

Local Governance and Reform:

Executive Summary



Local Governance Act was meant to empower chapterhouse governments with legal authority to pursue business development. 20 years later, we have found that chapter houses are not thriving as well as the progenitors thought; only 45 of 110 are certified. With the proposal of regionalization, Dine Policy Institute researched Title 26 to better understand the reality of chapter house governance.

Our findings suggest that chapter houses need support with reaching and after obtaining certification. Certain rules and procedures need to be reworked to provide support chapters in achieving community goals.

Our findings show that a large amount of chapter officials are female. Regionalization will affect the number of female workers by limiting the number of workers in governance. Contrary to popular belief, education ranges among chapter officials. The surveys reveal the list of priorities within chapters with “economic development” leading the priority list that lends more support to the true foundation of Title 26.

Our recommendations stem from our findings. Reworking laws to accommodate chapters is pertinent for development and achieving community goals. Navajo lawmakers need to support chapters by accommodating chapters in the development of their capacities.

Findings

- **Gender** of chapter officials: **76%** are female and **24%** are male.
- **Education** of Chapter Officials: **4%** NA, **26%** high school Education, **26%** A.A./A.S., **22%** B.A./B.S., **22%** M.A/ M.S, and **0%** Ph.C. /Ph.D.
- **“Economic development”** is listed as the community’s top priority followed by **“more housing”**, **“improved land use planning”**, **“improved farming”**, and **“improved chapter management”**.
- **Signature-Approval-System (SAS-164)**
 - Both non-certified and certified chapters are required to obtain approval from overseeing departments. This process might discourage chapter officials from applying for external funds for local projects.
- **Human Capital**
 - Several chapters lack a Community Service Coordinators (CSC) with Account Maintenance Specialists (AMS) doing the work of CSCs.
 - Workforce is temporary.
 - Chapters do not have powers to hire their workers; that is left to the Department of Personal Management (DPM).
- **Not-for-Profit Method**
 - Some chapters create a not-for-profit to achieve community goals. These non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) are quicker than the tribal government with its central management.

- Chapter officials believe that proper decentralization of administrative authority, spending and hiring authorities, and land-use planning will help them accomplish more.

Recommendations:

- Lawmakers should amend the SAS-164 process or rework the law entirely to allow chapter governments the same kind of local spending and fundraising authorities the state and federal governments allow them in not-for-profit organization.
- The hiring of Community Service Coordinators (CSCs) should be delegated to chapter house leadership. CSCs should be treated as political appointees and not subject to the review process of the Department of Personal Management.
- The Division of Community Development should specialize support toward LGA-certified chapters to help them develop ordinances related to tax and business site leasing that conform to Navajo Nation laws.
- The Navajo people needs to reject all proposed referendums that give the power of government reform to a few actors in Window Rock, i.e., “regionalization”.