

Marketing Proposal for VA250

A Regional and National Strategy to Commemorate America. Made in Virginia.

As the Commonwealth of Virginia prepares to commemorate the 250th anniversary of American independence, VA250 is uniquely positioned to lead the nation in elevating the history, ideals, and continuing promise of our founding. The 250th is not just about July 4, 2026—it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to remind Americans where their shared story began and to inspire a new era of civic pride and participation. This proposal outlines an integrated marketing strategy—across both earned and paid channels—designed to build sustained public awareness, drive attendance at events, and position Virginia as the epicenter of this historic moment.

At the heart of this campaign is a simple, powerful truth: **America. Made in Virginia.** From the ideas that sparked revolution to the battlefields that secured independence, from iconic founders to everyday patriots—Virginia’s role in shaping the United States is unrivaled. Our goal is to ensure every Virginian, and every American, knows that story and feels a connection to it.

Strategic Objectives

VA250’s marketing strategy is built around two primary goals: (1) to raise awareness of America’s 250th and Virginia’s role in its origin and continued evolution, and (2) to drive traffic to VA250.org and encourage participation in regional events, museum visits, and commemorations throughout the Commonwealth. All messaging will reinforce the campaign’s core theme—**America. Made in Virginia.**—and be aligned with the broader mission to educate, engage, and inspire.

A Regionally Driven Approach: Six DMAs + Neighboring Jurisdictions

Virginia’s media landscape is diverse, spanning urban, rural, and cross-border regions. To effectively target messaging, VA250’s outreach strategy will be organized around six Designated Market Areas (DMAs), with special attention to **adjacent jurisdictions** whose residents travel, work, and consume media across state lines. Each DMA will have a dedicated regional microsite hosted on VA250.org, with content tailored to highlight local events, historic sites, and civic opportunities. Microsites will use IP-based geolocation to direct users to the most relevant content automatically.

1. Washington, D.C. (DMA #8 – DMV Region)

Serving Northern Virginia (Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun, Prince William, Stafford, etc.), the District of Columbia, and Southern Maryland (Charles, St. Mary’s, and Prince George’s Counties).

2. Norfolk–Portsmouth–Newport News (DMA #44 – Hampton Roads/Tidewater)

Covering southeastern Virginia including Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News, Williamsburg, and York County.

3. Richmond–Petersburg (DMA #56 – Central Virginia)

Home to the state capital and key institutions like the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, this DMA includes Richmond, Henrico, Chesterfield, and surrounding counties.

4. Roanoke–Lynchburg (DMA #70/71 – Western & Southcentral Virginia)

Covering Roanoke, Lynchburg, Danville, and surrounding areas.

5. Tri-Cities TN–VA (DMA #101 – Southwest Virginia/Northeast Tennessee)

Spanning Bristol, Abingdon, and their Tennessee counterparts, this DMA shares a strong cross-state cultural identity.

6. Charlottesville (DMA #172 – Piedmont Region)

Serving Albemarle, Fluvanna, Orange, Greene, and Madison counties, this DMA centers on the legacy of Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, and the intellectual origins of the republic.

Civic Engagement Through the Lens of America. Made in Virginia.

At the heart of the VA250 commemoration is a single, clear, and powerful message: **America. Made in Virginia.** This is not simply a slogan—it is a foundational narrative that guides every aspect of our civic engagement, public storytelling, and community outreach. It serves as an invitation to all Virginians and Americans alike to reconnect with their shared history, recognizing that the ideals, struggles, and triumphs of America’s founding began right here in the Commonwealth.

To ensure clarity, authenticity, and consistency, all civic engagement efforts and creative communications will remain firmly rooted in existing VA250 assets. This includes leveraging previously developed speeches, videos, talking points, educational content, branding materials, and narratives. While some new content or stories may be carefully developed to engage specific local communities or amplify underrepresented voices, these will always directly reflect, support, and reinforce the existing core themes of **America. Made in Virginia.**

All public-facing communications—whether advertisements, partner toolkits, educational resources, merchandise, or Mobile Museum experiences—will explicitly highlight Virginia’s pivotal role in America’s founding. By continuously reinforcing this central message, VA250 ensures that civic pride, historical awareness, and community engagement flow naturally and powerfully from the unified understanding that Virginia is not merely part of the American story—it is where the story itself began.

Throughout the campaign, VA250 will leverage a wide range of authentic Virginian voices—including historians, educators, veterans, descendants of revolutionaries, Indigenous communities, and new citizens—whose stories vividly illustrate how the foundations laid in Virginia continue to shape our lives today. Each narrative and activation, regardless of scale or region, will be clearly and consistently linked back to the central theme of **America. Made in Virginia.**, ensuring that Virginians across all regions recognize their shared historical legacy and civic responsibility.

By maintaining this disciplined approach to storytelling and content development, VA250 will effectively inspire citizens across the Commonwealth and beyond to engage actively in civic life, and recommit to the enduring values and ideals first forged in Virginia.

Mobile Museums: Bringing History Directly to Virginia's Communities

A cornerstone of VA250's statewide engagement and education strategy is the Virginia 250 Mobile Museum initiative, which consists of two traveling museums designed to deliver powerful, immersive experiences that connect Virginians directly with America's founding story. One Mobile Museum is already actively touring the state, while a second is scheduled to launch in early winter 2025 or early 2026.

Upon deployment of the second museum, the two vehicles will strategically divide coverage to ensure comprehensive outreach:

- Mobile Museum 1: Primarily servicing the densely populated and historically rich areas of Northern, Central, and Eastern Virginia.
- Mobile Museum 2: Focusing on Southwest, Southern, and Western regions of Virginia, extending outreach to rural and underserved localities to ensure inclusivity.

Each Mobile Museum will engage Virginians, particularly middle school students, through interactive multimedia exhibits, holographic historical reenactments, and narratives emphasizing universal themes of liberty, civic responsibility, and active citizenship. These experiences underscore the campaign's core message—America. Made in Virginia.—making history tangible and relevant.

Maximizing the Mobile Museums' Impact:

To amplify their reach and visibility, the Mobile Museums will serve multiple strategic functions:

- Educational Outreach: Each Mobile Museum aims to visit every middle school in the Commonwealth, providing students with memorable and educational experiences. Supplementary materials, such as takeaway handouts and QR-code-enabled guides, will help extend these lessons to families at home.
- Event-Based Visibility: The Museums will be prominently featured at major statewide events, including high-attendance sports events such as the University of Virginia vs. Virginia Tech football game, regional fairs, festivals, and significant commemorations, broadening exposure to diverse audiences.
- Local Advertising and Promotions: Equipped with exterior-mounted digital screens, the Mobile Museums will serve as dynamic mobile billboards. At each stop, they will showcase localized advertisements for upcoming historical commemorations, civic activities, and VA250 partner events, significantly increasing community engagement and event attendance.
- Grassroots and Partner Integration: The Mobile Museums will collaborate closely with local VA250 committees, DMOs, historic sites, and educational institutions to tailor each visit to regional historical narratives and civic interests. Partner organizations will be encouraged to host complementary events, maximizing local participation and amplifying regional pride.
- Content Capture and Storytelling: Visits will be documented through social media, short-form videos, and local news features, ensuring that impactful moments and community reactions are widely shared, driving digital engagement and reinforcing the broader earned media strategy.

In combination, these strategic uses will position the Virginia 250 Mobile Museums as vibrant, accessible symbols of Virginia's foundational role in American history, effectively driving public awareness, education, and excitement for the 250th commemoration across all regions of the Commonwealth.

Paid Media Plan: Statewide Reach, Regional Relevance

To amplify visibility and ensure maximum engagement, VA250's paid media plan will strategically leverage digital and traditional channels with clear targeting and measurable outcomes:

- **Programmatic and Digital Advertising:**
 - Precise demographic and interest-based targeting, emphasizing families, educators, historians, and civic-minded Virginians.
 - Advanced retargeting strategies for website visitors and past event attendees.
 - Geofencing of historic districts, schools, and local events for timely ad delivery.
- **Social Media Marketing:**
 - Integrated ad formats, including Stories, Reels, carousel ads, and influencer-driven content.
 - Localized social media content calendars coordinated around historical anniversaries and regional events.
 - Monthly influencer partnerships to reach younger audiences and increase organic sharing.
- **Streaming and Audio Marketing:**
 - Regionally targeted ads on Spotify, iHeartRadio, and Pandora, tailored to commuter peak hours and weekend listening.
 - Custom audio messages recorded by recognizable local leaders and Commission members for heightened authenticity and engagement.
- **Broadcast and Cable Advertising:**
 - Targeted local buys around historically themed programs, community news, local sports events, and PBS programming.
 - Flighted schedules with increased frequency during key commemorative periods, such as May and July 2026.
- **Dynamic Out-of-Home Advertising:**
 - Digital billboards placed strategically along tourist-heavy corridors (I-95, I-81, I-64, Route 29, etc.), airports, and transit hubs.
 - Rotating messages tailored to upcoming local events and countdowns to milestone commemorations.
- **Guerilla and Experiential Marketing:**
 - Community pop-ups and street-team activations providing memorable, sharable experiences.
 - Interactive installations encouraging public interaction, content capture, and social sharing, increasing grassroots buzz.
- **Community Partnership Program:**
 - Collaborations with local small businesses for promotional signage, co-branded offers, and commemorative merchandise.
 - Community incentive programs to reward repeat visits to historical and cultural partners.
- **Direct Digital Integration (Email and SMS):**
 - Capturing event registrations and mobile museum visits to grow segmented email/SMS databases.
 - Personalized communications promoting upcoming events, offering special content previews, and engagement prompts.

Creative content across all paid media channels will consistently and compellingly reinforce the central message of the campaign: America. Made in Virginia. Every ad placement, from digital and social media to broadcast television, radio, billboards, and transit signage, will emphasize Virginia's pivotal role in the founding of the United States.

Earned Media Plan: Elevating Virginia's Voice Nationally

Virginia's earned media strategy leverages the full breadth of the commemoration—major tentpole events, local and regional activations, cultural milestones, mobile museum tours, and the robust leadership of the VA250 Commission—to engage media at national, regional, and hyperlocal levels. Given the scale and historical importance of the 250th anniversary, Virginia's strategic storytelling will emphasize the Commonwealth as the epicenter of America's founding narrative.

Importantly, while the campaign benefits from targeted paid media within Virginia, budget constraints significantly limit paid media placements at the national level. Therefore, strategic, high-impact earned media is particularly critical for extending the **America. Made in Virginia.** message beyond the Commonwealth, ensuring national recognition and engagement with Virginia's pivotal role in American history.

This earned media approach will follow two interconnected strategies:

Part 1: Event-Driven and Programmatic Storytelling

A core aspect of the earned media strategy focuses on generating broad visibility, excitement, and media coverage surrounding major commemorative events, anniversaries, and programmatic activations. This includes both large-scale “tentpole” events and community-specific storytelling, all framed consistently by the message that these historical milestones belong to every American.

Media outreach will emphasize:

- **Tentpole Events**, such as:
 - Virginia's Independence Day celebration on May 15, 2026, in Colonial Williamsburg.
 - July 4, 2026 weekend commemorations in Williamsburg and communities across Virginia.
 - Major anniversaries and commemorations tied to historical speeches, declarations, and battles.
- **Moments-in-Time Storytelling**—framed around significant historical dates, including:
 - May 15, 1776 – Virginia's declaration of independence.
 - October 7, 1776 – Convening of Virginia's first General Assembly as a newly independent state.
- **Mobile Museum Experience (MME) Visits**—regional earned media outreach aligned with the museum's schedule, highlighting:
 - Local student and community participation.
 - Coverage opportunities for regional TV, radio, and newspapers to foster local pride and participation.
- **Educational and Programmatic Announcements**, highlighting:
 - New educational curriculum initiatives aligned with Virginia's Standards of Learning.
 - Distribution of commemorative grants to local communities.
 - Unveiling of traveling exhibits and statewide museum partnerships.

Outreach efforts will be strategically targeted to local media outlets, including community newspapers, public radio, and digital platforms, while actively pursuing feature stories in state and national publications when events and programs carry broader historical or cultural significance.

Part 2: Principal-Led Storytelling and National Thought Leadership

Given the limited national paid media budget, VA250 places special emphasis on principal-led storytelling and earned media at the national level. The bipartisan leadership of the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission provides unparalleled credibility, historical depth, and civic authenticity, making these leaders uniquely positioned to engage national audiences and media. By leveraging the voices of these prominent

leaders, VA250 will strategically secure coverage beyond Virginia, ensuring nationwide resonance of the **America. Made in Virginia.** narrative.

Key principals driving national earned media include:

- **Carly Fiorina, Honorary National Chair** – With a well-established national profile and robust media presence, Carly Fiorina is particularly well-positioned to serve as the primary voice for national earned media placements. Her thought leadership will anchor high-impact op-eds and prominent media interviews with outlets such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *CBS Sunday Morning*, *PBS NewsHour*, Bloomberg, and influential podcasts and civic platforms. Her extensive LinkedIn network (500,000+ subscribers) further amplifies national reach.
- **The Honorable Terry Austin, Chairman** – His bipartisan reputation and legislative expertise will reinforce Virginia’s statewide approach to commemoration in national interviews, highlighting cross-party unity and regional cooperation.
- **Senator Mamie Locke, Vice Chair** – An influential advocate for inclusive storytelling, Senator Locke will provide critical context around the contributions of historically underrepresented communities, enhancing national conversations around diversity and civic participation.
- **Cheryl Wilson, Executive Director** – Cheryl’s deep operational knowledge of Virginia’s commemorative initiatives allows for authoritative discussions about programmatic success, educational impact, and innovative civic engagement strategies in national and regional media interviews.
- **Chief Stephen Adkins, Tribal Nations Leadership Council Chair** – As Chief of the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, Chief Adkins brings a crucial perspective to national media, highlighting Indigenous peoples’ foundational and enduring contributions to America’s history.
- **Additional Commission Members and Institutional Leaders** – including Christy Coleman (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation), Cliff Fleet (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation), Jane Kamensky (Monticello), Doug Bradburn (Mount Vernon) – will offer expert commentary to specialized national media outlets in history, education, tourism, and cultural fields.

Tactics to Maximize Principal-Led National Earned Media Impact:

- **Strategically Timed Op-Eds and National Commentary** – Principals will author articles and opinion pieces in prominent national publications around significant dates, effectively positioning Virginia’s foundational story in broader American discourse.
- **National Broadcast and Digital Interviews** – Securing appearances on high-profile TV and radio shows, podcasts, and influential digital platforms to elevate Virginia’s commemorative message to nationwide audiences.
- **Social Media and Digital Amplification** – Extending reach through targeted use of Carly Fiorina’s extensive LinkedIn network, institutional partners’ digital channels, and coordinated amplification by VA250’s earned media team.

By carefully leveraging earned media at both state and national levels—and through strategic deployment of the Commission’s high-profile leaders—VA250 will effectively overcome national paid media budget limitations. This comprehensive earned media approach ensures the enduring significance of Virginia’s role in American history is recognized not only within the Commonwealth but across the nation, powerfully reinforcing the unifying message of **America. Made in Virginia.**

Partner Activation and Grassroots Distribution

VA250's partner strategy is grounded in the belief that broad visibility, meaningful community engagement, and sustained impact depend on building and continuously nurturing a powerful, regionally distributed network of trusted amplifiers. These partners are essential for delivering the message of **America. Made in Virginia.** into every locality, classroom, cultural site, and civic space across the Commonwealth.

Our diverse and growing network of partners includes:

- Local VA250 committees representing all 134 Virginia localities
- Museums, historic sites, libraries, and cultural institutions
- Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and tourism agencies
- Public and private universities, K–12 school systems, educators, and curriculum specialists
- Chambers of commerce, nonprofit organizations, civic associations, and local businesses
- Faith-based communities, congregations, and interfaith groups
- Local media outlets, community newspapers, and broadcasters
- Members of the Virginia General Assembly, local elected officials, and key government influencers
- Individual volunteers and community advocates dedicated to supporting VA250
- Associations and convening groups

While mobilizing this existing partner base, VA250 recognizes the ongoing need to identify and recruit additional high-value partners—specifically those organizations and individuals with substantial reach, significant engagement, or influential voices within their sectors or regions. Targeted outreach will prioritize key statewide entities such as the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, influential regional school districts, prominent media personalities, and leading cultural and economic organizations.

Tailored Communications and Support by Region

To effectively activate this expansive partner network, VA250 will employ a strategically tailored approach organized around Virginia's six DMAs. This ensures communications are relevant, timely, and actionable for each partner. Twice per month—or more frequently during high-profile campaign moments—partners will receive succinct, targeted emails providing:

- **Featured Content Ideas:** Curated highlights around historical anniversaries, regional commemorations, significant civic milestones, and special VA250 events (e.g., “May 15: Virginia’s Declaration of Independence Day,” or “Mobile Museum Visiting Your Region This Month”).
- **Region-Specific Creative Assets:** Direct access to downloadable collateral, such as social media graphics, customizable flyers, digital banners, email templates, QR-code signage linking to DMA-specific microsites, and other promotional materials carefully tailored to their geographic area.
- **Social Media Guidance:** Practical suggestions for posts, including sample captions, approved hashtags, and key talking points aligned with the campaign’s core narratives and overall media strategy.
- **Merchandise and Promotional Opportunities:** Clear guidance on promoting, displaying, or distributing official VA250-branded merchandise—such as apparel, commemorative items, flags, and souvenirs—within local museum shops, tourism centers, community events, and partner facilities.
- **Earned Media Calls-to-Action:** Invitations for partners to contribute to local and regional media coverage through interviews, co-authored op-eds, public service announcements, or other storytelling opportunities.
- **Calendar Reminders:** Notifications about upcoming regional VA250 activities, Mobile Museum visits, commemorative events, public engagements, or partner coordination calls, providing partners ample lead time to participate and promote.

All partners will also have continuous, direct access to the comprehensive VA250 communications toolkit via the VA250.org website, along with contact information for dedicated regional liaisons who can assist with questions and support.

Support, Prioritization, and Recognition

Given the scale and diversity of Virginia's communities, VA250 will deploy a strategic, phased, and tiered partner activation framework to efficiently allocate resources, maximize impact, and provide customized support:

- **Tier 1 – High-Reach Localities:**

Focused initially on the largest jurisdictions—such as Fairfax County, Virginia Beach, Prince William, Chesterfield, Loudoun, and Henrico—this tier leverages their robust communications infrastructure, extensive audience reach, and established civic engagement capacities. Partners in these areas will receive:

- Frequent strategic check-ins and personalized briefings
- Enhanced one-on-one liaison support, particularly for high-impact partners like the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, prominent cultural institutions, and influential General Assembly members
- Priority access to exclusive content and co-branded merchandise opportunities
- Recognition through statewide earned media outreach and prominent social media spotlights

- **Tier 2 – Medium Localities & Regional Clusters:**

VA250 will then focus efforts on strategically grouped medium-sized cities and counties—such as the Roanoke Valley, Shenandoah Valley, Peninsula, Fredericksburg, and Charlottesville regions—particularly around significant historic anniversaries, events, and Mobile Museum visits. Partners here will receive:

- Regular group briefings tailored by DMA
- Customized toolkits emphasizing region-specific historic themes and local commemorative events
- Cross-promotional opportunities among regional partners
- Easy-to-use digital and print assets facilitating seamless integration into their existing communications channels

- **Tier 3 – Rural and Underserved Localities:**

Recognizing the importance of inclusion and visibility in every part of Virginia, VA250 will ensure targeted, accessible support for traditionally under-resourced or rural localities. This approach includes:

- Simplified yet effective toolkits designed specifically for ease of implementation by volunteers, small nonprofits, or local governments with limited staff
- Enhanced virtual training sessions tailored to these partners' capacities
- Specialized templates for straightforward social media, print collateral, and media outreach
- Additional hands-on guidance for Mobile Museum coordination and participation in statewide commemorative events

Additionally, VA250 will implement structured recognition programs celebrating high-performing partner initiatives across all tiers. Successful local activations, creative promotions, and impactful storytelling will be regularly highlighted via:

- VA250 social media channels and the official campaign website
- Inclusion in statewide newsletters and stakeholder communications (e.g. DOE, VAM, VACO, corporate newsletters)

- Targeted earned media pitches and regional press releases showcasing partner contributions and local success stories

By continually expanding this partner network—prioritizing organizations with significant reach and influence—and providing regionally tailored, user-friendly resources, VA250 is cultivating a powerful grassroots infrastructure. This ensures the message of **America. Made in Virginia.** reaches every corner of the Commonwealth, resonating authentically and creating lasting community pride.

Metrics

To effectively evaluate the success of VA250's marketing efforts from September 2025 through July 2026, specific metrics aligned closely with VA250's overarching strategic objectives must be implemented. VA250's primary goals include (1) raising broad awareness of America's 250th anniversary and Virginia's foundational role, and (2) driving traffic to VA250.org, encouraging participation in regional events, museum visits, and commemorations statewide. Essentially, VA250 is building the top of the marketing funnel, prioritizing reach, engagement, and initial interaction.

Awareness and Reach Metrics:

- **Overall Impressions:** Track total impressions across all media (digital, print, broadcast, out-of-home) to assess the broad visibility of the "America. Made in Virginia." campaign.
- **Website Traffic Growth:** Total unique visitors to VA250.org and regional microsites, emphasizing new user acquisition.
- **Brand Recognition and Message Penetration:** Regular surveys to measure public awareness and understanding of Virginia's role in America's founding and evolution, including awareness of the VA250 campaign.

Digital Engagement Metrics:

- **Site Engagement:** Average time on site, pages viewed per visit, and bounce rates, particularly from paid and organic traffic sources.
- **Social Media Reach and Interaction:** Total reach and impressions across social media platforms, as well as engagement rates (likes, shares, comments), highlighting content virality and resonance.
- **Influencer Campaign Effectiveness:** Metrics capturing impressions, reach, and engagement from partnerships with social media influencers and community leaders.

Event Participation and Activation Metrics:

- **Event Attendance:** Number of attendees at VA250-branded or partner-hosted events, including specific counts from significant commemorations and mobile museum visits.
- **Mobile Museum Impact:** Total number of middle schools visited by mobile museums, attendance numbers, student engagement metrics, and distribution of educational materials.

Media and Content Metrics:

- **Earned Media Volume and Reach:** Total number of media placements (local, regional, national), including TV, radio, podcasts, print, and online outlets, measuring total audience exposure.
- **Content Interaction:** Number of downloads of educational resources, event guides, and promotional materials from VA250.org.

- **Regional Content Effectiveness:** Engagement with geographically tailored content, measured through microsite traffic, regional media coverage, and local partner participation.

Grassroots and Partner Network Metrics:

- **Partner Activation:** Number of active local committees (out of the total 134 localities), tracking regular use of provided promotional toolkits and assets.
- **Grassroots Engagement:** Number of local community events held, attendance metrics, and quantity of promotional materials distributed through grassroots networks.
- **Merchandise Distribution and Engagement:** Quantity of VA250-branded merchandise distributed or sold, tracking regional demand and visibility.

By clearly defining and regularly tracking these metrics, VA250 will effectively measure its success in building awareness, driving initial engagement, and fostering participation, thus fulfilling its role as the foundational layer of the marketing funnel for America's 250th commemoration.