

Great Lakes Water Authority

RFP for Communication  
and Marketing Services

6.23.2023

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CREATIVE

**Dear Proposal Review Committee,**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Great Lakes Water Authority's RFP for Communication and Marketing Services. The Martin Group has assembled a customized partnership of best-in-class organizations to support GLWA's communication objectives, including our trusted partners at Hearst and VVK PR + Creative based in Detroit, MI.

As a fully integrated communications firm, The Martin Group will provide project oversight to include brand strategy, positioning, and the overall creative direction as needed for GLWA. We feel uniquely positioned for this opportunity given our specialized experience working with water authorities and utilities, including the Niagara Falls Water Board, Buffalo Water Board, and National Fuel.

In 2020, The Martin Group formed a strategic partnership with Hearst that allows us to share resources and strategy across traditional media, social media, and creative and digital services. This partnership gives us exclusive early media opportunities throughout the Hearst portfolio and provides us with access to Hearst's industry-leading collection of audience and first-person data.

The third firm in our partnership is VVK PR – a known and trusted firm in Southeast Michigan who will provide on-site public relations, media relations, and crisis communications support. We are proud to have worked with VVK to support the Detroit-based Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, which serves communities in both Southeast Michigan and Western New York.

We believe this alliance with VVK PR and Hearst provides a dynamic, one-of-a-kind service offering to GLWA, as the organization looks to enhance its brand vision both regionally and nationally, while delivering the best water and wastewater services to 3.8 million Michigan residents. We named our partnership team "MVH" – which stands for Martin, VVK, Hearst – and this is how we will reference ourselves throughout the document.

Sincerely,

Matthew N. Davison

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Davison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chief Business Officer

[matt@martingroupmarketing.com](mailto:matt@martingroupmarketing.com) | 716.604.7772

**APPENDIX A**  
**TECHNICAL WORK PLAN**

## **Section #1**

### **Understanding of the Project**

**The Martin, VVK, Hearst (“MVH”) team is providing:**

1. Brand Awareness and Positioning
2. Reputation and Crisis Management
3. Internal Communication
4. Coaching and Training
5. Reporting

#### **Concept narrative**

As the largest water and wastewater authority in the state of Michigan, GLWA shoulders immense responsibility, servicing nearly half of the Michigan population. And as a (relatively) new entity, awareness and perceptions of the authority’s functions and responsibilities, as well as its values and unique approach to those functions and responsibilities, remains somewhat limited.

This situation presents a significant communications challenge. It also presents a unique opportunity to proactively build that awareness, and shape those perceptions, in a way that creates lasting equity toward the authority’s stated market position as a leading national water and sewer services provider, employer of choice, and defender of clean water.

To this end, MVH has prepared the following comprehensive public relations and marketing strategy designed to grow awareness and affinity for GLWA across its eight-county service area. As requested in the Procurement Solicitation, our recommendations include a strategic mix of brand, message, and materials development; a public relations strategy that includes both proactive and reactive media relations – including crisis communications counsel and support – as well as other public speaking engagements; content marketing strategy and execution; internal communications research, support, and execution; coaching and training; and regular reporting and analytics.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these recommendations and look forward to discussing them with you at your earliest convenience.

## **Section #2**

### **Proposed Work Plan**

#### **Brand awareness and positioning**

MVH will develop a dynamic communications strategy designed to establish a foundational level of education and awareness of GLWA's mission, operations, goals, and programs among key target media. This strategy will serve to maximize future proactive media outreach opportunities.

From a planning and project management standpoint, MVH's approach to ensure solid planning, expectations, and alignment is to develop annual strategic communications plans. These plans then become the basis for forecasting optimal opportunities for media outreach. We then deliver detailed, tactical quarterly plans, as well as plans per announcement, if necessary.

The tactics outlined below will be integrated and sequenced into the communications plans. Within these tactics, MVH will utilize its robust video production resources to enhance these efforts with video storytelling that is critical to any strong communications strategy.

#### **Key message development**

In consultation with the GLWA team, MVH will develop a portfolio of key messaging documents focused on the following subject areas:

- GLWA brand and mission
- Highlights of each GLWA program
- GLWA's impact on its service areas (broken out by county, city or community)
- Others, as needed

These messages will serve as a guide for all communication interactions, from media interviews to speaking opportunities.

#### **Press kit**

MVH recommends developing a comprehensive press kit for GLWA or, if one already exists, refining it for each of the four key focus markets. The press kit may include the following:

- Press releases (developed per announcement)
- GLWA profile, backgrounder and/or fact sheets
- Executive biographies

- Profiles on program areas
- Profiles on geographies (broken out by county, city or community)
- Testimonials

## **Ongoing media engagement**

MVH will work with GLWA to develop press materials that reinforce the authority's mission and vision through your ongoing projects and accomplishments. Developed as part of a coordinated campaign or to address a strategic opportunity, MVH will create a variety of communications materials, including:

- **Presentations for editorial board meetings and briefings**

At the onset of our work, or at key points in GLWA's work, MVH recommends editorial board meetings and briefings with media leadership in the region so that they are exposed to the full scope of the authority's mission, impact and/or programs.

- **Press releases**

Press releases will be written, distributed, and pitched to announce programs, major projects, and organization accomplishments. This effort has a greater impact beyond coverage – it is a way to continually educate target media on GLWA's work and progress, which will elevate and reinforce the brand.

- **Subject matter expertise/industry and thought leadership interviews**

MVH will work with the GLWA team to understand the collective and individual expertise of the authority and its leadership team. We will then identify and pitch opportunities and current news-cycle topics where GLWA executives can be interviewed as thought leaders and/or subject matter experts to provide insight in articles and editorials.

- **Op-eds or letters to the editor**

MVH will identify timely news opportunities to submit op-eds or a letter to the editor about your mission, impact, programs, or other matters related to water and wastewater treatment. We also will strategize with your team to identify opportunities when it would be more impactful for a stakeholder to submit an op-ed or letter to the editor that supports or complements GLWA's efforts.

- **Media recognitions and awards**

Media recognitions and awards are impactful strategies to reinforce the strength of your team expertise and the quality of your operations and brand. MVH will identify recognitions and awards through which GLWA and its executives, their work, expertise, and accomplishments, can be elevated, such as:



- *Crain's Detroit Business's* Most Influential Women, Notable Executives in Nonprofit/DEI/Etc., 40 Under 40/20 in their 20s, and Best Managed Nonprofits
- *Corp! Magazine's* Diversity leader awards
- *Detroit Free Press's* Neal Shine Awards for Regional Leadership

- **Content marketing**

MVH will work with the GLWA team to author editorials and produce video content that can be shared across communication channels to educate audiences on your general operations, as well as the impact of key programs.

More frequently than ever before, media asks for original editorial content. In addition to sharing this content on GLWA's digital platforms, it can be used for publications that are key for GLWA's mission, such as the *Michigan Chronicle*, *Latino Press* and the *Arab American News*, as well as some local TV outlets, such as CBS, where their capacity to capture original content is low.

## **Brand messaging**

MVH recommends beginning this engagement with a Strategy Session with your internal leadership and communication teams. During the session, we will confirm project priorities, discuss your competitive set, uncover existing challenges and opportunities, and review previous marketing and communications efforts that were both successful and unsuccessful.

We anticipate the session to last a minimum of two hours and would be happy to conduct this meeting in person at your offices, or via tele/videoconference, at your convenience.

Informed by MVH's internal research, as well as the insights gathered during the Strategy Session, we would next craft the GLWA's Brand Strategy Brief – a comprehensive internal “roadmap” that clearly articulates the key aspects of the brand, including (though not limited to):

- **Brand Position** – How your brand is differentiated from the competitive landscape in which it operates.
- **Brand Promise** – Distilling that differentiation into a single declaration about the unique value you deliver to your audiences, as can be validated by supporting proof points.
- **Brand Pillars** – Identifying the 3–5 foundational characteristics that define your brand and articulating the key messaging points around each.

- **Tone and Manner** – The tone of voice, language, and demeanor of the brand, again with an eye to what would be most compelling to the target audience. Where necessary, we will also provide language recommendations for converting complex technical information into messaging fit for consumption by the general population.
- **Desired Net Impression** – A concise declaration expressing the specific impression we want the brand to make on its target audience from their point of view.

MVH will share the Brand Brief with you to elicit your feedback before final approval and will ultimately serve as the foundation for all marketing and communications efforts moving forward.

## **Media inquiries**

VVK, as the PR portion of the MVH team, is the primary point of contact for the majority of 40+ clients in Metro Detroit, across Michigan and nationally, including large nonprofit organizations. As such, they field media requests and immediately communicate to clients the details of the outlet, including contextual background, and recommended next steps to respond.

At the start of our engagement with GLWA, MVH recommends developing a media response protocol, to ensure that our organizations are aligned. The protocol will outline the overall first point of contact for media, the key points of contact within GLWA to address key issues, and expected timeframe to respond to inquiries. This protocol helps provide a seamless process internally and an appropriate level of response externally with media and serves to help cultivate strong media relationships.

## **Media relationships**

MVH has extensive, long-standing relationships with key media regionally, particularly those covering nonprofits, environmental, infrastructure/utilities, and public and community affairs. To enhance our ability to deepen these relationships specifically for GLWA, we would begin by establishing a foundation of understanding and awareness of your role and the impact of your programs, then identify timely and intriguing opportunities to elevate awareness around them.

## **Responding to media**

Course correcting media is an essential component to reputation management. MVH mitigates this issue from the start with the media education approach previously mentioned, which establishes a foundation of understanding that alleviates misinformation and misguided assumptions. Regardless, when media is responding to

consumer concerns or other issues, we understand this must be addressed quickly and smartly.

## **Thought leadership**

Thought leadership content helps fortify executives and leaders as experts in their fields; in our often virtually driven world, it provides the opportunity to grab the attention of those online. Your leaders are experts, and their insight is valuable to your followers. MVH recommends leaning on the success of these leaders for a series of thought leadership pieces. Our award-winning expertise would combine to produce appropriate content for a variety of audiences. These pieces will amplify your leaders' expertise, promote and explain GLWA services, and comment on topical matters that affect your customers and key stakeholders. Once complete, this content can be posted as news links and promoted across your social media channels; used as LinkedIn articles to solicit interest throughout your industry; or utilized for op-ed/sponsored content placement within Southeast Michigan publications and trade publications.

### **Potential topics for thought leadership content:**

- An introduction to GLWA and what its work means to the region
- How industry trends in water management could affect the future of Southeast Michigan
- How climate change is affecting the Great Lakes region and what residents can do to help
- What are the biggest challenges facing wastewater management and how is GLWA meeting these challenges?
- Why innovation in the industry will be critical to managing the threat of changing weather patterns across the U.S.

## **Speaking opportunities**

Speaking opportunities are a key element of elevating GLWA's brand and reinforcing its executives' industry/thought leadership and positions as subject matter experts. As described above, MVH will first take the time to learn more about the authority and the expertise of your team, and then determine the best avenues for positioning.

For each speaking engagement, MVH will provide a briefing document on the opportunity, plus support with content development (talking points, scripting, etc.) and visuals. We can also work with GLWA to implement public speaker training for your executives and well as provide individualized preparation for each opportunity.

Through our combined experience, MVH has a strong understanding of the publications and organizations where we can position GLWA in the region and throughout the state to introduce and share your mission. We also would conduct research to identify



additional opportunities, such as national trade organizations and other appropriate venues.

Based on our general market awareness, here are some examples of the target organizations where we may pitch GLWA for speaking engagements or panel participation:

- The Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce's Detroit and Mackinac Policy Conferences
- Great Lakes Water Infrastructure Conference
- *Michigan Chronicle's* Pancakes and Politics
- Automation Alley
- Community and regional chambers
- Ethnic/cultural organizations, such as the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) and the Italian American Cultural Society

MVH is available to all clients for 24/7 media representation, and when necessary or appropriate, to act as the initial spokesperson. Many of our team members have served as spokespeople for major organizations and would be trained and prepared to serve GLWA in a similar role. It is important for spokespeople to reflect the communities you are serving. MVH is dedicated to diversity at every level and can provide spokespeople who reflect and resonate with diverse communities.

MVH has extensive experience designing, producing, and implementing a wide variety of promotional collateral for a host of different campaigns. Printed collateral has great value standing on its own, and greatly complements digital marketing, traditional paid media, public relations, and social media campaigns.

As MVH works together with GLWA on the "Year in Review" report, there are several aspects for discussion, including:

- Proofreading and copywriting support
- Number of pages/sides to the piece
- Coordination of print production
- Use of photography and stock images
- Digital and print-ready file requirements

MVH assigns a project manager to all clients, who attends key meetings, takes detailed notes and shares pertinent details with the client team. We would assign this associate

to attend these meetings consistently. We could also identify a more senior level team member to attend meetings when requested/necessary.

## **Reputation/Crisis management**

A “crisis ready” organization is better positioned to minimize negative impacts to business, reputation, or credibility in the face of severe, often unexpected, situations. MVH will work in concert with GLWA to ensure the organization is sufficiently prepared to respond – and confident in its communications – amid a crisis scenario. We will do that by developing a comprehensive crisis management program, the key elements of which include assessing GLWA’s readiness and planning efforts to date; identifying risk scenarios, stakeholders, and internal resources; designing a crisis response team and communications plan; and implementing the program, from initial rollout through maintenance, including regular training sessions.

Team MVH has successfully provided such services for various utilities, including for the Niagara Falls Water Board as a result of their 2017 “blackwater discharge” incident, which drew international scrutiny and media attention.

MVH is the first point of contact for crisis response for many clients with local and national operations, including those in the nonprofit, manufacturing, logistics and retail industries. Similar to our communication protocol brief, MVH will develop a crisis communication protocol sheet that provides holding statements, prioritized chains of communications, crisis collaboration/strategy teams. This briefing document helps align responsibilities and processes that can help mitigate challenges when responding to urgent matters. Ninety percent of the VVK PR team is based in Southeast Michigan and within a 30-minute distance from GLWA sites within the region.

Furthermore, team MVH has experience handling 24/7 responses around issues such as water main breaks, facility power outages, and impromptu regulator, media, or elected official facility visits.

## **Internal communications**

Understanding the attitudes and perceptions of your internal stakeholders, and how they may change over time, is critical to inform internal communications efforts. As such, we were pleased to read as part of this RFP that GLWA currently conducts a bi-annual internal communications survey.

MVH’s internal strategy teams specializes in a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research methods – including surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and more – and would be fully equipped to execute this research on GLWA’s behalf, or to support GLWA in conducting its own research, in whatever capacity would be most helpful.

## **Coaching and training**

MVH provides customized media training sessions for executives and other corporate spokespeople – generally half-day or full-day. Our sessions, which have been conducted for organizations across the U.S., typically begin with a 45-minute classroom-style discussion about the media landscape. This helps the participants gain an understanding of the context in which journalists live (for example, their fast-paced environment and 24-hour news cycle) and introduces best practices for interview situations. We discuss tips for remote and in-person interview experiences, ways to handle challenging questions, and other interview process issues.

After the classroom-style discussion, our team spends approximately 45 minutes conducting mock interviews. We complete at least two mock interviews for each executive present. The first mock interview is designed to make each trainee feel more comfortable in interview situations, while the second one puts the trainee in challenging situations with more difficult questions. This gives them the opportunity to test some of the best practices they learned during the classroom session. Our team also provides live feedback about interview performance and offers tips on ways to further improve. These mock interviews are recorded – likely via an iPhone – and would be provided to GLWA and the training participants in the days following our session.

MVH will use our prepared media training materials with customization for your organization, industry, and market. The materials will include a training deck and a brief best practices guide, which we will share with your team to reference moving forward. Media training sessions are held in-person and led by one of our senior PR staff members.

## **Reporting**

### **Traditional (monthly) and social media (monthly and quarterly) metrics reports**

MVH's monthly reports include an activity report that tracks all deliverables achieved, which would aggregate the requested weekly reports. We also provide integrated monthly earned and owned media reports that track audience, engagement, sentiment, reach, clicks, and other key metrics as needed, as well as clickable tiles for each piece of coverage or each social post.

- [Click here](#) for an example of a recent report for the launch of Teach for America's TeachMichigan campaign.

### **Weekly check-in meetings (virtual and/or in-person)**

MVH will tailor our meeting cadence to the requirements and requests of the GLWA. We have found the most successful strategy is to hold a comprehensive all-team monthly meeting where we report on our progress, align on strategy, and outline next steps. We then meet weekly to touch base on key elements of the strategy or needs/requests to help move the work forward. We are happy to meet virtually or in person, at the request of GLWA.

## **Section #3**

### **Assumptions**

In preparing our response to this Request for Proposal (RFP) from the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), MVH made the following assumptions:

- All information outlined in the RFP was true and accurate as of the day it was released.
- Once the contract is awarded, it will be crucial that both parties (GLWA and the selected agency) maintain the confidentiality of all shared information and data – especially as it relates to crisis communications and media relations.
- Our ability to represent an organization accurately in the public sphere depends on timely access to all facts and information known at the time.
- In this particular type of media relations work, truth and integrity among all parties is paramount.
- If GLWA is unable to meet these standards, the agency will not be able to represent the authority.

## **Section #4**

### **Conflict Resolution/Claim Avoidance**

Team MVH concurs that should any dispute arise out of this Agreement related to invoicing, payment, or service delivery, either party may request that such dispute be submitted to third-party mediation for resolution. The parties shall meet in mediation within 45 days of a request. The mediator shall be agreed to by the mediating parties; in the absence of an agreement, the parties shall each submit one name from mediators listed by the [National Academy of Distinguished Neutrals](#). The mediator shall be selected by a blind draw. The cost of mediation shall be borne equally by the parties. Neither party shall be deemed the prevailing party. No party shall be permitted to file a legal action without first meeting in mediation and making a good faith attempt to reach a mediated settlement. The mediation process, once commenced by a meeting with the

mediator, shall last until agreement is reached by the parties but not more than 60 days, unless the maximum time is extended by the parties.

## **Section #5**

### **GLWA's Role**

To achieve a successful partnership, MVH views GLWA as the inspiration for our work in support of the authority. After learning GLWA's primary business objectives and customer/ratepayer needs, MVH would shape all campaigns, initiatives, announcements, and activities to positively position GLWA as the leading provider of water and sewer services in North America. It is MVH's intention to become a true extension of the GLWA team. MVH will invest substantial time in campaign implementation and will engage GLWA in monthly comprehensive strategy meetings, as well as appropriately involve key GLWA team members in weekly check-in meetings when needed. Beyond these meetings, we will provide ample time to engage GLWA in important processes, such as material approvals and media/digital/video interviews. Above all, GLWA will help drive the communications efforts, yet MVH will proactively tackle ideation and project management implementation, to offer a true value-add to the organization.

#### **APPENDIX B**

### **EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS**

## **Section #1**

### **Overview of Vendor**

#### **About The Martin Group**

Founded in 2001, The Martin Group is a leading Great Lakes regional integrated communications firm with offices across New York State, and a remote workforce in various cities throughout the U.S. The firm, which received a strategic minority investment from Hearst in 2020, works with best-in-class organizations ranging from small businesses to global enterprises and has extensive experience in categories including government entities, nonprofits, healthcare, sports and lifestyle, financial services, and food and beverage.

At The Martin Group, we have what we like to call a "sweet spot" for our clients – we are large enough to have all the necessary capabilities within our organization, but small enough so that every client feels important and valued. We simply will not deliver



anything less than a dedicated team who is passionate about their client's business and empowered to go above and beyond to exceed client expectations. The Martin Group has a collaborative environment benefiting both clients and our associates. We foster a shared approach to solving problems and delivering results, which drives our culture and our industry-leading product. The team is comprised of seasoned veterans and rising stars with decades of experience serving top regional, national, and international brands. The firm's philosophy is to develop long-term relationships with clients through a commitment to personal service, innovative thinking, attention to detail, high standards, and a collaborative approach. **Learn more at [martingroup.co](http://martingroup.co).**

## **About VVK PR + Creative**

VVK PR + Creative is an independent, integrated communications firm based in Detroit. We help brands define themselves with strategic and creative communications services. We are a team of 20 PR strategists, digital media specialists, and video producers, who implement comprehensive campaigns that achieve results for our dynamic client base.

The company is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at our core. We believe diversity is more than a committee or policy. It is engrained in our culture, represented at every level of our company, and the lens through which we approach our work.

VVK PR + Creative's team members have a strong history with the Great Lakes Water Authority. Throughout his career, our CEO Peter Van Dyke has worked with several infrastructure organizations and regional efforts where public relations, public affairs and consumer communications are seamlessly integrated. This includes previous clients such as the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, Detroit Department of Transportation, the Regional Transit Authority of Southeastern Michigan, and the Public Lighting Authority. **Learn more at [vvkagency.com](http://vvkagency.com).**

## **About Hearst**

Hearst was founded in 1884 with the *San Francisco Chronicle* and by William Randolph Hearst. Hearst's strong commitment to diversification, innovation, and integrity, centered in a culture of care and a mission to inform audiences and improve lives has propelled the growth of the company to become the fourth-largest digital audience in the nation. This audience size allows local brands to reach deeply into their local communities and scale across the nation when business goals dictate.

Not only is the reach of Hearst expansive, the company's diverse portfolio includes global financial services leader Fitch Group; Hearst Health, a group of medical information and services businesses; Hearst Transportation, which includes CAMP

Systems International, a major provider of software-as-a-service solutions for managing maintenance of jets and helicopters; ownership in cable television networks such as A&E, History Channel, Lifetime, and ESPN; 33 television stations; 24 daily and 52 weekly newspapers; digital services businesses; and over 200 magazines around the world. **Learn more at [hearst.com](http://hearst.com).**

## Case Studies

### Niagara Falls Water Board

*Communicating after a discharge catastrophe*

The Martin Group was hired for a multi-year engagement by the Niagara Falls Water Board (NFWB) following the July 29, 2017, black water discharge incident at the Lower Niagara River in Niagara Falls, New York. This release of untreated water made international headlines, as tourists at Niagara Falls witnessed the basin of the cataracts turn black with sewage and untreated water. The resulting smell and shock impacted local tourism outlets for months, including the world-famous Maid of the Mist, whose ships were surrounded by the water on the date of the incident. The situation was a true black eye for both the region and the NFWB.

In light of this crisis, The Martin Group was hired to step in and handle follow-up media relations and regulatory communications, while at the same time build a proactive campaign to refocus public attention on the need for massive infrastructure investment and technology upgrades at all NFWB (and Great Lakes) wastewater facilities.

The agency designed a budget-friendly public affairs campaign titled the Water Investment Initiative (WIN), to raise New York State and federal government awareness regarding the state of wastewater infrastructure in Niagara Falls. This campaign eventually helped deliver millions of dollars in grants and funding to upgrade NFWB facilities and safeguard local waterways.

In addition to this work, the agency acted as an ongoing public spokesperson for the NFWB. We also designed social media graphics and content calendars, created an educational advertorial series in regional media outlets, and composed speeches, press releases, talking points, letters, and other correspondence for the organization around issues like fire hydrant maintenance, main breaks, water quality, lab testing, rate changes, and related issues.

# Water Main Break Update



## Ratepayer Update from the Niagara Falls Water Board

The NFWB is considering a two-percent rate hike for the 2019 calendar year in order to offset rising operational costs, impending New York State minimum-wage increases, and overall economic inflation. This hike is expected to impact average residential ratepayers through an estimated \$1.97 in total additional service and delivery charges per quarter.

Prior to proposing a rate increase, the NFWB has made every effort to trim expenses and to increase revenues from sources other than ratepayers. This includes moves to generate more interest income on required reserve funds and efforts to overhaul the NFWB vehicle fleet, which have saved the NFWB \$200,000 per year. Additionally, the NFWB has applied for and received grant monies, but most of these require the NFWB to spend its own capital funds for at least 70 percent of the project costs. Moreover, these grants assist with capital projects, not operations and maintenance costs which, like inflation, rise every year.

### Important Facts

- Affecting all companies, non-profits, and government entities, the general costs of doing business have continued to rise over the last several years, including in the operational areas of materials, fuel, wages, insurance, and benefits.
- The major driver of costs is increases in chemical and sludge hauling, which, at \$4,400,000, make up 11% of the proposed budget. By comparison, chemical and sludge hauling costs in 2017 were \$2,275,942.
- The NFWB's renewed focus on maintaining and improving its system, including repairing and maintaining hydrants and repairs to the wastewater treatment plant to maintain water quality, comes at a cost.
- The well-publicized July 29, 2017 discharge has not driven the need for a rate increase; in fact, the NFWB has received over \$20 million in grants in part because of attention that incident brought to wastewater treatment plant's massive investment needs.
- Salary and benefits at the NFWB remain in line with other peer water management authorities and are all accessible to the public. The NFWB keeps wages competitive in order to keep up with increases in wages across all industries and reduce costly turnover.

### Questions?

If you have questions about the rate hike, please do not hesitate to contact the NFWB at [contact@nfwb.org](mailto:contact@nfwb.org) or 716.283.9770.

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Niagara Falls Water Board is to provide safe and reliable water and wastewater management services to our community in an economical and efficient manner.

### Did you know?

With a two percent increase, most ratepayers' quarterly bill will go from \$14.59 to \$14.86, a \$1.97 increase, or \$7.88 per year.

Unlike some municipalities which charge just for drinking water supplied, the NFWB's charges include potable water, wastewater, and storm water treatment services.

For more information, visit [www.nfwb.org](http://www.nfwb.org)

You're Invited



The Niagara Falls Water Board is pleased to announce its working with you to help reduce wastewater, climate, and local infrastructure costs in the town's water system. We are looking for your input on the following:

**January 15, 2019 - 11PM**  
**Niagara Falls Water Board Wastewater Treatment Plant**  
 1000 Buffalo Ave, Niagara Falls, NY  
 All 1000 Buffalo Ave, Niagara Falls, NY  
 All 1000 Buffalo Ave, Niagara Falls, NY

NIAGARA FALLS WATER BOARD



## Detroit Future City

*Managing a robust integrated communications strategy*

VVK CEO Peter Van Dyke has led communications for Detroit Future City since the organization's inception 10 years ago. Through the support of integrated communications plan development and implementation, DFC's presence has grown from a start-up nonprofit to a highly regarded and nationally recognized "think and do tank" dedicated to economic equity in Detroit.

VVK manages all communications strategy for DFC including media relations, executing organizational positioning, marketing and video projections, as well as web management, and digital and social media consultation. In the last year, VVK led the announcement of DFC 2030 Vision for Detroit, which outlined strategies to grow Detroit's African American middle class. This effort included media briefings that resulted in extensive coverage including a comprehensive piece in [Crain's Detroit Business](#), as well as the production of a [2030 Vision video](#) to announce the plan. VVK also managed the social media and newsletter strategy implementation.

The 2030 Vision is just one strong example of the extensive communications VVK provides through DFC's three departments – The Center for Equity, Engagement, and Research; Community and Economic Development; and Land Use and Sustainability. This includes the announcement of multiple reports and programs. More examples of VVK's work on DFC's behalf can be viewed on DFC's [news page](#).





## IMPACT REPORT 2017 - 2021





## Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation

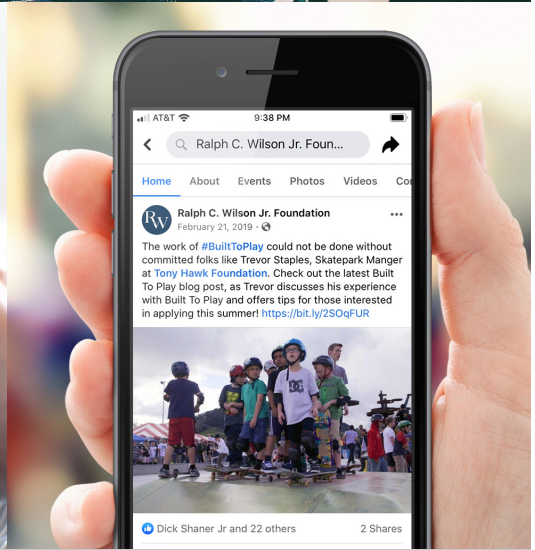
*Honoring a legend by fueling change*

Throughout his life, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. affected millions of people. As owner of the Buffalo Bills. As an entrepreneur, veteran, and philanthropist. And as the founder of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. Before he passed, Mr. Wilson left the foundation with a mandate that would forever change the communities he loved most: Within twenty years, use the \$1.2 billion gained from the sale of the Buffalo Bills to benefit Southeast Michigan and Western New York.

As the foundation's partner agency, The Martin Group had our work cut out for us. What began with the creation of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's brand grew into numerous integrated campaigns supporting their many philanthropic efforts, including:

- **Built to Play** – an initiative to build spaces where children can engage in non-structured play.
- **Lift Off** – an initiative focused on early childhood development and helping children reach their fullest potential.
- **STEM 2035** – an initiative to grant funding and technical assistance to existing afterschool and summer STEM programs.
- **RW100** – A \$200 million investment in parks and trails in Western New York and Southeast Michigan, commemorating what would have been Mr. Wilson's 100th birthday.

And that's just to name a few. Most recently, our team provided marketing support for the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's caregivers initiative and COVID-19 response. Our work has helped the foundation achieve widespread media coverage and deep engagement. Together, we've created broad awareness for the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation while ensuring the success of innovative projects that will benefit the communities of Southeast Michigan and Western New York for generations to come. We think Mr. Wilson would be proud.



## Amazon – Hearst Recruitment and Employer Branding

*Connecting a top national employer to candidates to fill positions at scale*

Amazon has over 1,000 warehouse facilities across the U.S. to support fulfillment of consumer goods. From truck drivers to warehouse workers, Amazon had a persistent need to hire workers to meet the demands of same-day and one-day shipping pledges. With new facilities opening, and to meet the challenge of turnover, Amazon partnered with Hearst to support their digital marketing efforts to fill these critical positions.

In this partnership, Hearst and Amazon aimed to attract talent with three key strategies. The first was to provide hyperlocal, location-based targeting focusing on competitive businesses and other key locations surrounding a defined radius of each warehouse location where candidates are likely to congregate.

The second strategy was to leverage Hearst's best-in-class, first-party audience segments to target job seekers based on experience level and industry of focus (for example, reaching job seekers that have a background in truck driving or manufacturing).

And the third strategy was to drive candidate interest through compelling creative that offered a sign-on bonus, higher wages, and other tactics to gain candidate interest and application. Based on these Hearst Recruitment Solutions strategies, Amazon was able to fill 1.5 million jobs positions on an annual basis.

Each campaign was carefully supervised by a dedicated team at Hearst to ensure that all strategies were performing against client KPIs. Creative messaging, target locations, and other levers were monitored daily to confirm the candidate funnel was robust and that each individual warehouse was meeting their hiring needs. The solutions allowed for multiple creatives to run concurrently for optimization purposes resulting in better talent attraction.



## We are raising the bar on wages.

Starting November 1, all of Amazon's US employees will earn at least \$15 an hour and up to \$16 for nights and weekends.

[join our team](#)

Amazon is an Equal Opportunity Employer - Minority / Women / Disability / Veteran / Gender Identity / Sexual Orientation / Age

amazon

## \$500 sign-on bonus

Earn \$20/hr as a warehouse team member

[Start earning](#)

Amazon is an Equal Opportunity Employer - Minority / Women / Disability / Veteran / Gender Identity / Sexual Orientation / Age

Earn up to \$16.15/hr

Now hiring warehouse team members

[Start earning](#)



amazon

Amazon is an Equal Opportunity Employer - Minority / Women / Disability / Veteran / Gender Identity / Sexual Orientation / Age

## Get started today

Find the warehouse job that works for you.



[Apply now >](#)

Amazon is proud to be an equal opportunity employer.

## Hourly jobs with great pay for everyone

[Apply at Amazon](#)



Amazon is proud to be an equal opportunity employer.

## Find the right Amazon job for you.

Earn **\$15/hr** or more as a warehouse team member in Milford

[APPLY NOW >](#)

Amazon is an Equal Opportunity Employer  
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# Section #2

## Character of the Work

### **The Martin Group**

The Martin Group develops comprehensive, effective, and cost-efficient branding and marketing communications campaigns – many of which include a public affairs and community relations focus. We are delighted to be included in your preliminary consideration set for a strategic marketing communications partner. Given our extensive experience delivering strategic communications for various water authorities and utilities, we believe we would be a particularly well-suited partner for GLWA.

For the past 22 years, we have used our proprietary Brand Fuel process to help countless institutions bring their brands to life through strategic, breakthrough campaigns that yield outstanding results. We are comprehensive – we have the “bench depth” and scale to fully implement interdisciplinary marketing communications solutions – yet intimate; we are personally invested in each and every client relationship, typical of boutique agencies. We simply will not deliver anything less than a dedicated team that is passionate and empowered to go above and beyond to exceed client expectations.

### **VVK PR + Creative**

VVK PR + Creative brings decades of strategic communications and creative production experience to media, automotive, energy, insurance, IT, legal, nonprofit, retail, and real estate industries. As passionate corporate citizens, VVK PR is committed to improving our communities – Detroit specifically. In addition to driving impact for its team and clients, VVK operates on a philanthropic mission to impact organizations aligned with the founders’ passions and company culture. This includes serving on the boards of and making investments in Wayne State University’s College of Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts, [Detroit Public Theatre](#), [InsideOut Literary Arts Program](#), Culture Source, and Michigan Humane. We are deeply focused on providing clients and partners with communication solutions that advance their brand and connect with their audiences.

### **Hearst**

Hearst is one of the nation’s largest global, diversified information, services, and media companies with a huge portfolio of national holdings in print, digital, broadcast, and magazine. Leveraging information from Hearst Sustainability provides information on global best practices and emerging trends in water conservation, and Hearst’s



StoryStudio solution can provide the opportunity to place major reports, findings, op-eds, or white papers in front of true national audiences.

## Section #3

### Years' Experience

#### The Martin Group

20+ years as a Vendor (Contractor/Consultant)

#### VVK

15+ years as a Vendor (Contractor/Consultant) | 15 years as a Sub-Contractor

#### Hearst

20+ years as a Vendor (Contractor/Consultant) | 4 years as a Sub-Contractor

## Section #4

### Project References

Project Name:	Built To Play, Lift Off, STEM 2035
Client Name (Project Owner):	Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
Contact Person:	Carly Strachan, Communications Officer
Telephone No.: 313.885.1895	Email Address: <a href="mailto:Carly.Strachan@rcwjrf.org">Carly.Strachan@rcwjrf.org</a>
Project Description:	*See case study
Prime or Subcontractor for this project:	Prime
Start Date:	End Date:
Original Project Budget: *See Note	% of Original Budget
Final Project Budget: *See Note	% of Final Budget
Original Completion Date:	Final Completion Date:
If Project Budget or Time was Increased, provide an explanation:	

Project Name:	Water Investment Initiative (WIN)
Client Name (Project Owner):	Niagara Falls Water Board

Contact Person:	Sean Costello, General Counsel and Secretary
Telephone No.: 716.799.9495	Email Address: <a href="mailto:scostello@nfwb.org">scostello@nfwb.org</a>
Project Description:	Provided media relations, regulatory communications, social media, etc. (See Case Study)
Prime or Subcontractor for this project:	Prime
Start Date: July 2017	End Date: July 2021
Original Project Budget: *See Note	% of Original Budget
Final Project Budget: *See Note	% of Final Budget
Original Completion Date:	Final Completion Date:
If Project Budget or Time was Increased, provide an explanation:	

Project Name:	2030 DFC
Client Name (Project Owner):	Detroit Future City
Contact Person:	Anika Goss, Chief Executive Officer
Telephone No.: 313.259.4407	Email Address: <a href="mailto:anika.gossfoster@detroitfuturecity.com">anika.gossfoster@detroitfuturecity.com</a>
Project Description:	*See case study
Prime or Subcontractor for this project:	Prime
Start Date: 9-1-13	End Date: Ongoing
Original Project Budget: *See Note	% of Original Budget
Final Project Budget: *See Note	% of Final Budget
Original Completion Date:	Final Completion Date:
If Project Budget or Time was Increased, provide an explanation:	

*\*Note: Per our Non-Disclosure Agreements and as a matter of course in our normal business operations, we are not able to share specific client budgets.*

# Great Lakes Water Authority



## MVH Team

### The Martin Group



Matt Davison  
Chief Business Officer



Lisa Bellacicco  
Chief Operations Officer



Dan Giacomini  
Vice President of Strategy



Mike Farrell  
Content Supervisor



Brittany Kenney  
Senior Public Affairs Manager



Shantel Coleman  
Public Relations Specialist

### VVK



Peter Van Dyke  
Chief Executive Officer



Laura L'Esperance  
Senior Vice President,  
Public Relations



Craig Fahle  
PR Director



Stephen Jones  
Senior Account Executive



John Heiple  
Vice President of  
Creative Production



Ciara White  
PR Coordinator

### Hearst



Kate Weber  
Executive Sponsor



Sara Bryant  
Research and Marketing Insight



Robin Stroike  
Strategy Consultation



Laura Wilson  
Reporting and Optimization

## APPENDIX C

# PROJECT TEAM AND KEY INDIVIDUALS

## Section #1 Key Individuals

All staff resumes are included in PDF format as a separate attachment in Bonfire.

## Section #2 Project Team

### Part 1 Summary of contractor's current involvement with all projects:

The MVH team partners with best-in-class organizations ranging from small businesses to global enterprises and offers extensive experience and subject-matter expertise within a number of industry verticals—including water authorities and utilities, an industry in which associates across each of our core departments have considerable experience. Each client has a dedicated Project Manager, as well as an integrated team of experts in various disciplines, to ensure work is completed on-time and within the budget. All three legs of our partnership have significant bench depth and additional resources so that GLWA would feel as if they are our only client.

Contract No.	Client Name	Involvement Time	Contract Title	Type of Involvement
2301145	Great Lakes Water Authority	See breakdown below	Communication and Marketing Services	Strategic Communications and Marketing

**Involvement time for this project**  
See Part 3 below.

### Other Projects

We do not disclose our client lists but do share client work on our individual websites.

**Part 2 Explain how the commitments listed under part 1 will impact performance on this project.**

The MVH team has a combined 50+ years of experience managing client relationships. We have thoughtfully organized a dedicated team who is best suited for the work at hand, and who will become deeply familiar with GLWA's brand, offerings, and preferences. We are small enough that our clients receive the service levels one would expect of a boutique agency, and at the same time our clients have access to a deep bench of talent so that support for their objectives does not waver and any need can be met.

**Part 3 Explain how the project manager or consultant representatives allocated percentage of time to this contract will be utilized.**

**MVH Team = 100%**

**The Martin Group = 40%**

*Integrated communication services*

**VVK PR = 50%**

*Local, on-site media relations*

**Hearst = 10%**

*National consumer data and insights*

## Section #3

### Staff Experience

No.	Staff Name	Employer Name	Total Years of Related Exp.	Related Projects	Project Role
1	Matt Davison	The Martin Group	20+	Niagara Falls Water Board, Buffalo Water Board, National Fuel, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation	Chief Business Officer – Brand, Public Relations, and Crisis Comms Counsel
2	Lisa Bellaccico	The Martin Group	20+	National Fuel, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation	Executive Support
3	Dan Giacomini	The Martin Group	15	National Fuel, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation	Brand Strategy and Integrated Comms Lead
4	Mike Farrell	The Martin Group	20	National Fuel, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, Buffalo Water, M&T Bank	Content and Thought Leadership Support



5	Brittany Kenney	The Martin Group	10	Corn Hill Neighborhood Development	PR Support
6	Shantel Coleman	The Martin Group	1	Corn Hill Neighborhood Development	Community Relations Support
7	Peter Van Dyke	VVK PR + Creative	20+	Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, Detroit Department of Transportation, Regional Transit Authority of Southeastern Michigan	CEO – Executive Support
8	Laura L'Esperance	VVK PR + Creative	20+	Michigan Saves, Health Plan, Autism Alliance of Michigan, Teach for America Michigan, ProsperUS	SVP – PR Lead
9	John Heiple	VVK PR + Creative	20+	Detroit Future City, Michigan Nonprofit, WDIV –TV Local 4 Southwest Solutions	VP, Creative Production – Video Lead
10	Stephen Jones	VVK PR + Creative	5	Michigan Saves, Health Alliance Plan, Autism Alliance of Michigan, Teach for America Michigan, ProsperUS	Senior Account Executive – Media Lead
11	Craig Fahle	VVK PR + Creative	20+	Invest Detroit, LISC Detroit, Detroit Land Bank Authority, City of Detroit, Marathon Oil Refinery	PR Director – Crisis Comms Lead and Media Support
12	Ciara White	VVK PR + Creative	3	Detroit Future City, ProsperUS, Marathon Oil Refinery	PR Coordinator – Project Manager
13	Kate Weber	Hearst	20+	City of San Antonio Ready to Work program, cleveland.com and	Executive Sponsor – Integrated

				MetroHealth COVID-19 digital hub project	Comms Counsel
14	Sara Bryant	Hearst	15	City of San Antonio Ready to Work program, cleveland.com and MetroHealth COVID-19 digital hub project	Research and Marketing Insights Support
15	Robin Stroike	Hearst	20+	City of San Antonio Ready to Work program, cleveland.com and MetroHealth COVID-19 digital hub project	Strategy and Content Counsel
16	Laura Wilson	Hearst	15	City of San Antonio Ready to Work program, cleveland.com and MetroHealth COVID-19 digital hub project	Reporting and Optimization Counsel

-end-