

# UNIT 4: Local Government Knowledge

Decisions are made everyday that affect issues in our communities. While most of us are familiar with the people and the structure of the federal and state government, it is our local government that makes the majority of decisions that uniquely affect our communities.

Instruction in U.S. government and democracy – at the national, state and local levels – is an important part of increasing civic knowledge. American citizens should have an understanding of our government’s structure, the powers and responsibilities of its different branches and levels, and how government influences and is influenced by the greater society. Knowledge of government helps us be politically engaged: the more knowledgeable we are, the more likely we are to grasp important political issues and be smart voters.

Learning about government is usually confined to the classroom. However, extracurricular programs are in a position to enrich this learning and bring government to life by engaging young people in simulations of democratic processes and procedures, and by using pertinent issues as vehicles for exploring how government works. Young people often see government as boring, distant and unrelated to themselves. A vital part of civic education is to demystify government. It shows young people that government is made up of real people and that the average American citizen is intimately involved in how governmental officials are chosen and how decisions are made. Exposing youth to the human side of politics – talking with elected officials, visiting government buildings, attending meetings – is a great way to make government more personal. Understanding government structure and processes allows us to see how the system works and how we can make a difference.

## Think local

Research has shown that high school students understand local government better than federal government, despite the lack of local government information in the formal school curriculum. At the local level, democracy comes to life. The

people that we elect to lead our local government generally serve a much smaller constituency than federal and state leaders, and thus they are more accessible; they may even be people you regularly see in the community. These elected officials and many other appointed local government employees work to improve the quality of life in their districts by providing services and creating ordinances. And it is the responsibility of us, as citizens, to communicate with them our wants and needs. Working for change at the federal and state levels can be tiresome and long-term in nature, but at the local level, we can make our opinion heard by simply attending a governmental meeting and speaking face-to-face with decision makers.

Trying to understand local government can be confusing at first, given all of the different government units: counties, townships, cities, villages, school districts, intermediate school districts and special authorities all have different governing bodies and all have different powers and responsibilities. How can we sort all of this out? We can start by learning what local government units have jurisdiction over what issues. This way, we can use the issues that we are interested in to determine which government unit has the power to do something about those issues.

## Forming partnerships

Taking advantage of the relative accessibility of local government officials is a great way to increase understanding of how these government units work and to make your voice heard. Collaborating with local government officials *during the organization* of your group is an effective way to establish a working partnership. Many officials are excited about the opportunity to hear young people’s opinions and concerns surrounding community issues and would be willing to support a youth group interested in citizenship. The following is an example of how one group formed such a partnership. (See Unit 5, “Taking Action” for other examples of partnerships.):

### **Principles of Citizenship:**

- Knowledge of Government
- Public Policy

The Genesee County 4-H Citizenship Academy is a collaborative program sponsored by the Genesee County Board of Commissioners and the 4-H Youth Program of Michigan State University Extension in Genesee County. Nine high school-aged students, one from each county commissioner district, can be selected to participate in the extensive “hands-on” government/citizenship event. The academy provides the opportunity for Genesee County youth to develop a better understanding of the role and purpose of local and state government with their commissioner serving as a local mentor.

Each participant receives a comprehensive notebook regarding history and demographics of Genesee County along with a lot of information regarding Genesee County government. They complete five two-hour meetings learning about local county government, complete an intensive issues identification process, have dinner with the commissioners to present the identified issues, and complete a detailed evaluation of the program. Participants take one full-day off from school to sit next to their respective commissioner during an official meeting of the Genesee County Board of Commissioners and then visit up to twelve county departments to question staff and department heads.

## Resources for local government knowledge

The Civics Institute, “Teaching the Types of Local Government in Michigan: Model Building” [http://www.civicsinstitute.org/curricula/high/Teaching\\_the\\_Types\\_of\\_Loca.html](http://www.civicsinstitute.org/curricula/high/Teaching_the_Types_of_Loca.html)

The University of Michigan Library, “Local Governments and Politics” <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/pslocal.html>

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington, “Local Government Policy-Making Process” <http://mrsc.org/Publications/polmakpro.pdf>

Michigan Constitution (see Article VII: “Local Government”) <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/publications/Constitution.pdf>

## References

Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. (2003). *The Civic Mission of Schools*. New York: Carnegie Corporation.

Flanagan, C.A. & Faison, N. (2001). Youth civic development: Implications for social policy and programs. *Social Policy Report*, vol. xv, 1.

Galston, W.A. (2001). Political knowledge, political engagement, and civic education. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4, 217-234.



**“A consensus is taking shape... classroom study and community practice both play a role in forming citizens.”**

— William Galston, (2001, p. 218)

## ACTIVITY:

# The “Invisible” Government

### **Description:**

Youth consider issues and problems of local relevance and use these to begin learning about the structure and processes of local government in Michigan, including local government responsibilities and government officials. Youth then explore their own community to learn what services are provided and who the people are that make it run. This activity should be conducted after the group has completed the issues identification process in Unit 3, “Issues Identification.”

### **Participant Age:**

Ages 16–19

### **Activity Objectives:**

The participants will:

- Understand the structure of local government.
- Understand the purposes and responsibilities of local government units.
- Connect local issues with local government departments and services.
- Become familiar with their own local government units and officials.

### **Learning and Life Skills:**

Wise Use of Resources; Planning/Organizing

### **State of Michigan Social Studies Standards:**

Standard III.1 Purposes of Government; Standard III.4 American Government and Politics; Standard VI.1 Identifying and Analyzing Issues

### **Materials, Equipment, Handouts:**

- Handout: “What Does Local Government Do for You?”
- Three-ring binder for each participant with the following handouts inserted inside the binder:
  - Handout: “Understanding Local Government in Michigan.” Includes main page “Understanding Local Government in Michigan” and the following:
    - “Counties” (2 pages)
    - “Responsibilities of County Government”
    - “People in County Government”
    - “Townships”
    - “Villages”
    - “Cities”
  - Handout: “Common Community Issues”
- List of community issues that the group is interested in focusing on
- Handout: “Issues and Local Government”
- Notebook paper and writing utensils for all participants

### **Time:**

2 ½ hours, broken up into three parts

### **Setting:**

Indoors, tables and chairs to accommodate all participants

## **Procedure:**

### **Before the meeting:**

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Print one copy of “What Does Local Government Do for You?” for each participant.
- Print out, copy, and organize the handouts, “Understanding Local Government in Michigan,” (which includes the main page, “Understanding Local Government in Michigan” and the following: “Counties” [2 pages], “Responsibilities of County Government,” “People in County Government,” “Townships,” “Villages,” and “Cities”) and also the handout, “Common Community Issues” into three-ring binders so that each participant receives one.
- Print one copy of “Issues and Local Government” for each participant.
- See Part III, step 2. If following option “c” in step 2, prepare a handout with information on your county government, including departments and/or commissions or get copies of your county directory from your county government.
- Make sure that the group has already identified which community issues it would like to focus on, and make sure the list is accessible.

### **During the meeting:**

## **Part I**

- I. Ask the group what they think of when they hear the word “government.” Take several responses. Responses will likely be in reference to state and federal government.

2. Explain to the group that today they are going to talk about local government. There is a government for your county, township and city or village, too, although it may not get as much attention as the state and federal government.
3. Distribute the “What Does Local Government Do for You?” handout. Explain that the items on the handout are services that are normally provided by units of local government, not state or federal government. As a group, read through each item on the list and ask participants to give examples of the service in their community or examples of problems associated with the item in their community.

## Reflection Activities and Ideas:

After the group has gone over each item, ask the following questions:

- Which of these services, or others, could be improved in your community?
- Where do the issues that you previously identified fit into this list?

## Part II

1. Distribute one three-ring binder (containing the handouts as described in the “Before the Meeting” procedure) to each participant. Explain that this binder contains information on the structure of local government in Michigan and that they should keep this binder as a resource for the remainder of the group’s meetings. Tell the group that it is important to understand the different units of local government and what each unit is responsible for in order to address an issue at the appropriate level. Go through the information on each of the units of government, answering any questions; have participants identify their respective county, township and village or city at the beginning of each section. (See “Try This, Too” section for fun ideas on how to reinforce participants’ understanding of this information.)

## Part III

1. Explain to the group that they will use this information on local government to determine which unit of government (that is, county, township, city or village) deals with the issues and problems that they believe to be the most important in their community. Revisit the list of issues that the group is interested in focusing on. Have the group go through their list of issues and decide which unit of local government can address each issue. It may be that some issues are applicable to multiple units of local government. If the original list of issues is extensive, have the group narrow the list down to four or fewer issues. Distribute the handout “Issues and Local Government” and have the group work together to fill in the handout with their chosen issues and corresponding units of local government. Finally, have them fill in the name of the local government unit (that is, the county, township, village or city name).
2. There are several options for this step:
  - a. If computers are available, have participants work in pairs to research the web site for one of the local government units identified in step 1. Make sure each group has paper and a writing utensil. Instruct groups to pay particular attention to “departments” or “commissions” within each unit and to record these. Groups may record any other information that they find interesting.
  - b. If computers are not available, instruct each participant to research the web site for one of the local government units identified in step 1 outside of the meeting. Instruct participants to pay particular attention to “departments” or “commissions” within each unit and to record these and bring them to the

next meeting. Participants may record any other information that they find interesting.

- c. If computers are not available, distribute the pre-prepared information on the county government and county government departments and/or your county directory. Give the group time to read through the information.

## Reflection Activities and Ideas:

Reconvene the larger group and have participants share the information they found interesting from Part III, step 2. Ask the following questions:

- What departments or commissions are in the local government unit(s) and what issues might they deal with?
- What department(s) might deal with the issues that we discussed in step 2?
- Do you think that there should be more departments to address more issues? Do you think that there should be fewer departments? What would be the benefit of having fewer departments?
- How does what you learned today help you to make decisions about getting involved with community issues? How does what you learned today relate to citizenship?

## Try This, Too:

- When preparing the three-ring binders for each participant, add information in the binder about the history of your particular county, township, city and/or village.
- After Part I, take a walk (30 to 60 minutes) with the group around the community, outside of the meeting place. Bring the “What Does Local Government Do for You?” handout. Have the group use the handout to identify real examples of local government services in the community (for example, parks, sidewalks, street lights, buses, libraries). If these services are not accessible by foot from the meeting place, it may be better to arrange a field trip at a later time to complete this activity.
- For Part II, invite a local government official (for example, county commissioner, county Extension director, city councilmember) to this meeting to introduce himself or herself, give a brief biography, and explain where he or she fits into the local government structure and what issues he or she works on. If possible, invite someone who works on an issue that the group identified as one they would like to focus on. The local official can also help field questions related to local government structure.
- After reviewing the information in the binders in Part II, make a game for participants to practice recalling facts about local government (for example, which units provide which services, names of government officials at each level). Use information from the “Understanding Local Government in Michigan” handout to organize a game in the style of Jeopardy!, TRIVIAL PURSUIT® or Concentration. Break the group up into teams, or have participants compete individually. Provide prizes for the winner(s).
- At the conclusion of Part III, ask the group to identify one or more departments relevant to their issues of interest that they would like to visit. Arrange a field trip to this department building.



## **HANDOUT:**

# ***What Does Local Government Do For You?***

The list below reflects the types of problems we may all encounter at some point, or the services we may need.

## **Services**

1. Hospitals
2. Police and fire protection
3. Special education programs
4. Voter registration
5. Parking
6. Mental health counseling
7. Emergency medical services
8. Child custody, support and visitation
9. Street lights
10. Road maintenance
11. Public transportation (for example, buses, trains)
12. Parks
13. School buildings – use for community programs
14. Recreation programs for young people and adults
15. Juvenile detention or diversion
16. Sidewalks
17. Garbage pick-up/disposal
18. School curriculum
19. Libraries
20. Local fairs

These are all issues that can be addressed and services that can be provided by local government units. There are other issues and services that local government can address.

Adapted with permission from "What Does Local Government Do for You?" by Elizabeth Moore, in *Developing Community Leadership*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 2005.

**HANDOUT:**

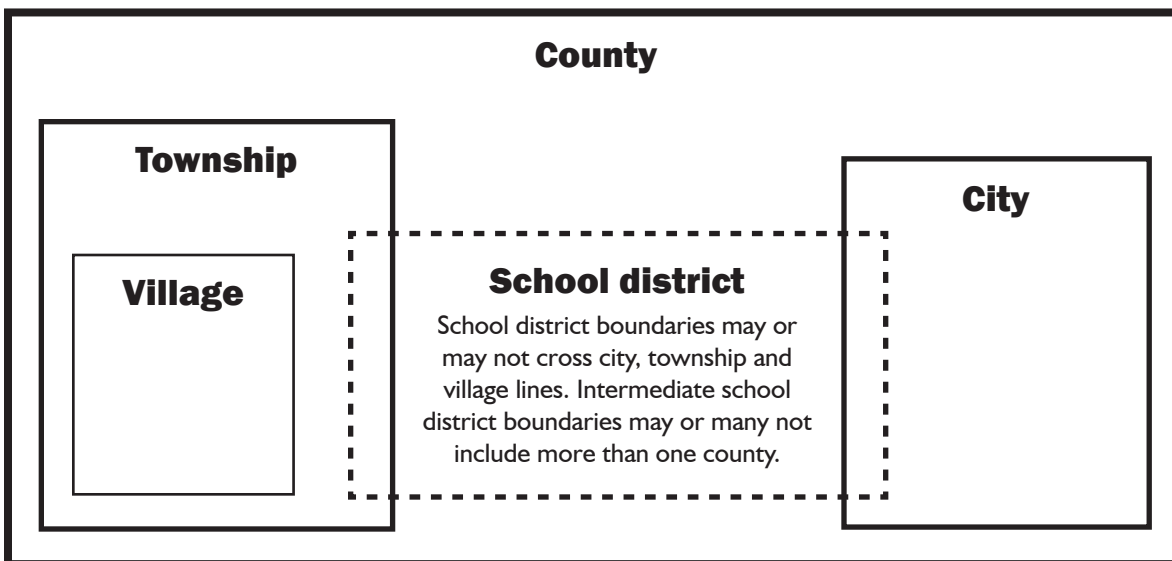
# ***Understanding Local Government in Michigan***

## **What is local government?**

- Local government uses local tax money.
- Local government has a governing body usually composed of elected officials.

## **Michigan has eight (8) types of local government:**

	<b>Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>General purpose</b>	1. Townships	1,242
	2. Villages	261
	3. Cities	272
	4. Counties	83
<b>Special purpose</b>	5. School districts	556
	6. Intermediate school districts	57
	7. Community colleges	29
	8. Special authorities	Unknown
<b>Total</b>		<b>2500</b>



Adapted with permission from "Understanding Local Government," by Elizabeth Moore, in *Developing Community Leadership*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 2005.



**HANDOUT: Understanding Local Government in Michigan, continued**

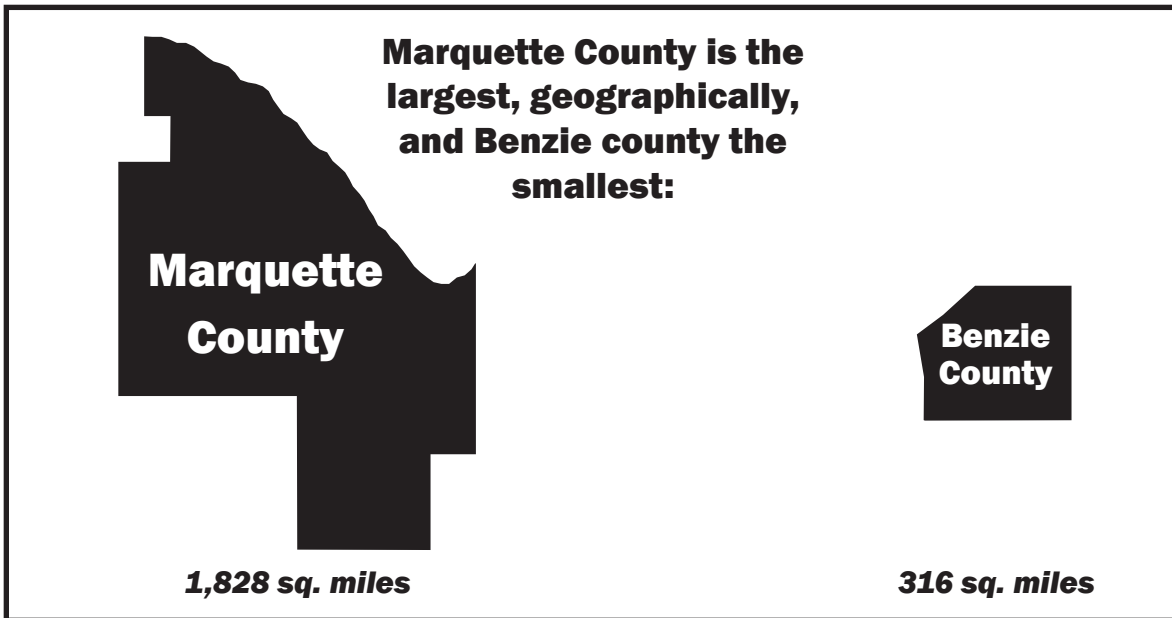
# **Counties**

**Counties are the largest political units of the state.  
There are 83 counties in Michigan.**



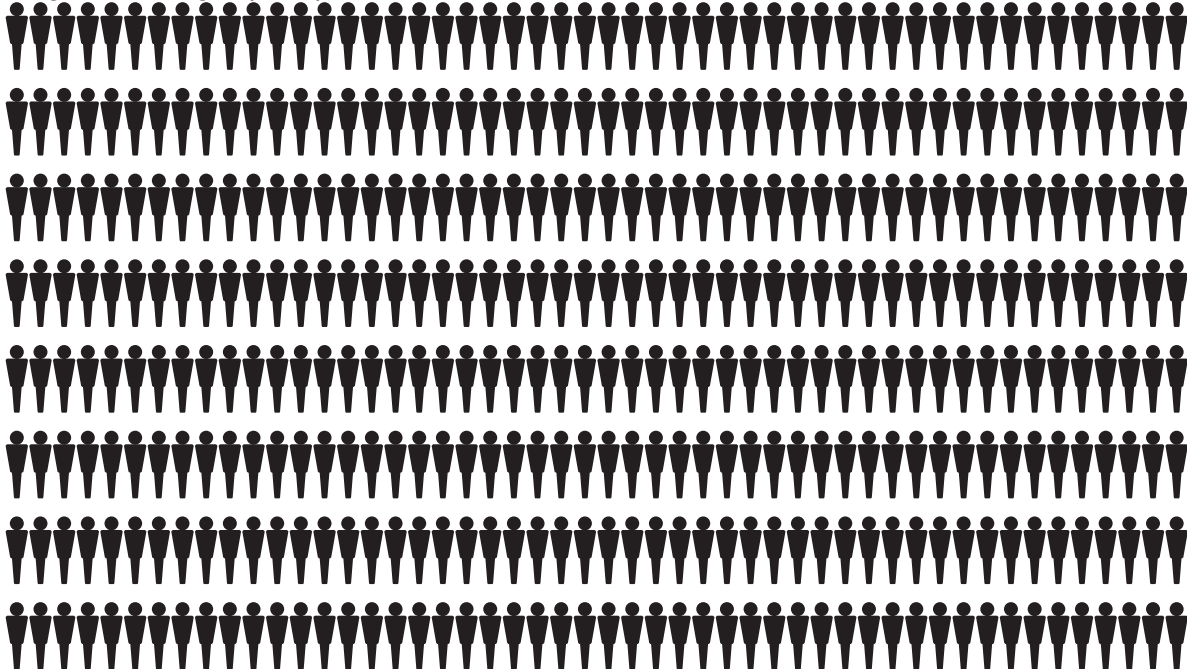


**HANDOUT: Understanding Local Government in Michigan, continued  
Counties, continued**



**Wayne County has the largest population, Keweenaw the smallest:**

**Wayne County: 2,061,162**



**Keweenaw County: 2,300**



**Human icon = 5,000 people**

## HANDOUT: Understanding Local Government in Michigan, continued

# Responsibilities of county government

County governments only have the power to deal with issues that are related to the county. They cannot interfere with more local issues (for example, city sidewalks), nor can they influence state and national issues (for example, the Iraq War). County governments must also make sure that they follow all state laws.

### The following are some of the responsibilities of county governments and areas over which they have power:

- Keeping records of persons and property in the county
- Building and maintaining roads in the county
- Care of rural lands and populations
- Public health
- Mental health
- Animal control
- Veteran's Affairs
- Friend of the Court
- Planning and zoning
- Emergency medical services
- Circuit, Probate, District Courts
- Michigan State University Extension
- Social services
- Senior services
- Economic development
- Hospitals
- Emergency preparedness
- Public works
- Equalization of taxes
- Election oversight

These responsibilities are usually carried out by **departments** in the county government. Many of the responsibilities listed above have a specific department created for their execution. Not every county has the same departments. Some examples of county government departments are the road commission, the parks and fairground department, family services and the sheriff's department.

Adapted with permission from "Understanding Local Government," by Elizabeth Moore, in *Developing Community Leadership*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 2005.

## HANDOUT: Understanding Local Government in Michigan, continued

# People in county government

The governing body of most counties is called the **county board of commissioners**. The commissioners are elected by the people of the county. The size of the board depends on the population of the county; the smallest board in Michigan has five commissioners and the largest has 26 commissioners. The board serves the following functions:

1. Legislation – decides on resolutions and laws (ordinances) to be enacted in the county
2. Budgeting – decides how county tax money and other resources are spent and distributed
3. Establishes compensation for county employees – decides how much money people who work for the county earn
4. Makes appointments to county positions – decides who gets county jobs
5. Provides constituent services

Other elected county officials include:

- **Sheriff** – responsible for enforcing state law at the county level, investigating law violations and for bringing those suspected of law violations to justice
- **Clerk** – maintains records of all of the board of commissioner’s proceedings, resolutions, decisions and votes. The clerk is responsible for keeping vital records for the county and managing their application and approval, including: birth records, marriage licenses, death records, visas and concealed weapon permits. The clerk also administers elections.
- **Register of deeds** (often combined with clerk responsibilities) – maintains official records of property in the county. The register of deeds also keeps track of all exchanges of real estate with the state.
- **Treasurer** – responsible for public funds. The treasurer cannot make payments except upon order of the board of commissioners.
- **Prosecuting attorney** – conducts criminal prosecutions.

Some counties have created other administrative positions, such as **Controller, Administrator, Director of Finance, Coordinator** and **Elected Executive**.

Adapted with permission from “Understanding Local Government,” by Elizabeth Moore, in *Developing Community Leadership*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 2005.

## **HANDOUT: Understanding Local Government in Michigan, continued**

# ***Townships***

There are 1,242 townships in Michigan, ranging in geographic size from four square miles to 600 square miles. The smallest township has a population of ten people and the largest a population of 95,000.

### **Responsibilities of township governments**

Township governments are responsible for all aspects of local government:

- Health, safety, welfare
- Fire protection
- Traffic safety
- Land use and zoning
- Subdivision controls
- Licensing of business
- Administering elections
- Assessing property and collecting taxes
- May also provide public water and sewers, libraries, etc.

### **People in township government**

Officials in township governments are elected to four-year terms to serve on the **township board**. The board members include:

- Supervisor
- Clerk
- Treasurer
- Trustees (2-4)

Adapted with permission from "Understanding Local Government," by Elizabeth Moore, in *Developing Community Leadership*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 2005.

## **HANDOUT: Understanding Local Government in Michigan, continued**

# **Villages**

There are presently 261 villages in Michigan with populations ranging from 130 to 10,000. Villages are formed when a greater population density with a township creates a need for more services, such as the establishment of the village's own water supply, sewerage and maintenance of street and roads. Villages remain part of the township.

### **Responsibilities of village governments**

The types of responsibilities of village governments include:

- Management of sidewalks
- Street lighting and pavement
- Zoning
- Local water supply
- Care of cemeteries
- Building regulations

### **People in village government**

Village officials are elected to serve two- to four-year terms on the **village council**. There are two types of villages: General Law villages and Home Rule villages. They have similar leadership structure, including:

- President
- Clerk
- Treasurer
- Trustees (6 in General Law village)

Adapted with permission from "Understanding Local Government," by Elizabeth Moore, in *Developing Community Leadership*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 2005.

## **HANDOUT: Understanding Local Government in Michigan, continued**

# **Cities**

Cities are formed when communities become more densely populated. Residents decide to become a city in order to provide a full array of services. There are 272 cities in Michigan; populations range from 500 to 900,000. Cities have the power to collect taxes and write ordinances or city laws.

### **Responsibilities of city governments**

City governments carry on the same type of business as townships and villages, but usually on a larger scale. Their responsibilities include:

- Assessing property
- Collecting taxes
- Conducting elections
- Providing services
  - Sidewalks
  - Police
  - Zoning
  - Libraries
  - Streets
  - Parks/recreation
  - Fire protection
  - Water supply
  - Transportation
  - Trash removal

Adapted with permission from "Understanding Local Government," by Elizabeth Moore, in *Developing Community Leadership*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 2005.

## **HANDOUT:**

# ***Common Community Issues***

### **Recreation**

Lack of parks  
Parks in disrepair  
Need for recreation centers  
Need for sports facilities  
Lack of recreation programs  
Lack of walking/biking paths

### **Education and Health**

School violence  
Lack of textbooks  
High drop-out rates  
Truancy  
Overcrowded schools  
Poor test scores  
Child abuse  
Lack of child-care centers  
Childhood illness  
Teen parents  
Pollution (air or water)

### **Crime and Safety**

Violent crime  
Gangs  
Drugs and alcohol  
Theft  
Police-community relations  
Traffic accidents  
Vandalism  
Litter

### **Economy**

Youth unemployment  
Lack of job training  
Poverty  
Homelessness

### **Diversity**

Hate crimes  
Race relations  
Gender issues  
Age discrimination  
Affirmative action issues

### **Administration**

Public transportation  
Lack of sidewalks  
Sidewalks in disrepair  
Poor lighting on streets  
Zoning problems  
Abandoned buildings  
Vacant lots  
Tax or budget issues

### **Other**

(add you own ideas)



**HANDOUT:**

# ***Issues and Local Government***

**1. ISSUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Corresponding unit(s) of local government:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of local government unit** (for example, county name):

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. ISSUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Corresponding unit(s) of local government:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of local government unit** (for example, county name):

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. ISSUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Corresponding unit(s) of local government:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of local government unit** (for example, county name):

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. ISSUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Corresponding unit(s) of local government:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of local government unit** (for example, county name):

\_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITY:

# Behind-the-Scenes of Local Government

### Description:

Youth learn about local government structure by visiting a village, city, township or county government building (for example, county courthouse, county jail, city hall). There, youth have a guided tour of the building and meet with local government officials to better understand how a department of local government runs and who the individuals are that make it run. Youth will identify what issues and problems this department of local government addresses and examine what strategies are employed to do so. This activity should be conducted after an introduction to local government structure.

### Participant Age:

Ages 13–19

### Activity Objectives:

The participants will:

- Visit and understand the function of a local government department.
- Examine public policies.
- Interview a local government employee.

### Learning and Life Skills:

Cooperation; Social Skills

### State of Michigan Social Studies Standards:

Standard III.1 Purposes of Government; Standard III.3 Democracy in Action; Standard III.4 American Government and Politics; Standard IV.3 Role of Government; Standard VI.1 Identifying and Analyzing Issues

### Materials, Equipment, Handouts:

- Informational materials about the department that the group visits. These materials should be obtained from the department itself, prior to the meeting.
- Handout: “Interview Questions for Local Government Site Visit”
- Handout: “Local Government Department Information”

### Time:

90–120 minutes

### Setting:

On-site at a local government facility

## Procedure:

### Before the meeting:

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Print one copy of the “Interview Questions for Local Government Site Visit” handout and one copy of the “Local Government Department Information” handout for each participant. Print extra copies of “Interview Questions for Local Government Site Visit” for the local government department contact person and interviewee.
- Two options:
  - a. Choose a local government department to visit. The department’s work should be relevant to the issues that the group is interested in.
  - b. At the end of a prior meeting, allow the group to identify a local government department to visit. The department’s work should be relevant to the issues that the group is interested in (see Try This, Too section of “The Invisible Government” activity).
- Contact (preferably in person) the chosen local government department at least one week in advance to schedule a guided visit. Identify the department officials that you would like to meet and the specific features of the facility you would like to see while there. Arrange to interview at least one department official. Follow up with the department contact person and the interviewee immediately prior to the visit for confirmation.
- Ask the local government department contact person to provide informational materials about the department’s responsibilities, activities, structure and other important topics of interest to the group. These should be obtained prior to the day of the visit. Make sure there are enough copies for all participants.
- Provide the local government department contact person and interviewee with a copy of the “Interview Questions for Local Government Site Visit” handout prior to the day of the visit. Inform them that these are the types of questions about which the group will inquire. The specific questions may differ from those on the handout.

- Arrange transportation for all participants to the department facility.

### **During the meeting:**

1. Tell participants that today they will learn more about how local government addresses one (or more) of the issues that they identified by visiting a local government department. Remind the group that the purpose of local government is to provide services that people in the community want. There are a few services that are mandatory – that is, the local government is required by state law to provide them – but most services are non-mandatory and can be added, removed or changed.
2. Revisit the issues that the group identified as important and the local government departments that may address these issues. Explain that the group will visit one of these departments today and they should observe what the department does, how it operates, who the people are that make it run, and so forth. Tell the group to pay particular attention to how the department addresses (or does not address) the issue(s) that the group has identified.
3. Distribute the informational materials on the local government department. Give the group a few minutes to look over these materials individually. Help them with any questions. After about five minutes, ask the group what it appears the department does. What questions do they still have after reading these materials?
4. Distribute one “Interview Questions for Local Government Site Visit” handout to each participant, and give the group a minute to read over the questions. After, ask the group what questions they would add to the list. Remind the group that they must be polite and respectful of the government officials – keep this in mind when generating new questions. Have the group generate up to five new questions and ask participants to volunteer to ask specific questions so that each question is accounted for.
5. Distribute one “Local Government Department Information” handout to each participant, and instruct the group to take notes on the responses that they get and also of any observations they make of the facility.
6. Transport the group to the local government department facility.
7. Take the guided tour as arranged prior to the meeting. Make sure to save time at the end of the tour to interview the designated official.

### **Try This, Too:**

- If transportation to the site midway through the activity is problematic, the entire meeting can occur on-site at the local government facility. If so, it is preferable to have an adequate meeting area for pre- and post-activity discussion. If this is not feasible, try conducting the pre-activity discussion during a preceding meeting and the post-activity discussion during a subsequent meeting.
- Let participants choose their own local government department to visit, either individually or in small groups. Explain to participants what steps they must follow to plan the visit, and have them organize the visit themselves. Participants should generate a prepared list of interview questions to be answered during the visit. Afterwards, have participants talk about their visit with the group and explain what they learned.
- Repeat the activity for other local government departments, if there is interest.

### **Reflection Activities and Ideas:**

Ask the group the following reflection questions:

1. What did you learn about local government based on your tour of the facility?
2. What services does the local government department that you visited provide?
3. What services do you think the department should add, remove or improve on?

**HANDOUT:**

# ***Interview Questions for Local Government Site Visit***

1. Please give your name, title, department and the local government for which you work.

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2. What are the responsibilities of your job?

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3. What are the responsibilities of your department?

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4. How long have you held this position?

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5. What is the most difficult aspect of your job?

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6. Are the services provided by your department mandatory or non-mandatory? Which are mandatory? Which are non-mandatory?

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7. Our group has expressed interest in the issue of

---

Does your department address this issue? How?

---

8. Speak about your department's view of the importance of the issue of

---

9. How has this issue evolved or gotten to the point that it is now?

---

10. What advice would you give to our group for addressing the issue of

---

?

**HANDOUT:**

# ***Local Government Department Information***

**Department responsibilities/services provided:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Department employees (titles):**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:**

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