

Beacon 8.00 Release Notes

As NetComm approaches its 30th year in business, it was time to update to Beacon 8.0.

This iteration, we've got a major new 64-bit version of our popular Beacon Excel Add-In. You'll also find new tracking information in FLOW, new fields and filters throughout our Finance and HR modules, new options for sharing your useful searches, and plenty of minor improvements to the user interface.

Highlights from this release

- **Beacon:** At your request, we've broken out individual videos and associated them to each version release. You'll find a link to the ones for the current version by Release Notes in the sidebar. Alerts in both Finance and HR are now listed alphabetically, and in some cases renamed for clarity.
- **Beacon Excel Add-In:** Using the most recent 64-bit version of Office? Our new 64-bit Excel Add-in boosts performance by an average of 20% over the 32-bit version. We've also made the CurFYAmt() function a bit more flexible to match options available in Beacon Finance.
- **Beacon FLOW:** Managers now have access to more tracking data about submissions, reviews, and approvals.
- **Beacon Finance:** You can now share your saved transactions searches with other users. Renamed "Current FY Funded" column to "FY19 obligations" (or FY18, etc.). Balance of Accounts can be filtered to current FY obligations only. Administrators can now edit budget permissions as though they were budget owners. PS Costs data fields have been added to the Display Employee FTE screen (and renamed). Also, Mech Code data is now available on Transactions.
- **Beacon HR:** Added historical data (compensation, fellow awards, education, and visa) and data of birth columns to the Positions screen. Also made NED's current badge process step data available.

Specifics

Module	What we did	Why we did it
Beacon	Added a modal displaying videos associated with the current version to the sidebar Release menu. The video player is now embedded.	Users wanted shorter, more focused videos with each release, and wanted them displayed within the application. The new video list indicates which module and functionality is demonstrated.
Beacon	Alerts are now presented alphabetically (and in some cases renamed slightly) where alerts are selected or configured.	As our alert options grew, some users found the list unwieldy. We've tidied up the listing and alphabetized it, and in some cases, we've tweaked the names for clarity.

Module	What we did	Why we did it
Excel Add-In	Built a 64-bit version of our Excel Add-In, available from your Beacon Dashboard user profile, for users who have 64-bit Excel.	Many users are working in 64-bit Excel already. We rebuilt the Add-In to take full advantage of speed and performance improvements available in 64-bit Excel. The new version averages 20% faster than the 32-bit version. (You must be using 64-bit Excel to use this version.)
Excel Add-In	Expanded the CurFyAmt() function, which returns FY19-funded functions for multi-year accounts, to return amounts for QTR1, QTR2, YTD-QTR1, etc.	This makes time filter formulas more consistent across the application and simplifies common quarterly reporting tasks.
FLOW	Beacon now stores and displays more information about the package submission, review, and approval process.	Workflow managers wanted to be able to track and report on how long packages take from initiation to completion.
Finance	Added an option to share your saved Transaction searches with other users.	Users wanted the ability to share custom search and filter criteria with other users. (You will still need access to the relevant accounts/views.)
Finance	Renamed the CurFyFunded column as FY19 Obligations. (The FY always corresponds to the currently selected FY.) The corresponding screen name has also been updated.	For clarity, the column name now indicates the FY associated with the obligations. The functionality is unchanged: it still shows you all obligations both processed and funded this year, and existing formulae for custom columns is unchanged – other than the name.
Finance	Added a filter to limit reports to current FY obligations, available on Balance of Accounts.	Users expect to be able to filter based on current obligations. We've added it where appropriate.
Finance	Beacon Finance system administrators can now reassign or edit budgets as though they were budget owners.	When budget owners left an organization, it could be cumbersome to reassign permissions. Now system administrators have the same rights as the budget owners do.

Module	What we did	Why we did it
Finance	<p>Renamed PS cost fields on the Account Structure page.</p> <p>YTD Salary and Benefits columns, and Remaining Salary and Benefits columns, now also appear on Employee FTE Data screen. You will only see data for organizations you have access to.</p>	<p>We shortened the display names for four fields related to YTD and remaining salary and benefits data.</p> <p>Previously, only FTE data was available on the Employee FTE Data screen. This puts other critical salary and benefits data from HR at the fingertips of finance users when they need to dig into costs. Where the user may not have access to a specific organization, values are hidden.</p>
Finance	<p>Transactions screen now offers the MechCode column. You can add it from that screen's column selector.</p>	<p>Users requested visibility for this data, as it is sometimes used for reporting.</p>
HR	<p>Made historical data for compensation, education, fellow awards, and visa available on the Position screen. They display on multiple lines for ease of reporting.</p>	<p>Previously, the ad-hoc reporting tool offered a few options to show historical data in reports, but no such option appeared for the Positions screen.</p>
HR	<p>Date of Birth is now available for reporting on the front Position list, provided you have access to sensitive data.</p>	<p>Many common ad-hoc reporting tasks can be handled by the Position list screen, but for various reasons, sensitive data was not shown there. This change makes the Position screen's reporting capability more useful for HR staff who deal with sensitive data.</p>
HR	<p>Made current badge process step data available in the system.</p>	<p>This recently added field comes from NED data and is now available for view via the Locator screen.</p>