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BUREAU CONTRACTS WITH ADVANCE GROUP TO OFFER MEETING PLANNERS STATE-OF-THE-ART HOUSING SERVICES

SAN JUAN, September 7, 2005 – The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau (PRCB) announced today that it has partnered with Advance Group Conference Management Inc. to assist meeting planners with the latest technology in housing management, as one of the many services provided by the organization dedicated to meetings, conventions, tradeshow and group incentive travel to Puerto Rico.

“Providing housing services has become an industry standard among top meetings destinations throughout the U.S. and the globe,” stated Ana María Viscasillas, president and CEO, Puerto Rico Convention Bureau. “As we continue to evolve as the preferred meeting destination of the Americas and welcome more groups in both terms of size and quantity, it’s become a critical next step to offer our partners the expertise of a top-rated industry leader in housing services that can seamlessly coordinate the various aspects of housing and conference management to meeting groups in Puerto Rico.”

Advance Group currently assists other top-tier convention destinations to provide housing services for events that range in size from just one or two hotels, to large international congresses utilizing over 150 properties. In addition, Advance Group has experience in working with a wide-range of clients similar to those which are currently hosted in Puerto Rico, including the corporate, scientific/medical, association and government sectors.

“We are delighted to have been selected as the official housing service provider for the Puerto Rico Convention Bureau”, said Rose Ironside, managing director, Advance Group. “Our knowledge and experience working with Passkey and groups of various sizes means that the PRCB is truly putting its best foot forward when the system comes online in early 2006. It’s an exciting time for the meetings industry in Puerto Rico, and we look forward to supporting the Bureau and being part of that growth.”

In forging a relationship with Advance Group, the Bureau will gain an experienced team of dedicated bilingual (Spanish and English) professionals who can assist delegates and conference organizers with coordinating local and international business gatherings in Puerto Rico.

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Sales and Marketing Agent for the new
Puerto Rico Convention Center



Working with Advance Group, based in Vancouver, BC, the PRCB will now offer Passkey, the leading online group reservations management solution utilized by 85% of the top convention cities in North America. This state-of-the-art system automates the group housing process, giving delegates secure 24/7 real-time access to online reservation services and automated confirmations, while providing reports for convention organizers about the status of contracted hotel room blocks. The 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, the Super Bowl and the 2004 U.S. Democratic Convention were all managed with Passkey technology. While the Bureau has offered similar services in the past, the increasing popularity of Puerto Rico as a meeting and convention destination and the opening of the Puerto Rico Convention Center (late 2005) meant that a more sophisticated system was required. A critical part to the success of implementing the housing service are the training sessions which were conducted by Advance Group on behalf of the PRCB for Bureau sales team executives and member hoteliers late last month.

“As the Puerto Rico Convention Center comes online there will be increasing pressure on Puerto Rico’s hoteliers for group room blocks as well as other conference management services,” Viscasillas continued. “Whether it’s a convention at a resort that brings a few hundred delegates, or a group such as the renowned U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce which will bring several thousand delegates to the Puerto Rico Convention Center in 2007, we want to provide our hotel partners and convention organizers the very best in available technology and service standards to make meetings in Puerto Rico easy to coordinate.”

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Editor's Note:

The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau (PRCB) is a non-profit organization established in 1962 to drive meetings, conventions, trade shows and incentive groups to Puerto Rico. With offices in San Juan, Chicago, New York, Miami, and Washington DC, the Bureau strengthens Puerto Rico's competitive position in the Americas and abroad by increasing awareness of the Island's outstanding meeting facilities and services, and produces approximately \$92 million to the local economy. The Bureau can be reached electronically through the Internet at info@prcb.org or at its website www.meetpuertorico.com. The PRCB is the official marketing and sales agent for the new Puerto Rico Convention Center (PRCC) slated to open in late 2005. For more information on the new Convention Center visit www.prconvention.com. The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau, representing the capital city of San Juan, is a member of BestCities, a global alliance of Bureaus that represent the highest standards of service in the meetings and convention industry. For more information, visit www.bestcities.net.

Advance Group, based in Vancouver, British Columbia, is recognized as one of North America's leading professional congress organizers, serving national and international clients in the corporate, scientific/medical, association and government sectors. The company provides comprehensive housing and conference management services, and is proud to be a member of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers (IAPCO). For more information, visit www.advance-group.com, or email Carol MacKenzie, Director, Sales at carolm@advance-group.com



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