



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 14, 2025
8:30 am – 10:30 am
Visit SLO CAL Office: 81 Higuera St, Suite 220, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Terri Banish, Sheridan Bohlken, Jacqui Clark-Charlesworth, Cheryl Cuming, Gordon Jackson, Stacie Jacob, Lori Keller, Kathleen Naughton, Courtney Pene, Joel Peterson, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Leann Standish, Michael Wambolt

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Molly Cano, Lisa Belsanti, Kristen Carlson, Whitney Chaney, Matt Halvorson, Aleigh Hogan, Mayla Lohnes, Alyssa Manno, Rachelle Ramirez, Brooke Weisbecker, Lauren Miller, Megan Leininger, Theresa Nagai, Rachel Goode

AGENCY PRESENT: Maureen Thielen, The Shipyard

Call to order at 8:31 am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – Naughton announced that she is the new Executive Director of the Paso Robles Distillery Trail.

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

3. Approval of November 12, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Jackson/Banish to approve the November 12, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes.

Motion carried: 15-0-0

(Bohlken and Sanpei arrived after vote)

4. Visit SLO CAL VP of Marketing Report

Cano provided details on Spartan Race 2024 including that registration and the number of spectators were down compared to the year prior. Spartan attributed the participation decrease to delayed ticket sales due to permitting delays. The 2024 race also saw a decrease in Visit SLO CAL (VSC) co-op partners. Cano gave an overview of the VSC onsite activation highlighting a Third Wheel Tours photo op, CASS wine tasting and the SLO CAL Crafted wellness basket giveaway that resulted in 189 newsletter sign-ups. Cano wrapped up the 2024 recap by sharing that the event saw rain and was held on a busy weekend.

Cano shared the results of SLO CAL Open Morro Bay highlighting that although WSL's event page saw a reduction in visits, engagement was up. VSC is looking forward to next week's SLO CAL Open at Pismo Beach.

The filming for the Sustainably SLO CAL series is now complete. Cano reminded the committee that the last three videos to be released are about craft brewing, oceans and hotels/lodging industry. The plan is to roll these videos out towards the end of this fiscal/beginning of next fiscal.

Cano provided Airline updates. American Airlines Dallas service is suspended until February 12. There will be three flights per day to Pheonix during that period. Alaska Airlines has the most capacity with the 737s now operating from Seattle.

Cano informed the committee that paid media in the LA area is paused due to the wildfires. There has been a shift in messaging strategy and VSC has been outreaching to various DMOs in impacted areas.

Cano shared results of mid-year budget reforecast. No adjustment will be made to paid media as directed by the board. The budget reforecast shows slight deficit spending as revenue is leveling off.

Staff thanked those who attended the Advisory Committee (AC) Meeting and reception in December. The next AC Meeting will likely be pushed to June. Also looking at rescheduling the May Marketing Committee (MC) to May 20 to align with Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting that month.

Cano announced that Thielen is ending her time with The Shipyard and moving to the Pensara team. Cartier added that there is a new Shipyard account supervisor and Theielen will help with the transition.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Cuming confirmed that the Seattle flight is just once a day.

There was committee discussion around the LA fires. The discussion included, what individual DMOs can do, what VSC can do and how to ensure everyone is walking the line of being helpful without taking advantage.

Jacob pointed out that the reforecasted deficit is a small percentage of the overall budget. Standish asked for clarification on reserves. Jackson wondered if VSC is budgeting an increase or decrease for next year. Cartier replied that the budget isn't completed for next year but would assume leveling.

The committee discussed the date of the May meeting. VSC staff will send an updated invite with the new date.

BUSINESS ITEMS	M. Cano
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5. Tourism Exchange Program Overview

Carlson provided an update on the Tourism Exchange Program. This is a pilot program put on by Visit CA with the goal of getting more lodging and attractions bookable online. VSC is one of three DMOs in the pilot program. So far 17 SLO CAL businesses are in the pipeline and two are live. Cartier will be speaking at a panel about this program at Outlook Forum in March. Carlson played a video overview. This opportunity is most beneficial for attractions. Tourism Exchange will help with copy, assets and website – a benefit for small businesses. The program is for suppliers who aren't online to get online. There is a 3.5% fee on actualized bookings.

VSC is in need of advocates at the local destination level to make connections with businesses. Carlson explained that the pilot program is six months, and that VSC wants to take advantage of getting as many businesses as possible in the program. Cano shared the SLO CAL is leading the charge on this from Visit CA and Tourism Exchange.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Clark-Charlesworth asked if staff has a wish list of businesses. Carlson replied yes, top SLO CAL experiences that would drive visitation have been identified, and ideally once those have joined, smaller businesses will follow. Peterson wondered how it operates with Tock. Carlson responded that it doesn't have an integration, but businesses who use Tock for bookings could still use some of the Tourism Exchange benefits without paying the 3.5%.

Cuming asked about the list. Carlson will share the wish list. Wambolt informed the committee that he has asked some local partners to sign up to see how it works. Sonne shared that for farms, it's about education and helping them to understand the program. Akers asked how long it takes to get a business into the program. Carlson replied it's a matter of weeks. Akers added that bookable product is one of the most asked questions at IPW. Carlson confirmed this list can be included in tradeshow collateral. Jacob suggested positioning this to local partners as a way to expand into international markets for zero dollars.

6. Tourism Economics Lodging Forecast Results Recap

Cano informed the committee that all co-op partners have received the forecast. Overall supply is expected to outpace demand, which will impact RevPAR and occupancy. Room revenue is expected to grow due to the new supply being high-end product. Occupancy is shown to be leveling out and ADR is above inflation and will start to level out with the addition of the new supply. High income households are more resilient during times

of inflation, low-income households will take longer to recover and have been more impacted. As a reminder, short-term rentals and RV parks were not part of this study.

Cano shared that one-on-one calls with co-op destination partners have been scheduled with Tourism Economics. VSC will provide some general countywide talking points for partners to use and the Economic Impact Report will be distributed in February. Cano asked the committee to consider any interest in annual economic impact reports.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Sorgenfrei wondered if the ADR rate included all fees. Cano replied that it only included rates, no fees. Sorgenfrei asked if VSC marketing strategy would change to a higher income level based on these results. Cartier answered that the target has always been those with the ability to travel. However, now that some high-income households in the key feeder market of Los Angeles have been displaced, VSC will have to look at strategy and how to increase demand.

Akers asked if there is an opportunity for VSC to present at TBIDs about countywide details. Cano answered yes, and to let staff know if they would like VSC to present at any meetings.

7. Unpacking Episode 2 Asset Review

Cano presented that Unpacking Episode 2 launched on January 6. A new addition for this episode's launch was the creation of the toolkit for co-op partners. Cano played the 30 second spots for each co-op partner, reviewing assets and the toolkit in more detail. Cano asked for co-op partner feedback on the toolkit.

Thielen presented the media distribution for Unpacking Episode 2. These assets are one layer of storytelling framework in an integrated system.

Cartier pointed out that this is the first time VSC provided separate cuts for each destination as a way to dive deeper into the storytelling.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Peterson noted that there are no background people in the videos. Clark-Charlesworth thought the toolkit was great. Jacob is looking forward to the Paso Robles assets in the next episode. Pene asked who is going to be featured as talent in episode 3 and if there was a way to represent families and the older demographic. Thielen replied that families are tricky to shoot and that VSC invested in family message recently. Clark-Charlesworth suggested maybe these demos could be included in who talent interacts with in the episode.

8. Wine-O-One Update

Cano provided the committee with an overview of the wine-o-one campaign: sharing assets and the plan for the roll out.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Naughton asked if this was a co-op. Cano replied yes, with Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance (PRWCA) and Travel Paso. Akers asked if there would be a dedicated landing page with one-sheets and resources that would be helpful to visitors. Cano replied yes and elaborated that all videos will be included on the landing page.

9. Marketing, Travel Trade & ESC 2050 Updates

Belsanti presented a high-level overview of earned updates sharing that there were three missions and 11 FAMs since November. Lohnes walked through specific coverage and PR opportunities.

Halvorson shared owned media updates on the website. Distribution of the new 2025 Visitor Magazine is happening now and if committee members would like additional copies, Halvorson requested that they let staff know. The newest Zine (Zine 5.0) will be distributed in mid-January and is themed around food.

Belsanti spoke to the social media strategy of always on posting within storytelling framework. Goode went over engagement for November & December and announced that VSC reached 70k followers on Instagram. Belsanti added that staff is keeping an eye on all TikTok news.

Halvorson went over paid media updates and provided the committee with results of the always on, as well as the brand campaign.

Carlson reviewed the UK Sales Agent FAM in November and shared that it resulted in three itineraries. The Shared Hotel Beds co-op with Visit CA generated 2,470 room nights in SLO CAL from September-November 2024. Hogan spoke about attending Smart Meeting Incentive Live trade show in December in Arizona. Carlson wrapped up the Travel Trade presentation with a recap of Go West Summit in Palm Springs last week, noting that there was a large China delegation at the trade show and that leads will be sent out next week.

Chaney provided an update on the last mile transportation working group. The need for enhanced communication and signage around transportation from the airport, and a shuttle pilot program with SLO Safe Ride were discussed. Next, VSC will develop a transit survey to learn more. Chaney reminded the committee that the SLO CAL Welcome training is dark and will go live on a new platform in summer. Staff is working with Cal Poly students to help audit content for the revamped training.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Allen asked about airlift from China. Cartier responded that less than a third of it is back. Jackson added that the wait is over a year to get a visa. Akers confirmed that VSC's focus is on the UK. Carlson replied yes, with Canada, Mexico & Germany.

Next Meeting: Marketing Committee Retreat March 11th at Niner Wine Estates

ADJOURN: 10:28 AM