

My Volunteering experience with PMIEF as a judge in Future City Competition ¹

By Manuel M. Ancizu Beramendi

Abstract

In this article, the author exposes his volunteering experiences with Project Management Institute Educational Foundation (PMIEF - <https://pmief.org>) as a judge in Future City Competition (<https://futurecity.org>), which is an annual project-based learning program where about 40.000 students of 6th, 7th and 8th grade imagine, research, design and build cities of the future.

Body of article

Volunteering activities provide with excellent opportunities to access multiple learning experiences and to contribute to the development of the communities we live in by sharing our knowledge, skills and passion; among all of them, there are certainly many organizations where we can volunteer in something related to Project management.

This time I am writing about my volunteering experience with PMIEF (<https://pmief.org>), which is the educational branch of Project Management Institute (PMI <https://pmi.org>) and whose mission is to inspire and enable youth to develop their full potential and transform their lives through Project management.

Actually, projects allow value creation, transforming ideas and dreams into real value; This is known as “**ideas to action**”.

Future City Competition

Have you ever heard of Future City Competition? <https://futurecity.org>

It is a project-based learning program where about 40.000 students of 6th, 7th and 8th grade imagine, research, design and build cities of the future.

The themes are very engaging and challenging for the students; in year 2021, the theme was "Living on the Moon: designing a lunar city using available resources and keeping its citizens safe and healthy." In year 2022, the theme has been “Design a waste-free city

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that uses the principles of a circular economy”, which is very connected to sustainability and the global targets to transition to a carbon neutral world by 2050. So good that students can dream, imagine and develop potential solutions for a better world.

I found it fascinating and immediately became curious about what the students' proposals would look like and how they would use Project management tools to organize their work, keep them accountable and move from the idea to the final deliverable.

PMIEF sponsors Future City Competition, and it opened the possibility to collaborate with the event as a volunteer. Thus, with great excitement, I submitted my application to PMIEF to volunteer as a judge evaluating the projects created and executed by the participants.

Application and selection process

Volunteering opportunities, both from PMI and PMIEF, are published on PMI's website (<https://www.pmi.org/membership/volunteer>); by applying to the opportunity, the organization can assess the degree of interest and select the volunteers.

I did so and, fortunately, I was selected to volunteer as a judge in the Future City competition. Wow, what an inspiring experience!

Volunteering in Future City Competition

Future City competition usually consists of five deliverables per team: a project plan, a written essay describing the process, a model of the proposed city according to the annual guidelines (lunar city, waste-free city, etc.), a video presentation and a final Q&A live session from a panel of international experts (the volunteers).

The students were organized in teams of three to four members and worked together during five months supported by teachers from their schools and by a mentor; the interactions between the students and the final presentation were held virtually these two years.

It was very exciting to take part on the enthusiasm transmitted by these young students and discover how they were able to explain their ideas, stories and motivations, their different approaches to remain accountable to deliver the project as planned, their research on the subject and the process to make agreements and move forward from the initial idea to presenting the final deliverable: a safe and sustainable city on the Moon in 2021 and a green waste-free city based on the principles of the circular economy in 2022.

Students did all those activities applying Project management methodologies throughout the entire process: defining goals as a team, assigning roles and responsibilities, planning and scheduling tasks, using different colors for the tasks and ideas as a visual management method, designing prototypes prior to the final model, managing time, deciding the appropriate quality to move on to the next phase, reaching agreements, involving people outside the team who could add valuable insights, procuring the necessary materials, using collaborative online platforms to be in touch, solving issues, meeting the deadlines for each deliverable and, above all, learning continuously at each step of the competition.

Regardless of age, it was fascinating to see how Project management methodologies deeply contributed to the learning of these young students and how they helped them on their challenge to build prototypes of sustainable and safe cities.

As in any competition, the judges evaluated the deliverables and agreed on the winners. Congratulations to all the participants!

Learnings

- Future City has enabled multiple learnings in these 6th, 7th and 8th grade students, mainly in three main areas:
 - 1) Knowledge about real trending topics such as sustainability and not only theoretically but by being fully involved in a project that enabled them to learn through research, conversations with others, exchange of ideas and real practice.
 - 2) The possibilities of Project management methodologies to transform these ideas into practical results efficiently.
 - 3) And very important, personal skills like making agreements, working together or delivering a public presentation of their outcomes to put in value everything that had been done as a team.

These learnings might have a positive impact not limited to this competition but far beyond, as they will be part of these students forever: they know themselves better and have become more confident to face the challenges ahead.

- As a volunteer, it was enormously rewarding to be part of the jury; serve with my personal experience to the development of these students, ask and make comments about the project showing them that they were listened with empathy and see the proud faces and the smile of the students, their teachers and mentors when they received the congratulations is something extraordinary that motivates me to keep learning and contributing.

This is, for sure, the virtuous circle that appears when we share our knowledge, passion and time with others.

Ready to volunteer?

Volunteering is a good way to get involved and to contribute with our knowledge and enthusiasm to the positive development of local communities; the opportunity covered in this article is just an example of the benefits but there are many others out there. "Ideas to action", are you ready?

About the Author



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Human leadership, Global Sustainable Projects, Renewable energy, Story-teller, Keynote speaker, Lifetime learner, Risk management, Standardization

Manuel Ancizu is passionate about human leadership, sustainable projects and people's motivations. Enjoys working in international multicultural environments and wants to have a positive impact in society.

Manuel graduated in Economics from University of Navarra and obtained an MBA from IESE Business School (Spain); he has also studied in CEIBS (China) and University Anahuac del Sur (Mexico). He holds a number of professional certificates such as the PMP by Project Management Institute, Lead Auditor in ISO 9001:2015 by IRCA Association and has also received training in Management of Development Projects and Risk Management by Interamerican Development Bank (IDB).

Manuel has lived in Spain, France, UK and Mexico; he currently works in the wind energy sector leading the quality management of Offshore projects. Manuel has been involved in wind energy renewable projects developed in different parts of the globe with external customers, as well as in internal projects of cultural transformation, IT and global processes.

Thanks to his experience, he has delivered training sessions, lectures and keynotes to a different number of institutions.

Manuel is a qualified member of the Spanish Standardization Body (UNE) and has been involved in the development of Standards and Norms in Projects, Programs and Portfolios; he has also participated in the translation of different ISO 21500 to Spanish language.

Manuel loves smiling, storytelling, dreaming and making ideas come true in a sustainable manner.

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