

Lean Ohio Boot Camp: One Approach to Lean Government Processes

Michelle Brodke
BGSU Firelands
mbrodke@bgsu.edu

Abstract

State governments are increasingly challenged to provide needed services while working within their budgetary limitations. Lean Six Sigma (LSS) provides a well-documented approach to achieve the types of cost savings needed to meet the challenges of governing, as well to address rising criticism of waste in government. The State of Ohio implemented a training program to immerse local and county government workers into lean process improvement, entitled Lean Ohio Boot Camp. The purpose of the program was to disseminate information about basic (i.e., green-belt level) approaches to removing waste from government processes ranging from records management to maintenance to education.

Since its inception in 2010, Lean Ohio Boot Camp has achieved cost savings for Ohio in the hundreds of millions of dollars. This paper addresses delivery of the program such as participant selection, dealing with skepticism, and participant follow through from the perspective of the program facilitator. First, participants were selected carefully to enhance the likelihood of implementing and sustaining lean practices after training. For example, groups of people from one agency were trained together so that they could provide knowledge and support to each other as they began their lean initiatives. Second, the lean principle of “respect for people” undergirded delivery and simulation experiences during training to reduce resistance to the program. Government works often feel “stuck” within a clunky system that fails to meet customer expectations. The program regularly challenged this view while empowering participants to act. Third, participants were expected to do “teach-backs” and select projects to begin upon their return to work. The success of this program provides insight about how others like it may make Lean Six Sigma a partner in effective governance.

Biographies

MICHELLE BRODKE, Ph.D. is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Sciences at Bowling Green State University, Firelands College. Her areas of interest include lean process management, advanced statistical analysis, and behavioral operations management. Dr. Brodke can be reached at mbrodke@bgsu.edu.