



# VA Acquisition Academy's Project Acceleration Workshop Series for Activation Teams



## CHALLENGE: Major Project Activation

Following on the success of the FAC-P/PM training program, the VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA) Program Management (PM) School initiated Project Acceleration Workshops as a custom solution from Learning Tree to address challenges that project teams face in implementing best practices and improving the overall performance of government initiatives.

This healthcare provider was struggling with the complex and multi-faceted efforts of opening a major medical center. The 'Activation' phase follows the general construction and is a vital phase to ensure the successful launch of a healthcare facility — hiring people, implementing equipment and technology, and establishing all operational processes to provide effective patient care. These large complex projects — which in many cases exceed \$1 billion in budget — require the collective collaboration from all departments of the healthcare facility.

The activation teams needed an 'accelerated' approach to developing the disciplines and competencies of the project/program management, as well as FAC-P/PM training, for one major reason: project visibility.

Hospital activations have significant Congressional oversight through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), very tight schedules, and large budgets.

## SOLUTION: Custom Acceleration Workshops to Launch and/or Recover Major Initiatives

The Project Acceleration Workshop series was custom-designed for the VAAA's PM School to provide activation program leaders, project managers, and team members (with or without FAC-P/PM certification) with the next-level knowledge and skills needed to develop and execute the actual project management artifacts for their specific mission-critical program/project/investment.

The VAAA PM School developed the curriculum and activities that constituted the infrastructure of these critical workshops, and designed them to complement the federal initiative to implement consistent management practices across the federal enterprise. The best practices of the FAC-P/PM training curricula were reviewed to identify which key artifacts could provide immediate balance to a complex program.

These Project Acceleration Workshops are a dynamic strategy for developing essential work products for real projects that are both highly visible and critical in nature. Through these workshops, facilitator(s), along with the members of the program/project team, collaboratively work on the analysis and development of actual program management artifacts and gain the knowledge and skills needed to put these into practice.

At the conclusion of each workshop, program managers take away project/program management artifacts for their programs/projects, developed by their teams under the guidance of and with hands-on assistance from Learning Tree practitioners.

**In one project alone, a savings of \$3 million in contract costs were realized.**

### KEY BENEFITS

- Development of actual project artifacts – BRD/URD, WBS,
- Milestone Schedule, Risk Register, Acquisition Strategy
- Metrics Dashboard for effective Monitor and Control
- On-the-job coaching of the required competencies to deliver improved performance
- Established formalized project governance
- Improved line-of-sight across project portfolio for senior stakeholders

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## THE RESULTS:

The VAAA's Project Acceleration Workshop series allowed dynamic, high-paced knowledge transfer in real time at the project site. Workshop participants learned, applied, and implemented consistent management disciplines/processes/artifacts to immediately improve a specific performance impediment. The entire project team benefited from sustainable process improvements, repeatable across other programs and program teams.



### Measuring The Impact

#### PHASE 1:

- **Custom content design** “greatly reduced cost of training to VA”
- **Delivered a unique, highly-customized, 3-tiered program** covering Leadership and Program Management, and tailored Professional Development competencies
- **Exercises, Case Studies, and Scenarios** were all custom designed
- **Action Plan System** – provided oversight on >700 improvements

#### PHASE 2:

- **Implemented efficient, customer-specific Acceleration Workshops**
- **Hands-on coaching, mentoring in real time;** on actual projects

#### PHASE 3:

- **Transitioned to a co-branded curriculum** to further adopt the unique lessons learned into the curriculum exercises and case studies

### Voice of the Customer

“The VA realized it needed a training program that **focused on achieving performance improvement** in both the individual’s and the organization’s programs and projects. The VA found this in Learning Tree’s training program.”

— Vice Chancellor, Veterans Affairs

“In 6-months, in partnership with Learning Tree, the VA trained over 1,000 professionals and oversaw more than 700 improvement actions identified as a result of the best practices inherent within Learning Tree’s training.”

— Chancellor, Veterans Affairs

### Achievements



The unique alignment of Learning Tree’s curriculum design **“saved the federal government millions of dollars.”**



**VA leadership received greatly improved** insights and oversight of their at risk project portfolios, improving their on-schedule portfolio.

**To learn more about how Learning Tree’s Acceleration Workshops can work for your process improvement initiative, visit [LearningTree.ca/Workshops](https://LearningTree.ca/Workshops)**