

OUT & ABOUT IN MARANA *Citizens' Forum*

CASE STUDY TITLE:	Marana Citizens' Forum
CASE STUDY CATEGORY:	Community Building
JURISDICTION NAME:	Town of Marana
TOWN MANAGER:	Gilbert Davidson
INNOVATION AWARD:	Yes, we would like to be considered
RAPID FIRE SESSION:	Yes, we would like to be considered
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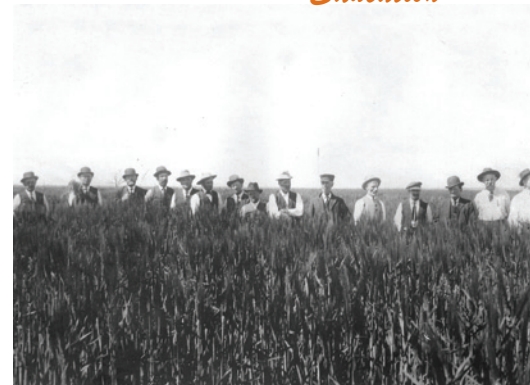
Citizen Engagement



Transparency



Education



DESCRIPTION OF THE MARANA CITIZENS' FORUM

In 2006, the Town Council formed five Citizen Advisory Commissions (CACs) via formal resolution. These commissions evolved over the past six years into the Police, Parks and Recreation, Utilities, Business and Economic Development, and Affordable Housing Citizen Advisory Commissions. These commissions consisted of members from throughout the community and each was assigned a staff member to act as a liaison. The CACs relied heavily on Town staff to facilitate their meetings, and provide detailed updates.



The Forum conducts an ice-breaker exercise.

Similar to other jurisdictions, these commissions were tasked with addressing local issues with a community perspective. The CACs focused on their specific areas, and were less effective. As Marana grew, issues throughout the Town became more complex and needed a more interconnected and multi-disciplinary approach. This led to the creation of the Marana Citizens' Forum.

There were several months of preparation prior to the first Forum session. Staff worked on the initial framework, which was then presented to Department Heads for input. To make the program viable, it was vital to have buy-in from the CAC members. Staff attended the regularly scheduled meetings of each of the former Commissions to present the concept. Staff then met with all five CACs collectively to present the idea for the Forum. They gave valuable insight regarding the CACs functionality, as well as what they would like to see included in a new concept. Further, Town employees conducted a trial-run of the process. Finally,

in November 2011, Town Council acted to disband the CACs and institute the Marana Citizens' Forum as an outlet for civic engagement and soliciting community input. This had to be done by means of resolution due to the nature of the CACs creation. The topic chosen for inaugural this Forum session was "civic and community engagement."

STRUCTURE

The Forum membership consisted of appointments from several different areas. First, former CAC members were invited to continue their participation through the Forum. Second, each council member made an appointment. Finally, each of four community partners (Marana Chamber of Commerce, Northwest Fire District, Marana Unified School District and the Marana Health Center) was invited to nominate one Forum participant apiece. A total of 20 participants came from these invitations.

Each Forum session is held in three meetings. The first is the Introduction meeting. Members are introduced to each other, the Facilitator and Recorder, who preside over the session, and the topic they are to discuss. The second is the Data Presentation meeting. Following the introduction of the topic, participants are given the opportunity to request from Town staff information that would help facilitate the discussion. This information is presented and Forum participants are given the opportunity to ask questions. The final gathering is the Panel Discussion meeting. The Forum members generate a list of questions between the second and third meetings, which is used for the Panel Discussion. Forum participants are presented with the questions and asked to come to consensus on a response. The trained Facilitator and Recorder are vital in this process.

The end result of the Panel Discussion is a list of tangible recommendations that are then brought to Council. The participants elect from their membership four representatives to work with Town staff on the presentation of the recommendations and follow-up. The Forum participants are responsible for taking ownership of these recommendations. For example, one recommendation on civic engagement was to administer a community survey. Town staff helped develop the format and questions and Forum participants

implemented the survey throughout the community. The data from this survey will be shared with the Town.

The Forum requires that participants drive implementation rather than relying solely on Town staff as was the case under the previous CAC format. This new format resulted in time savings for Town employees and resulted in innovative approaches to increasing civic engagement.

OUTCOMES AND PRACTICALITY

The Forum has proven to be a method for members of the public of varying backgrounds to come together, bring their expertise, and discuss a topic addressing their community. The initiative shown by the participants in regard to the implementation of the community survey has been strong. Another of the recommendations was to expand the Town's website calendar to include more community events. The Town is currently in the process of implementing this recommendation.

When determining how to measure outcomes of the Forum, the intent was to have tangible work products that could be reviewed on a regular basis. The four recommendations developed by the Forum members were things that could be

implemented with little reliance on staff time or Town financial resources.

The first topic of "civic and community engagement" steered the group to ideas on improving the overall health of the Town. This conversation led to an in-depth discussion on what changes the group wanted to see to make the Town more attractive to new residents and businesses.

Should a community decide to move toward a new format of engagement, there are many tough decisions to be made. Keeping the group size small will make for easier discussions and ensure that each member has their chance to present their opinion. The Town has completed one Forum session with plans for another in the fall on a different topic.

PRESENTATION STYLE

The case study presentation will use Prezi. This presentation will focus on the obstacles to development of the program. The presentation will then highlight the format of the program and outcomes from the first session.

Presenters will discuss the process to create the Forum as well as information stemming from the participants discussions. There will also be information on the next steps and applicable changes based on the exit survey of participants and the community survey administered by the Forum members.