



Lean Government

OARM Reorganization Review and Approval Process

Lean Event Case Study

Summary

In September 2013, the EPA Office of Administration and Resources Management (OARM)'s Office of Human Resources (OHR), Program Management and Communications Staff (PMCS) began a Lean project on the Reorganization Review and Approval Process for the agency. The Lean team consisting of the reorganization process stakeholders (i.e., ERD, OCFO, ITD, PMO/HRO, SSCs and Union/LER) sought to shorten the timeline needed for the review and approval of reorganization packages. Managers must submit a reorganization request to realign staff or to change the name of an office or division. After the event process changes are implemented, EPA will be able to review and process reorganization requests 42 percent faster.

This Lean initiative took a different approach from a conventional Lean project where improvements are usually identified through a kaizen or value stream mapping event. Instead, the Lean team scoped the project, identified goals, and created a map of the current process—all without holding an event. They also solicited improvement ideas through stakeholder interviews. As of September 2014, the project has been completed and the team will hold a one-day Kaizen event by the end of the year to celebrate project successes and lessons learned.

Results

The Lean project expects to reduce lead time by 42 percent from 105 to 65 business days. The process improvements will allow EPA to review and process reorganization requests faster and with more time to address stakeholder concerns about proposed

Metric	Old Process	New Process	Percent Change
Lead time	105 business days	65 business days	↓42%

**Results are anticipated based on the new process design*

Scope of the Lean Project

Project Scope: The scope of this Lean project was the OARM Reorganization Review and Approval Process (Levels 1-3), starting from the initial receipt of a reorganization package (regardless of completion status) to the implementation of the organization code changes in EPA's automated HR system (the People Plus System). The scope excludes the four to six month Congressional Review period required for packages classified as Level 1.

Goals:

Process Time Goals

- Reduce the 105 business day review and approval process to 65 business days, a reduction of 42 percent.

Product Quality and Customer Communication Goals

- Reduce the number of incomplete reorganization packages OARM receives.
- Better understand the criteria used to determine whether a package requires Congressional Review.
- Reduce the number of complaints.
- Increase the level of customer satisfaction and improve customer and union relationships.
- Understand the role of unions in the review process.

Process Changes and Improvements

After creating a process flow map (Figure 1) to outline the existing reorganization review process, the team restructured the consecutive reviews of reorganization packages by all of the stakeholders into concurrent reviews, which will reduce the amount of time needed. The project team also worked with the Information Technology Division in the Office of Human Resources to expedite changes to reflect the reorganization in the People Plus System, EPA's automated HR system. In addition to expediting the review process and IT changes, the project team also addressed process inefficiencies from the high number of incomplete packages being sent to OARM. OARM implemented a training for EPA offices to clarify the signatures and completed documents required to submit a package and have it continue in the review and approval process.

To complement the process mapping exercise, the project team interviewed stakeholders that participate in the review process to further identify areas for improvement. These interviews established the role and needs of each stakeholder group and provided an opportunity to communicate Lean principles and the importance of achieving a shorter timeline to stakeholders.

Critical to stakeholder outreach, the team also worked with Labor and Employee Relations (LER) staff within the Office of Human Resources to better incorporate union review and prevent process delays. EPA program offices are encouraged to involve their Shared

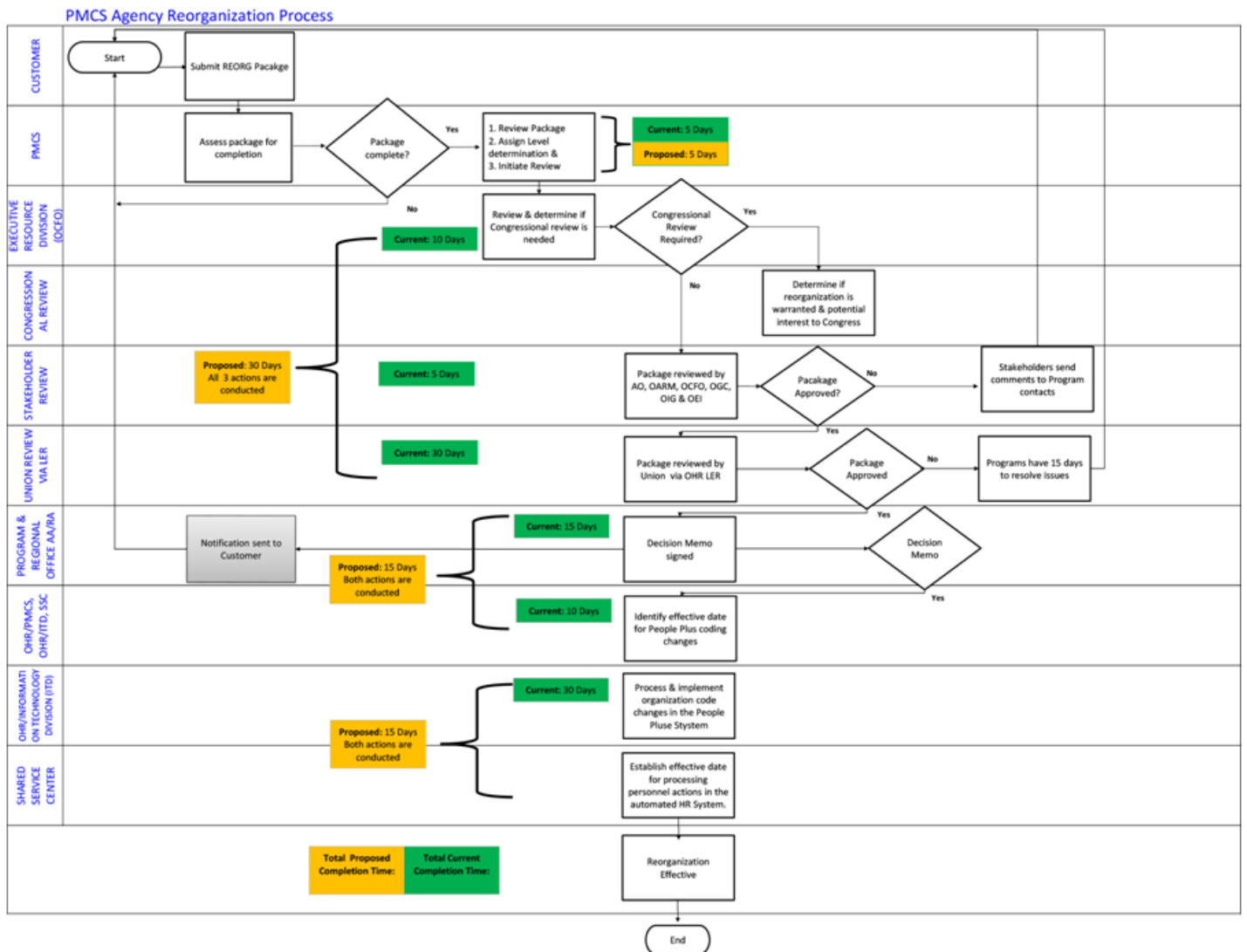


Figure 1: OARM Reorganization, Old Process and Proposed Future Processing Time
 The green boxes indicate the processing time for each step in the original process prior to the Lean event. The yellow boxes indicate the proposed processing time for the new process.

Service Center representatives and unions early on in the development of reorganization plans to avoid issues that may arise later during union review and delay the approval timeline. With concurrent review in the new process, unions will automatically receive the reorganization package at the initiation of the review period, allowing more time to address union concerns.

The table below summarizes the process changes identified by the Lean project team to address issues in the current reorganization review and approval process:

Old Process	New Process
Large number of incomplete packages	Small number of incomplete packages
Clock starts after receiving complete package	Clock starts upon receipt of initial package
Extensive time to prepare complete package	Reduced time to prepare a complete package
Sequential stakeholder review process	Concurrent stakeholder review process
105 business days to complete review	65 business days to complete review
1 check-in/update at business day 50	More frequent check-ins/updates
Manual system with fillable forms	Completely automated system
Interaction with difficult customers	More friendly customer interaction

Implementation

After conducting interviews, all reorganization stakeholders accepted the proposed Lean process changes and timelines for simultaneous review. As a result, the Reorganization Review and Approval process is currently functioning on the 65 business day timeframe set out in the project goal.

The team has also conducted trainings for offices submitting reorganization packages on the requirements for completion. Since the implementation of trainings for EPA offices on submitting a reorganization package, 8 out of 10 packages sent to human resources for review are complete packages upon first submittal.

The Lean team continues to work to identify ways to improve communication and customer interaction between OARM and the office or person submitting the reorganization request. The team will have a Kaizen event with stakeholders to complete implementation in November or December 2014. As a continued success of the new 65-business day streamlined reorganization process, the team is embarking on another Lean initiative to make the process paperless by automating the submission, review and approval process engaging customers and stakeholders.

For More Information:

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