

Municipal Government in Colorado

Cities and Towns

Mayor and Managers

Councils and Trustees

How Towns and Cities are Ruled

- **Overview-** This lesson provides background information on how cities and towns are ruled in Colorado. It provides a basic description and advantages/disadvantages for each.
 - **Colorado Civics Standards Prepared Graduate Competencies:**
 - Analyze and practice rights, roles, and responsibilities of citizens
 - Analyze the origins, structure, and functions of governments and their impacts on societies and citizens
- **Procedures** – Show the slides ask students to take notes using the form provided.
- **Follow-Up Activity** - Research government corruption that led to the creation of the city manager system during the Progressive Era.

Municipal Government

Cities and Towns

- The Colorado Constitution allows for several types of Cities and Towns.
- There are different rules for how each is governed. For a complete description of the rules, check out the resources at the end of the slide show.
- We will learn about two types:
 - Mayor – Council system
 - Council – City Manager system

Student Note Taking Form

	Mayor - Council System	Council City- Manager System
Description and Flow Chart		
Advantages		
Disadvantages		

Municipal Government

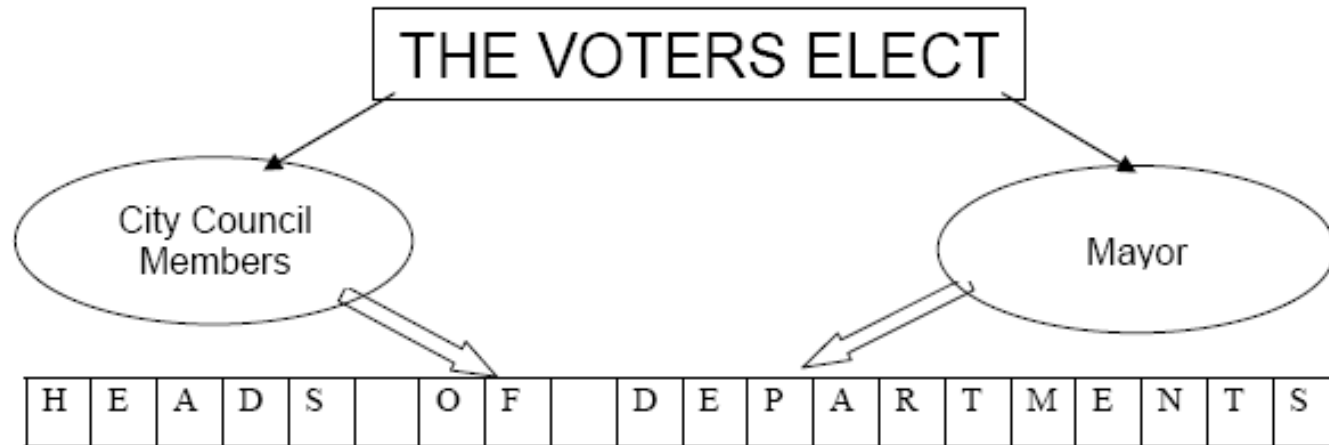
Mayor-Council System

- Towns may choose to use the **Mayor - Council (Trustee)** form or a Council-Manager System
(See next slide)
 - Mayor is elected by the public.
 - The mayor is the chief executive of the town in charge of running the city departments.
 - The mayor's job is to enforce the policies created by the town trustees.
 - Council /Trustees are elected by the public.
 - Trustees serve as the legislative body, writing the laws and regulations for town.

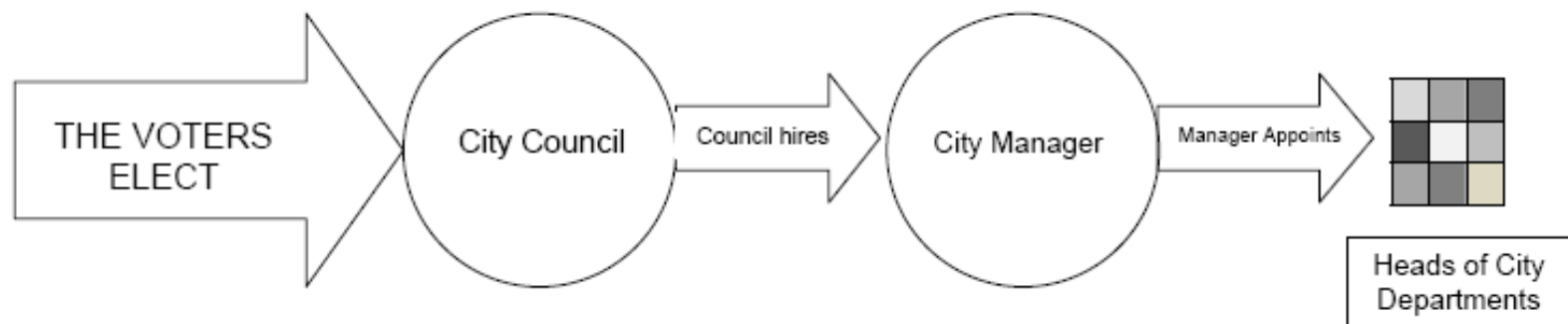
Municipal Government Council-Manager System

- Towns & Cities typically use the **Council – Manager** form, but other choices are possible.
 - Council is elected by the public.
 - The Council serves as the legislative body writing laws, rules and policies for the city.
 - The Mayor is a member of council and may be elected separately. The Mayor in this system serves as the figure head of government performing many ceremonial duties.
 - The City Manager is hired by the Council.
 - The City Manager is the chief executive of the city in charge of running the city department.

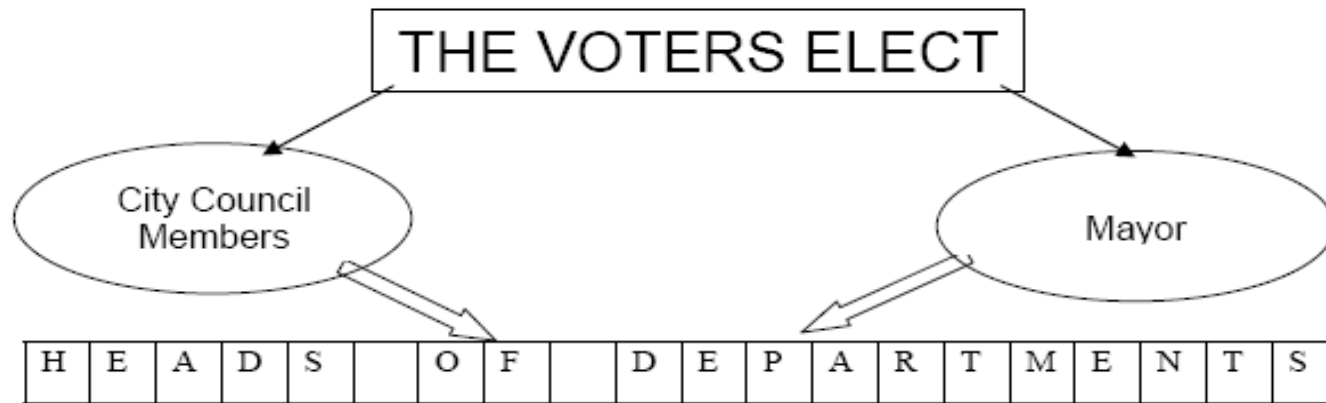
Mayor-Council form of City Government



City Manager Form of City Government



Mayor-Council form of City Government

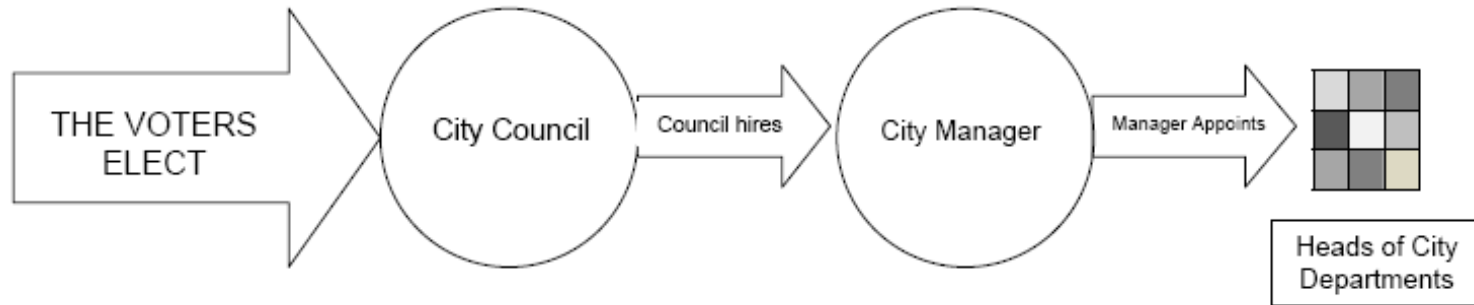


- The mayor and council members (trustees) are elected by the voters. The mayor is the chief executive who prepares the city's budget and proposes laws or ordinances. The city council is the legislative body that passes laws and ordinances and approves the mayor's appointments. Terms of office vary but usually run from two to four years. Most cities are divided into districts or wards. Each district elects a council member who acts like a representative for the district's residents. In some cases city officials are also elected. These might include treasurer, judges, city attorney, and tax assessors. Other officials, such as heads of the police or fire departments, public works, or parks are elected or appointed. Their terms of office can run two to four years or as long as the city administration is in power.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Mayor Council System:

- The main advantage of the mayor-council system is it provides a clear division of responsibility, so citizens know who is in-charge for different services. The mayor-council system also provides for strong leadership. The mayor and the council members are elected by the voters and directly accountable to them. They are the most visible members of the city government and provide its leadership.
- Some of the disadvantages of the mayor-council system are the mayor can become too strong and dominate the government. Before term limits, this was a problem in many cities as mayors who had amassed considerable power and influence stayed in office for many years. Because they wield so much power, mayors and council members can sometimes fall into corruption or just lose sight of the voters' wishes. Unless laws have been broken, the voters can't replace city officials until the next election.

City Manager Form of City Government



- In the City Manager form of government the voters elect a city council which acts as the city's law making body. The council hires a city manager who skilled in management and city government. The city government is run much like a big business or corporation with the council acting like a board of directors who set policies and planning, and the manager acts like a CEO (chief executive officer) handling the day-to-day operations. The city manager carries out the city's business and enforces the laws. The city manager also appoints qualified people to head the different departments, and they report directly to him or her.

Advantages and Disadvantages of City Manager System:

- The main advantage of the city manager form of government is that the managers serve at the pleasure of the city council. If they don't do a good job, they can be quickly replaced. Because managers are appointed and not elected, they don't partake in party politics and are not subject to pressure from interest groups.
- Some of the disadvantages of the city manager system are sometimes the city council and managers don't work well together, or the council has a difficult time finding or affording a competent manager. Also, because competent managers might be hard to find, there can be strong competition among cities in hiring and managers can ask for high salaries.

Resources

- [Links to city government web sites](#)
- CML Materials
- [Colorado Statutes](#)

- Thanks to PBS news hour for lesson ideas and materials.