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# **Agency and Department Adoption of Agile: Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

**Presenters: Jerome Frese  
Joshua Seckel**

- Intro
- Example Projects
- Implementation options
  - Vendor or Fed development?
- Cultural/Organizational Changes
- Successes and Impediments
  - IRS
  - CIS
  - Others
- Recommendations for new agency agile adoption

Joshua Seckel

Chief of Applied Technology Division at USCIS

Leads DHS Agile IPT

ICAgile Certified Expert Agile Coach

Jerome Frese

Chief Methodologist at IRS

Runs semiannual Interagency Seminar on Agile

- DHS Agile IPT started in 2011
  - Biweekly meetings
  - Whitepaper on implementation
  - DHS level discussion
  - DHS wide Agile Expo for sharing
  - SELC rewrite
  - Agile Guidebook

## Inter Agency SDLC Seminar

**Purpose is to bring federal SDLC practitioners together so they can establish a network, learn about and share best practices and collaborate on new and innovative ways to support projects.**

- Started 2009 – held 9 seminars
- Average 90+ attendees from more than 30 different agencies.
- More 80% of the attendees have government email addresses
- Focused on how AGILE is being implemented in the federal agencies

All presentations are stored on

The screenshot shows the MAX.GOV website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Find, Help, and Contact Us. A yellow banner indicates "New in MAX.GOV". The user is logged in as "Jerome" and can log out. The main heading is "Inter-Agency SDLC Collaboration" under the "INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE" section. A search bar is present with the text "Search The MAX Community". Below the heading, there is a breadcrumb trail: "Informatio > Home > IT Infrastr > Collaborations > Inter-Agency SDLC Collaboration (0)". The page was edited by Jerome Frese (TREASURY) on Feb 28, 2014 at 08:18 AM. The main content area contains the text: "The **Census Bureau** will host the next **Inter-Agency SDLC Seminar** on **Tuesday, May 6, 2014** at their facility in **Suitland, MD**. This **free**, half day seminar focuses on how the Agile approach is being implemented within federal agencies. Tentatively, the topics planned for the

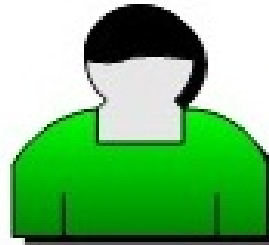
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**Executive Sponsor/  
Champion**

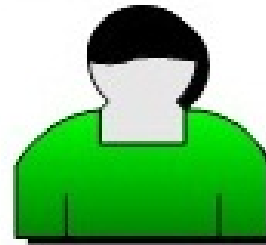


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**Product Owner**

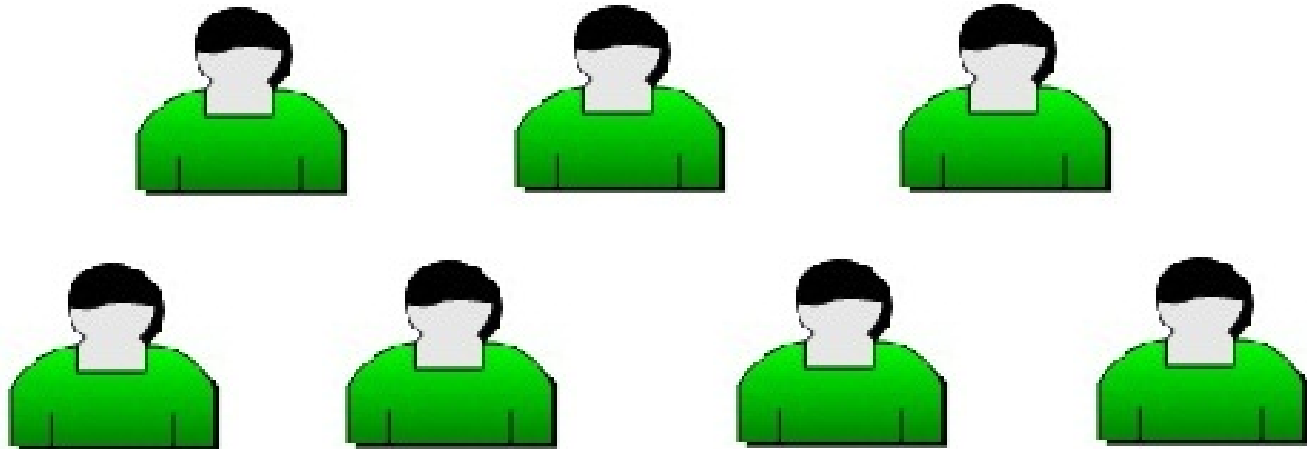


**Scrum Master**



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**Scrum Team**

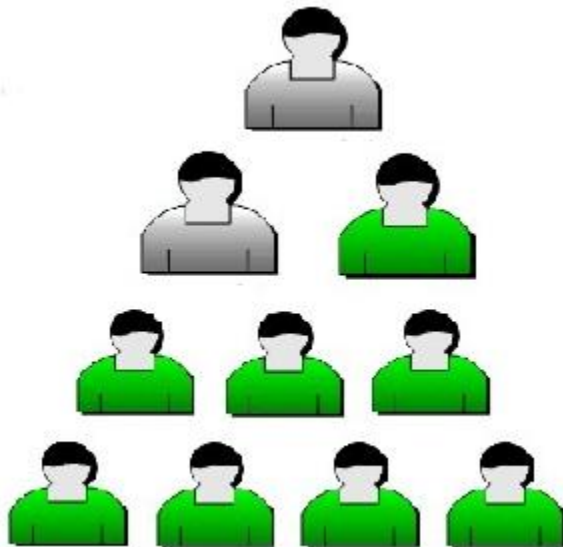


### Champion

- Knowledgeable of agile and possibilities
- Works with the team to push boundaries
- Pushes on external bodies to accept changes
- Drives change

### Sponsor

- Knows what isn't working
- Wants to try something new
- Supportive of agile experiment
- Pushes on results
- Provides top cover



## Vendor Supplied Team

### Government

- ✓ Executive Sponsor
- ✓ Product Owner

### Vendor

- ✓ Scrum Master
- ✓ Scrum Team

- Government
- Vendor

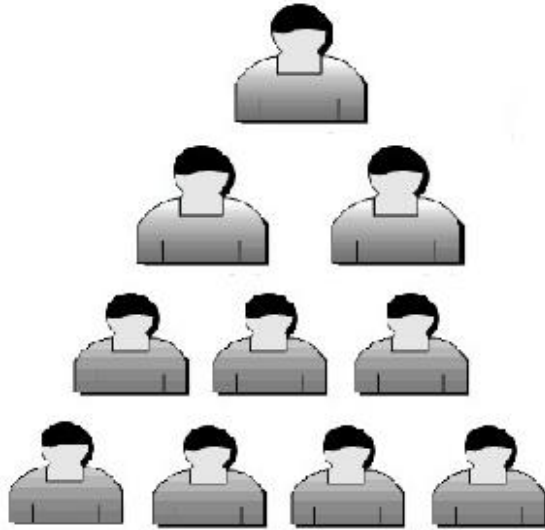
## GSA

- Started by a Manager in Marketing
- Hired vendor developers
- Daily tells team what he wants
- Getting results, but burning out developers
- Vendor Management suggests structure
- Capture good metrics

## VA

- Started by CIO
- Hired vendor developers who suggested AGILE
- Implements 6 month contracts
- Red Flags





## IRS

- Recommended by McKinsey
- Hired Scrum Masters and developers
- Didn't train people hiring

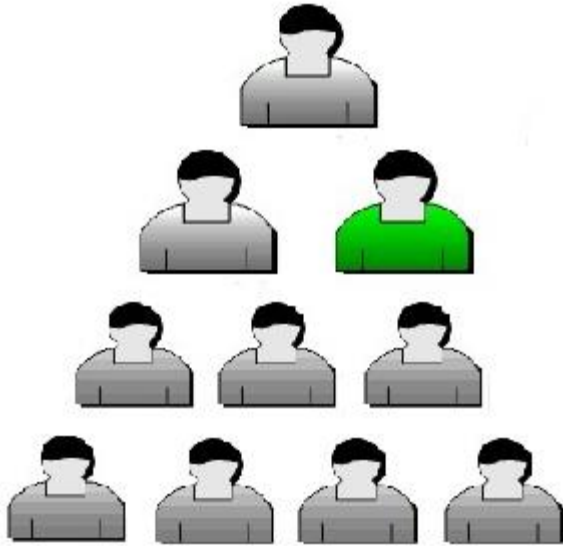
### All Government Team

#### Government

- ✓ Executive Sponsor
- ✓ Product Owner
- ✓ Scrum Master
- ✓ Scrum Team

#### Vendor

- Government
- Vendor



## Hybrid Team

### Government

- ✓ Executive Sponsor
- ✓ Product Owner
- ✓ Scrum Team

### ✓ Vendor

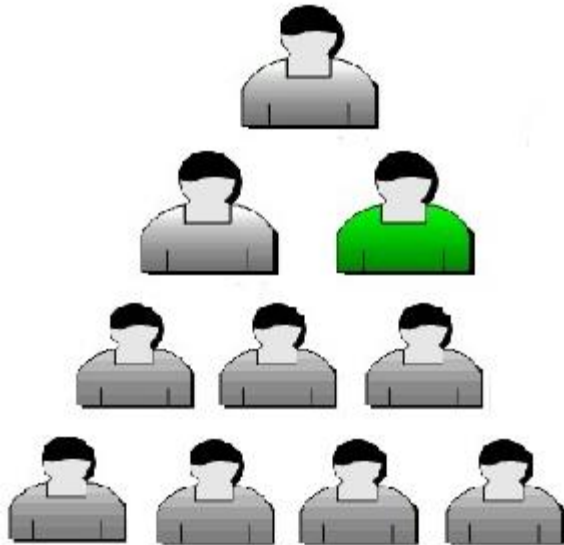
- ✓ Scrum Master

Government

Vendor

## Bureau of Fiscal Services

- Tank Commander
- Trained everyone
- 2 years to set up
- Strict compliance with AGILE principles
- Continuing Process improvement



## Hybrid Team

### Government

- ✓ Executive Sponsor
- ✓ Product Owner
- ✓ Scrum Master

### ✓ Vendor

- ✓ Scrum Team

■ Government

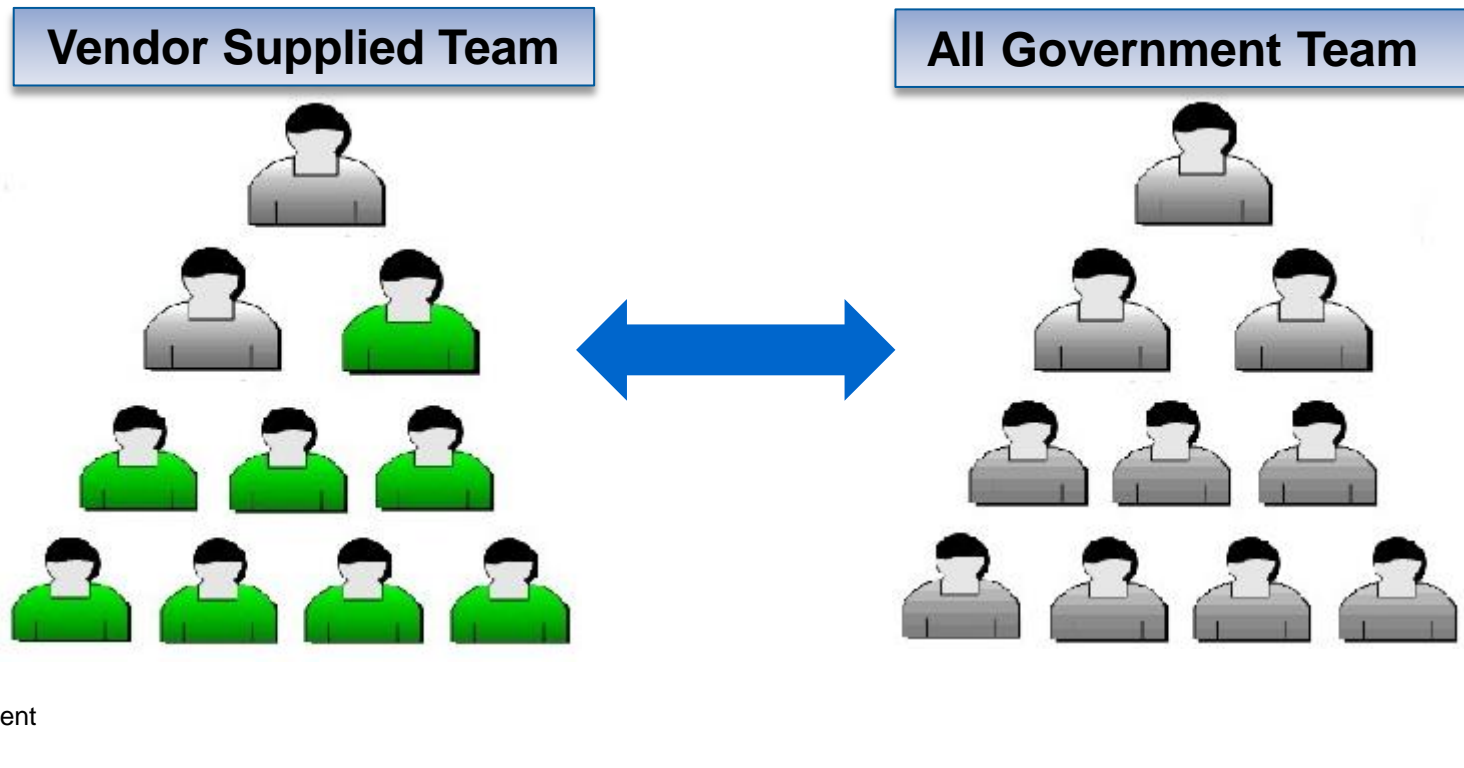
■ Vendor

## US Citizenship and Immigration Services

- Trained Gov as PO and SM
- Hired development teams with agile coding skills
- Changes in contracting, organizational structure
- 8 AGILE principles required for all programs
- Continuing Process improvement
  - Moving to DevOps, AWS

## Structure continuum of types

- Advantages of each type
- Disadvantages of each type

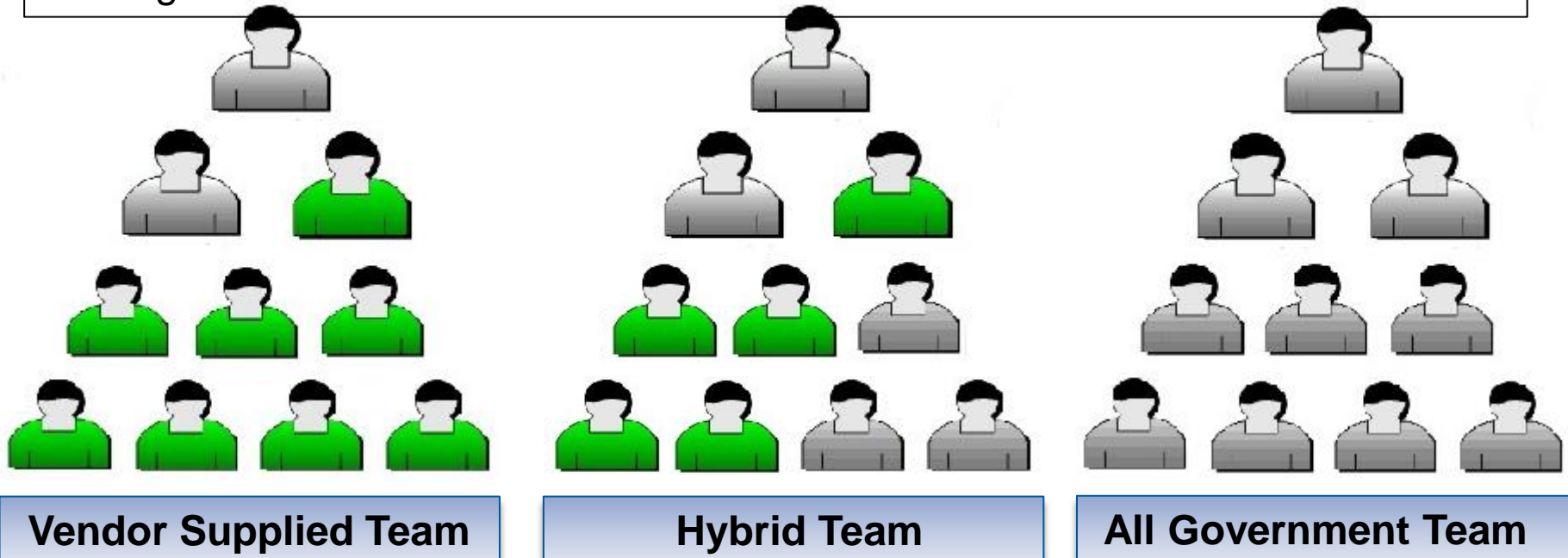


Regardless of implementation, agile requires cultural changes:

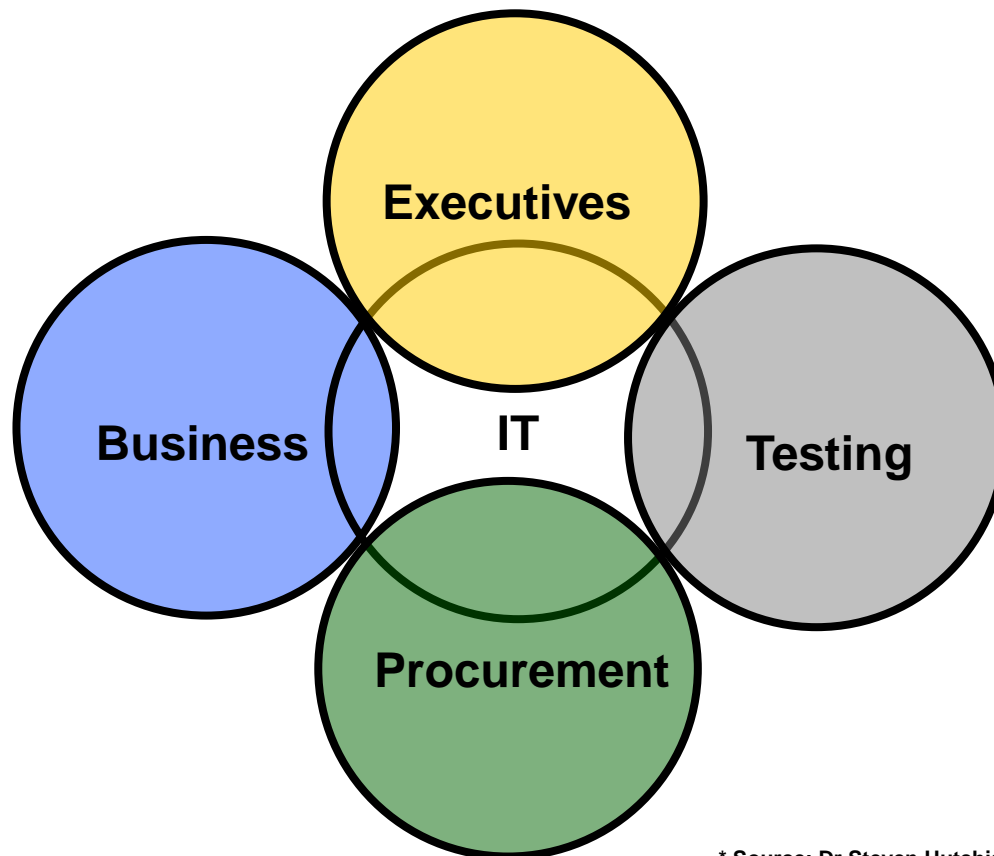
- Transparency increase
  - Willingness to open the kimono both up and down
- Collaboration increase
  - Across groups within OIT
  - Between OIT and Business
  - Between Contractor and Government
- Flattening organization Structure
  - Anyone can talk to anyone
- Willingness to experiment – unexpected results are OK

## Start with a Pilot

- Should be small to be successful
- Better success initially, when the Feds serve as the product owners, and contractors with a lot of Agile experience make up the rest of the scrum team.
- Essential to have a scrum master (and team members) with real life experience of how it all works. Being a Certified Scrum Master (CSM) is not enough



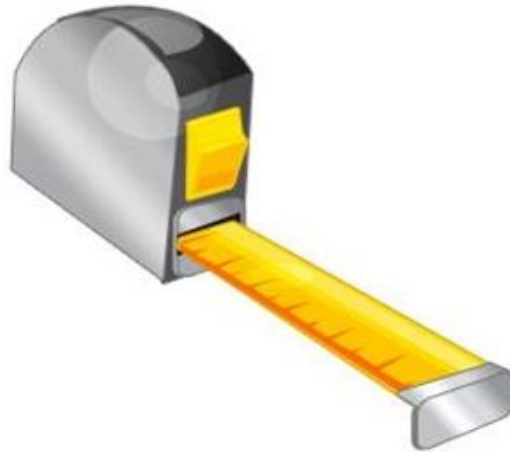
- Education on Agile concepts is important to do to standardize terminology, concepts and roles
- **AGILE is a total change in mindset.**



\* Source: Dr Steven Hutchison, Principal Deputy  
Developmental Test and Evaluation

## Measure for Success

- Must collect good metrics, to validate success.
- Business metrics are best to measure success.
- Establishing velocity or cycle time is necessary to monitor progress
- Important to have fixed length sprints for scrum
- Measure frequency of deployment





### Team composition

- Open communication between developers, testers and Business is critical.
- Co-location dramatically improves success
- 80-5 rule
- Team members must have the authority to make decisions

### AGILE Oversight

- Imbed oversight into the teams
- Lean out oversight – encourage combined experiments
- Preventer of problems, not discoverer/auditor
- Need to use automated tools

### Organizational

- Open communication between divisions, branches, sections is important.
- Reward risk taking and learning (not just success)
- Servant Leadership modeled throughout
- Push all decision authority as close to implementation as possible

### AGILE Mindset

- Generalizing specialists aren't just developers
- Focus on values and principles for adoption, not just practices
- Early failure is better than late failure
- Lose the blame mindset

- AGILE is not a Silver Bullet – it requires work across all the organization
- **AGILE is about continuous experimentation and adoption**
- Start somewhere and continuously improve, don't wait to have it perfect

**50 yards**



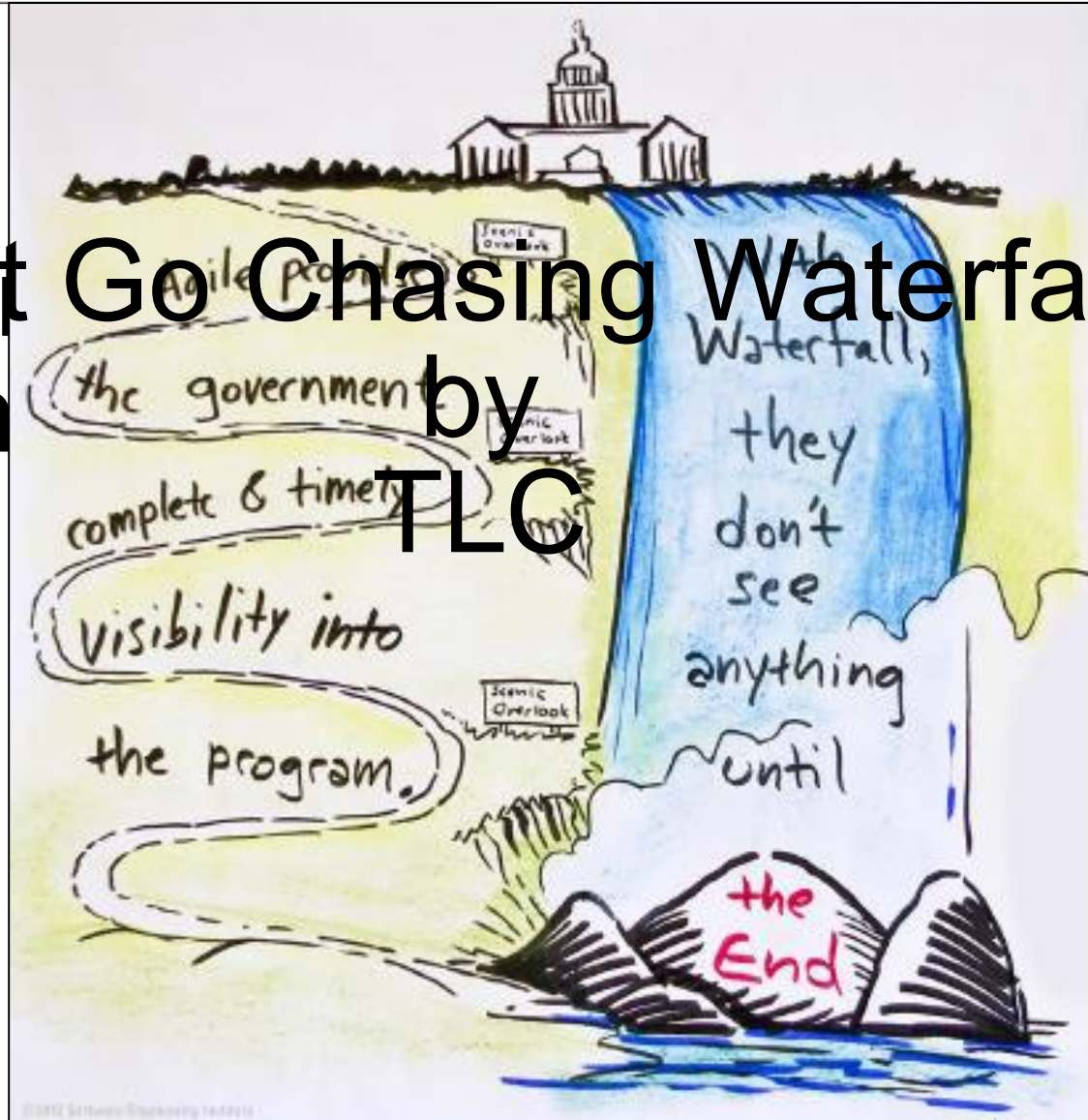
**1000 yards**



# Agency and Department Adoption of Agile: Lessons Learned and Recommendations



Don't Go Chasing Waterfalls  
that have been  
the government  
complete & timely  
visibility into  
the program.



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