

Lean Government Case Study: Ventura County, CA Service Excellence Program Continues Strong Results



In 2008, the county of Ventura, California began their lean journey through a program they call “Service Excellence.” The objective of the program is to “encourage a Countywide culture of service excellence, continuous improvement and empirically based decision making as a means of improving the quality, consistency, speed and cost of County services.”

The Service Excellence program is sponsored by the County Board of Supervisors and the County Executive Officer, and coordinated by the Assistant County Executive Officer. It is structured to support both agency/department-initiated improvement projects as well as Board/CEO-initiated, inter-agency process improvement projects.

For their 2010-2011 fiscal year-to-date, the county reported \$1.64 million in hard savings and \$402,000 in other returns. *For the first two and three-quarter years of implementation, Ventura County’s Service Excellence program has recorded a total \$6.9 million in savings.*

Ventura County continues to grow their program. From the County’s Service Excellence website:

“The County of Ventura has embarked on a deliberate detour from traditional approaches in its stand against waste using a continuous improvement model known as Lean Six Sigma.

Over the last decade, a number of government entities have employed Lean Six Sigma with substantially convincing results to demonstrate that the concept of effectively creating lean systems in government is not only possible, but probable and attainable.

'Lean Thinking' is a concept for government whose time has come. County staff who have participated in improvement actions report that they experience a sense of renewed energy, team-building, inspiration and excitement when they are able to correct long-standing process problems. Continuous improvement as a way of business has arrived and is here to stay.”

Result Samples from Ventura County’s Human Services Agency:



Ventura County’s Human Services Agency (HSA) recently provided a detailed snapshot of what other county agencies have achieved through the Service Excellence program. The HSA launched its improvement efforts in July 2008. As of June 2010, Agency employees conducted 13 improvement events aimed at improving front-line customer service and maximizing county resources. *The total annual value of these improvements is over \$585,000.*

The table on the following page is a sample of their improvement activities.

Focus Area	Description	County Benefits	Customer Benefits
Application Registration	Streamlined the first step for requesting Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, and CalWORKs benefits.	Gained 6,670 hrs/year in staff time (valued at \$328k) previously spent on paper work. Saved \$16,000 per year in paper copying costs.	Applicants no longer need to make appointments to start the application process. Less time spent providing and repeating personal information.
Benefit Renewal Packets	Standardized renewal packets for Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, and CalWORKs. Streamlined packet preparation process.	Eliminated 28 forms from packets. Saved \$30k/year in copying and storage costs.	Clients spend less time reading and completing forms when renewing their Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, and CalWORKs benefits.
Appeals	Replaced the time-intensive process of logging in/out client files with a new process that facilitates timely file transmittal to process client appeals.	Gained 1,020 hrs/year of staff time (\$50.1k). Saved \$1,070 per year in copying costs.	Clients benefit from the re-direction of staff time from logging cases to client services.
Health & Dental Exams for Foster Children	Partnered with Public Health to streamline processes for educating foster parents about exam schedules, and to standardize data entry.	Reduced process steps by 30%.	Better children's medical and dental data will be available to foster parents, who can then schedule exams for their foster children's exams more easily and at recommended intervals.

For more information, see Ventura County's Service Excellence web page:

http://portal.countyofventura.org/portal/page/portal/cov/service_excellence

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