

**Signature Attractions
Best Practices Mission
November 20-23, 2003**

FINAL REPORT

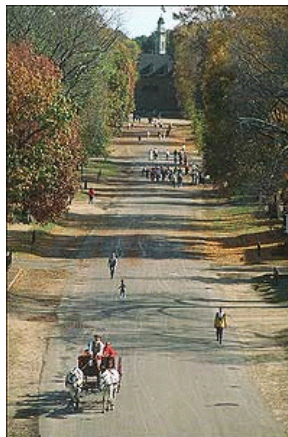


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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and background

Atlantic Canada is blessed with hundreds of years of history and a rich and vibrant culture. These elements of our provinces have always attracted tourists to our region. As trends in tourism gradually turn towards authentic experiences, the opportunity has presented itself for Atlantic Canada to capitalize on visitors' interest in destinations providing a unique experience exclusive to our region. In particular, these trends present an opportunity for partnership and networking between all stakeholders promoting Signature Attractions in the region.

One of the primary challenges limiting Atlantic Canada's growth in tourism is the need to provide better and more diverse market-ready products that match consumer need. The Signature Attractions Best Practices Mission was designed to expose Atlantic Canadian tourism operators and stakeholders to exemplary practices in order to stimulate new and innovative ideas, business practices, operations, planning models and partnership opportunities.

The Signature Attractions Best Practices Mission took place in Colonial Williamsburg from November 20-23 in 2003.

1.2 The Post-Mission Report

Section one outlines the history behind Best Practices Missions, the overview and objectives of the program, and briefly reports on the overall success of the tour.

Section two includes information on all presentations and meetings.

Section three encapsulates the feedback from mission participants, including comments on the key best practices and lessons learned.

1.3 Objectives of the Best Practices Mission

The mission was designed to expose private sector operators and stakeholders to exemplary tourism products. The mission was developed to provide tourism planners with first-hand industry knowledge and information on the development and marketing models that exemplify such attributes as quality, high productivity, extended seasonality and motivation to travel. It was intended that the mission would serve as demonstrative research and would reinforce the need for innovative products that successfully address current market demands.

1.4 Overview of the Program

The Best Practices Missions Program provides funding assistance and logistical coordination for a maximum of twelve participants to travel to areas where operators and industry stakeholders have successfully attracted market share by offering quality experiences that meet current market needs and by knowing and utilizing the proper channels to sell their experience.

This mission incorporated seminars and presentations with various directors and managers of different departments of Colonial Williamsburg, as well as the opportunity to experience certain tourism products in the area.

2. **Mission Activity Summary**

2.1 **Site Reports**

Background Information on Colonial Williamsburg

The mission of Colonial Williamsburg is “That the future may learn from the past”. The following description has been copied from their website:

Colonial Williamsburg, in Williamsburg, Virginia, is the world’s largest living history museum—the restored 18th century capital city of Britain’s largest, wealthiest, and most populous outpost of empire in the New World. Here we interpret the origins of the idea of America, conceived decades before the American Revolution. The Colonial Williamsburg story, “Becoming Americans”, tells how diverse peoples, having different and sometimes conflicting ambitions, evolved into a society that valued liberty and equality. Americans cherish these values as a birthright, even when the promise remains unfulfilled.

In Colonial Williamsburg’s 301-acre Historic Area stand hundreds of restored, reconstructed, and historically furnished buildings. Costumed interpreters tell the stories of the men and women of the 18th century city—black, white, and Native American, slave, indentured, and free—and the challenges they faced. In this historic place, we help the future learn from the past.

The street is about one mile long and ½ mile wide, surrounded by modern infrastructure. The heart of the historic district does not allow cars between 7am and 10pm, but people do live in some of the houses. The modern houses are quite cleverly disguised so that one cannot see inside, as they stand next to buildings being used for historical interpretation or for historical reproductions.

Colonial Williamsburg is operated by a private foundation, which does not receive operating funds from the government. Because of this fact, they are continually educating their visitors because it is assumed by the public that public dollars are funding the site. The foundation:

- Preserves and interprets the Historic Area
- Operates for-profit subsidiaries, including hotels, restaurants, convention facilities, and golf courses.

- Sells licensed products and reproductions.
- In addition to the Historic Area, the foundation also operates:
- The DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum
 - The Winthrop Rockefeller Archaeology Museum
 - The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum
 - Bassett Hall
 - Carter's Cove (currently closed for renovation)

A shuttle bus is available serving the historic area from 8:50am-10:00pm daily. The shuttle buses depart from the visitor centre and other designated locations throughout the site. Cars are not permitted in the historic area; it is open only to pedestrians.

Colonial Williamsburg has an annual operating budget of \$230 million, with an education budget of \$100 million, a maintenance budget of \$10 million and a marketing budget of \$7 million. In 2003, they operated with a \$35 million deficit. The admission price funds less than half of the cost of the educational experience at Colonial Williamsburg thus the need for donations.

Orientation

Colonial Williamsburg has an enormous visitor interpretation centre. This centre contains an information kiosk, walls of orientation panels, a 37 minute movie in two different theatres, and signage on the walkways to the historic area. Visitors receive a newspaper style "Guide to Colonial Williamsburg" which contains a map as well as a listing of events for the week, ticket areas, etc. The centre strives to orient the visitor both to the specifics of what will be visited, as well as to the generalities of the experience of the time period.

Orientation panels in the reception centre have a "family fun" icon with questions geared towards children in order to get them thinking about how they should experience Williamsburg. This icon is used to denote activities that children would likely enjoy. Throughout the orientation centre there is a continuous soundtrack of horse's hooves trotting, cannons blasting, and drums pounding.

Session 1 - The Role of Retail and Merchandising in Reinforcing the Experience

This session was presented by Charles Driscoll. Although recently retired he has set up many of the current licensing agreements on behalf of Colonial Williamsburg.

The restoration of Colonial Williamsburg began in 1926. The first tours began in 1932 but it wasn't until 1937 that the foundation started to reproduce antiques from the Colonial Williamsburg collection.

Its products and licensing programs evolved with the addition of licensees and the introduction of several product lines. Established in 1936, the WILLIAMSBURG Products Program supports the mission of the foundation by offering authentic reproductions of antique furnishings, historically accurate accessories and an interpretive lifestyle collection. Revenue from the sales

of WILLIAMSBURG products supports the foundation's educational programs. The WILLIAMSBURG name and symbol are registered trademarks and are protected at all costs. It is believed that the first licensing program of this nature began at Colonial Williamsburg.

Since 1937, a standing committee has met every two weeks to approve all new prototypes. There are three different types of products produced by Colonial Williamsburg:

1. Reproductions - the most accurate.
2. Adaptations - details have changed in order to make the products more functional or affordable today.
 1. Interpretations - design elements of the past used in more modern products. For example an old pottery design implemented on new coffee mugs or platters.

As the historic district was being redeveloped the original commercial establishments in this quarter of town were being pushed out. Merchant Square was developed as the first planned shopping centre in the US. Over the years the focus of Merchant Square has changed, today it is an upscale visitor shopping destination. A few years ago a decision was made to invite some select national retailers to lease space in this area (4 out of 40) - these include Williams-Sonoma, Barnes & Noble, Chicos and Talbots. This move was made for several reasons:

- a) To give locals a reason to come to the area
- b) So that they would not set up shop somewhere else drawing shoppers away from the area.

It is now considered a premier shopping area for the whole Tidewater district. Management continues to provide reasons to attract people to Merchant Square such as a farmers market in the summer, a concert series and a new parking garage nearby.

There are approximately 40 retail outlets onsite including stores in the historic district, merchant square, hotels and visitor centre. Breakdown of the retail outlets:

- The Historic Area - Duke of Gloucester Street** is the centre for 18th century wares created by craftspeople.
- Colonial Post Office:** books, prints, maps, stationary, seals, sealing wax, games.
- Mary Dickinson Store:** trimmed hats, toiletries, jewellery, ribbons, bows, caps, and stockings.
- M. Dubois Grocer:** tavern food, baking mixes, Virginia ham, peanuts, and preserves.
- Golden Ball:** fine gold and sterling silver jewellery and hand-wrought iron sterling silver hollow ware.
- John Greenhow Store:** candy, three-cornered hats, fifes, toys, and games.
- McKenzie Apothecary:** herbs, spices, and apothecary jars.
- Prentis Store:** handcrafted leather products, ironwares, and salt-glazed pottery.
- Raleigh Tavern Bake Shop:** gingerbread, Shrewsbury cakes, and Sally Lunn bread.
- Tarpley's Store:** baskets, pottery, creamware, soaps, and candles.
- The Craft House:** exquisite works by master craftspeople and authentic reproductions of Colonial furnishings, reproduction wallpapers, china, toys, games, maps, books, prints souvenirs.

- The **Williamsburg Inn Gift Shop** offers exquisite gifts and decorative accessories, such as silver-plated serving pieces, fine crystal, and other treasures.
- At the **Williamsburg Lodge Gift Shop**, you'll find contemporary folk art, as well as a selection of tavern accessories.
- Ceramics and glassware are featured, along with a selection of Colonial Williamsburg gifts, at the **Williamsburg Woodlands Gift Shop**.
- The **Cascades Gift Shop** has gifts and accessories, as well as many Virginia-made items.
- For a variety of gifts and guest conveniences, stop by the **Governor's Inn Gift Shop**.

Additional forms of retailing implemented by Colonial Williamsburg include:

- S Direct Mail (Catalogue)
- S Wholesale
- S License
- S Internet

Gross retail sales for 2002 were \$40 million (US) with a net profit of \$4 million.

Until recent years, Colonial Williamsburg enjoyed one million paid visitors per year. 50%-70% are repeat visitors and 20% of those were repeat visitors from the previous year. Attendance in 2002 was 800,000 and attendance for 2003 was also projected to fall short of one million.

Numerous factors in the past few years have contributed to this decline:

1. Terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001
2. Downturn in the American economy
3. The war in Iraq
4. Highway sniper attacks of 2002 were as close as 60 miles to the site
5. Weather conditions in summer 2003

The main lesson learned from this session was that attractions should feature core products that say something about the operation. For example, during an excavation they discovered a "bird bottle" (a bird feeder shaped like a bottle that you attach to your house) which has been reproduced and is sold in all of Colonial Williamsburg's retail outlets. Also, operators need to show how the products relate to the theme of the attraction by providing education about the products to consumers. For example, include on a tag or on an insert information on the relevance of the price, put it into context for the consumer.

Session 2 - Fundraising and Development

This session was presented by Roger Thaler. Roger was the Director of Funding and Development of Colonial Williamsburg for many years.

When Colonial Williamsburg first began, it had been completely funded by the Rockefeller family. It wasn't until the 1970's that new sources of income were sought over and above what

was generated by meals, rooms, admissions and the occasional gift from the Rockefeller's. Since 1926, the Rockefeller's have given \$90 million to the site. The development office began as an office of one and now employs over 50 people. The set up of the fundraising program now closely resembles those of privately funded American universities.

The speaker recommended that participants set up a planned giving program, requesting donations from estates as this can be very lucrative and is not difficult to set up. Individual gifts provides the majority of funds to Colonial Williamsburg (90%) but a small portion of gifts also come from foundations and corporations. Attractions should concentrate on receiving on major gifts from 10-15 people who could make a substantial, institution-transforming gift. Programs to attract the funds are:

1. Annual giving
2. Capital or restricted for XYZ project
3. Planned giving, bequests

In the beginning the development office rented mailing lists from travel and architectural magazines. In the first year they raised \$54,000; now, this amount is \$12 million. In the earlier years revenue streams were difficult to predict, therefore the funds raised were always placed in the following year's budget.

It is an accepted fact that acquiring new donors is an expensive process, and it may cost as much as \$1.00 to \$1.50 to generate a \$1.00 donation. However, in the future it may cost as little as \$.06 to raise \$1.00 from a repeat donor. The best prospects for direct mail donations are those people visiting your site now.

The capital campaign is expected to reach \$500 million and is currently at \$360 million with two years remaining, although it may be extended. The three primary components of a capital campaign are:

1. Unrestricted donations (operating)
2. Money for buildings
3. Endowment

The breakdown of revenues for Colonial Williamsburg are as follows:

1. Admissions - \$30 million
2. Endowment - \$20 million (currently the foundation draws 5% from endowment)
3. Annual Fund - \$12 million (a record year for the program with 100,000 donors with an average gift of approximately \$120)
4. Other sources- food, rooms, products, licensing- shortfall is met by decreasing expenses or drawing on the endowment.

Colonial Williamsburg ended 2002 with a near-record for total gifts and grants received of \$46 million. This is just \$700,000 shy of the record established in 2000.

At Colonial Williamsburg donors are not members. They do not receive free admission to the site unless they are in the “Raleigh Tavern Society”, which consists solely of donors who contribute a minimum of \$5,000 each year. Still, even these donors must give advance notice in order to receive free admission to the site.

They also have an excellent data collection program. Contact information is collected at the visitor centre when tickets are purchased. For people attending as part of a group or conference this information is collected by the hotels. This information is used to distribute appeals to visitors five to six weeks after their visit.

Colonial Williamsburg treats its donors very well. The level of treatment depends on the amount of the donation, beginning with \$35 donations where donors are given a free quarterly newsletter. They often use a small give away such as an ornament to lure new donors. The newsletter cannot be bought and is seen as a major public relations tool for the institution. The newsletter started in 1976 and the bulk of the articles are written in house. Occasionally an outside expert will contribute an article and is paid \$500. The newsletter also features advertisements.

The St. George Tucker House is a historic building in the heart of the district used for donor receptions. Annual donors of \$100 or more are invited to relax and take advantage of the concierge services or to have a drink when visiting the site.

In 2002, the foundation budgeted an operating deficit, which reflected pressures on ticket sales and hotel occupancy resulting from the slowing economy and travel concerns, increased expenses from new buildings, and costs related to compensation and staffing. Although the foundation achieved almost \$9 million in savings, primarily as a result of reduced staffing and lower interest costs, operating revenues were almost \$17 million less than budgeted. Ticket sales were approximately \$5.4 million short of what was budgeted. Lower visitation also affected hotel occupancy and retail sales. In the aggregate, revenue from hospitality and products operations was more than \$10 million short of budget.

This level of deficit is clearly unacceptable. The foundation’s goal is to operate on a balanced budget by 2006, with operating deficits of no more than \$25 million in 2003 and \$15 million in 2004. There has been substantial progress in financial results in 2003, despite the sluggish economy, inclement weather, and the war in Iraq. Through April, operating expense reductions of more than \$7 million had been identified for 2003. The value of the endowment as of December 31, 2002, was \$586.3 million, a decline of \$105.5 million compared with the December 31, 2001, figures. The foundation withdrew \$52.8 million during the year to fund the annual draw for operations (\$34.8 million) and a supplemental draw to fund educational activities (\$18.0 million). A total of \$10.7 million in gifts were transferred to endowment during the year.

The main lessons learned from this session was that every institution should have a capital campaign and it was also stressed throughout the session that operators shouldn’t include the annual fund into the budget until it has been raised. Participants also learned the importance of

starting a planned giving program, increased attention to data collection and implementing an ongoing self-sustaining process

Session 3 - The Experience and Interpretation

This session was presented by Mary Wiseman who has worked for Colonial Williamsburg for 28 years. She still portrays Martha Washington in a 90 minute presentation at the Kimball Theatre and has begun a character development program at Mount Vernon. Mary began the session by coming out in costume and character as Martha Washington.

Mary was one of the original interpreters who created the first person program for Williamsburg. All character interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg perform in first person with a knowledge of historical information rather than reading from a script. The orientation guide advertises where these interpreters will be performing in order to draw crowds to them. These character interpreters began as an experiment in 1979. Originally the site had used actors, which caused problems for people trying to stick to the script. The actors were not always accepted by the other interpreters and they lacked the historical background. First person interpretation allowed the story of slavery to be told.

Today there are various types of interpreters working at Colonial Williamsburg and they include:

4. Trade Interpreters
5. Historical Interpreters
6. Character Interpreters

Not everyone is suited for the role of character interpreter. Interpreters must have a desire to reach to the public and a desire to extend this knowledge. Overstatement is required and the goal must be to educate not to entertain. The characters work on a three-year cycle. Newspapers and records from the 18th century are used by the interpreters to give the characters greater depth and can be seen as a living biography.

There are rules that interpreters must follow:

1. They must not break character. Coming out of character is always done at their discretion; it is only done when the interpreter feels comfortable with it and agrees to it.
2. The newer characters must apprentice with senior characters
3. Basic character rules exist for each character

The main lesson learned from this session was that the key to success is who you hire. They should have a sense of the character, a sense of history or knowledge about your attraction, and have a desire to reach out to the public to extend this knowledge.

Session 4 - Handling Natural Disasters

This session was presented by Mike Wenger. Mike is the current maintenance manager of Colonial Williamsburg. He is trained as an architect and also has a historical educational background. Responsible for:

- 3,500 acres
- 800 structures
- 4,000 livestock
- 12,000 monitoring points

Every occupied building has its own disaster plan and there is at least one person in each building responsible for implementing the plan. There are one hundred employees on the disaster staff with a very detailed disaster plan. This plan has five levels including provisions for such things as hurricanes, north-easterly winds, tornados, bomb threats, fire, terrorism, demonstrations among other things. The control centre begins to track storms ten days in advance. Twenty-four hours prior to a disaster they begin to close facilities and move artifacts to secure locations. The main building closes last. In the event of a disaster, staff focus on protection of artifacts, not removal of them. There is a priority list in place that details which buildings need to be opened first to ensure that revenue is not jeopardized; this is decided before the storms even occur. Continuing to do business is very important in these circumstances.

Colonial Williamsburg has second priority with the Power company, after the hospitals, in the event of power loss. The generators can maintain humidity levels for five days in the galleries. Once the facilities go into protective mode only the responsible curator has access to the facility. They also have a press bureau that releases information to the public and employees to tell them what is going on at the site on a regular basis. Contact is mainly through the radio system and a phone tree system.

The attraction was hit by hurricane Isabel and only one of the major buildings suffered destruction. The gardens were hard hit and over 1,000 trees were lost. One of their first priorities was fencing for the livestock as they have very valuable historic breeds (\$30,000 sheep for example). Colonial Williamsburg will not have all the damage cleaned up until next spring and estimate that they will spend millions on tree removal and replanting. The site was under general closure for two days although it was not completely closed, as 1100 rooms were occupied and meal service had to continue during the storm.

Colonial Williamsburg has a staff of 145 maintenance workers and gardeners and an annual maintenance budget of \$10 million.

Eighty-eight of the structures at the site are said to be original (build prior to 1830). These include the George Wythe House, Peyton Randolph House, Grissell Hay House and the Thomas Everard House. Some have original parts such as the Alexander Craig House. Some of the houses were reconstructed with original materials from other houses. The Custis Tenement was reconstructed in the 1930's with material from a house built in 1840 that was once reconstructed

with materials from a 1755 house. When repairs are needed, they use a combination of traditional 18th century and 21st century techniques in order to ensure an authentic look.

The main lesson learned from this session was to properly prepare and plan for natural disasters.

Session 5 - Marketing History

This session was presented by Randall Foskey, who was the marketing manager of Colonial Williamsburg for 15 years. For the past ten years, he has been running his own advertising agency, Williamsburg is one of his clients as are other historical and tourist attractions throughout Virginia.

One of the main contributing factors to the success of Colonial Williamsburg is its location. One third of the American population lives within an eight hour drive of the site. The majority of Colonial Williamsburg's marketing efforts concentrate on attracting those customers within a 600 mile radius of the site.

Colonial Williamsburg has an annual marketing budget of \$7 million. Randall explained that marketing is simply the process of attracting and maintaining customers. The majority of the session was spent explaining to the participants the "5 P's of Marketing":

1. **Place:** The location of an attraction is very important. One third of the American population lives within an eight hour drive of Colonial Williamsburg. This represents a potential market of 70 million people.
2. **Product:** Ensure there is a need or want for your attraction. Know your customers and offer what they are looking for.
3. **Price:** The way that you package the price is incredibly important. Convince people that it is to their advantage to buy something larger, e.g. package deals such as an annual pass instead of individual tickets. In the 1970's, 3% of visitors purchased annual passes, by the 1980's it had increased to 70%.

Randall also recommended not printing prices on any materials such as brochures. This is wise as you can then increase prices at any point during the year with reasonable acceptance. It is unlikely that a customer would turn away at the gate because of an increase in price. For example, due to an increase in visitors to a nearby attraction, Colonial Williamsburg increased its prices mid-season and were able to stay in budget with fewer visitors.

Colonial Williamsburg offers its customers three types of tickets:

1. *The Freedom Pass*: features multiple days (unlimited for up to one year) admission to Colonial Williamsburg's historic area, exhibitions, buildings, interpretive programs and sites. This pass cost \$49 per adult, \$24.50 for youths 6-14. Walking tours are included in the admission. Most people opt to purchase the *Freedom Pass* even though they

typically only visit for one day as it offers greater perceived value. It also provides Colonial Williamsburg with an additional \$10 in revenue per person.

2. *Single Day Admission*: one-day admission to Colonial Williamsburg's historic area, exhibitions, buildings, interpretive programs and sites. This pass costs \$39 per person and \$19.50 for youths.
3. *Hotel Guest Tickets*: offers admission to the historic area exhibition, buildings, museums, and admission to all regular daytime programs. Guests are also entitled to free parking at the visitor centre and use of Colonial Williamsburg shuttle services. They also receive a 50% discount on evening programs. This ticket is valid for the length of stay at any of the Colonial Williamsburg hotels.

Colonial Williamsburg has also established a good neighbour pass for local people to come onto the property anytime during the year for \$10.

They do not give discounts to large groups as they feel that they would lose too much revenue. Colonial Williamsburg does not offer discounts to AAA clients because this represents 40% of their leisure traffic and this type of exposure is not needed. They are very firm on their pricing strategy and would rather turn away the 8% of visitors who think the price is too high. They distribute price surveys to customers to rate their level of price satisfaction and on a scale of 1-5, 3-3.5 is the norm. Half of those surveys respond which is much higher than required.

4. Promotion: Good promotion is the key to success for an attraction. It is important to ensure that you are spending your money in the proper areas.

5. People: You need to have staff that are motivated and who want to do a good job. They also have to be good at their job.

Session 6 - Themed Meetings and Conferences

The speaker for this session was Kim Beachum. Kim currently works for Colonial Williamsburg in a senior position in group sales and management for all the hotel and food locations.

Colonial Williamsburg is the largest and oldest living history museum. Employees at Colonial Williamsburg have a very high level of passion and this enthusiasm is transferred to the visitors. Integrity and pride are key qualities possessed by their employees.

Colonial Williamsburg has 1,100 hotel rooms available in a variety of settings. They are able to handle large groups and accommodations range from colonial houses to the luxurious Williamsburg Inn.

Recreation, food and beverage services are other important areas at Williamsburg. Beyond the historic district, the foundation also operates three golf courses, spas, shopping and dining experiences for every budget.

The largest group that they can comfortably accommodate is 760 guests. If guests are only doing on activity they can handle up to 960. The Williamsburg Lodge is the largest property; it is where the majority of conference groups are housed. The average conference size is 50 people, 350 is the top end of what they expect to see in any given conference. Recent trends indicate that smaller corporate groups are more popular, groups are staying for shorter lengths of time and events are planned with less lead time. Conference and group sales is a highly competitive market and this has been especially true since the events of September 11th. Express visits have grown tremendously in the last few years, bookings made less than six weeks out, and long-term bookings have dropped drastically. Since September 11th and the sniper attacks, bookings from school groups, seniors and religious groups have still not recovered.

The rough breakdown of visitors is as follows:

- 50% of visitors are walk-ins

- 30% schools and bus tours

- 20% conference groups

Groups who come to Colonial Williamsburg usually have some inquisitive historical interest. For example, during our stay another group associated with the food industry were having meetings. They had specials tours and seminars on 18th century food and food production. They will learn agriculture and livestock information through discussions with rare breed curators.

Conference services can provide interpreters for the groups. When the characters are in costume they speak in the 18th century dialect and maintain character integrity. This is required to suspend visitor disbelief. Everything that takes place within the historical district is interpretive programming. Colonial Williamsburg has had the same mission statement for the past 77 years, “So that the future may learn from the past”. All employees perform their duties in this mind set.

The purpose of Colonial Williamsburg is to educate people about Virginia in the 18th century. When a group comes to the site this is always the focus. Williamsburg can add to the experience by having a torchbearer escort the group through the darkened streets, or having a fife and drums lead them to dinner. A balladeer can teach the groups bawdy drinking songs in one of the taverns or you could meet a character who will discuss current topics of the day over traditional food.

If a group has a common interest or profession, such as doctors or lawyers, they might include a character interpreter of the same profession from the 18th century to entertain the group. All the theming is done on a local level.

In the convention office, the most important thing is for the staff to find out the expectations of the group to develop a program. The most frequent request they receive is to facilitate transportation, since their convention office receives a greater discount on transportation than other meeting planners. When conventions/groups make arrangements they are charged a standard 30% mark-up on booking the fife and drums and other extras, their cost can drop to 25% under negotiations.

A service manager is assigned to each group once an initial, contract has been signed and they will go over the details with the group. It is the departments job to upsell the experience. The convention sales office will work with groups staying in outside properties. However some of the signature items such as fife and drum corps, Characters Jefferson and Washington do not leave the site so as to maintain integrity. There are also restrictions on what they can be asked to do. For example, Jefferson would never stand in a receiving line although he may enter a room and address the group. Outside contractors such as musicians, less notable speakers and a prepackaged grand medley show can be sent off site.

Colonial Williamsburg is well aware of its audience. The domestic audience wants to hear the patriot’s point of view. There is little call for Tories (or loyalists) although these interpreters are also maintained to provide education on the whole story. It was explained that with themed events enough is never enough; always ask what additional services can be provided. You can always offer or sell more product.

3. Mission Evaluation

3.1 Mission Survey Results

The results from the mission evaluation were very positive. In the post-mission evaluation form, eighty percent of the participants said that the mission exceeded their expectations. Please see Appendix A for graphed results of the post-mission evaluation.

3.2 Overall Success of the Mission

Positive comments about the mission included:

- “Local co-ordinator Randall Foskey did a terrific job and was very attentive to our needs.”
- “There was flexibility to adjust content, ex: a side trip to Jamestown.”
- “The quality and professionalism of the presenters was outstanding.”
- “Presentation material was very appropriate and focussed.”
- “Definitely a beneficial experience to stay in the Colonial area instead of a regular motel.”
- “Time spent travelling to Colonial Williamsburg to set up the sessions was definitely a good investment of time and resources.”
- “The Colonial Williamsburg area was the ideal site for this mission.”
- “There was a good balance between group activities and personal exploration time.”
- “The group interacted very well together and was quite focussed.”
- “The networking that went on and the contacts that were made will be very valuable to future business.”

Recommendations to improve future missions:

- “Presenters could have had handouts for us to take back with us.”
- “It would be preferred if travel arrangements could be made so that all participants arrive at the same time.”
- “Each of the speakers were so knowledgeable that they could have used more time. We really tried to squeeze a lot of information into a short amount of time. The group would have benefited from another day on this mission.”
- “Speaking to someone involved in the school programs or the costume makers would have been excellent.”