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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS USING PUBLIC FUNDS

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Abstract. This article examines methodological approaches to evaluating the effectiveness of publicly funded projects implemented by civil society institutions. The study develops an integrated, results-based evaluation framework that combines financial discipline, social impact, transparency, beneficiary coverage, sustainability, and institutional accountability. It also reviews internationally recognized evaluation standards within the context of ongoing public governance reforms in Uzbekistan and proposes practical mechanisms to strengthen evidence-based financing, enhance monitoring and evaluation systems, and increase the public value generated through publicly funded projects.

Keywords: civil society institutions; public funding; project effectiveness; state grants; government subsidies; social procurement; results-based management; social impact; institutional accountability; monitoring and evaluation; public finance; Uzbekistan; performance-based budgeting; transparency; evaluation criteria; NGO financing; public value; social partnership.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются методологические подходы к оценке эффективности проектов, финансируемых из государственных средств и реализуемых институтами гражданского общества. В исследовании разрабатывается интегрированная, ориентированная на результаты система оценки, объединяющая финансовую дисциплину, социальное воздействие, прозрачность, охват благополучателей, устойчивость и институциональную подотчётность. Также анализируются международно признанные стандарты оценки в контексте продолжающихся реформ системы государственного управления в Узбекистане и предлагаются практические механизмы, направленные на укрепление финансирования, основанного на доказательной базе, совершенствование систем мониторинга и оценки, а также повышение общественной ценности, создаваемой за счёт реализации проектов, финансируемых из государственных средств.

Ключевые слова: институты гражданского общества; государственное финансирование; эффективность проектов; государственные гранты; государственные субсидии; социальный заказ; управление по результатам; социальное воздействие; институциональная подотчётность; мониторинг и оценка; государственные финансы; Узбекистан; бюджетирование, ориентированное на результат; прозрачность; критерии оценки; финансирование ННО; общественная ценность; социальное партнёрство.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary system of public governance, civil society institutions have become key actors in addressing social, economic, environmental, humanitarian, and community-level challenges. Their role is no longer limited to advocacy or the representation of social interests; they increasingly participate in the delivery of public services, social support programmes, local development initiatives, environmental projects, legal aid, education, public oversight, and inclusive governance processes. This evolution has significantly increased the importance of state financial support for civil society institutions through grants, subsidies, social procurement mechanisms, and other forms of public funding.

At the global level, the effectiveness of publicly funded civil society projects has become an increasingly important issue, as governments and international organizations are gradually transitioning from input-based financing approaches to results-oriented public management. Traditional approaches primarily focused on whether allocated funds were spent in compliance with formal procedures. In contrast, modern public finance emphasizes a broader question: what measurable social outcomes have been achieved through the use of public resources? This shift is closely associated with performance-based budgeting, results-based management, social accountability, and impact evaluation. International practice demonstrates that public funds should be assessed not only in terms of financial compliance, but also through relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, transparency, and alignment with national development priorities.

The OECD DAC evaluation framework is particularly relevant in this context, as it defines six internationally recognized criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. These criteria are widely applied in evaluating development projects, social programmes, and public policy interventions. For civil society institutions, they provide a systematic foundation for assessing whether a project addresses real social needs, aligns with public policy priorities, achieves planned outputs and outcomes, utilizes resources efficiently, generates broader social benefits, and ensures continuity of results beyond the funding period.

In Uzbekistan, this issue is especially relevant as civil society institutions are increasingly recognized as important partners of the state in implementing socially significant initiatives. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan recognizes civil society institutions, including public associations, non-governmental non-profit organizations, citizens' self-governing bodies, and mass media, as fundamental components of civil society. The Law "On Social Partnership" establishes the legal framework for cooperation between state bodies and civil society institutions, including government grants, subsidies, and social service procurement mechanisms. In accordance with this law, government grants are allocated on a competitive basis to support socially beneficial projects, while subsidies are aimed at strengthening statutory and socially oriented activities of non-governmental non-profit organizations and other civil society actors.

The national relevance of this topic is further reinforced by the "Uzbekistan–2030" Strategy and the broader concept of civil society development. Uzbekistan is actively pursuing objectives aimed at expanding public participation, strengthening social partnership, increasing transparency, and improving the quality of public governance. In this context, public funding of civil society institutions should be viewed not only as a financial support mechanism, but also as an instrument for achieving social outcomes, enhancing citizen engagement, improving local problem-solving capacity, and strengthening trust between the state and society.

However, despite the expansion of financing mechanisms, several methodological and institutional challenges remain. First, the indicators used to evaluate project effectiveness are often fragmented and primarily focused on activities rather than outcomes. Second, financial reporting and social impact reporting are not always integrated into a unified evaluation system. Third, monitoring systems tend to emphasize formal expenditure verification while paying insufficient attention to beneficiary satisfaction, long-term sustainability, and social value creation. Fourth, the absence of a standardized rating or index system limits the comparability of projects across regions, sectors, and types of civil society institutions. Fifth, digital monitoring tools are not yet fully utilized to ensure real-time transparency and evidence-based decision-making.

Therefore, the scientific problem of this research can be formulated as follows: existing approaches to evaluating projects implemented by civil society institutions using public funds do not yet provide a fully integrated, evidence-based, comparable, and results-oriented assessment of financial efficiency, social effectiveness, institutional accountability, and sustainability. This creates the need to develop a comprehensive methodological framework that links public expenditure to measurable public value.

The purpose of this study is to develop a scientific and practical approach to evaluating the effectiveness of publicly funded projects implemented by civil society institutions, with special attention to the institutional and financial context of Uzbekistan. The scientific significance of the research lies in integrating international evaluation standards with national mechanisms of social partnership and public financial management. The practical significance lies in proposing a set of measurable indicators and policy recommendations that can be utilized by public funds, parliamentary commissions, local authorities, grant-making bodies, and civil society institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scientific study of civil society project evaluation is grounded in several theoretical perspectives, including public finance theory, results-based management, social accountability, institutional economics, public value theory, and evaluation methodology. Each of these approaches contributes to understanding how public funds can be transformed into measurable social outcomes.

From the perspective of public finance theory, state resources are allocated in accordance with the principles of legality, efficiency, economy, effectiveness, and accountability. Public funds are not merely financial transfers; they are instruments for achieving public objectives. Musgrave's classical theory of public finance emphasizes the allocation, distribution, and stabilization functions of the state. When the state finances civil society institutions, it delegates part of the social problem-solving function to non-state actors. Therefore, evaluation should determine whether such delegation enhances public welfare, expands service coverage, and ensures more efficient use of resources compared to alternative public mechanisms.

Results-based management theory focuses on the logical linkage between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact. In this approach, a project is not assessed solely by the amount of funds spent or the number of activities implemented. Instead, the key question is whether a measurable change has occurred for beneficiaries or communities. For example, a legal aid project should not be evaluated only by the number of seminars conducted, but also by the number of citizens who received legal assistance, the quality of consultations, the resolution of legal issues, and the level of beneficiary satisfaction.

OECD research on results-based management shows that public institutions often face challenges in linking financial resources to final outcomes. Evaluation systems may become overly complex, indicators may be poorly selected, and reporting may become formal rather than analytical. This indicates that civil society project evaluation should avoid excessive administrative burden and instead focus on a limited set of meaningful indicators that reflect actual social value.

The OECD DAC evaluation criteria provide one of the most influential international frameworks. Relevance assesses whether a project corresponds to beneficiary needs and policy priorities. Coherence evaluates consistency with other interventions and institutional strategies. Effectiveness measures the achievement of planned objectives. Efficiency examines the relationship between results and resources. Impact assesses broader, long-term, and indirect effects. Sustainability evaluates whether benefits continue after project completion. These criteria are particularly suitable for civil society projects, as such initiatives typically combine social, institutional, and community-level outcomes.

The World Bank's social accountability approach emphasizes the importance of citizen participation, community monitoring, transparency, and feedback mechanisms in improving public service delivery. Civil society organizations can play a dual role: they may implement publicly funded projects and also contribute to monitoring the use of public funds. This creates both opportunities and constructive challenges. On one hand, civil society can enhance local responsiveness and trust. On the other hand, if monitoring mechanisms are insufficiently developed, public funding processes may become formalized or less transparent. Therefore, project evaluation should include not only administrative oversight but also beneficiary feedback and public disclosure mechanisms.

Institutional economics also provides valuable insights. According to this approach, the effectiveness of public-funded projects depends on formal rules, informal norms, incentives, transaction costs, and accountability mechanisms. If grant selection procedures are transparent, reporting requirements are clear, and performance indicators are measurable, civil society institutions are incentivized to improve project quality. If rules are ambiguous or evaluation practices are subjective, the system may encourage formal compliance rather than genuine effectiveness.

Public value theory argues that public programmes should be evaluated based on the value they create for society. In the case of civil society institutions, public value may include improved access to social services, increased civic participation, protection of vulnerable groups, environmental improvements, enhanced legal awareness, community development, and strengthened public trust. This theory is important because some civil society outcomes are not easily expressed in financial terms. Therefore, evaluation should integrate both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

In Uzbekistan, the legal and institutional study of civil society financing has become increasingly relevant. The Law "On Social Partnership" defines government grants, subsidies, and social procurement as mechanisms for supporting socially significant projects. Government grants are provided through competitive procedures for projects aimed at socially beneficial objectives. Subsidies support statutory activities and the material and technical capacity of civil society institutions. Social service procurement enables state bodies to contract civil society institutions for socially important works and services. These mechanisms create a legal basis for results-oriented financing, but they also require robust evaluation tools.

Existing research in Uzbekistan often focuses on legal regulation, organizational development of non-governmental non-profit organizations, public oversight, and social partnership. However, insufficient attention has been given to developing an integrated quantitative and qualitative methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of publicly funded projects. In particular, there is a need for a unified index that combines financial discipline, output achievement, outcome achievement, beneficiary satisfaction, transparency, sustainability, and institutional capacity.

Thus, the literature indicates that the evaluation of civil society projects should be multidimensional. It should not be limited to reviewing expenditure documentation. It should address four key questions: whether funds were used legally and efficiently; whether planned activities were implemented; whether beneficiaries experienced measurable improvements; and whether the achieved results can be sustained or scaled.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-method research design based on economic analysis, comparative analysis, institutional analysis, statistical methods, indicator-based evaluation, and logical modelling. The methodological framework is built on the integration of internationally recognized evaluation criteria and Uzbekistan's national legal framework for financing civil society institutions.

First, economic analysis is applied to assess the relationship between allocated public funds and achieved project results. This includes cost–output analysis, cost–beneficiary analysis, administrative cost assessment, and the calculation of efficiency ratios. For example, the average cost per beneficiary is calculated by dividing total project expenditure by the number of direct beneficiaries. The administrative cost ratio is determined by dividing management and overhead costs by total project expenditure. These indicators help assess whether resources are used in an economically efficient manner.

Second, comparative analysis is used to contrast international evaluation approaches with current institutional practices in Uzbekistan. The OECD DAC evaluation criteria, results-based management principles, and social accountability mechanisms are compared with national instruments such as state grants, subsidies, social procurement mechanisms, and public funding frameworks. This approach enables the identification of methodological gaps and potential areas for adaptation and improvement.

Third, statistical methods are used to structure and standardize evaluation indicators. Since civil society projects vary by sector, scale, region, and beneficiary group, a unified evaluation model is required. The study proposes a weighted scoring system in which each project is assessed across multiple dimensions. Each dimension is scored on a scale from 0 to 100, and the final effectiveness index is calculated as a weighted average.

Fourth, institutional analysis is applied to examine the roles of key stakeholders, including state bodies, public funds, parliamentary and public oversight commissions, civil society institutions, beneficiaries, auditors, and local communities. This approach helps clarify the allocation of responsibilities in the evaluation process and defines the mechanisms of information flow between project implementers and decision-making entities.

Fifth, a logical framework approach is used to establish clear linkages between project inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. This approach prevents the common methodological limitation of equating activity completion with effectiveness. For instance, conducting ten training sessions represents an output, whereas improving the legal literacy of vulnerable groups represents an outcome. True effectiveness should primarily be assessed at the outcome and impact levels.

The proposed evaluation model is defined as the Integrated Civil Society Project Effectiveness Index (ICSPEI). It consists of six components:

1. Financial discipline and targeted use of funds;
2. Achievement of planned outputs;
3. Achievement of social outcomes;
4. Beneficiary coverage and inclusiveness;
5. Transparency and accountability;
6. Sustainability and scalability.

The general formula is:

$$ICSPEI = (FD \times 0.20) + (OA \times 0.15) + (SO \times 0.25) + (BI \times 0.15) + (TA \times 0.15) + (SS \times 0.10)$$

Where:

ICSPEI – Integrated Civil Society Project Effectiveness Index;
FD – financial discipline;
OA – output achievement;
SO – social outcome achievement;
BI – beneficiary inclusion;
TA – transparency and accountability;
SS – sustainability and scalability.

The weighting structure reflects the principle that social outcomes should be assigned the highest significance, as the primary objective of publicly funded civil society projects is the generation of socially beneficial results. Financial discipline is also assigned a substantial weight, as public resources must be used in a lawful, transparent, and accountable manner. Sustainability is assigned a relatively lower yet meaningful weight, recognizing that not all short-term projects are expected to produce long-term institutional effects, while still requiring a degree of continuity and scalability potential (Table 1).

Table 1. Proposed Evaluation Dimensions for Public-Funded Civil Society Projects[1]

Evaluation dimension	Main indicator	Measurement logic	Weight
Financial discipline	Targeted and documented use of funds	Compliance with budget, audit, and procurement rules	20%
Output achievement	Planned activities completed	Ratio of completed outputs to planned outputs	15%
Social outcomes	Measurable beneficiary-level change	Improvement in knowledge, access, welfare, rights, or services	25%
Beneficiary inclusion	Coverage of target groups	Number and structure of beneficiaries, vulnerable group access	15%
Transparency and accountability	Public reporting and feedback	Open data, reports, complaints mechanism, beneficiary surveys	15%
Sustainability	Continuation and scaling potential	Post-project viability, partnerships, local ownership	10%

The scoring scale may be interpreted as follows: 85–100 points means high effectiveness; 70–84 points means satisfactory effectiveness; 55–69 points means moderate effectiveness with improvement needs; below 55 points means low effectiveness and need for corrective action.

This methodology is suitable for Uzbekistan because it can be applied by public funds, local public commissions, grant-making bodies, and civil society institutions. It can also be integrated into digital reporting platforms, where project implementers submit financial reports, activity reports, beneficiary data, photographs, survey results, and outcome indicators.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis shows that evaluating the effectiveness of projects implemented by civil society institutions using public funds requires a shift from expenditure control toward results-based and public value–oriented assessment. In many public finance systems, the dominant evaluation question remains: "Were the funds spent in accordance with the approved budget?" This is necessary but not sufficient. A project may fully comply with financial regulations yet still achieve limited social outcomes. Conversely, a project may generate significant social value while facing documentation challenges, which may affect accountability perceptions. Therefore, an effective evaluation system must integrate financial, social, institutional, and sustainability dimensions.

The first result of the study is that the legal framework in Uzbekistan provides a strong foundation for public financing of civil society institutions, while evaluation mechanisms require further methodological refinement. The Law "On Social Partnership" clearly defines government subsidies, government grants, and social services procurement. It also establishes requirements for transparency, targeted use of funds, openness, and compliance with project obligations. However, the law provides a general legal framework rather than a detailed methodology for measuring project effectiveness. This creates a need for standardized indicators, rating tools, and digital monitoring mechanisms.

The second result is that Uzbekistan's civil society development priorities are aligned with international trends. Globally, civil society institutions are increasingly involved in achieving Sustainable Development Goals, improving public service delivery, supporting vulnerable groups, and strengthening community participation. Uzbekistan's reform agenda also emphasizes public participation, social partnership, and the development of civil society institutions. Therefore, publicly funded civil society projects should be evaluated in accordance with both national priorities and internationally recognized criteria.

The third result is that financial compliance should be considered a necessary condition, but not the final measure of effectiveness. For example, if a civil society institution receives a state grant for a youth employment project, the evaluation should not be limited to verifying invoices, contracts, and expenditure reports. It should also assess how many young people were trained, how many obtained employment or self-employment opportunities, whether the training aligned with labour market demand, and whether beneficiaries experienced improvements in income levels or employability. This requires outcome-based indicators and post-project monitoring.

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The fourth result is that beneficiary feedback should become a central component of evaluation. Civil society projects are typically designed to address the needs of citizens, communities, vulnerable groups, women, youth, persons with disabilities, elderly populations, and local residents. If beneficiaries are not consulted regarding the usefulness, accessibility, and relevance of the project, the evaluation remains incomplete. Beneficiary surveys, focus group discussions, complaint mechanisms, and community scorecards can provide valuable evidence on the actual quality of project implementation.

The fifth result is that digitalization can significantly enhance transparency and reduce administrative burdens. A unified electronic monitoring platform could enable civil society institutions to submit project proposals, budgets, contracts, progress reports, outcome indicators, and final reports. Public fund administrators could monitor implementation in real time. Beneficiaries could provide feedback through online forms or mobile applications. This would reduce paper-based procedures and improve data reliability and traceability.

The sixth result is that an integrated index can improve comparability across projects. Currently, projects are often evaluated separately by sector or institution, which makes it difficult to compare effectiveness across regions and funding mechanisms. The proposed Integrated Civil Society Project Effectiveness Index enables projects to be assessed using common criteria while preserving sector-specific indicators. For example, a health awareness project and an environmental project may have different outcome metrics, but both can be evaluated through financial discipline, output achievement, social outcomes, inclusiveness, transparency, and sustainability (Table 2).

Table 2. Example of Project Evaluation Using the Integrated Index[2]

Component	Score	Weight	Weighted score
Financial discipline	90	0.20	18.0
Output achievement	85	0.15	12.75
Social outcomes	72	0.25	18.0
Beneficiary inclusion	80	0.15	12.0
Transparency and accountability	70	0.15	10.5
Sustainability and scalability	60	0.10	6.0
Final effectiveness index	—	**1.00**	**77.25**

The example demonstrates that a project may exhibit strong financial discipline and successfully achieve its planned outputs while showing comparatively lower performance in sustainability and transparency. Its final score of **77.25** indicates a satisfactory level of effectiveness and, at the same time, identifies specific areas requiring further improvement. This type of evaluation is considerably more informative than a simple "approved/not approved" conclusion because it provides a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of project performance.

A key scientific finding of this study is that the effectiveness of civil society projects should be understood as the relationship between the public resources utilized and the public value generated. Public value encompasses both measurable and less tangible outcomes. Measurable outcomes may include the number of beneficiaries served, legal consultations provided, employment outcomes achieved, reductions in social risks, improvements in legal awareness, expanded access to services, or positive environmental outcomes. Less tangible outcomes may include increased public trust, community empowerment, civic participation, institutional learning, and social cohesion. Therefore, a balanced evaluation methodology should integrate both quantitative and qualitative assessment methods.

Another important finding concerns the distinction between outputs, outcomes, and impact. Many projects primarily report outputs because they are relatively easy to quantify, such as the number of events organized, publications produced, participants engaged, meetings conducted, or informational materials distributed. However, these indicators alone do not necessarily demonstrate whether meaningful change has occurred. Outcomes are more informative because they reflect improvements in knowledge, behaviour, accessibility, institutional capacity, or social well-being. Impact represents the broader, long-term effects of the project on society. For example, within a project supporting persons with disabilities, the output may be the number of vocational training sessions delivered; the outcome may be improved employability and professional skills; while the impact may be greater social inclusion and enhanced quality of life.

The study also demonstrates that sustainability should receive greater attention within project evaluation. Publicly funded projects are often implemented over relatively short periods, whereas the social challenges they

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address are long-term in nature. If project benefits cease immediately after funding concludes, the overall public value remains limited. Sustainability can be strengthened through local partnerships, volunteer engagement, co-financing arrangements, institutional capacity building, integration with local development programmes, and the use of digital tools that remain operational after project completion. Accordingly, grant agreements should include a clearly defined sustainability plan.

In Uzbekistan, the practical application of this approach can enhance the effectiveness of public funds that support non-governmental non-profit organizations and other civil society institutions. It can also assist parliamentary and public commissions in making more evidence-based funding decisions. Rather than relying primarily on narrative reports, decision-makers would have access to standardized performance indicators. Projects demonstrating high effectiveness could be considered for additional funding or scaling opportunities, while projects with lower performance could receive methodological support to improve their implementation before participating in future funding rounds.

The proposed model also contributes to the objectives of transparency and integrity in public finance management. When project objectives, indicators, budgets, beneficiary information, and achieved results are presented in a structured and publicly accessible format, public oversight becomes more effective. Citizens, journalists, researchers, and public councils can compare planned activities with actual achievements. This approach helps reduce the risks of formalistic reporting, duplication of activities, inefficient resource utilization, and non-priority financing.

From the perspective of financial management, the evaluation of publicly funded civil society projects should include the following indicators:

Budget execution rate;
Share of administrative expenditures;
Cost per beneficiary;
Cost per output;
Co-financing ratio;
Timeliness of expenditures;
Audit compliance rate;
Share of funds allocated directly to project implementation.

From the perspective of social effectiveness, the following indicators are particularly important:

Number of direct and indirect beneficiaries;
Proportion of vulnerable groups among beneficiaries;
Beneficiary satisfaction rate;
Outcome achievement rate;
Changes in beneficiaries' knowledge, access to services, income, legal awareness, or quality of services received;
Number of issues resolved or referrals successfully completed;
Continuity of project benefits following project completion.

From the perspective of institutional accountability, evaluation may include the following indicators:

Publication of project information;
Availability of financial and final reports;
Functioning complaint and feedback mechanisms;
Number of public consultations conducted;
Results of independent monitoring;
Quality and completeness of project documentation;
Compliance with grant agreement requirements.

The integration of these indicators enables public authorities to advance toward evidence-based financing. Within such a system, future allocations of state grants and subsidies would depend not only on the formal status or reputation of an organization but also on its demonstrated capacity to achieve measurable social results. This approach would foster constructive competition among civil society institutions and encourage higher standards of project management.

At the same time, evaluation requirements should remain proportionate. Many civil society institutions operate with limited administrative capacity. Excessively complex reporting requirements may unintentionally discourage the participation of smaller grassroots organizations in publicly funded programmes. Therefore, Uzbekistan could apply a proportionate evaluation framework: simplified reporting for small grants, standardized performance indicators for medium-sized projects, and comprehensive outcome and impact evaluations for large-scale initiatives. Such an approach appropriately balances accountability with accessibility.

The expanded analysis confirms that an effective evaluation system should incorporate three complementary levels. The first level consists of internal monitoring conducted by the civil society institution itself. The second level comprises external administrative monitoring performed by the grant-making organization or public funding body. The third level includes public and beneficiary monitoring through transparency mechanisms, open data, and stakeholder feedback. The integration of these three levels provides a comprehensive framework for ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

The first scientific approach is the introduction of results-based financing. Under this approach, a portion of public funding may be linked to the achievement of agreed milestones and outcome indicators. For example, an organization may receive the initial tranche of funding upon signing the grant agreement, the second tranche after the verified completion of planned outputs, and the final tranche after demonstrating the achievement of expected outcomes. This mechanism strengthens accountability and encourages effective use of public resources.

The second approach is the development of a national evaluation standard for civil society projects financed through public funds. Such a standard should establish minimum requirements for project objectives, performance indicators, baseline data, target values, beneficiary verification procedures, reporting formats, and final evaluation criteria. It should be aligned with the OECD DAC evaluation framework while reflecting Uzbekistan's legal and institutional context.

The third approach is the creation of a digital project monitoring platform. This platform should support electronic application submission, standardized budget templates, automated indicator tracking, document management, geolocation of project activities, beneficiary feedback, public dashboards, and integrated evaluation scoring. Digitalization would enhance transparency, improve data quality, and reduce administrative duplication.

The fourth approach is the application of an Integrated Civil Society Project Effectiveness Index (ICSPEI). The proposed index can serve as both a diagnostic and comparative evaluation tool. Although it should complement rather than replace expert judgment, it can improve the objectivity, consistency, and transparency of project evaluation. It may also be used to rank projects, identify best practices, and determine which initiatives are suitable for scaling.

The fifth approach focuses on capacity building for civil society institutions. Many organizations would benefit from additional training in project design, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, digital reporting, social impact measurement, and risk management. Strengthening institutional capacity ensures that evaluation requirements function as instruments for organizational development rather than administrative barriers.

The sixth approach emphasizes independent and participatory evaluation. For large-scale projects, independent experts or academic institutions may be involved in the evaluation process. Beneficiaries should also participate in assessing project relevance, quality, and effectiveness. Such participation enhances credibility, strengthens public trust, and reduces the potential for administrative bias.

The practical significance of this research for Uzbekistan is substantial.

First, it supports the modernization of public finance management by linking state support for civil society institutions with measurable performance and social outcomes. This is particularly relevant in the context of expanding public participation and increasing expectations for transparency and accountability.

Second, the proposed methodology can improve the quality of grant selection. When project proposals are evaluated using transparent and standardized criteria, public resources can be directed toward initiatives with the greatest potential for generating positive social impact. This contributes to more effective allocation of public funds and reduces the likelihood of supporting weak, duplicative, or insufficiently developed projects.

Third, the methodology can strengthen accountability following project completion. Civil society institutions will clearly understand in advance the performance indicators against which their projects will be assessed. This encourages more effective planning, improved documentation, and higher implementation quality.

Fourth, the proposed approach can enhance public trust. When citizens observe that publicly funded projects are evaluated transparently, consistently, and objectively, confidence in both public institutions and civil society organizations is strengthened. Such trust is fundamental to effective social partnership and active civic participation.

Fifth, the model can support balanced regional development. Local civil society institutions often possess a deeper understanding of community needs than central government bodies. When provided with public funding and evaluated through a robust methodology, they can become effective partners in addressing local challenges related to poverty reduction, youth development, women's empowerment, environmental protection, legal awareness, healthcare, education, and social inclusion.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of projects implemented by civil society institutions using public funds is one of the key priorities in modern public finance and social governance. The main conclusion of this study is that the effectiveness of such projects cannot be assessed solely through financial reporting. A comprehensive evaluation must include financial discipline, achievement of planned outputs, social outcomes, beneficiary inclusion, transparency, accountability, sustainability, and scalability.

The study demonstrates that international standards, particularly the OECD DAC evaluation criteria and results-based management principles, provide a strong methodological foundation. At the same time, these standards should be adapted to Uzbekistan's legal and institutional context. The Law "On Social Partnership" already establishes a legal basis for state grants, subsidies, and social procurement. However, the next stage should focus on developing standardized evaluation indicators, strengthening digital monitoring systems, enhancing public transparency, and promoting evidence-based financing decisions.

The proposed Integrated Civil Society Project Effectiveness Index offers a practical tool for evaluating publicly funded projects. It enables public authorities and civil society institutions to move from formal reporting toward analytical and evidence-based assessment. It also makes it possible to compare projects, identify areas for improvement, reward high-performing organizations, and improve future funding decisions.

Three practical recommendations are proposed.

First, Uzbekistan should introduce a unified national standard for evaluating publicly funded civil society projects. This standard should include mandatory indicators covering financial discipline, outputs, outcomes, beneficiary coverage, transparency, and sustainability. It should be proportionate to project size to ensure that small organizations are not overburdened by reporting requirements.

Second, a digital monitoring and evaluation platform should be established for all state grants, subsidies, and social procurement mechanisms allocated to civil society institutions. The platform should include electronic reporting, indicator tracking, public dashboards, beneficiary feedback tools, and automated effectiveness scoring. This would significantly enhance transparency and reduce administrative costs.

Third, future public financing should be more closely linked to demonstrated results. Civil society institutions with high effectiveness scores should be given priority in future competitions, scaling opportunities, and methodological support. Organizations with lower performance results should receive targeted recommendations, capacity-building assistance, and, where appropriate, temporary limitations on new funding until identified gaps are addressed.

The development of a results-oriented evaluation system will strengthen the role of civil society institutions in Uzbekistan, improve the efficiency of public expenditure, enhance transparency, and generate greater social value for citizens. Public funds should be assessed not only by how they are spent, but by the positive and sustainable changes they produce in society.

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