



New Hampshire Employment Security Appeals Process



Summary

Using Lean principles, NHES Appeal Tribunal Unit eliminated a 3-month hearing backlog.

Accomplishments

- From March 2011, NH met federal time lapse standards for the first time in two years.
- Average appeal age improved from 163.6 days to 18.4 days.
- 64.7% of appeals were completed within 30 days and 85.5% within 45 days.
- For 2011, NH moved from last place to 16th nationally for case aging.

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The Service

Timely unemployment compensation appeal hearings.

The Problem

In May 2010, NH Employment Security had an unprecedented **2,762** pending unemployment compensation appeals.

There had been 522 pending appeals in May 2008. However, the new online computer system implemented in late 2009 was not appeal-process friendly.

If that was not enough, from May 2008 through June 2010 the unit had three different supervisors.

All of this happened during a period of unprecedented unemployment levels for the state.

It was the perfect storm.

By the end of 2010, NH ranked last in the country for case aging because of a three-month backlog. The unit needed a change. Lean Process Improvement was the catalyst.

The Goal

Provide a fair hearing **within 30 days** of the appeal file date to meet federal time lapse requirements and eliminate the backlog.

The Lean Process

In January and February 2011, three Appeal Tribunal Unit employees and a newly appointed Trainer attended three days of Lean Process training given by the Bureau of Education & Training.

The group identified the process to be improved, which began with the receipt of an appeal request and ended with the mailing of the appeal notice. The group mapped the current process and identified its customers, bottlenecks, and duplicate steps.

The new process opened bottlenecks and eliminated some system-interface steps, adapting the process to the new computer system.

The process plan was presented to the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and new Appeals Administrator. After a few calibrations, the process was implemented in early March 2011.

Tasks were rearranged consistent with individual job descriptions. The new process **chopped 86 minutes** off the "cycle" time (the time for one item to get through the process, including batching and transportation from desk to desk) for processing an appeal.

The Results

The Appeal Tribunal Unit eliminated its backlog and began **exceeding** federal time lapse goals. The immediate impact was an increase in the 30-day time lapse performance from below 48% in February 2011 **to above 82%** in April 2011.

Auxiliary processes known as *Kaizens* were identified for future Lean events. These included scheduling, filing, and communication. Kaizen means (Kai) to *change (Zen) for the good of all*. They provide an opportunity for improvement of other business practices.

Lean Process Improvement has had a lasting impression on Appeals. It not only improved customer service, but also employee morale.

By using the Lean Process, employees are more invested in their daily work as they are an integral part of the solution.

"Lean - Not just a process, but a catalyst for change!"

- Heshla Ash-Tessier