



July/August 2014

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## The CI User Group Returns in August

We are pleased to announce the return of the Minnesota Continuous Improvement (CI) User Group. After a few months off the calendar, User Group sessions will resume in August and September.

As a refresher, the CI User Group is a forum for CI practitioners of all stripes to come together for sharing, discussion and networking with their peers. Whether CI is in your formal job description or you've just participated in your first CI training or improvement project, we encourage you to join us to discuss your recent efforts, share ideas and best practices, learn new tools and skills, and network with fellow CI experts and innovators across the state.

We have some great presenters on board for August and September. Here's a preview of what's on the agenda:

### Wednesday, August 13, 2:30 to 4 p.m.

- **Integrating CI into Strategic Planning**, presented by Joe Raasch, CI Director at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- **Sneak Preview at a New Tool for Tracking CI Projects**, presented by Cathy Beil, Improvement Data Coordinator at the Minnesota Office of CI.

### Tuesday, September 16, 2:30 to 4 p.m.

- **Usability Testing for Measurement and Reporting**, presented by Melissa Donndelinger and Bridget Anderson from the Minnesota Department of Revenue
- **Communicating and Sharing Your CI Successes**, presented by Sherryl Livingston and Andy Wakefield from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Organizational Improvement Unit.

Hope to see you there! You can RSVP for the [August](#) and [September](#) sessions on our [Eventbrite page](#), and you can learn more on the [User Group page](#) of our website.

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#### Meanwhile, in Colorado...

Curious about CI efforts happening elsewhere in the US? Check out [this great video and report](#) from the State of Colorado.

## Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Completes CI Project on Agency Contracting Process

Back in 2005, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) completed a continuous improvement (CI) project on their contracting processes. The project resulted in many improvements for how contracts were managed in the agency, including the consolidation of expertise into one unit of contract specialists supporting the entire agency. Since then, not only did MPCA reduce their average processing time from six months down to three and a half, but they also reached a point where they are often viewed as a leader in the quality of contracts across Minnesota state government.

For all the progress that was made, MPCA committed itself to even further improvement in January 2014, initiating another CI project aimed at the processes around contracting. While staff and customers expressed satisfaction with the quality of the end product, internal processes, communication and roles were creating frustration. What's more, in the time that passed since the 2005 project, contract volume had increased greatly and new and expanded laws and rules were introduced, both of which had significant implications for contracting.

Truly living up to the "continuous" portion of the term continuous improvement, MPCA's new CI project team went to work to address those issues.



*The MPCA Contracting Continuous Improvement Team, which included two members from the Department of Administration's contracting group, is pictured above.*

The team leveraged a wide variety of tools on the path to improvement. They started by mapping out the current state process. Next, they researched customer attitudes via surveys and focus groups. From there, they reviewed the customer data, and used root cause analysis tools to identify problems and prioritize solutions. What resulted from this work was a comprehensive implementation plan, which the team has since presented to agency leadership and staff. All told, all these efforts took about six months, and today the team is in the process of executing that plan.

### Upcoming Events

**Aug. 6-7**, Kaizen Facilitator Training, [Register](#) **4 open seats**

**Aug. 13**, CI User Group, [RSVP](#)

**Sept. 8**, Lean 101, [Register](#)

**Sept. 8**, Effective Problem Solving, ([Waitlist](#))

**Sept. 11**, Leading CI Projects, [Register](#) **1 open seat**

**Sept. 16**, CI User Group, [RSVP](#)

**Oct. 6**, Lean 101, [Register](#)

**Oct. 7-8**, Kaizen Facilitator Training, [Register](#)

**Nov. 3**, Lean 101, [Register](#)

**Nov. 3**, Effective Problem Solving, [Register](#) **3 open seats**

**Nov. 4**, Leading CI Projects, [Register](#)

**Dec. 2**, Lean 101, [Register](#)

**Dec. 3-4**, Kaizen Facilitator Training, [Register](#)

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

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



next two years – a 32 percent improvement from the existing 34 percent satisfaction rate identified in the research phase of the project.

From the variety of tools used, to the clear performance measures, and the strong commitment to sustainment, MPCA's CI efforts are worthy of acclaim. Thanks to these latest efforts, there is little doubt the agency will continue to be recognized as a leader in contracting in the years ahead.

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