

Customer Service

Annual
Report
2020



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Prosperity with
a Purpose

Larry Hogan, Governor • Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor

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Leadership Analysis of FY20 and Summary of FY21 Approach

Dear Commerce Teammates,

I am very pleased to present the 2020 Customer Service Annual Report. Over the past several months, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our ability to serve our customers and one another. Our mission shifted from growing Maryland companies and attracting new investment to our state to helping to sustain Maryland businesses and provide them guidance and financial support.

We quickly responded by standing up informational webpages, participating in webinars, and responding to thousands of emails and requests from businesses on how to best navigate this crisis. Within only a few weeks, we set up emergency relief grant and loan funds to give businesses a lifeline and keep their doors open. I am so proud of the Commerce team for rising to the challenge and delivering the guidance and relief our businesses so desperately needed.



As we move forward, we will continue to focus on giving our customers the best possible experience in working with our agency and uphold the Governor's Customer Service Promise and to continue to 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

FY20 Highlights

Programs

- Secretary's Collaboration Tours
- Commerce Subcabinet
- Maryland COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund Programs for Businesses
- Day to Serve

Surveys

- Customer Service Survey

Training

- Customer Service Onboard Training
- MD Business Express Training Video & Quiz
- Commerce University - TED Talks
- COVID-19 Training
- Winter Webinar Series
- Listening Sessions
- Virtual Communities and Online Offerings
- Maryland Arts Recovery Task Force
- BioHealth Industry Informational Webinars
- Business 2 Government Presentations and Workshops
- Maryland Defense Network (MDN) Webinar/Demos and Relaunch Event
- Maryland Defense Cybersecurity Assistance Program (DCAP) Workshops
- Defense Technology Commercialization (DefTech) Program
- Maryland Defense Diversification Assistance (MDDA) Program Defense Business Valuation Workshop
- Successful Communications Webinar

Process Improvements

- Strategic Industry Grants
- e-Innovation Grant Program
- Manufacturing Innovation Grant Application
- Business Alert Emails
- DocuSign
- SharePoint
- Bio Tax Credit Registration
- MD Employer Security Clearance Cost Tax Credit

- Office of Strategic Industries and Entrepreneurship's (OSIE) Funding Grants Portal
- Export Maryland MD
- Military Personnel and Veteran-owned Small Business Loan Program (MPVOLP)

Recognition Given to Teammates

There were no in-person awards ceremonies in FY20. However, Secretary Schulz made it a priority to recognize individuals and teams who made outstanding contributions to the Department's COVID-19 response during each of our all-hands teleconferences.

Years of Service Awards: The following Commerce employees were presented a Certificate of Service from Secretary Schulz:

Alex Clark	5 years
Cindy Zeng	5 years
Paul Beatty	5 years
Brian Fisher	5 years
James Meyer	5 years
Todd Sabin	5 years
Trevor Leach	5 years
Brandon Chan	5 years
Kyle McColgan	5 years
Shlomo Krasner	10 years
Tim Murphy	10 years
Mindie Burgoyne	15 years
James Keenan	15 years
Karen Hood	20 years
Tim Doyle	20 years
Lisa Swoboda	20 years
Russian Wyatt	20 years
Dolores Churn	25 years
Catherine Batavick	25 years
Anne Kyle	25 years
Dan Leonard	25 years
Skip Kulbicki	30 years
Les Hall	30 years
Chi'Anti Ilyas	30 years
Kat Evans	30 years
Gary Ventry	35 years

Detailed FY20 Results

Secretary's Collaboration

Tours: At the Department of Commerce, Secretary Schulz believes that the purpose of economic development is not just to spur business growth, increase prosperity, and create jobs, but to use those accomplishments to improve the lives of all our citizens. This means helping people find their own purpose and giving them the tools to build a better life for themselves and their families. The



Secretary calls this "Prosperity With A Purpose" and we took this theme on the road for a statewide County Collaboration Tour.

This was one of our major accomplishments, a visit to each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions (16 in fiscal year 2020) and collaborating with our county partners, fellow economic development agencies, local businesses, and more. Between July and December, we met with and toured 31 businesses and co-hosted 18 local partner meetings. This provided us with the opportunity to see and hear first-hand the wonderful things our business community is achieving and to offer assistance with challenges that they were facing. In December, we wrapped up the initiative with a tour of Baltimore City, where our agency makes its home.

Secretary's Citations: In FY20, Secretary Schulz and the Commerce team presented 148 congratulatory 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: The Department of Agriculture was invited to join the subcabinet, expanding the number of participating agencies to 11. The Department of Agriculture joins the Departments of Commerce, 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). The subcabinet meets every other month.

A multi-agency collaboration related to sustainable materials management led to the creation of a new workgroup. This workgroup,

in addition to the five (5) established workgroups that include customer service, job creators, workforce development, small business and regional resources, reports at each subcabinet meeting. The workgroups identify collaborations among state agencies to support customers and bring updates on initiatives and challenges to the subcabinet to provide guidance and collaborations.

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.

Media/Outreach: Between March and the end of June 2020, Secretary Schulz and the senior leadership team took part in 86 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 set up three grant and loan programs to assist businesses during this COVID-19 crisis.

- *\$75 Million Relief Loan Fund* – for for-profit businesses with 50 or fewer employees. This COVID-19 Emergency Relief \$75M Loan Fund offers working capital to assist Maryland for-profit small businesses disrupted operations due to COVID-19. Loan assistance is intended to provide interim relief complementing actions with its bank, business interruption insurance, and financial partners.

- *\$50 Million Relief Grant Fund* – for business and nonprofits with 50 or fewer employees. This COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grant Fund offers working capital to assist Maryland small businesses and nonprofits with disrupted operations due to COVID-19. Grant assistance is intended to provide interim relief complementing actions with its bank, business interruption insurance, and financial partners.
- *\$5 Million PPE Manufacturers Grant Fund* - for assisting Maryland manufacturers to produce 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 are urgently needed by the State of Maryland, Maryland-based hospitals and healthcare facilities, and emergency and first responders.

And one grant program to assist Maryland's Arts Community:

- *\$1 Million Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) Emergency Grants*: This funding (partially CARES Act funding through the National Endowment for the Arts) was distributed through the Emergency Grant Program to directly address losses incurred in the Arts Community as a result of the Governor's Declared State of Emergency.

As of June 30, 2020, the following grant and loans had been awarded to businesses and nonprofit organizations:

- Relief Loans (146), \$6,850,695
- Relief Grants (4,154), \$40,820,049
- Manufacturing Grants (53), \$1,848,997
- MSAC Emergency Grants: (125), \$1,000,000



Business Advisory Groups: The Department partnered with a broad range of customers/businesses to organize 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. There are also two (2) nonprofit and faith-based task forces coordinated by the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives.

Maryland's COVID-19 Business Response Web page: The Department set up 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

Back to Business Web Page: The Department created the Back-to-Business web page (<https://open.maryland.gov/backtobusiness/>) for businesses to find information on getting back to business (Governor Hogan's Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery plan), best practices for safety and the Maryland Strong, Back to Business Pledge.

Frequently Asked Questions Web Page: In collaboration with state agency partners, the Department set up a Frequently Asked Questions web page where businesses could easily find answers to many of their common concerns.

Email Accounts to Handle Multiple Questions: Email accounts were created and manned by multiple staff members to handle the numerous questions addressed to the Commerce Secretary or over 20 partner State Agencies or questions that pertained to the Maryland COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund Programs.

- Secretary.Commerce@maryland.gov
- Covid-19.Application@maryland.gov

With these email accounts, we were able to respond to hundreds of questions per day.

Assistance from other State Agencies: We sought out assistance from other agencies, utilizing employees who may have been on administrative leave, to support the processing of the emergency grant and loan applications to expedite the response time for customers. Approximately 150 employees from other agencies were brought on board to expedite the applications.

MEMA Team: Commerce provided the following assistance to MEMA during the pandemic:

- Four (4) volunteers were dispatched from the Department of Commerce to assist MEMA with:
 - Establishing and implementing the process by which national and international suppliers of critical item needs and services were vetted; Coordinating interagency processes between the Maryland Department of Health, the Department of General Services, MEMA, the National Guard and the Maryland Department of Commerce
 - Vetting national and international suppliers and services through local and international partners including the U.S. Commercial Service and the Maryland China Center
 - Communicating the current purchasing priorities of personal protection equipment (PPE) i.e. face masks, gowns, gloves, etc.), medical equipment such as ventilators, tents, lodging and services to Commerce's business development team
 - Identifying and prioritizing procurement from manufacturers in Maryland that produce PPE
 - Establishing and implementing the process by which donations of PPE were accepted, inspected, warehoused, and distributed to medical centers and other priority establishments



- Answering COVID-19 related questions from businesses sent to the Business Operations Center (BOC).
- A fifth volunteer provided digital and print design expertise to MEMA's Joint Information Center (JIC) to help disseminate accurate and critical information to a diverse audience in the form of fact sheets, PSAs, social media posts, website banner ads, and outdoor advertising.
- A sixth volunteer managed the Spanish translation process of official documents by working with our vendor for translation and then disseminating those documents to the

appropriate individuals for posting on various agency sites. The volunteer also assisted in overseeing the management of the Rumor Control Webpage, maintaining the accuracy and validity of rumors listed on and submitted to the site.

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 on the HUB.

MD Business Express Training: Commerce team members have been 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.

Commerce University - TED Talks: This year, prior to the pandemic, the Department sponsored a TED Talk series where team members would meet every other week to watch and discuss a TED Talk. This year's theme was "leadership and customer service."

COVID-19 Training: Approximately 150 employees from other State agencies were brought on board and trained how to process applications from businesses who were applying for funding from the Department's Maryland COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund Programs for Businesses.

Winter Webinar Series: MSAC's 2020 new Winter Webinar Series connected with over 600 attendees across nine webinars. Topics for this series were developed

from constituent requests and included Grant Writing 101, Equitable and Accessible Re-Granting for County Arts Agencies, low-cost marketing and grant platform tutorials, and informational sessions on folklife and public art opportunities.

Listening Sessions: MSAC, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance, and Maryland Citizens for the Arts collaborated to offer four public Listening Sessions in response to the Governor's Declared State of Emergency. The initial sessions were attended by 250 stakeholders who shared recommendations and prioritized actions to mobilize support. The information collected formed the basis for *The Future of Maryland's Arts Sector: Strategies for Stability and Sustainability* series of guiding documents as well as the formation of virtual communities and online offerings.



Virtual Communities and Online Offerings: Recurring virtual communities were established to deal with immediate concerns in real time, provide updates, hold the space for peer-to-peer sharing, and offer relevant professional development through consistent and frequent online offerings. *Coffee with Ken* provided a consistent virtual space on Tuesday mornings for artists and arts organizations to gather in dialogue. Total constituents in the combined 35 virtual sessions numbered greater than 2,000 attendees, and future online offerings were designed based on feedback.

Maryland Arts Recovery Task Force: The Maryland Arts Recovery Task Force, composed of representatives from the Maryland arts sector, private philanthropy, and members of state government was formed to provide guidance for the reopening and recovery of the arts in our State.

BioHealth Industry Informational Webinars: These webinars are targeted to international biotechnology hubs with an interest in doing business in Maryland. The webinars explain the technological landscape, funding mechanisms, Federal resources, universities, organizations and programs that cater to the biohealth industry's growth and innovation.

Business 2 Government Presentations and Workshops: The department delivered seven presentations throughout Maryland to over 248 businesses to provide information on Commerce and B2G available resources.

Maryland Defense Network (MDN) Webinar/Demos and Relaunch Event: Commerce

hosted a live webinar, conducted multiple demonstrations for stakeholder groups, and held a large breakfast event to promote the launch of the newly redesigned MDN, a free online resource tool created by Commerce, to better connect defense contractors to the supply chain and to opportunities for business growth. More than 8,000 Maryland defense contractors are included in the MDN along with 900 active users.

Maryland Defense Cybersecurity Assistance Program (DCAP) Workshops: Maryland Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MD MEP), Commerce's administrator for the DCAP program, hosted one educational workshop webinar 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 partner events during the year.

Defense Technology Commercialization (DefTech) Program: In FY20, the DefTech Center held 23 open in-person and virtual educational events on various topics related to technology commercialization for existing and potential client entrepreneurs. 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.

Maryland Defense Diversification Assistance (MDDA) Program Defense Business Valuation Workshop: A defense business valuation workshop, hosted by the MDDA's program administrator, Maryland MEP was held for MDDA clients. This workshop was an educational event dedicated to helping Maryland defense contractors and specifically MDDA participating companies to understand, cultivate, and maximize business valuation of their organization. The collective value of participating companies was in excess of \$40 million and an additional \$10 million in collective business growth opportunities were identified during the course of the workshop.

Successful Communications I Webinar: This 90 minute program is designed to help improve personal interactions and customer service through better communication. Verbal communication is a learned skill and almost everyone has room for improvement. This program will help understand the impact of your verbal communication skills on other people, and how improving these skills can make it easier to get along in the workplace. Topics covered include: maintaining focus when listening; becoming aware of communication barriers; helping improve the skill of asking questions; and providing superior customer service. Thirty-six Commerce

employees improved their communication and customer service skills by taking this class.

Process Improvements

Strategic Industry Grants: Commerce launched an online grant application portal this year to make it easier for applicants to apply and to increase efficiency in the grant review process.

e-Nnovation Grant Program: Commerce developed a new grant reporting template to provide better clarification, standardization and ease of reporting the outcomes of the e-Nnovation grants. A training session was developed to assist grantees with a better understanding of the reporting requirements, proper documentation, and to introduce the new form.

Manufacturing Innovation Grant Application: The COVID-19 Emergency Maryland Manufacturing Innovation Grant provided financial assistance to companies willing to change their manufacturing output to items on the critical needs list for COVID 19 emergency response. A new portal, gateway and online application allows companies to easily apply, track and update information required for grant processing.

Business Alert Emails: An e-newsletter blast was sent to interested Maryland companies (over 800 to date) alerting them to upcoming Business 2 Government (B2G) events in Maryland offering opportunity for business growth and federal procurement process awareness.

OneStop Loan and Grant Application Process: Commerce, with the assistance of the Department of Information Technology, set up the OneStop portal to accept and process applications from businesses that apply for Maryland Commerce COVID-19 relief funding.

DocuSign: DocuSign was introduced as a means to sign documents electronically. This has allowed Commerce a more efficient electronic process for getting documents digitally signed by all appropriate parties. This is a vast improvement over the old process, which required walking documents around for hard signatures.

SharePoint: SharePoint hosts the department's external websites and many internal applications. The SharePoint forms were updated with enhancements and increased security.

Bio Tax Credit Registration: We have streamlined the Bio Registration application to automate the collection of everyone who wants to receive Bio Tax Credit monies. 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: Created an application that allows applicants to apply online for the Clearance Cost Tax Credit.

Office of Strategic Industries and Entrepreneurship's (OSIE) Funding Grants Portal: OSIE manages a Strategic Industries grant program to support nonprofits and tech councils that support the state's strategic industry sectors. Commerce launched an online grant application portal this year to make it easier for applicants to apply and to increase efficiency in the grant review process.

Military Personnel and Veteran-owned Small Business Loan Program (MPVOLP): A new online portal and gateway was implemented making it easier for applicants to apply.

Export Maryland MD: We expanded the tasks that could be done within the ExportMD application system, so that not only the application but now the stipend agreement and reimbursement and reporting process are also in the online system to make the process easier and more efficient.

Day to Serve: Day to Serve is an annual, month-long community service initiative in which Maryland joins Washington, D.C., Virginia, and West Virginia in encouraging its residents to get out and volunteer. The Maryland Stadium Authority (MSA), Maryland Lottery & Gaming, Maryland Department of Commerce, Maryland Department of Education with Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs spent the morning landscaping and cleaning at the Vietnam War Memorial in Hanover.

FY21 Plans

Efforts for FY21 will include the following strategies:

- Develop an enhanced 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
- Continue Day to Serve, our community volunteer engagement program
- Continue training through webinars
- Continue quest for process improvement

Customer Service Survey Results

Our year-end customer service rating for customers who were satisfied* (61%) was measurably lower for FY20 compared to last year (84%). This can be attributed to the totally new processes and procedures associated with the COVID-19 emergency grant and loan funds, the overwhelming volume of applications, the limited fund availability and a very stressful environment.

In the period July 2019 through December 2019, prior to the pandemic, Commerce received an 89% customer satisfaction score, which was higher than our customer service rating in FY19 (84%). In January 2020, the customer satisfaction score was 100%. The monthly scores began to decrease as the pandemic set in and the Department began to receive applications for the emergency relief grant and loan funds. The scores for the remainder of the year were: February - 85%, March - 72%, April - 43%, May - 49% and June 67%. The score began to increase in May after the initial wave of applications were processed. We continue to see an uptick in the score and believe that our score will return to our pre-pandemic level.

* Somewhat Satisfied and Very Satisfied

Status of Customer Service Training

Due to the onset of the COVID-19, the development of a new, in-person training program and quarterly All-Hands meetings were put on hold. We plan, however, to introduce a virtual customer service training in FY21. Customer Service Training programs from other agencies, including the Maryland Department of Labor and the Maryland Department of Human Services, have been reviewed and certain parts of these programs may be incorporated into Commerce's training program. We will also continue to require that new employees take customer service training as part of the onboarding process.

Timeliness and Responsiveness

Answering and returning phone calls and emails in a timely manner is a requirement and expectation of all Commerce employees. In FY20, our timeliness and responsiveness were measured in our customer service survey results. In previous years, we also conducted an internal Division of Administration and Technology survey to measure our responsiveness to our internal customers. Due to the pandemic, however, this survey was also put on hold. We plan to resume it this coming year. We have learned a lot about customer service during the pandemic. We are confident that our customer service score will steadily rise during the pandemic and will rebound once the pandemic is over.

Call Center and Welcome Center Data

The department Call Center received 7700 calls /1252 Handled by Agent in FY20

Welcome Centers received 200,407 visitors in FY20

Social Media and Online Experience

Throughout FY20, the department has continued to improve the sharing of resources and information through the internet. Commerce managed websites generated:

1,352,400 visitors

753 outreaches via “Contact Us”

699 newsletter signups

Commerce has continued to grow its social networks and leverage social media tools to share information and provide customer service. In FY20, the department’s audience size grew to 45,502 followers and generated 1.71 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 more than 34,000 additional subscribers each month.

