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Revenue wins national award for best training program

OLYMPIA – March 17, 2015 – The Washington State Department of Revenue (Revenue) has taken national honors for its approach to teaching employees how to solve problems and look for ways to make the agency more efficient and customer-focused.

The Federation of Tax Administrators (FTA) named Revenue winner of the 2015 Award for Training and will formally present the award during its annual conference in June in Minneapolis.

“Revenue has become a leader in helping agency employees embrace Lean and move toward extending the Lean culture in state government,” said Vikki Smith, Revenue’s acting director. “Our Lean training program has been effective at every level of our work providing employees with the tools to engage in looking for ways to be more effective, efficient and improve services to our taxpayers.”

The award is given to agencies that demonstrate excellence in training their employees and would serve as an example for other agencies to use in developing their own training.

Revenue has embraced Lean principles to empower employees to find smarter, more efficient ways to do their work. More than 30 employees have been certified through an in-house training program to lead large-scale improvement projects. Every employee has access to a list of easy-to-use tools that can improve anyone’s efficiency.

While the award focuses on the elements of the training program itself, Revenue is proud of the results that Lean training has had in time savings and employee morale.

One example is how employees streamlined a tax assessment review process, decreasing review times between 85 and 92 percent. The time savings allowed the agency to repurpose staff time to other tasks that are estimated to raise \$750,000 in revenue.

“When we can empower people to feel comfortable challenging the way things are done and give them the tools to affect change, I think the opportunities are astounding,” said James Samans, manager in Revenue’s Compliance division.

The Federation of Tax Administrators is a nonprofit organization comprising tax and revenue departments of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and New York City. Its mission is to improve the standards and methods of tax administration.

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This is the 15th FTA award Revenue has earned in the last decade.

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About Revenue

The Department of Revenue is Washington state's primary tax administration agency, nationally recognized for innovation and service quality. Revenue collected more than \$19.6 billion in tax revenues in fiscal year 2014. These funds go to support public schools, social services, health care, corrections, public safety and natural resources conservation.