

New Hampshire

New Hampshire ranks 42nd among the states in number of local governments, with 559 as of June 2002.

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 234 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 in New Hampshire only to cities. In addition to usual city functions, they 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. Governmentally organized “locations” in New Hampshire are also classified as township governments for census purposes. However, there are no governmentally organized locations now in existence.

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 (177)

School District Governments (167)

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
- Special 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 and special school districts are governed by elected boards. All four district types may issue bonds and determine how their own fiscal requirements are applied.

Dependent Public School Systems (10)

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

Systems dependent on county governments (1):

- Coos County School District

Systems dependent on municipal governments (9):

- 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 agencies that supervise the school affairs of two or more school districts. School administrative units may request, receive, and expend Federal funds

for educational purposes. Operating 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.

Area vocational high schools and authorized regional enrollment area (AREA) schools are maintained and operated by the school districts in which the facilities are located. Such schools are classified as joint activities of the participating school districts and are not counted as separate governments for census purposes.

The commissioner of the department of education may designate specific high schools offering vocational education programs as vocational education centers. Vocational education centers are classified as dependent activities of their affiliated school districts, and are not counted separately for census purposes. Although the commissioner of education may designate an out-of-state school as being part of the New Hampshire Regional Vocational Education Plan (in favor of state interests), these activities are counted as dependent activities of their affiliated school district. An advisory committee of seven members, who are appointed by the commissioner of education, advises the receiving district board on matters related to vocational education centers such as, but not limited to, agriculture, marketing and distribution, health, home economics, office occupations, trades, and industries.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (148)

New Hampshire statutes authorize the creation of special districts or authorities, which are counted as separate governments for census purposes. These are discussed in detail below.

Conservation Districts

Under New Hampshire law, each county and its boundaries constitutes a conservation district. A board of five supervisors (land occupiers within the district), appointed by the State Conservation Committee, governs each district. Activities of these districts are related to the conservation and development of soil, water, and natural resources. Revenue for these districts are derived from gifts, grants, rentals, leases, and special assessments.

Housing Authorities

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

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, as an ex officio member. The authority may issue bonds, fix rates and tolls, and accept grants.

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: where populations of over 50,000 are entitled to five voting representatives; populations between 25,000 and 49,999 are entitled to four voting representatives; populations between 10,000 and 25,000 people are entitled to three voting representatives; and populations consisting of less than 10,000 people may contribute two voting members to a regional transit district board. Each participating city or town funds district expenses based on a fair-share formula. Additional revenue for the district may be obtained through gifts, grants, or loans.

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

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

Each city, town, unincorporated town, or unorganized place within the state participates in a solid waste management district or provides access to another approved solid waste facility for its residents. Districts are governed by a district committee, and are organized according to the district agreement. These districts may issue bonds upon approval by member governing bodies. Local government officials may enter into cooperative agreements to provide regional solid waste management facilities or services for residents.

Village Districts or Precincts

Ten inhabitants of any village, situated in one or more towns, may petition a town or towns to create a village district or precinct. Village districts or precincts may handle the following functions: extinguish fires, provide for lighting or sprinkling of streets, planting and care for

shade and ornamental trees, provide water supply for domestic and fire purposes (to include protection of supply sources), to construct and maintain sidewalks and drainage or common sewers, to operate and maintain sewerage and waste treatment plants, to maintain and care for parks and recreation, to provide for pollen control and pest abatement, impoundment of water, appointing and employing watchmen and police officers, to construct and maintain roads, and to maintain 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, levy taxes, and may also charge rates for services.

SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

The following governmental designations in the state of New Hampshire are considered to be dependent activities of the state or local governments that created them. Based on census classification guidelines, although these units do possess governmental character to varying degrees, that character is not enough to qualify them as separate independent governments. Legal provisions for some of the larger subordinate agencies of this kind 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 act of the General Court 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, governs the authority. The authority may charge fees and rents, accept grants, make loans, and issue revenue bonds. The Governor, with the advise and consent of the council, may award an unconditional state guarantee of the bonds. This entity was formerly called the New Hampshire Industrial Development Authority.

New Hampshire Higher Educational and Health Facilities Authority (state).

This authority was established to construct educational and health facilities, and is governed by a board of seven directors appointed by the Governor with the advise and consent of the council. The authority may fix, revise 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. The authority may receive grants, contributions; and loans; make mortgage loans and issue revenue bonds.

Other examples include:

State

- Community Development Finance Authority
- Emergency medical services districts
- Fire districts (for forest fire control)
- Forest districts
- New Hampshire Industrial Heritage Commission
- New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Authority
- New Hampshire Long Term Care Institute
- New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank
- New Hampshire School Building Authority
- New Hampshire State Port Authority
- Pease Air Force Base Development Authority
- Sweepstakes Commission

Municipal

- Airport authorities and districts
- Central business service districts
- Economic development and revitalization districts
- Health districts
- Historic districts
- Local industrial development authorities
- Multimunicipality industrial development authorities (city, town, or joint)
- Transit authorities

Town

- Airport authorities and districts
- Central business service districts
- Economic development and revitalization districts
- Health districts
- Highway districts
- Historic districts
- Multimunicipality industrial development authorities (city, town, or joint)
- Transit authorities

Other

Gores, grants, locations, purchases, and unorganized townships are geographical areas outside the area of any city or town, and are not counted as governments. The New Hampshire Healthy Kids Corporation is classified as a private entity. New Hampshire laws also provide for various types of local areas for election purposes, administration of justice, and zoning.