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# Unlocking Potential: Navigating Opportunities for Small Chambers

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**small** CHAMBERS. **BIG** OPPORTUNITIES.



Western Association  
of Chamber Executives

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# **Josh Cross**

## CEO Atascadero Chamber

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**Why Are We Here?**

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**Lynsey Hansen – Morro Bay Chamber**  
**Julie Matthews – Atascadero Chamber**  
**Jim Dantona – San Luis Obispo Chamber**





# Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce

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## Lynsey Hansen

Membership Director

- Morro Bay, CA
- Population - 11,228
- 310 Members

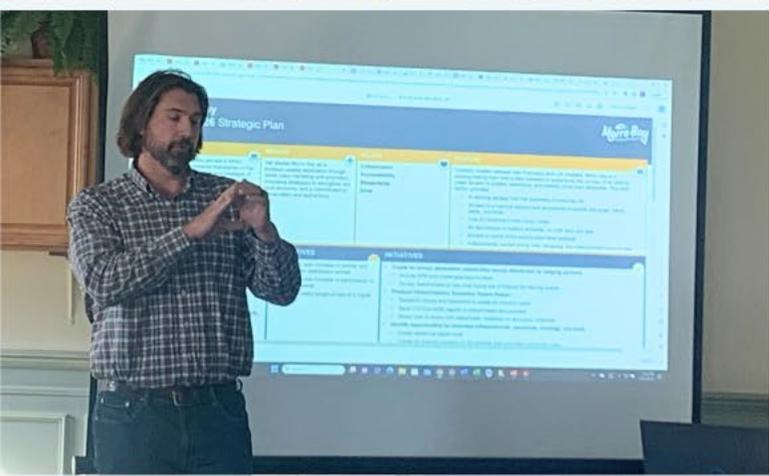
**small CHAMBERS. BIG OPPORTUNITIES.**



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**How do we know what our members need?**

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# **Listening Tour- What and Why**

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- **4 business districts = 4 Tour dates and Report Out Meetings**
- **Invite Members, Non-Members, City Leadership, and Elected Officials**
- **Supports City Contract, guides programming, identifies problems and solutions**
- **Connects City directly with local business owners**

# Listening Tour Report Out

## DOWNTOWN 6.8.22 AT PIZZA PORT

"Either decide you're going to be a business district, or not"

### NEW BUSINESSES

- Amber Waves, Out of the Dark, Monarch Spa opening
- Questions about Scout Coffee (maybe not until Summer 2023) and Engle & Associates (when?)

### RESTROOMS

- Impact on those who have public restrooms – increased water costs, extra cleaning supplies, staff time for cleaning
- No infrastructure to connect to it
- Quantify the cost of no restrooms.
- Link to homelessness issue (if installed – how to prevent sleeping in them – messy)

### TREES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Need banners/signage (cute/funky)
- Lighting in trees needs upkeep and repair
- Uneven sidewalks need grinders – trip hazard
- Trees trimmed or pulled and thinned. City manages 3000 street trees. Each tree is \$1-2000. Could there be a program created for business owners?
- Birds - sidewalk cleaning, public health issue. Can't discharge loud noises because of estuary.

### DISTRICT IDENTITY

- What do we want downtown to be?
- Parklets, public gathering place is missing in the downtown. City Park referred to as "needle alley"

## DOWNTOWN 6.7.23 AT PIZZA PORT

### RESTROOMS

- Impact on those who have public restrooms – increased water costs, extra cleaning supplies, staff time for cleaning
- people leave the district because they can't find a restroom. Moves them out of the area
- Bars/restaurants getting hit the hardest for restrooms

### TREES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Lighting in trees still needs upkeep and repair
- Nicely lit trees creates placemaking to keep people in town

### DISTRICT IDENTITY

- "Empty stuff doesn't help businesses thrive" – lots of vacant buildings – looks run-down, unappealing to tourists
- Locals not tourists are downtown
- Public opinion is Morro Bay shuts down at 7pm – everything closed, nowhere to eat/shop
- Not enough parking – re-paint spaces and do an assessment of spaces

### WORKFORCE HOUSING/STAFF

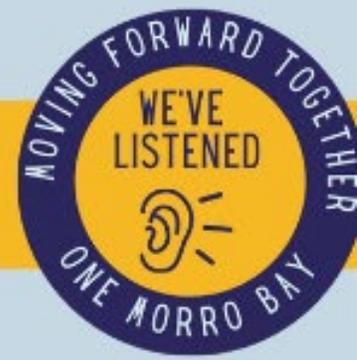
- Need new development that focus on our workforce
- Hard to find staff
- Homelessness impacts

LISTENING TOUR  
REPORT OUT & NEXT STEPS

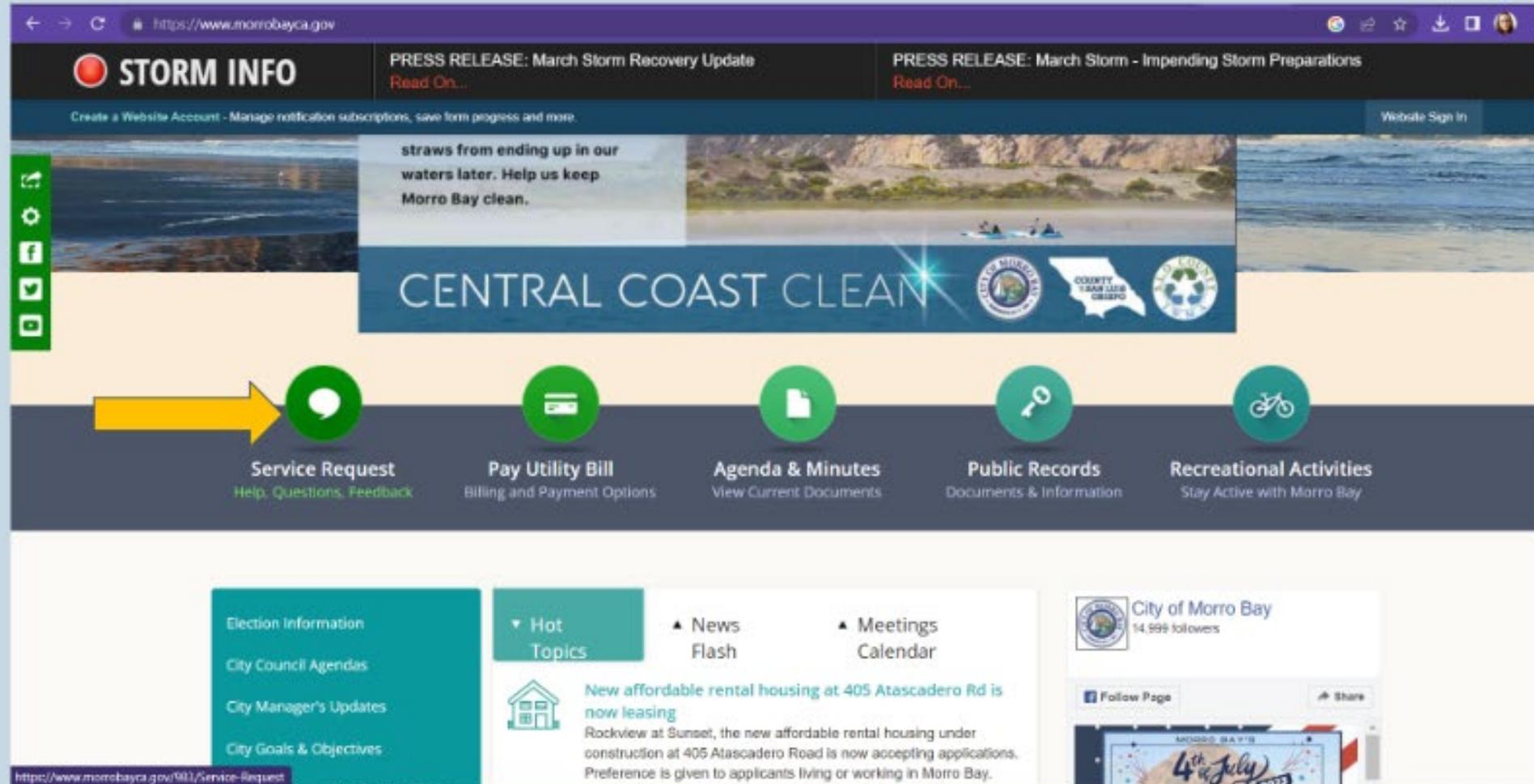


# Take Control - Service Requests

LISTENING TOUR  
REPORT OUT & NEXT STEPS



**Put a request in!**  
Give a couple weeks - trees, bird guano, lights, sidewalk disrepair.



# Results



- Helped guide Chamber programming
- Shared resources and tools with business owners
- Brought problems to light that were not seen prior
- Helped guide City improvement projects

# Squeaky Wheel Roundtable

*Help chart the course*



You are invited to engage in round-robin table discussions on issues of importance to the business community.

You will also get a chance to rate priorities for Chamber advocacy

Register at [morrochamber.org/events](https://morrochamber.org/events)



**February 8, 2023, 5:30-7:30 pm**  
**Inn at Morro Bay, Morro Bay Room**  
**60 State Park Rd**



# Squeaky Wheel

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- **Round Robin table discussions**
- **City Department Heads**
  - **Public Works**
  - **Community Development**
  - **City Administration**
  - **Police**
  - **Fire**
  - **Harbor**
- **Voting exercise to rate priorities for Chamber advocacy during City Council goal setting**



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# Questions?

[lynsey@morrochamber.org](mailto:lynsey@morrochamber.org)

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# Atascadero Chamber of Commerce

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- Julie Matthews, VP of Membership
- [julie@atascaderochamber.org](mailto:julie@atascaderochamber.org)
- City Population: 30,000
- 800 Members



**Atascadero**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**small CHAMBERS. BIG OPPORTUNITIES.**

# **small** CHAMBERS. **BIG** OPPORTUNITIES.

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**THREE PROGRAMS  
THAT HAVE A RIPPLE  
EFFECT CAUSING  
IMPACT!**



**Jr. CEO**  
ATASCADERO

**ENROLL NOW!**

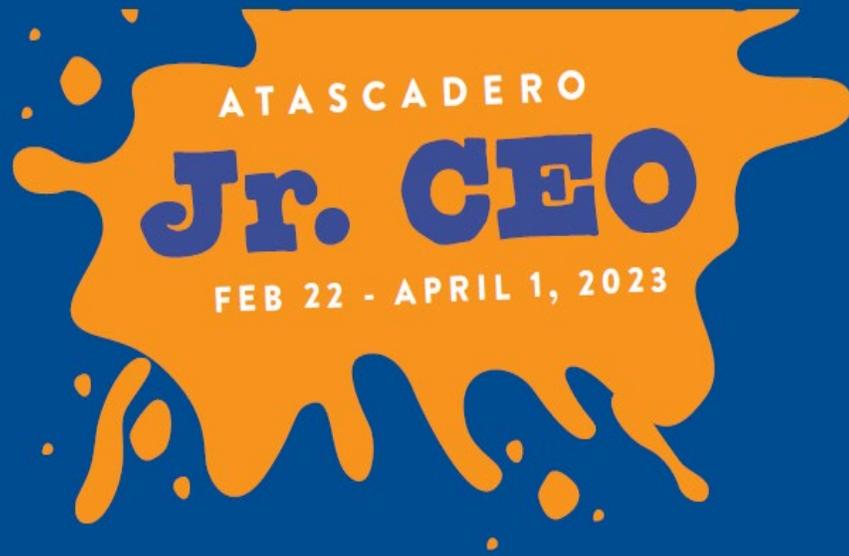
LEARN  
HOW TO  
START AND  
RUN A  
BUSINESS

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**Educating Tomorrow's **Future** Entrepreneurs**

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## ATASCADERO JR. CEO PROGRAM

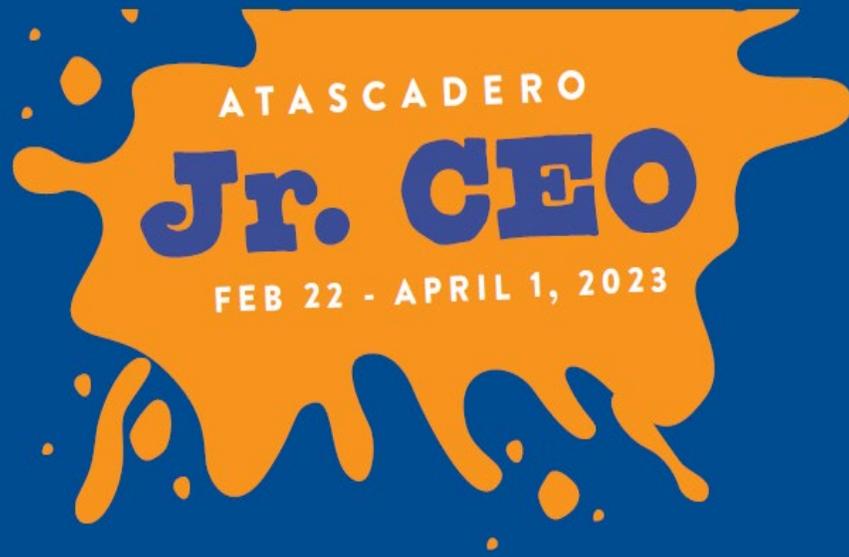


## Jr. CEO Program

- Ages 6-16+
- 6-week virtual program
  - Business fundamentals
  - Cost models
  - Safety
  - Food preparation
  - Marketing
  - Banking Basics

*\*Program developed by the  
Visalia Chamber of Commerce*

## ATASCADERO JR. CEO PROGRAM



## Jr. CEO Program

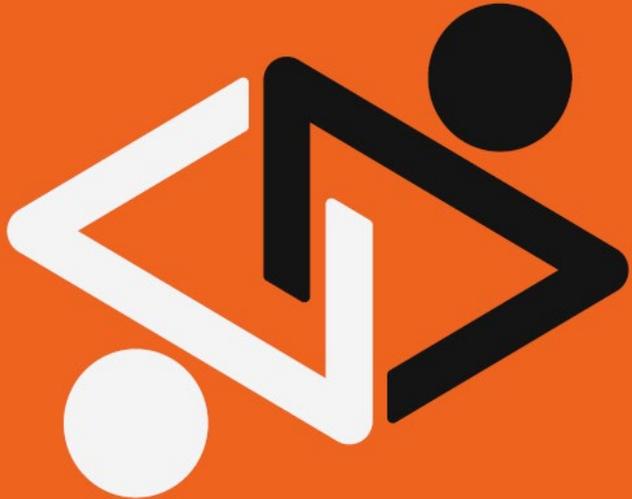
- CEO's must visit City Hall for a business license.
- At the end of the course, students sell their goods and services at "Jr. CEO Business Day."
- This creates a real-life experience for kids to make money.
- Sponsors love this program.



# Jr. CEO Program

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- **Community leaders** taught classes and **participated** in “Business Day.”
- **Empowered students** to be public speakers at the Annual Awards Dinner and Gala.
- The **Chamber** became a **Champion** for community
- The **Chamber** organization **created value** with this program.



**GET YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE**

## **Your Website is your Strongest Marketing Tool**

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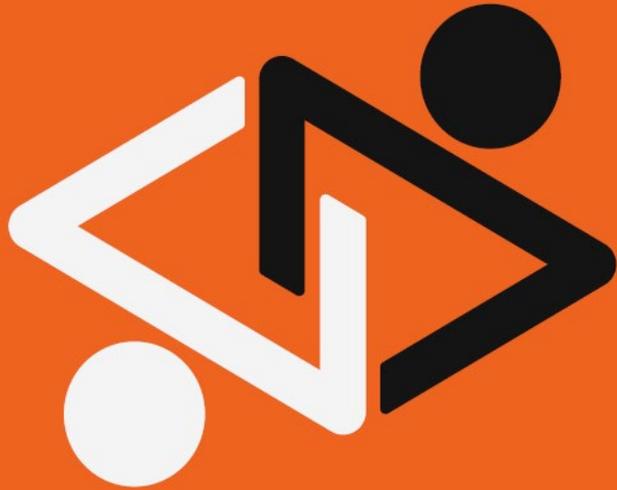
Grant funding provided us the opportunity to fill a marketing gap in our business community.

**Identify** the Problem.  
**Fill** the Need.

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***“Chambers are in the SOLUTIONS business”***  
***Dave Kilby***

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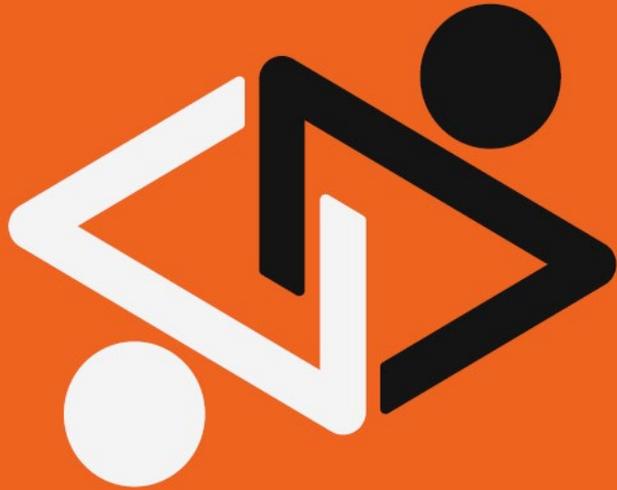
**GET YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE**

## **Your Website is your Strongest Marketing Tool**

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### **Benefits:**

- Employed a “Get Your Business Online” program manager.
- Assisted over 85 businesses in the past year with online presence and digital literacy.
- Helped serve the Hispanic business community with understanding and trust of our services.
- The Chamber organization created value.



**GET YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE**

## Keep it Simple

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### **Website:**

- About
- Services
- Menu/Products
- Contact
- Hours of Operation

### **Scope:**

- 8 hours of design services
- 2 hours of meetings
- 2 hours of digital literacy
  
- *Services not available for nonprofits*



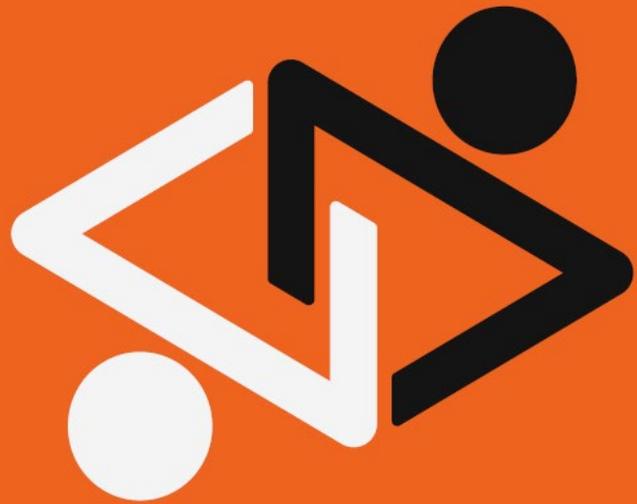
**GET YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE**

## Keep it **Simple**

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### **Client Responsibilities:**

- Attend website maintenance meeting(s)
- Purchase domain
- Purchase hosting
- Attend digital literacy training



**GET YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE**

## How To . . .

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### Steps to Implement Program

1. Seek Grant Funding – program is ripe for grants!
2. Be inclusive and competitive. Allow this program to serve surrounding communities.
3. Hire a program manager
4. Develop registration materials
5. Market services
6. Launch!



# Workforce Development

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## Benefits

- Employed a “Workforce Development” program manager.
- A constant resource with grant funding and hiring support.
- Solutions for businesses in our region.



**Atascadero**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



# How To . . .

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## **Implement this program with 3 Steps:**

1. Build relationships with the Workforce Development Board
2. Use SLO County model to identify funding using Workforce Foundation Opportunity Act (WIOA)
3. Deploy Program

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# Questions?

[julie@atascaderochamber.org](mailto:julie@atascaderochamber.org)

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# San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce

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## Jim Dantona

President & CEO

- San Luis Obispo, CA
- Population – 50,000
- 1,200 Members



**small CHAMBERS. BIG OPPORTUNITIES.**

# Family Friendly Workplace

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**San Luis Obispo County  
Family-Friendly Workplaces**

- Limited childcare resources
- Partnership between First 5 SLO County – County of SLO - Chamber
- Free consultation
- Awards

[www.slofamilyfriendlywork.org](http://www.slofamilyfriendlywork.org)

# S.O.A.R.

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## SOAR

SLO ONBOARDING ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

[www.slochamber.org/soar](http://www.slochamber.org/soar)

- Talent from out of the area
- Difficulty finding a connection
- Dedicated “conciierge”
- Better employee retention
- New talent resource

# Cracking the Government Code

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- Build a pipeline of engaged business leaders
- Barriers to entry
- Nuts & bolts of government
- Panels: Government staff, elected officials and advocates

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# Questions?

[jim@slochamber.org](mailto:jim@slochamber.org)

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