



## **Santa Barbara County 2021 CSAC Challenge Executive Summary**

### **Overview:**

InnovateSBC is the countywide innovation program offering trainings that introduce Lean Six Sigma techniques that induce a collaborative team effort to improve performance while empowering staff.

### **Challenge:**

One of the greatest challenges in government is how to keep staff motivated and engaged in their work in order to respond to the many competing priorities with the use of limited resources. We usually have outdated technology and not enough funds to respond to all the public and staff needs. As an organization we had the need to create a transformational effort amongst our entire organization and examine how we serve the public. In response to these challenges, the County embarked on the Renew '22 transformation initiative in 2017 to address financial and organizational challenges and make decisions to transform the County for success by 2022 and beyond. During the first couple of years of Renew '22, we experienced challenges engaging staff in all levels of the organization. Most staff viewed the initiative as a top-down approach and did not see value in the County's efforts. They felt it threatened their jobs and didn't understand how they could do their work "better." This energy was felt all over the organization and we needed to create a more positive outlook on the transformation and work to engage all staff from all levels while also empowering them to contribute to the transformational goals of the County.

### **Solution:**

The County created an innovation training program that introduces tools for employees at all levels of the organization to help them feel engaged and empowered to transform the way they do their work. The training focuses on identifying and eliminating waste by empowering staff to develop innovative strategies to improve their daily work flow. It teaches staff how to make small changes that can have a lasting impact on their everyday work. Borrowing from many management and production methodologies, including Lean and Six Sigma, the foundational beliefs of InnovateSBC are that people are the strongest asset of any organization and that processes must be continually improved.

### **Innovation:**

Originally developed as an in-person training, we adapted this to a virtual training program during COVID-19. In December 2019, the County hosted the first Black Belt training led by the Peak Academy from The City and County of Denver. Twenty-five County employees attended this training and it created the momentum to develop InnovateSBC. Planning meetings in early 2020 envisioned monthly in-person four-hour Green Belt trainings. Before the launch, however, COVID-19 hit and most workers were sent to work from home. We wondered whether an innovation training aimed at affecting culture change could be successful during such a difficult and stressful time for many, but we decided to move forward because our organization was in need of transformation. We engaged an innovation consultant to create a virtual Green Belt training that replaced the four-hour in-person session with a two-hour online training and 4.5 hours of live group Zoom sessions, and a Black Belt course that replaced the 32-hour in-person training with a 10-hour online training and 4.5 hours of live Zoom sessions. The online training and Zoom sessions are stretched out over about 10 days instead of intense continuous in-person sessions, which created a unique and unanticipated benefit. Instead of setting participants free after in-person sessions to complete their innovations, the protracted virtual training period allowed us to require participants to implement their innovations *during* the training period. This boosted the completion rates, allowed them to consult with the InnovateSBC team for support during their implementation, and gave participants a true sense of achievement by the end of the course.

### **Results:**

Engaged all levels of staff in ways to re-design their work that are more efficient and less frustrating for all involved in the process. People have created standard work, checklists, and cleaned up and organized their work spaces. The program has increased cross-departmental communication and is building stronger relationships across the County via the Green and Black Belt trainings. Divisions within departments are even coming together and learning more about each other's work or working together on projects that will help the whole division. This is helping to break down silos that once created additional work. Thus far, we have trained 319 people in 21 departments in Green Belt and 24 people in 12 departments in Black Belt. The County has had so much positive feedback from staff about the program, including these comments:

*Even the smallest change can have the greatest impact.*

*I am a perfectionist, however when I reflect on the class, I realize that it does not have to be perfect the first time. Testing ideas and tweaking them along the way can deliver greater impacts in the future.*

*Changes that might not seem big in terms of dollars or time can have a profound impact on both customer and employee satisfaction.*

**Replicability:**

The InnovateSBC team created a standard work for coordinating the trainings, including email scripts and a course enrollment webpage. This eliminates errors along the path of enrollment to attendance because the process is easily replicated for every training.

**Program Highlights:**

- Successfully adapted in-person course to virtual format during COVID
- Created marketing videos:
  - InnovateSBC Overview: <https://vimeo.com/578186794>
  - Innovation Spotlight: <https://vimeo.com/580305012>
- Cohort names based of popular landmarks in Santa Barbara County
- Created standard work and a document-sharing website
- Continuous improvement to program based off lessons learned
- Tool kits provided to participants with essential training items such as sticky notes, Sharpies, and large paper
- Designed program logo and merchandise for graduation awards
- Trained nearly 350 employees thus far
- Approximately \$500k+ in savings realized thus far
- Produced an Introduction Video & Success Stories

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