



February 2015

## From the Director's Desk: A Strong Start to 2015

The positive impact of continuous improvement (CI) continues to grow in Minnesota government, and the stories you'll find in this issue of the newsletter offer ample proof. We've got a great spotlight on the Minnesota Department of Education's recent efforts. Then we take a closer look at some CI projects that are helping the state better serve people with disabilities, and which were nominated for Governor's CI Awards in 2014.

Before we get to those great stories, I wanted to quickly highlight a couple of news items from our office.

First, I'd like to officially introduce and welcome the newest member of the Office of CI, **Jane Xiong**, who joined our team at the beginning of 2015. Jane will spend half of her time supporting our office's training courses, and the other half providing CI services to the Minnesota Department of Administration (Admin). While the Office of CI has called Admin home since its creation, Admin has never had any CI staff resources of its own. Already, Jane is working on a number of ambitious projects within Admin, helping the agency improve its various services.

Jane has worked in the public sector for about 15 years, primarily in employee development and grants management. As far as the State of Minnesota goes, Jane first started at the Department of Employment and Economic Development in 2009, and most recently worked at the Department of Health. Her new role is familiar, as she previously worked for Admin back in 2011, and provided support to our office when it was known as Enterprise Lean and led by Tom Baumann. We are very happy to welcome her back.

I'm also excited to share some news about our training programs. In January, we hit two important milestones. We revamped and re-launched our introductory CI course, formerly known as Lean 101. The course now uses simulations and hands-on exercises to create a dynamic, interactive learning experience and bring CI concepts to life. Thus far, participants have really enjoyed it, and we're excited to deliver it to more people throughout 2015.

Also in January, we delivered our new [Process Improvement Measurement](#) course for the first time. Attendees learned about the importance of measurement and how it fits in the improvement cycle, how to select measures, how to use data to guide and sustain improvements, and how to develop a data

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### First Steps...

The CI Index, featured here [a few months ago](#), has made its debut! In 2015, two organizations have deployed it to gather feedback from their staff.

collection plan. This course is now part of our ongoing training rotation, so be sure to give it a look in the coming months!

2014 was a year of growth and change for the Office of CI, and I'm eager to see what we can accomplish together in 2015. I'm confident that it will be another big year for CI in Minnesota government!

Mary Jo Caldwell  
Director, Minnesota Office of Continuous Improvement

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## Agency Spotlight: Minnesota Department of Education

**Minnesota** Department of  
**Education**

In 2014, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) embraced continuous improvement (CI) in a big way. Since 2012, about 27 percent of the agency's employees have received introductory CI training, with the majority of these participants completing their training in the last year. MDE staff participation

in advanced training courses on problem solving and project facilitation has also been on the rise. All told, this gives MDE some of the highest training participation totals across state government.

The agency's commitment is further demonstrated by the numerous CI projects it has recently completed. In total, MDE has conducted six WorkOuts, two process mapping events, two large-scale improvement projects, and one design project. Underlying all of these efforts is a strong commitment from the agency's leadership.

"I am so proud of the work our employees are doing to serve Minnesotans better through embracing a culture of continuous improvement" said Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. "As stewards of the public's resources, we have an obligation to operate our department with efficiency, and the training our staff receive in continuous improvement is an important part of that."

These efforts are helping to create positive outcomes for the department, its customers, and the public. In 2014, MDE received its first Governor's CI Award, for a project completed by its State Library Services division. The project, highlighted in [last month's newsletter](#), is enhancing the state's ability to deliver quality early childhood learning experiences involving schools and libraries, thanks to streamlined application forms and requirements behind the scenes.

What makes MDE's accomplishments especially impressive is the fact that they have been achieved without any dedicated CI staff within the department. While many of Minnesota's government organizations have formal divisions, teams, or employees wholly focused on CI, MDE's CI efforts have grown based on the actions of leaders who recognize that CI approaches and tools can help them improve service quality, reduce costs, and enhance customer value. MDE leaders are embedding the values of CI in all of its staff and equipping employees with the tools to succeed. These efforts are setting the stage for continued success in the years ahead.

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## Highlighting Improvement Projects Impacting People with Disabilities

In [last month's newsletter](#), we highlighted the seven winning projects from the 2014 Governor's Continuous Improvement (CI) Awards. But with 33 nominated projects – all worthy of recognition in their own right – we wanted to take a moment to shine a spotlight on all of these projects and the positive impact they are making in Minnesota. This month, we highlight the excellent work of three teams whose projects are helping the state better serve people with disabilities.

### **Faster Medical Treatment for People in Need**

Our first project comes from the Department of Human Services (DHS) and its State Medical Review Team (SMRT). SMRT teamed up with the DHS Office of CI to more quickly and efficiently make client disability determinations. Faster determinations means their clients (many of whom are homeless or live in shelters) receive necessary medical treatment for their disabilities more quickly. In 2014, SMRT increased by 21 percent the number of determinations processed in 15 days or less. Providing medical services more quickly not only drastically impacts the quality of life for recipients, but also results in significant cost reductions for DHS – both in contractor costs and required staff time. From 2013 to 2014, DHS saw a total estimated cost reduction of \$34,000.



Metro Mobility provided approximately two million rides in 2014.

### **Effective Transit for People with Disabilities**

[Metro Mobility](#) is a public transportation service for people with disabilities, overseen by the Metropolitan Council and delivered by providers who contract with the Council. In 2014, the service provided approximately two million rides. Three important technological improvements were implemented this past year, including real-time dispatching and GPS tracking services, a voice response system to enhance communications with customers, and a new fare collection system to provide seamless transition between transit modes. Newly installed tracking services on buses helped drivers increase on-time performance from 96.33 percent in 2013 to 97.85 percent in 2014. Furthermore, all of these technology improvements decreased “talk time” and Metro Mobility’s reliance on the shared Regional Emergency Radio System by more than 70 percent. This frees up the system for other emergency communications.

### **Advocacy Tools for the Disability Community**

The [Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities](#) created the “Telling Your Story” app, which helps people with developmental disabilities connect with public policy leaders. The app uses simple questions and step-by-step prompts to guide users as they write their personal stories, relate those stories to a particular policy issue, add a photo using their device’s built-in camera, and email the information to their elected officials and other policymakers. Speed and effective targeted messaging

### Upcoming Training & Events

- Feb. 10**, Intro to CI, [Register](#)
- Feb. 10**, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
- Feb. 11-12**, Kaizen Facilitation, [Register](#)
- March 9**, Intro to CI, [Register](#)
- March 10**, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
- March 10**, Process Improvement Measurement, [Register](#)
- March 24**, Leading/Supporting CI, [Register](#)
- April 7**, Intro to CI, [Register](#)
- April 7**, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
- April 15-16**, Kaizen Facilitation, [Register](#)
- May 11**, Intro to CI, [Register](#)
- May 12**, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
- May 12**, Process Improvement Measurement, [Register](#)
- May 14**, Leading/Supporting CI, [Register](#)
- June 9**, Intro to CI, [Register](#)
- June 9**, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
- June 10-11**, Kaizen Facilitation, [Register](#)

View all Lean events at [mn.gov/CI](http://mn.gov/CI)

Register for trainings on [our Eventbrite page](#).

are essential to today's policy discussions, and this app gives self-advocates a powerful new way to participate. Designed for people with developmental disabilities, anyone can use the app to communicate with public officials.

Stay tuned for the stories of other nominated projects in future issues of our newsletter!

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