Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) Customer Service Annual Report (Fiscal Year 2019)

INSIDE FRONT COVER

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FY19 Highlights

The Clean Energy Grant Program is the Maryland Energy Administration's largest program based on number of direct participants. In fiscal year 2019 (FY19), the grant administrators for the Clean Energy Grant Program implemented a new process upon receipt of an electronic application to the program. Each grant administrator now sends a template email introducing themselves as the assigned grant administrator for the particular application and provides detail on final actions required to complete the application.   This activity has significantly streamlined the process and decreased the amount of time required for an application to be deemed complete and ready for review.

Recognition Given to Employees

Recognition is given to employees that provide great customer service through the Maryland Energy Administration's Gold Star program.   When Maryland Energy Administration employees are recognized by name in comments provided through a customer service survey, the employee is usually presented with a Gold Star to post on their wall, highlighting the date and the reason for recognition. Gold Star recognition is typically given out at the same Maryland Energy Administration all-staff gathering where the Employee of the Month is recognized, or at agency-wide staff meetings.

Leadership Analysis of FY19 and Summary of FY20 Approach

In FY19, the Maryland Energy Administration continued to make strides in streamlining the process used for the Clean Energy Grant Program, the Maryland Energy Administration's largest program based on number of participants. The Clean Energy Grant Program team makes an effort to reach out to applicants with problematic applications, often contacting them by phone call to discuss the specific issues with their application. As a result of this multi-year effort, the number of pending Clean Energy Grant Program applications was reduced substantially from almost 1200 applications at the end of FY17 and approximately 330 awards at the end of FY18 to roughly 180 applications at the end of FY19.

Moving forwarding into fiscal year 2020, the Maryland Energy Administration will focus on onboarding new staff to the State of Maryland's customer service initiative. In addition, the Maryland Energy Administration will look for ways to improve communication and program tracking for participants of the Maryland Smart Energy Communities program, resulting in an improved customer service experience by program participants.

Detailed FY19 Results and FY20 Plans

In fiscal year 2019, the Maryland Energy Administration is proud to share that over **92%** of survey respondents indicated that they were either "Very Satisfied" or "Somewhat Satisfied" with the customer service provided by Maryland Energy Administration staff.

Moving forward in FY20, the Maryland Energy Administration plans to continue our focus on customer service to ensure that the majority of MEA survey respondents indicate that they are either "Very Satisfied" or "Somewhat Satisfied".

Customer Service Survey Results
As noted above, the Maryland Energy Administration had a very high customer satisfaction rate during fiscal year 2019. The Maryland Energy Administration's goal for FY19 was to maintain a customer service satisfaction rate of 95% or above. MEA came close to this goal with 92% of participants indicating they were satisfied with MEA's customer service in FY19.

Status of Customer Service Training
The Maryland Energy Administration is in the process of hiring and onboarding several new employees. Moving forward into FY20, the Maryland Energy Administration intends to put each of the new Maryland Energy Administration staff members through customer service training.

Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution
Timeliness of Responding to Customer Inquiries
Maryland Energy Administration staff are aware of the need to respond to customer inquiries as quickly as possible, balanced with providing accurate and well-informed information.
Best Practices
The Maryland Energy Administration has developed a call routing document that provides a quick summary of program assignments by individuals for the administrative staff that answer the main phone line, as well as areas of subject matter expertise.

Plans for Improvement
The Maryland Energy Administration's Maryland.gov email is on the Gmail platform. Gmail has labeling and filtering features that can be used to sort and manage email. In FY20, more detailed information on labeling and filtering features will be shared with the Maryland Energy Administration programmatic staff as a way to help improve inbox management associated with specific energy programs, with the goal of having these changes also improve the timeliness of response and general customer service experience of program participants.

Call Center Data

As a relatively small state agency, the Maryland Energy Administration does not have a dedicated call center.

Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives

Making Agency Services Available Online

The Maryland Energy Administration accepts electronic application submissions for competitive energy programs, the Clean Energy Grant Program, and the Energy Storage Tax Credit program.

Processing Times for Customer Transactions

The Maryland Energy Administration has two high-volume, first-come, first-served programs: the Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment Rebate Program and the Clean Energy Grant Program.

- The Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment Rebate Program generally has very quick application processing times, averaging less than a week for the application to be processed internally at the Maryland Energy Administration during FY19.   The rapid processing of applications, combined with the Maryland Energy Administration's communication of application status to program

  participants, resulted in twelve (12) customer service surveys highlighting the Program in FY2019.

- Streamlining the Clean Energy Grant Program has continued to be a priority for the Maryland Energy Administration, as highlighted in earlier customer service report. In FY19, the Maryland Energy Administration is thrilled to report a 28-day reduction in average grant processing time by the Clean Energy Grant Program team from the previous year. This metric captures when an electronic or paper application is received by the Maryland Energy Administration and ends when the application has been found eligible and approved for reimbursement by the Clean Energy Grant Program team. This timeframe includes days where the application may have been effectively "on hold" while the Clean Energy Grant Program team awaited missing information or documents from the applicant.

Adjusting Hours to Meet Customer Demands

Unlike some other state agencies, the Maryland Energy Administration does not interact with the general public through "walk-in" type transactions. Instead, the majority of interactions are handled by the subject matter expert in a given area of energy expertise, via phone or email. Contact information for the Maryland Energy Administration's subject matter experts is available 24/7 at http://www.energy.maryland.gov/Pages/InsideMEA/staffdirectory.aspx.

The Maryland Energy Administration has already implemented administrative staff schedules to answer the main phone line from 8 AM to 5 PM.

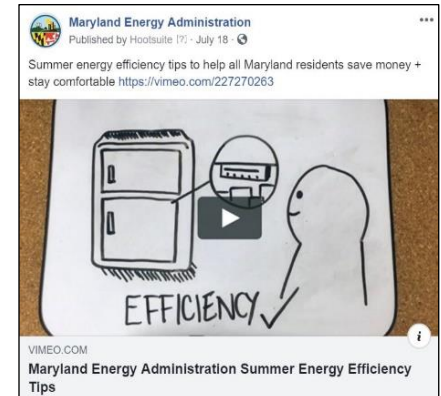### Social Media Usage to Improve the Customer Experience

The Maryland Energy Administration leverages social media to disseminate information about individual energy program launches throughout the year. Social media is also used to highlight Maryland Energy Administration-funded projects via staff visits and "photo tours" to help educate the public about different types of energy technologies, and how program funds are being used across the State. Finally, social media is used to help disseminate energy-related news and tips.

To help drive participation in social media, the Maryland Energy Administration also posts information on timely topics. For example, in April 2019 MEA celebrated National Poetry Month by posting energy-related haikus and linking to energy lesson plans for teachers.

The Maryland Energy Administration has also expanded educational online content with more videos and blog posts highlighting program changes. In addition, team members have begun to publish more articles online and via LinkedIn to amplify outreach to energy stakeholders and industry professionals.

Licensing and Permitting from Multiple Perspectives

The Maryland Energy Administration does not issue any licenses or permits.