



**EVERY STUDENT.
EVERY DAY.**

P.O. Box R
400 North Elm Street
Cortez, Colorado 81321
Phone: (970) 565-7282
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www.cortez.k12.co.us

Request for Proposals: Executive Search Services for Superintendent

Issued by: Board of Education, Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1

RFP Number: RFP-20261029-1

Issue Date: Thursday, October 15, 2026

Proposal Deadline: Thursday, October 29, 2026, 2:00 p.m. Mountain Time

Designated RFP Contact:

Debra Ramsey, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and School Board
Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1
400 North Elm Street, Cortez, Colorado 81321
(970) 564-4187

bidinfo@cortez.k12.co.us

Introduction and Purpose

The Board of Education of Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1 (the "Board" or the "District") invites qualified firms to submit proposals for executive search services to assist in the recruitment and selection of a permanent Superintendent for the District. The selected firm will serve in an advisory capacity to the Board. The appointment of the Superintendent is the sole authority of the Board and will be made by vote at a properly noticed public meeting. The Board's goal is a Superintendent start date no later than July 1, 2027. Firms may recommend changes to the anticipated timeline based on their experience.

District Profile

Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1 is a rural public school district headquartered in Cortez, Colorado, in Montezuma County, approximately 40 miles from the Four Corners. The District serves approximately 1,900 students from preschool through grade 12 in six District-operated schools, including one preschool, three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The District also authorizes two charter schools, Southwest Open School and Pleasant View Charter School.

The District serves a diverse student population, including significant numbers of Native American and Hispanic/Latino students, and works with families, community organizations, local governments, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. The District is currently led by an interim superintendent. This RFP concerns the search for a permanent Superintendent.

DIRECTORS: JUSTINE BAYLES, LARA MARIA BLAIR, DR. LAURA DEWITT, JASON HALL, MIKE LYNCH, BARBARA MATE, DR. JOSHUA SHUMWAY

M-CSD Re-1 Vision: Montezuma-Cortez schools inspire resilience, lifelong learning, and civic purpose by fostering high expectations, critical thinking, and accountability in a safe, and diverse environment.

M-CSD Re-1 Mission: As we strive to become a district of choice, we celebrate diversity, build meaningful relationships, and open doors to personal growth and a world of possibilities for every student.

RFP Schedule

Activity	Date and Time
RFP issued	Thursday, October 15, 2026
Optional preproposal meeting	
Deadline for written questions	Thursday, October 22, 2026, 4:00 p.m. MT
Final addendums issued, if any	Monday, October 26, 2026
Proposals due	Thursday, October 29, 2026, 2:00 p.m. MT
Firms selected for interviews notified	Monday, November 2, 2026
Firm interviews with the Board (public meeting)	Tuesday, November 3, 2026, 6:00 PM
Board action to select firm	On or before Tuesday, December 1, 2026
Contract executed	On or before Monday, December 14, 2026

The District may change this schedule by written addendum.

Anticipated Search Timeline

Phase	Target Period
Planning meeting with the Board; stakeholder engagement	December 2026 to January 2027
Board adopts leadership profile; position posted	January 2027
Application period closes; screening and reference checks	February 2027
Board interviews; finalist(s) named publicly	March 2027
Finalist engagement; appointment no sooner than 14 days after public notice of finalist(s)	March to April 2027
Superintendent begins service	No later than July 1, 2027

Questions, Addenda, and Communication

All questions must be submitted in writing by email to the Designated RFP Contact by the question deadline. The District will answer questions by a written addendum distributed to all firms that have requested the RFP and posted at www.cortez.k12.co.us. Only written addenda are binding. Each proposal must acknowledge receipt of all addenda.

From the issue date until the Board selects a firm, proposers shall not communicate about this RFP with any Board member, District employee, or District representative other than through the Designated RFP Contact and at the Board-scheduled interviews. A violation may result in disqualification.

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District Priorities Relevant to the Search

The Board will finalize a leadership profile using stakeholder input gathered during the search. The priorities the next Superintendent will be expected to lead include, but are not limited to:

- **Student achievement:** improving outcomes for all students, strengthening literacy and core instruction, and closing gaps between student groups.
- **Fiscal stewardship and workforce:** sustainable budgeting, competitive compensation, and recruitment and retention of qualified staff.
- **Facilities:** long-range planning for the condition and future use of District facilities.
- **Community and tribal partnerships:** transparent communication and productive relationships with families, staff, the Cortez community, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and local partners.
- **Governance and organizational effectiveness:** an effective working relationship with the Board, a clear central office structure, and alignment of operations with Board policy.

Scope of Services

The selected firm shall provide, at a minimum, the following services:

- **Planning:** meet with the Board to set the search process, timeline, roles, and communication plan, in compliance with the Colorado Open Meetings Law and the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA).
- **Compensation:** advise the Board on a competitive salary and benefits range using comparable Colorado and regional data.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** design and facilitate opportunities for input (such as surveys, focus groups, and forums) for staff, students, families, community members, tribal representatives, and partners, and provide the Board with a written summary of the results.
- **Leadership profile:** draft a leadership profile and position announcement reflecting stakeholder input and Board priorities for Board adoption at a public meeting.
- **Recruitment:** advertise the position regionally and nationally, and actively recruit a broad, diverse, and qualified pool of candidates. All recruitment, screening, and recommendations shall be conducted without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other status protected by federal or Colorado law.
- **Screening:** receive and manage applications; verify credentials, Colorado licensure or eligibility requirements, and employment history; conduct reference checks and, with candidate consent, background checks in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act; and present the Board with recommended candidates and supporting documentation.

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- **Confidentiality and public notice:** keep applicant records confidential as required by C.R.S. 24-72-204(3)(a)(XI); assist the Board in making its decision of naming one or more finalists; and ensure the list of finalist(s) is made public at least 14 days before appointment, with no offer made before that notice, as required by C.R.S. 24-6-402(3.5).
- **Interviews and finalist engagement:** develop interview protocols and questions, coordinate Board interviews, and organize finalist engagement such as community forums and site visits.
- **Contract and transition:** assist the Board, in coordination with the Board's legal counsel, in negotiating the Superintendent's employment contract and support the transition.
- **Board meetings:** attend Board meetings at key milestones, in person or virtually as mutually agreed. The District will provide advance notice of meeting dates.
- **Placement guarantee:** provide a guarantee to conduct a new search at no additional professional fee if the appointed Superintendent separates from the District within a stated period.

Proposal Content

Proposals shall be organized in the following order and shall not exceed 20 pages, excluding résumés, references, and required forms.

1. **Cover letter** signed by a person authorized to bind the firm, acknowledging all addenda and stating that the proposal is valid for 90 days.
2. **Firm qualifications:** firm history; number of K-12 superintendent searches completed in the past five years, identifying those in Colorado, rural districts, and districts of comparable size; percentage of searches resulting in a placement; average time from contract to accepted offer; and the percentage of placed superintendents still serving in that position after three years.
3. **Search team:** the lead consultant and all staff assigned, with résumés, relevant experience, and availability during the search period.
4. **Approach and timeline:** a detailed description of the proposed process and timeline; the stakeholder engagement plan; how the firm will work with the Board at each phase, including interviews, site visits, and forums; how the firm builds a broad and diverse candidate pool; and how the firm ensures compliance with Colorado open meetings and open records requirements.
5. **Contingencies:** the conditions under which the timeline may be modified or the search terminated, and the process the firm would follow if the candidate pool is not viable or a finalist withdraws, with an example from a past search.
6. **References:** three K-12 clients for whom the firm completed a superintendent search in the past 36 months, preferably comparable districts, with contact names, titles, telephone numbers, and email addresses.

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7. **Fee proposal:** a fixed professional fee; itemized reimbursable expenses (advertising, travel, background checks, and other costs) with a not-to-exceed amount; the payment schedule; the terms of the placement guarantee; and the total cost, by major category, of the firm's three most recent superintendent searches.
8. **Required forms:** Attachment A (Proposer Certification and Conflict of Interest Disclosure), a current IRS Form W-9, and a certificate of insurance or written evidence of the ability to obtain the required coverage.
9. **Exceptions:** any exceptions to the terms of this RFP. Terms not identified as exceptions are deemed accepted.

Evaluation and Selection

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criterion	Points
Experience and record with comparable K-12 superintendent searches	25
Proposed approach, stakeholder engagement, and timeline	25
Qualifications of the proposed search team	20
Cost and overall value	20
References	10
Total	100

The Board may invite one or more firms to interview at a public meeting. The Board will select a firm by vote at a public meeting and will award the contract to the proposal it determines to be most advantageous to the District. The District is not required to select the lowest-cost proposal. The District may determine to not select any proposal.

Submission Instructions

Submit one electronic copy of the complete proposal as a single PDF by email to bidinfo@cortez.k12.co.us with the subject line "Superintendent Search RFP: [Firm Name]" no later than **Thursday, October 29, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. Mountain Time.**

Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered. The District is not responsible for delays in email or delivery. The District will confirm receipt by email. After the deadline, the District will record the names of all firms that submitted proposals. The contents of proposals will not be released until the Board selects a firm, except as required by law.

General Terms and Conditions

Reservation of rights. The District reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to accept or reject any or all proposals in whole or in part; to waive minor irregularities; to request additional information or clarification from any firm; to negotiate with any firm; to modify or cancel this RFP; and to award to a firm other than the lowest-cost proposer.

Proposal costs. Each firm bears all costs of preparing and submitting its proposal, attending interviews, and negotiating a contract.

Proposal validity. Proposals are irrevocable for 90 calendar days after the proposal deadline.

Public records. Proposals become public records subject to CORA, C.R.S. 24-72-200.1 et seq. Information a firm believes to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information under C.R.S. 24-72-204(3)(a)(IV) must be clearly marked and separated. The District will determine whether marked information may be withheld under CORA. Marking an entire proposal confidential is not acceptable.

Non-collusion. By submitting a proposal, the firm certifies that the proposal was prepared independently, without collusion with any other proposer, and that its prices and terms have not been disclosed to any other proposer.

Conflicts of interest. Each firm must disclose, on Attachment A, any familial, financial, or business relationship between the firm, its principals, or assigned staff and any Board member, District employee, or person likely to be a candidate. The selected firm shall not, for three years after the appointment, recruit the appointed Superintendent for another position without the Board's written consent.

Nondiscrimination. The firm shall comply with all applicable federal and state nondiscrimination laws, including Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act.

Insurance. Before contract execution, the selected firm shall provide certificates of insurance showing, at a minimum: professional liability of \$1,000,000 per claim; commercial general liability of \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 aggregate, naming the District as additional insured; and workers' compensation as required by Colorado law. The District's risk manager may adjust these requirements in the final contract.

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Indemnification. The selected firm shall indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the District, its Board members, officers, employees, and agents from claims, losses, damages, and expenses, including reasonable attorney fees, to the extent caused by the negligent acts, errors, omissions, or willful misconduct of the firm, its employees, or its subcontractors.

Governmental immunity. Nothing in this RFP or any resulting contract waives the immunities, protections, or limitations of liability available to the District under the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act, C.R.S. 24-10-101 et seq.

Appropriation. Financial obligations of the District payable after the current fiscal year are contingent upon funds being appropriated, budgeted, and otherwise made available, consistent with Article X, Section 20 of the Colorado Constitution.

Independent contractor. The selected firm is an independent contractor and not an employee or agent of the District.

Candidate information. The firm shall safeguard all candidate and District information, use it only for this search, and comply with all applicable privacy and consumer reporting laws.

Force majeure. Neither party is liable for delay or failure to perform caused by events beyond its reasonable control, provided the affected party gives prompt written notice. The District may suspend or terminate the contract if such an event prevents performance.

Contract. The selected firm will be required to execute the District's professional services agreement. This RFP and the firm's proposal will be incorporated into that agreement.

Governing law and venue. This RFP and any resulting contract are governed by the laws of the State of Colorado. Venue for any action lies in the District Court for Montezuma County, Colorado.

Finality. The Board's selection of a firm is final.

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Attachment A: Proposer Certification and Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Firm name: _____

Address: _____

Contact name: _____ Telephone number: _____

Email: _____

Question 1. Does any owner, officer, employee, or consultant of the firm who would work on this search have a familial relationship (spouse, partner, parent, child, sibling, or in-law) or a financial or business relationship with any member of the Board of Education of Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1?

Yes ____ No ____

If yes, identify the firm representative, the Board member, and the nature of the relationship:

Question 2. Does any owner, officer, employee, or consultant of the firm who would work on this search have a familial, financial, or business relationship with any District administrator or employee, or currently represent or advise any person employed by the District?

Yes ____ No ____

If yes, identify the firm representative, the District employee, and the nature of the relationship:

Question 3. Has the firm or any of its principals been debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from contracting with any public entity in the past five years?

Yes ____ No ____

If yes, explain:

Certification. I certify that I am authorized to submit this proposal on behalf of the firm; that the proposal was prepared independently and without collusion; that the information in this disclosure is true and complete to the best of my knowledge; and that the firm will promptly disclose in writing any relationship that arises after submission.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____ Title: _____

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