

# Structure and Responsibilities of Arkansas' County Governments

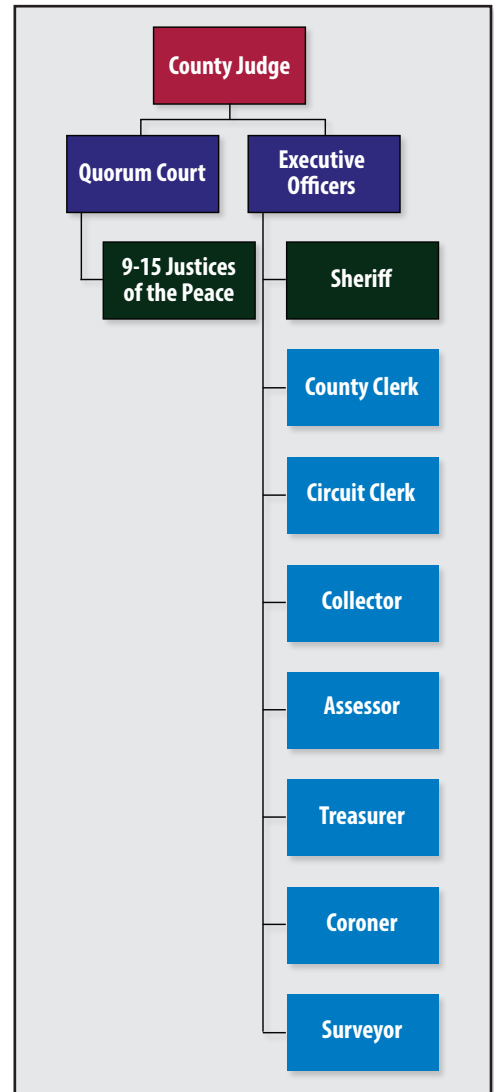
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Services provided by county governments in Arkansas are a fundamental part of our daily lives. Revenues received by counties, including tax dollars, pay for services such as roads, law enforcement, libraries and other important services. These services 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 county services to provide to residents, and how to provide them.

- County Judge:** The County Judge oversees the quorum court and executive officers. Powers include presiding over the quorum court without a vote but with veto power, administering ordinances enacted by the quorum court, authorizing and approving disbursement of county funds, operating a system of county roads, maintaining custody of county property and hiring employees except those employed by other elected officials.
- Quorum Court:** There are between nine 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 and fix the number and compensation of county employees and county officers within ranges determined by the state. With voter approval, the Quorum Court may also levy taxes, such as property and sales tax, and fill vacancies in elected offices.

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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.

- **Executive Officers:** Counties may have as many as nine 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; 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, 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.

#### **Responsibilities of County Government:**

County governments must provide constitutionally mandated services, but may 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.
- Manage court and public records.

Non-Mandated services offered by counties often include:

- Transportation services, including county roads and 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.courses.uaex.uada.edu](http://www.courses.uaex.uada.edu) and to take our online “Introduction to County Government” course. You can also learn more about the responsibilities of county government by viewing the following resources:

- Procedural Manuals for each of the county executive officer positions and justices of the peace are available on the Association of Arkansas Counties website at: <https://arkansascounties.org/publication-library/>.
- 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.arcountries.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](http://www.uaex.uada.edu/localgov).

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