

RAPID RESULTS

A/E Consultant Agreement Improvement Project

Background

Every year, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) processes nearly 400 architecture and engineering (A/E) consultant agreements. These agreements are required by IDOT for projects to start or continue. Projects are dependent on these agreements, and there is a great need to improve the agreement process so as to not disrupt the business functions of consultants and to keep the projects on schedule.

Though it is critical to the function of IDOT, as of Fall 2015 the process had nearly ground to a halt. With a backlog of almost 157 agreements, the overall process took around 9 months to establish and execute a new contract. With complaints pouring in, IDOT staff recognized that change was necessary.

Steps Taken

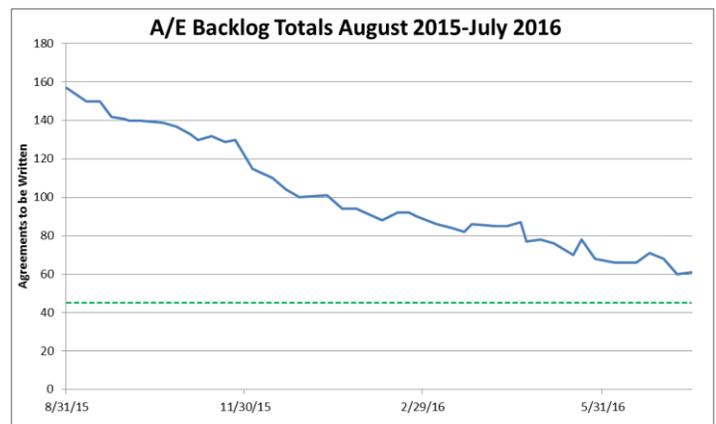
Under the guidance of a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt volunteer from [Chamberlain](#) and using industry best practices, ten employees analyzed and mapped the process. After the process was mapped, they identified parts of the process that did not add value. These were defined as waste. The team was then able to identify 12 improvements that directly targeted waste, of which 7 have been implemented.

Improvement examples include:

- ▶ Defining processes for different agreement types and removing discrepancies;
- ▶ Allowing agreements to be submitted as a scanned copy via email;
- ▶ Establishing a SharePoint site for proposal packages to be submitted and stored electronically;
- ▶ Creating more user friendly templates through improvements such as automating calculations.

Results

The A/E improvement project has shown enormous success to date as a result of these improvements. The overall cycle time for the agreement process has decreased by nearly 60 percent from 154 days to 60-70, which represents the time it takes for a project to receive approval after it is received. By decreasing the cycle time, the team cut the number of backlogs by over 60 percent, with only 60 agreements currently remaining in the backlog, down from 157.



These changes have improved customer interactions between businesses and the State. Complaints from customers have been replaced with comments on how the process is more efficient and less burdensome. The project also highlights how often overlooked operational changes can lead to major improvements that benefit both the State and businesses.

Looking Forward

DOT staff intends to continue to improve this process and anticipates reducing the cycle time to as low as 45 days, representing a 70 percent reduction in turnaround time.