

# Strategic Lean Project Report



**For Reporting Period:** July 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016

## I. General Information:

Lead agency name **The Office of Administrative Hearings:**

Partner agencies: Employment Security Department (ESD), Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Health Care Authority (HCA), Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB)

**Improvement project title: Public Website Revamp Project**

**Date improvement project was initiated: 7/1/2015**

**Project type: New Project**

**Project is directly connected to:**

- Results Washington performance measure

- Agency Strategic Plan

**If applicable, specify the alignment:**

1.1: Increase percentage of agency core services where customer satisfaction is measured from 68% to 100% by June 30, 2020

2.1: Increase percentage of projects with measured improvements, as reported in strategic lean project reports, in cost and/or quality, safety, time, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction

**Strategic Objectives: Convenience & Accessibility - We make it easy for people to do business with us.**

1. Provide equal access to administrative justice for those facing economic and other barriers
  - Enhance services for Limited English Proficient parties.
2. Improve customer value by enhancing processes and services
  - Develop a more responsive system for public records requests.
  - Seek customer input.
3. Communicate in plain language

**Report reviewed and approved by: Chief Administrative Law Judge Lorraine Lee**

## II. Project Summary:

Over a year's time the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) receives more than 40,000 hearing requests. The public website is one of the tools available to help people prepare for their hearings. We improved our public website, resulting in better access to justice by providing updated hearing preparation information that had not been updated in over 10 years to information that is 100% maintained and updated in real time. The new public website was revamped with a new technology platform built in-house and is now an application that allows us to maintain the site easily without the involvement of IT staff.

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## Project Details:

**Identify the problem:** The public website [www.oah.wa.gov](http://www.oah.wa.gov) is used by OAH hearing participants and the general public. Prior to this project, it was an old website that did not have dynamic interaction for customers, was not updated, and was very technologically cumbersome and limited in the ability to make changes and updates.

The website was designed in 1999. The original staff members who coded the website no longer work at OAH. The maintenance of the website had been minimal and limited in recent years. The website used an older version of Dreamweaver. When changes were made, it was very easy to break the website because the code was very convoluted.

**Problem statement:** Currently, the website:

- Is built on old technology that is cumbersome and requires scarce IT resources to update information
- Has old outdated information
- Website users are required to wait over 45 seconds per page to access information

Compared to our target of creating a new website with completely revised content that is easy to update and includes a mechanism to gather customer feedback, which we want to reach by 2017.

**Improvement description:** We used focus groups of OAH employees and partner agency staff (referred to as “Sprints”) to completely revise the content for the website. The new content was written using subject matter experts who worked daily with the hearing participants. These experts helped shape the content development and navigation of the system to help users prepare for hearing and understand what to expect during their hearing. There was a great deal of emphasis on writing the new information using “plain talk.” We were very successful and overall the site is written at the industry standard of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level which increases accessibility to a wider audience of important legal concepts and procedures.

The programming process was interactive and iterative between business and IT. The site was developed one topic at a time which allowed for instant feedback. We built a new technical platform that allows multiple users, who are not members of the IT team, to easily update and maintain the content. This allows OAH staff to update the website without IT assistance and in real time.

The site also expanded the ability for customers to interact and access the information in 31 different languages using the Google Translate feature. Reports and usage information were tracked and made available on the site. We also added a section to gather customer feedback about the administrative appeals process and hearing. A new feature was added allowing public records requests to be made on the public website. Previously requests had to be mailed or faxed.

The new technology platform also focused on using dynamic and responsive technology to seamlessly allow users to access and view the website on a desktop, laptop, tablet, or phone.

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**Customer involvement:** Eight people from other agencies including ESD, DSHS, HCA and LCB joined the Sprints to write the content for the website. They gave customer feedback from their perspective and shared with us common questions and issues that they experience with hearing participants.

The input from staff at these agencies helped us write content that was focused on helping the hearing participant. By collaborating with other agencies, we were able to tie the content from our website to their websites. For example, when we were working with the HCA, we were able to use direct links to the HCA website which contained their forms for requesting a hearing or canceling a hearing. As we wrote the content together, the staff from HCA were excited. Partnering with subject matter experts from other agencies was invaluable for capturing a more complete picture of the voice of the customer and their needs.

### III. Impact to Washingtonians:

In the vast majority of the cases heard at OAH, the hearing participants represent themselves and do not have lawyers. The primary audience for our website is hearing participants who are self-represented. The information on our website functions as one of the primary tools to help these people, who are not lawyers, to understand how to prepare and present their case during the hearing. The work of this project was critical to helping us improve this resource for Washingtonians.

In our [Strategic Plan](#), one of our goals is to make it easy for people to do business with us. This entire project has made it easier for customers to do business with us. Washingtonians have more access to information which helps them understand how to prepare for their hearing and what to expect. This enables them to more meaningfully participate in their hearing and promotes their access to justice. The information is consistent and accurate throughout the website. The new technology used for the website also allows us to easily maintain and update the information without needing IT intervention.

Another goal in our strategic plan is to provide equal access to administrative justice for those facing economic and other barriers. By adding the Google Translate feature to the website, we added the ability to translate the entire website into 31 different languages. We were able to reach a wider audience including those Washingtonians who have limited English proficiency.

Developing a more responsive system for public records requests is also part of our strategic plan to make it easier for customers to interact with OAH. Prior to the website revamp, Washingtonians had to mail or fax in requests for public records. Now, there is a simple online process that allows Washingtonians to easily make public records requests. This enhances transparency.

In our strategic plan we also commit to seeking customer input. The website gives us a vehicle to solicit customer feedback. We are now using the website to actively solicit customer feedback through a satisfaction survey.

Finally, we commit in our strategic plan to communicate in plain language. It can be difficult to communicate legal concepts using plain language. However, it helps Washingtonians to understand if

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the concepts are written in a way that everyone can comprehend them. This increases access to justice and the ability for Washingtonians to prepare for their hearing and understand what will happen at their hearing. The old website was written at a 10.3 average grade level. Some sections, specifically targeting those who needed an interpreter, were written at a 15<sup>th</sup> grade level and higher. The revised website content is written at a 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, which is the industry standard for writing public documents

## IV. Project Results:

Improved process as measured by:	Specific results achieved: <i>(Complete the narrative boxes below)</i>	Total Impact: <i>(Actuals; Current Reporting Period)</i>	Results status:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Quality</b>	<p>Increased (improved) the quality of information on the site <b>from</b> not being updated for over 10 years <b>to</b> 100% updated accurate content with mechanisms to maintain the content without IT involvement.</p> <p>Increased accessibility to the information by changing the reading level (which is used to measure if a document is written in plain talk) <b>from</b> over a 10<sup>th</sup> grade level <b>to</b> the industry standard of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.</p> <p>Increased the number of languages available on the site <b>from</b> 1 language (English) <b>to</b> 31 different languages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated information.</li> <li>• OAH staff can update information without IT assistance.</li> <li>• Changed readability from 10<sup>th</sup> grade to 7<sup>th</sup> grade.</li> <li>• Website content available in 31 different languages.</li> </ul>	Final
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Time</b>	<p>Decreased the amount of time it took website users to load a page on our website <b>from</b> approximately 45 seconds per page <b>to</b> less than 1 second per page.</p>	<p>This saved Washingtonians who use our site a minimum of 44 seconds of waiting per page.</p>	Final
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Customer Satisfaction</b>	<p>Increased the amount of feedback gathered from customers <b>from</b> 0 <b>to</b> providing an easy online option for hearing participants to give feedback about the administrative appeals process, hearing and website content.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> N/A (or) We now have a vehicle to gather customer input on our website.</p>	Final
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Employee Engagement</b>	<p>Increased the number of internal and external subject matter experts involved in this project. The project team consisted of three people. Using subject matter experts we went <b>from</b> 3 people <b>to</b> involving 48 experts from OAH and 8 experts from four different agencies.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> N/A (or) We engaged 56 employees who are the experts on the front line doing the work.</p>	Preliminary

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## V. Contact information:

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