

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire ranks 42nd among the states in number of local governments, with 545 as of October 2007.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (10)

There are no areas in New Hampshire lacking county government. New Hampshire county governments have relatively few responsibilities. Towns and cities perform most of the functions of local governments. The county governing body is known as the board of county commissioners.

SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (234)

The subcounty general purpose governments in New Hampshire consist of municipal (city) governments and town governments. These two types of governments are distinguished primarily by the historical circumstances surrounding their incorporation.

Originally, cities were established solely through special acts of the general court. Since 1979, existing cities and towns may change their form of government through the creation of a charter. In either case, the voters of the city or town must approve a change in the form of government.

Municipal Governments (13)

The term "municipality," as defined for census statistics on governments, applies in New Hampshire only to cities. In addition to usual city functions, cities have responsibility for services performed in other parts of the state by town governments. Cities exist outside the area of any town.

Town or Township Governments (221)

Although not differing in legally authorized powers from cities, units in New Hampshire locally designated as "towns" are counted in census statistics as a separate type of government. Town governments exist in each

county in New Hampshire, but they do not cover the entire area of each county. Cities, gores, grants, purchases, unorganized locations, and unorganized townships exist outside the area of any town.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (174)

School District Governments (164)

The following types of school districts in New Hampshire are counted as separate governments for census purposes:

- Cooperative school districts
- Interstate school districts
- Regular school districts

The composition and the method of selection of the boards of cooperative school districts is determined by the agreement establishing the district. Regular school districts are governed by elected boards. All four district types may issue bonds and determine their own fiscal requirements.

Dependent Public School Systems (10)

New Hampshire statutes provide for the following types of dependent public school systems:

- Systems dependent on county governments:
 - Coos County School District

- Systems dependent on municipal governments:
 - City school systems

The Coos County School District serves the unincorporated areas of Coos County. It is governed by the board of county commissioners, serving in an ex officio capacity. This school district is classified for census purposes as a dependent agency of Coos County.

The public school systems serving the cities of Berlin, Dover, Franklin, Laconia, Manchester, Nashua, Portsmouth, Rochester, and Somersworth are governed by separate

school “district” boards that are either appointed by the city council or elected by the voters. The public school systems serving these cities are subject to municipal fiscal control. They are classified for census purposes as dependent agencies of the cities they serve and are not counted as separate governments.

Other Educational Activities

School administrative units, formerly referred to as supervisory unions, are entities that supervise the school affairs of two or more school districts. Expenses are met by the participating districts. School administrative units are classified as joint educational service agencies of participating school districts and are not counted as separate governments.

Authorized regional enrollment area schools are maintained and operated by the school districts in which the facilities are located. These schools are classified as joint activities of the participating school districts and are not counted as separate governments.

Vocational education centers are designated by the commissioner of the department of education. The selected high schools receive additional state funding for construction or renovation and additional assistance in the form of a regional advisory committee. Vocational education centers are classified as dependent activities of their affiliated school districts and are not counted as separate governments.

Joint maintenance agreements may be entered into by two or more adjoining school districts to establish and maintain schools. The school districts entering into the agreement may incur indebtedness in the name of the joint agreement. Schools created under joint maintenance agreements are classified as dependent activities of the school districts they serve.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (137)

New Hampshire statutes authorize the creation of special districts or authorities that are

counted as governments. These are discussed in detail below.

Conservation Districts

Under New Hampshire law, each county constitutes a conservation district. A board of five supervisors appointed by the state conservation committee governs each district. Revenue for these districts are derived from gifts, grants, rentals, leases, and special assessments. The district boards may require contributions from landowners for benefits extended.

Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation

This alliance was created by act of the general court to acquire, own, and operate a regional transit system. The alliance serves the seacoast region of New Hampshire (Rockingham and Stafford counties) and Berwick (Maine). Its board of directors includes representatives of various state, local, and private agencies. The alliance may fix rates, fares, tolls, rents, and other charges and receive federal, state, and local contributions.

Housing Authorities

Housing authorities may be established in any city or town after local referendum. Housing authority commissioners are appointed by the mayor or the town selectmen. Authorities may issue bonds and collect rentals for facilities.

Maine-New Hampshire Interstate Bridge Authority

This authority was created by a special act to operate the Portsmouth-Kittery Bridge. The governing body consists of three members from each state. In New Hampshire, the members are appointed by the Governor and include the commissioner of transportation. The authority may issue bonds and fix rates and tolls.

Regional Transit Districts

Cities and towns may jointly vote to establish a

regional transit district. Board members for the district are appointed by the governing bodies of the participating local governments. The number of representatives contributed by the local governments is based on population. Each participating city or town funds district expenses based on a fair-share formula.

Transit districts and authorities established by only one local government (such as the Manchester Transit Authority) are counted as dependent activities of the creating government for census purposes. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Solid Waste Management Districts (1994 law)

These districts may be created by the governing bodies of two or more municipalities. Each district is governed by a district committee selected in the manner determined by the authorizing agreement. The districts may issue bonds with the approval of the participating governments. Fiscal needs are determined by the district committee and apportioned according to the provisions for cost sharing in the agreement. Similar districts, including regional refuse disposal districts, formed under prior law continue to operate under the prior law and existing agreements.

Village Districts or Precincts

Ten inhabitants of any village, situated in one or more towns, may petition a town or towns to call a referendum to create a village district or precinct. The functions conducted include: fire protection; lighting or sprinkling of streets; shade and ornamental trees; water supply for domestic and fire purposes; sidewalks and drainage or common sewers; sewerage and waste treatment plants; parks and recreation facilities, pollen control and pest abatement; watchmen and police officers; roads; and ambulance services. These districts are governed by an elected body. After a vote is held at a district meeting, the district or precinct may issue bonds and levy taxes. The districts may also charge rates for services.

Village districts may create boards of commissioners for municipal electric, gas, or water systems, which are dependent agencies of the creating government. Village districts also may participate in the creation of regional water districts, which are joint dependent agencies of the creating governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

Shown below are various governmental designations in New Hampshire that have certain characteristics of governmental units but that are classified in census statistics as subordinate agencies of the state or local governments and are not counted as governments. Legal provisions for some of the larger of these are discussed below (see "Public School Systems," above, regarding educational agencies of this nature).

New Hampshire Business Finance Authority (state). This authority was created by special act to develop, operate, finance, and maintain commercial, industrial, transportation, and recreation facilities. A board of 14 directors, nine of whom are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the council plus additional state representatives, governs the authority. The authority may charge fees and rents and issue revenue bonds.

New Hampshire Health and Education Facilities Authority (state). This authority was established by act of the state legislature to construct educational and health facilities. The authority is governed by a board of seven directors appointed by the Governor and council. The authority may fix and collect rates, rents, fees and charges for the use of facilities and services. It may issue revenue bonds with the approval of the Governor with the advise and consent of the council.

New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority (state). This authority was established to provide mortgage credit for housing; to provide housing subsidies to low-income persons; and to construct housing. The authority is governed by a nine-member board appointed by the Governor with the consent of the

council. The authority may make mortgage loans and issue revenue bonds.

Other examples include:

State¹

Community Development Finance Authority
Estuary Alliance for Sewage Treatment
Forest fire districts
New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage
Investment Authority
New Hampshire Long Term Care Institute
New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank
New Hampshire School Building Authority
Pease Air Force Base Development Authority

Municipal

Airport authorities and districts (special acts)
Boards of commissioners for a municipal
electric, gas, or water system
Boards of public works commissioners (joint)
Central business service districts
Conservation commissions
Economic development and revitalization
districts
Health districts
Historic districts
Local industrial development authorities
Recreation commissions
Transit authorities

Town

Airport authorities and districts (special acts)
Boards of commissioners for a municipal
electric, gas, or water system

Boards of public works commissioners (joint)
Boards of sewer commissioners
Central business service districts
Conservation commissions
Economic development and revitalization
districts
Health districts
Historic districts
Local industrial development authorities
Recreation commissions
Transit authorities

Other

The regional water districts are joint dependent agencies of the creating counties, cities, towns, school districts, village districts, and/or special districts.

Gores, grants, locations, purchases, and unorganized townships are geographical areas outside the area of any city or town and are not counted as governments.

New Hampshire laws also provide for various types of local areas for election purposes and administration of justice.

1. Legislation authorizing the New Hampshire Industrial Heritage Commission was repealed on May 17, 2002. Legislation authorizing the New Hampshire State Port Authority was repealed on July 1, 2001.