



# Benefitfocus Post-Implementation Review

## Inspector General Department

Gary J. Cooney, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller  
Audit Report

**Terri W. Freeman, CPA, CIA, CISA, CRMA**  
Inspector General

Audit Conducted by:  
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**Report No. BCC-200**  
**November 4, 2021**



**Inspector General Department**

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November 4, 2021

Board of County Commissioners

The Benefitfocus Post-Implementation review as identified in the 2020 Audit Plan is complete.

Overall, the controls were designed well and functioned as designed. A few opportunities for improvement for this and future system implementations are included in this report.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by everyone contacted during the course of this review.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri W. Freeman  
Inspector General

cc: Gary J. Cooney, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller  
Denise Bell, Chief Deputy Clerk  
Kristy Mullane, Chief Financial Officer, Clerk's Office  
Malysa Goldsmith, Chief Administrative Officer, Clerk's Office  
Jennifer Barker, Interim County Manager  
Jim Kovacs, Director, Office of Human Resources and Risk Management

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# Scope and Objective

The objective of the review was to assess the design of the following project management controls for the Benefitfocus implementation and test them to determine if they functioned as designed.

- System Selection
- Project Cost Management
- Risk Management
- Testing Process
- Training
- Problem and Incident Management

To achieve this objective, various tests of controls were conducted which included inquiry with management and staff, interviews with representatives from Constitutional offices, and reviews of minutes, documents, and records from the implementation phase to October 1, 2019.

# Overall Conclusion

Overall, the controls were designed well and functioned as designed. Opportunities for improvement for this and future system implementations are included in this report.

The following controls functioned well during this project:

- Functionality requirements were identified prior to application selection by a Selection Committee that was made up of staff from Information Technology, Finance, Human Resources, and Constitutional Offices. The contract was awarded to the bidder whose application was best able to fulfill those requirements, who provided the best training features, and submitted the lowest price of all the proposers. Benefitfocus also provided project management services.
- Costs were within the projected expenditures approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The projected costs included an amount for contingencies.
- End users were involved in testing the system to ensure ease of use and appropriate functionality.
- Staff from County departments and constitutional offices were offered benefits portal training during the enrollment period by staff super-users. A Help Center was established to assist staff as needed.
- The project team continued to meet after implementation with the vendor and internally to discuss outstanding issues, gain familiarity with under-utilized features, finalize formal processes, and prepare for upcoming mass enrollments.

# Background

Benefitfocus was introduced to employees at the annual open enrollment in 2019. Benefitfocus is an online tool for employees to use to enroll in the Lake County benefit plan or to make changes when a life event occurs such as marriage or the birth of a child. It is used by employees of the Board of County Commissioners, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller, Lake County Water Authority, Property Appraiser, Tax Collector, and Supervisor of Elections.

The vendor awarded the Lake County project team their 2020 Celebrate Community Award in the category of "Technology Excellence." The award recognizes organizations that transform from a largely paper-based to digital benefit program. The award was announced on National Employee Benefits Day through a press release and Benefitfocus social media channels.

# Opportunity for Improvement

## 1. Problem and Incident Management

The County's expectations of service (e.g., performance indicators, service level agreement) are not identified in the contract with Benefitfocus. Such requirements provide transparency regarding service assessment and mutually agreed upon consequences, which will reduce misunderstandings and save time for both parties. Monetary penalties may assist the County if losses are incurred or extra County staff effort is needed to address an issue.

**Agreed Upon Action Plan:** Performance guarantees will be discussed as part of the contract renegotiation now in process with Benefitfocus.

**Target Completion Date:** February 28, 2022

# Opportunities for Improvement for Future System Implementations

The business owner of a system implementation contract should monitor a vendor's performance against project management best practices and escalate concerns to the vendor's leadership to ensure issues are addressed quickly.

As discussed with management when reviewing this report, the Inspector General Department is available to consult during future system implementations to assist business owners in proactively identifying improvement opportunities in the project management process.

Two important project management processes were not managed well by the original project manager provided by the vendor for the Benefitfocus implementation. The project manager was replaced late in the project. These processes were:

## 1. Risk Management

Interfaces with other systems pose significant risk in a system implementation. However, a risk assessment was not conducted by the vendor's project manager with the project team that could have identified issues regarding exporting the County's demographic data to Benefitfocus from MUNIS, the County's enterprise resource planning system.

There were misunderstandings regarding responsibilities that led to unanticipated work in a short timeframe for project team members and delays because MUNIS was going through an upgrade.

## 2. Problem and Incident Management

The vendor's project manager did not initially set up a formal problem and incident tracking system. Some user testing issues were submitted through email and not formally captured for discussion, follow-up, and resolution approval. Not all these issues were resolved until well after the go-live date after another project manager took charge. Less efficient and effective workarounds had to be implemented until the issues were resolved.