

Columbia County Board of Commissioners, Georgia

Efficient Benefits Enrollment with Munis[®] Employee Self Service

Industry: County Government

Location: Evans, GA

Employees: 902

Years as a Tyler Client: 3

Budget: \$173 million

Tyler Products Used: Munis[®] Financials, Incode Courts & Justice, iasWorld Appraisal & Tax, Tyler Content Manager LE

The Facts: With a population of more than 110,000 situated on 290 square miles, Columbia County is a major county in the second largest metropolitan area in Georgia. Predominantly residential, Columbia County is home to more than 1,400 acres of parkland; Clarks Hill Lake, one of the largest inland bodies of water in the South at 71,000 acres; and the Savannah River Rapids. It is governed by a Board of Commissioners comprised of five people—a commissioner elected from each of the four districts and a chairman elected district-wide—who are responsible for providing necessary County services in a cost-efficient and effective manner.

Contact:

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Assistant Human Resources Manager/Benefits Manager

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Key Challenges

- Replace inefficient manual employee benefits open enrollment process with cost-saving electronic process
- Transition Human Resources staff from an administrative information management role to a benefits consulting role
- Reduce time spent by HR staff and County employees on the benefit enrollment process

Benefits: Financial and Beyond

- Realized Return on Investment in saved dollars for HR staff time and benefit materials
- Provided employees with an opportunity to make better informed benefit decisions
- Improved communications, accuracy and efficiencies of the County's employee benefits open enrollment process

Columbia County Board of Commissioners Best Practices

- Close collaboration between the Information Technology and HR Departments to ensure an accurate and efficient benefits enrollment process
- Trained key personnel who had previously worked on benefits enrollment to assist with testing of the Employee Self Service module and training of employees
- Employed a detailed and strategic implementation process to ensure effective use of the new electronic system

Why Tyler?

- Tyler provides all consulting, product enhancement, implementation, training and support services
- The Munis Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) suite is a fully-integrated software solution

- Tyler is the largest sole provider of software and services for the public sector, covering all solutions for Financial, Document, Pension and School Management; Land & Vital Records; Appraisal & Tax; Courts & Justice; Public Safety; and Citizen Services

In Their Own Words:

"The Munis Employee Self Service module and its online open enrollment capabilities provide the latest in technology, efficiency and organizational proficiency."

*-Elizabeth McBurney,
Assistant Human Resources Manager/
Benefits Manager*

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The Challenge: An Inefficient and Time-Consuming Benefits Enrollment Process

With more than 900 employees and a county government that continues to grow, Columbia County, Georgia's manual benefit open enrollment process had become time consuming and inefficient for both Human Resources staff and County employees. In addition to time spent answering employee questions and gathering paperwork during the actual enrollment process, it previously took two HR staff members three weeks to enter all benefits data into their current system and cross check calculations. What's more, a temporary worker had to be hired for more than a month each year following open enrollment just to handle the associated paperwork and filing. It was clear that the County needed to improve communications and efficiencies in the benefits enrollment process.

Detailed Implementation and Training Processes Provide a Smooth Transition

With the purchase of Tyler's Munis ERP Solution in 2006, the County's HR Department immediately recognized the possibilities of using the Munis Employee Self Service module for electronic benefits enrollment. "It was time to make the choice to become more reliable and efficient internally and to become more eco-friendly," explained Elizabeth McBurney, assistant human resources manager and benefits manager for Columbia County. Working closely together, the County's Information Technology and HR Departments and Tyler staff created a comprehensive implementation plan to build the new online process according to the County's specific benefit structure and to ensure County employees could easily learn the new procedures. Munis staff worked onsite with IT staff for three days to customize the Employee Self Service

module to the complexity of the benefits products and the County's needs, and key County personnel who had previously worked with open enrollment were chosen to assist with testing and implementation.

The County also took a detailed approach to employee training on the new module. Once core staff members were trained they walked pilot groups of small County departments through benefits selection in order to fine tune the process and ensure employees received all needed instruction. Command centers were developed throughout the County to provide aid during the benefits enrollment period and all County employees were guided through the new enrollment process by a trained enroller.

Employee Self Service: Considerable Benefits for County Employees and HR Personnel

Utilizing Munis Employee Self Service for their benefits enrollment process has provided considerable benefits to both Columbia County employees and HR staff. For employees, secure online access to their benefits information—including benefits history, current benefits choices, product information, summary plan descriptions and pricing—at any time and from any computer means better informed decisions. Employees can now take time to discuss decisions with family members and can make changes to benefits that are realized almost immediately—a win-win situation for both employees and the County. "By empowering employees to learn and participate in their benefits enrollment, they gain a better understanding of the organization's organizational strategy and cost savings efforts...in turn increasing organizational success," said McBurney.

For HR staff, the improvement in processing time, accuracy of information and continuity of operations has been significant, resulting in measurable cost savings in staff time and paper use. "There are no materials to store, no forms to file or lose, no hard copy references to update...and no more booklets to produce or store," McBurney explained. What's more, once an employee's benefits are approved the Employee Self Service module automatically transfers that information to Munis Payroll—without manual action from HR personnel. "The implementation of online benefits enrollment takes the [benefits enrollment] process from an administrative operation to a more strategic Human Resources operation...allowing HR to function in more of a benefits consulting role for employees," emphasized McBurney. And that means more time spent answering employee questions and assisting with enrollment issues rather than on entering data and deciphering illegible forms. "The Munis Employee Self Service module and its online open enrollment capabilities truly provide the latest in technology, efficiency and organizational proficiency," said McBurney.