



November 2014

From the Director's Desk: What We've Been Up To

It has been a busy couple months here at the Minnesota Office of Continuous Improvement (CI). To give you an idea of the work our program has been concentrating on in recent days, here's a quick overview:

- We received 33 nominations for the Governor's CI Awards. The CI Steering team has reviewed the nominations, and winners will be announced by early December.
- We've facilitated kaizen projects with the Departments of Education and Transportation, the Minnesota Historical Society, and others.
- We've begun piloting a CI project tracking system with six state agencies.
- We've developed a new tool we call the CI Index (more on that below), which agencies can use it to determine where they stand on the CI journey, and where support is needed.
- We've continued to expand our training programs. Along with new courses "Problem Solving" and "Leading and Supporting Improvement Projects," beginning in 2015 we will launch a course on Process Improvement Measurement and substitute Lean 101 with Applied Lean, which will teach Lean principles, methods and tools through interactive simulations, activities and group discussions

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2015 Training Awaits!

We've announced new training dates for 2015! See all the dates and get registered via this issue's 'Upcoming Events' section.

Additionally, I just returned from the [Mid-Atlantic Lean Conference](#) in Maryland, where I led a presentation on Minnesota's CI efforts as part of the conference's Lean Government track. During the conference, I had the opportunity to hear some great presentations and connect with other government CI leaders from around the country. Other states in attendance included Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and Michigan, to name just a few.

One final update I want to provide this month is an overdue introduction; we have been very fortunate to have a new member on our team over the past few months. Chris Zempel joined us in July as one of the first participants in a new State of Minnesota fellowship program. The program, known as the "Star of the North Fellowship," takes inspiration from the [Presidential Management Fellowship](#) and other similar programs, and is being used by Minnesota in an effort to attract professionals fresh from graduate school to state service. The program gives fellows an opportunity to experience public sector employment while allowing the state to utilize their knowledge and expertise.

Chris is a recent graduate of the Humphrey School of Public Affairs Master of Public Policy program. He comes to us with three years of professional experience working as a business improvement consultant in the private sector, with both large multinational corporations and local small businesses. As a member of the CI team, he has been working on building cross-agency relationships, applying adult learning concepts to our CI trainings, and developing the CI Index and other tools to measure CI capacity and engagement at state agencies. Starting in January, Chris will join the Results Management team at Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) for the second half of his one-year fellowship experience.

We've really enjoyed working with Chris, and encourage our readers, colleagues and partners to [contact him](#) to learn more about his experiences working for the State of Minnesota. In the meantime, I'll direct you to the next article in our newsletter, which Chris put together to provide more info on the CI Index.

Mary Jo Caldwell
Director, Minnesota Office of Continuous Improvement

The CI Index: A New Tool to Measure Organizational Capacity for Performance Improvement

"Measurement is the first step that leads to control and eventually to improvement. If you can't measure something, you can't understand it. If you can't understand it, you can't control it. If you can't control it, you can't improve it." - Dr. H. James Harrington.

The Minnesota Office of Continuous Improvement (CI) is excited to introduce a new tool that can guide agencies on the path of continuous improvement. It's a survey we call the CI Index, and in the spirit of Dr. Harrington's quote above, we hope it will help agencies measure and understand the capacity of their organization, and their people, to plan, devise and implement improvements.

Your first reaction may be, "Not another survey!," and I cannot blame you for the sentiment. Since businesses, university researchers, and government offices discovered how easy it is to reach people using the internet, we have been bombarded with surveys asking for our opinions on everything from the quality of our meal at a restaurant, to the latest news headlines, and the candidates seeking votes in the next election.

With that being said, surveys remain a valuable method to collect information from a large number of people at a relatively low cost – in terms of financial, staffing and time demands. In the case of the CI Index, talking directly to employees is essential, and a survey is perhaps the most efficient and effective way for an organization to measure how engaged its people are with the concept of CI, and what capacity there is to put it into action.

Continuous Improvement Index Survey

45%

2. The manager or supervisor I report to...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Don't Know
...believe improving service quality and efficiency is very important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...demonstrates the importance of improving service quality and efficiency.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

A preview of some of the questions you'll find on the CI Index, these measuring managers' support of CI efforts.

To return to Dr. Harrington's point, the primary value of the CI index is what the information we gather allows us to do. It validates whether we have reached or can reach those final stages of control and improvement. What agencies learn should help them make targeted changes, support the development of CI efforts, and build a stronger CI culture.

In our CI training and facilitation, we stress how all employees should be empowered to be leaders and improvers. Similarly with the CI index, we encourage agencies to deploy the survey within all levels of their organization – from brand new staffer to middle-manager to senior leadership – to ensure the data provides a clear, complete picture. Missing out on certain groups will provide biased information which can increase the likelihood that the advice and action plans developed in response to the index have a reduced impact. Again, continuous improvement is an inclusive process and without input from all of our team members, we are missing out on innovative perspectives, ideas, and solutions to the challenges we face in state government.

We are currently in discussions with a number of agencies about using the index in their organizations. If you're interested in being a part of that conversation, don't hesitate to [contact me](#), or to email our office at lean@state.mn.us.

Christopher Zempel
Fellow, Minnesota Office of Continuous Improvement

Closing Out 2014 with the CI User Group

The August and September meetings of the Continuous Improvement (CI) User Group were our best attended sessions yet. We invite you to help us keep that momentum going, as the Minnesota CI User Group re-convenes in November and December.

Below you'll find a quick preview of what to expect in the next two sessions:

- **Wednesday, November 19, 2:30 to 4 p.m.**
 - A presentation about understanding CI engagement and capacity in an organization, presented by Chris Zempel from the Office of CI.
 - A group discussion on measuring return on investment (ROI) on CI efforts, presented by Dave Pehoski from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
- **Wednesday, December 17, 2:30 to 4 p.m.**

Upcoming Events

Nov. 19, CI User Group, [RSVP](#)
Dec. 2, Lean 101, [Register](#)
Dec. 3-4, Kaizen Facilitation, [Register](#)
Dec. 17, CI User Group, [RSVP](#)
Jan. 6, Applied Lean, [Register](#)
Jan. 7, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
Jan. 7, Process Improvement Measurement, [Register](#)
Jan. 21, Leading/Supporting CI, [Register](#)
Feb. 10, Applied Lean, [Register](#)
Feb. 10, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
Feb. 11-12, Kaizen Facilitation, [Register](#)
March 9, Applied Lean, [Register](#)
March 10, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
March 10, Process Improvement Measurement, [Register](#)
March 24, Leading/Supporting CI, [Register](#)
April 7, Applied Lean, [Register](#)
April 7, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
April 15-16, Kaizen Facilitation, [Register](#)
May 11, Applied Lean, [Register](#)
May 12, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
May 12, Process Improvement Measurement, [Register](#)
May 14, Leading/Supporting CI, [Register](#)
June 9, Applied Lean, [Register](#)
June 9, Problem Solving, [Register](#)
June 10-11, Kaizen Facilitation, [Register](#)

View all Lean events at mn.gov/CI

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

- For the December User Group session, we are holding a holiday/end-of-year potluck and networking session! Come share in snacks, networking, holiday good vibes and year-end reflections with your CI peers around Minnesota. Bring your favorite holiday treat or CI themed snack (process mapping post-it note cookies, anyone?!).

For the uninitiated, 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.

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