



# **IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF HAMPTON ROADS**

**The Hampton Roads Regional Structure Project**

**Recommendations for the**

**H.R. Partnership: News Bureau**

Prepared by the Future of Hampton Roads, Inc.

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SG2C

HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL STRUCTURE PROJECT

**REPORT OF STUDY GROUP 2C**

**HAMPTON ROADS NEWS BUREAU  
(PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE)**

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November 30, 2006

### **1. Study Group Task**

Study Group 2C was charged with providing recommendations regarding a proposal from *Report No.2* that a Public Information Office (PIO) be attached to the Hampton Roads Partnership (HRP) to perform three functions:

1. Execute the needed public information program for the HRP itself (press releases, newsletters, etc.)
2. Write articles with the byline “Hampton Roads” for publication in various channels of the national media, some of which should be identified as examples.
3. Serve as a point of contact for journalists outside the region interested in making contacts or getting information about Hampton Roads.

### **2. Questions for the Study Group**

- A. What are the functions of the proposed Public Information Office?
- B. What are some examples of the kind of stories the PIO would produce for the national media as indicated in Task 2?
- C. Is “Public Information Office” the appropriate descriptive name for this function?
- D. Is more than one person needed to perform the job?
- E. What credentials are deemed essential to fulfill the mission of the position or positions?
- F. Given the function (Task 1), the HRP is probably the appropriate place to locate the PIO for administrative purposes; however, are there alternatives (Planning District, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) that are better suited to carry out the mission?
- G. Related to (F), who should pay for staffing salaries?
- H. What is the anticipated budget for salaries, benefits, conferences, travel and other expenses?

## 2. Recommendations

### **a. Establish a Hampton Roads News Bureau in the Hampton Roads Partnership.**

The lettered paragraphs below refer to the questions listed above in Section 1:

A. The functions of the News Bureau would be expressed in its Mission Statement:

As the public information arm of the Hampton Roads Partnership, the News Bureau will publicize the Partnership's own activities as well as the positive aspects and achievements of the Hampton Roads region, and it will enhance public awareness of Hampton Roads' competitive advantage among businesses, governmental and general audiences locally, throughout Virginia and the nation.

The News Bureau will support the mission of the Hampton Roads Partnership:

- i. Pursuit of regional competitiveness for Hampton Roads in a dynamic global economy.
- ii. Effective and equitable representation of ten cities, six counties, and one town in Southeastern Virginia and their citizens totaling a population of nearly 1.6 million.
- iii. Facilitation of regional collaboration and action resulting in a better quality of life for all of the region's citizens.

B. The news bureau will build national and international awareness of Hampton Roads through third-party credible media exposure.

- i. It will strategically pitch human-interest stories to national and international publications, accentuating
  - Regional history
  - Regional industry (military, tourism, manufacturing, the Port of Virginia, advanced technology)
  - Regional quality of life
  - Regional statistical data
  - Regional growth and transitions during process (metamorphosis)
  - Regional cooperation (to tackle regional challenges – e.g., transportation)
  - Regional direction
- ii. The news bureau will strive to establish Hampton Roads Partnership as a national expert in the field of regional engineering.

iii. The news bureau will strive to establish Hampton Roads regional brand identity:

- \* Establish the name “Hampton Roads” in on-line search engines for the Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News Metropolitan Statistical Area.
- \* Promote the official renaming of the MSA to Hampton Roads.
- \* Establish consistency of Hampton Roads MSA parameters and name. The MSA parameters as outlined by the U.S. Census Bureau should be consistent within the agency and other affiliated governmental bodies. These parameters should be perpetuated in published studies of the region, commemorative publications, travel publications (AAA reports and Tourbooks, Virginia Tourism Corporation travel guides), military reports/assessments, and Chambers of Commerce reports.

C. The preferred name for this function is “Hampton Roads News Bureau.”

D. The Hampton Roads News Bureau should be staffed by two persons.

E. It is recommended that the Hampton Roads News Bureau be staffed by an accredited public relations strategist (PIO) and a research analyst.

F. In consideration of the mission of the Hampton Roads Partnership, it is believed the Hampton Roads News Bureau should be housed within the Hampton Roads Partnership and the staff should report to the President of the Partnership.

G. It is believed the salaries and benefits for the staff of the news bureau should be administered by the Hampton Roads Partnership with contributions by all communities in the Hampton Roads region to cover these expenses.

H. The suggested budget is \$100,000 annually to cover all expenses, salaries and benefits of the Hampton Roads New Bureau.

**b. Analyze the communication methods used by competitor MSAs.**

The Hampton Roads News Bureau should initially conduct a competitive analysis of the communication methods established by the following MSAs to determine best practices for regional public relations. It should simultaneously study Hampton Roads’ competitive advantages.

Jacksonville, FL MSA  
Birmingham, AL MSA  
Hartford, CT MSA  
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL  
Atlanta, GA MSA  
Louisville, KY-IN MSA  
Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN PMSA  
Portland, ME MSA

Baltimore, MD PMSA  
 Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill, NC-SC MSA  
 Greensboro--Winston-Salem--High Point, NC MSA  
 Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC MSA  
 Richmond-Petersburg, VA MSA  
 Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN MSA

**c. Create a regional message.**

In order to facilitate opportunities for positive regional exposure, the Hampton Roads News Bureau will utilize resources available through regional convention and visitor bureaus, city/county communications offices, industry public information officers and the regional chambers of commerce. It will engage the support of these partners and identify opportunities for collaboration. It is essential that the news bureau not overlap the efforts already in place by its stakeholders, but to enhance them by taking efforts from a community level to a regional one.

To effectively accomplish its objectives, the bureau will:

- i. plan, direct and coordinate national and international media relations and reputation management programs.
- ii. develop an annual marketing plan to accomplish its objectives through measurable goals.
- iii. develop a sales activity calendar with which to implement its plan and measure its accomplishments.
- iv. craft and disseminate regional news and feature press releases to print, broadcast and electronic media, including new media such as podcasts, blogs.
- v. contribute to the collaborative development of regional marketing collateral.
- vi. be responsible for preparation of an annual state of the region report
- vii. maintain Hampton Roads Partnership's web site and on-line press room to reinforce objectives:
  - o Identify cities and counties on home page.
  - o Publish current state of the region statistics and assessment.
  - o Operate a current press room with an online media kit representative of the region
  - o Develop Images indicative of the unique aspects of Hampton Roads (military, downtowns, city centers, universities, main streets, farming, seafood, history, etc)
  - o Issue current press releases
- viii. provide local public communications support to identified regional organizations and initiatives to foster improved understanding among Hampton Roads citizens of regional processes and regional potential.

- ix. communicate regionally the purpose of the Hampton Roads Partnership, its objectives and accomplishments, through media and community relations.
- x. communicate regionally the success of Hampton Roads Partnership's national media relations efforts.

**d. Prepare the communications section of a regional crisis management plan.**

With establishment of a Hampton Roads News Bureau and the ability to issue positive news releases that contribute to positive exposure for the region, comes the need for the Hampton Roads Partnership to be prepared to respond to media queries—both positive and negative—relating to the region. In particular, the Hampton Roads Partnership must be prepared to implement the communications aspect of a previously-developed crisis management plan in time of regional crisis to truly manage the region's reputation and external relations. The news bureau should therefore be responsible for:

- i. developing the crisis plan and updating it annually or per crisis, whichever is more frequent.
- ii. educating and counseling senior officials and regional partners on public information and communication strategies.
- iii. serving as the regional voice to national media in time of crisis.
- iv. serving as a clearing house of information to encourage message consistency among communications officers and industry officials. To accomplish this, the news bureau must establish credibility and consensus among stakeholders prior to the need to implement the crisis plan.

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## **Annex A-1**

### **Position Description:**

#### **Manager of the Hampton Roads News Bureau**

Reports to the President, Hampton Roads Partnership. Supervises a media analyst.

Develop and implement the public relations and communications program of the Hampton Roads Partnership.

Develop and implement the day-to-day operations of a Hampton Roads News Bureau, including writing, editing and releasing news and feature material about significant regional developments and practices in the Hampton Roads area.

Plan, direct and coordinate national and international media relations and reputation management programs to publicize positive aspects and achievements in the region, enhancing awareness of the competitive advantages of Hampton Roads in business, governmental and general audiences.

Provide local public communications support to selected regional organizations and initiatives to foster improved understanding of regional processes and potential among Hampton Roads citizens.

Assist with the development of related activities, publications and collateral materials as required. Consult with and advise senior management on public information and communication strategies.

## **Annex A-2**

### **Members of the Study Group**

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