



Michael Cooper

Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Tourism
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Michael Cooper, Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Tourism, is a 21-year veteran of Kentucky state government and has extensive domestic and international tourism experience. Prior to his retirement from the state in 2004, Cooper served in the Kentucky Department of Parks for seven years and for 14 years in what is now called the Department of Tourism. In the tourism department he held a variety of posts, including assistant director of marketing and advertising from 1994 to 2000 and assistant director of tourism services from 2001 to 2004. He was instrumental in the formation of Visit Kentucky USA, an international marketing consortium of convention and visitor bureaus of Lexington, Louisville, Northern Kentucky, and the commonwealth and other new and innovative tourism and marketing initiatives.

In addition to his tourism expertise, Cooper is an experienced event planner. He most recently served as executive director of the inauguration of Governor Steven L. Beshear. He recently coordinated the Kentucky Democratic Tour to Victory rallies and bus tour, as well as the "Let's Work Together" victory night celebration for Governor Beshear. He also assisted with the inaugurations of Governors Martha Layne Collins, Wallace Wilkinson, Brereton Jones, Paul Patton and Ernie Fletcher. Cooper has planned other high-profile events, including the 2001 Southern Governors Association Convention, the Kentucky Bicentennial and many Governor's Kentucky Derby festivities.

Cooper is a 15-year board member of Equestrian Events Inc., producer of the annual Rolex Kentucky Three Day Event. He also serves on the boards of the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, the Kentucky Tourism Council, the Kentucky Derby Festival, Travel South USA, the Southeast Tourism Society, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and the Man of War Swim Conference.

A native Kentuckian, Cooper holds a B.S. degree in Accounting and Business Administration from Georgetown College. He is a Travel Marketing Professional, having earned his certification from the Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College. Married and the father of two children, he lives in Lexington. He is an avid distance runner who has participated in more than a dozen marathons around the country.