

PM Insights

A publication for members of the PMI Chicagoland Chapter

March 2026

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PMI CHICAGOLAND CHAPTER MISSION

To be the Association of choice advancing Project/Program/Portfolio Management discipline including fostering professional growth and empowering individuals to fulfill their potential.



www.pmichicagoland.org



President's Message

Q1 2026: Our Shared Journey Toward Meaningful Impact

Dear PMI Chicagoland Community,

As we step into 2026, I extend my warmest wishes to each of you for a happy, healthy, and wish-fulfilling year ahead—one defined by purpose, growth, and meaningful impact.

Our work as a chapter continues to be guided by a simple yet powerful philosophy: **Servant Leadership**. Leadership, to me, is not about the seat we occupy, but about the service we provide to others. As a community, our mission is to ensure that PMI Chicagoland serves as a catalyst for your professional success—removing barriers to growth, creating opportunities for learning, and building a space where every member feels seen, heard, and valued.

PAVING THE PATH THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

We often talk about “Member Experience,” but a truly meaningful experience is not something the chapter gives to you—it is something we build together. Your engagement forms the pavement on the path to a vibrant and impactful community.

Throughout the first quarter, we have seen this collaboration come to life through our **monthly chapter meetings**, where outstanding and inspiring speakers have shared their insights, experiences, and practical wisdom with our members. These sessions continue to provide tremendous value by expanding perspectives and sparking meaningful dialogue.

Equally powerful are our **Special Interest Group (SIG)** cohorts, which bring together members from specific industries and professional domains. These groups create focused communities of expertise where professionals meet, learn, exchange ideas, and grow together while strengthening both professional relationships and industry knowledge.

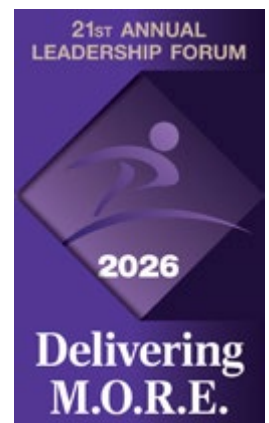
LOOKING AHEAD: THE M.O.R.E. FRAMEWORK

As we move into the second quarter and beyond, we are excited to prepare for one of our signature initiatives—the **Leadership Forum**. This year, the forum will center around the **M.O.R.E. strategic framework**, encouraging leaders to rethink project success beyond the traditional “Triple Constraint” of scope, schedule, and cost.

Through the M.O.R.E. lens, we will explore how project professionals can deliver:

- **Meaningful Outcomes**
- **Organizational Impact**
- **Resilient Leadership**
- **Enduring Value**

In addition, our upcoming Professional Development workshops will focus on bridging the evolving relationship between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emotional Intelligence (EI). As technology accelerates change across industries, the leaders who will thrive are those who combine technical intelligence with human-centered leadership — empathy, ethics, adaptability, and sound judgment.



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GRATITUDE TO OUR HEARTBEAT: OUR VOLUNTEERS

None of this would be possible without the dedication and passion of the 150+ volunteers who quietly power our chapter every day.

From organizing virtual and in-person chapter meetings, facilitating PMP and certification study groups, coordinating programs, managing logistics, and supporting the countless operational details behind every successful event—our volunteers form the backbone and heartbeat of PMI Chicagoland.

Their commitment represents servant leadership in action. We deeply appreciate every volunteer for what they do, how they do it, and the tremendous value they bring to our members and to the broader project management community.

GROWING TOGETHER – NOT IN SILOS

Our growth as a chapter cannot happen in silos; it must happen **hand in hand**.

Our volunteers continuously work to stay connected with our members—listening to feedback, understanding emerging needs, and responding to the hunger for learning and professional development that defines our community.

At the same time, our members play an equally important role. We encourage you to be ambassadors of PMI Chicagoland—share your experiences, invite colleagues to attend our events, and amplify the value of our community within your workplaces and professional networks.

When volunteers and members move forward with shared purpose, we do more than sustain a professional association—we build a **North Star organization** that inspires, guides, and elevates the project management profession across the Chicagoland region.

Thank you for your continued engagement, trust, and commitment to this community. Together, I look forward to the meaningful impact we will create in 2026 and beyond.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Ravi Avasarala
President, PMI Chicagoland Chapter

Celebrating Women Leaders

In honor of Women's History Month, PMI Chicagoland Chapter is celebrating the women leaders who power the chapter and keep us moving forward. You drive change. You uplift us. You inspire us.

Our diverse team of women leaders shapes the future of our organization, ensuring success and insightful lessons learned with every project.

Together, let's recognize and honor the women within the project management landscape this month and every month.



Tolu Abolaji



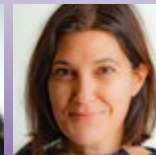
Ashley Brady



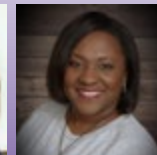
Tina Dodson



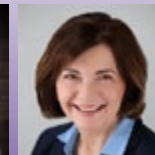
Shyamala Ekambaram



Leslie Farrell



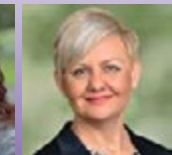
Catrina Franklin



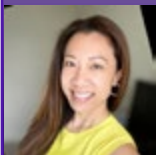
Elfi Gabriel



Margaret Gonzalez



Yuliyana Gospodinova



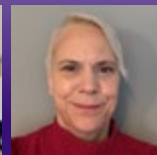
Kristine Gregorio



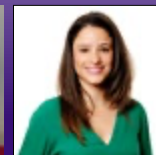
Tiara Jackson



Durga Poosaa



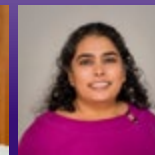
Kathy Jordan-Baker



Virginia Montiel Faria



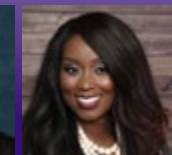
Uzma Nikhath



Bijal Patel



Ura Puranda



Mimi Smith-Philemon

Welcoming Our New Directors

The year began with our Board and Directors coming together for the 2026 Leadership Development & Directors Transition meeting. Guided by the theme “Lead with Purpose; Create Lasting Impact,” our leadership team reflected on how we can continue to strengthen the chapter while creating meaningful opportunities for our members, volunteers, and community.

This March, we’re thrilled to introduce the newest members of our leadership team. Each brings unique experiences, fresh perspectives, and a passion for supporting our members and volunteers.

Please join us in giving a warm welcome to our new directors:

- Virginia Montiel Faria** . . . Director of Member Relations
- Noel McElroy** Director of Mentoring
- Mimi Smith-Philemon** . . . Director of Marketing and PR
- Uzma Nikhath** Director of Youth Outreach
- Leon Shamoun** Director of Social Outreach
- Ashley Brady** Director of Career Development
- Elfi Gabriel** Director of Social Media

Volunteering is more than just giving a few hours here and there. It’s an investment in personal and professional growth. Commitment to helping others. An opportunity to connect with communities.

Get Involved in 2026!

If you’re interested in volunteering this year, explore our open positions on our volunteer site!

Simply [log into](#) PMI’s volunteer page, click “Find an Opportunity” on the left-hand menu, navigate to the “Chapter” menu (under “All Opportunities”), and select “Chicagoland Chapter.”

Questions? Reach out to our Director of Volunteers at DirVolunteers@pmichicagoland.org.



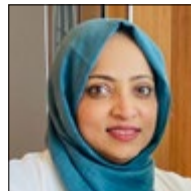
Virginia Montiel Faria



Noel McElroy



Mimi Smith-Philemon



Uzma Nikhath



Leon Shamoun



Ashley Brady



Elfi Gabriel



The PMI Chicagoland Chapter Board of Directors convened for a transition meeting in early 2026. Seven new directors were enthusiastically welcomed to the Leadership Team.



Delivering M.O.R.E.

21ST ANNUAL LEADERSHIP FORUM

- M** MANAGE Perceptions
- O** OWN Project Success Beyond Project Management Success
- R** RELENTLESSLY Reassess Project Parameters
- E** EXPAND Perspective

2026 Leadership Forum

Register NOW before the April 19 deadline for the 21st annual **Leadership Forum** on **Friday, May 1, 2026, 7 AM – 12:30 PM CT**, at **Chevy Chase Country Club**, Wheeling, IL. Don't delay; this is typically a sold-out event.

This year's theme features PMI's **M.O.R.E.** vision for maximizing project success. [PMI's 2024 Project Success study](#) showed that only 7% of project professionals always do all four of M.O.R.E. When they do, project success scores rose to 94 over the baseline of 27.



Hear from thought leaders including [Joel Carboni, Ph.D., GPM-b](#) (“Deliver MORE with Integrity: Place Sustainable Performance at the Center of Project Value”), [Mary Harden, PMP, CCMP](#) (“Change Management in Action: Redefining Success Beyond the Triple Constraint”), and [Katelyn Jones, Ph.D.](#) (“AI and Social Impact: Expanding What We Measure and Why”). Click on each speaker's link to access their bios, abstracts, and learning objectives.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

pmichicagoland.org/Leadership_Forum

Group discounts for five or more, contact:

- Francis Labayen** (DirExecutiveOutreach@PMIChicagoland.org) or
- Sunil Chainani** (VPBusinessOutreach@pmichicagoland.org).

We're also seeking sponsors and exhibitor partners. Sponsoring the Leadership Forum offers organizations direct access to executives and project leaders driving transformation, a platform to highlight brand services, thought leadership, and engagement with one of PMI's most dynamic and influential U.S. chapters. There are opportunities for \$250 exhibitor tables, an executive networking event, or tailor-made options that meet your budget.

Learn more about sponsorship: https://pmichicagoland.org/Events_SP or contact **Kevin Davis** (DirAdvertising@PMIChicagoland.org).



Joel Carboni, Ph.D., GPM-b



Mary Harden, PMP, CCMP



Katelyn Jones, Ph.D.

PMI Chicagoland Annual Community Awards Are Now Open!

PMI Chicagoland Chapter will recognize a nonprofit organization or an accredited educational institution that has demonstrated significant social impact within the greater Chicagoland and suburban geographic area. This is part of the Chapter's Community Impact Program to expand our reach and deepen our impact within the communities we serve.

This extends to providing student scholarship opportunities to qualified Chicagoland students or young professionals with a focus on project management. Refer to the specific award for application details.

APPLICATION DEADLINE APRIL 15, 2026!



One (1) Community Service Award – Quality Education - Providing a quality education, the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. [Apply online.](#)

One (1) Community Service Award – Social Good Reduced Inequalities - Paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations to improve people's lives and sustainable development. [Apply online.](#)



Two (2) \$1,000 Student Scholarships – Project Management Resident Chicagoland student accepted or currently enrolled in an Illinois-accredited educational institution with a focus on project management. [Apply online.](#)



Spring Clean Your PMI Profile

The chapter needs your help to ensure that the data we use to plan events for our members is correct and complete.

We are finding that the data in ThoughtSpot has incorrect/missing address fields, industry, and certifications. Please take a few minutes to review and update your profile:

[Login to pmi.org](#) using your PMI Global credentials.

- Click on "Community Profile" in the dropdown menu under your name in the upper right-hand corner.
- Click "Manage Profile" (if it is visible) or the ellipsis (...) next to your name at the top of the page.
- Click "Edit Personal Info."

Review and update information (i.e., "Industry", "Organization", "Title") as needed.

- Click "Save & Close."

If you only see an "About Me" box, click "Edit." If you see a list of items under the "About Me" box, click the "Edit" next to each of the items listed below:

Location – Review and verify that your listed city and state are correct.

Certifications – Review and verify that the certifications listed are correct.

Chapter Membership – Review and verify that all chapters of which you are currently a member are listed.

Feel free to review and update any additional information on your profile.

Please contact the Membership team (VPMembership@pmichicagoland.org) if you have any questions about accessing or updating your profile. Thank you for ensuring that our planning data is correct and current.

Strengthening the Profession Through Mentorship

The PMI Chicagoland Chapter's Mentoring Program remains one of our most impactful and distinguishing initiatives—a volunteer-driven platform dedicated to elevating professionals and strengthening the project management community.

Designed as a structured, high-quality mentoring experience, the program connects experienced practitioners with emerging leaders in meaningful, goal-oriented mentoring cycles. It is built on service, professionalism, and a shared commitment to advancing careers while strengthening the profession.

Over the years, the Mentoring Program has evolved into a flagship offering of the Chapter. Through dedicated volunteer leadership and continuous improvement, the program has enhanced mentor-mentee matching, strengthened engagement frameworks, and created a consistent, scalable structure that delivers measurable value to participants.

The excellence of the Mentoring Leadership Team was recognized when the program received the PMI Chicagoland Team of the Year (2017–2018) award. Best practices from the program were also shared at the PMI Global Leadership Institute Meeting, reflecting the Chapter's broader contribution to the global PMI community.

Beyond structure and recognition, the true strength of the Mentoring Program lies in its culture. Mentors and mentees consistently describe the experience as transformational—building confidence, expanding networks, and fostering long-term professional growth. The program cultivates cross-generational learning and reinforces the principle that leadership includes investing in others.

As part of the Chapter's ongoing Professional Growth initiatives, the Mentoring Program continues to be a strategic priority. We remain committed to expanding access, strengthening scalability, and ensuring that mentorship remains a core pathway for leadership development within our community.

We also acknowledge the contributions of past mentoring leaders who helped shape and sustain the program over the years. Among them was Carlton “Skip” Depner, whose dedication to mentoring left a meaningful and lasting imprint on the program's culture. His commitment—like that of many volunteers who serve with heart—reflects the spirit of mentorship that defines our Chapter.

The success of the PMI Chicagoland Mentoring Program belongs to the collective effort of volunteers who continue to invest their time, expertise, and care in helping others grow.

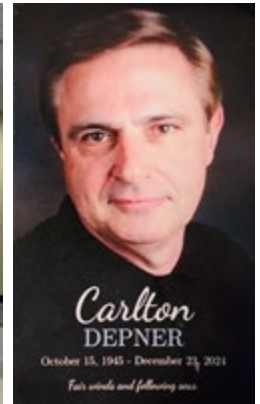
We invite members to participate—as mentors, mentees, or supporters—and be part of a program that continues to strengthen leaders and elevate our profession.

With Best Regards,

Noel McElroy
 Director of Mentoring
DirMentoring@pmichicagoland.org

(Left) A group of mentors and mentees meet as part of the PMI Chicagoland Mentoring Program.

(Right) Carlton “Skip” Depner leaves a meaningful impact on the Mentoring Program.



APRIL 2026 PMP® WEEKLY VIRTUAL STUDY GROUP

Don't miss your chance to prepare for the PMP® exam alongside a supportive community of peers!

Registration Deadline: April 10, 2026

Mondays: 4/13, 4/20, 4/27 & 5/4 | 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM CT

\$25 Members / \$35 Non-Members

Questions? DirCertification@pmichicagoland.org

[REGISTER NOW](#)

**MAY 2026 CAPM® WEEKLY VIRTUAL STUDY GROUP**

Your CAPM® journey starts here! This upcoming month-long virtual study group will offer peer-driven, structured learning designed to build real exam-day confidence.

Registration Deadline: April 30, 2026

Sessions run quarterly:

February, May, August & November

\$25 Members / \$35 Non-Members

Questions? DirCertification@pmichicagoland.org

[REGISTER NOW](#)

**JOIN A SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP!**

PMI Chicagoland's Special Interest Groups (SIGs) bring together professionals in focused fields for monthly community-driven sessions packed with learning, networking, and industry insights. Complete an interest form today and become part of the conversation!

[Special Interest Group – Healthcare Project Management \(SIG-HPM\)](#)

[Special Interest Group – Construction Project Management \(SIG-CPM\)](#)

WE'RE LOOKING FOR EXCEPTIONAL VOICES! COULD THAT BE YOU?

The Speaker's Bureau is on the hunt for dynamic, inspiring speakers who challenge audiences to think differently about leadership, innovation, and execution. If you have insights that make people lean in and take notes, we want to hear from you!

[Learn More & Apply](#)

**SHARE YOUR EXPERTISE AND GET PUBLISHED IN PM INSIGHTS!**

Are you ready to establish yourself as a thought leader in project management? The PMI Chicagoland Chapter Writers' Submission Initiative invites you to feature your work in the quarterly PM Insights newsletter, reaching 5,000+ members and industry leaders. Build your portfolio, strengthen your credibility, and make your mark in our professional community.

[Review Submission Guidelines](#) | [Submit Your Content](#)

