DEVELOPING PM-KNOWLEDGEABLE YOUTH THROUGH STUDENT COMPETITIONS
Student competitions become even more valuable when they introduce young people to project management.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: HELEN S. COOKE, PMP
From PMIEF’s formative years until today, Helen S. Cooke remains committed to the idea that project management can and should be leveraged for social good.

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DEVELOPING PM-KNOWLEDGEABLE YOUTH THROUGH STUDENT COMPETITIONS

For young people facing the difficult requirements of student competitions, the work involved can seem daunting. As in real life, the application of project management principles can make all the difference in their success. PMSEF invites young students to participate in the ideal forum through which to introduce young people to project management because they engage them in experiential learning that requires not only "doing" a project, but carefully managing it from conception to completion.

PMSEF recently awarded grants to two organizations, Destination Imagination and Discoverer, to incorporate the teaching of project management principles into their student competitions. As a result, students are being introduced to and becoming experienced in using project management strategies that can be applied for success in college, career, and everyday life.

PMSEF’s investment in Discoverer and Destination Imagination supports these organizations in their effort to revise their competition curricula and related materials in order to thoroughly integrate project management into the student experience.

Destination Imagination

With growing cultural interdependency and a critical need for raising campus problems quickly and creatively, an understanding of the creative process—teamwork, creativity, imagination, and collaborative problem-solving—is essential. With 30-plus years of experience, Destination Imagination currently reaches 200,000 students and 30,000 adult mentors. The organization’s annual competition encourages students to strengthen their critical thinking and creative skills through challenge-based programs in one of seven focus areas: technical, scientific, fine arts, improvisational, structural and service learning (in addition to a two-narrative early learning challenge). Teams may showcase their innovative solutions to these challenges at a tournament and those that advance past regional and state/country (affiliate) tournaments are invited to participate in Finals Global, the world’s largest celebration of creativity.

Kris Beisel, Destination Imagination’s Director of Global Affairs and Strategies, articulated the purpose and value of the grant to their competition. “We are excited to validate the learning that comes through our competition around project management. We have been doing it, but now we will refine our process and materials with project management tools and language.”

Beisel also noted that the integrations of the project management structure help the adult team manager guide the students toward progress without offering their own advice. Students can discern their own way to do their own thing. They have a structure for moving the project along from inception to implementation.

Discoverer’s Future City Program

Discoverer’s Future City is the world’s only nationally recognized engineering contest for 40,000 students (grades 6-9) in the U.S. It provides a project-based learning experience for students to apply math and science to imagine, design, and plan a city of the future that addresses real-world problems like feeding and transforming future populations. Students work as a team with an educator and engineer mentor to plan cities using SimCity2000® software; research and write solutions to engineering problems; build tabletop scale models with recycled materials; and present their vision to a panel of judges.

According to Tara Saha, Director of Programs at Discoverer, “PMSEF in helping us make Future City a current experience, equips students with more transferrable skills and a plan for how to take on this project and the next.”

The PMSEF grant provided a unique and very valuable opportunity that Saha was quick to point out. She said, “For-profit dollars don’t get to measure impact in the same way.” Because of PMSEF, we have been able to make a thorough assessment and have provided an opportunity to formally integrate project management into the Future City process. It will take Future City to the next level.

The revised Future City curricula will utilize many PMSEF resources. Careers in Project Management, Project Management Skills for Life, Project Management Toolkit for Youth, and the Project Management Toolkit for Teachers.

Once the pilot materials are released nationally, they are expected to ultimately reach 40,000 middle school students and 2,000 teachers and mentors.

According to Saha, a small group of teachers participated in a Future City pilot program in 2016 to provide feedback on the revised curricula as well as planning that technical management has been integrated into the tests. They agreed that the addition of the project management framework to the curricula provides a logical sequencing that is very helpful because it mirrors the engineering principles with project management, resulting in a clear and intentional checklist for participants to follow throughout the competition.

Students also gave feedback indicating the success of the pilot. One said, “It was new because we were doing and didn’t feel like we were being told.”

Impact of Student Competitions

Student competitions foster development of 21st century skills—including the 4 Cs—collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking—that are inherent to project management. They provide challenges, foster innovation, promote excellence, and give students an opportunity to test their strengths and innovative ideas. Competitions create the allure for teenagers who are increasingly engaged in student projects, and that value they offer students (as well as teachers and mentors) becomes even greater. This is why PMSEF links its support to organizations like Destination Imagination and Discoverer.

Shortly after observing the presentations at Destination Imagination’s Global Finals, Beisel wondered whether other offers experience and named exactly what grants to student competitions. “It’s in project management; whether it is future life, framework, or writing an essay or application for college, these students will know how to plan their steps to get the results they want. When I watch them at Global Finals, my jaw drops at what kids can accomplish and the excellence this experience makes in their lives.”

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DONOR SPOTLIGHT: HELEN S. COOKE, PMP

Throughout her 25 years of experience in project management, Helen S. Cooke has remained committed to the idea that project management can and should be leveraged for social good. According to Cooke, whether it is building bridges, solving agricultural problems, or disaster relief, social problems are better solved in the context of project management.

Cooke put this idea into action as she played an integral role in the development of PMI’s Educational Foundation. She recalled the early years of shaping its vision and said, "We were setting the goal of undertaking 'goose bump' projects. That meant looking for projects outside of PMI’s normal boundaries. Projects that would not happen at all without project management. Projects so exciting, they would give goose bumps."

This initial goal has become a reality within PMIEF, and Cooke has remained an ardent supporter.

"To me," Cooke continued, "seeing students without privilege gain project management skills and access tools to manage their futures and achieve goals—that gives me goose bumps."

Currently serving as CPO at OPM Mentors in Chicago, a consulting practice that specializes in advancing the maturity of organizations to deliver strategic objectives through projects, Cooke’s past accomplishments include creation of a Project Management Office at United Airlines, leading McDonalds Corporation’s Project Management Center of Excellence, leading a profit-and-loss consulting practice at Deloitte for ten years, and acting as mid-level grants manager in the federal government.

Involved with PMIEF in the early days, Cooke helped grow the foundation. She served on the PMIEF board for two terms and in between the terms, she went on a delegation trip with the PMI Chicagoland Chapter to Cape Town, South Africa where the vision for the life-skill project was initiated.

Though she has never sought the spotlight, Helen S. Cooke has contributed to PMIEF in valuable ways deserving recognition. Her influence and impact continue today.
SEE HOW YOUR DONATIONS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Your support of the PMI Educational Foundation greatly impacts the lives of students and communities throughout the world. Watch and hear why your contribution is so important. In learning project management, these students have received an investment that will last a lifetime.
Scholarship Application Reminder

Global scholarships for professional development are awarded annually in varying amounts.

- The Project Management Institute has donated PMI Chapter Milestone Professional Development Scholarships to chapters that have reached their 30-year, 35-year, and 40-year milestones.

- Several former PMI Communities of Practice have donated professional development scholarships for project management practitioners.

**Deadline: July 31**

Descriptions, criteria, and applications are available at PMIEF.org.

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