**The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS)**

**Support to Build State Capacity for**

**Business Process Improvement and Modernization**

 **through a Skills Exchange Program**

of May 2016, draft

**Background**

State environmental agencies have adopted a variety of business process improvement (BPI) methodologies to help them improve services, cope with tight budgets, and more efficiently perform their functions of protecting our states’ natural environment.

ECOS uses the term “business process improvement” to refer to a suite of business-oriented methodologies designed to streamline a given enterprise’s operations and achieve efficiencies in order to reduce costs and maximize shareholder value. Business process improvement includes a number of similar methodologies with names including Lean, Six Sigma, Kaizen, 5s, Kanban, Value Stream Mapping (VSM), etc. Lean is a commonly used term and is sometimes used as shorthand to refer to business process improvement in general. The majority of these methodologies have arisen and evolved over the course of the last 30 years, and have been applied throughout the private sector as well as in government.

In 2016, ECOS finalized a cooperative agreement with U.S. EPA’s Office of Policy to conduct several activities in support of state capacity building, outreach and engagement, and training focused on business process improvement.

States have considered a number of approaches to incorporating business process improvement techniques and principles and hosting lean-type events, and there is a range of individual state improvement techniques in practice as well. ECOS seeks to support states to build individual state capacity. ECOS also seeks to identify and facilitate sharing of information such as state lean event summaries with U.S. EPA, in part through the ECOS website for the coordination of ongoing lean efforts, lean contact listings, and communication/collaboration for U.S. EPA and state staff.

**Skills Exchange**

Through the ECOS Innovation and Productivity Committee, ECOS and states are proposing to develop and test a skills exchange program to build state capacity for business process improvement (BPI) project implementation. This proposal will pair key experienced state lean staff with less experienced state programs to facilitate peer-to-peer lean knowledge and skills transfer. Based on this pairing, ECOS would work with both states to build an intensive exchange lasting for a period of one week or less. During this period, the experienced state would play a key role examining the activity and needs of the less developed state program, designing specific training, and sharing reflections about completed projects to highlight benefits received, improvements gained, and potential challenges.

ECOS will select two states with corresponding needs and experience that want to gain an up-close perspective on implementation of successful business process improvement techniques or which serve to maximize lean knowledge, skill transfer, project replication or transference. ECOS will also share proposed efforts with the respective EPA regional office for potential knowledge sharing and/or coordination, including potential participation by an EPA regional staff member in relevant portions of the pilot skills exchange program if regional interest and resources allow.

Following the exchange, ECOS plans to develop a case study of key elements of the exchange(s) to highlight specific learning benefits and to serve as a template for replication and additional efforts as appropriate. ECOS proposes to work with participating states to hold a webinar or other forum to share results and highlight additional efforts.

ECOS will also provide support for discussions, meetings, webinars, travel, and website postings; will conduct state outreach and recruitment, conference calls, training and technical assistance as required. In addition, ECOS would work with the Innovation and Productivity Committee to consider ways to communicate about these efforts such as at ECOS meetings and other forums.

**Case Study**

In February 2015, Missouri DNR invited Arizona DEQ staff to come to Missouri to provide lean awareness training and share information about Arizona’s experience implementing lean practices.

AZ DEQ staff gave a 4 hour lean awareness training to executive staff and program and regional directors. The training noted how Arizona got started and the outcomes they had seen. AZ staff also provided a standard training for staff that Missouri has given to all of its staff over the last year including training on specific lean tools.

AZ staff also met with Missouri’s E3 Team (a team supporting their Lean efforts) to answer questions. In that meeting, he demonstrated some tools and talked about 4 pitfalls Arizona had experienced.

Missouri found the two pieces of executive and staff training together to be very effective and able to be completed in one day. The state felt that training got leadership on board and the meeting with the E3 Team helped them determine the best next steps and where to go from there.

Within the past year, EPA Region 7 and the Region 7 states have also established a strong process improvement network. Representatives from each agency met in Iowa to learn more about their Lean efforts since Iowa has been using Lean techniques for years. The regional network has been beneficial to Missouri as states and regions are sharing techniques and even share facilitators. For instance, a member of EPA Region 7’s lean team traveled to Missouri to help co-facilitate an event as they had the expertise in leading Kaizen there.

If you are interested in learning more, or in being involved in the skills exchange as an experienced state staff or as a state interested in building capacity, please send a completed application form (following page) or any questions to Owen McAleer, omcaleer@ecos.org, (202) 266-4922.

**Application to Participate in a**

**State-to-State**

**Business Process Improvement (BPI)**

**Skills Exchange**

**Application Form**

If you are interested in participating in a state-to-state Business Process Improvement (BPI) skills exchange as either an experienced BPI state staff or as a state environmental agency or office interested in building its BPI capacity, please enter the following information. Forms will be reviewed by the ECOS Innovation and Productivity Committee. Please send completed forms to Owen McAleer at omcaleer@ecos.org. Forms received by **Friday, June 24, 2016** will be considered and selected by the ECOS committee leadership. Applications received after June 10 are welcome and may be considered for future iterations of this program.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The state environmental agency and office you represent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your job title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you an experienced state BPI staff?  Yes  No
2. Are you interested in building your state’s BPI capacity?  Yes  No
3. Why you are interested in participating in the ECOS BPI skills exchange?
4. What do you hope to get out of participating in the ECOS BPI skills exchange?
5. Please describe your BPI experience (any trainings completed, qualifications) including brief summary of completed events or your BPI needs as appropriate.
6. Which of the following events and activities interest you related to a skills exchange (either conducting or receiving)? (You may select and/or rank any that apply.)

\_\_\_ Agency-wide or all-staff training

\_\_\_ BPI event observation

\_\_\_ Department-specific training

\_\_\_ Real-time BPI event facilitated by the visiting official

\_\_\_ Development of an agency-wide or department-specific BPI strategic plan

\_\_\_ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. States and U.S. EPA have also begun discussions about potential priority programmatic areas for replication and transfer of completed BPI events. The following is a list of areas under consideration:

\_\_\_ Clean Air Act State Implementation Plan Projects

\_\_\_ RCRA Facility Investigation and Remedy Selection Track (RCRA FIRST)

\_\_\_ Financial Assurance

\_\_\_ RCRA PCB Cleanup Program Review & Approval Process

\_\_\_ Combined Enforcement/Inspection Tools

* 1. Is your state interested in conducting BPI activity related to any of the areas on this list? (Your answer will not disqualify your state from participation in the skills exchange program.)

 Yes - Please specify and/or indicate above: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 No

* 1. Do you have any suggestions for programmatic areas to add to or remove from the list?

 Yes - Please specify and/or indicate above: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 No

1. Please provide any additional comments you may wish to make.

*Thank you for your interest in the ECOS BPI Skills Exchange. For more information, please contact Owen McAleer,* *omcaleer@ecos.org**.*