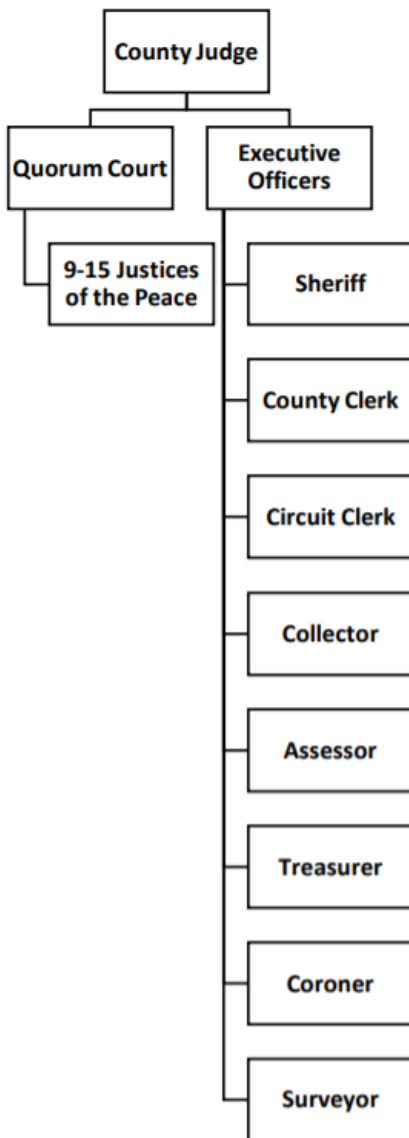


Overview of Arkansas County Government Structure and Responsibilities

Services provided by county governments in Arkansas are a fundamental part of our daily lives. The funds generated by counties pay for services like roads, law enforcement, libraries, and other important health and social services. These services are critical to residents' quality of life and are necessary for adapting to the changing structure of the global economy.

Structure of County Government: The structure of County Government can be compared to a business, with the County Judge as the CEO who oversees both the quorum court and executive officers. These bodies work together to make decisions about what and how to provide county services to residents.



- **County Judge:** The County Judge oversees the quorum court and executive officers. Their powers include: presiding over the quorum court without a vote but with veto power, administering ordinances enacted by quorum court, authorizing and approving disbursement of county funds, operating system of county roads, maintaining custody of county property, and hiring employees except those employed by other elected officials.
- **Quorum Court:** There are between 9 and 15 justices of the peace who sit on the Quorum Court, depending on county population size. This is the legislative body of county government and is considered the voice of county citizens. This body has legislative authority to adopt county ordinances, appropriate funds, contract or join with other governments, fix number and compensation of county employees and county officers within state determined range. With voter approval¹, the Quorum Court may also levy taxes such as property and sales tax and fill vacancies in elected offices.
- **Executive Officers:** Counties may have up to 9 elected officials in addition to County Judge. These Executive Officers oversee each department in county government. Their duties are described below:
 - **Sheriff-** Maintains public peace and has custody of county jail.
 - **County Clerk-** Official bookkeeper of county government and serves as clerk for the county, quorum, and probate courts.
 - **Circuit Clerk-** Maintains the flow of paperwork through the various divisions of the circuit court.
 - **Collector-** Collects property taxes for the county and cities and school districts in the county.
 - **Assessor-** Appraises and assesses real estate and personal property.
 - **Treasurer-** Responsible for the custody and disbursement of all county funds and certain school district funds.
 - **Coroner-** Determines cause of death for individuals in the county.
 - **Surveyor-** Locates boundaries of property at the request of the assessor. (Not all counties have a surveyor)

Community, Professional & Economic Development
Strengthening Arkansas Communities

Responsibilities of County Government: County Governments must provide constitutionally mandated services, however counties also offer many non-mandated services. Here are summaries of mandated and non-mandated services for Arkansas counties:

County Government constitutionally mandated responsibilities:

- Administer Justice through the courts
- Provide law enforcement protection and custody of persons accused or convicted of crimes
- Administer real and personal property taxes; and
- Manage court and public records

Non-Mandated services offered by counties often include:

- Transportation services, including county roads & bridges
- Agricultural services
- Community and rural development services
- Emergency services, including 911
- Human services
- Community services
- Solid waste services
- Water, sewer and other utility services
- Job training services and facilities

More Information on County Government: To learn more about your county government go to www.learn.uada.edu and go through the online "Introduction to County Government" course. You may also learn more about the responsibilities of county government by viewing the following resources:

- Arkansas County Judges 2018 Procedures Manual: https://www.arcounties.org/site/assets/files/4814/county_judges.pdf
- Arkansas justices of the peace 2018 Procedures Manual: <https://www.arcounties.org/site/assets/files/4894/jps.pdf>
- Access Arkansas code: <https://portal.arkansas.gov/agency/bureau-of-legislative-research/service/arkansas-code-search-laws-and-statutes/>
- Contact your county's executive officers: <https://www.arcounties.org/counties/>
- For additional information contact your local county agent and go to the UA System Division of Agriculture's Local Government Program at: www.uaex.uada.edu/localgov

Contact:

Wayne Miller wmiller@uada.edu
Professor – Community and Economic Development
Ellie Wheeler ewheeler@uada.edu
Program Associate - Community and Economic Development

¹ However, the quorum court may approve property tax millage changes for county government general and road expenses without voter approval, up to a maximum of 5 mills and 3 mills respectively.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.