



CMC - GLOBAL

Engaging Young Consultants

A Strategic Framework for Professional Renewal

ICMCI Future Leaders Report

www.cmc-global.org



About ICMCI

The International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI) is the worldwide organisation that represents management consulting professional bodies. It administers the Certified Management Consultant (CMC®) designation, a testament to a consultant's professionalism, competence and trustworthiness. As the global voice of the management consulting profession, ICMCI helps to advance our societies and economies while building a strong community of empowered professionals. ICMCI Future Leaders, our global community of young professionals, has an important role to play and presents this report as its first tangible contribution.

Terms of use

This publication is issued by ICMCI for informational, non-commercial purposes. You may download, copy or share it for personal, educational or internal use, provided that:

- ICMCI is acknowledged as the source.
- Content is not altered or misrepresented.
- The ICMCI name or logo is not used to imply endorsement without prior written permission.

Commercial use, resale, or derivative works require written consent from ICMCI. Requests should be directed to: cmc-global@cmc-global.org

Access to underlying survey data is restricted and available only by separate agreement.

This content is provided "as is" for general guidance only and does not constitute professional or legal advice. ICMCI and the authors accept no liability for any loss arising from its use.

© 2026 International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI). All rights reserved.

Foreword

A Call for Professional Renewal

The management consulting profession is undergoing a profound shift as markets, technologies and client expectations evolve. These forces are redefining what professional excellence and leadership mean today. At the heart of this transformation stands a new generation of consultants: diverse, digitally native and determined to create visible impact.

As a first for the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI), this report offers a comprehensive analysis of how our global network engages with its future leaders. It introduces a Strategic Framework for Professional Renewal, designed to secure the long-term vitality and authority of management consulting.

For ICMCI leadership, the framework signals our commitment to the sustainability and enduring strength of the CMC® brand. To remain the Global Voice of Management Consulting, our network must be a professional anchor, where the world's most promising consultants find excellence, belonging and a platform for growth.

For the ICMCI Future Leaders Community, the findings highlight enormous untapped potential within our network. They show how a more dynamic, ecosystem-based approach can build a profession that is both more connected and more inclusive.

This report is intended as a shared point of reference, a basis for reflection, dialogue and collaboration. By providing a framework built on ten core principles, it helps bridge the gap between initial engagement and long-term leadership, aligning with global benchmarks such as Youth2030, the UN Youth Strategy.

We invite all stakeholders to use this Strategic Framework as a catalyst for action. By working together across borders and generations, we can ensure the ICMCI continues to set the global standard for management consulting for decades to come.



Nick Warn, CMC®

Chair
International Council of Management
Consulting Institutes (ICMCI)



Gergana Mantarkova, CMC®

Founding Lead
ICMCI Future Leaders Community

Executive Summary

This Executive Summary and Chapter 8 (“Bringing It Together”) deliver the core strategic messages, drawn from ICMCI’s proprietary survey data across 19 countries (N=19), while the middle sections provide detailed models, insights and practitioner case studies.

This report establishes a definitive strategic baseline for the ICMCI’s global engagement with the next generation of management consultants. Moving beyond traditional recruitment models, it provides an evidence-based framework for ensuring the continuity and vitality of the profession.

Why engagement must change

- **The power of parallel pathways**

Success requires a dual-track strategy that targets both the university pipeline and early-career practitioners, reducing reliance on any single route and strengthening the resilience of the profession. This is driven by three core design principles: Consistent Presence, Relatable Activities and a Clear Next Step.

- **The shift to structural engagement**

The research identifies a critical move away from temporary “youth activities” toward Structural Engagement. The report details five distinct models of involvement, ranging from Formal Authority in governance to Platform Leadership for global visibility. Retention is highest when future leaders hold recognised, functional roles within the institutional fabric of the Institute.

- **Eliminating friction points**

The survey identifies a “Visibility and Infrastructure Gap”. Inconsistent programming and fragmented digital tools create friction that prevents initial engagement from maturing into long-term commitment. Reducing these barriers is essential to lower the threshold for participation for busy, emerging practitioners.

- **From participation to progression**

The survey indicates an opportunity to evolve how success is tracked. While the network currently relies on participation-led data (attendance), there is a strategic need to develop metrics that track the continuous professional journey toward maturity and career-long affiliation.

Executive Summary

An ecosystem for continuity

Professional renewal is introduced in this report as an ecosystem. It rests on the idea that the profession's vitality depends on how relationships, roles and learning flows are organised globally between generations. In this ecosystem, the individual is at the centre as a developing professional whose journey connects local and global experiences over time. National Institutes act as local anchors, the Future Leaders Community serves as a global connector and the ICMCI Board provides the overarching mandate and direction. Together, these elements express a philosophy of continuity through which the network can build a resilient system of professional evolution.

From insight to action

To safeguard the profession's future authority, the network must move from evidence to activation. The Ten Principles for Sustainable Engagement provide the institutional framework necessary for this transition, translating the ecosystem philosophy of professional renewal into a coherent set of conditions. They offer a shared basis for reflection and collaborative dialogue across the ICMCI network, helping stakeholders align structures, roles and expectations to lead the profession forward.

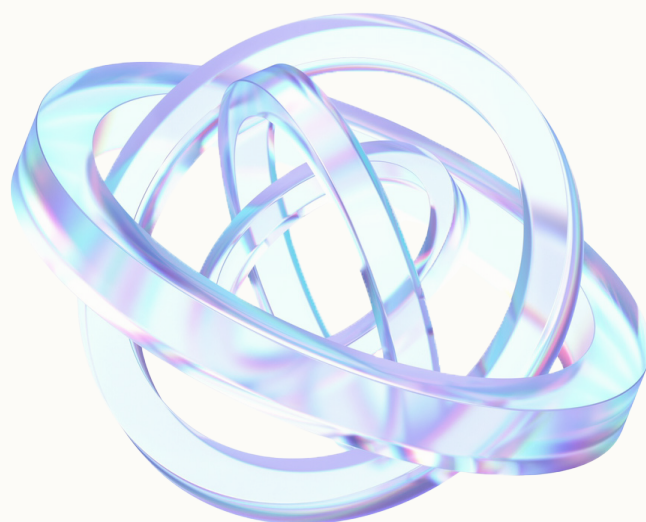


Table of Contents

01	Introduction	07
02	Methodology	08
03	Defining “Young Consultants”	09
04	Attraction Students · Early-Career Professionals · Strengthening Attraction Across Both Routes	11
05	Engagement and Retention Models for Structural Engagement · Supporting Mechanisms: Learning, Development and Networking · Continuity, Retention and Leadership Pipelines	15
06	Challenges and Barriers Awareness and Visibility · Value Proposition and Relevance · Digital Infrastructure · Resource Constraints: Time and Cost · Legacy of Past Efforts · In summary: Moving from Obstacles to Opportunity	24
07	Measuring Success Key Takeaways & Next Steps · Limits of Current Approaches · Toward More Meaningful Indicators · Measurement as a Learning Tool	28
08	Bringing It Together Why Engagement Is a Strategic Imperative for ICMCI · Unlocking Underused Potential · Ten Principles for Sustainable Engagement · Strategic Synthesis · Activating a Network Response	30

Introduction

This report, developed by the ICMCI Future Leaders Community, provides an evidence-based analysis of how to attract and engage young consultants. It is intended as a practical resource for ICMCI Member Institutes and other stakeholders involved in shaping the future of the management consulting profession.

The ICMCI Future Leaders is a global community formally established within ICMCI and approved by the ICMCI Board in 2024. Supported by our Member Institutes, it operates within the ICMCI governance framework and brings together younger professionals from across the network to contribute insight, experience and perspective on issues affecting the future of the profession.

The analysis in this report draws on three complementary sources:

- **Quantitative survey** responses from ICMCI Member Institutes
- **Structured discussions** within the ICMCI Future Leaders
- **Targeted external research** and benchmarks.

Participating Institutes represent a diverse cross-section of the ICMCI network. Some report encouraging outcomes from youth-focused initiatives, while others face persistent challenges related to visibility, engagement and retention. Both perspectives are essential: successes illustrate what is possible under different conditions, while challenges highlight systemic issues that require deliberate attention.

Data for this report was collected throughout 2025 and reflects patterns that tend to evolve gradually rather than year by year. Accordingly, the report is positioned as a foundational reference point rather than a time-bound assessment. It provides a shared baseline against which future progress can be assessed and refined, intended to evolve as more Institutes contribute their experience and as the ICMCI Future Leaders Community continues to develop.

For readers outside the ICMCI network, it also offers an example of how professional bodies can design engagement with future leaders in a more structured way.

Methodology

This analysis integrates quantitative and qualitative inputs to provide a grounded and practical understanding of how ICMCI Member Institutes approach the attraction, engagement and retention of young consultants.

Data consolidation

Survey data was collected from contributors representing 19 countries. To ensure comparability and avoid overweighting individual responses, results are calculated at the country level (N=19). Multiple responses from the same country were consolidated into a single input. Percentages reported throughout this analysis reflect country-level participation, ensuring that larger Institutes do not disproportionately influence the identified global trends.

Qualitative validation

Structured discussions within the ICMCI Future Leaders Community served as an interpretive and qualitative validation layer. These discussions tested the internal consistency of survey patterns and assessed their resonance across different national contexts. Survey evidence and internal reflections were then benchmarked against selected external research to explore whether patterns observed across the ICMCI network reflect broader dynamics affecting young professionals. This triangulation helps ensure that the findings represent persistent trends rather than isolated local conditions.

Scope of findings and limitations

This mixed-methods approach balances evidence with experience, enabling the report to interpret why certain practices gain traction and how they may be adapted. As with any survey-based analysis, the findings reflect reported experience and should be read as indicative rather than exhaustive.

The evidence framework

To translate this data into a usable toolkit for Member Institutes, the findings are presented through two complementary lenses:

- **Evidence in Practice:** Practical examples from survey responses, presented as adaptable “proofs of concept”
- **Case Study Spotlight:** Three case studies illustrating integrated, multi-year approaches across the young consultant lifecycle

Defining “Young Consultants”

A clear and shared understanding of who qualifies as a “young consultant” is essential for designing effective attraction, engagement and retention strategies. Without such clarity, outreach efforts can become fragmented, expectations misaligned and programmes difficult to sustain.

The three lenses of definition

Survey responses indicate that Member Institutes typically define young consultants using one or a combination of three primary criteria:

- **Age-based:** Individuals under a specific threshold (most commonly 35 years).
- **Career-stage:** Professionals with limited experience (for example, fewer than five years). This captures “young” entrants regardless of biological age.
- **Qualification-based:** Defined by the progress toward or absence of senior professional credentials, such as the CMC®.

In practice, the findings suggest that the specific definition applied matters less than its clarity and consistency. Institutes that define their target group clearly and apply that definition consistently report fewer barriers to entry and stronger alignment between their offerings and participant expectations.

A functional definition for this report

For the purposes of this analysis, the term “young consultants” is used in a broad, functional sense. It refers to early-career consultants and aspiring professionals in the formative stages of their consulting journey, whether defined by age, experience, qualification or a hybrid of these.

SECTION 03 Defining “Young Consultants”

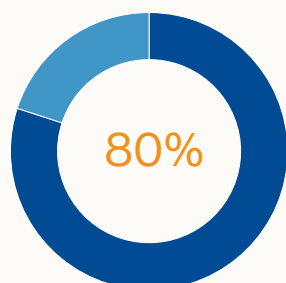
Survey Snapshot:

How IMCs apply these definitions

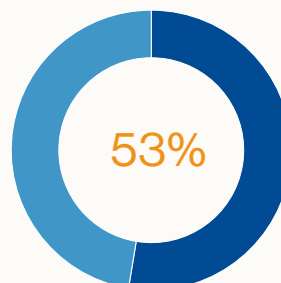
At the country level (N=19), the data reveals how Member Institutes weigh these different criteria.

Definition Model	Number of Countries	Percentage
Age-based only (e.g., under 35 years)	8	42.1
Hybrid model (both age and career-stage)	7	36.8
Career-stage only (e.g., less than 5 years of experience)	3	15.8
Qualification-based (e.g., pre-CMC® status)	1	5.3

Key trends



80% of the countries (15) use age-based criteria in some capacity



53% of the countries (10) incorporate career-stage considerations

This high share of hybrid and career-stage definitions highlights a sophisticated understanding of the “early-career” demographic across the ICMCI network.

Attraction

Building on a clear understanding of who young consultants are, the survey identifies attraction as the first critical step toward sustained engagement. Two primary entry points emerge across responses: students and early-career professionals. While these groups differ in context and availability, a consistent pattern appears across countries and discussions.

This section explores how Institutes approach attraction through these two routes, combining practical activities with underlying design principles that translate initial awareness into active engagement.

4.1 Students

Engagement with students is widely recognised as a critical entry point for introducing the consulting profession. Most participating Institutes report a presence in universities, business schools or other tertiary institutions. However, survey responses show that meaningful engagement depends on sustained interaction.

Across countries, student attraction appears strongest when campus activity is built as a repeatable pathway of connected events. Institutes that achieve high visibility prioritise three design elements:

- **Consistent presence** in academic settings
- **Relatable activities** that translate consulting into concrete, hands-on experiences.
- **A clear next step** that allows interested students to stay connected to the Institute or broader community.

Together, these elements create a path from first contact toward a stronger sense of professional belonging, as illustrated by Kazakhstan's structured campus approach.

Evidence in Practice

01

Kazakhstan ¹

The Institute has developed a structured ecosystem through partnerships with multiple universities, emphasising repeatable formats that allow students to progress over time. Key components include:

- **Recurring masterclasses:** Direct education on consulting standards to bridge the gap between academic theory and professional practice.
- **Formal membership pathways:** A dedicated student membership category that gives students an official stake in the professional community.
- **International Consulting Week:** A major annual event featuring university-focused activities designed to build awareness and professional excitement.

A similar design logic is evident in Canada, where long-standing university partnerships sit at the core of attraction efforts. Canada provides a comprehensive case of embedding such pathways into a long-term national strategy; the following spotlight shows how institutional partnerships have become a cornerstone of the profession's attraction pipeline.

¹ Central Asia Chamber of Management Consultants (CMC Kazakhstan)

Embedding Pathway Design in a National Strategy

National Strategy Foundations

CMC Canada’s 2021–2025 Strategic Plan positions “new certification pathways via Academic Partners” as a core mechanism for growth and renewal. The plan:

- Links student level initiatives (academic partnerships, student membership, early exposure to consulting tools and ethics) to the same competency framework used for the CMC® designation.
- Sets quantitative targets for expanding the partner network, viewing institutional pathways as infrastructure for attraction, development and long term leadership renewal.
- Emphasises inclusion of young people, new Canadians, women and Indigenous Peoples, aligning pathway development with broader talent diversity goals.

Institutional Partnerships as Cornerstone

Through the Academic Partner Program, the consulting pathway is embedded inside university and college programs. Partner institutions:

- Align selected courses with CMC Canada’s competency and courseware standards, so students encounter consulting tools, ethics and methods as part of their formal curriculum.

2 Canadian Association of Management Consultants (CMC-Canada)

- Frequently include applied consulting projects, giving students early experience with client work that can later support elements of CMC® assessment.
- Provide access to CMC® branded professional development, mentoring and information about the designation, presented as a next step after graduation.

Illustrative Partnerships

- Royal Roads University (School of Business): Embeds CMC®-aligned management consulting content within its MBA in Executive Management - Management Consulting Specialisation, and offers a Graduate Certificate in Management Consulting, together creating a clear applied pathway toward the CMC® designation and linking coursework, consulting projects and ethics training to professional standards.
- University of Fredericton (UFred): The renewed partnership promotes a clear pathway to earning the CMC® designation, helping students integrate the credential into career planning.

These partnerships create identifiable cohorts that CMC-Canada can follow from first contact through to certification, and feedback from partners is used to refine the pathways over time.



Chris Harper, FCMC®

Executive Director
CMC-Canada

4.2 Early-Career Professionals

Alongside student outreach, participating Institutes pursue attraction routes aimed at early-career consultants and professionals transitioning from other fields. While these groups are often harder to reach through formal institutions due to work commitments, they represent a vital segment of the professional pipeline.

Survey responses indicate that attraction at this stage is most effective when entry points are accessible and clearly linked to professional credibility. Early-career consultants prioritise engagement where the value is immediate and the time investment is manageable.

Institutes utilise formats that lower the threshold for participation, allowing professionals to engage at their own pace. Effective entry points identified in the survey include:

- **Flexible formats:** Short webinars, after-hours sessions and local networking meet-ups.
- **Professional development:** Short courses and introductions to certification or designation pathways.
- **Digital outreach:** Social media campaigns centred on professional recognition and legitimacy.

The following examples show how different Member Institutes tailor these entry points to align with the needs of working professionals.

Ultimately, they reinforce that effective attraction for early-career consultants depends less on the volume of activities offered and more on how clearly entry points align with time constraints, career stage and perceived professional value.

Evidence in Practice

02

United Kingdom³

The Institute utilises a low-friction approach, offering after-hours webinars and local networking meetings. These events provide opportunities to sample content and meet peers, facilitating a gradual transition into deeper involvement.

Evidence in Practice

03

Brazil⁴

Engagement is supported through accessible digital channels and a strong focus on professional standards. The Institute uses online events and community spaces to introduce ISO 20700 Guidelines for management consultancy services as a professional differentiator. Direct interaction with senior practitioners reinforces this, making the value of membership tangible from the outset.

Evidence in Practice

04

Jordan⁵

Attraction efforts are built around professional recognition and international standards. Social media outreach highlights credibility and career progression, positioning the Institute as a gateway to professional legitimacy for early-career practitioners.

³ Institute of Consulting (IC)

⁴ Instituto Brasileiro dos Consultores de Organizacao (IB-CO)

⁵ Institute of Management Consultants and Trainers of Jordan

4.3 Strengthening Attraction Across Both Routes

Viewed across both student and early-career routes, the findings point to a set of reinforcing factors that consistently shape attraction outcomes, regardless of context or specific target group. Institutes that align these factors are better positioned to convert initial interest into early participation, creating a stronger foundation for subsequent engagement and retention.

Continuity builds trust

Repeated contact is essential for translating initial awareness into familiarity and professional trust. Across regions, consistent presence outperforms one-off appearances, which rarely sustain interest on their own.

Clarity reduces friction

Attraction is most effective when the “next step” is visible. When potential participants understand how to progress after the first contact, they are more likely to see a viable path forward and take action.

Credibility adds value

Entry points linked to professional development, recognition or international standards (such as ISO 20700) are perceived as high-value investments. This is particularly important for early-career professionals who must balance participation against competing work priorities.

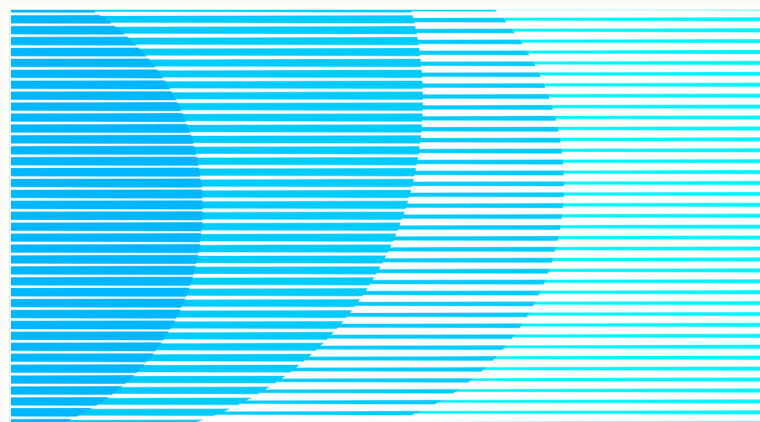


Engagement and Retention

Attracting young consultants is only the first step. The survey indicates that sustained engagement and retention depend fundamentally on how Institutes structure participation over time: specifically, the roles, responsibilities and pathways through which young consultants can contribute and remain involved.

Across participating Member Institutes, engagement is shaped through a combination of structural arrangements, enabling activities, and progression mechanisms. The following sections examine these elements in turn:

- **Models for structural engagement**
The formal frameworks used to house young professional activity.
- **Supporting mechanisms**
The role of learning, development and networking as secondary drivers of involvement.
- **Continuity and leadership pipelines**
How participation is sustained and transitioned over time.



5.1 Models for Structural Engagement

While institutional capacities vary, the survey identifies five recurring models through which Member Institutes structure participation. These models show different ways of combining responsibility, visibility and continuity.

Each model is explored overleaf with evidence from Member Institutes across the network.

- Model 01** Formal Authority and Decision-Making Roles
- Model 02** Organised Future Leaders Groups
- Model 03** Representation with a Structured Voice
- Model 04** Platform Leadership and Visibility
- Model 05** Integrated Engagement

Model 01: Formal Authority and Decision-Making Roles

A governance-based model that integrates young consultants into official leadership structures.

In this model, Member Institutes give young consultants formal governance roles, such as board seats or executive portfolios, linking participation to strategic influence. When well defined and supported, these roles strengthen legitimacy, accelerate learning and create clear leadership pathways.

Evidence in Practice

05

Canada

A board seat is reserved specifically for a young professional, enabling direct participation in decision-making and ensuring a youth “lens” is applied to all institutional strategies.

Evidence in Practice

06

Bangladesh⁶

Zimbabwe⁷

Youth engagement is formalised through a dedicated Board portfolio. The person holding this role may not be from the young professional age group; instead, an established leader is given formal accountability for the youth pipeline, ensuring these initiatives are championed by someone with the experience and institutional influence to embed them within senior governance structures.

Model 02: Organised Future Leaders Groups

A functional model that creates structured spaces for shared contribution and leadership growth.

In this model, Institutes establish a formal Future Leaders group, creating a structured community where young consultants lead initiatives and collaborate over time. By distributing leadership across functional teams such as Marketing, Strategy and Events, it enables deeper engagement and stronger continuity than individual governance roles.

Survey findings suggest that organised peer groups are most effective when:

- **Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined:** Responsibilities are divided into specific areas of competence (e.g., Consulting Practice or Relations with Senior Members).
- **Activities move beyond social interaction:** The focus is on professional outputs, such as workshops, seminars and specialised “think-tank” groups.
- **Participation is linked to real tasks:** Members are assigned to areas where they can contribute based on their specific expertise and interests.

The Member Institute in Italy offers a benchmark for how such a group can function as a central engine for engagement. By utilising a “matrix” of functional board roles and thematic working groups, they have created a sustainable leadership pipeline.

⁶ The Institute of Management Consultants Bangladesh (IMCB)

⁷ Zimbabwe National Institute of Consulting (ZNIC)

A Matrix Model for Peer-Led Engagement

Context and Strategic Intent

APCO Italy established APCO Giovani (APCO Young Professionals) to systematically cultivate and nurture future leaders. Operating in a mature consulting market, the Institute found that while interest among young consultants existed, engagement was fragmented and ad-hoc. The goal was to build an organised community that provides tangible value to both members and the Institute.

Structural Framework

The initiative is guided by a formal Board that plans and coordinates community activities, positioning young consultants as active contributors. To ensure full functional coverage, the Board is divided into key areas of competence:

- **Strategy and organisation:** Defines objectives and strategic plans, ensuring alignment with the community's vision.
- **Marketing and communication:** Promotes activities and increases visibility both internally and externally.
- **Consulting:** Acts as a "think-tank" for professional development, knowledge exchange and skill-based workshops.
- **Events:** Manages informal networking sessions and formal conferences.
- **Relations with senior members:** Bridges young professionals with experienced consultants for mentorship and alignment with APCO's broader objectives.

8 Associazione Professionale Italiana dei Consulenti di Management (APCO)



Thematic Working Groups

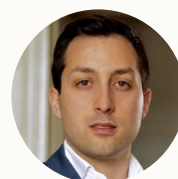
A key driver of sustained engagement is the creation of sub-groups based on specific professional interests. This allows members to deepen their expertise and creates a sense of ownership by aligning institutional work with their personal career aspirations. Current teams include:

- **Startups:** Collaborating on projects and support services for emerging businesses.
- **Subsidised finance and grants:** Expertise in government funding.
- **Marketing and branding:** Enhancing community and member visibility through strategy sessions.

Operational Rhythm and Continuity

APCO Giovani sustains momentum through a disciplined cycle of events and evaluation. The Board conducts bi-monthly check-ins to measure progress and adjust objectives.

Feedback mechanisms are integrated into this cycle to ensure activities remain relevant to member needs. This adaptive approach has turned the community into a predictable and sustainable leadership pipeline, providing young consultants with visibility and a clear sense of ownership within the Institute.



Valerio Oliveto

Co-chair
APCO Giovani

Model 03: Representation with a Structured Voice

A consultative model providing formalised input without governance authority.

In this model, young consultants are given a recognised and structured voice in Institute discussions without necessarily holding formal governance roles or belonging to a dedicated peer group. Participation is organised through defined consultative mechanisms rather than decision-making authority.

These arrangements are typically used by Institutes that wish to incorporate younger perspectives into planning and strategy while maintaining existing leadership structures. Mechanisms may include advisory roles, youth “labs” or clubs that develop proposals for leadership consideration.

Evidence in Practice

07

Russia⁹

A Young Consultants Club offers a forum where early-career members develop proposals that are channelled to Institute leadership for consideration. This provides a clear path for influence and institutional contribution without requiring a formal board seat

These arrangements increase visibility and relevance, but only if contributions are acknowledged and lead to visible influence. When feedback loops are weak or purely symbolic, engagement tends to fade.

⁹ National Institute of Certified Management Consultants (NICMC)

Model 04: Platform Leadership and Visibility

A recognition-based model offering public-facing roles and professional exposure.

In this model, engagement is supported through high-visibility opportunities where young consultants are invited to speak at events, join panels or represent the Institute in public forums.

Survey responses indicate that such opportunities can:

- Boost professional confidence and identity.
- Signal high-level recognition from the broader professional community.
- Create entry points for further involvement.

However, the survey suggests that visibility alone has limited impact on long-term retention. Without a follow-up pathway to continued involvement, participation remains episodic. This approach is most effective when used as a “hook” to lead members into the formal roles described in the previous models.

Model 05: Integrated Engagement

An intentional system where multiple engagement mechanisms reinforce one another.

Integrated engagement is observed in a small number of Member Institutes. This model is characterised by the deliberate alignment of governance inclusion, structured youth community, activity-based engagement and professional progression within a single framework. It transforms participation from episodic events into long-term professional integration.

Evidence in Practice

08

Singapore¹⁰

The Institute demonstrates a high-level integration of youth into the “engine room” of the Institute.

- **Substantive governance:** Young consultants hold key executive roles on the Institute’s Council, including Vice President, Honorary Treasurer and Council Members.
- **Relational access:** A Youth Chapter manages high-value enabling activities, such as informal “Kopi Sessions” with senior leaders, providing low-barrier entry to mentorship.
- **International exposure:** The Institute organises business mission trips (for example, to Vietnam), offering direct experience in cross-border markets and professional networks.

Evidence in Practice

09

China¹¹

This model is characterised by a sophisticated blend of national-level professional recognition and digital integration.

- **Structural representation:** Young consultants are represented within a Directors’ Committee, participating directly in the decision-making processes of the Institute.
- **Digital continuity:** Engagement is maintained through WeChat-based channels that link members directly to training, certification activities and real-time feedback loops.
- **National visibility:** To drive long-term retention, participation is linked to prestigious recognition, such as inclusion in the Annual Outstanding Cases and SME Experts List.

The engagement practices in Singapore and China demonstrate a mature, high-level integration of youth within national engagement systems.


¹⁰ Institute of Management Consultants (Singapore)

¹¹ Management Consulting Committee of China Enterprise Confederation

In Hungary, this approach is already being embedded in newly established initiatives as a strategy for rapid institutional renewal.

Evidence in Practice

10

 **Hungary** ¹²

Within its recently established young consultants' section VTMSZ NEXT, currently comprising 12 members, the Institute aligns multiple layers of engagement:

- **Strategic prioritisation:** Youth integration is explicitly included among the Board's formal priorities.
- **Governance integration:** The section elects its own Chair, who serves as a full member of the VTMSZ Board.
- **Intergenerational dialogue:** The "GenB meets GenZ" series facilitates structured exchange on professional identity and evolving norms.
- **Project-based contribution:** Open calls invite early-career members to participate in working groups and strategic initiatives.



¹² Association of Management Consultants in Hungary (VTMSZ)

Bringing the Models Together

Across all five models, one lesson stands out: engagement is most likely to fail when it is treated as spontaneous or purely social rather than built into the design of participation. Membership alone does not create engagement.

Sustained engagement does not happen by default. It must be intentionally structured.

What defines successful engagement design?

Survey Strategic Insights

The most successful Institutes treat engagement as an organisational “architecture”, ensuring that every youth initiative is built upon three pillars.

Visible roles

Participation is not hidden; it is seen and recognised by the broader profession.

Clear responsibilities

Young consultants know exactly what is expected of them and have ownership over specific tasks.

Credible pathways

There is a logical “next step” that transforms today’s contribution into tomorrow’s leadership opportunity.



Future Leaders Insights: A Further Perspective

While the survey maps the formal structures, ongoing discussions within the ICMCI Future Leaders Community provide deeper nuance on how this “intentional design” is realised in practice.

Decentralised ownership

The most resilient models allow young professionals to lead their own initiatives autonomously within a shared institutional framework, rather than being “managed” by senior committees.

Skill-based organisation

Engagement is stronger when work is designed around professional interests, such as Sustainability or AI, rather than “youth” as a category.

Global connectivity

Engagement is amplified when members can contribute to projects and peer-learning that transcend their own national borders, leveraging the global scale of the ICMCI.

5.2 Supporting Mechanisms: Learning, Development and Networking

Learning, development and networking activities are widely used to engage young consultants, cited by about three-quarters of participating Institutes. They typically support skill development, professional orientation and peer connection..

However, survey responses suggest these activities alone are often insufficient to sustain engagement over time. Many Institutes risk an “activity trap”, where high-quality events generate short-term enthusiasm but fail to translate into long-term commitment due to the lack of a clear link to formal structures.

Strategic analysis: moving beyond the activity trap

The survey confirms the prevalence of such programmes, but the insights below show how Institutes can shift from transactional events to strategic engagement:

- **Mentorship as a structural anchor:** Moving beyond informal networking mixers toward structured, modern formats of professional exchange that move away from top-down hierarchies and recognise that, in a rapidly evolving market, value and expertise are multidirectional across all career stages.
- **From consumer to contributor:** Instead of just attending workshops, young professionals are invited to lead or facilitate sessions, shifting their identity from “users” of the Institute to contributors to its intellectual capital.
- **Credentialing and continuity:** Linking “soft” activities (e.g. webinars) to “hard” milestones, such as CMC® credits or certifications.

5.3 Continuity, Retention and Leadership Pipelines

Survey findings suggest that retention is less about motivation and more about continuity: specifically, whether young consultants can stay meaningfully involved over time. Where engagement is intentionally designed as a progressive process rather than a series of isolated events, it supports both sustained participation and the long-term development of an Institute’s leadership pipeline.

Institutes reporting stronger retention tend to approach engagement as a developmental journey, linking early exposure to increasing opportunities for responsibility and contribution as professional maturity grows.

What distinguishes these approaches is not formality, but function: the presence of roles that feel purposeful, visible and connected to real work. Even without official titles or decision-making power, these roles offer a reason to remain engaged despite time pressures and shifting career demands.

The following illustrates how an Institute can transition from simple outreach to a structured leadership pipeline by embedding continuity into its core design.

Building Continuity from Outreach to Leadership

Zimbabwe Institute operates in a context where attracting and retaining young consultants is vital for long-term sustainability. To sustain engagement beyond initial contact, it created a **Future Leaders Committee (FLC)** to bridge the gap between student outreach and professional leadership.

The Structure

The FLC is designed to develop a leadership pipeline by providing emerging professionals with direct exposure to governance and strategic initiatives. Its structural features include:

- **Diverse membership:** Selected members drawn from different functional areas to ensure a variety of perspectives.
- **Defined leadership:** Led by an elected Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, supported by a small Secretariat.
- **Thematic working groups:** Task-oriented sub-committees focusing on Governance, Innovation, Sustainability and Community Engagement.
- **Intergenerational link:** Senior executives are paired with committee members through mentorship to ensure alignment with organisational priorities and knowledge transfer.

Key Activities

The FLC's activities focus on making progression visible and realistic:

Zimbabwe

- **Outreach:** Visiting universities and tertiary institutions to present on the relevance of Management Consulting.
- **Visible contribution:** Encouraging young professionals to publish articles and secure presentation slots at seminars and conferences.
- **Networking and awareness:** Organising Future Leaders Mixers and creating career awareness campaigns to highlight the profession's impact.

Outcomes and Insights

While still in its formative stages, the FLC has successfully transitioned from "outreach-only" efforts to integrated participation.

- **For the individual:** Members report increased confidence, leadership readiness and a stronger connection to the Institute's mission.
- **For the Institute:** The organisation benefits from fresh thinking, particularly regarding technology, and a strengthened intergenerational dialogue.
- **Strategic takeaway:** In smaller Institutes, integrating young consultants into existing activities with visible, time-bound responsibilities can be more effective than creating separate, parallel structures.



Joselyn Siziba Watsikenyere

Zimbabwe National Institute of Consulting (ZNIC)

Challenges and Barriers



While the survey highlights many promising practices, it also reveals persistent barriers that limit the effectiveness of attraction, engagement and retention efforts. These challenges are not isolated to individual Institutes but reflect recurring structural and operational constraints.

Understanding these barriers is essential. Without directly addressing them, even well-designed initiatives risk becoming fragmented, short-lived or overly dependent on individual champions.

6.1 Awareness and Visibility

The survey reveals a low baseline of recognition. Many young people either never encounter the Institute or notice it briefly before it fades behind the demands of study and work. Awareness exists, but it is fragile and rarely reinforced. Three closely linked themes recur.

- **Lack of clarity:** The profession itself often lacks immediate clarity, as management consulting can sound abstract until its day-to-day practice is explained. Until the profession is translated into concrete roles, activities and career paths, it remains easy to overlook for students and early-career professionals.
- **Weak first contact:** Outreach efforts frequently fail to leave a lasting impression because initial exposure is rarely reinforced through repetition, peer visibility or clear follow-up.
- **The fragmentation factor:** Potential audiences are dispersed across universities, firms, freelance roles and fragmented online spaces, complicating consistent contact. Outreach is often episodic (one-off lectures or social media posts), and in many contexts, too few young consultants are involved to generate the peer momentum required for referral and visibility loops.

6.2 Value Proposition and Relevance

Even when awareness is achieved, engagement with young consultants often weakens early, reflecting perceived relevance rather than low motivation. Early-career professionals make pragmatic choices about where to invest limited time and attention.

- **The programming gap:** 9 of 19 Institutes report having no programmes specifically for young consultants, reducing reasons to engage.
- **Deferred vs. immediate value:** Professional status and long-term credibility are valued but feel distant, so pathways focused on future rewards are often deprioritised in favour of options with clearer, immediate benefits.
- **Practical competition:** Young consultants balance heavy workloads and multiple networks, turning to communities that offer faster feedback and flexible participation.
- **The “observer” signal:** Eligibility thresholds for leadership or expert roles can signal that meaningful involvement is reserved for later, reinforcing a passive, observer role.

Overall, the issue is timing and relevance, not interest: when value is clear and immediate, engagement is more resilient, aligning with global findings that flexibility, learning and purpose drive early-career engagement under significant time and workload constraints.¹³

13 Deloitte: 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey

<https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/issues/work/genz-millennial-survey.html>

6.3 Digital Infrastructure

Digital infrastructure emerges from the survey as a distinct and significant structural constraint. Even where interest exists, weak or fragmented digital systems undermine sustained participation.

- **Practical friction:** Respondents point to outdated or static websites, unclear registration pathways and inconsistent follow-up as key hurdles.
- **The continuity barrier:** In several cases, the absence of a single digital focal point means each outreach effort risks starting from zero, with interest briefly captured and then lost.
- **Habit alignment:** Survey comments suggest digital experiences often do not align with younger audiences' expectations for seamless, flexible interaction.
- **An enabling condition:** Digital infrastructure functions as a foundational element rather than a standalone solution; where it is weak, even well-designed initiatives struggle to take root.

Without a coherent digital strategy, sustained engagement depends disproportionately on individual effort and informal networks, limiting the scale and resilience of the Institute. This challenge echoes wider research on professional associations, which identifies fragmented digital experiences as a key barrier to long-term participation and emphasises the need for journey mapping to understand member needs at a deeper level.¹⁴

14 Associations Now, Understand Your Members on a Deeper Level Through Journey Mapping

<https://associationsnow.com/2022/10/understand-your-members-on-a-deeper-level-through-journey-mapping/>

6.4 Resource Constraints: Time and Cost

Practical hurdles often act as the final deterrent for even the most motivated individuals. For early-career professionals, affordability and time constraints are deeply intertwined, as both represent limited resources that must be pragmatically allocated.

- **The cost-value calculation:** While the survey does not quantify a universal price barrier, responses suggest that cost sensitivity is closely linked to perceived value. Membership fees and event costs become a significant deterrent when the immediate professional return or engagement pathway is unclear.
- **Capacity over interest:** Time pressure is a recurring constraint across both student and early-career segments. Respondents consistently note that high interest in the Institute's mission does not always translate to availability, which is often dictated by rigid academic calendars, project cycles and intensive work demands.
- **The barrier of rigidity:** Current formats, such as long sessions, fixed schedules or mandatory in-person requirements, unintentionally raise the "cost" of participation. When an activity clashes with a client deadline or an exam, it is often deprioritised not due to a lack of interest, but a lack of capacity.

The cumulative effect of these constraints is that engagement decisions become a purely practical trade-off. Initiatives that fail to account for these realities risk losing even highly motivated participants who simply cannot afford the "entry price" in terms of either their finances or their schedules.

6.5 Legacy of Past Efforts

Current institutional decision-making is naturally shaped by the history of previous initiatives. Many Institutes have invested significant energy and heart into youth-focused programs that struggled to sustain momentum, which can lead to an understandable sense of caution or "protective fatigue".

- **Contextualising past results:** It is important to view past initiatives as products of their time rather than failures of leadership. Many of these programs were led by dedicated individuals who gave their best under different professional conditions; that they did not last is often a sign of how rapidly the consulting landscape and the needs of young professionals have changed.
- **Redefining the "fail" narrative:** These inherited perceptions can become a barrier to progress if they are not explicitly addressed with perspective. By treating these experiences as valuable "institutional wisdom," we can move toward a more resilient and modern model for the future.

6.6 In summary: Moving from Obstacles to Opportunity

The barriers to engagement and retention are cumulative rather than isolated. Their combined effect, spanning visibility gaps, resource constraints, digital friction and the shadow of past efforts, helps explain why interest, while present, often fails to translate into sustained participation.

By understanding these challenges with a sense of empathy for both the busy young consultant and the cautious Institute leadership, we can begin to design a “professional home” that is more accessible, flexible and ultimately more rewarding for the next generation.

Voices from the Network



Management consulting sounds abstract until someone explains what it means day-to-day.



The Institute’s promise doesn’t line up with what younger professionals look for.



We don’t have a hub to communicate with young consultants.



The main barrier is lack of programmes for young consultants.



After events, we often lose contact.



We appear once and then disappear.



The challenge is helping them understand that consulting is not a quick-return activity, but a profession that requires commitment, continuous development, and adherence to standards.



Activities often clash with exams or peak work periods.

These are unedited comments from survey participants on recurring themes and barriers in their own words.

Measuring Success

The survey suggests that most Institutes adopt a pragmatic, activity-led approach to measurement. Rather than applying complex frameworks, they rely on indicators that are easy to observe and aligned with immediate priorities. Currently, measurement reflects what Institutes are able to track, rather than a comprehensive picture of long-term impact or quality of engagement.

7.1 What Institutes Currently Measure

Institutes primarily focus on volume and continuity. Key indicators include:

- **Membership growth:** Approximately 75% of responding Institutes track changes in student and early-career registrations.
- **Event attendance:** Participation rates in webinars and activities are commonly used as the primary proxy for engagement.
- **Retention:** Monitoring repeat participation or membership renewals to gauge loyalty.

Systematic qualitative feedback remains limited; where it exists, it is often informal or ad hoc, missing the deeper “quality of experience” metrics. These indicators are practical starting points but provide only a partial view of engagement quality and long-term impact.

7.2 Limits of Current Approaches

Respondents recognise that counting participants indicates reach, but not necessarily meaning. Three specific gaps emerge:

① Engagement vs. Attendance

High turnout does not necessarily mean participants found the session valuable or relevant.

② Short-term vs. Long-term

It is easier to count who shows up today than to track who will lead the Institute in five years.

③ Visibility of outcomes

The contributions of young consultants (ideas, project outputs, decisions) are rarely connected back to Institute-level decision-making.

Without addressing these gaps, Institutes risk undervaluing successful efforts or misdiagnosing why participants drop off.

7.3 Toward More Meaningful Indicators

The survey points toward a more evolved set of markers that move beyond “counting” toward “understanding”.

Respondents also emphasise that evaluation must be proportionate. Overly complex systems risk becoming a burden that diverts resources away from actual delivery.

Key indicators for meaningful engagement

Progression signals

Tracking the transition from a passive attendee to an active role in a working group or leadership opportunity.

Contribution visibility

Identifying when the work or ideas of young consultants directly influence Institute priorities.

Experience feedback

Using light-touch, structured tools to capture perceptions of relevance and inclusion.

7.4 Measurement as a Learning Tool

Evidence in Practice

11

Australia¹⁵

The Institute demonstrates this learning-oriented approach by using insights from a dedicated internal survey to deepen their understanding of early-career motivations and expectations. This data doesn't just sit in a report; it actively informs their future development plans, ensuring their strategy remains intentional and responsive.

Measurement should be a tool for reflection and adaptation, not only compliance. Success is less about benchmarking Institutes against each other and more about helping each Institute refine its own pathway.

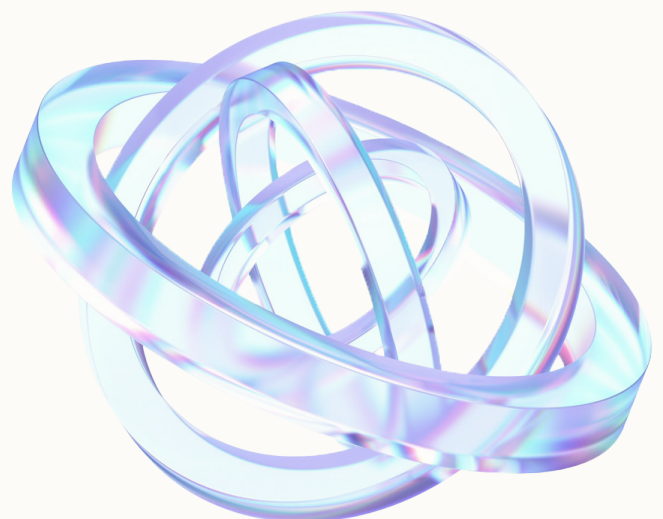
¹⁵ Institute of Management Consultants - Australia

Bringing It Together

8.1 Why Engagement Is a Strategic Imperative for ICMCI

For the ICMCI and its global network of Member Institutes, engagement with young consultants is not a secondary concern. It is a core requirement for the continuity of the profession. Young consultants are the future stewards of the CMC® brand. How they connect with our professional communities today directly influences the long-term credibility of management consulting as a standards-based profession.

- **From Tradition to Relevance:** In a landscape where affiliation is no longer automatic, the ICMCI network must move beyond legacy models. Belonging is now shaped by digital networks and meaningful opportunities to contribute, rather than by tradition alone.
- **Renewing the CMC® Value Proposition:** Sustaining a global community requires us to remain responsive to a generation whose career paths are non-linear. To maintain our role as the “Global Voice of Management Consulting,” we must ensure that voice includes the perspectives of those who will lead the profession in 2030 and beyond.



8.2 Unlocking Underused Potential

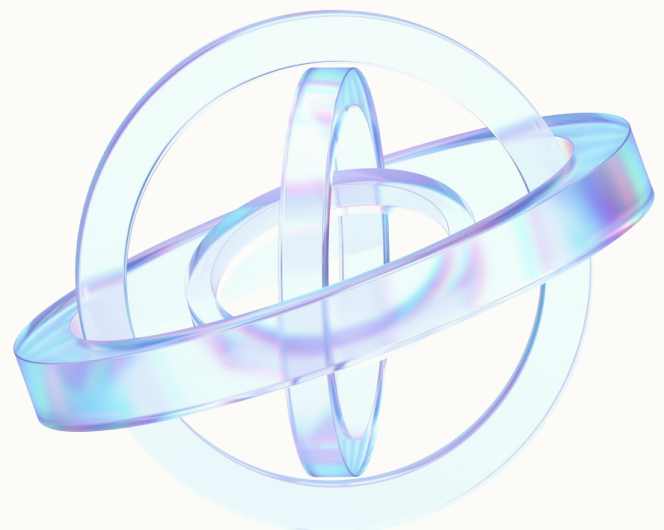
The survey points to two reasons for cautious optimism.

First, participating Member Institutes shared practical examples of what has worked in engaging young consultants.

Second, when viewed systemically, these experiences reveal broader and often underused potential for strengthening engagement across the profession.

The findings confirm that engagement is not only possible but already occurring in many contexts when the right conditions are in place. Institutes described situations in which young consultants remained involved over time, contributed meaningfully and developed stronger connections to the profession.

Where progress stalled, it was rarely due to a lack of interest or effort. More often, key conditions for engagement such as clarity, continuity and visibility, were absent. These patterns shift the conversation away from success versus failure and toward learning, adaptation and the design of more supportive engagement environments.



8.3 Ten Principles for Sustainable Engagement

These principles provide a practical framework for activating young professionals, bridging the generational gap and building a more resilient professional community.

Visibility and Reach	01	Make the first point of contact visible and accessible.
	02	Move beyond assumed affiliation.
Pathways and Focus	03	Design engagement as a pathway.
	04	Focus on a small number of consistent priorities.
Roles and Recognition	05	Recognise young consultants as contributors.
	06	Make participation visible and consequential.
Community and Infrastructure	07	Build peer communities, not isolated participation.
	08	Strengthen enabling infrastructure.
Learning and Progression	09	Treat engagement as a learning process.
	10	Measure continuity, contribution and development.

The following pages expand each principle in detail, showing how Institutes across the ICMCI network are translating this framework into practical action within their own organisational contexts. Together, the principles provide a flexible reference that can be adapted and sequenced to support different national starting points and priorities.

Ten Principles for Sustainable Engagement

- 01 Make the first point of contact visible and accessible.**

Ensure that young people can see how to get involved at key transition points, so initial awareness can grow into long-term engagement.
- 02 Move beyond assumed affiliation.**

Reach out proactively to young professionals who are not already inside existing networks, instead of relying only on familiar circles.
- 03 Design engagement as a pathway.**

Offer clear “next steps” so that brief interest can develop into an ongoing role with growing responsibility.
- 04 Focus on a small number of consistent priorities.**

Concentrate effort and resources on a few agreed priorities so programmes can mature and demonstrate results over time.
- 05 Recognise young consultants as contributors.**

Create meaningful roles where young professionals contribute to real work, building both professional identity and commitment.
- 06 Make participation visible and consequential.**

Acknowledge contributions and connect them to tangible outcomes, such as recognition, opportunities or progression.
- 07 Build peer communities, not isolated participation.**

Support peer groups and networks so young people feel part of a shared professional community, not just individual participants.
- 08 Strengthen enabling infrastructure.**

Invest in reliable digital tools, communication channels and support structures that make engagement activities easy to run and expand.
- 09 Treat engagement as a learning process.**

Use feedback, reflection and evidence to improve engagement pathways, rather than dropping approaches at the first difficulty.
- 10 Measure continuity, contribution and development.**

Track how young professionals stay involved, what they contribute and how they progress, instead of focusing only on attendance counts.

8.4 A Strategic Synthesis

Sustained engagement is not the result of isolated efforts but the product of an interconnected ecosystem.

Drawing on the survey process, wider research into global professional bodies and an analysis of international youth engagement trends, a central insight emerges: Sustained engagement is not the result of isolated efforts, but the product of an interconnected ecosystem.

The Engagement Ecosystem

This ecosystem perspective serves as a framework to explain why some initiatives gain traction while others struggle. It recognises that in a global network like the ICMCI, professional continuity is a shared responsibility across four distinct yet interdependent layers, with the individual at the centre:

- **The Individual (The Core)**

The starting point of the ecosystem. The individual's professional journey, identity and aspirations drive the need for engagement.
- **The Local Professional Anchor (National IMCs)**

Member Institutes serve as the primary point of contact and provide the foundation of the ecosystem. Their role is to ensure the profession remains tangible, locally relevant and accessible to those entering the field.
- **The Global Connector (Future Leaders Community)**

This layer amplifies local efforts by providing international visibility and shared learning. It fosters a "global tribe," offering high-potential consultants a sense of belonging to a leading international community that transcends national borders.
- **The Strategic Mandate (ICMCI Board)**

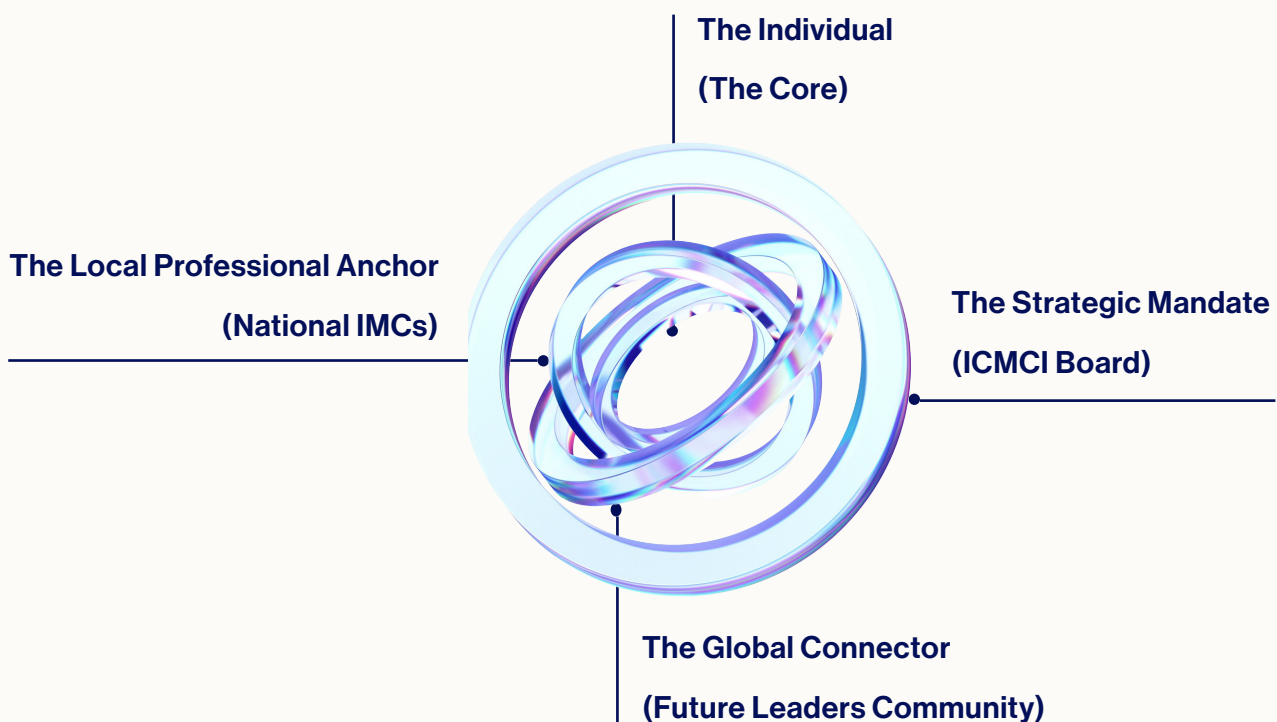
The Board curates the professional environment by providing legitimacy and a strategic mandate. By signalling that engagement is a top-tier priority, it ensures that local and international initiatives are recognised as central to the long-term credibility and standards of the profession.

The Wider Professional Landscape

Beyond these formal structures, a wider professional ecosystem, including consulting firms, universities and digital platforms, shapes how young consultants develop their professional identity. This external environment is where the “consultant journey” often begins. Recognising these actors allows the ICMCI to position itself strategically as a partner in the consultant’s career, rather than a separate or secondary entity.

A Shared Opportunity

This ecosystem view acknowledges that no single actor can sustain the profession alone. Instead, alignment across local and global roles, combined with an awareness of the wider professional landscape, creates a resilient environment where engagement is more likely to be maintained. This synthesis, consistent with global best practices like the United Nations Youth 2030 framework, moves the conversation beyond simply counting members toward designing a system that ensures the continuity and vitality of the ICMCI for the next generation.



8.5 Activating a Network Responses

The survey findings and the ecosystem perspective demonstrate that meaningful engagement with young consultants is achievable when efforts are aligned and supported consistently. Across the ICMCI network, the opportunity now is to reflect on what has worked, identify where challenges persist, and consider how existing efforts can be better connected.



Institutional reflection

Reflection provides a critical starting point. Examining past experience helps distinguish between what contributed to progress and what limited it, supporting learning and more grounded decision-making. By analysing these findings, Institutes can move away from reactive initiatives toward a more intentional strategy.

Collaborative dialogue

Dialogue follows reflection. Sharing experience, comparing approaches and coordinating efforts across the network can strengthen coherence and resilience over time. Progress does not require uniform models, but rather clearer connections between roles, relationships and resources.

Shaping the future direction

This combined approach offers a practical way to consolidate learning and support more sustained engagement with young consultants. How the network responds to this synthesis will determine its capacity to lead the profession and set the global standard for management consulting for decades to come.

Acknowledgements

This Strategic Framework was developed by the **ICMCI Future Leaders Community**, drawing on survey responses and contributions from its members and from ICMCI Member Institutes across the global network. The analysis and synthesis were led by **Gergana Mantarkova**, Founding Lead of the Future Leaders Community and former Board Liaison, within the ICMCI governance framework, as part of ICMCI's commitment to integrating future leaders into core strategic work.

We would like to thank the following individuals for the professional insights and diverse perspectives that informed this report:

Salim Al-Armali (Jordan)	Silva Mesropyan (Armenia)
Dimah Barakat (Jordan)	Valerio Oliveto (Italy)
Dan Brewer (USA)	Emre Özdemir (Switzerland)
Deborah Di Matteo (Italy)	Thisun Piyasena (Australia)
Thibaut Gallineau (Switzerland)	Alexandra Pusca (Romania)
Chris Harper (Canada)	Terence Sim (Singapore)
Zakir Hossain (Bangladesh)	Tatyana Soldatenko (Kazakhstan)
Adelwyn Holder (Canada)	Brigitta Vereczkei (Hungary)
Rima Kocharyan (Russia)	Luiz Viana (Brazil)
Sam Lee (Singapore)	Gerhard Wanek (Austria)
Gregory Lunde (USA)	Joselyn Watsikenyere (Zimbabwe)
Iulian Martin (Romania)	Man Yi (China)

Participating ICMCI Member Institutes

We recognise the leadership of the following Member Institutes. Their local insights and institutional experience underpin this report and are essential to fostering the next generation of consultants.

Country	Member Institute
 Armenia	Institute of Management Consulting of Armenia
 Australia	Institute of Management Consultants - Australia
 Austria	Austrian Professional Institute of Management Consultancy, Accounting and Information Technology (UBIT)
 Bangladesh	The Institute of Management Consultants Bangladesh (IMCB)
 Brazil	Instituto Brasileiro dos Consultores de Organização (IBCO)
 Bulgaria	Bulgarian Association of Management Consultants and Consulting Organisations (BAMCO)
 Canada	Canadian Association of Management Consultants (CMC-Canada)
 China	Management Consulting Committee of China Enterprise Confederation
 Hungary	Association of Management Consultants in Hungary (VTMSZ)
 Italy	Associazione Professionale Italiana dei Consulenti di Management (APCO)
 Jordan	Institute of Management Consultants & Trainers of Jordan
 Kazakhstan	Central Asia Chamber of Management Consultants (CMC Kazakhstan)
 Romania	Romanian Management Consultancies Association (AMCOR)
 Russia	National Institute of Certified Management Consultants (NICMC)
 Singapore	Institute of Management Consultants (Singapore)
 Switzerland	Institute of Management Consulting Switzerland - Consulting Network Switzerland
 United Kingdom	Institute of Consulting (IC)
 United States	Institute of Management Consultants (IMC USA)
 Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe National Institute of Consulting (ZNIC)



CMC - GLOBAL

© 2026 International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI). All rights reserved.

