

Accelerate Permitting-Related Decisions

Goal Leader: **Tom Tyler**, Acting Division Director, Office of Policy

Theme: Natural Resources and Environment, Economic Security and
Policy

Overview

Goal Statement

- **Accelerate permitting-related decisions.** By September 30, 2019, EPA will reduce by 50% the number of permitting-related decisions that exceed six months.

Challenge

- EPA permitting programs are complex, specialized, and administered across many offices. EPA lacks basic system-wide tracking and overview capabilities on permit status, backlog, throughput, and performance trends. Outdated policies, inefficient procedures, incompatible data systems, and inadequate coordination and communication complicate efforts to modernize and streamline while maintaining day-to-day operations.

Opportunity

- Robust, targeted improvements in permitting processes can improve environmental outcomes, accelerate economic growth, and save time and resources overall by reducing delay, wasted effort, and avoidable disputes.

Goal Structure & Strategies

Building on experience in EPA and examples from state environmental agencies, EPA will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its permitting programs in several ways, and will explore additional opportunities to improve federal environmental permitting overall.

- **Strategy 1: Leaning Permitting Programs** - by conducting targeted Lean business process improvement events and implementing their results.
- **Strategy 2: Tracking and Targeting Improvements** - by gathering, analyzing and using agency-wide permitting data to track results, collect best practices, and target efforts.
- **Strategy 3: Improving Guidelines and Procedures** - by systematically reviewing and amending internal policies and procedures to eliminate unnecessary steps.

EPA will be using the deployment of a new EPA Lean Management System (ELMS) to achieve the results set forth in the Strategic Plan. As part of ELMS, EPA will be conducting multi-day process improvement events to make significant progress in those priority areas identified in the Strategic Plan. Visual management will then be used to ensure that improvements from the events are achieved and sustained over time. Poster boards with regularly updated performance data will serve as visual management for monitoring progress towards meeting the targets set forth in the Strategic Plan, while additional poster boards will be used to track the flow of the work that needs to be performed to achieve the targets. Managers and staff will have weekly stand-up huddle meetings in front of their visual management boards to discuss the performance and flow of the process.

In addition, National Programs and Regional Offices will hold monthly business reviews to go over both the strategic measures tracked on scorecards, and the implementation plans that track progress on Strategic Plan and priority area projects identified for EPA under President Trump's Executive Order on a Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch. The Administrator will hold quarterly reviews to monitor overall progress on the agency's Strategic Plan and priority area projects.

ELMS is designed to make sure that EPA is regularly monitoring progress towards meeting the targets set forth in the Strategic Plan, and taking immediate action if expected performance is off track.

Summary of Progress – FY 2018 Q1

Strategy 1: Leaning Permitting Programs:

- Worked with programs to collect and analyze data in preparation for Lean events to be held in Q2.

Strategy 2: Tracking and Targeting Improvements:

- Since October, have been collecting monthly data on the timeliness of permits issued by EPA.

Strategy 3: Improving Guidelines and Procedures:

- Targeted for initiation in FY 2019.

Key Milestones: Lean Events

- Conduct Lean Events on Permitting Programs and Key Steps within them; Implement Results.
- Selection of initial round of events for January & March 2018.

Milestone Summary					
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Change from last quarter	Owner	Comments
Conduct First Round of Lean Events, targeting permitting programs and key steps	Feb 2018	Two events completed	Strategy launched	OW	
Conduct Second Round of Lean Events	Mar – Apr 2018	Two events scheduled		OAR	
Identify and evaluate potential improvements resulting from Lean events	FY 18 - 19			OW & OAR	

Key Milestones: System-wide Data

- Collect system-wide data on permit status, backlog, and throughput.
- Strategy launched December 2017.

Milestone Summary					
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Change from last quarter	Owner	Comments
Initial data collected for scoping purposes and to identify initial Lean / Kaizen events	December 2017	Launched		OP	
Collecting data for permit decisions made since October 1, 2017	December 2017	Launched		OP	

Key Milestones: Improved Internal Procedures

- EPA will modify or eliminate outdated policies or inefficient procedures government permitting programs.
- Policy review launched.

Milestone Summary					
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Change from last quarter	Owner	Comments
Inventory internal policies	FY 2018	Underway		OP & Permitting Programs	
Design a cyclical review program	FY 2019	Being designed		OP & Permitting Programs	

Key Indicators

- The following indicator will be used to show progress toward the goal of reducing by 50% the number of permitting-related decisions that exceed 6 months:
 - Monthly data on the timeliness of permits issued by EPA.
- Data will be collected monthly and summarized quarterly.
- Additional leading indicators will be developed concurrent with a more robust data collection effort.

Data Accuracy and Reliability

- EPA will be conducting the Lean events and tracking their implementation and results in a systematic and centralized way. EPA programs and regions are responsible for permitting decisions and will be reporting monthly on them.
- Permitting data is largely collected and reported manually. We will evaluate options for future automation.

Additional Information

Contributing Programs

Organizations and Program Activities:

- US EPA, Office of the Administrator.
 - Office of Policy – data collection, analysis and presentation; participation in Lean events; policy review and amendment; overall coordination.
 - Office of Continuous Improvement - facilitation of Lean events and follow-up, collection of mission measure data related to permitting.
- US EPA Program Offices (Office of Air and Radiation, Office of Land and Emergency Management, Office of Water, Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention) and Regional Offices – participation in relevant Lean events; reporting of permitting data; implementation of Lean event results, policy changes, and best practices.
- US EPA – Office of Chief Financial Officer – E-Enterprise federal/state program.
- State agencies – participation in Lean events, policy discussions, and sharing of best practices.

Policies:

- Policy – changes to internal policies and procedures.

Stakeholder / Congressional Consultations

- State and Local Permitting Agencies – can provide recommendations and examples on permit program operation and improvement.
- Regulated Entities – permit holders will benefit from programs that are more efficient and effective.
- Communities and Individuals – will experience enhanced environmental protection, improved transparency, and benefits of stepped up economic activity.
- U.S. Congress – to be consulted as appropriate.