

Callahan & Associates

April 22, 2026



Moving Project Management From Function to Shared Mindset

Callahan Client Webinar Series



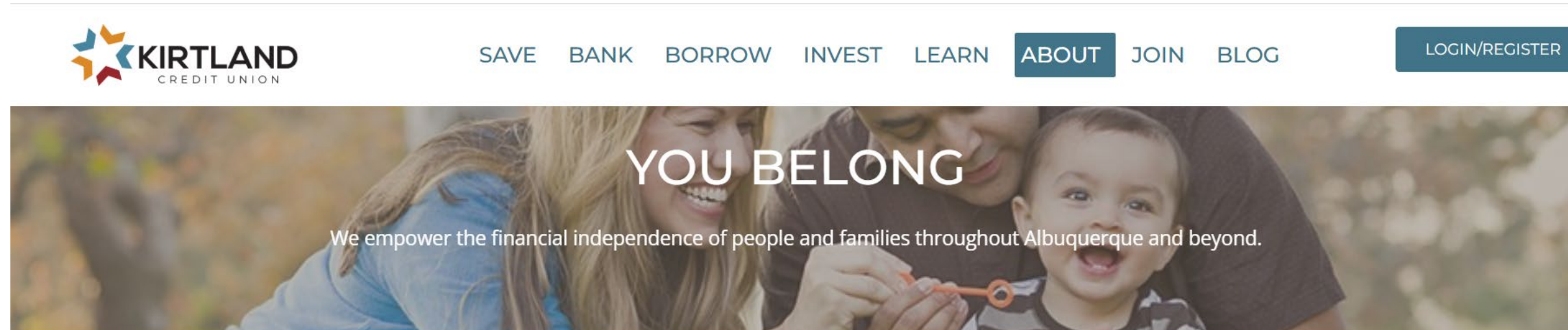
Our Speaker



Matt Rarden
CEO, Kirtland Credit
Union

About Kirtland Credit Union

- Albuquerque, NM
- Approx. \$1.1B in assets
- Over 50,000 members
- 196 FTEs
- 8 branches



Banking Without The Bank

Kirtland CU isn't a bank. Big, impersonal, for-profit—that's not us. Like all credit unions, we're a not-for-profit financial cooperative. We're dedicated to empowering the financial independence of members who are largely ignored by or lost in the crowd at the big banks.





The Challenge/Opportunity

- With multiple initiatives underway simultaneously, it wasn't uncommon for different projects to overlap in terms of the people and resources needed when I became CEO of Kirtland in 2020.
- We were stepping over one another. Committing one another's resources when we didn't know they were committed. All that normal uncontrolled chaos.
- My background includes 16 years with IBM before switching to a credit union career. That background shaped how our cooperative now approaches project management.

The Solution

- After joining Kirtland Credit Union, I quickly started thinking about how to add more discipline and structure to our project execution.
- The solution started with creating a defined Project Management Office (PMO) and elevating our one certified project manager to lead the PMO in 2021 — *a role that now oversees two staff-level project managers.*
- We worked to develop the PMO construct and associated processes and procedures to include how to propose, scope, review, and approve projects.

A Disciplined Structure

- That structure includes a tiering system to *rank projects by strategic alignment, level of effort, resources, cost, benefit, and more.*
- Tier 1 projects *might require little effort or cost* and involve only one line of business.
- Tier 5 projects *typically are strategically aligned, include mandatory regulatory requirements, involve multiple lines of business or stakeholders, and/or be a major needle-mover for the credit union.*
- Regardless, we approve projects individually and map them to our overall strategy to understand how to execute different projects simultaneously to reduce resource overlap.

Project: Youth Accounts

ELT Sponsor: **G W**

BU Lead: **J T**

PMO Resource: **J M**

Project Tier: **Tier 3**

Strategic Initiative(s) Alignment:

Member Growth, Enhanced Digital Experience, Deposit Growth

Project Driver Score: **4**

Financial Impact Score: **3**

Employee Impact Score: **6**

Member Impact Score: **5**

Date Prepared: **03/17/2026**

Est. Kickoff Date: **04/06/2026**

Est. Duration: **6 Months**

Est. Live Date: **10/05/2026**

Project Category*: **GTB**

**RTB = Run the Business, OTB = Optimize the Business, GTB = Grow the Business*

- Project Summary
- Project Objective(s)
- Project Scope
- Expected Impact (Members/Employees/Financial)
- Key Metrics and Project Success Criteria
- Key Dependencies (what/owner/etc.)
- Key Assumptions (Importance/Impact)
- Financial Impact
- Key Resources/Level of Effort/Time (RASCI)
- Expected Schedule w/Milestones
- Project Risks/Level/Probability/Mitigation

Oversight & Management

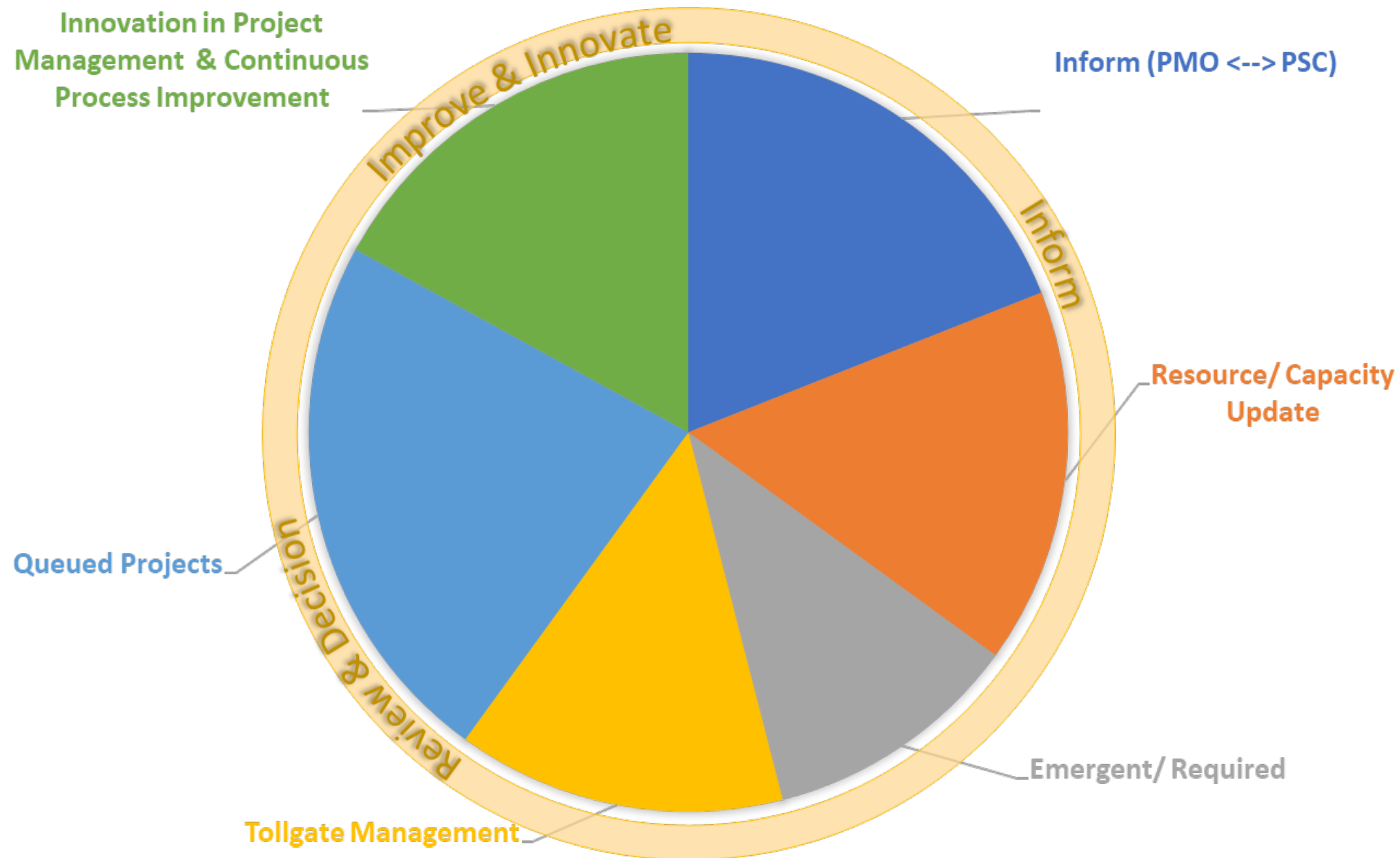
- Although we do use some project management software, we designed the bulk of our structure internally.
- I worked with our leadership team to define each tier, determine how to prioritize projects, outline documentation requirements, and more.
- Resource-management at the enterprise level is always a challenge and we continue to evolve how we track and evaluate resource availability
- Each line of business works to identify key project staff. *Understanding who is likely to participate because of their expertise or position, understanding business-as-usual workload, vacation schedules, and developing an enterprise level view is key to level loading project driven workload.*
- To tackle project prioritization, resource management, key decision making and roadblock elimination a project steering committee meets monthly to examine project charters and determine which tiers are the right fit. *These senior leaders are the ultimate decision-makers, although approvals can go all the way up to the board if a project is big enough.*

About the Project Steering Committee's Role

- The committee members understand what's going on and what resources are available. Internally, leaders evangelize for their projects, but if the credit union can't work on all requested projects, *the steering committee has to decide what to prioritize.*
- The easiest considerations are those that tie to strategy and business results. *The harder part is prioritization.* If the committee agrees on the merits of a particular project but can't make it happen during the current fiscal year, it tables the project for future consideration.
- It's still something in our purview and we've agreed it needs to happen though the level of priority now.
- Although we might kill some projects, few are ever truly dead, and that's generally *only when outside factors make it impractical to pursue the idea further.*

Project Steering Committee

90 Minute Project Steering Committee Meeting



Purpose of the Project Steering Committee

Steering is defined as... “to direct;” “to control the course of” or “to pursue a course of action.”

The primary function of the Project *Steering* Committee is to provide project steering guidance beginning with project decisioning through the tollgates and the PMO process. The Project Steering Committee will monitor and review projects’ statuses, prioritize projects in alignment with KCU Strategy, allocate resources to achieve desired project outcome, and

Attendees

- Executive Leadership Team
- Extended Leadership Team (VP+)
- Other key personnel / Subject Matter Experts
- PMO Team

A Long-Term, Cultural Evolution

- Along with improving communication, increasing efficiency, and better managing resources, the new project management system has also helped Kirtland *operate more like a large company, all without impacting staff churn.*
- This new way of doing business didn't drive turnover, but it certainly drove frustration. *We had to work through frustration, understand why, and continue to re-educate as to why we're this is a critical skillset for the business.*
- With a few years of this structure under our belt, it's important to note that this type of structure isn't typically an overnight success and that there will be bumps, frustrations and even pushback along the way.
- There's a cultural evolution that has to happen. *It sounds and feels like a lot of red tape, but we'll eventually collapse under our own weight if we don't do this.* We were already seeing that happen, and it was going to get worse for us as we grow.

Lessons Learned

- Everybody conceptually understands the need for project management and accepts that they don't have carte blanche over their part of the business because now they're all part of our collective overall success.
- However, the cultural acceptance is not as easy as it might sound. It's a different level of business acumen. Even though we've been doing it for four years, we're still fine-tuning things.
- If I could start the process over again, I'd spend more time educating the executive team to ensure deeper buy-in. I would also spend more time educating the teams on the critical importance of accurate project scoping.
- My advice to others is to spend more time making sure the executive team can evangelize it and enforce it and help everyone else on their teams understand it.
- Sometimes we have to slow down so we can speed up. This allowed employees to avoid rework, which ultimately slows things down. *We always want to be more nimble and move quickly, but accurately.*
- The process is worth the effort.



Questions?



Presented by Guest Speaker

Matt Rarden