



Laura J. Cortez

M.B.A. & Ph.D.

CEO & Founder of Cortez Consulting

Dr. Laura J. Cortez is the CEO and Founder of Cortez Consulting, a public engagement firm in Austin, Texas. Laura is from the Rio Grande Valley and came to Austin in 1999 as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer. She earned her B.S. in Environmental Science from Drake University, and later went on to earn her MBA from St. Edward's University and a PhD in higher education administration from the University of Texas at Austin. Laura spent fourteen years in higher education serving as a scholar-practitioner.

In 2012, Laura served as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Texas at Austin where she served as the Director of Public Engagement. In this role, she led one of the City's most comprehensive public engagement projects known as the Colony Park Sustainable Community Initiative. Laura credits this experience with changing her professional trajectory and after completing the project she launched her own firm, Cortez Consulting. Today, Dr. Cortez is designing new ways to effectively engage the community, particularly those individuals who are traditionally left out of the public planning process. Cortez Consulting is involved with an array of projects across the City of Austin working to build positive relationships within the community.

During her free time, Dr. Cortez is active in the local community. She is a graduate of Leadership Austin Essential Program and serves on the board of the Austin Parks Foundation and Leadership Austin.

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