



**Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting**  
**Tuesday, July 9, 2024**  
**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, Molly Cano, Gordon Jackson, Stacie Jacob, Lori Keller, Kathleen Naughton, Courtney Pene, Joel Peterson, Lindsey Roberts, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Leann Standish, Michael Wambolt

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

**AGENCY PRESENT:** Maureen Thielen, The Shipyard

**Call to order at 8:32 am**

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)**

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – None.

**CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required***

**3. Approval of May 14, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes**

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

**ACTION:** Moved by Jackson/Akers to approve the May 14, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes

**Motion carried: 13: 0-0**

(Cano, Jacob, Sanpei & Wambolt arrived after vote)

## CMO REPORT

### 4. Visit SLO CAL CMO Report

Cartier introduced the two new committee members: Pene & Standish and congratulated San Luis Obispo on being named CNN Travel's best towns to visit. Cartier provided an update on Highway 1 messaging and reopening. Cartier also shared that Visit SLO CAL has posted the Vice President of Marketing position, and the Cal Poly scholarship is moving ahead with a target of awarding the scholarship in the Fall. Cartier congratulated Lohnes & Weisbecker on being named to CalTravel 30 & Under Emerging Leaders list. Completed Business & Marketing Plans copies were also shared with the Committee.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob added that Travel Paso is looking into a scholarship for high schoolers going onto a four-year college to study hospitality.

## BUSINESS ITEMS

### 5. Summer Media Spend

Cartier informed the committee that VSC is spending \$20k on media, beginning next week, to make sure the summer comes in strong this year. The Shipyard is developing creative with a focus on drive markets and targeting those lower in the funnel. Thielen shared that there has been a softening seen across the state.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob added that Paso Robles was light for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the Mid-State Fair is looking the same. Cartier responded that media is targeting events. Jackson shared that Pismo Beach was busy for the 4<sup>th</sup>, but this week is soft. Keller added that the consumer is more cost-conscious. Jacob asked that if there is any way to collaborate, to let partners know. Cartier offered that VSC will share final media plan along with earn media strategy with Committee. There was discussion about hoping rates will balance out post-pandemic and Keller added that lodging will mostly do more last-minute deals.

### 6. FY 25 Media Plan

Cartier introduced the high-level media plan presented by Thielen. Thielen shared that as they continue to hone and refine, target markets have been re-prioritized. Thielen reported no major shifts in geographic market tiers or KPIs. Thielen then presented Shipyard's full funnel media approach and broke down tactics and where they sit in the funnel. For the media mix and budget allocation, attention was drawn to increase allocation to video, but much remains the same – including strategically leveraging the storytelling framework.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob asked when OOH boards will be up. Thielen replied that they will be up in August. Akers wondered how partner referrals (seen in KPI's) are shared. Thielen responded that The Shipyard provides monthly reports on all performance. Cartier added that VSC will work on a media quarterly report for each destination. Halvorson added that this feedback is appreciated.

Akers asked if CTV as a new addition to Sojern be added to the co-op. Thielen answered that there are minimums that need to be met, but yes and a blended program is recommended. Cartier shared that now that all co-op forms have been collected, there will be individual conversations with each destination partner about their co-ops.

Akers inquired what tools VSC is using to track instead of Arrivalist for visitor data. Cartier responded that VSC is using Tourism Economics, and they use NEAR data instead of Arrivalist. There are not enough POIs at the city level to accurately report out currently, but these conversations are being had. Halvorson shared that staff is working on how to share more of Tourism Economics quarterly visitation studies and will continue to explore ways to create and share meaningful data.

Sorgenfrei added that Tripadvisor and The Trade Desk have high minimums and encouraged the consideration of future co-ops in these spaces. Cartier replied that Shipyard will investigate this and bring it back to the Committee.

Keller asked how OOH media impact is being measured. Thielen responded that the largest way to measure is through the brand awareness study, but also have mobile retargeting elements that can also be referenced. Cartier added that flight data is also used.

## **7. Ethnographic Research**

Cartier asked the committee for input on the best locations where visitors in each destination for ethnographic research collection. Research will be conducted in market twice, with the first being this month.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Allen inquired what the methodology will be. Cartier replied in person intercept. Thielen added that the findings will be used to inform the next brand campaign. Jacob pointed out that the dates are during the Mid-State Fair and there is a bus stop at City Park that takes visitors to the fairgrounds. Keller asked about the sample size in each location. Thielen replied they are seeking 100 people in total each time in market. Sorgenfrei wondered who is conducting the interviews. Cartier replied that The Shipyard is. The Committee then discussed and suggested research locations.

Jacob asked if this is a co-op. Cartier replied that it was taken off the list because there was lack of interest but can be added back. Standish wondered how many questions will be asked. Cartier replied with about a dozen questions. Jacob shared that she would be interested in adding questions (as a co-op) but want to see the other questions first. Cartier will follow up once they are finalized.

Akers inquired if there will be community specific data too. Cartier responded that there will be from the overall survey. Allen asked if there was any discussion about sampling at the airport. Thielen replied that the airport can be added to the list of places.

## **8. FY 25 Working Groups**

Cartier provided the Committee with an overview the working groups for the year including regional tourism industry workforce plan, countywide trails working group, last mile transportation and roadmap to regional sustainability. Cartier encouraged the Committee to submit ideas on who should be on the working groups to Chaney via email.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob asked for confirmation that trails can be on private or public lands. Cartier confirmed. Peterson inquired if previous working groups would go away. Cartier replied that these groups are meant to complete a task and then disperse, but they can be reconvened when needed for specific items.

## **9. SLO CAL Nomenclature**

Cartier requested committee feedback for places to include in the upcoming Zine. Entertainment is planned for the July issue, Holiday Gift Guide for September and Culinary for January.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – The Committee shared local favorites live music venue suggestions.

## **10. SLO CAL Summit**

Cartier provided a reminder that SLO CAL summit is on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September at Embassy Suites starting at 11:30 am. The program will begin with lunch and there will be a networking reception with SLO CAL Crafted pop-up market to follow the programing. Tickets will go on sale Monday (7/15). Last year tickets sold out quickly.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

## **11. Marketing, Travel Trade & ESC 2050 Update**

Belsanti provided an end of fiscal year report on PR Coverage highlighting Wanderlust Magazine Travel Green List and Today Show coverage. Belsanti also shared that VSC will continue to lean into local coverage to demonstrate tourism value to the region. Lohnes covered domestic coverage, FAM trip highlights and recapped the PR & Social Media Mixer, while also sharing tentative dates for future mixers. Lohnes shared the San Diego media co-op date and location. Cartier added that it is \$500 to participate.

Halvorson provided an owned media update, sharing that the website structural changes that were suggested in the UX study have been completed. Halvorson gave an update on Film SLO CAL: microsite was launched, new brochures printed and film trailer has been refreshed. Halvorson also shared that deals are now being featured in the consumer newsletter and the upcoming visitor's magazine has a new publisher and advertising is open.

Halvorson gave an update on the In-Kind Sponsorship Pilot Program. The launch and application will be shared soon. Cartier clarified that these are not monetary sponsorships.

Weisbecker shared the top performing social media posts for May and June while also highlighting the results from last fiscal year – up across the board. Weisbecker also gave an overview of four of the eight new social content series including: culture quest, life in..., beyond the dashboard and thrill or chill.

Halvorson provided a paid media update. Always-on layer is continuing to perform. Halvorson shared creative and performance highlights with the Committee.

Carlson presented a high-level overview of what travel trade and meeting conference events VSC will be attending in the next year. Sales is also hosting a SLO CAL Hospitality Mixer on August 6 at Rod & Hammer Event Center – keep an eye out for the invite.

Chaney shared that the SLO CAL Welcome hosting site contract has been renewed through December 2024 and VSC is looking for ways to grow the training's completion numbers. Cartier added that the goal is at least 100 per month. Chaney also informed the Committee that the destination content needs to be updated and destinations will be asked to assist with updates.

Chaney walked the Committee through the Community Engagement & Advocacy work plan at the high level. This will create a foundation and move the department forward. The full plan will be shared soon.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Standish asked what is classified as local coverage. Belsanti replied in County. Cartier added that the goal is to show value of tourism to the community while also spreading SLO CAL nomenclature. Jacob shared that the Cavalier Resort's phone is ringing off the hook from the Today Show coverage.

Sanpei wondered if there was lodging for the PR co-op participants. Belsanti reiterated that travel is on participants. Cartier added that VSC can look into a room block. Sonne asked if there will be swag bags. Belsanti replied that there would be.

Jacob inquired if VSC is only looking for lodging deals. Halvorson replied that all deals are welcome.

Akers asked if the Visitor Magazine will be annual or every two years. Halvorson replied that it will be published every year to keep up with business changes and to keep things fresh.

Pene wondered how many signature events are planned each year and wondering if they might be good to use in a static display at the airport.

Jacob shared that Travel Paso did a big program when SLO CAL Welcome was first launched and got over 200 participants certified. Bohlken wondered if VSC has reached out to colleges with this training. Chaney replied that it is part of the curriculum at Cal Poly. Cartier added that currently students are completing it more than anyone in the industry.

**Next Meeting Marketing September 17, 2024**

**ADJOURN: 10:41 AM**