

Adapting private-sector tools to build a more effective, efficient state government

Governor Inslee’s Results Washington initiative, launched in 2013, is focusing state government on key goals in [education](#), the [economy](#), the [environment](#), [health and safety](#) and [government efficiency](#). To help achieve these objectives, the state is adapting proven private-sector principles, such as Lean management, to government.

Lean, pioneered by Toyota and now widely used by businesses and nonprofits, empowers line staff to improve work processes, cut waste and improve customer service. It replaces a “because we’ve always done it that way” mindset with a workplace culture that engages employees in finding better ways to achieve an organization’s goals. By scrutinizing processes and objectives, the people doing the work pinpoint — and remove — wasted steps, duplicated efforts and delays.



The state is getting considerable help in this effort. To date, more than 231 individuals from 106 organizations have volunteered pro-bono teaching, training, coaching and mentoring to thousands of state employees. These Lean experts come from a broad cross-section of corporations, government agencies and nonprofit organizations, including those in the retail, manufacturing, health care, military and aerospace sectors.

Although the work is still in the early stages, Lean principles and tools are helping the state avoid millions of dollars in costs, simplify paperwork and cut wait times for driver’s licenses, business licenses, death certificates, administrative hearings, collision data and public records.

Ultimately, the goal is to transform the workplace culture so that Lean principles and strategies become the way that Washington state government works.

Examples of [these early results](#) from Lean practices:

- » The **Department of Revenue** shortened a four-page tax form widely used by small businesses to a single page with just three lines. The agency also set up an online chat system to answer customers’ tax questions.
- » By speeding up an audit reconsideration process, the **Department of Labor and Industries** has saved employers \$1.7 million in interest costs.
- » The **Department of Transportation** eliminated an 8.5-month backlog of collision reports. The crash reports, which used to take an average of 255 days to process, now take an average of 17. The average cost to produce a collision report has fallen from \$8.22 to \$2.74.
- » The **Utilities and Transportation Commission** has slashed transportation permit processing time from 15 days to nine.
- » The **Liquor Control Board**, which was deluged with public record requests related to marijuana legalization, has cut the average response time from nearly 14 days to fewer than eight.
- » The **Department of Health**, which handles complaints about the Women, Infants and Children program, has cut the time for handling them from an average of four weeks to one.
- » A team of employees at **Consolidated Technology Services** converted the state’s 30-year-old long-distance network to a new service, saving state agencies \$2 million a year in long-distance charges.
- » The **Office of the Chief Information Officer** and the **Department of Enterprise Services** are building a single mailing address database for use by 11 agencies that were using their own databases. The cost avoidance from saved staff time and fewer address errors is estimated to be at least \$1.6 million a year.