



Request for Proposals to host a **Hot Air Balloon Championship**

Introduction

The Hot Air Competition Division of the Balloon Federation of America (BFA/HACD) is seeking proposals from sports commissions, convention and visitors' bureaus, or other local organizations to host the 2022-2024 US National Hot Air Balloon Championships and other Championships for 2020 through 2024. These are annual events of four to seven days that bring together top men and women competitors from across the United States as they vie for the opportunity to represent the US in various biennial World Hot Air Balloon Championships. Events that involve 10-50 competitors are available. The BFA, as the National Aeronautical Association US representative, is the officially recognized sanctioning body authorized to organize National Championships for the purpose of selecting representatives to attend International Hot Air Balloon Competitions. This RFP provides an overview of what is expected of an organization in order to host one of the Championships, a list of available events, and the anticipated number of competitors at them. Proposals, and resulting contracts, will generally be for a three-year commitment. Additional details and bid criteria for each event are available from BFA/HACD representatives.

Background

The BFA has held a US National Hot Air Balloon Championship since 1963. Other Championships have been added more recently. Several cities have hosted the US National Championship over the years and each location featured its own unique blend of hospitality, travel and tourism, and geography. The US National Championship has been hosted by

- Rantoul, IL;
- Des Moines and Indianola, IA;
- Baton Rouge and Shreveport, LA;
- Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, MI;
- Columbia, MO;
- Reno, NV;
- Middletown, OH;
- Anderson, SC;
- Waco and Longview, TX.

In August 2019 it began a three-year run in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska.

In the early years of the National Championship, competitors numbered as many as 100 with the competitive field being cut to 30 mid-way through the event. It was eventually decided to reduce the field to 50 and support that number for all days of the event. While

scheduled for as many as nine days of competition in the early decades, the current model has been trimmed to 6-12 flights over 6-7 days of competition to better match the economic realities of the day as well as pilot and family schedules and availability. Other Championships run for 4-6 days with one or two flights per day. In addition to the competitors, some communities have also included additional non-competitive “fiesta” balloons as further entertainment and to assist with sponsor and VIP obligations for weekend activities.

Event Overview

While the actual schedule can be adjusted based on the event and a local community’s preferences, the typical format is to begin with afternoon registration and an evening opening party/reception for the 3-5-person balloon teams and the community. The competitive balloon flights begin the next morning shortly after sunrise and continue every morning, and some evenings, depending on local weather conditions, through the following Sunday morning. Balloons will be in the air approximately 1-2 hours each flight. Most competitors will come into the area for practice flights prior to the competition. On Friday and Saturday nights of the event a night-time balloon glow can be scheduled at a local park or other open area in conjunction with a community festival or music concert. The championship usually concludes with a Sunday awards brunch.

US National Championship Host Model

The business plan and economic model to host the US National Hot Air Balloon Championship has undergone many changes in the past decade in response to the realities of sponsorship opportunities and the economic environment that communities face today. Each of the Championships is a partnership between the BFA/HACD and a local community organization. The BFA brings a package of world-class competitive entertainment proven to be an attractive community celebration and tourism package. The BFA provides the personnel and expertise to help organize and execute the Championship. The local community and its event organization provide the local personnel, organizational structure, sponsorship, and logistics to bring the event to fruition. An active local community, volunteers, and a strong sponsor base are essential to the success of the model. A sample organization chart is included at the end of this RFP.

Economic Impact

While the actual economic impact of a Championship event will depend on several factors, some available reports of previous events are indicative of the potential.

- An analysis of the 2016 US National Championships in Shreveport showed that the direct economic impact was between \$750,000 and \$1 million.
- An annual event in Middletown, Ohio, which grew out of the US Nationals there several years ago, has reported an economic impact of \$3.8 million.
- In Longview, Texas, they found that there were over 1,000 room nights booked in local hotels as a result of the US Nationals held in conjunction with their local balloon event.

Available Championships

- US National Hot Air Balloon Championship, 2022-2024 (6-7 days, 50 balloons, July or August)
- Champions Tour, 2020-2024 (4-6 days, 20-25 balloons, current and former US World Team competitors, August-October)
- US Women's National Championship, 2022-2024 (4-5 days, 10-20 balloons, June-October)
- Juniors National Championship, 2020-2024 (4-5 days, 6-12 balloons, June-October, could be combined with Women's Championship)
- Team National Championship, 2020-2024 (4-6 days, 30-45 balloons, May-August)
- Regional Championships, (annually, 3-5 days, June-October)
- State Championships, (annually, 3 days, June-October)

Required Flying Area

If your area has an active local balloon group, the area is probably conducive to hosting a National Championship. While some congested area is acceptable, generally we are looking for locations containing open areas, rolling hills and farm fields providing appropriate launch and landing areas for up to 50 hot air balloons. The primary launch field is often a large public park or school complex. In total, you will need up to 30 acres of open ground area to stage 50 balloons and provide space for spectators, vendors, and parking. The overall competition area typically covers an area approximately 25 miles X 25 miles. Balloon operations cannot be conducted in or in close proximity to Class B airspace (major airports). If you have questions in this regard contact a local pilot or HACD representative and seek their guidance. In any case, the event organizer, with assistance from HACD, will be filing a Request for Waiver with the local FAA Flight Standards District Office seeking a waiver of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 91, §§ 91.119(b) and (c).

Volunteers

An active corps of local volunteers is paramount to the success of a US National Championship. In order to properly develop a plan and secure physical arrangements and sponsors, we suggest a minimum of nine months to one year of active planning. An active local balloon community and/or other volunteers are needed to assist with landowner relations, as well as target field searches and documentation prior to the Championship. Volunteers are also needed for a number of support activities including:

- preparing and securing the venue
- sponsor recruitment
- hospitality and food service
- registration
- souvenir sales
- entertainment (if any) planning
- parking
- communications
- publicity
- propane management
- vendors

Responsibilities of the Host Organization

- An annual \$500-\$5,000 sanction fee paid to the BFA/HACD. (Lesser amounts for championships other than the US Nationals. There is no bid fee.)
- Propane is a major expense of the event. Most successful Championship venues have had at least a partial sponsorship of the propane. The US Nationals hosted in Longview, Texas, and Shreveport, Louisiana, received complete sponsorship of their propane – a value of approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 per year. Propane consumption for each competitor could average up to 40 gallons per flight and 15 gallons per glow. Propane is to be available for practice flights at pilot's expense. The propane provider must be equipped with fueling adapters and stations to fuel multiple balloons simultaneously. The refueling location should be at an area easily controlled with good ingress and egress for pilot vehicles and trailers.
- Provide hospitality and food as follows:
 - An opening night reception for pilots, crews, officials, sponsors and other VIP's. Usually includes food from the simple to the sublime. Often the organizer stages this party at a local point of interest such as a park or zoo. A successful approach has been hosting a 'taste of the city' where local restaurants donate and feature samples of their restaurant fare. This serves to familiarize the out of town pilots, crew and staff with the local restaurants and encourages them to return and support the local economy throughout the duration of the event.
 - Snacks and drink for pilots, crew, staff and volunteers at morning and evening briefings. Continental breakfast items, while much appreciated, would not be considered a necessity. This is an area where in-kind contributions could be most helpful. Companies like Dunkin Donuts,

Panera Bread, McDonald's, and a wide variety of local breakfast eateries are often approachable for in-kind donations.

- An awards banquet at the end of the event for pilots, crew, and staff. This can be a breakfast, brunch or lunch. Each pilot is generally provided three-five complimentary tickets to the event. Additional tickets, if needed, are purchased by the pilots or crew.
- Provide lodging accommodations for participating pilots. Pilots receive one complimentary room beginning the day of registration and checking out the day of the awards brunch. Fiesta pilots, if any, generally would only require a room for two evenings as their flight schedule is limited. Local pilots would not be provided complimentary rooms. Approximately 20% - 30% of the competitive pilots purchase an extra room for their crew. Many competitors arrive a day or two early, at their own expense, to get in some practice flights and learn the area. While it may be necessary to utilize more than one hotel to accommodate all the needs of the event, it is preferred that all competitors and their crew be housed together at the primary hotel.
- Provide lodging accommodations for 10-20 BFA event officials and staff beginning one or two days prior to the start of competition. The BFA/HACD staff must be housed together and at the primary hotel.
- Provide suitable meeting space, either in or near the primary hotel, as follows:
 - A room for pilot briefing with conference style seating for each pilot, crew chief, and event official. Additional theatre style seating for up to 50. The room will have an adequate sound system, head table and riser, computer projector and screen.
 - Lockable room for target and measuring teams, and their supplies. Seating for 20.
 - Lockable room for senior competition staff for task planning and weather information gathering. Must have high-speed Internet capabilities with sufficient bandwidth. Seating for up to 10.
- Up to ten vehicles with courtesy car logo stickers for staff use throughout the event.
- "Pilot packs" for each competitor and official including two copies of the competition map, event shirt with logo, event badges, and printed copy of the 75-page Operations Manual containing rules, schedule and other pertinent data.
- Two basket banners per balloon, minimum size 28" X 32", with pilot competition number and space for balloon sponsor name.
- Event logo tee shirts for volunteers.
- Two high speed copy machines.
- Supplies such as paper, toner, and AA batteries to be used in GPS tracking loggers provided by the BFA.
- Primary launch area facilities such as port-a-johns, hospitality tents, trash receptacles, security, temporary lighting, temporary fencing, staging, and broadcast sound system.

- Coordination with all local police, fire and EMS personnel to ensure safety of the event and comply with provisions of the FAA Waiver.
- Insurance to indemnify and hold BFA harmless for claims arising from event activities and a General Liability policy with BFA named as additionally insured with waiver of subrogation.
- A prize package for competitors. (There is no fixed amount. Recent US National Championship events have had total packages of \$10,000 - \$70,000 available for competitors and Fiesta pilots. In some instances, the BFA/HACD can assist the local organizer in finding a partial national sponsor for this expenditure.)

BFA/HACD Contributions

The BFA will provide to the host organization, event licensing throughout the contract years. The BFA/HACD will determine eligibility requirements and provide recruitment of the pilots based on the HACD National Eligibility List. It will also handle the pilot application process for competitors and Fiesta pilots. Registration fees will be collected, and retained, by the BFA to cover travel expenses for its event officials. The BFA/HACD will also provide the following.

- Experienced professional staff to run the event and provide technical support for safety, race planning and execution.
- Travel stipends for all staff recruited by the BFA.
- A General Liability and Non-Owned Aircraft policy naming the organizer as additionally insured.
- Assurance that each participating pilot is fully insured for bodily injury and property damage. Pilots will name the organizer, its officers, directors, employees, venue cities, etc. as additionally insured with waiver of subrogation.
- Marketing materials and event advertising in its publication, **Ballooning** and its newsletter, **Quick Release**.
- Medals and awards to selected recipients.
- All competition supplies including: theodolite, markers, GPS tracking loggers, targets, measuring tapes, helium, 16" latex pibals (balloons), pibal night lights, portable flag stations, and flags.
- Technical assistance for the development of the competition map and selection of printing vendor.
- Training of local volunteers for service as measuring team members, registration workers, and propane assistants.
- Championship Rules and Regulations related to the event.
- Liaison with the local FAA FSDO and file an Application for Waiver and related NOTAMS.
- Assistance in the development of a crisis management plan.

Potential Revenue Sources

In-Kind Contributions: Major expenses of hosting a hot air balloon National Championship are housing, propane and meals. All of these can be partially or totally sponsored by local companies as an in-kind contribution. Printing, trash removal, apparel, cars for officials, and other operational costs can also be provided as in-kind donations. Benefits provided to the sponsor will vary depending on the level of support.

Title Sponsorships: While in-kind contributions are helpful, it is important to note that the event cannot be run solely on in-kind contributions. Local community sponsorships are the absolute life blood of an event of this nature. Marketing a title sponsorship for approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000 is almost essential for a six-day event. Your community and the nature of local or national companies present will determine the appropriate amount for such title sponsorships.

Balloon Sponsors: Individual balloon sponsorships are typically sold for prices ranging from \$750 to \$1,500 depending on the length of the event. Benefits offered can include listing in the event program, envelope banners with the company's name/logo, and public announcements at the event's primary launch field by a field announcer.

Corporate Tents: A very successful source of revenue at some events is corporate tents or villages. Fees for this might range from \$5,000 to \$7,500 plus the cost of the tent, tables, chairs, food and beverage service, and entertainment, contracted directly by the sponsor with local vendors. This has replaced the company picnic for many sponsors. The tent sponsor could also be provided two or three Balloon Sponsorships as described above, depending on the level of support.

Target or Race Sponsors: Creative marketing, combined with a creative BFA Championship Director, can provide race day sponsorships using a company's logo as a target displayed at the venue used in the competition. Think of items that could be utilized as a 'target' such as Target Department Store logo, tires, car dealers etc. Basically, any company's logo may be adaptable to a balloon competition target. In addition, large field banners, flags or cold air inflatables could help market the sponsor's product or service.

Launch Field Vendors: Depending on the scope of the event, food vendors can be solicited, and entry fees may vary from \$500 to \$1000 depending on the anticipated crowd. The balloon event can also be run in conjunction with carnival rides and attractions. While this represents an entirely different set of problems and opportunities, it can be a source of revenue. Many local and national companies such as cell phone companies, state lotteries, beverages, and snack foods love to purchase space to promote and sample their products.

Gate Receipts: Events sometimes try to structure their revenue relying heavily on gate or parking revenues. We find this to be a good potential source of income especially if the balloon event is combined with a well sponsored entertainment venue. However, the event is weather dependent and good business dictates that budget revenues be covered in advance with sponsorships. Reasonable parking fees (\$10 to \$20) per car load or a fixed fee (\$25 to \$35 for the entire event) can generate \$10,000 to \$20,000 in revenue. The Longview, TX event raises in excess of \$100,000 annually in gate fees. In its first year, Shreveport had a paid attendance of 10,000 people on Saturday night alone.

Event Organization

A sample organization chart is included at the end of this RFP. Each organizer would establish their own chain of command that would work best for their organization, but this provides an idea of major responsibilities for a US National Hot Air Balloon Championship.

Additional Information

For further information or more specific details regarding any of the Championships contact one of the following:

- Gary Britton, HACD Secretary, 414.333.5664, brittong@uwm.edu
- Jason Jones, HACD Chairman, 913.338.2628, pilot@oldworldballoonery.com
- Maury Sullivan, Championship Event Director, 330.323.4455, tequilatom@aol.com

Bid Package

Please submit your bid proposal for the 2022-2024 US National Hot Air Balloon Championships and other Championships electronically to both Jason Jones and Maury Sullivan with as much detail as feasible addressing the major points of this RFP. In particular, include the following:

- Name and description of the sponsoring organization.
- City and State.
- Proposed dates along with a note as to flexibility.
- Venue location (primary launch and viewing area). Include exact address.
- Name(s) and address(es) of host hotel(s).
- List local balloonists or balloon club willing to assist.
- Source of local volunteers.
- Proposed operational budget.
- Proposed prize package.

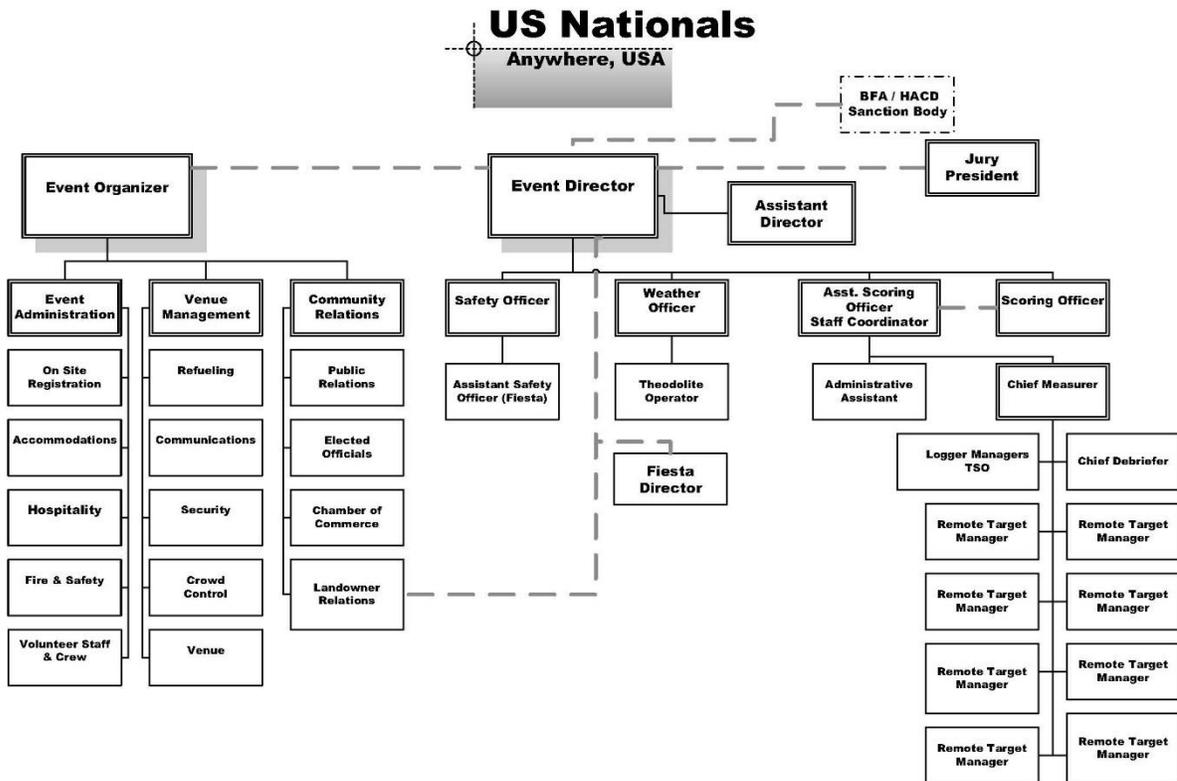
Additional supporting materials may be sent by surface mail to either Jason Jones, 12600 W. 142nd St., Overland Park, Kansas 66221, or to Maury Sullivan, 6509 Yost St NW, Canton, Ohio 44718.

Selection Criteria

In making the selection for the site of the 2022-2024 US National Hot Air Balloon Championship and other Championship events, the HACD Board of Directors will consider the location, the flying area, probable weather, the proposed budget and prize package, estimated cost of hotel rooms for crew members, the strength of the host organization, and how well its proposal covers the required items. In general, the HACD seeks to provide the best overall championship experience for its members, the local community, and all event participants.

Tentative Bid Schedule

November 30, 2019	Proposals for any championships commencing in 2020 due
November 30, 2020	Proposals for any championships commencing in 2021 due
November 30, 2020	Proposals for 2022-2024 US National Championship due
January 1, 2021	Notification of selected host location for 2022 US Nationals
Summer 2021	Passing of BFA flag to selected 2022-24 host organization
Throughout the process	Site visits by HACD representatives will be scheduled, in consultation with local organizations, as needed depending on familiarity of board members with the proposed site(s).



US NATIONAL HOT AIR BALLOON CHAMPIONSHIP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING SITE SELECTION

This set of questions and the corresponding answers provides supplementary information pertaining to the BFA/HACD Request for Proposals to host the US National Hot Air Balloon Championship.

Q: Is the number of balloons in the US Nationals rigidly set at 50?

A: While the HACD rules specify there will be 50, it can be increased a small amount by mutual agreement between the organizer and BFA/HACD. An increase adds costs for the host organization and staffing requirements for the HACD.

Q: Are there set dates for the Championships?

A: No. Preferably the US Nationals would be from mid-June through the latter part of August so as not to conflict with the end or beginning of school or with major previously scheduled balloon events. Dates should be consistent with the historically best summer weather and wind data for the local area. There is more flexibility with the other Championships.

- Q: Can balloon rides be included as part of the package for sponsorships?
- A: Events sometimes include a 'sponsor ride' for one person as part of various sponsorship packages. While this may seem like it makes the sponsorship an easier sell, it does add complications to the event. Sponsor riders cannot be carried on-board balloons during the competition for a variety of safety and legal reasons. The sponsors can, however, be provided a ride during sponsor/media flights typically scheduled the day before the competition begins. Fiesta pilots or commercial ride operators are often engaged to carry the majority of event sponsors. We strongly suggest advising all sponsors that hot air ballooning is a fair-weather sport. Sponsor rides should never be 'guaranteed.' It should be fully explained that ride opportunities are limited to designated flights prior to the start of competition or selected fiesta flights as noted on the event's printed schedule.
- Q: What benefits does the Fiesta Division bring to the event?
- A: They serve, in large part, as an alternate entertainment opportunity for glows, public walk-about, sponsor rides, and static displays. If special shape balloons are included, they serve as an additional special feature attraction for spectators.
- Q: How much does the HACD charge competitors for their entry fee and what is this money used for?
- A: Competitors in the US Nationals are typically charged a non-refundable entry fee of \$200 and Fiesta pilots are charged \$50-\$100. It is used by the BFA/HACD to cover costs in providing travel and expense stipends for its official staff traveling from across the US, and other operational expenses. Depending on the level of local balloonist volunteers, the HACD typically provides a staff of approximately twenty well trained professionals to ensure the success of the event.
- Q: How can members of the local ballooning community help?
- A: This depends on the experience, interests, and personalities of members in that community. For example, experienced competitors can assist in planning and target field selection. Sport flyers could participate as fiesta pilots. All pilots could assist in landowner relations and obtaining sponsorships. Crew members could volunteer to be on measurement teams or crew for out of town competitors.
- Q: Is a nearby large metropolitan area necessary?
- A: No. The host community must have an infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, and meeting facilities) large enough to host the event. But drawing large numbers of spectators is only necessary to the extent that gate receipts are expected to cover a portion of the costs.
- Q: Are any of the budget amounts or other requirements negotiable?
- A: Yes, and some items are optional. The HACD is willing to work with local organizers and help plan a proposal and subsequent event best suited to the needs of both the HACD and the local community.