

A⁴ Results – a Strategic Project Management Approach to Process Improvement

Through strategic project management, government agencies can increase opportunities for success, turn aspirations into realities and maximize their process improvement investments.

In this White Paper, we share a proven approach to process improvement delivery based on industry leading practices and lessons learned from clients in the public and private sectors in various industries throughout the US and across the globe.

Introduction

For decades reports have reflected government's excitement about process concepts and methodologies and the possibilities of reducing waste, streamlining activities and improving service delivery.¹ Agencies have made significant investments in process improvement projects to address these opportunities. Although agencies report progress and understand the value of process discipline, there is still a great opportunity to improve the planning process and implement better measures to ensure intended benefits of a process improvement effort are realized and sustained.

For example, according to a recent study *"only 64 percent of government strategic initiatives ever meet their goals and business intent- and government entities waste \$101 million for every \$1 billion spent on projects and programs."*²

Given the proliferation of federal transformational projects, uncertainty of budgetary resources and the need to increase the value Americans receive for their tax dollars, Legislative and Executive Branches are requiring more successful outcomes from projects and programs.

When evaluating reports on challenges of business process improvement initiatives, many of the same reasons seem to surface; no business case, lack of strategic alignment, inactive executive sponsorship, resistance to change, etc. However, reasons such as no upfront planning or measured approach to monitor progress prior to completion are often undervalued or overlooked. A recent report³ developed by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) entitled "DOD Should Improve its Planning and Performance Monitoring of the Military Departments" supports this theory.

A Model for Process Improvement

What is A⁴ Results

A⁴ Results is a model that utilizes a STEP (Strategies Targeting Efficiency and Productivity) change approach facilitated by a Stage Gate Review process to develop, manage and monitor process improvement and project management activities.

1. *Federal Government Business Process Reengineering: Lessons Learned*, U.S. General Services Administration, February 1994

2. *The High Cost of Low Performance, Project Management Institute Pulse of Survey*, September 2016

3. *Defense Business Transformation – DOD Should Improve Its Planning and Performance Monitoring of the Military Departments*, U.S. Government Accountability Office, December 2015

A Model for Process Improvement

The STEP summaries below represent a guideline with suggested tools for a process improvement initiative with cross department and agency impacts. However, one size does not fit all. Depending on the goals, budget, capacity and/or capabilities of an agency, slight adjustments to this model may be required.



Step One: Align

The purpose of this phase is to align departmental process improvement goals with the agency's strategic goals. To achieve goal alignment several activities are recommended:

Set process goals

Each process goal should have clear and measurable targets based on the strategic goals of the department and agency. To ensure goals are realistic and obtainable, it is important to consider the agency's and department's current capacity (financial and technology) and capability (skills, knowledge and change acceptance) to address and accept a process improvement effort.

Determine the methods and tools that will be used to achieve process goals

Be careful not to over-engineer process improvement or change efforts. For example, if the goal is to standardize, build awareness and/or increase adoption of existing processes, a project to develop standard templates and document processes may only be required. If the goal is to accomplish quick wins, "Workouts" have proven

to accelerate change and transformation. If the goal is to remove waste or reduce defects, Lean and Six Sigma methods and/or tools are best practices. However, a full pledge Lean or Six Sigma is not necessarily ideal for every process improvement effort.

Conduct high-level assessment of the current state

The primary purpose of this activity is to determine the maturity of existing processes, inventory and evaluate related projects (in flight or planned), validate improvement opportunities and recommend a prioritized list of projects required to address process goals.

A SIPOC (Suppliers, Inputs, Process, Outputs, Customers) diagram is typically used to document a high-level process map from beginning to end. A SIPOC diagram helps to focus team discussions and provides a common language and understanding of a process. After problems and issues have been identified, a prioritization matrix should be used to help rank process improvement efforts. Criteria used for ranking should be most important to the project or organization. Typical criteria used in a prioritization matrix

step 1 continued

are cost, level of effort required, duration, impact, ROI. Additional data should be captured to assess the current state. Gaps between the current and desired state should be documented.

Identify the appropriate fit and resources for desired roles

Roles and responsibilities to achieve specific goals should be documented and communicated. Typical roles for a process improvement effort are Governance Board Member, Project Sponsor, Six Sigma Black Belt, Project Manager, Process Owner, Subject Matter Expert, Change Leader/Agent and Stakeholder. Document a formal recruitment plan to identify and allocate resources required to meet project goals. The first position to consider recruiting is the Project or Program Manager. The Project or Program Manager should work with the Project Sponsor to develop the Project Charter and budget.

Announce the project and communicate the process goals

Document a communications plan that includes the purpose, owner, targeted audience, tools and frequency

of communications. Formal consensus of goals should be agreed upon before project initiation. Communications of the process improvement initiative should be shared within a timely basis.

Tools: Governance Model, Communications Plan, Business Case Templates, Strategy Correlation Matrix, The SEA™ (Standards of Excellence Assessment), Six Sigma SIPOC, Change Readiness Findings, Project Prioritization Matrix, and Benefit Realization Plan



Guiding Principles:

- Develop S.M.A.R.T. goals
- Organize around outcomes and not tasks
- Understand cross- department impacts

Step Two: Action

Implement and Deliver

Finalize a project plan to include specific tasks, milestones, deliverables, ownership, timing, dependencies and metrics to measure success. A governance model should be implemented to provide single ownership of delivery, monitor progress and track benefit realization.

Depending on the method and tools selected to achieve process goals (Step One: Align), a variety of working sessions could take place to initiate action: Lean Sigma “Work-outs”, Six Sigma DMAIC, Value Stream Mapping, Change Readiness Assessment, etc. To provide an objective view, these types of sessions are best facilitated by a resource external to the agency. Also, key Stakeholders from external departments impacted by potential change should be engaged in these sessions early. For additional information, contact us.

Process Owners should simplify process documentation as much as possible. During the implementation of a process change, resources need to be deployed and managed.

Activity milestone need to be measured and variances should be reported. Process and Goal Owners should address gaps in performance.

Tools: Lean Workout, Six Sigma DMAIC or DMADV templates, Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) processes and tools, Activities Based Costing Model, Balanced Scorecard, Stage Gate Templates and Balanced Scorecard



Guiding Principles:

- Develop “actionable” and “realistic” plans
- Integrate all stakeholder groups
- Share lessons learned after each milestone



Step Three: Adopt

Change and Sustain

Change is not instant. Agency leaders should communicate the vision for change often. Change events should be facilitated periodically to build awareness and excitement. Change Leaders, Change Agents or “Super User Groups, should be identified to help build awareness, promote an environment of change and help to accelerate adoption. To ensure individuals successfully adopt the changes of how they will work, it is critical to provide required tools, training and communications within a timely manner.

Tools: Communications, Change Events, Employee Feedback, Change Readiness Findings, Training Plan, Lessons Learned Report, Balanced Scorecard (with metrics to measure change effectiveness and adoption rate), and Training Plan



Guiding Principles:

- Business goals as driver for change
- Treat process improvements as permanent practice
- Implement metrics to measure the effectiveness of change

Step Four: Account

Measure and Continuously Improve

Assess process improvement goals and measure change effectiveness after key milestones using a balanced set of quantitative performance metrics. This activity should not be deferred to the end of a project.

Training needs should be tied to performance plans and budgets and performance should be tied to compensation plans. Lessons learned should be captured, documented and shared in a centralized repository with agency-wide access and knowledge transfer should start at the beginning of the project or program. Successes should be rewarded often.

Tools: Status Reports, Benefit Realization Plan, Balanced Scorecard, Performance Plans, Lessons Learned Report, Training Plans, Communication Plan.



Guiding Principles:

- Measure, measure and measure
- Moments of truth before repeated mistakes
- Actively pursue suggestions and ideas

Conclusion

Effective and efficient processes are at the heart of a successful agency. Our A⁴ Results approach has proved to help improve efficiency and cost effectiveness for our clients. For example, one of our clients, a government agency, initiated a Continuous Improvement and Accountability Program called S.T.E.P. with the objective to improve the quality of service delivery and reduce the number of errors on traffic citations. They adopted the A⁴ Results approach and reduced number of errors on citations by 25% within the first month. Several other benefits were achieved as a result of process improvement efforts. For more information regarding this case study, please contact us.

Through strategic project management, your agency can increase opportunities for success, turn aspirations into realities and maximize process improvement investments. Consider "A⁴ Results" as your solution to benefit realization of your process improvement efforts.

About P³ Delivery

P3 Delivery is a management consulting firm that specializes in Strategic Program Management. We offer a comprehensive suite of services in project, process and performance management. Our team has an average of 15 years of management and industry experience. We have demonstrated experience successfully leading large Lean, Six Sigma, ITIL and strategic initiatives for clients in the public and private sectors.

Most of our Associate Team hold certifications including but not limited to the Program Management Professional (PgMP), Project Management Professional (PMP), Six Sigma Black and Green Belt, ITILv3 and Call Center Benchmark Auditor.

To provide feedback on this White Paper, learn more or request a consultation, please visit www.p3delivery.com

Contact Us

160 Clairmont Avenue, Suite 200
Decatur GA
404 294-7774

1200 G Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington DC 20774
202 661-2175