



Central Administrative Functions Survey

2025

Executive Summary

County governments consist of various elected offices that may either rely on centralized county services—such as human resources (HR), information technology (IT), and finance—or operate their own internal administrative functions. To better understand how these structures vary across jurisdictions, the County Supervisors Association (CSA) conducted a survey to examine how administrative functions are organized across county departments. Responses from 12 counties offer insight into the benefits and challenges of consolidating administrative functions, providing a clearer understanding of how counties approach the management of administrative functions.

The survey focused on seven core functions, and some counties included additional administrative functions. To jump to a specific section, click its title or corresponding page number:

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These functions were analyzed across the nine county elected departments:

- Sheriff
- School Superintendent
- Recorder
- Superior Court
- Assessor
- Justice Court
- Treasurer
- Board of Supervisors
- Attorney

Initial findings show that most counties rely on centralized administrative functions across elected departments. However, some— primarily Sheriff's Offices and Courts—retain some internal operations due to specialized needs.

Centralization offers key advantages, including cost savings, efficiency, consistency with county standards, and access to skilled personnel. Challenges include concerns about trust and potential impacts on service delivery. These findings are explored in greater detail throughout the report.

**Function included by La Paz County only*



Centralized
Centralized function
used by dept.



Decentralized
Dept. handles function
internally



Combination
Dept. uses combination of
centralized & internal services

HUMAN RESOURCES

n=12

	Sheriff	Recorder	Assessor	Treasurer	Attorney	School Superint.	Superior Court	Justice Court	BOS
Apache									
Cochise									
Coconino									
Gila									
Graham									
Greenlee									
La Paz									
Mohave									
Navajo									
Pinal									
Yavapai									
Yuma									

Key Trends

Centralized HR services are consistently used by the Recorder, Assessor, Treasurer, County Attorney, School Superintendent, and Board of Supervisors across all responding counties. Exceptions exist in the Superior and Justice Courts, who often utilize internal HR departments.

Reasons for Centralized Services

Counties cited cost efficiency, economies of scale, and reduced redundancy as primary reasons for centralizing HR functions rather than maintaining separate internal teams.

Reasons for Independent Administration

Several exceptions highlight the need for flexibility: Yuma County reported that its Sheriff's Office and Jail District require dedicated HR staff due to the complexity and intensity of their personnel needs. Additionally, multiple counties noted that the courts—operated jointly by the state and county—maintain independent HR systems to accommodate distinct pay structures, job classifications, and training protocols. Greenlee County noted that its court maintains its own merit system.



Centralized
Centralized function
used by dept.



Decentralized
Dept. handles function
internally



Combination
Dept. uses combination of
centralized & internal services

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

n=12

	Sheriff	Recorder	Assessor	Treasurer	Attorney	School Superint.	Superior Court	Justice Court	BOS
Apache									
Cochise									
Coconino									
Gila									
Graham									
Greenlee									
La Paz									
Mohave									
Navajo									
Pinal									
Yavapai									
Yuma									

Key Trends

Centralized IT systems are used for the Recorder, Assessor, Treasurer, County Attorney, and Board of Supervisors. Separate IT systems are most often utilized in the courts as required by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

Reasons for Centralized Services

Counties cited cost savings, efficiency of operations, increased network security, reduced redundancy, and the ability to take advantage of in-house technical expertise.

Reasons for Independent Administration

Most counties noted that the courts are required by AOC to use a separate IT system connected to the statewide network. Sheriff's departments in Yuma and La Paz Counties maintain independent IT services due to the complexity of 24/7 operations and specialized infrastructure. In Gila and Yuma Counties, school superintendents receive IT support through third-party providers on separate networks from the county.

	Centralized Centralized function used by dept.		Decentralized Dept. handles function internally		Combination Dept. uses combination of centralized & internal services
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FINANCE

n=12

	Sheriff	Recorder	Assessor	Treasurer	Attorney	School Superint.	Superior Court	Justice Court	BOS
Apache									
Cochise									
Coconino									
Gila									
Graham									
Greenlee									
La Paz									
Mohave									
Navajo									
Pinal									
Yavapai									
Yuma									

Key Trends

Most counties use centralized finance functions across elected departments, with some exceptions in the Superior and Justice Courts. Payroll services are centrally managed in all responding counties.

Reasons for Centralized Services

Centralized finance functions offer economies of scale, reduces redundancy, and helps facilitate cost savings.

Reasons for Independent Administration

In Gila County, the courts maintain separate finance and bookkeeping systems from the county due to distinct operational structures. In Greenlee County, financial functions for the courts are shared between court staff and county personnel.



Centralized
Centralized function
used by dept.



Decentralized
Dept. handles function
internally



Combination
Dept. uses combination of
centralized & internal services

BUDGETING

n=12

	Sheriff	Recorder	Assessor	Treasurer	Attorney	School Superint.	Superior Court	Justice Court	BOS
Apache									
Cochise									
Coconino									
Gila									
Graham									
Greenlee									
La Paz									
Mohave									
Navajo									
Pinal									
Yavapai									
Yuma									

Key Trends

Overwhelmingly, counties utilize centralized budgeting functions across elected departments.

Reasons for Centralized Services

Counties cited efficiency, economies of scale, and consistency across departments as the primary reasons for maintaining centralized budgeting services.

Reasons for Independent Administration

In Greenlee County, budgeting functions for the courts are shared between court staff and county personnel.



Centralized
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used by dept.



Decentralized
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internally



Combination
Dept. uses combination of
centralized & internal services

PROCUREMENT

n=12

	Sheriff	Recorder	Assessor	Treasurer	Attorney	School Superint.	Superior Court	Justice Court	BOS
Apache	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized
Cochise	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized
Coconino	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized
Gila	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized
Graham	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination
Greenlee	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination	Combination
La Paz	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized
Mohave	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized
Navajo	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Combination	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized
Pinal	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized
Yavapai	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized	Centralized
Yuma	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized	Decentralized

Key Trends

Most counties utilize centralized procurement services. For those that do not, procurement is handled at the department level.

Reasons for Centralized Services

Centralized procurement offers efficiency, cost savings, and reduced redundancy. Additionally, counties noted institutional expertise associated with procurement practices.

Reasons for Independent Administration

Graham County does not have a dedicated procurement department; instead, individual departments manage their own purchasing, which is then routed through Finance. In Greenlee County, departments follow Board-approved contracts and purchasing policies, with each office handling its own procurement with an exception for vehicle purchases. Navajo County does not have a procurement department, but procurement operates under the Public Works Department with the exception of contract attorneys. La Paz and Yuma reported that each department conducts its own procurement independently.



Centralized
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centralized & internal services

FACILITIES

n=12	Sheriff	Recorder	Assessor	Treasurer	Attorney	School Superint.	Superior Court	Justice Court	BOS
Apache									
Cochise									
Coconino									
Gila									
Graham									
Greenlee									
La Paz									
Mohave									
Navajo									
Pinal									
Yavapai									
Yuma									

Key Trends

Counties overwhelmingly use centralized facilities services across elected departments, with a few exceptions in the Sheriff's department.

Reasons for Centralized Services

Centralized facilities functions help to increase cost savings and increase efficiency.

Reasons for Independent Administration

La Paz and Yuma Counties noted that the sheriff's and jail facilities are a 24/7 operation, requiring specialized facilities services.



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FLEET MANAGEMENT

n=12	Sheriff	Recorder	Assessor	Treasurer	Attorney	School Superint.	Superior Court	Justice Court	BOS
Apache									
Cochise									
Coconino									
Gila									
Graham									
Greenlee									
La Paz									
Mohave									
Navajo									
Pinal									
Yavapai									
Yuma									

Key Trends

Fleet management is largely centralized across county departments, with some exceptions in the sheriff's offices and school superintendent.

Reasons for Centralized Services

Centralization offers greater oversight, reduced costs, uniformity with county policies, and efficiency.

Reasons for Independent Administration

Navajo County noted that the Sheriff's Department utilizes centralized fleet services, however they use a mix of in-house and private vendors to outfit vehicles to reduce turnaround times. Graham County noted that their Highway Department is responsible for their own fleet, and that the courts do not have vehicles assigned to them. The Yuma County Sheriff's office participates in the county fleet program but is responsible for their own procurement, up-fitting, and maintenance of vehicles. The Yuma County School Superintendent does not participate in the county fleet management program, and vehicles are purchased with grant or state funds. Yuma County noted that the courts use a mix of both county-owned and state-owned vehicles.



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GRANT SOLICITATION & MANAGEMENT

n=1	Sheriff	Recorder	Assessor	Treasurer	Attorney	School Superint.	Superior Court	Justice Court	BOS
La Paz									

Key Trends

La Paz County included Grant Management and Solicitation as an important administrative function for the county. Grant Management in La Paz County remains decentralized due to the specialized expertise required across departments. Each department independently identifies and applies for grant opportunities, leveraging subject-matter knowledge tailored to specific funding requirements. Larger or more complex proposals are reviewed by the Administrative Services Director for long-term viability before Board approval. Once awarded, grants are managed within the department, with external consultants occasionally assisting with compliance and reporting.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

Table 1 of 2

	What are the primary reasons for choosing to utilize centralized administrative functions?	For those departments that choose to utilize internal administrative functions, what are the primary reasons for keeping them in-house?	Are there any non-elected departments that utilize their own internal administrative functions?
Cochise	Cost and efficiency given the county's size; economy of scale and availability of professional workforce to meet needs	Sup. Court HR currently separate, county seeking to merge with county HR to improve service; Separate court IT required by AOC	No
Coconino	Departments and employees on the same page; simplification of organizational policies and procedures	N/A	No
Gila	Centralization of services has occurred over time, saving money and promoting efficiency	N/A	No
Graham	Financial constraints and efficiency	If Courts had vehicles assigned to them they would be serviced by Highway department. Currently they take a rental or personal car and get reimbursed.	Highway does their own procurement and fleet
Greenlee	County size and economy of scale	Sup. Court functions jointly performed by state and county; court merit system separate to maintain clarity of state responsibility	No
La Paz	Efficiency, expertise, and operational support	Sup. Court IT per AOC; Sheriff maintains own IT contract; specialized knowledge required for grant management within departments	No
Mohave	Efficient and cost effective	Sup. Court manages own HR and IT functions per AOC	No
Navajo	Convenience and efficiency; cost effective, increased transparency, access to professional support systems	Sheriff uses mixture of county and internal fleet services; courts manage liability insurance, workers comp, legal, and employee merit policies	Library District doesn't utilize centralized procurement because it purchases items for multiple libraries
Pinal	Cost savings and efficiency given county size	Sup. Court HR and IT per AOC	No
Yavapai	Efficiency	Sup. Court IT per AOC	No
Yuma	Reduced redundancy, availability of in-house expertise, economies of scale	No centralized procurement; unique needs in Sheriff's office due to specialized operations; IT support provided through Northern Arizona University for School Superintendent	Library District maintains in-house IT and facilities

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

Table 2 of 2

	What benefits has the county seen from centralizing administrative services?	What challenges does the county face when centralizing administrative services?	Are there any administrative functions that should be either centralized or decentralized to improve county operations?
Cochise	Greater oversight of taxpayer funds; policies applied consistently; improved trust and fairness	Maintaining balance between adherence to county policies and independence of elected officials	County is exploring centralizing Court HR and IT while still maintaining separation required by the Courts
Coconino	Streamlining of policies and processes	Making sure all policies and processes are done correctly and on time	N/A
Gila	Increased customer service, reduction in overtime pay; improved standardization of services and staff training	Buy-in from elected officials	N/A
Graham	Consistency in adhering to policies; more awareness for BOS office	Time delays at times when there are multiple requests; higher priority items can delay lower priority projects	Would like to centralize purchasing at some point
Greenlee	Harnessing economy of scale of a single service; consistency with established purchasing and other policies	One-off transactions or service issues	County has explored ways to systematize procurement, perhaps teaming up with a larger county
La Paz	Management of critical functions; alignment with best practices; reduced vulnerabilities	Internal capacity and practices, limitations of staff	No, county uses a hybrid approach based on staff availability and complexity of the issue
Mohave	Generally more efficient and cost effective	Cost allocation disagreements	N/A
Navajo	Streamlining of operations; cost savings through economies of scale; consistency; improved data sharing	Delays in processing demands, specialization of needs	Sheriff's office would benefit from decentralized IT to have a dedicated administrator; Sup. Court looking to consolidate receipting, requisitions, and PAFs
Pinal	Greater uniformity; efficiency; risk reduction in having consistent practices	Friction between departments and timing of services	N/A
Yavapai	Efficiency; effectiveness; dedication of specialized staff providing services	Perceived lack of control	N/A
Yuma	Consistency and adherence to county policies	Perceived lack of trust	County would like to centralize procurement to provide consistency for solicitations and contracts