

Lean Government Case Study: Minnesota State Services for the Blind Radically Improves Service

Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB) has trimmed waste by nearly half in one of its key business processes. A unit within the state’s Department of Employment and Economic Development, SSB believes that Minnesotans who are blind or visually impaired should never be prevented from obtaining a job or participating in personal and community activities.

Director Richard Strong explains that people use SSB services to get assistance in looking for employment, preparing for a career, adjusting to blindness, learning how to travel without sight, and learning how to deal with others about their blindness.

A lean government improvement team, composed mostly of SSB staff, gathered in early 2011 to focus on one of the program’s services: Providing an assessment to clients regarding assistive and adaptive technology that may help them overcome obstacles. The goals of the event included reducing the amount of time for performing an assessment, reducing the hassle for clients, and reducing the amount of paperwork required for referrals.



“Taking on a task with a group of people talking about what is going on is really helpful – communication is the key!” a member of the team said after the event. The results of their work are dramatic.

Through the lean improvement process, the team eliminated numerous wastes – from unnecessary handoffs to redundant tasks – that deliver a 71 percent reduction in the average process time. Seventy days was the average time for the process before. Now it takes only 20 days. That’s almost two months faster for a blind client to receive visual assistive technology. Additionally, the team reduced staff working time by nearly 50 percent, while simplifying and reducing the number of forms used.

Minnesota State Services for the Blind Improvement Metrics:

	Old Process	Improved
Employee Work Time	13.7 hours	7.2 hours (47% less)
Handoffs	11	6 (45% fewer)
Filing Steps	4	2 (50% fewer)
Decision Reviews	3	1 (66% fewer)
Total Processing Time	70.0 days	20.0 days (71% faster)

For more information:

Minnesota's Enterprise Lean website: <http://www.lean.state.mn.us/>

To Learn More About Lean Government:

Learn how the Maryland World Class Consortia can help your government organization use simple and effective methods of continuous improvement to increase service levels, shorten response times, reduce cost, and improve employee satisfaction.

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