

2026 PMI Carolina Professional Development Day



Project
Management
Institute.[®]
Carolina

September 12, 2026

The Pearl
915 Pearl Parkway
Charlotte, NC, 28204

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to **PMI Carolina Professional Development Day 2026!**

It is a pleasure to have you with us for a day dedicated to learning, connection, and professional growth.

Professional Development Day embodies what makes our PMI Carolina community special: professionals coming together to share knowledge, learn from one another, build meaningful connections, and continue to grow as leaders.

Whether you have been part of PMI for many years, recently joined our community, or are attending a PMI Carolina event for the first time, **you belong here, and we are glad you are with us.**

I invite you to explore the sessions, connect with our speakers and fellow participants, ask questions, share experiences, and make the most of the opportunities throughout the day. I hope you leave not only with new knowledge and ideas, but also with new connections and renewed inspiration for your professional journey.

Events like this are only possible because of the dedication of many people. On behalf of PMI Carolina, I extend my sincere appreciation to our **volunteers, speakers, sponsors, partners, and Board of Directors** for contributing their time, expertise, and support to make Professional Development Day possible.

And most importantly, **thank you for being here and being part of our community.**

Together, we continue to build a chapter where project professionals can **connect, learn, grow, and lead.**

I hope you have an inspiring and memorable Professional Development Day!

Warmly,

Mariana Morini, PMP, PMI - ACP
President, PMI Carolina

Built on Care. Driven by Purpose.



Project
Management
Institute.
Carolina

8:15 – 9:00

Attendees' arrival, Registration, Breakfast & Mingling
Welcome, Opening & Event Logistics

9:00 – 10:00

Opening Keynote Speaker - Tara LaFon Gooch, MBA
Built to Hold: The Playbook for Confidence & Capacity in Project Leadership
Auditorium

Session 1
10:00 – 11:00

Darnell Badger
You Must Change Your Pace to Win the Race. How Pace Sustains Momentum to Change
Auditorium

Desmond A. Wiggan Jr.
From Boardroom to Bootstrap: How Business Acumen Turns Projects into Strategy?
Room 3300

Session 2
11:00 – 12:00

Christine Edwards Pitkin, MPA
Learning Styles for Better Facilitation
Auditorium

Padma "Priya" Jayaram, PMP, CSM
The Structuring Force: Why Value-Driven Project Managers Matter More in the Age of AI
Room 3300

12:00 – 1:00

Group Photo, Lunch, Networking

1:00 – 3:30

Interactive Workshop
Cara Truitt: *Hold the Room: Presentations that Influence Decisions*
Auditorium

3:30 – 4:00

Closing Ceremony / Raffle
Auditorium

PMI Carolina

Board of Directors welcome you to PDD 2026



Marianna Morini
President



Misty Calderon
VP of Membership



Rochelle Blakeney
VP of Professional
Development



Rhonda Evans
VP of Administration
& Governance



Rick Sabedra
VP of Military Outreach



Lou Pecina
VP of Programs



Micheal Pineda
VP of Technology



Marco Carbone
VP of Marketing

**Opening
Keynote
Speaker**

**Time:
9:00 - 10:00**

**Power
Skills**

 [Tara LaFon Gooch, MBA](#)



Tara LaFon Gooch, MBA

Tara is an international TEDx and keynote speaker, brand strategist, and CEO of Best Branding Solutions.

She is also a 3X bestselling author and host of the GRASP Confidence Podcast — a top personal development podcast reaching leaders and high performers worldwide. Tara is the creator of the GRASP Method®, a framework that helps professionals move from self-doubt and hesitation to decisive, purpose-driven leadership.

She is a Certified Coach in Personal Change Management, endorsed by the Oxford Review, and holds an MBA in Business Analytics, equipping her with both behavioral and data-driven approaches to leadership transformation.

Through her speaking, coaching, and media platform, she has helped executives, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders strengthen leadership presence, elevate team engagement, and lead with greater confidence and internal alignment.

Her work blends leadership psychology, emotional intelligence, and purpose-driven performance to help leaders and organizations cultivate trust, accountability, and achieve sustainable results.



**Project
Management
Institute.**
Carolina

Session 1

Time:
10:00 - 11:00

Ways of
Working



[Darnell Badger](#)



Darnell Badger

Darnell Badger is an executive leader in the wealth and investment management sector, where they direct large, high-performing teams through volatile, high-stakes corporate transitions.

As the creator of The PACE Method™, Darnell specializes in helping enterprise divisions eliminate the "Cognitive Load Tax"—the hidden 40% penalty in delivery speed that occurs when teams face rapid change without structural control.

By bridging the gap between human behavioral mechanics and rigid technical roadmap deadlines, their actionable frameworks teach project leaders how to bypass systemic team burnout, eliminate passive resistance, and unlock long-term delivery momentum.



Project
Management
Institute.
Carolina

Session 1

Time:
10:00 - 11:00

Business
Acumen

 [Desmond Wiggan Jr.](#)



Desmond A. Wiggan Jr.

Desmond Wiggan Jr. is an award-winning entrepreneur, international business leader, and Founder & CEO of BatteryXchange, a technology company transforming how people stay connected across healthcare, municipalities, universities, and major events nationwide.

With more than a decade of experience in business growth, he began his career leading a \$10M sales territory at PepsiCo before earning his MBA in China, where he studied international business and learned Mandarin. Since launching BatteryXchange, he has raised more than \$2 million in capital and pitched on stages including InvestFest, BET, and AfroTech.

Beyond building companies, Desmond is passionate about developing entrepreneurs, strengthening global partnerships, and helping businesses bring products to market through manufacturing and international sourcing. He has spoken on more than 300 stages, serves on multiple advisory boards, and remains committed to creating opportunities for the next generation of founders. Above all, he is a proud husband of nine years, father of two, and recipient of the Father of the Year award.



Project
Management
Institute.
Carolina

Session 2

Time:
11:00 - 12:00

Ways of
Working



[Christine Edwards Pitkin, MPA](#)



Christine Edwards Pitkin, MPA

Christine Edwards Pitkin is a Civic Innovator, a Founder and Principal Consultant with a Master of Public Administration with a focus on Urban Management and Policy.

Before launching her community engagement consulting company, Civility Localized®, in 2018, she excelled in several local government affairs roles, including Community Relations Coordinator for Mecklenburg County Government.

Christine's mission is to help communities grow with dignity. She was recently named a 2025 Charlotte Business Journal Women in Business Honoree, and her work has been featured in numerous publications including Fast Company's World Changing Ideas Issue for the City of Asheville Community Reparations Project.

In 2025, Christine graced the TEDx stage with her signature talk "Why Quiet Activists Must Unmute" about how civic change accelerates when we create space for every voice to be heard, not just the loudest. When she's not serving her community, Christine can be found exploring the world through travel, enjoying Southern food, or nurturing her love for civic advocacy by watching it play out in everyday life. Christine lives in Charlotte with her husband Ryan and dog Parker.



Project
Management
Institute.
Carolina

Session 2

**Time:
11:00 - 12:00**

**Business
Acumen**

 [Padma Priya \("Priya"\) Jayaram](#)



Padma Priya ("Priya") Jayaram

Padma Priya ("Priya") Jayaram, MBA, PMP, is a project management and business transformation leader with 15+ years of experience delivering complex enterprise initiatives and advancing EPMO governance and strategy. She helps organizations translate strategy into execution and measurable business value by bringing clarity, alignment, and structure to complex business challenges.

She lives in Huntersville, North Carolina, with her family. In addition to her corporate career, Priya serves as Vice Chair of Environmental Sustainability Committee advisory board of Huntersville, where she champions environmental stewardship, and community engagement.

Also, she founded Heart2Harmony Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to celebrating cultures, fostering understanding, and strengthening communities through meaningful connection. She finds joy in bringing meaningful ideas to life.

**Interactive
Workshop**

**Time:
1:00 - 3:30**

**Power
Skills**

 [Cara Truitt](#)

Cara Truitt

Cara Truitt is a presence-driven leadership and communication expert.

For more than two decades, she has helped leaders, speakers, entrepreneurs, and organizations amplify their ideas by creating stronger connections with the people they serve, lead, and influence.

Cara is the Education Director for NAWBO Charlotte, the Charlotte chapter host of Mic Drop Club, and the Founder of TEDx Sugar Creek Women.

Through keynote speaking, coaching, and her signature Choose the One method, Cara teaches a simple but often overlooked truth: influence begins with presence and connection.

Cara was named one of the Top 50 Women to Know in North Carolina and is the creator of the podcast Hold The Room, which addresses presence in the age of distraction.



PMI Carolina
Professional Development Day 2026
Thanks to our Sponsors



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE



WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY



Project
Management
Institute.
Carolina

PMI Carolina
Professional Development Day 2026

Session surveys

Important:

**Please complete the survey
after each session, so our team can**

- **process PDUs for you, and**
- **gather feedback for providing you a better experience in future events.**



Project
Management
Institute.
Carolina

PMI Carolina - Planning Team of PDD 2026



Jessica Turner
PDD Director



Pauline Robinson



Rochelle Blakeney



Sarah-Ann Nijman



Gwen Murtha-Eudy



Marco Carbone



Willie Jones



Tishonna Brown



Jermaine Hayes



Rajesh N Unni



Regina Holmes



Kimberly Casperson

PMI Carolina PDD 2026 Volunteers



Dreia Hannibal Hawkins



Dorian Brown



Beatriz Isaacura



Dilim Oraegbu



Bronwyn Falconer



Cassandra Taylor