



The Green Suppliers Network Offers the *Lean and Clean Advantage*

Working in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the Green Suppliers Network to help small and medium-sized manufacturers stay competitive and profitable while reducing their impact on the environment. We call this approach the *Lean and Clean Advantage*—the hallmark of the Green Suppliers Network.

What Is the *Lean and Clean Advantage*?

Manufacturers of all sizes have turned to lean manufacturing techniques to reduce waste and save money. Any activity that does not directly add value to the product is waste. Lean manufacturing systematically identifies and removes these wastes from all aspects of an organization's operations. Lean's focus on eliminating non-value added activity drives down costs and improves efficiencies in the manufacturing process.

There is one type of waste, however, that often goes unaddressed by traditional Lean initiatives—environmental waste. When added up, environmental wastes can create significant costs for businesses. Raw material loss, disposal costs, costs for compliance management activities, and pollution control equipment can be expensive. Environmental wastes frequently indicate opportunities for increased production efficiencies resulting in saved time and money.

Expanding the traditional definition of Lean to include environmental wastes presents significant improvement opportunities, strengthens Lean results, and improves environmental performance and worker health and safety.

What Does the Green Suppliers Network Do?

The Green Suppliers Network partners with large manufacturers to engage their suppliers in confidential, low-cost technical assessments to identify strategies for improving process lines and using materials more efficiently. The *Lean and Clean Advantage* targets and eliminates the root causes of waste. The result—a stronger bottom line.

Lean experts from the Department of Commerce's Manufacturing Extension Partnership program team up with Clean experts from state environmental programs to conduct onsite, technical assessments of selected process lines. Suppliers then receive a set of confidential recommendations that, when implemented, will result in production efficiencies, environmental improvements, and cost savings.

Suppliers that have participated in the Green Suppliers Network assessment process have experienced a minimum of a 3:1 return on investment, with some seeing returns of up to 30:1.