



**Maryland Energy Administration (MEA)
FY 2018 Customer Service Annual Report**



Maryland
Energy
Administration

INSIDE FRONT COVER

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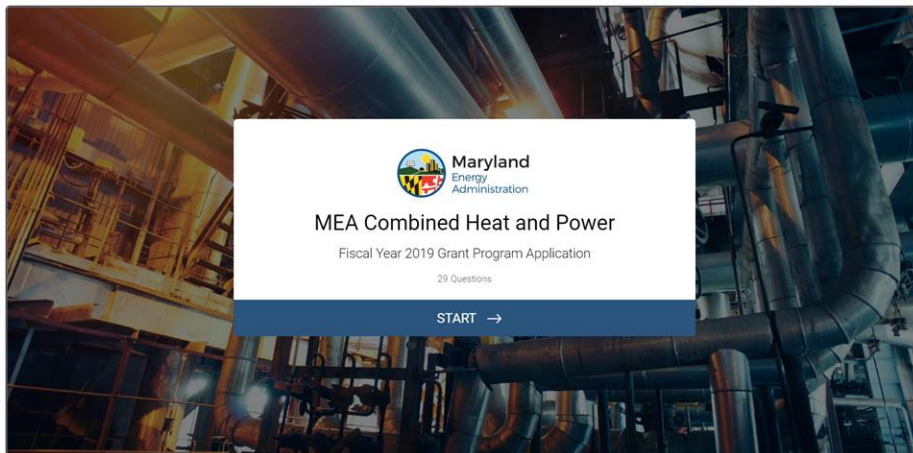
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FY18 Highlights

- Increased the number of energy program applications that can be filled out completely electronically via an application portal. In fiscal year 2018, the Maryland Energy Administration was able to offer the applications for the Combined Heat and Power Program, the Data Center Energy Efficiency Program, and the Energy Storage Tax Credit Program in a new format, avoiding the need to either email or physically mail documents. Shown below is the user-friendly FY19 Combined Heat and Power application designed by Maryland Energy Administration program manager Rory Spangler at the end of FY18, in preparation for program launch on July 2nd, 2018.



- Successfully gained buy-in from all applicable parties within the State to be able to accept electronic signatures on documents, improving convenience for program participants moving forward.

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 presented with a Gold Star to post on their office 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.



- In FY18, Maryland Energy Administration Transportation program manager Mike Jones was recognized numerous times for his rapid processing of Electric Vehicle Charging Station rebate applications.
- Multiple members of the Clean Energy Grant Program administrative team were recognized for their efforts following up with program applicants in order to enable successful application submission.
- David Comis, the Maryland Energy Administration's solar program manager, was recognized by a number of constituents for his efforts answering questions and providing general education about solar energy.
- Several Maryland Energy Administration team members were recognized for their efforts providing energy-focused storm support to the State Emergency Operation Center before and during a significant winter weather event.

Leadership Analysis of FY18 and Summary of FY19 Approach

The Maryland Energy Administration's fiscal year 2018 efforts were centered on keeping the importance of customer service to Maryland constituents in the spotlight, accomplished in part by having customer service be a topic of discussion during the majority of all-staff meetings and gatherings.

One major focus in FY18 was to resolve a backlog of Clean Energy Grant Program applications that had been submitted previously by applicants but had remained in



limbo, unable to be fully processed, generally due to missing information or lack of signature from the applicant. The Clean Energy Grant Program team made a concerted 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 effort, the number of pending Clean Energy Grant Program applications was reduced substantially from almost 1200 pending applications at the end of FY17 to approximately 330 awards at the end of FY18.

Moving forward into fiscal year 2019, the Maryland Energy Administration is continuing to look for opportunities to increase the use and improve the convenience of online application submission. Additionally, the Maryland Energy Administration will look to find ways to improve the "customer experience" for individuals, non-profit organization, local governments, and businesses interacting with the Maryland Energy Administration.

Detailed FY18 Results and FY19 Plans

In fiscal year 2018, the Maryland Energy Administration is proud to share that **97.5%** of survey respondents indicated that they were either “Very Satisfied” or “Somewhat Satisfied” with the customer service provided by Maryland Energy Administration staff.

Voice of the Customer – Survey Results

As noted above, the Maryland Energy Administration had a very high customer satisfaction rate during fiscal year 2018. The Maryland Energy Administration’s goal for FY19 is to maintain a customer service satisfaction rate of 95% or above.

Customer Service Training

The Maryland Energy Administration has recently brought several new team members on board. Moving forward into FY19, the Maryland Energy Administration intends to put each of the four new Maryland Energy Administration employees through customer service training. In addition, existing staff will be given a refresher on customer service, challenging each staff member to consider the “customer service” experience.



Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution

Customer Contact Centers

As a relatively small agency, calls that come into the Maryland Energy Administration are handled by the Maryland Energy Administration receptionist. If the receptionist is unavailable, several other administrative assistants provide back-up phone coverage. To help get callers to the right person within the Maryland Energy Administration quickly and the first time, the Maryland Energy Administration has developed a list of programs and responsibilities by individual to use as a call routing tool.

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

Many of the Maryland Energy Administration's phone calls are related to the status of residential Clean Energy Grant Program awards, the agency's highest volume program. The Maryland Energy Administration directs phone calls for this Program to the agency receptionist who can quickly answer routine questions about the Program. In this way, the Clean Energy Grant Program grant administrators are freed up to process applications and answer more complex program inquiries.

Additionally, and as mentioned earlier, the Maryland Energy Administration has developed a call routing document that provides a quick summary of program assignments by individuals for the administration staff that answer the main phone line, as well as areas of subject matter expertise.

Plans for Improvement

The Maryland Energy Administration intends to continue looking for opportunities to make the online program application process more user-friendly.

Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives

Making Agency Services Available Online

While the Maryland Energy Administration has accepted application submissions via email for a number of years, the agency continues to look for technology tools that make the application process online more user friendly.

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 has very quick application processing of typically a week or less. This rapid turn-around was noted by more than 20 customer service surveys in FY2018 specifically highlighting this Program.
- Streamlining the Clean Energy Grant Program has been a priority for the Maryland Energy Administration, as highlighted in last year's report. In FY18, the Maryland Energy Administration is thrilled to report a 31-day reduction in average grant processing time by the Clean Energy Grant Program team. This



metric capture 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 on the Maryland Energy Administration’s subject matter experts is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week 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 has effectively been used to promote Maryland Energy Administration programs and ensure maximum subscription levels, in some cases yielding a higher return on investment (ROI) than traditional media and press releases. Social media is also used to highlight projects funded through Maryland Energy Administration programs that are then visited by our staff, in order to help educate the general 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.

The Maryland Energy Administration has increased our social media followers on LinkedIn from 160 to 445 followers, Facebook followers have increased from 446 to 2,712, and Twitter followers have increased from 1,291 to 1,695. Since amplifying our social media interactions, an increase in early grant applications has been seen in nearly half our programs. The Maryland Energy Administration’s reach via social media has not been as heavily impacted by Facebook’s algorithm change as originally anticipated, thanks in part to followers accepting invitations to like our page, as well as employee advocacy and sharing of posts. Moving forward, the Maryland Energy Administration hopes to further amplify our social media reach with more original content and coordinated posts via team members and LinkedIn shares.

Conclusion

Moving into FY 2019, the Maryland Energy Administration aims to continue to maintain the high rate of overall customer satisfaction documented through customer service surveys in FY 2018. To do so, Maryland Energy Administration staff will actively seek new opportunities to improve the overall customer service experience of Maryland residents, businesses, local governments, and non-profit organizations seeking access to energy programs, as well as general energy-related information.



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