# VALLEY FORGE

## INSIGHTS INTO DRIVING EFFICIENCY

*"I am now convinced beyond a doubt, that unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place… this Army must inevitably… Starve, dissolve, or disperse, in order to obtain subsistence in the best manner they can."* ~ George Washington, December 23, 1777

When George Washington's army arrived at Valley Forge on December 19, 1777, it was in dire straits. On the most basic level, the soldiers faced a food and clothing shortage that threatened to consign them to death if not remedied. Further, military setbacks in 1777 had made clear that Washington's army was nowhere near capable of standing up to the British army in open battle. The five months of the Valley Forge encampment would prove to be *the* critical period for the Continental Army as Washington and his generals took full advantage of the winter months to fundamentally alter the trajectory of the American Revolution. In the words of John B. B. Trussell, Jr., "Valley Forge is… a symbol of the translation of a group of sincere but minimally trained, loosely organized, and highly individualistic men into a hard hitting, dependable, efficient army." The story of those five months, the story of the transformation of the Continental Army, is one that offers compelling insights for today's leaders into **Driving Efficiency** and the related subcomponents of **Fiscal Responsibility**, **Managing Resources**, and **Leveraging Technology**.

Valley Forge is located eighteen miles northwest of Philadelphia, about a 40-minute ride from the center city area. The National History Park is roughly 3,500 acres, with a ten-mile tour route taking visitors to nine official stops and offering much more to see along the way. Ideally, visitors spend 5-6 hours on-site, including a picnic lunch, which makes for a full-day program with the transit into and out of Philadelphia on each end.

Some of the day's highlights include:

- George Washington's creative use of competition and what insights that offers into **Fiscal Responsibility**;
- The army's centralization of their artillery – a historical parallel to shared services – and how we can use that analogy to think more about **Managing Resources and Leveraging Technology;**
- The role of Baron von Steuben in training the soldiers, and what we can learn from that story about **Driving Efficiency;**
- The enduring image of Valley Forge and what that teaches us about the **use of symbolism and creating a legacy**.

At the end of the day we reflect upon all we have seen and make a plan to carry the learning back to participants' place of work.