

# Types of cities and forms of government

## Types of cities (classification)

- **First Class (10)** – RCW 35\*
- **Second Class (5)**
- **Towns (68)**
- **Code Cities (197)** – RCW 35A\*

\*May have city charters

## Forms of government

- **Mayor-council** (executive mayor) (227)
- **Council-manager** (54)
- **Commission** (0)

Characteristics	Mayor-Council	Council-Manager
Legislative authority	Council	Council
Executive authority	Elected mayor	Appointed manager
Selection of CEO	Popularly elected	Appointed by council on the basis of experience
Removal of CEO	Recall election	Removed by a majority vote of the council
Tenure of executive	4-year term	Indefinite
Tenure of council	4-year term	4-year term
Appointment of department heads	Mayor (with council confirmation if provided)	Manager (no council confirmation)
Removal of department heads	Mayor	Manager
Veto	Mayor	Manager has no veto
Policy development	Mayor can propose	Manager can recommend
Policy implementation	Mayor	Manager
Underlying principles	Separation of powers Political leadership Strong central executive	Separation of politics from administration Promotes economy and efficiency through professional management Strong central executive Follows a business model
Source: MRSC.org		

# Roles & Responsibilities

- Policy and Administration are separated (think branches of government)
- Legislative and policy-making powers are vested in the City Council
- Administrative authority is vested in the Mayor

### Council

- Adopt council rules of procedures
- Participate in preparation of council agenda
- Discuss, develop and adopt city policies governing city operations including budget
- Set wages and benefits, establish positions, establish bargaining parameters and approve final labor contracts

### Mayor

- Prepared agenda, report to council on matters
- Propose policy including budget
- Implement policy adopted by the council
- Hire, fire, supervise, and discipline staff
- Negotiate labor contracts

## Scenarios

- The Mayor wants to hire a new Community Development Director to fill a vacant position. Does the Council have a say in the appointment?
- A councilmember wants to observe collective bargaining negotiations. Does the Mayor have to let them?
- The Mayor wants to create a new communications position and has included it in the budget proposal. Can the Council refuse to authorize the new position?
- The Council passes an ordinance revising the open hours for city parks. The Mayor disagrees with the new policy. Can the Mayor refuse to implement the new ordinance?
- A councilmember is very interested in the planning process and wants to have regular meetings with city planning staff. Does the Mayor have to allow the councilmember to meet with staff?
- A councilmember has a complaint about the conduct of a police officer and wants the Mayor to investigate and report back. What does the Mayor do?