PMI or IICTP: which should you take first?

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If you are weighing a PMI credential against an IICTP one, start with the work you actually do. Both are respectable; they point at different jobs. This guide maps common roles to the credential that fits, and says when the answer is “both”.

TL;DR The short version

- Choose by the work you actually do: plans, budgets and stakeholders point to project management; design reviews, releases and incidents point to technical practice.
- The post maps common roles to the credential that fits each one.
- A tech lead who is also accountable for a date and a budget is doing two jobs, and both credentials can make sense.

Read online, listen to it, or change the text size: https://blogs.iictp.org/pmi-or-iictp-which-to-take-first

PMI facts in this post were read on pmi.org on 20 October 2026 and may have changed since. PMI®, PMP®, CAPM® and PMI-ACP® are marks of Project Management Institute, Inc. IICTP is not affiliated with or endorsed by PMI.

Start with your daily decisions

- If your week is plans, budgets, stakeholders and status, you manage delivery. A project management credential fits.
- If your week is design reviews, release calls, incident response and mentoring engineers, you make technical decisions. A technical credential fits.
- If it is a mix, which most tech leads and technical program managers find, you may eventually want both.

A guide by role

IF YOU ARE…	CONSIDER	WHY
Early career, aiming at project management	PMI CAPM	PMI describes it as the foundation for project management skills, with no experience required.
Early career developer or QA	IICTP ATP	Covers the software life cycle, baseline architecture and delivery fundamentals. 100 questions in 120 minutes; no work experience required.
Managing projects for 3 or more years	PMI PMP	The established credential for leading projects across industries.

IF YOU ARE…	CONSIDER	WHY
Tech lead or engineering manager	IICTP CTP	Tests system design, trade-offs, technical risk and delivery governance.
Running agile ways of working with teams	PMI-ACP, or IICTP ADP	PMI describes PMI-ACP as validating how you engage stakeholders, apply agile approaches and lead teams. ADP focuses on technical agile governance: pipelines, technical debt and release flow.
Leading AI projects as a manager	PMI-CPMAI	PMI positions it for leading AI projects and driving business impact.
Building and securing AI systems	IICTP AIP	Covers applied AI engineering, retrieval systems, edge deployment and safety guardrails.
Leading sustainability in project delivery	PMI CSPP	PMI describes it as leading resilient, sustainable projects.
Building greener software	IICTP CSTP	Carbon-aware development, efficient computing and hardware life cycle.
Running a program or portfolio of technical work	PMI PgMP / PfMP or IICTP PgTP / PfTP	Choose by whether the role is mainly managing programs and portfolios, or governing the technology inside them.

PMI descriptions from pmi.org/certifications, read 20 October 2026. IICTP descriptions from iictp.org.

When the answer is both

A tech lead who has become accountable for a delivery date and a budget is doing two jobs. A project management credential covers the delivery job. A technical credential covers the judgement job. Holding both costs time and fees, so choose based on which gap hurts more today.

What employers may ask for

Some job posts name a specific credential. If a role requires a PMP, take the PMP. If you are applying for engineering leadership roles, there is no single credential that every employer asks for. A public, checkable credential can help you show your judgement, but we will not promise that it gets you a job or a raise. No credential can.

Questions to ask yourself

1. What decision did I make last month that I am most proud of, and which credential would have tested it?
2. What is the next role I want, and what do people in it hold today?
3. Do I need a recognised name for this employer, or evidence of technical depth?
4. Am I eligible now? Check the eligibility planner for IICTP and PMI's own requirements for theirs.

> IICTP is an independent credential focused on technical practitioner skills. Choose between technical leadership and project management tracks based on your daily decisions and career goals.

To go deeper, see the first post in this series on what each body certifies, and the exam facts for every IICTP credential.

Sources and further reading

1. Project Management Institute. “Project Management & Specialized Certifications.” pmi.org/certifications. Read 20 October 2026.
2. Project Management Institute. “Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)® Certification.” pmi.org/certifications/certified-associate-capm. Read 20 October 2026.
3. Project Management Institute. “PMI Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP)® Certification.” pmi.org/certifications/agile-acp. Read 20 October 2026.
4. IICTP. Credential pages and exam facts. iictp.org/certifications.

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