

## Improving Cycle Time for Review and Approval of Policies at Dartmouth-Hitchcock



This project addressed user dissatisfaction with the amount of time necessary for policies and procedures to be approved by the Office of Policy of Support (OPS). Through data analysis, and the voice of the customer interview process, it was determined that the excessive cycle time depended on three major factors. First, the total processing capacity, which was 50 percent of historical norms; second, a non-value-added step to review and approve documents in two distinct processes making for an increased wait time; and finally, there was no stratification of resource deployment relative to the incoming work. OPS spent too much time reviewing and approving very specific laboratory procedures with highly proficient document owners instead of reviewing and approving documents owned by less proficient users of the system who needed more support.

To address the first and second issues, the review step of the policy and procedure development process was eliminated. This allowed documents to be accessed more quickly by the content experts in the review stage rather than OPS being a bottleneck. To address the third issue, users were stratified by proficiency. Since many of the document owners in the laboratory documents are detailed procedures proscribed by external certifying bodies, OPS would provide a more perfunctory review of the documents. The primary purpose of the review is to verify conformity to D-H procedural standards rather than provide a detailed review of every document. Lastly, user training was moved from a more didactic and generalized approach to one that was customized to each user's need and role in the document creation and approval process. The goal was to improve the quality of incoming material from users who were historically less proficient so that less time and effort needed to be spent on reviewing and editing, further improving cycle time.

Cycle time has improved dramatically, going from 30 days for some documents, with an overall queue of more than 200 documents, to 3 to 5 days currently with an overall queue of less than 30 documents. One primary challenge in this project was eliminating a process step that dated back to the creation of a formal OPS, which was deeply entrenched in the existing process. The other main challenge was in transitioning to an understanding opposed to exchange for improved cycle times. More responsibility for quality was moved further back in the value stream to the document owners themselves.