

San Francisco
Local Agency
Formation Commission

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FACT SHEET

This information is provided in response to the Commission's request for a short explanation of the purposes of LAFCo and its powers. LAFCo has broad powers to study local governments and implement changes as noted below. It is an independent body created by state statute with an independent budget. The City and County of San Francisco is unique in the State because it is a consolidated government. Notwithstanding this fact, there are powers granted to a LAFCo that are relevant to the City and County of San Francisco.

A. Purpose:

Local Agency Formation Commissions ("LAFCo's") are responsible for:

- Efficiently providing government services;

An example of implementation of this power is initiating service studies or governmental reorganization studies involving utilities, fire and/or police protection services, wastewater or potable water services, park and recreation services, and other services providing for the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

- Orderly formation and development of local government agencies based on the needs of the community;

An example of implementation of this power is creating and alternating existing governments, including cities, districts (including municipal services districts (CSD)), and county service areas (CSA).

- Control of urban sprawl; and

An example of implementation of this power is the use of special studies and governmental reorganizations as noted above.

- Maintenance of open-space and agricultural land.

An example of implementation of this power is the use of special studies and governmental reorganizations as noted above, focusing on parks and recreation services, habitat restoration, and conservation.

(Government Code § 56301)

B. LAFCo Powers:

1. Power to Initiate Studies of Existing Services or Government:

LAFCo is responsible for initiating studies of existing agencies to catalogue available resources and determine maximum service areas and capacities. This information enables local agencies to develop in response to local conditions and needs. (Government Code §§ 56301, 56378; San Francisco LAFCo General Policies and Procedures §§ 1.1, 2.6)

2. Power to Review Proposals to Create or Modify Existing Government:

LAFCo is authorized to review, and accept or reject, proposals from other agencies or individuals for the creation of new local government agencies or the restructuring of existing agencies. Such proposals may include the creation, dissolution, annexation, detachment and consolidation of cities and certain districts; the merger and establishment of subsidiary districts; and the reorganization of such agencies. LAFCo oversees boundary changes and service extensions by cities and districts. LAFCo may choose to approve a proposal in whole or in part and has the power to impose conditions on implementation. (Government Code § 56375)

3. Power to Initiate Proposals to Consolidate, Merge, or Dissolve Districts:

LAFCo has the authority to initiate a proposal for the consolidation or dissolution of a special district; merger of a district of limited powers, such as a harbor district or recreation and park district, with a city; establishment of a subsidiary district; or the reorganization of any such entity. (Government Code § 56375)

4. Power to Adopt Spheres of Influence for Government Agencies:

LAFCo promotes order and efficiency by developing a sphere of influence for the city and county and special districts within the county, describing the entity's service area and physical boundaries. (Government Code §§ 56425, 56076) LAFCo determinations concerning agency formation and restructuring must be consistent with applicable spheres of influence. (Government Code § 56375.5)

C. San Francisco LAFCo's Budget:

San Francisco LAFCo is an independent body that controls its own finances and annual budget. (Government Code § 56381; San Francisco LAFCo General Policies and Procedures)