

**Human Services Agency  
Lean Six Sigma Continuous Improvement Plan**

Revised May 17, 2016



COUNTY OF VENTURA

## Overview & Background

The Human Services Agency's Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Continuous Improvement Plan builds upon HSA's longstanding efforts to streamline business processes in order to provide even better customer service, meet or exceed performance mandates, and maximize resources.

As HSA faced unprecedented budgetary and “cost-of-doing-business” shortfalls in 2008 and the years following the recession, it became more critical than ever for HSA to align resources strategically. While HSA addressed overarching fiscal issues using a number of strategies, HSA adopted LSS as its continuous improvement methodology, recognizing that there were opportunities throughout the Agency to create efficiencies that would result in costs savings and/or resource maximization.

Even as budgets have stabilized more recently and systems have been put into place to serve record-high caseloads – with more than one in four of the County’s residents receiving assistance up from one in 10 prior to the recession – HSA continues to recognize a vital need for LSS. Among many examples, LSS is currently helping the Agency: standardize, streamline and automate workflows so that precious staff time may be redirected to high-value tasks; craft new service models and processes for serving clients; and detail the intersection of complex functions performed by multiple County and community partners.

Therefore, HSA is committed to utilizing LSS Agency-wide in alignment with County and Agency priorities, dedicating LSS resources to those areas likely to produce the greatest returns on investment.

HSA’s LSS Continuous Improvement Plan addresses five critical areas:

- Section 1: Executive-level Commitment to LSS
- Section 2: Organizational Structure Supporting LSS
- Section 3: Criteria for Selecting and Prioritizing Kaizen Events
- Section 4: Kaizen Events and Milestones Projected for 2016
- Section 5: LSS Communication Tactics

## **Section 1: Executive-Level Commitment to LSS**

### ***Structured, Coordinated LSS Deployment***

While LSS may be implemented in organizations in a “grassroots” fashion, it is more appropriate to implement LSS in a structured manner in complex organizations, such as HSA, where numerous federal, state, and local mandates, as well as automated systems, intersect in nearly every major business process. Implementing LSS in a structured manner in 2008 prevented any unintended consequences that could result from an uncoordinated effort, and has ensured that LSS resources are dedicated strategically to priority areas.

Although HSA has implemented LSS in a structured manner, HSA encourages staff at all levels of the organization to share their ideas for improvement with supervisors. Indeed, a number of successful LSS improvements have resulted from staff’s grassroots ideas.

### ***Executive Team as LSS Sponsors***

HSA’s Executive Team has participated in “Champion” training offered by the County. Over the past several years, each member of the Executive Team has sponsored multiple successful Kaizen Events, and all Executive Team members are supportive of using LSS methodologies in a human services environment.

One or more of HSA’s Executive Team will continue to sponsor all LSS events, fulfilling a number of roles including:

- Selecting topics for LSS events
- Reviewing event charters
- Authorizing subject matter experts to dedicate the amount of time necessary for full participation in LSS events
- Providing support and guidance to event champions, team members, and facilitators
- Taking ownership for sustaining the results achieved during LSS events that in turn advance County and Agency strategic goals

## **Section 2: Organizational Structure Supporting LSS**

### ***LSS Responsibility***

The HSA Executive Team provides high-level LSS guidance to the Agency, and has vested leadership responsibility within its Administration Department for a number of reasons. For example, many LSS events cover topics that cross program department lines, making it advisable for a non-program group to ensure that cross-cutting events are well-coordinated from an Agency perspective. Moreover, many of the County-wide LSS agendas target administrative areas (e.g., purchasing and recruitment). By training HSA administrative staff in LSS, HSA has ensured that the representatives sent to County-wide LSS events are well-suited to participate in those events.

*LSS Agency Champions:* Barry Zimmerman, Agency Director  
Melissa Livingston, Deputy Director, Administration

*LSS Executive Leadership:* Lauri Flack, Deputy Director, Community Services  
Marissa Mach, Deputy Director, Adult and Family Services  
Curtis Updike, Deputy, Community Services  
Judy Webber, Deputy, Children and Family Services

### ***Green Belt Staffing***

To date, 11 staff from HSA's Administration Department have earned Green Belt certifications.

HSA utilizes its Green Belts to conduct Kaizen Events and process improvement workgroups; help implement "Just-Do-It's;" conduct current-state mapping; facilitate sessions that support larger projects; and educate staff about how they can use simple LSS tools on their own outside of formal LSS events to make improvements that are limited in scope and affect a small number of staff.

<i>Green Belts:</i>	Mandi Basaldua	Admin	Human Resources
	Norma Cahue	Admin	Office of Strategy Management
	Myra Chavez	Admin	Office of Strategy Management
	Rajiima Danish	Admin	Office of Strategy Management
	Leticia Lachberg	Admin	Office of Strategy Management
	Kathy LeClair	Admin	General Support Services
	Tisha Maeda	Admin	Business Technology
	Leticia Morales	Admin	Office of Strategy Management
	Jennie Pittman	Admin	Office of Strategy Management
	Patty Sanchez	Admin	ITS / HSA Liaison
	Gina Spoerlein	Admin	Office of Strategy Management

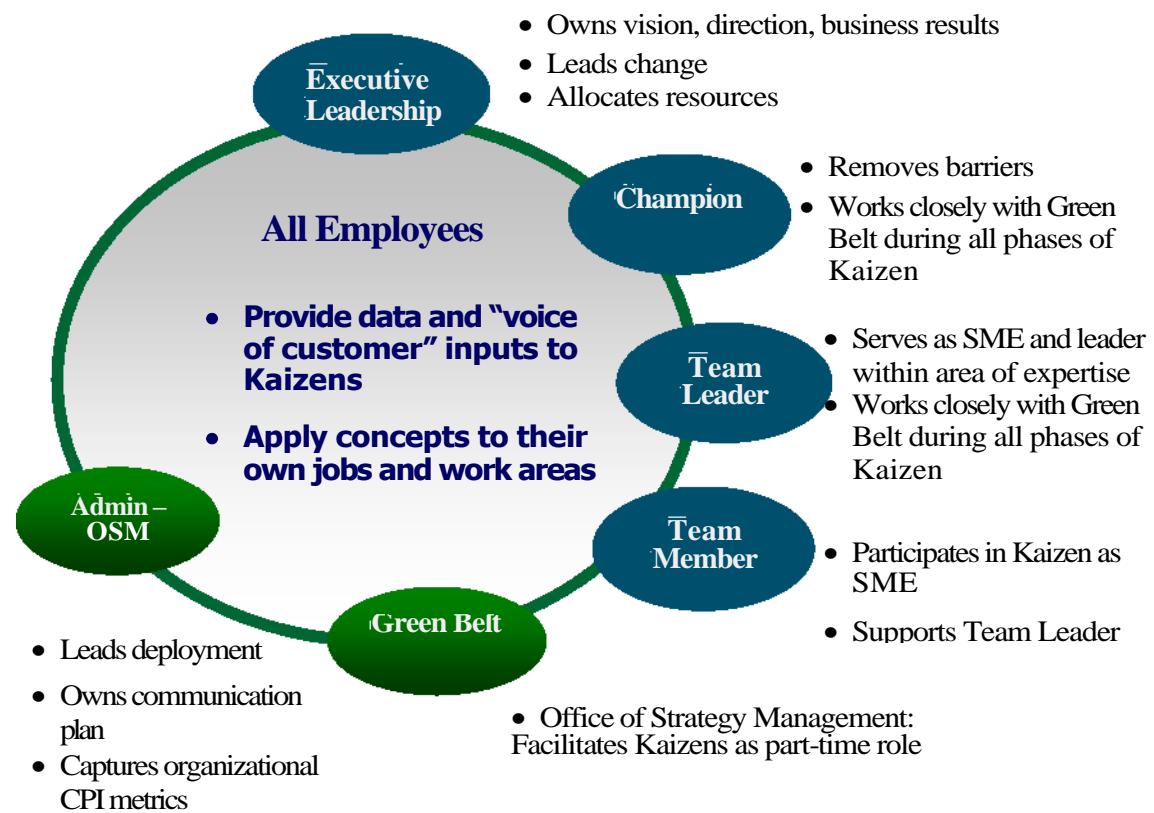
## LSS Tactical Lead

Within HSA's Administration Department, the Office of Strategy Management has been designated as the LSS lead. As such, the Office of Strategy Management fulfills a number of roles and responsibilities, including:

- Conducting preliminary analysis to help the Executive Team decide whether to undertake LSS events on particular topics
- Conducting thorough analysis to define the scope of LSS events, ensuring that the events are the appropriate size and complexity for Kaizen Events
- Assigning Green Belts to facilitate selected events
- Gathering pre-event and post-event metrics
- Assisting Kaizen champions in executing post-event control plans
- Publishing event results, including cost-savings and resource maximization figures
- Communicating promising practices and sharing resources via within HSA and throughout the County

Additionally, the Office of Strategy Management stays in close communication with the Executive Team to ensure that LSS events are progressing as desired, and engages in sessions with the Executive Team to review event results.

## LSS Roles & Responsibilities Diagram



### ***Resources Required***

In addition to supportive executive leadership, well-trained facilitators, and highly knowledgeable Kaizen team members, key resources that have enabled HSA to conduct dozens successful Kaizens and LSS workgroups include:

- HSA Intranet for sharing information and posting LSS results
- Web-based PolicyTech system for posting and managing policies, procedures, etc.
- Web-based Clarity project management software for managing the tasks that comprise a Kaizen Event and storing key documents
- Availability of a customized LSS room at the Administrative headquarters building equipped with two computers, lap top connectivity, printer access, and overhead projector capability. Conducting Kaizens in this room has been very effective, as multiple Kaizen participants may be tasked with completing tasks at the same time (e.g., one participant finalizes a Visio flow chart while another posts a new procedure in PolicyTech, and another develops a Quad Chart in PowerPoint)

### **Section 3: Criteria for Selecting and Prioritizing LSS Events**

#### ***Proposed LSS Event Topics***

HSA's Deputy Directors often propose topics for Kaizen Events that align with their departmental or Agency-wide goals.

Ideas for LSS events also emerge from HSA staff who are familiar with LSS through information posted on the HSA Intranet, through their own participation in Kaizen Events, and through communication with their peers who have participated in Kaizens. Indeed, over 200 staff have participated in at least one Kaizen to date, and are now serving as LSS ambassadors in their offices.

Proposed topics for LSS events are submitted to HSA's Office of Strategy Management (OSM), which performs preliminary analysis. If the OSM's analysis reveals that the proposed topic may be handled as a "Just-Do-It," the OSM discusses this with the person who proposed the topic, offering tips and tools that the person may use independently to implement the change. "Just-Do-It's" are not forwarded to the Executive Team for consideration. If the OSM's analysis reveals that the proposed topic is a large-scale LSS Project, the OSM works with the person who proposed the topic to understand whether the project may be broken down into smaller topics suitable for Kaizen Events. After completing preliminary analyses of all topics proposed, the OSM submits high-level proposals for Kaizen Events to the Executive Team.

#### ***Kaizen Event Selection and Prioritization Criteria***

HSA's Executive Team selects and prioritizes topics for Kaizen Events by asking and answering a number of questions, including the following:

- Does the proposed Kaizen Event advance a *departmental or Agency goal*, and does the proposed timing of the Event align with the Agency's priorities?
  - All Kaizen Events must advance align with the Agency's priorities. Further, the timing of Kaizen Events must be considered early-on to ensure the availability of Agency resources for the Event given other Agency priorities.
- Is the problem to be addressed through the proposed Kaizen Event primarily a *process-related* problem?
  - The Executive Team must be certain that the problem to be addressed is primarily a process-related problem (not a political issue, or individual performance issue, for example) in order to ensure a good fit with LSS methodologies. If the problem that needs to be resolved is primarily a political problem, utilizing a hard-driving LSS approach may be less

successful than using a different approach that allows participants more time to become comfortable with group decisions.

- Is the proposed Kaizen Event intended to improve an existing process (or create an entirely new process) related to a *critical mandated* function or performance metric?
  - Given HSA's limited resources, the Agency must prioritize the improvement of existing processes related to critical mandates (i.e., those processes that are "drawing fire," are critical to customers, and must be performed in order to be in compliance with federal, state, or local requirements).
- Do the leaders who will need to champion the outcome of the proposed Kaizen Event – as well as the staff who will need to sustain the outcome – have the *capacity and willingness* to support and implement the change?
  - In order to ensure a good return on investment, the Executive Team must be certain that the leaders and staff affected by the outcome of the LSS event have the capacity and willingness to accept the change, given adequate training and reinforcement through strong supervision.

Once HSA's Executive Team determines that the proposed Kaizen Event topic is viable, the Executive Team asks the Office of Strategy Management to perform further analysis before making a final determination about conducting the Kaizen Event. The Office of Strategy Management then uses a number of criteria to analyze proposed event topics thoroughly, including:

- Degree to which the process is definable
- Degree to which the scope is manageable
- Degree to which the event topic is connected to a larger end-to-end process that has or has not already been streamlined, or is connected to smaller sub-processes that have or have not already been streamlined
- Degree to which facilities and technology need to be changed – and can realistically be changed – to achieve the objective of Event
- Number of persons and types of expertise needed to achieve the objective of the Event
- Level of active participation by participants needed to achieve the objective the Event
- Availability and expertise of Green Belts to facilitate the Event

Depending on the results of the Office of Strategy Management's comprehensive analysis, further discussions with the Executive Team may be necessary to ensure that the proposed Kaizen Event will provide a good return on investment.

#### **Section 4: Kaizen Events and Milestones Projected for 2016**

Please contact [gina.spoerlein@ventura.org](mailto:gina.spoerlein@ventura.org) for the Systems Improvement Portfolio report.

#### **Section 5: LSS Communication Tactics**

HSA continues to utilize a number of communication tactics to ensure that LSS results and promising practices are shared throughout HSA and beyond, including the following:

Regular Executive Team briefings during which LSS information is shared that may then be cascaded throughout the Agency

Participation in Kaizen Event brief-outs by Executive Team members, senior managers, and others to facilitate a deeper understanding of LSS methodologies

Regular updating of LSS information on the HSA Intranet to maintain an interest in LSS among staff, and provide recognition for Kaizen participants

Regular updating of the HSA Intranet to share results, tools and promising practices

Convening of HSA Green Belt roundtables to troubleshoot issues and engage in peer-to-peer sharing

Discussions with other counties about taking advantage of new cost-saving measures that HSA has put into place with vendors who provide the same service in other counties

Sharing of results at California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) and Southern Area Consortium of Human Services (SACHS) meetings and conferences