

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Transit Grant Application Lean Summary Report



Project Summary

The Division of Transportation Investment Management (DTIM) Transit Section administers state and federal funding to local governments to support public transportation services throughout the state. In 2014, the Public Transit Assistance Program provided \$15.3 million to 76 agencies for capital investments and operating projects.

DTIM staff manage the annual application process for local governments, which entails compiling and reviewing budget documents, ridership estimates, capital inventories, and evaluating performance metrics by comparing them to criteria established by federal and state policies.

Improvements

- Staff hours for budget review reduced from 180 minutes per application to 50 minutes
- Number of incomplete applications reduced from 30 in 2013 to 20 in 2014
- Compliance documentation review became a separate process, reducing the need for on-site reviews
- Implemented a more efficient desk review process for budget documentation, thereby decreasing application review time

MAPSS Core Goal Area

- Service

Statewide Goal Area

- Reduce cost of government
- Improve customer satisfaction

Issue

Federal and state rules and regulations governing transit programs are complicated and may change from year to year. Transit Section staff assist applicants through the process with resource materials that are complex and may be confusing. Additionally, application materials must be submitted as hard copy documents, making review and approval cumbersome and time consuming. Applications are often submitted with incomplete information and/or missing documentation, requiring additional Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and local staff resources to gather and complete. The project scope includes the annual application process for operating and capital funds available to local public bodies through the Public Transit Assistance Program.

Lean Six Sigma Process

Using the Lean Six Sigma methodology, the project team outlined the current process and identified major areas of incomplete or incorrect application materials. The team identified compliance issues and budget preparation as the main contributors. A separate process was created for the compliance components of the application and an improved process for desk reviews was implemented for budget components as a way to reduce the need for on-site reviews. Lean Six Sigma methodology was applied throughout the project to pinpoint root causes of incomplete applications and offer improved processes. Going forward, these streamlined processes will be used in implementing automated application submissions.

Results

Number of incomplete applications: Of the 76 applications received during the 2014 application cycle, 20 of them were incomplete, representing a 14 percent reduction in incomplete applications requiring follow up as compared to 2013. Additional measures are being taken for future application cycles to continue to improve the completeness of materials received.

Staff time spent on application review: Transit Section staff reduced the time spent reviewing applications from approximately 180 to 50 minutes per application (a 72 percent decrease), or a reduction of over 160 annual hours for the Public Transit Assistance Program. This reduction can be attributed to the reduced travel time for on-site compliance reviews and increased efficiency in desk reviews of budget information.

Next Steps

WisDOT Transit Section has recently procured a web-based grants management software system to reduce reliance on hard copy submissions and has built-in prompts to eliminate incomplete applications. The business area is also expanding the use of Lean methodologies to create efficiencies in other similar program applications, including a specialized transit application document reduced from 96 pages to 26 pages.