

City of Cortez, Colorado  
**FINANCE DIRECTOR**





## **CORTEZ AND THE FOUR CORNERS**

Just to the west of the majestic San Juan Mountains, high on southwest Colorado’s desert plateau sits the City of Cortez. “Platted in 1886, incorporated in 1902, and becoming a city in 1952, the founding date of Cortez is (open) to interpretation,” according to the city’s budget. Rich in ancient history and natural beauty, Cortez (pop. 9,118, elev. 6,191, 6.21 sq. mi.) is the largest city in, and county seat of, Montezuma County. Residents enjoy access to the massive San Juan National Forest, every manner of outdoor recreation, and the serenity of the high desert and the American West.

The Ancestral Pueblo people made this region their home for some 700 years between the years 600 and 1300 CE. Cortez is nine miles west of Mesa Verde National Park and about three hours from New Mexico’s Chaco Culture National Historical Park (Chaco Canyon). Both sites were major centers of culture for

the Ancestral Puebloans, whose cliff dwellings, including the showpiece Cliff Palace, are remarkably well-preserved at Mesa Verde, inspirational evidence of their rich culture and sophisticated community. The Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation is immediately to the south.

Named for Spanish Conquistador Hernán Cortés, the city is also about 45 minutes northwest of the famous Four Corners Monument, located within the Navajo Nation and the only place where four states meet – one can stand in Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico at the same time. Cortez’s economy benefits from the tourist traffic along U.S. 160 between these two classic destinations, and the city hosts a Colorado Welcome Center.

Cortez residents enjoy a strong sense of community, and they love the serene setting, good weather, high quality of life, and raising families in this quintessential western small town. The city is friendly. Neighbors here look out for one another. Water, mountain, and desert recreation are easily available. Durango is located 45 minutes to the east, and Telluride’s world class skiing is 90 minutes northeast, while Moab’s red rocks, mountain bike trails, and Arches National Park are two hours away in Utah. The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Cortez Balloon Rendezvous will be held in August, and various

other community events occur throughout the year.

The Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 School District serves the city and includes four elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school, along with charter schools and a Montessori School. Southwest Memorial Hospital is located in town, with CommonSpirit - Mercy Hospital 50 miles to the east. The Cortez Municipal Airport (CEZ) and the Durango-La Plata County Airport (DRO) both offer multiple commercial flights daily.

To learn more about the City of Cortez, please visit <https://cortezco.gov>

## **THE ORGANIZATION**

Cortez adopted its home-rule charter in June 1957 and operates under the council-manager form of government. Residents elect a seven-member city council, who sets policy, enacts ordinances, adopts the budget, and hires the city manager, who oversees day-to-day operations. The next municipal elections will be in April 2026.

Cortez is one of Colorado’s best kept secrets, a beautiful, mature, full-service municipality where one might not expect to find one. The city provides services well beyond those provided by others its size, including a regional emergency communications and dispatch center, a fiber optic system (third-party franchisee), residential and commercial refuse /

### **QUICK FACTS**

Population: ..... 9,118  
 Size: ..... 6.21 sq mi  
 Elevation: ..... 6,191 feet  
 FY 2025 Budget: ... \$41M; GF \$14.9M  
 FY 2025 FTE: ..... 150  
 FY 2025 Department Budget: \$865K  
 FY 2025 Department FTE: ..... 6



recycle service, the Cortez Animal Shelter, a public library, and a showpiece parks and recreation system that is the envy of the region.

Since joining Cortez in May, 2021, City Manager Drew Sanders has recruited national-caliber talent to an already strong leadership team. Together with Cortez’s finance director and department, and an expert team of outside auditors, Mr. Sanders has overseen a dramatic turnaround in the city’s finances. The team has helped restore public trust by painstakingly reconstructing six years of audited financial statements, retired millions in debt early (leaving the city “debt-free,”) and implemented the ClearGov budget management system, which institutionalizes transparency in budgeting. The city’s FY 2025 budget of \$41 million (GF \$14.9 million) supports 150 FTE.

**THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT AND THE DIRECTOR**

Reporting directly to the city manager, the finance director oversees a budget of \$865,000 and a department of 6.0 FTE:

the director, a payroll/sales tax administrator, accounting technician II (payroll), a utility billing (water and refuse) specialist, a grants administrator, and a front desk/AR technician. The city uses Caselle as its primary governmental accounting software, including payroll. The city’s enterprise funds include refuse and recycling, water, and the airport, which operates under its own revenue streams. The city has dedicated sales tax funding for street improvements, equipment, and the recreation center. The city enjoys a strong financial position with enough cash on hand to fund operations for nearly 300 days.

The finance department is the strategic business partner of every other city department – the director must understand each of their unique business needs, collaborate with them, and provide teaching, coaching, and guidance. The department provides timely, accurate financial information to the residents of Cortez, the city council, the city manager, and all city departments. The next director will inherit a

dedicated, experienced team and a department where work-life balance is encouraged. Hybrid work schedules are common.

Issues facing the department include a shift to a true long-term finance strategy, especially identifying a realistic path to funding significant capital improvements and infrastructure needs, as well as a need for sophistication and modernization of the finance function throughout the city.

**QUALIFICATIONS**

A bachelor’s degree in accounting, business administration, or a related field, and three years of governmental finance experience, including supervisory experience, are required. Required experience includes accounting, auditing, budget preparation and administration, data processing, finance, financial reporting, investments, and taxation. Experience in local government finance is strongly preferred. A graduate degree, GFOA credentialing, and experience with Caselle governmental accounting

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN**

Absent unforeseen circumstances, the recruitment will follow the schedule below. Be mindful of the filing deadline and final interview dates, which are unlikely to change.

**SCHEDULE**

Filing Deadline: .....	April 20, 2025	Recommendation of Candidates: .....	May 6, 2025
Preliminary Interviews: .....	April 28-29, 2025	Finalist Interview Process: .....	May 14-15, 2025

software are all preferred. At its sole option, the city will consider an equivalent combination of education and experience.

### **THE IDEAL CANDIDATE**

Cortez's next finance director is a true public servant and someone who is passionate about local government finance. The city manager is looking for an effective leader and manager, who is deeply committed to providing excellent customer service, taking personal pride in a job well done, and maintaining high professional standards.

The preferred candidate has a strong strategic financial background, a superior work ethic, and a commitment to the health and well-being of the organization. She or he is technically competent in all aspects of government finance with experience in as many of the following areas as possible: accounting, bonding, budgeting, capital project finance, internal controls, investment of public funds (COLOTRUST), procurement, purchasing, tax increment financing, all relevant state laws, payroll, retirement and benefits costs, and sources of revenue of every kind

and type, including grants. The successful candidate thinks holistically, taking these individual aspects of the finance function and expertly coordinating them as part of the city's comprehensive finance strategy.

The ideal candidate is both a strategic and tactical thinker with good situational awareness. She or he is fiscally disciplined, with good business sense and significant experience developing and managing budgets. It is essential for the next finance director to understand Cortez's recent financial history and the tremendous efforts required over the past four years to restore public trust and to return Cortez to financial health. A mindset of guardianship, stewardship, and a commitment to maintaining strong internal financial controls are required.

The preferred candidate is an expert collaborator and team-builder, someone skilled at developing and maintaining relationships. The next director will also do their part to be a highly effective member of the leadership team, supporting the city manager, avoiding siloes, and fostering

strong relationships with every team member.

The next director is an effective departmental manager, committed to staff development, cross-training, and maximizing the potential of every team member. She or he delegates effectively and holds team members accountable without micromanaging. The preferred candidate may also represent the city on one or more local or regional boards.

The ideal candidate has expert-level presentation and communications skills, with the ability to communicate complex budget and finance concepts in a manner that is easily understood by anyone, regardless of the listener's experience level or sophistication. The preferred candidate must be unflappable, direct, and candid, with the ability to say "no" diplomatically, respectfully, and firmly.

The ideal candidate is calm and genuine, with good judgment, high emotional intelligence, and common sense, and applies these traits in the development and oversight of finance policies. The ideal candidate is friendly, open, honest, and approachable, with a sense of humor. She or he is quietly confident and listens actively. The ideal candidate intends to come to Cortez to have an impact and develop a legacy.

### **TOTAL COMPENSATION**

The hiring range for this position is \$120,000 to \$160,000, and appointment will be made depending upon the qualifications of the selected candidate. In addition, the following benefits are provided: health (city pays approx. 90%, employee, 10%) and dental (city pays 100%) insurances; life insurance; mandatory 5% supplemental retirement, matched 100% by the city, plus optional voluntary deferred compensation plan; vacation, sick, and discretionary leave, plus 13 paid holidays; and employee assistance program. Relocation assistance and possible additional incentives are subject to negotiation.

### **APPLY**

To be considered for this excellent professional opportunity, please email only your cover letter and resume to [apply@columbialtd.com](mailto:apply@columbialtd.com), naming your files Last.First.CL and Last.First.Resume. Receipt of your submittal will be acknowledged within two business days. All applicants will be updated on their status following the Recommendation of Candidates.

If you have any questions regarding the recruitment process, or this opportunity, please feel free to call Andrew Gorgey directly at (970) 987-1238. For more information, visit the Columbia Ltd website: <https://columbialtd.com>.