



RI Office of Management and Budget

Introduction to Lean Process Improvement

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Governor Gina M. Raimondo’s Lean Government Initiative requires agencies to conduct process improvement reviews, establishes a training program within the Office of Management and Budget to build Lean capacity among state employees, works closely with local businesses with experience in Lean through a mentorship program, and incorporates Lean process improvement in agencies’ strategic planning processes.

Background on Lean Process Improvement

Based on the Japanese method of “Kaizen,” or continuous improvement, Lean process improvement activities seek to eliminate waste and backlogs and to increase agency efficiency by streamlining the use of staff time and resources. The Lean process involves value stream mapping of an agency’s process, such as permitting or hiring processes, and includes current and future state maps. The current state map defines each step in the process such as handoffs, bottlenecks, errors in documents, waiting time, and applications or reports that are resubmitted and reviewed again. The future state map acts as the guide to how the process should look after several months of improvement. These maps help the Lean team to highlight the inefficiencies in the current state and formulate plans to eliminate any non-value-added activities in order to attain the future state. The Lean team prioritizes the “gaps” between current and future state and develops a work plan with clear tasks to make progress. Lean facilitators follow up with core team members on progress of action steps.

While Lean started in the manufacturing industry, it is increasingly being used in state government to improve processes by removing unnecessary steps. For state government, the goal is to have a more responsive agency to Rhode Island customers, businesses, and taxpayers with transparent processes and improved overall customer service.

A good example of this in Rhode Island state government is the work of the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), which has conducted Lean reviews of six of its major processes. These efforts resulted in faster turnaround times through process improvements. For example, DEM implemented expedited consideration of less complicated site remediation projects and created a Permit Application Center to provide customers with rapid review of applications for accuracy before beginning the technical review process.

DEM Lean Process Improvement Initiatives

Site Remediation	Underground Storage Tank Fund
Wetlands Preliminary Determination	Bureau of Natural Resources Warehouse
Air Preconstruction Minor Source Permit	Marine Fisheries Rules Promulgation Process

Why Consider Undertaking a Lean Process Improvement Project?

OMB, in partnership with the Department of Administration’s (DOA) Division of Purchases (Purchases), developed Master Price Agreement (MPA) #486 for Lean Process Improvement Services and consultants. Four vendors are available to assist state agencies complete Lean process improvement projects, making it easier to begin this work and improve the productivity of the agency.

Lean improvement work will help the agency address backlogs, improve workflow, strengthen work quality, better meet the needs of the agency’s customers, address new challenges, and free up time and resources to focus on the agency’s priorities. Gaining time, capacity, and customer and employee satisfaction are compelling reasons to begin a Lean project and work toward continuous improvement in the agency.

Lean Process Improvement Services

Each of the four vendors on MPA #486 offers the following types of services listed below.

Lean Process Improvement Services

Type of Service	Description
Facilitation Training	This training focuses on teaching facilitators to be objective, impartial meeting leaders, to ask the right questions to draw ideas and thoughts from the Lean team members, and to assist the team in reaching consensus on processes that need to be improved. Meeting facilitators allow the Lean team to reflect on the processes of their daily work.
General Training	This session provides awareness training on Lean Process Improvement tools, how to identify waste in existing processes, and an introduction of the roles and responsibilities of the participants.
Value Stream Mapping	This session helps the Lean team understand and critically evaluate the current process by following the service from beginning to end. The current state of the process will be analyzed in depth and mapped out visually. This process includes identifying waste or non-value-added steps in the current process, such as steps that are repeated, steps that are unnecessary or could be completed more efficiently, etc. The workflow map will highlight the time it takes and resources needed to complete each step. This leads to the development of the future state map to show how the process should look after improvements are made.
Kaizen Process	This session focuses on brainstorming improvement options for the process using the current state and future state maps. A work plan is developed to implement the solutions and improvements, including assigning responsibility and milestones. This also includes a presentation of the results of the Kaizen event to the agency director. Follow up is an important aspect of this process, with facilitators checking in with the team to ensure the process is being changed on schedule.
In-Depth 5S Training	This session provides information on the Japanese method of using visual cues for workplace organization and efficiency. The “5S” include the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sort: eliminate unnecessary materials in the work area; 2. Set: arrange and streamline employees, materials, etc. with a clear work flow that is clear of waste; 3. Shine: keep the workspace and all materials clean and organized; 4. Standardize: develop uniform procedures and organization of workspaces; and 5. Sustain: institutionalize this workplace organization through training and communications with employees.
Training – Standardized Work	This training focuses on creating processes that are the most efficient for the workplace and are sequenced in the most effective way to reduce waste, complete the work correctly, and improve the customer experience.
Key Performance Indicators	This session focuses on helping the organization understand, define, and measure progress towards organizational goals using quantifiable measurements.
Lean Tool Support	This service provides information on the tools for implementation, action planning, and improvement measurement to provide sustainable change in the organization.
Communications Support	This service will help communicate Lean process work and outcomes to state leaders and key staff.

*As this work is new to state agencies, General Training and Facilitation Training are recommended for any new project. Value Stream Mapping and Kaizen Process sessions are essential; other training sessions may also be relevant.