Change characterizes county government today as it has over the past three decades. County governments throughout the U.S. are becoming a more critical component in intergovernmental relations in part due to new assignments from state and national governments and in part as a response to the increased demands of urban residents. Counties have moved beyond their historic purposes into critical responsibility for a broader array of public services. As a result, the growth in county budgets and personnel exceeds that of all other local governments, with the possible exception of selected special districts.

New obligations, expanded budgets, and a growing county workforce have placed increased demand on the management of county governments, particularly with respect to countywide management of an increasingly complex county organization, multi-faceted services and personnel. Many county governing bodies, particularly in larger, more urbanized jurisdictions, have responded to these demands by establishing the position of county administrator and appointing professional
Introduction

Each day, the Kansas Association of Counties staff receives inquiries and requests for information from member counties and others. There is perhaps no more frequent request than for information on what county administrators do, how appointed administrators can assist boards of county commissioners in addressing the increasing complexity of county government, and how appointed administrators fit in the structure of county government.

In this report, Professor Ed Flentje of the Center for Urban Studies at Wichita State University, along with Sammi Mangus, graduate assistant at the WSU Center, report the findings of survey research conducted on the topic of county administrators in Kansas. The KAC is pleased to publish this report to help answer questions posed by county commissioners and other students and observers of county government.

Randy Allen, Executive Director

Information Resources

For more information on appointed county administrators, you may want to contact the following organizations:

• Professor Ed Flentje, Center for Urban Studies, Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount, Wichita, KS 67260. E-mail: flentje@twsvm.uc.twsu.edu. Telephone: (316) 978-6526.

• Kansas Association of Counties, 6206 SW 9th Terrace, Topeka, KS 66615-3822. Contact: Randy Allen, Executive Director. Telephone: (785) 272-2585. E-mail: rlallen@ink.org. KAC web site: www.ink.org/public/kac.

• Kansas Association of City-County Management Association (KACM), 300 SW 8th Street, Topeka, Kansas 66603-3984. Telephone: (785) 354-9565. KACM web site: www.ink.org/public/kacm.

• National Association of Counties (NACo), 440 First Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001-2080. Contact: Peggy Beardslee, Research Assistant (202) 942-4279 (E-mail: pbeardsl@naco.org) or Jacqueline Byers, Director of Research (202) 942-4285 (E-mail: jbyers@naco.org). NACo web site: www.naco.org.

• To order a video or brochure describing the nature of the county administrator position, contact: Mr. Mort McBain, Marathon County Administrator, 500 Forest Street, Wausau, WI 54403. Telephone: (715) 261-1402.

• International City/County Management Association (ICMA), 777 N. Capitol St., NE, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201. Contact: Martha Perego. Telephone: (202) 962-3668. (E-mail: mperego@icma.org). ICMA web site: www.icma.org.

The Kansas Association of Counties, an instrumentality of member counties under K.S.A. 19-2690, provides legislative representation, educational and technical services, and a wide range of informational services to its member counties.
managers to improve the management of county government. This national trend may be found in Kansas as well. In 1982, a survey of county governments in Kansas identified three Kansas counties with appointed county administrators. This number has quadrupled in less than twenty years as thirteen Kansas counties now have appointed county administrators. Governing bodies in a number of additional counties have considered establishing the position of county administrator or are now considering such action.

This report reviews the status of appointed county administrators in Kansas and examines the primary assignments performed by county administrators. Attention is given to similarities as well as variances in these assignments across counties. An assessment of the value of county administrators, from the perspective of county commissioners who have supervised administrators, is also provided.

### Primary Assignments of County Administrators

Over the past twenty-five years, the position of county administrator has become established in Kansas primarily through actions taken by local boards of county commissioners. Thirteen Kansas counties, ranging in population from Pottawatomie County with 18,691 to Sedgwick County with 448,050, currently employ appointed county administrators. Seven of the state’s ten largest counties now have county administrators. Most county boards have established the position of administrator through ordinary resolution, although four have acted through charter resolution. Table 1 identifies those counties that have formally established the position of county administrator, as of June 30, 1999, as well as the year and form of authorization.

Official duties assigned to appointed county administrators have been formulated somewhat uniquely by each board of county commissioners—although specific wording does exhibit a substantial degree of borrowing from those counties acting earlier in the twenty-five year period. Further, as county boards gained experience with appointed county administrators, duties have been refined by resolution in a few cases or clarified through written job descriptions in other cases. In contrast to city governments that were guided by state statutes, for example, in establishing the council-manager form of city government, county governing bodies acted without state statutory guidance—at least prior to 1996. Consequently, while the official duties of appointed county administrators vary in detail across counties, substantial commonality may be found in five primary assignments, as follows:

- preparing budgets;
- recommending policies;
- preparing agenda;
- performing liaison; and
- coordinating administration.

By their resolutions establishing the position of county administrator, boards of county commissioners have used these primary assignments to define and justify the job of county administrator in Kansas. A closer examination of these official acts uncovers the similarities and variances in these assignments across the counties. While county administrators perform a variety of tasks—formal and informal—beyond these primary assignments, these assignments give form and substance to the job of county administrator.

### Preparing Budgets

The authority of the board of county commissioners with respect to adopting the county budget provides a primary mechanism for coordinating county government, and all county administrators are assigned authority with respect to preparing county budgets for approval by the board of county commissioners. While the exact wording of these assignments varies across counties, these duties normally involve preparing and recommending the annual operating budget, which includes estimating revenues and expenditures, for the upcoming year. In most counties, administrators are further charged to monitor execution of the budget and assure that county officials and departments comply with the budget authorized by the county board. In addition, ad-
ministrators in Douglas, Finney, Johnson, Pottawatomie, Reno, and Sedgwick counties are assigned responsibility for recommending multi-year capital improvement programs and long-range strategic plans to the county board for approval.

### Recommending Policy

All county administrators are assigned duties with respect to making recommendations to the board of county commissioners on policies of county government, although the scope of responsibility varies from county to county. In some counties the administrator is authorized broadly to initiate policy, for example: “recommend to the Board adoption of measures as he may deem necessary and expedient for the welfare of the County” (Johnson County); “make recommendations to the Commission on all matters concerning the welfare of the Unified Government” (Wyandotte/Kansas City); “present proposed policies, programs and plans aimed at addressing overall County needs” (Douglas, Finney, Pottawatomie, and Reno counties); “make recommendations” for policy changes “within county government” (Butler and Miami counties); and develop and recommend “policies and procedures” (Sedgwick County).

In Harvey, McPherson, and Saline counties, these duties are both more limited and more general as the administrator is charged on the one hand to advise and make recommendations “on matters within his administrative authority” and on the other hand “to prepare plans and programs for the Board’s consideration in anticipation of future needs and services.” In Barton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Authorization</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Authorized By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Harvey County</td>
<td>34,361</td>
<td>Charter Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Sedgwick County</td>
<td>448,050</td>
<td>Charter Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Johnson County</td>
<td>429,563</td>
<td>Charter Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>McPherson County</td>
<td>28,630</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Barton County</td>
<td>27,641</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Saline County</td>
<td>51,617</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Douglas County</td>
<td>93,137</td>
<td>Charter Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Dickinson County</td>
<td>19,742</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Wyandotte County</td>
<td>152,355</td>
<td>Appointment Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Finney County</td>
<td>36,514</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Miami County</td>
<td>26,597</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Pottawatomie County</td>
<td>18,691</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Butler County</td>
<td>61,933</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Reno County</td>
<td>63,211</td>
<td>Ordinary Resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Position of county administrator authorized in 1989 but has been unfilled since 1992.
2. The position of county administrator, originally authorized by an appointment contract, was formally established in 1997 by a resolution of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas.
3. Reno County created the position in 1998 but did not make an appointment to the position until 1999.
County the administrator is charged to prepare “plans, policy statements, manuals, contracts, and other documents” for the county board.

### Preparing Agenda

Most county administrators are assigned duties with respect to preparing meeting agenda for the board of county commissioners. In Miami and Sedgwick counties, the administrator is specifically charged to prepare or set the agenda for commission meetings. In most counties, the administrator assists in agenda preparation in consultation with other county officials. For example, in Barton, Harvey, and McPherson counties, the administrator “assists the chairman” of the board of county commissioners in preparing meeting agenda. In other counties, the administrator is charged to set or assisting in setting the agenda in conjunction with the entire county board (Butler, Douglas, Reno, and Wyandotte) or with the board and the county clerk (Pottawatomie). In Finney, Johnson, and Saline counties, actions taken to establish the position of county administrator specify no duties with respect to preparing agenda.

### Performing Liaison

With one exception, all county administrators are assigned official duties in performing liaison on behalf of the county or the board of county commissioners with other public officials and jurisdictions. In Douglas and Finney counties, the administrator is charged to “coordinate county programs and operations with other local government units, federal and state governments, the Kansas Association of Counties and other governmental and nongovernmental entities.” Pottawatomie, Reno, and Saline counties have similar language.

The liaison assignment of county administrators in other counties relates more generally to matters of public policy, with attention to intergovernmental relationships (Johnson County), appearance before state legislative committees and at policy meetings (Sedgwick County), and representation of the county with legislative groups and news media (Butler and Miami counties). Liaison duties in other counties are more limited to “special district programs” (Harvey and McPherson counties) or to agencies “involved in the design and implementation of co-sponsored special projects or contracted services” (Barton County). The county administrator of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City has no official duties concerning external relations specified in the charter resolution establishing the position.

### Coordinating Administration

**General management.** County resolutions establishing the position of county administrator assign duties with respect to coordinating the administration of county government in a variety of ways. With the exception of Sedgwick County, every resolution designates the county administrator as “chief administrative officer” of the county; eight resolutions charge the administrator to “supervise and coordinate the work of departments, agencies, districts, and other units under the direct jurisdiction or fiscal control of the board of county commissioners” or make this assignment with language closely similar. One-half of the resolutions specifically charge the administrator to “enforce all policies, rules, and regulations adopted by the board of county commissioners.”

In Pottawatomie and Reno counties the administrator is charged to “monitor and provide regular reports to the board of county commissioners concerning adherence by county departments to the personnel, purchasing, budget, accounting and other administrative policies of the board.” In the larger counties, resolutions often assign the county administrator with responsibility for one or more central administrative functions, such as financial management or personnel management, and central administrative services, for example, data processing, telecommunications, copying, supplies, security, or motor pool.

Duties relating to financial management of county government are found in most all resolutions establishing the position of county administrator, although the language of these assignments does vary. Duties with respect to preparing budgets, as noted above, run through all resolutions. Except for Pottawatomie, Reno, and Wyandotte/Kansas City, the county administrator or a subordinate of the administrator is designated as the purchasing officer for the county. Half the counties place...
the county administrator in charge of county property. In the larger counties, for example, Sedgwick, Johnson, Douglas, and Wyandotte/Kansas City, the administrator may directly administer subordinate units in financial management such as budgeting, accounting, purchasing, internal auditing, and risk management.

**Personnel management.** State statutes assign authority for the appointment and removal of county personnel among various elected county officials, specifically among the board of county commissioners on the one hand, and other elected officials such as the sheriff and clerk on the other. Given the diffusion of authority for personnel management in county government, boards of county commissioners have moved to centralize personnel management in two ways: first, by establishing countywide personnel policies, for example, through requirements for merit-based selection of personnel, procedures for the evaluation, discipline, and termination of personnel, and classification and compensation of personnel; and second, by delegating to the county administrator duties with respect to employing, compensating, developing, evaluating, terminating, and supervising county employees. Both actions augment the duties of the county administrator with respect to personnel management.

In establishing the position of county administrator, boards of county commissioners have assigned the administrator duties with respect to countywide personnel policies. Four counties (Butler, Johnson, Miami, and Wyandotte/Kansas City) assign the county administrator authority to initiate and formulate personnel rules and regulations including position classification, pay, and benefit plans for adoption by the county board. Once adopted, the administrator is charged to “administer” (Butler and Miami counties) or “enforce” (Harvey and McPherson counties) county personnel policies. In other counties (Douglas, Finney, Pottawatomie, and Reno counties) the administrator is charged to “monitor and provide regular reports to the board of county commissioners concerning adherence by county departments” to countywide personnel policies.

In Douglas County, the administrator is specifically charged to “review and approve” personnel actions “within the departments of elected County officials for compliance with the personnel…policies of the County Commission.” The Barton County resolution calls on the county administrator to “provide leadership for the personnel management system.” The Saline County resolution makes no specific assignment with respect to personnel policies. In Sedgwick County the resolution assigns no specific duties with respect to personnel policy but delegates supervision of the central personnel division to the county manager and consequently implies authority with respect to formulating and enforcing countywide personnel policies.

Through the creation of appointed county administrators, boards of county commissioners have moved to centralize personnel management within the limits of board authority. The duties of county administrators with respect to personnel management still vary across the thirteen counties but fall into two distinct patterns. The dominant pattern may be found in Butler, Douglas, Finney, Johnson, Miami, Pottawatomie, Reno, Sedgwick, and Wyandotte/Kansas City counties, in which the county administrator is designated as personnel administrator or delegated authority for personnel administration for all or a specified category of county employees under the jurisdiction of the board of county commissioners. In this assignment the county administrator appoints, approves compensation, disciplines, and terminates all employees under his or her assigned jurisdiction.

The scope of the county administrator’s delegated authority for personnel management varies in these nine counties. In four counties (Douglas, Finney, Pottawatomie, and Reno) the administrator is charged to “approve the appointment, compensation, discipline, and change in status of personnel in the departments of all officials appointed by the County Commission.” In Butler and Miami counties this scope is specified by exception, in that the county administrator shall “em-
ploy and terminate all County employees except for those employed or terminated by an elected official of the County.” The Sedgwick County resolution details thirty-six “bureaus, departments, offices, and functions” for which “personnel administration…is hereby delegated to the county manager” and eight others in which personnel administration is retained by the board of county commissioners. The Johnson County resolution charges the administrator with “the authority to appoint, suspend, dismiss and compensate heads of departments, divisions, and agencies brought under the scope and responsibility of the County Administrator” but does not delineate that scope of authority. In Wyandotte/Kansas City, the administrator is charged to “appoint and dismiss employees designated as key division heads,” but those division heads are not detailed in the resolution.

A second pattern of delegated authority for personnel management may be found in Barton, Harvey, McPherson, and Saline counties. The county administrator in these counties has a more prescribed authority to “make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on the appointment of applicants for all positions for which the Board is the appointing authority” or language quite similar. In these counties the board retains primary authority for personnel administration.

### Statutory Guidelines

The establishment of appointed county administrators in Kansas counties has evolved quite differently from the movement to create the position of city manager in Kansas cities. State statutes first authorized the city manager plan for Kansas cities in 1917—requiring a referendum of city voters to adopt the plan and specifying in state law the duties of a city manager. In contrast, the position of appointed county administrator, including a delineation of duties, emerged from the independent actions of boards of county commissioners—at least up until 1996. In 1996, the Kansas legislature adopted legislation providing statutory guidelines for “establishing the office of county administrator” (see K.S.A. 19-3a02-04). This statute delineates “powers and duties” for the county administrator unless “otherwise provided by the board of county commissioners.” The law also authorizes county voters to initiate the creation of an office of county administrator through a petition of five percent of qualified county electors. The filing of a petition having sufficient signatures with the board of county commissioners requires the board to submit the question of creating the position to a referendum, and if the question receives the approval of a majority of voters, the position is established.

While no county to date has established the position of county administrator by petition and referendum, the statutory delineation of duties for a county administrator does provide guidance to boards of county commissioners considering the establishment of the position. Since 1996, two counties, Pottawatomie and Reno, have established the position of county administrator and embraced the statutory language delineating duties almost without change.

With respect to the duties of the county administrator, the statutory language of K.S.A. 19-3a04 follows almost verbatim the wording of the resolution originally adopted in 1986 by the Douglas County Board of County Commissioners to establish the position of county administrator. The Finney County board adopted nearly identical language in 1992. The statutory language detailing the duties of county administrator provides for preparing budgets, recommending policy, preparing agenda, performing liaison, and coordinating administration and is presented in *italics* as follows:

**Preparing budgets:** present an annual recommended operating budget, capital improvements program, and long-range strategic plan for all county operations for review, revision, and approval of the board of county commissioners.

**Recommending policy:** attend all meetings of the board of county commissioners, and present proposed policies, programs, and plans aimed at addressing overall county needs for review, revision, and approval by the board.

**Preparing Agenda:** in conjunction with the board of county commissioners, prepare the meeting agenda of the board.

**Performing Liaison:** coordinate county programs and operations with other local governmental units, federal and state governments and other governmental and nongovernmental entities.
Coordinating Administration:

**General management**: coordinate and supervise the administrative operations of the departments of all officials appointed by the board of county commissioners. All officers and employees therein shall be administratively responsible to the county administrator;

- coordinate the administrative services of county departments and agencies, offices of elected officials, advisory and governing boards appointed by the board of county commissioners. Provide technical assistance to such departments, offices, agencies, and boards as needed;

- execute contracts and other documents as approved by the board of county commissioners;

- monitor and provide regular reports to the board of county commissioners concerning adherence by county departments to the personnel, purchasing, budget, accounting, and other administrative policies of the board; and

- perform such other duties as shall be lawfully delegated by the board of county commissioners.

**Personnel management**: identify and recommend individuals to the board of county commissioners for appointment to boards and commissions;

- recommend individuals to the board of county commissioners for appointment to offices for which the board is the appointing authority by law. Evaluate and recommend the compensation, suspension, or dismissal of all such appointed administrative officers;

- approve the appointment, compensation, discipline, and change in status of personnel in the department of all officials appointed by the board of county commissioners. All employees affected by such decisions shall continue to have access to all appellate and other rights granted them by county personnel policies; and

- supervise, evaluate, and recommend the compensation and discipline of personnel of the board of county commissioners.

### Survey of County Commissioners

The rapid expansion in the number of Kansas counties with appointed county administrators suggests growing acceptance of the concept by county officials and the public. Individual members of the boards of county commissioners who have supervised county administrators have special insight into the work of county administrators and provide a knowledgeable source for assessing the value of appointed county administrators to the operation of county government. To gain this appraisal, 67 current and former county commissioners who had supervised county administrators in Kansas during the six-year period, 1993-1998, were surveyed for their assessment of county administrators; 52 county commissioners, or 78 percent of those surveyed, responded to all or most of the survey.

In part, the survey questionnaire asked county commissioners to respond to a number of statements concerning the value of an appointed county administrator in their respective county. Results from the survey are presented in Table 2.

County commissioners having experience with appointed county administrators overwhelmingly affirm the value of county administrators from a number of standpoints. Commissioners express almost total agreement with statements that county administrators have improved the management of county personnel and ser-
Frequency of Responses by County Commissioners to Statements Concerning the Value of Appointed County Administrators (percentage in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree or Don’t Know</th>
<th>No Difference</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The appointment of a county administrator in my county has <strong>improved the overall organization, management, and coordination of county personnel and services.</strong></td>
<td>30 (58.8)</td>
<td>20 (39.2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2.0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The appointment of a county administrator in my county has <strong>improved the county budget process</strong>, including the capacity of the county commission to estimate revenues and allocate funds.</td>
<td>33 (64.7)</td>
<td>15 (29.4)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (2.0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>benefits</strong> derived from the appointment of a county administrator in my county <strong>outweigh the costs.</strong></td>
<td>31 (60.8)</td>
<td>17 (33.3)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The appointment of a county administrator in my county has <strong>improved the capacity of the county commission in setting its meeting agenda</strong> and organizing commission meetings.</td>
<td>27 (52.9)</td>
<td>17 (33.3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The appointment of a county administrator in my county has <strong>improved the capacity of the county commission to consider and resolve major policy issues facing county government.</strong></td>
<td>24 (46.2)</td>
<td>20 (38.5)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The appointment of a county administrator in my county has <strong>improved communication between county government and other local governments</strong>, including city, township, school, and other special district officials.</td>
<td>22 (43.1)</td>
<td>21 (41.2)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The appointment of a county administrator in my county has <strong>improved communication between the county commission and other elected county officials.</strong></td>
<td>14 (27.5)</td>
<td>17 (33.3)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (2.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
services and the county budget process. Indeed, all but one of the commissioners agreed with the statement that the “appointment of a county administrator has improved the overall organization, management, and coordination of county personnel and services.” Similarly, 48 of 51 commissioners, or 94.1 percent, agreed that the “benefits derived from the appointment of a county administrator in my county outweigh the costs.”

County commissioners expressed strong, but somewhat less, agreement with statements affirming the value of county administrators with respect to improving the capacity of the county commission in setting its meeting agenda and resolving major policy issues facing county government and improving communication between county government and other local governments. In each case, however, 43 or 44 of 51 commissioners agreed with these statements.

Finally, 31 of the 51 county commissioners responding to the survey, or 60.6 percent, agreed that the “appointment of a county administrator has improved communication between the county commission and other elected officials.” Twenty commissioners either disagreed with the statement, felt there was no difference, or did not have an opinion.

In the survey county commissioners were also asked to rank the primary assignments commonly performed by county administrators with respect to their value and priority to county government in their respective county. The survey forced commissioners to differentiate among the administrator’s assignments based on their value to the county. The results of this survey are presented in Table 3.

“Administering county government” received the highest average ranking from commissioners followed by “performing liaison” and “preparing commission agenda.” Surprisingly, “preparing the county budget” and “recommending county policy” received the lowest ranking. These lower rankings seem in variance with the assessments made by commissioners and compiled in Table 2. The results suggest that commissioners value the administering role of county administrators substantially more than the budget and policy recommending roles. Administering county government—as contrasted

Average Ranking by County Commissioners of the Value and Priority of Primary Assignments Performed by County Administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Assignment</th>
<th>Average Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administering county government, that is, organizing, managing, and coordinating county personnel and services.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing liaison with other local governments, that is, representing county government in communicating with city, township, school, and special district officials.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing commission agenda, that is, assisting the county commission in setting its agenda and organizing commission meetings.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing the county budget, that is, estimating revenues and recommending expenditures.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommending county policy, that is, conducting research and analyzing county issues, identifying policy alternatives, and recommending policy to the county commission.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Commissioners were asked to “rank the duties commonly performed by county administrators with respect to the value and priority to county governments in your county. Rank the duties from 1 to 5, with 1 the highest priority and 5 the lowest priority.”
with recommending budget and policy—may be seen as a constant, ongoing assignment of the county administrator, one more critical to the operation of county government.

### Conclusion

The position of appointed county administrator has dramatically appeared on the landscape of county government in Kansas over the past twenty-five years. Three such positions came into being in the 1974-81 timeframe; another 10 were established from 1983 through 1998. Seven of the state’s largest counties now employ county administrators. The official duties assigned to county administrators may be characterized as preparing budgets, recommending policies, preparing agenda, performing liaison, and coordinating administration. While in practice the work of county administrators may be enlarged or constricted from these formal assignments, boards of county commissioners defend and justify the job of county administrator based on these duties. In assessing the performance of appointed county administrators, county commissioners who have supervised administrators strongly affirm their value in performing these primary assignments.

### Endnotes

1 The term “appointed county administrator” is used generically to describe positions of general administrative authority appointed by and responsible to the board of county commissioners. These positions may be given other titles. For example, in Sedgwick County, the position was originally called “director of administration” and more recently was designated as “county manager.”


3 Those retained by the county commission include: county counselor, county appraiser, county manager, county engineer, noxious weed supervisor, public information officer, intergovernmental relations, and board staff.
At the Kansas Association of Counties, we believe that education and thorough inquiry are integral to the development of good public policy and the responsive delivery of county services. The Association’s commitment to continuous learning is demonstrated in the programs of the Kansas County Government Institute, the KAC’s education program. The Kansas County Government Institute currently offers two certification programs, including the Kansas Leadership Academy for County Commissioners (in partnership with the Kansas County Commissioners Association) and the Certificate Program in Customer Service Excellence.

To obtain information about upcoming workshops, we invite you to visit us on the world-wide web (www.ink.org/public/kac/education.html) or by contacting our Education Program office at (316) 634-2400, or by writing: Kansas Association of Counties, Education Program Office, 3500 N. Rock Road, Building 100, Wichita, KS 67226.