



Larry Hogan | Governor  
Boyd Rutherford | Lt. Governor  
R. Michael Gill | Secretary of Commerce  
Benjamin H. Wu | Deputy Secretary of Commerce

January 20, 2017

The Honorable Edward J. Kasemeyer  
Chairman, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 W Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh  
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee  
House Office Building, Room 121  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

**RE: Statewide Customer Service Improvements – 2016 JCR, Page 140**

Dear Chairmen Kasemeyer and McIntosh:

In accordance with Page 140 of the 2016 Joint Chairmen's Report, the Maryland Department of Commerce is pleased to present the Report on Statewide Customer Service Improvements. This report includes an update on activities relating to statewide customer service improvements, as well as recommendations for additional improvements and an update on consideration of adding additional members to the Commerce Subcabinet. I look forward to your review of the report and will be pleased to respond to any questions. Upon review of this report, Commerce respectfully requests the release of \$100,000 for the purpose of administration that is being withheld. If my staff can be of further assistance, or if you have any questions regarding this report, please feel free to contact me at 410-767-6301.

Sincerely,

R. Michael Gill  
Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Members, House Appropriations Committee  
Jody Sprinkle, Department of Legislative Services



## **Report on Statewide Customer Service Improvements**

In accordance with p. 140 of the 2016 Joint Chairmen's Report

Submitted by  
Maryland Department of Commerce

**January, 2017**

## **Team Commerce**

The newly reorganized Maryland Department of Commerce led several actions in 2016 to further Governor Hogan's statewide customer service initiatives, and his desire for a renewed focus on a strong service culture throughout state government. These activities included:

- The creation of a new Commerce strategic plan in partnership with the Maryland Economic Development Commission (MEDC);
- The creation of a Customer Service Workgroup by the Commerce Subcabinet; and
- Collaboration with the Governor's Office of Performance Improvement, the Governor's Business Ombudsman, and other agencies in the development of a statewide Customer Service Initiative.

## **Strategic Plan**

October 1, 2015 was the first official day of the Maryland Department of Commerce. Transformation of the former Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development into this new Cabinet agency began when Governor Larry Hogan signed House Bill 943 into law on April 29, 2015. The enacted legislation also reformed the composition and scope of the Maryland Economic Development Commission (MEDC). The newly reconstituted MEDC responsibilities include the creation, in conjunction with the Department of Commerce, of an economic development strategic plan to grow, attract, and retain businesses and jobs in Maryland.

The strategic plan was released in February 2016, and provides a roadmap to accomplishing our mission of revitalizing and strengthening our state's economy. In it, the MEDC recommended that Commerce focus on six goals, the first being:

- **Goal #1 – Achieve Operational Excellence** through the adoption of customer service standards, training, orientations, and performance reviews.

Commerce's Division of Administration & Technology is taking the lead on this goal, with strategies focusing on onboarding and training, process improvement, and performance measures. Strategies that were successfully implemented in 2016 include:

- Creation of a multi-step onboarding and orientation process for new employees that includes frequent "touches" from Human Resources, hiring managers and leadership.
- Enhancement of the employee performance evaluation process to include greater emphasis on employee goals that connect to the agency's strategic plan, and quarterly check-in's.
- Development of an online training system called "Commerce University" to be rolled out in early 2017.

## **Commerce Subcabinet Workgroup**

The Commerce Subcabinet includes the secretaries of the Departments of Commerce, Environment, Housing and Community Development, Labor, Planning, Transportation, and the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs, and is chaired by Commerce Secretary Gill. When the Subcabinet first met in December 2015, they identified three major priorities: shared mega projects, workforce, and customer service. A workgroup was created for each priority with senior level representatives from each agency.

The Customer Service Workgroup began meeting in February 2016 with the following outcomes:

- Discussion and review of –
  - Current state of customer service in agencies
  - Defining customers and stakeholders
  - Current surveys and measurements
  - Comments from the Regulatory Reform Commission
- Research of best practices –
  - Reviewed existing studies from various third-party consultants on customer service efforts by other state and local governments
  - Reviewed and engaged successful companies in the private sector
- Partnered with the Governor's Business Ombudsman to merge multiple customer service efforts into a consolidated plan of action.
- Invited representatives from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation and the Department of Human Resources to join the Workgroup.

Several customer service initiatives were successfully implemented this year by Commerce Subcabinet agencies and partner agencies. Some examples are:

- Assessments & Taxation – created uniform work hours so that all employees are working when customers are looking for services.
- Environment – executed a Lean Management pilot project that resulted in significant measurable improvements in services to Lead Rental Registry customers.
- Housing and Community Development – started a monthly employee recognition program for directors to highlight employees who are “Caught Doing Good”.
- Minority Affairs – created a new phone call intake process that emphasizes timely responses and resolution.

## **Collaboration & Statewide Rollout**

By April 2016, the Workgroup was partnering with the Governor's Office of Performance Improvement, the Governor's Business Ombudsman, and the Department of Information Technology, on the implementation of a statewide customer service effort. Based on the research

and benchmarking conducted by the Workgroup, the Governor's Customer Service Initiative was created and concentrated on three core deliverables:

- A renewed focus on a strong service culture in state agencies;
- Improved customer service training for state employees; and
- The establishment of new service performance metrics, which will allow the Administration and all Marylanders to track improvements in customer service over time.

The Initiative also includes a Customer Service Promise with specific commitments to the way state agencies interact with the public.

### Plan for Additional Improvements to State Government Customer Service

The Governor launched his Initiative in June 2016, and directed Commerce, Performance Improvement, and the Business Ombudsman to coordinate its implementation. The Governor asked 38 state agencies to do the following:

- a) Prominently display the Customer Service Promise at each entrance to building(s), in public spaces, in employee gathering places, on agency web sites, and on social media platforms.
- b) Select a designee to be the Customer Service liaison. Given the importance the Governor has attached to this effort, it was determined that this should be someone who reports directly to the agency head and has decision-making authority. Going forward, the Workgroup will meet with the agency liaisons several times a year to share best practices, provide support and address questions and concerns.
- c) Complete a customer service inventory, coordinating with the Governor's Office of Performance Improvement. These inventories captured all of the services each agency provides to customers – both internal and external – so that progress can be tracked in improving customer service delivery.
- d) Develop a customized customer service plan for each agency. These plans will become an integral part of the strategic vision for each agency. They contain measurable steps to achieve the three core deliverables (culture, training, and metrics), include appropriate customer service performance elements and standards for employees' performance



evaluation, and outline an incentive and recognition program for employees who provide excellent customer service. The Governor's Customer Service Workgroup, and the Governor's Communications Office reviewed all plans and provided feedback. Plan summaries are now posted on agency web sites. Going forward, plans will be consistent with and a part of each agency's Managing for Results strategic plan.

- e) Develop a timeline by which agencies will provide all employees the required customer service training. All employees are to be trained as soon as possible, with all training completed no later than June 2017. While each agency will need to tailor its training to meet its specific customer service needs, all training will incorporate a core curriculum of standardized principles and expectations, including the values embodied in the Customer Service Promise.

Several "train the trainer" sessions have been provided, aimed at those agencies that do not have their own in-house trainers. This will continue into 2017 as needed. A Trainers Workgroup has also been established to share training information and work together on a statewide training course that would be relevant for all state employees.

- f) Provide all customers a satisfaction survey after they interact with your agency. The Governor's Office of Performance Improvement worked with the Department of Information Technology to implement this statewide online survey, with links from agency websites and employee email signatures.

Moving forward, the Customer Service Workgroup will review annual updates on the progress of each agency.

A list of the participating agencies is as follows:

Aging	Information Technology
Agriculture	Insurance Administration
Assessments & Taxation	Juvenile Services
Budget & Management	Labor, Licensing & Regulation
Commerce	Lottery & Gaming Control
Disabilities	Military Department
Education * ( <i>newly added</i> )	Natural Resources
Emergency Management	Planning
Emergency Medical Services System	Public Safety & Correctional Services
Energy Administration	Secretary of State
Environment	Stadium Authority
Environmental Service	State Police
General Services	Transportation
Health & Mental Hygiene	Veterans Affairs
Higher Education Commission	Governor's Grants Office
Housing & Community Development	Governor's Office of the Business Ombudsman
Human Resources	Governor's Office for Children

Governor's Office of Community Initiatives  
Governor's Office of Crime Control &  
Prevention  
Governor's Office of Minority Affairs

Governor's Office of Performance  
Improvement  
Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of  
Hearing

### **Recommendations on Expansion of Subcabinet Workgroup**

While the membership of the Commerce Subcabinet was determined by statute, its Customer Service Workgroup has invited and collaborated with the following agencies on its initiatives:

- Assessments & Taxation
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Governor's Office of the Business Ombudsman
- Governor's Office of Performance Improvement

These agencies will continue to work and partner with the Subcabinet Workgroup to support all 39 agencies as they implement their customer service plans.

Now that the Governor's cabinet level agencies and supporting offices have implemented the Initiative, we will initiate efforts in 2017 to collaborate with independent entities such as:

- Office of the Comptroller
- Public Service Commission

### **Looking Ahead**

In conclusion, we realize based on our benchmarking and research, and our initial implementation of the Initiative, that improved customer service is an ongoing cultural transformation. Continuous training of all state employees centered on the principles of the Customer Service Promise is important. But even more essential is a commitment from leadership to create an engaged workforce that is supported and empowered by supervisors and management.