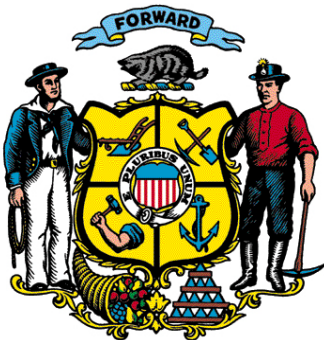STATE OF WISCONSIN

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

# Enterprise Continuous Improvement Program Report

Fiscal Year 2024

Prepared for the Department of Administration by the Strategic Management and Planning Team

October 2024

# The Enterprise Continuous Improvement Program

**Introduction**:

The Enterprise Continuous Improvement (ECI) program, led by the Department of Administration (DOA) Strategic Management and Planning (SMP) Team, is designed to foster innovation, efficiency, and excellence in state government operations. The purpose of the program is to leverage continuous improvement (CI) methodologies to empower state employees to enhance products, services, and processes, resulting in time and cost savings, increased customer satisfaction, and other benefits. The program currently includes the following 20 state agencies, each running their own department-level initiative:

- Department of Administration (DOA)
- Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP)
- Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Department of Financial Institutions (DFI)
- Department of Health Services (DHS)
- Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Department of Revenue (DOR)
- Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)
- Department of Workforce Development (DWD)
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)
- Office of the Commissioner Insurance (OCI)
- Educational Communications Board (ECB)
- Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Department of Tourism (Tourism)
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)
- Public Service Commission (PSC)
- Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)
- Department of Military Affairs (DMA)
- Department of Corrections (DOC)

**Executive Summary**:

Due to the global health crisis caused by Covid-19 pandemic, many agencies necessarily had to shift their focus to safety and operations and as a result, fewer continuous improvement projects were reported in the last few years. As such, overall CI engagement decreased within many of the participating agencies. However, as operations stabilized, agencies across Wisconsin are once again prioritizing CI initiatives. Over the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the SMP Team focused on reconnecting agencies with their CI programs, laying a strong foundation for future growth. Key actions taken by SMP include:

- Identifying common challenges and concerns through information gathered from Agency CI Contacts.
- Developing and implementing a new collaborative structure across the enterprise, based on feedback from agency stakeholders.
- Prioritizing resources and building a foundation for agency CI program growth, which centered on communication, resource development, standardization, and collaboration.
- Launching the online Yellow Belt Curriculum to increase accessibility and engagement.
- Initiating a quarterly CI newsletter to strengthen communication and promote CI efforts.
- Supporting workgroups which developed resources such as the Agency CI Contact Manual.

These collaborative efforts helped support agencies as they reinvested in their CI programs, resulting in forward progress. This report details the growth of the ECI Program, including increased Yellow Belt certificate completions and stakeholder engagement. It also outlines how agencies have continued to reestablish and expand their CI initiatives, with the support of the ECI Program and SMP. The overall impact is illustrated by Table 1, showing that 62 improvement projects were completed and reported in FY24. These projects resulted in a total of 21,864 repurposed hours and $654,365 in cost savings across the state.

Looking ahead to FY25, the program will continue to emphasize accountability, communication, and collaboration across the enterprise. These values will guide our efforts as we refine project identification, implementation, and reporting structures. With a focus on accessibility and participation, we aim to increase project reporting, further strengthening the culture of continuous improvement for the State of Wisconsin.

| Table 1: Statewide outcomes in FY24 | |
|---|---|
| Improvement efforts completed | 66 |
| Annual staff hours repurposed | 23,618 |
| Annual cost saved | $654,365 |

# Growth in The ECI Program

## Increasing our Leadership

In early October 2023, the SMP team conducted 16 interviews with individuals who had either current or historical involvement with the ECI program. This was followed by a focus group discussion on October 24, 2023, where agencies shared their needs and ideas for enhancing CI and expanding improvement initiatives statewide. Based on these insights, SMP, in collaboration with the CI Network, led a restructuring effort to implement a new charter, setting objectives for the fiscal year. This restructuring aimed to develop a collaborative CI foundation, working with CI contacts to create resources that supported agencies and their CI programs.

As a result, the CI Network expanded, bringing both new and returning agencies into the program. For instance, ECB joined the program for the first time, and DOJ reengaged after a three-year hiatus. Many agencies, including DNR, added additional CI contacts, demonstrating their commitment. Overall, CI contact participation increased by 45% (see Figure 1). This growth also allowed us to better support and learn about agency CI program investments.

**Figure 1: CI Network Growth June 2023-2024**
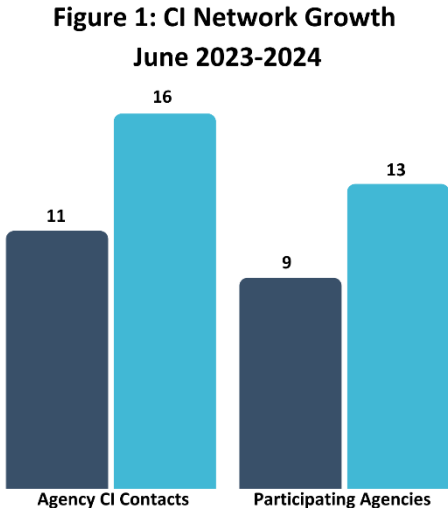


As the network expanded, so too did agency CI programs. For example, DWD created a new CI Coordinator role in 2023, dedicating a position to identify, support, and implement improvements within the Unemployment Insurance (UI) division. Additionally, DWD and DCF developed strategic goals to enhance its CI culture and initiatives. Similarly, DOR has reinvigorated its CI program working with the Learning Advisory Committee and identifying CI champions. In addition, DOR held a strategy road mapping summit to prioritize and plan improvement projects. Several projects are expected to start in September 2024, including a review of their new employee orientation and onboarding practices.

Three agencies—DVA, OCI, and DFI—are also advancing their improvement projects. DFI is refining its parking pass process, while DVA is finalizing a department-wide footprint downsizing, which will result in cost savings. OCI is working on implementing six projects, including one to automate and validate insurer enrollment data, a process that has previously been manual and time-consuming. All these projects are important improvements for the state, and most are expected to be completed and reported in FY25.

## Modernizing our Trainings

CI trainings are a key initiative of the ECI program and have had a significant impact on state employees. This year, SMP focused on expanding the reach and accessibility of these trainings, including developing new schedules for White and Yellow Belt training and launching Yellow Belt Modules online. Yellow Belt participation has increased significantly since the introduction of these online modules. Compared to 2023, there was more than 200% growth in Yellow Belt certificates completed in the 2024 fiscal year (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Growth in Yellow Belt Certificates**
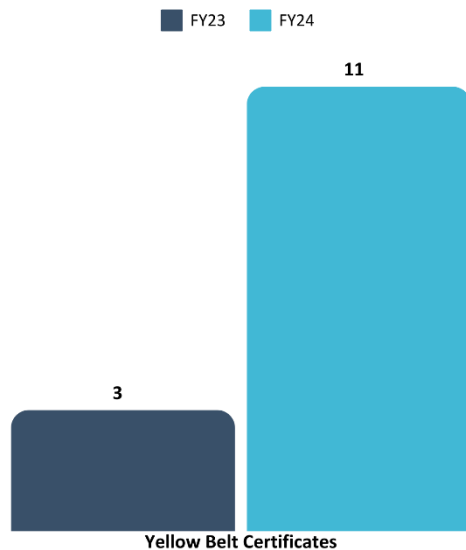


Notably, DFI increased its Yellow Belt participation, with five employees currently enrolled. Other agencies, such as ECB and DHS, have also boosted their training involvement. DSPS actively promotes continuous improvement training, with 13 staff members engaged in the Yellow Belt Curriculum. DWD is also enhancing its departments' CI knowledge, with 17 employees working towards Yellow Belt certification. More data on our overall training numbers can be found in Table 2.

In addition to the program's CI trainings, some agencies are expanding their educational offerings. In the Fall of 2023, DWD hosted a workshop where the SMP Team provided White Belt training to 36 employees, covering fundamental continuous improvement methodologies. DCF completed its fifth year of providing a full day of Continuous Improvement training to its leadership foundation group, which included 32 emerging department leaders in FY24. Looking forward, DWD will conduct a CI in-service training in Fall 2024. Additionally, WisDOT (Office of Workforce Development and Division of Budget and Strategic Initiatives CI Site Lead) coordinated with DOA to produce CI materials for their leadership development program and currently have six CI projects in development.

## Connecting CI Conversations

The ECI program utilizes two key communication channels to keep employees knowledgeable on CI methods and updates. Since 2022, the CI Community of Practice (CoP) has grown to 200 members, with an average of 73 participants attending the meetings (Table 3). This year, we restructured the CI CoP to include CI contacts, and for FY25, the CI Network will focus on developing CoP content to enhance enterprise-wide CI discussions. The effectiveness of these efforts will be measured through a satisfaction survey, and results will be reported in next year's program report.

New in 2024, SMP launched a CI newsletter, providing quarterly updates on project successes, CI news, and valuable resources. Created in collaboration with the CI Network, the

**Figure 3: Click Rate for First CI Newsletter**



97%
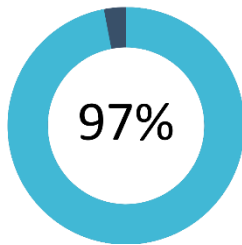
newsletter aims to foster enterprise-wide improvement discussions and inspire the CI community. The inaugural edition in May garnered 139 subscribers, with 136 viewing the issue on its first day (See Figure 3). As of August 8, 2024, subscriber numbers have grown to 228.
Notably, the newsletter highlighted a DATCP project focused on improving the overall licensing process for pesticide certification and licensing to reduce lead time. This feature spotlight led DOA to nominate the project for the Center for Digital Government: Government Experience Awards 2024. The award winner will be announced later in 2024.

# Impact of the ECI Program

**Supporting the Enterprise**

The benefits of training and teaching CI methodologies and practices include but are not limited to, growing the CI knowledge base, supporting improvement efforts, and empowering state employees within their work environment. Table 2 demonstrates the total number of participants for the FY24 trainings. After completing CI training, it's vital to keep the connection and conversation going with employees. The CI newsletter and CoP both provide that additional touchpoint to further engage and inspire the CI community (Table 3).

| Table 2: ECI Program Training | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Course** | **Length** | **FY24 Participants** |
| White Belt Training | 3 hours | 199 |
| Yellow Belt Certificate Completions | N/A | 11 |
| Yellow Belt Certificate In-Progress | N/A | 161 |

| Table 3: CI Conversation Channels | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Program** | **Occurance** | **FY24 Average Reach** |
| CI Newsletter | Quarterly | 112 |
| CI Community of Practice | Bi-Monthly | 73 |

**Project Acheivements for the State:**

     *The project data and descriptions that follow are provided by the agencies, using the CI Project form and database. Data is submitted and reviewed for accuracy at the agency level.*

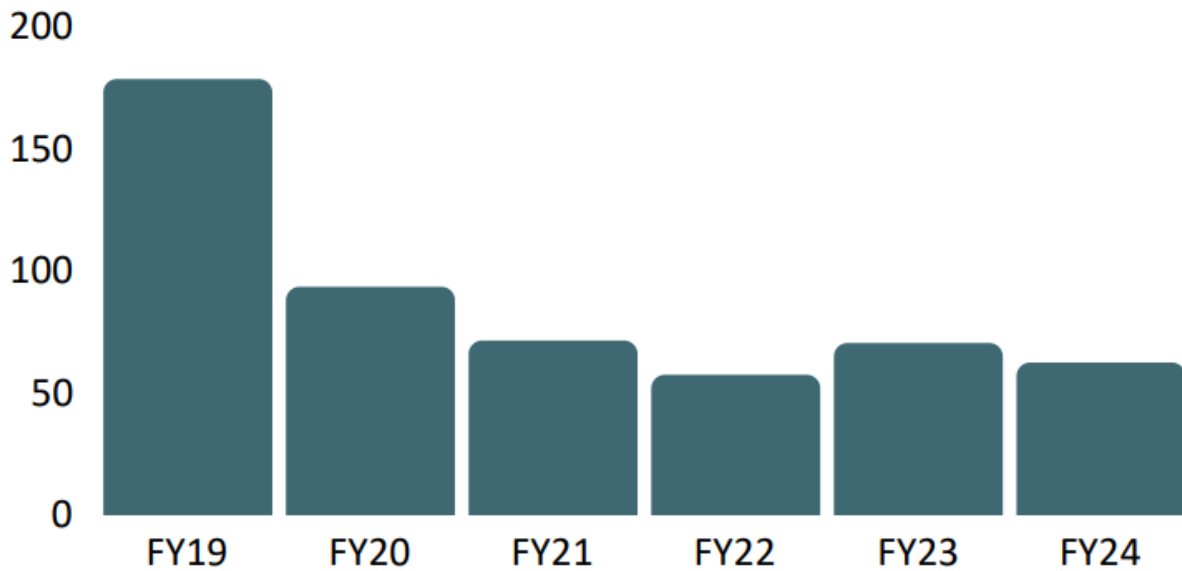## Figure 4: Number of CI Projects Completed FY19-24



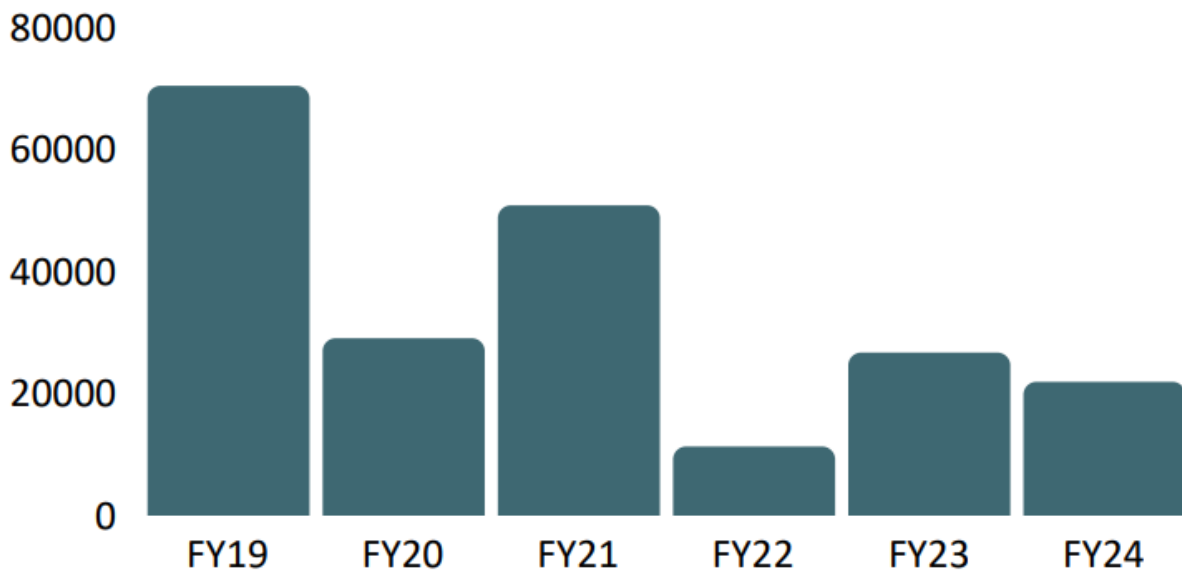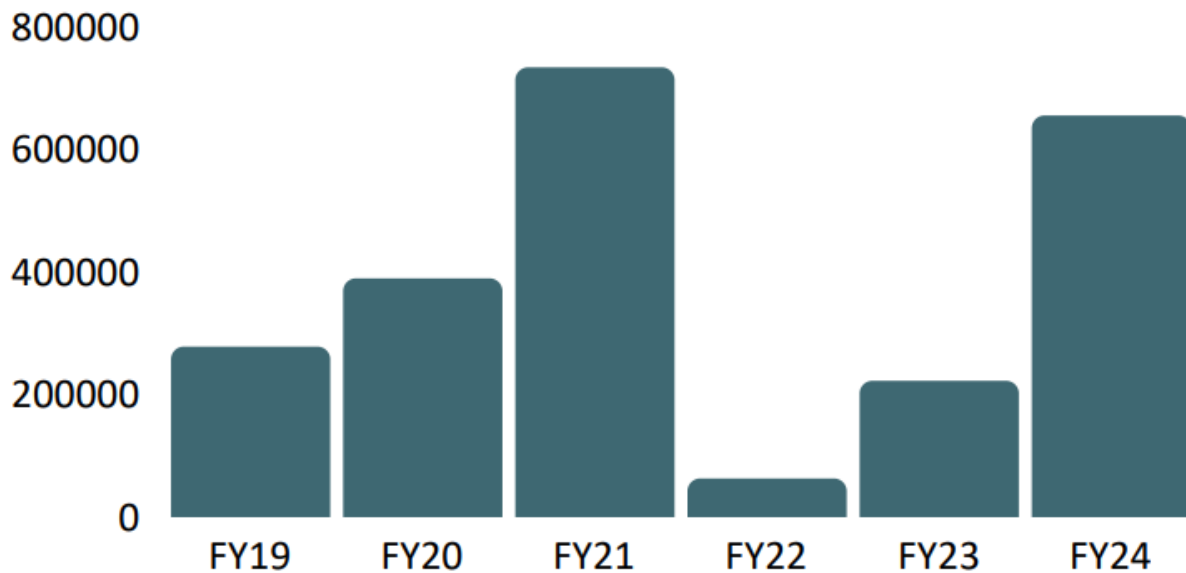## Figure 5: Annual Hours Repurposed FY19-24

# Figure 6: Annual Cost ($) Saved FY19-24



**Select Project Highlights**:

**Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection:**

DATCP implemented numerous improvements this fiscal year, supporting healthy growth and innovation throughout the department. Here are two examples, of many, which detail the positive contribution improvement initiatives are having across DATCP:

- The Bureau of Agrichemical Management Bureau within the Division of Agricultural Resource Management successfully implemented a Paperless Inspection and Investigation Submittal Project, which eliminated three process steps, repurposed 75 staff hours annually, saved $6,950, and reduced the average lead time by 10 days.
- The Division of Trade and Consumer Protection streamlined the No Call Renewals process by sending expiration notices, which eliminated three process steps and resulted in an annual savings of $170.80.

**Department of Health Services:**

DHS completed an improvement project as part of a Yellow Belt certification titled Improving Organizational Change Process at Central Wisconsin Center (CWC). The project focused on identifying gaps and addressing inefficiencies in the CWC change process. Using tools such as a fishbone diagram for root cause analysis and a process map to visualize the current and future state, the team implemented improvements that reduced meeting duration and restructured the change process format. This resulted in repurposing 432 annual staff hours. Feedback from pulse surveys showed significant improvements, with a 57% increase in efficiency, 52% in effectiveness, 49% in communication, 15% in governance, and 9% in engagement.

**Wisconsin Department of Transportation:**

WisDOT continues to support and implement positive change and improvement across the agency. Below are two improvement efforts making an impact within our state.

- Contract Management System Phase 1 - WisDOT has multiple interconnected systems for contract management. The number of systems grew over time as the department sought ways to efficiently and effectively manage and track projects, handle materials, and create a solid database for projects. In addition, software was introduced to allow for interconnectivity and extraction of data in formats that could easily be analyzed. This project focused on six applications that comprise the construction administration functions. The project's contract management systems review, and consolidation effort led to a reduction of the applications by a total of four. The difference shows that there was a 60% reduction in annual licensing costs, equating to $458,000 in annual savings.
- Knowledge OWL Redesign – Knowledge OWL is a knowledge transfer system purchased in 2016. It is the primary source of information front line staff use to help customers. The project resulted in creating and implementing a governance system to ensure front line staff have the most current information to help customers. The project resulted in 10,062 staff hours repurposed through the reduction of staff time reviewing reference materials.
- E-Finals – The E-Finals project focused on the Construction Finals Process, which includes a manual process of printing those documents to submit in hard copy format (papers, field books, flash drives, etc.) for review and storing for retention. The project resulted with documentation to be saved electronically in a consistent format and naming structure. The project resulted in 6,090 staff hours repurposed and $114,822 annual costs saved.

# Looking Forward

As we look ahead to Fiscal Year 2025, the ECI Program remains committed to fostering continuous improvement across state agencies by investing in our stakeholders and creating a collaborative environment. In FY24, the program laid a solid foundation by expanding the reach of the CI newsletter and restructuring the CI Community of Practice (CoP), promoting cross-agency collaboration and outreach. Within DOA, we have committed to investing in our CI program, increasing the usage of our CI trainings and resources, capturing improvement projects, and growing the agencies' culture of CI. Participating agencies have demonstrated the impact that a strong CI foundation can have within an organization, showing that by providing employees with the tools and support needed, we empower them to take action and lead improvements which result in significant time and cost savings. Wisconsin serves as a model of how continuous improvement can make a positive contribution to our public services, and speaks to the Stewardship value embodied at DOA.

For FY25, the ECI Program will focus on four primary objectives aimed at increasing project visibility and improving reporting structures. Our overarching goal is to enhance our CI reporting structure to increase the number of projects across agencies, providing support for the long-term sustainability of CI efforts statewide.

1. **Evaluate CI Reporting Structure**: The ECI Program will evaluate the current project reporting structure, collaborating with the CI Network to identify barriers that employees face when starting, completing, and reporting improvement projects. Based on these findings, we will outline top priorities for enhancing this structure to make CI more accessible and user-friendly across all agencies.

2. **Develop CI Resources**: With the priorities identified from the reporting structure evaluation, we will refine and develop the necessary tools to support the full lifecycle of CI projects. This includes improving project identification, implementation, and reporting resources. Additionally, SMP will lead the development of the Yellow Belt Cohort structure to further enhance project completion and reporting.

3. **Capture Improvement Projects**: A major focus in FY25 is capturing and reporting all improvement projects completed by participating agencies. Our goal is for every participating agency to complete and report at least one project, ensuring that success is measurable and celebrated. The program will provide additional support where needed to sustain long-term reporting success.

4. **Promote CI Systems**: The visibility and reach of continuous improvement efforts will be amplified through the expansion of the quarterly CI newsletter and the continued

investment in the CI CoP. These channels will be key in uniting state employees around foundational improvement knowledge, providing agencies with the tools and inspiration needed to grow their own CI initiatives.

In summary, FY24 marked a year of substantial growth for the ECI Program. We saw a significant increase in Yellow Belt certificate completions, broader engagement across agencies, and the development of key resources like the Agency CI Contact Manual. The completion of 62 projects, the repurposing of over 21,000 hours, and savings of over $650,000 are clear indicators of the difference that continuous improvement is having across the state. As we enter into FY25, we look forward to building on these successes, further embedding CI practices into state operations, and increasing project visibility and outcomes.