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Cultural Tourism Final

March 29th, 2023

Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta

Executive Summary

For the marketing plan I will be focusing on the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in October. The Balloon Fiesta brings in an average of 850,000-900,000 a year. In 2019 there were 866,414 and there was about a 10% decline in attendance in 2021 with about 783,866 people attending after 2020 was cancelled.¹ The Fiesta brings in spectators and pilots with their balloons from all over the world. In 2017 there were 21 countries represented in the festival not accounting for spectators.² The festival itself focuses primarily on hot air balloons with several types of contests and events as well as wood carving during the 8-day event. Some of the events happen every day such as dawn patrol show which is when a few hot air balloons take off before sunrise and check on the weather conditions and visibility of landing. There is usually music playing, and it is a tradition to do it every morning for practical reasons. There is the morning glow where several balloons line up and light their burners before sunrise and do synchronized burns. Mass ascension were hundreds of balloons launching at the same time, which leads into balloon launch where more balloons take off. Then there is an evening balloon glow at night where they do a similar thing as the morning glow but after dusk and are then followed by laser shows or fireworks.³ Throughout the fiesta there are rodeos or competitions such as a balloon race, special shape balloon events, other flying competitions.⁴ The food that is on the grounds of the fiesta is standard fair type food hotdogs, hamburgers, etc.

This plan outlines a way to bring more cultural activities into the balloon fiesta that will lead to more revenue for the state, city and local businesses and organizations. Including local food vendors, offering onsite classes or demonstrations such as roasting green chiles or pottery making. Including dance performances from local tribes and having local artists perform at the balloon concert. There will be collaboration with the sightseeing tours and the balloon fiesta transportation to the grounds. There will also be discounts on museums and local attractions for people who purchase tickets to the fiesta. All these changes will bring in money all around and give the people coming in for the balloons an opportunity to be cultural tourists of the area. This partnership and collaboration could just be the start of a cultural arts initiative around the state. The New Mexico department of Cultural Affairs estimates that the arts and cultural industries in the state employ about 43,031 persons which equals to 1 of every 18 jobs in the state or 5.5%. If they

¹ Pardo, Annalisa. "Around 784,000 Visitors Attended Balloon Fiesta This Year." KRQE NEWS 13 - Breaking News, Albuquerque News, New Mexico News, Weather, and Videos, KRQE NEWS 13 - Breaking News, Albuquerque News, New Mexico News, Weather, and Videos, 2 Nov. 2021, <https://www.krqe.com/news/balloon-fiesta/around-784000-visitors-attended-balloon-fiesta-this-year/>.

² "Final Stats - Balloon Fiesta." Balloonfiesta.com, https://balloonfiesta.com/files/galleries/Final_Stats.pdf.

³ Comments, Jessica Norah 199. "Ultimate Guide to the Albuquerque Balloon Festival in New Mexico." Independent Travel Cats, 26 Aug. 2022, <https://independenttravelcats.com/attending-albuquerque-balloon-fiesta/>.

⁴ "Event Schedule." Balloon Fiesta | Event Schedule, <https://balloonfiesta.com/Event-Schedule>.

include arts and cultural education and industries linked to unique culture and heritage of the state, then there are about 76,780 persons employed which equals to about 1 in 10 jobs or 9.8% in the state. The arts and culture sector brings in on average \$5.6 billion to the state economy. If we can increase visibility to these organizations, then those amounts can increase and bring more jobs and more money into the state economy.⁵

Mission Statement

The current mission statement of The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is “to conduct the world’s premier ballooning event while renewing friendships and promoting camaraderie among all participants and promoting the sport of ballooning, the City of Albuquerque and the State of New Mexico, nationally and internationally.”⁶ It would be worth adding a section about community engagement and inclusivity amongst all participants.

Goals and Objectives of Cultural Tourism

The goal and objectives of this specific project is to take an already established event within the community of Albuquerque and build up more engagement from the community and local businesses and organizations. The Fiesta brings in almost 900,000 attendees from all over the world and there is currently a real lack of community representation at the 9-day event. I want to build a better relationship with this organization and the local community.

Situation Analysis

Strengths:

The largest strength that the Fiesta has is world recognition. People come from all over the world to attend this event and over 20 countries were represented just by the balloon pilots alone in 2017.⁷ Bringing in an average of 850,000-900,000 spectators every year is a feat and shows just how important this event is to the tourism and economy of New Mexico and specifically Albuquerque. Another strength of the organization is the current partnerships with the State of New Mexico and the City of Albuquerque. With an annual event of this size, it would be difficult to run without local government support. Having this ongoing relationship with government also makes it easier to build partnerships with local communities and address problems that can be fixed with the government's assistance. The final strength mentioned here is that the Fiesta has a designated location and space for the event. The Balloon Fiesta Park is an event space that has other purposes such as The Premier Park of Albuquerque, the Balloon Fiesta Park is utilized year-round for events such as: ballooning, sports practices and games, golf practice, model aircraft flying, movie productions, weddings, graduation parties, walks and runs, bicycle racing, company picnics, concerts, and special events.⁸ The Fiesta organizers AIBF pay the city \$100,000 a year to use Balloon Fiesta Park, the landfill, and a portion of parking but it is at a

⁵ “Culture's Impact in New Mexico.” New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, <https://www.newmexicoculture.org/about/cultures-impact>.

⁶ *Mission Statement*, <https://balloonfiesta.com/Mission-Statement>.

⁷ “Final Stats - Balloon Fiesta.” *Balloonfiesta.com*, https://balloonfiesta.com/files/galleries/Final_Stats.pdf.

⁸ “Balloon Fiesta Park.” *City of Albuquerque*, <https://www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/parks/balloon-fiesta-park>.

discounted rate given the revenue that comes from the event.⁹ If they had to find a location every year it would limit resources, time and effort from staff that can be put elsewhere. There would also be a chance that there wouldn't be a space large enough to hold the event or it could become too expensive to rent.

Weaknesses:

There are three major weaknesses identified in this section. Firstly, there is a major lack of community engagement from the organization. The Fiesta Park is just south of the Sandia Pueblo, yet there is no partnership or working relationship between the two. There is a real lack of representation of the indigenous communities and the overall community of Albuquerque during the event. The lack of daily activities during the Fiesta is another weakness. With the light schedule of activities, it makes it harder to sell multi-session tickets or to sell tickets for multiple days. This can also be related to the lack of community involvement. There is a real opportunity to include local organizations and businesses in the daily events and schedule. This would better represent the community and increase revenue for it and within the Fiesta grounds. The final weakness mentioned here is the traffic surrounding the event. The main road leading to the park has two lanes going in both directions and can get very backed up leading to and away from the Fiesta. Even with the park and ride program and multiple parking lots around the area there is a real problem for not only attendees but also for locals just trying to get around the area.

Opportunities:

There are two major opportunities that the Fiesta organizers have. The Balloon Fiesta is an Albuquerque staple, and many businesses already offer discounts and events surrounding the Fiesta. So having more sponsorships and partnerships with local businesses and organizations can increase the importance of the Fiesta within the community but also give attendees of the event a better more well-rounded experience of the local cultures. This also leads to another opportunity to work with locals to have a more inclusive representation at the Fiesta. This specific work needs to be done to ensure that communities such as the local Indigenous, BIPOC, AAPI and Queer communities feel safe at the event as well as being represented in a way they want to.

Threats:

Two threats that I have observed for the Fiesta's survival are global warming and the rising cost of living. The Fiesta is exclusively outdoors and needs perfect conditions for the balloons to launch and attendees to safely be in the park. With weather conditions changing drastically because of the threat of global warming this might bring major challenges to the scheduling of the events. If the balloons cannot launch and people can't be there to see them then there will be no tickets sold and some might not return the following days or years for fear that it would be canceled again. Rising costs of living are also making people cut down on leisurely activities, travel and other 'non-necessities' that they normally would look forward to. While tickets to this event aren't expensive, travel, lodgings, food, and other activities can make this too expensive

⁹ Bade, Brittany. "Audit: Balloon Fiesta Generates Almost \$190m to the Albuquerque Area." *KRQE NEWS 13*, KRQE NEWS 13 - Breaking News, Albuquerque News, New Mexico News, Weather, and Videos, 3 Feb. 2021, [https://www.krqe.com/news/balloon-fiesta/audit-balloon-fiesta-generates-almost-190m-to-the-albuquerque-area/#:~:text=\(AIBF\)%2C%20the%20groups%20that,other%20rental%20and%20utility%20fees](https://www.krqe.com/news/balloon-fiesta/audit-balloon-fiesta-generates-almost-190m-to-the-albuquerque-area/#:~:text=(AIBF)%2C%20the%20groups%20that,other%20rental%20and%20utility%20fees).

for many. If attendees still, choose to come to the Fiesta their spending overall in Albuquerque and at the park will be less. That means it can be even more expensive for the pilots to get the balloons to the event and some of the international pilots might choose not to attend this event and go to ones closer to home.

Website Analysis

When you first open the website, you are greeted by several images and videos of the Fiesta titled a View from Above. Below is a countdown to the event going as detailed as down to the seconds. Below the countdown is the dates of the event this year and then followed by more images and hyperlinks to more information about the event and location.¹⁰ The website, while very colorful and interesting, is also structured well and organized in such a way that all the important sections for attendees are at the top of the page. Some of the links at the very top of the page include News, Schedule, Tickets, Hotels, Maps, Store and Guide. Directly below that has larger sections such as This Year's Event, Tickets and Reservations, Ballooning and Merchandise. Each of those has a drop-down menu helping people find exactly what they are looking for. Directly next to those are four colored boxes with information on Sponsors, Media, Behind the Scenes and At the Park. If you scroll to the bottom of home page there is the standard Connect with Us section that has links to social media, app stores to download the app, and a spot for you to sign up for the E-Newsletter. What is unique about this page is that there is a weather section that breaks down the weather in Albuquerque that is updated each time the page is refreshed and includes information such as temperature, wind, station pressure, sunrise, and sunset.

The website is set up very informatively without giving up on style and design. With this being an annual event lasting 9 days it does an exceptionally decent job of having the page set up to get all the information you need at any given time either before, during or after the event. The Fiesta itself doesn't have any hotel's they work with specifically, but adding a link to a hotel reservation site helps people coming in for the event find hotels that are near the area or near a park and ride pick up spot. The organization understands that most of the people attending the event are tourists so laying out all the information they would need for their visit is smart and gives the attendees a feeling of importance to the city and organization that there are resources available that are easy to find on the official website.

Some things that would be beneficial to add to the website are a code of conduct, accessibility information and city information. All of these should be included under the "This Year's Event" as well as in the "Guide." The city information should also be made into its own button on the top for easy access and have a link to the City of Albuquerque tourism page and well as the New Mexico True page for tourism information around the state. The Code of Conduct should be displayed at every spot possible. A separate tab on the drop-down menu from "This Year's Event" as well as on the ticketing page, confirmation email of tickets, on the guide PDF as well. The accessibility section should be on its own tab under the drop-down tab of "This Year's Event" as well as under FAQs and in the guide. There should also be clear accessibility information in the maps section.

¹⁰ Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, <https://balloonfiesta.com/>.

Social Media Presence

The current social media accounts of the Balloon Fiesta are severely lacking in engagement. The posts that are being made throughout the year do not feel like they have an intention behind them. There is a big opportunity to bring in a social media team and have them completely revamp the social media pages. There will be focus on the social media pages highlighting individual experiences at the Fiesta. Bringing in testimonies from attendees, partnering with social media influencers for content and using Fiesta specific hashtags to find and use attendees' own photos and videos of the event. There will also be contests hosted across the social platforms where people can win hot air balloon rides, Fiesta swag and other prizes related to the event. There will also be specific marketing plans geared towards family memories that can be shared on a specific day as well as best experiences on its own designated day. The purpose of all this planning will be to give the social platform purpose in the posts and stories that are shared. Show potential tourists the experiences they can expect and so they can see themselves as attendees at the event. This plan is specific to platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok. The YouTube platform already does an excellent job of highlighting the daily events and offering live streaming each day but there is opportunity to include testimonies from previous attendees leading up to the launch of tickets sale that happens before the event.

Tactics and Recommendations

The following are my tactics and recommendations:

1. Changes to the daily schedule.

The current schedule is minimal with most of the days like the other. Woodworking is the only extra event aside from balloon launches and competitions. Adding more events to the schedule will accomplish two main goals, to increase the involvement of the local communities and increase local and Fiesta revenues.

The main proposed changes are adding a “food corner” that will host local businesses from all over the city putting specific emphasis on business with less than 3 locations, in areas of town that have been underinvested and owned by underrepresented communities. This will be open every day from 1-7pm. On the topic of food there is also a proposed “food truck circle” that is added on Wednesday from 12-3pm this will be outside of the park grounds to entice locals on lunch break to come and visit the food trucks and add the possibility of them returning to the grounds and purchasing a ticket to the events. Not listed in this mock schedule is also adding the opportunity for a late-night food truck section near the RV camp grounds to bring in more revenue from that demographic of attendees. Moving into drinks, there is a proposed “happy hour garden” that will be hosted by local wineries, breweries, and distilleries. This will take place on Friday night from 5-8pm and Saturday day from 1-7pm. With both the food and drink partnerships there will be an option for local businesses to offer discounts, coupons, or site-specific themed items as well as any merchandise they wish to promote. Partnering with these businesses will boost the local economy, bring in locals that maybe wouldn't otherwise attend and represent the local community better to tourists.

Other proposed changes to the schedule include offering local demonstrations and a buy local section of the park. Both will bring in local artists and businesses and give tourists a more unique experience at the fiesta by being a part of local culture and being able to buy more thoughtful

souvenirs. Additionally, we will be partnering with local tour guides and organizations to offer transportation around the city and to local cultural institutions for tourists to experience things outside of the park grounds. These partnerships can be described as a central meeting spot for tour guides to pick up attendees and drop them off at the park they are familiar with or already planned to attend and it can also be in terms of offering discounted tickets to these institutions for people who are attending the Fiesta. While in the proposed schedule there are set days and times that these will take place there can also be discounts that can be offered to ticket holders that want to explore alone at separate times.

Another large change to the schedule is specifically on Kids Day and ABQ Aloft day. While both days already exist, there is a real lack in child and family related activities on these days. Starting with the ABQ Aloft day, the event as it exists currently is a time for balloon pilots to go to different schools around the Albuquerque area and engage the children in a learning opportunity about the balloons and watch them light and launch the balloons. I am proposing we build a better partnership with the schools and create a “Balloon Field Day” for the kids to learn more about Ballooning, Weather, the history of city and importance surrounding balloon culture there as well as other important subjects in the form of activities and games themed around the Fiesta and Ballooning. We can also hand out goodie bags that include free admission tickets to the children plus one adult and offer a discount the families can use for additional members to attend with them. To build on this emphasis on families we can restructure the Kids Day events to include Fiesta scavenger hunt that has the children go around the park and learn about different facts pertaining to ballooning, the city, the state or other related topics that result in a prize at the end. On that specific day, the local demonstrations will be geared more towards children and families and might result in small crafts that kids make themselves that they can take with them. I am also proposing we add a Kids dance party at the end of the day before the fireworks where families can come together and have fun and relax.

Here is a potential schedule example. The highlighted items are the proposed changes.

<p><u>EVERYDAY Oct 7th-Oct 15th</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:00 am- Dawn Patrol • 8:00-noon- Chainsaw Carving Exhibition • 10:00 am- Chainsaw Carving Auction • 1:00pm-7:00 pm- Food Corner • 8:00 pm*- AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show (excluding Mon-Wed) *weather permitting 	
<p><u>Friday October 6th</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7:00 am- Albuquerque Aloft (at local elementary schools) • 9:00 am- Fiesta partnered “Balloon Field Day” 	<p><u>Saturday October 7th</u></p> <p>Opening Day (Sponsor Pending)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 am Morning Glow • 7:00 am Opening Ceremonies (Includes land Blessing from Sandia Pueblo) • 7:00 am Mass Ascension • 5:00 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving • 6:00 pm America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race Launch • 6:00 pm Twilight Twinkle Glow™ • 7:30 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30-7:45pm Opening Day Concert Series
<p><u>Sunday October 8th</u> <u>New Mexico True Day</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30 am Morning Glow 7:00 am Mass Ascension 7:30-11am Fiestas de Los Globitos (Remote Control Balloons Exhibition) 9:00 am Fiesta of Wheels Car Show 11:00 am Balloon Fiesta Pin Trading 11:00 am-2:00pm- Local Demonstrations 12:00pm-5:00 pm- Buy Local booths 5:00 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving 6:00 pm Balloon Glow, powered by ExxonMobil 6:00pm-9:00pm Dance Party (Includes performances and lessons) 7:30 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving 	<p><u>Monday October 9th</u> <u>Museum Monday</u> <u>(Sponsor City of Albuquerque)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 am Double Balloon Launch and Competition 10:00am –Meet for local guided tours around the city (Ticket holders only) 11:00 am- Shuttles to different cultural institutions around the city (select institutes pre-selected) 11:00am-2:00pm Local Demonstrations
<p><u>Tuesday October 10th</u> <u>Coca-Cola Day</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 am Double Balloon Launch and Competition 10:00am –Meet for local guided tours around the city (Ticket holders only) 	<p><u>Wednesday October 11th</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30 am Morning Glow 7:00 am Flight of the Nations Mass Ascension 7:30-11am Fiestas de Los Globitos (Remote Control Balloons Exhibition) 10:00am –Meet for local guided tours around the city (Ticket holders only) 11:00am-2:00pm Local Demonstrations 12:00pm-3:00pm Food Truck Circle
<p><u>Thursday October 12th</u> <u>Kids Day</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4:30 am Kids' Day Goodie Bag Distribution begins 7:00 am Special Shape Rodeo™ 8:00 am Double Balloon Launch and Competition 9:00am- Fiesta Scavenger Hunt 12:00pm-3:00pm Local demonstrations (arts and crafts activities) 5:00pm-7:30pm- Kids Dance Party 5:00 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving 6:00 pm Special Shape Glowdeo™ 7:30 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving 	<p><u>Friday October 13th</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 am Special Shape Rodeo™ 7:00am Double Balloon Launch and Competition 7:30-11:00 am Fiestas de Los Globitos (Remote Control Balloons Exhibition) 5:00 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving 5:00pm- 8:00pm Happy Hour Garden (Local wineries, distilleries, breweries) 6:00 pm Special Shape Glowdeo™ 7:30 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving

<p><u>Saturday October 14th</u> ExxonMobil Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 am Morning Glow • 7:00 am Mass Ascension, powered by ExxonMobil • 9:15 am Annular Solar Eclipse • 11:00 am Balloon Fiesta Pin Trading • 1:00-5:00 pm Music Fiesta • 1:00 pm- 7:00 pm Happy Hour Garden (Local wineries, distilleries, breweries) • 5:00 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving • 6:00 pm Night Magic™ Glow, powered by ExxonMobil • 6:00 pm Fiestas de Los Globitos (Remote Control Balloons Exhibition) • 7:30 pm Team Fastrax™ Skydiving 	<p><u>Sunday October 15th</u> Farewell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 am Morning Glow • 7:00 am Farewell Mass Ascension, presented by News Radio 770 KKOB • 12:00pm Farewell Ceremony
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2. Meet with local BIPOC, AAPI and Queer Communities

When it comes to the BIPOC and the AAPI communities, both local and tourists, there is a real opportunity to work together and bring in more representation. On the local level I think the Fiesta should reach out to local BIPOC organizations, businesses, and communities to see what they can do better as an organization and event and what are some things they are doing well at or what the community already enjoys. Then be open to suggestions and comments about what can be done in the future to better represent the local community. Something I think the Fiesta can do to bring in more BIPOC visitors is to send out information and/or work with travel agencies that specifically cater to different BIPOC communities. It can be as simple as sending out brochures to these companies and can go farther by working with local businesses and organizations to build a travel package for individuals as well as groups to come to the area for the Fiesta. Similar to the communities above I think working with the local queer community is a great starting point for the discussion on inclusion and partnership. Meeting with the local queer community and hearing their thoughts, comments, suggestions and/or concerns will help make sure everyone is included in the conversation. Then there should be section on the website where there is a list of queer friendly spaces around the area. When the event is happening there is also an opportunity for the local queer businesses and organizations to host events centered around the Fiesta such as brunches that live stream the events, meet ups, and more. There are also queer travel agencies that we can work with similarly to the BIPOC and AAPI agencies.

3. Collaborate with local Indigenous Communities

Similar to working with local communities that I have listed above I believe there is a severe lack of collaboration and representation of indigenous tribes and communities. My strategy to start the mending process with these communities is to meet with them and build a trusting relationship with them. I think there is an opportunity to include them in the opening ceremony

where they can come and offer a land blessing or ceremony to welcome the events and people to the land if they feel it is appropriate. I think within this ceremony there should be land acknowledgement, dances, and other offerings the tribes want to give. Following that when looking for businesses and organizations to offer stalls there should be a certain amount of them set aside for different local tribes to New Mexico to come and sell food, clothing, artistic creations as well as the option to have a booth where people can go to learn more about their community if they feel comfortable and welcoming to speaking. There should also be a discussion about offering tours to reservations and communities if they feel safe enough to allow people to enter their spaces. All of these are suggestions but cannot and should not happen without the support and collaboration of the communities. We cannot expect anything from these conversations or relationships but work to prove the partnership is equal and welcome.

4. Change ticket structure

The current ticketing system can feel confusing as well as elitist with how it is described on the website and the types of packages we offer. The general admission tickets are \$15 per session for anyone over the age of 12 years old. One session is considered all morning activities or all evening activities. Then there are bundles and VIP experiences that are available for purchase. The first level is the Chasers Club at \$65 a person and under 6 years old is free. That includes admission to the event. Guaranteed seating in a private open-air patio, access to private bathrooms, beverages, desserts and catered food as well as access to a cash bar. The next level up is the Concierge Program that ranges from \$350 per session with 1-2 guests up to \$450 per session with 4 guests. That includes a personal concierge for the whole session, golf transportation with a driver, one premium parking pass, general admission tickets and a special gift. The final tier offered is the Sky Box access which is \$5,000 per session per box and can accommodate 1-20 guests. This tier includes admission tickets for up to 20, seven premium parking passes, specialty individual grazing boxes, host bar at 3 drinks max per person and dedicated restrooms.¹¹

I believe what is lacking in this current system is other ticketing tiers to accommodate single visitors and people wanting to attend multiple sessions and days. My plan is to first simplify the ticketing language on the website and offer clear comparisons of different offers and tiers. I would then offer all day options at a slightly cheaper price around \$25 and then also offering bundle options for multiple days and sessions that are discounted at different rates based on the amount purchased and make it transparent on the website what those percentages are. I think there is also a market offering food and drink packages that give meal tickets at certain levels without having to purchase bigger packages. If visitors purchase their tickets early online, we can then offer discounts the following year of multi day or session passes for returning visitors which will create better retention. I think once inside the grounds there should be other opportunities for visitors to get discounts at local businesses or culture institutions. Such as offering special rates to the local museums, tours etc. and try to incentivize the local businesses to offer coupons to people at their stalls that buy from them at the event to get them to come to the brick-and-mortar shops and possibly if they return to Albuquerque outside of the Fiesta.

¹¹ "Balloon Fiesta: Purchase Tickets." Balloon Fiesta | Purchase Tickets, <https://balloonfiesta.com/Purchase-Tickets>.

5. Make a Code of Conduct

As stated above on the Balloon Fiesta website there is a PDF consisting of 30 pages of information about the Fiesta, Albuquerque, FAQ, and things to do around the area.¹² I think there needs to be a page in this guest guide covering the code of conduct for the event and what is expected from the guests and what will not be tolerated, especially in terms of personal interactions with people. There is a section already in the packet that states what you can and cannot bring into the Fiesta so there can be an added section there about the code of conduct. I believe this will make people feel comfortable about walking into a large space with crowds of people from all over the world. On top of the packet, I think the code of conduct should be included in any emails sent leading up to the event and displayed at the entrance(s) of the grounds and around the grounds. Within the pdf in the FAQ there is a question if the Fiesta is wheelchair accessible and it is mentioned that there is a flat hard surface handicap parking area available, but it does not mention if the grounds itself is accessible. I think there needs to be clearer language about what the accessibility is on the grounds.

Digital Marketing Campaign

The Fiesta already has a solid digital marketing campaign for people who have shown interest in the website and signed up and for past attendees. To expand on the already successful E-Blasts we will also be sending out E-Blasts to local guides, businesses, and organizations so that they can share them with their audiences. There should also be a campaign to send out E-Blasts and other electronic information to Travel agencies around the world with carefully crafted information that might appeal to their clients. Working with BIPOC, AAPI and Queer specific travel agencies specifically around the US will include the standard Fiesta information but also information that our local communities of those identities have deemed important for tourists to know or be aware of. For the international audience there is significant importance that the E-Blasts are in those languages and that there is clear information about the event, local area, and local customs to help put any concerns at ease they might have about travelling to a different country and area than they are accustomed to.

Marketing Internal Support

The internal support needed to make these changes work and the Fiesta to grow and the local community to thrive because of it starts at the leadership level. The leadership needs to approve of these changes and work closely with the team to make sure proper steps are being taken. None of these changes will be equitable for the community and the attendees if there is not constant communication with leadership, our teams, and the community. Before any changes are made and actions can be taken, there must be a real conversation with leadership and community leaders. Once this relationship has been established it is imperative that the teams continue to consult with the community and adjust if needed. There should be careful and deliberate oversight of the leadership on every step of the planning process and implementation of the changes.

External Communications

As stated above these changes cannot be made without the support and collaboration with the local communities and city leadership. I believe before we start with meetings with local leaders

¹² Guest Guide." Balloon Fiesta, https://balloonfiesta.com/files/galleries/New_2022_Guest_Guide_9-30.pdf.

and communities, we need to put out a survey or a poll that the Albuquerque community can submit with their thoughts, suggestions, frustrations, or experiences with the Fiesta. After compiling those we can then plan meetings with local community leaders and start building that relationship. These meetings need to be with the local communities listed above but also with local tour guides, cultural institutes, and local business communities.

When working with local government we need to maintain the relationship we already have but also use that to try and make some substantial changes such as construction on the main road towards the park and the marketing of the event on their websites. We already have a strong working partnership with the City of Albuquerque, but we need to continue to foster that and show how these changes will benefit the city and local economy as well as increase the level of tourism coming to the area outside of the Fiesta.

Measurements of Success

Our measurements of success would be an increase in spending from nonlocal tourists surrounding the Fiesta within the grounds and in the local community. Forward Analytics found that the total economic impact of the 2019 Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta was estimated at \$186.82 million for the nine-day event. Balloon Fiesta increased the local business volume by \$109.89 million in direct impact and \$76.93 million in indirect impact. It was found that on average, the non-local attendees spent about \$157 per day outside of the balloon grounds and an average of \$30 per person per day on the balloon grounds.¹³ I would suggest we hire Forward Fiesta again to study the economic impact in 2023 and then in 2024 and 2025 when our changes have been executed. The goal we would be trying to achieve would need to be discussed and decided but I think it is plausible that we can aim for \$175 per day outside of the balloon grounds and \$60 per day inside the grounds. The largest growth will come from within the grounds with the addition of local food and drinks, demonstrations, and a buy local campaign.

Timeline for Implementation

The implementation timeline for the 2024 Fiesta is October 2023 to September 2024 for this proposal. October 2023 will be running the Fiesta as planned for 2023 and to focus primarily on this event. There is an opportunity to survey the attendees at the event as well as to hire Forward Diagnostics again. November is the time to start reaching out to local communities and their leaders asking for feedback and starting to build relationships with them. December is for internal diagnostics and feedback. Planning and having meetings with teams about what worked and didn't work this previous Fiesta and challenges that arose. January 2024 is for reviewing the findings from Forward Diagnostics and categorizing the feedback received from internally and externally in terms of local communities and attendees. This is also when the RV spots go on sale due to the high demand and how fast the spots sell out. February is when we start to formally reach out and plan meetings with local leaders to build more on our relationships and start the process of potential partnerships. March is for continuing to build relationships with local communities as well as open applications for food and beverage vendors for the stalls at the Fiesta. April is when we finalize the schedule and sponsors. Early April is also when tickets to the Fiesta go on sale. May is for more local meetings and where we start to make decisions or plans with the local communities. June is when we pitch to local communities to get approval,

¹³ Forward Analytics, Albuquerque, NM, 2019, pp. 1–17, 2019 Economic Impact and Guest Research. https://balloonfiesta.com/files/galleries/AIBF_2019_Economic_Impact_Report_Final_2_13_2020.pdf

feedback, and adjust accordingly. In July, we finalize the Opening Ceremony and Farewell Ceremony and announce the Dance Party Performers. August is for meetings with local organizations, institutions, and tour guides to finalize Museum Day, transportation to locations and discounts to attendees if applicable. Finally, September is when finalizing last-minute items and preparing for Fiesta happens and any last-minute changes are made.

For the social media plans those would need to be mapped out and decided by the social media team and consultants but there would need to be informational posts pertaining to RV sales, ticket sales, final schedule, Performer announcements, applications for stalls at the event and any other vital information needed before the event starts. There would also have to be a detailed plan for testimonies, contests, and hashtags.

Conclusion

The Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta already has strong roots in New Mexico and specifically in the city of Albuquerque. The Fiesta itself brings in around 900,000 visitors each year and almost \$200 million in revenue to the area. With these changes, I believe the Fiesta can capitalize on the tourists already coming to the area and increase the revenue for the Fiesta and the local economy. There is also a wonderful opportunity in this “post-covid” world to build and foster stronger relationships with the local communities. With the recommendations above, the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta can make a much larger impact on the state and truly represent the local community to tourists.