Visit San Luis Obispo

Live the SLO Life

SLO TBID ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26



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BACKGROUND

In June 2008, the City Council adopted Ordinance 1517, establishing the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) in the City of San Luis Obispo as requested by the local lodging industry. The assessment of 2% of gross receipts for the district became effective on October 1, 2008, and the use of funds as defined in Section 12.42.030 of the Municipal Code states:

> "This ordinance is made and enacted pursuant to the provisions of the Parking and Business Improvement Area Law of 1989 (Sections 36500 et seq. of the California Streets and Highways Code). The purpose of forming the district as a business improvement area under the Parking and Business Improvement Area Law of 1989 is to provide revenue to defray the costs of services, activities and programs promoting tourism which will benefit the operators of hotels in the district through the promotion of scenic, recreational, cultural and other attractions in the district as a tourist destination."

ADVISORY BODY

The use of the assessment fund is based on the recommendation of the Tourism Business Improvement District advisory board (TBID Board), which is composed of City of San Luis Obispo hotel owners, operators and/or managers. Board members are appointed by the City Council and serve for an initial term of four years, with the opportunity to serve a second term for a maximum of eight years.

2025-26 TBID BOARD MEMBERS

NAME	PROPERTY	STATUS	TERM CONCLUDES
Clint Pearce*	Madonna Inn	Appointed May 2022	6/30/2030
Lori Keller**	Apple Farm Inn	Appointed June 2022	6/30/2030
Prashant Patel	Vagabond Inn	Appointed Sept 2022	6/30/2029
Nipool Patel	Lamplighter Inn & Suites	Appointed April 2024	Resigned 6/10/2026
Dante Specchierla	Petit Soleil	Appointed April 2025	3/31/2029
Mark Eads	Embassy Suites	Appointed July 2025	6/30/2028
Christine Nelson	TownePlace Suites and Hampton Inn & Suites	Appointed April 2025	Resigned 2/12/2026

*Clint Pearce served as Chair for FY 2025-26.
**Lori Keller served as Vice Chair for FY 2025-26





ADVISORY BODY BYLAWS

In addition to the governing City ordinance, the TBID Board established advisory body bylaws that further define its role and functions:

The functions and duties of the TBID Board shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Planning a comprehensive program to promote tourism to the City of San Luis Obispo and prepare an annual marketing program consistent with industry goals and objectives.
- Develop advertising and promotional programs and projects to benefit the lodging industry in San Luis Obispo.
- Present an annual assessment report to the City Council regarding the implemented promotional programs and projects.
- Perform any other lawful tasks as directed by the Council.

The TBID Board meets monthly on the second Wednesday at 10 a.m. In fiscal year 2024-25, the Board approved the formation of marketing and management subcommittees in lieu of a second monthly special meeting. The marketing subcommittee meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, while the management subcommittee meets on the fourth Thursday.

In FY 2025-26, the Board met 11 times for regularly scheduled meetings, held eight subcommittee meetings and hosted one partner reception, representing approximately 30 volunteer hours per Board member.

2025-26 YEAR BY THE NUMBERS

In the 2025-26 fiscal year, the City of San Luis Obispo again collected a record-breaking figure of transient occupancy tax (TOT) totaling more than $12.28 million. This number represents a 7.9% increase over the prior year. For the first time ever, San Luis Obispo saw six $1 million revenue-collection months in July, August, October, April, May and June.

This incredible contribution of TOT revenue to the City's General Fund is one of the direct benefits of tourism for the City, as the full collection of TOT revenue is retained by the City and helps support safety services, access to open space, infrastructure improvements and so much more. Separately, the TBID retains the revenue collected through its special assessment of 2%, which in FY 2025-26 resulted in nearly $2.5 million.

The fiscal year 2025-26 occupancy level in the City increased by 2% compared to the 2024-25 fiscal year, with an average annual occupancy rate of 71% for the year. With the addition of 200 rooms this fiscal year, this growth reflects a continued recovery in overnight travel, with the average occupancy rate now exceeding the pre-pandemic level of just below 71% in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

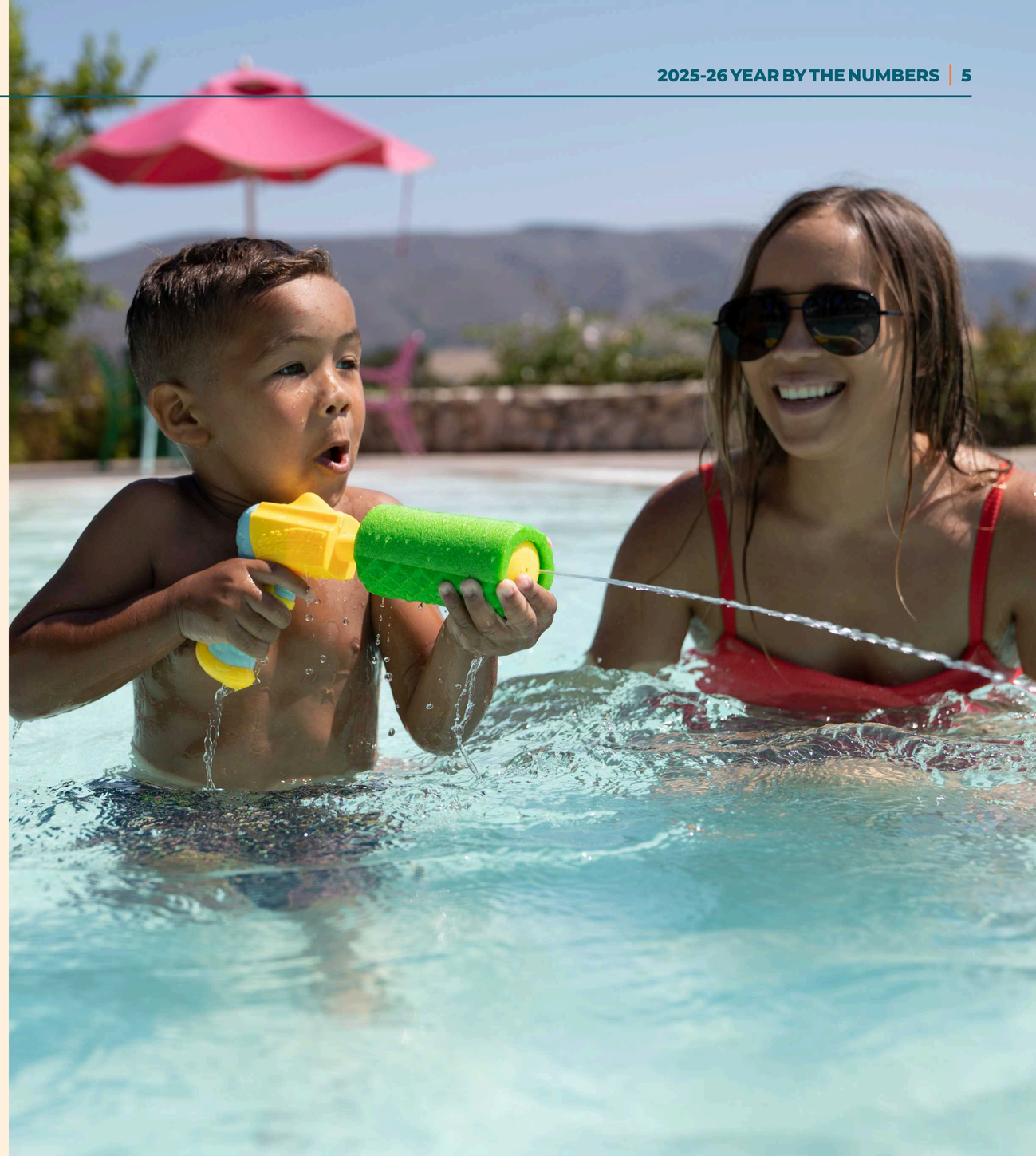
The growth of the Average Daily Rate (ADR) also saw an increase. In fiscal year 2025-26, the annual ADR was approximately $182. This is a 2.8% increase compared to the prior year and $29 higher than the pre-pandemic year of 2018-19. However, the current ADR is still below the peak of $195 achieved in fiscal year 2021-22.

The last key indicator used by the TBID to gauge impact is RevPAR, defined as Revenue Per Available Room. In the 2025-26 fiscal year, the annual average RevPAR was up nearly 5% from the prior year at the rate of $131 on average.

While these numbers provide a snapshot of lodging performance the TBID Board also tracks visitation to the downtown Visitor Center to represent the foot traffic. In fiscal year 2025-26, the Visitor Center served approximately 61,600 guests.

MEASUREMENT	FY 2025-26 RESULT	% CHANGE FROM FY 2024-25
TOT	$12,280,531	+7.9%
TBID Revenue	$2,456,106	+7.9%
Occupancy	71.41%	+2.0%
Average Daily Rate (ADR)	$182.09	+2.8%
Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)	$131.30	+4.9%

CHECK THE APPENDIX FOR COMPLETE GRAPHS (GRAPHS FOR TOT/ADR/REVPAR/OCC)



STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

In the fall of 2024, the TBID Board undertook a significant effort to establish a refreshed Strategic Plan to guide efforts from 2025 through 2030. Now entering the third year of executing against the plan, the Board continues to use this framework to align its priorities and decision-making. This foundational work included a dedicated workshop led by Whereabout, a destination consultancy specializing in stewardship, which facilitated a comprehensive session to align the TBID Board around a shared vision and strategic direction.

The resulting 5-year Strategic Plan provides a clear and unified framework for the Board's priorities and decision-making. It outlines the TBID's key roles in stewarding the Visit San Luis Obispo brand, representing its lodging partners and driving overnight visitation through targeted marketing strategies, strategic partnerships and destination advocacy.

Central to the plan are four Strategic Objectives that shape the TBID's focus over the 2025-2030 period:

1. **Ensure Organizational Excellence**
2. **Deliver Smart Growth**
3. **Build Meaningful Partnerships**
4. **Activate the SLO Life**

Each Strategic Objective is supported by specific strategies and measurable indicators of success, ensuring accountability and progress over time. Throughout this annual report, examples of accomplishments aligned with these objectives are highlighted, demonstrating the TBID Board's commitment to advancing both the Strategic Plan and the long-term vitality of San Luis Obispo's tourism economy.

CHECK THE APPENDIX TO VIEW THE FULL TBID 2025-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN MATRIX

CONSTITUENT RELATIONS

In support of the Strategic Objective to **Ensure Organizational Excellence**, the TBID Board continued to support constituent-relations efforts in 2025-26. To keep the lodging constituency abreast of all TBID business, Board members continued to liaise with assigned properties and report feedback during the “Hotelier Update” portion of each board meeting.

The TBID also continued to leverage the outreach support of the SLO Chamber’s contracted services through weekly lodging call-arounds and quarterly hotel visits. This resulted in more than 2,300 touchpoints with San Luis Obispo hotels through phone calls, emails and property visits to distribute important visitor-serving collateral.

In addition, the TBID hosted a partner reception in February 2026 to encourage networking and share updates on Visit SLO projects and programs. This included an update on the rollout of the SLO Life Coach brand campaign, results from the Brand Sentiment Tracker study, highlights from the Visit SLO CAL Visitor Profile study and ways for TBID constituents to stay engaged with Visit SLO. The reception also provided an opportunity for constituents to meet with staff, contractors, City leaders, strategic partners, and hospitality industry colleagues.

In addition to creating opportunities for networking and education, the TBID launched a new constituent newsletter to keep lodging partners connected to Visit San Luis Obispo programs, resources and opportunities. The newsletter also helped spotlight MidWeekend deals from participating properties, strengthening collaboration around off-peak travel and keeping lodging partners connected to the MidWeekend initiative.

The TBID will continue building on this collaboration to make it even easier for lodging partners to participate in and benefit from destination marketing efforts.





DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

The TBID is committed to supporting a welcoming, inclusive and accessible San Luis Obispo for visitors, residents and the local businesses that serve them. The TBID incorporates the values of diversity, equity and inclusion into its marketing and business strategies and works with destination partners, including Visit SLO CAL, to be a destination where people from all backgrounds feel welcome and represented. This commitment is grounded in the belief that every person should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

The TBID recognizes and values the diversity of our community and visitors, including differences in race and ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, language, age, ability, veteran status, pregnancy status, religious and spiritual beliefs and other aspects of identity and lived experience. The TBID continues to listen, learn and look for opportunities to strengthen its practices and partnerships. This includes being intentional about representation, accessibility, multicultural marketing and inclusive storytelling, while seeking opportunities to better understand and engage the diverse audiences who visit and experience San Luis Obispo.

We continue to grow our collaboration with Uniquely Driven, a public relations firm recognized for its expertise in multicultural marketing. Since 2024, this partnership has supported the TBID's efforts to reach more diverse audiences and strengthen representation in media and public relations, helping ensure that San Luis Obispo's stories reflect the diversity of the people who visit, live in and contribute to our community.

The TBID's commitment to DEI is reflected through tourism marketing initiatives such as:

- Creating content that resonates with and reflects diverse audiences
- Showcasing the authentic diversity of San Luis Obispo through inclusive imagery, narratives and community partnerships
- Leveraging paid, earned and owned media channels to engage wider, more representative audiences
- Offering destination materials in Spanish to foster accessibility and inclusion
- Amplifying the voices and visibility of diverse-owned businesses
- Building and maintaining strategic relationships, including the partnership with the Gala Pride & Diversity Center

SUSTAINABILITY

Visit San Luis Obispo's brand vision is to balance a thriving visitor economy with a meaningful commitment to sustainability. In doing so, the TBID supports the City's ambitious 2035 carbon neutrality goal while striving to lead by example in sustainable tourism. San Luis Obispo is more than just a beautiful place to visit—it's a destination committed to protecting what makes it special for generations to come.

Sustainability is part of the SLO Life and woven into the community itself. It is also a key differentiator in attracting conscientious travelers. Through its initiatives, partnerships and marketing strategies, Visit San Luis Obispo works to make sustainability part of the visitor experience, ensuring that the destination remains vibrant, responsible and resilient.

At the center of this work is Sustainable SLO, the sub-brand that gives these efforts a consistent visual and messaging identity for visitors and locals. One of its signature programs is Keys for Trees, which brings visibility to the City's climate goals while creating real-world impact through tree planting and education.

In FY 2025-26, the TBID continued to integrate sustainability throughout the visitor experience through several key initiatives:

- Continuing the Keys for Trees program, which connects overnight stays with local tree planting in partnership with the City's Office of Sustainability and Natural Resources and ECOSLO
- Making the SLO Life Coach a more visible face of Sustainable SLO across video, email, web, social, paid and print content, helping make sustainability more approachable and visible to visitors
- Continuing to promote lower-impact, off-peak travel through MidWeekend content across email, web, social and other visitor touchpoints, helping distribute visitation more evenly across the week and throughout the year
- Supporting citywide collaborations, including continued efforts with Solid Waste and Parks & Recreation

Together, these efforts expanded the visibility of Sustainable SLO and reinforced Visit San Luis Obispo's ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship. As Sustainable SLO continues to evolve, the TBID will continue to support the City's sustainability objectives through intentional programming, meaningful partnerships and a long-term vision for a thriving, sustainable destination.





PARTNERING FOR IMPACT

Executing a year-round marketing strategy requires not only expertise, but close collaboration. The TBID works alongside City Staff and a dedicated team of contracted partners to ensure strategic, creative and performance-driven marketing across the tourism program. Each agency brings specialized capabilities that, together, create a fully integrated marketing ecosystem.

Regular coordination, shared strategic planning and cross-functional execution keep efforts across media, public relations, social content and guest services aligned in strategy, message and purpose.

Together with the TBID team, this network of agency partners keeps strategy and execution connected across all marketing efforts, helping each initiative land with maximum impact.

Contracted Agency Partners:

noble studios™

Agency-of-record leading integrated marketing strategy, brand development, creative direction, campaign execution and media planning/buying

Uniquely Driven

National public relations agency focused on multicultural marketing and audience-specific storytelling

SAN LUIS OBISPO CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Local public relations partner, supporting media relations and in-market visitor experience

BADGER BRANDING

Content marketing partner responsible for developing and managing organic social media content across Visit SLO's channels

MARKETING ACTIVITIES

To effectively influence travel decisions, the TBID maps its marketing to the traveler's journey, from early dreaming and discovery through planning, booking, experiencing and sharing. Across paid media, public relations, social media, content marketing and VisitSLO.com, this integrated approach helps Visit San Luis Obispo reach travelers at the right time, with the right content and through the right platforms.

DREAMING →

- Aim to create brand awareness & connection
- Create shareable content that inspires travel

SERVICES

- Organic Social
- Paid Social
- Display Ads
- Email
- Public Relations
- Influencers

PLANNING →

- Bring prospects to the website to encourage research and discovery about what makes the destination special and unique
- Help prospective travelers plan with destination-specific content

SERVICES

- Website Experience
- Organic Search
- Paid Search
- Organic Social
- Paid Social
- Display Ads
- 3rd Party Ads
- Email
- Public Relations
- Print

BOOKING →

- Encourage travelers to visit key stakeholder pages to book & plan their trip

SERVICES

- Organic Search
- Paid Search
- Paid Social
- 3rd Party Ads
- Website Experience
- Email

EXPERIENCING →

- Utilize website to plan in-destination moments and activities
- Find up-to-date travel information

SERVICES

- Website Experience
- Email
- Organic Social
- Visitor Center

SHARING

- Keep the conversation going to amplify our message

SERVICES

- Organic Social

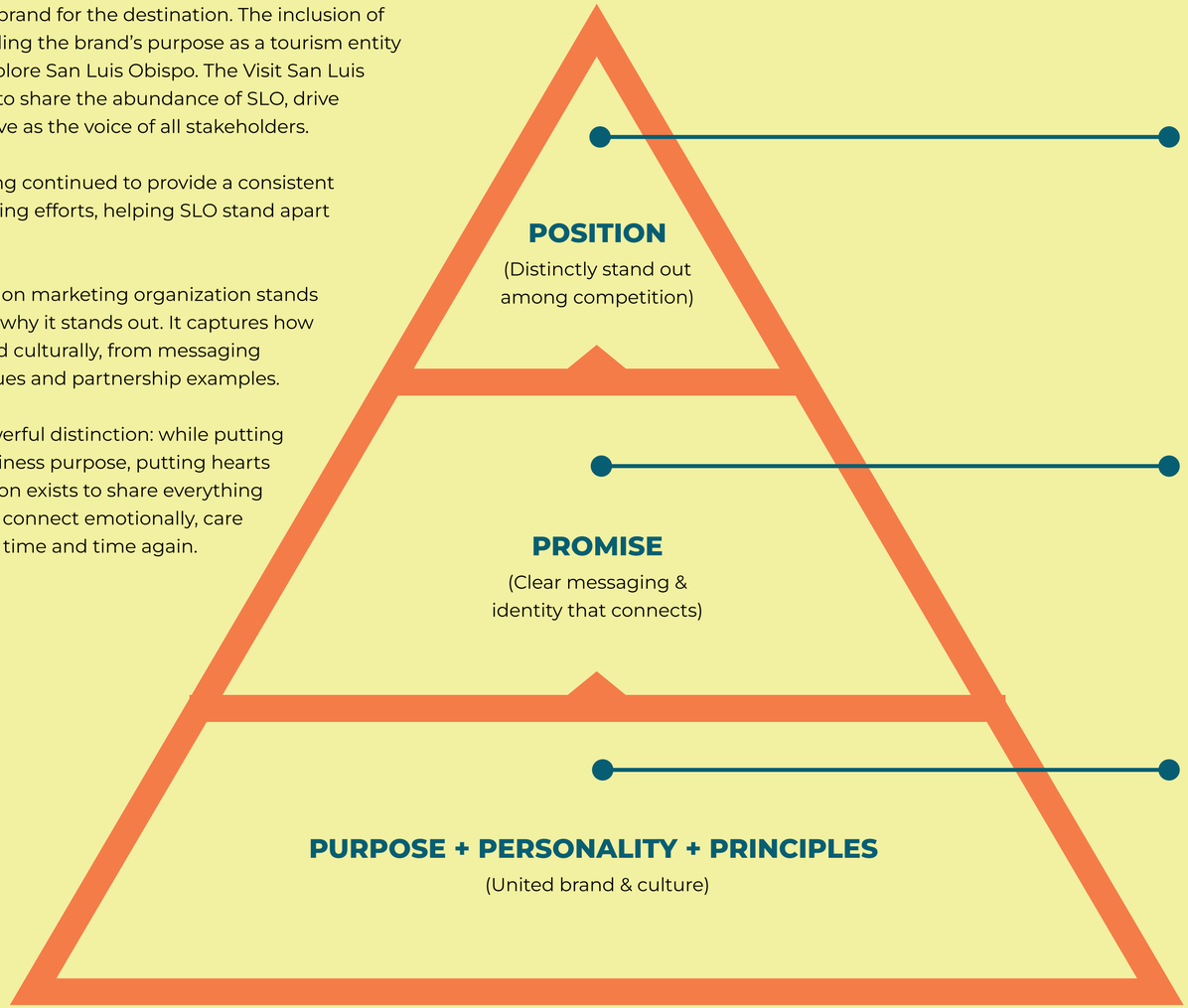
BRAND STRATEGY

Visit San Luis Obispo is the official tourism brand for the destination. The inclusion of “Visit” is an intentional choice, clearly signaling the brand’s purpose as a tourism entity and inviting travelers to experience and explore San Luis Obispo. The Visit San Luis Obispo brand supports the TBID’s mission to share the abundance of SLO, drive prosperity to the lodging economy and serve as the voice of all stakeholders.

In FY 2025-26, Visit San Luis Obispo branding continued to provide a consistent foundation across the destination’s marketing efforts, helping SLO stand apart in a crowded California travel landscape.

The brand book outlines what the destination marketing organization stands for, how it benefits travelers and locals and why it stands out. It captures how the brand comes to life visually, verbally and culturally, from messaging and logo usage to color palettes, brand values and partnership examples.

At its core, the brand book reinforces a powerful distinction: while putting heads in beds is Visit San Luis Obispo’s business purpose, putting hearts in beds is its brand purpose. The organization exists to share everything San Luis Obispo stands for—so that visitors connect emotionally, care for the community as their own and return time and time again.



HOMEBASE AWAY FROM HOME

You don’t just visit San Luis Obispo on vacation. You become part of our community and culture, an honorary local. The welcoming waves, neighborly nods and small-town California charm instantly make you feel welcome and invite you to start living The SLO Life. As you immerse yourself in our city, you bond with it and start to feel a sense of belonging that blends with the beauty of releasing life’s stresses, because it truly feels like a home away from home. And with the beaches, iconic sites and stunning beauty of the world-class Central Coast nearby, it’s also an incredible homebase during your vacation.

A CHANCE TO LIVE THE SLO LIFE

The SLO Life is a deep breath that releases life’s pressures. It’s a change of pace. It’s a fresh take. It’s a warm embrace. It’s a feeling of comfort and calm in a welcoming place filled with a special energy, connection, creativity and a wholehearted spirit. You can feel The SLO Life wrap its arms around you and pull you close. It’s tangible. And you’ll never want to let that feeling go, so you live The SLO Life to its fullest while you’re here and take a piece of it with you when you head back home.

HEARTS IN BEDS

If putting “heads in beds” is our business purpose, putting “hearts in beds” is our brand purpose. We live to share all that San Luis Obispo stands for so we can emotionally connect with and welcome people who will fall in love with our community in such a way that they actually become part of it, caring for it like they live here and returning time and time again.

BRAND CAMPAIGN

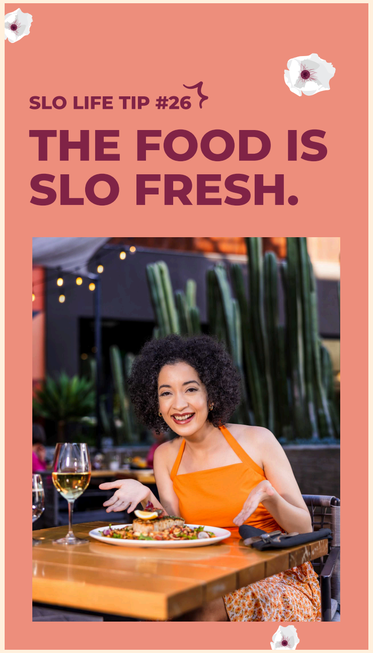
FY 2025-26 marked the first full year of the SLO Life Coach campaign, launched at the tail end of FY 2024-25 as a personified expression of the established “Live the SLO Life” platform. With warmth, wit and a distinctly SLO point of view, the SLO Life Coach gives travelers an approachable guide to experiencing San Luis Obispo like a local.

Over this past year, the campaign evolved from a launch idea into a flexible, year-round platform. The SLO Life Coach showed up across video, web, email, social media, paid advertising and print, sharing SLO Life Tips and becoming a recognizable face for initiatives including MidWeekend and Sustainable SLO. This cross-channel integration helped create a more consistent and connected brand experience throughout the traveler journey.

More than a campaign character, the SLO Life Coach gives Visit San Luis Obispo a distinct voice, a relatable face and a scalable way to connect destination storytelling with the programs, experiences and travel behaviors that support overnight stays.

That differentiation has also begun to show in brand perception. The latest Brand Sentiment Tracker found positive SLO associations continuing to grow as “pit stop/college town” perceptions declined, while the SLO Life Coach showed promising signs of campaign stickiness.









SLO LIFE TIP #34

DON’T DRIVE THRU SLO. STAY.

WEBSITE

VisitSLO.com is the City's official tourism website and the digital hub connecting Visit San Luis Obispo's marketing efforts. Built primarily for travelers, it also serves travel trade professionals, meeting planners, TBID constituents and media. Campaigns and communications across channels point back to the site, where inspiration can turn into trip planning and referrals to local lodging and experiences.

In FY 2025-26, overall site traffic held steady while engaged sessions (visits lasting more than 10 seconds, including a key event or reaching at least two pages) and referrals to lodging and Things to Do partners increased, indicating stronger on-site engagement and partner referral activity.

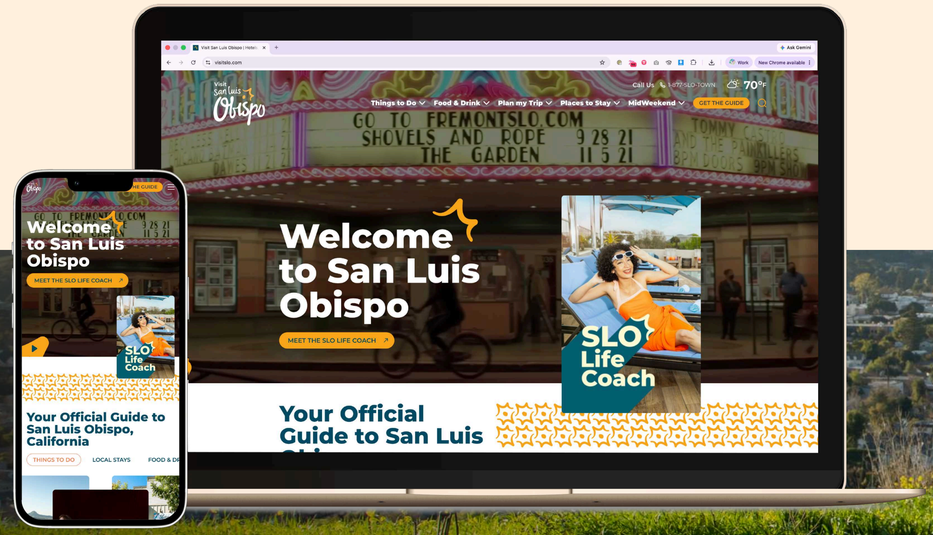
WEBSITE PERFORMANCE YOY:

8%
INCREASE IN ENGAGED SESSIONS

14%
INCREASE IN HOTEL PARTNER REFERRALS (50,081 VS 43,923)

27%
INCREASE IN THINGS TO DO PARTNER REFERRALS (49,919 VS 39,179)

3%
DECREASE IN NEW USERS



SEO

In FY 2025–26, search engine optimization (SEO) performance adapted to shifting search behaviors driven by the rapid rise of AI Overviews and direct Search Engine Results Page (SERP) answers. While these zero-click features naturally reduced overall website session volume across the destination marketing sector, San Luis Obispo's core search authority remained stable.

Strong Page 1 rankings kept the brand visible to prospective travelers, while traffic from Large Language Models (LLMs) grew 257% as AI became a larger part of travel discovery. By pivoting toward AI search optimization and high-intent content, Visit San Luis Obispo broadened how it measures performance to include holistic search visibility, click-through quality and conversions alongside raw traffic.

SEO PERFORMANCE YOY:

13%
INCREASE IN PAGE 1 KEYWORDS

257%
INCREASE IN TRAFFIC FROM LLMS (2,238 VS 627)

19%
DECREASE IN ORGANIC TRAFFIC

18%
DECREASE IN PAGES PER SESSION

7%
INCREASE IN AVERAGE SESSION DURATION

13%
DECREASE IN ORGANIC HOTEL PARTNER REFERRALS (8,851 VS 10,188)

DIGITAL MEDIA

In FY 2025-26, Visit San Luis Obispo balanced upper-funnel awareness-building with performance-driven, lower-funnel tactics designed to turn interest into action. This approach directly supports the TBID's Strategic Objective to **Deliver Smart Growth**, balancing long-term brand health with near-term economic impact.

Across paid channels, performance data and market insights informed campaigns and helped optimize reach, relevance and return on investment.

DIGITAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE YOY:

17%
INCREASE IN PAID TRAFFIC

22%
INCREASE IN PAID SOCIAL CTR

41.4 MILLION
TOTAL PAID IMPRESSIONS
(DOWN 16.7% YOY)

36.99%
PAID SEARCH & PAID SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT RATE

10.77%
PAID SEARCH CTR
(BENCHMARK 8.7%)

40%
INCREASE IN GOOGLE ADS PARTNER REFERRALS



EMAIL MARKETING

In FY 2025-26, email remained a direct line to travelers for MidWeekend and the SLO Life Coach campaign. Average newsletter open rates exceeded the industry benchmark and the subscriber base grew by 6% year over year. With the prior year's mass-audience giveaways no longer driving traffic at the same scale, email generated fewer raw sessions but more engaged site visits, with subscribers spending more time on VisitSLO.com and viewing more content per visit.

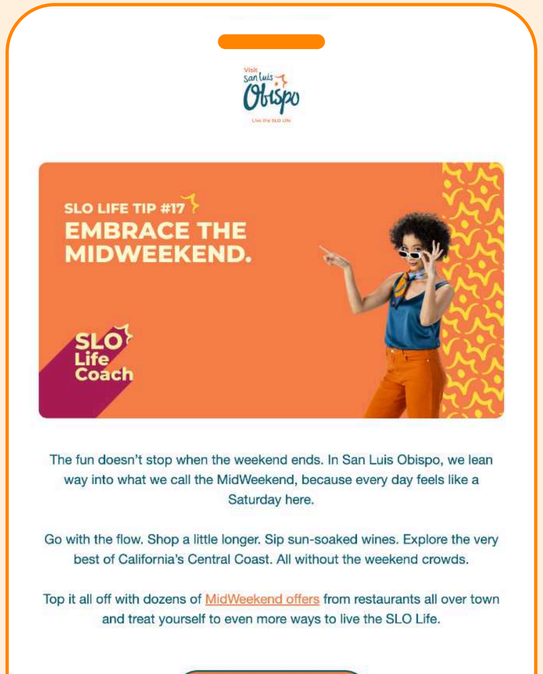
EMAIL MARKETING PERFORMANCE YOY:

46.2%
AVERAGE NEWSLETTER OPEN RATE
(45.2% INDUSTRY BENCHMARK)

1.4%
AVERAGE CLICK RATE
(2.43% INDUSTRY BENCHMARK)

6%
GROWTH IN NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

13
TOTAL EMAILS SENT





PRINT ADVERTISING

Print remained a selective part of the media mix in FY 2025-26. While digital continued to lead, targeted print placements helped Visit San Luis Obispo reach niche and mature audiences through visitor guides, regional maps and other travel-focused publications, reinforcing travel inspiration and broader brand awareness.

Print Placements Included:

- SLO Chamber Visitors Guide
- Visit California Visitors Guide
- Visit SLO CAL Visitors Guide
- SLO Destination Folded Brochure
- Central Coast Map & Regional Placement
- Phoenix Magazine





SLO LIFE TIP #14

DITCH THE CAR.

In SLO, it's easy to roll from scene to scene while keeping things green. When you walk, bike or rideshare between SLO Film Fest venues, you can focus on your next step instead of your carbon footprint.

BONUS FEATURE: Visit SLO's Keys for Trees program donates a portion of your hotel room charge to plant trees in our community, so you're helping us grow closer to our goal of carbon neutrality by 2035 by simply staying here.

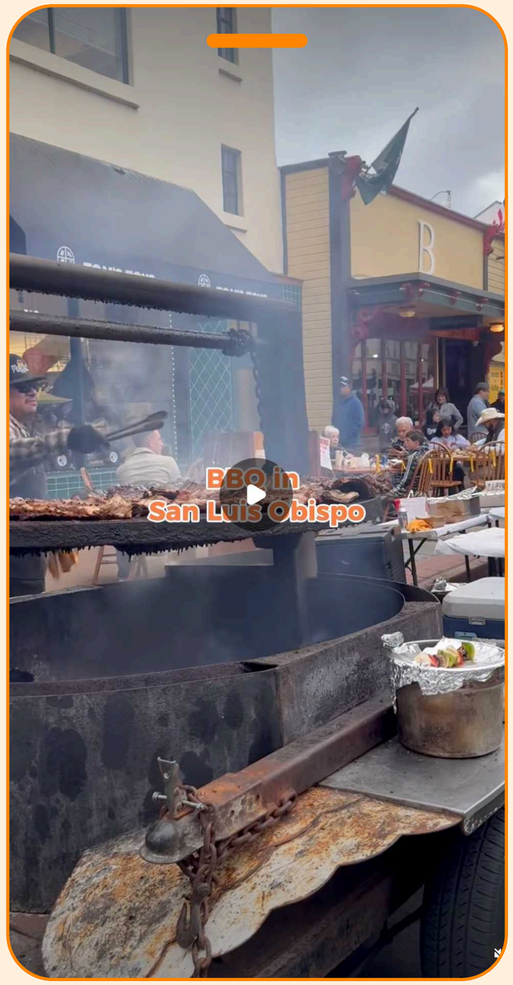
SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Sustainable SLO — A Visit San Luis Obispo Program

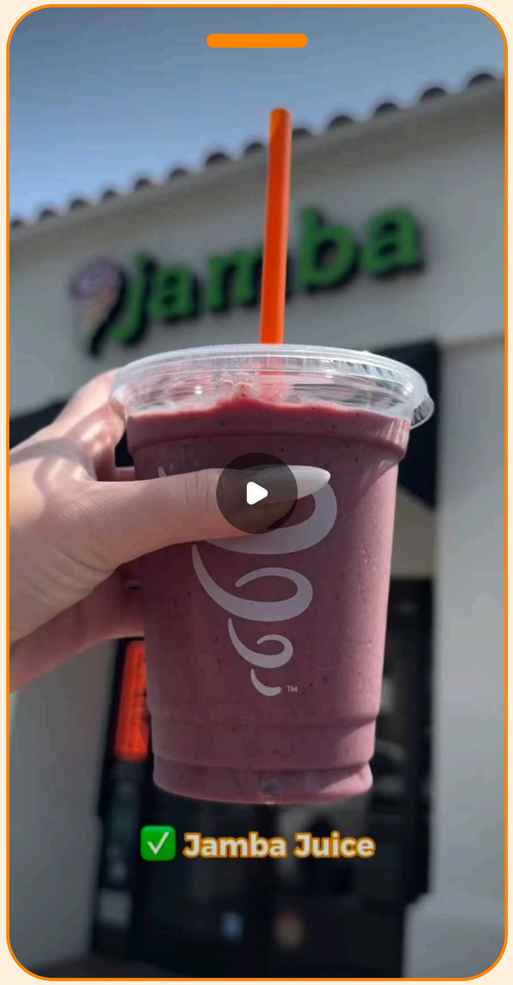
Visit San Luis Obispo — Live the SLO Life



SLO Train
(1.5M Meta Views)



BBQ in SLO
(216K Meta Views)



SLO-Born Businesses
(178K Meta Views)

SOCIAL MEDIA

@ShareSLO, Visit San Luis Obispo's official social media presence, continued to connect locals and inspire visitors through timely, trend-aware and distinctly SLO content. In FY 2025-26, efforts expanded reach and engagement across platforms, introduced new content formats and integrated key campaigns including the SLO Life Coach, MidWeekend and SLO Restaurant Month.

Social Media Highlights:

- **17.7K increase** in followers across Meta and TikTok
- **Produced 168 original Reels**, participated in 98 collaborations and ran 32 giveaways
- **Joined the "Million Club"** with the Train Reel, which reached 1.5M views on Meta
- **Maintained a cohesive visual identity** across Reel covers, Linktree, banners and Highlights
- **Used a flexible content calendar** to respond quickly to trends and timely opportunities
- **Established recurring series** including Hub 'n' Spoke, Local CP Legends and New Businesses in SLO

Top Performing Content:

- SLO Train **(1.5M Meta Views)**
- BBQ in SLO **(216K Meta Views)**
- SLO-Born Businesses **(178K Meta Views)**
- SLO in the '90s Trend **(88.7K Meta Views)**

PUBLIC RELATIONS

In FY 2025-26, Visit San Luis Obispo continued its shared public relations model, with the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce serving both the TBID and Promotional Coordinating Committee (PCC) and Uniquely Driven dedicated to TBID initiatives. The Chamber focused on regional outreach while Uniquely Driven led national efforts, working together to build awareness, secure high-quality media coverage and tell stories that showcase San Luis Obispo's distinct character.

The year's PR strategy included 21 individual media visits, ad hoc influencer vetting and consistent proactive and reactive pitching, with six additional visits planned for the next fiscal year.

The year's strategy also included a MidWeekend-themed content creator trip in October 2025, which brought five drive-market content creators to San Luis Obispo, generated 10 content placements and totaled more than 636,000 unique visitors per month (UVPM). The SLO Chamber's PR representative also attended Visit SLO CAL media missions in Los Angeles and Phoenix, meeting with 25 media contacts in key markets.

Collectively, these PR efforts generated 94 media placements and more than 1.19 billion impressions. Coverage appeared in prominent national and regional outlets including Forbes, BBC Travel, USA Today, Eater LA, Travel + Leisure, Essence and Yahoo.

With the PR landscape continuing to evolve, including newsroom reductions and a growing reliance on freelancers, Visit San Luis Obispo is exploring expanded formats such as podcasts, satellite interviews, advertorials and sponsored media opportunities to sustain visibility and reach.

PR PERFORMANCE:

1.19 BILLION
IMPRESSIONS

94
MEDIA PLACEMENTS

TOP MEDIA PLACEMENTS

BBC TRAVEL

10 of the US's most sustainable small towns - and why they're worth the trip

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

Discover California's 25 Best Destinations for Every Traveler

Forbes

All-American San Luis Obispo Is A Great Summer Weekend Getaway

EATER LOS ANGELES

The Best Restaurants Around Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (SLO), According to Eater Editors

yahoo!

10 Best Places to Eat and Drink in San Luis Obispo, California's Best Small City





GUEST SERVICES

Through a dedicated contract with the TBID, the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce continues to provide a comprehensive suite of guest services that support Visit San Luis Obispo's mission to create welcoming experiences for travelers.

In FY 2025-26, the Visitor Center continued to serve as a key resource for prospective and in-destination visitors, welcoming 61,636 walk-in visitors, responding to 17,987 digital inquiries via email and web chat and fielding 2,064 phone calls throughout the year.

Guest services also include the 1-877-SLO-TOWN line, a dedicated phone number connected directly to Visit San Luis Obispo's marketing efforts. Managed by Chamber staff, the line provides live trip-planning assistance and is used exclusively to promote San Luis Obispo lodging properties and experiences. In FY 2025-26, it handled 382 calls.
These guest services extend the Visit San Luis Obispo brand beyond marketing, giving travelers personalized guidance and up-to-date destination information throughout the planning process and in-market experience.

VISITOR CENTER PERFORMANCE:

61,636
WALK-IN VISITORS

17,987
DIGITAL INQUIRIES

2,064
PHONE CALLS

EVENTS

Destination events remained an important tool for attracting visitors and supporting overnight stays in San Luis Obispo. The TBID Board reviewed funding requests on a case-by-case basis using the established application process.

EVENTS SPONSORED:

SPARTAN RACE — NOVEMBER 8-9, 2025
Drawing more than 8,000 attendees from around the world, the annual SLO CAL Spartan Trifecta Weekend is supported through a co-op partnership among Visit San Luis Obispo, Visit SLO CAL and Visit Atascadero. Given their proximity to the venue, San Luis Obispo and Atascadero see the greatest direct benefit from the event.

VINEYARD TEAM, SUSTAINABLE AG EXPO — NOVEMBER 10-12, 2025
The Sustainable Ag Expo is a three-day, midweek, off-season educational symposium and tradeshow attracting over 500 wine industry professionals to San Luis Obispo. Visit San Luis Obispo's sponsorship supported lodging for event speakers and presenters, along with promotional efforts.

MISSION COLLEGE PREP HIGH SCHOOL, MISSION PREP CHRISTMAS CLASSIC — DECEMBER 19-23, 2025
The Mission Prep Christmas Classic is a four-day premier California high school basketball tournament featuring some of the best high school basketball players from the state and beyond. The event draws a majority of out-of-area attendees and livestreams to thousands more. Visit San Luis Obispo was the exclusive lodging partner and supported the event with funding to host teams in SLO properties and out-of-market advertising.

SLO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, 32ND FESTIVAL — APRIL 23-28, 2026
The 32nd SLO International Film Festival (SLO IFF) hosted a six-day festival primarily in downtown San Luis Obispo, featuring more than 124 events and drawing filmmakers, industry professionals, and audiences from across the region and beyond. Visit San Luis Obispo supported the festival as a strategic opportunity to drive visitation, extend stays, and generate economic impact, while reinforcing SLO's reputation as a destination for arts and culture.

In addition to marketing and lodging support, Visit San Luis Obispo's public relations team partnered with the festival to host a press tour, giving journalists the opportunity to experience both the event and the destination firsthand — generating earned media coverage that extends the festival's reach and visibility well beyond the six days of programming.

DOWNTOWN SLO — OCTOBER 15-17, 2025 & JULY 3, 2026
Downtown SLO hosted the California Main Street Conference in October, which gave the TBID a meaningful opportunity to support the event and showcase San Luis Obispo's capacity to host large meetings and conferences. As part of this effort, Visit SLO invested in professional photography to capture the unique sessions over multiple days, supporting its broader meetings and events strategy with high-quality imagery for future marketing and sales efforts.

Another new partnership with Downtown SLO this year included support of the expanded July 3 Concerts in the Plaza Block Party. The TBID's backing allowed the event to extend its footprint and duration, drawing additional visitation over the holiday weekend. The celebration offered a unique experience for residents and visitors alike, increasing economic impact for the community, and celebrating America's 250th anniversary.

GALA PRIDE & DIVERSITY CENTER, PRIDE AND CULTURAL PROGRAM — YEAR-ROUND
The TBID maintained its legacy partnership with the Gala Pride & Diversity Center in FY 2025-26, partnering on both the annual Central Coast Pride celebration and year-round Pride & Cultural programming. Visit San Luis Obispo remained committed to amplifying authentic, community-rooted storytelling—collaborating with Gala to help develop LGBTQIA+ content for VisitSLO.com. The partnership also included promotion of Central Coast Pride through owned channels and select paid media tactics, reinforcing the destination's inclusive values and welcoming spirit.





STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

In FY 2025-26, Visit San Luis Obispo continued to strengthen relationships with community partners and industry organizations to expand reach and align marketing around shared priorities. These collaborations give the TBID access to new audiences, platforms and expertise while helping destination marketing efforts go further.

Partnerships with Cal Poly remained a cornerstone of outreach efforts. Through ongoing collaborations with the Office of Student Affairs, Visit San Luis Obispo participated in SLO Days, Mustang Family Weekend and Open House, providing direct access to thousands of students, parents and supporters. The partnership with Cal Poly Athletics also continued, including destination sponsorship, marketing exposure and lodging coordination with TBID properties.

Now in its fourth year, the TBID's partnership with Kind Traveler—a responsible travel platform—continues to serve as a meaningful channel for engaging sustainability-minded travelers. Through Kind Traveler's Every Stay Gives Back program, Visit San Luis Obispo showcased its Keys for Trees initiative via a dedicated destination landing page and annual community impact report.

To advance the Strategic Plan's third objective, **Build Meaningful Partnerships**, the TBID will begin auditing its partnership landscape, identifying key gaps and developing an events strategy that complements Visit SLO CAL's approach.

Key partnerships in FY 2025-26 included:

Cal Poly

Cal Poly Mustangs

KindTraveler
Do More Than Travel

EcoSlo
Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo

San Luis Obispo SLO Coast Wine Collective

Gala Pride & Diversity Center

INDUSTRY RELATIONS

Visit San Luis Obispo maintains relationships with regional, state and national tourism organizations that extend the destination's reach, support industry advocacy and create opportunities for shared marketing, research and planning.

VISIT SLO CAL (VSC)

The TBID participates in Visit SLO CAL through representation on its Board of Directors and Marketing Committee. The partnership extends San Luis Obispo's reach beyond the local and state markets prioritized in the TBID's own marketing plan and supports countywide group sales, film commission, public relations and strategic planning efforts, including the SLO CAL Events & Festivals Strategy.

CENTRAL COAST TOURISM COUNCIL (CCTC)

The Central Coast Tourism Council is an organization of tourism and hospitality professionals whose marketing efforts accomplish collectively what no single tourism entity can do alone: promote the entire California Central Coast as a destination and maximize its members' tourism revenue. The CCTC serves as the Central Coast's voice in Sacramento and partners with California Tourism's global marketing and advertising campaigns. The TBID is actively involved in CCTC with a seat on the Board from staff and the SLO Chamber public relations representative on the PR committee.

CALIFORNIA HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION (CHLA)

The California Hotel & Lodging Association protects the rights and interests of the California lodging industry. Legislative advocacy, educational training, communication and cost-saving programs are provided for all segments of the industry. Through the TBID, all lodging properties in the city of SLO are members of CHLA and can utilize the services offered.

VISIT CALIFORNIA (VCA)

The Visit California partnership has been critical in the growth of Visit San Luis Obispo's brand within the California Tourism product. SLO has received coverage through the marketing activities performed by Visit California including travel trade, press and industry outreach. Monthly submissions are uploaded to Visit California for media leads, trade contacts and newsletter content. Through a seat on CCTC's Executive Committee, the City's Tourism & Community Promotions Manager also participates in VCA's Rural Committee.



2025-26 AWARDS & ACCOLADES

VISIT CA POPPY AWARD FINALIST

Best Content Marketing
MIDWEEKEND CAMPAIGN

Best Brand Advertising Campaign (under $1 million)
SLO LIFE COACH CAMPAIGN

Influencer Marketing
SUSTAINABILITY FAM

ETOURISM SUMMIT EXCELLENCE AWARDS FINALIST

Campaign of the Year
SLO LIFE COACH



FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

INCOME SOURCE	2025-26
FY 2025-26 TOT Revenue Assumption, per FY 2025-26 Supplemental Budget	$11,099,705
FY 2025-26 TOT Revenue Collection	$12,280,531
FY 2025-26 TBID Revenue Assumption, per FY 2025-26 Supplemental Budget	$2,219,941
FY 2025-26 TBID Revenue Collection	$2,456,106
FY 2025-26 TBID Projected Expenditures*	$2,219,697
FY 2025-26 TBID Projected Surplus*	$236,409

*Actuals will be reported to City Council at the Year End Budget Report in November 2026. Audited financials will be available in February 2027.

ADOPTED TBID PROGRAM BUDGET	FY 2025-26
Operations/Staffing	
Administration Overhead (2% of TBID Assessment)	$44,399
Staffing	$275,084
Staffing Contingency	$85,000
Contracts & Marketing Services	
Marketing Contract - Noble Studios/DCI	$1,250,000
Chamber of Commerce - PR	$50,000
Chamber of Commerce - Guest Services	$51,975
Chamber of Commerce - Media Monitoring Service Fee	$3,500
Co-op Marketing Program Funding	$30,000
Content Marketing Services - Badger Branding	$107,700
Partnerships	
Cal Poly Athletics	$65,000
EcoSLO - Sustainability Initiative	$22,199
SLO Coast Wine Collective Membership	$5,000
Events & Promotions	
General Events Promotion	$50,000
Event Activation + Collateral	$7,250
Seasonal Promotion	$25,000
Tradeshows	
Tradeshows	$18,000
Tourism Conferences	$7,500
Tourism Organizations	
CCTC Dues	$950
Smith Travel Report	$2,580
CalTravel Membership	$1,000
California Hotel & Lodging Association	$34,010
Research + Program	
Research + Program Development	$45,000
Support/Meetings	
Tourism Program Expenses	$7,500
FAM Trip Hosting	$15,000
Services/Online Tools/Fulfillment (Dropbox, Crowdriff, Survey Monkey)	$8,500
Contingency	
Contingency Fund	$7,550
TOTAL COMMITTED	**$2,219,697**
FUNDS REMAINING	**$244**
TOTAL	**$2,219,941**



LOOKING AHEAD (FY 2026-27 PRIORITIES)

As Visit San Luis Obispo enters FY 2026–27, the TBID remains committed to advancing the goals outlined in the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan while ensuring the continued execution of the newly adopted 2026-28 Strategic Marketing & Business Plan. This two-year Strategic Marketing & Business Plan serves as a comprehensive guide for Visit San Luis Obispo's overarching marketing direction, as well as the tactical efforts that support destination stewardship, drive overnight stays and represent the voice of stakeholders.

The following priorities will guide the work ahead:

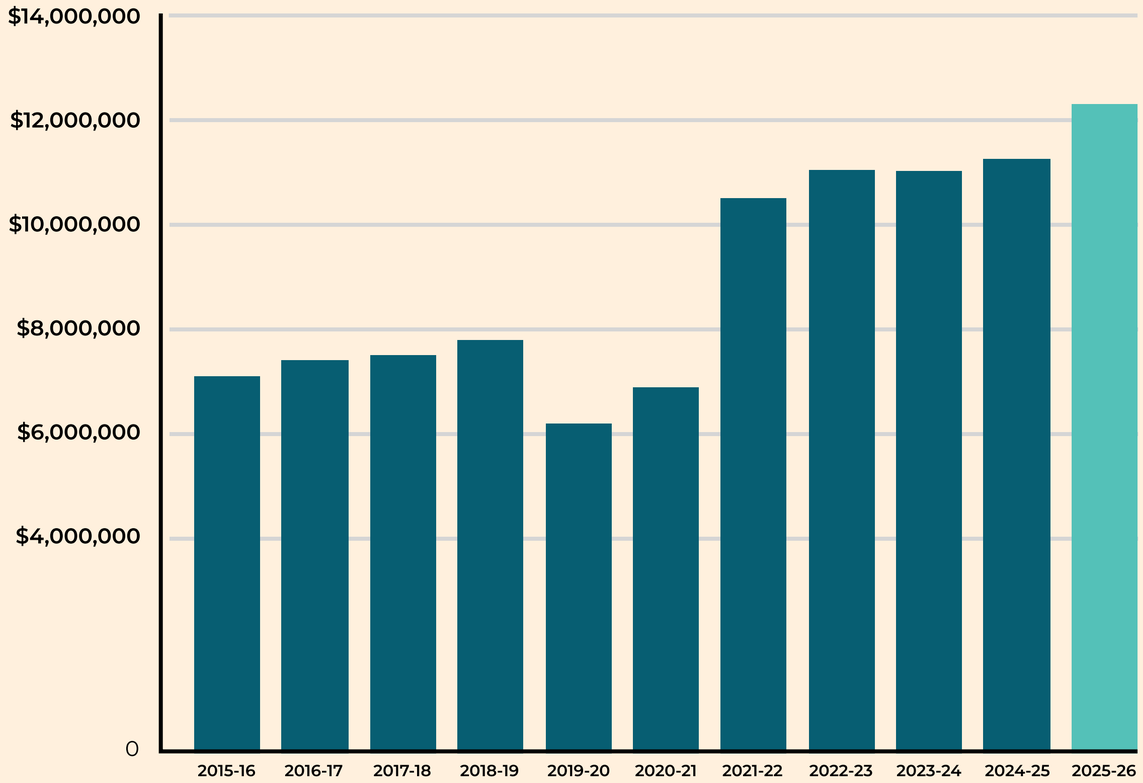
- Launch a Partnership Audit of the TBID's existing events and partner landscape to evaluate effectiveness and resource use
- Generate demand, given the projected supply-demand imbalance — with an explicit focus on midweek and shoulder-season periods
- Develop a comprehensive influencer strategy, including hosting a micro-influencer midweek FAM, to authentically showcase San Luis Obispo and connect with niche travel audiences
- Deepen co-op research partnerships with Visit SLO CAL and Visit California (2026 Economic Impact Study; meetings/trade research; third-party visitation data exploration)
- Grow the SLO Life Coach campaign from awareness-building to conversion — connecting the campaign to bookable offers and interactive planning tools, rather than continuing pure brand storytelling
- Continue to embed sustainability and DEI authentically across all programs, reinforcing the brand's core values and long-term vision

While these are not the only areas of focus for the TBID, they represent key priorities requiring significant attention as Visit San Luis Obispo works toward meaningful, measurable implementation in the year ahead.

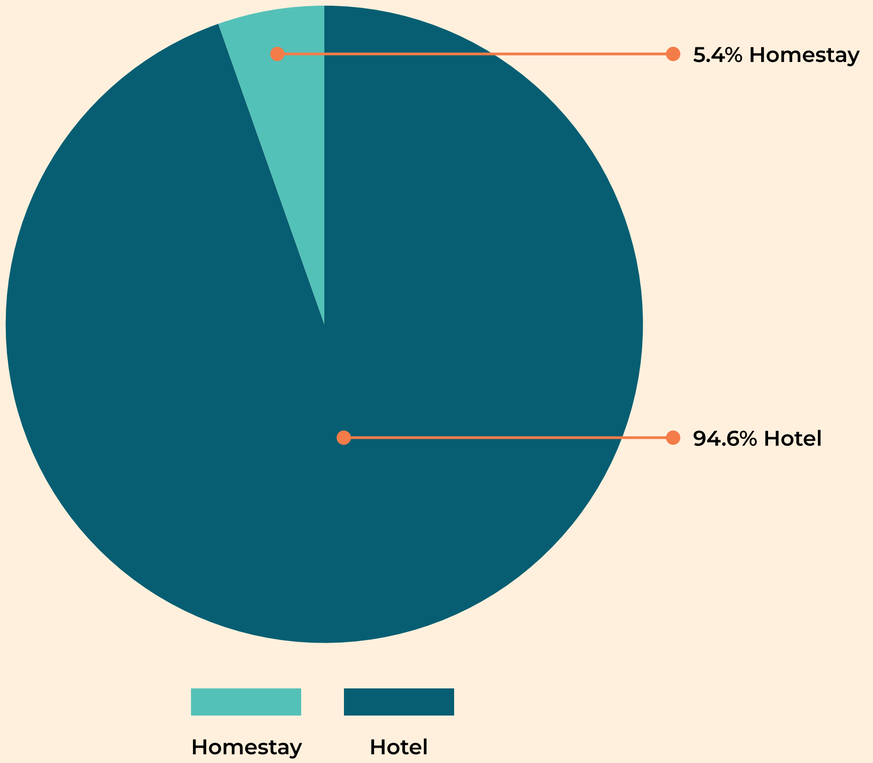
APPENDIX



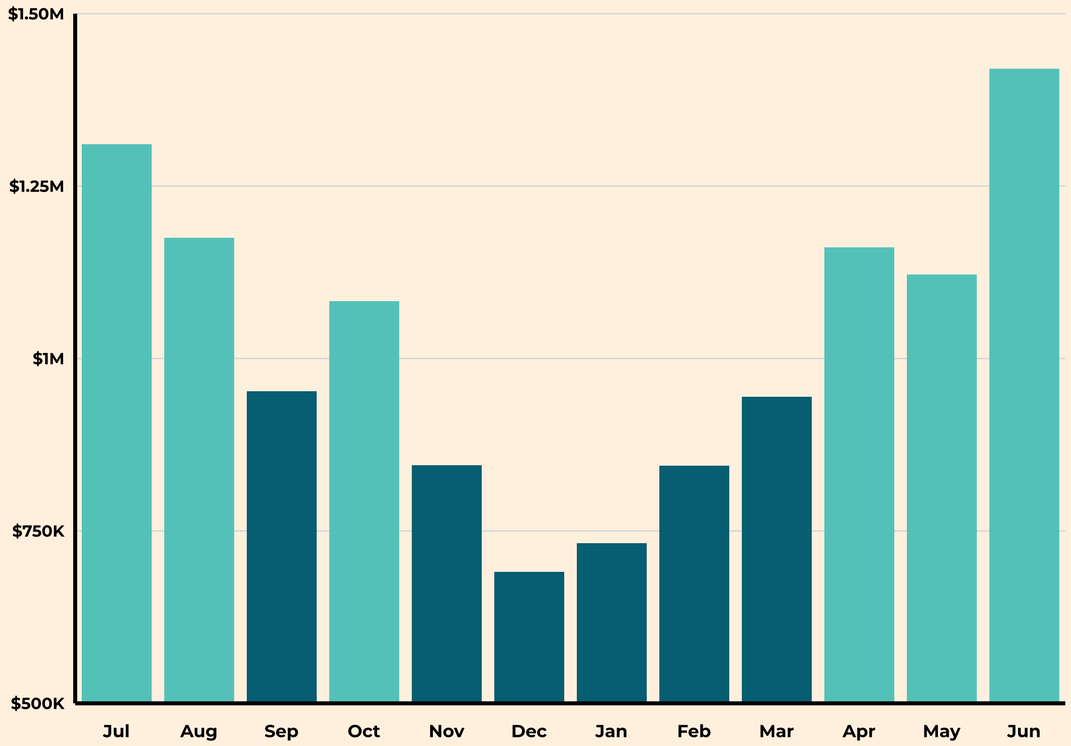
TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX FY 2015-16 TO FY 2025-26



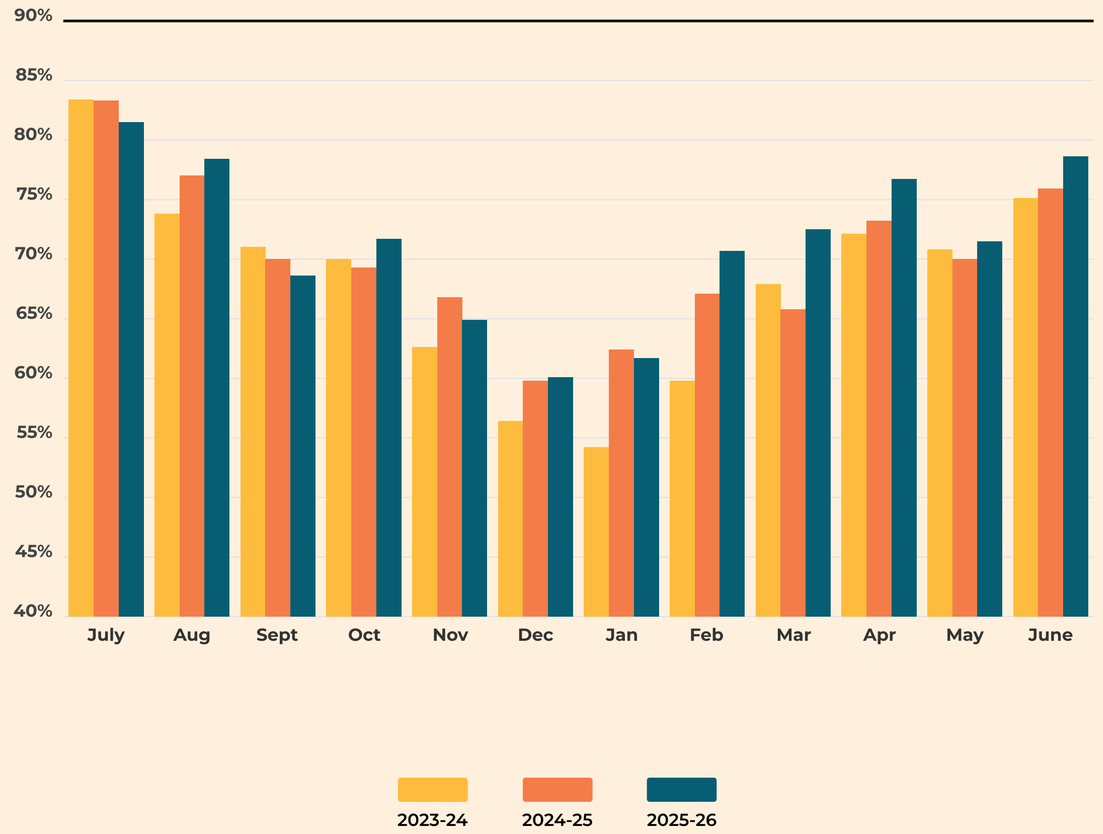
TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX DISTRIBUTION 2025-26



TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX MONTH TO MONTH



OCCUPANCY MONTH TO MONTH



AVERAGE DAILY RATE MONTH TO MONTH



REVENUE PER AVAILABLE ROOM MONTH TO MONTH



2025-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

NORTH STAR

VISION

A welcoming community with a vibrant economy that enriches the lives of visitors and residents alike.

MISSION

We share the abundance of SLO, driving the lodging economy and serving as the voice of our stakeholders.

VISION

We believe in:

- Service
- Leadership
- Adaptability
- Collaboration

POSITION

The SLO TBID stewards the brand of Visit San Luis Obispo and represents its lodging partners, driving overnight stays by:

- Telling the San Luis Obispo story via targeted marketing content and activities.
- Serving as a convener and subject matter expert for tourism conversations impacting the destination.
- Advancing strategic partnerships that extend the reach and influence of Visit San Luis Obispo.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS
ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE	• Maintain stakeholder sentiment of Visit San Luis Obispo performance. • Increased engagement and participation with Visit San Luis Obispo's Brand Book and promotional toolkits.
DELIVER SMART GROWTH	• Increase in resident sentiment. • Increase mid-week occupancy. • Increase length of stay.
BUILD MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS	• Create one net new signature brand partnership. • Partnerships balanced across identified key sectors.
ACTIVATE THE SLO LIFE	• Lift in brand sentiment against baseline. • Increase RevPAR. • Increase awareness of SLO as a sustainable destination.

STRATEGIC ACTION

STRATEGIES

- Grow organizational capacity.
- Invest in internal relationship building.
- Develop an innovation process.
- Communicate successes.
- Invest in stakeholder connections.

- Foster ongoing positive resident sentiment.
- Develop remote work messages as part of SLO Life.
- Advocate for conference center development.
- Partner with Visit California and Visit SLO CAL to bolster targeted segments of travel.

- Perform an audit of our partnership landscape.
- Develop partnerships to address key gaps.
- Develop an events strategy to complement Visit SLO CAL's approach.

- Further enhance the use of data to inform marketing programs.
- Maintain focus on social awareness & environmental responsibility.
- Maximize the evolution of the "Live the SLO Life" brand.
- Differentiate Visit San Luis Obispo while building off Visit SLO CAL's success.

Visit San Luis Obispo

Live the SLO Life

CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO