



City of Mesa
LGHN Civic Engagement Award Nomination
May 31, 2018

Name of individual/organization

City of Mesa

Category (city, county, special districts, education, non-profit, private sector partner)

City

Jurisdiction/jurisdiction population

City of Mesa, 475,000

Month/year when program was initiated and when fully implemented

January 2018, April 2018

Nominator/primary contact

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In 2017, the City of Mesa began exploring the possibility of enhancing its communication efforts and outreach to the growing Mesa Hispanic and Spanish-speaking population.

Mesa is the third largest city in Arizona with a Hispanic population of 28.1%. Mesa Public Schools, Arizona's largest schools district, has a majority-minority population of 42% Hispanic, while Mesa Community College has a student population that is expected to be 25% Hispanic in 2018. Armed with this knowledge, MARRISA RAMIREZ-RAMOS, a council assistant obtaining her Master's degree in communication management with a focus in digital marketing, began to research ways Mesa could better connect with its Hispanic residents.

Ramirez-Ramos created a market analysis based on studies that included national and local data about the best ways to target Latino populations. According to Simmons National Hispanic Consumer Study, Hispanics are active digital consumers with 61% saying the Internet is their first source for information. The study also shows 94% of online Hispanic adults use social media and share content five times more often than non-Hispanic users. A Nielsen study indicated that 81% of Hispanics in the Phoenix area (including Mesa) speak some Spanish at home. Additional case studies from other local governments helped to determine that a digital/social media solution would help deliver the best outcome. Ramirez-Ramos then spoke with the City of Reno Spanish Facebook page manager to learn about Reno's efforts and model.

After her extensive research, Ramirez-Ramos pitched the following solution to city management to fill the communication void: Launch a Spanish-language Facebook page and webpage that would be a single hub for citywide information to be distributed in Spanish/bilingually to Mesa's Hispanic, Spanish-speaking and bilingual residents. Mesa would create an internal committee made up of bilingual speakers from each department to create content and make the effort more

sustainable by having experts in each area share their knowledge and the workload. This initiative is now known as “Mesa en Español.”

As the city assembled its team of about 20 bilingual representatives, Ramirez-Ramos worked to gain thoughtful input from area Hispanic groups and leaders, including the Mesa Hispanic Network employee group (LGHN affiliate), East Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Mesa Association of Hispanic Citizens. These groups weighed in about the early concept, including what information they would like to see and how they would like to interact with the city. They also provided feedback closer to the launch of the Facebook page about the look and tone and then helped promote the page to their memberships through their own social media channels, email newsletters and in-person promotion.

The City of Mesa has five social media goals:

- Connect – be there
- Inform – provide important information
- Promote – tell our story
- Engage – interact with and help people
- Innovate – lead the way in digital engagement

As Mesa began planning in earnest to launch a new Spanish Facebook page, the bilingual team kept these tenants in mind and came up with these tactics: share relevant content with followers daily, showcase Latino culture and the Spanish language in shared content, create a citywide phone list to feature on social media and the related Spanish webpage to help Spanish speakers directly and commit to regular in-person and digital promotion of this effort.

The City of Mesa soft launched its [En Español Facebook page](#) in January and began promoting it through partner organizations and at city events with business cards and signage. In April, the city more formally launched the project with a news release to local English and Spanish-language media; a booth at Celebrate Mesa, which is the city's big spring festival; and promotion across city-owned assets, including on city building monitors, on English social media pages and on the city website.

In the short time this effort has been going, the bilingual group has had in-person engagement efforts at about half a dozen events and has improved upon those efforts each time. In-person events have included a photo wall with tissue paper flowers, Mexican candy giveaways, a Spanish matching game, tote bag giveaways, social media contest giveaways and professional polo shirts for staff. The team frequently hears great feedback from the community and has earned more than 200 Facebook fans. One excited user on Facebook said: "Yes i love this!! Yay!!! to the person that thought of this!! 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊"

Although the primary focus of this initiative has been the social media presence, city staff recognize the cultural relevance of engaging with people in person. This personal connection allows employees to bring a sense of family to the initiative. People like knowing and recognizing that there are real people behind the digital page; in-person events have garnered a warm reception with kudos for the initiative and what we are trying to do to better connect the City of Mesa with this target population. In fact, an additional and unintended benefit has been the celebration of Hispanic culture and language shared across Mesa.

This effort has enhanced direct communication with Spanish-speaking residents through the Facebook page and in-person events, but it has also empowered our employees to do more on

their own to reach out to this audience. The bilingual committee representative from Falcon Field Airport, a general aviation airport owned by the City of Mesa, started tours of the airport in Spanish. The communications staff with the Mesa Police Department and Mesa Fire and Medical Departments are now conducting additional outreach in Spanish on their primarily English social media channels. This effort, along with the formation of the Mesa Hispanic Network a few months before, has helped empower bilingual employees and created an internal culture that supports Hispanic engagement.

Sustainability of this digital engagement project was a concern from the outset. However, the project requires little to no budget and relies heavily on the enthusiasm and participation from employees. The City of Mesa offers bilingual compensation at basic and intermediate levels to employees who can demonstrate bilingual proficiency. The city drew from this group of compensated employees for its bilingual committee to create a network of subject matter, language and cultural experts to make this effort collaborative and successful. Additionally, as the committee members have interacted with residents, they became even more aware of sensitivities in the Hispanic and Spanish-speaking community related to government interactions and have tailored social media messaging very carefully to help build trust with this audience. Their passion and dedication to this effort is what continue to grow the innovation of outreach that is helping to enhance Mesa's communication with its Hispanic residents.

The City of Mesa plans to continue to support and grow this effort through the ongoing committee, which meets weekly to discuss content opportunities, proactive outreach and in-person engagement. This effort is supported by city management and the Mesa City Council, which have

empowered committee members to grow their reach and engagement with Spanish-speaking Mesa residents.

“Facebook en Español offers our community access to information and the ability to engage with city personnel of interest,” said Vice Mayor David Luna, Mesa’s first Hispanic elected official to serve on the City Council. “Providing educational outreach remains a priority, and Facebook en Español provides the city an opportunity to engage with Spanish speakers throughout the City of Mesa.”

Supporting links:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ciudaddeMesa>

Webpage: <http://www.mesaaz.gov/espanol>

Email: preguntas@mesaaz.gov