

Understanding County Governments

Objectives

- ✓ Understand the creation and evolution of counties throughout Texas' history
- ✓ Learn the history of the participants' county

Advanced preparation

- ✓ Secure data for your county and each of its larger cities/towns/communities from the United States Census Bureau Web site at:
<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>
- ✓ Obtain any documented and written history of your county through the County Clerk's Office or the County Historical Commission.
- ✓ Invite the County Judge or a County Commissioner to be a guest speaker.

Materials needed

- ✓ Computer and projector
- ✓ CD with the PowerPoint presentation
- ✓ Pens and pencils
- ✓ County map
- ✓ Copies of Attachments 1, 2, 3 and 4

Background

Texas is a large state with 254 counties—many more than any other state. Each Texas county has its own history.

Interest approach

Give participants copies of Attachment 1 (Overview of Texas County Government) as background on our state's history and how counties in Texas were formed.

Lesson

1. Introduce the topic (slide 1).
2. Read the quote from Sam Houston (slide 2).
3. Review the history of Texas and Texas government (slides 3-6).
4. Have participants complete Attachment 2 using the data you have collected about your county.
5. **Option 1:** Have the county judge or a county commissioner talk about the structure of the county government (i.e., offices, duties, election cycle).
Option 2: Use Attachment 3 (Who's in Charge?) to outline the structure of the county government (slide 7).
6. Have participants complete Attachment 4. Then hand out the answer sheet (Attachment 5) and review their answers.
7. Close with a reminder of the importance of participating in county government (slide 8).

Application

Our county officials have a huge job to effectively and efficiently manage and operate the county. Through the democratic process, we have the privilege of voicing our concerns and supporting candidates for these offices. As citizens, we should value our right to vote but remember to support our elected officials and the democratic process.

References

4-H County Government Guide. Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program.