Counties deliver vital services in several areas, including providing justice and public safety services, workforce preparedness, protecting children from abuse and neglect, administering elections, serving vulnerable Ohioans and maintaining roads and bridges, and much more.

All of these services contribute to Ohio’s quality of life and overall success. This document will take you through the many ways your county affects your life. Simply put, Ohio counties matter.
County government touches the lives of all Ohioans. That's because when it comes to the basics of life, such as infrastructure, emergency response, tax collection and services for children and families, county government has a broad array of responsibilities to perform for the citizens of Ohio. State and federal governments enact laws, and county government implements those laws and delivers services that matter to all Ohioans.
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
Ohio has implemented two forms of county government. 86 of Ohio’s counties operate under statutory laws crafted by Ohio lawmakers, while voters in two counties – Summit and Cuyahoga Counties – 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 fewer row officers.

### Elected County Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>86 Counties (statutory form of county government)</th>
<th>Summit County (charter form of government)</th>
<th>Cuyahoga County (charter form of government)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Three-Member Board of County Commissioners</td>
<td>County Executive</td>
<td>County Executive</td>
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<td>Prosecutor</td>
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<td>Auditor</td>
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<td>Sheriff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coroner</td>
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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
- Developmental Disabilities Board
- Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Board
- Regional Planning Commission
- Family & Children First Council
- Parks Board
- Health Board
- Public Defender Commission
- Fair Board
Counties help keep citizens safe by administering justice. The sheriff’s office preserves the peace, the prosecutor’s office prosecutes criminal activity and the common pleas court mediates and resolves 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

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. Where is your emergency?
Counties play an integral role in receiving emergency calls, dispatching appropriate emergency services and response. Over 7 million calls were made to 9-1-1 in 2015.
Each county has a County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS). Collectively, they administer one of the largest health, 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 (includes Foster Care and Adoption)
- Protecting the Elderly from Abuse and Neglect
- Child Support
- Cash Assistance
- Food Assistance
- Childcare
- 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.

**75 percent** of the people served by the CDJFS are seniors, children or disabled.

**One in four** Ohioans (nearly three million people) at any point in time are served by a CDJFS.

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

County Departments of Job and Family Services receive approximately **250,000** phone calls a week.
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 and Infrastructure
- Workforce Skills
- Building Permits and Land Use Issues
- Competitive Tax Structure
- Availability of Incentives
- Revitalization Programs
- Regional Economic Development Strategy

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 commutes 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, such as jails, courthouses and parks, as well as water purification and sewage systems.

Services include:
- Roads and Bridges
- Airports
- Public Transit
- Drainage and Storm Water Prevention
- Drinking Water and Wastewater Management

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

Counties operate the vast majority of Ohio’s 97 general aviation airports.

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

Public Transit
Counties may create transit authorities to provide public transit service alone or in conjunction with other local governments. There are 28 urban and 33 rural transit systems in Ohio.

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

In 2014, counties spent more than $88 million to administer elections.

Counties manage 8,887 polling locations/voting centers.

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

Nearly 250,000 young people across Ohio participate in the 4-H program through OSU Extension.
The County Commissioners Association of Ohio works to advance effective county government for Ohio through legislative advocacy, education and training, technical assistance and research, quality enterprise service programs, and greater citizen awareness and understanding of county government.

To learn more, visit www.ccao.org.

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