



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee

Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

8:30 am – 4:30 pm

SLO Brew Rock – 855 Aerovista Ln, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Terrie Banish, Molly Cano, Cheryl Cuming, Gordon Jackson, Kathy McCorry, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Jill Tweedie, Michael Wambolt

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Trevor Lynch, Cynthia Gonzalez, Melissa Murray, Eric Parker, Kristen Buhning, Rachelle Ramirez, Lauren Miller, Alyssa Manno, Brooke Weisbecker, Camille Silvera, Theresa Nagai, Mayla Lohnes, Ashley Scarcella

AGENCIES PRESENT: Visit SLO CAL Agencies: Dave Mering, The Shipyard, John Risser, The Shipyard, Maureen Thielen, The Shipyard, Tammy Haughey, The Shipyard, Beth Shaini, The Shipyard, Sara Gorgon, MMGY NJF, Michael Wojtowicz, MMGY NJF, Nick Evans, Pensara

PUBLIC: Alli Williams, Abbi Agency, Jen Bravo, PRWCA

Call to order at 8:30am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of January 31, 2023 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Jackson/Cuming to approve the **January 31, 2023** Marketing Committee Minutes.

Motion carried: 12:0:0

CMO REPORT

4. Visit SLO CAL CMO Updates

Cartier let the committee know that three seats are up for re-election. She also provided an update on the increase in airlift. She let the committee know that Davison will be attending the Routes America Conference in March. Cartier provided the committee an update on the mural trail which has two new locations confirmed in both San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

Business Items

5. Introductions & Discussion Overview

Everyone including agencies, marketing committee members, guests and SLO CAL staff introduced themselves.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

6. Marketing Feedback Overview

Lynch provided a high-level update from the survey results sent out to the Marketing Committee. Looking at target markets, most of the group is looking to target both millennials and Gen X with majority of advertising spend taking place during shoulder season. Priority markets leaned towards Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego. Lynch summarized the need for social media in marketing efforts with majority of respondents looking to utilize giveaways with Instagram being the preferred social media platform. From a PR perspective, the survey showed that freelancers are most important when it comes to PR strategy followed by digital and traditional journalists. Majority of respondents had budget to invest in SLO CAL co-op opportunities.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

7. Setting the Stage

a. FY 23 Marketing Program

Risser summarized the existing marketing framework which focuses on a House of Brands approach and cross-visitation strategies and showed some examples of how this has been integrated into existing assets. Parker emphasized the ways in which the work within the SLO CAL brand can integrate with Visit California's efforts.

Lynch provided the committee an update on the SLO CAL Crafted program which has 16 new partners this year and includes several videos in partnership with Acacia Productions as well as a dedicated section in the updated Visitors Magazine.

Gorgon showcased earned media wins including features in Conde Nast Traveler, CBS Mornings, and Travel + Leisure. She touched on the success of the Dylan Efron YouTube series as well as local and regional media stories.

Evans shared insight into the existing SLO CAL social media strategy which focuses on video first and brings nuance from all the other existing campaigns. He showed some examples of social content incorporating *Land of...* and SLO CAL Crafted. Evans shared the launch of the first ever destination spotlight campaign with WTTC which featured several partners and organizations throughout SLO CAL. This content partnership included a case study of a destination who is not only embracing sustainability, but also able to run successful businesses with that in mind.

b. FY 23: By the Numbers

Shaini gave the committee a snapshot of the paid media plan, which included a mix of video, audio, display, native, social, search and out-of-home. Looking at video completion, Cross-Visitation videos are currently outperforming *Land of...* videos.

Evans shared some key metrics from a social perspective which saw an increase in impressions, engagement, and views. The shift has been from stills to social video led content, average views have increased exponentially with messaging featuring all the key points. Gorgon summarized earned media performance to date with included 112+ pieces of coverage and 813M+ impressions. From a co-op perspective, the team hosted a Dallas Media Mission and Media training.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

8. Break

9. Establishing the Roadmap: Tomorrow

a. Strategic Direction 2026

Cartier summarized the Strategic Direction 2026 process and key findings. Looking at strategic perspectives, Visit SLO CAL is widely supported by the tourism community and the House of Brands strategy has been widely applauded. The focus of the new plan will also look to stake a claim in sustainable tourism and keep an eye on community resistance. From a value perspective, stewardship, authenticity, and excellence were updated to be a more accurate reflection of the organization's core values.

Highlights from the updated objectives include increasing usage of the SLO CAL nomenclature, developing a sustainable tourism strategy, and building local understanding of the positive impact tourism has on the community.

b. Current Program Alignment

Cartier asked the group to share the types of programs that work and what the committee would like to see more of and what types of programs don't work.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Banish sees the value in the SLO CAL messaging and would like to see this utilized in more places like how SLO CAL Crafted is messaged. Jackson noted the "Community of..." messaging has been challenging, especially when destinations are bringing this to their boards and city councils. Sorgenfrei suggested doing some preemptive marketing of the dunes, showing a balance of what other activities can be done outside of off-roading. Bravo suggested a wider partnership mixer which would allow partners from around the county to network which would allow for greater collaboration in the future. She also noted that with all the content Visit SLO CAL pushes out, it would be helpful to have more explicit instructions on how to use and share within their communities. Wambolt noted that the Dallas Media Mission was hugely successful and that he would love to see more opportunities like this. Cano said that SLO CAL staff participation at the TBID meetings is great and encouraged staff to share more during these meetings to their boards.

c. Trends

Wojtowicz noted 'Lisness', High-End Sustainable Travel, Electric Road Trips and Set-Jetting as some of the emerging trends in the news. Haughey showcased some 2023 Travel Trend Predictions which included 'Preppers in Paradise' which is a potential opportunity for SLO CAL as well as 'Delighted in the Discomfort

Zone’.

d. SLO CAL Nomenclature

Staff asked committee for their feedback on ‘SLO CAL’ usage.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion- Banish suggested engaging the local news and having them adopt SLO CAL rather than San Luis Obispo County. Sonne asked when looking at events, is there opportunity for promotion or sponsorship from SLO CAL. Cartier noted that to offer sponsorship dollars, the event has to cross multiple communities but for promotion, staff can help with PR, social and newsletter promotion.

Cano shared some thoughts on getting locals to use SLO CAL and suggested partnering with New Times and doing monthly SLO CAL takeover section. She also thought it would be beneficial to separate the brand and nomenclature to appear more authentic. Sorgenfrei echoed the need for a local play and suggested looking into the podcast space. Banish celebrated SLO CAL Welcome and encouraged everyone to get their employees to participate.

e. SLO CAL Welcome

Cartier updated the committee on SLO CAL Welcome which currently has 523 experts and 112 registered businesses. She noted that Visit SLO CAL is working to get more restaurants and experiential attractions participating.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –Bravo added that Travel Paso Robles and the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance are working together to offer incentives for businesses to participate. Cartier noted that we’re working on building out a landing page and some sort of badge for those that are certified, and a list of certified organizations will go out to each community representative.

10. Lunch

11. FY 24 Strategic Opportunities

a. Integrated Storytelling Framework

Haughey showed the committee the integrated storytelling framework including new pillars of activation. She introduced a new initiative ‘Sustainable SLO CAL’, a new creative execution which will include a content series and key

market activation. Key takeaways showed that for Gen Z, environment is a top priority.

b. Sustainable SLO CAL

Leaning into key findings, Haughey introduced 'Sustainably SLO CAL' which positions the destination as a place with sustainability-minded people preserving SLO CAL for the long-term benefit of all. In addition to sharing a few of the WTTC Sustainability content pieces she also walked through development and deployment.

c. Creative Execution

Risser discussed the ways in which SLO CAL will continue storytelling which includes taking longer form experience-based content and adding a bigger dose of personality. When looking at the *Land of...* advertising, the goal is to lean more into the experience aspect. One potential concept introduced was 'Unpairing'.

d. Key Market Activation

Gorgon discussed an in-market activation framework to drive awareness and interest in SLO CAL. Some ideas included SLO CAL Crafted Marketplace, media outreach, social activation, and *Land of...* campaign blitz. Evans outlined the social strategy while Shaini outlined the paid strategy highlighting the full circle approach.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion- None.

12. Breakout Session

Cartier instructed each group to brainstorm ideas in-line with different key markets including activities for explorers, outdoor adventurers, YOLO travelers and family travelers and shared out to the group.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion - Bravo outlined some ideas from her group which included nature bathing while Williams discussed different pairing options such as wine and oysters and foraging experiences paired with fine dining. Parker shared his groups ideas for 'unpairing' which highlighted olive oil tasting in lieu of wine, and a Firestone Walker experience for the wine lover. Gorgon and her group shared ideas for these groups which included options for tea-blending, chakra balancing and taking the beach lovers to do some new activities such as clamming and kelp foraging.

The groups also shared out ideas for the faces of sustainability, how to engage

visitors in sustainability, fun facts and other nuggets of insight. Parker shared out on behalf of his group which highlighted local companies and their packaging practices while Banish highlighted the 82,000 acres of land near Hearst Castle and the fact that their buses were converted from diesel to a cleaner gas, AZA accredited Atascadero Zoo and the protected wildlife estuary in Morro Bay were also landmarks in line with the sustainability story. Bravo shared out ideas which included highlighting the jewelry making, sustainable wine trail as well as the Cal Poly architectural graveyard.

13. Break

14. Co-Op

Cartier asked the committee for their thoughts on co-op participation, specifically for a Dallas in-market event. She also presented the Spartan co-op, an event taking place November 4-5 in Santa Margarita which has a partner buy-in option for added exposure including an on-site activation. Cartier also highlighted the Economic Impact Calculator available to partners who are putting on large-scale events. Thielen talked through the Pinterest program which begins in April.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion - Akers noted that there is interest in the in-market event but depends on cost and inquired whether there is flexibility on location to which Cartier noted there was. Sorgenfrei noted that Pinterest was a great resource and was a refreshing experience given you could speak to Pinterest directly. Banish let the committee know that Atascadero loves the opportunity to participate in co-ops such as Spartan.

15. Wrap Up and Next Steps

Cartier thanked all the participating partners including Evans who helped put together the WTTC content partnership. She thanked all the agencies for working together to help champion the larger mission. Cartier thanked the Visit SLO CAL staff for cross-collaborating and the marketing committee for supporting the work and allowing for honest conversations.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion- None.

ADJOURN at 3:34pm