

Frequently Asked Questions: ARTS Obispo / SLOCOE Alliance

ARTS Obispo and the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education have forged a new alliance.

ARTS Obispo is the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council, a nonprofit agency founded in 1981. **The mission of ARTS Obispo is to advance the visual, literary, and performing arts in San Luis Obispo County through programs that promote local arts planning and collaboration; the arts in educational settings; public access to the arts; and opportunities for artists and arts and cultural organizations.** As the designated San Luis Obispo County partner of the California Arts Council (CAC), we are charged with expressing the goals of the CAC in response to our particular county's needs. Our countywide purpose in the arts is to:

- Promote public value of and participation
- Leverage public and private support
- Encourage and promote arts in education
- Foster local and regional partnership and collaboration
- Create, present, and preserve the arts of all cultures
- Promote inclusiveness and equity in the arts for all communities
- Encourage cultural development and preservation of diverse communities

The San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE) is a public education agency which **supports the educational needs of school districts throughout the county.** They provide legally-mandated services, advocate for education, as well as implement non-mandated programs for schools and districts countywide. SLOCOE works to build and maintain a responsive agency that meets the needs of the broader community by:

- Delivering high quality educational services for grades Pre-Kindergarten through Twelve
- Administering mandated programs and services
- Tracking relevant education data
- Advocating for local, state and federal educational issues
- Partnering with local agencies
- Providing advance training and academic licensure.

How is the alliance structured?

The alliance is structured such that both agencies continue as independent entities, each fulfilling its mission and providing its programs separately except where they have common interests. The alliance is NOT a merger, but a means to build the capacity of ARTS Obispo and leverage each organization's strengths.

What are the benefits of the new alliance?

Both ARTS Obispo and the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education have a mission in arts education. Each organization benefits from the new alliance through leveraging the strengths, expertise, and access that each brings to the alliance. ARTS Obispo has arts in education as part of its mission and arts education is also inherent in its mission to provide and promote life-long learning opportunities through its programs already operating in the county's schools and communities. ARTS Obispo brings to the alliance its arts education expertise and knowledge in state and national initiatives and policy, research, grant writing, and fostering the integration of the arts across the curriculum. Similarly, the County Office of Education brings access to all schools in the county and to populations served by SLOCOE, including migrant students, homeless and foster youth, and students enrolled in career and technical education pathway. Further, state-adopted curricula and standards integrate and mandate the visual and performing arts. The result is that both ARTS Obispo and the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education mutually benefit from the alliance as do the students and residents of the county.

What does this mean for ARTS Obispo?



A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on August 4, 2017 following joint strategic planning which began in early April. The alliance is *not* a legal merger. ARTS Obispo is a nonprofit agency. SLOCOE is a public agency. Each agency remains intact and operates in its own orb. However, where our interests are mutual, we will work together increasingly to build capacity to serve more of the public in communities and schools as well as arts and culture producers countywide.

SLOCOE Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Brescia and ARTS Obispo Board President Peggy Sonoda with executive director Angela Tahti at MOU signing, August 4, 2017.

How will current ARTS Obispo programs be affected?

Current successful ARTS Obispo programs and initiatives, such as Art After Dark, Open Studios Art Tour, Poetry Out Loud, SLO County Poet Laureate, the facilitation of public art projects, and serving as fiscal agent for arts-related projects, will continue as they are part of the mission of ARTS Obispo as the county arts council, receiving financial support from the California Arts Council as its county partner.

What is the timeline of doing this?

The transition which began with the MOU signing in August is underway. The details of the cooperation are unfolding from month to month as the board and staff meet and as ARTS Obispo and SLOCOE jointly apply for new grant resources.

What happens to the ARTS Obispo Board of Directors?

The Board of Directors continues guiding the mission of ARTS Obispo, the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council. As per the alliance MOU, the ARTS Obispo Board of Directors will be expanded over time from its current composition of nine members a maximum of 20 members with a an emphasis on countywide representation.

What happens to the ARTS Obispo Office on Mill Street in the city of San Luis Obispo?

The ARTS Obispo Office on Mill Street in the City of San Luis Obispo remains in operation in its current location on Mill Street.

What new programs are being planned?

The focus over the last many months has been on securing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ARTS Obispo and the County Office of Education. Both organizations would like to expand programs in arts education and in growing a cadre of teaching artists, given the increased capacity the alliance will afford ARTS Obispo and the arts education expertise it will afford SLOCOE; however, specific programs have not been discussed or determined.

What becomes of a donation I already made to ARTS Obispo?

All donations already made to ARTS Obispo are recorded to the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council, a 501(c)3 non-profit, operating separately from the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education, and benefit the public through ARTS Obispo services.

ARTS Obispo remains a membership-supported organization. Contributions of any size are welcome. Membership support begins at \$25 for students, \$50 for families, and \$60 for visual, literary, and performing artists. Contributions are deductible to the full extent of the law and make possible public programs such as Art After Dark, Open Studios Art Tour, Poetry Out Loud, the Poet Laureate program, and the countywide arts calendar and arts directory.

What if I want to make a donation to ARTS Obispo moving forward?

ARTS Obispo continues to be a non-profit 501(c)3 and all donations to ARTS Obispo, unless designated otherwise, become assets of the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council and are used to sustain public programs and services. Contributions to ARTS Obispo may be remitted by check to 1123 Mill Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401, or securely online via www.artsobispo.org by clicking on the Donate button.

What will happen to the ARTS Obispo's website and other communication channels?

ARTS Obispo's website www.artsobispo.org and other communication channels remain intact. Each may gain benefits, however, from the alliance through collaborative marketing. Further, the alliance amplifies ARTS Obispo by including relevant activities in SLOCOE's multiple communications.

How will decisions on programs and other ARTS Obispo activities be made?

Each program has evaluation built into it so that data drives annual program planning by the Board of Director and staff. Community input is also critical to this evaluation and planning process.

Suggestions for new programs and activities are first screened by the staff to determine such considerations as current existence of a similar the program or activity; if it would be better addressed by another organization so a referral by ARTS Obispo may be in order; what time and financial resources (grants or funding) would be appropriate; and/or whether ARTS Obispo could provide technical, marketing, or fiscal services. If the suggested program or activity meets the mission of ARTS Obispo and is not better addressed or being duplicated elsewhere, and so forth, then staff elevates it to the Board of Directors for consideration within the organization’s capacity.

If I have a great idea for an event or program, how do I get the support of ARTS Obispo?

ARTS Obispo may be able to provide fiscal or marketing services as well as other services as noted in the last response. The last response also details the procedure for seeking support: Begin at the staff level. If the program or event meets certain criteria as noted, then staff elevates it to the Board of Directors.

