Operational Organisations

SMEs should be engaged from the foremost level of construction process to understand Lean implementation in Highways England Supply Chain must be aligned with leadership (expected) supporting (Lean Implementing) SMEs.

Lean should be implemented in all levels of construction processes for Highways England. SMEs need to integrate Lean within Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 of Highways England Supply Chain (SME). Lean in construction is not that widely adopted by SMEs. This study reveals that current Lean implementation focus of Highways England is primarily on Tier 1 of the Supply Chain. A strategic long-term focus for Lean Construction need further development at SME level (i.e. at level of Tier 2 and Tier 3 Suppliers).

This investigation leads to key recommendations to advance SMEs engagement. The report suggests that implementing Lean within Highways England Supply Chain requires an equal effort at different levels (Organisational and Process) of Supply Chain. Key recommendations that would ensure smooth flow of Lean implementation at all levels of Highways England Supply Chain are established.

The objective of Lean is “to get value to flow at the pull of the Customer and then improve each day” (Highways England). Lean is mainly to improve the construction process to develop innovative and sustainable construction. Organisations handling Lean Construction projects must implement Lean principles on each level of construction. Lean in construction is not successful if implemented in just one section of Supply Chain (i.e Tier 1). Highways England SMEs should be engaged from the foremost level of construction process to understand the need for Lean implementation and its benefits.

This study draws upon relevant literature and interviews with 20 professionals working on the frontlines and emphasises on the issues that hinder the SMEs engagement and contribution to Lean implementation within Highways England Supply Chain. Survey Respondents’ presents the distribution of respondents and operational areas. The choice of respondents covers the entire Supply Chain of Highways England.

Areas which showed need of improvement:-

- Need to integrate Lean within Procurement/Contracting process
- Raise the level of stake and level of liability of SMEs for Lean implementation through direct contracts
- Improve SMEs Commitment to implement Lean
- Motivate SMEs to implement Lean in Highways England Supply Chain
- Early engagement of SMEs to ensure Lean implementation in Supply Chain
- Provide strategic support to SMEs
- Implement Lean as a grand scheme rather than an individual initiative
- The “Lean Tracker” and “HELMA” should be used to capture knowledge and increase Lean awareness
- Need to develop a Knowledge Sharing approach within Highways England Supply Chain
- Need advancing Knowledge Sharing tools and techniques whilst modifying current tools and techniques of sharing Lean’s knowledge with SMEs

Data analysis indicates that Lean approaches are not fully embedded and widely adopted by SMEs working for Highways England. Before committing to Lean adoption, SMEs are seeking surety about the benefits of Lean adoption against the implementation cost. This study reveals that current Lean implementation focus of Highways England is primarily on Tier 1 of the Supply Chain. A strategic long-term focus for Lean Construction need further development at SME level (i.e. at level of Tier 2 and Tier 3 Suppliers).

The collaborative working and engagement of SMEs to implement Lean within Highways England Supply Chain applies to deliver five strategic outcomes as set out in Highways England Delivery Plan 2015-2020. This likely to drive five strategic outcomes. Lean implementation within Highways Supply Chain could play a key role to drive the strategic outcomes through advancing the supply chain and most importantly its SMEs.

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