



Paso Robles Conference Center Q&A

**Q: Why does Paso Robles need a conference Center?
Can our community sustain this capital project?**

A: The entire region of San Luis Obispo (SLO) County will benefit from the new facility. The 2017 demand study by Visit SLO CAL and the 2018 economic feasibility study both point to the current-day demand and economic sustainability this project brings to SLO County. Furthermore, a benefits analysis, currently underway ensures economic benefits specific to the region's lodging partners.

Q: When will the conference center be built?

A: A number of studies will continue throughout 2018 to fully evaluate the feasibility of a conference center. Once these milestones are confirmed viable and the project is fully formulated, construction bids are scheduled for early 2019 with an anticipated opening in early 2021.

Q: Who will pay for the conference center?

A: The task force – Paso Robles Event Center, Travel Paso and City of Paso Robles – vision is to form the ultimate public, private partnership. Bringing together a state agency, the city and the private sector is a unique collaboration for this type of project. The project must be financially sustainable. A financial advisor has been retained to work out the various revenue paths. The task force is committed to the partnership and meeting with other public and private entities interested in joining the legacy project.

Q: Who will operate the conference center?

A: A governance structure is being created to evaluate options and identify roles and responsibilities of the conference center operations. It is a key part of the critical milestones to be determined in 2018.

Q: Is the Paso Robles Event Center/fairgrounds the best place for a conference center?

A: The Event Center's central location with convenience off Highway 101 and Highway 46 along with its proven expertise in running large-scale events makes it the ideal location. Its ancillary facilities and ample parking are additional reasons for the Event Center location.

Q: Does a new conference facility require additional hotels?

A: Paso Robles has 1,447 total rooms. In addition, nearly 1,400 new rooms are entitled to be built in the next three to five years. Currently more than 700 hotel rooms are located within a half mile of the Paso Robles Event Center, which meets event planners preference to have ample inventory of accommodations within close proximity of the site.

Q: Why do we need more visitors? Isn't tourism at an all-time high?

A: The majority of Paso Robles visitors are leisure traveling Friday and Saturday during the summer months. Filling mid-week business: Sunday – Thursday specifically in the fall, winter and spring is a key growth opportunity for sustaining tourism and offering year-round employment. Increased mid-week business also supports ancillary businesses like restaurants, wineries, breweries, arts and culture, entertainment and activity companies.

Q: How does a conference center impact local business?

A: A conference center creates additional economic benefits turning business travelers into leisure visitors.

- Many conference attendees bring a spouse, who typically engages in travel experiences, shopping and dining outside the conference venue
- Combining business and leisure often leads to a longer length of stay in the market
- Conference attendees are more likely to return to the market for a leisure visit after becoming aware of the county assets
- Conference attendees also support ancillary businesses: restaurants, retail, attractions, florists, entertainers, etc.

Q: With all the hotels, wineries and exhibit halls it seems like we have adequate space to host groups ... can't we just work with the facilities we currently have?

A: According to study findings, the meeting space currently available in SLO County is not sufficient to host many professional meetings and events. Ballrooms are generally the most sought-after space in conference centers, due to their flexibility and ability to host plenary sessions. Ninety-five percent of responders indicated that a ballroom of 20,000 SQ FT satisfies their group business needs. Currently, of the 34 properties in the county that offer sellable meeting space and have on-site lodging the Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo offers the largest ballroom in the County. With 5,100 SQ FT Embassy's ballroom is considered a "junior size" space by the meetings industry. The proposed usable space includes – up to a 15,000 square foot ballroom, six meetings rooms, one board room, one pre-function space and catering facilities.

Q: With today's modern technology, isn't the need for conference space declining?

A: In short, no ... seventy-five percent of meeting planners report a growing importance of "experience creation," which means to collaborate and exchange ideas, which is in contrast to the conventional speaker-audience relationship. Leading industry publication, Smart Meetings, indicated networking among the top trends for meetings and events in 2017. As such, the most important meeting venue elements over the next five years:

- Access to interactive technology – 78%
- Flexible meeting space – 47%
- Networking spaces – 37%
- Comparatively less important factors include multiple options for food and beverage, access to local area experiences and availability of team-building activities

Q: Where can I find more information about the Paso Robles Conference Center?

A: Please check out <https://www.midstatefair.com/event-center/> for a full copy of the study. You will also find links to www.travelpaso.com and <http://www.prcity.com/>.