



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 12, 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, Jacqui Clark-Charlesworth, Cheryl Cuming, Stacie Jacob, Lori Keller, Kathleen Naughton, Joel Peterson, Lindsey Roberts, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, 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 – None.

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

3. Approval of September 17, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Allen/Wambolt to approve the September 17, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes

Motion carried: 13-0-1

(Jacob arrived after vote, Banish abstained)

4. Visit SLO CAL VP of Marketing Report

Cano shared staff anniversaries and the updated organization chart that will be sent out to the committee. Cano gave an overview of Brand USA travel Week and CEO Summit. This was the first time VSC participated in the travel week with travel trade and PR. Cartier shared some key learning including that the UK visitor isn't impacted by economic and political changes in the U.S., late booking and booking through travel trade has increased, and sustainability continues to gain momentum in this audience.

Cano gave an overview of the second wave of ethnographic research conducted in October. The findings confirmed brand positioning as still relevant. Next, staff will work on next iteration of the campaign to be presented at the MC Committee Retreat.

Cano provided an overview of the spartan race, data report to come and staff will evaluate the future of sponsoring the event. The SLO CAL Open is the next sponsored event. The advisory committee will meet on December 12th at the VSC office with reception to follow the meeting.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Akers asked how the Spartan performed compared to last year. Cano replied that there were less racers than last year. Sorgenfrei asked about the South of the Bay, Noth of LA tagline. Cartier replied that VSC is using in market where it makes sense.

Jacob asked for another calendar reminder for the advisory committee meeting. Cano confirmed one will be sent out to MC member again.

BUSINESS ITEMS**M. Cano****5. SLO CAL Summit Recap**

Cano provided a summary of the SLO CAL Summit and shared the recap video. It was the most attended Summit to date with 245 attendees.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob wondered if key audience members were missing from Summit. Cartier replied no, but there is consistently a waitlist. There was committee conversation around food and networking opportunities at the event.

6. Unpacking

Cano went over Unpacking episodes 2 & 3 release timeframe as well as themes and activities. A rough cut of episode 2 was played for the committee. Cano opened the conversation around leveraging toolkit assets. These assets include long form video, destination specific cut down, destination teaser and 5 still images for co-op partners. Thielen shared recommended deployment of assets and Visit SLO CAL's media plan.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Sorgenfrei commented that a good selection of tactics to deploy was presented. Jacob inquired destinations should sync up to be the most effective. Thielen replied that launching within a few weeks across social and website space is where the largest value would be. Cartier shared that staff plan to send the toolkit in December with a launch plan requesting launching with or after VSC.

Keller asked if individual partners will get assets too. Cartier replied that as a thank you they will receive a 15 second reel and a couple still images. Thielen added that staff will also share a tagging plan to increase consistency. Akers requested to include destination in communication with partner. Cartier agreed and added that it is important for partners to know this came from the destination and to start differentiating VSC from individual destinations.

Bohlken asked who is included in episode 3. Cartier replied Pismo, Paso and Arroyo Grande and that episode 3 will be shared at the January meeting.

7. Tourism Economics Co-op

Cano shared that there is interest in the economic impact and lodging forecast co-op and presented investment level ranges. The work is already starting on the lodging forecast which will be ready in December.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob clarified that there will be overall regional lodging forecast data, and co-op partners will get community level data too. Cartier confirmed. Naughton asked if it would be possible to segment by industry or if it was by community only. Cartier replied that the date would allow segmented area (like south coast). Halvorson added that the city zip code data could be combined. Sorgenfrei wondered if there will there be a wine carve out. Halvorson clarified that there will be industry carve out but not as specific as that. Cartier wrapped up the conversation and requested final co-op interest by end of the month so staff can determine breakdown of cost.

8. FY 25 Budget Reforecast

Cano shared that the budget reforecast is to be completed in December and presented to Executive and Board meeting in January. Initial estimates show revenue shortfall that will result in reduction in program budget while maintaining media budget. Cartier shared that conversation around revenue shortfalls are happening around the state.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Akers asked if Visit California had any insights into the revenue shortfall. Cartier replied that VCA shared much of the gap was in domestic travel and people waiting on election before making travel plans. Additionally the China market is still down and some international travelers are holding back on Highway 1 road trip until it is fully open. Thielen shared that many clients are experiencing this across the nation. Travel is down. Sanpei, added there is a correlation with inflation and travel.

Sorgenfrei affirmed that irrespective of who wins in politics, people wait to travel. There will be cases of misery travel and celebration travel. Akers suggested that staff keep in mind what the destination can do collaboratively to increase domestic motivators. Thielen shared that some of the ethnographic research points to the fact that no matter your views you can feel safe in SLO CAL and have conversations and be yourself.

9. Marketing, Travel Trade & ESC 2050 Updates

Belsanti gave an overview of a recent international FAM with Tank magazine around road trip culture. Belsanti shares domestic FAM highlights. VSC collaborated with Highway 1 Road Trip and Travel Paso with SLO CAL Harvest domestic press trip. Lohnes shared about Visit California “It’s a Luxury” global press trip and Visit California Los Angeles media reception in October.

Belsanti spoke about the UK & Ireland Mission during Brand USA Travel Week. The familiarity with SLO CAL and individual journalists has increased. Belsanti also shared a save the date for the next PR and social media mixer on December 3rd. Time and location to come, will be held in the late afternoon.

Halvorson provided some owned media updates, including an overview of website pages that are being updated for future launches as well as continued optimization areas. Halvorson shared the new SLO CAL visitor Magazine cover, the distribution plan and unveiling event. Consumer newsletter performance and top performing content was presented. Halvorson also shared interest specific supplemental newsletter timeline.

Halvorson went over the new Zine distribution and mentioned the new culinary version Zine 5.0 is coming. An overview of upcoming video releases was presented, and the Life Elements video was played for the committee.

Weisbecker went over September and October social media performance, highlighting the “Life In” series success. Weisbecker also shared Visit California social media posts featuring SLO CAL in their ultimate playground content. The highlights on VSC’s Instagram profile has also been updated.

Halvorson went over paid media always-on campaign performance. Across the board results are staying consistent or improving MOM and YOY. Halvorson also went over brand creative messaging to date and custom content highlights including Live CTV, Pause Ad and Rich Media page grabber. Halvorson provided an overview of local campaigns including a Cal Poly and Vina Robles wifi sponsorship.

Carlson shared a new SLO CAL itinerary from Purely California resulting from March UK FAM and new SLO CAL bookable product with Bonotel. Carlson discussed VSC's work with NAWBO Women's Retreat reception at the Cliffs which hosted many business owners eager to return for their own corporate meetings.

Carlson shared Brand USA Travel Week highlights including 40 trade appointments with tour operators and being the wine sponsor at VCA's Trade & Media event. Carlson gave an overview of the UK & Ireland Mission with trainings and SLO CAL wine tasting experience. Carlson also provided information about an upcoming Tourism Exchange Partner Webinar on November 18th.

Hogan provided the committee with a recap of the North Star Destination California highlighting staff's 20 appointments with meeting planners seeking CA venues.

Chaney updated the committee on the Workforce Development working group. The next working group about the last mile will kick-off soon. Chaney also shared that SLO CAL Welcome training program will go dark on December 31st and staff is putting together static information to bridge the gap. The content will get updated and then uploaded on a new platform Learn Tourism (formerly Tourism Academy) and go live on July 1, 2025. Cartier shared that there will be another push to use the program once it is on the new platform.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Sonne asked how many attend the PR and Social Media mixer. Belsanti replied around 45.

Clark-Charlesworth asked where zines are distributed. Halvorson replied with locations where locals would find them and partners who are featured throughout the County. Cartier added that this is part of the nomenclature play. Halvorson continued that 500 are printed of each run approximately every three months.

Jacob wondered about the number of social posts is the sweet spot. Weisbecker shared that VSC is trying to hit 17 times a month and generally posting around 20 times a month. It's more about creating content that resonates with audience rather than just creating content for the sake of it.

Next Marketing Committee Meeting January 14, 2025

ADJOURN: 10:28 AM