



The Lean Journey: Denver Human Services

Nearly two years ago, our Executive Management team here at Denver Human Services (DHS) was invited to Denver Health to observe a Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) read out. We were incredibly impressed with the creativity and thoroughness the team had put into the improvements they were making. In fact we were so impressed, we decided to go back for more.

We attended the two day Lean Executive training as a team in order to fully understand what it would take to lead this kind of initiative here at Denver Human Services. We learned a great deal about how invested our team needed to be, how we could deal with resistance and how to make the whole process manageable. But looking back now, we realize nothing could have truly prepared us for the Lean journey we have been on for the past couple of years.

We knew from the beginning that we would have to do this our way. We kept hearing about savings—but we needed to get money out the door! We kept hearing about processes—but our business is people! We kept hearing about products—but we provide services!

But still, we knew we could apply the same philosophy, tools and innovation—we simply had to adapt them to our world. We learned quickly that there is no wrong way to improve.

Of course we made our fair share of missteps—perhaps that particular problem is too big for one week, or perhaps we should let the entire team know when—in advance—all of Executive Management will be observing them. But by embracing the idea of continuous improvement, we learn that missteps are simply steps on our journey. And we embrace them, too.

We now have an agency-wide innovation plan, two full-scale value streams, and a mission control wall to track our progress for all to see. We have conducted 34 Rapid Improvement Events; have 41 trained Black Belts and 202 trained Green Belts helping us improve on a daily basis. Over 20% of our staff has participated in RIEs and we've saved countless hours of staff time, which we reinvest in doing more good. And now we know for certain, our journey has just begun.

Penny May, Director of Denver Human Services



Lean Innovation Spotlight: Denver Human Services Flow Cells

The first DHS Lean project in 2013 set the bar high. In the Family & Adult Assistance Division we wanted to decrease the time it took for paperwork dropped off by a client to reach the case worker for processing. We knew that decreasing this time would result in faster and more accurate benefits for our clients.

The Lean Project Team started by examining the current state of the process. Through data gathering, analysis and process mapping, we discovered it took four to six days to get documents to case workers. The team specifically looked at how many documents typically come into our office and how many staff members we have to do the work associated with processing— including routing, scanning, and data entry.

With these two pieces of information, we calculated the Takt time. Takt time is the rate at which we need to work in order to meet customer, or in our case, client demand.

The team calculated Takt time for each application at 94 seconds. This meant that every 94 seconds, we needed to make an application available to a case worker for processing.

Our current process was not able to meet that pace—we needed to eliminate the waste.

The team found that there were too many handoffs, multiple entry points, excessive transporting of documents from one area of the building to another, and instances of duplicated work.

The solution was to implement something called a flow cell. A flow cell is a logical, efficient, and usually physically self-contained arrangement of supplies, equipment, and personnel needed to complete a process sequence. Flow cells enable the use of many Lean tools such as visual management, 6S, flow, and standard work. Based on customer demand, we determined a need for two “application flow cells” and seven “everything else flow cells”.

In order to design the flow cells, the team used a process called 2P (preparation and process). First, the team decided upon the critical success factors and then considered all aspects of the flow cell—visual, quality, flow, people, information, supplies, and equipment. Using this information, the team designed seven different cell layouts. Finally, the entire team worked together to narrow down a solution, which was a hybrid of best options. When the design was finalized, the team tested it using cardboard and other available equipment. This allowed for experimentation before implementation.

Kathy Hicks, DHS



Application flow cell in action.
Karen Gibson, Linda Sudasar,
Janie Jones & Spenser Rudd

Leon Joseph (left), a member of the RIE team, at the ribbon cutting ceremony.



Everything Else flow cell in action.
Becky Donnella,
Jackie Pina, & Laura Omdahl

What Good Looks Like

Innovation is about creativity – the ability and willingness to manage and make changes. Here are some (but certainly not all) of the recent highlights:

- A group of colleagues from DHS—Family & Adult Assistance, increased the number of same day determinations for assistance programs by standardizing the interview process. The projected annual savings is \$151,000.
- The Office of Economic Development streamlined the contract award decision process by creating a standardized approval process. The projected annual savings is \$100,100.



“Hi to Bye” RIE with Denver Motor Vehicle



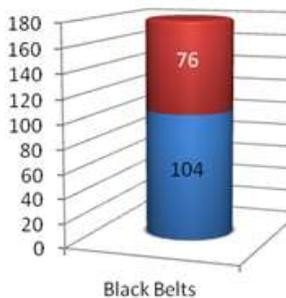
Black Belt Cohort 9

- A group of colleagues from Denver Motor Vehicle, the Controller’s Office, and the Budget & Management Office improved the customer experience and streamlined the transaction process of registering a vehicle. The projected annual savings is \$204,000.
- A group within the Controller’s Office came together to eliminate 100% of rejects and duplicate payments for bulk mortgage payments, resulting in mortgage companies paying the correct amount each and every time. The projected annual savings is \$20,000.

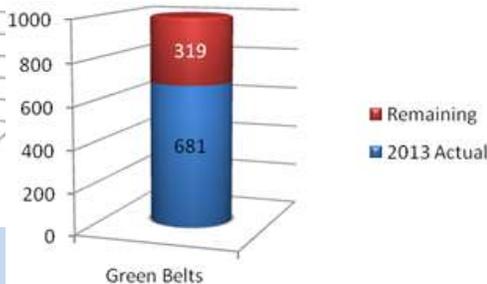
Peak Academy | Update

Building & Celebrating a Culture of Continuous Improvement

2013 Peak Academy Black Belts



2013 Peak Academy Green Belts



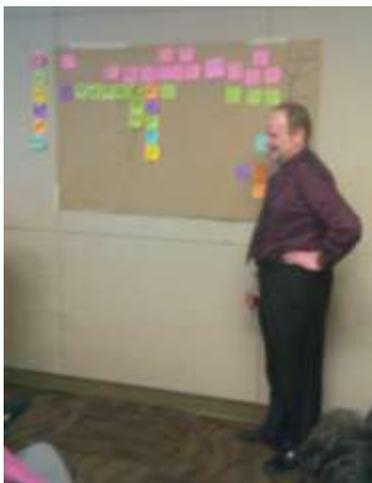
The **Peak Academy** is committed to empowering Denver colleagues to improve their processes using Lean tools and techniques. This empowerment comes through:

- Tools to identify process waste
- Tools to eliminate process waste
- Support after “graduation” to improve processes

“The training {Black Belt} was the most valuable training that I have been through with the City. I have taken it a step further than this feedback and have already suggested to the Mayor that everyone in the City should take this training and there should be a space on the front page of denvergov.org for positive comments and feedback regarding this training. THIS IS A GAME CHANGER! Thanks everyone.”

--Larry Stevenson, Excise and License, Black Belt Cohort 9

“To teach my team just one thing from this class would be an injustice to them. This needs to be a packaged deal for everyone to truly move things forward. This is the best class that the City and County of Denver has offered!”
--Participant in Black Belt Cohort 8



Black Belt Curt Pesicka leading a Green Belt training for the Office of Economic Development

| Month | Training Dates |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| July | 7/22, 7/23, 7/24, 7/25, and 7/26 |
| August | 8/26, 8/27, 8/28, 8/29, and 8/30 |
| September | 9/23, 9/24, 9/25, 9/26, and 9/27 |
| October | 10/21, 10/22, 10/23, 10/24, and 10/25 |

2013 Application Process

Black Belt (4.5 day Lean Process Improvement Training)

If you applied, we have your application on file and will be filling up the July, August, and September cohorts to the best of our ability.

Green Belt (4-hour Intro to Lean Process Improvement)

Teams interested in taking the Green Belt training as a group, please contact the Peak Academy. Individuals interested in taking Green Belt training can register through the Office of Human Resources by calling (720) 913-5628 or by emailing training@denvergov.org.

www.denvergov.org/PeakPerformance



Members of Black Belt Cohort 9 on a Gemba Walk with Elizabeth Foster (Black Belt Cohort 8) of Denver Human Services

Peak Academy | Contact Information

For Peak Academy info, training dates, how to apply, or other general questions, please contact:

Brian Elms

Email: PeakAcademy@denvergov.org

Phone: 720.913.1645

Peak Performance Website:

www.denvergov.org/peakperformance

General ideas, feedback, questions?

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Process Improvement

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