

CRYSTAL SCONIERS

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER
WALTON COUNTY, FLORIDA



SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

TYPE: CHARTER

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APPROVAL: Kelly Cornelius, 06/05/2025
Crystal Sconiers, 06/26/2025

WALTON COUNTY CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL CHARTER

Purpose

The purpose of the Department of Inspector General (Department) is to strengthen Walton County's (County's) and the Walton County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller's (Clerk's) ability to create, protect, and sustain value by providing the County, Clerk, and management with independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight.

The Department enhances the County and Clerk's:

- Successful achievement of its objectives.
- Governance, risk management, and control processes.
- Decision-making and oversight.
- Reputation and credibility with its stakeholders.
- Ability to serve the public interest.

The Department is most effective when:

- Auditing is performed by competent professionals in conformance with The IIA's Global Internal Audit Standards, which are set in the public interest.
- The Department is independently positioned with direct accountability to the Clerk.
- Department staff are free from undue influence and committed to making objective assessments.

To promote awareness of the potential for fraud, waste, and abuse throughout the County, and to facilitate the prevention and detection, of fraud, waste, and abuse, the Department will conduct investigations, coordinating with law enforcement, and other investigative agencies as warranted.

Commitment to Adhering to the Global Internal Audit Standards and Investigative Practices

The Department will adhere to the mandatory elements of The Institute of Internal Auditors' International Professional Practices Framework, which are the Global Internal Audit Standards and Topical Requirements. The Inspector General will report annually to the Clerk regarding the Department's conformance with the Standards, which will be assessed through a quality assurance and improvement program.

The Department will also govern itself by adherence to the Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General of the Association of Inspectors General.

Mandate / Authority

By authority of the Constitution of the State of Florida, Article VIII, Section 1. (d), "*...the Clerk of the Circuit Court shall be ex-officio clerk of the Board of County Commissioners, auditor, recorder, and custodian of all county funds.*" The Constitution of the State of Florida, Article V, Section 16, also specifies that the Clerk shall have the duties quoted above. The law also confers onto the Clerk the responsibility to act as the County's auditor.

By authority of Section 744.368 of the Florida Statutes, the Clerk, "*shall audit the verified inventory and the accountings. The clerk shall advise the court of the results of the audit.*"

Pursuant to the legal authority and responsibility cited above, the Clerk has established the Department to fulfill the responsibilities of the office as they relate to audit and investigation functions other than the pre-audit of disbursements from Walton County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) funds. The Clerk's Finance Department performs the pre-audit function. The Department's responsibilities include a post-audit review of that function as well.

The Department's authority is created by its direct reporting relationship to the Clerk. Such authority allows for unrestricted access to the County and Clerk.

The BOCC and Clerk authorize the Department to:

- Have full and unrestricted access to all functions, data, records, information, physical property, and personnel pertinent to carrying out internal audit responsibilities. Auditors are accountable for confidentiality and safeguarding records and information.
- Allocate resources, set frequencies, select subjects, determine scopes of work, apply techniques, and issue communications to accomplish the Department's objectives.
- Obtain assistance from the necessary personnel of the County and Clerk and other specialized services from within or outside the County and Clerk to complete audit services.

Independence, Organizational Position, and Reporting Relationships

The Inspector General will be positioned at a level in the organization that enables audit services, investigations, and responsibilities to be performed without interference from management, thereby establishing the independence of the Department. (See "Mandate" section.) The Inspector General will report functionally and administratively (for example, day-to-day operations) to the Clerk.

The Inspector General will confirm to the Clerk, at least annually, the organizational independence of the Department. If the governance structure does not support organizational independence, the Inspector General will document the characteristics of the governance structure limiting independence and any safeguards employed to achieve the principle of independence. The Inspector General will disclose to the Clerk any interference department staff encounter related to the scope, performance, or communication of audit work, investigations, and results. The disclosure will include communicating the implications of such interference on the Department's effectiveness and ability to fulfill its mandate.

Changes to the Mandate and Charter

Circumstances may justify a follow-up discussion between the Inspector General and Clerk on the Department's mandate or other aspects of the charter. Such circumstances may include but are not limited to:

- A significant change in the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- A significant reorganization of the County or Clerk.

- Significant changes in the Inspector General or Clerk.
- Significant changes to the County or Clerk’s strategies, objectives, risk profile, or the environment in which either operate.
- New laws or regulations that may affect the nature and/or scope of audit or investigative services.

Clerk Oversight

To establish, maintain, and ensure that the Department has sufficient authority to fulfill its duties, the Clerk will:

- Discuss with the Inspector General the appropriate authority, role, responsibilities, scope, and services (investigations, assurance, and/or advisory) of the Department.
- Ensure the Inspector General has unrestricted access to and communicates and interacts directly with the BOCC and Clerk, including in private meetings without management present.
- Discuss with the Inspector General other topics that should be included in the charter.
- Participate in discussions with the Inspector General about the “essential conditions,” described in the Global Internal Audit Standards, which establish the foundation that enables an effective audit function.
- Review the Department’s charter annually with the Inspector General to consider changes affecting the organization, such as the employment of a new Inspector General or changes in the type, severity, and interdependencies of risks to the County and Clerk.
- Approve the Department’s charter annually, which includes the Department’s mandate and the scope and types of services.
- Approve the risk-based internal audit plan.
- Provide input to the Department’s human resources administration and budgets.
- Approve the Department’s budget and resource plan.
- Approve the Department’s expenses.
- Receive communications from the Inspector General on the Department’s performance relative to its plan and other matters.
- Provide input and approve decisions regarding the appointment and removal of the Inspector General, ensuring adequate competencies and qualifications and conformance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- Approve the remuneration of the Inspector General.
- Review the Inspector General’s performance.
- Ensure a quality assurance and improvement program has been established and review the results annually.
- Make appropriate inquiries of management and the Inspector General to determine whether scope or resource limitations are inappropriate.

Chief Audit Executive (Inspector General) Roles and Responsibilities

Ethics and Professionalism

The Inspector General will ensure that department staff:

- Conform with the Global Internal Audit Standards, including the principles of Ethics and Professionalism: integrity, objectivity, competency, due professional care, and confidentiality.
- Understand, respect, meet, and contribute to the legitimate and ethical expectations of the County and Clerk and are able to recognize conduct that is contrary to those expectations.
- Encourage and promote an ethics-based culture at the County and Clerk.
- Report organizational behavior that is inconsistent with the County and/or Clerk’s expectations, as described in applicable policies and procedures.

Objectivity

The Inspector General will ensure that the Department remains free from all conditions that threaten the ability of department staff to carry out their responsibilities in an unbiased manner, including matters of engagement selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, and communication. If the Inspector General determines that objectivity may be impaired in fact or appearance, the details of the impairment will be disclosed to appropriate parties.

Department staff will maintain an unbiased mental attitude that allows them to perform engagements objectively such that they believe in their work product, do not compromise quality, and do not subordinate their judgment on audit matters to others, either in fact or appearance.

Department staff will have no direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities they review or investigate. Accordingly, department staff will not implement internal controls, develop procedures, install systems, or engage in other activities that may impair their judgment, including:

- Assessing specific operations for which they had responsibility within the previous year.
- Performing operational duties for the County, Clerk, or its affiliates.
- Initiating or approving transactions external to the Department.
- Directing the activities of any County or Clerk employee that is not employed by the Department, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to the Department or to otherwise assist department staff.

Department staff will:

- Disclose impairments of independence or objectivity, in fact or appearance, to appropriate parties annually, such as the Inspector General, the Clerk, or others.
- Exhibit professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information.
- Make balanced assessments of all available and relevant facts and circumstances.
- Take necessary precautions to avoid conflicts of interest, bias, and undue influence.

Managing the Department

The Inspector General has the responsibility to:

- Develop and submit, at least annually, to the Clerk a risk-based audit plan for review and approval.
- Communicate to the Clerk the impact of resource limitations on the audit plan and/or investigations.
- Implement the approved annual audit plan, including, as appropriate, any special tasks or projects requested by the BOCC or Clerk.
- Review and adjust the audit plan, as necessary, in response to changes in the County and/or the Clerk's business risks, operations, programs, systems and controls.
- Communicate to the Clerk any significant interim changes to the audit plan.
- Initiate audits, projects, or investigations and assist management throughout the year, even though the projects/items may not be on the annual audit plan.
- Perform consulting services, beyond the Department's assurance services, to assist management in meeting its objectives. Examples may include consulting services, agreed-upon procedure engagements, and training.
- Ensure audit engagements are performed, documented, and communicated in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- Ensure each engagement of the audit plan is executed, including the establishment of objectives and scope, the assignment of appropriate and adequately supervised resources, the

documentation of work programs and testing results, and the communication of engagement results with applicable conclusions and recommendations to appropriate parties.

- Follow up on engagement findings and confirm the implementation of recommendations or action plans and communicate the results of services periodically to the Clerk for each engagement, as appropriate.
- Ensure the Department collectively possesses or obtains the knowledge, skills, and other competencies and qualifications needed to meet the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards and meet the requirements of the charter and mandate.
- Ensure trends and emerging issues that could impact the County and/or Clerk are considered and communicated to the Clerk as appropriate.
- Consider emerging trends and successful practices in auditing and investigations.
- Establish and ensure adherence to methodologies, policies, and procedures designed to guide the Department.
- Ensure adherence to the Clerks' relevant policies and procedures, unless such policies and procedures conflict with the charter or the Global Internal Audit Standards. Any such conflicts will be resolved or documented and communicated to the Clerk.
- Coordinate activities, where possible, and consider relying upon the work of other internal and external providers of assurance and advisory services, as needed. If the Inspector General cannot achieve an appropriate level of coordination, the issue must be communicated to the Clerk.
- Maintain the fraud, waste, and abuse hotline and conduct investigations as indicated in the circumstances.

Communication with the Clerk

The Inspector General will report annually to the Clerk regarding:

- The Department's mandate and charter.
- The Department's audit plan and performance relative to its plan.
- The Department's budget.
- Significant revisions to the audit plan and budget.
- Potential impairments to independence, including relevant disclosures as applicable.
- Results from the quality assurance and improvement program, which include the Department's conformance with The IIA's Global Internal Audit Standards and action plans to address the Department's deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.
- Significant risk exposures and control issues, including fraud risks, governance issues, and other areas of focus for the County and/or Clerk that could interfere with the achievement strategic objectives.
- Results of assurance, advisory, and investigative services.
- Resource requirements.
- Management's responses to risk that the Department determines may be unacceptable or acceptance of a risk that is beyond the Clerk or County's risk appetite.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Program

The Inspector General will develop, implement, and maintain a quality assurance and improvement program that covers all aspects of the Department. The program will include external and internal assessments of the Department's conformance with the Global Internal Audit Standards, as well as performance measurement to assess the Department's progress toward the achievement of its objectives and promotion of continuous improvement. The program also will assess, if applicable, compliance with relevant laws and/or regulations. Also, if applicable, the assessment will include plans to address the Department's deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

Annually, the Inspector General will communicate with the Clerk about the Department's quality assurance and improvement program, including the results of internal assessments (ongoing monitoring and periodic self-assessments) and external assessments. External assessments will be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the County; qualifications must include at least one assessor holding an active Certified Internal Auditor® credential.

Scope and Types of Services

The scope of the Department's services covers any operation under the direction of the Clerk or BOCC, including all activities, assets, and personnel. It also includes other functions for which the BOCC provides financial support as separate entities in its budget, or of which the BOCC is the ex-officio governing body.

The Attorney General, in opinion No. 86-38, stated that until legislatively or judicially determined otherwise, the Clerk, as ex-officio county auditor, is not authorized to perform post-audit functions on the records of other constitutional officers. Therefore, scope of authority does not include other constitutional officers.

The scope of the Department's activities also encompasses, but is not limited to, objective examinations of evidence to provide independent assurance and advisory services to the County and Clerk on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management, and control processes.

The nature and scope of advisory services may be agreed with the party requesting the service, provided the Department does not assume management responsibility. Opportunities for improving the efficiency of governance, risk management, and control processes may be identified during advisory engagements. These opportunities will be communicated to the appropriate level of management.

The scope of the Department's work includes, but is not limited to, the following two general areas:

1. **Audit Services:**

The scope of audit activities encompasses, but is not limited to, objective examinations of evidence for the purpose of providing independent assessments to the BOCC, Clerk, management, and outside parties on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management, and control processes for the County.

Assessments include evaluating whether:

- Risks relating to the achievement of the County and the Clerk's strategic objectives are appropriately identified and managed.
- The actions of the County and the Clerk's employees and contractors are in compliance with policies, procedures, and applicable laws, regulations, and governance standards.
- The results of operations or programs are consistent with established goals and objectives.
- Operations or programs are being carried out effectively and efficiently.
- Established processes and systems enable compliance with policies, procedures, laws, and regulations that could significantly impact the County and/or the Clerk.
- The integrity of information and the means used to identify, measure, analyze, classify, and report such information is reliable.
- Resources and assets are acquired economically, used efficiently, and protected adequately.


The Department may perform advisory and related client service activities, the nature and scope of which will be agreed with the client, provided the Department does not assume management responsibility.

2. Investigations/Public Integrity

Investigations and public integrity duties will include:

1. Investigating suspected fraud, waste, abuse, or other inappropriate activity.
2. Notifying the Clerk, County Administrator, or such other officials, as appropriate, if an investigation substantiates that a fraudulent act has occurred.
3. Consulting with law enforcement agencies, as necessary, if a substantiated fraudulent act has criminal implications.
4. Administering oaths and compelling the production of books, papers, and other evidence material to investigations.
5. Augmenting the Clerk's Probate Department Guardianship Section and the 1st Judicial Circuit Court, Guardianship Assignments, by conducting audits and investigations of guardianship activities.

Acknowledgments/Signatures



Kelly Cornelius
Inspector General

6/5/2025
Date



Crystal Scoviers
Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller

6.26.2025
Date