



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, May 14, 2024
8:30 am – 10:30 am
Visit SLO CAL Office – 81 Higuera Street, Suite 220, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Terrie Banish, Sheridan Bohlken, Molly Cano, Cheryl Cuming, Grodon Jackson, Stacie Jacob, Lori Keller, Kathleen Naughton, Joel Peterson, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Jill Tweedie, Michael Wambolt

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Lisa Belsanti, Kristen Carlson, Matt Halvorson, Mayla Lohnes, Aleigh Hogen, Alyssa Manno, Rachelle Ramirez, Lauren Miller, Theresa Nagai, Megan Leininger

AGENCY PRESENT: Tammy Haughey - The Shipyard

Call to order at 8:30 am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – None.

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

3. Approval of March 5, 2024 Marketing Committee Retreat Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Cuming/Jackson to approve the March 5, 2024 Marketing Committee Retreat Minutes.

Vote: 13: 0-0
(Cano, Jacob and Sanpei arrived after voting)

CMO REPORT

4. Visit SLO CAL CMO Report

Cartier provided staff updates (promotions and new hire). CEO search is moving forward and job posting has been forwarded to all board and committee members to share. Cartier presented the

committee with an update on Highway 1 and that staff is working with Visit CA and See Monterey to create a consistent message. Cartier shared that flights at the SLO County Airport (SBP) are performing well, presented new airport creative that will be used locally, and that the airport is also rolling out a dog program. Cartier shared the Marketing Committee meeting dates for next year – staff will send out. Events/Sponsorship dates were also highlighted including SLO CAL Summit, Spartan Race and the SLO CAL Opens in Morro Bay and Pismo Beach. Lastly, Cartier spoke about Visit SLO CAL's Cal Poly Scholarship which the board approved and will be in next year's budget.

Halvorson recapped the film commission scout FAM and partner workshop, both of which occurred in April.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

The Committee wondered where letters of support for Cartier as CEO should be sent. Cartier replied with the Board Chair: Mark Eads. Jacob shared that the Travel Paso board had taken action in support of Cartier and Jacob would be happy to share with any committee members.

Jacob inquired when the 2025 Marketing Retreat will be. Cartier replied that it will be on March 11.

Jacob asked if VSC will administer the scholarship or work with third party. Cartier responded that staff would work with The Community Foundation.

Allen added that the Film SLO CAL partner workshop programming was great. Haughey asked for key permitting themes that were discussed. Halvorson replied with topics around: payment portal, trademark and copywrite laws, working across different organizations, typical turnaround times and drone information. Jacob asked how cities fit into the county's film work. Halvorson replied that VSC tries to facilitate and connect partners with requests. Cartier added that more city permitting partners can be added to future workshops.

Akers asked if VSC has specific talking points around highway 1. Cartier replied that VSC will continue to work with VCA and Monterey, but right now the key point is that Highway 1 is open in San Luis Obispo County.

BUSINESS ITEMS

5. FY 2025 Co-Op Programs

Cartier walked the committee through the 2025 Co-Op programs: Land Of asset renewal, ethnographic research, Sojern media buy, Unpacking episode, Spartan activation and San Diego media buy.

Cartier clarified that the asset co-op isn't just about destinations using the assets themselves, but also Visit SLO CAL using the Land Of assets on the destination's behalf.

Cartier shared that the ethnographic research opportunity will take place in July and October 2024 and will take place while travelers are in destination. This research will inform the next campaign of Land Of.

Cartier will send out a one sheet recap of the co-ops.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Cano voiced concerns of being left out if destinations are unable to buy in to the Land Of asset co-op. Cartier clarified that VSC has renewed land of assets, but these would be dedicated single destination assets. Haughey further clarified that everyone is included in the Hero Brand, but the house of brands (individual destination assets) are used when buying into media co-ops such as Sojern and in about 28% of VSC media buys for retargeting ads. Cartier confirmed that in order to participate in the Sojern co-op, destinations must also renew their assets.

Sorgenfrei inquired about getting full talent rights in the future. Peterson agreed that full rights are necessary in the future. Cartier mentioned how VSC is trying to avoid using paid talent and Haughey chimed in that the approach will be very different in the next production. Jacob inquired if these assets are tied to Sojern ads, are they tied to anything else. Cartier confirmed they are not.

Sorgenfrei asked if there will be a motivator question in ethnographic research. Cartier responded that there will be, and that destinations that buy into the co-op can add up to three questions that are important to their destination. Sanpei wondered how the interviewee will be selected. Haughey replied that people will be intercepted in destination with the goal of getting a broad sample. Cano asked if interviewees will be staying in specific destinations. Cartier replied that for those destinations that co-op, they will ensure they are staying in destination. Jacob wondered how VSC will use the study outcomes. Cartier stated that the focus is on why they are visiting/motivator and cross visitation information. Haughey added that the Shipyard uses qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate campaigns. In the shifting landscape they are especially focused on well-being and the emotional benefit of the brand. Tweedie was wondering if there would be any questions about bad experiences/barriers to their visit asked. Cartier confirmed that it is important to know that information so it can influence the future direction. Cuming commented that it would be good to capture some of this interview content on video to use on social. Cartier added that there will be some that is filmed.

6. FY 2025 Draft Business & Marketing Plan – *motion required*

Cartier presented the draft business and marketing plan as a roadmap to 2026. Halvorson covered owned media. Belsanti spoke on social and earned. Halvorson presented partnership and events. Carlson went over travel trade. Halvorson talked to Film SLO CAL.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Cuming asked if VSC has a sustainable tourism plan. Cartier replied that there is a sustainability marketing plan. Jacob questioned what role the airport is playing in the conversation about the last mile. Cartier replied that they are involved, and everyone will have to work together to solve these transportation challenges. Jackson asked if there is tourism industry workforce data specific to each individual city. Cartier replied that she doesn't know but will find out.

Jackson inquired if VSC is looking for a partner for bookable lodging/experiences. Cartier clarified that VSC's role is to show the benefits of having a bookable product. Akers asked for any tools on bookable experiences destinations can share with partners. Carlson shared that VSC is participating

in Visit CA's pilot program 'Tourism Exchange.' VCA is bringing someone into market to educate lodging partners.

Jacob asked what VSC is finding for a good mix of organic and paid on socials. Belsanti replied that the mix is tilted towards organic. Cartier added that VSC doesn't do much boosting. Cuming asked if PR mixer dates could be published further in advance. Belsanti responded yes.

Allen wondered if the sales strategy is still in the works. Carlson replied that it has been completed and staff is implementing some of the findings this year – specifically the need for education. Sorgenfrei, added that CCTC might be a good organization to collaborate with. Cano replied that Belsanti attended their most recent meeting.

Peterson shared that he doesn't see the value in such a long marketing plan. Cartier replied that staff uses the document throughout the year and knows it is dense. She believes there's another way to present this document in a streamlined version to the committee.

ACTION: Moved by Peterson/Keller to recommend the Board approves the Business & Marketing Plan draft.

Vote: 16: 0-0

7. FY 2025 Proposed Budget

Cartier went over the proposed FY 2025 budget. She highlighted there will be a break-even budget and called out areas of budget reduction.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Cuming inquired if there is budget for an additional multi-destination large event sponsorship for next fiscal. Cartier replied that there isn't anything specifically earmarked.

Jacob asked if there may be an RFP process in the future for the California Welcome Centers. Cartier replied that Visit CA is planning on putting one out for an additional CWC in the fall. Cano shared her concern if the California Welcome Center were to go away entirely within the County. Jackson thought maybe the funding could be a co-op.

8. Marketing Committee Member Application Approval – motion required

Cartier presented the current marketing committee members up for reelection and new marketing committee applications.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Cuming wondered if the committee accepted the four applicants for re-election, how many additional seats can the committee appoint. Cartier replied that there is no official cap. Jacob shared she would advocate for

applicants Pene and Standish. Cartier confirmed the timeline will go to the executive committee and then to the board meeting.

ACTION: Moved by Sorgenfrei/Tweedie to request the board approves the reelection of Keller, Naughton, Roberts and Sonne.

Vote: 14: 0-0
(Keller and Peterson left before the vote)

ACTION: Moved by Sorgenfrei/Sanpei to request the board approve the selection of Pene and Standish to the Marketing Committee.

Vote: 14: 0-0
(Keller and Peterson left before the vote)

9. Events and Festivals Calendar

Cartier presented the new calendar of events approach. She shared that based on the event and festival working group meetings with Artsopolis and functionality concerns, VSC is pivoting to include partner events on the SLOCAL.com calendar. Staff is actively seeking out events and educating partners on how to submit. events. Other local destinations are encouraged to pull the event information they want from VSC's website.

Halvorson shared Visit SLO CAL's in-kind partnership strategy. VSC will reach out to each destination for top events for VSC to highlight across owned media channels.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

The Committee was supportive of the change to the event calendar plan.

10. SLO CAL Welcome

Cartier informed the committee that the SLO CAL Welcome program was experiencing software issues (in the process of being fixed) and lower engagement rates. VSC will launch SLO CAL Welcome 2.0 in early 2025 and will create a re-engagement campaign to increase participation.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Sorgenfrei suggested creating video modules for the program that the lodging partners use for new hires.

11. California Tourism Month/National Travel & Tourism Week

Cartier informed the committee of the press release, social posts, newsletter mentions, proclamations and website banner VSC has planned for NTTW and CA Tourism Month.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Jacob asked how the group gets elected officials to talk about tourism. Cartier replied that the best thing to do is to give them talking points, include community's direct tourism dollar benefit stories and increase repetition. Belsanti agreed that elected officials want the talking points and VSC can work on a toolkit for this.

12. Marketing, ESC 2050 & Travel Trade Update

Lohnes provided an overview of earned coverage for April (including AAA Westways foodie road trip 4-page cover spread). Lohnes also talked about the March UK Group FAM and post-IPW FAM, both in conjunction with the VSC Sales Team.

Halvorson talked about the work the team is doing to get the website optimized by rolling out technical updates (currently ahead of schedule) and shared that VSC will be doing A/B Testing and CRO soon. Owned media is focused on efficiency and optimization. Seasonality/topical items drive traffic and will remain a focus.

Belsanti presented how social media engagement continues to impress and shared that VSC will continue to lean into organic content. Pensara is in destination now for a social media shoot. Halvorson recapped paid media always on creative messaging to-date, highlighting strong video completion rates and engagement. VSC continues its nomenclature local ad campaign.

Carlson provided an overview of IPW 2024. VSC held over 80 meetings with tourism operators and receptors – leads will be shared soon. The California Plaza had SLO CAL representative food & beverage activations in the morning and afternoon.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Committee provided positive feedback on new trade show booth.

Next Meeting July 9, 2024

Cartier reminded the Committee that the Bash is on Friday, and she hopes to see everyone there.

Sonne requested an updated org-chart. Cartier confirmed that one will be sent out.

ADJOURN: 10:27 AM