

Customer Service

Annual
Report
2021



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Prosperity with
a Purpose

Larry Hogan, Governor • Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor

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Leadership Analysis of FY21 and Summary of FY22 Approach

Dear Commerce Teammates,

I am very pleased to present the Fiscal Year 2021 Customer Service Annual Report. As in Fiscal Year 2020, much of our work focused on sustaining Maryland businesses through the pandemic by providing them with guidance and financial support. We maintained extensive communication with business and elected leaders across the State to help them navigate through these unprecedented times.

Businesses and elected leaders have offered praise and accolades to our department for this assistance. This is a testament to your caring, dedication, and excellent customer service. I am very proud of you and the work you are doing to ensure that Maryland remains open for business and that our economy continues to thrive.

Looking ahead, we'll continue to uphold the governor's promise and provide exceptional customer service, grow our economy, and help our citizens build better and more purposeful lives.

Thanks to all of you for your dedication to our mission and for continuing to make Maryland a great place to live, work and play.

Kelly M. Schulz

Secretary

FY21 Highlights

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- Maryland Employer Security Clearance Costs Tax Credit
- Restaurant and Hotels
- Wineries and Vineyards
- Buy Maryland Cybersecurity
- WebFOCUS
- Elevating Grant Procedures to operationalize Equity

Teammate Recognition

Employee Appreciation Video

For Employee Appreciation Day, Secretary Schulz expressed her gratitude in a short video. She thanked her staff for all the work we have done as a team to help our businesses stay afloat, to put people back to work, and to get our economy back on track.

Employee Appreciation at Camden Yards

A guided tour of Camden Yards and employee appreciation luncheon was provided for all Commerce employees in July 2021. The team celebrated accomplishments of the year, employees' years of service and the retirement of fellow colleagues. Most importantly, fellow employees and friends reconnected with each other.

Years of Service Awards: The following Commerce employees received a Certificate of Service:

Dean Ertwine	5 years
Tamar Osterman	5 years
Andrew Sargent	5 years
Heather Gramm	5 years
Dixie Lanehart	5 years
David McDaniels	5 years
Liesel Fenner	5 years
Harold Ginn	5 years
Michael Siers	5 years
Chad Buterbaugh	5 years
Robin A. Smith	5 years
Thelma Bever	5 years
Brian Lawrence	5 years
Cynthia Miller	5 years
Julia Bouie-Randall	5 years
Peter Cento	10 years
Timothy Murphy	10 years
Craig Svoboda	10 years
Jennifer Chiasson	10 years
Florence Brant	10 years
Thomas Evans	15 years
Felicia Bailey-McCoy	15 years

Anna Halikias	15 years
Signe Pringle	15 years
Sandra Jones	15 years
Drucilla Hollie	15 years
Mary Diferdinando	20 years
Steven Wall	20 years
Roger Venezia	20 years
Regina Tillery	20 years
Darla Garrett	20 years
Harry Carroll	20 years
Rhonda Ray	25 years
Lutisha Williams	25 years
Greg McClain	30 years
Corine Watkins	40 years

Commerce Superstar Award

This year, the Maryland Department of Commerce is shining a spotlight on Commerce employees who go above and beyond their line of duties. In 2021 we introduced our new internal newsletter, The Commerce View, along with an opportunity to recognize a “Commerce Superstar” monthly. Each month nominations are sent in from across the agency and the winners are recognized in a special section of The Commerce View.

This year’s “Commerce Superstars” were:

- March: Amanda Winters and Brian Castleberry
- April: Elizabeth Carven and Andrew Sargent
- May: Kelly Adams
- June: Jayson Knott and Corine Watkins
- July: Felicia Pullam

Telework Video

Our journey, through some of the most challenging economic times our state and nation has ever faced, is captured in this video marking the one-year anniversary of the pandemic. Through communication, adaptability, professionalism and, most importantly, teamwork, Commerce became a better agency and helped keep Maryland Open for Business.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZbxcQ8ysjdRoy3TvwupYn_k7Kw5UI8sC/view?usp=drive_sdk

Detailed FY21 Results

Communications with Stakeholders during Pandemic

During the pandemic, the secretary and the department maintained constant communication with businesses, elected officials, advocacy groups and community leaders across Maryland. These included:

- 105 virtual meetings
- 63 in person meetings
- 24 recorded webinars
- 12,000 emails received through Covid-19.Application@maryland.gov
- Over 2,100 emails received through Secretary.Commerce@maryland.gov

Shareholder Response:

"I sincerely want to say thank you for assisting our team in Washington County and supporting our efforts to continue assisting businesses in every way possible. Clearly, this year has been devastating to all of us, but I am grateful for the ongoing attention that Commerce has provided." - Washington County Department of Business Development

"I just wanted to recognize Tamar (Osterman) and let you know that she has been a great resource for us during this difficult time. She took time to meet with our businesses in the evening on Zoom and made herself available to assist where possible." - Ian Shaw Mayor of Sykesville

"Ms. (Nancy) LaJoice has provided invaluable support, resources and communications to the Kent County Business Community. We navigated uncharted waters during the pandemic, while undergoing a full departmental restructure of Economic and Tourism Development. Ms. LaJoice assisted Jamie Williams, Director, Economic and Tourism Development, through these challenging times with grace and a keen sense of how to move forward. We commend her ability and willingness to support our business community. Her professional disposition has been unwavering." Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator

"Thank you so much for the information and all the work you have been doing to guide us all! It has been extremely helpful and informative." Cory Chappell, Human Resources Manager, Aphenia Pharma Solutions, LLC.

"Kelly Adams is a super civil servant. Really helpful and very informative. Great team at MD Commerce and she is a rock star." Drew Greenblatt

"I appreciate the outstanding and forthright people with whom I associate when dealing with Maryland State Arts Council. Their congeniality and promptness is respected and appreciated. Good job, Maryland!" Customer Service Survey Response, October 8, 2020

COVID-19 Response

The department's priority during the pandemic was to ensure that businesses had the guidance and information they needed to reopen and operate safely while providing financial support to those impacted.

Media & Outreach

Between July 2020 and June 2021, Secretary Schulz and the senior leadership team participated in more than 200 webinars, interviews, and town halls to communicate the Governor's plan to reopen the economy safely to the business community.

Maryland COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund Programs for Businesses

The department continued to disburse funds for the three grant and loan programs established in the prior fiscal year to assist businesses during the COVID-19 crisis:

- **\$75 Million Relief Loan Fund** – Offered working capital to assist Maryland for-profit small businesses with 50 or fewer employees that had operations disrupted due to COVID-19. When additional funding became available, these loans were converted to grants.
- **\$50 Million Relief Grant Fund** – Offered working capital to assist Maryland small businesses and nonprofits with 50 or fewer employees that had operations disrupted due to COVID-19.
- **\$5 Million Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Manufacturers Grant Fund** - Assisted Maryland manufacturers in producing personal protective equipment and other items identified as Critical Needs Items by the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Department of General Services (DGS), that were urgently needed by the State of Maryland, Maryland-based hospitals and healthcare facilities, and emergency and first responders.

- **Maryland State Arts Council Grants** - Funded Maryland arts organizations, county arts agencies, and Arts & Entertainment Districts for losses sustained because of programming, operations, and events that have been modified or cancelled due to COVID-19.

The department established and disbursed funds for the following programs:

- **Restaurants Relief (2020 - 2 ROUNDS \$50M/\$30M)** - to support the state's restaurants suffering from closures and restrictions.
- **Hotels Relief (2020)** - to support local hotel, lodging, and accommodation businesses experiencing hardships.
- **Tourism** - to help the state's local Destination Marketing Organizations promote tourism in their jurisdictions.

Additionally, the Bipartisan Relief Act of 2021 established the following programs the department was responsible for implementing to assist business during the COVID-19 crisis:

- **Small Business COVID-19 RELIEF Grant Program (- Non Sales & Use Grant)** - to support Maryland's small businesses facing continued financial impacts, specifically those that do not collect sales and use tax.
- **Maryland State Arts Council Grants** - additional funding to Maryland arts organizations, county arts agencies, and Arts & Entertainment Districts for losses sustained because of programming, operations, and events that have been modified or cancelled due to the COVID-19.
- **Restaurants** - to support the state's restaurants suffering from closures and restrictions. Funds were distributed through the state's 24 jurisdictions.
- **Hotels** - to support local hotel, lodging, and accommodation businesses experiencing hardships. Funds were distributed through the state's 24 jurisdictions.
- **Online Sales & Telework** - to support small businesses seeking to expand online sales and teleworking capabilities for their employees, funds were distributed through the state's 24 jurisdictions.
- **SMWOBA** - to support the state's small businesses, these funds were disbursed through the existing Small, Minority, and Women-Owned

Business Account, also known as the Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) program.

- **Tourism Assistance** - to help the state's local Destination Marketing Organizations promote tourism in their jurisdictions.
- **Local Bus Assistance** - to support Maryland commuter and shuttle bus companies negatively impacted by the pandemic.

As of June 30, 2021, the following grant and loans had been awarded to businesses and nonprofit organizations:

- **Relief Loans** (654) \$75,268,411
- **Relief Grants** (14,286) \$140,995,261
- **Manufacturing Grants** (53) \$3,919,447
- **MSAC Emergency Grants:** (806) \$7,126,824
- **Restaurants Relief (2020 - 2 ROUNDS \$50M/\$30M):** \$80,000,000
- **Hotels Relief (2020):** \$50,000,000
- **Tourism:** \$2,000,000
- **Small Business COVID-19 RELIEF Grant Program- Non Sales & Use Grant: (1131)** \$10,000,000
- **RELIEF Act Maryland State Arts Council Grants** (839) \$5,000,000
- **RELIEF Act Restaurants** \$22,000,000
- **RELIEF Act Hotels** \$10,000,000
- **RELIEF Act Online Sales & Telework** \$500,000
- **RELIEF Act SMWOBA** \$10,000,000
- **RELIEF Act Small Business Marketing:** (25) \$10,000
- **RELIEF Act Local Bus Assistance:** (6) \$8,000,000

Business Advisory Groups

The department continued to work with a broad range of customers/businesses that were previously organized into 13 advisory groups to develop guidance and safety best practices for reopening establishments. The advisory groups included: Tourism, Attractions, Sports, Small Business/Personal Services, Restaurants, Professional and Financial Services, Manufacturing, Lodging, Tourism Transportation, Destinations, Construction and Development, and Arts. The Governor also created a nonprofit and faith-based task force, both coordinated by the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives.

Maryland's COVID-19 Business Response Web Page

The department continued to update Maryland's COVID-19 Business Response web page (<https://govstatus.egov.com/md-coronavirus-business>) where businesses could easily find information on: • Business Closures, Restrictions, and Enforcement • Employer and Worker Assistance • Financial Assistance • Offers, Donations, and Volunteer Resources • MEMA's Virtual Business Operations Center

Additionally, the information on the "Back to Business" web page was ultimately folded into one COVID-specific page for the business community.

Email Accounts to Handle Inquiries

Email accounts created as the state of emergency was announced were continued to be manned by multiple staff members to address questions, and provide support and resources for customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Inquiries involved coordination of more than 20 partner state agencies. Among the inquiry topics were the Maryland COVID -19 Emergency Relief Fund Programs, unemployment benefits, business re-openings and closures, licensing, business start-ups, resources for Federal Business Relief Programs, mask protocols, executive order compliance, taxes, and business and residential rent support. Commerce staff also assisted with the COVID-19 hotline.

Commerce staff, primarily from the legislative, communications, and office of the secretary staff, monitored these mailboxes daily and responded to more than 12,000 emails received through Covid-19.Application@maryland.gov and over 2,100 emails received through Secretary.Commerce@maryland.gov.

Assistance from other State Agencies

The Department of Commerce received assistance from a number of state agencies to support the expedited processing of emergency grant and loan applications. More than 150 temporary employers were brought on and trained in an effort to get loans and grants to businesses as quickly as possible.

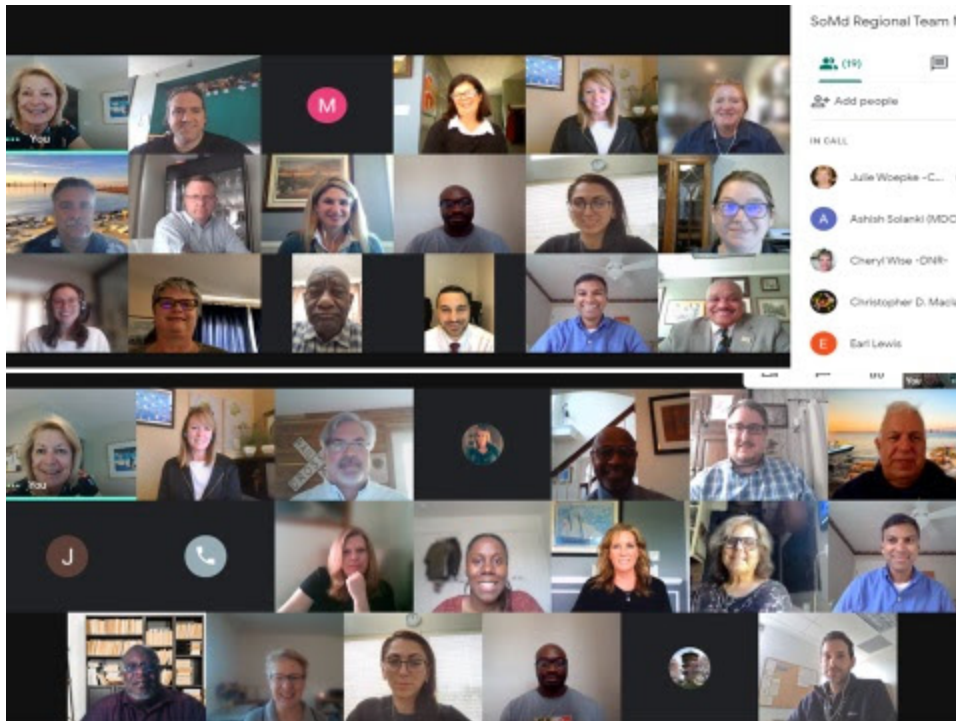
Secretary's Citations:

In FY21, Secretary Schulz and the Commerce team presented over 180 congratulatory

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citations to local businesses in recognition of their service and dedication to doing business in Maryland. These citations celebrated grand openings, expansions, and milestone anniversaries throughout the state.

Commerce Subcabinet:



Southern Maryland and Eastern Shore Regional Resources Teams' Meetings with Secretary Schulz

The Commerce Subcabinet, comprised of the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Environment (MDE), Planning (MDP) and Smart Growth, Transportation (MDOT), Labor, Natural Resources (DNR), the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs (GOSBA), the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) continued to meet every other month. The Deputy Secretaries met in the alternating months of the Subcabinet to review new construction and redevelopment projects, programs and infrastructure that create jobs for awareness and support of customers.

Emphasizing the importance of the Regional Resources Teams, Secretary Schulz participated in all of the five (5) Resources Team meetings to experience firsthand the collaboration among the state agencies and sharing of information and problem solving to serve the business community. Commerce authored a blog post on the Regional Resources Teams which was shared among state agencies on social media. The

Regional Resources Workgroup is one (1) of six (6) workgroups of the Subcabinet. The other workgroups are customer service, job creators, small business, workforce development and sustainable materials management (SM3).

Commerce View

The Commerce View, monthly updates from the Maryland Department of Commerce, was introduced in 2021. It includes the Secretary's Corner, a personal message from the Secretary, welcoming of new team members, promotions, personal accomplishments, retirements, new additions to the family and the Commerce Superstar Award.

Training

Customer Service Onboard Training: When new employees are brought onboard, they are presented with the Customer Service Promise and are required to take the MDTRN - Customer Service Training for State Government on the HUB.

MD Business Express Training: Commerce team members continue to be made aware of the Business Express Training on the Hub and have been encouraged to take the training. The training gives an overview of the Business Express website and the valuable information that the site contains for business to get started and to expand.

Virtual Communities and Professional Development: MSAC's FY2021 Virtual Professional Learning events connected with over 8,000 attendees across 238 individual offerings that dealt with immediate concerns in real time, provided updates, held the space for peer-to-peer sharing, and offered relevant professional development through consistent and frequent online offerings. Topics for this learning included a Financial Best Practices series, Tuesday morning Coffee with Ken series, Discovering and Connecting with New Constituents, engagement with the County Arts Agencies of Maryland, informational sessions on funding and support opportunities, and more. FY2021 Virtual Professional Development Convenings also included six Regional Arts Institutes and one statewide Arts Summit in June.

Listening Sessions: MSAC continued to hold Listening Sessions in connection to any proposed policy changes. Initial sessions allowed space for feedback to prioritize actions for a team of public editors, who would then meet to finalize

recommendations for a policy change. 2021 Listening Sessions included Mental Health in the Arts Sector, Equitable Funding Formulas for the Grants for Organizations program, Funding of Community and School Programs, application process revision for MSAC's Folklife Network grant program, and more.

Implicit Bias in the Panel Process: All MSAC panelists participated in implicit bias training prior to evaluating grant applications. This training emphasized ways implicit bias can show up in the process of evaluation and provided tools to support panelists to recognize and limit its effects within the process. This training was modeled for all state arts agencies nationwide through the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Arts equity consultants worked with public editor panels to limit bias in those processes as well.

Accessibility and Equity Training for MSAC Staff: MSAC and its affiliates and collaborators completed training in the following areas: Self Awareness and our Intersectionality; Generative Conflict and Restorative Justice; Institutional Reconciliation; Aesthetic Perspectives; and Accessibility Planning. In addition, the Mid-Atlantic Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Center provided training for MSAC staff.

Equity Training: MSAC funded a statewide equity and justice training program through Maryland Citizens for the Arts as well as an additional program through ClancyWorks Dance Company: Building Racial Equity in the Arts through Dance, each reaching over 100 constituents.

Business-2-Government (B2G) Presentations and Workshops: The department delivered six presentations throughout Maryland to over 800 businesses to provide information on Commerce and B2G available resources.

B2G Newsletter: In FY21, Commerce issued a monthly newsletter promoting government contracting events and opportunities to a subscriber database of 2,500 business recipients.

B2G Blog: Commerce introduced a new blog post about Federal Agencies in Maryland and their impact on the state, creating greater awareness of the agency missions and business opportunities associated with Maryland's federal government presence.

Maryland Defense Cybersecurity Assistance Program (DCAP) Workshops: Maryland Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MD MEP), Commerce's administrator for the DCAP program, hosted thirteen (13) educational workshop webinars and virtual events for defense contractors to provide assistance on compliance with cybersecurity regulations issued by the Department of Defense. MD MEP also delivered cybersecurity education and program outreach through two (2) partner events during the year.

Defense Technology Commercialization (DefTech) Program: In FY21, the DefTech Center held twelve (12) open virtual educational events on various topics related to technology commercialization for existing and potential clients and held eight (8) customized group training events and programs for various audiences, including scientists and engineers at APG. The DefTech Center is a technology transfer accelerator tasked with facilitating technology transfer of R&D from DoD labs in Maryland and transforming that research into jobs and new businesses via product development.

Daily Resource Email: To ensure that businesses continued to receive the guidance and information they needed to reopen and have access to financial and technical assistance, the Regional Resources Director and team members sent a daily email to our county partners, economic development and trade organizations, and individual businesses. This was daily from April, 2020 through May 2020. It is now 3 days/week.

Outreach: The Commerce Regional Team continued to participate in webinars and summits to provide access to the most up to date information for businesses on grants, loans and technical assistance offered at the county, state and federal level.

Innovation Uncovered: A multifaceted program to highlight Maryland's innovators, entrepreneurs, and small businesses in 2020. Through blog posts, videos, and social media promotion, Commerce will be celebrating the bold new ideas and cutting-edge research and technology that spring from our unique businesses. The centerpiece of "Innovation Uncovered" was the search for the "Maryland Future 20," a list of innovative Maryland startups with the potential to become the state's next major business success story. Members of Maryland's business community and the general public nominated a startup on the Innovation Uncovered website.

Successful Communications Webinars: The department offered several internal training programs through the year to improve interpersonal and customer facing skill sets.

Successful Communications I, Successful Communications II, and Successful Communications III are three distinct but complementary 90 minute virtual training sessions. They are designed to help improve personal interactions and customer service through better communication. Verbal and non-verbal communication are learned skills. There is room for further development for all team mates. This program helps individuals understand the impact of their verbal and non-verbal communication skills on other people, and how improving these skills can make it easier to get along in the workplace. It also helps the team more positively interact with external customers. Topics covered include maintaining focus when listening; becoming aware of communication barriers; helping improve the skill of asking questions; and providing superior customer service. 139 Commerce team mates improved their communication and customer service skills by taking these classes.

Process Improvements

Bio Tax Credit Registration: The Bio Registration application has been updated to automate the collection of individuals seeking to receive Bio Tax Credits. This application also sets up the user's reference name and number, simplifying the process and removing the chance of errors.

Maryland Employer Security Clearance Costs Tax Credit: The application has been updated to allow applicants to apply online for the Clearance Cost Tax Credit.

Maryland Relief Act of 2021- Commerce launched a portal that allows for applicants to sign up in order to receive relief funds which were prioritized by service, Covid disadvantage, and time.

Restaurant and Hotels: Commerce launched a portal that allowed counties - to input the businesses they distributed the state relief funds as well as all demographic and pertinent information. Commerce also set up a system for counties to mass upload their information.

Wineries and Vineyards: Commerce updated the wineries and vineyards assistance application. This application provides owners of vineyards and wineries to receive grants in order to encourage them to grow. The much needed upgrade to the application process better serves our customers.

Buy Maryland Cybersecurity: Commerce updated the application for this program. This application provides both buyers and sellers of cybersecurity to connect and receive grants in order to encourage them to grow. The upgraded application better serves customer needs.

WebFOCUS: WebFOCUS is a data analysis and reporting tool that is replacing older paper-based reporting systems. This has allowed each unit to more efficiently track, analyze, and report on budgetary trends and issues. It also allows individuals to track metrics meaningful to them without having to collate data from hundreds of pages in paper reports and create specialized excel tools.

Elevating Grant Procedures to Operationalize Equity: Between September 2020 and February 2021, dedicated meetings were held internally for staff to elevate portions of the grant processes in alignment with MSAC's commitment to equity and justice. Outcomes included:

- Launching a testimonial design to collect and publish panelist experiences so that Black, Indigenous, and people of color can see themselves in the panelist process.
- Increasing targeted marketing and sharing information and associated graphics for all panelists and public contributor calls with current networks.
- Revising the panelist application and selection process to reduce barriers and increase access to the agency.
- Revising applicant communications so that ineligible and declined notifications serve as a connector to future opportunities through specific customizations.
- Leveraging connections with all public, private, and community colleges and universities in Maryland to present MSAC opportunities to upcoming and/or recent graduates to connect emerging artists to MSAC.
- Expanding the MSAC Glossary to increase transparency and access.
- Creating documentation outlining the grant approval process to ensure transparency of the panel recommendations connected to funding.
- Revising an Applicant Feedback Form to increase transparency and leverage future connections through a nurtured relationship with applicants.
- Collaborating with the Department of Commerce to optimize payment

procedures that prioritize timelines in alignment with communications and MSAC procedures.

- Creating documentation clarifying the staff role in ensuring that panel meetings align with MSAC's commitment to equity and justice and establishing a throughline of this importance for all panelists and applicants.
- Emergency Grants: MSAC completed four rounds of Emergency Grants between May 2020 - June 2021, as well as a fifth round for Roster Artists, to assist with losses connected to the COVID-19 Declared State of Emergency. \$12,126,824 was distributed across 1,645 grants to organizations and independent artists in all 24 jurisdictions.

FY22 Plans

Efforts for FY22 will include the following strategies:

- Develop and implement an in-house customer service training program for all Commerce employees and new hires;
- Continue to support businesses and nonprofits through additional emergency relief grant and loan funding as needed;
- Feature customer service training during our Maryland Charities Campaign kick-off;
- Continue training through webinars and in-person meetings;
- Continue to improve processes and procedures.

Customer Service Survey Results

Our year-end customer service rating for customers who were satisfied* (83%) was considerably higher in FY21 compared to FY20 (61%) and is approaching pre-pandemic levels (84% in FY19). A large part of the increase in customer satisfaction can be attributed to the improvements in the process and procedures for distributing emergency relief funding.

The percentage of respondents who thought that the state made it easy for them to handle their issues rose from 59% in FY20 to 79% in FY21- a 20% increase.

* Somewhat Satisfied and Very Satisfied

Status of Customer Service Training

While we did not develop an in-house customer service training course in FY21, we plan to develop and implement one in Q1/Q2 FY22. We will continue to require new employees to take the customer service training on the HUB during their onboarding process.

Timeliness and Responsiveness

Answering and returning phone calls and emails in a timely manner continues to be a top priority and expectation of all Commerce employees. The year-over-year increase in customer satisfaction is a strong indicator that Team Commerce is meeting expectations. Through customer service training and an emphasis on customer service in our bi-annual performance reviews, we anticipate the increase will continue in FY22.

Call Center and Welcome Center Data

The department Call Center received 1,343 calls (all handled by Agent in FY21)
Welcome Centers received 137,282 visitors in FY21.

Social Media and Online Experience

In FY21, the department has continued to improve the sharing of resources and information online, including the management of the state's primary website for COVID-19 business resources. Collectively, websites managed by the Commerce marketing team garnered 2,571,978 web visitors during FY21.

Commerce has continued to grow its social networks and leverage social media tools to share information and provide customer service. In FY21, the department's audience size grew to 49,170 followers and generated 1.3 million engagements (clicks, comments, video views, and other engagements) through organic and paid media.

Our monthly Business Pulse newsletter - which highlights a variety of business and industry news throughout the state - is sent to nearly 30,000 subscribers each month.

