



# Improving Together: Winter 2017



[LeanCT Website](#)

## What is Improving Together?

Improving together is a quarterly newsletter issued by LeanCT to provide relevant information to Connecticut's process improvement community. It is intended to cover topics such as upcoming Lean training and events, articles and tools that will help you on your Lean journey, and hopefully introduce you to some new ideas and strategies. This publication is only as valuable as you make it, so please let us know what you want to learn about!

[START FEEDBACK SURVEY](#)

## **In This Issue**

In CT state government, we

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think of Lean as "growth strategy", enabling us to create opportunities and redirect our resources toward activities that ADD VALUE to the people we serve. Lean fosters growth, and organizational strength, by helping us to see how things work, why we do what we do, and by engaging us in the exploration of how to make things better.

But, wait...  
what *is*  
Lean?

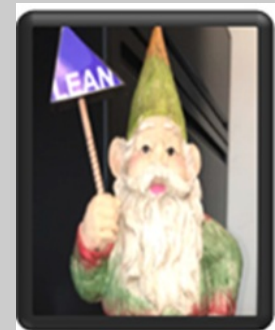
Don't you  
mean LEAN?

Yes, "Lean" can be, and often is, spelled with all capital letters. However, this may be confusing to some, as "Lean" is not an acronym.

# Agency Spotlight: Connecticut's Department of Social Services (DSS)

## Meet Larry... the Lean Gnome!

The DSS Lean/Process Improvement Steering Committee has launched a new campaign to promote the use and understanding of Lean/Process Improvement concepts throughout the department. Like the famous Travelocity roaming gnome, "Lean Larry" is a special gnome who travels throughout DSS via interoffice courier, bringing information about Lean/Process Improvement. He also collects information about processes that staff have "Leaned" (increased productivity or improved customer service). If an area doesn't have a Lean story to share with Larry, the staff is simply asked to share what they know about Lean and consider what they might try to do. Larry delivers learning resources when he comes to visit too. He has already been to 12 units and/or offices and is still on his journey. Here is a report of his first visit back in June!



## ***Commissioner's Core Team Hosts Lean Visitor***

A group of Department leaders comprising the DSS Core Team met with Lean Larry, and had a terrific time brainstorming about support for process improvement across the agency.

Larry 'asked' the following question: "What is your role and what can you commit to doing in support of process improvement in DSS?" Core Team members identified a whole treasure chest filled with things they are committed to providing in support to in the unending quest for efficient and effective service delivery. It includes:

- Setting expectations - creating objectives and making sure they are SMART (Specific,

Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time- Limited);

- Being a role model--setting an example of how to get comfortable with risk and making changes as often as needed to get to where we want/need to be;
- Actively participating--being part of the change process;
- Coaching/leading/guiding--providing support and direction, as needed, around all things Lean;
- Communicating--assisting the Process Improvement Steering Committee through E-News and other communication mechanisms to share information in a consistent and clear format;
- Creating an environment for success--supporting the Steering Committee and its recommendations;
- Promoting the use of data--providing support through the Steering Committee to continue robust analysis of data the agency collects.

Lean Larry left the Core Team with all of these treasures and will soon be seeing what's happening in other parts of DSS. Stay tuned for the next chapter!



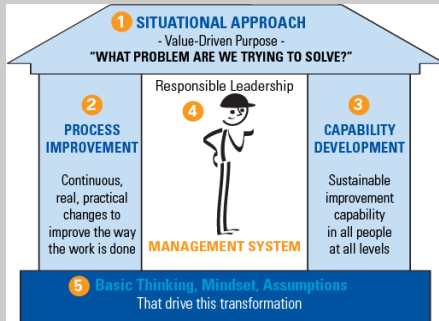
Members of the Commissioner's Core Team with some of their Lean brainstorming results. Seated: **Alvin Wilson**, counselor and government relations director; **Vance Dean**, information technology services director; **Mike Gilbert**, chief financial officer; and **Kathy Brennan**, Deputy Commissioner for programs & administrative services. Standing: **Rosa Ficocelli**, assistant to the Commissioner; **Brenda Parrella**, agency legal director; Commissioner, **Rod Bremby**; **Janel Simpson**, deputy commissioner for operations, enrollment & eligibility; and **Darleen Klase**, organizational & skill development director. Not pictured: **Astread Ferron-Poole**, chief of staff and affirmative action director; **Diane Benedetto**, human resources director; **Kate McEvoy**, health services director; and **David Dearborn**, communications director. Photo by **Hiram Negron**.

[Click Here to Learn More About DSS' Lean Journey!](#)



## The Buzz

### Culture Change in Government



### Check out Lean Government "at the gemba"!

The State of Connecticut and the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) were both filmed for a Gemba Academy Live! video series.

### State of Connecticut Videos

### CMS Videos

### What if Your Boss Doesn't "Get" Lean?

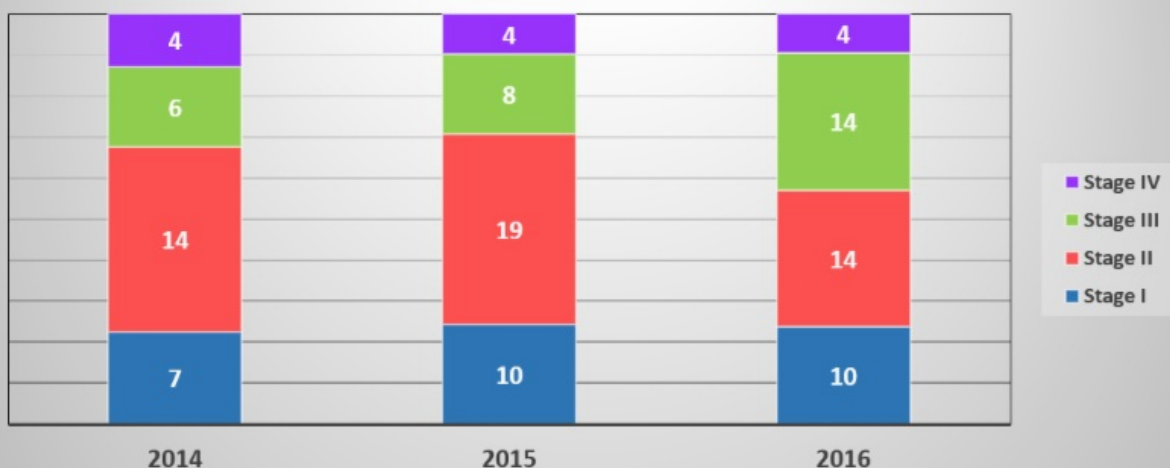


### Leadership Interview: Simon Sinek



## Measuring Success

Number of State Agencies at Each Lean Culture Stage by Year



The four stages of "Lean Culture" maturity, and their relevant criteria, can be found in the table below. These stages represent our perception based upon the above criteria. An agency's position at one particular stage does not equate to superiority of any kind. The Statewide Process Improvement Steering Committee is comprised of members working at all four stages, which gives it additional perspective, diversity and the potential for growth. The Committee members, along with Agency Lean Coordinators, support, encourage, and coach all state agencies (including their own) to move along this continuum and mature their agency's "Lean Culture" as much as possible.

Stages and Criteria
<b>Stage I</b> - New to Lean tools, have begun training staff, agency's process improvement philosophy has been identified, beginning to work on project(s)
<b>Stage II</b> - Moderately familiar with Lean tools, some of staff have been trained, have completed and/or are currently working on at least one Lean project, internal Lean work group has been developed at the agency
<b>Stage III</b> - Advanced use of Lean tools, most staff have been trained, some staff are prepared to facilitate Lean events and/or train co-workers, internal Lean work group is engaging staff for process improvement ideas and is regularly measuring progress, culture of continuous improvement is developing and is supported by Commissioner
<b>Stage IV</b> - Category III plus full staff engagement and adoption of a culture of continuous improvement

In this section, we will be sharing high-level, statewide metrics to help us assess the progress of our collective Lean journey. If you have any ideas or suggestions about how we can better measure success, please let us know!

[Send an Email to LeanCT!](#)

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## Fireside Chat with Judeen Wrinn, DMV Deputy Commissioner

How would you define "leader"?

*A leader is someone who has the ability to influence and inspire*



others to meet or exceed performance targets.

**In your opinion, what are some key factors and/or characteristics that help a person become an effective leader?**

*There are so many critical skills required, but I'll just focus on five that I think are vitally important.*

- (1) A leader is put into a position to deliver specific results for an organization. They must be **results-oriented**, which means the leader must understand the metrics of what success looks like in order to achieve the organization's objectives. A leader may possess all the right people skills but a leader understands that if they're not leading their team to achieve the target objectives, the team cannot be successful.*
- (2) A leader must recognize that they don't know it all. Through strong **relationship management skills**, they need to draw on talented employees throughout the organization and encourage them to challenge the status quo to liberate new ways of thinking. Engaging and encouraging others to be active team members is powerful in helping to increase buy-in, but it **MUST** be sincere!*
- (3) A leader has to possess **decision-making skills**. They need to make decisions and be accountable for them. Decisions made by gut instinct should be considered with extreme caution and rarely be employed. Decisions need to be made with the appropriate data analysis, participation and input from employees (listening is key here), and customers (including analysis of their needs). Making the ultimate decision isn't easy because not everyone might agree with it, but if the leader has gathered the right data, included the right input and participation and conducted the right analysis, they need to be confident in their decision and move on. After all, that's only part of the equation, implementing the decision is where the real hard work begins.*
- (4) A leader must have **management skills**. Implementing decisions requires defined success metrics, a great deal of coordination, organization skills, teamwork, buy-in - the list is quite extensive. Management is the skill to bring multiple parties and "parts" together to implement a decision. The leader will ultimately be accountable for the outcome.*
- (5) Finally, a leader must have **strong communication skills**. Besides the importance of listening and soliciting input, a leader must recognize the importance of keeping others informed. When employees know what's going on and are engaged early and often, they can better understand how to support the organization's objectives. Communications should extend to customers, business partners, and other critical stakeholders, like shareholders in the private sector and legislators in the public sector. Communicating effectively requires a leader to adjust their message according to the audience, so that each recipient hears and understands the information that was intended for them.*

**Who was the best boss you've ever had, and why?**

*My best boss was someone who employed "tough love" with me. They demonstrated they believed in me by challenging me with extra assignments that increased my knowledge of the organization and expanded my skill set. They coached me regularly, candidly sharing where I could do better. I learned a valuable leadership lesson from this person-- the*

*importance of providing candid and constructive feedback - even when it's uncomfortable. When a boss/manager/supervisor doesn't provide feedback, they've made a choice that the employee cannot improve. That's simply not fair. Every employee has the choice of what feedback to accept and what to ignore, but the decision needs to be in their hands. Those willing to hear the tough messages, even if they don't agree with all of it, will benefit. I did!*

**Is there one moment, or situation, that stands out as a pivotal point in changing the course of your career? If so, please tell us about it.**

*Early in my career in the private sector I was trained by someone who didn't know the job very well. As a result, I made a lot of mistakes. I realized that I could lose my job if I didn't take control over my own destiny. Through trial and error, I figured out the best way to perform the various functions and created a procedure manual so that any other new hire wouldn't have to go through what I did. I thought I did a great thing but, it turned out my fellow employees were resentful. I had no idea what I had done that caused such a stir but, thankfully, I was reading a book at the time that helped me "see the light". Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People" is probably one of the greatest influences in my career. Once I took a look in the proverbial mirror I realized that I had insulted my peers by never letting them know what I was doing or asking for help or advice. I could have ignored their hurt feelings and maintained I did nothing wrong. Instead, I recognized that I needed to make the effort to apologize and win back their respect. I knew the only thing I could control was me and I owned making this better if I wanted to remain in the organization. Within seven months I became assistant supervisor with the full support of the team... it couldn't have gone better. It was a valuable lesson and one I try to remember, even to this day.*

**Your one-year anniversary with the state is fast approaching. What is the one change you are most proud of since coming to work at the DMV?**

*I'm most proud of the people with whom I work. They have been open to trying a new way to solve business problems at a time that they've had so much going on (such as enduring a difficult system implementation a year earlier). I am so impressed with the resilience and commitment they have shown to make things better. It would have been so easy to push back because of the extra work required. They didn't. Even though they may not all have initially believed in the process, they engaged anyway. Their tireless work ethic and focus on the customer superseded all else. The process improvements THEY have implemented show impressive results, and they deserve any recognition for what has been accomplished.*

**We are so lucky to have you working on customer service in the most public-facing state agency in CT. What are some of the major differences between managing customer service operations in the private sector vs. the public sector? What is similar?**

*This is simple; it's not different. Even in the private sector, there are companies who do an exceptional job in customer service and others who do not. At the DMV, there are opportunities to engage employees in all process improvement efforts. For example, we need to provide formal customer service training to each employee across the entire agency. Ultimately we all serve the customer and it is important that all agency functions, including Operations, IT, HR, Fiscal, Legal, understand the role they play in delivering on our service promises.*

If there was one piece of advice you would share with state employees who are just beginning their career, what would it be?

*I can't say one thing, but I can come up with three!*

(1) **Always do the right thing.** Don't compromise your moral standards and you'll be able to sleep well at night.

(2) **Assume positive intent.** This may be difficult to do at times, but remember, none of us really know what's in someone else's head or what's going on in their life. When you assume positive intent, your approach is better, and if someone is struggling, you've helped them more than you'll ever know.

(3) **Take control of your own destiny.** Personally, I think it's so important to focus on what you control. You can't make anyone else change, so always look at yourself first. Always look within to see how you can be more effective. Over my career, I've seen many employees place their careers in the hands of management. You can ask for help, but don't expect others to do it for you. No one cares more about your career than you, so you need to own it.

**Thank you so much for chatting with us today, Deputy Commissioner Wrinn! Your words of wisdom are thoughtful and inspiring, to say the least.**

**For more on DMV's transformation journey, please [see this video](#) of Deputy Commissioner Wrinn's presentation at the September 2016 LeanCT conference!**



## National Trends



### VSM in New York State

The State of New York's Lean program took a fun and competitive approach to innovation. NYS Lean organized a massive value stream mapping event on Friday May 13, 2016, where **113 processes** were mapped by **80 Lean teams** representing **26 different state agencies** - all in **less than 2 hours!** While

simultaneously working on four levels of the Empire Plaza Convention Center in Albany, NY, teams used basic Lean tools to map out their processes, surfacing opportunities to reduce waste, improve quality and enhance the value they provide to the citizens of New York. To read more about the event, click [here](#).





[Learn More About NYS' Lean Journey Here](#)

## Kaizen Kit



### Kanban

*Kanban* is Japanese for "visual signal" or "card." Toyota line-workers used a kanban (i.e., an actual card) to signal steps in their manufacturing process. The system's highly visual nature allows teams to communicate more easily on what work needs to be done and when.

### Q: What are the most common mistakes in implementing Lean?

**A:** To start with, Lean must never be seen as a tool for headcount reduction or mindless cost-cutting. This fundamentally misses the purpose of Lean, which is to create value through eliminating waste. As we improve our processes, we should focus on reallocating our productive resources to new value-creating work, backlog, or proactive planning.

Another important attitude to avoid from the beginning is the impulse to implement



It also standardizes cues and refines processes, which helps to reduce waste and maximize value.

Today's workforce may be armed with retina-worthy smartphones and tablets, but plenty of information still comes our way as words on a screen. Emails, spreadsheets, task lists-text is everywhere. While it fits certain scenarios, textual information is not a one-size-fits-all communication vehicle. Its effectiveness is lower than you might think.

Kanban helps you harness the power of visual information, by using sticky notes on a whiteboard, to create a "picture" of your work. Seeing how your work flows within your team's process lets you communicate status within the context of the work. Kanban takes information that typically would be communicated via text and turns it into something that our brains can understand in milliseconds.

**For more information on Kanban,**  
[click here!](#)

individual Lean tools without seeking to understand the system in which they fit. This is hard to avoid, since many tools, like 5S, deliver immediate payoffs. But ultimately all Lean leaders must understand the "why" behind the tools, or their value will be lost.

Lean beginners should also limit the scope of their initial project so as to better ensure success, they should have a coach/mentor with deep knowledge, and they should have a gemba attitude i.e. always base one's thinking on a close observation of the work itself, and never relax on this point. Indeed, one of the hardest challenges we may face is the degree to which individual Lean successes will invariably uncover new problems and greater challenges. So in this regard, simply be aware of how difficult this work will be - and commit.

[Submit YOUR question here!](#)

## Upcoming Events

We are sorry, but there are no statewide trainings available at this time. If you are interested in attending Lean 101, shadowing an experienced facilitator, or visiting a 5-day Kaizen event, please e-mail LeanCT today!

[Send an Email to LeanCT!](#)



## Are you looking for a Lean coach/mentor?

Do you want to introduce Lean thinking in your agency, or do you need some support re-energizing your agency's Lean journey?

The Statewide Process Improvement Steering Committee is standing by!

[Submit your request for assistance now!](#)

CT Statewide Process Improvement Steering Committee | [www.ct.gov/leanct](http://www.ct.gov/leanct)

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