



County Technical Assistance Service
INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

County Official's ***Companion***



Welcome to County
Government
2026

Welcome ***Message***

On behalf of CTAS, I am honored to welcome you to the 2026 County Officials Orientation Program (COOP). Whether you are new to public office or continuing your service, you have taken on an important responsibility in helping to shape the future of your county and community.

This CTAS Companion book is designed to serve as a practical and reliable resource as you begin or continue your journey in public service. Within these pages, you will find helpful guidance, practical tools, and essential information to support you in your role. The CTAS team is here to support you every step of the way—ready to answer questions, provide training, and assist with the challenges and opportunities you may encounter.

Thank you for your commitment to public service. We are proud to support you and look forward to working with you in the years ahead.



Jon Walden, CTAS
Executive Director



County Technical
Assistance Service

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Say Hello to ***Your Key Partners***



RANDY BOYD was appointed president of the University of Tennessee by the UT Board of Trustees March 27, 2020, following a 16-month period as interim president. Boyd took office Nov. 22 following the retirement of UT President Joe DiPietro. As UT's 26th president, Boyd serves as the chief executive officer of a statewide university system. The flagship campus in Knoxville includes the Space Institute in Tullahoma and the statewide Institute of Agriculture. The UT System also includes campuses in Chattanooga, Pulaski and Martin; the Health Science Center in Memphis; and the Institute of Public Service. The UT System manages Oak Ridge National Laboratory through its UT-Battelle partnership.

Boyd is the founder of Radio Systems Corp., a Knoxville-based business, with more than 800 employees; offices in six countries; and produce pet-related products under the brand names PetSafe, Invisible Fence and SportDOG. He also serves as chairman of Boyd Sports and is the owner of the Tennessee Smokies, Johnson City Cardinals, Greeneville Reds and Elizabethton Twins and part owner of the Memphis Redbirds.

Boyd served as chairman of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and as commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. He was a founder and co-chair of the Governor's Rural Taskforce, which exists to help state government and industry leaders find solutions to the biggest challenges facing rural Tennessee.

Boyd also served as Gov. Bill Haslam's special adviser for higher education. He was the architect for Tennessee Promise and Drive to 55 and was the founder and chairman of Tennessee Achieves—all initiatives aimed at increasing the number of Tennesseans with post-secondary degrees to 55 percent by 2025 and decreasing financial hardship for Tennesseans pursuing degrees.

Through his philanthropy, Boyd also supports the Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research and the Anderson Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation's Boyd Venture Challenge seed grant program for student entrepreneurs, both through the Haslam College of Business at UT Knoxville.

Boyd is the first in his family to graduate from college. He earned a bachelor's degree in business with an emphasis on industrial management from UT Knoxville. Boyd also earned a master's degree in liberal studies with a focus on foreign policy from the University of Oklahoma.

Boyd and his wife, Jenny, live in Knoxville. They have two children and two grandchildren.

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DR. HERB BYRD III is vice president of public service at the University of Tennessee. After attending Harding College (Searcy, AR) for two years, Byrd received his bachelor's degree in Animal Science, master's degree in reproductive physiology and PhD in educational leadership, all from the University of Tennessee. Most of his professional career has been spent with his alma mater in UT Extension.

Byrd began his Extension career in 1984 as a 4-H agent in Monroe County. He then worked in McMinn County for seven years in adult agriculture & resource development while serving as county director. In a two-year stint away from UT Extension, Byrd was a vice president with Lads to Leaders, Inc. where he conducted workshops teaching adults how to teach leadership skills to youth.

After returning to UT Extension's state office in 1998, Byrd was responsible for recruitment, personnel, and civil rights and served as UT Extension's affirmative action and EEO officer. In addition, he was also the director of the Extension Evaluation and Staff Development department, organized July 1, 2003. Before his appointment as interim vice president of the Institute for Public Service, he was also the human resources officer for the Institute for Agriculture. Byrd has served on the staff of the University of Tennessee's Leadership Institute since 1999.

The Institute for Public Service (IPS) was created in 1971 by the UT Board of Trustees on the recommendation of former UT president Edward J. Boling, who had a vision to create an institute that would take university expertise to governments and industries across Tennessee, bringing technical assistance, research, consulting services, information and training to Tennessee citizens. IPS became the umbrella organization for UT CTAS when it was created in 1973.



JON WALDEN is executive director of County Technical Assistance Service (UT CTAS), an agency of the University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service. He has been with UT CTAS since October 1993, serving as an administrator of information technology prior to becoming manager of information technology & environmental services in 2002. He was named interim executive director June 1, 2020, and selected as executive director on December 1, 2021.

Before joining UT CTAS, Walden was a programmer analyst with Columbia State Community College. He holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from Tennessee State University and a master of arts in leadership and public service from Lipscomb University.

UT CTAS was created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1973 at the urging of county officials and their organization, the Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA). County officials wanted an agency to provide prompt, accurate technical assistance on a daily basis to Tennessee's 95 counties.

Say Hello to ***Your Key Partners***



DAVID CONNOR is executive director of the Tennessee County Officials Association (TCSA), a position he has held since January 2014. TCSA is a non-partisan, non-profit public interest group representing county mayors/executives, county commissioners, and highway officials from the state's 95 counties. TCSA is an umbrella organization that includes affiliate associations - Tennessee County Commissioners Association (TCCA), Tennessee County Highway Officials Association (TCHOA), and Association of County Mayors of Tennessee (ACM).

Prior to coming to TCSA, Connor was the executive director of TCCA from 2007-2013. He previously served as a member of the legal staff of the County Technical

Assistance Service (UT CTAS) for over a decade before joining TCCA. He received his bachelor's degree from Rhodes College in Memphis in political science and a law degree from Vanderbilt University. He also has previous experience working as an elections attorney for the Division of Elections in the Secretary of State's office.



BRETT HOWELL is executive director of the Tennessee County Highway Officials Association (TCHOA), a nonpartisan, nonprofit public service organization representing the goals and objectives of elected and appointed county highway officials in all 95 Tennessee counties.

Howell previously served as communications specialist at UT CTAS for more than 26 years, working closely with county associations representing county highway officials, county mayors and county commissioners during that time with state budget analysis, the legislative process, and meeting and communications planning. He received his bachelor's degree from Tennessee Technological University in 1990 and his master's degree in public

administration in 2003 from Tennessee State University.

Howell received the professional designation of Certified Public Manager from the UT Institute for Public Service Naifeh Center for Executive Leadership. He began his current position at TCHOA in July 2021.

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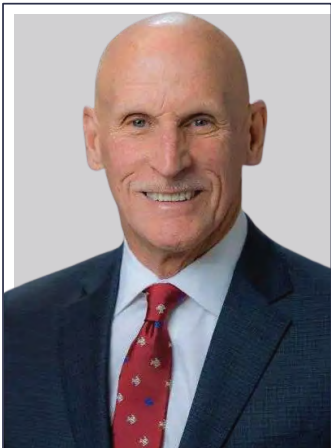


CHARLIE CURTISS is executive director of the Tennessee County Commissioners Association (TCCA), an association representing the elected legislative bodies of Tennessee's 95 county and metropolitan governments.

The association is dedicated to promoting more efficient county government and representing the interest of counties before the General Assembly and the various departments and agencies of state government. TCCA is an affiliate partner with TCSA, TCHOA, and ACM.

Prior to being named TCCA executive director, Curtiss served in the Tennessee House of Representatives from 1994-2013.

A Marine Corps veteran, Charlie became involved in community service when he was named chief of the Cassville Volunteer Fire Department. That led to his election to a term on the White County commission and ultimately to a term as county executive.



ANTHONY HOLT is the executive director of the Association of County Mayors (ACM). ACM has been an affiliate member organization of the Tennessee County Services Association since its inception in 1954. ACM was chartered to serve the needs of Tennessee's County Mayors at the State Capitol.

ACM and its staff serve as a liaison between the highest elected county officials in the state as a group, and the Governor's office, the state legislature, numerous state government agencies and other county and municipal organizations.

Over the years ACM has been very active in advocating legislation to streamline county government, save county tax dollars, promote local autonomy, and further and more clearly define the authority of the office of County Mayor.

Say Hello to ***Your Key Partners***



BEN RODGERS began serving as the Executive Director for the County Officials Association of Tennessee (COAT) in March 2024. COAT is an advocate, voice, and resource for elected county officials across the state. Ben previously served as a County Government Consultant in the Upper Cumberland region for the University of Tennessee's County Technical Assistance Service since 2005. He graduated from Tennessee Technological University in 2002 with a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration, majoring in accounting. From 2002 through 2005, Ben worked in public accounting at a CPA firm in Nashville. He completed tax returns and audits for the music industry.

Ben is a native of Baxter and served on the Putnam County Commission for twelve years. He has served as chairman of the commission for four years and chairman of the budget committee for 11 years. He is also chairman of the 911 Emergency Communication District, a board member of the Ag Extension Committee, the Highlands Residential Service, and Treasurer for the Putnam Education Partnership Foundation.

Ben became a Certified Fraud Examiner in 2019 and earned the Certified Public Manager designation in 2020. Ben completed his Master of Arts in Leadership and Public Service from Lipscomb University in August 2023. Ben was awarded the Outstanding Public Servant of the Year by the County Officials Association of Tennessee in 2022. He has been married to Amy since 2008. They have two dogs: Sam and Maggie.



WILL DENAMI has served in the role as Executive Director of the Tennessee Association of Assessing Officers (TNAAO) since 2007.

Prior to joining the TNAAO, Will served as the Executive Assistant to the Commissioner in the Department of Economic and Community Development. Before that, he worked as a bill clerk in the Tennessee House of Representatives.

Will received his bachelor's degree in political science from Middle Tennessee State University and a law degree from Nashville School of Law.

Will and his wife Betsy live in Franklin and are the proud parents of William and Annie.

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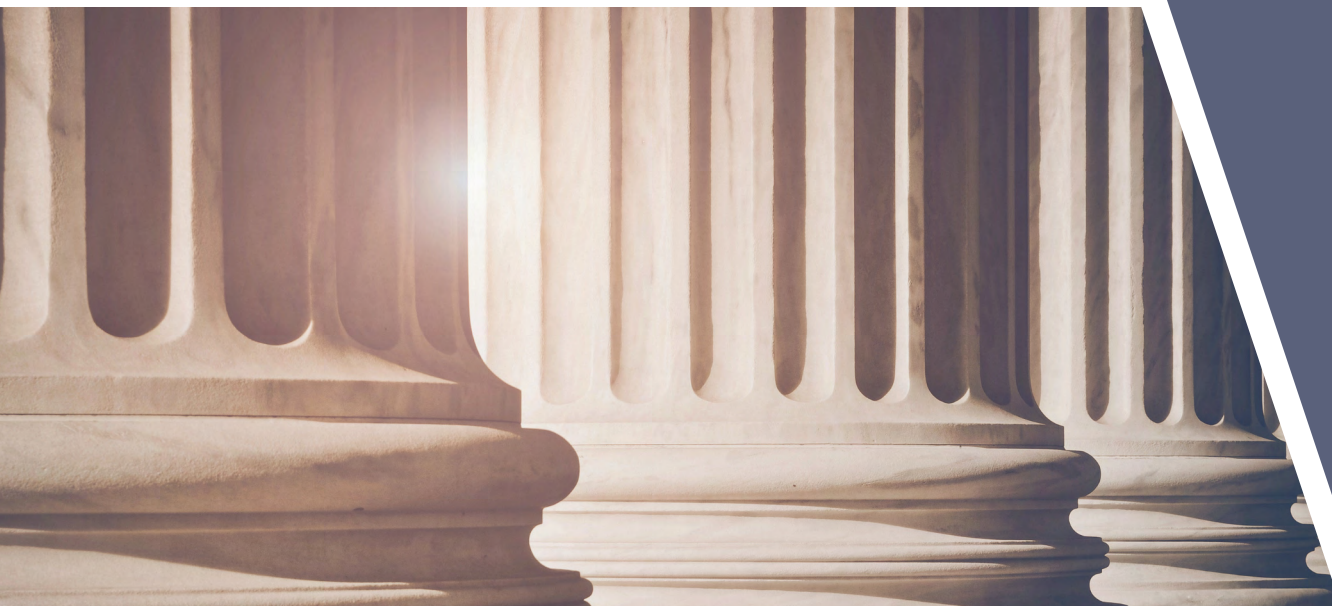
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About **CTAS**

County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS) was created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1973 at the request of county officials and the Tennessee County Services Association to provide reliable technical assistance to Tennessee's 95 counties. CTAS fulfills the land-grant mission of the University of Tennessee through statewide outreach and training and operates as part of the University's Institute for Public Service, as authorized by T.C.A. § 49-9-402.

CTAS provides direct consulting, training, and information services to support county governments. Our staff work alongside county officials on finance and budgeting, property assessment, public safety, environmental guidance, and other operational needs. Through conferences, regional classes, and targeted programs, CTAS offers practical training to support county officials and staff in their roles. Each county is supported by consultants who serve as points of contact, backed by internal specialists who draw on CTAS expertise to address that county's unique needs.

Chapter 1: About CTAS

Chapter 1 introduces the County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS) and explains how the agency supports county officials across Tennessee. It provides a clear picture of who we are, the expertise of our staff, and the ways we serve counties every day.

The chapter highlights the work of Field Services, Legal Services, Training and Technology Services, the Certified County Finance Officer (CCFO) program, Customer Service, and Business Operations. Each section offers a brief description of what these areas do and the types of assistance they provide to counties. It also includes contact information for agency leadership and program managers.

Service area maps show the regional coverage for consultants in County Government, Environmental, Property Assessment, and Public Safety, making it easy to identify who supports each county.

The chapter concludes with an overview of CTAS services, including financial and legal assistance; training programs such as the County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP), the CCFO program, online certificates, and commissioner training; highway, public safety, environmental, and property assessment services; research and analysis; information services; and the CTAS Electronic Library (e-Li). Together, these sections offer a helpful starting point for understanding CTAS programs, consultant coverage, and available resources.

This chapter contains:

- Staff expertise
- Service area maps
- Services list
- Agency contact information

CTAS Staff Expertise

CTAS staff bring a broad range of professional experience in county government, public administration, finance, training, and operations. Staff work collaboratively to support effective, lawful, and well-managed county government across Tennessee.

Staff expertise includes:

Field Services

CTAS field services consultants provide direct support to county officials across a wide range of operational and governance issues, including:

- County commission roles and procedures
- Budgeting and financial management
- Property assessment
- Environmental and land use issues
- Criminal justice and jail operations
- Emergency management and fire services

Legal Services

CTAS legal staff provide county-focused legal expertise to elected and appointed county officials. They support CTAS consulting and training by offering analysis and guidance in areas including:

- County authority and powers
- Open meetings and public records
- Ethics and conflicts of interest
- Employment and governance issues

Training & Technology Services

CTAS training and technology staff develop and deliver educational programs and tools designed to strengthen county operations and leadership, including:

- Certification and continuing education programs
- Online learning and training delivery
- County data tools and technology support
- CTAS web-based resources, including the Electronic Library (e-Li)

Certified County Finance Officer (CCFO) Program

In partnership with the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, CTAS administers the CCFO program, which includes:

- Program coordination and participant support
- Financial training and continuing education for county financial officers

Customer Service

CTAS customer service staff support counties by helping officials navigate CTAS programs and resources, including:

- Assistance connecting with appropriate CTAS services
- General questions about CTAS programs
- Guidance on accessing CTAS information and training

Business Operations

CTAS business operations staff support the internal systems and processes that allow CTAS to serve counties effectively, including:

- Budget and financial management
- Human resources support
- Operational improvement

Find it Fast!

Our full staff list is available on our website under
About > Staff

www.ctas.tennessee.edu

Agency Contact Information



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<http://www.ctas.tennessee.edu>

Leadership

Jon Walden — Executive Director

jon.walden@tennessee.edu

- Overall leadership of CTAS
- Strategic direction and agency oversight

Technical Assistance

Jim Hart — Manager of Field Services

jim.hart@tennessee.edu

- Technical assistance requests from counties
- Field services coordination

*Identify your County
Government Consultant on
our website under
About > Service Area Maps*

www.ctas.tennessee.edu

Connect!

Legal Services

Kristy Godsey Brown — Manager of Legal Services

Our legal team supports county officials with research and guidance on laws related to county government. To connect with the right resource, email: ctas.support@tennessee.edu

Training & Certification

Nikki Ballentine — Manager of Training & Technology Services

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- County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP)
- Certified Public Administrator (CPA) designation
- Online certificate programs
- General training coordination

John Sutton — CCFO Program Manager

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- Certified County Finance Officer (CCFO) program

Customer Service

Chris Payne — Manager of Customer Service

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- General customer service inquiries
- Support for county officials and staff

CTAS Web & Information

Liz Gossett — Marketing Director

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- County Directory corrections/updates
- CTAS website, e-Li (online library), and information resources
- Email communications, social media, CTAS newsletter, & mailing lists

CTAS Service Areas

CTAS assigns consultants to specific service areas across the state to ensure consistent coverage, regional familiarity, and timely support for county officials. The service area maps on the following pages show how consultant responsibilities are organized by functional area and geography and identify which consultants serve each county.

Each map identifies the counties served within a specific area of the state and the consultant(s) assigned to provide assistance. While some consultants serve defined regions, others provide statewide support depending on the subject matter. Consultants also collaborate across service areas to address complex or cross-cutting issues.

These service area assignments are designed to promote strong working relationships with counties while ensuring statewide access to specialized expertise. The maps are intended to help county officials quickly identify the appropriate consultant to contact for assistance.

Current service area maps are also available on the CTAS website and are updated as staffing or coverage changes occur, allowing counties to reference the most up-to-date information as needed.

Find it Fast!

Our maps are available on our website under
About > Service Area Maps

www.ctas.tennessee.edu

County Government Consultants



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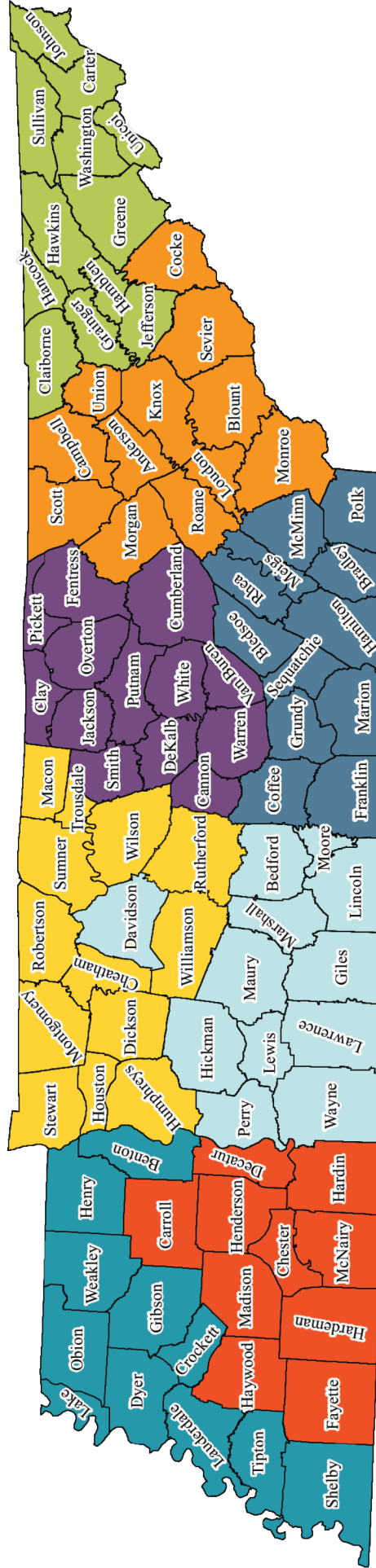
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Benton, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Lauderdale, Obion, Shelby, Tipton, Weakley

Cheatham, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, Macon, Montgomery, Robertson, Rutherford, Stewart, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson, Wilson

Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, White

Carter, Claiborne, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington, White



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Manager of County Government Consultants
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Carroll, Chester, Decatur, Fayette, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McNairy

Bedford, Davidson, Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Moore, Perry, Wayne

Bledsoe, Bradley, Coffee, Franklin, Grundy, Hamilton, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Polk, Rhea, Sequatchie

Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Cocke, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Union

Environmental Consultants



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Western Middle Tennessee

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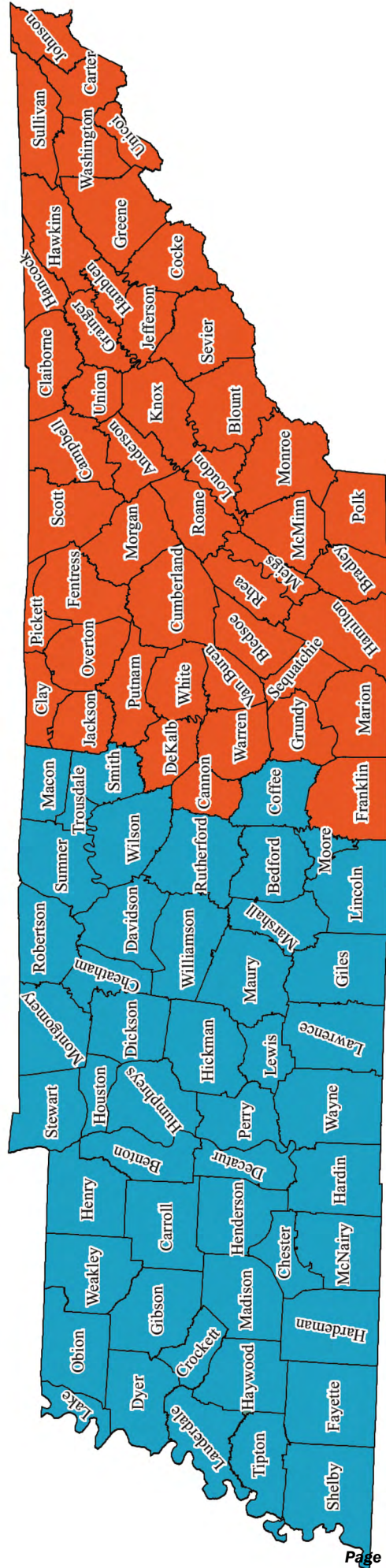


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Eastern Middle Tennessee

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Property Assessment Consultants



Taylor Coker
West Tennessee
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Joe Griffin
Middle Tennessee
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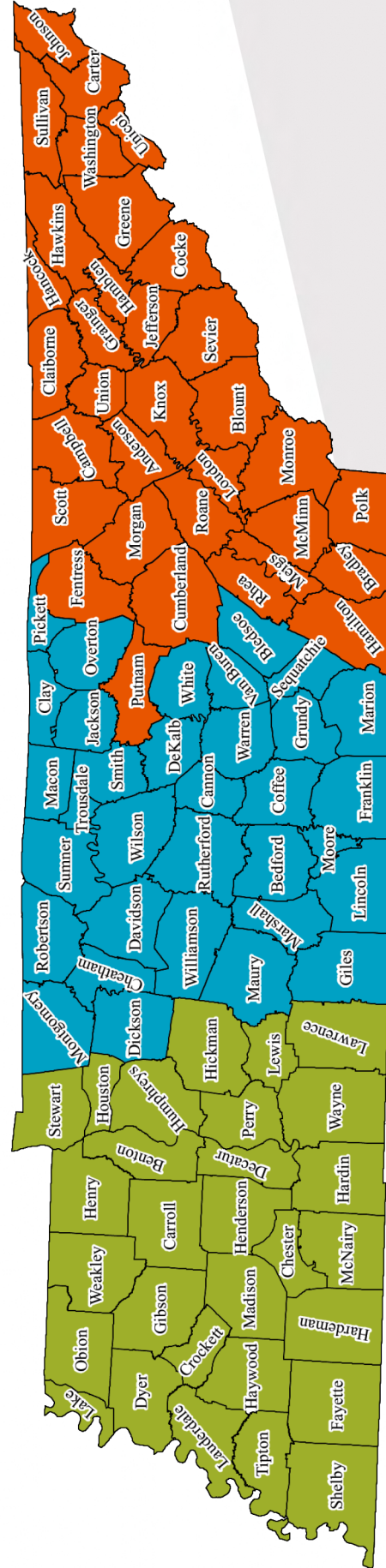
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Public Safety Consultants



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CTAS Services Available

CTAS provides a wide range of services to support county government operations, compliance, and leadership. This list offers a high-level overview of what CTAS does and how our consultants assist county officials and employees throughout the year.

Financial Services

CTAS assists counties in all aspects of government finance. Our financial consultants provide guidance in a wide range of topics, including:

- Budgeting
- Purchasing
- Accounting
- Debt management

This support helps counties meet their fiscal responsibilities while planning for long-term stability.

Quick Fact

CTAS consultants work with county mayors, finance directors, and budget committees each year to support the management of county public funds across Tennessee's 95 counties.

Legal Services

CTAS attorneys provide legal expertise by:

- Drafting and reviewing legislative proposals
- Monitoring action in the General Assembly
- Compiling the private acts of each county
- Providing legal guidance and written opinions to elected and appointed county officials

Training Services

CTAS offers a range of training programs designed to meet the professional development needs of county officials and staff.

County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP)

The COCTP provides specialized, technical, and managerial training to help officials run their offices more effectively. The program also offers a comprehensive overview of county government. Graduates earn the Certified Public Administrator (CPA) designation.

Certified County Finance Officer Program (CCFO)

In partnership with the Comptroller of the Treasury, CTAS administers the educational program and testing required for county financial officers to achieve the CCFO designation. The program covers accounting principles, county government structure, and fiscal management skills.

Online Certificate Programs

CTAS offers online certificate programs that allow officials to pursue continuing education at their own pace and on their own schedule.

Commissioner Training

Tennessee law sets training requirements for county commissioners, including an orientation and eight hours annually for those with fewer than eight consecutive years of service. CTAS provides programs to help meet these requirements through inperson and online opportunities.

CTAS Services Available

Highway Services

CTAS consultants work closely with county highway departments by providing:

- Certifications of county road revenues
- Computerized road lists and inventory systems
- Cost analysis for projects and operations
- Bid specifications for equipment purchases

These services help counties maintain accurate records and manage resources effectively.

Public Safety Services

Public safety consultants assist counties with law enforcement operations, jail management and operations, and emergency management and fire safety. They work directly with sheriffs and other public safety officials to review operations and offer practical guidance.

Environmental Services

CTAS environmental consultants assist counties with recycling, solid waste management, landfill operations, floodplain management, water quality requirements (including NPDES), and planning and land use policy. They also provide site analysis support using GIS mapping and drone technology.

Research & Analysis

CTAS conducts research and analysis on county revenues and expenditures, debt capacity and management, state-shared taxes and appropriations, school funding, jail needs assessments and staffing analyses. These analyses help counties make informed financial decisions.

Property Assessment Services

CTAS supports assessors of property and the property assessment community by providing:

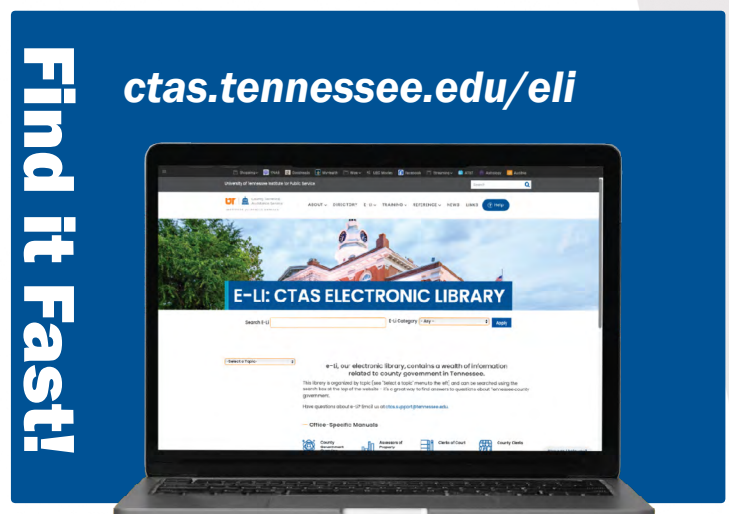
- Reappraisal review and guidance
- Budget assistance
- Certified tax rate and penny value calculations
- Operational support and appeal guidance
- City cost-sharing calculations

Information Services

CTAS helps counties strengthen their information technology and cybersecurity resources through consultation and direct technical assistance. Staff also develop and maintain web-based resources for county officials and their employees.

The CTAS Electronic Library (e-Li)

e-Li is CTAS's online resource containing information on county manuals and guidance, organized by topic and fully searchable. It serves as a go-to reference for questions about Tennessee county government.





County Government in ***Tennessee***

Understanding how county government works is essential for serving effectively. In this chapter, you will learn about the structure of county government in Tennessee, the budgeting process, the purchasing authority counties may have, and how your office relates to other county offices. This information will help you see the bigger picture and build strong working relationships across your county government.

Chapter 2: County Government in Tennessee

County government in Tennessee is shaped by a combination of constitutional provisions, state statutes, and long-standing legal principles that define how counties are organized and how authority is distributed. While the specific details may vary from county to county, the underlying framework is consistent statewide and establishes the roles, responsibilities, and limits of county government.

This chapter provides an overview of that framework. It explains how Tennessee counties are structured, the functions of the county legislative body, and the roles of elected and appointed county officials. The goal of this chapter is not to address day-to-day operations or policy decisions, but to establish a common understanding of how county government is legally organized and how its various components relate to one another.

Understanding this structure helps county officials place their own office within the broader system of county government and recognize where authority is shared, separate, or constrained by law.

This chapter contains:

- Structure of County Government
 - Counties as Part of the State
 - County and Court Officers in Tennessee
 - State Officials Who Operate at the Local Level
 - Checks and Balances in County Government
 - Forms of County Government
 - Working Together: Intergovernmental and Interlocal Agreements
- Budgeting and Purchasing: How County Money is Planned and Spent
 - The County Budget: Your Legal Spending Authority
 - Finding Your County's Financial Authority in the CTAS Directory
 - Who Does What in the Budget Process
 - Purchasing: Spending Must Follow the Rules
 - Paying the Bills: How Funds Are Actually Disbursed
- What New Officials Should Keep in Mind
- Relationship to Other Offices
 - Key Offices in County Government
 - How County Offices Work Together
 - Communication and Coordination
- Acronym List

Structure of County Government

This chapter explains how county government in Tennessee is organized and how the different offices work together to serve the public. You will learn about the county's role as part of the state government, the various elected offices and their responsibilities, the balance of powers between branches, and the various forms a county government can take under Tennessee law.

Counties as Part of the State

In Tennessee, counties are not separate governments—they are extensions of the State of Tennessee. Each county is a political subdivision of the state, created to carry out state laws and provide essential services locally.

Counties are responsible for many everyday functions such as maintaining roads and bridges, collecting and managing property taxes, operating local courts, operating schools, and supporting public safety. They also partner with the state to manage programs like elections, public health, and schools.

Because counties are created by the state, they only have the powers granted to them by state law or those that are necessary to perform their duties. The Tennessee General Assembly, which is the state legislature, decides what powers and responsibilities counties have. The state constitution also requires that each county elect certain officials and have a county legislative body.

County and Court Officials in Tennessee

Every Tennessee county elects a group of officials and a county legislative body. These officials operate independently within their areas of responsibility, and their offices exist because they are either required by the Tennessee Constitution or created by state law. County and court officials fall into three main categories: county constitutional officers, judicial constitutional officers, and statutory officers.

County Constitutional Officers (Article VII, Section 1 of the Tennessee Constitution)

These officials are required by the Tennessee Constitution and exist in every county. They form the core of county government, but each operates independently. Their duties and qualifications are defined by state law, but their existence comes directly from the Constitution.

County Mayor (in some counties titled as the County Executive): Serves as the county's chief executive officer, oversees preparation of the county budget, and has primary responsibility for county fiscal administration and purchasing functions, as provided by law. The mayor does not have supervisory authority over other elected officials.

Sheriff: Enforces the law, operates the county jail, serves process, and provides courtroom security.

Trustee: Serves as the county treasurer, collecting and distributing funds for the county and other local entities. Collects property taxes.

Register of Deeds: Maintains public records such as property deeds, mortgages, and other official documents.

County Clerk: Handles motor vehicle registration, marriage licenses, business licenses, and various records. The county clerk also records county legislative body meeting minutes and maintains those records.

Assessor of Property: Determines the value of real property for tax purposes. The assessor does not set tax rates or collect property taxes.

Structure of County Government in Tennessee

Together, these officials make up the executive branch of county government, but each operates independently within the authority granted by state law.

Judicial (Court) Constitutional Officers (Article VI, Section 13 of the Tennessee Constitution)

These county officials serve the courts and are also authorized by the Tennessee Constitution—specifically under Article VI, the Judicial Article. They perform essential administrative and recordkeeping duties for the judicial branch.

Circuit Court Clerk: Elected by voters; serves as the clerk for circuit court and, in counties without a separate general sessions clerk and/or juvenile court clerk, the circuit court clerk usually serves as the general sessions court clerk and the juvenile court clerk. In most counties, the circuit court has both civil and criminal jurisdiction, but some populous counties have a separate criminal court and elected criminal court clerk.

Clerk and Master (Chancery Court): Appointed by the chancellor(s) for a six-year term; serves as the clerk for chancery court cases.

Juvenile Court Clerk: Handles all court matters involving minors; in counties without a separate juvenile clerk, the circuit court clerk usually serves as the juvenile court clerk.

General Sessions Court Clerk: Handles misdemeanor criminal cases and small civil claims; except in the larger counties, the circuit court clerk often serves as the clerk of the general sessions court.

Criminal Court Clerk: Manages records and filings for criminal court in larger counties.

Probate Court Clerk: Handles matters related to wills and estates; in counties without a separate probate court, the clerk and master usually serves as the probate court clerk.

These county officials are authorized under the Tennessee Constitution and serve an integral part of the judicial branch.

Statutory Officers (Created by State Law)

Some county offices are not mentioned in the Constitution but are instead created by state statute when the General Assembly determines that counties need them for specific purposes. Because these offices are statutory, they may be modified or eliminated by future legislation.

An example of a statutory officer:

Chief Administrative Officer of the County Highway Department: Heads the county's highway operations. Actual titles vary by county, but this position is often called highway superintendent or road superintendent.

The structure of statutory offices varies by county. In some counties, duties may be combined with other offices depending on population, local acts, or historical arrangements.

State Officials Who Operate at the Local Level

Several public officials work within each county but are not county officials. These positions are state offices or state-authorized roles that perform duties locally on behalf of the state rather than under county authority. They are typically established by state law and overseen by a state agency or constitutional officer.

Examples include:

State Administrator of Elections: Serves as the chief administrative officer of the county election commission, which is part of the state election system overseen by the Tennessee Secretary of State and the State Coordinator of Elections.

Structure of County Government in Tennessee

State Election Commissioners: Appointed by the Tennessee State Election Commission to administer elections within each county.

Notaries Public: Appointed by the governor and commissioned by the state; applications are received and processed by the county clerk, but the position itself is a state designation.

Circuit Judges and Chancellors: Serve within judicial districts that may include one or more counties as part of the state judicial branch rather than county government.

State District Attorneys General: Represent the state in criminal prosecutions within a judicial district; employed by the state, not by the county.

State Public Defenders: Provide legal defense for indigent defendants; also employed by the state through the judicial branch.

State Probation and Parole Officers: Employees of the Tennessee Department of Correction who supervise offenders at the local level.

State Troopers: Members of the Tennessee Highway Patrol who enforce state law across counties but are not county law enforcement officers.

These positions may appear to function locally, but their authority, funding, and supervision come from the state, not from county government.

Checks and Balances in County Government

Tennessee's counties operate under a three-branch structure of government—executive, legislative, and judicial—similar to the structure at the state and federal levels. This structure is designed to distribute authority and create checks and balances among county officials.

The executive branch includes the county mayor and the other constitutional officers. Each of these officials is independently elected and manages the operations of his or her own office. The county mayor does not supervise other elected officials, and no constitutional officer has authority over another. This independence prevents any single official from controlling multiple functions of county government.

The legislative branch is the county legislative body, commonly called the county commission. The county legislative body may exercise only those legislative powers granted by the General Assembly, including adopting resolutions within its statutory authority, adopting the county budget, appropriating funds for lawful purposes, and levying property taxes sufficient to fund county operations and financial obligations. While elected officials manage their own offices, they may spend funds only as appropriated by the commission. In this way, the commission provides fiscal oversight without directing the day-to-day operations of other offices.

The judicial branch includes local courts such as the general sessions and juvenile courts, which handle legal matters at the county level. Circuit and chancery courts are state courts that also operate within the county. These courts interpret and apply the law and may review the actions of county officials when legal disputes arise. Clerks of court perform essential administrative functions that support the work of these courts.

By dividing authority among independently elected officials and separate branches, county government limits the concentration of power. No single official controls taxation, spending, law enforcement, and the courts. Instead, authority is shared, and each branch operates within defined legal boundaries, providing accountability to the public and to one another.

Structure of County Government in Tennessee

Forms of County Government

Most Tennessee counties operate under the traditional form of government described below. This is the default structure required by the Tennessee Constitution unless voters approve another form through a local referendum. There are three forms of county government permitted under Tennessee law.

Traditional Form

The standard system used in most Tennessee counties follows the traditional structure established by the state constitution. Under this system, the county mayor—formally known as the county executive—serves as the administrative head of the county and acts as both the chief financial officer and the budget officer. Other constitutional officers, including the sheriff, trustee, register of deeds, county clerk, and assessor of property, are independently elected and operate with significant autonomy in their respective areas of responsibility. This arrangement means executive authority is shared among several offices rather than centralized. The county legislative body, formerly called the county court and now commonly known as the county commission, serves as the county's legislative body and is composed of popularly elected members who enact local legislation, approve budgets, and set policy for county operations. This structure is the default form of county government unless a county adopts an alternative form, such as a charter or consolidated metropolitan government, through a referendum process.

Charter Government

A county may adopt a “home rule” charter, formally authorized under Article VII, Section 1 of the Tennessee Constitution and implemented through Tennessee Code Annotated Title 5, Chapter 1, Part 2. Under home rule, counties gain greater autonomy by eliminating the need for the General Assembly to pass private acts for routine changes, enabling local decision-making on matters such as administrative organization and certain policy areas. Charter counties also have limited ordinance-making authority similar to municipalities, allowing them to adopt ordinances on purely county affairs and impose penalties within statutory limits. However, these powers do not extend to areas like local option taxation, and counties must still comply with the Tennessee Constitution and general state law. The charter must be drafted by a charter commission and approved by voters in a referendum before taking effect. To date, Knox County and Shelby County are the only Tennessee counties operating under home rule charters.

Metropolitan Government

A metropolitan government is established when a county and one or more municipalities within its boundaries consolidate into a single governmental entity under a metropolitan charter authorized by state law. This form of government merges most city and county functions, creating unified executive and legislative structures that exercise both municipal and county powers. Key features typically include the creation of general services and urban services districts, a metropolitan council whose size is determined by the charter, and broad ordinance-making authority. Metropolitan governments may also consolidate utility districts, operate a unified school system, and allocate duties among officials—including constitutional officers—according to the charter provisions. While they cannot act contrary to general state law, metropolitan governments enjoy the greatest degree of local autonomy permitted under Tennessee law. The process requires drafting a charter by a commission and approval by referendum in both the city and the county outside the city. As of now, Nashville-Davidson County, Lynchburg-Moore County, and Hartsville-Trousdale County are the only jurisdictions in Tennessee that have adopted this consolidated metropolitan form of government.

Structure of County Government in Tennessee

Unification Government

This model is similar to the metropolitan form but is available only to counties that already have a charter. A unification charter merges a county with participating cities, establishing one executive and a legislative body with a limited number of members.

Each form provides a different level of flexibility and local control, but all must follow the Tennessee Constitution and state laws.

Private Acts and Local Control

The Tennessee General Assembly may pass private acts that apply to specific counties. These laws can grant additional authority, create or adjust offices, or allow programs not provided under general law. Before a private act can take effect, it must be approved locally—either by a two-thirds vote of the county commission or by a majority vote of county residents in a referendum.

Working Together: Intergovernmental and Interlocal Agreements

Counties often cooperate with the state, cities, and other counties to provide services efficiently and reduce costs.

Intergovernmental Agreements allow counties to partner with state agencies in areas such as public health, emergency management, and elections.

Interlocal Agreements let counties and cities share resources and responsibilities for services like solid waste collection, law enforcement, or utilities.

These agreements help ensure that services are delivered effectively and economically.

Mutual Aid and Emergency Cooperation

During emergencies or natural disasters, counties can request help from neighboring communities through mutual aid agreements. Under Tennessee law, local governments may send personnel or equipment to assist one another when local resources are stretched thin. This cooperation strengthens emergency response efforts and ensures faster recovery for affected areas.

Budgeting and Purchasing: How County Money is Planned and Spent

For many newly elected officials, budgeting and purchasing can feel intimidating at first. While the details vary from county to county, the basic structure is consistent across Tennessee: county money cannot be spent unless it has been approved through the budget, and all purchases must follow established legal and financial controls. Understanding how these two systems work together will help you operate confidently, ask the right questions, and avoid common missteps early in your term.

The County Budget: Your Legal Spending Authority

The county budget is more than a planning document—it is the county’s legal authorization to spend public funds. Each year, the county legislative body adopts a budget, typically before the start of the fiscal year on July 1. Once adopted, the budget establishes how much money each department or office may spend and the purposes for which those funds may be used.

Even elected officials do not have authority to spend county funds unless the money has been appropriated in the budget. While officials may request funding for their offices, the authority to appropriate funds rests with the county legislative body. Budgets are adopted annually, but they are not static; if circumstances change during the year, the county legislative body may amend the budget to adjust appropriations.

Education budgets follow additional statutory requirements. State law sets firm deadlines and minimum funding levels for schools, and in certain situations, an education budget may go into effect automatically if required action is not taken by the county legislative body. While the mechanics can be complex, the key takeaway for new officials is that education funding operates under stricter timelines and rules than most other county spending.

Tennessee counties operate under different budget laws, including general law, local option laws, and private acts. Despite these differences, all budget systems share the same core principle: the adopted budget controls spending authority.

Finding Your County’s Financial Authority in the CTAS Directory

In addition to understanding statewide budgeting and purchasing principles, county officials should know where to find their county’s specific financial authority. Because Tennessee counties operate under different combinations of general law, local option law, and private acts, not every county follows the exact same procedures.

To make this information easy to find, CTAS links key financial laws directly on each county’s page in the CTAS County Directory. These links provide quick access to the legal authority governing how your county handles fiscal procedures, budgeting, and purchasing, as well as any county-specific private acts that affect financial matters.

On each county’s directory page, you will find links to:

- Fiscal procedure laws
- Budgeting laws
- Purchasing laws
- County private acts that affect financial operations

These links are provided for reference and are especially helpful when questions arise about which law applies to your county or why your county follows a particular process.

Budgeting and Purchasing: How County Money is Planned and Spent

How to Access Your County's Fiscal Authority Information

To find your county's fiscal authority:

1. Visit the CTAS website.
2. Click Directory in the main horizontal navigation menu.
3. Select your county from the list.

Once on your county's page, scroll to the Legal Authority section. There, you will see links to the fiscal, budgeting, and purchasing laws that apply to your county, along with any relevant private acts.

Why This Matters for New Officials

You are not expected to memorize these laws but knowing where to find them is important. When financial or procedural questions arise, your county's CTAS directory page provides a reliable starting point and helps ensure that decisions are grounded in the correct legal authority for your county.

When questions remain, county finance staff and CTAS consultants can help interpret how these laws apply in practice.

Who Does What in the Budget Process

Although procedures differ slightly by county, most follow a similar division of responsibility during the budget process. Departments and elected offices prepare budget requests based on their operational needs. Those requests are reviewed—often by the county mayor, budget committee, or finance staff—and compiled into a proposed budget. The county legislative body then reviews, amends if necessary, and adopts the final budget and tax rate.

As an elected official, your role is generally to operate within the budget that has been approved, rather than to control the budget process on your own. Significant changes to spending authority, including increases or new expenditures, require approval by the county legislative body through a budget amendment.

Purchasing: Spending Must Follow the Rules

Once funds are budgeted, purchasing laws and policies determine how that money may be spent. These rules exist to protect public funds, promote fairness, and ensure transparency in the use of taxpayer dollars.

Across Tennessee counties, purchasing systems share several common features. Purchases must be properly authorized and documented, and competitive bidding is required for many purchases, particularly those above specified dollar thresholds. Depending on the laws adopted by the county, purchasing authority may be centralized through a purchasing agent or finance department, or it may be exercised by individual departments within established limits.

It is important to understand that having money in the budget does not eliminate the need to follow purchasing rules. Budget authority and purchasing authority are separate but interconnected. Both must be followed for a purchase to be legal.

Paying the Bills: How Funds Are Actually Disbursed

Counties do not pay bills the same way private businesses do. Instead, payments are made through formal disbursement processes designed to ensure that every expenditure is lawful and properly approved.

Budgeting and Purchasing: How County Money Is Planned and Spent

While specific procedures vary by county, disbursement systems typically include verification that the expense is budgeted, confirmation that required approvals have been obtained, and issuance of a warrant or check through the county's financial system. Multiple layers of review are common and may involve the county mayor, finance director, trustee, or other officials, depending on the county's adopted financial management system.

These controls are not optional. They are required by law and are designed to protect both the county and individual officials from improper or unauthorized spending.

What New Officials Should Keep in Mind

As you begin your term, it is important to remember a few foundational principles.

- You have authority to spend county funds for your office, but only within the limits set by the adopted budget and the purchasing laws that apply to your county.
- Staying within your approved budget and following required purchasing steps provides legal protection for both you and the county.
- When questions arise, asking before spending is always the safest approach.

Budgeting and purchasing systems are not meant to slow down county government. Instead, they provide structure, consistency, and accountability in how public funds are used. Once you understand the framework, these processes become tools that support effective and responsible county governance.

Relationship to Other Offices

County government functions through a network of independently elected and appointed offices, each with distinct legal duties but shared responsibility for serving the public. As a newly elected county official, understanding how your office relates to others is essential. No office operates in isolation. Day-to-day operations, legal compliance, budgeting, and service delivery all depend on coordination and mutual awareness across offices. This section provides a high-level overview of key county offices and explains how their work intersects

Key Offices in County Government

County government is made up of several constitutional and statutory offices, each assigned specific responsibilities under Tennessee law.

The County Mayor (in some counties titled as the County Executive) is the county's chief executive officer and oversees preparation of the annual budget for consideration by the county legislative body. The county executive coordinates with other county officials on budgeting and administration but does not supervise other elected offices.

The County Legislative Body (commonly called the County Commission) exercises the legislative powers granted to it by the General Assembly. Commissioners adopt the annual budget, appropriate funds for lawful purposes, levy property taxes, and adopt resolutions within their statutory authority. Because funding and legislative decisions affect every office, the commission interacts regularly with all departments and elected officials.

The County Clerk performs a wide range of administrative and recordkeeping functions. These duties typically include issuing licenses, maintaining official records, and serving as clerk to the county commission by preparing agendas and recording minutes.

The County Trustee serves as the county's financial custodian. The trustee collects property taxes and other revenues, manages county funds, and disburses payments as authorized by the budget and county officials.

The Register of Deeds is responsible for recording and maintaining property-related documents such as deeds, mortgages, and liens. Accurate records maintained by this office are essential for property ownership, taxation, and financing.

The Sheriff is the county's chief law enforcement officer. In addition to patrol and investigative responsibilities, the sheriff often provides courtroom security, serves legal papers, and operates the county jail. The sheriff's office works closely with courts, prosecutors, and other county officials.

The Circuit Court Clerk or General Sessions Court Clerk supports the judicial system by maintaining court records, managing case filings, handling fees and fines, and assisting with jury administration.

The Assessor of Property determines the value of real and personal property for tax purposes. These assessments form the basis for property taxation and must comply with state appraisal standards and schedules.

The Highway Superintendent oversees the construction, maintenance, and repair of county roads and bridges. This office plays a key role in public safety, economic development, and infrastructure planning.

How County Offices Work Together

Although each office has defined statutory duties, many county functions require coordination among multiple offices.

Relationships to Other Offices

Budgeting and funding decisions involve nearly every office. The county mayor oversees the preparation of the proposed county budget based on requests submitted by departments and elected officials. The county commission reviews, amends, and adopts the budget, while the trustee manages collections and disbursements in accordance with the approved spending plan.

Public safety functions often require collaboration. The sheriff may work with the county mayor and county commission to address staffing, equipment, or facility needs. During emergencies, coordination among the sheriff, highway superintendent, county mayor, and other offices is critical to protect public safety and maintain essential services.

Property taxation is a shared process. The county commission sets the tax rate, the assessor of property establishes taxable values, the trustee collects taxes, and the register of deeds maintains ownership records that support accurate assessment and billing.

Court operations depend on cooperation among clerks, judges, attorneys, and law enforcement. Clerks manage records and schedules, sheriffs provide courtroom security and serve legal documents, and jury lists may be drawn from voter registration records maintained by the county clerk.

Infrastructure planning requires coordination between the highway superintendent, mayor, and commission. Road projects are prioritized, funded through the budget process, and aligned with broader county goals such as safety, growth, and maintenance.

Communication and Coordination

Effective county government depends on regular communication among offices. Commission meetings, budget hearings, and department head meetings provide opportunities to share information, address challenges, and clarify responsibilities. Understanding the roles of other offices helps prevent misunderstandings, reduces duplication of effort, and supports lawful and efficient operations.

Acronym List for County Government

County government work often involves state agencies, professional associations, training opportunities, and technical terms—many of which are commonly shortened to acronyms. This list is a quick-reference guide to help readers recognize and understand the acronyms used throughout this book and in other county government materials. It is not a complete list, so please contact us if you have questions.

CTAS & IPS-Related Acronyms

BCF – Basic County Finance Certificate

CAPC – County Administrative Professional Certificate

CATC – Cybersecurity Awareness Training Certificate

CCFO – Certified County Finance Officer Training Program

CEOC – County Elected Officials Certificate

CH - Choice Elective under COCTP

CIS – Center for Industrial Services

CLP - Center for Local Planning

CO - County Elective under COCTP

COCTP – County Officials Certificate Training Program

CPA – Certified Public Administrator

CTAS – County Technical Assistance Service

e-Li – CTAS Electronic Library

IPS – Institute for Public Service

LEIC – Law Enforcement Innovation Center

MTAS – Municipal Technical Advisory Service

NCEL – Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership

SMART - Substance Misuse and Addiction Resource for Tennessee

SWCP – Solid Waste Certificate Program

TLC – Tennessee Language Center

County Government Associations

ACM – Association of County Mayors

COAT – County Officials Association of Tennessee

TASBO – Tennessee Association of School Business Officials

TCAA – Tennessee County Attorneys Association

TCCA – Tennessee County Commissioners Association

TCHOA – Tennessee County Highway Officials Association

TCSA – Tennessee County Services Association

TNAAO – Tennessee Association of Assessing Officers

TSA – Tennessee Sheriffs' Association

State Agencies & Boards

COT – Comptroller of the Treasury

DPA - Division of Property Assessments

F&A – Department of Finance & Administration

LGA – Local Government Audit

LGF – Local Government Finance

SBOE – State Board of Equalization

TCRS – Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System

TCI - Tennessee Corrections Institute

TDEC – Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation

TDOT – Tennessee Department of Transportation

Acronym List for County Government

TECB – Tennessee Emergency Communications Board

TEMA – Tennessee Emergency Management Agency

TNDOE – Tennessee Department of Education

TNDOR – Tennessee Department of Revenue

Finance & Budgeting

CAP – Capital Projects

CIP – Capital Improvement Plan

GAAP - Generally Accepted Accounting Practice

GASB – Governmental Accounting Standards Board

GFOA – Government Finance Officers Association

LGIP – Local Government Investment Pool

PILOT – Payment in Lieu of Taxes

RFP – Request for Proposal

RFQ – Request for Qualifications

TGFOA – Tennessee Government Finance Officers Association

Human Resources & Benefits

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

COBRA – Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act

EEO – Equal Employment Opportunity

FMLA – Family and Medical Leave Act

Public Safety & Emergency Management

E-911 – Enhanced 911

EMA – Emergency Management Agency

ICS – Incident Command System

LEO - Law Enforcement Officer

NG911 – Next Generation 911

NIMS – National Incident Management System

Education & Schools

ADA – Average Daily Attendance

ADM - Average Daily Membership

CTE – Career and Technical Education

IEP – Individualized Education Program

TISA – Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement

Infrastructure & Planning

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization

ROW – Right of Way

TIP – Transportation Improvement Program

TTAP - Tennessee Transportation Assistance Program

Grants & Federal Programs

ARPA – American Rescue Plan Act

CDBG – Community Development Block Grant

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

HUD – Housing and Urban Development

USDA – U.S. Department of Agriculture

Open Records & Legal

FOIA – Freedom of Information Act

ORC – Open Records Counsel

TOMA – Tennessee Open Meetings Act



Getting ***Started***

Starting a new role in county government requires immediate attention to legal authority, deadlines, and foundational responsibilities. This chapter follows a practical timeline—from before you take office through your first month—outlining required steps such as taking and filing the oath of office, executing your bond or acquiring insurance, securing access to systems and records, understanding ethics and financial controls, and meeting time-sensitive filing requirements. It is designed to help you focus on what must be done first so you can begin your term in compliance with state law and with a clear understanding of your responsibilities.

Chapter 3: Getting Started

The first days and weeks in office set the tone for your entire term. While you may arrive with ideas, priorities, and a sense of urgency, Tennessee law imposes several required steps that must come first—some with firm deadlines and serious consequences if missed. This chapter is designed to help you navigate that early period with confidence by laying out what must be done, when it must be done, and why it matters.

Rather than overwhelming you with theory or office-specific nuance, this chapter follows a practical timeline—from the moment your election or appointment is finalized through your first month in office. It highlights required legal steps such as oaths of office and bonds or insurance, early administrative and access needs, key relationships to establish, and common pitfalls to avoid. These are the foundational actions that protect you, your office, and the county before day-to-day operations fully begin.

Every county and office operates a little differently, but the guidance in this chapter reflects statewide requirements and widely accepted best practices across Tennessee counties. Use it as a roadmap for your transition into office—one that helps you focus on what truly needs attention first, so you can move forward with clarity and confidence.

This chapter contains:

- Before You Walk in the Door
- Your First Day
- Your First Week
- Your First Month

Before You Walk in the Door

Before you begin making decisions or performing official duties, there are several foundational requirements that must be completed. These steps establish your legal authority to serve and protect the county and the public.

Oath of Office

One of the first required actions is taking and filing the oath of office. The Tennessee Constitution requires every person elected or appointed to an office of trust to swear to support the Constitutions of Tennessee and the United States and to faithfully perform the duties of the office. The oath may be administered after election results are certified (or after appointment); however, even if taken early, you may not exercise the authority of the office until the term officially begins.

The oath must be in writing, signed by the official taking it, and accompanied by a certificate from the person administering the oath showing the date it was taken. Both the oath and certificate must be filed with the county clerk. Failure to take and properly file the required oath is a misdemeanor under state law, making this a critical first step before performing any official duties.

Official Bonds

Most county offices are also subject to bonding requirements. An official bond is a written promise that you will faithfully perform the duties of your office, properly handle public funds, maintain required records, and turn over all records and property to your successor at the end of your term. Bonds protect the state, county, and citizens if an official fails to perform required duties or commits wrongful acts while in office. Importantly, bonds do not protect county officials from personal liability. If a claim is paid under a bond, the surety may seek reimbursement from the official.

The following county officials are required to execute a surety bond: county clerk, court clerks, highway chief administrative officer, sheriff, register of deeds, property assessor, and trustee.

In addition, bonds are required for several other positions, including: finance director, director of accounts/budget, county auditor, constable, coroner, road commissioners, county surveyor, director of schools, and purchasing agent.

Counties must also maintain a blanket bond covering county employees who are not otherwise required to be individually bonded. Minimum bond amounts for officials and employees are established by law and available in the CTAS electronic library online under Bonds ([https:// www.ctas.tennessee.edu/eli/bonds](https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu/eli/bonds)).

Quick Fact

The following county constitutional officials are required to execute a surety bond:

- ◇ *highway chief administrative officer*
- ◇ *county clerk*
- ◇ *court clerks*
- ◇ *sheriff*
- ◇ *register of deeds*
- ◇ *property assessor*
- ◇ *trustee*

Before You Walk in the Door

Insurance Instead of Bonds

In some counties, insurance is used instead of individual bonds. State law allows a county legislative body to purchase an insurance policy that serves as a substitute for official bonds. This option is discretionary and must be approved by the county legislative body. If used, the policy must meet minimum coverage requirements, list each covered office or official, and be recorded with the register of deeds and filed with the county clerk. For legal purposes, such a policy is treated as a blanket official bond for each office covered.

Because bonding and insurance requirements vary by office and by county practice, newly elected officials should confirm early whether their office is covered by an individual bond, a blanket bond, or an insurance policy—and ensure that all required approvals, recordings, and filings are completed on time.

Additional Requirements & Considerations Prior to Taking Office

Some offices have additional early requirements. For example, highway officials must confirm and document an interim successor, ensuring continuity of operations if the official becomes unable to serve. If this applies to your office, it should be addressed immediately.

During this initial period, it is strongly recommended that you avoid making personnel changes. Even if you plan to reorganize later, early staffing decisions made without full context can create legal, operational, or morale issues. Taking time to understand existing roles, policies, and constraints will serve you better in the long run.

Equally important: do not destroy records. County records are governed by state retention laws, and destroying records—intentionally or unintentionally—can result in serious legal consequences. When in doubt, preserve records and ask for guidance.

Finally, you should begin establishing working relationships with key support functions that nearly every county office relies on. Early contact with the county attorney, finance or budget office, and IT or network services can prevent misunderstandings and help you understand how your office fits into broader county operations.

Your First Day

Your first day is about gaining access, getting oriented, and beginning the relationships that support your office. You are not expected to make decisions or changes immediately. Instead, the goal is to ensure you can function effectively, understand how your office currently operates, and identify the people and systems you will rely on moving forward.

Access & Systems

On your first day, you should ensure you have physical access to your office space as well as system access to the tools you will need—such as email, financial systems, document management systems, and shared drives. Confirming access early allows you to receive information, communicate with staff, and review records without delay. When access is incomplete or delayed, even routine tasks can become difficult and create unnecessary frustration during an already busy transition.

Records & Financial Information

You should also begin a high-level review of key documents, including office policies, budget materials, and any bank accounts or signature authority connected to your position. This review is not about mastering every detail on day one. Rather, it helps you understand how money flows through the office, what rules and practices are already in place, and where your legal and administrative responsibilities begin and end.

Introductions to key county partners often happen organically on the first day, even if they are not formally listed in any checklist. Meeting the people you will work with regularly—such as department heads, administrative staff, and support personnel—helps establish communication early. These early interactions also set expectations, build trust, and signal that you value collaboration and continuity within county operations.

First Day Focus

- ◇ ***Gain access to your workspace and systems***
- ◇ ***Review key policies, budgets, and financial authority***
- ◇ ***Begin relationships with the people you'll work with most often***

Your First Week

As your first week unfolds, your focus should shift from access and orientation to understanding risk, responsibility, and compliance. This is the point where learning how the office functions day to day intersects with understanding the legal and procedural boundaries that govern your decisions.

Ethics, Personnel, & Purchasing

During this time, you should review county ethics, personnel, and purchasing policies. These policies define what you can and cannot do, how decisions are documented, and how conflicts of interest are identified and handled. Early mistakes are often not related to bad intent, but occur when official acts before fully understanding these requirements.

Internal Controls & Financial Oversight

You should also take time to understand your office's internal controls—the checks and balances designed to prevent errors, misuse of funds, or unauthorized actions. This may involve learning who approves transactions, how payments are processed, and how financial records are reviewed and reconciled. Even a high-level understanding helps you recognize where accountability exists and where questions should be raised.

Legal, Audit, & Asset Responsibilities

Meeting with the county attorney and finance or budget staff during your first week is strongly recommended. These conversations can clarify legal responsibilities, reporting expectations, and upcoming deadlines. They also provide an opportunity to ask questions early, before small uncertainties turn into larger compliance concerns.

In addition, you should review prior audit findings and fixed asset lists, if applicable to your office. Audit findings often identify recurring risks or areas that need closer oversight. Fixed asset lists help you understand what property, equipment, or resources your office is responsible for safeguarding.

Records Retention Awareness

Finally, this is a good time to begin a records retention review, even if no immediate action is required. Understanding what records your office creates and how long they must be kept will help you establish sound practices and avoid compliance issues later. You can find current records retention schedules in our electronic library, e-LI: <https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu/eli/retention-schedules>.

First Week Focus

- ◇ ***Understand ethics, purchasing, and personnel rules***
- ◇ ***Learn financial controls, approvals, and audit expectations***
- ◇ ***Clarify legal and reporting responsibilities***

Your First Month

Your first month in office includes several time-sensitive requirements that are tied to your legal authority to serve. Unlike the first day or week, these responsibilities often involve fixed deadlines set by law. Missing them can carry serious consequences, so they should be identified and tracked early.

Required Deadlines & Legal Filings

One of the most critical first-month deadlines involves official bonds. For offices required to file a bond with the county clerk, the bond must be properly executed and filed within 30 days after the election or appointment. Failure to meet this requirement can result in forfeiture of the office, making it one of the most important administrative responsibilities at the start of a term.

Compensation Decisions for Fee Officials

Certain officials—commonly referred to as fee officials—must also make a timely decision regarding compensation. Fee officials are county clerks, court clerks, registers of deeds, sheriffs, and trustees.

Within 30 days, these officials are required to either file a salary suit or sign a letter of agreement. This decision determines how compensation will be handled throughout the term and carries long-term financial and legal implications, so it should be made deliberately and without delay.

Equipment & Asset Inventory

For highway officials, an inventory of equipment is generally required within 60 days of taking office. This inventory documents county-owned equipment under the official's control and establishes a baseline for accountability. It also plays an important role in future audits and transitions.

The demands of a new term and office can be overwhelming. It's important to keep these inventory deadlines in focus. Treat first-month requirements as firm obligations. This will protect you and the county from avoidable problems that can occur later in the term.

First Month Focus

- ◇ ***Complete legally required filings on time***
- ◇ ***Make required compensation and bonding decisions***
- ◇ ***Document responsibility for county assets***



Office-Specific ***Information***

This chapter is reserved for the office-specific information you'll receive during your breakout session at orientation. Each county office has unique responsibilities, requirements, and procedures, and this portion of your materials is designed to provide guidance tailored to your specific role. Be sure to review the handouts and notes from your breakout session and keep them here for easy reference as you begin your term.

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intentionally blank.**

**You are encouraged to place any handouts
or flyers you receive during your breakout
session in this chapter.**



Training & Continuing ***Education***

CTAS provides training to help county officials and staff strengthen their knowledge and skills. This chapter provides an overview of the training programs and resources available through CTAS. You'll learn about two major training programs focused on county government operations and financial management, as well as several online, self-paced certificate programs in areas like administration, cybersecurity, and basic finance. CTAS training is designed to be practical, flexible, and responsive to the real-world needs of county officials and staff across Tennessee.

Chapter 5: Training & Continuing Education

Serving as a county official carries significant responsibility, and ongoing education plays an important role in supporting effective leadership and sound decision-making. Training opportunities help officials strengthen their understanding of county government, build practical skills related to office operations, and develop leadership and management capacity over time.

Training needs can vary widely depending on an official's role, experience, and responsibilities. Some officials may focus on foundational training early in their term, while others may seek ongoing professional development or specialized instruction related to their specific office.

CTAS delivers and coordinates training for county officials across Tennessee, offering programs that are practical, role-specific, and grounded in state law and county operations.

This chapter explains what training may apply to different county offices, outlines available training programs and options, and describes how to get started.

This chapter contains:

- How CTAS supports your training & professional development
- Types of Training Available Through CTAS
- County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP)
- Certified County Finance Officer (CCFO)
- Online Certificate Programs
- Enrollment Processes
- Learning Management System

How CTAS Supports Your Training & Professional Development

CTAS offers a wide range of training and educational opportunities designed to support county officials and county employees throughout their tenure in county government. These offerings are not one-size-fits-all. Instead, they are designed to meet participants where they are— whether they are newly elected, newly hired, or highly experienced.

CTAS training is:

- Practical and grounded in Tennessee law and county operations
- Tailored to specific roles and responsibilities
- Designed to build confidence, competence, and consistency across counties

CTAS training is flexible, allowing officials and staff to choose learning opportunities that align with their roles, schedules, and experience levels. Programs range from short, targeted courses to multi-year professional certification programs.

Types of Training Available Through CTAS

CTAS offers several types of training to support county officials and employees at different stages of service and with different responsibilities.

Orientation and foundational training

These offerings are designed to help newly elected or appointed officials understand county government structure, legal authority, and core responsibilities early in their term.

Professional certification programs

CTAS administers and supports formal certification programs for officials and staff seeking in-depth training and recognized credentials, particularly in administration and county finance.

Targeted and online training

CTAS also offers flexible training options— including self-paced online certificates and topic-specific courses—that allow officials and staff to build skills in areas such as ethics, supervision, finance, and administrative practices.

Not every official needs every type of training. CTAS staff can help identify options that align with your role, experience level, and responsibilities without pulling you away from essential day-to-day duties.

Important note: Only county commissioners are subject to training requirements established in state law. Those requirements are addressed separately in the following chapter of this book.

Quick Fact

CTAS training is:

- ◇ ***Practical and grounded in Tennessee law and county operations***
- ◇ ***Tailored to specific roles and responsibilities***
- ◇ ***Designed to build confidence, competence, and consistency across counties***

County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP)

The County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP) is a comprehensive professional development program administered by CTAS. COCTP is designed to provide county officials and county employees with a broad, practical understanding of county government operations, leadership, and administration.

COCTP is managed by CTAS's Training Department, which oversees program development, course delivery, and participant support.

COCTP offers specialized, role-relevant training that combines technical instruction with management and leadership development. The program helps participants understand their office and county government as a whole, leading to better decisions and public service.

Participants who successfully complete all program requirements are designated by the University of Tennessee as Certified Public Administrators.

Who the program is for

COCTP was developed for:

- Elected and appointed county officials
- County employees seeking advanced training in county government operations

The program is open to participants across county offices and is not limited to executive or administrative roles.

Program structure and focus

COCTP is completed over time and includes:

- Core courses focused on county government operations, finance, legal issues, ethics, and administration
- Elective coursework that allows participants to tailor learning to their interests and responsibilities
- Examinations designed to assess understanding of county government principles
- A multi-day Capstone experience that emphasizes leadership, collaboration, and applied problem-solving

Together, these components are intended to ensure participants gain both practical knowledge and a broader perspective on county governance.

Is COCTP Right for You?

COCTP is best suited for participants seeking:

- ◇ ***Broad, long-term professional development***
- ◇ ***Leadership and administrative growth***
- ◇ ***Structured, multicourse learning***

Certified County Finance Officer (CCFO)

The Certified County Finance Officer (CCFO) program is a professional certification program developed by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury and CTAS. The program provides Tennessee's county financial officers with an opportunity to strengthen their understanding of governmental accounting and financial reporting, learn how county governments are structured in Tennessee, and enhance the skills needed to manage the fiscal affairs of a county or department.

CTAS administers the educational program and testing required to earn the CCFO designation, while the Comptroller of the Treasury serves as the certification authority and establishes program requirements and policies. As a result, CCFO is managed separately from CTAS's general training programs.

Participants who successfully complete all program requirements are designated as Certified County Finance Officers by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury.

CCFO at a Glance

- ◇ **11-course professional certification program**
- ◇ **In-person and online learning formats**
- ◇ **Certification awarded by the Comptroller of the Treasury**

Who the program is for

CCFO is designed for county financial officers—county officials and county employees whose responsibilities include managing, overseeing, or supporting the fiscal affairs of a county or county department.

Program focus

The CCFO curriculum is built around the core knowledge and practical skills county financial officers use every day, including:

- Governmental accounting and financial reporting
- County budgeting and fiscal procedures
- Purchasing, internal controls, and risk management
- Audits, cash and grants management, debt, and capital projects

Program structure and certification

Participants complete a structured curriculum of 11 courses, offered through a combination of in-person and online/virtual formats. A test follows each course, and there is no comprehensive exam at the end of the program. Upon successful completion of program requirements, the Comptroller's Office awards the Certified County Finance Officer (CCFO) designation.

Although CCFO certification is not required by law, it is widely recognized as a strong professional credential for individuals responsible for county financial operations.

Online Certificate Programs

CTAS offers several fully-online certificate programs designed to help county officials and their staff build knowledge and practical skills in a flexible, accessible format. **These programs are self-paced, do not require travel, and are intended to fit alongside the day-to-day responsibilities of county service.**

Online certificates are available in a range of focus areas, including the County Elected Officials Certificate (CEOC), the County Administrative Professionals Certificate (CAPC), the Cybersecurity Awareness Training Certificate (CATC), Basic County Finance (BCF), and the Solid Waste Certificate Program (SWCP). Each program provides structured instruction in a specific subject area relevant to county government operations.

These certificates are particularly useful for officials and staff who want targeted learning without committing to a long-term certification program. They focus on real-world county practices, reinforce core responsibilities, and can help participants build confidence as they settle into a new role or expand their responsibilities. For newly elected officials, online certificates can be a practical way to fill knowledge gaps during a first term in office.

Participation in online certificate programs is optional, but many county officials and employees find them to be a convenient and effective way to strengthen skills and better understand the work of county government.

Online Certificates at a Glance

County Elected Officials Certificate (CEOC)* • 23.5 credits

Continuing education for elected officials covering budgeting, finance, personnel issues, public meetings, cybersecurity, leadership, and communication.

**One-time enrollment fee required.*

County Administrative Professionals Certificate (CAPC) • 17 credits

Develops administrative, communication, customer service, and workplace skills for county staff supporting daily office operations.

Cybersecurity Awareness Training Certificate (CATC) • 12 credits

Builds foundational knowledge of cybersecurity risks, threats, and preparedness for county officials and staff.

Basic County Finance (BCF)* • 10 credits

Step-by-step instruction in county governmental fund accounting, budgeting, payroll, transactions, and financial reporting.

**One-time enrollment fee required.*

Solid Waste Certificate Program (SWCP) • 12 credits

Focuses on Tennessee county solid waste systems, including operations, funding, customer service, and regulatory best practices.

Enrollment Process

Most CTAS training programs use a centralized request form. To enroll in a certification program, request commissioner training that assists in meeting statutory requirements, or inquire about other training opportunities, submit the CTAS Training & Other Requests form available on the CTAS website.

Training Requests Form

To enroll in CTAS training—or to request training for yourself or county staff—use the CTAS Training Requests form: <https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu/form/training-requests>

This form is used to:

- Request enrollment in certification programs
- Register for required training
- Ask about upcoming courses or sessions
- Request specialized or customized training

What to expect after submitting a request

After submission:

- CTAS staff will review your request and confirm eligibility
- You will receive follow-up instructions, including next steps and timelines
- Some programs may require additional documentation or approvals

If you are unsure which program applies to you, submitting the form is still the best first step. CTAS staff can help route your request appropriately.

Learning Management System

CTAS uses an online learning platform to deliver and track certain training programs, including required training, certification programs, and online certificates. This system allows participants to register for courses, access online training, and document completed coursework.

Because CTAS training is offered in multiple formats and continues to evolve, the specific learning platform used by CTAS may change over time. For that reason, this book does not provide system-specific instructions.

Instead, enrollment instructions, course access details, and information about tracking completion are provided directly as part of each training program. CTAS staff are available to assist with access, navigation, and technical questions as needed, and participants are not expected to navigate the system on their own without guidance.

If you are enrolled in a CTAS training program, you will receive clear instructions on what to do, when to do it, and where to go for help.

CTAS staff are available to assist county officials and county employees in identifying training opportunities that align with their roles and responsibilities.



County Commissioner *Training*

Tennessee law establishes mandatory training requirements for county commissioners to support informed decision-making, legal compliance, and effective governance. This chapter explains those requirements, including orientation training for newly elected or appointed commissioners and ongoing continuing education obligations throughout a commissioner's term. It also describes the role of CTAS in providing and approving training opportunities and outlines the common pathways commissioners use to meet these statutory requirements.

Chapter 6: County Commissioner Required Training

Serving as a county commissioner carries significant legal and policy responsibility. Commissioners make decisions that affect county finances, operations, and public trust, often in complex and highly regulated environments. To support commissioners in fulfilling these duties, Tennessee law establishes minimum training requirements designed to promote informed decision-making, legal compliance, and effective governance.

These training requirements apply to both newly elected and re-elected commissioners and are mandatory throughout a commissioner's term of office. The intent is not only to introduce new commissioners to the structure and authority of county government, but also to ensure that all commissioners maintain current knowledge of evolving laws, best practices, and emerging issues that affect county operations.

This chapter outlines the core training requirements for county commissioners, including orientation training for new officials and ongoing continuing education obligations. It also highlights the role of CTAS in providing and approving training opportunities and identifies common pathways commissioners use to satisfy these requirements. Understanding these expectations early helps commissioners stay in compliance while building the knowledge base needed to serve effectively from the beginning of each term.

This chapter contains:

- Training requirements
- Orientation training
- Continuing education training
- Resources for commissioner training

Training Requirements

Tennessee law requires county commissioners to complete training during their term of office. These requirements are mandatory and are intended to support commissioners in understanding their responsibilities and carrying out their legislative duties effectively.

Orientation training

Orientation training requirements apply to commissioners who are newly elected as well as those appointed to fill a vacancy must complete orientation training within 120 days of the date of election or appointment.

Orientation training may be completed by:

- Attending the CTAS County Officials Orientation Program (COOP), held every four years for newly elected officials, or
- Completing specific online orientation courses provided by CTAS

Newly elected commissioners are responsible for contacting CTAS at ctas.support@tennessee.edu to request access to the online commissioner orientation courses. Assistance with accessing CTAS's online training system is available through the CTAS training department.

Continuing education training

After completing orientation, county commissioners must complete at least eight (8) hours of continuing education each year. This requirement applies each year of a commissioner's term and does not carry over from one year to the next.

- The annual compliance period runs from September 1 through August 31
- For newly elected or commissioners appointed to fill a vacancy, the first compliance period begins on the first September 1 following the date of election or appointment
- Orientation training does not count toward the annual continuing education requirement

Taken together, these requirements are designed to ensure that county commissioners begin their service with a clear understanding of county government and continue building knowledge throughout their term. Orientation training provides essential context early on, while annual continuing education allows commissioners to stay current on legal changes, policy considerations, and best practices that affect county operations. Completing required training in a timely manner helps commissioners approach their legislative responsibilities with confidence and consistency from year to year.

Quick Overview

Orientation vs. continuing education

◇ **Orientation training is a onetime requirement for new or appointed commissioners.**

◇ **Continuing education is required each year of a commissioner's term.**

Resources for Commissioner Training

County commissioners may satisfy their continuing education requirement through a variety of CTAS-approved learning opportunities. These options are designed to be flexible, accessible, and relevant to the responsibilities commissioners carry throughout their term. Approved training opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- CTAS-sponsored training classes, offered in person and online
- Online training programs developed and administered by CTAS
- Educational sessions offered at Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA) conferences and Tennessee County Commissioners Association (TCCA) regional meetings
- Other professional development activities that have been reviewed and approved by CTAS

CTAS plays a central role in coordinating and supporting commissioner training statewide. Through partnerships with county associations and the development of targeted training content, CTAS ensures that commissioners have multiple pathways to meet statutory requirements while gaining practical knowledge related to budgeting, ethics, open meetings, personnel issues, and other core aspects of county governance.

Commissioners are strongly encouraged to complete required training and orientation early in their term. Doing so helps avoid compliance concerns and provides essential context and guidance that can support informed decision-making from the outset of service.

Have questions about required training? Send us an email at ctas.support@tennessee.edu.



E-Li: CTAS ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

Search E-Li

E-Li Category - Any -

Apply

CTAS Information *Resources*

This section introduces the primary web-based information resources published and maintained by CTAS. This chapter explains what each resource contains, how the information is organized, and how county officials commonly use these tools as references in their day-to-day work. Covered resources include the CTAS website, the e-Li electronic library, private acts compilations, the e-Li virtual assistant Mary Ann, and the CTAS Directory of Tennessee Counties. Together, these resources support informed research, orientation, and reference for Tennessee county government.

Chapter 7: CTAS Information Resources

This chapter provides an overview of the primary information resources published and maintained by CTAS. These resources are designed to make Tennessee county government information easier to locate, understand, and reference as part of routine county operations.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe what information each CTAS resource contains, how that information is organized, and how county officials typically use these resources as references. This chapter does not provide step-by-step instructions, legal determinations, or decision guidance. Decision-making authority remains with county officials and governing bodies, and legal interpretation remains the responsibility of the county attorney.

This chapter contains:

- The CTAS Website
- e-Li: The CTAS Electronic Library
- Mary Ann: The e-Li Virtual Assistant
- CTAS Private Acts Compilations
- The CTAS Directory of Tennessee Counties

The CTAS Website

The CTAS website serves as the primary platform through which CTAS publishes and delivers its information resources and services. It functions as the main entry point for accessing CTAS publications, tools, training, and program information.

Information available through the CTAS website includes general guidance articles, announcements, publications, training information, conference and event materials, and access points to distinct CTAS information resources such as e-Li, private acts compilations, and the Directory of Tennessee Counties.

Because the CTAS website is a living platform, its content evolves over time to reflect changes in law, policy, and service delivery. County officials typically use the website to locate current information and connect to specific CTAS resources, rather than as a single, comprehensive reference source.

e-Li: The CTAS Electronic Library

e-Li is CTAS's electronic library of explanatory materials related to Tennessee county government. It contains researched, plain-language explanations of state law as it applies to counties, organized to support reference and understanding.

The content in e-Li covers a wide range of county government topics, including governmental structure, finance, budgeting, purchasing, personnel, ethics, open meetings, and public records. Materials are written to explain statutory requirements, commonly accepted interpretations, and how different areas of law interact in county government.

e-Li content is organized by topic, reflecting the way county government issues typically intersect across offices. While the e-Li homepage includes office-specific manuals as entry points, the underlying structure of the library is topical rather than office-based.

e-Li is maintained to reflect changes in Tennessee law as they occur. Content is reviewed and updated to ensure that statutory frameworks discussed in the library remain current and consistent with applicable law.

County officials commonly use e-Li as a reference when researching legal or procedural questions, reviewing statutory frameworks, or gaining background information before discussing an issue with colleagues, auditors, or legal counsel.

e-Li does not replace the county attorney. It provides statutory background and explanatory context that help officials frame questions and focus conversations with attorneys, auditors, or other officials on interpretation and application rather than basic background.

Mary Ann: The e-Li Virtual Assistant

Mary Ann is CTAS's virtual assistant designed to help users navigate and locate information within e-Li more efficiently. The virtual assistant supports county officials and staff who are searching for background information, statutory explanations, or related topics within the CTAS electronic library.

Mary Ann draws responses from e-Li content and is intended to assist users in locating relevant materials rather than providing legal advice or definitive answers. The virtual assistant helps users identify applicable topics, statutes, and explanatory resources that may be useful when researching a question or preparing for further discussion with colleagues or legal counsel. County officials commonly use Mary Ann as a starting point when they are unsure where to begin their research, are exploring unfamiliar subject areas, or want to quickly locate relevant e-Li materials.

Mary Ann: The e-Li Virtual Assistant

without browsing multiple sections of the library. Like e-Li itself, Mary Ann does not replace the county attorney. The role of the virtual assistant is to support access to information and provide context, helping users frame questions and understand how different areas of county law and operations may connect.

The virtual assistant is named in honor of Mary Ann Moon, who served at CTAS from 2003 until her retirement in 2019 and played a key role in developing e-Li. The name is a tribute to her legacy and commitment to person-first information services.

CTAS Private Acts Compilations

Private acts are acts of the Tennessee General Assembly that apply to a specific county rather than to counties statewide. These acts often establish or modify county offices, governing structures, fiscal procedures, or administrative authority.

CTAS maintains private acts compilations to provide centralized access to county-specific private acts. These compilations bring together private acts that apply to individual counties, allowing users to identify laws that may affect how a particular county operates.

County officials and staff typically reference private acts compilations when researching county-specific authority, reviewing inherited practices, or determining whether a county operates under provisions that differ from general law.

Private acts compilations are provided as reference tools. While they make county-specific legislation easier to locate, interpretation of private acts and their interaction with general law remains the responsibility of the county attorney.

The CTAS Directory of Tennessee Counties

The CTAS Directory of Tennessee counties provides county-level reference information intended to help users orient themselves to how a specific county is organized and who holds key roles within that county's government.

County directory pages include listings of elected or appointed county officials and select county staff, along with high-level information about county offices and organizational structure. Directory pages also include links to county-specific information, such as applicable fiscal procedures and private acts.

County officials and staff commonly use the Directory to identify points of contact, review basic organizational information, and locate links to county-specific laws that may warrant further review.

The Directory is maintained as an information resource and relies on counties to report updates to their information. While CTAS works to keep the Directory current, accuracy cannot be guaranteed.



County ***Associations***

CTAS works closely with key association partners to support county officials across Tennessee. Through these partnerships—with organizations such as the Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA), Tennessee County Commissioners Association (TCCA), Tennessee Sheriffs' Association (TSA), and others—we help provide coordinated training, resources, and advocacy tailored to the needs of specific county offices. These relationships strengthen our shared mission of improving local government by ensuring officials have the support and information they need to serve effectively.

Chapter 8: Association Partners

County government in Tennessee operates within a strong network of professional associations and governmental partners that support elected officials, share expertise, and advocate on behalf of counties. These organizations play an essential role in helping county officials understand their responsibilities, respond to legal and policy changes, and work collaboratively across offices and jurisdictions.

CTAS works closely with county official associations and other governmental entities to strengthen this network and ensure that counties have access to practical, reliable support. This collaboration includes soliciting input on CTAS services and programs, providing technical assistance and training, supporting conferences and communications, and serving as a link between counties and state and federal partners. Through these relationships, CTAS helps advance the shared goal of effective, wellinformed county government across Tennessee.

Chapter 8 provides an overview of the key associations and governmental partners that support Tennessee county officials. Each page includes the association's name, website address, year established, and a brief description of its purpose and role. Together, these profiles highlight the organizations that county officials may rely on for education, advocacy, collaboration, and professional support throughout their service.

This chapter contains:

- Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA)
- Association of County Mayors (ACM)
- Tennessee County Commissioners Association (TCCA)
- Tennessee County Highway Officials Association (TCHOA)
- County Officials Association of Tennessee (COAT)
- Tennessee Association of Assessing Officers (TNAAO)
- Tennessee Sheriffs Association (TSA)

Tennessee County Services Association TCSA



**TENNESSEE COUNTY
SERVICES ASSOCIATION**
SERVING COUNTY MAYORS, COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
AND COUNTY HIGHWAY OFFICIALS SINCE 1954

Year Established: 1954

Website: www.tncounties.org

About TCSA

Founded in 1954 and headquartered in Nashville, the Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit public interest group representing counties before the Tennessee General Assembly and the state administration.

According to the by-laws of the organization, TCSA was created for the “... purpose of developing more efficient and economical functions of local government to promote the common welfare of the people.”

TCSA works to accomplish this mission by:

- collecting and sharing information about the government and the administration of counties,
- by providing a means for county officials to exchange ideas and experience and
- by providing a means for counties to act harmoniously regarding matters affecting the rights and liabilities of counties.

David Connor, TCSA Executive Director

Association of County Mayors

ACM



Year Established: 1954

Website: www.tncounties.org/affiliates/acm

About ACM

Since 1954, the Association of County Mayors (ACM) has proudly been a member of the Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA), dedicated to serving the State of Tennessee and supporting our 95 county mayors in their mission to govern effectively.

As a vital link between county leaders, the Governor's office, the Tennessee General Assembly, and key organizations, ACM is committed to empowering mayors with the tools they need to lead. From educational resources to networking opportunities and leadership initiatives, we strive to provide unparalleled support to Tennessee's county mayors and executives.

Anthony Holt, ACM Executive Director

Tennessee County Commissioners Association TCCA



Year Established: 1969

Website: www.tncounties.org/affiliates/tcca

About TCCA

The Tennessee County Commissioners Association (TCCA) represents over 1,640 county legislative body members from all 95 Tennessee counties. Established in 1969, TCCA advocates for efficient county government and represents counties before the Tennessee General Assembly, the Governor's office, and state departments.

TCCA is an affiliate of the Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA) and shares offices with TCSA and the Tennessee County Highway Officials Association.

Charlie Curtiss, TCCA Executive Director

Tennessee County Highway Officials Association TCHOA



Year Established: 1987

Website: www.tncounties.org/affiliates/tchoa

About TCHOA

The Tennessee County Highway Officials Association (TCHOA) represents all 95 elected and appointed county highway officials across Tennessee, advocating on their behalf before the Tennessee General Assembly, the Governor, and state agencies.

Since 1987, TCHOA has provided critical support to county highway departments, ensuring they stay informed about new regulations and best practices. Through a close partnership with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and other organizations, TCHOA equips members with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively manage county road systems.

TCHOA continues to deliver expert legal, financial, and technical assistance through collaborations with the University of Tennessee County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS) and the Tennessee County Services Association (TCSA).

Brett Howell, TCHOA Executive Director

County Officials Association of Tennessee COAT



Year Established: 1968

Website: www.tncountyofficials.com

About COAT

The County Officials Association of Tennessee (COAT) is a statewide professional association made up of elected and appointed county officials in Tennessee—primarily County Clerks, Registers of Deeds, State Court Clerks, and County Trustees.

COAT serves as an advocate, voice, and resource for these officials by providing information, educational opportunities, updates on changes in state law that affect county operations, and support through networking and training events.

COAT also represents county officials' interests during the legislative session and helps members connect with vendors, leadership programs, and other services to improve their effectiveness in serving their local communities.

Ben Rodgers, COAT Executive Director

Tennessee Association of Assessing Officers TNAAO



Year Established: 1960

Website: www.tnassessors.org

About TNAAO

The Tennessee Association of Assessing Officers (TNAAO), also known as Tennessee Assessors, is a professional organization composed of elected property assessors from across the state of Tennessee. It exists to support and strengthen the work of local assessors of property by promoting fairness, uniformity, and excellence in property assessment practices.

TNAAO helps its members fulfill their statutory duties to locate, identify, and value all taxable property in accordance with state law and best practices. The organization also represents the interests of Tennessee assessors in discussions with the Tennessee State Board of Equalization, the Division of Property Assessments, and the Tennessee General Assembly, and provides leadership, education, and professional development opportunities to its membership.

Will Denami, TNAAO Executive Director

Tennessee Sheriffs Association TSA



Year Established: 1971

Website: www.tnsheriffs.com

About TSA

The Tennessee Sheriffs' Association (TSA) was founded in 1971 to bring together law enforcement officials across the state of Tennessee who help keep our state safe.

Through our work, we advocate for policies that enhance public safety, host conferences for education and training, and provide a platform for law enforcement to connect, network, and share best practices.

We believe in a collaborative approach to keeping our communities safe and are committed to working with our members, community leaders, and other stakeholders to create safer and more just communities for all Tennesseans.

Sheriff Russell Barker, Anderson County, TSA President

Contact Us

County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS) is here to support Tennessee's countiees with expert guidance, training, and resources. If you have questions or need assistance, our team is ready to help. Please contact us using the information below.



Phone

(615) 532-3555



Message

ctas.support@tennessee.edu



Website

www.ctas.tennessee.edu