



Here
and
Next

Transcend Initiative Grant

Growing University-Wide Team Research & Science

FY 2026 Call for Proposals

Transcend Initiative Grants support transdisciplinary teams as they move toward competitive, center-level funding by supporting infrastructure creation and capacity building.

Dates and Deadlines

Informational Webinars	Fall Webinar: August 15 th at 2 PM – Register Here Spring Webinar: January 16 th at 2 PM – Register Here
Proposal Deadlines	LOIs are accepted at any time after August 1 via InfoReady until May 15th, 2026. Invitations to the full proposal will be issued after LOI discussion. Proposals will be reviewed quarterly, please see the schedule below.
Award Period	Up to three years
Award Ceiling	Up to \$150,000 per year

Program Scope

The Transcend Initiative Grant supports the development of new cross-school interdisciplinary research initiatives that align with the **Here and Next Priority Areas** of Public and Global Health, Environmental Research, Digital Transformation, or Research Impacting the St. Louis Community. Awarded teams will be known as Transcend Initiatives, colloquially, “Transcends.”

Please see the attached appendix for FY 2026 Here and Next funding priorities to ensure that your initiative is competitive within this year’s cycle.

Transcend Initiatives bring together researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplines across multiple schools and departments around a societal challenge and in an interdisciplinary manner at a broader scale than currently exists at WashU. It is imperative that teams have a clear plan and strategy to increase research exponentially in the selected area. They should clearly explain how activities and expenses over the course of their proposed grant period will make this growth possible. Additionally, Transcends should generate visibility of WashU’s leadership and expertise in the selected research area, synergize and leverage cross-campus activities, and enhance community and local partnerships.

Transcend funds support cross-school teams that include leadership from **two or more** WashU schools to develop their infrastructure and research initiative **in preparation for securing highly competitive and strategic center-level extramural proposals**. Transcend Grants aid teams in developing key evaluation criteria common for these external proposals such as:

1. Support for the research area by the institution (i.e., institutional commitments),
2. A Center Director with prior demonstrated leadership experience in managing or directing a center or multiple large grants,
3. Established industry and community partnerships, and,

4. Preliminary data and prior evidence of a strong collaborative team.

Transcend Initiatives are expected to include multiple faculty members (around 10 or more) that are actively engaged in its activities. These initiatives should not duplicate, substantially overlap with, or subsume the mission of existing Transcends or school-based centers. Centers, institutes, consortia, and other programs that are housed within a single school are not included in the definition of a Transcend Initiative.

Examples of research groups that may benefit from establishing a Transcend Initiative are:

- **Interdisciplinary and cross-school groups that have started collaborative discussions and projects around a critical challenge and are looking to expand on collaborations.** Outputs from the initial group may have included a white paper, publication, or submitted proposal.
- **Interdisciplinary and cross-school groups that have previously received some external sponsored funding to support collaborative research and other activities,** such as symposia, but need Transcend funding to broaden the group's activities and support elevating the research group to a nationally recognized level.
- Regardless of their stage of formation, teams should articulate how the Transcend grant will grow their plans beyond what is currently possible without those funds.

Transcend Initiative activities should include, but are not limited to:

- Seek extramural research funds with the goal of becoming a sponsor-funded center or initiative,
- Facilitate research and research collaborations across multiple schools and disciplines,
- Carry out university and public services programs related to the TI's research focus,
- Bring national awareness to the focus of the TI by hosting national symposia, workshops, etc. Positioning WashU to be a leader in the TI focus area,
- Disseminate research results through conferences, meetings, and other activities,
- Support and strengthen graduate and undergraduate education by providing students with training opportunities and access to research facilities.

Partnership with the Research Development Office

As a part of the Here and Next strategy, the Research Development Office (RDO) will partner with awarded Transcends to meet their external funding goals. As part of this commitment, an RDO associate will act as a thought partner for Transcends throughout their three-year project period to consult on best practices for centers, team science, extramural funding strategy, and to provide proposal management services, at a rate of up to 5% FTE. Certain commitments from the awarded team are required for the RDO to fulfill their holistic support to bolster the success of the Initiative; namely the RDO associate will need to be included in the leadership meetings of the awarded initiative.

At minimum, RDO will provide:

- a. A formal kickoff to describe and outline RDO resources and planning for team science
- b. Consultation on best practices for Transcend Initiatives, team science, and strategy for successful center infrastructure and programming
- c. Mobilization of RDO proposal support services for Transcend affiliates

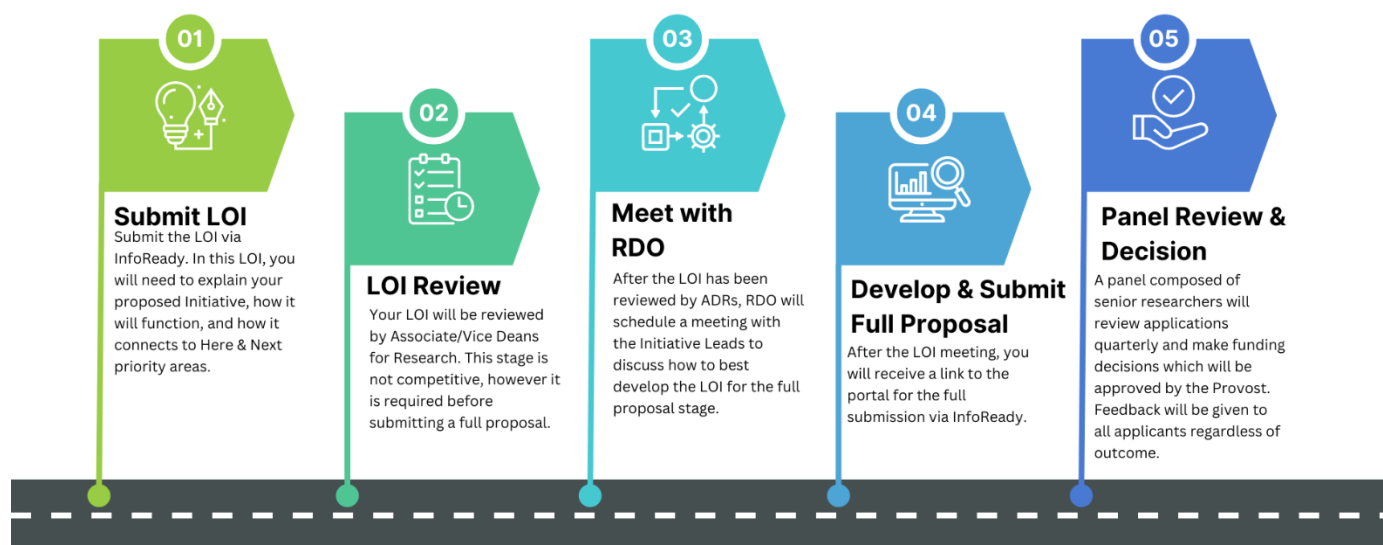
In your planning, please consider that RDO can offer the following resources and services as part of the award, if requested:

- Develop guides and serve as moderator(s) of group discussions focused on extramural funding opportunities

- Ideation and team development
- Grant proposal management services including grant proposal team kickoff, collaborator identification, brainstorm sessions, proposal outlines/timelines/checklists, content development (limited), draft review, red team review coordination, site visits, etc.
- Strategic funding intelligence
- Scientific editing for proposals
- Consulting on strategic planning and program evaluation
- Transcend website template

TRANSCEND INITIATIVE Application Procedure

University-Wide Research Collaboration Grants



Transcend Initiative Review and Selection Process

Applicants should read this document in its entirety before initiating the application process.

1. **Required Letter of Intent**

Faculty seeking to establish a new Transcend Initiative should first submit a required LOI through the InfoReady Portal. You will be asked several questions about your proposed Transcend Initiative, your initiative's leadership structure, proposed activities to grow research around the initiative, and plans for sustainability. This stage is required and provides valuable feedback to teams as they prepare to move their initiative forward toward center-level funding.

2. **Associate/Vice Dean Review**

Applicants must socialize their initiative with their department chairs, deans, and administrators in their school(s) prior to submitting an LOI. Submitted LOIs will undergo preliminary review by the Vice/Associate Deans for Research of the schools represented by the leadership team of the Transcend Initiative. The Associate Deans will confirm that the LOI and the team meet the criteria for an initiative and provide guidance relative to each school's institutional priorities and objectives.

3. **Meet with Research Development Office**

The leadership team of the proposed Initiative will meet with the Research Development Office, usually the Senior Associate Director of Programs and Seed Grants along with the Sr. Associate Director of Research Development. In this meeting, RDO will deliver any feedback from the Associate/Vice Deans for Research as well as provide guidance on the development of the full Transcend Initiative proposal.

4. **Develop & Submit a Full Proposal**

After meeting with RDO, you will be sent a link to the full proposal portal. The team can then submit their proposal and submit via InfoReady based upon their own timeline. Please consult the timeline for review below.

5. **Panel Review**

The reviewers are selected from a) the different disciplines associated with the Here and Next priority areas of research excellence, and b) successful team researchers and center directors. **Please note:** The panel is composed of senior researchers who will not be experts in the fields associated with your proposal. It is in the team's best interest that you define all acronyms, keep your plan free of jargon, and ensure that it is understandable and compelling to a non-specialist.

6. **Provost Approval**

Panel recommendations will be passed along to the Provost's Office for the final funding decision.

7. **Award**

Teams will be notified of their status as soon as possible. Before the official Award letter and Terms and Conditions are issued, the team will meet with RDO to transition to the awarded initiative. In this meeting, RDO will discuss any feedback from the panel for the team, finalize the budget, and make amendments to the plan.

Review Schedule

Please keep in mind the schedule below when submitting your LOIs and full proposals. Full proposals will not be invited until the LOI has been approved by the Associate Deans and you have discussed your proposal with RDO.

Full proposals that are received by...		
September 30, 2025	will be reviewed by the full panel at the	October Review Meeting, with November notification
December 31, 2025		January Review Meeting, with February notification
March 31, 2026		April Review meeting, with May Notification
June 30, 2026*		July Review Meeting, August notification*
<p>All notification dates are approximate. We make every effort to review proposals quickly, but our top priority is to ensure that they are thoroughly and fairly considered and any prospective initiatives are set up for success if awarded.</p> <p>*Summer Deadlines are hopeful. Review may take longer over summer months.</p>		

Letter of Intent Instructions

Letters of Intent must be submitted via InfoReady.

LOI review may take up to six weeks. In addition to basic demographic information, you will be asked to answer the following questions via InfoReady:

1. Briefly describe your proposed initiative. What is the issue that your team is addressing? How does this initiative represent a value add on top of what already exists on campus/amongst collaborators? (300 words max)
2. How will your Transcend Initiative function? How will your Initiative increase WashU research capacity and excellence? What will you do with the funds and time provided by this grant? (300 words max)
3. Here and Next Alignment: Describe how your initiative aligns with the Here and Next priority area you selected. You may also briefly discuss how it aligns with other areas. (300 words max)
4. Upload a preliminary organization chart for the initiative. This chart should include the Transcend Initiative leadership and oversight structure, names and titles of associated WashU researchers, and any associated personnel. You should also include any committees or advisory boards, as well as any community or international partners or collaborators. No more than one page.

Full Proposal Instructions

All proposals must be submitted via InfoReady. In addition to applicant and initiative information (such as names of leadership team, emails, departments, etc.), you will need to upload several documents.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants may submit only one application as a co-Lead of a Transcend Initiative Grant per fiscal year (July 1-June 30). Transcend Leads should be up-to-date with all reporting for *any* previously awarded Here and Next Seed Funding to be eligible. Leads are eligible to submit other Here and Next programs (one per program per year). In FY26, preference will be given to Transcend Initiatives with representation from faculty with primary and secondary appointments in School for Public Health.

1. Section I: Team and Initiative Information

- Enter the names, appointments, school/departments, and emails of the Initiative co-Leads
- Enter the name of the individual who will be the post-award administrator, if awarded
- Initiative Title
- Initiative Abstract—150 words free of jargon, for a general audience
- # of Years requested
- Funding amount requested for the Transcend Initiative per year
- Primary Here and Next Priority Area
- Does your Transcend Initiative plan on using community-engaged research methods?

2. Section II: Proposal Narrative

Proposal Formatting: PDF upload of a 5-page document, 8.5 by 11” sized pages, single spaced, using a standard font in size 11 point (Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, etc.), with 1-inch margins. Please use page numbers throughout the document.

Proposals should discuss the following:

- **Purpose of the Initiative** and the benefit of the initiative to the research enterprise at WashU. What is the vision for the initiative? How would Transcend support allow teams to take their collaboration to a new level that would otherwise be impossible?
- **How is the Initiative a university-wide research initiative?** And how does it align with Here and Next priority areas?
- **Define Roles and Administrative structure of the Initiative.** Who are the leaders of the initiative and how will the team function? What are the expected contributions of each participant? What is the organizational structure? This section should coordinate with the required Organizational Chart upload in Section III.
- **Metrics for Success** How will you know that your Transcend Initiative is successful as each year passes? What metrics will you use to analyze your success?
- **What are the activities to take place in each proposed year of the Initiative?** These activities can include tasks related to administration, research, stakeholder engagement, development of the community/industry partnerships, etc. You should also discuss if there are any external service functions of the TI (this will not be applicable to every team). Explain how the proposed activities will grow the initiative's success at WashU and assist the team in achieving their selected metrics for success.
- **Sustainability Plan** What are the team's plans to sustain the Initiative beyond the years of Transcend Initiative Grant support? Be specific and detailed in your plan to secure continued funding, be it federal, foundation, philanthropic, industry, etc.

3. Section III: Uploads

For each category, all documents should be uploaded in a single .pdf document. Please note that the InfoReady application program requires that all .pdfs be combined using the “binder” mechanism rather than the “portfolio” option in Adobe.

*Required

- ***Organizational Chart:** See optional template (including an org chart is not optional, following the sample template is optional)
- ***Gantt Chart/Timeline for Initiative Activities:** See optional template (timeline/Gantt chart is not optional, but following the sample template is optional)
- ***Budget and Budget Justification:** Please include a budget of high-level expenses for the initiative over the course of each year of award. Please consult the “Award & Budget Information” below. The justification should address how the funds will permit the Initiative to meet their Metrics for Success and achieve sustainability.
 - RDO will provide up to 5% FTE to consult on best practices for centers and team science, and provide extramural funding strategy and proposal management
- ***CVs and Biosketches** for each Transcend Lead. No longer than 4 pages per Lead. List 10 most recent and relevant publications/grants.
- ***Other Sources of Support** List all other sources of research support, both internal and external, currently active or pending for Transcend Leads. Include any other support from the Here and Next support including other seed fund programs run by other units.
- ***Letters of Support from Department Chairs** Department Chairs for the Team Leads should be aware of and approve the initiative. Letters of Support are required and should include any commitments from individual schools. One page maximum per letter.
- **Cited References** (Optional) References should be in an accepted journal format, no more than 2 pages long.

Award & Budget Information

Allowable costs: Expected budgets for Transcend Initiative Grants will be \$150,000 per year for a maximum of three years, after which the Initiative should be sustainably funded by external funding mechanisms.

Transcend Initiative Grant funds may be used to:

- Fund collaborative team events and symposia, particularly those focused on funding outcomes
- Student and postdoc support,
- Developing joint infrastructure,
- Communication and marketing efforts
- Pilot projects to develop WashU's strength in the initiative's area

Transcend Initiative Grant funds should include:

- Support for Co-Leads' effort at a percentage or as a yearly "bonus"
- Identification of admin/project management staff support, and inclusion of that support at a minimum of 20% effort

Unallowable costs

Costs that are generally unallowable are:

- Capital equipment
- Faculty hires
- Substantial research support beyond catalyst, pilot funding (i.e. funds may not be used solely for project support)
- Funds for student initiatives

Criteria for Review

Above all, this program is designed to grow research excellence and capacity at WashU in ways that are not currently possible by developing transdisciplinary, cross-school teams of researchers. It is your task in the proposal to explain how your proposed initiative will grow this research excellence and capacity. Beyond being successful researchers themselves, our selected reviewers have substantive experience as leaders in the university research enterprise.

A few things to note:

1. We assume that the research performed by the team is sound. You should **not** justify the merits of your methods on individual projects, but rather emphasize how individual projects will allow you to meet your metrics of success and sustain this initiative long term.
2. Transcend Initiatives should build capacity and have plans to continue growth through the acquisition of external funding, be it federal, foundation, corporate, or philanthropic dollars. At the end of the award period, it is expected that initiatives will be sustainably funded. There will be no extensions or follow-on funding.

In addition to soliciting their holistic read of the proposal within the context of the Here and Next Research Excellence, we ask the reviewers to evaluate the following:

- Is there a clear and strong justification for why there should be an initiative on this topic at WashU?
- Does the composition of Team Leadership make sense given the goals and objectives of the initiative? Are faculty listed as affiliates with the Initiative suitable for the goals and objectives of the Initiative? Are there people and/or disciplines that should be affiliated with the Initiative?

- Does the vision presented by the proposal represent an exponential growth of research at WashU?
- Are the metrics of success defined by the proposed Initiative reasonable and justified?
- Are the activities designed to prepare the initiative for research growth and eventual sustainability?
- Is the business and sustainability plan clear and achievable? Does the plan for acquiring external funding match the strategic initiatives of the Transcend Initiative?
- Do the budget items proposed clearly connect with the activities and aims of the proposed initiative and connect to the initiative's long-term plans for sustainability? Do the budget items truly aid in taking the initiative to the next level?

Accountability & Reporting

Awarded Transcend Initiatives will submit an annual report via InfoReady. This report will request information on the previous year's activities, financial summaries, and plans for the upcoming year. It will be circulated amongst the Provost's office and the deans of affiliated schools. **The successful completion of this report and satisfactory progress towards the anticipated metrics are required to obtain the next year's funding.** Additionally, a yearly review meeting will be held between the RDO and the team leadership to discuss any feedback on the annual review.

Support will not exceed 3 years of funding. Initiatives are expected to become fiscally self-sufficient through sponsored programs and external fundraising. No follow-on funding will be granted. No-cost extensions (NCEs) will be granted only when there are clearly articulated extenuating circumstances and 60% of the annual funds have already been spent.

Questions

For questions relating to application guidelines, program scope, or InfoReady, please reach out to researchseedfunding@wustl.edu.

Addendum: Funding Priorities for FY2026

The Here and Next Seed Grant program is pleased to announce the FY26 focus areas supporting innovative and interdisciplinary research projects and initiatives focused on Public Health. To celebrate the launch of the new School of Public Health, we aim to catalyze collaborations across disciplines to drive population health research efforts to solve society's deepest challenges by capitalizing upon WashU's pre-existing strengths across schools.

Public Health is what society does collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.

Population health science is the study of the conditions that shape distributions of health within and across populations and of the mechanisms through which these conditions manifest in an individual's health. Essentially, population health science is the basic science of public health.

Public health is then the applied practice of the **science of population health**. For instance, the science may study distribution of asthma in populations, public health then implements the programs and policies that address this distribution. Population health science may document the policies that effectively reduce pollutants, while public health then works with local partners to develop and implement policy change.

Thus, proposals should bring together researchers from multiple schools to develop adaptive solutions, transform health systems and policies, and explore multi-level influences on human health at a fundamentally interdisciplinary level.

2026 Research Focus:

We invite proposals from projects, teams, and initiatives in the following areas of interest:

- **Anticipating Global Health Changes:** Work that anticipates changes in the global health landscape and develops adaptive solutions grounded in WashU research strengths.
- **Digital Transformation:** Work that leverages digital technologies, data analytics, and emerging innovations to enhance public health outcomes and to address complex health challenges through interdisciplinary collaboration.
- **In St. Louis, for St. Louis:** Work dedicated to improving health outcomes and to addressing public health challenges specific to the St. Louis community, through locally-focused, community-engaged, and evidence-based interdisciplinary approaches.
- **Policy, Systems, and Solutions:** Work designed to improve public health through innovative policy and systems change at local, state, and federal levels.

- **Implementation Science:** Work that accelerates the adoption and implementation of evidence-based and sustainable solutions to diverse public health challenges.
- **Planetary Health:** Work that explores the intersections of environmental changes and human health, aiming to address public health challenges through sustainable and interdisciplinary approaches focused on environmental and planetary health.