

What is Lean in Government Services?

Government services' costs are rising too quickly and too many preventable errors occur in most organizations around the world. We strongly believe the "lean" methodology is our best hope for improving quality while truly reducing waste and excessive costs, thus increasing the value provided by our lean government systems. Today, a number of leading organizations are demonstrating they can provide better value through proven and tested process improvement methods.

Many professionals often ask how lean, a methodology associated primarily with Toyota and manufacturing industries, can apply in government services. Lean is not just a set of tools for improving quality in a factory – it is a set of methods, principles, and philosophies that form a complete management system. Lean can be applied in any setting where work is done, employees face problems, and people lead or manage others, and this includes government services. Lean is not just a set of tools for improving quality in a factory – it is a set of methods, principles, and philosophies that form a complete management system. Lean supports the purpose of any organization – providing the best service using the minimum number of resources.

Lean also places a premium on supporting government services' professionals and staff to maximize their client services' activity. Before lean, government services' workers often spent hours a day dealing with "waste" or problems in the workplace. "Waste" is any activity that does not directly help move forward the delivery of requested services. For example, staff might search for missing forms each and every day, facing the same frustrations repeatedly instead of stopping to fix the process, once and for all,

so that needed supplies and equipment are always available. Government services' quality experts estimate that between 30 and 50% of all work activity can be categorized as "waste." The opportunity with lean is to reduce costs by eliminating waste, not through traditional cost cutting, which often includes providing fewer services or reducing headcount.

Lean focuses on doing more with less. Before lean, government services' organizations typically believe their problems can only be solved with "more"- more space, more people, and more money. More space costs money, money government services are increasingly pressured to avoid spending. More people is often not even an option, cost aside, because of extreme shortages of professional staff. Through lean government services learn methods that allow them to increase capacity without adding people – true productivity. And many government services have been able to cancel multi-million dollar capital expansion project as they learn how to use their existing space more effectively with lean principles put in place.

It may seem like wishful thinking, but the application of lean methods in government services will bring benefits for all institutions, citizens, employees, and state government.