Tech-Enabled Public Finance: Automation, AI Governance, and Team Design

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HSFO

Meet Your Presenters

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What You Will Leave With

01 Identify high-value automation

Recognize where automation creates real operational value in finance workflows.

02 Apply AI with controls

Use AI in a governance-driven way that supports decision-making and compliance.

03 Define minimum governance

Set basic expectations for responsible AI use in finance operations.

04 Design for sustained value

Align team structure, roles, and skills for durable outcomes over time.

Activity: Where Heroic Effort Is Holding It Together

Think of a critical fiscal process that depends on workarounds by one or two people to keep moving.

1. **Identify the process and why it depends on heroic effort.**
   Focus on where a single-point dependency creates real risk.

2. **Share the situation without naming people or agencies.**
   Use general terms; describe the process type and the exposure, not identities.

3. **Name what would break if that person were unavailable for 30 days.**
   Identify the workload, decisions, and controls that would be at risk.

Why Tech Enablement is Helpful for CFOs

Rising workload against static staffing capacity

Increasing regulatory scrutiny and audit exposure

Growing demand for real-time, decision-ready fiscal information

Core insight: Technology is a management and workforce design challenge not simply an IT upgrade.

Common Pitfalls

1 Automating broken processes

Digitizing inefficiency instead of redesigning it first.

2 AI without guardrails

Deploying outputs without governance, review, or auditability.

3 Tools without role clarity

Adding platforms while decision rights stay ambiguous.

4 Change without adoption

Skipping the workforce readiness and trust-building.

'High-Value' Automation in HHS Finance

High-volume, rules-based tasks

Reconciliations, approvals, document validation, reporting prep.

Redesign before digitizing

Automation should reflect the future workflow, not replicate current inefficiencies.

Managing adoption

Address why staff resist automation and what drives lasting adoption.

Start low-risk, high-reward

Policy lookup, record summarization, redaction, draft documentation.

Bottom line: Automation should reduce workload without shifting accountability.

Sample Tools and Use Cases (Part 1)

Tool and Approach	Finance Use Case	Context and Example
Advanced Spreadsheets (Excel, macros, Power Query, Power Pivot)	Complex reconciliation, reporting, and analysis; bridging data across legacy systems.	RPA bot uses Excel to match daily bank deposits with ERP via VLOOKUP for revenue reconciliation. (Washtenaw County, MI)
Robotic Process Automation (RPA)	AP invoice processing / approvals; revenue and GL reconciliations; grant closeouts.	AI-enabled AP automation platform codes and routes invoices for approval, reducing AP processing time.
Workflow Platforms (Power Automate, ServiceNow)	Cross-system tasks, approvals, notifications, and data sync.	Power Automate flows connect Excel, SharePoint, and email, auto-alerts when reconciliation files update; Teams approvals from form submissions.

Sample Tools and Use Cases (Part 2)

Tool and Approach	Finance Use Case	Context and Example
BI Dashboards & Data Analytics (Power BI, Tableau, R, Python)	Performance dashboards, forecasting, variance analysis, budget and expenditure trends.	Power BI dashboards replace static Excel – enabling real-time tracking of productivity and spending, improving decision-making and transparency.
Collaboration & Project Management (MS Teams, Monday.com, Jira)	Workflow tracking, cross-team coordination, task intake, audit findings, remote comms.	State community college integrates monday.com Work OS to track curriculum development and finance tasks.

None of these tools deliver value without process clarity and role ownership.

Activity: Automation Readiness

1. **One workflow you've automated that worked and why**
   Share the process type, what made it work, and how you knew it was ready.

2. **One that didn't and why**
   Was it a process clarity issue, a trust issue, training, authority, or something else?

Use the Automation Readiness Checklist handout to test one of your current candidates.

Using AI Responsibly to Support Fiscal Decision-Making

AI Outputs → recommendations

AI outputs become recommendations, not decisions.

Human accountability holds

The CFO remains accountable for the decision.

Stakeholders in design

Involve users in design, use, and validation.

Ongoing monitoring

Monitor performance, drift, and unintended impacts.

What 'AI Governance' Means at a CFO-Appropriate Level

1 Data access and quality

Know what data trains and informs the model; ensure quality and lineage.

2 Privacy and compliance boundaries

Define what data can and cannot be exposed to which tools.

3 Approval and review of outputs

Human review before outputs drive action, especially at material thresholds.

4 Auditability

Can you explain and reproduce the result?

Practical AI Use Cases for HHS Finance

Document summarization

Summarize lengthy financial reports or regulatory texts.

Policy & procedure lookup

AI-powered search retrieves answers from policy manuals or grant guidelines.

Drafting routine narratives

Draft budget justifications or standardized correspondence for review.

Trend & anomaly analysis

Flag unusual spending patterns or forecast budget variances.

Not appropriate to automate: Final decisions impacting compliance, funding, or outcomes.

Activity: When AI Flags a Variance

Scenario — An AI tool flags unusual spending patterns in a Medicaid claiming category.

What questions must be answered before acting on it?

1. What data trained or fed this output?
2. What is the confidence and error range?
3. Who reviews before any action is taken?

Risk and Mitigation

Risk	CFO Mitigation
Incorrect or biased outputs	Human validation and controlled use cases.
Data privacy exposure	Restrict access; clearly define data boundaries.
Vendor opacity	Strong procurement and due diligence practices.
Staff mistrust or misuse	Training and workflow readiness.
Over-reliance on AI	Keep AI outputs advisory, not authoritative.

Team Design: Align Roles, Skills, and Accountability

1 **Single-point dependency risk**

Critical processes depend on one or two people.

2 **Compliance exposure**

Judgment calls happen without clear ownership.

3 **Burnout from invisible work**

Shadow processes never fully go away.

Automation and AI reduce risk only when the operating model changes with the tools.

Designing Roles for a Tech-Enabled Operating Model

From → To

From: 'Processes transactions.'

To: 'Ensures fiscal data is accurate, explainable, and decision-ready.'

Design questions CFOs should ask

- Who owns routine processing?
- Who monitors and maintains systems day-to-day?
- Who owns system-flagged exceptions?
- Who has override authority?
- Who reviews patterns, not just individual transactions?

CFO test: 'If we lost a key person for 30 days, what breaks, and why?'

Evolving Skills That Matter

1. **Analytical judgment:** Interpreting system and AI outputs.
2. **Risk literacy:** Knowing when something looks wrong vs. is wrong.
3. **Process thinking:** Understanding upstream and downstream impacts of automation.
4. **Appropriate escalation:** Flagging issues early without fear the system might be wrong.
5. **Design for coverage:** Cross-training, documented rule logic, shared ownership.

Wrap Up: From Tools to Operating Model

Automation, AI, and staffing must move together.

Governance and trust determine value.

CFOs own the control environment; IT supports it.

The question is not 'Where can we use AI?' It is 'Where do we have a clear process, governance support, and workforce readiness to use automation or AI without increasing control risk?'

From Tools to Operating Model.

Automate what is ready. Govern what is powerful. Design for who does the work.

Closing Action

What is one automation, AI, or role decision you will revisit with a workforce lens in the next 90 days?

Selected sources and evidence basis

- **Washtenaw County, MI Treasurer's Office** — RPA/Excel bank-to-ERP revenue reconciliation case (GFR1223-Robots.pdf).
- **AI-Enabled Automation Streamlines Local Government Finance** — AP invoice automation case study.
- **monday.com Community College case study** — Work OS integration for curriculum and finance task tracking.
- **Human services AI adoption research** — Evidence on policy lookup, summarization, redaction, and drafting as low-risk starting points.
- **Course storyboard** — Public Knowledge: Tech-Enabled Public Finance — Automation, AI Governance, and Team Design (May 2026).
- **Companion handout** — Automation Readiness Checklist (workshop tool; not a validated diagnostic instrument).

Note: Case examples are illustrative; participants should validate applicability to their own agency context.

Thank You

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