



**Military Enhancement Committee (MEC) of Beaufort County**  
**Communications Strategy**  
**Request for Proposals**  
**July 2, 2021**

**Overview**

The Military Enhancement Committee (MEC) of Beaufort County is submitting this request for proposals to contract the services of a strategic communications firm to develop, implement and manage a comprehensive communications plan to support its mission to promote and defend the three military bases in Beaufort County.

**Organization Background**

The Military Enhancement Committee (MEC) of Beaufort County was established in June 2003 by the Board of Directors of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce (formerly named the Greater Beaufort Chamber of Commerce) as an auxiliary committee of the Chamber. The MEC operates under its own charter. Beaufort County Council and City and Town Councils for Beaufort and Port Royal were concurring partners in the establishment of the MEC.

The MEC's purpose is to enhance the quality and value of the military installations of Beaufort County – Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island, Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort, and Naval Hospital Beaufort – and to lay the framework to defend those three military bases regarding any threats, including base realignment and closure (BRAC); and to establish procedures and contingency plans in the event one or more of these military installations is closed or realigned.

The MEC is comprised of nine (9) voting members – two appointed by the Beaufort Chamber, two by Beaufort County, two by the Greater Island Council, one by the City of Beaufort, one by the Town of Port Royal and the representative from Beaufort appointed by the Governor to the State's Military Base Task Force.

**Situation Analysis**

The MEC is at critical inflection point. During 2020, the group onboarded a new chairman and several new committee members. During 2021, the group worked through an internal process to outline a new workplan to accomplish its core mission. A robust, effective communications strategy is the foundation of the new workplan.

Meanwhile over the past year, media coverage has fueled increased questions about the future of Beaufort County's military installations, particularly about MCRD Parris Island. Comments made by the Commandant of the Marine Corps during a September 2020 interview raised the possibility of an alternative Marine basic training location. His interview triggered a round of articles in local and military-focused media outlets. Parris Island's future then became a narrative in a heated political contest for the SC-1 Congressional seat, fueling additional media coverage.

Additionally, an ongoing base resiliency study has generated several articles about the impacts of sea level rise and flooding at area bases. A congressional budget mandate has driven media coverage about gender integration for Marine training. Combined, the media attention has caused some in the community to debate the long-term

viability of Beaufort County's military installations. The MEC seeks to counter questions with facts and replace doubts with confidence in the future of our bases.

Communications efforts over the past 12 months in response to this media coverage have been limited to a few community presentations, one-on-one discussions between committee members and elected officials, and periodic public statements made by the Beaufort Regional Chamber. Media relations has not been a focal point for various reasons. The MEC's only web presence is a page on the Beaufort Chamber's website, and the MEC has no social media presence.

The MEC seeks to immediately develop and promote a proactive and unified case in support of the military bases and to engage key stakeholders in sharing those support messages. The MEC, through its forthcoming communications strategy, will make a convincing case for Beaufort's military installations based on their vital contributions to national defense and to the region's economy.

### **Objectives**

The MEC wishes to retain the services of a strategic communications firm to develop a comprehensive communications plan aligned with its mission, to implement that plan, and to provide ongoing communications management and support. The selected firm will develop a cohesive strategy, draft consistent messaging, outline implementation steps, and create core communications collateral to achieve the following objectives:

- Outline vital contributions to national defense made by Beaufort County military bases
- Highlight core and unique strategic and operational strengths of the military bases, including opportunities for mission expansion
- Underscore economic, cultural and historic value of the bases to the Beaufort region and beyond
- Present a factual narrative to address key concerns/questions about the bases and demonstrate their long-term value

### **Target Audiences**

Our strategic communications plan must include tactics to reach the following target audiences:

- Federal, state and local elected officials representing Beaufort County and its municipal governments along with others with vested interest in Beaufort's military installations
- National decision-makers on base alignment
- Local media and military-focused national media
- Community stakeholder groups (e.g. rotary clubs, chamber members, veterans organizations)
- Local general public, specifically military service members, retirees and veterans

### **Success Outcomes**

For the communications strategy to be successful, it must include deliverables that enhance the MEC's ability to achieve its mission through effective messaging and enhanced message delivery. Specific outcomes include:

- An overarching core narrative that promotes strengths of Beaufort's three military installations
- Robust talking points, tailored by installation, issue and audience
- A media relations plan to include editorial engagement, opportunities for earned media, etc.
- An enhanced web and social media presence for the MEC
- Increased visibility and recognition for the MEC with key regional stakeholders
- A practical plan for implementation and ongoing communications management
- Recommended metrics to establish a baseline and empirically track message reach and influence

### **Project Phases**

The MEC envisions three distinct phases to this communications plan. Proposals and cost estimates should address each of these phases:

- 1) Comprehensive communications plan development, including core messages and media strategy.
- 2) Plan implementation, including creation of core communications collateral
- 3) Ongoing communications management, including social media and web maintenance

### **Qualifications**

To assess each firm's overall expertise, a complete list of qualifications and at least three (3) references where comparable work has been successfully completed are required as part of the response to this RFP. Please include credentials for each firm member who will play a role in this engagement. Finally, please provide a description of your firm's technology support capabilities, as well as any experience in crafting messaging on military issues.

### **Expectation of MEC Involvement**

Please include in your proposal expectations of involvement or direct support by members of the MEC or by Beaufort Regional Chamber board or staff including – intelligence gathering, focus groups, outreach to secure meetings, administrative support, etc.

### **Submission Guidelines**

- Proposals should be submitted electronically in PDF format to: [ian@beaufortchamber.org](mailto:ian@beaufortchamber.org)
- All proposals are due no later than 20:00 EDT on Friday, July 30, 2021
- Any questions about the MEC, this RFP document, or the submission criteria should be submitted via email to: [ian@beaufortchamber.org](mailto:ian@beaufortchamber.org) no later than 17:00 EDT on Wed., July 14, 2021
- All submitted questions will be addressed during a live Q&A webinar via Zoom on Thurs. July 15 at 13:00. Zoom meeting link is: <https://zoom.us/j/91561556631>
- A recording of the Q&A webinar will be made available.

### **Preferred Order of Proposal**

1. Statement of intent
2. Methodology/Project Outline
3. Assigned Team
4. Timeline for completion
5. Qualifications/Experience/References
6. Expectations of the MEC staff and leadership during the project
7. Recommended cost proposal (to include specific recommended payment schedule, estimated hours/project task, and a breakdown of professional fees and estimated direct project costs)
8. Sample contract

### **Estimated Timeline**

- July 2 - RFP distributed
- July 15 - Conference call opportunity for any interested firm
- July 30 - Responses Due
- Week of 8/2 - MEC RFP Review Committee evaluates proposals
- Week of 8/9- MEC RFP Review Committee follow up
- Week of 8/16 - MEC meets for final selection
- No later than Sept. 1 - Contract begins

#### **Point of Contact**

Please direct all inquiries about this project to:

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