

Maximizing efficiency

Leading for impact

Cami Jones | November 19, 2025



Center for Government
Innovation



Agenda

01

Focus

Aligning with
what matters

02

Flow

Spotting and
removing bottlenecks

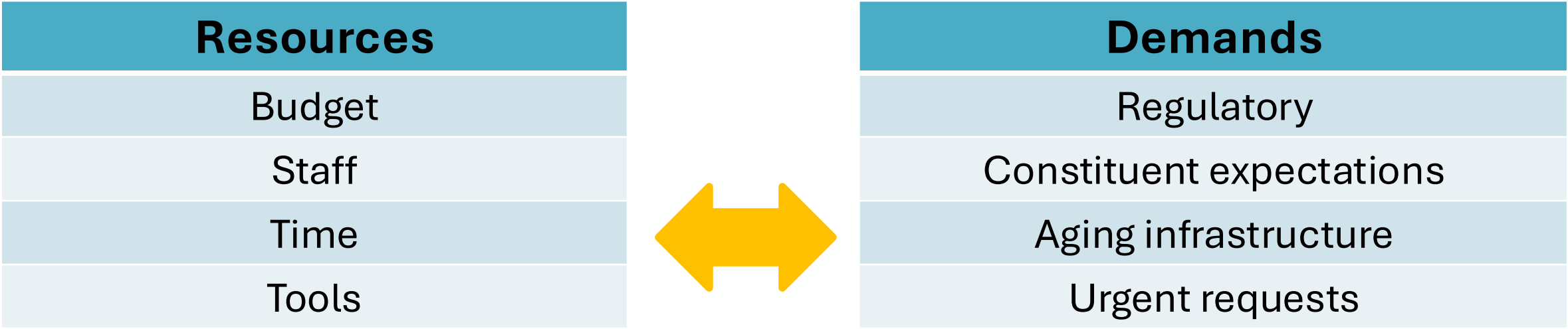
03

Freedom

Creating a culture
of innovation

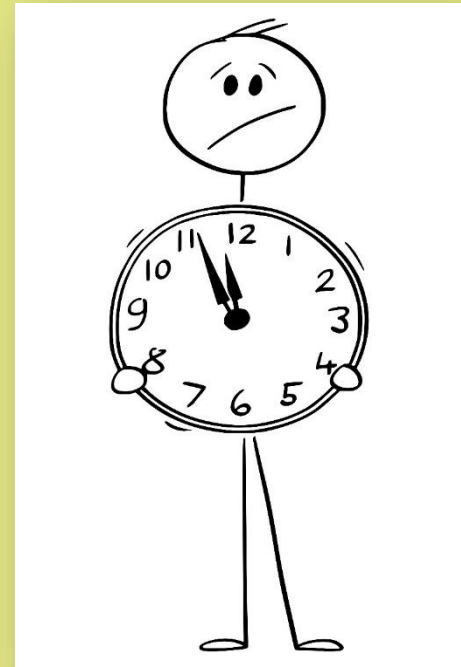


Shared reality



The reality...

- Speed doesn't equal value
 - Motion without movement
- Efficiency = doing the right things
 - Clarity before activity



The leadership challenge



Quick pulse check

- Raise your hand if your workload increased in the past year.



Poll: Which pressure-point feels strongest?

1. People → Not enough hands or the right skill sets.
2. Time → Too much work, not enough hours
3. Systems → Clunky tools or unclear processes
4. Clarity → Shifting priorities or fuzzy expectations

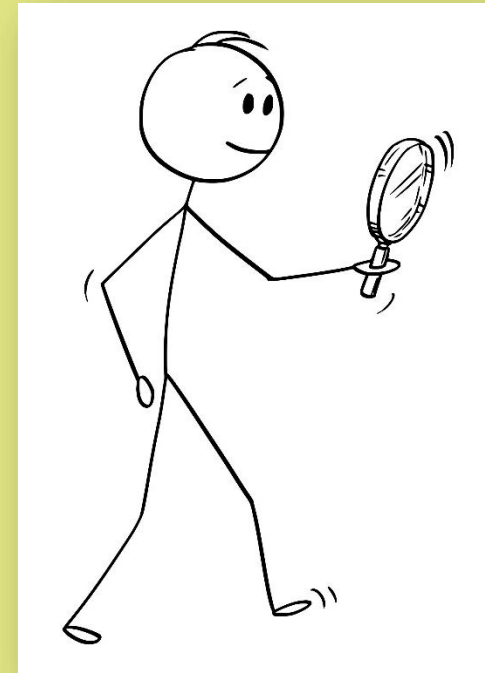


Focus is a leadership decision

Examples:

- New initiatives
- Emerging issues
- Urgent requests

You choose what matters.

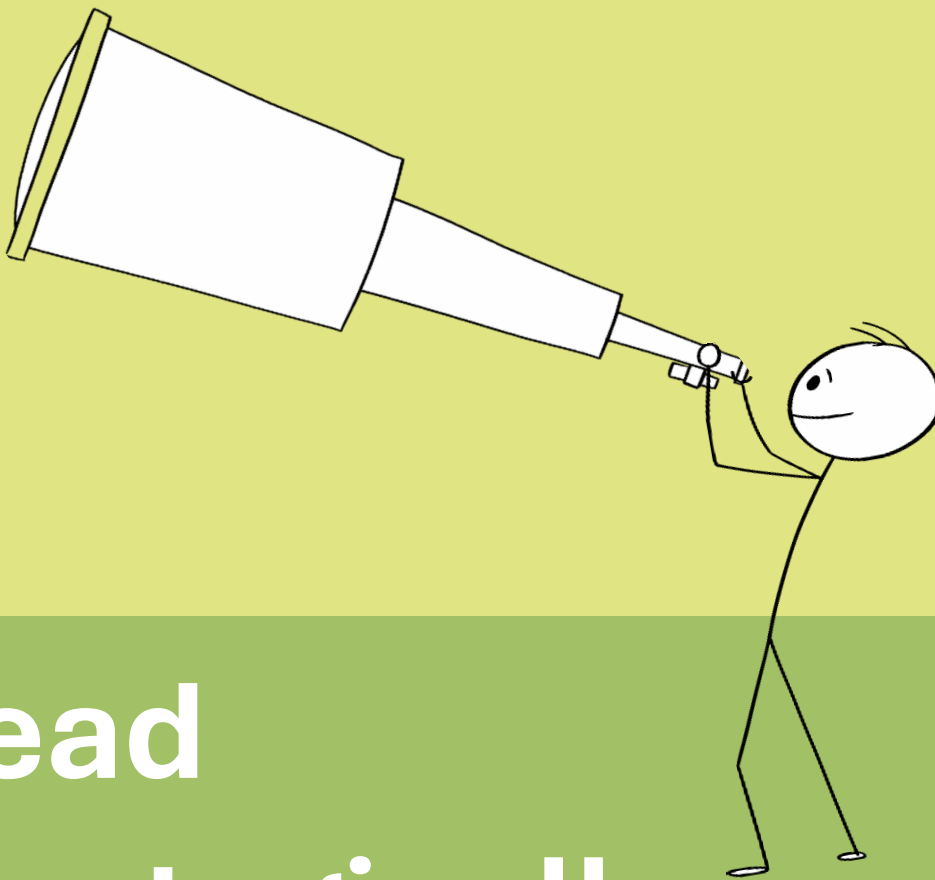


Lens one: Focus



Focus on impact

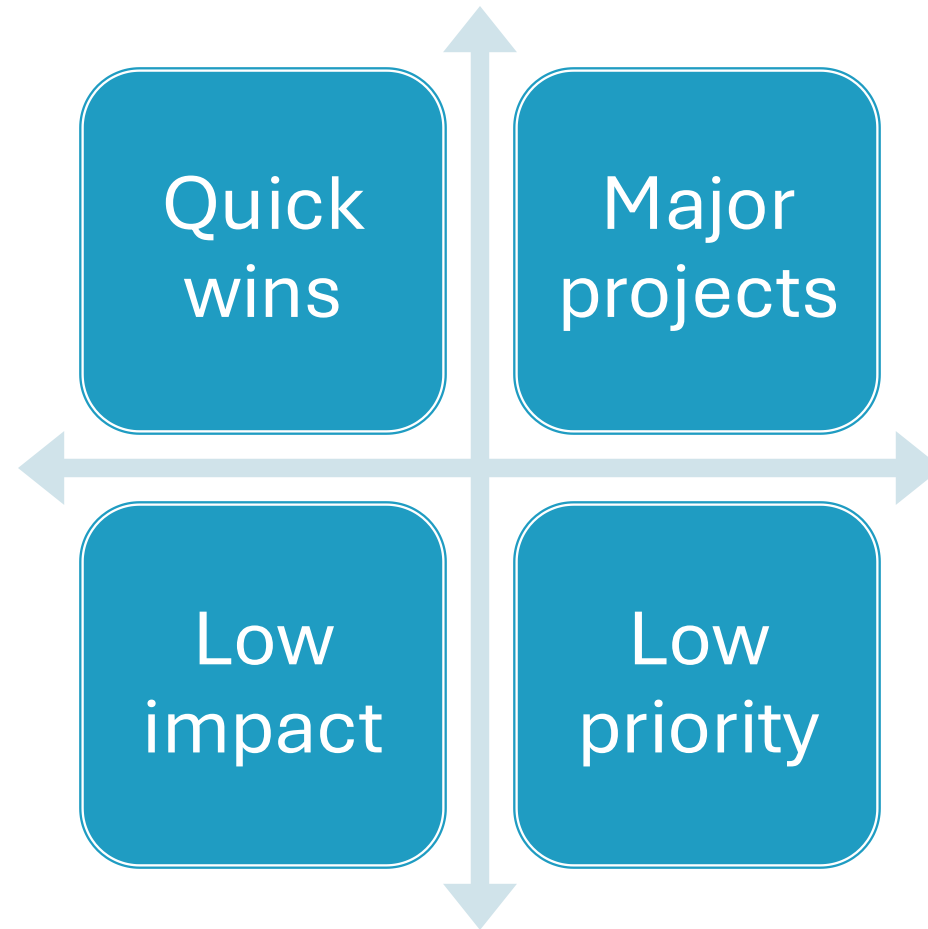
- Saying “no,” not because something is unimportant, but because it’s not the most important right now
- It’s not about eliminating, it’s about sequencing



Lead
strategically



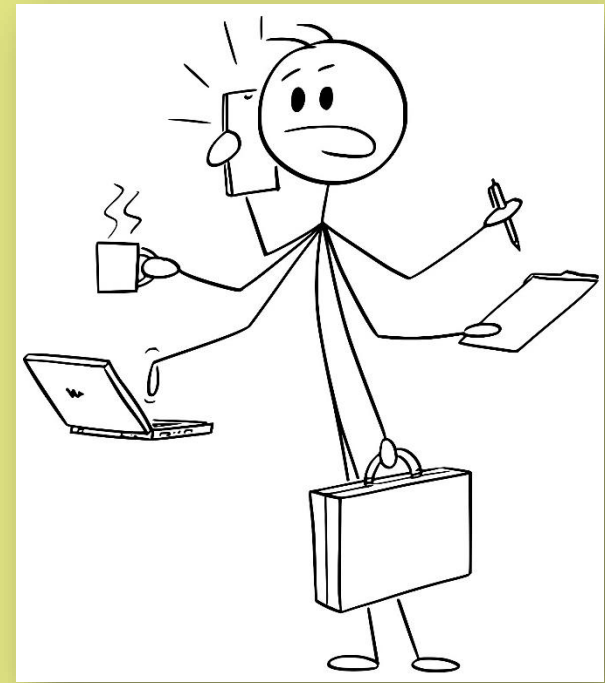
Tool: Impact-Effort Matrix



Focus + effort ≠ effective

- Lots of motion, little movement
- Move fast, but deliver little value

Activity doesn't equal progress.



Efficiency Paradox



Example: Permit intake process

Process	Work	Wait
Application received	10 min	1 day
Routed to Department A	50 min	2 days
Routed to Department B	50 min	3 days
Routed to Finance	40 min	3 days
Returned for clarification	10 min	2 days
Final approval	20 min	4 days
Total	3 hours	3 weeks

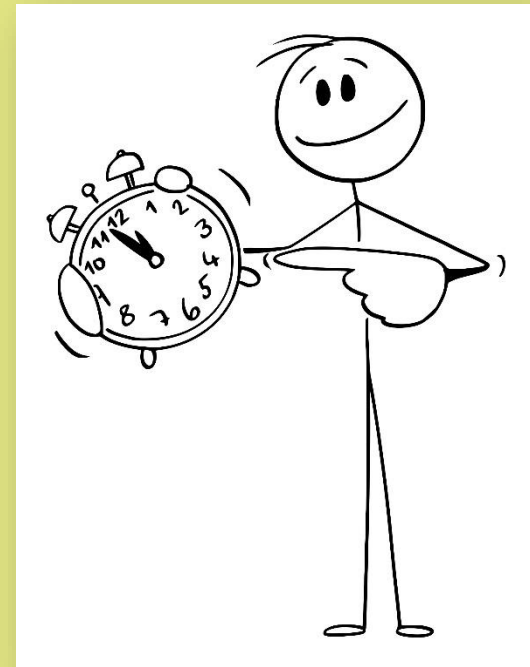


Causes of friction

Speed myth: “If we just work faster, we’ll get more done.”

Staffing myth: “Adding more people will fix the problem.”

Comfort myth: “We’ve always done it this way — it works fine.”

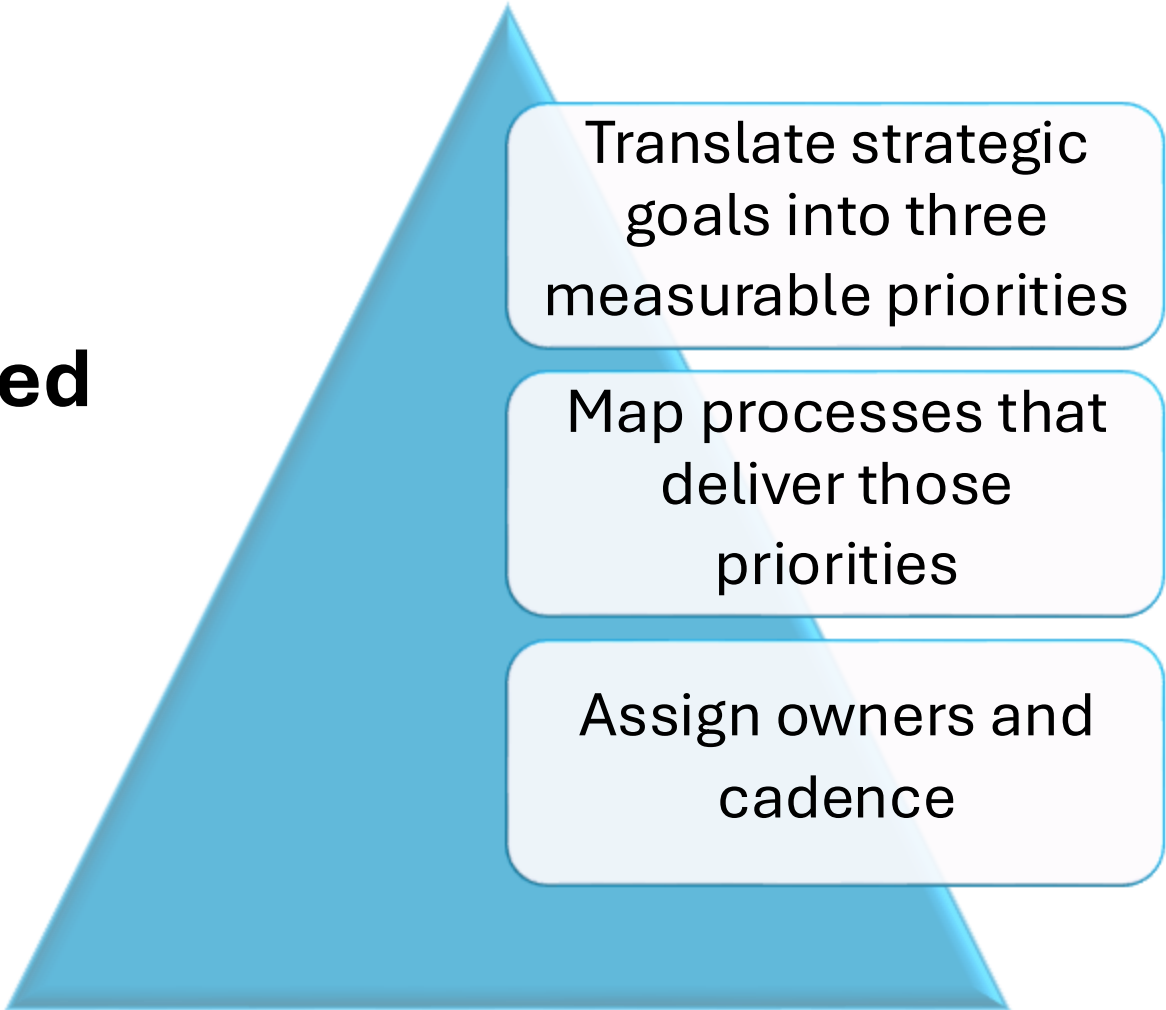


Efficiency myths



Strategy alignment

➤ **Work is anchored to outcomes**



Translate strategic goals into three measurable priorities

Map processes that deliver those priorities

Assign owners and cadence

Lens two: Flow

Flow is the pattern of work

Aligned	Not aligned
• Predictable service	• Long turn around
• Fewer mistakes	• Frustration
• Less staff stress	• Fire drills

➤ **To manage flow, we need
SEE, FIX and SUSTAIN tools**



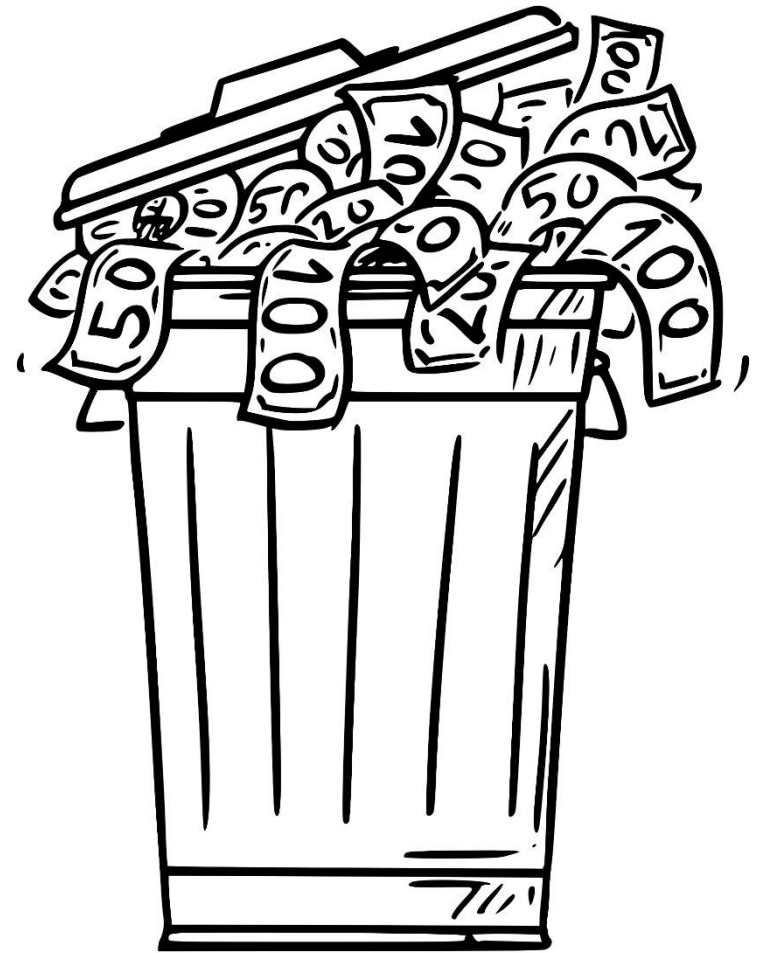
Leadership toolbox

Lens	Tools	Leadership purpose
SEE	• Waste spotting • Process mapping • Visual management	• Make hidden friction and lost value visible
FIX	• Root cause / 5 whys • Error-proofing • Standard work	• Solve the right problem and prevent recurrence
SUSTAIN	• PDCA cycles • Ownership & cadence	• Build habits and accountability so gains last



Where time and energy disappear

- **Waste** = any activity that consumes time, resources or energy without adding value



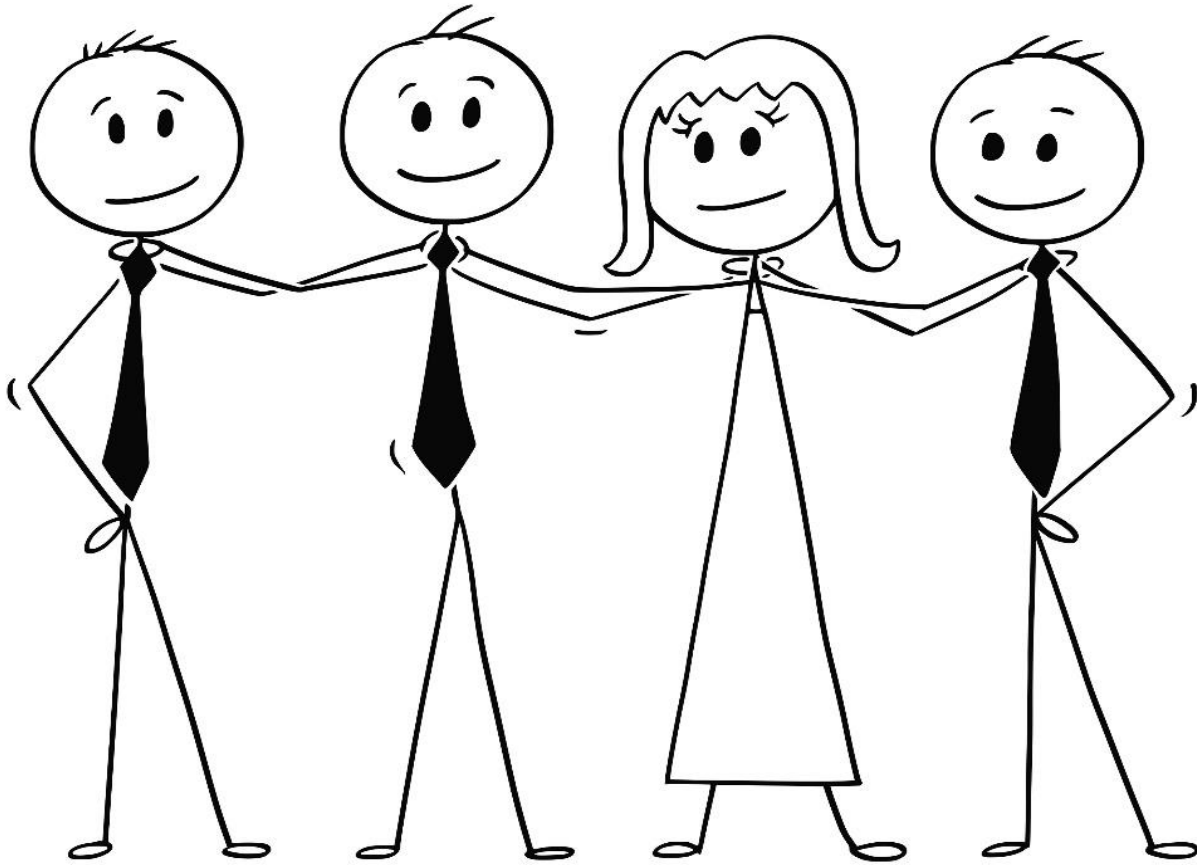
Lean wastes

- Overproduction → Reports no one reads
- Waiting → Approvals, signatures
- Transport → Walking paper forms
- Overprocessing → Re-entering data
- Inventory → Backlogs
- Motion → Searching files/emails
- Defects → Errors, rework
- Skills → Underused staff and technology



Tool: Waste spotting



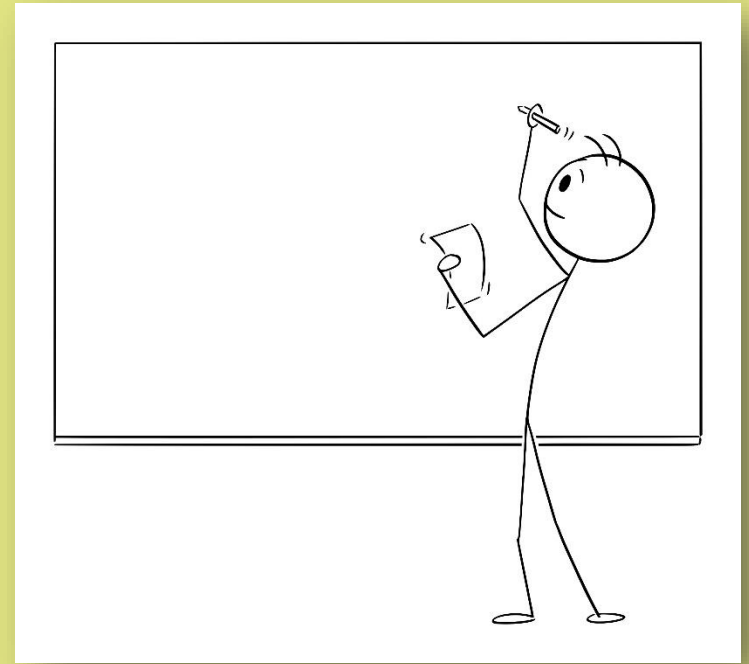


Stand if...



See the whole workflow

- Map every step
- Identify bottlenecks and delays
- Highlight rework and handoffs



Tool: Process mapping



Example: Capital project approval

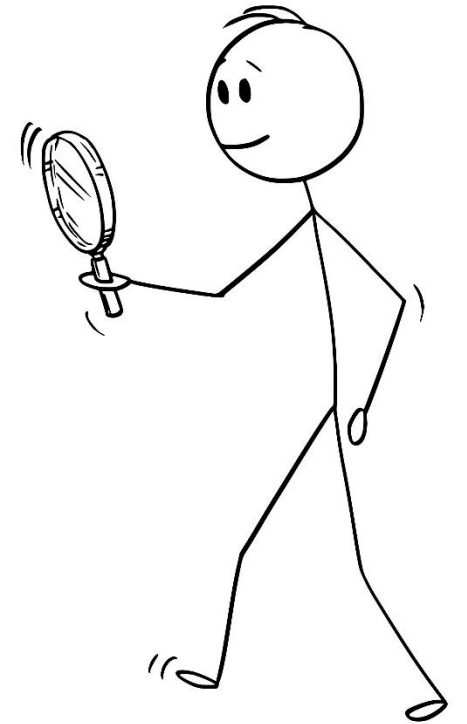


Visibility to action

Mapping is only valuable if it leads to action

- Visibility is step one
- Look for quick wins: Things you can test and see impact fast

Improvement starts small, one friction point at a time.



Forms: Small fixes, big impact

Leadership actions:

- Pilot basic automation
- Require user testing before rollout
- Protect admin./IT time for upkeep

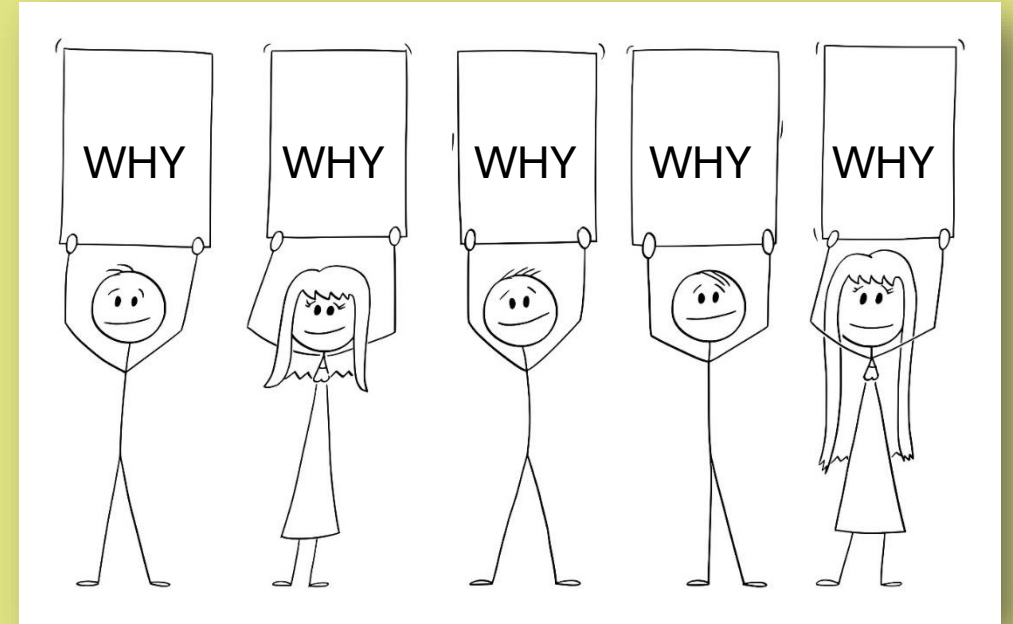


Tool:
Error proofing



Root cause analysis: 5 Whys

- By asking “why,” you get to the root of the problem.



Tool:
Root cause



Example of 5 Whys: Capital project delay

1. **Why** was the project delayed? → Because design review started late.
2. **Why** did design review start late? → Because key data wasn't ready.
3. **Why** wasn't data ready? → Because each department tracked progress separately.
4. **Why** did departments track separately? → Because there was no shared tracking system.
5. **Why** wasn't there a shared tracking system? → Because it was not required.



Standard work means...

- Documenting the best way to perform a task
- Ensuring consistency across staff and shifts
- Reducing errors and training time



Tool:
Standard work

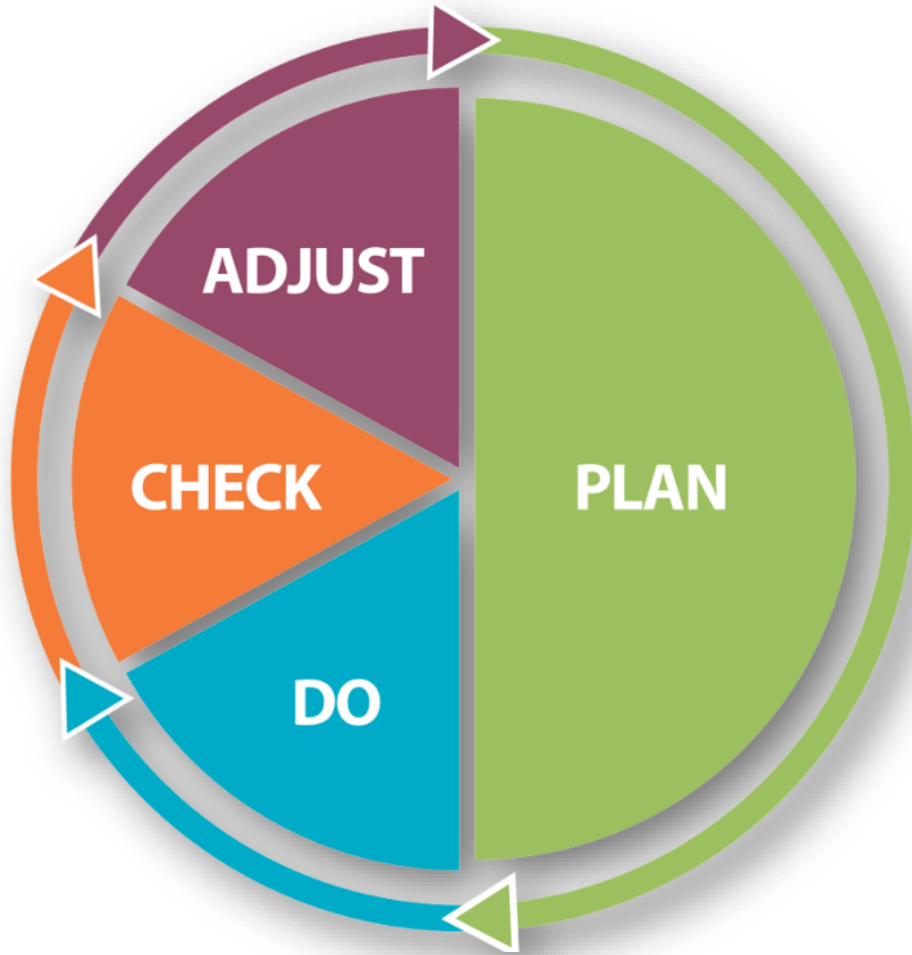


Tool: Visual management

- ✓ Make work visible at a glance
- ✓ Track statuses of tasks, deadlines and bottlenecks

Task	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Payroll processing	 Green	 Green	 Yellow	 Green	 Green
Accounts payable review	 Yellow	 Green	 Green	 Yellow	 Green
Reporting deadlines	 Yellow	 Yellow	 Green	 Green	 Red

Sustaining improvements



**Tool:
PDCA**

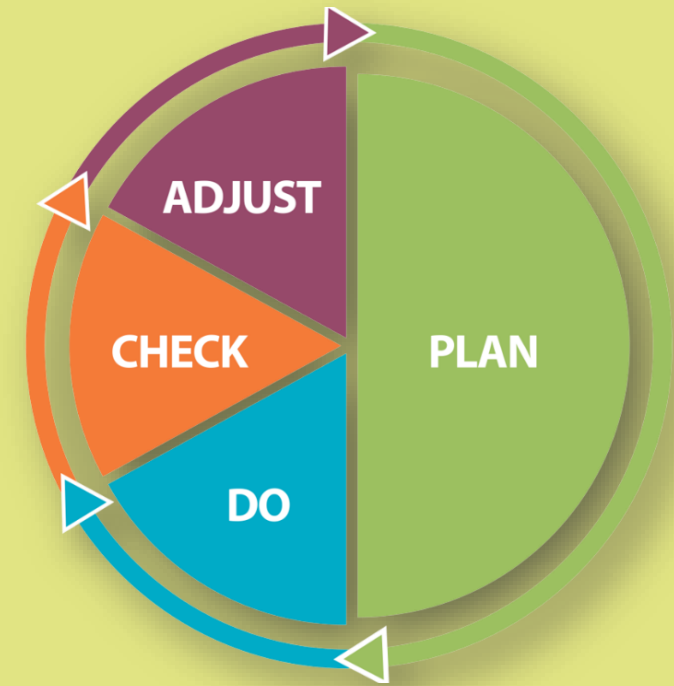


✓ **Plan:** Design a test fix

✓ **Do:** Try it out

✓ **Check:** Measure results

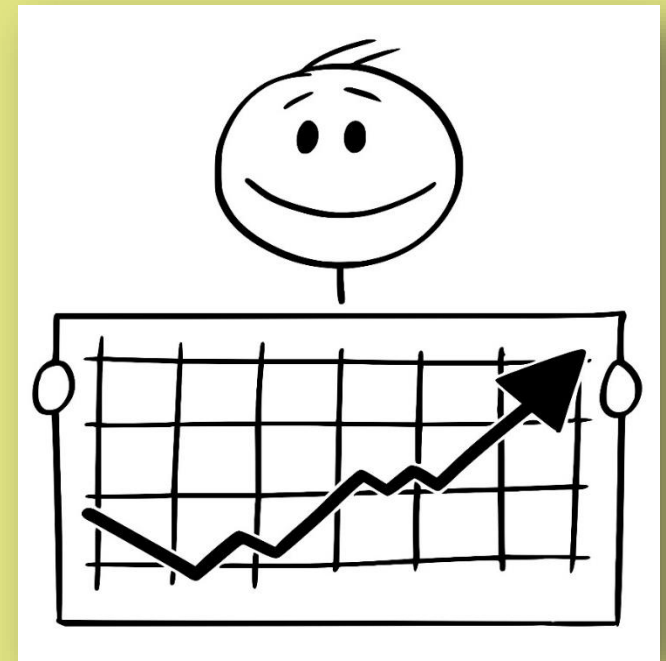
✓ **Adjust:** Expand or adjust



The PDCA Cycle

The leadership cadence

- Use short checkpoints
 - 30 days: Early adjustments
 - 90 days: Scale or stoop
 - 120 days: Check for adoption

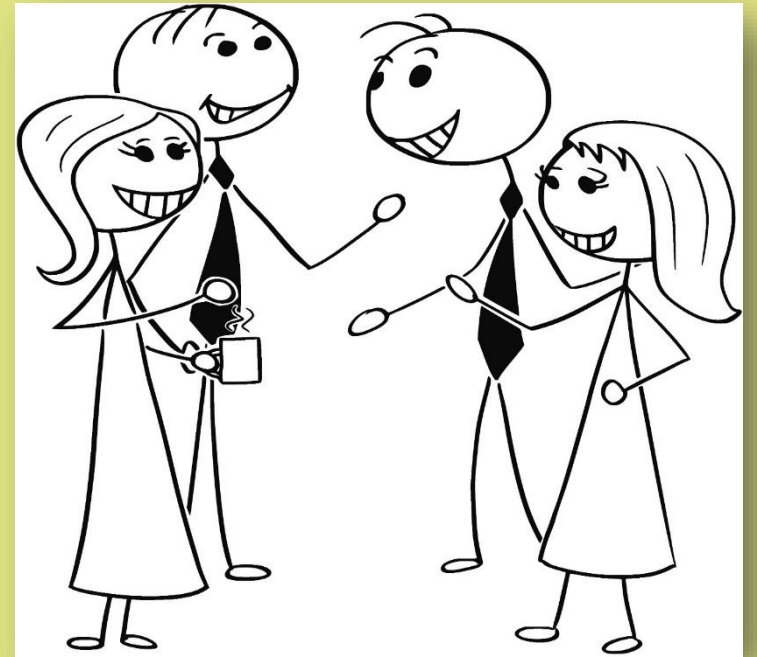


Measure and sustain



Create conditions for efficiency

- Align priorities
- Enable innovation
- Celebrate small wins



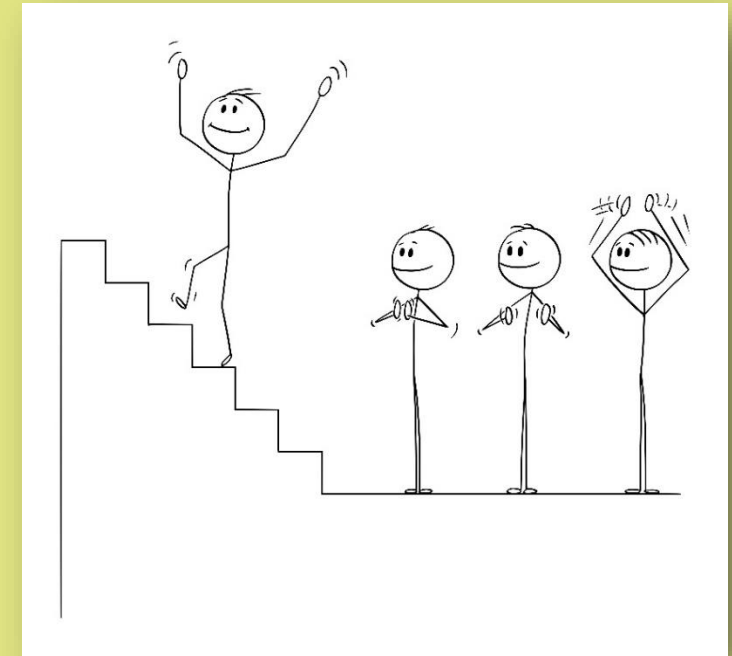
Leadership angle



Empowering innovation

Leadership's role:

- Provide psychological safety
- Create room to experiment
- Curiosity over command



Lens three: Freedom



A moment of reflection

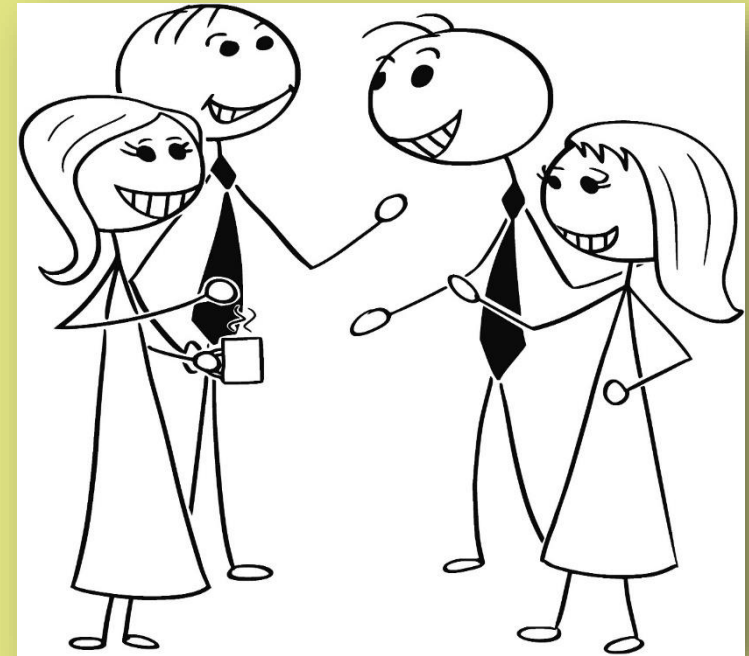
- Think of a time your team solved a problem in a creative way.

What made that possible?



Leadership checklist

- Invite ideas
- Allow small tests
- Celebrate learning
- Model vulnerability



Modeling innovation



Your leadership shift

- What's one thing you'll stop, start or shift this month to improve your focus or flow?



Lead with purpose

Your call to action:

Leadership = Clarity + Courage + Consistency



Questions?



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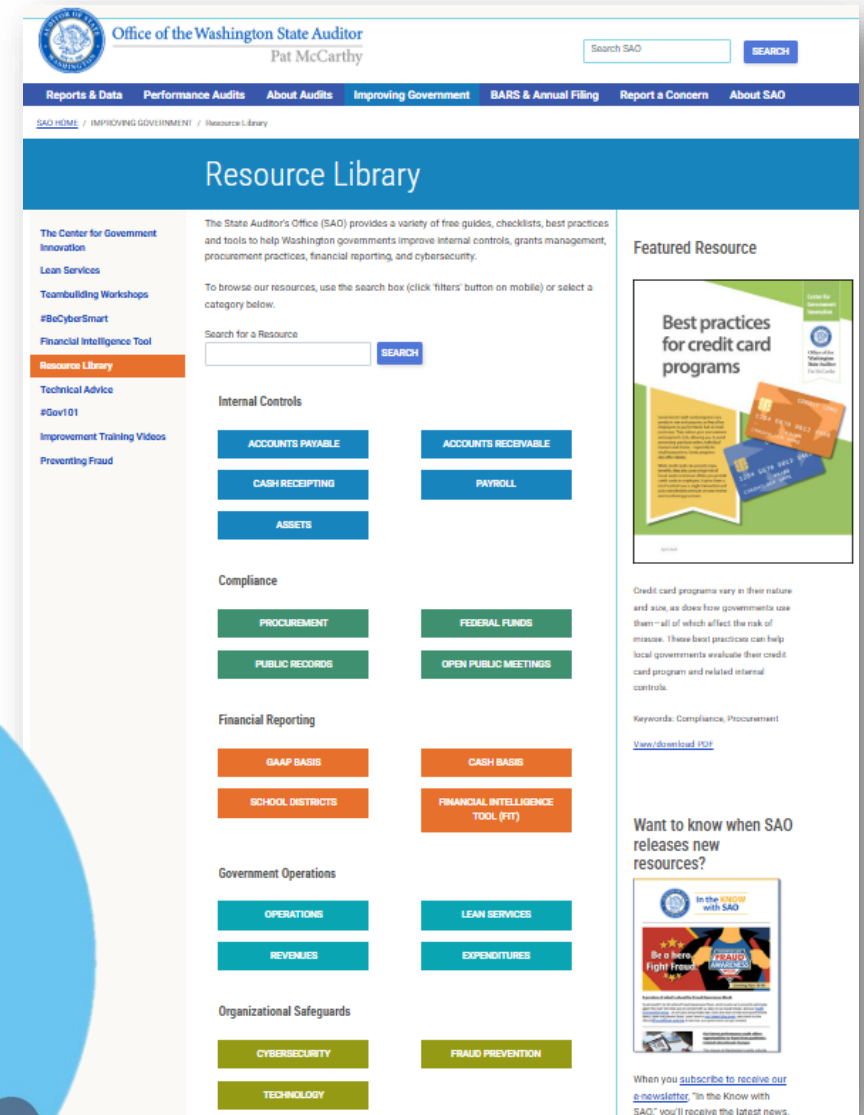
Customized and free Center services

- Lean workshops and facilitated process improvement projects
- Teambuilding workshops that help teams discover their natural strengths
- Email Center@sao.wa.gov to speak to a specialist



SAO's Resource Library

- Free tools, checklists and other resources that provide you ways to improve internal controls, compliance, cybersecurity and other areas.



Information

Cami Jones | Lean Specialist

Center@sao.wa.gov

(564) 999-0818

Website: www.sao.wa.gov

Twitter: www.twitter.com/WaStateAuditor

Facebook: www.facebook.com/WaStateAuditorsOffice

