

## **Lean Six Sigma**

**Presented by Wanda Williams and Modinat Agun**

**Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department**

### **Q&A Session**

#### **How can I receive further training in Lean Six Sigma (LSS)?**

Wanda Williams: There is actually a growing number of online universities that offer training on LSS, such as Villanova. The American Society for Quality (ASQ) has lots of training. Local universities in your own areas may offer trainings as well.

#### **You mentioned when talking about Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) that sometimes staff members feel like there is no end to the cycle(s). Do you have tips for helping to keep staff engaged, interested, and motivated?**

Wanda Williams: Absolutely—when you get into the Act phase and are trying to see what you learned, take the moment to celebrate the success of the improvement you have done before jumping into the next cycle. That's a tremendous motivator to the team and everyone else to see that you did complete a cycle.

Laura Arena: On the PHQIX Community Forum, we do have a thread about how to make quality improvement (QI) fun, and there may be ideas on that topic.

Modinat Agun: Leadership support is so crucial, and that has a tendency to keep people motivated and on task. It helps you realize that what we are doing is tied into the mission, vision, goals, and objectives of the organization. When you have a champion behind you and you're celebrating your achievements, that's huge for morale and motivation, and it doesn't feel like an endless cycle of improvement.

#### **How do you define “the customer” in government work? There are so many “customers.”**

Wanda Williams: That is important, and we struggle with that as well, but it's important for the agency as a whole to define the customer. If you can define the customer for the agency whether you are serving the internal staff or if you can all agree on that one customer, it helps the agency move forward together rather than fighting over competing views of the customer.

Modinat Agun: A huge problem we have in Tacoma is trying to differentiate between different types of customers, so we use the terminology of stakeholders in conjunction with customers. The struggle in public health is that the customers should be the citizens in the county that you are located in. However, we have a lot of stakeholders in all our processes: various politicians, proprietors, and vendors that we regulate. So keeping those in balance is a challenging and ever-evolving goal. Accounting for all the stakeholders impacts or affects the process.

Wanda Williams: You don't want to mistakenly identify your customer as your key stakeholder because that will skew the product or service you are trying to provide, and it might provide an outcome to your customer that you didn't intend.

#### **Could you comment on the Model for Improvement and how it fits with LSS?**

Wanda Williams: For us at Tacoma, we used the Model for Improvement the same way as PDSA.

**How long does it take to change the culture?**

Wanda Williams: As long as it takes, because unfortunately it's not something that happens overnight. As a QI practitioner, you have to keep fighting the good fight, learn to laugh at the struggles, and keep moving forward.

Modinat Agun: Pace yourself and celebrate all the wins that you get. If you are focused on a timeline, and you feel like you haven't progressed, you will get unmotivated. But if you look at each phase or step as a win, that will help you maintain the enthusiasm. It's good to focus on an end goal, but don't forget about the day-to-day wins. It may seem that change is slow, but sometimes when change happens, you are unprepared because you didn't expect it to happen.

**Great job, Wanda! It looks to me like you are integrating your QI work to support your strategic planning efforts. How many strategic goals does the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department have? Do you have defined QI projects in support of each of the strategic goals? Can you speak to how you've been working at integration?**

Wanda Williams: Partly with our existing strategic plan, we have five strategic directions, and that's what you saw on the webinar's SharePoint page (slide 58). Do we have defined projects? The answer would be yes and no. The four other strategic directions really focus on population health; the majority of our LSS efforts are internal, following our fifth strategic direction around organizational excellence, so we are trying to streamline our processes. We also have projects going on in environmental health that are trying to streamline cross-program processes.

Modinat Agun: One of the projects we are currently working on that supports our strategic direction, especially dealing with healthy people and healthy communities, is the Food, Drinking Water & Wells, and Septic Systems programs. We are on the tail end of wrapping up a yearlong QI effort to streamline the customer experience for people establishing a new restaurant. It's been a fantastic voyage, and when you talk about the culture change, it has taken three programs and examining their processes to see how they can be modified in future quality that benefits our customers. When we say "customer," we realize we have several stakeholders, including those who come in to apply for a restaurant license, septic system designers and installers, and the citizens of Pierce County. That's an example of a huge initiative we are currently undertaking that supports our strategic direction.

**Will you share your template for project status that you place on your SharePoint site?**

Wanda Williams: This is something we developed internally, and I can share templates and try to focus them on customer assessment and analysis.

**Where are you housed inside your organization structurally? Are you an office under executive leadership, or are you inside a specific public health program?**

Wanda Williams: We are actually buried in administrative services. We are not housed under executive leadership, but we are under administrative services, which is under the Office of the Director. We are in the Office of Assessment, Planning & Improvement. We are available for all four divisions, acting as quality consultants and mentors and providing trainings and organizational leadership development.

### **Do you have a dedicated budget?**

Wanda Williams: We are working on that. We don't have a specific line item that we would code all quality improvement activities to.

### **As a final product of the QI project for PDSA, we use a poster board describing each of the steps: P, D, S, and A. Do you do the same for Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control (DMAIC) on a poster board? Or on a table like the one you showed in the example?**

Wanda Williams: At this time, we do not; in the past, when we started quality improvement here at Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, we did follow the improvement model and Plan, Do, Check, Act. We did do poster boards, but we haven't done them in the past 2–3 years. We've talked about having a quality science fair quarterly to showcase the various projects and activities we are doing, but right now, a lot of that is being housed and shared on our SharePoint site.

Modinat Agun: We do have town hall report-outs, so if we do a cross-department initiative that involves most of our 250 people, we'll have a town hall where we'll use huge posters to take people on the journey from Define to Control and all the things we did on the way. It's taking them from the problem through the solution.

### **Additional Resources**

Public Health Centers for Excellence

<http://www.phcentersforexcellence.org/>

iSixSigma

<http://www.isixsigma.com/>

LSS Training

ASQ Quality Training

<http://asq.org/learninginstitute/index.html>

Juran Global Training

<http://www.juran.com/training/>

LSS Toolbox

Process Improvement & LSS Toolbox

<https://www.moresteam.com/toolbox/index.cfm>

LSS DMAIC Quick Reference

<http://www.isixsigma.com/new-to-six-sigma/dmaic/six-sigma-dmaic-quick-reference/>