



# NEW MEXICO

## TOURISM DEPARTMENT

### New Mexico Tourism Commission

#### Q2. FY24 Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 5, 2023, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Los Poblanos

4903 Rio Grande Blvd. N.W., Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, NM 87107

#### Meeting Minutes

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Chair Jennifer Kimball.

#### **Roll Call:**

##### **Commissioners Present:**

Jennifer L. Kimball (Chair)  
Ben Abruzzo  
Bill Lee  
Tania Armenta  
Emerson R. Vallo (Virtual)

##### **Commissioners not present:**

Belia Alvarez

**Approval of Agenda:** Commissioner Lee moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Armenta, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from previous meeting:** Commissioner Abruzzo moved to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Armenta, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Outdoor Recreation Update:** *Karina Armijo, Director, Outdoor Recreation, NMEDD* presenting – Director Karina Armijo introduced her team and provided her background. Karina has been with ORD for about 3 months, she has 8 years as the Tourism & Marketing Director for the Town of Taos, before that she had her own business as a graphic design and web developer events marketing for mostly small businesses in Northern NM. Started her career at LANL working for the communications department as a graphic designer, so she has experience in Federal Government, State Government and Local Government. The Deputy Director is AJ Jones, Carl Colonius is the Outdoor Recreation Planner. They are hoping to fill the Marketing Coordinator position soon to complete their team. ORD Mission works to ensure that all New Mexicans gain from the public health, environmental and economic benefits of sustainable outdoor recreation. (New Mexico) different from a lot of other states. Nineteen states currently have an outdoor recreation department, we are one of the first five states. Department was created by legislation back in 2019. Focused on making sure that New Mexicans are getting outside. ORD Core Values, Equity & Access, Sustainable Economic Development, Conservation & Stewardship, Education & Workforce, Public Health & Wellness. Every grant program that they have falls under one of these core values. The first of their programs is the Trails+ Grant program. Since the grant was created, nearly \$10M has been awarded to over 100 projects across the state – both in big communities and small rural areas. The Legacy Fund will fund this program every year for at least the next 4 years. Second, the Outdoor Equity Fund was created in 2019, a first-of-its-kind grant to help underserved youth get outside. So far, the fund has granted about \$4 million to 181 organizations that have introduced over 58,000 young New Mexicans to the outdoors. This year they are trying to get \$3 million out the door by the end of the fiscal year. Senator Heinrich is trying to establish the federal Outdoor Equity Fund. It is exciting that it started here in NM and other states are looking to New Mexico as a lead. The last program is the Outdoor Marketing Grant, this is the EDA ARPA funding, \$800k out the door. The grant supports investments in outdoor recreation marketing programs, tribal and government (entities) are included. Reaching a

greater audience increases outdoor participation, stewardship of ecosystems, and outdoor access. This is the EDA grant that they collaborated with Tourism on. It is currently open but will be closing shortly. Objectives for the upcoming year, first is staffing up. It is a lot of work to bring in money and do great things. Second is reconvening their advisory council, they have not met since August 2022, they are going to have their first reconvening next week. A Tourism person on that council. She is excited to work together more and have a strong relationship within departments, Tourism being one of them because being from the Tourism sector, she knows the great work the State Tourism department is doing. The NMTD has a person on the Outdoor Equity Fund and Trails+ Grant evaluation committees. Carl Colonius, their outdoor recreation planner sits on the Tourism Destination Forward Grant program. She is really looking forward to strengthening, engagement, and collaboration. Karina also just returned from Washington, DC where they announced the EXPLORE Act (Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experience). Another objective is to make sure that NM has a seat at the table. Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez is on the committee, and she is such a great advocate for NM. It was great to meet her and introduce myself as the new Outdoor Recreation Director. Any questions?

**Commissioner Armenta:** you mentioned a tourism professional was on your advisory council, do you remember who that is? **Director Armijo** explained that it was someone from NMTD, not the tourism industry. Nicole Barker from the NMTD will be the person. Other people from the outdoor recreation industry, such as Jim Glover from Endeavor and a few other people from the business community are on the committee.

**Question from the audience:** The grants that you were talking about, outdoor recreation grants, is that just towards government entity property or is that like for instance the Wildlife West Nature Park in Edgewood, has about a mile walk though, the animals that are rescued there. Is that something that the Grants would be available for? **Director Armijo** asked if they are a non-profit? The audience member answered yes. **Director Armijo** continued that they fund municipalities, tribal governments as well as non-profits.

**Chair Kimball** asked if there were any other questions. With none, she thanked **Director Armijo**, welcomed her aboard and exclaimed how excited they are to collaborate with her and her department.

### NMTD Update:

Secretary Adams thanked **Director Karina Armijo** for coming, and commented the ORD has been a great partner to the NMTD and it is exciting for her to be in that role. He looks forward to continued collaboration between their divisions.

1. **NMTD Research Director Victoria Gregg** presenting – last quarter **Director Gregg** presented the visitation results for 2022. Now we have the spending results, positive not just compared to 2021 and 2020 but compared to 2019 as well. NM saw \$8.3 billion in direct visitor spending, that amounted to \$11.2 billion in overall spending. This sustained 91,279 jobs directly supported by visitor spending. Generated \$728 million in state and local taxes and offset the household tax burden for NM families by almost a thousand dollars, that is a significant impact on our state's economy. 2022 visitor spending went up across the board, up double digits in almost all areas. Visitor spending 6-year history shows that 2022 saw record-breaking direct visitor spending, while international spending was almost back up to 2019 numbers, a big increase over 2021. County level data is available on our website [newmexico.org/industry](http://newmexico.org/industry), go to the research and reports page, find county level data back to 2018.

**Question from the audience:** Is any of your research done on events that are done in the state of NM, for instance the Santa Fe Renaissance Festival? This data is coming from our tours and economic partners, they do not dig in that deeply into events, we do have some data that can support events so we can understand their economic impact. We are currently working with our TEGS partners in some cases to try to identify change in percent of visitor spending year over year, so this is something that we are working with select partners to do. But generally, we do not have economic impact on behalf of events.

**Chair Kimball:** As part of the Folk Art Market board, they commissioned a study and survey that just came out and the results are on their website, Indian Market does the same thing as well as Balloon Fiesta.

**Commissioner Lee,** added he is from Gallup, McKinley County. The municipality takes a portion of the lodgers tax dollars and pushes that out to specific events each year to analyze the data and see what the economic impact is year over year. Allocated to events in our community. **Commissioner Lee** additionally asked, **Victoria,** do we know what created the 21% bump in the transportation area? She answered that we

can dig into it more, part of it is inflation, we did see quite a bit of drive traffic in 2022 so those things put together are going to contribute to that calculation.

**Question from audience for Commissioner Lee:** *On your events, you mentioned the lodgers tax from McKinley County, so for instance based on past experience, we submit the monies that have been paid for marketing, we do a lot of marketing on social media, we target Texas, Colorado but they don't actually send us a receipt saying you've targeting these, have you found that to be an issue at all?* Commissioner Lee answered, no, what they do when they are collecting data for specific events is they are putting boots on the ground at these events and taking surveys and collecting data that way and looking at the economic impact in terms of lodging, food and beverage and those things that play into it in the course of that weekend or week.

**Secretary Adams,** added we are 2 years into this events program, it has been a huge success, more than doubled in size and investment. As we work through that we are trying to figure out what is the best way to capture that data at the community level. We have awarded microgrants through the accelerator program, for example Fiesta Latina in Silver City, where they purchased some software and iPad devices that were used by volunteers to survey a significant amount of people and get insights and data that they never were able to capture before. Bernalillo Indian Arts Festival did a similar activity. There are things that we are doing to try to assist with this.

2. **NMTD Marketing Director Erin Ladd** presenting – NM True Certified Program now has 450 partners. We are mid campaign with an in-state piece supporting NM True Certified buy local, shop local for the holidays, started on November 13<sup>th</sup> and running through December 15<sup>th</sup>. Have a major pull out section in NM Magazine with high-quality photography. Partnered with Tax & Rev for holiday shopping, small business Saturday. NM True Certified Gift Guide is the second most visited page behind our very well trafficked home page. A 30% open rate on our e-newsletter feels almost monumental. Moving onto the next slide, everyone wants to know about this hat maker. This Old Hat, hatmaker out of Artesia.

\*Technical difficulties – Video was played after the Commissioners updates\*

As an update, the winter pieces have gone into market, keep your eyes open for the 3 in market in major airports in California, Texas, Phoenix, Denver, November through February. Cooperative Marketing Grant Program, FY24 is in progress, we have 45 partners at about a \$5.1 million media value. FY25 planning, 50% plan to request more cooperative initiatives and 40% plan to request the same amount of funds. Plan is for 3/5/24 application kickoff for award announcements by 5/13/24. Slides show pieces for Santa Fe County, Farmington, City of Clovis, Pecos, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and Ruidoso.

3. **NMTD Tourism Development Director Holly Kelly** presenting – *Destination Forward Program* in FY23 was the Rural Pathway Program awarded Picuris Pueblo with \$50,000 to develop an interpretive trail plus guide, outdoor exhibits, rooftop exhibits and original artwork and photography from Pueblo artists which is near completion. In FY24 the next iteration of the recommendations set forth by NMTD & Council of Governments for tourism infrastructure projects culminated in the development of a new NMTD grant program, *Destination Forward*, which is dedicated to supporting tourism infrastructure projects throughout the state of NM. Awarding \$1.9 million of funding for 10 Destination Forward projects intended to enhance the visitor experience at tourism-related amenities, facilities and points-of-interest throughout NM. *Tourism Event Growth & Sustainability Program (TEGS)* – This program provides technical assistance, marketing, and sponsorship to qualified tourism events within NM to support their growth and sustainability. FY23 supported 17 events statewide for a total funding of \$182k. 5 entities were awarded \$25k to participate in the Event Accelerator track. 7 entities were awarded \$120k in direct sponsorship. 5 entities were awarded a total of \$37k in Cooperative Marketing funding. FY24 the program more than doubled the investment awarding \$462,692 in grant funding for 35 tourism-related events scheduled over the next 12 months across NM. In total, NMTD will be supporting 17 NM communities through the program including 2 tribal communities. Technical assistance includes collecting data for these events and the economic impact their event has on the community. Already in discussion to see what this program will look like for FY25, we anticipate the application process to open the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in March and will run for about 30 days. *New Mexico Clean & Beautiful Program* – One of our signature grant programs that has been around for a very long time, we are very proud of this program, it continues to grow year over year. It provides grant funds to incorporated municipalities, counties and tribal governments to reduce litter and raise overall litter awareness statewide. This year the program awarded nearly \$907,000 in grant funds to a record 59 NM

communities. Director Kelley introduced Chantal Sandoval as the Clean and Beautiful Grant Coordinator and Jill Slaby who is new to the team, and also going to be a point of contact for the TEGs and Destination Forward grant programs.

4. *NMTD Acting Secretary Lancing Adams* Presenting – Explanation of the *Tourism Exchange* program. Innovative technology to connect suppliers and distributors with consumers. Suppliers are businesses like hotels, places providing attractions. Distributors are places where the bookings are made, Expedia for example. There is a huge gap between smaller suppliers not being able to engage in a digital marketplace with domestic and international travelers. This platform provides an opportunity for these smaller suppliers to at no cost plug into a network where they can have a booking system that is free to them. They can decide which distribution channels and what commission rates they want to engage in, in real time. They can have their product available for sale across the entire world. See this as a benefit to smaller businesses that do not have large marketing budgets. We are in the process of trying to get as many suppliers as possible into the Tourism Exchange system. It is a free program; the only expense is a 3.5% fee on bookings. We were the first state to sign up, several other states are joining this program.

*Commissioner Armenta:* As a point of clarification, bookings are occurring through your website and others? Secretary Adams answered that yes, bookings are occurring very preliminary. Functionally we can do it now.

*Commissioner Lee,* added that he will be fully immersed in this program here shortly.

*U.S. Route 66 Centennial* – Secretary Adams explained the national commission versus the state commission to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Route 66 in 2026. On the state level it is the Route 66 Centennial Coordination Group, which consists of 12 members tasked to recommend, plan, sponsor and coordinate official Route 66 centennial events, programs, and activities around the State. He does not know how this is going to go as of yet, the first meeting is scheduled for next week. Hopes we can identify projects that are going to benefit the entire state, also hoping that we have some federal funding support that comes with this. Looking forward to working with Commissioner Lee on this process, wants everyone to be involved in this. We have a request for funding in the Legislative Session for \$5M, hoping to get a match from the federal government.

*Commissioner Lee:* it is the mother road, and we all own a piece of it, everyone should have a piece of this celebration. It is an incredible tourism asset in this state that sometimes get overlooked. We want to make sure that we make it as inclusive as we can to everyone in the state.

*Legislative Update* – Secretary Adams provided a timeline of the upcoming Legislative session. Reviewed the FY25 Agency base budget request and the FY25 Agency special appropriations request. NMTD General Fund (Recurring Dollars) requested an increase of \$941K for personnel and \$2.9M for CoOp, TEGS, and \$400k Travel Trade. Special appropriations (One Time) request \$15M for National Advertising, \$3M for Destination Forward, \$5M for Route 66 and \$2M for Marketing Center of Excellence.

*Chair Kimball:* what percent the budget request is over what we got this year? *Secretary Adams* answered that it is close to 10% over last year's operating budget, that is what we are asking. Really need to put the point forward that these dollars are leading to success, this is one of the only things that the government is paying for that is paying us back. This is an industry in which we return money back to the tax base, that is something that we really try to drive home, it helps diversify the economy.

*Commissioner Lee,* commented on the need for the legislature to provide funds for HB377 creating the Marketing Center for Excellence, he reiterated that the NMTD should not have to use their budget for marketing of other agencies. The bill says all the other agencies should utilize the strength of the NMTD to do their marketing and tie into NM True, which is brilliant but charging the NMTD to do that without the resources to do it is not acceptable. *Secretary Adams* added that we need to protect NM True, we need to be very careful how NM True becomes part of it.

*Commissioner Armenta:* to clarify, if the 10% over last year was only in the one-time request or does that include reoccurring? *Secretary Adams* indicated that he did not want to misspeak on that, he is pretty sure we are talking about both together. He will get her the information. It should be 10% for one time and reoccurring.

*Chair Kimball:* historically it is very important to have industry support when NMTD is making their presentation to the committee, whether speaking or not, it is important that we are there in support of NMTD budget. It hurts the whole industry if the budget is not approved. *Secretary Adams* stated it is critical to have the industry show up to support and provide credibility. The citizen led legislature members are trying

to figure out what is important and what is not, what are people really behind what are they not. The real test is the support we have in the room. House appropriations will be our next big push.

### **Commissioner Updates:**

#### **Commissioner Ben Abruzzo** – Represents General Managers of Santa Fe, on the Board for Ski New Mexico

- Winter is here, and the ski industry is excited to see the snow falling, 5 of 8 ski areas are open and more to come shortly. El Nino is coming as predicted and they are seeing great snow fall. Employment market jobs are up, struggled after covid to hire the staff that they needed. Jobs are there, people are coming, wages are up. Season pass sales are up 25% in Santa Fe, 25% over our previous record, bookings going into Christmas are looking at similar numbers, people are traveling, and people are recreating. Skier visits are growing in NM, which is new, it had been flat for several years. NM is offering a ski experience that is tied in the NM True brand, coming to ski here, going to Taos, Santa Fe and down South is very different from going to Colorado, people are embracing that type of experience and not the cookie cutter ski experience you get in other states. All our ski areas are doing a good job of trying to work with their local communities to bring an authentic ski experience. The ski industry is re-investing in ways we have not seen in the last 10 years. We are anticipating \$250M of capital improvement projects among our 8 ski areas over the next 10 years. Those are significant numbers for the size of our ski areas, Toas just put in a new chairlift, Santa Fe is putting in a new chairlift next year, Angel Fire is on tab soon. The Tramway will be closed January, February and half of March for a multimillion-dollar improvement project on the controls, modernizing to provide some life to the Tramway for the next 50 years. Everyone is reinvesting in making sure skiing is going to be around for a long time in this state.

#### **Commissioner Bill Lee** – C.E.O. for The Gallup McKinley County Chamber of Commerce

- First would like to thank you for Destination Forward, aware of the improvements going on in Red Rock Park for the RV and Convention Center all that is taking place there, and also Trail of the Ancients which incorporates much of our region from Farmington to Zuni Pueblo and out through Highway 53. Glad to see all of that happening. Happy to see the Ski Season being kicked off, wish it would have waited another weekend as snow got in the way of their Red Rock Ballon Rally last weekend, but they made the best of it. Was able to do Glow in the Rocks with baskets and burners, they had the Apache Crown Dancers group from Zuni Pueblo which was done by bonfire in the Red rocks with candlesticks which was pretty magnificent to see. Saturday, they had a ballon glow, so even though they were not able to fly they did get those two events off, was successful probably close to 12,000 people at Saturday night's event so they were hungry to see the balloons. Really looking forward to seeing the occupancy over the course of last weekend, had friends calling that said they were going to come but could not get a hotel room. Wanted to talk about the Tourism Exchange. Has a small ballon ride business that has never been on a digital platform to book visitors, he is sticking his toe in the water. Having meetings with the Tourism Exchange now, we are getting suppliers from our community to come to a meeting to populate even further, hopes to have a much better report of how it is working for our next Tourism Commission meeting. Excited, thinks it opens a whole new doorway especially for the smaller businesses in NM and the rural communities who have these incredible offerings and events, you can sell tickets through this platform. Highlight the advocacy piece once we get into the committee hearings and its importance, if you have a vested interest in tourism, we encourage you to be in that committee room even if you don't stand up to speak, just raising your hand in favor of the budget it goes a long way and makes a big difference. Lastly, wanted to say that is a really cool NM Magazine cover, that is a very cool nativity scene.

#### **Commissioner Tania Armenta** – President and CEO of Visit Albuquerque.

- Introduced Brook Young, the new VP of Destination Development and Community Engagement, day 2 of her employment and day 5 of living in NM, moved here from Kentucky and has great destination organization experience, sports tourism, and a myriad of other things, looking forward to her contributions. Launched a Destination Master Plan for Albuquerque, a strategic plan with a 10-year focus timeline, a roadmap for Albuquerque ties in all these programs from a state perspective. Will be doing stakeholder, visitor and resident surveys, look forward to many in this room contributing to that. Focus groups and listening sessions in the coming months. Excited about our Destination Master Plan and what that will mean not only for Albuquerque but for this overall region. Visitation closed strong, looking



forward to calendar year numbers that follow the fiscal year numbers, with record high lodgers' tax, overall revenue and average daily rate increases for Albuquerque. Balloon Fiesta achieved record high visitation, record high increases in hotel occupancy and revenue as well. Strong air visitation coming into the Sunport. Mother nature helped with the Annular Eclipse. The Isleta NM Bowl, our collegiate bowl game that calls Albuquerque and NM home is next Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. This is the first time the Aggies will play in the Isleta NM Bowl, Isleta is a wonderful title sponsor this year, Visit Albuquerque and the NMTD are presenting sponsors. It is a wonderful opportunity and hope we fill the stadium as it is national broadcast television. A lot of upcoming sporting events, we will again host USA Track and Field Indoor Championships in Albuquerque. New national events happening in Albuquerque, National Gymnastics Competitions, USA Cycling event, a boxing event and USA taekwondo. Visit Albuquerque Holiday party is Thursday evening at the Marriot Pyramid for anyone who would like to attend from 5-7pm.

**Chairwoman Jennifer L. Kimball** – Ambassador and Board Chairman Emerita at La Fonda on the Plaza

- Santa Fe update – New Year's Eve the City of Santa Fe will be shooting fireworks off of the balcony of her office at midnight. You can watch the Zia get raised instead of dropped because we do things different in the city different. Shout out to the Tourism Department, Tourism Santa Fe put a call out yesterday to volunteers to come clean the plaza of litter and ice, the Tourism Department showed up big time to support Santa Fe Tourism, so kudos to you guys. Thank you! We have an online report for Commissioner Vallo.

**Commissioner Emerson Vallo** – Pueblo of Acoma.

- Commissioner Vallo first had a question; would tribes be included in the Centennial Coordination Groups? General Counsel Novela Salazar for NMTD answered, "for clarification it is not multiple groups but one statewide Centennial Coordination group for NM. The Secretary for the Department of Cultural Affairs is one of the named members on the Centennial Coordination Group and I would be happy to send out the roster to anyone who is wondering about the full roster (including designees) or missed it during the presentation. Commissioner Vallo's update: speaking of the beautiful magazine Ed has presented from NM Magazine, Commission Vallo wanted to say thank you to NM Magazine and Ms. Jennifer Levin for featuring Artisan Prudy Correa from the Pueblo of Acoma, her artwork is on the cover of the magazine doing a Christmas Story featuring Ms. Correa. Second, he wanted to mention most pueblos are fully open and will celebrating the upcoming Christmas activities, festivities, everyone is welcome to attend the dances in Acoma, the dances occur inside the Mission Church from December 25<sup>th</sup> through December 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Public Comment:** *Ed Graves, NM Magazine*, we are excited about the December issue of NM Magazine, from the NM True shopping to our shopping pages and our charitable giving pages this is a good opportunity to buy NM made products. This is our 4<sup>th</sup> year recognizing NM Magazine True Heros, we have selected 11 people throughout our state who have gone above and beyond to make their communities better. In partnership with KOB4 our True Heros will be featured during the month of December on KOB4.

**Adjourn:** Motion made by Commissioner Armenta to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Lee and passed unanimously. Chairwoman Kimball adjourned the meeting at 2:44pm.

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Approved by Commission vote at public meeting held on March 18, 2024.

  
Commission Chair Jenny Kimball