



**Maryland Department of Agriculture
Customer Service Annual Report**

Fiscal Year 2018



Contact:

Mary Darling
HR Administrator I
Maryland Department of Agriculture
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-5847 (Office)
443-602-9831 (Fax)
mary.darling@maryland.gov

Table of Contents

FY 2018 Highlights.....	4
Recognition Given to Employees	6
Leadership Analysis of FY 2018 and Summary of FY 2019 Approach	8
Detailed FY 2018 Results and FY 2019 Plans.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Voice of the Customer – Survey Results	9
Customer Service Training	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution	10
Customer Contact Centers.....	7
Timeliness of Responding to Customer Inquiries	10
Best Practices	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Plans for Improvement	10
Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives.....	10
Making Agency Services Available Online.....	10
Processing Times for Customer Transactions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Adjusting Hours to Meet Customer Demands.....	11
Social Media Usage to Improve the Customer Experience.....	11



The State of Maryland pledges to provide constituents, businesses, customers, and stakeholders with services in the following manner:

- **Friendly and Courteous:** We will be helpful and supportive and have a positive attitude and passion for what we do.
- **Timely and Responsive:** We will be proactive, take initiative, and anticipate your needs.
- **Accurate and Consistent:** We will always aim for 100% accuracy, and be consistent in how we interpret and implement state policies and procedures.
- **Accessible and Convenient:** We will continue to simplify and improve access to information and resources.
- **Truthful and Transparent:** We will advance a culture of honesty, clarity and trust.

Tell us about your experience with the Dept of Information Technology. [Click here to complete a three question customer experience survey.](#)

FY 2018 Highlights

The Maryland Department of Agriculture’s mission is to provide leadership and support to agriculture and the citizens of Maryland by conducting regulatory, service, and educational activities that assure consumer confidence, protect the environment, and promote agriculture.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture achieves excellence in MDA programs and in services that preserve and protect agricultural resources and the environment, promote profitable agriculture and consumer confidence, enhance the quality of life for all Marylanders, and secure a future for Maryland agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture’s Customer Service Promise describes our approach.

Customer Service activities in 2018 included:

1. Improving the tracking, responsiveness, and time-to-resolution of all electronic, telephone, written, and in-person correspondence. For example, we acknowledge all email inquiries within 24 hours of receipt. Correspondence control and complaints is handled directly in the Secretary’s office assuring impacted areas respond within 24 hours of receipt of any adverse information.

2. Ensure state employees and managers continue to improve customer service skills through formal training classes and informal coaching on best practices in customer service. Since there is no training budget for this action, MDA has utilized the very effective web-based training information. Customer service responsibility is an integral part of any new employee’s on-boarding process.

3. Improved the processing times of agency services to help citizens and businesses accomplish their transactions with the state. This is an ongoing challenge and MDA employees often go the extra mile to make sure customers are happy and their request is acted upon almost immediately. And greater use of electronic media is helping to reduce any time lags. See point four below:

4. Increased the number of services the state provides online so that citizens and businesses can utilize self-service, as appropriate. MDA is still in the process of making all services available online, such as license applications. Now, Kitchen Grease Haulers, Pesticides License, Permits and Certificates, State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, Weights and Measures Registering Service, are online.

5. Updated online publications, forms, FAQs, and pertinent information on our website so that citizens and businesses can find relevant information quickly and accurately. MDA has dramatically decreased published information but instead relies heavily on electronic versions of documents that can either be read or printed, if desired, by members of the public seeking information.

6. Used social media to help get the word out about services, events, and news to provide citizens and businesses with information important to them. There are metrics on this in the social media section.

7. A three question Customer Experience Survey is available on our website for citizens and businesses to provide feedback. Results are used to make improvements to services. In addition to these core customer service-related activities, we analyzed our business hours in order to better align them to customer needs; conduct focus group-type meetings with stakeholders, ensure literature is up-to-date, and conduct staff meetings to discuss progress on achieving customer service goals. We will also continue to recognize top performers in our agency for professionalism and courtesy, responsiveness in resolving a customer's needs, and for innovations that improve customer service. MDA has posted the customer service challenge in all entrances, exits, elevators, and bulletin boards. Staff is constantly reminded of their responsibility. We monitored the execution of the aforementioned activities, measured performance, and analyzed the results in order to continuously improve customer service. We are committed to providing Maryland citizens, businesses, stakeholders, and other customers with the best customer service.

Recognition Given to Employees

A performance management and awards program is critical to the success of an organization. Managers and supervisors must effectively differentiate between high and low performance by employees. The awards system must encourage and reward noteworthy performance. At the Maryland Department of Agriculture, we believe that major contributions, extra efforts and actions that are above and beyond normal duties should be recognized. Recognizing and rewarding accomplishments that demonstrate exemplary efforts and results help to sustain a high performance organization.

Long Service Awards

Our staff plays a major role in protecting consumers and the environment and ensuring fairness in the marketplace. On October 2, 2017, the Maryland Department of Agriculture honored 52 employees for their years of dedicated service to the department and to the state. Fourteen of the 52 employees honored have 30 or more years of service, and four of those individuals have more than 40 years. All together, these 52 employees represent 865 years of public service, and nearly 1.8 million hours worked. Our department and the agriculture community are fortunate to have such dedicated and knowledgeable personnel working to strengthen the State of Maryland and this agency each and every day. It is a testament to the value of our work that many of the employees honored this year have been with department since its earliest years.

Employee of the Year



The Maryland Department of Agriculture Employee of the Year was awarded to Alisha Mulkey who works in the Office of Resource Conservation as the Watershed Implementation Planning Coordinator. Her work is a major component of the department's efforts to protect Maryland's natural resources and waterways, specifically the Chesapeake Bay. Mulkey is known for her high standard of performance, professionalism and dedication to serving the citizens of the State of Maryland. She brings critical thinking and reasoning skills to effectively perform the duties and responsibilities associated with her position.

She is dedicated to agricultural conservation and Chesapeake Bay restoration and creative in developing solutions to address challenging issues and is articulate in presenting complex information to a variety of audiences.

(left to right): Hans Schmidt, Assistant Secretary of Resource Conservation; Julie Oberg, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture; Alisha Mulkey, Watershed Implementation Planning Coordinator; Jason Kepler, Program Manager, Watershed Implementation Program

FY 18 Employees of the Quarter

Throughout FY 2018, the Maryland Department of Agriculture honored six Employees of the Quarter who were nominated by their supervisors for going above and beyond the expectations of their positions with their exceptional service and dedication to the department's mission and goals.

- **Susie Kozlovsky Husk (*State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners*)** received the Leadership Award. She serves as the lead investigator for the Board and is responsible for investigating all consumer complaints against veterinarians and veterinary hospitals. She has a strong work ethic, fierce dedication, and willingness to train new employees. During a time of transition for the Board, Susie has gone out of her way to ensure employees are up to speed on the Board's processes, how regulations are enforced, how veterinary practices and procedures are handled, and how past experiences can inform future decision making. Often pulling long hours, Susie is being recognized for her great efforts over the years.
- **Matthew Malinowski (*State Chemist*)** serves as a chemist for the department's State Chemist office. He received the Customer Service Award for his notable contributions to the department's internal and external relations. His expertise in lab skills and instruments along with his commitment to quality and efficiency make him a highly valued member of the State Chemist staff. Going beyond his job role, Matthew also volunteers and takes initiative to help with internship recruitment, state fair activities, and other housekeeping items.
- **Shawn Burgess (*Program Planning - Resource Conservation*)** serves as an administrative specialist for Program Planning – Resource Conservation. She received the Customer Service Award for her incredible willingness to assist any coworker and for her extremely positive attitude when interacting with the public. From troubleshooting problems to assisting staff with the new phone system, no problem is too big or small for Shawn. Working tirelessly to improve the efficiency of program activities and procedures, Shawn has made a huge impact on the program and the department.
- **Barbara Kunie (*Animal Health*)** serves as an advanced ag inspector for the department's Animal Health program. She received the Customer Service Award for going above and beyond in her role to help the program quickly control and prevent further spread of avian influenza. Her relentless efforts helped to contain a reported case of avian influenza A virus this past February. Barbara's high level of productivity and excellent work ethic has greatly advanced the important mission of the Animal Health program.
- **Kimberly Lambert (*Frederick Animal Health Lab*)** received the Outstanding Performance Award. She serves as an advanced agricultural laboratory scientist in the department's Frederick Animal Health Lab. Kimberly has steered the lab's quality assurance activities for the past five years and has been instrumental in maintaining the lab's accreditation. Thanks to her efforts, the Frederick Animal Health Lab was recently re-accredited and achieved compliance with the new ISO/IEC 17025: 2017 standard assessed by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation – the second animal health diagnostic laboratory in the nation to do so. Kimberly is dedicated to ensuring the Animal Health Program is always working to improve their quality standards and played a crucial role in helping the Frederick Animal Health Lab meet compliance for the updated quality standard.
- **Kevin Whited (*Salisbury Animal Health Lab*)** received the Outstanding Performance Award. He serves as an agricultural laboratory scientist in the department's Salisbury Animal Health Lab. Kevin started providing quality assurance guidance to the lab last year and has played a critical

role in helping to increase compliance. With Kevin's help, the Salisbury Animal Health Lab recently achieved accreditation for the updated ISO/IEC 17025: 2017 standard by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA). The Salisbury Animal Health Lab is the first animal health diagnostic laboratory in the country to be accredited for this new standard through A2LA. Kevin was instrumental in helping the lab achieve this higher quality standard.

On the Spot Awards

The department also offers "On the Spot Awards," which are designed to offer supervisors the opportunity to grant immediate recognition for individuals and teams of employees for their day-to-day extra efforts and contributions. Eleven employees received "On the Spot" awards in FY 2018.

[Leadership Analysis of FY 2018 and Summary of FY 2019 Approach](#)

The department is working every day to continue to provide prompt, courteous, and reliable customer service through our interactions via phone, email, online and in person. We are working to make more transactions and information available online in order to offer customers online modern, on-demand option for doing business with the government. The following are a few highlights from FY 18:

- Surveys sent to customers of the Salisbury and Frederick Animal Health lab in December of 2017 (provided customers the option of completing survey on paper or online). Results tabulated and analyzed by Quality Manager and reviewed by Lab Director. Overall, 85% of respondents were either Very Satisfied or Satisfied with the customer service the labs provided.
- For 2019, the Animal Health Program is planning to increase the scope of our customer survey to include our Program administrators and field personnel. The broader survey will ask Animal Health customers questions on: overall customer satisfaction, quality and timeliness of service and reports, professionalism and courteousness of our Program's personnel, and any follow-up responses or actions needed.
- Pesticide Regulation Section's license renewal process was moved online and customer service surveys showed that 93.6% were satisfied with the process.
- The State Chemist's renewal process was moved online and customer service surveys indicate 83.3% were satisfied with the process (and 100% would recommend the new online process to another person.)
- The State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners began a significant upgrade to its online services and internal database in FY 18. The project will be completed in the first half of FY 19. These upgrades include:
 - Establishing a new online portal for licensees to track their continuing education credits, maintain current information about their practices, and renew their annual licenses online. The licensing renewal portion was launched in FY 2018. This function allows the Board staff to see, in real time, who has renewed and who has not from the previous year. It also provides us, in real time, how much revenue we have collected from the different licensees.
 - Organizations who are seeking approval to offer Continuing Education credit for seminars and presentations they are providing may now request information online, as of July 1. In the past, providers were required to submit paper packages that had to be tracked and reviewed. This system also allows individual licensees to request credit for

courses they take that have not been approved by the Board or the national organization (such as specialty conferences in other states).

- Plant Protection and Weed Management added a new email address (DontBug.MD@maryland.gov) which is included on all of the department's spotted lanternfly outreach material, requesting the public to send any pics or inquiries to this email for verification. This e-mail address will also allow citizens to send in photos of suspicious insects for identification.
- Office of Resource Conservation – District Operations purchased 24 iPad tablets and Verizon data plans in an effort to streamline conservation program delivery. In particular, employees in the 24 Soil Conservation Districts are utilizing the iPad to sign-up farmers for the FY 2019 Cover Crop Program at their farm while performing the FY 2018 Cover Crop Program field checks. This mobility has eliminated the need for a farmer to travel to their local Soil Conservation District office to fill out an application. Claim for payments and field spot checks can now be performed utilizing the iPads, greatly expediting these processes as well. Further work is underway to utilize the iPads to replace paper forms and report data in real time (e.g., MACS Capital Program status reviews).
- Mosquito Control Program provides a valuable public health service to Marylanders. The program has a plane and the aerial spray crew sprayed over 60,000 acres in Dorchester and Somerset counties, which is quite an undertaking that the community appreciates. Additionally, in FY 2018 the program sprayed about 48,000 acres for floodwater species that cause a problem throughout the entire state, which is unusual as the spray crew typically focuses on salt marsh species.

In FY 2019, the department is proposing a multi-year modernization IT project to upgrade MDA's database infrastructure, which will allow MDA to further enhance the goal of digitizing all of the department's applications onto a single public-facing platform to offer greater citizen access. MDA's project will facilitate a more efficient and sustainable workflow while supporting the Governor's directive to enhance customer service from within Maryland state agencies. This project will enable the department to unify all citizen facing licenses and permits into one platform with a seamless user experience.

Customer Service Training

Per Hub data, 90 MDA employees completed the online course "Customer Service Training for State Government" during FY 2018, which includes new hires, seasonal hires, and other employees.

Voice of the Customer – Survey Results

From the initial launch of the statewide effort to improve customer service, MDA has consistently ranked high in its survey results. Part of this is the hands-on nature of the work being done. Many employees know the customers with whom they interact on a personal level. Much of the MDA staff is disbursed to the field where that personal touch is even more prevalent. For the FY 2018 online customer service online survey data that was provided for Question 1 (*Overall, how satisfied are you with the customer service provided?*), the department received 192 responses. Of those, 160 were very satisfied/somewhat satisfied (84%), 6 were neutral (3%) 12 were somewhat dissatisfied (6%) and 12 very dissatisfied (6%).

Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution

Customer Contact Centers

The department's policy is for each program to have phones staffed during our core business hours of 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Timeliness of Responding to Customer Inquiries

Customer transactions are already almost immediate. However, we will be mindful in the future to address any service delays should they arrive. Generally, any service delays are a direct result of too many requests and too few people to service those requests. We do not see that dynamic changing and have moved to use the Web to address many concerns, to provide timely information, and to allow for more online transactions. The move to make services more accessible via the Web will continue as we move forward.

Plans for Improvement

Although the indicators of MDA's customer service delivery are overwhelming positive, we will not be satisfied until we can reach 100% in all the categories. This is a lofty goal as human nature and the nature of MDA's work--spraying for mosquitoes for instance, can create both positive and negative reactions. The proposed database modernization project (see below section and Leadership Analysis section for more details) will provide a much needed platform that will streamline customer interfaces with the department.

Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives

Making Agency Services Available Online

The department is making transactions and information available online in order to offer customers an online, on-demand option for doing business with the government. In FY 2019, the department is proposing a multi-year modernization IT project to upgrade MDA's database infrastructure, which will allow MDA to further enhance the goal of digitizing all of the department's applications onto a single public-facing platform to offer greater citizen access. MDA's project will facilitate a more efficient and sustainable workflow while supporting the Governor's directive to enhance customer service from within Maryland state agencies. This project will enable the department to unify all citizen facing licenses and permits into one platform with a seamless user experience.

The State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners and Maryland Horse Industry Board began a significant upgrade to their online services and internal database in FY 18. The project will be completed in the first half of FY 19. The State Chemist renewal process and the Pesticide Regulation Section license renewal process was moved online.

Starting in FY20, the department aims to launch a database modernization project to incorporate the rest of the department's programs.

Adjusting Hours to Meet Customer Demands

The department's policy is to have phones staffed during our core business hours of 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Social Media Usage to Improve the Customer Experience

More and more organizations, agencies, nonprofits and regular people are communicating via social media. Traditional media as well are moving to online, digital platforms. By its nature, social media is fast moving and immediate. Rumors and misunderstandings can "go viral" very quickly. By being online and engaged with stakeholders and constituents, the department can not only become part of relevant discussions, it can also stop the spread of false information.

The department's social media activities allow the agency:

- To maintain a constant and consistent presence in online communities and discussions;
- To provide credible information directly to the public, without relying solely on the media;
- To monitor trends and issues in public discourse, to correct rumors and provide alternative viewpoints on emerging controversies;
- To improve the image and increase citizen understanding of agriculture;
- To regularly and routinely – both seriously and informally – engage citizens in a variety of issues;
- To continually promote the agency's website as the authoritative source of information.
- The department continued to expand its social media presence during FY 2018 with growing followings on Twitter and Facebook and a less prominent presence on Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, and Soundcloud.

These social media platforms provide the agency direct access to a new, younger, more tech savvy audience. MDA's official Facebook page ended FY2018 with 11,210 followers. MDA's official Twitter feed ended the year with more than 13,000 followers.

Agency Social Media Accounts

The department continues to maintain several program-specific accounts in addition to its official Facebook and Twitter.

Twitter

- @MdAgDept – Main Maryland Department of Agriculture account
- @MDsBest – The department's marketing office account
- @MDsBestSeafood – The seafood marketing program's account
- @MdEquines – The Maryland Horse Industry Board account
- @MdFarm2School – The Farm to School Program account
- @MdAgMosquito – The Mosquito Control program account.
- @MdGypsyMoth – A small feed that live tweets when planes are spraying trees and forests for gypsy moth.

Facebook

- Maryland Department of Agriculture
- Maryland Horse Industry Board
- Maryland Farm to School
- Maryland's Best
- The department also maintains accounts on Flickr, Instagram, and YouTube.