

Delivering M.O.R.E.

21ST ANNUAL
LEADERSHIP FORUM



Project
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Attendees,

It is my distinct honor, as President of the PMI Chicagoland Chapter, to welcome you to the 2026 Leadership Forum.

Today, we gather not just as project professionals, but as leaders entrusted with shaping outcomes, influencing change, and creating lasting impact in an increasingly dynamic world. In such an environment, leadership calls for more than execution — it calls for intention, adaptability, and purpose.

This is the essence of our theme: **Delivering M.O.R.E.**

To lead effectively today, we must **Manage perceptions with clarity, Own outcomes with accountability, Relentlessly reassess what drives value, and Expand our perspective beyond immediate priorities.** These principles are not just guiding ideas—they are the foundation for leadership that inspires trust, drives meaningful results, and elevates the organizations we serve.

The Leadership Forum is designed to challenge thinking, spark new ideas, and foster meaningful connections. It is an opportunity to reflect, to learn, and to grow alongside a community of leaders who are committed to excellence and continuous evolution.

At PMI Chicagoland, we remain deeply committed to advancing the profession, strengthening our community, and empowering each of you to lead with greater purpose and impact.

As you engage throughout the day, I encourage you to be present, be curious, and be intentional in how you apply what you gain from this experience.

Together, let us embrace the M.O.R.E. mindset—not only to enhance project success, but to elevate leadership and create a broader, more lasting impact in the world around us.

Thank you for being part of this important event. I wish you an inspiring and impactful Leadership Forum.

Ravi Avasarala PMP, DASSM
President, PMI Chicagoland Chapter





About the PMI Chicagoland Chapter

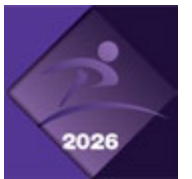
The PMI Chicagoland Chapter, which has been serving the greater Chicago area for nearly 50 years, is proud to be one of the largest and most established local networks of project management professionals in the United States. Local chapters, such as the Chicagoland Chapter, support the mission and goals of the Project Management Institute (PMI), the leading professional membership association for the project management field. PMI, established in 1969, provides value to over 2.9 million professionals worldwide through advocacy, collaboration, education, and research. PMI enhances careers, organizational success, and the project management profession through its globally recognized standards, certifications, resources, tools, research, publications, professional development courses, and networking opportunities.

The Chicagoland Chapter, founded in 1977, currently has over 4,900 members in the Chicago metropolitan area. It is one of the largest chapters globally and is highly active within PMI. One of the main goals of the Chicagoland Chapter is to provide a platform for networking with other project management professionals and practitioners across various industries in the Chicago metropolitan area. This allows for the sharing of project experiences, effective strategies and tools, and valuable insights gained. For more information, please visit our website at www.pmichicagoland.org or follow us on social media.



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Agenda

- 8:00–8:05 AM **President’s Address** — Ravi Avasarala, PMP, DASSM, *President PMI Chicagoland Chapter*
Welcome remarks
- 8:05–8:10 AM **Speakers Introductions** — Michelle Ware-Ivy, MA, ACMP, PMP, *Executive Council Chair*
- Agenda, Executive Council and Speaker Introductions**
- 8:10–9:15 AM **[Dr. Joel Carboni, GPM-B](#)**
Deliver M.O.R.E. With Integrity: Placing Sustainable Performance at the Center of Project Value
- 9:15–9:30 AM **Break 1**
- 9:30–10:35 AM **[Mary Harden, PMP, CCMP](#)**
Change Management in Action: Redefining Success Beyond the Triple Constraint
- 10:35 – 10:40 AM **Association Outreach Overview** — Kathy Jordan-Baker, *Director of Association Outreach*
- 10:40–10:50 AM **Break 2**
- 10:50–11:55 AM **[Dr. Katelyn Jones](#)**
AI and Social Impact: Expanding What We Measure and Why
- 11:55 AM–12:00 PM **Speakers Recognition, Next Steps** — Michelle Ware-Ivy, MA, ACMP, PMP, *EC Chair*
- 12:00–12:20 PM **Executive Outreach Overview** — Francis Labayen, PMP, CISM, *Director of Executive Outreach*
- Networking Exercise** — Dr. Natochia Lewis, Ph.D, PMP, *Business Outreach COS*
- 12:20 – 12:30 PM **Event Polls** — Imelda Wu, PMP, CSM, *2026 Leadership Forum Project Manager*
- Recognitions, Prizes** — Francis Labayen, PMP, CISM, *Director of Executive Outreach*



Michelle Nicole Ware-Ivy

Executive Council Chair

MC of Leadership Forum

Michelle brings a unique perspective as Founder of the Malcom Orlando Ivy Foundation (TMOIF) and a recognized Global Business Transformation Leader in the biotech and healthcare industries. She has decades of experience translating bold organizational visions into strategic objectives and operational excellence, delivering high-impact outcomes that influence people, processes, and technologies.

In 2024, after a life-changing experience, Michelle's influence transcended into a purpose-driven commitment to patient wellbeing and precision medicine. Under her visionary leadership, she has established coalitions with multiple well-established patient advocacy organizations to execute TMOIF's core strategic objectives of amplifying awareness and advocating for patient-directed research that enables equitable access to life-saving therapies for all patients worldwide. Through TMOIF, Michelle is a trusted voice for the voiceless, challenging systemic misdiagnoses and delayed care that can cost lives. She delivered numerous grassroots programs bridging the gap between science and community to empower clinicians and at-risk communities, reshaping the blood cancer landscape.

Academically, Michelle holds a Master of Arts in Human Performance Improvement from Roosevelt University. Her professional credentials include the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification and a recognized change management credential from ACMP, reflecting her blend of strategic acumen and people-centric insight.

Michelle resides in the greater Chicagoland area and is known for empathy and relentlessness. An explorer at heart, she cherishes quality time with loved ones and finds joy in discovering new destinations around the world. Through her visionary leadership and unwavering advocacy, Michelle continues to create a lasting impact on healthcare, shaping a brighter future for all communities.

Deliver M.O.R.E. with Integrity: Placing Sustainable Performance at the Center of Project Value

KEYNOTE | 8:10 - 9:15 AM

Abstract: PMI's M.O.R.E. mindset asks leaders to manage perceptions, own success, reassess relentlessly, and expand their perspective. However, "value" is still too often defined as scope, schedule, and cost. This session explores how to embed sustainable performance into the heart of M.O.R.E., so projects deliver value that lasts. Attendees can expect to leave with a practical lens for redefining "project success", so it holds up — not just at go-live, but when regulators, communities, and the next generation start asking harder questions.



Speaker: Dr. Joel Carboni, PhD, GPM-B
Green Project Management Founder & Practice Lead for PMI's Global Sustainability Content Innovation Platform

Dr. Joel Carboni is the founder and president of GPM and the global subject matter expert on embedding sustainability, ethics, and value into project management. He is the architect of the P5 Sustainability Standard, the Sustainability Competence Standard, the Sustainable

Project Management™ Practice Guide, and the Project Sustainability Reporting Guide. For more than 16 years, he has advised organizations, governments, and institutions on moving sustainability from reporting to decision-making. A Forbes-recognized sustainability leader and contributor to Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards, Dr. Carboni's work focuses on integrity, regenerative practice, and redefining project success as value that is worth the effort and cost.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Reframe "project value" in line with PMI's M.O.R.E. mindset using sustainable performance rather than just the iron triangle
- Apply the concept of impact thresholds to decide when "more" is no longer value-creating but value-destroying for the organization and society
- Integrate the P5 Standard and PRiSM™-style thinking into PMO governance, project selection, and benefits realization
- Communicate project trade-offs to executives and sponsors in a way that is honest about constraints yet focused on continuous value

Change Management in Action-Redefining Success Beyond the Triple Constraint

KEYNOTE | 9:30 - 10:35 AM

Abstract: As organizations face accelerated transformation, constrained resources, and rising change fatigue, the greatest risk to project success is no longer delivery—it is adoption. This session demonstrates how modern Project Management Offices can deliver M.O.R.E. value by evolving into enterprise change engines, not just delivery hubs. Attendees will leave with a practical blueprint, governance model, and toolset they can apply to launch or strengthen their own Change Management Center of Excellence and deliver continuous value.



Speaker: Mary Harden, PMP, CCMP

Vice President, Senior Change Management Advisor at Wintrust Financial Corporation, Executive Council Member, PMI Chicagoland

Mary Harden is a senior change and transformation leader with more than a decade of experience guiding large-scale, enterprise initiatives across financial services and global organizations. She currently serves as Vice President and Senior Change Management

Advisor, where she established and currently leads a Change Management Center of Excellence, developing enterprise frameworks, governance, and toolkits to accelerate adoption and realized value. Harden has led multimillion-dollar digital transformations, acquisitions, and large-scale change initiatives. She is known for her ability to translate strategy into sustainable results. She is PMP and CCMP certified and an Executive Council member of PMI Chicagoland.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Using the PMI M.O.R.E. framework, attendees will learn how PMOs can:

- Manage Perceptions through structured stakeholder confidence mapping
- Own Project Success by redefining “done” as sustained adoption and realized value
- Relentlessly Reassess through rapid reassessment cadences that keep initiatives aligned to shifting business realities
- Expand Perspective by using change complexity as a core portfolio decision lens

AI and Social Impact: Expanding What We Measure and Why

KEYNOTE | 10:50 -11:55 AM

Abstract: As AI transforms business operations and drives economic growth, a critical question remains unanswered: How do we ensure its benefits are shared equitably while minimizing harm? Drawing on real-world examples from Chicago's \$57.4 billion AI economy and beyond, this session will explore how AI's rapid adoption creates both unprecedented opportunities and significant risks for communities. Participants will learn why conventional responsible AI principles fall short and how to apply practical strategies to address these shortcomings.



Speaker: Dr. Katelyn Jones

Vice President of Impact Analytics & Strategic Advisor on Data-Driven Decision Making, YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago

Dr. Katelyn Jones brings over a decade of mixed-methods research and leadership experience to help leaders and boards make strategic decisions at the intersection of data, impact, and mission. As VP of Impact Insights & Analytics at the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, she led enterprise-wide evaluation strategy and integrated AI-powered tools that accelerated project delivery by 50% while generating over \$500K in annual savings. She now advises mission-driven organizations through Noetic, her advisory practice, and teaches Decision Strategy at Loyola University Chicago's Quinlan School of Business. Dr. Jones also serves as Board Chair of Joel Hall Dancers & Center. She holds a post-graduate certificate in AI for Leaders from UT Austin and has presented on AI and social impact at CDO Vision Chicago.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the gap between conventional AI success metrics and social impact measures
- Understand the limitations of current responsible AI frameworks
- Apply a social impact framework to evaluate AI utilization and/or strategy in their organization

2026 Leadership Forum Event Team



Sunil Chainani, PMP, DASSM, PMOCP

Project Sponsor/Advisor - VP Business Outreach

Sunil brings multiple years of project, program, and portfolio management experience in small, medium, and large organizations within the food, medical, consumer, and engineered goods industries. Sunil's diverse career experience includes a variety of roles, including ERP upgrades and consolidations, mergers and acquisitions, SAP enablement, plant startups, and supporting transformation of PMO processes. He looks forward to bringing his experiences to engage senior leaders to promote PMO and PM thought leadership via the services of the Project Management Institute.



Francis Labayen, PMP

Project Advisor – Director of Executive Outreach

Francis is a PMP-certified Information Technology professional with 25+ years of experience delivering and supporting mission-critical Information Systems & Infrastructure. He has a strong track record for managing and delivering large and complex technology projects on time and within budget. In addition, he has a strong interest in adding value by implementing process improvement initiatives that will significantly reduce costs while increasing operational effectiveness and client satisfaction.



Aleia Simone, PMP, DASM

Executive Council Liaison – Executive Council Project Manager

Aleia is a seasoned Project and Operations Management Professional with more than 10 years of experience leading cross-functional initiatives, building scalable systems, and transforming organizational goals into measurable outcomes. Throughout her career, she has worked across industries that include technology, telecommunications, and professional services, developing a proven track record for designing governance frameworks, optimizing operations, and leading programs that strengthen efficiency.

2026 Leadership Forum Event Team

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Imelda Wu, PMP, CSM, AWS Cloud Practitioner
2026 Leadership Forum Project Manager

Imelda has over 15 years of experience within the healthcare insurance, startup, financial services and information technology space. The majority of the projects that she has managed and completed successfully were infrastructure projects where she served both as the project lead and engineer.



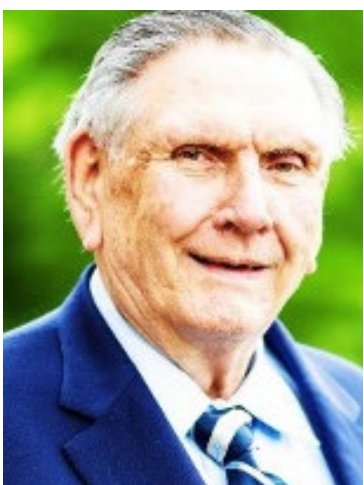
John Lopez, PMP
Speaker Selection Lead

John Lopez is a seasoned leader with over 20 years of experience who specializes in crafting and executing operational strategies, optimizing processes, and building high-performing teams. John's expertise includes driving large-scale projects from strategy to execution, enabling organizational change, and leveraging technology to fuel business growth.



Kierstyn Schwartz-Watjen, PhD, PMP
Marketing/Sponsor Lead

Kierstyn has led complex biotech R&D and biomanufacturing programs by building systems, structure, and clarity around highly technical work. Kierstyn holds a PhD in Microbiology and hands-on experience in fermentation, infectious disease, and modeling. She translates between scientists, engineers, data teams, and leadership — so portfolios move from ideas and experiments to predictable delivery.



John Handel, MBA
Logistics Lead

John is currently an Adjunct Professor at Elmhurst University, teaching Project Management courses. Through his work at Bell Labs/Lucent Technologies, he was awarded a United States patent for his work associated with the International Credit Card Validation project in 1991. In 2001, John was part of a team that implemented the PMIC Mentoring Program. From 2002 to 2006, he also served as the PMIC Mentoring Program Director.

2026 Leadership Forum Event Team

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Michael Spilg, PMP, PMI-ACP
Kickoff/Website Lead

Michael is currently an R&D Project Manager at Evergen, a leading CDMO in the tissue engineering field. He prioritizes driving team achievements by resolving conflicts through root cause analysis, risk assessment, and executing project delivery within time, budget, and scope. Michael has 5+ years of experience in highly regulated industries, such as aerospace and medical devices. He has a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, as well as PMP, PMI-ACP, Six Sigma Yellow Belt, and AWS Practitioner certificates. He has traveled to 100+ countries and built his adaptability skills during four semester exchange programs.



Lavanya Deshmukh
Registration Lead

Lavanya is an experienced Software Program Manager with a proven track record of leading complex initiatives and achieving strategic goals, specializing in delivering cutting-edge technology and automation solutions across a range of industries, including technology, e-commerce, retail, and third-party logistics. She has a keen ability to navigate ambiguity and engage stakeholders and specializes in transforming high-level vision into actionable strategies and successful project outcomes.



Business Outreach



For many years, the PMI Chicagoland Chapters has provided a focused activity dedicated to reaching out to Executives and helping organizations operating in the Chicago area succeed by adopting project management methodologies advocated by PMI. The PMI research studies show that successful organizations fully understand the value of project management, have actively engaged executive sponsors, align projects to strategy, develop and maintain project management talent, establish a well-aligned and effective PMO (project management office) and use standardized project management practices throughout the organization.

In environments (organizations or industries) where agility and value are frequently leveraged to enhance each other, the ability for businesses to respond to rapid change quickly yet still deliver value has never been more important. The Leadership Forum is a great place for executives, senior leaders, and mid-level project management professionals to discuss not only the current trends in business but also prepare for a world radically changed by technology such as Artificial Intelligence, a quickly changing Startup culture, and new advances in project, program, and portfolio management.

For more information about Business Outreach
please visit: pmichicagoland.org/outreach
or contact: VPBusinessOutreach@PMIChicagoland.org



Executive Outreach

LEADING STRATEGIC INITIATIVES WITH EXECUTIVES TO ADVANCE THE VALUE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT.

- Provide personalized onboarding for smooth integration into the Council.
- Promote project management as a strategic enabler to influence success.
- Gain exclusive access to peer-to-peer Quarterly roundtable discussions.
- Drive innovation, define the theme / speakers for the annual Leadership Forum
- Share correlated skills to manage PMOs, Change, AI, Cloud etc. technologies.

To volunteer or join the Council contact
Francis Labayen, Director of Executive Outreach:

DirExecutiveOutreach@PMIChicagoland.org



Corporate Outreach

REDEFINING PROJECT SUCCESS FOR ORGANIZATIONS.

Together, PMI and Chicago area organizations, shape the future of project management.

- Align evolving standards with your corporate needs
- Boost your organization's PM maturity and project delivery capabilities
- Upskill internal talent and sharpen team leadership skills
- Represent your organization in our Corporate Ambassador Program

Contact Kristine Gregorio, Director of Corporate Outreach, for more information about our Corporate Outreach Services:

DirCorporateOutreach@PMIChicagoland.org

Association Outreach

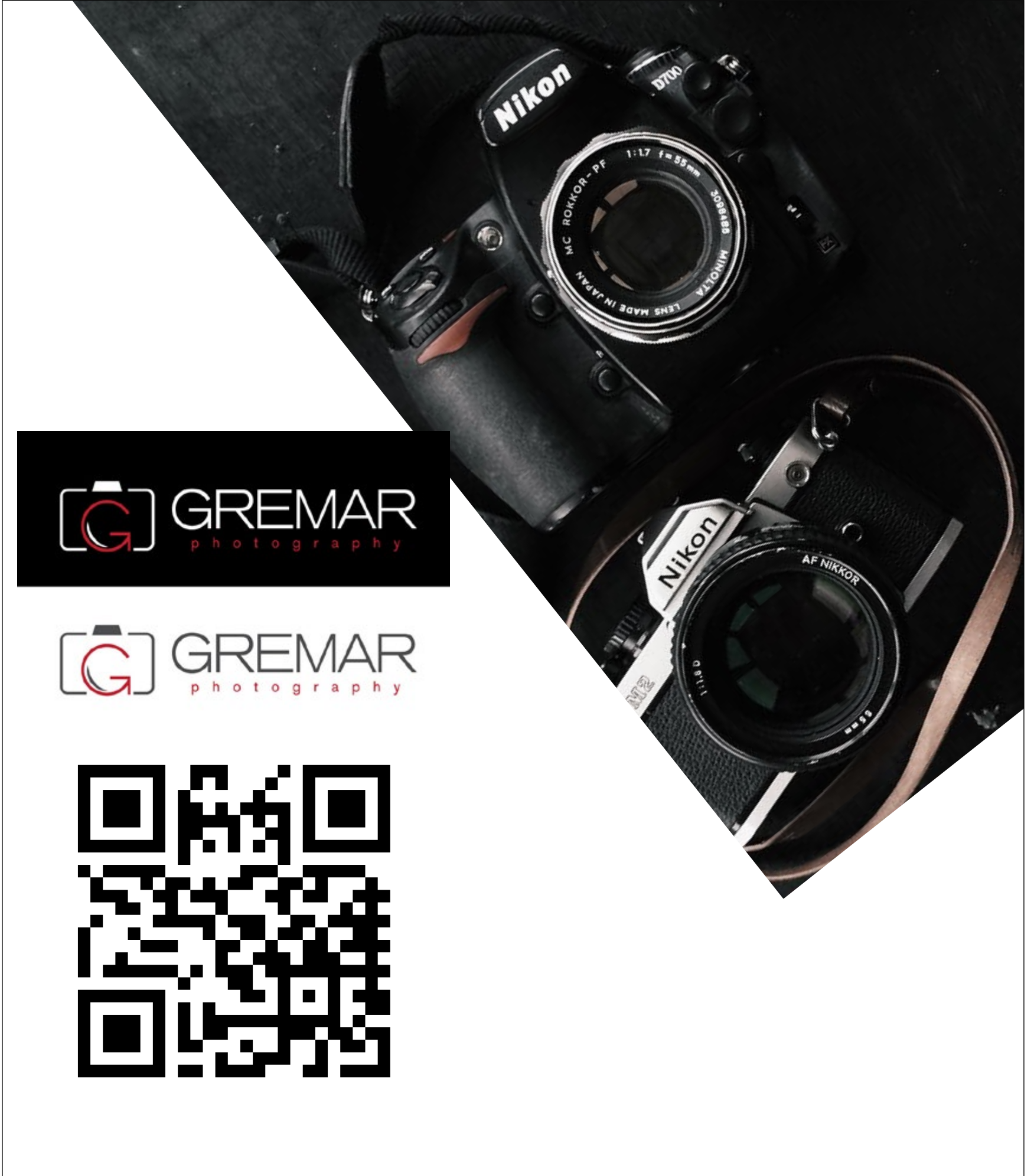
CHAMPIONING PROJECT LEADERSHIP ACROSS ASSOCIATIONS.

Together, PMI and Chicago area organizations, shape the future of project management.

- Advocate for project management, PMI, and PMI Chicagoland within partner organizations
- Create joint initiatives for shared growth and value
- Exchange insights and opportunities to enrich member experiences
- Showcase the power of cross-association collaboration

Contact Kathy Jordan-Baker, Director of Professional Association Outreach, for more information:

DirAssociationOutreach@PMIChicagoland.org



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The chapter extends our sincere thanks to Greg Jones, Past President, PMI Chicagoland Chapter, for photographing this event.



Thank you for coming!

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