



November 5, 2025

Dear San Luis Obispo Tourism Board,

This year, the SLO Film Festival will proudly celebrate its 32nd year where it will continue to be a vibrant community and cultural event. Our most recent festival was record-breaking, featuring Bob Mackie, Neil Young, Daryl Hannah and Jay Duplass. We have gained distinct notoriety in the past year as we have received the highest ever volume of submissions to the 2026 festival and have been distinguished as an Academy Award® Qualifying Festival for Documentary Short Films and have been named one of the Top 25 Coolest Film Festivals worldwide by MovieMaker Magazine. With this renewed spirit for showcasing the best, most relevant and fresh independent films of the year, the upcoming 2026 SLO Film Fest, centered on the theme “*Where Our Stories Live*” is shaping up to be an outstanding event.

As the SLO Film Fest continues to expand its reach and solidify its place as a premier regional destination, we remain focused on growth and improvement. Our ultimate goal is to amplify diverse community voices, share new perspectives through our programming, and provide an elevated experience to our attendees and filmmakers as we work to position San Luis Obispo County as a vibrant hub for arts and culture between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

In July 2025, we celebrated one year of operating the Palm Theatre as the SLO Film Center, offering daily programming and monthly events to more than 20,000 patrons alongside our annual festival. This new venture has expanded the opportunity for partnerships across local hospitality, tourism, and the expansive local wine industry, broadening our reach and attracting new audiences to the festival. We’ll also be launching a Film Center App in the coming months to better engage our community, deliver timely updates, and strengthen our relationship with our audience.

The 32nd SLO Film Festival will span six days, featuring independent films at venues throughout downtown San Luis Obispo. Alongside showcasing our insightful movies, we’ll expand networking and educational opportunities through additional panels, workshops, mixers, and filmmaker Q&As, fostering deeper collaboration within our community.

Our goal is to create a meaningful festival experience that inspires attendees to return each year while highlighting the very best of San Luis Obispo County. Our festival lounge serves as a dynamic hub for filmmakers, sponsors, media, and local businesses to connect. Our relationship with the area is top of mind and your generous support would help strengthen our local economy and bring the community together through the unifying power of film.

Building on our successful partnership from the past three years, we plan to offer the TBID an exclusive pass that will incentivize visitors to “See+Stay” in San Luis Obispo. Through targeted outreach to film industry groups such as the Academy of Motion Picture Sciences and Directors Guild of America and key markets like Los Angeles and San Francisco, we aim to boost tourism, support local hotels, and drive local economic growth.

As in previous years, we will survey attendees to gather data and measure the impact of our marketing efforts. Last year’s festival drew over 8,000 attendees with a steady increase each year, and revealed that out-of-town visitors stayed an average of 2.5 nights as well as data regarding how they heard about the festival and their demographic information. With additional support, we aim to increase both attendance and visitor stays at the upcoming festival.

We hope these initiatives will offer you and others a deeper connection to everything we strive to do as the region’s main resource for independent cinema and education. We couldn’t succeed without you and are most grateful for your past generosity. We hope that you will help us continue our vital mission.

Sincerely,

Skye McLennan
Executive Director of SLO Film Festival



EVENT NAME: SAN LUIS OBISPO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (SLO FILM FESTIVAL)

EVENT DATES: April 23 - 28th, 2026 in downtown San Luis Obispo

EVENT VENUE LOCATION: Exclusively Downtown San Luis Obispo: Fremont, The Palm Theatre, Downtown Centre Cinemas and Hotel SLO

WEBSITE: www.slofilmfest.org

EVENT ORGANIZATION: SAN LUIS OBISPO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, LLC

NON-PROFIT: Yes

ORGANIZATION URL: www.slofilmfest.org

PHONE NUMBER: 805-546-3456

POINT OF CONTACT: Skye McLennan

EMAIL: skye@slofilmfest.org

FESTIVAL NEEDS:

- **\$20,000 to support lodging for out-of-town filmmakers, journalists and industry professionals during the Festival at SLO partner hotels, specifically on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.** We are looking for at least 150 hotel nights (please note this number may change depending on filmmaker, journalist and industry professional attendance.) We currently have 50 complimentary nights donated with various hotel partners around the county. This concept would act similarly to that of the Cal Poly Athletic program. Hoteliers would opt in to participate and be paid for the nights using this funding.

- **See + Stay Package** - To qualify you must book a minimum of two nights at any hotel in San Luis Obispo and will receive two "See + Stay" passes that each include four regular screening tickets, access to special events, and access to our festival lounge. This year we are not asking the TBID to reimburse us for the value of the tickets, but would appreciate help promoting the package.

EVENT DESCRIPTION

The San Luis Obispo International Film Festival is a non-profit organization centered around celebrating independent films and filmmakers. With a six-day highly regarded annual event, a week-long virtual festival, and other exciting events and screenings throughout the year, the SLO Film Festival is a pillar of the arts in our community, and provides a year-round destination for international independent cinema promoting diversity, understanding, education, and inclusion through engaging storytelling to an ever-expanding range of audiences to new ideas and experiences. Exciting, fun, and impactful the SLO Film Festival screens over 100 films throughout the week, hosts a VIP Festival Lounge, Red Carpet events, live music, educational conversations with filmmakers and industry leaders, and capstone events each night to bring the community together, celebrate the arts, and expose our audience to important topics around the world.

DESCRIBE HOW YOU TRACK YOUR EVENT, SUCCESS AND ATTENDEES

(Ticket Sales, event attendance, attendee demographics, event satisfaction results, etc.)

Our organization utilizes a few different metrics and platforms to measure and track success. Our ticketing database allows us to track ticket and pass sales and redemption uses. It captures our audiences' residences, gives insight on their interests, if they are a returning customer and also measures which events are most successful. We also circulate surveys to attendees throughout and after the festival that help us retrieve feedback about the event as well as demographic information, where out of town attendees are lodging, the length of their stay, if they've traveled to the area before, etc.

DESCRIBE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES

Our festival has two branches it must market to: the audience and the filmmakers. From there we can break down our key target audiences. The audience is primarily older and local, with nearly 71% aged 55 or older and 42% residing in San Luis Obispo. Additional attendees come from nearby areas including the Five Cities (15%), North Coast (10%), and North County (6%), with 17% from outside SLO County, including 10% from out of state. The majority identify as female (66.9%), with 31.4% male and a small percentage identifying as non-binary or preferring not to self-describe. The audience is predominantly White (83.4%), with smaller representation from Hispanic or Latino (5.1%), Asian (3.4%), Black or African-American (2.3%), and other multiracial or ethnic backgrounds. Financially, the audience trends are affluent, with over half earning above \$100,000 annually—26.9% reporting \$150,000 or more

and 24.6% between \$100,000–\$149,999. Overall, our audience is well-educated, higher-income, older demographic with strong local engagement and moderate regional and out-of-state participation. We have seen steady growth in these areas by increasing the diversity of our filmmakers and programming.

HISTORICAL EVENT ATTENDANCE

Between 2020-2022 we had between 5,000 to 10,000 in-person admissions per year with an additional 8,000-16,000 virtual viewers. At the 2025 event we had 8,000 in-person admissions. Attendees surveyed were asked how they heard about the festival, their demographic information, and if they are from outside SLO County they were asked where they are from and where they were staying. This offers us insight on our lodging impact, where we've determined that visitors stay an average of 2.5 nights which we hope to increase this year with more marketing assistance.

HISTORICAL PERCENTAGE OF IN-COUNTY VS OUT-OF-AREA EVENT ATTENDEES

- **75%** - Local / In-County Event Attendees
- **25%** - Out-of-Area Event Attendees (Resides 50+ miles outside of SLO)

EXPECTED TOTAL NUMBER OF EVENT ATTENDANCE

For 2026 we are expecting to return to between 9,000-10,000 in person attendees

IN-PERSON FILMMAKER ATTENDANCE

- 114 total films shown across 137 screenings and events
- We had special guests and filmmakers in attendance from 71 main competition films, bringing in over 204 known filmmakers from the filmmaking teams (not including their guests) to San Luis Obispo, with an average stay of 2.84 nights. 54 filmmaking teams traveled from California (only 3 from within the county), 11 teams from out of state, and 6 teams from other countries.

RESULTS OF TBID SUPPORT:

FILMMAKERS: \$16,028 was used to help support filmmakers and journalists attending the festival (\$15,000 reimbursed through TBID funding). Using these funds, these guests were booked at Springhill Suites, Madonna Inn, La Quinta and Hotel Buena Vista based on the lowest offered group rates available.

Total Rooms Booked for the Festival: 146

Rooms Donated: 82 (\$40,163 Donation Value / \$490 average rate)

Rooms Booked Through TBID Funding: 64 (\$16,028 Spend / \$250 average rate)

- Springhill Suites: 36 room nights
- Madonna Inn: 6 room nights
- La Quinta: 13 room nights

- Hotel Buena Vista: 9 room nights

SEE + STAY PACKAGE:

2024: 17 qualified stays, \$14,003.90 hotel revenue, average 2-3 nights

2025: 33 qualified stays, average \$20,000 hotel revenue, average 2-3 nights

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Toolkit for hotels to easily use on their website about the See + Stay package
- More promotion earlier on through SLO Film Festival and Visit SLO
- Reduce clicking and easier access to booking hotel
- Make pass more accessible in terms of redeeming tickets

PROVIDE INFORMATION ON EVENT TICKETING

We use the ticketing platform Eventive. Eventive attendees are able to purchase passes, packages and individual tickets in advance or through our Box Office if more help is required. Eventive allows us to scan (passes and tickets, each attached to a customer profile) and track the attendance and attendees of each event. The following is a breakdown of our available passes and tickets for our annual film festival event.

PASSES + TICKETS

- **MOGUL+ ALL ACCESS PASS (\$350 Value)** Grants one person access to all in-person screenings, special events, festival lounge, and encore screenings. Plus, in-person priority line access.
- **MOVIE STAR+ PASS (\$225 Value)** Grants one person access to all in-person screenings. Includes daytime access to the festival lounge. Does NOT include access to special events such as Surf nite, King Vidor, Opening and Closing night. Also includes priority line access at in-person screenings.
- **FAN PACK 6 (\$80 Value)** A ticket package of six individual general admission tickets for in-person and virtual regular screenings. Does NOT grant access to special screenings, special events, red carpet events, or priority line access. Brings each ticket down from \$15 to \$12.
- **RED CARPET EVENT TICKET (\$25 Value)** Grants one person attendance to one Red Carpet Event or Special Presentation Screening
- **ADMIT ONE GENERAL ADMISSION TICKET (\$15 Value)** General admission tickets for in-person and virtual regular screenings. Does NOT grant access to special screenings, special events, red carpet events, or priority line access.

HAVE YOU REQUESTED FUNDING FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS/ENTITIES?

Yes

PLEASE PROVIDE THE NAMES OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS AND FUNDING ENTITIES:

Yes. We receive funding and in-kind support from the City of San Luis Obispo, The Community Foundation and Visit SLOCal.