



Lean Government

Region 8 Tribal Underground Storage Tanks Grant Award Process Lean Event Case Study

Summary

EPA Region 8 awards underground storage tank (UST) grants to tribes in the region every year. With a 5.5 month lead time, Region 8 identified the UST grants awards process as having several inefficiencies that created frustration among Tribal grant recipients as well as program staff. Unclear expectations of what tribes should include in grant applications, incomplete applications, version control issues with documents sent between tribes and Region 8 staff, and inconsistency in grants review among Region 8 staff all resulted in extra time investment by staff and excessive processing time.

In January 2014, the Region 8 office held a kaizen event focused on the UST tribal grants award process. The team created an improved process which, when implemented, is anticipated to result in grants being awarded 2-3 months earlier than in the current process, a 48 percent reduction in process time.



Figure 1: Underground Storage Tank Removal

Results

The Lean project team expects this Lean project to reduce the time needed for UST grant awards by an average of 48 percent. The table below contains estimated results based on the implementation of the process changes.

Metric	Old Process	New Process	Percent Change
Lead Time	Average: 5.5 months Range: 2.5 months to more than 1 year	Average: 3 months Range: reduce variation greatly	↓48%
# of Process Steps	177	110	↓38%

**Results are anticipated based on the new process design*

Other anticipated results:

- Improved consistency in how Tribal UST grant awards are processed
- Improved communications between Region 8 project officers and grants specialists

Scope of the Lean Project

Project Scope: The scope of the project was the time between when a draft workplan arrives from a Tribal grantee through the time when the grant award is made.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of the project were to revise the Tribal UST grant award process to reduce re-work and instances of miscommunication throughout the process. Specific objectives include:

- **Process Steps:** Reduce number of iterations of workplan revision
- **Lead Time and Processing Time:** Award grants earlier in the year by reducing:
 - Workplan and budget review time;
 - Time for the grants specialist to notify the project officer of the receipt of the final application;
 - Time for the project officer to complete the grant entry into IGMS; and
 - Time for the grants specialist to finalize and distribute the award
- **Participant Satisfaction:** Increase customer, grants specialist and project officer satisfaction with the process
- **Consistency:** Improve consistency in how Tribal UST grants are processed
- **Communication:** Improve communications between Region 8 staff (project officers and grants specialists)
- **Ensure that no new negative effects are created by implementing the new process**

Process Changes and Improvements

The following process changes and improvements will be implemented over the two grant cycles following the Lean event:

- Conduct a pilot for two-year grant awards, in which tribes will engage in workplan negotiations for a grant that covers a two-year period instead of completing a new workplan every year.
- Engage tribes early in the process, face-to face- if possible, to help them understand and complete grant requirements.
- Encourage grantee use of the Office of Management and Budget MAX website, which provides a standard place for tribes to submit workplans, budgets, and application forms for review. Use of the site can help reduce version control issues and miscommunications regarding document status.
- Develop an internal standard operating procedure that documents expectations throughout the process for Region 8 staff.
- Develop and utilize a shared tracking spreadsheet, for project officers, to document progress in meeting milestones throughout the process, including when the final application is received and when the grant specialist makes the final grant award.
- Create Integrated Grants Management System (IGMS) templates for grant project officers to improve consistence and accuracy in completion of documents and to reduce rework.
- Improve the process of metrics tracking for the grant award process.



Figure 2: Mapping the Current Process

Implementation

The Lean team plans to implement many of the process improvements by September 30, 2014, and to fully implement all process changes and improvements by September 30, 2015.

The team created a detailed implementation plan that lists all of the improvement items and team members responsible, with a timeline for those improvements to be applied. Items in the implementation plan include:

- Encourage grantees to use the MAX website
- Develop a shared tracking spreadsheet for project officers to track milestones in the grant award process
- Collect pre-event metrics for the process
- Create IGMS templates for grant project officers to use with accompanying guidance documents
- Develop a standard operating procedure for the improved process
- Launch a two-year grant pilot for UST Tribal grants in FY 2015
- Provide early engagement and face-to-face communication with Tribes in the FY 2015

The first year of implementation concluded on September, 30 2014. The team completed implementation of strategies to encourage use of the MAX website by providing a hands-on training with tribal grantees and ensuring all tribal grantees had login information to access the website. In addition, all project officers now use the shared, tracking spreadsheet to track milestones and the IGMS templates provided by the Grants Office. The Lean team collected metrics for the first year of implementation and will continue to do so in fiscal year 2015. Measureable results are not anticipated until after September 30, 2015 when all action items are fully implemented and process improvements are fully adopted by the Lean team.



Figure 3: Lean Event Team

For More Information:

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