

**City of Prescott Office of Tourism  
Special Events Guidebook**

**2021-22**



# Table of Contents

# Introduction – Page 3

# Welcome from the Prescott Office of Tourism

# Section One: Setting the Groundwork – Page 4

# The Importance of Organizational Vision, Objectives and Strategy

# Establishing Event Goals

# How to Use This Guidebook –Page 5

# Section Two: Marketing Your Event – Page 6

# Setting Marketing Objectives

# Marketing Planning and Research

# Target Audience Identification

# Traditional Media Planning

# Earned Media Marketing

# Digital and Social Media Marketing

# Creative Implementation

# Marketing Coordination with Event Operations

# 

# Section Three: Estimating Attendance – Page 19

# Different Methods for Estimating Crowd Sizes

# Section Four: Estimating Lodging Utilization – Page 21

# How to Work with Accommodations to Estimate Usage

# Section Five: Conducting an Event Survey – Page 22

# Methods to Evaluate Event Attendees Attitudes, Usage

# 

# Section Six: Community Benefit and Your Event –Page 24

# How to Help Your Event and the Community

# Section Seven: Preparing the Post Event Report – Page 25

# Importance of Data Gathering for the Post Event Reporting

# How to Enter Data Into the Required City Report

# Summary – Page 28

# Appendix

# 

# Suggested Survey Form

# INTRODUCTION

The City of Prescott’s Office of Tourism sponsors the annual Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) grant program for special and performing arts events. Collectively, these events help promote Prescott as a desirable destination for visitors to our area. Prescott is known as a primary destination for out-of-town visitors and special events contribute significantly to the economic well-being of the community.

The purpose of this guidebook is to provide special events organizers with a structure to improve the overall management of their event, specifically focusing on marketing, crowd estimating, total attendance and hotel, retail and restaurant usage. Organizations receiving TAC/PAAHC grants are required to provide their best efforts to comply with grant requirements that result in positive economic impact to the City of Prescott.

Why is this guidebook important? Special events like yours require significant resources, both financial and human, to be successful. This guidebook is designed to help you maximize the productivity of your marketing and data collection efforts so that your own resources and those of the City of Prescott and its taxpayers are put to the best use possible.

The Office of Tourism is aware that much of the effort in planning and executing a special event focuses on event operations with most of the work being assigned to volunteers. As a result, this guidebook focuses attention on aspects of special events that are outside of normal event operations. The Office of Tourism is also aware that events range from those that have existed for many years to those that are new to the community. Some events utilize professional advisors and some rely solely on community volunteerism. Therefore, some of the ideas suggested in this guidebook may be obvious to some and useful to others. The guidebook is offered only as a supplement to TAC/PAAHC recipients. Over time, it is hoped that all participants will assist each other with new ideas and improvements and that they will be shared among all stakeholders. The Office of Tourism seeks to promote a collaborative process in which all grantees gain in their special event expertise through this sharing.

Collectively, we can all help make a better place! Good luck and best wishes for your success.

Margo Christenson John Heiney

Chair, Tourism Advisory Committee City of Prescott Office of Tourism

# SECTION ONE: SETTING THE GROUNDWORK

Many not-for-profit organizations and their staff and volunteers have an intuitive feel for what their organization’s purpose is and how special events bring their organization to life. For some, the special event itself is the only activity the group plans.

However, your organization and events can benefit greatly from some reflection and advance planning so that your special event furthers your purpose. Following is a brief explanation, together with some examples, of why it is important to do preliminary thinking in advance of event preparations. Specifically, below are descriptions of Vision, Objectives and Strategy.

**Vision**

Every not-for-profit organization should have a Vision Statement that describes what it aspires to accomplish over time. It helps answer the question “Why do we exist?” “What do we hope to achieve in the long run?” “How do we fit into the greater community?” An effective Vision Statement should be specifically worded, be clearly stated and futuristic, but does not include wording more related to any subsequent organizational activities, such as your special event’s revenues or attendance.

Examples of possible Vision Statements:

“We aspire to bring a love of antique automobiles to our community.”

“We hope to bring a greater appreciation of the importance of indigenous peoples, their culture and art to the people of central Arizona.”

**Objectives**

Simply put, your objectives are “WHAT” you plan to achieve as an organization over a defined period of time. They must be consistent with your vision but also must be specific, actionable and measurable.

Examples of possible Organizational Objectives:

“To increase our membership base by 10% within the next three years.”

“To grow our donor list and total contributions by 5% within the next 12 months.”

**Strategy**

Your organizational strategy is the “HOW” you will achieve your objectives. A good strategy supports both the Vision Statement and your organizational objectives.

Examples of possible Strategy Statements for your organization:

“Host an annual special event highlighting the beauty of Corvette cars.”

“Conduct an annual fundraising campaign resulting in 50% of our revenue goals.”

“Purchase a list of 1,000 western art enthusiasts and conduct a membership drive.”

Spend some special time when you meet as a group to think about (and preferably write down) the thoughts above. It will be time well spent for your upcoming event.

One additional recommendation when pre-planning your event: consider finding/appointing a person or small group of your event planning team to focus solely on marketing planning and implementation. Event management is difficult and has many specific elements that are required to ensure the event is presented as planned. When you assign a marketing-only task to an event team member, it will allow your marketing objectives to receive the time and attention needed to complement the event management work of the rest of the committee.

# How To Use This Guidebook

Every TAC/PAAHC grantee is at a different levels of organization, experience and expertise with managing special events. The goal of this guidebook is to provide a lot of information and suggestions so that it is useful to as many of you as possible. For some, the ideas presented here may already be part of your marketing plans; for some, there may be ideas you haven’t yet considered. Hopefully, there is something for everyone in this guidebook. To get the most out of the ideas consider the following approach:

1. Read the entire guidebook to get a general sense of how it fits into your current approach to special event marketing, perhaps highlighting areas of interest for later reference.
2. When you are moving through the event planning process, refer back to the guidebook when you are planning that portion of your event. It will be more helpful to use this guidebook as a reference tool than to try to absorb all of it in advance.
3. As you finalize your planning and begin to implement the various phases of the marketing plan, refer back to the guidebook to make sure you are on track with that particular phase of planning.

# SECTION TWO: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Event marketing is a combination of art and science where the objective is to maximize the attendance at an event through the most efficient and effective combination of marketing activities. Paid advertising, earned media (public relations) social media, digital media and other methods can be expensive if not allocated to those areas that will deliver the greatest results, consistent with the event’s objectives.

That’s why the TAC/PAAHC grant program focuses on identifying those key target audiences the event is appealing to and coordinating the marketing program to reach those audiences most efficiently; that is at the lowest cost that will produce the highest results.

The following describes the identification of the primary target audience for your special event:

Marketing Objectives  
Your event marketing objectives must be consistent with your overall organizational objectives but be more detailed about WHAT you are attempting to achieve with your event. It would help to have them in writing, and while not required as part of the TAC application, event leadership should be aware of and committed to achieving the event’s core objectives. It is best if there is one singular objective, but some event organizers find it valuable to have more than one.

Examples of Event Objectives could include:

“To increase attendance and total revenue by 5% over last year.”

“To increase attendees from the states of California and New Mexico by 5%.”

# Marketing Planning and Research

Once you have established your marketing objectives for this year’s event, it will help to do some advance planning and relevant research needed for the TAC application process. The following guidelines are suggested for this process.

1. Analyze attendee past results, such as changes in total attendance; attendee profiles, etc. with whatever data you have available such as demographics, attendee origin, age, gender; hotels used and number of room nights, etc.
2. Study event revenues and compare to previous years, if applicable, to determine where the most productive revenue sources originate. Analyze the number of event participants (such as artists participating) and compare year-over-year changes.
3. Compare media buy coverage areas to where attendees actually came from.
4. Compare social media sites used previously and analyze results, such as number of views, time spent with your messaging; consider adding or reducing social media sites based on performance metrics.
5. Analyze community participation for those events where volunteers and related community organizations are an important part of your event. Consider where to improve, modify, etc.
6. Consider any other data, whether quantifiable or not, that you believe is important to improving the marketing of your event.

# Target Audience Identification

With event marketing pre-planning completed you will be in a good position to establish your event target audience identification. The following elements are essential to develop the most productive results for both media selections and maximized attendance.

1. **Demographics**

* This is first cut of defining your target audience. Define the demographic characteristics of your most desired audience, such as age range, income, gender, or other definable characteristics of the people that your event is designed to appeal to. Many events have multiple audience groupings that attend, such as wide age ranges, gender, etc. In these cases, try to create demographic segments by identifying your primary audience, then secondary, and even tertiary. Without specific audience goals you will not be able to spend your media dollars efficiently. Place most of your media activity against your primary audience.

An example of a target audience identification would be:

* + Primary: “Men 49-74 with incomes over $50,000 who love classic cars.”
  + Secondary: “Men 25-49 who live in the Quad Cities.”
  + Tertiary: “All car lovers and their families.”

1. **Place of Origin**
   * Once you have identified your target audience(s) you will need to determine where the targeted attendees are most likely to come from. There are several ways to identify place of origin:
     + City, town or market area
     + Zip Code
     + Multi-Geographic Special Interest Markets
     + Geographic Region/State/Country

**Market Area**For most TAC events identifying the local Quad Cities residents is easily achieved. But at least 75% of your marketing dollars are to be directed 90+ miles outside of the Quad Cities to qualify for a TAC grant, or at least for the maximum dollar grant. It will then be necessary for you to look to state, regional, or national/international audiences. Using your available data, study your current information about people that have attended previous events; have previously visited your physical location if applicable; have made financial contributions, etc. Using the “birds of a feather” comparison, your next most likely attendee will have location characteristics similar to your current ones.

**Zip Code Analysis**

Generally, zip code analysis is the preferred method because it is the easiest way to obtain targeted information from demographic sources, such as media outlets, governmental resources such as the Census Bureau, data marketing companies, etc. For example:

* + First and most important, study the zip code results of your previous events and apply this information to your media planning.
  + Ask your projected media companies for zip code studies they have completed to compare your primary audience information as well as your growth projections for new audiences. All media companies will provide this information at no charge and many will do the analysis for you.
  + Governmental data sources are a treasure trove of good data; however, it can take a significant amount of work to find the right data if you are doing this yourself. The Census Bureau is the primary source of no-charge demographic data and is used by many for-profit marketing companies. Also be aware that governmental data sources may have a time lag due to the complex nature of the data collection. Check for updates.
  + There are several data marketing companies in the Quad Cities and throughout Arizona that can complete all of your demographic and place of origin requirements. Fees will vary depending on the quantity and quality of your current available data or your proposed target audience goals. Due to the significant growth in digital media and data analytics, sourcing your resources for this important analysis has become much more available. Before making a final selection on a data marketing and/or a data analytics firm, be sure to determine the scope of services needed, check references, etc. to make sure you are receiving the counsel you need at a price you can afford.

**Geographic/Regional/National/International Markets**Once all of the target audience identification decisions have been made, for most TAC applicants geographic markets outside the Quad Cities market area will need to be determined to meet TAC requirements. Using the same information already developed above for your event, you will need to identify the most effective markets and the media vehicles that will reach your target market(s) most cost-effectively.

As an applicant you may do this research yourself or seek professional assistance as the markets and media choices are numerous. Depending on your event objectives and growth plans, you could consider:

* Drawing attendance from outstate Arizona, or broadening the market area by reaching out to markets in nearby states such as New Mexico, California or Texas.
* Arizona and Prescott tourism programs often target international audiences such as Canada, Germany and even Australia. The focus is for travelers to discover unique American highlights, such as the old west. If your event can be timed with a broader marketing campaign if would be worthwhile to see how your event could be coordinated with these larger efforts as way to build audience and give the tourism programs an additional feature to promote.

**Special Interest Markets**While certain groups of targeted populations may share similar demographic characteristics, they may be very dissimilar in their interests. That is why identifying areas of interest is an important way to target audiences, especially in the current age of digital media, social media, interest clubs, etc. Many special events are designed to appeal to these interests. Examples include specialty automobile shows, music festivals, food and beverage festivals, and similar. While many mass media vehicles cater to certain demographics profiles as well as interests, social and digital media are most often defined by interest category. Prescott area special events can easily identify targeted groups through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Podcasts, and similar.

* + If you are planning paid media advertising it will be worthwhile to identify publications, radio/TV shows, etc. within your specific target markets based on your special interest content. There are many local, regional and national vehicles that cater to specific audiences. This will most likely be your most effective, efficient and least costly. Many TAC grant applicants focus on specific interest categories, such as cars, western art, indigenous peoples, general arts and crafts, country music, jazz, etc. This should be your first consideration when considering paid media.

**Traditional Media Planning**  
Identifying important target markets, as described above, and media planning are closely related, often interrelated in developing your marketing plan. For instance, if your target audience consists of collectible car lovers or western art devotees, and you know of media sources that cater to that audience segment, the decision-making process becomes self-evident. But for many events, media selection requires a more detailed analysis to maximize your marketing investments. In addition, because today’s marketplace has so many options to choose from, it can become a daunting task to select the best options, sometimes resulting in making the easiest but not necessarily the best decisions for your investments. The tips below are offered to assist in making the best media selection decisions for your unique event.

# Paid Media

This category has been used for many years for special event advertising. It is relatively easy to identify, offers professional assistance through the media’s sales representatives and can provide valuable data assistance to help you achieve your objectives.

This category has several options depending on your planned geographic reach. You should consider newspaper, magazine, radio/TV and outdoor that complements target audience selection. For an updated media list, contact the Tourism Office.

**Print Media**Remember, all traditional print media companies will be glad to assist you with planning, location in newspapers and magazines so that your message will be placed in the sections most likely to draw your target audience. Ad placement costs are also very important. You may choose to have newspapers and/or magazines place your ad anywhere they choose. This is always the least cost method. Alternatively, you may choose to place your ad in a special location, such as page three of a newspaper, or in the sports section or food section. This may result in a higher price for the ad but often provides higher, more targeted exposure, making your investment more productive.

**Broadcast Media**Traditional broadcast media can be an excellent way to put your message in front of your defined target audiences. For instance, most radio stations in the Quad Cities and surrounding regions are programmed to reach specific audiences, such as country music, hard rock, classical, etc. Radio stations will be able to provide you with detailed listener data that demonstrates their listener profiles, audience size by day-part, geographic reach and any other needs you have to maximize your radio buy. Television stations provide the same information. Since there are no local network affiliated television stations in the Quad Cities, you will have to consider whether using Flagstaff or Phoenix-based television stations that have specific programming that will cost-effectively reach your target audience. However, if you are targeting regional attendees in Arizona or nearby states, use of traditional broadcast media can be an excellent way to attract this audience segment.

**Outdoor Advertising**Outdoor advertising is an excellent, and often overlooked, media vehicle to reach your target audience where geographic location is very important. Your selections can focus on the Quad Cities, or on specific markets such as Sedona, Flagstaff or even smaller markets. Outdoor is considered a broad reach, more general medium designed to complement your other media selections. Again, outdoor company representatives can assist you in developing a placement plan to meet your needs.

**Direct Mail**This media option has the potential to be a very targeted and cost-effective medium due to its capability to use extremely specific data analytics to send targeted messages to your potential attendees. Look for a direct mail provider that offers detailed research from the Census Bureau and other quantitative resources to create a “rifle” approach to mailing to a very specific audience group across a wide geographic and special interest range. If you already have a robust mailing list direct mail can be a very effective tool to current followers.

**Mailers, Flyers, Stuffers and Inserts**Many newspapers and direct-to-consumer media companies can carry your event message either within their publication (such as a newspaper) or through direct mail. This method offers the benefits of a broader “shotgun” reach together with the option of the “rifle” approach. While this method can be cost-effective, it can also be easier for your message to be “lost” when combined with messages from other advertisers.

Because of the detailed analysis involved in traditional media purchases, use of a professional media/marketing company is recommended to make the best use of your time and budget.

# Earned Media Marketing

Earned media is the opposite of paid media. It is event promotional messaging you can obtain from a variety of media sources at no cost. It is often referred to as public relations marketing. It differs primarily from paid advertising in that your event story is carried by the medium (newspaper, radio, TV, etc.) in the form of a story and gains the advantage of authenticity. Your special event should attempt to maximize the amount of free, earned media as possible. Earned media can take many forms. Below are some examples of effective ways to increase your earned media opportunities.

**Print Feature Stories**  
A classic way to publicize your event is to “pitch” a story to newspapers and magazines. The most important factor is to make your story idea timely and relevant to the readers of that publication. The editors will listen and determine if your event fits their publication and where and when it would work for their readers. You should try to create a compelling story idea focusing on what makes your event newsworthy. Look for new angles, local connections, newsworthy event content or anything else that will make your event stand out. Consider the location of the story when you make your “pitch.” If your event is significant to their readers you can propose that your event would make a good cover feature. Or perhaps the publication has a special section where your story would be a good placement. Advocate for yourself when presenting your story idea. Remember, earned media is free publicity and the publication, not you, will make the decision to run the story or not. If you want to control the outcome for your event, you need to purchase advertising. Some publications will offer to run a story for your event if you purchase advertising. Typically, quality, journalism-based publications will not run a story unless it has true editorial merit.

**Publication Listings**

Most newspaper and magazines have sections where they include community events like yours. It pays to work collaboratively with the publication to make sure your event gets listed and that all the relevant information is included. Many prospective attendees actively seek these event listings to plan their leisure activities. Be sure to plan far enough ahead to gain your listings, especially for magazines and any other publication where there are longer lead times.

**Radio**

The Quad Cities and surrounding areas have a large number of radio stations that cater to a variety of audiences. Look for stations that have live talent where you could “pitch” an idea for an interview. Make sure the station’s play list and audience profile fits with your prospective event attendees, such as country music, pop, jazz, etc. If you are presenting live talent, musical or not, present the idea that you could arrange an interview with your special guests. These stations will also have a news group and if your event has sufficient newsworthiness, consider also presenting your event from a news angle.

**Television**

Opportunities with television are more limited than other media because the primary networks are located in larger metropolitan areas. Local TV is limited to Prescott Community Television. However, there are over the air stations in greater Phoenix, Flagstaff, Kingman and Holbrook. There are several independent stations in Arizona that might be more open to event news stories to fill out their programming. Again, like radio, the more newsworthy the better. Remember, television is a visual medium so the more alive you can make your story idea the better. A spokesman is always good but its better if you can bring your event to life, such as with a demonstration, cooking prep, or art, or singing.

**Press Releases**

You should definitely prepare a complete press release, or even a complete press kit, for your event. It should include all relevant information for your event, especially day, date, times, location, fees, performers, etc. Some news outlets with small staffs may even print your news release as you write it so make every effort to use “news style” copy when preparing your release with the most important summary information in the first paragraph. However, you should not rely on your news release to secure the maximum amount of earned media. It is only a first step. Media outlets get many press releases every day and most get rejected. You will get the greatest results if you create unique, compelling stories that bring your event to life and that you present them actively by contacting the outlets directly. Always send a high quality 8x10 photograph (usually black and white) from previous events. If you are featuring celebrities or a band, etc. include a photo of them. Check first to see if the publications prefer hard copies or electronic versions of your press information. For an updated list of media contacts, call the Tourism Office.

# Digital and Social Media Marketing

While related, social media and digital media are different and should be considered separately when planning them as part of your event marketing plan. Social media marketing is just one of the many different channels of digital marketing. The rapid growth of social and digital marketing, especially among younger generations, together with the ability to do “micro-targeting” makes this method of promotion potentially very valuable and cost effective for those on limited budgets.

Here are the essential definitions of both and examples of where and how they can be utilized in your special event marketing plan.

**Digital Media Marketing**

Digital media is part of the overall marketing process that also includes traditional marketing methods, like many described above. It is another way to build awareness and to promote your special event. Digital media uses the Internet but is not limited to it as there are several off-line ways to use this method.

Examples of digital media include:

* + Website
  + Search Engine Marketing (including Search Optimization, pay per click, etc.)
  + Email marketing
  + SMS messaging
  + Online banner ads
  + Video ads and promotional content
  + Digital billboards – indoor and outdoor

It is very important to consider the viewing and reading habits of your target audience. While it’s almost impossible not to be presented with a myriad of digital media impressions on a daily basis, older generations (Silent, Baby Boomer, some Gen X) are somewhat less active when it comes to awareness and purchase intent than Millennials and younger groups.

Your website should be the anchor of your digital marketing approach. It allows you to provide virtually unlimited content opportunities to create awareness, understanding, detailed organizational information and many other important facts about you. Most importantly for your event, you can use it promote your event, sell tickets, give locational directions, obtain user information such as email addresses, phone numbers, etc.

Other digital media options available to you can help increase awareness, communicate with the followers you already have and promote your upcoming event. If your primary target audience is an older demographic you should consider email marketing as an important part of your overall media campaign. If you don’t already issue a regular e-newsletter to your followers, give serious consideration to starting one to keep your market informed about your event as well as other happenings throughout the year. Use your current email list and/or consider a targeted purchase list to grow your following.

For other uses of digital media, especially if your staff/volunteer resources are less familiar with current ways to use and maximize this important marketing tool, consider the use of a digital marketing specialist to assist you.

**Social Media Marketing**

Social media is best described as the platforms that bring people together based on common interests and to share information. Examples of social media platforms include:

* + Facebook
  + Twitter
  + Pinterest
  + Instagram
  + LinkedIn
  + TikTok
  + You Tube

However, there are many other platforms that appeal to very targeted audiences. Social media has several advantages for smaller, not-for-profit organizations on limited budgets and can be an excellent choice for your special event marketing. There are many advantages to including social media in your event planning:

* + Speed. It is the fastest and easiest way to send out a message to your entire target audience list if you already have them as followers.
  + Non-geographic. Unlike most traditional media, it’s not bound by geography. You can literally send to followers all over the world with the push of a button.
  + Content. People will follow you because they are interested in the same things your organization exists for and for what your event is promoting. With social media content is king.
  + Cost Efficient. Once you are set up with your social platforms it doesn’t require large budgets to maintain them relative to other media options. The most important thing is to have a savvy and experienced person on your team who manages your social media platform.
  + Measurable. Social platforms can provide detailed data about followers, views, time spent, etc. that will help you measure the effectiveness. Marketing researchers are increasingly finding that social media platforms can be used to “convert” viewers into potential customers with persuasive and targeted messaging.

Digital and social media marketing is now a fundamental foundation of most effective marketing campaigns regardless of the target markets you are reaching. That is why it is important for you to know the differences and benefits of each and to be able to utilize them effectively. Again, for those who don’t have access to an experienced resource within your special events team, consider a professional advisor.

# Creative Implementation for Events

The foregoing sections on target audience identification and messaging options are the ways you will get your message to your followers and prospects. But an equally important part of your special event marketing is your creative messaging. There are several components to compelling, persuasive communication. This next section will provide you with suggestions on how to create the most effective promotional messages to draw the largest possible audience of attendees.

**Essential Creative Elements**

The most subjective element of your special event is the development of your creative event theming and graphic/copy approaches. There is no one way to create excellent, persuasive advertising. In fact, the most arresting creative will be out-of-the-ordinary, eye-stopping. Some ideas to consider before you actually begin the creative process. Make sure your creative is:

* + Simple, easy to see or hear, and be understand
  + Clear, bold, arresting, vibrant
  + Dominant graphics or strong sounds/visuals

There are additional “must haves” for special event advertising and promotion:

* + Easy access to event name, time, date, place
  + Include call to action with how to get event access: tickets, free, etc.
  + Special features, such as 25th anniversary, This Weekend Only, etc.
  + Unique slogan, tag line

**Creative Development Ideas**

Ask 10 creative persons about how to begin the creative process and you will get 10 answers. It is that individual. But there are some time-tested approaches you should consider:

* + Begin with the big, over-arching idea (details can come later)
  + Discover what’s unique, special, different, appealing
  + Use a strong, dramatic visual that defines your event instantly
  + Less is more: only include necessary elements to convey your message

# Marketing Coordination with Event Operations

The purpose of this guidebook is to assist you with developing and implementing your marketing plan. At the same time, it is vitally important that the event marketing team work closely with the event operations team to achieve maximum success. As you set your marketing goals it is important that you have the “on the ground” agreement, support and coordination with the team that will bring the event to life to ensure an enjoyable experience for everyone involved. No matter the size of your event or the years of experience your team has, your event will only be successful in the eyes of your attendees if the “promises” made through your marketing are fulfilled through their actual experience. You will need to decide how to best plan for coordination between these two crucial elements of your event, but it is highly recommended that this be a coordinated effort. As mentioned earlier in this guidebook, you should give serious consideration to creating a separate team to work solely on the marketing of your event, which will allow your event operations team to focus solely on executing the event. Then, simply ensure they meet and share regularly.

# SECTION THREE: ESTIMATING ATTENDANCE

It is important for you to attempt to accurately estimate the attendance at your event, both for your own planning as well as to meet the requirements for the TAC grant. Knowing how many attendees you have each day of your event will assist you in planning many aspects of your event operation, such as volunteer requirements per day/per hour, estimates for food and beverage supplies, event security, and the list goes on. In many cases it will be very difficult if not impossible to determine an “exact count” but there are many methods to gain a reliable estimate, many of which will depend on the type of event you are sponsoring.

When estimating total attendance it will be important to distinguish the various roles of persons who attend your event starting with actual attendees, but also counting participants for events such as running or bike races; food vendors at festivals; security personnel; event volunteers; etc.

The most important thing is for you to do your best possible estimating, knowing that absolutes are hard to attain. Below are methods used that have stood the test of time to assist you in crowd estimating. They are listed from most accurate to least accurate:

**Ticket Sales**

The most obvious and definitive method for estimating your event attendance is ticket sales. However, not everyone who purchases a ticket will actually attend the event, so if it is possible, it is a best practice to also do an actual crowd count for your event and compare it to tickets sold. (See counting methods below.)

**Seat Counts**

If your event includes seating and is also a free event it is easy to count filled seats for each of the seated event times whether it is a one-time seating or one with multiple seatings over one day or several days. Assign a team to do seat counts after the activity has begun, usually in the middle of a scheduled performance. Also, be sure to do a crowd estimate for those standing who are attending the performance, allowing for the fact that persons who stand in the back may come and go.

**Gated Access**

If possible, an excellent way to create very accurate crowd counts for free events is to provide limited access to outdoor events by establishing perimeter fencing with entrance points at selected locations. With limited access in place you can then count attendees by having a volunteer count the persons as they enter with a simple counter that counts each time it is clicked. If attendees have received an entry pass all that is necessary is to collect the passes as people enter. If it is important to distinguish types of attendees, such as VIPs, adults, children, etc. the passes can be color coded, numbered, etc.

**Aerial Head Counts**

Many events are free and do not have defined access points. Events on the Courthouse Plaza or in an open field at Watson Park, for example, allow for many open access points and allow attendees to come and go at will. This is the most difficult type of event to conduct an accurate crowd count. The most time-tested approach to complete crowd estimates for this type of event is to conduct an aerial count at various times of the day or days for multi-day events.

This method requires photographing the event space from an elevated location, typically an airplane/helicopter or the roof of a building where possible. This method can be costly and difficult to access roofs with good vantage points.

A much more accessible way to count crowds or this type of event is by using aerial drones, although it can be more complex. The best way to accomplish this is to send up a drone (with an experienced, licensed operator) and complete a still photograph or series of still photographs at defined periods during the event. You will also need to create a scaled grid pattern that encompasses the entire event space that can be overlaid on the event location. Depending on the overall land mass for the event, a grid scaled for different spaces, such as grid where each grid represents a 10’x10’ space for a smaller event space or a 36’x36’ for larger spaces. With that in hand, you simply need to count heads within a grid and multiply by the number of grids, allowing for dense counts in prime locations and less dense counts on the fringes of the event space. This method takes some planning and experimentation, and may require police or FAA approval, but is an excellent way to create a very reliable crowd estimate.

**Attendance Surveys**

It is possible to gain a general idea about attendance through a survey that is conducted by volunteers on site during the event day(s). This method requires the creation of a survey form, (more about surveys later) a team of volunteers and some method to make the survey as random as possible. For example, a volunteer with clearly identifiable clothing/badge would randomly approach every 10th person or group and ask them a short series of questions, essentially asking how many in the party and how long they are attending the event (number of hours, days, etc.) This survey would be conducted at different parts of each day on a consistent basis, say every two hours for each day of the event. If a person had already completed the survey they would not be surveyed again. You would then take the raw data and multiply by 10 to determine a total attendance estimate for the event. This method also allows for secondary data analysis, such as attendance per day, peak attendance time periods, etc. This information also will be valuable to planning your operations logistics.

# SECTION FOUR: ESTIMATING LODGING USAGE

Many visitors, participants, vendors and others connected to your event may spend one or more nights in the Prescott area at different types of accommodations, including hotels, motels, Airbnb-type lodging, RV parks, private homes, etc. This is a very important part of the event analytics and has a direct impact on TAC grant funding. For hotels and motels, you will need to work with their management with a process described below to identify the number of attendees who are from outside the Quad Cities, where they originated and length of stay.

**Hotel/Motel**

It will be beneficial for you to set up a hotel or group of hotel/motels to promote to your targeted attendees and to negotiate a group rate with the properties. To track room nights in this category, set up a room block account with each of the properties you are planning to use during the time period of your event. An Information Only Block (Infor Block) will be created within each hotel property management information system, using an adjoining rate code. When a reservation is made the hotel will record it to your room block. You will then be able to know the number of rooms booked and the number of nights (called room nights). The hotel will know how many room nights you used to help them plan for future business with your organization. Be sure to establish a negotiated group rate when working with each hotel/motel for direct bookings. Or, if your attendee books through an Online Booking Agency (OTA) channel, have your front office or reservations staff set up a system to ask the attendee if they are attending your event to make sure you get credit for the booking. An example would look like this:

Event: Corvette Club

Dates: April 23-25, 2021

Group Code: Corvette2021

If the properties you select for group bookings and group rates don’t have the type of automated system outlined above, ask them to create a manual system managed by the front desk. There are many hotel/motel properties in our area so it is possible attendees will stay at properties you did not promote. Using an event survey should be able to identify these properties so you can estimate usage. Remember, the TAC grant asks only for your best effort to estimate lodging usage, not exact numbers.

**RV Parks**

If area RV parks have an automated system as outlined above, use the same method. If not, communicate with those RV parks you believe will be the ones your attendees would most likely use and ask that they survey their reservations and provide you with the number of vehicles parked, the number of people in the party and the number of days used that coincide with your event dates.

**Private Lodging/ Airbnb-type and Miscellaneous**

The best way to track this category will be through your event surveys. Use your completed surveys and estimate total usage by multiplying your surveys by the sample of attendees you selected. For example, if you survey every 10th party at your event, then simply multiply the results by 10 to get an estimated total.

# SECTION FIVE: CONDUCTING AN EVENT SURVEY

Alternatively, much of the event data discussed above can be obtained through an in-person survey conducted on-site during the event or with a post-event survey. As mentioned, surveys of this type can provide general guidance but are the least reliable form of gathering information about attendance. On the other hand, event surveys can allow for different types of attendee information to be gathered in one convenient method. The survey can be conducted in several different ways as long as you attempt to achieve as much organized randomness as possible to be able to project the results as accurately as this method allows. A sample survey is included in the appendix of this guidebook. In addition, it’s important to make the survey brief to maximize the number of persons willing to participate. Below are recommended areas of inquiry for the survey:

* Attendance (as outlined above)
* Location, Zip Code Origin
* Number of persons in the party
* Length of Stay
* Type of Lodging
* Retail, restaurants used, planned to use
* Event Ratings

As a reward for answering the survey, consider a drawing, or a co-op promotion with a nearby vendor/restaurant to provide for a discount coupon or similar. This may be the easiest method for your event management to conduct but recognize it will be the least accurate in helping you understand your event attendance dynamics for future planning and TAC reporting.

How should you conduct the attendee survey?

* Ticketed or Gated Events

If your event requires a paid ticket or has limited access points, you can provide a survey to attendees and ask that they complete it during the event and turn it in as they leave, either to a volunteer (preferred) or by placing it in a survey box at the exit. The survey could be given out upon arrival or placed on each seat. Be sure to ask for one survey per group.

**Free, Gated Events**

If your event has limited access entry and exit locations, you can either offer the survey to attendees at entry, during the event or as they exit. As described above, use of volunteers or survey boxes are preferred ways to gather the information.

**Open Access Events**

Depending on the type of open-access event, surveys can be conducted in ways that best fit the event. For example, a free, open seating concert could use volunteers to deliver surveys to attendees where they are sitting. For an event such as an art show or similar, the best method would be to utilize volunteers to distribute the surveys randomly as described in the sections above.

**Post-Event Surveys**

If your event attendees can be identified easily through a registration list or other linkages you have through mailing lists, e-newsletters or similar means, then a survey can be distributed that way. The only caveat is that your event needs to have accurate customer data. Surveys of this sort can be distributed by mail or electronically, with electronic distribution preferred. This method also allows for the possibility of a longer, more in-depth survey than the on-site method because the respondent may be willing to give it more time. On the other hand, you should expect a smaller return rate and it will not be as statistically reliable as survey respondents are not necessarily representative of your total attendee profile. A post event survey is best for gathering more attitudinal insights than quantitative data.

# SECTION SIX: COMMUNITY BENEFIT AND YOUR EVENT

This component of your event is a very important element of your overall event management and is evaluated by TAC reviewers as part of your contribution to the betterment of the Prescott community. While most of your event planning and post-event reporting will require quantitative analysis, the community benefit portion of your event is more subjective in nature. The TAC goal is to encourage you to include people and organizations outside of your core event planning team. Many social service organizations, community service groups, and even area companies are looking for ways to expand their community service and your event may be a perfect fit for them. In addition, inclusion of outside groups can expand your volunteer labor force without having to hire event personnel for certain activities. Below are some examples you might consider:

* + Consider using a Scout troop to serve as gate counters or as survey helpers.
  + A church or social group could help with event clean up or participant support.
  + An area car dealership may want to recruit employees to assist with a car show.
  + Work with area companies who encourage employees to do community service projects as a way to develop company pride, enrichment and community involvement.

There are many opportunities for community involvement and only require a pro-active approach and creativity. Some groups will want to serve your event as a way for its members to achieve important service hours or badges. Some may seek to be paid a stipend for their efforts to help them with whatever mission they serve, but this will almost always be more cost-effective than hiring outside labor. Be creative!

# SECTION SEVEN: PREPARING THE POST-EVENT REPORT

All of the suggestions in this guidebook are designed to help you all the way through your special event, from pre-planning, on-site event information collection to post-event reporting. The TAC recommends you conduct as much data collection as is feasible to assist you with continual improvement, but there are a few specific quantitative reports needed to fulfill your requirements as a TAC grantee.

1. Attendance
2. Number of Participants/Vendors
3. Lodging Nights
4. Revenues
5. Market Reach
6. Media Expenditures
7. Earned Media Dollar Value Estimates
8. Community Benefit

When evaluating your grant application, the TAC records your planning estimates for each component listed above and provides dollar grants based on the economic/social benefits your event produces. At the conclusion of your event, the TAC then compares your estimates to your actual results and uses this information in evaluating your application for the next year, which is why your data collection is so important.

Clearly, some of the required data is easier to assemble than other elements. Some will be very specific such as revenue, paid media expenditures, number of participants/vendors, etc. Below are some summary suggestions for preparing your post-event report where the data is more of an estimation. TAC understands that estimating is acceptable asking only that you make your best efforts to be as specific quantifiable as possible.

1. Attendance

You should choose the attendance counting methodology that is most consistent with your type of event and the availability/capability of your organizational structure. As you evaluate your current capacity, consider adding people to your event planning team that possess skills and/or interest in handling this portion of your event preparation. As indicated in the Estimating Attendance section, some calculations can be exact, such as ticket sales, but most require an attendance estimate.

1. Participants/Vendors

You should be able to calculate an exact number for this requirement through your current process. If you are making an informal estimate, consider asking participants to complete a sign-up sheet or some similar method.

1. Lodging Nights

This is one of the most important elements of data reporting requirements for your grant. The City Council expects that your grant dollars will bring positive economic impact from attendees who travel more than 90 miles to attend. There are several suggestions for estimating lodging rooms booked and number of nights spent (called room/nights). The most accurate method will be to use the method where you work with each hotel/motel and have them use the booking system outlined in the Lodging section. The same system can be used with area RV parks as well. You can then use attendee surveys to estimate room/nights at other types of lodging that are more decentralized, such as Airbnb housing, private residences and the like. Please give this reporting requirement special attention as it can also affect your future grant applications.

1. Revenues

You should be able to be exact with this reporting requirement once you tally all of the dollar-based elements of your event, such as ticket sales, product sales, registration fees, and similar. If you need to improve this area of reporting consider adding a volunteer accountant to your team, or recruit other types of volunteers who work with numbers regularly.

1. Market Reach

The best way to calculate the geographic market reach for your event is to require a report from the media outlets where you have made space or time purchases. They will be able to present you with a report that outlines a wide variety of market data that will be useful to you, but the specific report you will need for your post-event report is the percentage of the market reached outside of the 90-mile distance from Prescott. Next, using your preferred attendee methodology, create the estimated percentage of actual attendees by zip code origin. These two analyses will tell you where you “planned” attendees to come from, and where they “actually” did come from. This, too, is an extremely important part of the TAC review process.

1. Media Expenditures

This report should be exact and easy to calculate by simply compiling all the formal media buys you have made, whether they are from local area media outlets or those in the region. This will be easy to assemble for traditional media such as newspapers, radio, television and outdoor. If your marketing plan includes digital media that you purchase, that too should be easy to include in your tally. Social media will be more difficult unless you have purchased ad space or other monetary units of advertising. Only include actual dollar expenditures. (Social media can provide you with invaluable metrics that you can use to expand your market reach and connectivity with your event, but if you didn’t pay for the metrics such as number of clicks, page views, etc. do not include it in your media expenditure report.)

1. Earned Media Dollar Estimates

This category includes all the publicity placements that occurred featuring or listing your event for this current year. They can include any traditional/digital/social media publicity that featured your event, but the inclusion had to be a third-party decision, not yours. For example, a story you “pitch” to a newspaper that the editors decide to publish, whether it’s a press release, interview, event listing, etc. it would count as earned media. If your event self-publishes an event announcement on your website, social media account or similar it would not count as earned media (even though it would be a good marketing activity).

It is easy to calculate the dollar value of your earned media results. First, calculate the size and quantity of your placements. Second, apply the price the medium would have charged you had the placement been an advertisement, commercial, etc. For example, if you receive a newspaper story that is four columns by 19 inches, simply calculate the total column inches, in this case 76 column inches (4x19) and apply the open rate the paper charges for an ad of that size. For radio and TV, you would use the same formula, only changing it to the number of minutes given multiplied by the commercial rate for that time slot. If you receive free outdoor advertising, simply ask the dollar value the outdoor company would have charged you for the showing.

For many TAC grantees that have limited marketing budgets and goals to expand the regional reach of the event, earned media is an excellent tool for your marketing campaign for two primary reasons: first, you will have little or no out-of-pocket budget expense; and second, many consumers place more trust in a news story than a paid advertisement. The only downside is that you cannot control the outcome of your publicity efforts as the medium’s editorial staff will make the final decision on placement.

1. Community Benefit

When preparing your post-event report be sure to include the total number of organizations and people involved, hours of service provided and the nature of how and why the community volunteers participated. This report, while subjective as mentioned, can demonstrate your dedication to community betterment and will count positively to your overall rating and dollar grant award.

# SUMMARY

Your event is very important to Prescott’s reputation as a desirable tourism destination. The purpose of the TAC grant program is to assist your organization in supporting this reputation and the grants provided assist your success.

All of the suggestions in this guidebook are intended to help with event marketing preparation and post-event reports to support your grant award and provide a basis for your next grant application.

The City of Prescott and the Office of Tourism believe strongly in continuous improvement to achieve success. As it partners with you on your special event we want to also encourage improvement on your part as well. Event improvement can be facilitated by comparing pre-event goals with post-event results, some of which are data driven and some of which are subjective. Most importantly, the city believes that collaboration on our mutual goal for continuous improvement is the best way to achieve our mutual goals. As you prepare your grant application and post event report the Office of Tourism asks that you also provide suggestions that will help improve the TAC grant process in future grant cycles. It is only through our mutual collaboration that we will collectively improve and help make Prescott a better place to live and visit.

Thank you for your interest in Prescott tourism. We look forward to many years of partnership.

This book and all contents are the property of the City of Prescott. C 2021

# APPENIX – SAMPLE EVENT SURVEY

**Event Visitor Survey**

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. By filling out this survey, you are consenting to participate.

What is your home zip code? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How many people in your party? \_\_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about this event? (check all that apply)

* Social Media
* Online Advertising
* Printed news article or advertisement
* Radio
* TV
* Posters/Banners
* Word of Mouth
* Attended previously
* Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is your primary reason for visiting Prescott today? (check one)

* I live here
* Visiting Friends/Family
* This event (fill in the name) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

While you are in Prescott, where are you staying?

* Hotel/Motel
* Bed and Breakfast
* Airbnb or VRBO
* With Friends
* Camping
* Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If you are visiting, how long are you staying?

* Day Trip Only
* 1-2
* 3+
* Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Are you dining and/or shopping in Prescott?

* Yes, Where? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* No

Email address? (optional) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Recommendations: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you!**