



Proposal to the City of San Luis Obispo
Tourism Business Improvement District
May 2021

Guest Services and Public Relations

Purpose: Build on the partnership between the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce and the City of San Luis Obispo's Tourism Business Improvement District to strengthen San Luis Obispo as an unforgettable place where visitors engage in a unique lifestyle they aspire to live, become emotionally attached and return to for renewal.

Expertise: The San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce looks forward to building on our existing strengths including a successful track record of promoting San Luis Obispo, strong relationships throughout the community as well as extensive experience providing public relations and visitor services.

Looking forward: For more than 50 years, the Chamber has worked with the City of San Luis Obispo to improve the quality of life and economic vitality of our community. We continue to seek new opportunities to deepen our partnership and further the understanding of San Luis Obispo as an exceptional community to live in and visit.

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Qualifications

The San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce offers a distinctive and powerful combination of strengths to assist the Tourism Business Improvement District in fulfilling its mission and strategic direction.

- Direct **relationships with more than 1,300 local businesses** that represent nearly 39,000 employees throughout the county. These long-term relationships allow us to work cohesively with local businesses to execute promotions, projects and media visits.
- Constant interaction with visitors in our **downtown Visitor Center. More than 60,000 visitors** were personally greeted and assisted in 2020 and we engaged with thousands more over the phone and digitally. The center, which is open seven days a week, is staffed by visitor information professionals who are trained to answer questions and accommodate requests of locals, visitors and travel writers.
- Productive **relationships with the media**, rooted in our 40+ years of work in San Luis Obispo public relations. We are the go-to resource for travel writers due to the strength of the “chamber of commerce” brand and the strong relationships we have built through the years.
- We have a **nimble, responsive PR team**, which is well informed about what is happening in the city and can capture the attention of as well as respond to journalists with timely information, photography and contacts.
- Long-term **strategic alliances** with local organizations and events that attract visitors and enhance the overall experience for tourists, including Hearst Castle, SLO Coast Wine Collective, Cal Poly, Festival Mozaic, Downtown SLO, the PAC and the SLO Film Festival.
- Access to a library of **more than 50,000 current and historical images** of San Luis Obispo and the surrounding area. The award-winning images have appeared in publications such as *National Geographic Traveler*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Outside Magazine*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and many more.
- The SLO Chamber continues to **stay on top of the trends in tourism promotions**, working with regional, statewide, national & international partners to identify and act on emerging trends and best practices.

Project Team

The SLO Chamber has an **experienced, professional staff** who work together to execute projects to completion with a track record of success. The key team members who will lead the work for the Tourism Business Improvement District include:



Dusty Colyer-Worth
Visitor Center Manager

Dusty Colyer-Worth has been leading the Visitor Center and its team of customer service professionals since February 2016. Dusty utilizes his background in community relations, marketing, customer service and retail management to lead the SLO Chamber's guest services efforts. Dusty also served on the City of SLO's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force,



Jacqui Clark-Charlesworth
Director of Communications

Jacqui Clark-Charlesworth has been with the SLO Chamber since 2018, and brings to the team a strong background in marketing, brand development & public relations. In this role Jacqui works to share "why" San Luis Obispo is a wonderful place to vacation, live, work and generally enjoy life.



Keri Forsberg
Lead Communications & Social Media Strategist

Joining the SLO Chamber staff in 2015, Lead Communications & Social Media Strategist Keri Forsberg has a degree in Recreation, Parks and Tourism Planning and Management from Cal Poly and specializes in social media trends and marketing, as well as connecting community members and businesses, to enhance the region's tourism promotion efforts.



Jim Dantona
President / CEO

Jim Dantona's focus is on helping local businesses prosper. He brings his professional experience in government and personal passion in economic development to assisting on the contracts with the TBID and PCC. In addition, Jim comes with more than 20 years of experience in the public and private sector helping communities thrive.

Proposals

Guest Services

The SLO Chamber's Visitor Center is in a unique position to provide the San Luis Obispo guest with a friendly and informative experience before their arrival. This not only entices visitors to San Luis Obispo but plays a pivotal role in the overall guest experience, encouraging travelers to stay in and return to SLO. Through relationships developed with each of the TBID constituents we are able to capitalize on the Visitor Center's significant face-to-face, phone and email traffic to encourage travelers to stay in San Luis Obispo and match the right guest with the right property. To this end, we are proposing to continue the current services we provide to the TBID.

The Chamber provides a **hotel availability service** that is currently exclusive to the TBID. Visitor Center staff contact every TBID property each week, on behalf of the TBID, and maintain a record of which hotels are sold out and which have availability for each Thursday, Friday and Saturday as well as impacted weekdays throughout the year. This helps guests, who would otherwise need to call each property on their own, easily find a room in the city. This service also allows for TBID properties to refer their clients directly to the Visitor Center for centralized guest services. Since July 2020, the Chamber has been able to utilize this availability information to refer TBID properties more than **13,000** times. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this service also acted as a vital connection point to relay and gather important information and data, and will continue to do so as we move forward with recovery.

In addition, Visitor Center staff answer each call made to the TBID's 1-877-SLO-TOWN phone number, which serves as a **response tool to the TBID's advertising efforts and digital presence**. This creates the option for a 'real person' to assist in trip planning, ensuring that travelers seeking personal guidance have a friendly, live voice to shape their experience of San Luis Obispo before even arriving. The telephone dedicated TBID 1-877-SLO-TOWN line includes voicemail for after-hours in which calls are returned during the next day's hours of operation. In 2021-22, the Visitor Center will be open seven days a week, Sunday-Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Thursday-Saturday, 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m. for a total of **55.5 hours a week** with additional hours added on seasonally.

This year we are also proposing the continued use of the live chat service on VisitSLO.com that was activated mid-March 2020 to maintain additional communication avenues. As more and more interactions are taking place in a digital arena, this provides yet another way to capture guests' interest in San Luis Obispo.

Promotions - Sales Support - Fulfillment

The Visitor Center also serves as a fulfillment location and customer service lead for TBID special promotions. We look forward to collaboration on the development of promotions, serving as the customer service outlet for guest inquiries in regards to advertised promotions, and the delivery of promotional materials to guests upon their arrival in San Luis Obispo. We propose to continue this partnership, but as the needs and tactics of the TBID change and adapt, we also expand this offering to include active support of the TBID's sales objectives and follow up and fulfillment of information requests about San Luis Obispo that come in from other sources.

Scope of work

The scope of work within this proposal includes:

- Tracking room availability Thursday – Saturday through:
 - Weekly email and phone calls to all constituents as well as additional tracking for impacted weeks throughout the year (i.e. Cal Poly Week of Welcome, Cal Poly Family Weekend)
 - Availability information for impacted times will be provided to TBID properties in order to help maintain guest within the city
 - Tracking will be extended to TBID Homestay properties that opt in to the service
 - SLO hotel contact information included in advertising on exterior facing monitor after Visitor Center hours on weekends
- Guest service and booking assistance for guests that call the customer service line seeking tourist information on 1-877-SLO-TOWN
- Guest service and information assistance via the live chat widget on VisitSLO.com
- Site visits by Visitor Center staff to each hotel to build understanding of each property's unique offerings and their individual needs to ensure that the Visitor Center is making informed and educated referrals
 - Up to 6 activations per year
- Site visits to TBID strategic partners (ie: SLO Coast Wine properties) to deliver TBID marketing and promotional materials
 - Up to 2 activations per year
- Assisting guests in the Visitor Center with booking a SLO city hotel room
- Up to 4 activations per year of Visitor Center on-the-road service to assist in tourism promotion at off-site or virtual events such as: trade shows, brand activations, or at in-county TBID sponsored events, that fall upon mutually agreed dates. Lodging expenses as needed would be covered by the city, similar to past years.
- Up to 4 activations per year of Visitor Center involvement in special promotions, sales support, and information fulfillment including:
 - Utilization of the Visitor Center as a fulfillment location for guest pick-up and delivery of promotion
 - Utilization of Visitor Center staff to respond to phone and email inquiries regarding those promotions
 - Involvement of Visitor Center manager in planning strategy and execution to ensure seamless fulfillment
 - Active support of TBID sales efforts (ie: follow up and auditing leads lists from Visit SLOCAL and pushing information to TBID properties)
 - Information request fulfillment to those that have expressed interest in San Luis Obispo (ie: Visit CA lists)
 - Mail TBID brochure and other agreed open materials

\$47,500 a year for the next two years

Public Relations

Overview of 2020-21

Since 2014, the SLO Chamber has led tourism public relations for the City of San Luis Obispo through a partnership between the *Promotional Coordinating Committee* and the *Tourism Business Improvement District*. In this role, the SLO Chamber has managed the responsive and proactive public relations efforts to showcase the best of San Luis Obispo and entice visitors and locals to explore our city.

In 2020, the SLO Chamber began a new partnership with TBID's public relations agency DCI. Over the past year, we have developed a strong working relationship to promote SLO, where we act as the boots-on-the-ground local expert supporting DCI's national pitching and media relationships. Serving both the TBID and the PCC's goals, our proactive work this past year has mainly focused on economic recovery and resiliency, supporting our local businesses to ensure a thriving community continues to exist for visitors and locals alike.

As part of this focus, contract elements include pitching story ideas, inviting writers and influencers to experience the destination and coordinating those trips, sending out media releases, responding to media inquiries, use of the SLO Chamber's photography library for editorial requests and developing customized media kits. We do all this public relations work for just one client – San Luis Obispo.

This focused effort is paying off; even in this past year we contributed to dozens of media placements that highlight San Luis Obispo including those in *Forbes*, *Thrillest*, *Reader's Digest*, *HuffPost*, *TripSavvy*, *MSN* & *Fodor's*.

2021-23 Strategy

Since March 2020, San Luis Obispo, like so many cities reliant on tourism, has been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As restrictions begin to ease and leisure travel resurges, San Luis Obispo will be facing a new normal in tourism and in our community. Now more than ever, it will be imperative to communicate the vitality and character of our community and showcase San Luis Obispo as a safe, friendly and thriving city where people want to live and visitors want to vacation.

The public relations program will share the story of the unique offerings San Luis Obispo has for both residents and visitors by highlighting the character of the community and why locals love to call SLO home. This includes the promotion of community initiatives and the sharing of distinctive experiences which set the San Luis Obispo community apart from other destinations.

Objectives:

- a) Promote San Luis Obispo as a destination to live, play and stay driving visitation and delivering economic impact.

- b) Build consumer awareness serving as the voice of SLO by amplifying the destination brand and reaching audiences locally, regionally and nationally.
- c) Communicate the vitality and character of San Luis Obispo and the community.

Target audiences:

Our promotional efforts will target two audience groups:

- 1) Potential visitors ranging from millennials to baby boomers, in defined key drive markets (Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego), as well as those with special interests such as food and wine, outdoor activities or arts and culture.
- 2) Central Coast residents looking to rediscover what is in their backyard or within their community.

Strategies to reach target audiences:

Specific to the Tourism Business Improvement District

Telling the right story in the right place

As our community bounces back, we will continue telling unique stories within our community to promote businesses and the faces behind them, supporting SLO's economic recovery. The tourism industry is a vital part of San Luis Obispo and in our partnership with the TBID's new marketing team, we will amplify our voice and reach, operating as the boots-on-the-ground local expert. We will work together to position San Luis Obispo as the ideal destination for visitors, taking into consideration how the city fits into wider travel trends.

Press visits & FAMs

There is no substitute for experiencing San Luis Obispo firsthand. Press trips play a major role in generating editorial placements that tell the San Luis Obispo story and showcase our key messages. These placements inspire travel and educate consumers on the destination. This year we will be:

- working with key partners to host individual and FAM visits based on existing relationships and responsive leads
- additionally hosting visits as a result of DCI proactive outreach

Digital Influencer Hosting

As the digital influencer-sphere is growing, we have dedicated more attention to these content creators. In our past work as lead on the digital influencer strategy, we have found success in authentic relationship building and will continue to work with DCI to grow this program. We will support partnerships with digital influencers that are relevant to the SLO brand, resonate with our target audience and have a desired reach on their platform(s). This year we will be:

- working with key partners to host visits based on existing relationships and responsive leads
- additionally hosting visits as a result of DCI proactive outreach

Specific to the Promotional Coordinating Committee

Championing a vibrant economy

Small businesses are the lifeblood of our community and help shape the diverse economy in San Luis Obispo. There are many unique and unearthed stories to be shared within the community. As cities across the globe fight to regain their economic footing, highlighting the character and the faces of San Luis Obispo will be an important piece of our success. The stories of creativity and innovation among families, students, small business owners and professionals are waiting to be told, and sharing these stories will encourage further connection amongst neighbors and enhance the intrinsic feeling of joy felt when entering our community.

Uniquely SLO

Every inch of San Luis Obispo has its own unique history, and innovation and creativity is brimming around every corner. Economic recovery continues to be at the forefront, and we will build upon this past year's work to amplify this message to the community through continued strategic partnerships, working with local and regional media, and promoting community programs and campaigns.

Building back better

Our world shifted in many ways this past year. Beyond economic recovery and resiliency, we will put a more focused effort on representing diverse voices through our work. Additionally, we will continue to soldier on with our sustainability focus — not only a booming trend in travel tourism, but a core pillar of SLO's identity.

Foster Key Relationships:

It continues to be vital to work with our community partners to strengthen our collective message. With less resources and more obstacles as we look to encourage people to explore our city, the SLO Chamber will proactively work with other organizations to cross market through public relations initiatives as well as grow strategic alliances. In the upcoming year we are excited to further deepen our collaboration with strategic partners that contribute to the region's cultural vibrancy.

Visit California: We will leverage the large international megaphone that belongs to Visit California by participating in its PR programs. Key opportunities include submitting content to Visit California's editorial board, participating in Visit California-led press trips, sharing content on Visit California's social media channels and potentially attending domestic media marketplaces.

Central Coast Tourism Council: We will leverage the Central Coast Tourism Council's growing reach by participating in its PR efforts and positioning the destination as the heart of the Central Coast.

Visit SLO CAL: We will leverage the national and international reach of Visit SLO CAL by partnering closely with their PR team and participating in their programs. As the hub of SLO CAL,

SLO is poised to lead Visit SLO CAL-led press trips and ensure that SLO CAL understands our key messages and the city as a productive partner in promoting our region.

SLO Coast Wine Collective: Understanding that the budding wine region is a flourishing aspect of our destination, SLO will work with SLO Coast Wine's team on telling that story and publicizing the destination together.

Cal Poly: Cal Poly is not only one of the community's largest economic drivers, but also a huge draw for visitors whether they be families of students or those seeking the university's many cultural offerings. Through our built-in relationship with Cal Poly, we are able to work with them to get in front of additional audiences like alumni, staff recruits and other key stakeholders in the university.

Mindbody: The SLO Chamber's great relationship with Mindbody has continued to strengthen. Our shared interest in representing San Luis Obispo as a wellness destination, in addition to highlighting our community as one where start-ups such as Mindbody thrive, is an excellent example of the SLO Chamber's ability to bring together non-traditional tourism partnerships.

SLO Lodging Properties: We will work with the city's lodging partners and any PR teams to lead the destination portion of any hosted media or FAMS. As there is a shared interest for success in both promoting the hotels and the destination, this partnership is natural but also tactical in its approach.

Scope of work:

The scope of work within this proposal includes:

- In partnership with DCI agency:
 - Developing the 2020-21 PR strategy and editorial calendar
 - Sourcing ideas and content for responsive leads
 - Building custom itineraries and hosting travel writers on individual and FAM trips throughout the year
 - Building custom itineraries and hosting digital influencers
 - Maintaining VisitSLO.com media center
 - Participation in and pitching of TBID coordinated special promotions such as *Money for a Rainy Day*
 - Working in coordination on the comprehensive marketing plan to increase brand awareness across all platforms
- Continued independently:
 - Fulfilling all media requests
 - Tying in with *Visit California*, *Visit SLO CAL* & *CCTC*'s public relations efforts to enhance visibility and sync messaging
 - Partnering with neighboring destinations on tourism initiatives
 - Working with community partners on additional hosting opportunities
 - Sourcing, building custom itineraries and hosting travel writers on individual and FAM trips throughout the year with key partners
 - Sourcing, building custom itineraries and hosting digital influencers with key partners

- o Participation in and pitching of City coordinated campaigns such as *Support Local* to regional media and influencers
- o Participating in potential out-of-area promotional trips including preparation, media coordination and staff travel

\$90,000 a year for PR Services for the next two years, jointly funded by the TBID and PCC

In 2020-21, the TBID and the PCC funded the contract 50/50

Media Monitoring

In 2021-22, we propose a continuation of the media monitoring contract with *Cision* which allows the TBID & PCC to see the impact of public relations work, gives our PR team access to contact information for outlets, freelancers and influencers, and allows for whitelisted distribution of media releases. This is a pass-through contract, and because of the Chamber's nonprofit status, the service is available at a significant discount. This year, we propose the TBID and PCC once again, jointly fund the media monitoring service to ensure the SLO Chamber has the tools they need to complete their work and measure results.

\$7,425 a year jointly funded by the TBID and PCC

Summary

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| Guest Services for 2021-23 | \$47,500 a year |
| Public Relations Services for 2021-23 | \$90,000 a year* |
| <i>*180,000, jointly funded by the TBID and PCC</i> | |
| Media Monitoring Service 2021-22 | \$7,425 a year* |
| <i>*7,053.75 with early signing, proposing joint funding by the TBID and PCC</i> | |