Finance Services Transformation

Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: July 8, 2026

About the Initiative

What is the Finance Services Transformation Project?
The Finance Services Transformation Project is a university-wide effort to strengthen how financial services are delivered across WashU. It is part of a broader shift toward a center-led services model designed to improve consistency, collaboration, efficiency, and effectiveness, in order to strengthen support for the university's academic, research, and patient care mission.

The project includes financial operations across all Danforth Schools and Central Fiscal Unit (CFU) departments and focuses on common financial transactions, general financial inquiries, reporting, and special projects. We will also be able to provide strategic financial advisory support. Certain functions, including School of Medicine financial operations, departmental research administrator roles, and some highly specialized reporting activities, are currently outside the scope of the initial rollout.

Why is WashU making this change?
Over time, financial processes and roles have developed differently across schools and units. While this has allowed for flexibility and strong support for local needs, it has also created inconsistencies in processes, services, and resources, limited opportunities for collaboration across the Danforth schools and Central Finance, and operational inefficiencies. The goal of this transformation is not to replace what is working well, but to build on existing strengths, preserve mission-critical activities, and create a more consistent and sustainable model for delivering financial services across the university. This transformation aims to:

- Improve consistency and collaboration
- Provide better data and insights for decision making
- Strengthen service and support for faculty, staff, and the rest of the University community
- Preserve mission-critical support while standardizing common financial processes where appropriate
- Provide more consistent and sustainable financial support across schools and departments

- Provide transparent career pathways, professional development opportunities, and clearer role progression

What is a "center-led" model?
A center-led model organizes financial work into coordinated groups that provide:

- Operational support (transactional and financial reporting)
- Strategy partnership through Finance Business Partners
- Specialized knowledge and support through Centers of Expertise

This structure is designed to improve consistency, collaboration, and service quality across the university while maintaining strong alignment with individual schools and departments.

What This Means for You

Will there be job losses as part of this change?
No job losses are currently planned as part of the transition to a center-led model. The intent of the Finance Services Transformation is to preserve and redeploy existing talent wherever possible while creating opportunities for professional growth and development.

Will I still support my current school or department?
Maintaining strong alignment with schools and departments remains a core principle of the future model. As structures evolve, the goal is to preserve and strengthen those relationships.

In the future-state model, support may be provided through a team-based approach rather than relying on a single individual. This approach is intended to improve continuity of service, promote collaboration, and help balance workloads while maintaining strong connections to schools and departments.

Are decisions already made about the future structure?
No. The project is currently in the process optimization phase, focused on understanding current-state operations, identifying opportunities for improvement, and gathering stakeholder input across schools and units. Organizational design activities are expected to begin in mid-to-late Summer 2026, and no final decisions have been made about future structure, roles, or processes at this stage.

Can you share the estimated staff requirements in the three domains and the estimated cost of this project?
The project is still in the process optimization and design phases, and finalized staffing and cost estimates are not yet available. Current efforts are focused on understanding existing financial processes and informing future organizational design.

At this time, the expectation is that many finance service center and business partner roles will be filled by existing WashU staff, allowing the university to preserve institutional knowledge and continuity of support while realigning resources over time. As the model evolves, additional details regarding staffing, including professional growth opportunities, and costs will be shared.

Will my job be affected?
At this stage, no specific role changes have been determined. The intent of this transformation is to:

- Build on existing strengths
- Align work more effectively
- Create clearer roles, consistent titles, and development opportunities over time

In some cases, individuals may currently perform financial responsibilities as part of broader roles. As the future model is developed, those responsibilities may require additional discussion and review in partnership with the relevant CFU area or Danforth School.

As more information becomes available, updates will be shared directly and transparently.

Is research activity included in scope for Financial Services Transformation?
While the center-led team will have the ability to enter financial transactions including research related worktags, it will not include the departmental research administrator roles. These roles and responsibilities are specialized to include grant compliance, effort reporting, and award/grant management. The activities included in scope will be the initiation of transactions submitted to the center-led team; however, transactions currently entered by departmental research administrators will remain unchanged.

How is this different from previous centralization efforts?
The Finance Services Transformation is designed as a phased, collaborative effort that builds on existing strengths across schools and departments. Rather than implementing a one-size-fits-all approach, the model is intended to preserve strong local relationships, operational knowledge, and the unique aspects of each school and unit while improving consistency, collaboration, and sustainability across the institution.

The project team is actively partnering with schools, departments, and finance staff throughout the design process to ensure the future model reflects operational needs and stakeholder feedback. Implementation will occur in phases to allow for testing, refinement, and continuous improvement over time.

Process & Timeline

What is happening right now?
The project is currently focused on:
- Meeting with leaders and finance staff across units
- Conducting process optimization workshops
- Gathering input on current challenges and opportunities

This input will directly shape the future design.

When will changes take effect?
The target go-live date is July 2027, with potential pilot phases before then. This is a phased effort, and changes will not happen all at once.

Engagement & Communication

How can I provide input or feedback?
There are several ways to engage in this process:
- Participate in workshops or meetings when invited
- Reach out to the project leadership team
- Share feedback with your manager or unit leadership and submit to project leadership team

During the current Discovery phase, engagement is focused on Finance staff, leaders from each unit, and faculty representatives.

Will there be opportunities to participate in surveys or other project activities?
Yes. Throughout the project, selected stakeholder groups may be invited to participate in surveys, workshops, interviews, meetings, or other activities designed to help inform process improvements and future-state design recommendations. Participation opportunities will vary based on project phase, audience, and area of focus.

How will I stay informed?
You will receive updates through email communications, department leadership and manager updates.

Why does communication feel so limited right now?
In early phases, the focus is on gathering input and understanding current processes from leaders and financial partners. Communications will increase as more information becomes available and decisions are made.