



OHIO COUNTIES MATTER

Delivering vital services to Ohioans



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ASSOCIATION OF OHIO
RESEARCH & EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION

WHY DO COUNTIES MATTER?

COUNTY GOVERNMENT plays a critical role in the life of every Ohioan. Counties are often responsible for implementing state and sometimes federal programs at the local level. Counties build roads and bridges, increase broadband connectivity in the county, improve access to housing for residents, foster economic and workforce development, administer elections, and collect taxes to name some examples of this vital state-county partnership.



COUNTY GOVERNMENT impacts the everyday lives of all Ohioans by delivering a variety of services at the local level. Many of these services directly improve the lives of Ohioans such as providing services for children and families, and services for the elderly and disabled residents. Counties also provide a variety of public safety services such as building and operating a county jail, answering and dispatching 9-1-1 calls, and providing emergency management services.



COUNTY LEADERS

County commissioners along with the county executive and county council in Summit and Cuyahoga counties are elected into leadership roles that set county priorities largely through adoption of the county budgets as well as leading in economic development initiatives, workforce development, growth efforts, partnerships with other local governments and providing vital services.

These public servants are elected to four-year terms of office, and the timing of their terms are staggered between even-numbered years to provide continuity. They serve as:

- The budgetary authority by balancing demands for services with finite taxpayer funds;
- The contracting authority by approving county contracts;
- The taxing authority by raising or lowering certain fees/taxes as well as deciding whether or not to place a property tax proposal before voters;
- The legislative authority by setting policies.

In addition, they hold title to all county property, oversee implementation of programs and services in county departments and partner with various county boards and commissions, including selecting individuals to serve. These county leaders are uniquely situated to see the big picture and define high-level goals and long-range outcomes for the county.



COUNTY LEADERS IN OHIO, BY THE NUMBERS

258 County Commissioners

2 County Executives

22 County Council Members

COUNTY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Ohio has implemented two forms of county government. Eighty-six of Ohio's counties operate under statutory laws crafted by Ohio lawmakers, while voters in two counties – Summit and Cuyahoga – have chosen to adopt a charter form of government which can possess some home rule powers similar to municipalities. In addition, the county charter form of government allows for an elected county executive and council as well as a different structure of other elected county officials.

STATUTORY

The Ohio Constitution defines a structure of county government organized around nine roles: a 3-member board of commissioners, plus a prosecutor, auditor, treasurer, recorder, engineer, clerk of courts, sheriff, and coroner. Eighty-six counties follow this “statutory” structure.

CHARTER

In 1933 and 1978, amendments to the Ohio Constitution allowed alternative government structures based on “county charters.” Charter government may not include all the roles in the original statute. Summit and Cuyahoga are the sole Ohio counties with charter governments. These counties have elected county executives, elected county councils, and certain other elected county officials.

86 COUNTIES (statutory form of county government)	SUMMIT COUNTY (charter form of county government)	CUYAHOGA COUNTY (charter form of county government)
Three-Member Board of County Commissioners	County Executive	County Executive
	11 Member County Council Elected by District and At-Large	11 Member County Council Elected by District
Prosecutor	Prosecutor	Prosecutor
Auditor	Fiscal Officer	
Treasurer		
Recorder		
Engineer		
Clerk of Courts	Clerk of Courts	
Sheriff		
Coroner		



The following boards and commissions also deliver important assistance and programs to county residents:

- Soil & Water Conservation District
- Veterans Services Commission
- Board of Elections
- Children Services Board
- Solid Waste Districts
- Developmental Disabilities Board
- Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Board
- Regional Planning Commission
- Land Banks
- Family & Children First Council
- Parks Board
- Health Board
- Public Defender Commission
- Fair Board

JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Counties help keep citizens safe by administering justice. The sheriff's office preserves the peace, the prosecutor's office prosecutes criminal activity, and the county court system mediates and adjudicates on many issues from juvenile and domestic relations matters to criminal cases.

Justice and public safety components include:

- Courts
- Sheriffs' Offices
- County Jails
- Probation Services
- 9-1-1 & Emergency Management
- Juvenile Detention and Justice Services
- County Prosecutors
- Coroners
- Indigent Defense
- Dog Wardens/Animal Control



60%+

Administering justice is a vital part of county government and accounts for 60+ percent of a county's general fund budget.



Dog Wardens and Animal Control

Counties administer Ohio's dog laws to register, apprehend, impound and reunite dogs with their rightful owners and develop adoption programs.



9-1-1. What is your emergency?

Counties play an integral role in receiving emergency calls, dispatching appropriate emergency services and response. Nearly **6 million** calls were made to 9-1-1 in 2022.

HUMAN SERVICES

Each county has a County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS). Collectively, they administer one of the largest human service and workforce systems in the nation. The county is responsible for administering programs to the state's most economically vulnerable citizens.

Services operated through local agencies include:

- Local Workforce Initiatives
- Child Protective Services (including Foster Care, Kinship Care and Adoption)
- Protecting the Elderly from Abuse and Neglect
- Child Support
- Cash Assistance
- Food Assistance
- Child Care
- Medicaid (Comprising Long Term Care, Children's Health Insurance and Services to Aged, Blind and Disabled)

Counties are responsible for understanding the complex rules and systems that accompany these services and helping clients navigate the various programs. It is the county's primary duty to ensure clients receive the services they need and that the integrity of the programs is protected.

One in four Ohioans
at any point in time are
served by a CDJFS.



Blue pinwheels for National Child Abuse Prevention Month.



Counties administer over 100 programs that collectively serve millions of Ohioans every year.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development involves programs to create and retain jobs, grow personal income and provide needed services to attract as well as retain business and industry. County commissioners, county executives and county council members are vital in positioning their counties as vibrant places for investment.

Counties play a critical role in providing services that businesses and site selectors highly value, such as:

- Transportation
- Infrastructure
- Workforce Skills
- Building Permits and Land Use Issues
- Competitive Tax Structure
- Availability of Incentives
- Revitalization Programs
- Regional Economic Development Strategy
- Housing
- Land Banks



Economic development happens because of strong partnerships with state and county leadership, other local officials, local community organizations, business leaders, schools and training programs.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation and infrastructure are core public sector responsibilities that impact everything from our daily commute to moving goods around the globe. From building and maintaining roads and bridges, to providing efficient transit options, counties are a driving force in connecting communities and strengthening our economy. Counties play a major role in other essential community infrastructure projects, such as jails, courthouses and parks, and water purification and sewage systems.

Services include:

- Roads and Bridges
- Airports
- Public Transit
- Drainage and Storm Water Prevention
- Drinking Water and Wastewater Management
- Broadband

Counties are responsible for **60%** of all the bridges and **24%** of all road miles in the state.

Many counties operate water purification and wastewater treatment facilities for certain areas of the county.



Counties operate the vast majority of Ohio's

97

general aviation airports.



Public Transit

Ohioans are served by **61** outstanding transit systems, **27** located in urban centers and **34** operating in rural areas.

Drainage & Storm Water Prevention

Counties work with Soil and Water districts and other partners to safely dispose of excess water.

ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS

Counties provide vital services to their residents, balance numerous administrative responsibilities and perform essential functions to ensure safe, healthy and resilient communities for their residents.

Services include:

- Election Administration
- Real Estate Appraisal and Assessment
- Tax Administration
- Building Code and Land Use Functions
- Record and Protect Important Legal Documents

Provide funding to administer services for:

- Veteran Service Commissions
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- OSU Extension Services
- County Fair Boards
- County Historical Societies

Counties manage **3,332**
polling locations/voting centers.



In 2022, counties spent more than

\$119.5

million to administer elections.



#OperationGreenLight for Veterans

Counties provide over **\$60 million** in funding to help Ohio's veterans through County Veteran Service Commissions.

131,102 young people across Ohio participated in the 4-H program through OSU Extension in 2022.

CCAO RESEARCH & EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Founded in 1991, as a not-for-profit charitable foundation for the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO), the CCAO Research and Educational Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that obtains grants and donations to provide the high-quality information, tools, and training that our members need. The foundation is dedicated to fostering a deeper understanding among Ohioans regarding the essential role of county government in their lives. In addition, the foundation has been supporting our future leaders by offering scholarships around the state to high school seniors interested in careers in public service.

To support these important educational and outreach efforts, visit www.ccao.org/foundation.



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