Detailed Lean Improvement Project Report

For the June 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014, reporting period

Agency name:
Department of Ecology

Improvement project title:
Improve Consistency and Streamline Agency Grant and Loans Management Programs

Date improvement project initiated:
11/13/12

Summary:
The Department of Ecology is improving the process for managing grants and loans by streamlining 26 different processes into one across the agency. This effort was used to inform development of a web based grant and loan management system, Ecology Administration of Grants and Loans (EAGL).

Details:

Description of the problem:
Ecology had a largely paper process, many "Shadow" systems and processes and client experiences that varied across the agency. Ecology needed to standardize the processes for 26 different funding opportunities to inform the development of a web based grant and loan management system and improve the customer satisfaction.

Description of the improvement:
During a four day Lean event a team of subject matter experts:
- Mapped the current state for 26 different processes.
- Identified inconsistencies and waste.
- Mapped the future state to be consistent across the agency.

After the event, the EAGL IT project planning team built on the standardization decisions made through the Lean process as they worked with the vendor to customize the Commercial Off the Shelf (COTS) system Ecology purchased. In addition to streamlining workflows and building them into EAGL, the Lean effort helped kick off a cross program coordination team to support continuous improvement and develop training materials to document the new process.

Specific results achieved:
As of December 2014:
- 12 of the 26 funding opportunity processes have transitioned into the new automated workflow process using the EAGL system.
- 475 organizations and 894 recipients have registered to apply for grants and loans electronically.

The EAGL system enforces standard business rules for data entry. We expect this to result in better data quality that will give Ecology the ability to do agency wide reporting for the first time. We will also be able to tell a more accurate story about our grant and loan programs and how they help protect and restore the environment. We are currently identifying ways to measure improved data quality.

We expect to save staff time by reducing the:

- Need for Ecology staff to review all grant and loan agreements to ensure they contain the correct terms and conditions. Now, mistake proofing is built into the new process to prevent the agreements from moving on to the next step in the process if the terms and conditions are not correct. We are currently identifying ways to measure the time savings.
- Need for duplicate data entry. Before, staff was required to enter information from paper documents into different shadow systems. Now, grant and loan data is entered directly into the system throughout the life of the agreement starting with the customer when submitting the application. We are currently identifying ways to measure the time savings.
- Processing time spent on amendments processed through the fiscal office. Previously, Ecology used a manual process for amendments. Now, EAGL enforces a rule that automatically approves amendments if they don't exceed 10% of the total budget amount. We are currently identifying ways to measure the time savings.

How we involved customers or stakeholders in this effort:
Ecology invited four customers to participate in the Lean event. Three were local government and nonprofit clients and one representative was from the Department of Commerce's Public Works Board (this is another state agency that also provides grant funding). We are conducting survey's to monitor client satisfaction and areas of improvement

Contact persons:

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