

“Lean” as a Process Improvement Approach in Government Service Processes

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Abstract

The paper presents the “lean” approach to the improvement of service processes in government agencies, and provides a discussion differentiating it from the traditional approach. The lean approach has the following features: (1) customer-centric (2) metric-based, focused on process velocity, simplicity, and flexibility and, (3) focused on the elimination of “wastes” or non-value add activities. The framework of the lean approach considers the customer’s needs and requirements as the start point of the improvement initiative, and the maximization of the value of the service process to the customer as the end point. An important premise is that ‘value’ is defined from the viewpoint of the customer. The “customer” is an entity that is minimally recognized or addressed in service improvement efforts in government agencies. The focus of the paper is on the “approach” rather than on a structured methodology. The paper concludes with a discussion of how “lean” principles, activities, and processes are applied to the improvement of government service processes. Key discussions include how the “customer” is defined, and the definition and identification of “wastes” or non-value add activities for service processes in government agencies.