Accelerate Permit-Related Decisions

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

Theme: Natural Resource and Environment, Economic Security and Policy

Overview

Goal Statement

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

Challenge

o   EPA permitting programs are complex, specialized, and administered across many offices.

o   EPA lacks basic system-wide tracking and overview capabilities on permit status, backlog, throughput, and performance trends.

o   Inefficient procedures, incompatible data systems, and inadequate coordination and communication complicate efforts to explore opportunities to modernize and streamline while maintaining day-to-day operations.

Opportunity

o   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.

o **Strategy 1 - Leaning Permitting Programs** - by conducting targeted Lean business process improvement events and implementing their results.

o **Strategy 2 - Tracking and Targeting Improvements** - by gathering, analyzing and using agency-wide permitting data to track results, identify any incompatible data systems and take corrective action if necessary, collect best practices, and target efforts.

o **Strategy 3 - Improving Guidelines and Procedures** - by systematically reviewing and, as appropriate, amending internal policies and procedures to identify inefficiencies and eliminate unnecessary steps.

Goal Structure & Strategies

EPA Lean Management System (ELMS)

o EPA will use the deployment of the new EPA Lean Management System (ELMS) to achieve the results set forth in the Strategic Plan. As part of ELMS, EPA will conduct multi-day process improvement events to make significant progress in priority areas identified in the Strategic Plan, including this one.

o 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 in the Strategic Plan, while additional poster boards will track the flow of the work needed to achieve the targets. Managers and staff members will participate in weekly stand-up huddle meetings in front of their visual management boards to discuss the performance and flow of the process.

o 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.

o 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:

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

Strategy 2: Tracking and Targeting Improvements:

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

Strategy 3: Improving Guidelines and Procedures:

- o Targeted for initiation in FY 2019.

Summary of Progress – FY 2018 Q2

Building on experience in EPA and examples from state environmental agencies, EPA is on track to 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
o   (Completed) Worked with programs to collect and analyze data in preparation for Lean events.
o   (Completed) Participated in Lean events for the UIC, NPDES, Title V, and NSR programs.
o   (Underway) Working with programs to help implement identified recommendations to improve processes, as appropriate.

Strategy 2: Tracking and Targeting Improvements
o   Will begin collecting monthly data on the timeliness of permits issued by EPA starting in May, based on permit applications submitted since October 2017.

Strategy 3: Improving Guidelines and Procedures -
o   (Underway) Conducted initial review of a sampling of permit policies available online.

Key Milestone: Lean Events

o Conduct Lean Events on Permitting Programs and Key Steps within them; Implement Results.

o Initial round of events held in January, March and April 2018.

Milestone Summary					
Key Milestones	**Milestone Due Date**	**Milestone status**	**Change from last month**	**Owner**	**Comments**
Conducted Lean events for UIC and NPDES permitting programs	Jan 2018	Two events completed	Strategy launched	OW	Identify and prioritize potential improvements resulting from Lean events
Conducted Lean events for Title V and NSR permitting programs	Mar – Apr 2018	Two events completed	Strategy launched	OAR	Identify and prioritize potential improvements resulting from Lean events
Working with programs to help implement potential solutions and determine next steps	FY 18	ongoing	No change	OW, OAR and OP	
Continue ongoing work with OAR and OW to help implement solutions	FY 19	Work will begin in FY19		OW, OAR, and OP	

Key Milestone: System-wide Data

- Collect system-wide data on permit status, backlog, and throughput.
- Strategy launched December 2017.
- Methodology developed to effectively measure permit cycle time.

Milestone Summary					
Key Milestones	**Milestone Due Date**	**Milestone status**	**Change from last month**	**Owner**	**Comments**
Initial data collected for scoping purposes and to identify initial Lean / Kaizen events	December 2017	Completed	No change	OP	
Started collecting data for permit decisions made since October 1, 2017	May 1, 2018	Launched	No change	OP	
Will track data on permits completed within 180 days and pending permit applications, using October 2017 as a baseline	Monthly starting on May 1, 2018	Will launch in May 2018	No Change	OP	

Key Milestone: Improved Internal Procedures

o EPA will modify or eliminate outdated policies or inefficient procedures related to government permitting programs.

o Policy review launched.

Milestone Summary					
Key Milestones	**Milestone Due Date**	**Milestone status**	**Change from last month**	**Owner**	**Comments**
Conducted initial effort to gather and review permitting policies available online		April 2018 completed	No change	OP	
Inventory internal policies	FY 2018	Underway	No change	OP, OAR, OW	
Design a cyclical review program	FY 2019	Being designed	No change	OP, OAR, OW	

Key Indicators

o 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:

- o Monthly data on the timeliness of permits issued by EPA.

o Data will be collected monthly (starting in May 2018) and summarized quarterly starting in the 3rd quarter (August 2018).

o Additional leading indicators will be developed concurrent with a more robust data collection effort.

Data Accuracy and Reliability

Purpose of Measure

- o To inform on EPA's commitment to provide consistency and certainty to the regulated community in executing its responsibilities.

Unit of Measure

- o Days

Methodology

- o Permitting-related decisions are based on an "application" for a permit decision to be made by EPA including new permits, renewals, and modifications.

- o Starting in May 2018, permitting decisions that exceed six months will be measured on a monthly basis.

- o In May 2018, EPA will begin tracking the status of applications received six months prior.

Performance Measure Term Definitions

- o **Permitting-related decisions** are based on 1) for individual permits, any permittee's "application" for a permit decision to be made by EPA including new permits, renewals and modifications and 2) under general permits, any "Notice of Intent" from permittees which requires an EPA decision.

- o A **pending permit-related decision** is measured from the date a permitting decision request is received to the data an issuance or denial action has occurred.

- o **Lead time** for a permitting-related decision is measured from the data of the request to the date of an issuance or denial action.

A Data Quality Record has been developed for the strategic measure associated with this Agency Priority Goal: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-05/documents/dqr-3-4-permitting.pdf.

Contributing Programs

Organizations and Program Activities:

- o US EPA, Office of the Administrator

  - o Office of Policy – data collection, analysis and presentation; participation in Lean events; policy review and amendment; overall coordination.

  - o Office of Continuous Improvement - facilitation of Lean events and follow-up, collection of mission measure data related to permitting.

- o 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.

- o US EPA – Office of Chief Financial Officer – E-Enterprise federal/state program.

- o State agencies – participation in Lean events, policy discussions, and sharing of best practices.

Policies:

- o Administrator Memo of March 2018 (link)

Stakeholders

o State and Local Permitting Agencies – can provide recommendations and examples on permit program operation and improvement.

o Regulated Entities – permit holders will benefit from programs that are more efficient and effective.

o Tribes, Local Communities and Individuals – will experience enhanced environmental protection, improved transparency, and benefits of stepped up economic activity.

o U.S. Congress – to be consulted as appropriate.