

Overview: The first Countywide Lean Six Sigma implementation within the State of California, and one of the first within the nation, was implemented in Ventura County in 2008. Since that time the Service Excellence Program has improved customer satisfaction, reduced wait times, and effected \$28 million dollars in both one-time and ongoing savings.

Challenge: Ventura, and every other County, faced an uncertain future in 2008. The stock market crash resulted in increasing demands for County services amid decreasing revenues. Instead of surrendering to budget constraints by simply reducing programs and service levels, the Service Excellence Program strove to meet, or exceed, existing service levels at a time when they were most needed.

Innovative Solution: While investigating ways to improve service levels, Ventura County was invited to attend a Lean Six Sigma training at Naval Base Ventura County. The General Services Agency Procurement Manager attended, and, upon returning, completed an improvement event with her team. They improved the speed of the Blanket Purchase Order Renewal Process by 500 percent. After additional research and testing, Ventura County decided to fully commit to using Lean Six Sigma to improve services within every agency.

Originality: No County in California had ever tried to implement a Countywide Lean Six Sigma program. There was no existing model for how best to deploy and use Lean Six Sigma in County Government. County government is different from other Lean organizations because the demand for County services often goes up at the same time that revenue sources decline. As a regulatory body, not all customers are voluntary, and frequently we must balance competing customer needs. The incredible diversity of services that County governments provide requires training and practice to apply Lean Six Sigma concepts within so many different service environments.

Cost Effectiveness: Initial startup costs for the program included \$200,000 in consulting, along with a full-time Deputy Executive Officer at \$150,000 annually; and a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt position at \$125,000 annually. The decentralized model allowed agencies to receive training and then improve their

own processes with coaching and support. During the eight years of existence this program has generated \$27.8 million in documented hard and soft savings.

Results: Since 2008 Lean Six training has been administered to 4,244 staff members. Within that time period, 888 improvement events from across the County have been reported, with a total savings of \$27.8 million to date. Although we are pleased with the hard and soft dollar savings, we are most excited about the culture of continuous improvement that has resulted in better service to our customers within the broad areas of health, safety, and public resources and infrastructure. Customers benefit from improved quality, faster services, and better access via extended office hours, opening additional satellite offices, and creating more self-service online options.

Improvements can also lower the costs of doing business. For example, the General Services and Public Works Agencies began sharing heavy equipment; and in the first year eliminated \$429,000 in scheduled equipment replacements. The Sheriff's Crime Lab reduced the amount of time to analyze dry drugs from 64 to 17 days, and cut their backlog in half. The Human Services Agency deployed iPads to 188 social workers in the field, saving each person 30 minutes per day in travel and transcription time. Other improvements have resulted in reduced emergency room wait times; faster hospital discharges; improved purchasing and hiring processes; fewer workers compensation claims; reduction in bench warrants; faster housing appraisals; less overtime; reduced file storage and postage costs; the automation of manual tasks; paperless processing; and the use of technology to improve efficiency and create smart phone applications for the public such as pet adoption, safe beaches, and election tracking.

Ventura County's customer-driven, business-friendly mindset and consultative approach to regulatory compliance has led to the One-Stop Permitting Website; 50 percent faster discretionary permitting; easier weights and measures registration; the creation of a film-permit calculator; and updated regulations to save water suppliers over \$100,000 in redundant compliance costs.

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