

APM Project Management Challenge 2023/24

SWWE Branch Competition Guidance Document



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Introduction

1. APM's PM Challenge is an annual competition aimed at corporate employees, apprentices or graduates with fewer than three years' experience in the project management profession; and students who are currently enrolled in a course at an HEI at the time of the Challenge.
2. The competition aims to improve the participant's project management skills in a real-life environment with the support of a mentor. It is run over several months and culminates in a final awards evening, where down-selected teams (where relevant) provide a short presentation on their project. At this event the winners are selected and announced.

Vision

3. For more than a decade APM's branch volunteers have developed and shaped the PM Challenge competition, providing students and early career professionals invaluable experience of project conception and delivery. Our goal is to broaden the reach of this initiative through wider take up across our branch network. We aim to have national recognition of APM's PM Challenge within our target audiences of students; early career professionals; HEIs and corporates, with regional stage winners going on to participate in a national competition.

Purpose

4. The PM Challenge competition is designed to support the learning and development of inexperienced individuals and teams who are at the start of their project careers. Improving individual project management competence, through hands-on experience, lies at the heart of the competition. Additionally, some branches may encourage participants to deliver a project which provides social benefit, highlighting a key element of APM's charitable goals – "Because when projects succeed, society benefits".
5. The key benefits to participants are:
 - a. Develop and practice professional competences associated with project management in a realistic environment that is outside normal circumstances;
 - b. An opportunity to be mentored and work alongside experienced project professionals;
 - c. Develop knowledge of the success criteria required to deliver a winning or successful project;
 - d. Develop a better understanding of the personal qualities required to become an effective project manager and leader;
 - e. An opportunity to enhance the learning experience within the corporate and further education environments; and
 - f. A high-visibility example of successful project management delivery and implementation which should also provide beneficial publicity for the corporate team sponsors.

Theoretical frameworks

APM Body of Knowledge

6. The APM Body of Knowledge (BoK) is a foundational resource, providing the concepts, functions and activities that make up professional project management. It seeks to reflect the developing profession, recognising project-based working at all levels and across all sectors for influencers, decision makers, project professionals and their teams. The BoK should be used as an academic reference text to inform the approach and methodologies used by teams.

APM Competence Framework

7. The APM Competence Framework sets out the competences required for effective project, programme, portfolio management and project management office (PMO). The framework consists of 29 competences based around outcomes that project professionals need to achieve. Each competence includes a series of criteria covering knowledge and the application.
8. The marking schedule for the Project Challenge will align with the competence framework, as outlined in the marking criteria section of this document. This framework should be used as a core reference for teams undertaking the competition.

Roles and responsibilities

9. **PM Challenge Lead** – this is the SWWE committee volunteer who manages the planning and delivery of PM Challenge in their region. They will be the main point of contact for volunteers and participants during the activity, including mentors and teams. They will brief the judges at each milestone and oversee the scoring and feedback process throughout. This person can act as a judge alongside other volunteers.
10. **Project Sponsor** – key contact within the company or university who offers support for the project at initial submission stage. The sponsor should be sourced by the team in advance of submitting their entry.
11. **Mentor** – mentors are normally expected to be provided from within the participating team's organisation. The mentor acts as a coach during the process, offering experience and insight for any challenges or questions the team may have. A guide to mentoring, as well as a mentoring agreement will be supplied to each mentor ahead of the project delivery phase.
12. **Judging Panel** – judges are selected from the volunteer pool within the branch, or volunteers known to the committee. They are responsible for assessing and scoring projects at each stage of the competition. The Judges will be expected to:
 - a. Provide written and verbal feedback at the following stages of the competition:
 - I. Judges review plans (Dec 23 – Jan 24)
 - II. Feedback to teams on project plans (Jan 24)
 - III. Judges review final reports (Apr 24)
 - IV. Attendance at finals night (May 24); and
 - V. Judges provide feedback (May 24)
 - b. At each stage of the assessment, judges should refer to the marking criteria and use this as the basis for assessing submissions. Actual awarded marks to each team at each phase will not be socialised by the committee in order to maintain optimism and focus on all projects.
 - c. Project Teams should have 3 to 6 members and are comprised of graduates, apprentices or trainees who have less than three years of experience in a project role, or students who are undertaking study during the period in which the competition runs.

Timelines and Deliverables

Phases & Milestones	
APM Project Management Challenge launches	29 September
Launch Night (Bristol)	19 October
Teams to submit entry forms (Appendix 1) and Judges will approve participation.	w/c 30 October
<p>Phase 1: Development and submission of project plan</p> <p>All teams develop and submit a project plan – please see Appendix 2</p> <p>Teams submit project plan</p> <p>The judging panel review and score all plans submitted against agreed criteria.</p> <p>Judges to provide feedback to all teams.</p>	6 Nov – 4 Dec
	w/c 4 December
	11 Dec – 2 Jan
	9 Jan
<p>Phase 2: Project delivery</p> <p>All teams will be asked to initiate and deliver proposed projects. An experienced project professional will be assigned to each team as a mentor for the remaining duration of the competition. APM will provide teams with seed funding up to a maximum of £150 per team.</p>	8 Jan – 8 April
<p>Phase 3: Submission of final report</p> <p>All teams should submit a final report which outlines the key achievements, including how the benefits of the project will be realised and lessons learned through participating in project challenge. Refer to Appendix 4 to view the structure and layout of these reports. These projects will be reviewed and scores added to the project plan scores to form an overall mark. The four highest scoring teams will then be down-selected to present at the Finals Night.</p> <p>Judges review and score final reports.</p>	8 April
	8 – 29 April
<p>Phase 4: Finals night</p> <p>The four down-selected teams will present their project overview and post project learning to a panel of judges and a live audience. Presentations will last 15 minutes and will be followed by an opportunity for questions from the attendees. Judges will mark the teams for their presentations and collate scores from across the competition to determine the overall winner, who will be announced on the night and awarded the overall winners' trophy.</p>	15 May
<p>Phase 5: National Challenge competition</p> <p>The overall SWWE Challenge Winner goes forward to be considered for the APM Challenge National Finals assessment.</p>	May

Project timeline

SWWE APM PM Challenge: Competition Plan Version 1.0	2023			2024				
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Launch Event (at AtkinsRealis)	★ 19 Oct 23							
Generate Project Plan	6 weeks							
Submit Project Plan			★ 8 Dec 23					
Assess Project Plan			4 weeks					
Start of Delivery Phase				★ 2 Jan 24				
Feedback on Project Plan				★ 9 Jan 24				
Implement Project				12 weeks				
Submit Final Report							★ 8 Apr 24	
Assess Final Report							3 weeks	
Announce Finalists								★ 29 Apr 24
Presentation/Finals Night								15 May 24 ★
Issue Feedback to All Teams								24 May 24 ★

Marking criteria and assessment

13. As part of their role judges will mark each of the team deliverables during the competition. The marking criteria and assessments provide tools for judges to:
 - a. assess each report fairly and consistently against criteria;
 - b. work with a standard marking and assessment process;
 - c. provide meaningful feedback to the project team about the project report; and
 - d. provide meaningful feedback on the considered status of the project.
14. The assessment of each project will be undertaken using agreed assessment criteria and specific competencies, as shown on the following page. Definitions for each of the criterion are described in the relevant appendices.
15. A full description of the competence framework and guidance on the application of the criteria can be viewed at <https://www.apm.org.uk/resources/find-a-resource/competence-framework/>
16. When scoring projects, judges will measure and score the understanding or application of criteria in work presented as follows:

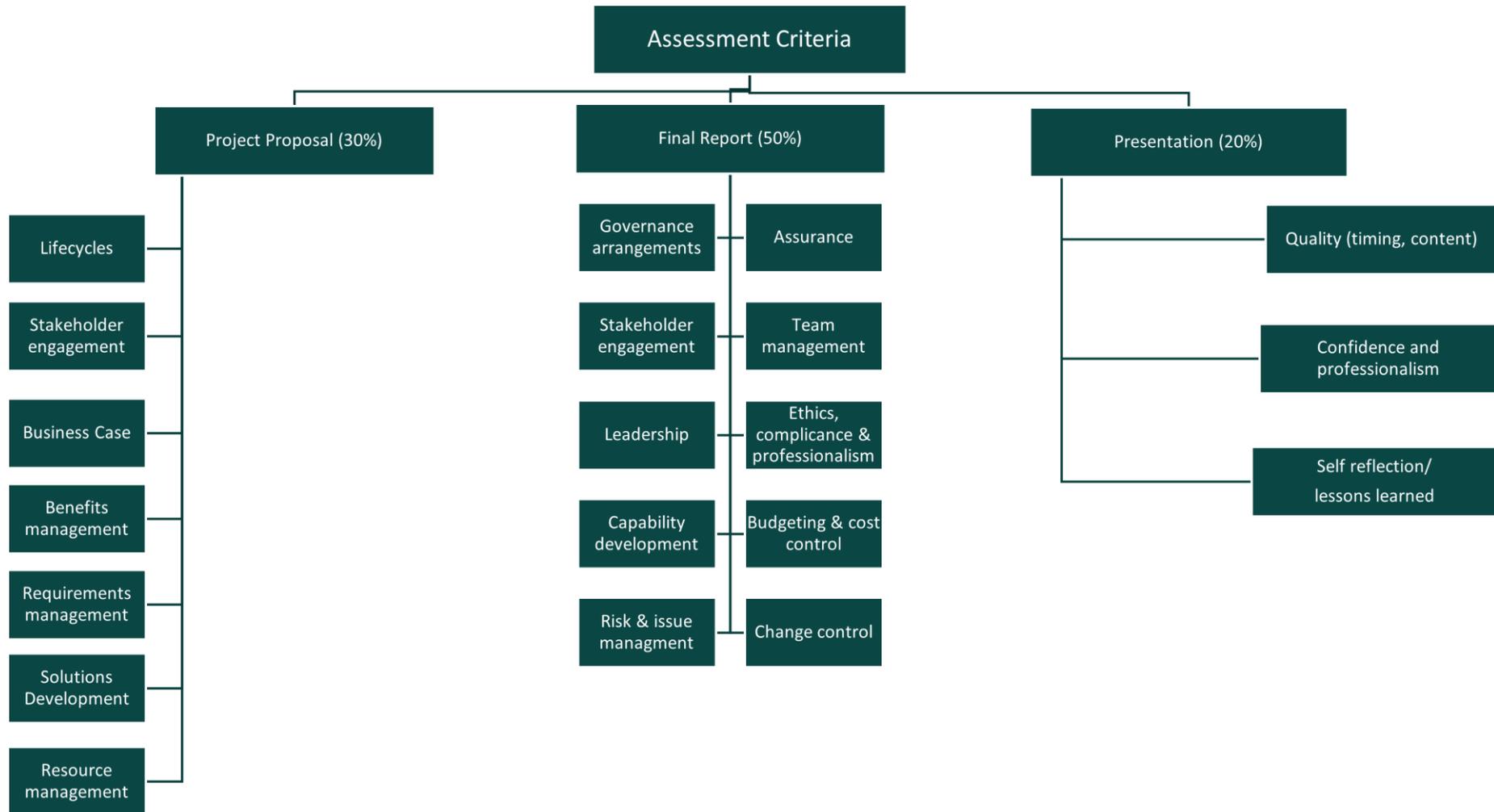
No evidence	0
Limited evidence	1
Some evidence	2
Clear evidence	3
Exceptional evidence	4

The weighting of each stage of the competition is as follows:

Phase	Weighting
Project Plan	30%
Final Report	50%
Finalist Presentation	20%

17. Written feedback will be provided to each team for their project plan and their final report; however, scores are not shared with teams.
18. During the delivery phase of the competition, teams will be required to submit two progress reports. These will not be scored, but judges should review these submissions to understand progress and any significant issues that may arise.

Competences



Competition Rules

19. The choice of project is up to each team; however, teams should ensure that their project aligns to the theme of the year. The theme of the year for 2023/24 is to provide project outputs and benefits to deserving charitable organisations across the south-west region.
20. APM reserves the right to limit the number of teams from a single organisation within each region. If it is deemed that the number of teams will need to be reduced at the start of the competition, team entries will be reviewed with a view to reducing the overall numbers. Therefore, organisations should be prepared to prioritise their teams.
21. Corporate entries should be limited to teams comprising apprentices, graduates or trainees with up to three years' full or part time employment.
22. Student entries must be enrolled and attending a course at the University at the time.
23. Teams should comprise of a minimum of three and maximum of six members.
24. Teams should ensure that individual team members are available to participate for the duration of the competition. Time will be a key constraint for the projects so this aspect must be considered carefully.
25. Teams will be required to submit/attend the following:
 - a. Competition entry form – [Appendix 1](#)
 - b. Project plan – [Appendix 2](#)
 - c. Mid project progress report – [Appendix 3](#)
 - d. Final report – [Appendix 4](#)
 - e. Finals night
26. The project plan and final report should be sent to bruce.phillips@jacobs.com by midnight on the dates specified.
27. Project entry forms will be reviewed by the Judges and teams informed of their successful entry into the competition.
28. Teams should consider the format of any documents submitted to the Judges, with specific consideration being given to content, layout and readability.
29. The marks obtained for the Project plan and Final report will be used by the judges to determine which teams are selected as finalists.
30. Up to four finalist teams will be selected to present on finals night.
31. Each of the finalist teams will be required to prepare and deliver a 15-minute presentation which will be followed by up to five minutes of questions from the Judges and other guests.
32. APM will provide finalists up to a maximum of £150 to teams. Spending will be reimbursed through APM's expenses portal and should be accompanied by full receipts for each claim.
33. There is no limit to funding that can be sourced by each project team however all funding, and how it was secured should be clearly outlined, and accounted for, in project reports.
34. Any supporting resources from outside the core team should be proportionate, appropriately tailored and declared within the project reports.
35. All team members of the finalist teams will be required to attend the finals night phase of the competition.

36. Teams will require the support of a Mentor. A mentor can be provided by the sponsoring organisation, or, if a team is unable to source a mentor, they should advise APM, who will identify an appropriate individual to act as a mentor on their behalf.
37. It is likely that those teams who are not selected to present as one of the four finalist teams will be requested to participate in the 'best storyboard competition', which involves producing a single slide or paper that illustrates and tells the story of each project.
38. Appendix 5 provides a contextual overview of all participant teams in last year's competition.

Appendix 1

PM Challenge Entry Form

PM CHALLENGE ENTRY FORM	
TEAM INFORMATION	
Team Name	
Organisation(s) (Company/University)	
Name Of Charity or Community Project	
TEAM MEMBERS – Please list name and email address for each team member	
Participant 1	
Email Contact 1	
Participant 2	
Email Contact 2	
Participant 3	
Email Contact 3	
Participant 4	
Email Contact 4	
Participant 5	
Email Contact 5	
Participant 6	
Email Contact 6	
EXECUTIVE SPONSOR	
Contact Name	
Email Address	
Role In Company	
We confirm that no member of this team has more than 3 years of project management/project controls working experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 2

APM PM Challenge – Plan Submission

1. The plan should provide a persuasive synopsis of your team's project including an outline, high-level schedule of how you will achieve your objective.
2. Project teams are expected to provide a plan that makes a persuasive and realistic argument for delivering their project of choice. The plan must be no more than 3,500 words. Teams who submit plans that exceed this word limit (that includes screenshots, pictures, figures and tables) are likely to receive a penalty points deduction. The plan should include at least the following:
 - a. project objective;
 - b. project scope;
 - c. project schedule;
 - d. budget; and
 - e. planned resources/ organisational chart.
3. The plan will be structured and scored against the following competences:
 - 1. Lifecycles:** The ability to structure and organise change initiatives.
 - 2. Stakeholder engagement and communication management:** The ability to work with people, both internally and externally, to build support to achieve intended outcomes.
 - 3. Business case:** The ability to prepare, gain approval of, refine and update business cases that justify the initiation, investment and/or continuation of change initiatives in terms of benefits, costs and risks.
 - 4 Benefits management:** The ability to identify and agree the benefits and determine how they will be measured, monitored and managed throughout a change initiative until they are realised.
 - 5. Requirements management:** The ability to prepare and maintain definitions of the requirements of change initiatives.
 - 6. Solutions development:** The ability to determine the optimal solution to satisfy agreed requirements.
 - 7. Resource management:** The ability to acquire and deploy internal and external resources.

Appendix 3

APM PM Challenge – Mid-project progress reports

Please use the template below to provide a progress report to the judges. Your report should be no longer than one page. This should be submitted by 31 January and 29 February 2024.

Please include details of the organisation you are working with, and an overview of progress made to date.

Project Team	
Date of report	
Mentor Name	
Please summarise the status of your project.	

Appendix 4

APM PM Challenge – Final Report Format and Content

Product Title:	PM Challenge – Final Report
Purpose:	<p>The final report will be used by the judging panel to assess how each competing team has reflected on the execution and delivery of a successful project, taking into consideration how the individual members of each team have developed their overall project management experience and competence.</p>
Composition:	<p>The project final report must include an Executive Summary. The project final report should identify how the project was delivered in comparison to the intentions defined in the project plan and any plans for completion of the project (if not completed by the final report submission date).</p> <p>Evidence of the following criteria will be scored during marking:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governance arrangements: The ability to establish and maintain governance structures that define control of deployment for delivery of change initiatives, and that align with organisational practice. 2. Assurance: The ability to provide confidence to the governance board that a change initiative is on track to deliver the objectives and intended value. 3. Stakeholders: The ability to work with people, both internally and externally, to build support to achieve intended outcomes. 4. Team management: The ability to select, develop and manage individuals to create and sustain teams. 5. Leadership: The ability to empower and inspire others to deliver successful change initiatives by providing vision, direction, feedback and support, so that people can do their best work. 6. Ethics, compliance and professionalism: The ability to embody, promote and maintain a trusted profession and to navigate the cultural, legal and regulatory environment. 7. Capability development: The ability to assess organisational maturity in relation to a change initiative and the wider organisation. 8. Budgeting and cost control: The ability to develop and agree budgets for change initiatives and understanding where costs fall over time. 9. Risk and issue management: The ability to identify and monitor risks (threats and opportunities); to plan and implement responses to those risks and respond to issues that affect a change initiative. 10. Change control: The ability to manage variations and change requests in a controlled way.

<p>Format / Presentation:</p>	<p>The report should be well structured, with a clear table of contents, concise sections and good use of graphics and appendices. The report must be based on a post project/ implementation review or lessons learnt meeting and must include a section detailing these reflections.</p> <p>It must be no more than 6,000 words, including the words used in screenshots, tables, graphics, appendices and schedules. Failure to adhere to this word limit will result in reduction in assessment points.</p> <p>The Project Board is looking for quality, not quantity. This must be delivered as a Word document with a clear word count statement. Embedded Power Point and XLS pictures should be kept to a minimum,</p> <p>Appendices: up to a maximum of 8 pages in total may be submitted (the number of words here will also be included in the overall word count).</p>
<p>Quality Checking Method:</p>	<p>Before submission it is recommended that the report undergoes a formal Quality Review by the whole project team and Final sign-off and approval from the Project Sponsor.</p>

Appendix 5

APM PM Challenge 2022/23 – Finals Night Write Up

On the evening of the 4th of May 2023, around 90 excited sponsors, customers, mentors and team members attended the ninth South Wales and West of England (SWWE) Project Management Challenge Finals and Awards Night with four down-selected teams competing for the Winner’s trophy.

This year, the event was held physically at BAWA in Bristol rather than virtually and at the end of the night after four remarkable presentations, the Winners trophy was awarded to Team Beluga from AIRBUS who are based in Bristol. Team Beluga delivered a project to their chosen charity, Feed The Homeless. Feed The Homeless is a grassroots charity that provides food to those that need it the most in the Bristol community and they are able to provide over 200 people a week access to hot meals, drinks and snacks, with additional food bank services to more than 100 people each week. The objectives of Team Beluga were to deliver a platform to serve as a central hub for FTH and a place to deliver training and conduct food checks at venues, provide an archive (connected to the platform) to act as a database of training and food checks evidence and, lastly, produce a starter pack to be distributed to all FTH members and volunteers with guidance on FTH’s ways of working.



The team utilised a governance process which relates to a linear life cycle methodology combined with an agile approach for the Archive and Platform work packages as these would require there to be some flexibility. Feedback from the project plan, Gateway reviews 2 and 5 as well as Minimum Acceptance Criteria meeting with FTH helped to shape the Development and Deployment phase of the project. These discussions also revealed the need to implement mitigations towards time as a risk. It was recognised that the work packages, especially the deployment of the Archive and Platform would require a period of integration for the charity that may extend past the Challenge Final Report deadline. The team recognised this and adapted the Roadmap to allow for float (extra time that is

available after the set deadline for the deliverable that would not impact the success of the project).

Currently the team has completed the Starter Pack which is ready to be tested on volunteers. The Archive design and functionality has been developed with the aim of populating the database with volunteer data and integrating/ linking the functionality to the platform. The Platform has been designed and developed with the aim to occupy the site with content relating to the charity and form links to the Archive from the forms embedded in the site. The benefits and success of the project is predicted to be realised after 6 to 8 months of use when considering the rate of interest shown by people to join the charity. Team Beluga is shown below with their Winner’s trophies.



The other Winners award of the evening went to Atkins, Team Joy. They won the Best Storyboard award for delivering a project to their customer, MAGGIE’S, who provide free cancer support and information not only to those who have cancer but also to their friends and families.



Team Joy's project focused on an events template and marketing strategy for the charity as this will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their efforts to plan and run events. Team Joy can be seen in the picture below.



The standard of the presentations on the night was, yet again, astonishing. All of the twenty-one teams competing in this year's competition have obviously worked extremely hard and have gained lots of valuable experience and knowledge that will help them to develop their careers as project professionals. All teams were asked to deliver outputs and benefits to deserving projects across the community and, importantly, were able to demonstrate and develop their own professional project management competences, understand critical success factors, develop their own personal behaviours and learn from their mistakes, as well as get a taste of what it feels like to be part of an integrated team delivering a very real project.

The other finalists competing in the competition were; Team Agile from Turner and Townsend, who worked with the charity 'Young Bristol' to help deliver a market research task with a clear recommendations report; Team Venture for Babcock, who worked with their charity 'First Light' to deliver an asset management solution and Team Spirit from Turner and Townsend who worked with their charity St Mungo's to integrate new IT solutions in to their organisation.



There were seventeen runners up teams who also competed in the Best Storyboard competition, and these are shown below along with their chosen charities. The significant number of participant teams represents an astounding collective contribution by corporate project teams in the South West to the charity sector, representing corporate community reach, social value and collaboration that makes a difference to the lives of many people across society who either struggle or are disadvantaged in life.

ID	Team	Client	ID	Team	Client
1	AIRBUS Team Deep Vision	Headway Bristol	10	Babcock Team Collaborate	Keynsham Foodbank
2	AIRBUS Team Airfortis	Auti-Ms	11	Egis Team Egis	Down to Earth
3	AIRBUS Team Airvolve	St Peter's Hospice	12	Frazer Nash Consultancy	Trans Aid Cymru
4	AIRBUS Team Green Skies	Tortworth Arboretum	13	LogiKal Team LogiKal	1625 Independent People
5	AIRBUS Team Jetstream	Avon Wildlife Trust	14	Ministry of Defence Team Prosperity	Royal British Legion Stoke Gifford
6	ATKINS Team Dynamic	Young Bristol	15	Turner and Townsend Team aMAZing	MAZI
7	ATKINS Team Joy	MAGGIE'S	16	Turner and Townsend Team Helping Bristol	Caring in Bristol
8	ATKINS Team Maverick	Empire Fighting Chance	17	Turner and Townsend Team Holistic Health	Love Squared
9	ATKINS Team Synergy	inHope			

The Project Board consisting of Head Judge Bruce Phillips, SWWE Branch co-chairs Paul Johnson and Gary Mainwaring, SWWE committee members Martin Gosden and Allan Reid, John Bone (Senior Lecturer, SGS College), Sarah Halstead (Atkins), Aimee Avrill (committee member) and Carolyn Bellars (MOD), managed three key assessment stages:

- Provision of a project plan in December 2022 that identified smart outputs and benefits to be delivered, associated resources, costs and key risks;

- Provision of a final report in March 2023 which demonstrated how the teams delivered the project outputs and benefits defined in the original project plan using a range of competences defined in the APM BoK; and
- The delivery of four 15 minutes presentations at the Awards and Finals Night.

Bruce Phillips, who managed the competition overall, said “The project board was unanimous in its praise for the significant effort shown by all entries in the SWWE branch’s ninth successful PM Challenge competition. All of the aspiring project professionals in all of the competing teams have worked extremely hard to deliver their projects. It is astonishing to see such a high standard from such young professionals and that their outputs are actually being used for very worthy charitable and social causes. Whilst winning the competition is ‘icing on the cake’ every member of every team is a winner as the competition is all about individual and collective learning and development. Every single member of each team should be justifiably proud of their achievements in delivering real benefit to the wider community and, equally as important, the development of their personal and professional competences for their future careers in the project profession. I would urge you all to keep that thought at the front of your mind and to build upon these experiences – both in terms of success and in what you have learned - as you develop your careers further.”

All participating teams, mentors, sponsors, corporate organisations, charities and supporters were thanked and congratulated on their excellent contributions towards another successful Challenge competition which would simply not be possible without their support, commitments and motivations. The SWWE Challenge competition has really blossomed over its nine years existence which has been fundamentally achieved through both the sustained contribution of our corporate communities in the South West and also the realisation that having a career in the project profession can bring huge opportunities to our project professionals of tomorrow.