

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Southeast Defense Innovation Center

DIU OnRamp Hub Initiative • North & South Carolina

Executive Overview

This Comprehensive Communications Plan establishes the strategic framework, tactical playbook, and operational calendar for positioning Charlotte and the broader Carolinas as the premier location for a Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) OnRamp Hub. It demonstrates to DIU leadership, the Applied Research Institute (ARI), and the congressional delegation that the Southeast defense innovation community is organized, self-motivated, and already delivering on the DIU mission — with or without a formal hub designation.

The plan covers seven integrated communications channels, each designed to serve a specific function in building the case, recruiting the vendor pipeline, and demonstrating ecosystem readiness:

Website <i>Hub & Resource Platform</i>	Newsletter <i>Biweekly — 26 Issues</i>	Vendor Database <i>Pipeline Intelligence</i>	Speaker Series <i>Authority & Credibility</i>	Accelerator Forums <i>NC & SC Events</i>	Social Media <i>Amplification</i>	Advocacy Comms <i>DIU / Congress / ARI</i>
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Strategic Frame: We Are Already the Hub

This communications plan does not position Charlotte as a city hoping to be selected. It positions Charlotte as a region that has already begun doing the work of a DIU hub — building the vendor pipeline, educating non-traditional companies, convening the defense innovation community, and demonstrating market depth. The DIU designation formalizes what is already happening. This frame is more compelling to DIU than any application, and it is the organizing principle for every element of this plan.

7 Integrated Channels	26 Newsletter Issues (Yr 1)	500+ Target Vendor Database	12 Speaker Events (Yr 1)	6 Accelerator Forums	4 Social Platforms
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SECTION 1 — BRAND IDENTITY & POSITIONING

Brand Identity: Southeast Defense Innovation Center

The Brand Platform

Every communications element in this plan operates under a single, unified brand. Consistency across channels is essential to signaling organizational maturity to DIU evaluators.

Brand Element	Definition
Primary Name	Southeast Defense Innovation Center (SEDIC)
Tagline	"Where Commercial Innovation Meets the Warfighter"
Sub-brand	Powered by SEDIC • Anchored by UNC Charlotte NDI3
Voice	Authoritative but accessible. Civic and entrepreneurial. Patriotic without being partisan. Data-driven and action-oriented.
Core Promise	We connect the Southeast's most innovative companies to the DoW marketplace — and we are building that connection right now, not waiting to be asked.
Visual Identity	Navy blue (#1B3A6B) and gold (#B8860B) as primary colors. Clean sans-serif typography (Arial/Calibri). American flag imagery and military silhouettes used sparingly. Maps of the Southeast corridor used consistently.
Domain (suggested)	SoutheastDefenseCorridor.com OR SEDefense.org OR SEDefense.org

The Audience Hierarchy

Audience Tier	Who They Are	What They Need from Our Communications
Primary — DIU / ARI / Pentagon	Owen West (DIU Director), ARI team, DIU Commercial Engagement Director Sarah Pearson	Evidence of organizational capacity, named operators, operational ecosystem, vendor pipeline depth, accelerator programming. All content should be producible as a brief for this audience.
Primary — Congressional Delegation	Sen. Budd, Sen. Tillis, Rep. Harrigan, Gov. Stein	Constituent engagement proof, economic development narrative, defense community support letters, media coverage they can amplify.
Secondary — Tier 1 Vendors	Current Carolina DoW contractors (identified via USASpending)	Market intelligence, new opportunities, peer networking, awareness of hub advocacy.
Secondary — Tier 2 Vendors	SAM-registered but non-winning companies	Education on OTAs, SBIRs, acquisition pathways, CMMC. 'The door is open' messaging.
Secondary — Tier 3 Vendors	Commercial companies with dual-use capabilities, no federal footprint	Inspiration, demystification, first-step guidance. 'You may already be a defense asset.' messaging.
Tertiary — Civic/Business Leaders	Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, chambers, economic development	Regional pride, economic impact narrative, call-to-action for endorsement letters.

Tertiary — Media	Charlotte Observer, Triangle Business Journal, Defense News, WBTV/WSOC	News-worthy angles: exclusive data, notable speakers, forum events, hub progress milestones.
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SECTION 2 — WEBSITE PLATFORM

The Website: SEDefense.org

Strategic Role

The website serves three simultaneous functions: (1) vendor education and pipeline recruitment for Tier 2 and Tier 3 companies; (2) a professional face for DIU evaluators and congressional staff who will search for evidence of organizational seriousness; and (3) the registration and content hub for all events, the newsletter, and the speaker series. It must be live and indexed by the time the formal hub application is submitted.

Site Architecture — Seven Core Sections

Page / Section	Content & Purpose
Homepage	Hero statement: 'The Southeast is Open for Defense Business.' Rolling stats: vendors in database, events hosted, newsletter subscribers. Clear CTAs: 'Register as a Vendor,' 'Subscribe to Newsletter,' 'Upcoming Events.' Map of the Southeast Defense Innovation Center.
Why Charlotte / About SEDIC	The full strategic case in reader-friendly format: NCRC, NDI3, GM Defense ISV, motorsports dual-use assets, military installations, financial capital, World Military Games 2027. Links to the Executive Summary v2.0 as a downloadable PDF.
Vendor Resources Hub	Plain-language guides: How to Register in SAM.gov, What Is an OTA, SBIR Explained, CMMC 101. Links to SAM.gov, SBIR.gov, USASpending.gov, NCMBC, DEFTECH. Downloadable 'Carolina Defense Vendor Starter Kit' PDF (newsletter signup incentive).
Contract Opportunities	Live feed or weekly-updated list of open DoW solicitations relevant to NC/SC companies. Pulls from SAM.gov. Includes OTA consortium alerts and DIU CSO listings. This is the single highest-traffic draw for Tier 1 and 2 vendors.
Events & Speaker Series	Calendar of all SEDIC events: forums, roundtables, accelerator cohort launches, speaker sessions. Registration links. Post-event recaps and video (if recorded). Archive builds over time.
Newsletter Archive	Searchable archive of all issued newsletters. Signup form prominent on every page. Most recent issue featured on homepage.
Hub Progress Tracker	Public-facing timeline of advocacy milestones: congressional letters sent, ARI meetings held, endorsements secured, vendor database size, forum attendance. This page signals organizational momentum to every visitor including DIU evaluators.

Lead Magnet: Carolina Defense Vendor Starter Kit

Every page of the site features a signup incentive: the Carolina Defense Vendor Starter Kit, a downloadable PDF guide containing the SAM.gov registration walkthrough, the USASpending NAICS search guide, a SBIR primer, a CMMC Level 1 checklist, and a directory of NC/SC defense

support organizations. This is the most effective newsletter list-building tool available and simultaneously demonstrates to DIU that we are actively on-boarding new vendors.

Technical Specifications

Element	Recommendation
Platform	Squarespace, Webflow, or WordPress (with Elementor) — all support email capture, event pages, and professional design without developer overhead
Email Platform Integration	Mailchimp, Beehiiv, or Substack for newsletter list management; embed signup forms throughout site
Domain	Register SEDefense.org and SEDefense.org as redirects
SEO Priority Keywords	DIU OnRamp Hub North Carolina, Charlotte defense innovation, defense contracting NC SC, SBIR North Carolina, OTA Southeast
Analytics	Google Analytics 4 + Google Search Console from day one; track page views, newsletter signups, resource downloads, event registrations
Launch Target	April 1, 2026 — one day before Newsletter Issue 1
Mobile Optimization	Critical: DoW audience accesses content on government-issue mobile devices; site must render perfectly on mobile

SECTION 3 — BIWEEKLY NEWSLETTER PROGRAM

The Newsletter: Southeast Defense Innovation Brief

Program Overview

The Southeast Defense Innovation Brief is a biweekly newsletter (26 issues, April 2026–March 2027) serving as the primary educational and relationship-building tool for the vendor pipeline. It establishes SEDIC and the SEDIC as the authoritative voice on defense innovation in the Southeast and provides concrete, actionable intelligence to business owners at all three vendor tiers.

Standing Sections in Every Issue

Section	Content & Production
Contract Opportunity of the Week	One specific open DoW solicitation from SAM.gov relevant to Carolina businesses. Solicitation number, agency, description, NAICS code, deadline, dollar range, direct link. 100 words. 45 min to produce.
OTA / DIU CSO Alert	One open Other Transaction Authority opportunity (from MCSC, NSWCCD, AFWERX, Army Futures Command) OR one open DIU Commercial Solutions Opening. 100 words. 30 min to produce.
Federal Procurement Calendar	3 upcoming federal procurement events relevant to the current issue's theme: SBIR windows, NDAA milestones, end-of-year deadlines. Keeps readers oriented to the federal buying cycle.

Charlotte Corridor News	2–3 bullet items: NDI3 updates, NCRC announcements, installation news, advocacy milestones, hub application progress. 30 min to produce.
Glossary Term of the Issue	One defense contracting term defined in plain English: OTA, SBIR, CMMC, NAICS, PSC, FAR, CSO, UEI, ATO. Builds cumulative literacy across the subscriber base.
Upcoming Events	3–5 SEDIC and partner events: forums, speaker sessions, NCMBC workshops, SBIR conferences, installation industry days. Direct registration links.

12-Month Issue Themes at a Glance

Quarter	Theme Focus	Key Issues
Q1 (Apr–Jun 2026)	Launch, Education, Market Intel	Issue 1: Welcome to SEDIC Issue 2: SAM.gov 101 Issue 3: Carolina Installation Spending Map Issue 4: Dual-Use Technology Issue 5: OTA Revolution Issue 6: SBIR Season
Q2 (Jun–Aug 2026)	Spotlight, Policy, Technology	Issue 7: Vendor Spotlights Issue 8: NDAA & Budd’s \$5M Issue 9: CMMC Decoded Issue 10: Defense Energy Market
Q3 (Aug–Oct 2026)	Procurement Sprint, AI, Advocacy	Issue 11: End-of-Year Spending Sprint Issue 12: AI & Autonomous Systems Issue 13: New FY2027 Budget Issue 14: Six-Month Report
Q4 (Oct 2026–Jan 2027)	Hub Campaign, Workforce, Policy	Issue 15: DIU Playbook Issue 16: Veteran Advantage Issue 17: MILCON Opportunity Issue 18: Space & Comms Issue 19: NDAA Season Issue 20: Year in Review
Year 2 Q1 (Jan–Mar 2027)	Planning, Spotlights, Advocacy Capstone	Issue 21: 2027 Action Plan Issue 22: One Year Later Issue 23: SC Corridor Issue 24: SBIR Deep Dive Issue 25: Hub Letter Campaign Issue 26: Anniversary Report

Subscriber Growth Targets

Milestone	Target Subscribers	Key Growth Drivers
Issue 1 Launch (Apr 2026)	150–250	SEDIC network, NDI3 launch list, NCMBC referrals, Charlotte Regional Business Alliance blast
Issue 6 (Jun 2026)	400–600	SBIR season content virality, Vendor Starter Kit downloads, Forum 1 registrations
Issue 13 (Sep 2026)	700–1,000	End-of-year opportunity content, Forum 2 & 3 registrations, SC expansion push
Issue 20 (Dec 2026)	1,200–1,800	Year-end wrap-up shares, hub advocacy coverage, congressional staff forwards

Issue 26 (Mar 2027)	2,000+	Full Carolinas coverage, year-two re-engagement, hub designation momentum
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SECTION 4 — VENDOR PIPELINE DATABASE

The Vendor Pipeline Database: Building the Market Depth Argument

Strategic Purpose

A documented database of 500+ dual-use companies in NC and SC is one of the most persuasive elements of any DIU hub application. It demonstrates that the market depth DIU is seeking already exists in the Southeast — and that the Charlotte team has already begun the work of cataloguing it. No other competing city is likely to have this asset at application time.

Three-Tier Pipeline Architecture

Tier	Source Data	Target Count (End of Year 1)
Tier 1: Current DoW Vendors	USASpending.gov: DoW contracts, NC + SC place of performance, FY2022–2024, all relevant NAICS codes. Deduplicate by UEI.	200+ companies
Tier 2: SAM-Registered, Non-Winning	SAM.gov entity search: NC + SC, defense-relevant NAICS codes, active registrations. SBA Dynamic Small Business Search.	150+ companies
Tier 3: Dual-Use, Unregistered	Charlotte Regional Business Alliance members, SC Manufacturers Alliance, NCMBC network, motorsports supplier directories, NDI3 partner network.	150+ companies

Key NAICS Code Clusters to Search

Sector / DIU Track	NAICS Codes	Charlotte Corridor Anchor Examples
Advanced Manufacturing	332710, 332721, 336992, 333517, 332994	GM Defense, Keselowski AM, NASCAR supply chain
Additive Mfg / Materials	332117, 327910, 333249	Oerlikon AM, Siemens CATCH, UNC Charlotte WSLEE
IT / Cybersecurity	541511, 541512, 541519, 541330	Charlotte fintech-to-defense companies, EPRI partners
AI / Autonomous Systems	541715, 334511, 336411	BigBear.ai, NDI3 AI Institute, UAV startups
Energy / Microgrids	221118, 237130, 335311	Duke Energy, microgrid firms, Army TMS partners
Construction / Facilities	236220, 561210, 238210	MILCON contractors, base ops support, electrical
Telecom / Fiber	517919	Corning Optical, broadband manufacturers

Biotech / Medical	621999, 325412, 334517	NCRC biotech firms, Eli Lilly corridor, Pearl district
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Database Integration with Communications

- Newsletter uses database to personalize: Tier 1 subscribers get market intel; Tier 2 get education; Tier 3 get inspiration.
- Forum invite lists drawn from database: target Tier 2 and 3 companies for accelerator forum outreach.
- Speaker series hosts invite selected Tier 1 company leaders to speak — builds community and social proof.
- Quarterly database growth reports submitted to Sen. Budd’s office and ARI as proof of pipeline development.
- At hub application submission: database summary (total companies, sector breakdown, dollar potential) included as an appendix.

SECTION 5 — SPEAKER SERIES: THE SEDIC DEFENSE INNOVATION FORUM

Speaker Series: SEDIC Defense Innovation Forum

Strategic Role

A quarterly speaker series serves multiple functions simultaneously: it builds the SEDIC brand as a convener of serious people; it provides newsletter content and social media material; it creates in-person networking opportunities that accelerate vendor pipeline development; and it generates the kind of documented community activity that DIU evaluators look for as evidence of ecosystem health. Speakers fall into three categories: federal officials who validate the hub concept, industry leaders who demonstrate dual-use ecosystem depth, and advocacy champions who signal political momentum.

Year 1 Speaker Series Calendar

Event	Date / Format	Suggested Speakers & Topics
Forum 1: The Open Door Launching the Southeast Defense Innovation Center	May 2026 In-Person Charlotte (NCRC or NDI3)	Keynote: Sen. Ted Budd on the NDAA \$5M authorization and why NC was chosen Presentation: Dr. Mesbah Uddin (NDI3) on the Charlotte defense ecosystem Panel: ‘From Commercial to DoW: Three Carolina Companies Share Their Journey’ (Tier 1 vendor profiles from database) Wrap-up:
Forum 2: The Acquisition Revolution How OTAs, SBIRs, and DIU Are Changing the Game	July 2026 Hybrid Charlotte + Virtual	Featured Speaker: DIU Commercial Engagement Director Sarah Pearson (requested via media@diu.mil) Presenter: NCMBBC Director on statewide SBIR assistance programs Workshop: ‘OTA Deep Dive — How to Win Without a FAR Contract’ Panel: ‘CMMC: What You Actually Need and How to Get There’
Forum 3: Manufacturing Meets Mission The Dual-Use Corridor from Concord to Kannapolis	September 2026 In-Person Concord / NCRC Site Tour	Site visit: GM Defense / Hendrick Motorsports ISV production facility Keynote: Corvid Technologies CEO on dual-use advanced manufacturing Presentation: Oerlikon AM on metal additive manufacturing for defense Army DEVCOM representative on ground vehicle technology

		priorities Panel: ‘From NASCAR to National Security’
Forum 4: South Carolina Joins the Corridor Building the Tri-State Defense Innovation Network	October 2026 In-Person Greenville or Spartanburg, SC	Keynote: Rep. Pat Harrigan or SC congressional rep on defense innovation priorities Presenter: SC Manufacturers Alliance on Upstate SC industrial base Speaker: Clemson ICAR on automotive-to-defense dual-use research Panel: ‘Shaw AFB and the F-16 Supply Chain: What SC Companies Are Missing’
Forum 5: AI, Autonomy, and the Warfighter Technology Priorities for the Next Five Years	November 2026 Hybrid Charlotte (North Tryon Tech Hub)	Featured Speaker: Tate Nurkin (OTH Intelligence Group, CSBA/Atlantic Council) on China military modernization and SE US technology gaps Presenter: BigBear.ai on AI for defense applications from Charlotte Keynote: Owen West video message (requested) or senior DIU official on current CSO priorities Panel: ‘Charlotte Fintech Meets Defense AI: The Talent Transfer Opportunity’
Forum 6: The Hub Is Coming Annual Advocacy Summit & Business Community Letter Signing	March 2027 In-Person Charlotte (signature venue)	Keynote:

Speaker Outreach Protocol

1. Tier A speakers (federal officials, ARI, DIU): outreach through congressional offices first, then directly. Lead time 8–12 weeks.
2. Tier B speakers (industry leaders, university officials): direct outreach from
3. Tier C speakers (local advocates, community leaders): direct invitation. Lead time 2–3 weeks.
4. All speakers receive: event brief, audience profile, speaking guidelines, suggested talking points tailored to SEDIC frame.
5. Post-event: written thank-you from SEDIC, speaker bio and remarks archived on website, social media recognition.

Event Production Standards

Element	Standard
Format Options	In-person (preferred for key events), hybrid (in-person + Zoom stream), virtual webinar for education-focused sessions
Duration	2–3 hours for full forums; 60–90 minutes for focused workshops
Registration	Eventbrite or website-native registration; pre-event surveys to qualify attendees for database
Materials	Printed program with SEDIC branding; speaker bios; resource packet with DIU/SAM/SBIR links; post-event survey
Documentation	Attendance list added to vendor database; post-event summary distributed to newsletter subscribers; key quotes for social media
Media Coverage	Press release to Charlotte Observer, Triangle Business Journal, and defense trade press 2 weeks before each event; post-event media follow-up

Sponsorship	Seek co-sponsorship from NCMBC, Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, NDI3, and private sector (law firms, accounting firms serving defense contractors)
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SECTION 6 — ACCELERATOR FORUMS: NC & SC DEFENSE INNOVATION COHORTS

Accelerator Forums: The DIU Hub in Practice Before the Hub Exists

Strategic Frame

The accelerator forum program is the single most compelling demonstration of hub-readiness. By launching structured cohort programming before the formal hub designation, Charlotte proves to DIU that it does not need a designation to start delivering results — it needs the designation to scale what it is already doing. This directly mirrors the Phoenix and Seattle hub models that DIU has publicly praised.

The SEDIC Accelerator Model

Each accelerator forum is a structured 1-day intensive event for 20–40 non-traditional companies. The format follows the DIU/Seattle accelerator blueprint with Charlotte-specific modifications:

Accelerator Forum Format (Each Cohort)

- Morning Session: DoW Marketplace Overview — How DIU, OTAs, SBIRs, and CSOs work; plain-English acquisition walkthrough
- Mid-Morning: Technology Domain Deep Dive — one of four tracks (Manufacturing, Cyber, AI, Energy/Biotech) with a named DoW challenge problem
- Lunch & Network: Facilitated peer introductions; database intake forms; newsletter signups
- Afternoon: Pitch Workshop — each company drafts a 2-minute capability statement; peer feedback with NCMBC coach
- Late Afternoon: Pathways Panel — 3 Tier 1 vendors share their DoW contracting journey
- Close: Next Steps — SAM registration checklist, SBIR calendar, SEDIC newsletter signup, follow-up resources
- Post-Event: Each participant receives a personalized 'Your DoW Pathway' one-pager generated by SEDIC + Claude

6-Forum Schedule: North and South Carolina

Forum	Location & Date	Technology Track	Target Companies
Accelerator 1 Charlotte Metro	Charlotte (NCRC, Kannapolis) June 2026	Advanced Manufacturing & Additive Mfg	Motorsports supply chain, machining firms, Oerlikon AM-adjacent companies, precision manufacturing SMBs
Accelerator 2 Triangle Area	Raleigh / RTP Area July 2026	IT, Cybersecurity & AI Systems	Tech startups, fintech firms, university spinouts, cybersecurity companies, data analytics firms
Accelerator 3 Upstate SC	Greenville or Spartanburg, SC August 2026	Advanced Manufacturing & Dual-Use Industrial	BMW/Michelin supply chain, Clemson ICAR ecosystem, precision manufacturing, automotive-to-defense crossovers

Accelerator 4 Coastal Carolina	Wilmington or Jacksonville, NC September 2026	Logistics, Maritime & Base Operations	Port-adjacent logistics firms, maritime technology, base ops support contractors, construction companies
Accelerator 5 Charlotte Metro Round 2	Charlotte (North Tryon Hub) October 2026	Energy, Biotech & Human Performance	Duke Energy ecosystem, NCRC biotech firms, medical device companies, pharmaceutical manufacturers
Accelerator 6 Lowcountry SC	Charleston or Columbia, SC November 2026	All Tracks Graduation Cohort	Graduates from forums 1–5; companies ready for SAM registration, SBIR submission, or OTA engagement; invitation-only

Accelerator Outcomes to Document for DIU

- Total companies served (target: 120–200 across 6 forums)
- SAM registrations completed as a direct result of forum participation
- SBIR applications submitted by forum participants
- OTA engagements initiated by forum participants
- Vendor database records added from forum intake forms
- Media coverage generated by each forum (press releases + follow-up stories)
- Documented DoW challenge problems identified in partnership with Carolina installations

These outcomes, reported quarterly to ARI and Sen. Budd's office, constitute the strongest possible evidence that Charlotte is already functioning as a DIU hub. They also give the newsletter, the speaker series, and social media a continuous stream of compelling human-interest content.

Accelerator Partnerships Required

Partner Organization	Role in Accelerator Program
NC Military Business Center (NCMBC)	Co-facilitator; provides SBIR assistance coaches; vets and refers Tier 2 companies; supplies DoW market data
NDI3 / UNC Charlotte	Provides academic credibility; supplies technology track content; hosts Charlotte forum events
NC Research Campus (NCRC)	Physical host for Charlotte-area forums; provides lab tours as part of the program
SC Manufacturers Alliance	Outreach and recruitment for SC cohorts; co-host for Greenville and Charleston forums
Rowan-Cabarrus Community College	Provides workforce development context; connects manufacturing training to DoW supply chain needs
Charlotte Regional Business Alliance	Corporate sponsor outreach; media partner; C-suite referrals for Tier 3 companies
Applied Research Institute (ARI)	CRITICAL: Invite ARI team to participate in at least two forums as observers/presenters. This builds the relationship and signals operational alignment before the formal application.

SECTION 7 — SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Social Media: Amplification and Evidence of Community

Platform Strategy

Social media serves three functions in this plan: amplifying every newsletter, event, and forum to reach audiences beyond the direct subscriber base; creating a searchable public record of SEDIC activity that DIU evaluators, congressional staff, and media can find; and building a community identity around the Southeast defense innovation brand. The SEDIC should be discoverable on every platform a DoW official, congressional staffer, or defense industry professional uses.

Platform	Primary Role & Audience	Content Strategy
LinkedIn (Highest Priority)	Primary platform. Defense industry professionals, congressional staff, government officials, business executives. The platform where DIU leadership and ARI officials are most active.	Post every newsletter issue. Share event recaps immediately after forums. Tag NDI3, NCMBC, Sen. Budd, Rep. Harrigan, Charlotte Regional Business Alliance in relevant posts. Publish original 'thought leadership' articles (written by SEDIC + Claude) on defense innovation topics 2x/month. Target: 500+ followers by Issue 6; 1,500+ by end of Year 1.
X / Twitter	Real-time defense policy and procurement news amplification. Defense journalists, Hill staff, think tank analysts.	Live-tweet forum events. Share Contract Opportunity of the Week every other Thursday (newsletter day). Engage with @DIU_DoW, @SenTedBudd, @PatHarriganNC, @NCMilBizCenter. Retweet/amplify relevant DoW and defense industry news. Target: 300+ followers by end of Year 1.
Facebook	Broader Charlotte and Carolinas business community. Chambers, civic organizations, small business owners not on LinkedIn.	Share newsletter issues. Post event photos and recaps. Promote accelerator forum registrations. Target veterans and small business community segments. Boost key event posts (\$50–\$100 per event) to reach target geography (NC + SC + 50 miles).
YouTube / Video	Long-form education and event documentation. Searchable content that builds over time.	Record and post accelerator forum highlights (with speaker permission). Short explainer videos: 'What Is an OTA? (3 minutes),' 'How to Register in SAM.gov,' 'The Charlotte Defense Corridor — A 90-Second Overview.' Video thumbnails use SEDIC branding. Each video ends with newsletter CTA.

Content Calendar — Weekly Rhythm

Day / Cadence	Social Media Action
Every Other Thursday (Newsletter Day)	LinkedIn: Full newsletter summary post with link. X: Tweet 'Issue #XX is live' with hook stat. Facebook: Post newsletter image + link. YouTube: Upload any video content from that issue's theme.

Monday (Weekly)	LinkedIn: 'Contract Opportunity of the Week' standalone post (drives traffic to newsletter and site). X: Same content, condensed.
Wednesday (Weekly)	LinkedIn: Original thought leadership article OR reshare of relevant defense innovation news with commentary from SEDIC. X: Engage with DoW-related news threads.
Event Week (Before any forum)	LinkedIn: Countdown posts Day 5, Day 3, Day 1. X: Live event hashtag established. Facebook: Boosted post for registration.
Event Day	LinkedIn + X: Live updates, speaker quotes, photos. Post-event: immediate 'wrap-up' post with attendance numbers and key takeaways.
First of Each Month	LinkedIn: 'SEDIC Hub Progress Update' — running tally of database size, newsletter subscribers, forum attendees, advocacy milestones. This monthly post signals momentum to DIU evaluators who check our social presence.

Hashtag Strategy

- #SoutheastDefenseCorridor — primary SEDIC brand hashtag on all platforms
- #SEDICHub — event-specific hashtag for all forums and speaker series events
- #CarolinaDefense — geographic community builder
- #DIUOnRamp — direct alignment with DIU program brand; visibility with DIU staff
- #DefenseInnovation — broad defense industry discovery
- #OTA #SBIR #CMMC — used on educational content for direct keyword search visibility
- #Charlotte Corridor — local business community

SECTION 8 — ADVOCACY COMMUNICATIONS: DIU, ARI & CONGRESS

Advocacy Communications: Reaching the Decision Makers

The Three-Track Advocacy Communications Strategy

Advocacy communications operate on a separate, more disciplined track from public-facing content. While public channels build community and demonstrate market depth, advocacy channels communicate directly with the three-layer decision structure: DIU Director Owen West, the Applied Research Institute, and the congressional delegation. These communications must be timed, coordinated, and cumulative.

Track A: DIU / Pentagon Communications

Communication	Timing & Content
Initial Introduction Brief	April 2026: SEDIC + NDI3 send a 2-page brief to DIU Commercial Engagement Director Sarah Pearson introducing SEDIC, naming NDI3 as proposed operator, naming NCRC as physical host, and requesting a 30-minute call. Copy Sen. Budd's staff liaison.
Quarterly Progress Reports	July, October 2026; January 2027: One-page reports documenting SEDIC activity: newsletter subscribers, vendor

	database size, forum attendance, SAM registrations generated, SBIR applications submitted. Sent directly to Pearson and cc'd to ARI (Caleb Bonham).
Site Visit Request	August–September 2026: Once forum program is established and database exceeds 200 companies, formally request a DIU site visit to Charlotte and NCRC. Frame as 'showing you what already exists.'
Formal Hub Application	Fall 2026: Full application submitted through ARI's process. Includes Executive Summary v2.0, NCRC facility commitment letter, NDI3 operator letter of intent, vendor database summary, forum outcomes data, congressional letters, endorsements.
Owen West Direct Communication	Through Sen. Budd's office: request a brief meeting or phone call between SEDIC/NDI3 and Owen West. Frame: 'We want to show you what the Southeast already looks like.' Marines respect initiative and action over aspiration.

Track B: ARI Communications

Communication	Timing & Content
Initial Contact	April 2026: Direct outreach to Caleb Bonham (Caleb.Bonham@TheARI.us, 970.556.3058). Brief email introducing SEDIC, NCRC, NDI3. Request a 20-minute call to understand ARI's process for evaluating new hub locations.
Relationship Building	May–July 2026: Invite ARI team member to participate as an observer or presenter at Forum 2 (July). This builds the relationship in a substantive context, not just a pitch meeting.
Proposal Preview	August 2026: Share a draft hub proposal with ARI before formal submission. Ask for feedback on what would make it stronger. This signals respect for their process and gives ARI a stake in Charlotte's success.
Formal Proposal Through ARI	Fall 2026: Submit official hub designation proposal through ARI's cooperative agreement process with all supporting documents.

Track C: Congressional Delegation Communications

Communication	Timing & Content
Sen. Budd — Charlotte Specificity Ask	April 2026: Brief meeting or call with Budd's staff. Provide Executive Summary v2.0. Ask Sen. Budd to explicitly name Charlotte (not just NC) in all future DIU communications. Provide a one-page 'Charlotte vs. RTP' comparison brief for their use.
Rep. Harrigan — Activation	April–May 2026: Brief Rep. Harrigan's office (NC-10). His district is the hub location. Ask him to communicate directly with Owen West's office championing Charlotte. Provide same materials as Budd.
Gov. Stein — State Endorsement	May–June 2026: Brief EDPNC and Governor's office. Request a formal letter of support from Gov. Stein to DIU naming Charlotte. This adds executive-branch weight to the congressional advocacy.

Quarterly Delegation Update	July, October 2026; January 2027: One-page progress updates to all three offices. Keeps delegation staff informed and ready to respond if DIU reaches out for congressional input.
Final Letter Campaign	March 2027 (Forum 6): Coordinate a simultaneous letter submission from Sen. Budd, Rep. Harrigan, Gov. Stein, Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, NDI3, NCMBC, and 200+ business signatories — all submitted to DIU on the same day. Creates a undeniable demonstration of statewide support.

SECTION 9 — 12-MONTH MASTER COMMUNICATIONS CALENDAR

12-Month Master Calendar: All Channels Integrated

April 2026 — Launch Month

- April 2026 Priority Actions**
- Apr 1: Website SEDefense.org launches with Vendor Starter Kit lead magnet
 - Apr 2: Newsletter Issue 1 sends — 'Welcome to the Southeast Defense Innovation Center'
 - Apr 2: LinkedIn, X, Facebook accounts activated; Issue 1 posted across all platforms
 - Apr 1–7: Contact ARI (Caleb Bonham) — introduce SEDIC, request briefing call
 - Apr 1–7: Brief Sen. Budd's office — request Charlotte specificity in DIU communications
 - Apr 1–14: Meet with Rick Hudson (NDI3) — confirm NDI3 as named operator; request letter of intent
 - Apr 15: Confirm Tate Nurkin's NDI3 advisory role
 - Apr 16: Newsletter Issue 2 — SAM.gov 101
 - Apr 30: Newsletter Issue 3 — Carolina Installation Spending Map

May 2026

- May 2026 Priority Actions**
- May 14: Newsletter Issue 4 — Dual-Use Technology
 - May 2026: Forum 1 — 'The Open Door' (Charlotte / NCRC site) — Forum + Speaker Series
 - May 2026: NCRC leadership briefing — request letter of commitment as physical host
 - May 2026: Charlotte Regional Business Alliance formal co-sponsorship briefing
 - May 2026: Brief Gov. Stein / EDPNC — request state letter of support
 - May 28: Newsletter Issue 5 — OTA Revolution

June 2026

- June 2026 Priority Actions**
- Jun 11: Newsletter Issue 6 — SBIR Season (timed to FY2026.2 solicitation opening)
 - Jun 2026: Accelerator Forum 1 — Charlotte Metro (Advanced Manufacturing track)
 - Jun 25: Newsletter Issue 7 — Vendor Spotlight
 - Jun 30: Vendor database target: 100+ companies

July–August 2026

Jul–Aug 2026 Priority Actions

- Jul 9: Newsletter Issue 8 — NDAA & Budd's \$5M (Policy advocacy issue)
- Jul 2026: Forum 2 — 'Acquisition Revolution' (Charlotte, hybrid) — invite ARI/DIU as speakers
- Jul 2026: Accelerator Forum 2 — Triangle Area (IT/Cyber/AI track)
- Jul 23: Newsletter Issue 9 — CMMC Decoded
- Aug 2026: Accelerator Forum 3 — Upstate SC (Greenville/Spartanburg)
- Aug 6: Newsletter Issue 10 — Defense Energy Market
- Aug 20: Newsletter Issue 11 — End-of-Year Spending Sprint (URGENT issue — Q4 push)
- Aug 2026: Submit first DIU Quarterly Progress Report (subscribers, database, forum outcomes)

September–October 2026

Sep–Oct 2026 Priority Actions

- Sep 3: Newsletter Issue 12 — AI & Autonomous Systems
- Sep 2026: Forum 3 — 'Manufacturing Meets Mission' (Concord site tour)
- Sep 2026: Accelerator Forum 4 — Coastal Carolina (Wilmington/Jacksonville)
- Sep 17: Newsletter Issue 13 — New Fiscal Year FY2027 Budget Guide
- Sep 30: FY2026 ENDS — final contract opportunity push; database target: 250+ companies
- Oct 1: Newsletter Issue 14 — Six-Month Progress Report
- Oct 2026: Forum 4 — 'SC Joins the Corridor' (Greenville/Spartanburg)
- Oct 2026: Formal DIU site visit request submitted
- Oct 15: Newsletter Issue 15 — DIU Playbook
- Oct 29: Newsletter Issue 16 — Veteran Advantage (Veterans Day timing)

November–December 2026

Nov–Dec 2026 Priority Actions

- Nov 2026: Accelerator Forum 5 — Charlotte Metro Round 2 (Energy/Biotech track)
- Nov 12: Newsletter Issue 17 — MILCON Opportunity
- Nov 2026: Forum 5 — 'AI, Autonomy, and the Warfighter' (North Tryon Tech Hub)
- Nov 25: Newsletter Issue 18 — Space & Communications (PARI story)
- Dec 10: Newsletter Issue 19 — NDAA Season (FY2027 provisions)
- Dec 2026: Share draft hub proposal with ARI for feedback
- Dec 24: Newsletter Issue 20 — Year in Review
- Dec 2026: Database target: 400+ companies

January–March 2027 — Advocacy Capstone

Jan–Mar 2027 Priority Actions

- Jan 8: Newsletter Issue 21 — 2027 Action Plan & SBIR FY2027.1 preview
- Jan 22: Newsletter Issue 22 — One Year Later: Case Study Profiles
- Feb 5: Newsletter Issue 23 — SC Corridor expansion issue
- Feb 2027: Accelerator Forum 6 — Lowcountry SC Graduation Cohort
- Feb 19: Newsletter Issue 24 — SBIR Proposal Clinic (FY2027.1 proposals due)
- Mar 5: Newsletter Issue 25 — Hub Advocacy Capstone Issue

- Mar 2027: Forum 6 — Annual Advocacy Summit & Business Community Letter-Signing Campaign
- Mar 2027: FORMAL FORMAL SUBMISSION — Full hub application through ARI with all supporting documents
- Mar 2027: Coordinated same-day letter submission: Sen. Budd + Rep. Harrigan + Gov. Stein + 200+ business signatories
- Mar 19: Newsletter Issue 26 — One-Year Anniversary Report

SECTION 10 — BUDGET, STAFFING & RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Budget & Resource Requirements

Estimated Year 1 Investment

Category	Estimated Cost (Year 1)	Notes
Website Development & Hosting	\$2,500–\$5,000	Squarespace/Webflow annual plan + domain registration; one-time design setup
Email Newsletter Platform	\$600–\$1,200	Mailchimp, Beehiiv, or Substack Pro; scales with subscriber count
Vendor Starter Kit PDF Design	\$500–\$1,500	Professional graphic design for lead magnet; one-time cost
Forum 1–6 Event Production	\$1,500–\$3,000 per event = \$9,000–\$18,000 total	Venue, catering, A/V, printed materials; co-sponsorship from partners reduces cost significantly
Speaker Series Events (alongside forums)	Minimal incremental cost	Speaker fees typically waived for federal officials; industry speakers receive recognition; nominal venue costs
Social Media Management	\$0–\$2,400	SEDIC + Claude produce content; optional: \$200/month for scheduling tool (Buffer/Hootsuite)
Social Media Advertising	\$1,200–\$3,600	\$100–\$300/month for targeted LinkedIn + Facebook ads promoting forum registrations and newsletter signups
Graphic Design (Brand Assets)	\$1,500–\$3,000	Logo, social media templates, newsletter header, event materials; one-time brand build
SEDIC Time Investment	20–25 hrs/month	Newsletter production (10 hrs), social media (4 hrs), forum/event prep (8 hrs), advocacy meetings (3 hrs); Claude handles drafting
TOTAL ESTIMATED YEAR 1	\$15,800–\$34,700	High-quality professional program; co-sponsorship and in-kind support from NDI3, NCMBC, and Alliance can reduce by 30–50%

Staffing Model

Role	Responsibility & Coverage
Publisher / Executive Director	Strategic direction, advocacy meetings, Publisher's Notes, speaker relationships, forum emcee, congressional liaison. 20–25 hours/month.
AI Writing Partner (Claude / Anthropic)	Newsletter drafting from SEDIC outlines, social media post creation, event descriptions, vendor resource guides, forum materials, advocacy briefs. Eliminates need for a staff writer.
Event Coordinator (Part-time or volunteer)	Forum logistics, registration management, venue coordination, sponsor tracking. 10–15 hours/month during event months.
Partner Organizations (In-kind)	NCMBC: accelerator facilitation coaches, SBIR expertise. NDI3: content experts, venue hosting. Charlotte Regional Business Alliance: member outreach, corporate sponsor connections.

SECTION 11 — METRICS, SUCCESS CRITERIA & DIU REPORTING

Measuring What Matters: Metrics That Tell the DIU Story

Quarterly Reporting Metrics

Every metric in this framework is selected because it directly answers a question DIU asks when evaluating hub readiness: Is the ecosystem large enough? Is the community organized? Are non-traditional companies actually engaging? Is there expressed demand from the innovation ecosystem? These are not vanity metrics — they are evidence for the application.

Metric Category	Q2 Target (Jun 2026)	Year-End Target (Mar 2027)
Newsletter Subscribers	400+	2,000+
Vendor Database: Tier 1 (Current Vendors)	75+	200+
Vendor Database: Tier 2 (SAM Registered)	50+	150+
Vendor Database: Tier 3 (Dual-Use, Unregistered)	50+	150+
Vendor Database TOTAL	175+	500+
Accelerator Forums Hosted	1–2	6
Forum Attendees (cumulative)	40–80	150–250
SAM Registrations Generated	10+	40+
SBIR Applications Assisted	3+	15+
Speaker Series Events	1	6

Event Attendees (cumulative)	75+	500+
LinkedIn Followers	300+	1,500+
Website Unique Visitors (monthly)	500+	2,000+
Newsletter Starter Kit Downloads	100+	500+
Press Mentions (defense or business press)	2+	12+
Formal Endorsement Letters Secured	3+	10+
Congressional Offices Briefed	2 (Budd, Harrigan)	4 (+ Tillis, Stein)
ARI Engagements (calls + meetings)	1	4+

The DIU Evaluation Scorecard

Based on published DIU site selection criteria, the following shows how this communications plan directly addresses each evaluation factor:

DIU Selection Criterion	How This Communications Plan Provides Evidence
Robustness of the defense innovation ecosystem	Vendor database of 500+ companies with sector breakdown; forum attendance; newsletter subscriber count by company type
Relevance to DoW needs	Accelerator forums built around named DoW challenge problems; speaker content aligned to Owen West's 7 tech domains; NCMBC and NDI3 involvement
Health of the innovation ecosystem	Forum participation rates; SAM registrations generated; SBIR applications assisted; documented company journeys from Tier 3 to Tier 1
Expressed demand signal from ecosystem	Newsletter subscribers = expressed demand; forum registrations = expressed demand; business community letter signatories = expressed demand
Named local delivery partner	NDI3 letter of intent + NCMBC co-facilitation + NCRC facility commitment = complete operator structure
Expressed demand from the Pentagon	Coordinated communication from Sen. Budd + Rep. Harrigan naming Charlotte; Gov. Stein letter; Charlotte Regional Business Alliance letter; 200+ business signatories

CONCLUSION — THE ARGUMENT THIS PLAN MAKES TO DIU

The Argument This Plan Makes to DIU

When DIU evaluates the Charlotte hub application, they will not just read a proposal document. They will search online. They will look at the website. They will check LinkedIn. They will ask Sen. Budd's

office. They may call ARI. They may visit. Every channel in this communications plan is designed to deliver the same message from every direction:

"The Southeast is not asking for permission to build a defense innovation ecosystem.

It is already building one.

The DIU designation is how you join us."

Secretary Hegseth said the defense acquisition system as we knew it is dead, and that innovation must come from anywhere. Owen West said DIU will focus on speed, scale, and lethality. The Southeast Defense Innovation Center answers both mandates: it is a region of world-class manufacturers, cybersecurity professionals, AI researchers, and energy engineers who have never had a front door to the Pentagon — and we are building that front door right now, issue by issue, forum by forum, company by company.

By the time this plan reaches its March 2027 capstone, DIU will have twelve months of documented evidence that the Charlotte corridor is not a promising future hub. It is an operating hub that deserves the formal designation.

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