

MISSISSIPPI STATE
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EXTENSION

KNOWLEDGEABLE,
ENGAGED
YOUTH
SCHOLARS



**CONNECTING YOUTH
WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

COUNTY GOVERNMENT EDITION



The KEYS to Community Program

Knowledgeable, Engaged Youth Scholars

Facilitator's Guide

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The KEYS to Community Program

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Facilitator's Guide



Program Objectives

1. Develop understanding of county government services.
2. Develop understanding of role of county government officials.
3. Motivate young people to become involved with and informed about county government.

Session Outline

1. Introduction: County Governments and Their Services
2. Board of Supervisors
3. Tax Assessors/Collectors
4. County Law Enforcement
5. County Judicial System
6. Chancery Clerks
7. Circuit Clerks

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to help young people understand how their county government operates, what their county government is trying to accomplish, how the actions of government affect their everyday life, and their personal responsibility to local government.

Method of Delivery

The program is designed to be flexible for a variety of delivery methods. Sessions are intended to be presented individually over time (for example, one lesson per week or one lesson per month), with the goal of providing interactive and educational sessions. Each lesson is simply an example of how to cover the topic. Extension agents are encouraged to adapt the lessons to each situation. It is important to remember that lessons should be fun and interactive. Consider incorporating ice breakers and e-moments into each lesson. For examples, please see the KEYS Resource Site.

Operation of the Program

The Extension agent will assume responsibility for organizing this program. He or she will make contact with necessary speakers and tailor sessions to specific groups. Agents are encouraged to expand sessions to meet the needs of the participants. Agents are encouraged to involve 4-H volunteers to help implement the program.

Suggested Participants

Extension agents are encouraged to work with local 4-H leaders to identify youths ages 14–18 who would benefit from the program. Agents should ensure that a diverse group of participants is selected for the program. Other possible partners to help select participants could include school guidance counselors, history teachers, community leaders, civic organizations, and elected officials. A sample news release is included in this guide to help promote the program.

Participant Agreement

Extension agents should consider having participants and their parents sign a participant agreement. The standard **4-H Parental Release and Code of Conduct Agreement** (Extension Form 807, which includes a photo release section) can be used. Extension agents are encouraged to create a customized agreement for each situation. This agreement will ensure that all parties understand the program and what is expected. These agreements are optional and should be used within the county.

Evaluation

An essential element of this program is the completion of a program evaluation. Agents should administer the Youth Reflection tool (4-H Clover) after each lesson. The agent should also complete the Facilitator Reflection tool after each lesson. Once all lessons have been completed, have participants complete the program evaluation.

Mail completed reflection tools and program evaluations to the Extension Center for Government and Community Development, P.O. Box 9643, Mississippi State, MS 39762 the day after the program is completed. Individual responses will be combined to evaluate the impact of the KEYS to Community program. The county/agent will not be given credit for completing the program unless properly completed program evaluations are received in a timely manner.

Optional Activities

The flexibility of this program allows agents to adjust the length of each individual session and the overall length of the program. A list of optional activities is included with this guide to provide agents the opportunity to expand the participants' understanding of county government. Agents can incorporate these activities throughout each session or at the completion of all lessons. One option is to have students complete a set number of electives based on their interest in a particular area of county government.

Graduation/Completion Ceremony

Extension agents are encouraged to recognize those who participate and complete the program. Two examples would be: 1) Have participants attend the Board of Supervisors meeting and arrange for the Board President to recognize participants by name and present them with a certificate. 2) Hold a special dinner and invite all county elected officials, participants, and parents. Ask one official to speak on the importance of civic involvement and present participants with certificates of completion.

Sponsorship of Program

The program is designed to be operated at a minimal cost. If sponsorship is needed, consider the following sources:

- Individual elected officials
- Board of supervisors
- Community banks
- Civic clubs
- Economic development foundations

The KEYS to Community Program

Step-by-Step Guide to Getting Started

All agents wishing to implement the KEYS program must attend a KEYS in-service before starting the program.

1. Read the KEYS Facilitator's Guide.
2. Contact the Mississippi State University Extension Service Center for Government and Community Development at (662) 325-3141 to notify them that you are initiating the program. The staff will provide agents assistance for the KEYS program throughout the duration of the program.
3. Become familiar with each of the seven lessons and optional activities.
4. Determine the method of delivery for the program (length and location).
5. Set the session schedule and book any speakers.
6. Initiate contact with county elected officials and inform them of the program.
7. Use the news release provided to recruit participants. See **Suggested Participants** on page 3 of this facilitator's guide for partners to promote the program.
8. Have participants complete a **4-H Parental Release and Code of Conduct Agreement** (Extension Form 807, which includes a photo release section) and the **Participant Agreement** (see page 3). (This is optional.)
9. Present each session. After each session, the participant should complete the Youth Reflection tool (4-H Clover). The agent should complete the Facilitator Reflection tool.
10. Complete all seven sessions.
11. Have participants complete the post-evaluation. (Mail to GCD staff immediately.)
12. Host a graduation/completion ceremony.
13. Submit a news release to recognize participants' completion of KEYS.
14. Have participants send thank-you notes to any speakers or volunteers who assisted with the program.
15. Contact the GCD staff and tell them you have completed the program; provide feedback about the program during your post-program debrief.

The KEYS to Community Program

Mississippi Social Studies Framework

Crosswalk

The KEYS program supports the following Social Studies Competencies and Objectives. If implementing this program in a school setting, use this reference to demonstrate to teachers and administrators how the program supports the curriculum.

Supports the 9th- to 12th-Grade Mississippi Studies Curriculum Domestic Affairs Competencies and Objectives:

- 2) Understand the major responsibilities of state and local governments and how they are executed.
 - a) Identify and describe the duties of the three branches of state government in Mississippi.
 - b) Examine the various forms of local governments (i.e., city managers, municipal supervisors, mayor/city council, etc.), and evaluate how they help meet the needs of local communities.

Supports the 9th- to 12th-Grade United States Government Curriculum Domestic Affairs Competencies and Objectives:

- 3) Understand the meaning, scope, and limits of rights and obligations of democratic citizenship and that the relationships among democratic citizens and government are mutable.
 - a) Explain the individual's legal obligations to obey the law, serve as a juror, and pay taxes.
 - b) Explain the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering, performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service.

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Reflection Tools and Evaluation

An essential element of this program is the completion of a program evaluation.

1. During or after each lesson, ask participants to complete the Youth Reflection tool (4-H Clover).
2. The agent should complete the Facilitator Reflection tool after each lesson.
3. Once all lessons have been completed, the agent should have participants complete the program evaluation.

Completed reflection tools and evaluations should be mailed to the Extension Center for Government and Community Development, P.O. Box 9643, Mississippi State, MS 39762 the day after the program is completed.

Individual responses will be combined to evaluate the impact of the KEYS to Community program. The county/agent will not be given credit for completing the program unless properly completed evaluations are received in a timely manner.

Youth Reflection

Site: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

The form consists of a large, stylized four-leaf clover shape. Each leaf is a rounded, teardrop-like shape. The leaves are arranged in a cross pattern, meeting at a central point. The top-left leaf is labeled "Head (Learned)", the top-right leaf is labeled "Heart (Felt)", the bottom-left leaf is labeled "Hands (Practiced + Improved)", and the bottom-right leaf is labeled "Health (Helped Others)". The labels are written in a bold, sans-serif font and are slightly rotated to fit the shape of the leaves. The entire clover is outlined in a thick black line.

Head (Learned): Describe what you learned in today's activity.

Heart (Felt): Describe how you felt while doing today's activity.

Hands (Practiced + Improved): Describe something you got better at doing in today's activity.

Health (Helped Others): Describe how you helped others in today's activity.

Facilitator Reflection Tool

This reflection tool is designed for individuals to collect information at each activity implementation. Bring this with you to your next lesson study group meeting; information will help in planning next implementation.

FACILITATOR	WHAT HAPPENED?  What worked well?	 What needs improvement?	WHY? What contributed to what happened  and/or  ?	WHAT NEXT? What could I do next time?
Head Content goals for youth (e.g., knowledge, competence).				
Heart Intrapersonal goals for youth (e.g., self-esteem, confidence, empathy, character, interest, attitudes, persistence)				

FACILITATOR	WHAT HAPPENED?  What worked well?  What needs improvement?		WHY? What contributed to what happened  and/or  ?	WHAT NEXT? What could I do next time?
<p>Hands Applied skill goals for youth (e.g., problem solving, critical thinking).</p>				
<p>Health Interpersonal goals for youth (e.g., teamwork, contributions, using ideas from others, communication)</p>				

KEYS to Community Evaluation

Dear Participant:

You have been given this survey because you have participated in KEYS to Community (a 4-H program) and we would like to learn about you and your experiences in the program.

Your answers are important and they will be kept private. But, if you don't want to fill out the survey, you don't have to or if there is a question you don't want to answer, you can leave it blank.

There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer all questions honestly.

Thank you for your help!

Community Awareness

1. At KEYS, did you talk about needs in your community?

- Yes
- Sort of
- No

2. At KEYS, did you talk about needs across the country?

- Yes
- Sort of
- No

3. At KEYS, did you talk about needs around the world?

- Yes
- Sort of
- No

4. When you learn about a problem in the community, do you look for ways to help?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

5. When you learn about a problem across the country, do you look for ways to help?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

6. When you learn about a problem around the world, do you look for ways to help?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

7. Do you like helping people?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

8. Do you feel a responsibility to help your community?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

9. How much has KEYS inspired you to volunteer in your community?

- A lot
- A little
- Not at all

10. Because of KEYS, did you meet leaders in your community?

- Yes
- Sort of
- No

Understanding

Now that you have participated in KEYS, please rate your understanding of the following topics:

11. Services provided by county government

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

12. Structure of county government

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

13. Board of supervisors and their duties

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

14. Reasons counties must collect taxes

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

15. Actions of law enforcement in counties

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

16. Major issues addressed by different county courts (e.g., justice court, chancery court, circuit court)

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

17. Roles of the chancery clerk

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

18. Roles of the circuit clerk

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

Now that you have participated in KEYS, when you are old enough, how likely are you to:

19. Become involved with county government

- Not likely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

20. Be informed about county government

- Not likely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

21. Vote in local elections

- Not likely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

22. Vote in state elections

- Not likely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

23. Vote in federal elections

- Not likely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

Your 4-H Experience

If you are in 4-H, answer the following questions about your 4-H experience. If you are only in KEYS to Community, answer the questions about your time in KEYS.

24. How many years of 4-H have you completed?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 or more years
- I'm not in 4-H

25. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where adults care about you?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

26. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you feel left out?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

27. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where others like you?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

28. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you feel safe?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

29. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you get to figure things out for yourself?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

30. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where it's okay for you to make mistakes?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

31. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you get to teach others what you've learned?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

32. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you get to do things that you like?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

33. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you're encouraged to plan for your future?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

34. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you get to choose what you want to do?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

35. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where adults make the decisions?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

36. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you have a chance to be a leader?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

37. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you learn about ways to help your community?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

38. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you feel you belong?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

39. Is 4-H/KEYS a place where you get to help make group decisions?

- Yes
- Usually
- Not Really
- No

About You

40. How old are you?

years old

41. What grade are you in? *If it is summer break, which grade will you be starting in the fall?*

grade

42. Which of the following best describes your gender?

- Male (boy)
- Female (girl)
- I don't want to say

43. Which of the following best describes your race?

- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian
- More than one race
- I don't know

44. How many hours do you typically spend on 4-H activities each week?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 hour
- 2 hours
- 3 hours
- 4 hours
- 5 or more hours

45. Are you involved in 4-H at the county level?

- Yes
- No

46. Are you involved in 4-H at the state level?

- Yes
- No

47. Are you involved in 4-H at the national level?

- Yes
- No

48. Which of the following best describe how you are involved in 4-H? For each, circle one answer.

Clubs	Yes	No
Camps	Yes	No
After-school programs	Yes	No
In-school programs	Yes	No
Local fairs/events	Yes	No
Community service projects	Yes	No
Working on projects at home	Yes	No
Other	Yes	No

Thank you very much! Please return this form as directed.

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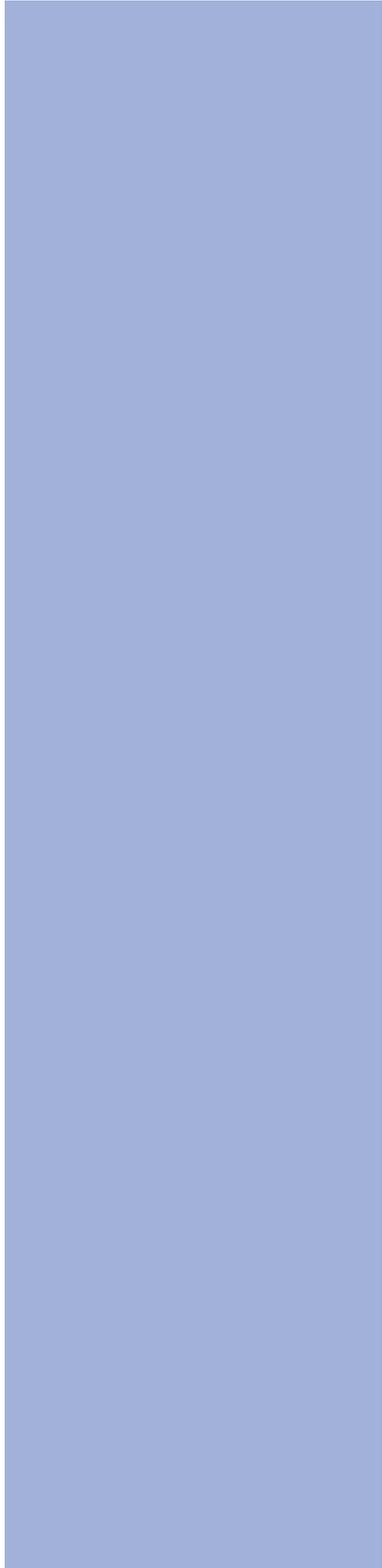
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Sample News Releases



Sample News Release

Pre-Program

County Government Program Seeks Local Youth Participation

Young people in _____ County have an opportunity to learn about local government through the “KEYS to Community” program.

The program is open to youths ages _____ to _____ and is provided by the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

The purpose of “KEYS to Community” is to help local youths understand how county government operates, what county government is trying to accomplish, and how the actions of county government affect their lives, said _____, the MSU Extension agent in _____ County.

“They’ll also understand more about their responsibilities as a citizen as a result of activities planned for the program,” _____ said.

Local youths who are interested in participating in the program should contact _____ at _____.

Sample News Release

Post-Program

Local Youths Graduate from KEYS to Community Program

Young people in _____ County are now better acquainted with local government after completing the “KEYS to Community” program.

The program is open to youths ages _____ to _____ and is provided by the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

The purpose of “KEYS to Community” is to help local youths understand how county government operates, what county government is trying to accomplish, and how the actions of county government affect their lives, said _____, the MSU Extension agent in _____ County.

“Young people are the future leaders of _____ County. We hope this program is the first step in fostering active and engaged citizens,” _____ said.

Youths who participated in the program are:

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Additional Resources



A Sample Note-Taking Form for an Elected Official Visit

<p>5 things I know about this office before the visit:</p>	<p>Official's biographical details:</p>	<p>Issues facing this official's office:</p>
<p>Questions I want to ask the official:</p>	<p>Geographic area served by this official:</p>	<p>5 things I learned during the presentation:</p>
<p>Questions other participants asked:</p>	<p>Budget and tax information:</p>	<p>Quotes:</p>



The KEYS to Community Program

Lesson I: County Governments and Their Services

Interest Approach

Depending on the size of the group, divide students into groups or, as a whole, give them a large flip-chart and markers. Ask students to use the supplies to draw the county outline and list or draw everything they know about the county. Examples: population and demographics, major industries, county officials, tourist attractions, schools, towns within the county, etc. Give students a set amount of time, and then have them share with the group.

Next, explain that this program is designed to give them a better understanding of their county government and how it works. Ask students: “Why is it important to understand how your county government works?” Explain that county government is operated by citizens and that successful counties need young, engaged leaders to be involved.

Objectives

1. Participants will understand the structure of county government.
2. Participants will discover positions within county government.
3. Participants will examine the need for county government.

Suggested Teaching Activities

- PowerPoint: **County Governments and Their Services: Introduction to County Government.**
- Invite a member of the local historical society or someone with knowledge of county history to share the history of the county. Make sure to encourage the speaker to include any information about prominent and infamous citizens, the history of the towns and county name, major changes to the county, and any major events that have occurred in the county. Alternatively, you can assign students to research information before the session to share with the group.
- Provide students the opportunity to read **Local Governments and Their Services** and **Political Process and Local Government Administration.**
- Use the **Name that County Official** worksheet to introduce students to various county officials.
 - Answers: D, F, E, C, G, A, B
- **What’s Happening in _____ County?** Before the session, gather as many newspapers, news articles, community profiles, or publications that discuss issues facing the county. Then, ask students to review the material and identify current issues in the county. Have students rank the importance of the issues. Students can also use this information to develop questions to ask future speakers who visit the group and compare how the officials prioritize issues.
- Have students use a computer to play the County Government Works online game to gain a better understanding of how a county works: <https://www.icivics.org/games/counties-work>.

Resources

Information Sheet: Political Process and Local Government Administration

<http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/information-sheets/political-process-and-local-government-administration>

Information Sheet: Local Governments and Their Services

<http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/information-sheets/local-governments-and-their-services>

County Government in Mississippi, 5th Edition (2015)

<https://extension.msstate.edu/publications/miscellaneous/county-government-mississippi>

County Government Works online game

<https://www.icivics.org/games/counties-work>

County Profiles

<http://gcd.msucare.com/communityprofiles>

Name That County Official

Match the county official with the job description.

1. _____ Serves as the voter register, issues marriage licenses, and jury lists.
2. _____ Charged with seeing that law and order is maintained in the county.
3. _____ Collects and assesses county taxes.
4. _____ Clerk of the board of supervisors and keeps records of county funds.
5. _____ Chief policymaker for county and administrative body of county.
6. _____ Serves various court papers.
7. _____ Responsible for all aspects of public education.

- A. Constable
- B. School Superintendent
- C. Chancery Clerk
- D. Circuit Clerk
- E. Tax Collector/Assessor
- F. Sheriff
- G. Board of Supervisors



Objectives

1. Identify the nomination, election, and term of office.
2. Discuss and describe the board of supervisors and their duties.
3. Discuss the board of supervisors' balance of power in county government.

Key Terms

Board of supervisors
Open meetings act
Unit system
Beat system

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Lesson II: The Board of Supervisors

Interest Approach

Allow participants to discuss the following quote from Winston Churchill: "Democracy is the worst system devised by the wit of man except for all the others." In other words, explain to students that democracy is better than the rest because it gives every citizen the right to partake and to be heard. That means that democracy is up to us, the citizens. Democracy cannot flourish unless citizens are involved and exercise the right to be effective citizens.

Read the following statements to participants as if they were found on a friend's Facebook status. Ask students: "Did you hear about the new laws going into effect in our county?"

The county fair has been canceled indefinitely.

The new county budget provides no money for the 4-H program.

All youths under the age of 18 are required to abide by the new curfew of 7 p.m.

Allow students to respond to the "new rules" and to speculate on why the board of supervisors may have implemented these policies. Help them understand that making rules and regulations such as these is one function of their local government. They should begin to realize how their county government affects their lives.

Suggested Teaching Activities

- PowerPoint: **Understanding Your County Government: The Board of Supervisors**
- The **Identify Your County Officials** worksheet/activity allows participants to become aware of their local officials. Encourage participants to find information on county websites, newspapers, etc.
- Set up a field trip to attend a county board of supervisors meeting to give participants the opportunity to observe firsthand the policymaking process of a county board meeting.
- Role-playing and simulations in class can be an excellent way to engage participants. A well-structured exercise can give participants a good example of the real world and allow them to become further involved in a particular topic. Use the **Procedures: Mock County Board of Supervisors Meeting** to complete a mock county board meeting.
- With guidance from the instructor, help participants understand the appropriate ways to contact elected officials. Use the provided Extension publication, **Public Policy Education and Advocacy**, to choose the appropriate way to contact an elected official regarding an issue of county government the participant(s) are concerned about.

- Have students create a brochure called “Board of Supervisors’ Duties.” This brochure can be created in Microsoft Word or another desktop application and printed on your desktop printer or at your county facility. Tell participants to create a brochure that reinforces the informative message of the board of supervisors.
- Let students conduct additional research by accessing the websites of their governmental offices and analyzing the county government information available to the public. Ask students: 1) What should be improved? 2) Can you pay county fees online? 3) Is there an option to contact officials online? etc.

Resources

County Government in Mississippi, 5th Edition (2015)

<https://extension.msstate.edu/publications/miscellaneous/county-government-mississippi>

Public Policy Education and Advocacy

<http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/publications/public-policy-education-and-advocacy>

County Board of Supervisors Identification Worksheet

List county supervisors:

Name

District

Party

When do the county supervisors meet? _____

My supervisor is _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

Email address _____

Community where he/she grew up, if native to county. _____

Family information, including spouse, children, and parents: _____

Hobbies (for example, hunting) _____

Affiliations in community and county _____

Special interests (for example, diabetes education) _____

Committee assignments

Procedures: Mock County Board of Supervisors Meeting

1. Assign participants to groups that represent a district in their county, and, as suggested under activities, have students conduct additional research on the supervisor who represents their assigned district.
2. Distribute the county board of supervisors' agenda as the scenario to be completed. Participants are to debate and vote on proposed amendments to the county code. Another option is to use the scenarios from the interest approach of the current lesson.
3. To complete this activity, the instructor will organize the facility to represent the county boardroom and serve as the moderator during the scenario.
4. For each scenario, allow each supervisor to speak on behalf of his or her district for 3 to 5 minutes, and then have the chair call for a vote. Allow for rebuttal or follow-up at your discretion, depending on time and student preparation.
5. Participants should base their arguments on how they feel their actual district supervisor would address the issue.

Note: For this activity, please use the publication **How to Conduct a 4-H Business Meeting** as a guide:

<http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/publications/how-conduct-4-h-business-meeting>

Understanding Your County Government

County Supervisor Guest Speaker Talking Points Tip Sheet

Provide this as a guide to the county official for information to cover with participants. Speakers are encouraged to use not only this guide, but to expand the presentation to provide information about their office that would be beneficial to participants.

Introduction

- Name and title
- Career and personal background
 - How you became a county supervisor.

Explain the role of the county board of supervisors.

- Requirements to hold office
- Duties of county board of supervisors
 - Authority over roads, ferries, and bridges, to be exercised in accordance with such regulations required by law.
- Challenges of the office.
- What you enjoy about the office.
- Common misconceptions about the office.

Help participants understand the management infrastructure of county government.

- What are current issues taking place in the county?
 - Provide examples of the board's actions to address current issues.
- Explain the process of addressing issues.
 - Discuss the actions of debating and voting on proposed amendments to the county code.

Describe to participants the importance of the Open Meetings Act.

- Explain to participants an appropriate way to voice their concerns to the county board of supervisors.

Possible Activities for Participants

- Attend board of supervisors meeting
- Review past board meeting minutes
- Review claims docket



The KEYS to Community Program

Lesson III: Tax Assessors/Collectors

Objectives

1. Participants will understand why counties must collect taxes and the different types.
2. Participants will discover the role of the tax collector/assessor.
3. Participants will demonstrate how to calculate property taxes.

Key Terms

Ad valorem tax

Mill

Millage rate

True value

Assessed value

Interest Approach

Have students list (individually or as a group) all the county services they used throughout the day. Some examples: school bus, driving on roads (can cost around \$86,000 per mile to repave a road), emergency services, county Extension office, etc. Once they have created a list, have the students estimate what the cost of providing the service to citizens is. Next, total the cost of all services used that day. Then, ask participants how the county funds these services. (Taxes.)

Follow up with students to explain that various forms of taxes pay for county services. Explain that, in today's lesson, they will learn about how taxes are used, the different types of taxes, the role of the tax collector/assessor, and how to calculate property tax.

Suggested Teaching Activities

- PowerPoint: **Understanding Your County Government: Tax Assessor/Collector.**
- Invite the county tax assessor/collector or a deputy to speak to the participants. Provide the official with the objectives so they understand what should be accomplished in the presentation. If needed, a **Tax Assessor/Collector Guest Speaker Talking Points** tip sheet is provided in the resources of this lesson.
- Take a field trip to the tax assessor/collector office. The official can give the same presentation and also show the students maps, tax rolls, and other tools used in the day-to-day duties of the office.
- Have students call the tax collector's office and ask for the price of a car tag of their dream car.
- The **What's My Tax Bill?** worksheet/activity allows participants to practice calculating example property tax.
- Find the true value of a home. Working with your local tax assessor, help students understand how the value of a property is calculated. Have the assessor bring in pictures of houses from the area or take students to a nearby property. The assessor can demonstrate to the students how the property value is calculated.
- Explore property tax maps. Visit the tax assessor's office and have a member of the staff explain how to read the property maps (section, township, and range). Have students locate their home on the map. Many counties now use GIS (geographic information system) mapping and can demonstrate the software to participants.

Resources

Understanding Mississippi Property Taxes

<http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/publications/understanding-mississippi-property-taxes>

MDOR Property Tax FAQ

<http://www.dor.ms.gov/Property/Pages/default.aspx> (click on Frequently Asked Questions)

Explaining Taxes to Kids

<https://www.usa.gov/taxes-lesson-plan>

Understanding Taxes

<http://apps.irs.gov/app/understandingTaxes/index.jsp>

Tax Assessor/Collector

Guest Speaker Talking Points Tip Sheet

Provide this as a guide to the county official for information to cover with participants. Speakers are encouraged to use not only this guide, but to expand the presentation to provide information about their office that would be beneficial to participants.

Introduction

- Name and title
- Explain that counties can have a single tax collector/assessor or a separate office for each.
 - 23 of 82 counties in Mississippi have a separate tax collector and assessor. Counties with a total assessed value of \$65,000,000 or more can separate the offices by vote of county board of supervisors.
- Career and personal background
 - How you became the tax official.

Help participants understand why counties must collect taxes.

- Discuss the cost to operate the county.
 - Provide examples of common expenditures (for example, it can cost around \$86,000 per mile to repave a road).
- Explain the different forms of revenue for the county.
 - Discuss the different types of taxes. Help them understand that sales tax does not benefit the county.

Explain the role of the tax collector/assessor.

- Requirements to hold office.
- Duties of collector and assessor.
 - Tax, bills, collect the different forms of taxes, car tags, garbage fees, tax sale, assessing property.
- Challenges of the office.
- What you enjoy about the office.
- Common misconceptions about the office.

Demonstrate to participants how to calculate property tax on a piece of property.

Explain to participants a mill.

- Remind them that the tax assessor/collector does not set the millage rate for the county.

Possible Activities for Participants

- Show and explain a property record card.
- Demonstrate how to read a property tax map. If possible, help students find their homes on the map.
- Demonstrate how to assess the value of a home using pictures of property in the area.

Example County Budget

OKTIBBEHA COUNTY

	Governmental Fund Types				Proprietary Fund Types			Total
	General	Special Revenue	Capital Projects	Debt Service	Permanent	Enterprise	Internal Service	
REVENUES								
Amount necessary to be raised by tax levy	\$ 8,072,400	\$ 6,509,922	\$	\$ 499,498				\$ 15,081,820
Taxes and ad valorem other than tax levy	150,000							150,000
Road and bridge privilege taxes								-
Licenses, commissions, and other revenue	376,200	543,000						919,200
Fines and forfeitures	495,600	1,000						496,600
Intergovernmental revenue:								-
Federal sources	237,500	247,609						485,109
State sources	738,110	736,500		30,678				1,505,288
Local sources	45,000	379,416						424,416
Charges for services	145,000	1,260,000						1,405,000
Interest Income	40,000	6,200						46,200
Use of money and property	19,800							19,800
Miscellaneous revenue	58,000	8,000						66,000
Other financing sources		136,825		1,182,863				1,319,688
Special Items (give description)								
Extraordinary items (give description)								
Total Revenues	\$ 10,377,610	\$ 9,828,472	\$	\$ 1,713,039				\$ 21,919,121
Beginning Cash Balance	748,246	3,098,054		2,335,422				6,181,722
Total Revenues and Beginning Cash Balance	\$ 11,125,856	\$ 12,926,526	\$	\$ 4,048,461				\$ 28,100,843
EXPENDITURES								
General government	\$ 5,990,331	\$ 685,051	\$	\$				\$ 6,675,382
Public safety	3,964,947	1,643,529						5,608,476
Public works	112,000	6,993,855						7,105,855
Health and welfare	466,556	1,383,659						1,850,215
Culture and recreation	175,400							175,400
Education	126,450	1,078,832						1,205,282
Conservation of natural resources	124,164							124,164
Economic development and assistance	166,008							166,008
Debt service				1,756,132				1,756,132
Other expenditures								-
Other financing uses		200,000						200,000
Special Items (give description)								
Extraordinary items (give description)								
Total Expenditures	\$ 11,125,856	\$ 11,984,926	\$	\$ 1,756,132				\$ 24,866,914
Ending cash balance		941,600		2,292,329				3,233,929
Total Expenditures and Ending Cash Balance	\$ 11,125,856	\$ 12,926,526	\$	\$ 4,048,461				\$ 28,100,843

What's My Tax Bill? Worksheet

Use the information provided for the mock county to calculate the property taxes due for each home.

Example

True Value: \$100,000.00

Assessment Ratio: 10%

County Millage Rate: 110



True Value \$100,000.00 X Assessment Ratio .10 = Assessed Value \$10,000.00

Assessed Value 10,000.00 x .110 Mills = Property Tax Due \$1,100.00

True Value: \$150,000.00

Assessment Ratio: 10%

County Millage Rate: 99



True Value _____ X Assessment Ratio _____

= _____ Assessed Value

Assessed Value _____ X _____ Mills = _____ Property Tax Due

True Value: \$450,000.00

Assessment Ratio: 10%

County Millage Rate: 122

Total Property Tax Due: _____





The KEYS to Community Program

Lesson IV: County Law Enforcement: Sheriff, Constable, and Coroner

Interest Approach

“I think you’re going to find out that westerns will be coming back. It’s America; it’s part of our history, the cowboy, the cattle drive, the sheriff, the fight for law, order, and justice. Justice will always prevail as far as I’m concerned.”

—Clayton Moore

The oldest law enforcement position in the United States is the office of the sheriff. In short, the sheriff’s primary duty is to serve as the supreme law enforcement in the county, and, in that duty, he/she is to hold the peace. Present participants with the following scenario:

Imagine what it would be like if you were playing in a football or basketball game and there was no referee to officiate the game. Would people abide by the rules of the game? Law and order within counties is equally important.

Start a discussion with students that speculates on an example of the sheriff’s duties in your county.

Suggested Teaching Activities

- PowerPoint: **Understanding Your County Government: County Law Enforcement.**
- To be an effective citizen, it’s important that we support the sheriff by practicing preparedness for any type of incident. Have participants complete the **Family Communications Plan** worksheet. Suggest that participants store the information in their cell phones.
- Allow participants to express visually the duties of their constable, coroner, or county sheriff. Participants can create a group or individual poster.
- Have participants create a unified list of solutions that they feel would make their county a better and safer community. Invite the county sheriff’s office to visit and address these issues with participants.
- Write the words “post mortem,” “autopsy,” “coroner,” “medical examiner,” and “forensic pathologist” on the board. Ask students to share what they already know about the meaning of each term as a way to start a discussion on the duties of the coroner.
- Divide the participants into an even number of groups. Provide them with the **My Office of the Sheriff Flag** handout and crayons or colored pencils, and have them depict a flag for the sheriff’s office that symbolizes the values of citizen safety and law. Once each group’s flag is complete, have a member from each group present why they depicted their flag the way they did.

Resources

County Government in Mississippi, 4th Edition (2011)

<http://www.mssheriff.org/>

Objectives

1. Identify the nomination, election, and term of office of constable, coroner, and sheriff.
2. Discuss and describe the constable’s, coroner’s, and sheriff’s offices and their duties.
3. Determine the actions of administering law enforcement within a Mississippi county.

Key Terms

At-large election

Bond

Jail docket

Warrant

My Family Communications Plan

My name: _____

My address: _____

My phone number: _____

Family work and cell numbers:

Work: _____

Cell: _____

Whom to call in an emergency:

9-1-1 or other emergency number: _____

Name and number of neighbor or relative: _____

Name and number of out-of-town contact: _____

Other important numbers:

My Office of the Sheriff Flag

There is symbolism behind every part of a local community or organization flag. The symbols and colors represent things that its members find most important. Use symbolism to create a flag that represents your county sheriff's office. Then, explain the symbolism you used.



County Law Enforcement

Guest Speaker Talking Points Tip Sheet

Provide this as a guide to the county official for information to cover with participants. Speakers are encouraged to use not only this guide, but to expand the presentation to provide information about their office that would be beneficial to participants.

Introduction

- Name and title
- Career and personal background
 - How you became a county official.

Explain the role of county law enforcement.

- Requirements to hold office.
- Duties of sheriff, constable, or coroner.
 - Keep the peace within the county.
- Challenges of the office.
- What you enjoy about the office.
- Common misconceptions about the office.

Help participants understand the management infrastructure of county law enforcement.

- What are current criminal issues taking place in the county?
 - Provide a resource that shows the crime statistics within your county.
- Explain the process of providing solutions to criminal issues.
 - Discuss the actions of county law enforcement and how they correlate with the county board of supervisors.

Describe to participants the administrative duties of your position beyond law enforcement.

- Explain to participants the process of documentation and budgeting that takes place within the office of the sheriff.

The KEYS to Community Program

Lesson V: The County Judicial System



Objectives

1. Participants will examine the structure of the justice court, chancery court, and circuit court.
2. Participants will identify the requirements to be justice, chancery, and circuit court judges.
3. Participants will explore the major issues addressed by each court.

Key Terms

Jurisdiction

Civil actions

Criminal violations

Misdemeanor

Felony

Appeals

Docket

Interest Approach

Have participants brainstorm (individually) reasons that people have to go to court (e.g., speeding tickets, criminal offenses, divorce, etc.). Allow participants to share reasons. Once students have had the opportunity to share, explain that there are several court systems in the county (justice court, chancery court, and circuit court), and each has been designed to handle specific issues.

Suggested Teaching Activities

- PowerPoint: **Understanding Your County Government: The Judicial System.**
- Invite judge(s) to speak to participants. Provide the speaker with the objectives so he or she understands what should be accomplished in the presentation. If needed, a **County Judicial System Guest Speaker Talking Points** tip sheet is provided in the resources of this lesson.
- Take a field trip to the county court house. The official can give the same presentation and also show the students the court rooms, docket, and items related to the duties of the office.
- **The Cost of Speeding.** Participants will contact the county justice court to get a list of speeding fines.

*****It may be necessary to obtain more than one speaker to cover the functions of the different officials.*****

Resources

County Judicial System Guest Speaker Tip Sheet

Handout "Understanding the Court System" (a project of the Young Lawyers Division)

<https://www.msbar.org/for-the-public/court-structure.aspx>

County Judicial System

Guest Speaker Talking Points Tip Sheet

Provide this as a guide to the county official for information to cover with participants. Speakers are encouraged to use not only this guide, but to expand the presentation to provide information about their office that would be beneficial to participants.

Introduction

- Name and title
- Explain that each county has a justice court, chancery court, and circuit court. If the county has a drug court, youth court, or county court, please explain this information.
- Career and personal background
 - How you became a judicial official.
 - The requirements for the different **elected** judicial officials in the county (judges and clerks).
 - Challenges of the office.
 - What you enjoy about the office.
 - Common misconceptions about the office.

Help participants understand the roles of the different courts.

- Discuss the major differences of each court and jurisdiction.
 - Justice courts (traffic tickets, etc.; no jury). There are 82 justice courts and 197 judges.
 - Circuit courts (voter registration and marriage licenses). There are 22 circuit court districts and 53 circuit court judges. Trial is normally heard with a 12-member jury and usually one or two alternate jurors.
 - Chancery courts (divorces, wills, land, juvenile matters). There are 20 chancery courts and 49 chancery court judges. Court may be held with or without a jury.

Possible Activities

- Take a field trip to the county court house. The official can give the same presentation and also show the students the court rooms, docket, and items related to the duties of the office.
- **The Cost of Speeding.** Participants will contact the county justice court to get a list of speeding fines.

The KEYS to Community Program

Lesson VI: Chancery Clerks



Objectives

1. Participants will examine the roles of the chancery clerk.
2. Participants will understand the role of the clerk in chancery court.
3. Participants will understand the role of the chancery clerk in essential county government functions.

Interest Approach

Explain to participants that the chancery courts have elected clerks. The clerks are responsible for court and also for other essential county government functions. Explain to participants that today's lesson will cover the objectives above that are related to the duties of the chancery clerk.

Suggested Teaching Activities

- PowerPoint: **Understanding Your County Government: The Chancery Clerk.**
- Invite the local chancery clerk to speak to participants. Provide the speaker with the objectives so he or she understands what should be accomplished in the presentation. If needed, a **County Chancery Clerk Guest Speaker Talking Points** tip sheet is provided in the resources of this lesson.
- Take a field trip to the county court house. The participants should visit the chancery clerk's office. The official can give the same presentation and also show the students the court rooms, docket, and items related to the duties of the office.
- Visit the chancery clerk office to look up and view the deed to the property where participants live.
- View the minutes to trace a decision made at a previous county board of supervisors meeting.
- View the claim docket to see what bills the county has to pay.

Resources

Handout "Understanding the Court System" (a project of the Young Lawyers Division)

<https://www.msbar.org/for-the-public/court-structure.aspx>

County Chancery Clerk

Guest Speaker Talking Points Tip Sheet

Provide this as a guide to the county official for information to cover with participants. Speakers are encouraged to use not only this guide, but to expand the presentation to provide information about their office that would be beneficial to participants.

Introduction

- Name and title
- Explain that each county has a chancery clerk.
- Career and personal background
 - How you became a chancery clerk.
 - The requirements for becoming a chancery clerk.
 - Challenges of the office.
 - What you enjoy about the office.
 - Common misconceptions about the office.

Help participants understand the roles of the chancery courts.

- Discuss the major differences of each court and jurisdiction.
 - Chancery Courts (divorces, wills, land, juvenile matters). There are 20 chancery courts and 49 chancery court judges. Court may be held with or without a jury.
- Explain the role of the chancery clerk in the courts and county government.
 - Role as clerk of the court.
 - Role in issues of land and divorces.
 - Duties related to the board of supervisors and county government.

Possible Activities for Participants

- Visit the chancery clerk's office to look up and view the deed to the property where participants live.
- View the minutes to trace a decision made at a previous county board of supervisors meeting.
- View the claim docket to see what bills the county has to pay.

The KEYS to Community Program

Lesson VII: Circuit Clerks



Objectives

1. Participants will examine the roles of the circuit clerk.
2. Participants will understand the role of the clerk in circuit court.
3. Participants will understand the role of the circuit clerk in essential county government functions.

Interest Approach

Explain to participants that the circuit courts have elected clerks. The clerks are responsible for court and also for other essential county government functions. Explain to participants that today's lesson will cover the objectives listed that are related to the duties of the circuit clerk.

Suggested Teaching Activities

- PowerPoint: **Understanding Your County Government: The Circuit Clerk.**
- Invite the local circuit clerk to speak to participants. Provide the speaker with the objectives so he or she understands what should be accomplished in the presentation. If needed, a **County Circuit Clerk Guest Speaker Talking Points** tip sheet is provided in the resources of this lesson.
- Take a field trip to the county court house. The participants should visit the circuit clerk's office. The official can give the same presentation and also show the students the court rooms, docket, and items related to the duties of the office.
- Visit the circuit clerk's office to look up and view the marriage license of a parent or relative.
- Register to vote and view voter identification requirements, different types of ballots, and voting machines.
- Hold mock elections.
- View requirements and necessary paperwork to run for public offices.

Resources

Handout "Understanding the Court System" (a project of the Young Lawyers Division)

<https://www.msbar.org/for-the-public/court-structure.aspx>

County Circuit Clerk

Guest Speaker Talking Points Tip Sheet

Provide this as a guide to the county official for information to cover with participants. Speakers are encouraged to use not only this guide, but to expand the presentation to provide information about their office that would be beneficial to participants.

Introduction

- Name and title
- Explain that each county has a circuit clerk.
- Career and personal background
 - How you became a circuit clerk.
 - The requirements for becoming a circuit clerk.
 - Challenges of the office.
 - What you enjoy about the office.
 - Common misconceptions about the office.

Help participants understand the roles of the circuit courts.

- Discuss the major differences of each court and jurisdiction.
 - Circuit courts (voter registration and marriage licenses). There are 22 circuit court districts and 53 circuit court judges. Trial is normally heard with a 12-member jury and usually one or two alternate jurors.
- Explain the role of the circuit clerk in the courts and county government.



The KEYS to Community Program

Knowledgeable, Engaged Youth Scholars

Optional Activities

Attend County School Board Meeting. Arrange for participants to attend the county school board meeting to gain a better understanding of how schools are governed. At least a week before the meeting, contact the school board to arrange for the group to be introduced.

Attend Justice Court. Arrange for participants to attend a session of justice court to allow students to see how a real court case works.

Tour County Health Department. Health departments seek to promote and protect the health of all county residents and visitors. Touring the health department will allow participants to understand the wide range of services offered to residents. This visit can also be used to help participants understand major health issues facing their communities.

Garbage! Where Does It Go? Many people never consider where their trash goes once it is on the street. Arrange for your students to visit with the local solid waste management office to learn about the process, or even visit the local landfill.

County Jail Tour. Hopefully, participants have not seen the inside of the county jail. Arrange for a tour of the county jail with your county's sheriff's office.

Emergency Management/County Fire Coordinator. Counties typically have an emergency manager and/or county fire coordinator. Work with this representative to set up a tour of a fire department and emergency services facilities provided by the county. Also ask to tour the 911 communication center.

Not in My County. Many times people do not realize the issues facing their neighbors and fellow citizens. After participants have had the opportunity to complete all planned sessions, hold a session to examine community issues. Using the information learned in the **What's Happening in _____ County?** activity from Lesson I, have participants look deeper into the issues. Invite community leaders who are involved with the issue to share with the participants about the problem. Next, have students select an issue they would like to help solve. Have students work to brainstorm solutions and develop a plan to address the situation. This activity can be completed in a session or can be expanded to take place over several months to allow for implementation.

A Look at County Political Parties. Invite a leader of both county political parties to speak to the group about county politics. It is suggested to use this activity only if both parties can be represented to remain fair and balanced. It is also suggested that the Extension agent meet with both speakers before the event to go over the topics to be discussed.

State Senator or Representative Speaker. Invite the state senator or representative who represents the county to speak to the group. Explain to the speaker about the program and that participants are learning about county government. Have the speaker explain his or her position, the state legislative process, and how it impacts county government.

Visit State Capitol. County government is affected daily by the decisions made by state government. Visit the state capitol, preferably while the legislature is in session (typically January to April). Allow participants to see the legislative process firsthand. Make sure to arrange a visit with the area's senator and representative while at the capitol. While in Jackson, the group can also arrange tours at many of the state agencies and learn how they serve county governments. Examples include the Department of Transportation, Emergency Management Agency, Department of Education, State Crime Lab, Fire Academy, and many more.

Essay Contest. Have participants compete in an essay contest. Participants could be asked to write a 400-word essay about how county government benefits the public. The winning essay could be presented at the board of supervisors meeting, or the participant could submit the essay to the local paper as a letter to the editor.

Major Industry Tour. Help participants gain a better understanding of the county's economy and tax base by arranging tours of the major industries of the county. You can ask tour guides to talk about how county policy affects the industry and how they interact with county government in their business.

Elected Official for a Day. Arrange students to be paired with and shadow an elected official for a day. This will allow participants to see what a typical day looks like for each official.

"What Office Handles This?" Create a list of common reasons people would visit any of the county offices discussed in this program. Then, have students identify the office or elected official they would contact to resolve the issue.



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Produced by Agricultural Communications.

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Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. GARY B. JACKSON, Director