

AFTER ACTION REPORT		VETERANS IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CREDENTIAL PMP® · Project Management Professional	US SALARY \$135,000 with · \$109,157 without	REPORTED SEP 09, 2026
REPORTING Dr. Dave Lees, PMP® · Air Force · Episode 004		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY · EPISODE 004

Dave Lees spent seventeen years in the Air Force, from a ground radio technician at eighteen to an electronic warfare officer on the RC-135. A juvenile diabetes diagnosis ended that career at thirty-five, a few years after he'd finished a doctorate in leadership. He took the PMP on his third attempt, used it to move from civil service into defense contracting, and now fills an engineering role at the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center.

US job postings ask for the PMP by name, and it turns "I ran operations" into a number a hiring manager can price. It isn't entry level: PMI wants documented months of leading projects first.

CONDITIONS · CHANGED JUL 09, 2026

PMI replaced the PMP exam on July 9, 2026: 240 minutes, new domain weightings, and four eligibility routes instead of three, with a 10-year experience window. Anything written before July 2026 is out of date.

1 TASK AND STANDARD

TASK: qualify for and pass the PMP®. **STANDARD:** one of four routes, by education level.

High school diploma or GED	60 months
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Associate's or equivalent	48 months
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Bachelor's or higher	36 months
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Bachelor's from a GAC-accredited program	24 months
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Non-overlapping months, earned in the past 10 years. Every route also needs 35 hours of PM training from any provider, and an active CAPM waives that.

2 ASSESSMENT – WHAT COUNTS FROM YOUR SERVICE

PMI wants months of leading and directing projects, and the word project never had to appear in your job title. Most people who assume they aren't eligible already are.

- ☐ A deployment workup
- ☐ A unit move, PCS of a squadron, or a base closure
- ☐ Standing up or shutting down a capability
- ☐ An exercise: Red Flag, RIMPAC, a CPX or an FTX

Doesn't count: Standing a watch, your duty section rotation, routine admin with no end date, and anything you supported but didn't lead.

3 RESOURCES AND RETURN

Exam	\$425 member · \$675 non-member
35 hours of training	\$0 to \$2,000+, by provider
US median, PMP	\$135,000 · \$109,157 without it
The difference	\$25,843 a year, about \$2,150 a month

4 OBSERVATIONS

SUSTAIN	IMPROVE
❑ A CCAF associate degree sits at the level the 48-month route asks for, not the 60-month one. That's a documented year you don't have to go and find. ❑ Join PMI before you apply. Global dues are \$129 plus \$10 to join, and membership takes \$250 off the exam, so it pays for itself on the first attempt. A retake saves another \$100. ❑ Still serving is stronger: Credentialing Assistance can cover training and the exam and you don't pay first. Get the credential and provider approved in your service's COOL portal. ❑ Confirmed on VA's approved test register at \$675, about eight days of entitlement. VA reimburses up to \$2,000 per test on Form 22-0803 after you pay, and failed attempts count. ❑ Onward to Opportunity training is free, and its exam voucher covers your last six months or unemployment.	❑ <i>Study for it while you're still in. Take a deployment or terminal leave and use the time, because the funding and the hours both stop the day you leave.</i> ❑ <i>Don't sit it cold because you already have degrees. It's an application test rather than a recall test, and a doctorate doesn't prepare you for it.</i> ❑ <i>Buy the book. Failing by two questions and then guessing at what you missed is how you score worse the second time.</i> ❑ <i>Use all three attempts if you need them. Taking all three isn't the disgrace you think it is, and the alternative is waiting a year.</i> ❑ <i>Go for the PMP before anything specialized. The Six Sigma Green Belt is on his resume and nobody has ever once asked him about it.</i>

5 REMARKS – REPORTING INDIVIDUAL	Dr. Dave Lees, episode 004
– <i>I went in cold because I had a lot of degrees and a lot of experience, and I figured I should be pretty good at this. I didn't respect the certification to the level I needed to.</i> – <i>Every question on that exam is application. You're not studying to memorize things, you're studying so you can apply them, and I'd never had a test like that before.</i> – <i>There were a lot of people coming out of the military writing 'I'm a leader, hire me because I'm a leader.' I have a doctorate in leadership and I don't think anybody's hiring me for that.</i> – <i>I told about twenty people to get a PMP and about ten of them did it. I can tell you what happened to every one of them.</i> – <i>I took the maximum number of tries to pass. Trust me, you can pass this thing. Just take it a little more seriously than I did.</i>	

NEXT STEP
Read the full PMP® route, kept current Eligibility, the path, cost, renewal, and what a US veteran should know about funding it.

FULL ROUTE, KEPT CURRENT	EPISODE, TRANSCRIPT AND LINKS
https://veteransinprojectmanagement.com/certifications/pmp/training-guide/ Reported September 9, 2026 with episode 004, and unchanged since. Requirements were last checked August 22, 2026 and they do move: the full route above is maintained, this report is not. This is a guide, not advice, it isn't an official or government document, and PMI had no part in it and did not endorse it. Where a training provider or a school is named, assume we may have a commercial interest in it.	https://veteransinprojectmanagement.com/podcasts/vipm/004-dave-lees/