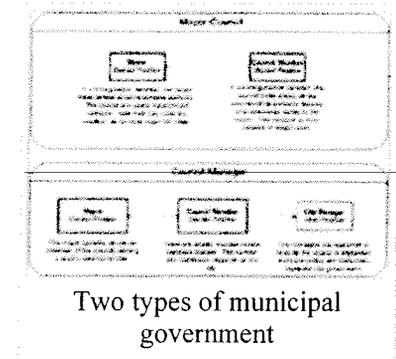


# Council-manager government

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The **council-manager government** is one of two main variations of representative municipal government in the United States. This system of government is used in the majority of American cities with



Two types of municipal government

populations over 12,000. (for contrast, see mayor-council government). The system is also used in the Republic of Ireland, both for city councils and county councils.

In the council-manager form of government, an elected city council (typically between five and 11 people) is responsible for making policy, passing ordinances, voting appropriations, and having overall supervisory authority in the city government. In such a government, the mayor (or equivalent executive) will perform strictly ceremonial duties or will act as a member and presiding officer of the council, similar to a chairman. The council will appoint a city manager or administrator who will be responsible for supervising government operations and implementing the policies adopted by the council. The manager serves the council, usually with a contract that specifies duties and responsibilities. Ideally, the manager is apolitical, but this is often difficult.

Municipal governments are usually administratively divided into several departments, depending on the size of the city. Though cities differ in the division of responsibility, the typical arrangement is to have the following departments handle the following roles:

1. Urban planning and zoning:
2. Economic development and tourism
3. Public works - construction and maintenance of all city-owned or operated assets, including the water supply system, sewer, streets, stormwater, snow removal, street signs, vehicles, buildings, land, etc.
4. Parks and recreation - construction and maintenance of city parks, common areas, parkways, publicly-owned land, operation of various recreation programs and facilities
5. Police
6. Fire
7. Emergency medical services
8. Emergency management
9. Accounting/finance - often tax collection, audits
10. Human resources - for city workers
11. Legal counsel/risk management - legal matters such as writing municipal bonds, ensuring city compliance with state and federal law, responding to citizen lawsuits stemming from city actions or inactions.
12. Transportation (varies widely) - if the city has a municipal bus or light rail service, this function may be its own department or it may be folded into the another of the above departments.
13. Information technology - supports computer systems used by city employees; may be also

responsible for a city website, phones and other systems.

#### 14. Housing department

The council-manager system can be seen to place all power into the hands of the legislative branch. However, a city manager can be seen as a similar role to that of corporate chief executive officer (CEO) in providing professional management to an organization. Council-manager government is much like a publicly-traded corporation. In a corporation, the board of directors appoints a CEO, makes major decisions and wields representative power on behalf of shareholders. In council-manager government, ~~the city council appoints a city manager, makes major decisions, and wields representative power on~~ behalf of the citizens.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is a professional organization for city managers. It was founded in 1914, and has more than 8000 members worldwide.

In New England, where municipal government is often invested in an incorporated town, the city manager may be called town manager, and the council can often be referred to its traditional name of board of selectmen.

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## History of the council-manager government in the United States

Sumter, South Carolina has the distinction of being the first city in the United States to successfully implement this form of government, known as council-manager government.

The progressive-inspired city-manager system of government was designed to remove politics from municipal administration.

## History of the council-manager government in the Republic of Ireland

Following the turmoil of the first world war 1914-1918, 1916 rising, Irish War of Independence 1919-1921 and Irish Civil War 1921-1923. The Irish Government found it necessary to remove the members of several local authorities and replace them temporarily by paid commissioners.

Both Dublin and Cork city councils were so removed . In both cities there was a body of opinion that the services provided by the councils were delivered more efficiently and fairly under the commissioners that under the previous system where the executive function was in effect vested in the Councils and their committees.

In 1926 a committee of commercial and industrial interests in Cork came together to consider a scheme of city government and having regard to the city's experience of commissioners and recent experience in