



invites your interest in the position of

Assistant Director of Finance



City of Surprise – The Jewel of the West Valley

Surprise, located just 45 minutes west of downtown Phoenix, was a former small farming village that now encompasses 108 square miles, including urban and commercial developments, ranches, industrial sites, and business parks. Surprise has grown from 500 residents to a city of over 140,000 people, evolving from a small-town government to a regional governmental entity.

For an overview of the City of Surprise, view the video on the Human Resources Department's website [here](#).

City Government

The City of Surprise operates under the Council/Manager form of government. Policymaking and legislative authority are vested in a governing council consisting of the Mayor and six Council Members. The Council is responsible, among other things, for passing ordinances, appointing committees, adopting the budget, and appointing the City Manager, the City Clerk, City Attorney, and the Presiding Judge. The City Manager is responsible for carrying out the policies and ordinances of the Council, for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the City, and for selecting department directors. The Council is elected on a non-partisan basis. Council members serve four-year staggered terms, with three elected alternately every two years. The Mayor is elected at large every four years, while the other Council members are elected by district.

The City of Surprise provides a full range of services, including police and fire protection, roadway maintenance and construction, recreational and cultural activities, as well as general administrative services. Sanitation, water, stormwater, ground ambulance, and sewer services are provided to many of the residents through the City's enterprise funds. The City provides street lighting for existing and new areas through legally formed street lighting districts.

The City's annual budget for FY23 is \$669M with a total workforce of 1,100. A city-wide organization chart may be viewed [here](#).



Economic Condition and Outlook

Local Economy

For the City of Surprise, the financial outlook was surprisingly better than anticipated, and the contingency built into the budget in past years was utilized. This allowed the City to keep up with the growing needs of adding public safety funding and setting aside one-time funds for Public Safety Pension debt, future land purchases, and park improvement and expansion projects. The economic position coming out of the global pandemic is one of optimism in Surprise as City Leadership and the community both adjust to the new normal.

Despite the global economic impacts of the pandemic, the City's year-end financial results were strong in both sales tax revenues, population growth, and commercial and residential development. The General Fund ended the year with sales tax exceeding budget by 32.3% or \$16M. In addition, the City received \$16.3 million of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding in FY2020, and the City was able to continue utilizing those funds in FY2021. During FY21, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law to provide additional relief from COVID-19. The City was allocated and received \$15.5M of ARPA funding.

Throughout the past year and continuing into 2022, the City of Surprise experienced residential population growth and significant residential and commercial permit activity. The City continues to exceed the statewide average in population growth and the trend is expected to continue based on the availability of land within the City's planning area. This results in a greater number of consumers and a larger proportion of state shared revenues. The increase in commercial square footage allows for a greater capture of potential sales tax revenues from the increased consumer base. These have combined to result in a 28.0% increase in sales tax collections while state shared sales tax revenues increased by 14.9% over the previous year. The population and commercial square footage growth has been a factor in the improved economic performance for the City.

Long-Term Financial Planning

The City continues to plan for investment in maintaining facilities, infrastructure, and equipment that allow for the continued delivery of high-quality services to the resident of Surprise. During FY2021, the City established a Public Safety Pension Reserve dedicated for the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS) unfunded liability. Council approved a one-time funding of \$13M, and an update to the Comprehensive Financial Management Policies that provides ongoing pension reserve funding generated from year savings from both the police and fire departments.

Major Initiatives

On November 7, 2017, the voters of the City of Surprise approved three General Obligation Bond questions in the areas of Public Safety, Traffic Congestion Mitigation, and Pavement Preservation. The three questions represent ten capital improvement projects for a total authorized bond amount of \$59.5M.

On May 15, 2018, the voters of the City of Surprise approved the acquisition of a local water company that operates in the City's northern planning area and future water service area. The acquisition will provide the City with the company's existing water infrastructure and grow the City's allocation of Colorado River water by more than 38%. The process for the acquisition of the water company has begun and is expected to be finalized within the next few years.

In fiscal year 2019, the City completed a five-year comprehensive utility rate study of the Water, Sewer, and Sanitation Funds. This study resulted in rates for the Water and Sewer funds remaining unchanged for the next five fiscal years, 2020-2024. The study resulted in Sanitation Fund rates increasing from \$16.96 in fiscal year 2019 to \$23.70 in fiscal year 2024, an increase of 39.74%. In addition, the Development Impact Fee Study was updated. In conjunction with the study update, a 10-year land use assumptions and infrastructure improvements plan was developed and approved by the City Council laying out planned projects for which development fees may be used to fund. The infrastructure improvement plan includes necessary public services for Parks and Recreation, Police, Fire, Water System, Water Resources, and Wastewater (Sewer).

Bond Rating

S&P Global Ratings assigned its 'AA' long-term rating to the City of Surprise's anticipated \$17.485 million series 2020 general obligation (GO) bonds. At the same time, S&P Global Ratings affirmed its 'AA' long-term rating on the City's GO debt outstanding and its 'AA' issuer credit rating (ICR) on the city. The outlook is stable. This credit rating also the City's participation in the broad and diverse Phoenix economic area, as well as trend of strong financial performance and very strong available reserves. The stable outlook reflects the expectation the city will be able to maintain very strong available reserves despite a potentially challenged revenue environment.

The rating further reflects the City's

- ◆ Strong economy, with access to a broad and diverse metropolitan statistical area (MSA);
- ◆ Strong management, with good financial policies and practices under the Financial Management Assessment (FMA) methodology;
- ◆ Adequate budgetary performance, with a slight operating surplus in the general fund and an operating surplus at the total governmental fund level; and
- ◆ Very strong budgetary flexibility, with an available fund balance in fiscal 2019 of 34% of operating expenditures.

Economic Condition and Outlook *continued*

The City continues to work in partnership with Ottawa University Arizona (located in the Civic Center Campus) and the surrounding landowners to develop the City Center. In the last year, this has seen the completion of the Residential Housing Facility and the O'Dell Center which includes athletic facilities for the University. Additionally, the Texas Rangers have completed construction on their team housing complex, Rangers' Village. The Kansas City Royals are slated to finish construction on their team housing complex, The Fountains at Surprise Center in January of 2022. Both projects are multi-story team complexes located at City Center near Surprise Stadium. Finally, the City continues to see development in the Entertainment District of City Center.

During fiscal year 2021, a number of projects were completed that strengthened the City's ability to provide services to the public. The construction of Fire Station 304 was completed in early FY21, this station will serve the City's northwestern area that is rapidly developing. In addition, the City finished construction on Fire Station 308, which is located in the City's robust Industrial Park. The City also finished three major road improvement projects that will help to mitigate traffic congestion and increase mobility in the City. In addition to art, the City also dedicated funding for the construction of a new park and design is currently underway on the renovations for the Surprise Community Park.

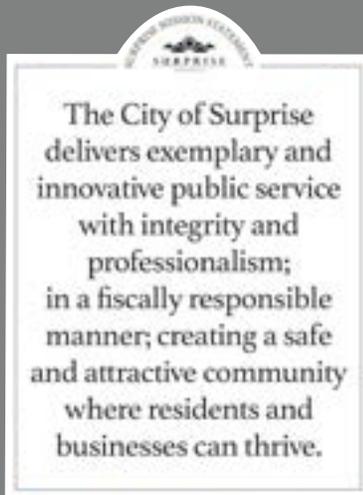


The Finance Department

The City's Finance Department is a robust operation including the following areas: accounting, accounts payable, accounts receivable, bonds, budget, business licenses, development fees, procurement, utility billing (including rates and charges). Total staff in the department is 61.

A current organization chart for the Finance Department may be seen [here](#).

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the City of Surprise for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020.



Mission

The City of Surprise Finance Department strives to be a professional, proactive leader, identifying issues and offering innovative solutions while providing high-quality customer service.

Value Objectives

Integrity, Accountability & Respect

We build trust and respect with all stakeholders through responsible stewardship of public resources.

Customer Focused

We serve our customers by providing an accurate, compassionate, and approachable manner.

Listen & Communicate

We strive and understand the needs of our customers so we can provide a timely response in an accurate, complete and respectful manner.

Continuous Improvement of Employees & Services

We establish an environment which improves us and our services through staff involvement, education, and development.

Overview of Position

The position of Assistant Director of Finance is an at-will employee reporting directly to the Director of Finance. This position is an excellent opportunity for a top candidate to gain increased responsibilities and broad exposure within a dynamic municipal organization.



Key responsibilities of the position include:

- ◆ Supervise and support staff to include prioritizing and assigning work; conducting performance evaluations; make hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations;
- ◆ Assist in directing the activities of the department to include overseeing the accounting, accounts payable, and utility billing divisions;
- ◆ Provide direction and guidance to external consultants and/or vendors engaged in studies and projects on behalf of the City; initiate and monitor the progress of special studies to undertaken by internal staff;
- ◆ Review departmental operations to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of services and/or programs;
- ◆ Serve as liaison with employees and contractors; represent the city at a variety of meetings, public events, training sessions, on committees, and/or other related events;
- ◆ Direct, review, interpret, and analyze a variety of information, data, and reports, work papers, communications, schedules, and/or statements to and from internal departments, external agencies, and/or other applicable organizations in accordance with Generally Accepted Governmental Accounting (GAAP) Standards and makes recommendations and presentations based on findings;
- ◆ Oversee and participate in the analysis of information; identify issues and discrepancies; conduct needs analysis; projects consequences of proposed actions; formulate recommendations based on findings; implement priorities, work processes, and procedures; and/or, train individuals on established or modified organizational practices and/or procedures;
- ◆ Direct the preparation of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), annual audit of financial statements, ensuring compliance with applicable laws, regulations and audit requirements based on area of responsibility; and
- ◆ Direct the development of division policies and procedures for assigned areas of responsibility.

The Ideal Candidate

The successful candidate for the position of Assistant Director of Finance will have demonstrated the ability to provide departmental and organizational leadership. Additional preferential qualifications include managing/supervising the daily operations of a finance department including accounting, utility billing, accounts payable and receivable, and revenue collections. While this position requires a high degree of skills and oversight, it also serves as a working manager.

Other characteristics of the ideal candidate include:

- ◆ Strong ethical framework to uphold the public trust while ensuring accountability, customer service, and efficiency.
- ◆ Proven leadership skills to select, appoint, supervise, develop, and evaluate department staff.
- ◆ Experience with strategic financial plan development, implementation, and outcomes.
- ◆ Working knowledge of public finance including debt issuance, restructuring, and working with bond and rating agencies.
- ◆ Demonstrated experience and interest in overseeing the finances of enterprise functions (water, wastewater, distribution, and collection).
- ◆ Knowledge of municipal governmental accounting principles and practices including Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures (GAAP) and Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) criteria.
- ◆ Experience organizing complex projects with multiple tasks, deadlines, and partners to ensure timely delivery.
- ◆ Knowledge of the federal, state, and local challenges facing cities and financial compliance.
- ◆ Effective communication skills that clearly convey information and ideas verbally and in writing to individuals or groups in a manner that meets audience needs and leads to understanding.
- ◆ Highly adaptable, flexible, and politically astute in dealing with the ever-changing expectations of the City.



Qualifications

Education: Bachelor's Degree in Accounting, Finance, or Business or related degree.

Experience: Five years professional experience and three years of progressively responsible management experience is required.

Compensation and Benefits

The City of Surprise provides a competitive compensation and benefits package. The base annual salary for this exempt position is up to \$150,499 depending on experience. In addition to base salary, the City of Surprise will also offer a one-time compensation incentive for the selected candidate.

For more information on benefits offered by the City of Surprise, visit the Employee Benefits Guide [here](#).



To Be Considered

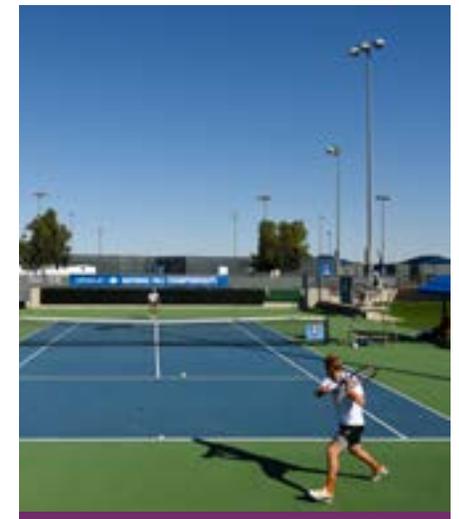
This is a confidential recruitment and will be handled accordingly throughout the various stages of the process. Candidates should be aware that references will not be contacted until mutual interest has been established. Interested candidates are encouraged to **apply by Monday, October 31, 2022**. Electronic submittals should be submitted to Ralph Andersen & Associates at apply@ralphandersen.com and should include a compelling cover letter and comprehensive resume.

Ralph Andersen & Associates will conduct preliminary interviews as applications are received. Video technology will be utilized for Round #1 interviews. Only the most highly qualified candidates will be invited for an on-site panel interview (Round #2). Every effort will be made to accommodate top candidates for in-person panel interviews.

Confidential inquiries are welcomed. Contact Ms. Heather Renschler, Project Director or Mr. John Slaughter, Co-Project Director at (916) 630-4900 for additional information. Alternatively, candidates may send an email to scheduling@ralphandersen.com to request an appointment to discuss questions about the position or related inquiries.



The City of Surprise is an equal opportunity employer



www.surpriseaz.gov