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## **SDAT Releases Second Annual Customer Service Report**

### *Launches Nationally Award-Winning Maryland Business Express for Entrepreneurs and Business Owners, Recognizes Outstanding Employees*

In the past year, the [Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation](#) (SDAT) has worked diligently to enhance the services we provide to our customers and introduce new ways we recognize our hard working employees, while delivering upon Governor Larry Hogan's [Customer Service Promise](#). Our Department's most significant accomplishment of the year was the launch of Maryland Business Express, which has a 96% satisfaction rating among customers and was highlighted in the Hogan Administration's [2018 Customer Service Annual Report](#).

"I would like to thank the many departments, agencies, and employees that contributed to the creation of Maryland Business Express, which is an outstanding resource for Maryland's business community," said SDAT Director Michael Higgs. "In the year to come, we look forward to launching additional online services to increase the quality and accessibility of the services our Department provides, while enhancing the customer experience."

The launch of the nationally award-winning [Maryland Business Express](#) site has made it easier than ever for Maryland's aspiring entrepreneurs and existing business owners to plan, start, manage, and grow their business. We even introduced a digital assistant called "Chatbot," which is the first to be used by any state government for business purposes and allows customers to interact with state government 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This online resource has broken down government silos to provide tremendous service to customers while ensuring that Maryland is Open for Business.

SDAT continued to focus on upgrading technology and streamlining procedures to make more services available online via Maryland Business Express. Today, more than 69% of all documents are filed online, with 50% of filings occurring outside of normal business hours and 20% of filings occurring on a mobile device. Maryland Business Express has given busy business owners a fast and easily accessible alternative to filing documents by mail or in-person. Not only are we increasing our digital engagement with customers, but we are also using mail and email campaigns, social media, and community events to connect with more property owners and business owners than ever before.

In addition, SDAT has received numerous calls, emails, and feedback cards from customers wanting to recognize employees that have gone above and beyond their call of duty. Throughout the last year, customers from across the state completed approximately 809 customer service cards and an average of 94 employees received shout-outs each month, which is a 56% increase from last year. As an expression

of our gratitude, our Department awarded Governor's Citations to six of our outstanding team members across the state in conjunction with the Hogan administration's regional cabinet meetings.

SDAT looks forward to working with our customers to build on this momentum and find new, innovative ways to make it even easier to interact with our Department and do business in Maryland!

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## **Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation FY18 Customer Service Annual Report**



*SDAT Office Manager Gayle Mister receiving a Governor's Citation for her 39 years of outstanding customer service at the Southern Maryland Regional Cabinet Meeting.*

On behalf of the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, I would like to thank Denise Herndon, Corbett Webb, Fallon Patton, and Candice De Falco for their contributions to the Department's customer service initiatives and in preparing this report.

~Michael Higgs, Director

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If you should need additional information about the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation's Customer Service Program, please contact the Department's Customer Service Liaison:

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## FY18 Highlights

In FY18, our Department utilized customer feedback to provide better customer service and recognize the achievements of our employees:

- Governor Larry Hogan, Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford, and SDAT Director Michael Higgs presented Governor's Citations to six members of our outstanding team across the state in conjunction with regional Cabinet Meetings.
- An average of 94 "Super Star Shout-Out" cards were awarded to SDAT's employees each month, which is a 56% increase from FY17!
- SDAT established an Employee of the Month program, Employee Appreciation Committee, and the SDAT Connection Newsletter to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of employees.
- Celebrated State Employee Recognition Day with a Department-wide pizza party and distributed Years of Service awards to 83 employees during a ceremony.
- 87.7% of customers who submitted feedback through the online survey or customer service cards at our 2 public service counters and 24 local offices were either "Very Satisfied" or "Somewhat Satisfied," exceeding the statewide agency average.

In FY18, we sought to improve the information available to our customers:

- Launched the new Maryland Business Express site, which is designed to provide tools and resources to aspiring entrepreneurs and existing business owners while they plan, start, manage, and grow their business.
- Introduced "Chatbot," which is the first ever digital assistant used by state government for business purposes designed to communicate with customers.
- Added more than 65,000 unique email addresses to our email distribution list to provide general updates and notify customers of annual deadlines.
- Mailed more than 77,000 postcards to low-income homeowners and renters to notify them that they may be eligible to receive a tax credit.

In FY18, we focused on upgrading technology and procedures to make more services available online and reduce transaction processing time:

- More than 69% of business documents are now filed online and 50% of these filings occur outside of normal business hours.
- Over 30,000 paper documents are being scanned each month and uploaded to the online Maryland Business Express portal for customers to easily view for free.
- PayPal is now available for customers to make payments online.
- Business entities can now file Resolutions and Cancellations online.
- The average wait for customers is less than one minute at a local assessment office counter.

## Recognition Given to Employees

Identifying and celebrating team members who demonstrate outstanding customer service and capturing positive customer feedback specific to employees has continuously been a key focus of SDAT's customer service initiative. Our Department uses the feedback customers provide to identify what services and procedures we need to update to better serve them. The feedback also provides us with a unique way to recognize and reward our employees who demonstrate extraordinary customer service.



To obtain feedback from customers, a customer experience survey is available on SDAT's website and we have placed customer service feedback cards in all of our public areas — including in our 24 local offices and at the 2 customer service counters in our Baltimore headquarters. Both the online and physical customer service surveys align with the Hogan-Rutherford administration's Customer Service Promise.

Every comment is logged and a feedback summary report delivered to program managers monthly. Additionally, every positive comment is printed on a "Super Star Shout-Out" card, which is presented to the employee by their supervisor. In FY18, an average of 94 cards were given out each month. This is more than a 56% increase from the amount of cards awarded in FY17! SDAT's employees are always very excited to receive these Shout-Out cards and proudly display them at their desks or in public spaces. Not only do these cards help recognize the efforts of employees, but they boost individual and group morale in the office.

Supervisors also circulate emails applauding a team member for a job well done and posts may be made on SDAT's social media pages, our Intranet site, the SDAT Connection Newsletter, or in a Department-wide email. Ella McDaniel can be seen on the right with the numerous Superstar Shout-Out cards she receives every month for the wonderful customer service she provides.



In FY18, six SDAT employees were presented with a Governor's Citation in conjunction with various cabinet meetings across the state to recognize their commitment to providing Marylanders with outstanding customer service. At the Southern Maryland Regional Cabinet Meeting, Governor Larry Hogan and Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford recognized Gayle Mister for the 39 years of fantastic customer service she has provided at SDAT's



Calvert County Assessments Office. This event is pictured on the first page of the report.

Lieutenant Governor Rutherford also visited SDAT's headquarters during the Baltimore City Cabinet Meeting to present Charter Filings Program Manager Lisha Williams with a Governor's Citation to recognize her tremendous efforts in modernizing the Department's business filing processes. This exciting moment is pictured to the right. While there, he also presented Chief of Staff Corbett Webb with a citation for his leadership on the governor's Customer Service Workgroup. Governor's Citations are a terrific display of gratitude towards those who are a part of our Taxpayer Services and Real Property teams who continuously go above and beyond.



In FY18, SDAT established an Employee Appreciation Committee, which is responsible



for continuously planning fun activities and club meetings to reward employees for their hard work. For State Employee Recognition Day, the Committee planned a Department-wide pizza party with an awards ceremony. At the awards ceremony, SDAT Director Michael Higgs distributed Years of Service awards to approximately 83 employees from the Taxpayer Services and Real Property Divisions. These Years of Service Awards were given to employees who have been with SDAT and the State of Maryland for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, and even 45 years. In the picture to the left, Director Higgs is presenting Charter Legal Program Manager Paula McLean with an award

for her 35 years of service to SDAT.

Additionally in FY18, the Department created the SDAT Connection Newsletter, which is distributed amongst employees via email once a month. This newsletter is a fantastic way of not only keeping employees informed, but also acknowledging their individual and group achievements. With 25 offices located throughout the state, the newsletter is also an efficient way to keep all of SDAT's employees well informed about what other programs are doing. The SDAT Connection Newsletter features updates from the Director and several divisions including Real Property, Information Technology, Taxpayer Services, Human Resources, Attorney General, and Accounting. The



newsletter also features a list of shout-outs received amongst the various divisions at SDAT, employee birthdays, and the announcement of the Employee of the Month.

SDAT's Employee of the Month program was established in FY18 to recognize a standout employee at one of the local assessment offices or at SDAT's headquarters. All SDAT employees may submit a nomination for one or several of their colleagues each month who have exemplified Governor Hogan's Customer Service Promise. After the Employee of the Month is chosen by the Committee, the winner is announced in the monthly SDAT Connection Newsletter. The winner is acknowledged by their supervisors and is presented with a special citation. Manya Archie, Supervisor at the Howard County Assessments Office, is pictured to the right with Director Higgs and her Employee of the Month award. She won this award in June because of the leadership and dedication she displayed while handling the aftermath of the devastating floods in Ellicott City in May.



Many of our employees exemplify the principles identified in the Customer Service Promise, and recognizing and rewarding those employees that do so improves the morale of the entire Department. The Super Star Shout-out cards, Governor's Citations, activities planned by the Employee Appreciation Committee, SDAT Connection Newsletter, and Employee of the Month awards are all fantastic ways to recognize SDAT's employees. In FY19, our Department will continue these methods of recognition, while also looking for new, innovative, and more-interactive ways of applauding employees for demonstrating outstanding customer service.

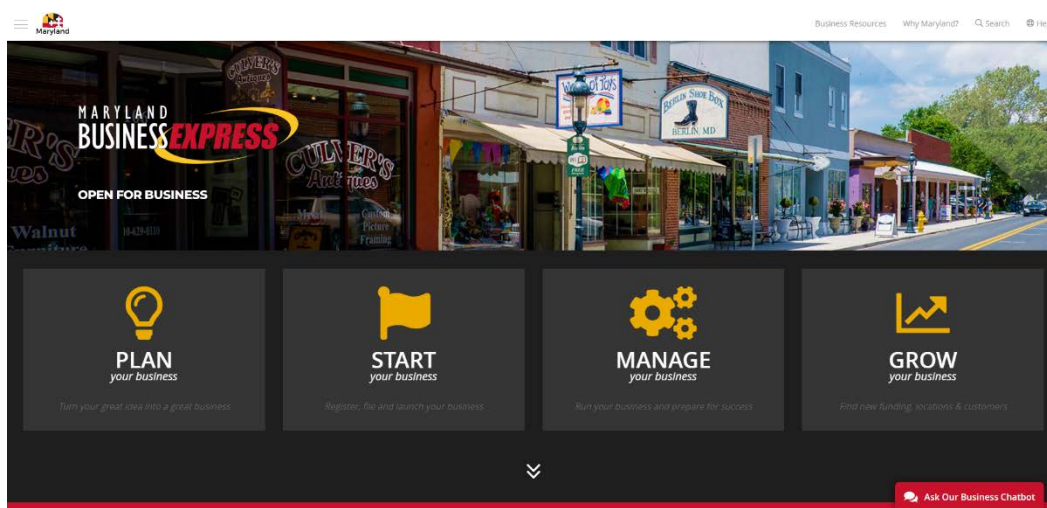
## Leadership Analysis of FY18 and Summary of FY19 Approach

The Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation's (SDAT) core responsibilities are assessing all real and personal property in the state; approving applicants to receive the homestead, homeowners', and renters' property tax credits; and managing all business filings required for entities to operate in Maryland. These programs are very different from one another, but all three involve significant, and many times in-person interactions with our customers.

In FY17, SDAT had numerous significant accomplishments that enhanced the service we provide to our customers and introduced new ways to recognize our hard working employees. In FY18, SDAT harnessed this forward momentum and continued to go above and beyond Governor Hogan's Customer Service Promise. In FY18, SDAT developed new ways to recognize the hard work of employees by awarding more Governor's Citations to employees in conjunction with Cabinet Meetings and establishing an Employee Appreciation Committee, Employee of the Month Program, and an SDAT Connection Newsletter. We continued to engage with our customers through community events, mail and email campaigns, social media, and by offering multiple methods for them to provide feedback.

SDAT has continued to engage customers digitally through the Maryland Business Express filing site, which has improved the quality of service provided while decreasing processing times. The multiple new online services offered in FY18 made it more convenient to do business, which is why over 69% of documents were filed online, more than 50% of which occurred outside of normal business hours.

Most notably in FY18, SDAT launched the new nationally award-winning [Maryland Business Express](https://businessexpress.maryland.gov) site, which is a multi-agency collaboration that makes it easier than ever for Maryland's small business owners and entrepreneurs to plan, start, manage, and grow their business. This site, located at [businessexpress.maryland.gov](https://businessexpress.maryland.gov), combines information previously spread across many state agencies into one, easy-to-navigate site, while providing a clear outline of steps involved in starting a business.



The site's layout is based on the questions most commonly asked by existing business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs, and contains four main sections: Plan, Start, Manage, and Grow. The Plan and Start sections list orderly steps that guide entrepreneurs through the process of developing a business plan, registering a business, and applying for tax accounts and licenses. The Manage and Grow sections help business owners remain in good standing, make legal changes to their business, and find additional programs that best fit their needs.

This website also includes a digital assistant called "Chatbot," which is the first to be used by any state government specifically for business purposes. The Chatbot and Maryland Business Express are available to communicate with and guide Marylanders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This new online resource provides tremendous customer service to Marylanders because it allows them to interact with state government whenever it is convenient for them. Not only is Maryland Business Express providing tremendous customer service to citizens, but it is ensuring that Maryland is Open for Business by stimulating economic growth through entrepreneurship.

Our Department is excited about the path we are on and for what the future holds, and in FY19 we are going to continue building on these successes. We are currently determining ways to better utilize customer feedback, and are looking into opportunities for more Department-wide customer service and job-specific training programs. We will continue working with our existing vendors to make more services available online. Additionally, we are looking into new methods of providing similar services for our tax credits and real property programs. We are also in discussion with various organizations throughout the state on how our Department can partner with them to provide even more information and services to Marylanders. With a continued focus on creating an excellent customer experience, coupled with an increase in services by harnessing new and innovative technologies, we can make it easier for customers to interact with our Department and do business in Maryland.

## Detailed FY18 Results and FY19 Plans

### Voice of the Customer – Survey Results

SDAT is somewhat unique among state agencies in that we not only encourage customers to submit feedback through the online survey, but we also encourage them to fill out customer service cards. These cards were updated to align with the Hogan-Rutherford administration's Customer Service Promise and online survey. The cards pictured below are available in each of our 24 local offices and at the two customer service counters at our headquarters location in Baltimore.

**MD**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ASSESSMENTS AND TAXATION

Mail to Headquarters at:  
301 W. Preston St.  
Baltimore, MD 21201-2395

**THE CUSTOMER SERVICE PROMISE**  
Our Department pledges to provide customers with services in the following manner:

<b>Friendly and Courteous:</b> We will be helpful and supportive and have a positive attitude and passion for what we do.	<b>Timely and Responsive:</b> We will be proactive, take initiative, and anticipate your needs.	<b>Accurate and Consistent:</b> We will always aim for 100% accuracy, and be consistent in how we interpret and implement state policies and procedures.	<b>Accessible and Convenient:</b> We will continue to simplify and improve access to information and resources.	<b>Truthful and Transparent:</b> We will advance a culture of honesty, clarity and trust.
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Completing this survey will help us enhance the information & services we provide.

**Thank You**

Your feedback is important to us. Please answer the following questions...

Overall, how satisfied are you with the customer service provided?

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
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The Department of Assessments and Taxation made it easy for me to handle my issue.

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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If you would like someone to follow up regarding your comments, please fill out the following contact information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Need help planning, starting, managing, or growing your business? Visit [businessexpress.maryland.gov](http://businessexpress.maryland.gov)

Visit us online at [www.dat.maryland.gov](http://www.dat.maryland.gov) Like us on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/MarylandDAT](http://www.Facebook.com/MarylandDAT)

The following table summarizes the customer service responses our Department received in FY18.

	Very Satisfied and Somewhat Satisfied / total	Percentage
Feedback from Customer Service Survey Cards	773/809	95.5%
Feedback from Online Customer Service Survey	426/558	76.3%
<b>FY18 Customer Service Feedback Total</b>	<b>1,199/1,367</b>	<b>87.7%</b>

Our Department is very proud of our results, which exceed the statewide average for respondents who indicated they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. Additionally, while we are always striving to increase overall satisfaction, we pay particular attention to the feedback comments. All positive comments are logged and used for employee recognition initiatives as discussed earlier in this report.

Any time a customer leaves contact information and is either not satisfied with their service or leaves a comment that suggests follow up would be beneficial, a member of our customer service team contacts them immediately. If negative comments are received but there is no contact information, they are still reviewed by program managers. Reviewing these comments can lead to substantive changes in procedures

and services provided, a number of which have already been made or are being developed.

For example, over the course of FY17, our Department heard from many business owners and accountants that the “Form 1” required filing was confusing to complete for business entities. Many also expressed that the annual filing process was a time consuming and paper heavy process. In response to the feedback we received from Marylanders, SDAT created a team of employees to review the Form 1 and brainstorm ways to streamline the annual filing process.

The team decided to separate “Form 1” into an “Annual Report” and a “Personal Property Tax Return.” The form separation clearly distinguishes the dual purpose of the annual filing and streamlines the process for business entities that do not own any personal property. Since these two new forms were created and the new process was implemented, our Department has received very positive feedback from customers. This is just one example of how our Department uses customer feedback to improve upon our existing procedures to provide a better experience to Marylanders.

One of our main focuses in FY19 will be on continuing to utilize these comments to improve our services and procedures, and sharing the feedback—whether positive, constructive, or negative—with more members of our team.

### Customer Service Training

SDAT employees routinely receive customer service training from their supervisors and occasional emailed etiquette reminders from customer service liaisons. In FY18, SDAT also procured 100 licenses to Lynda.com, which is an online training course that offers thousands of courses to government employees to help them acquire the management and technology skills they need to become more productive and advance within their roles. These licenses were distributed to supervisors and other team members throughout the Department.

All new employees are also required to complete an additional customer service online training program, and during orientation are provided with a copy of the Customer Service Promise and sign a form acknowledging that they have read and understand it. The goal of these activities is to help employees be more aware of the need to strive towards providing outstanding customer service at all times, and how to better think about their actions from the customer’s point of view.

Our Human Resources and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Divisions have also developed in-house training programs specifically for SDAT’s employees to promote a positive work environment. These new training programs are about civility, bullying, and sexual harassment.

SDAT’s Customer Service Liaisons have also been attending the various Maryland Agency Liaisons Meetings that are held throughout the year. These meetings have

been very helpful because they have introduced SDAT to learn new and innovative ways to provide fantastic customer service such as customer service journey mapping. The meetings have also given SDAT's Liaisons the opportunity to meet with other customer service representatives from various agencies to exchange ideas.

In FY19, we will look for innovative ways to provide customer service training to our employees at every level. Our Human Resources and EEO Divisions will continue to improve upon existing employee training programs and will create new programs to be used in-house. In addition, in November and December of FY19, we are going to send dozens of Program Managers to local two-day SkillPath training workshops to learn the latest and best techniques for effectively managing and supervising employees.

## Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution

### Customer Contact Centers

While we have great customer service survey results, which exceed the state average of 81%, we realize that there is always room for improvement in how we manage the inquiries that our Department receives. On phones, we currently have either one individual or a group of employees that are responsible for answering calls for particular subject matters. For example, we have one person who is responsible for answering all calls at headquarters involving real property. This is a task that is easily managed by one individual because most customers call their local assessment office directly.

On the contrary, in our larger divisions such as Charter and Tax Credits, we have to implement a different structure consisting of groups of individuals because of the high volume of calls received on a daily basis. The amount of incoming calls only increases during peaks throughout the year around deadlines. For example, as the September 1 submission deadline for tax credit applications approaches, our Tax Credits Division is bombarded with phone calls in August. During these busy time periods, many employees are answering calls. In FY18, we purchased headsets for many employees, so they can answer calls while doing other work and don't have to be stationary at their desk.

While this setup is adequate, in FY19 we have exciting plans to improve the structure and process of managing the Department's phone calls by creating an actual call center. Instead of having different processes for answering calls based on topic, this call center will be able to answer the most commonly asked questions on every topic, and will know exactly where to redirect the customer if they need to speak with a subject matter expert. Additionally, we are going to reorganize and simplify the existing phone tree, so customers can speak to a live person and get the answer they need faster than ever. These improvements will allow us to more closely align procedure with the Customer Service Promise, providing fast and accurate information to Marylanders who call.



Our Department's Maryland Business Express site is managed by NIC, Maryland; a vendor that provides technical support to our customers who use the site via phone, email, and live chat, which our customers have very positive feedback about. Their support services are fast, effective, and easy to use. In fact, 96% of customers are satisfied with the quality, ease-of-use, and overall experience with the application. In FY19, we look forward to not only continuing to maintain this relationship with NIC, but also maintaining the technical support services they offer on the Maryland Business Express site.

### Timeliness of Responding to Customer Inquiries

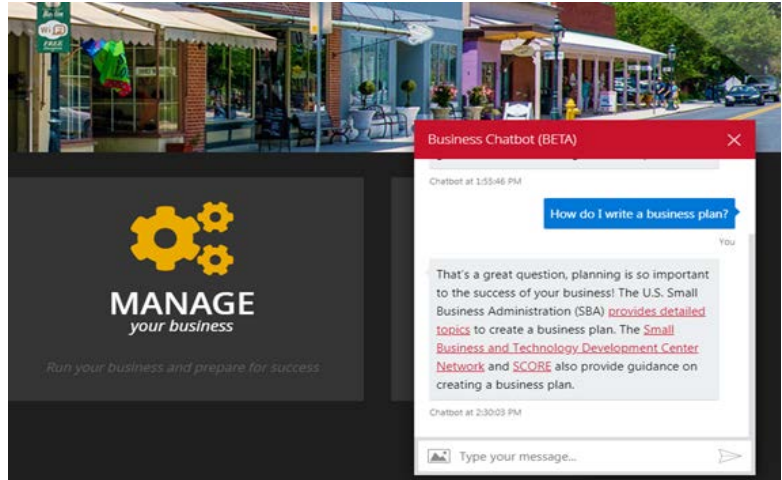
Our customer service feedback cards are collected from locked boxes in our public areas and are reviewed on a weekly basis. Customer service feedback sent via mail or email is reviewed daily. Feedback from the online customer service surveys are routed via the Intranet Quorum (IQ) to our Department's Customer Service Liaisons as they are received. Customer service reports are published on the Customer Service Portal bi-weekly and the Liaisons immediately follow up on all positive and negative feedback to continue to engage with SDAT's customers.

If a customer emails an inquiry to a specific division's shared email account, they will receive an automatic reply with important resources based on the most frequently asked questions. For example, if a customer emails a local assessment office, they will receive an automatic reply back with pertinent real property resources such as online FAQs, our online real property search, and the number for their local tax payment offices. While an SDAT employee will always follow up on the inquiry, the automatic email responses increase the odds that the customer's inquiry is fulfilled. Providing automatic answers to frequently asked questions is just one way we are improving the speed and quality of the service we provide.

Once an inquiry is reviewed, in the vast majority of instances a full and final answer is provided within 24 hours, instead of transferring the customer or asking another team member to follow up. Most customer inquiries can be quickly and easily answered because SDAT employees can refer customers to the organized forms, application, and online business and real property services that are available on our website. If an inquiry is more complicated and an immediate response cannot be provided, our customer service team will send an email to the customer thanking them for submitting their inquiry and confirming receipt of it before sending it to a program specialist for follow up. SDAT's official policy is to respond to all requests within three business days.

If a customer has an inquiry while using our online Maryland Business Express services, they may contact our vendor – NIC, Maryland – for 24 hour support. In addition, the new Maryland Business Express site also features a “Chatbot,” which is a digital assistant that is designed to communicate with and deliver real-time information to our customers.

In the picture to the right, you can see that a customer asked the Chatbot, “How do I write a business plan?” and the Chatbot responded with helpful resources. This very helpful resource is available to assist customers by answering questions and providing guidance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



### Best Practices

We believe our current practice of responding to customer inquiries is sufficient and satisfactory for our customers. As soon as we receive an inquiry, it is reviewed by staff and in one way or another we acknowledge the customer’s inquiry. We strive to handle inquiries very quickly in order to ensure that our customers have a positive experience.

We believe that the best practice that other agencies and departments in Maryland could adopt is having physical customer service cards available in public areas. Our customer service cards are available at our 2 public counters at our headquarters in Baltimore City and our 24 local assessment offices. These customer service cards are completed immediately following an interaction with SDAT staff and are a great indication of the service we are providing to customers.

### Plans for Improvement

While we have firm and efficient procedures for responding to feedback and inquiries we receive from our customer service surveys, we would like to increase the speed in which we receive the inquiries from our vendor NIC, Maryland.

In addition, we are developing ways to utilize our Google Analytics account, which allows us to see which pages on our Department’s website receive the most traffic and what audiences are viewing them. We are also going to be making comprehensive changes to the structure of our phone tree and will be developing a call center this coming fiscal year. In FY19, we will continue to improve the speed and quality of responses to customer service surveys and inquiries.

## Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives

### Making Agency Services Available Online

Whether it is an entrepreneur trying to start a home business, or a corporation in existence for decades, SDAT maintains the paperwork that allows businesses to operate in Maryland. Every year, the private sector offers more and more online services, but the public sector has not moved as quickly in this direction—and as of 2015, neither did SDAT. Three years ago, most charter filing transactions were completed by mail or in-person. If a customer wanted to start a business or reserve a trade name in Maryland, they had to wait 10 weeks while paperwork was processed. After a business owner filed their annual Personal Property Return, they had to wait 14 weeks for assessors to review the submission.

Today, thanks to a strong push to provide more services online, more than 69% of all documents are filed online and 50% of which occur outside of normal business hours. 20% of our Maryland Business Express viewers are also using a mobile device. In FY16, Maryland Business Express—our award winning online platform for filing business paperwork and requesting document copies—began accepting filings for most types of business entities.

In FY17, the ability to order copies of documents was added, and all new document filings and most within the past decade can be viewed and downloaded for free on our website. We also began an in-house scanning operation so that even more documents could be accessible online. In FY18, our Department has increased the scanning numbers to include 30,000 documents (125,000 pages) per month. More recently, we also contracted with Wells Fargo to augment our scanning operations and in just the first six months of 2018, we scanned, imported, or added more than 220,000 documents and 700,000 pages. The number of documents we scanned in the first 6 months of 2018 is almost as much as the number of documents added in the entire year of 2017.

Additionally in FY17, Maryland Business Express began issuing Certificates of Good Standing online and accepting applications to reserve a trade name online. In FY18, entities can now file resolutions to change a business' principal office and resident agent online. They can also now file a cancellation for a Maryland Limited Liability Company. PayPal was also introduced in FY18 as an option for customers to make payments online, rather than having to mail in a check.

Our Department's Real Property Database Search is also a very popular and useful tool used by various groups to find information about a specific property's assessment and tax credit application status. In fact, this search is viewed over 1,600,000 times each month!

Our Department's goal is to allow all services to be completed online. In FY19, we look forward to allowing customers to file penalties and previous year filings online using Maryland Business Express. With this update, Businesses that have fallen out of good

standing status or been forfeited will be able to file up to 10 years of overdue Annual Reports and Personal Property Tax Returns online to regain good standing status. We are looking forward to adding this new feature because it will help business owners get back on a path to success and regain the ability to legally do business after failing to submit a required filing.

Also in FY19, we will offer customers the ability to file formation documents for religious corporations and articles of termination for foreign Limited Liability Companies online. We also look forward to improving processes to essentially allow a customer to expedite their filing without having to pay the expedited fee. The availability of these online services enables customers to conduct business with SDAT when it's convenient for them, and results in quicker turnaround, shorter wait times, and fewer dropped calls.

### Processing Times for Customer Transactions

The increased availability of online services has drastically reduced processing times while also freeing up and enabling us to better allocate other resources. Three years ago, it could take up to 10 weeks for document copy requests to be returned, while today the turnaround is 4 weeks. In FY15, reviewing personal property returns could take up to 10 weeks, while today it only takes 5. Business-formation processing time has also been reduced from 10 weeks to 4 weeks and trade name processing time has been reduced from 10 weeks to 48 hours.

The average wait time at our customer service counters at SDAT's headquarters is now less than 30 minutes, which has been continuously decreasing since FY15. At the various local assessment offices located throughout Maryland, customers wait less than one minute at the counter for assistance. In fact, most customers are immediately assisted upon walking into the office. The percentage of calls abandoned has been reduced from an average of 18% in FY15 to an average of 6% in FY18.

Maryland Business Express processed more than 300,000 transactions in FY18, which is significantly more than the 200,000 transactions that were processed in FY17. This means that customers are taking advantage of the online services offered and are experiencing much faster processing times. One of Governor Hogan's many initiatives is to make Maryland Open for Business. We believe that we are doing just that by making it easier, faster, and more attractive to do business in Maryland than ever before.

### Adjusting Hours to Meet Customer Demands

We have examined our general business hours of operation and determined that being open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm most appropriately serves our customers' needs. In FY16, our Department implemented these uniform work hours as the previous schedule had a wide range of employee start and end times. In our 24

local real property offices, the hours may vary slightly depending on assessor availability, appeals in process, and other considerations. However, we continued to adhere to the aforementioned uniform work hours in FY18.

Additionally, by providing more services online, our Department in many ways is open for business 24/7 because of our Maryland Business Express filings site. Customers are able to submit business filings whenever it is convenient for them and are taking advantage of these features as evidenced by the fact that in FY18, more than 50% of business filings occurred outside of normal business hours.

In FY19, we not only plan on launching more online business services on Maryland Business Express, but the Department has undertaken a new initiative to develop an online system for applying for the homeowners', renters', and homestead tax credits. This online system will also be available for customers to apply for tax credits 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so Marylanders can simply and easily apply from the comfort of their home.

### [Social Media Usage to Improve the Customer Experience](#)

As SDAT continues to increase the number of online services offered to the public, we are continuously seeking new ways to digitally engage with our customers. In FY17, SDAT posted on the Department's social media accounts approximately once a week. However, in FY18, SDAT has made substantial improvements to the quality and frequency of posts on our social media accounts. After Public Information Officer Fallon Patton was hired in early 2018, SDAT now averages at least one social media post per working day.

The Department currently utilizes Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to ensure that customers are aware of upcoming deadlines, press releases, new online features, and general information about the business, real property, and tax credit services we offer. In addition, in FY18 the Department has begun to use social media as a way to feature specific employees who have gone above and beyond in providing customer service.

Additionally in FY18, SDAT continues to use the distribution lists that were created in FY17 to communicate with customers via the GovDelivery email service. Customers can easily sign up for our distribution list to receive [email updates](#) to stay informed. In FY17, our list was comprised of approximately 50,000 unique email addresses. In FY18, we now have more than 119,000 unique email addresses that were captured as a result of adding an email address field on our physical and online forms. In FY18, we sent out 14 press releases to announce time sensitive and critical information. The ability to efficiently and effectively communicate with more than a hundred thousand Marylanders by distributing press releases has allowed us to provide even better customer service. In FY19, we plan to continue to use social media to communicate with customers, but would like to increase the frequency of posts and press releases and the number of followers to expand our audience.



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