Study Objective

Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. (RTM) of Mooresville, North Carolina was hired to conduct a comprehensive travel and tourism research and strategic planning study to develop recommendations for regional tourism marketing involving 11 Virginia jurisdictions including:

- Charles City County
- Chesterfield County
- City of Colonial Heights
- Dinwiddie County
- City of Emporia
- Greensville County
- City of Hopewell
- City of Petersburg
- Prince George County
- Surry County
- Sussex County

This study was conducted during the time period of January through June of 2005.

Statement of Methodologies

1. Inventory of current tourism products by jurisdiction:

- RTM, with input from each jurisdiction, developed an inventory documenting all tourism-related products by jurisdiction. This included lodging, attractions, dining, retail, and tourism services. This list was sent to each jurisdiction for approval.

2. Reconnaissance and mystery shopping:

- RTM conducted a comprehensive mystery shopping study including site evaluations, gateways, airports, state welcome centers, signage and wayfinding, front-line training, typical visitor experiences at attractions, lodging, etc. for each jurisdiction.

3. Lodging property survey:

- A survey was sent to every lodging property in the 11 jurisdictions to determine market mix (percentage of total lodging booked for business, convention, group, leisure, etc.), monthly occupancy, top feeder markets, and average daily rates (ADR).
- Response rates varied by jurisdiction. RTM is satisfied that the final results are reliable as a basis for our recommendations.
- This data has been compiled by jurisdiction to allow for comparisons.
- RTM also obtained Smith Travel Research STAR Report data for each jurisdiction (as was available).
- A written report was prepared with analysis of the comparative data.

4. Community leader interviews:

- A minimum of five (5) executive interviews were conducted with tourism industry and community leaders in each jurisdiction that supplied contact information.
- A total of 55 formal interviews are documented in this report.
- An analysis of their responses is included in the final report.

5. In-depth analysis of current status of tourism in each jurisdiction:

- An outline was prepared to cover the information listed below.
- Follow-up meetings were held with each jurisdiction to review and modify the findings once initial data was collected and compiled into an analytical report.
- After final development, each jurisdiction report was sent to local contacts for approval.
- This document outlines for each jurisdiction:
    - Growth of tourism revenues over the past 5 years
    - Growth of tourism infrastructure over the past 5 years
    - Agencies or entities tasked with tourism marketing responsibility
    - Listing of tourism occupancy tax, meals tax, and sales tax related to tourism for the past 5 years
    - Allocation of funding for tourism promotion
    - Brief outline of current tourism marketing activities
    - Listing of primary tourism products

6. Evaluation, by jurisdiction, of current tourism marketing efforts and materials:

- RTM analyzed and outlined, for each jurisdiction, the following:
    - Tourism strengths and weaknesses
    - Markets and audiences served
    - Existing marketing tools
    - The jurisdiction's anticipated role in a regional tourism group
    - Initial strategies for each jurisdiction

7. A comprehensive final report with strategic marketing plan was developed based on research results. This report includes:

- Executive Summary
- Study Objectives and Methodologies
- Project Team
- Jurisdictional Reports
    - Current Status of Tourism
    - Community Leader Interviews Findings and Analysis
    - Lodging Survey Findings and Analysis
    - Tourism Marketing Assessments
    - Reconnaissance and Mystery Shopping
    - Product Inventory
- Recommendations and Strategies
    - Marketing Objectives
    - Targeted Audiences
    - Organizational Recommendations
    - Funding Recommendations
    - Marketing Recommendations

DELIVERABLES:

- Two (2) comprehensive final report notebooks with all jurisdiction sections.
- Eleven (11) jurisdictional final report notebooks including a regional summary and all data specific to the individual jurisdiction.

Study Findings

Tourism Product Inventory Report
RTM documented for each jurisdiction a complete inventory of attractions, lodging, unique dining, and unique shopping, as well as sources of visitor information. While there are significant major "attractors" for the area, the number of attractions is fairly limited overall, with most clustered in the "Tri-Cities" area anchored by Petersburg. Also, desired lodging and other amenities are not necessarily found in the same jurisdiction where the major attractions are located. No one jurisdiction has enough quality and quantity of lodging, attractions, dining and shopping to stand on its own. A combination of the jurisdictions is required to achieve the necessary balance of attractions and amenities.

Reconnaissance and Mystery Shopping Report
The RTM team visited all eleven jurisdictions on multiple occasions over a three-month period to document a typical visitor experience. Reconnaissance helps the research team become very familiar with the product mix and customer service in the area so that strategies are based on more than an academic knowledge of the tourism inventory and statistical trends. Overall, the team found that there is a great need for visitor orientation and facilitation upon arrival in the area. There is little information available that "connects the dots" among all attractions, lodging, dining, shopping, etc. Overall, there is little "sense of place" for the region. The result is that the visitor typically finds that this region has a few major attractions, and then a scattering of amenities, with nothing that creates an overall image. It is difficult to find one's way around the region. Also, all attractions are listed and promoted equally, which can cause great visitor frustration when attractions are not open as expected, or interpretation is weak. The region is very fortunate to have major interstates and feeder routes delivering a consistent volume of potential visitors. Thus, RTM finds that there is a substantial volume of potential visitors, and what is missing is the "packaging" of the existing products and strategic development of additional products that will allow for greater visitor satisfaction and spending.

Lodging Survey and Smith Travel Research Lodging Data
Every lodging property in each of the eleven (11) jurisdictions was contacted by email, fax, and/or telephone to obtain information regarding the type of visitors occupying lodging rooms in the region. Survey response was received from varying percentages for each jurisdiction. Additionally, RTM purchased statistical data collected in each jurisdiction by Smith Travel Research (STR). STR is the leading provider of lodging industry statistical data in the United States with all data provided by individual lodging properties. A review of the findings in this research segment revealed that most lodging properties rely heavily on individual business travelers, interstate transient travelers, or government lodging-generators such as Fort Lee. Additionally, smaller percentages of meeting, sports and leisure segments put heads in beds. It is clear for the most part the lodging properties do not consistently work together, nor do they partner with the jurisdiction destination marketing agencies for tourism growth. Occupancy, ADR (average daily rate), and RevPar (revenue per available room) statistics are reasonable but indicate the need for greater occupancy. Thus, there should be interest on the part of lodging properties in a regional marketing effort. The lodging properties in Northern Chesterfield County (Richmond suburbs) have little in common statistically with the remainder of the Crater Planning District lodging properties.

Community Leader Executive Interviews
RTM conducted over 55 interviews with community leaders throughout the region. These interviews revealed that overall, the community leaders want more focused and aggressive tourism marketing. They understand the value of tourism's economic impact and it is a relatively high agenda item for the jurisdictions that are recommended for the regional agency. In RTM's analysis, community leaders are well aware of the tourism strengths and weaknesses of the region, there is great consensus as to what specific jurisdictions should be included in a regional program, and there is clear understanding of what results are needed. There are some differing opinions on how to strategically accomplish these results. RTM anticipates that the strategies recommended in this report will satisfy the majority of these community leaders by addressing the concerns and desires they expressed in their interviews.

In-depth Analysis of Current Status of Tourism in Each Jurisdiction
RTM conducted an in-depth analysis of the current state of tourism in each jurisdiction. This process included:

- **Documentation of existence of tourism marketing agencies, and staffing and budget allocations for each**
- **Total taxes (occupancy, sales, meals) collected from visitors in each jurisdiction**
- **Documentation of stated tourism objectives for each jurisdiction**
- **Evaluation of current tourism marketing efforts and materials for each jurisdiction**
- **Strengths and weaknesses of tourism marketing and development in each jurisdiction**
- **Marketing assessment for each jurisdiction**

Overall, RTM learned in this process that the jurisdictions appreciate tourism and recognize its potential in the region. Most of the jurisdictions have very informal marketing programs with a few having more detailed marketing programs in place. While the jurisdictions know they have potential, strategies are not in place that will drive those potentials by partnering across jurisdiction boundaries to provide the visitor with a complete travel experience. Most jurisdiction representatives are interested in regional tourism marketing and development and are enthusiastic about anticipated results.

Strategic Direction

Randall Travel Marketing (RTM) made detailed, specific recommendations in this report for each of the eleven (11) jurisdictions who helped fund this study. This deliverable ensured that each participating jurisdiction received value from the study. At the conclusion of the study, each jurisdiction received a written report tailored exclusively for them containing the following sections:

- Current Status of Tourism, Marketing Assessment and Recommendations
- Report on Community Leader Executive Interviews
- Lodging Survey and Analysis
- Reconnaissance and Mystery Shopping Report
- Comprehensive Product Inventory Report

The definition of tourism is "***putting visitors in front of cash registers."*** The Crater District has an excellent opportunity to increase the revenues and resulting economic impact generated by tourism, while not overburdening its existing infrastructure. RTM recommends the following strategies to achieve this balanced growth:

1. Recommendation for Regional Tourism Partnerships

Randall Travel Marketing (RTM) investigated the eleven (11) jurisdictions in the State of Virginia that comprise this study group. The jurisdictions in this region have common heritage and history yet there are significant distinctions between each jurisdiction and between groupings of the jurisdictions. One of the primary purposes of this study was to examine these jurisdictions to determine which ones would make appropriate marketing partners and would most likely create a successful tourism marketing partnership. RTM's recommendations follow:

Jurisdictions recommended as partners for Crater District regional tourism marketing:

- Chesterfield (southern area)
- Colonial Heights
- Dinwiddie County
- Hopewell
- Petersburg
- Prince George County

The primary reasons these jurisdictions are a match for marketing partnership include:

- Relatively close proximity to each other resulting in good "touring scale" that is manageable by the visitor. This region is logical geographically.
- Complimentary attractions and amenities. Some jurisdictions within this group have more attractions, while others have more amenities, but together they achieve a good balance and create a total destination.
- Similar and complementing histories and "sense of place."
- Multiple matching historic patterns, particularly with the Civil War. Working together these jurisdictions can tell an awesome story of the development of the United States from pre-Colonial to present day.
- Transportation linkages: Rivers, railroads, highways, etc. since Colonial times have established this region as one of the original inter-modal transportation hubs in the United States.

Thus, marketing these areas together makes sense geographically, they achieve a good balance of tourism products, and their natural historic partnership and transportation linkages make this collection of jurisdictions the most similar as a marketing group.

1. (Continued)

Jurisdictions that would be better served partnering with Williamsburg:

- Surry County
- Sussex County**

These two counties have much in common with each other as well as with the Colonial heritage of Williamsburg. RTM's reasons for this recommendation include:

- Plantations and agriculture are one of the primary features of both these counties. These are more of a match for the Tidewater and James River areas.
- The English and Colonial rural heritage in these two counties make them similar to each other, but dissimilar to the other jurisdictions that are more urbanized and heavily linked to the Civil War.
- Many of the visitors to Surry and Sussex Counties are overnighting in Williamsburg. This is where most of these visitors learn about the plantations, restaurants, peanut outlets, etc. Thus, partnering with Williamsburg is already proving successful.
- RTM encourages these two jurisdictions to partner with Williamsburg and other similar destinations to establish awareness for the James River Plantations and the peanut heritage as well as other agrarian heritages.
- While it is possible that these two counties may participate in various co-marketing initiatives with the larger region, overall they should not be considered an integral part of the Crater District.
- **Sussex County also has an opportunity to partner with Emporia and Greensville as is outlined below.

Jurisdictions that would be better served marketing together aside from the Crater District:

- Emporia
- Greensville County
- Sussex**

These jurisdictions form the southern border for the Crater Planning District. RTM's analysis includes:

- These jurisdictions are approximately one hour away from any other commercially developed areas. This distance forms a geographic barrier that will frustrate travelers. If an area had exceptional scenery this distance might be accommodated, but as it is RTM sees it as problematic for regional promotion.
- These jurisdictions are better served by working closely together to capitalize on transient traffic generated by Interstate 95 and U.S. Highway 58. Improved signage, billboard and travel advertising will drive visitors to the growing volume of cash registers in these jurisdictions as opposed to marketing programs that the Crater District should consider.
- Further, RTM recommends that these jurisdictions consider working together to establish an identity as the southern gateway into Virginia's "peanut country". The Emporia area should consider erecting a bold and memorable peanut shaped water tower to create a sense of place and get people off the interstate and in front of local cash registers.

1. (Continued)

- **Note that RTM is recommending that Sussex County consider marketing with both this area and the Tidewater area. Sussex County's best tourism potentials are guided agricultural and farm tours, and outdoor recreation. This makes it a potential partner for more than one marketing group.

Jurisdictions that need to market tourism with others:

- Charles City County

This jurisdiction is somewhat similar to Surry and Sussex Counties in that it has a rural setting and plantation attractions. However, its location on the north side of the James River makes for transportation issues with one bridge and ferry connecting it to the rest of the Crater Planning District. RTM recommends that Charles City County form marketing partnerships with others such as Williamsburg, this area matches as a plantation destination; or Richmond, this area complements the urban Richmond environment by offering a tranquil rural setting with plantations and quiet scenic beauty.

2. Recommended Name of the Primary Marketing region:

Petersburg Area

Where the Appomattox and the James Rivers meet to form the best of American history

In the Petersburg Area you'll find an amazing story of American history. From ancient times to the modern era this is the story of rivers, roads and railroads, Pre-Colonial heritage, Revolutionary War, Native Americans, Civil War, Spanish conquerors, WWII, agriculture and farms, the famous Virginia peanuts and more. Come see where American history happened!

We must "connect the dots" and tell the overall story. This turns the entire region into one well-interpreted story and destination. Currently, it is too disjointed. One must treasure hunt without an effective map or guidebook to find the entire story in the region. No materials currently available explain what the agricultural heritage has to do with the Civil War. Or, what the Spanish have to do with the Revolutionary War. This is a great story waiting to be told.

3. Funding for the regional initiative

RTM recommends that funding for this initiative include the following sources:

- **ISTEA – Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act funds:** The heritage of rivers, roads and railroads, as well as the multi-jurisdictional approach to telling that story makes this source of funds a good potential.
- **State of Virginia Regional Tourism grants:** This is a newly told story of American history which will lure people to Virginia. The State of Virginia would be a viable source of grant funds for this program.
- **Cameron Foundation:** This foundation can provide support funds for this program that develops the entire region.

Crater Planning District Commission

range of placements. This will earn quick initial awareness and help PART analyze which placements provide the greatest response.

19. Advertising planning and placement

PART will need to establish an initial placement plan based on budget allocation, and following the placement rank order identified below. It would be advisable to have the Virginia Tourism Corporation review the placement plan to obtain any benefit from their experience as well. PART will need to plan future annual advertising investments based on research, objectives, and previous year evaluations and conversion rates. Potential placements need to be analyzed against cost-per-inquiry documentation by PART. Based on RTM's experience in research for similar destinations, the following advertising placements are recommended:

- **VTC tourism website**
- **VTC State Travel Guide**
- **Southern Living**
- **AAA Book of Values**
- **AAA Go magazine**
- **Reader's Digest**
- **Women's Day**
- **Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel**
- **Williamsburg Visitor Guide**
- **Civil War publications**
- **Pull out special advertising sections in the Interstate 95 and 85 Corridors**

20. Pay as you play advertising campaigns

RTM does not recommended that PART be a membership program. However, RTM does recommend "pay as you play" cooperative advertising campaigns. These allow for marketing partners to invest in specific advertisement placements and tools that will benefit those that participate. This might include niche markets such as birding, or antique trails, craft trails, cycling, etc.

In this type of program, PART would identify which promotions would be desirable and then enroll participants to pay for the design and placement of media. This way the project benefit goes to those who pay for the effort.

21. Billboards

With the Petersburg Area's location including Interstates 85 and 95 and other major routes, billboards deserve consideration. PART must remember that these major routes are "rivers of money" that are continuously flowing through the region. What is needed is some way of luring travelers off of these routes and into attractions and cash register locations.

Billboards can be a very valuable component of the overall marketing program for PART. RTM recommends that PART investigate available billboard locations along the ingress routes into the region.

Billboards work well to:

- Create name awareness for the region
- Provide directions to specific amenities such as visitor centers, major attractions, etc.

RTM advises PART to consider billboards for establishing name awareness for the region. RTM recommends utilizing a "pay as you play" process for marketing of specific businesses and attractions.

22. Inquiry and fulfillment procedures and e-blasts

PART will need to establish fulfillment procedures as well as protocol for tracking of inquiries. Inquiry data will be very useful for future marketing efforts. The key goals to be addressed in fulfillment are:

- Outsource fulfillment to allow for speed and efficiency in processing if the workload becomes too much to process inquiries speedily;
- Efficient cost of the fulfillment package including printing, labor and postage.
- Speed of fulfillment (potential visitors want it in five days or less).
- Contents of the package; ideally it includes additional information at the inquirers request. Custom tailored packages are hot!
- Make a distinction between "leads" and "inquiries." Leads are contacts who have inquired about a broader area than the Petersburg Area, such as those who request a Virginia State Visitor Guide, but have not specifically asked for information on the Petersburg Area. Inquiries are those who have specifically asked for information on the Petersburg Area. These are what PART is most interested in capturing and analyzing for future marketing efforts.
- Be absolutely sure to include a source code on all inquiries places into the database. This indicates which media placement produced the inquiry.

22. (Continued)

- All bulk inquiries (magazine, newspaper, etc.) must be received in electronic format (disc or email) and be processed within three days of receipt.
- All inquiries from various sources must be merged into one master database and maintained permanently. Trends must be tracked from these records so they will never be purged or destroyed.
- The most important data to record regarding inquiries includes:
    - Source of inquiry
    - Point of origin for inquiry (where they live)
    - Month and date
    - A code that identifies which ad/media produced the inquiry
- Develop email address data mine for future marketing.

23. Public relations efforts

Public relations efforts are among the most powerful, affordable tourism marketing tools. This should be considered one of the most critical marketing elements for PART. RTM has found the most effective public relations programs for destinations are supervised and driven by a destination marketing organization (such as PART) staffer who knows the destination intimately and can effectively place stories with contacts within the travel media. Thus, RTM recommends this be handled in-house as opposed to outsourcing. However, PART might want to utilize the services of a PR consultant to help with initial focus of the program, creating FAM tours, and obtaining story placement with travel writers. For the public relations effort, RTM recommends:

- Press kit with same image as other materials that can be filed easily in a hanging file folder. Limit brochures and inserts to avoid overloading the travel writer. Include story ideas with a brief paragraph on each unique angle. Reference website for information and photos on demand.
- PART must host regular FAM tours for travel writers focusing on the positioning theme. A public relations consultant can assist with this.
- In-house maintenance of media/press page on the website.
- In-house preparation of annual PR plan based on specific objectives, strategies and tactics to attract new visitors to the area.
- In-house annual “return-on-investment” study for public relations efforts that accurately tracks coverage earned and its corresponding value in advertising placement.

24. Group tour, meetings and event planner's guides

Planners of all types of events tell us in repeated studies they only want information for their type of event. Comprehensive four-color publications are out. Group tour planners do not want a meeting guide filled with data on meeting facilities. In essence, the contents are produced at desktop with covers that are tailored to the specific market or client, creating a tailor made piece for the Group Tour, Sports Planner, Reunion Planner, Wedding Planner, Meeting Planner, etc.

Content considerations for these guides include:

- Design a folder that is easy to file in a hanging file folder.
- Avoid boilerplate "Welcome" pages and other filler information.
- Design the cover to print the client's name on it and let the client know you have compiled it just for them…customize!
- Include a table of contents if there are multiple sections.
- Keep it lean and factual. Avoid filling it up with stuff. Big is bad!
- Include only the information directly relating to the needs of the planner.
- A basic handout format (list of contents) can be developed for distribution at meeting planner association trade shows.
- Use the visitor guide and padded map for general information.
- A chart-style listing for lodging and facilities specific to the type of event is good and allows the planner to efficiently determine which options work best. Again, show proximity to the event facility for each lodging and dining property.
- Including the listing of Group Tour, Meetings, and Event support services is important in this economy. This clearly positions PART as a full-service organization that is ready and willing to do everything possible to serve the planner.
- Meetings - Do not forget to add a list of potential local speakers and their topics, as this can make having a meeting in the Petersburg Area more cost effective. Local colleges are sure to have a host of good speakers on a wide range of topics.
- Include a pocket in the back where additional information can be provided (i.e. PART Visitor Guide).

25. Marketing partnerships with Petersburg AreaMiddle Tennessee State University tourism businesses

RTM recommends that PART hold regular meetings with marketing partners to address specific marketing and sales opportunities cooperatively. RTM recommends:

- Hold regular meetings with attractions, lodging, and overall marketing partners.
- This is NOT intended to be a "Marketing Committee" where participants tell PART where and how to advertise.
- Every PART initiative will NOT benefit every tourism business.
- Discuss what marketing initiatives are planned and results from previous efforts.
- Solicit data from each participant as to what they have done and how it has worked. This allows PART and its marketing partners to benchmark with each other to find the most effective methods of marketing.
- Brainstorm potential test marketing projects.
- Brainstorm cooperative marketing projects (pay as you play)
- Make regular on-site calls to local lodging properties to determine their marketing successes, find out what they need, share leads and update them on PART program of work.
- Be a leader in distributing research findings and creative strategies to empower progress for constituents.
- Be a leader in promoting "packaging" co-op opportunities for these groups.

26. Website and technology strategy

Nationally, travel research reflects continuing dramatic growth in Internet use for planning. One can be certain that potential travelers to the Petersburg Area will become increasingly reliant on the Internet for travel planning. The website is where you MUST become a "cruise ship on land" and make travel planning effortless for the reader. RTM recommends that a website be designed in a format similar to the recommended visitor guide and it should provide navigation that will make it easy for the travel planner to find the activities that will compel visitation. Specific recommendations include:

- A staff person must be assigned to the website, technology and e-marketing program to focus on the maintenance and smooth function of the website and resulting email marketing. PART must make e-marketing a number one priority and thus dedicate a staffer to this effort and overall research.
- The website imagery will have to be designed to match the new marketing materials.
- The home page should feature the primary positioning and emotional connection.

- Site needs “WOW” photography and bullet points, avoid lengthy narrative. Planners are impatient.

26. (Continued)

- Maps need to be interactive and easy to print.
- The navigation bar needs large buttons that are easy to read and click. Build the navigation bar around what to do, where to stay, where to eat, group tour, media, meetings/events and request information.
- “Request Information” needs to be easily visible on every page of the site. Information request should collect traveler profile and demographic data.
- Meeting planning page must have complete planning information. There must be an option to request additional information.
- Small fonts are hard to read by travel planners over 40, many of whom require reading glasses.
- Lodging and attractions information needs to be detailed. Again, a grid format is preferred by the customer. Local businesses should co-op with PART to receive an access code to be able to update their rates, hours of operation and other information on the site.
- An events page should feature unique local events packages with lodging.
- Shopping is one of the top activities mentioned by visitors in the research and it is possible for the website to increase shopping expenditures. Do a good job of selling the unique items that can be bought at the shops.
- Avoid listing dining options like a phone book in alphabetical order. Potential travelers to the Petersburg Area want to know what great dining is available. Feature the unique local fare and provide a comprehensive listing of all dining that can be sorted by type, price and geographic area.
- Be sure to include a questionnaire and offer a free visitor guide for providing site visitor data. The rank order of information to request includes:
    - Zip code
    - Source of information that led to site visit
    - Anticipated number in travel party (adults and children)
    - When planning to visit
    - Primary trip purpose
    - Interests and activities
    - Permission to be placed in e-marketing database
- Be sure to include a telephone number website visitors can call for more information. Make this easy to find on the home page.
- Include a listing of visitor centers and other visitor information sources.
- Have a separate press page with story ideas and down-loadable photos as well as public relations media contact information.

27. Guide book with CD

One of the priority recommendations in this report is to turn the entire Petersburg Area into one large, well interpreted product. As referenced earlier, currently one must literally go on a treasure hunt in order to "connect the dots" between all the various historic sites and products. Thus, RTM recommends that PART develop a guide book with CD and make this available for purchase. This can be an exciting and dynamic way to tell the overall story and create a satisfying interpretive experience for visitors to the Petersburg Area.

Grants should be sought to pay for this project as it is primarily a one-time production cost. Maintenance can be self-funding as this is a product that will be sold.

28. Trade and consumer shows

Trade and consumer shows are an important part of outreach efforts for PART. It allows the organization the opportunity to present its message to large numbers of group, meeting, and leisure trip planners. The trade shows RTM recommends PART attend include:

- Glamer – regional shows
- Regional shows for meeting and group tour planners - MPI, ASAE, USTOA and SGMP

RTM recommends that PART look for consumer shows in prime locations along the Interstate 85 and 95 corridors.

RTM recommends PART employ the following principals for attendance to trade and consumer shows::

- Be prepared with visitor guide.
- Booth display should be visually exciting and utilize the same imagery recommended in this report for brochures, ads, etc. The Petersburg Area must look unique when compared to other Virginia and Interstate 85 and 95 corridor destinations.
- Solicit support of local tourism "partners" for expenses, promotions, give-aways, etc. Specifically partner with lodging and attractions and go to these shows to sell!
- Encourage participation with local tourism "partners.""
- After attendance to the trade show, an evaluation should be conducted (on an annual basis) to determine which shows generated sufficient return-on-investment and which did not. The next year's plan of trade show attendance should be based on this analysis.

Promotional Efforts

29. Front line information at lodging properties

- As mentioned in the Strategic Direction section of this report, one of the most critical audiences for PART to reach is the existing overnight guest. The goal is to increase the awareness of the unique visitor opportunities that exist and increase expenditures.
- A key aspect of this strategy can best be accomplished by informing existing guests about what there is to see and do, as well as what unique dining, shopping and entertainment can be found.
- RTM recommends that PART place the previously mentioned informational kiosks in as many lodging properties as possible.
- Additionally, RTM recommends the front desk in every lodging property have a display for PART and area maps and the front-line personnel be coached in using these maps to help patrons with wayfinding and locating entertainment and dining options. This should be considered a top priority. Then, the map will do the rest of the work by indicating the “must-sees” and the compelling information that enhance the image.

30. In-room extend-the-stay promotion

- Existing overnight markets for PART include business, meeting, or transient travelers, as well as leisure destination visitors. Those already visiting the Petersburg Area are one of the best targets for future leisure visitation.
- RTM recommends a strategy of enticing existing travelers to stay a day longer or come back another time to experience the Petersburg Area as a tourist.
- This strategy would be implemented by having either tent cards or informational pieces in each lodging room which identify the “must sees” and other attractions and activities to be enjoyed in the Petersburg Area. Bound in-room information books are often placed in the drawers by housekeepers and are not as effective for this purpose as a tent card.

31. Visiting friends and& relatives (VFR), reunions, weddings, and funerals promotion

- As we learned in this research study, the primary trip purpose for approximately 5% of the total visitors to The Petersburg Area is to "visit friends and relatives."
- The smart destination CVBwill provide trip planning information and resources to assist these travelers, with the goal of hopefully increasing the number of overnight stays. This is another built-in market PART can capitalize upon.
- Have an annual pull-out special section in the local newspaper with tips for planning a reunion, where to find resources (flowers, cards, gifts, etc.) for weddings and other eventsfunerals .. Further, this section would contain the "Things to See and Do" and amenities in the area visitors will want to enjoy during their stay.
- Produce a small, inexpensively printed brochure exclusively for planning a family reunion. Have these available at all hotels, restaurants, short-term rental agencies, visitor information centers and any other visitor points. Residents will appreciate the assistance and the area will gain overnight stays.

32. Create seasonal reasons to visit The Petersburg Area

- In some months visitation is less than desired (November, December and January). This is an issue that can be addressed with marketing.
- There are activities and events scheduled in the Petersburg Area for each season of the year. RTM recommends PART prepare a detailed calendar of seasonal events and activities which can be enjoyed by visitors and distribute this to all lodging properties, restaurants and other visitor points. Also, sending monthly or even weekly faxes to lodging properties would be beneficial. This would make very good information for front desk staff at local lodging properties. This can be accomplished with a WinFax software application that allows PART to produce the weekly update and automatically have it sent to all lodging properties.
- RTM recommends PART strategically evaluate its current offering of events and festivals with the intention of increasing promotion of events and activities that boost visitation in the winter months. Further, RTM recommends PART champion the development of specific events that will drive visitation in these slower months.

33. African-American, Hispanic, Gay and other minority segment promotions

African-Americans, Hispanics, Gays and other minorities often report to RTM that they tend to visit only those areas where they are sure they are invited. For instance, African-Americans look for advertising that features photography including African-Americans, and special packages targeted to African-Americans. The same is true for other minority segments. Thus, RTM recommends that PART:

- Conduct pinpoint research with African-American and other major minority market segment inquirers who contact PART for visitor information. Determine what type of products and packages each market segment most desires related to the Petersburg Area. Minority inquirers are quick to respond when they are sincerely asked to help identify products and promotions that offer the most appeal.
- After a period of time conducting inquiries, test market potential packages and promotions. Determine feasibility of more resource commitment to these markets.

34. Packaging with attractor partners such as Virginia Motorsports, Pamplin Park, etc.

- Packaging is hot in current tourism trends. PART is fortunate to have several major attractions with which packages would be ideal. This includes Virginia Motorsports Park, Pamplin Park, Petersburg National Battlefield, Citie of Henricus, and others.
- RTM recommends PART identify potential test market packages that would likely be successful based on market trends and likely participation by marketing partners.
- PART wants to only pursue a limited number of package promotions, testing them prior to major investment of time and resources. Only those that prove successful would then be developed further.

35. Test for success – test market a variety of potential product promotions.

- RTM recommends that PART conduct a series of market tests to determine the potential for more serious promotional efforts for niche markets such as cycling, birding, hunting, etc. One wants to determine if a market offers successful results before committing heavily in resources.
- Test marketing techniques include public relations story placement, e-marketing tools, direct mail and Internet website promotions.

36. Jamestown 2007

- Any opportunity to connect The Petersburg Area to this celebration and reinforce PART's positioning should be a priority.

Direct Sales Efforts

As this regional marketing program is formed, it is important for leaders of the organization to realize that the tourism industry nationwide has experienced its first major downturn in decades. Lodging properties have really felt the pinch since a lodging building boom took place in the years prior to the decline that began in early 2001. That means lodging properties all over the country are coming to their local destination marketing organizations and asking "What have you done for me lately?" This economy demands aggressive direct sales efforts and a destination's best potential partner for this can be found in the lodging properties that have sales departments in place. A planned coordinated sales effort must be utilized to target specific market segments and drive increased overnight visitation. There is no time for duplication of efforts so the lodging properties, PART and any other sales organizations in the region should have regular meetings to coordinate their direct sales efforts. The bottom line here is getting out and selling aggressively or risk continuing to lose market share to those destinations who are selling. The following strategies are focused on specific market segments.

37. Leisure tourism sales

- Leisure tourism is a critically important market and currently comprises a disappointing portion of the entire overnight occupancy in the region.
- RTM recommends that printed materials be developed, that trade shows be a priority, and that there is a defined program of sales calls to AAA offices, travel agents, etc.
- RTM recommends PART investigate leisure trade shows for possible attendance.
- RTM recommends PART develop a database of all sales call contacts, do everything possible to collect the email addresses for these contacts, and prepare a continuous series of e-blasts to these contacts to present packages and travel itineraries.

38. Group tour and motor coach sales effort strategy

The central geographic location of the Petersburg Area provides advantages for group tour promotion. This can be a very lucrative market for PART as it provides significant economic impact. According to the survey of lodging in the region group tour is currently only a small portion (approximately 2-3%) of the total lodging occupancy. Comparable destinations to the Petersburg Area typically average 5-10% or more of their total lodging occupancy in group tour and motorcoach business. Thus, the Petersburg Area has some room for improvement in producing its share of motorcoach overnight business.

38. (Continued)

Thus, RTM recommends PART plan an aggressive effort in researching and recruiting group tours. Doing this will require direct sales efforts, direct marketing and promotion to potential group tour customers, attendance at appropriate trade shows with stringent tracking of leads and follow-up and analysis of best practices and best return-on-investment. The goal is to either sell a group tour operator on bringing a group to the area or to capture them as an overnight on a longer trip.

Group tour planners have, in numerous interviews, reported to RTM their criteria for choosing a destination to overnight includes:

- A nice, mid-priced meal and evening entertainment.
- A clean and updated mid-range hotel with an interior corridor in a quiet area.
- A destination organization that will work with them to provide special amenities and items that will make their group participants feel special.
- Unique itineraries that appeal to their specific audiences (whether seniors, youth groups or other specific niches).

- Develop appropriate solicitation materials, including a desktop publishing template that can be tailored to each contact with suggested itineraries and reasons to choose to overnight in the PART region as an exclusive trip or while in route to other locations. These materials should go hand-in-hand with all other PART promotional pieces (see specific recommendations for print materials elsewhere in this document).
- Partner with regional attractions to identify group tours that may be visiting. Research should be conducted with those overnighting in the Petersburg Area and those choosing not to overnight in the Petersburg Area. One wants to determine which group tour groups provide the best potential for overnight business recruitment.
- Appropriate step-on guides need to be identified and recruited for this effort. Many group tours demand the availability of step-on guides and PART must ensure that this is available.
- Identify a list of most likely tour operators and trade shows.
- Plan trade shows based on selection of those most likely to match target decision- makers.
- Have a booth for trade shows that is dynamic, matches the image of the revised primary marketing materials and works to capture the attention of trade show participants. You must stand out and be memorable so make that booth dramatic!
- Contact your area tourism marketing partners, attractions, etc. to obtain give-aways and promotional items.

38. (Continued)

- Follow -up with all trade show leads for maximum results.
- Develop a consistent annual e-marketing and direct mail program that focuses on the primary appeal of the Petersburg Area and offers unique trip planning itineraries.
- Make personal sales call missions at least every six months to targeted group tour operators in the Petersburg Area target market areas. Produce reports following every sales mission to document who was called upon, what follow-up action is required and what result is expected.
- Follow up all group tours with an evaluation form that allows you to determine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Petersburg Area as a group destination. By analyzing these results, PART can continuously improve its group tour products.
- Produce an annual report with the total number of trade shows attended, sales missions made, contacts made, the total number of follow-up activities and the number of group tours served by PART. Bear in mind that there will be group tours that occur that are not tracked by PART. Perhaps include an estimate in the annual report of the number of total group tours, as well as those that can be specifically traced by PART.

39. Convention and meeting recruitment

Smaller conventions and meetings are a good target market for PART. Currently the Association, Government, and Corporate meetings segments total approximately 6% of the lodging in the Petersburg Area. The area is well positionedpositioned geographically along a major interstate and is relatively affordable. Thus, it is a good location for the small and governmental meeting market, in-state and regional business conventions, association conferences and other meeting groups.

- RTM recommends PART establish an aggressive effort for meeting and convention recruitment. Meetings and groups offer a good potential for increasing visitation to the Petersburg Area.
- Additionally, PART must work with local lodging properties to identify potential for this convention and meeting market. RTM recommends that PART take a leadership role in partnering with these lodging properties to prepare effective marketing materials for mailings and other contacts. RTM suggestss holding quarterly brainstorming sessions, hosted by PART with area lodging representatives. The purpose of these meetings is to brainstorm new conference and meeting leads and to determine what can be done to target new leads.

39. (Continued)

- Prepare desktop print materials that can be tailored to each contact to sell the attributes of the Petersburg Area as a destination for convention and meeting planners.
- Identify possible convention and meeting decision makers and support lodging properties in contacting these.
- Follow up with lodging properties to determine the success of promotional efforts and what iswhat iis is needed for continuous improvement.
- Prepare monthly reports documenting PART's sales efforts and results. These results should be shared with local lodging properties to encourage support for PART's sales efforts. If the local lodging properties perceive they are receiving great value from the sales efforts of PART, they will be more willing to partner with PART.

Recommended Product Development

RTM's primary recommendation is to establish the entire region as a single tourism product. During the course of this study several other tourism products that will enhance the overall visit to the region were identified by the RTM team.

The volume of leisure visitors to the region now demonstrates that tourists enjoy the attractions and tourism products already in the Petersburg Area. However, it is important to note the national trends in tourist behavior. In national research and in specific research studies conducted by RTM we have learned that visitation to historic attractions is declining while interest in shopping and dining is increasing. It appears that tourists are seeking unstructured leisure time activities. Therefore it is critically important to consider every attraction carefully, enhance those that are in danger of visitation decline, and add new products that may encourage travelers to stay longer in the area.

In the strategies following in this section, RTM recommends specific new products and programs that will speak to these needs and support growth of a stronger tourism market for the Petersburg Area. At the same time, it is critical the community understands the role of PART is to *promote* rather than to *build* specific attractions. It is inappropriate for occupancy tax funds or PART funds to be used to build what might be considered competition for existing attractions. However, PART should play a leadership role in identifying unmet visitor needs and encouraging development of new tourism products.

RTM's recommendations include:

40. Continue the development of downtown Petersburg into a lively village style shopping, dining and entertainment district

- This development is critically important to the success of the long-term regional marketing program. This must be accomplished.
- RTM anticipates a more animated and lively Downtown Petersburg shopping, dining and entertainment district would have immense appeal for business travelers, those attending meetings, sports visitors and leisure visitors. This would definitely help the Petersburg Area be selected as a destination by travelers, and speed the growth of residential infill in the downtown area.
- The only caution RTM would add to this is to ensure the voice of the customer is closely monitored. In numerous studies RTM has learned such a shopping and entertainment district needs to include the following:
  - An easy walking scale, preferably with hotels attached
  - Well-lit at night
  - Lively and exciting (translates to having a good number of people visible and colorful, animated surroundings)
  - Fine and unique dining

40. (Continued)

- Entertainment options (movies, theater, fun activities)
- Good resting places, weather protection and shade
- A relaxing atmosphere
- Fun shopping options

41. Continued development of Downtown Hopewell

- Hopewell's development plans for its riverfront downtown area offer significant potential for the entire region. When completed, this area will be one of the top tourist "attractors" in the region.
- Again, it is the village style setting that has the most appeal to travelers. RTM encourages Hopewell to review the recommendations throughout this document for recommendations for layout and amenities as this development continues.

42. Additional village-style shopping, dining and entertainment venues

- These environments are very popular with visitors and tend to make the difference in choice of lodging location. In other words, give them the dining, shopping, and entertainment and they will more likely stay in the area. One of these villages is currently under construction in Chester.

43. Enhance Petersburg Area attractions

- Most travel and tourism products have a "life cycle" meaning that over time they move from being a new product everyone is eager to visit, to a product that most people have already visited and see no need to re-visit. The way most attractions overcome these life cycle issues is to add something new or reinvent their product somehow. A typical example of this would be theme parks who every year add an exciting new ride in order to encourage repeat visitation.
- RTM strongly recommends that the attractions in the Petersburg Area consider adding something new or to somehow provide a new experience at the site in order to reinvigorate visitation.

44. Destination wedding, family reunion, and events venues

- All eleven (11) jurisdictions in this study have an opportunity to develop attractive, rustic, and perhaps historic settings for destination weddings, family reunions, and events. This region is perfect for family reunions as it provides something of interest for everyone. And, the lodging and spending would be ample reward for site development.
- RTM recommends private entrepreneurs develop these event venues and for initial marketing contact wedding and event planners in Richmond and Washington.

45. Outdoor recreation niches

As the urban areas in the larger region continued to grow and develop, the more rural areas in the Petersburg Area have an opportunity to package outdoor recreation niche products including:

- Cycling trails
- Birding
- River recreation excursions
- Equestrian trails,
- Volksmarchs
- Etc.

46. Niche marketing

Niche marketing can be developed for a host of target niches. RTM recommends that Petersburg Area Regional Tourism look to its participating members, as well as other jurisdictions to test market niche products including:

- Motorsports
- Peanut trails
- African American heritage
- Equestrian trails and events
- Handmade craft studios
- Antiquing
- Watchable wildlife self-guided tours and excursions
- Scenic driving tours
- Hunting and fishing excursions
- Photo trails
- Native American heritage
- Agriculture/farm tours
- Route 58 military trail, etc. In developing these trails RTM recommends a “pay as you play” funding structure.

47. Recruit new fine and unique dining

Experiencing fine and unique dining is one of the great joys of travel. This is consistent with national research that tells us “restaurants” are the first major decision a typical visitor makes once they have arrived at the destination. Similarly,, RTM has learned from numerous studies that it is *unique* dining that these visitors most actively seek. Whether it is local flavor style restaurants or fine dining, travelers enjoy finding dining options that differ from what they normally find at home.

- RTM recommends the Petersburg Area establish a priority of recruiting and encouraging development of new restaurants. This can be accomplished as a cooperative effort between PART, the Chambers of Commerce and other economic development interests in the area.

47. (Continued)

- For example, RTM has worked with several destinations thatthat have made this a priority and sought to recruit owner/chefs to relocate to their towns. Sometimes incentives were offered, although most simply seek potential candidates, and then ensure promotion of the new restaurant until it has become well established.
- RTM encourages the development of additional niche dining. This will help to continue to draw in regional residents and visitors alike.

48. Light up downtowns

In this project, the cities in the region would engage a designer to develop a dramatic nighttime lighting program that lights up specific architectural features of the downtown areas. Macon, Georgia has a similar program in its successful "*Lights On Macon."*

- A lighting designer is selected by the city.
- Once a lighting designer has established a plan, then the individual businesses and homes that are featured pay for the lighting and the electricity to have the lights on daily. Thus, the only cost to the cities is that of the designer and the time required in recruiting the individual participating properties.
- The result is a tourism product that provides a significant level of community pride, gives visitors something to do in the evening hours and creates economic impact with visitors from the region stopping in to eat, shop, and see the lights.

49. Develop seasonal festivals and events to build slow lodging periods

- Although occupancy is fairly stable year round in the Petersburg Area, RTM sees room for improvement especially in the weaker winter months. During this study, RTM noted that there is less than desired occupancy during the winter, namely November, December, and January. This can be remedied with events that compel people to travel to this area during those shoulder and off-season times.
- RTM recommends to begin by closely examining events held in the region to determine if more aggressive promotion would likely result in greater visitation. The question to ask is *"Would more aggressive promotion result in increased overnight lodging during this event?"* If an affirmative answer can be provided, then PART should help with promotion. However, PART should also follow up *all* festivals and events with a quick telephone poll to determine how many room nights were generated by each event. This provides the best guidance for continued allocation of promotional resources.

49. (Continued)

- Further, RTM encourages PART to look at seasonal events that can be packaged to help increase visitation during weaker months. Some possible suggestions might include doing a "*Great Chefs of the Petersburg Area"* promotion in January, a *Chocolate Lovers Escape* in February, a *Girlfriends Getaway (fashion, makeup, hair and spa treatments)* in March, etc.

50. Sports marketing and development of sport and tournament facilities

Another major new product category to examine is the sports marketing field. In this study we learned that sports-related visitation comprises approximately 3-5% of the total lodging in the Petersburg Area. There is also a volume of daytrip sports visitors. Unfortunately, we do not have a way to quantify this volume. Although this market segment has been growing overall for the past few years, it has become highly competitive. It has literally become a high stakes game in which the destination that offers the best facilities and incentives wins the business.

- RTM recommends that if the Petersburg Area desires to become more active in sports marketing that PART hire a sports marketing consultant to visit The Petersburg Area and do an in-depth assessment of the current facilities and the competitive environment for this destination. In today's highly competitive sports environment it will be very important to strategically pick only the precise sports niches that promise the best return on both the time and money investment that will be required in pursuit of sports travel.

51. Development of new meeting facilities

An additional market segment to evaluate is the convention/meetings segment. This has become one of the most highly competitive segments in the past few years as companies and organizations reduced their travel budgets and encouraged alternative ways of conducting business. Thus, this has become "top-down" market in which larger destinations continually go to smaller destinations and take business away. In this environment, any destination would be foolish to build meeting facilities that have not been thoroughly researched to ensure market willingness and satisfaction with planned facilities. In other words, before you build it, make sure they will come.

- RTM recommends conducting a thorough customer use study that, prior to the development of any new meeting facilities, captures the voice of the customer and documents intentions of use and facility design preferences.

Hospitality Training

RTM recommends enhancing hospitality training in the Petersburg Area to support hospitality workers in understanding and communicating the unique positioning for tourism in the region.

Hospitality training is a challenge for the tourism industry. The “front line” at state and local visitor centers, hotels, restaurants and attractions tends to have a high turnover. Finding and recruiting a sufficient number of employees is often a problem. Additionally, managers of these front lines may or may not have in-depth knowledge of best practices in tourism hospitality training. Thus, the industry has trouble in motivating what may be an already overworked and fluctuating work staff.

As documented in the mystery shopping portions of this study, RTM found that most front line employees, when asked, recommend that travelers go to Richmond area restaurants, shopping venues, and lodging properties. Obviously, this is problematic. Thus, RTM recommends PART work to provide the following support to the local tourism industry:

52. Partner with Fort Lee to establish a hospitality training program for Fort Lee personnel spouses and family members.

- There is a need for more training at local front lines throughout the Petersburg Area to support staff in being more proactive in engaging visitors and encouraging them to stay in the area.
- RTM recommends that PART seek a grant to allow for development of an on-going “train the trainer” program with Fort Lee personnel spouses and family members. The purpose of this is to train these recruits in how to go out and train front line staff at restaurants, lodging, attraction, and shopping places.
- This is a never-ending program. Turnover at the front lines is frequent, thus the continued need for this program.

53. Recommended hospitality training

- Short (30 minute) on-site workshops for any local hotel, restaurant or attraction that requests hospitality training.
- Seasonal half-day or daylong workshops to which the entire base of local industries are invited.
- A package of training materials that can be utilized by local area managers to provide on-going staff training.
- Small laminated cards "The Must Sees of The Petersburg Area" which identify the top things to see and do in the area. To increase the use and remembrance of these cards by local hospitality industry workers, we further suggest that a representative of PART periodically walk up to front line employees and ask "What do you say when asked,, what is
  there to see and do around here?" Any respondent who can name all the things highlighted on the laminated card from memory receives $25 on the spot. Be sure to also take their photo and send a news release and photo to the local newspaper for coverage of the ambassadors of tourism.
- Periodic faxes and e-blasts sent to the local tourism industry highlighting the seasonal benefits of visiting the Petersburg Area that have been mentioned earlier in this report, will also help the local industry enthusiastically suggest fun things to do and see.

Local Education

RTM also recommends an annual educational effort designed to inform the local public regarding what tourists find most appealing about visiting the Petersburg Area. It is often hard to appreciate one's own area due to familiarity. When asked, we often find local people are likely to tell us "There's not really much to do around here." Because they see it everyday and they know more elaborate tourism attractions are located in other areas, they may not appreciate the local tourism options as much as a visitor. By reminding local residents what tourists tell researchers they like about the area, it helps them to keep the perspective and to understand that the area is truly desirable as a vacation destination.

54. Recommended education for local population

- RTM recommends a one-time pullout special section in the newspaper that identifies the PART program, what it covers, how it works, and why it is being done. Also, this piece can highlight all the wonderful aspects of the Petersburg Area. Residents can then read this and hopefully become better informed as to the importance of tourism to the area, as well as being able to file this away for future reference.

55. "Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown"

- PART may benefit from an event such as Macon, Georgia's annual "Be a Tourist in Your Own Backyard" event that takes place on two consecutive evenings. The event is publicized locally and residents are invited to visit participating area sites and attractions free of charge on the two evenings. By increasing local awareness of the sites and attractions, the CVB has seen an increased number of tourism "ambassadors" whomm are better informed about what their town has to offer. Participating sites have realized increased year-round visitation as result of this promotion.

Additional Research and On-going Evaluation

Walt Disney said it best: "You don't build it for yourself, you find out what the customer wants and you build it for them." This is the essence of tourism success. Gone are the days when "if you build it they will come" worked in tourism. Today, there are simply too many choices already competing for the customer's time and money. A destination who does not listen to the voice of the customer runs the risk of losing that customer to someone who does. That unfortunate scenario has been experienced in many industries. One only has to recall when American automobile manufacturers were so sure they knew what was best for the customer they neglected to do their homework. The Japanese listened intently to what the customer wanted and the rest, as they say, is history.

RTM recommends continued evaluation, research and measurement of tourism success, unmet needs and marketing efforts for PART.. The specific components of this research strategy include the items listed below:.

56. Monthly lodging market mix survey

- Monthly tracking of lodging market mix.
- Results will ONLY be shared with those lodging properties that participate in monthly survey.

57. Niche analysis

- Determine niches to be studied.
- Determine how many visitors fall into each niche.
- Determine average expenditures of each niche.
- Analyze which niches provide the greatest profit potential.

58. Conduct visitor profile and conversion research every three years

- Benchmarks and changes in visitor profile and conversion need to be documented periodically. Therefore, RTM recommends conducting a visitor profile and conversion study every three years. It is not likely to change significantly any more frequently than the three-year period.

59. Annual evaluation of inquiry point-of-origin

- Annually, RTM recommends evaluating the point-of-origin (where inquirers live) of inquirers who respond to PART advertising program. This reaffirms for PART it is targeting its advertising outreach placement to the most appropriate markets. This can be accomplished by maintaining a comprehensive database of all inquiries received throughout the year.

60. Website research form analysis

RTM recommends PART make a "request information" page on its website and it be highly visible throughout the site. Include a "request for information questionnaire" on the website and request for the following information which will allow the organization to better track visitor characteristics and needs:

- Point of origin for inquirers.
- Primary visitor interest(s).
- Most likely travel party size.
- When planning to visit the Petersburg Area.
- Analyze the information frequently to continuously confirm other research results.

61. Annual documentation and analysis of current status

- RTM recommends that PART annually request from each partner jurisdiction updated information for the Current Status section of this report. This needs to be re be repeated annually and monitored for changes. PART staff can implement this. The important things to measure include:
  - Increases/decreases in occupancy tax collections and tourism revenues.
  - Changes in tourism product infrastructure (number of lodging properties and room counts, new attractions, etc.)

62. Inquiry database "data mining"

- PARTRutherford County will receive inquiries and it will have to continuously refine its methods of database development and storage to insure all inquiry data is easily accessed and reported. Enhancements to current database methods include:
  - All reader response inquiries received electronically and stored as an accessible electronic database.
  - All bulk brochure requests retained and stored in a separate database.
  - All telephone inquiries not requiring fulfillment should be tracked as such and included in the database system.
  - All databases should be designed to be integrated for year-end reporting of total inquiry information from all sources.
  - Quarterly reviews of data and data mining procedure to make sure errors are caught before going unnoticed for too long.

63. Research comparability with Virginia

- RTM also encourages PART to maintain regular contact with the Virginia Commission of Tourism and compare research findings to those of the state. This will ensure comparability of data over the long term.

64. Convention and meeting segment research

- Although PART will not be aggressively recruiting conventions and meetings, the organization needs to practice good skills if this becomes part of the mission.
- RTM recommends holding regular meetings with Directors of Sales at regional hotels to determine what groups are being successfully recruited so as to help identify potential successful targets.
- Benchmark with other destinations with similar meeting facilities to determine which groups they are successful in recruiting. This may provide new insight into which groups might successfully be recruited to The Petersburg Area.
- Further, conducting executive interviews with the meeting decision makers of likely groups will help to determine likelihood of use and inducements required to recruit to the Petersburg Area.

65. Group tour research in partnership with major attractions

- Determine which groups are visiting national battlefield sites and other major attractions and then segment into which ones overnight in the Petersburg Area and which ones do not.
- Conduct executive interviews with group tour planners to determine profile of most likely group tours to overnight in the Petersburg Area.