AGC News

Lean Construction Training Offered by AGC Education Foundation

AGC Education Foundation (AGCEF) is piloting a Lean Construction Series to help contractors reduce costs through streamlining and efficient project management, keep work flowing so that crews are always productive installing product, reduce inventory of material and tools, and improve bottom lines.

AGCEF will offer the Lean Construction Series in two ways: The traditional classroom setting for all interested parties, and customized for individual companies.

AGC members will be able to take advantage of the concept pioneered by Toyota Corporation decades ago. Lean process spread to other manufacturing enterprises over the last 30 years and has been picked up by healthcare, retail, service and other industries. According to the Lean Construction Institute, the construction industry has been relatively slow to embrace the concept. But as other industries experienced improved efficiencies and less waste by implementing lean practices in their own businesses, many have begun to expect the same of the firms that build their facilities.

"A few years ago, healthcare clients started asking about companies' lean experience," said Jim Elliott, Principal – Healthcare for GLY Construction. "After using early integrated project planning to increase efficiency for years, owner interest encouraged us to consciously align our approach with lean principles. GLY Sr. Project Manager Todd Karr and I received intensive training at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation. Then we offered internal training at GLY and expanded lean principles into other types of projects."

Using lean construction practices such as Pull Planning scheduling, flow mapping, ‘just-in-time’ deliveries, tools-on-wheels and extensive prefabrication, the GLY healthcare team saw measurable benefits for their clients in cost savings, shorter schedules and high quality with few RFIs. Elliott wanted to increase the number of employees receiving lean training, and as a member of the AGCEF Executive Committee, he was interested in creating learning opportunities for others in the industry. Why not beta test an AGCEF-produced Lean Construction Series at GLY?

"The AGC Education Foundation did a lot of research." said Elliott. "They explored questions like 'What's out there? What can we leverage? Is it one class or a series? What do we expect the demand to be?'"

AGCEF worked with KCE, an engineering consulting firm whose expertise is process improvement, to develop the course curriculum. KCE engineers also serve as course instructors.

Sixteen GLY employees recently completed the first phase of a four-phase program. Along the way, the curriculum will be tweaked after feedback from GLY. "We want to make sure the training is construction-specific, and that the lean principles are taught with construction elements in mind," said Elliott.

Diane Kocer, Executive Director of AGCEF, says the foundation will offer the lean series this fall as part of its menu of courses. Meanwhile, Kocer invites companies interested in customized lean training to contact her at any time. For more information, contact Diane Kocer, 206-284-4500.

Photo: AGC Education Foundation-sponsored lean training at GLY Construction.