

Pulse of the Profession® 2021

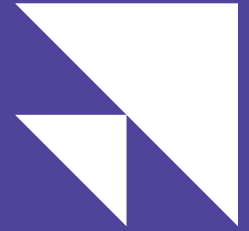
North America



SCHLEIFF / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

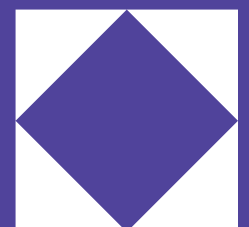
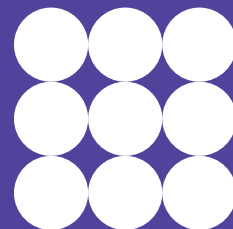


**Project
Management
Institute**



CONTENTS

PAGE	
3	PART 1 The New Work Ecosystem
4	PART 2 Regional Resilience
6	PART 3 New Ways of Working
8	PART 4 People Have the Power
9	PART 5 A Portfolio of Skills
10	PART 6 Connective Tissue
12	PART 7 Adapt and Advance





The New Work Ecosystem

For our North America¹ edition of *Pulse of the Profession*[®], we surveyed 1,721 project professionals in October and November 2020 to assess the impact of the pandemic and how organizations were responding to it.

Our global survey² revealed that project outcomes generally had not suffered, although this may have been due to many projects being put on hold.³ North America saw similar results in terms of projects being on time and on budget, and beat the global average for projects that met original goals (see Figure 1). Organizations in the region also saw fewer projects fail. Scope creep, however, was more of a problem compared to the global average.

When it came to accelerating business change in 2020, North America largely kept pace with global trends (see Figure 2). The region also matched the global average (61 percent) for productivity gains in 2020 compared to the year before.

FIGURE 1

Project Outcomes

	North America	Global
Met original goals/business intent	75%	73%
Completed within original budget	62%	62%
Completed on time	58%	55%

Q: In your estimation, what percentage of the projects completed within your organization in the past 12 months... (Mean percentages shown.)

FIGURE 2

Big Changes

Recent Business Change	North America	Global
Digital transformation	66%	68%
Organizational adaptability	63%	61%
Business strategy	62%	64%
Operational efficiency	58%	57%
Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives	58%	55%
Innovation approach	55%	57%
Organizational culture	55%	53%
Project management maturity	45%	49%
Talent management	41%	42%

Q: How would you describe the change in your business over the past 12 months compared to the 12 months prior in the following areas? ("Many/some significant changes" shown.)



ABDOLHAMID EBRAHIMI / E+/ GETTY IMAGES

Regional Resilience

Many organizations rose to the challenges presented by the pandemic; many, however, did not. What separated them? Our global research reveals the emergence of what we call the gymnastic enterprise: an organization that combines structure, form, and governance with the ability to flex and pivot on demand.

Gymnastic enterprises focus more on outcomes than process: instead of favoring any one approach to project management, they select the very best ways of working depending on the situation. Instead of using people skills—what we call power skills—primarily to motivate and seek alignment or to facilitate autonomous decision-making, gymnastic enterprises champion these skills both as a means to inspire and deliver, depending on the desired outcome. And instead of encouraging deeply specialized skills or more generalist approaches, gymnastic enterprises aim to build both breadth and depth in their people—what we call business acumen.

To identify these organizations, we looked at their ways of working (see Figure 3). Those that primarily utilized any and all possible methods to solve problems were classified as gymnastic enterprises. Those that primarily used tried-and-tested methods were classified as traditional enterprises.

Gymnastic enterprises focus more on outcomes than process: instead of favoring any one approach to project management, they select the very best ways of working depending on the situation.

FIGURE 3

A Competitive Edge: North America

The **gymnastic enterprise** embraces “new” ways of working

We consider any and all possible methods available to solve the problem at hand.

32%

The **traditional enterprise** uses “old” ways of working

We consider only methods that have proven effective for us in the past.

30%

Q: Please characterize your organization’s approach to ways of working to address problems and needs. (“Mostly/exclusively describes us” responses shown.)

Like their global counterparts, gymnastic enterprises in North America were much more likely to have high levels of organizational agility than traditional enterprises (49 percent versus 23 percent)—a key driver of project success in the region. At the same time, they also outpaced traditional enterprises in their use of standardized project management practices, including stakeholder engagement (69 percent versus 62 percent) and change management practices (66 percent versus 57 percent), as well as quality management practices (68 percent versus 56 percent)—which were another key driver of project success in the region.

This combination of agility and standardization has been a winner for gymnastic enterprises in North America, which saw better project outcomes than traditional enterprises in 2020 across a range of measures. On average, they completed more projects that were on time (58 percent versus 52 percent), on budget (64 percent versus 59 percent), and that met original goals and business intent (76 percent versus 73 percent). They also saw fewer projects that experienced scope creep or uncontrolled changes (37 percent versus 44 percent), which was a key driver of project success in the region.

That's not all. Gymnastic enterprises in the region were far more likely to see productivity gains in 2020 compared to traditional enterprises (70 percent versus 48 percent). They also showed resilience during the pandemic, being much more likely than traditional enterprises to have embraced significant business changes in 2020 compared to the year before. At the top of the list: organizational adaptability (74 percent versus 50 percent), digital transformation (71 percent versus 57 percent), and business strategy (70 percent versus 52 percent).

Gymnastic enterprises in the region held an advantage over traditional enterprises in three other critical areas: high project management maturity (52 percent versus 40 percent), high benefits realization process maturity (36 percent versus 27 percent), and strong project management office performance (52 percent versus 40 percent)—the latter of which was a key driver of project success in North America.

So how, exactly, are gymnastic enterprises delivering better value? They're creating changemakers—those who, regardless of their role, feel inspired and equipped to turn ideas into reality. And they're doing this by enabling their people to work smarter through mastery of new skills.

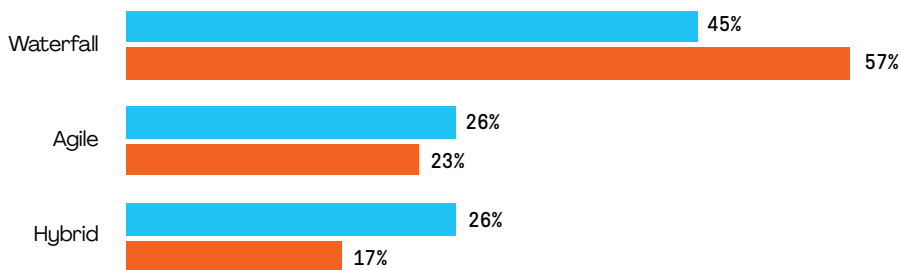
This combination of agility and standardization has been a winner for gymnastic enterprises in North America, which saw better project outcomes than traditional enterprises in 2020 across a range of measures.



New Ways of Working

Like their global counterparts, gymnastic enterprises in North America were more likely to use a variety of project management approaches than traditional enterprises (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4
Right Way, Right Time ■ Gymnastic ■ Traditional

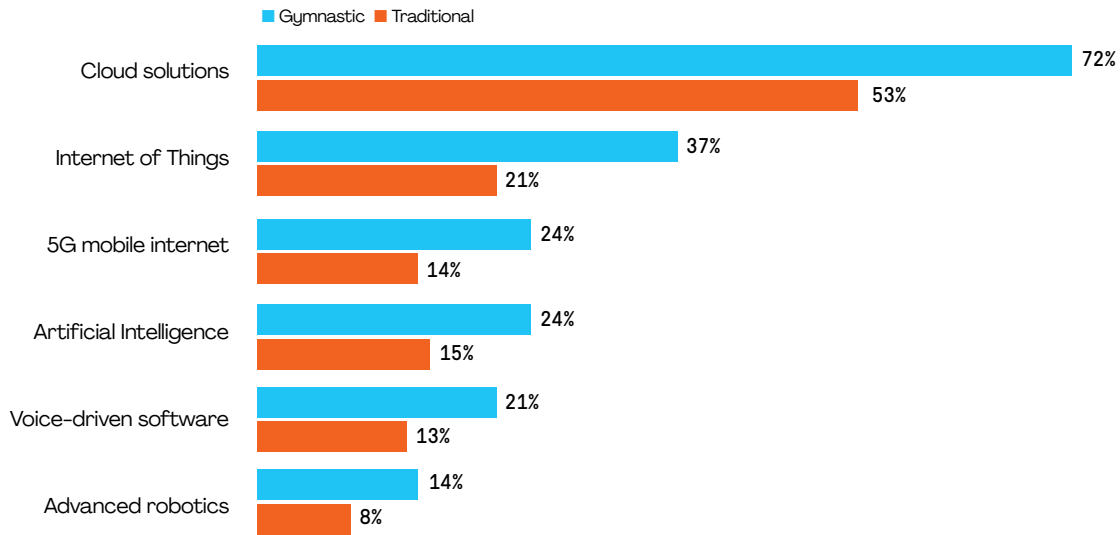


Q: In your estimation, what percentage of the projects that you managed and completed within your organization in the past 12 months used the following types of approaches? (Mean percentage of projects shown)

Gymnastic enterprises were also much more likely than traditional enterprises to be ahead of the curve in leveraging a wide range of technologies to manage projects, from cloud solutions to the Internet of Things to 5G (see Figure 5). And they were more likely to embrace the enterprise-wide adoption of tech-enabled ways of working, including complex problem-solving tools and techniques, on-demand microlearning apps, and career-assessment tools and apps (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 5

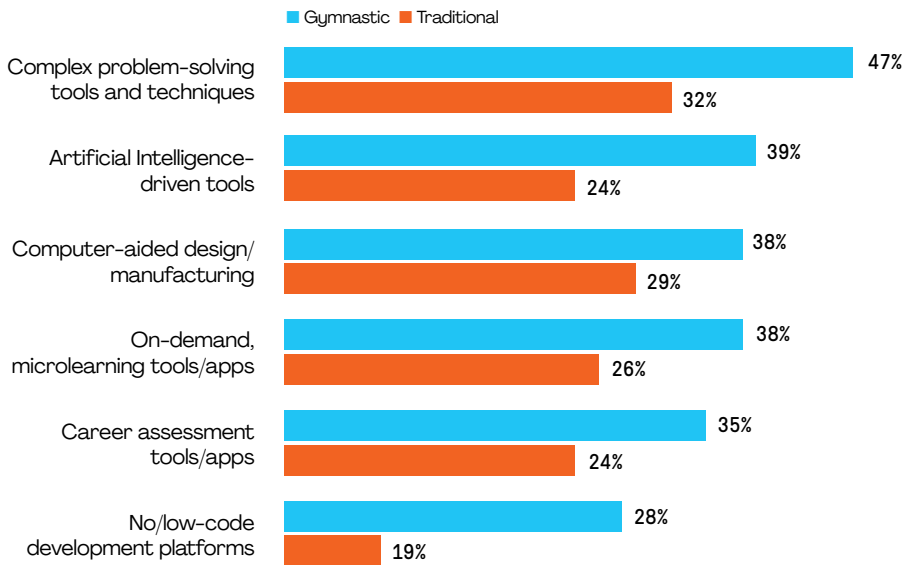
The Technology Edge



Q: How often do project teams at your organization leverage each of the following in the management of projects?
 ("Always/often" responses shown.)

FIGURE 6

Embracing Tech-Enabled Ways of Working





KATE SEPT 2004 / P / GETTY IMAGES

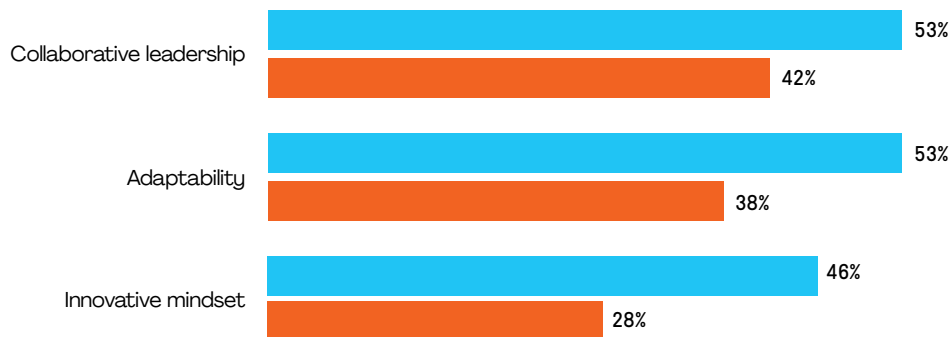
People Have the Power

Globally, power skills topped the list of talent development priorities for all organizations, but particularly among gymnastic enterprises. North America was no exception, with gymnastic enterprises more likely than traditional enterprises to place a high priority on collaborative leadership, adaptability, and an innovative mindset (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7

Powering Up

■ Gymnastic ■ Traditional



Q: Which are the highest priorities for talent development at your organization?

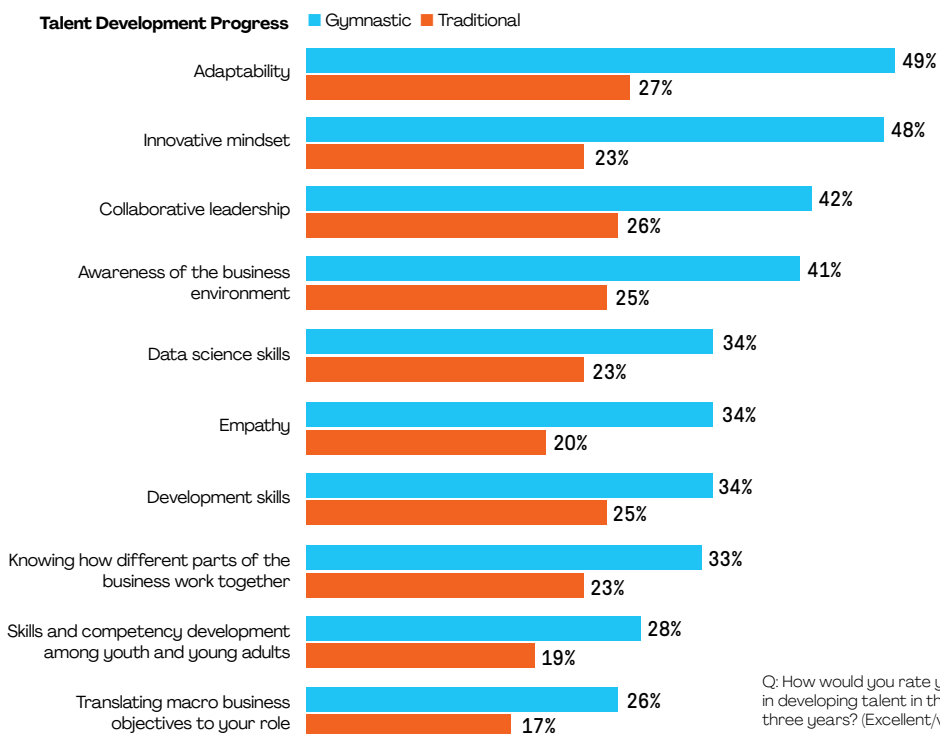


FOTOSTORM / E+ / GETTY IMAGES

A Portfolio of Skills

Power skills may be most prized among gymnastic enterprises in North America, but it doesn't mean they're ignoring other skills. Over the past three years, they've been far more likely than traditional enterprises to have made good progress in developing a wide range of capabilities (see Figure 8). This includes not only power skills, but also the ability to see the bigger picture, by understanding the business environment, how different functions work together, and how macro objectives relate to individual roles. It includes technical capabilities like data science skills and IT development skills. And gymnastic enterprises were also more likely to have made good progress in developing skills and competencies among younger people.

FIGURE 8
Developing Capabilities



Q: How would you rate your organization's progress in developing talent in these skill areas over the last three years? (Excellent/very good progress shown.)



KATE_SEPT2004 / E+ / GETTY IMAGES

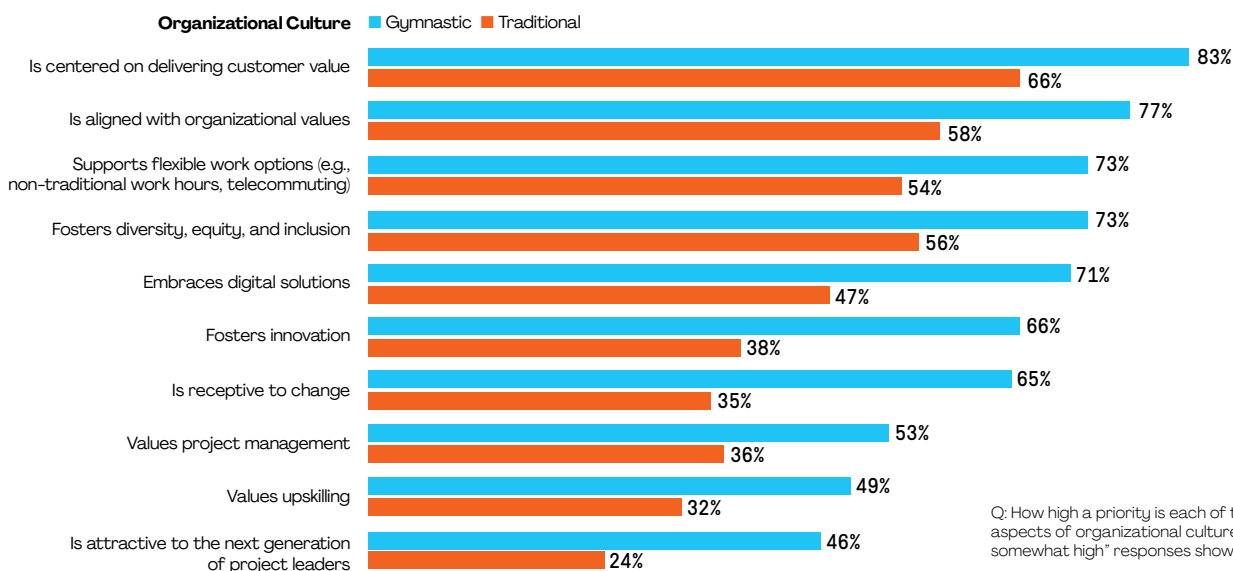
Connective Tissue

Building an environment where changemakers thrive doesn't just magically happen. The role of organizational culture cannot be overstated. Nor can the role of executive leadership in intentionally identifying the culture and capabilities it wants to have—and the role of talent management in promoting and reinforcing the right behaviors.

Like their global counterparts, gymnastic enterprises in North America were more likely than traditional enterprises to place a high priority on developing every aspect of organizational culture we asked about (see Figure 9). This includes a culture that's centered on customer value—a key driver of success in the region. Creating a culture that fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion also featured strongly—in fact, gymnastic enterprises in North America were more likely to place a high priority on this than any other region. However, as with their global counterparts, that hasn't yet translated into greater diversity in the boardroom; for example, just 56 percent of gymnastic enterprises in the region reported that they had at least one female leader in the C-suite.

Crucially, gymnastic enterprises in North America also know that values create value, with 77 percent prioritizing a culture that's aligned with organizational values, compared to 58 percent for traditional enterprises. And 95 percent had senior leaders who were guided by those same values, compared to 85 percent of traditional enterprises.

FIGURE 9
Changing Priorities

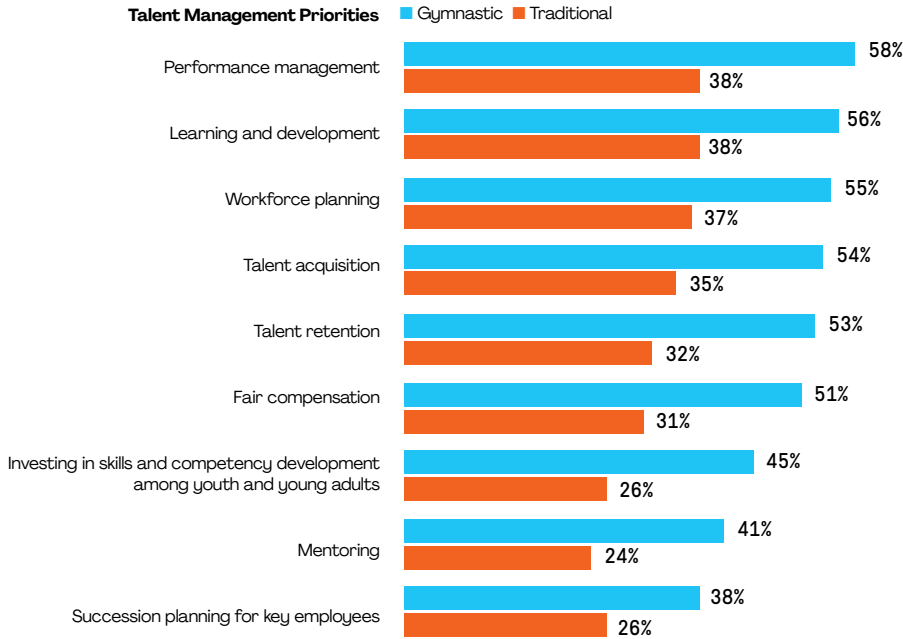


Q: How high a priority is each of the following aspects of organizational culture? ("Very/somewhat high" responses shown.)

Senior leaders at gymnastic enterprises in the region also go the extra mile when it comes to supporting the capabilities they want to create. Forty-one percent of gymnastic enterprises had senior leaders who placed a high priority on developing project management skills across the business, compared to just 27 percent at traditional enterprises. Gymnastic enterprises in North America were also more likely to have senior leaders who recognize the value of projects, in terms of prioritizing strategy implementation (75 percent versus 56 percent), active project sponsorship (55 percent versus 38 percent), and development of project management skills across the enterprise (41 percent versus 27 percent).

Additionally, gymnastic enterprises in the region focus on building culture and capabilities from the bottom up, surpassing traditional enterprises in all areas of talent management we surveyed, including performance management, learning and development, and workforce planning (see Figure 10).

FIGURE 10
Prioritizing Talent Management



Q: How high a priority is each of the following aspects of organizational culture? ("Very/somewhat high" responses shown.)

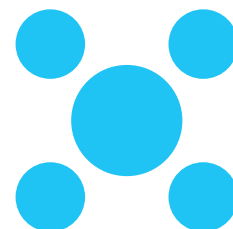


RICHLEGG / E+ / GETTY IMAGES

Adapt and Advance

It's taken a lot of resilience for organizations to navigate the pandemic. But the next normal demands even more. Our research shows gymnastic enterprises leading the way by developing a range of value delivery capabilities.

For gymnastic enterprises in North America, this means using a variety of project management approaches and combining power skills, business acumen, and tech-enabled ways of working. They're supporting these capabilities with a strong organizational culture, senior leadership team, and talent management function.

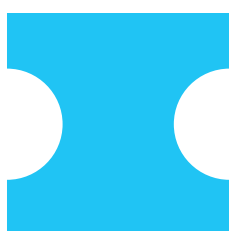


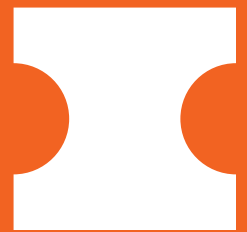
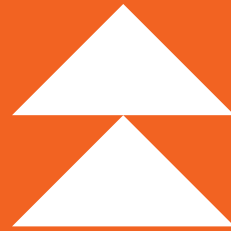
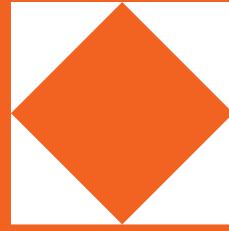
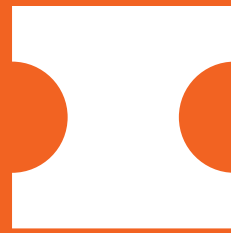
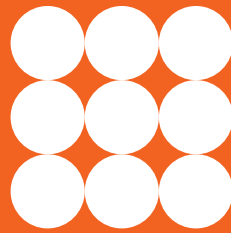
About This Report

Conducted since 2006, *Pulse of the Profession*[®] is the premier global survey of project management professionals. *Pulse* tracks major trends in project management now and in the future, featuring original market research that gathers insights from project, program, and portfolio managers. The 2021 edition of *Pulse* comprised an online survey of 3,950 project professionals conducted in October and November 2020. Respondents represented a range of industries and regions, including North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South Asia, Middle East/North Africa, and China. The survey was supplemented by in-depth interviews spanning a wide range of industries and regions.

Sources

1. The North America survey included respondents from Canada and the United States.
2. *Pulse of the Profession*[®]: *Beyond Agility*. PMI, March 2021.
3. Results from the *PMI Make Reality Global Survey 2020-2021* showed that 93 percent of business leaders said they had to put a project on hold in 2020. Of those, only 39 percent said they had adjusted their plans to execute these projects later in 2020. (For more information about the survey, please contact PMI at customer-care@pmi.org.)





Powering The Project Economy®

©2021 Project Management Institute. All rights reserved. "PMI," the PMI logo and the slogan "Powering the Project Economy" are marks of Project Management Institute, Inc. For a comprehensive list of PMI trademarks, contact the PMI Legal Department. All other trademarks, service marks, trade names, trade dress, product names and logos appearing herein are the property of their respective owners. Any rights not expressly granted herein are reserved. EXEC-014-2019 (10/19)

Project Management Institute | Global Headquarters | 14 Campus Blvd Newtown Square, PA 19073-3299 USA | Tel: +1 610 356 4600 | PMI.org