



City Administration

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1. Entity Information:

a. Entity Name: City of San Luis Obispo Office of Economic Development and Tourism

b. Type of Entity: Municipality

c. Contact details: McKenzie Taffe, Economic Development Analyst

d. Brief overview of the entity's mission and history:

The City of San Luis Obispo was first incorporated in 1856. The Major City Goals are the most important and highest-priority goals for the City to accomplish. Our Major City Goal of Economic Resiliency, Cultural Vitality and Fiscal Sustainability includes efforts to move forward the development of a conference center.

2. Project Overview

a. Description of the project, project objectives, expected impact and outcomes, and how the project's success will be measured

The City of SLO proposes to develop a site-specific plan for a conference center in San Luis Obispo, which will take the place of the existing courthouse facility after the State relocates the current courthouse at 1050 Monterey Street. The primary objectives are to enhance local economic development, provide a venue for community engagement, and attract diverse events that benefit both residents and visitors. The conference center will provide greater information-sharing opportunities between STEM and precision manufacturing businesses, bringing in talent and expertise from throughout the state and the nation. Currently, there is insufficient meeting space anywhere in the county to host large conferences. In order to position our region as a champion of clean energy and precision manufacturing, we need a centrally located conference center that can bring together business leaders and innovators.

The consultant engaged by the City projects the San Luis Obispo Conference Center to host 325 events annually by the time demand stabilizes and more than 72,000 attendees annually. These events and attendees generate 21,000 room nights in the market area per year. The facility could generate \$22 million in annual economic impact and \$995,000 in annual fiscal impact by demand stabilization.

In 2017, Visit SLO CAL commissioned a market study for a countywide conference center, and the City will soon finish a feasibility study for a center. The site that is the best fit for a conference center is the soon-to-be relocated courthouse facility at 1050 Monterey Street, which will be relocated by 2029. Locating a conference center in downtown SLO will avoid the urban blight that could otherwise be created by the courthouse building moving. The courthouse is a key economic driver for downtown San Luis Obispo. The proximity of the courthouse to legal offices means that lawyers, county employees, and jurors come downtown and support local businesses. A conference center would fill that void left by the courthouse annex, activating mid-week visitation and spending, and creating a community space that would benefit community members and visitors alike.

The expected impact of this project will provide a blueprint for the future development of a conference center in downtown San Luis Obispo. The project's success will be measured by the successful completion of the specific plan and ultimately moving to the next step of the development process.

b. Stage (Concept, Accelerator, or Launchpad)

This project is currently in the Accelerator stage.

c. Population of focus

The project will benefit local main-street businesses that will gain increased foot traffic, the diverse regional workforce who will gain access to employment opportunities, residents who can enjoy programming in the new facility, and visitors from across the state and the country that will participate in conferences.

d. Geographic focus

The project is in downtown San Luis Obispo, California, which is an economic hub for our county.

3. Alignment with Uplift's Strategies in the Regional Plan

a. Identify which sector(s) and strategy(ies) the project aligns to

The project aligns with the Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services Strategies:

Enhance the Capacity of the Region's Talent Ecosystem to Serve Priority Sectors:

Unlock the Full Potential of the Region's Innovation Assets

Increase Supports for High-Growth Entrepreneurship

Enhance Core and Sector-Relevant Infrastructure

b. Provide a brief description of how the project aligns to noted sector(s) and strategy(ies)

By creating a pathway for development of a conference center, local industries in STEM can host "talent-industry exchanges". A conference center in downtown San Luis Obispo could significantly support economic development in key sectors such as precision manufacturing by attracting industry-specific conferences and trade shows. These events would provide a venue for networking between local manufacturers, suppliers, and potential clients. Additionally, these events would foster innovation and efficiency improvements in precision manufacturing, which could help local businesses upskill their workforce. By collaborating with Cal Poly, research and development in the precision manufacturing sector would be on display through programming at the conference center, incentivizing more high-growth entrepreneurship in the region. Ultimately, the conference center will be key component in diversifying the Central Coast workforce and expanding the reach of local precision manufacturing businesses.

4. Alignment with Uplift's North Star and California Jobs First Requirements

a. Economic opportunity

The proposed conference center directly supports economic development by creating jobs and stimulating local business growth. The project also attracts conferences that increase visitor spending in the local

economy. Ultimately, the conference center will be hub for local and regional businesses and organizations, putting SLO on the map for future conference locations and business travel.

b. Equity

The conference center will promote equity by supporting a diverse workforce as well as creating a space accessible to community groups for gatherings and activities. By offering spaces for diverse community events, it fosters engagement and collaboration, ensuring that all community members can participate in regional economic and social activities.

c. Sustainability

Sustainability will be a core principle of the conference center's design and operation. The center will implement green building practices, energy-efficient systems, and waste reduction strategies. Additionally, the center can serve as a facility for information-sharing in STEM research, especially given its proximity to Cal Poly and the region's emerging clean energy nodes.

5. Partnerships and Community Engagement

Current or Potential Partners:

- County of San Luis Obispo
- Visit SLO CAL
- Cal Poly

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be developed to formalize these partnerships in the full application phase.

6. Administrative Requirements: Confirm that the applicant will be able to provide liability insurance and an audit or financial statement.

The City of San Luis Obispo can provide liability insurance and an audit or financial statement.