



## What is Lean?

Lean, in a government context, refers to the application of Lean manufacturing methods/tools that are used to identify and implement the most efficient and value-added way to provide government services. Lean tools (such as Value Stream Mapping) allow us to understand each step within a process, eliminate the unnecessary parts (such as wait time) and standardize the process so that it can be streamlined and replicated, while reducing re-work and error.

### Why Lean, why now?

Lean tools provide context and a methodology for managing projects, measuring performance and using data to inform decision-making. These concepts are the backbone of any strong business model and have been used for decades to improve performance in all industry sectors, including government. While a focus on process improvement is not new to Connecticut, the use of Lean tools has provided us with a standardized way in which we can maximize customer value and reduce waste. Since government is one of just a few growth industries, our costs will continue to increase over time. We must find a way, today, to provide the best services we can, within the resources we have available to us.

### How does this work?



An individual or a team of employees can use a color-coded system to map out a process (also known as Value Stream Mapping) and, using the colors, identify value-added steps (i.e. what the customer finds valuable), non-value added but necessary steps (i.e. statutory requirements) and non-value added steps

(i.e. wait time). From this process, the individual or team can make changes to the process based upon the data. The adjusted process will be faster, more efficient, less costly and more customer-focused (value-added).

### **What are Lean methods/ tools?**

Many Lean manufacturing methods have been successfully adapted to identify non-value added activities in administrative, transactional, and office processes that are common in government agencies. Common Lean methods include:

- Value Stream Mapping (VSM) – Value stream mapping refers to the development of a high-level visual representation of a process flow that is involved in delivering a product or service (called a “value stream”) to customers. VSM events, which are typically 3–4 days, focus on identifying the sources of non-value added activity and prioritizing possible improvement activities.
- Kaizen – Kaizen, a Japanese phrase, means “to change for the good of all” and is based on the philosophy of improvement, without regard to size, type or duration. Kaizen activity is often focused on rapid process improvement events (called Kaizen events) that bring together a cross-functional team for 3-5 days to study a specific process followed by implementing process changes.
- 5S – 5S is the name of a workplace organizational method that uses a list of five Japanese words which, when translated into English, start with the letter S—Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain.

### **What are non-value added activities?**

Several types of non-value added activity are common in government administrative and service processes. Lean methods focus on identifying and eliminating these wastes. The list below identifies common administrative process wastes:

- Backlog of Work, Excess Materials or Information
- Data Errors, Missing Info
- Unneeded Reports, Doing Work Not Requested
- Unnecessary Process Steps
- Unnecessary Approval Cycles, Signatures, Review
- Trips to Remote Printer or Files
- Report Routing, File Storage

Wastes in administrative and service processes can relate to:

1. collection, use, and management of information
2. design and implementation of work processes
3. the efficiency and effectiveness with which individuals work