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

Xusanova Gulsum Baxtiyorovna
Teacher, Department of Industrial Economics and Management,
Tashkent Institute of Chemical Technology
ORCID: 0009-0001-5265-8985

Abstract. This article examines methodological approaches to evaluating the effectiveness of publicly funded projects implemented by civil society institutions. It develops an integrated results-based evaluation framework that combines financial discipline, social impact, transparency, beneficiary coverage, sustainability, and institutional accountability. The study reviews international evaluation standards alongside the ongoing reform agenda in Uzbekistan and proposes practical mechanisms to strengthen evidence-based financing, improve monitoring systems, and enhance the creation of public value.

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

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются методологические подходы к оценке эффективности проектов, реализуемых институтами гражданского общества за счет государственных средств. Разработана комплексная система оценки, основанная на результативном подходе и объединяющая показатели финансовой дисциплины, социального воздействия, прозрачности, охвата целевых бенефициаров, устойчивости результатов и институциональной подотчетности. В исследовании проанализированы международные стандарты оценки эффективности проектов с учетом проводимых в Республике Узбекистан реформ, а также предложены практические механизмы, направленные на совершенствование финансирования, основанного на результатах, развитие системы мониторинга и повышение общественной ценности реализуемых проектов.

Ключевые слова: институты гражданского общества; проекты, финансируемые за счет государственных средств; эффективность проектов; государственные гранты; государственные субсидии; государственный социальный заказ; управление, ориентированное на результаты; социальное воздействие; институциональная подотчетность; мониторинг и оценка; государственные финансы; Республика Узбекистан; бюджетирование, ориентированное на результаты; прозрачность; критерии оценки; финансирование неправительственных некоммерческих организаций (ННО); общественная ценность; социальное партнерство.

INTRODUCTION

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

At the global level, evaluating the effectiveness of publicly funded civil society projects has become increasingly important as governments and international organizations continue to strengthen results-based public management. Traditional approaches primarily focused on verifying whether allocated funds were spent in accordance with established financial regulations. Contemporary public financial management, however, places greater emphasis on assessing the measurable social outcomes achieved through the use of public resources. This approach is closely associated with performance-based budgeting, results-based management, social accountability, and impact evaluation. International practice demonstrates that publicly funded projects should be assessed not only in terms of financial compliance but also with respect to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, transparency, and alignment with national development priorities.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation framework is particularly significant in this regard, as it identifies six internationally recognized evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. These criteria are widely applied in the evaluation of development projects, social programs, and public interventions. For civil society institutions, they provide a systematic framework for assessing whether projects address genuine social needs, align with public policy objectives, achieve their intended outputs and outcomes, utilize resources efficiently, generate broader social benefits, and ensure the sustainability of results beyond the period of public financing.

In Uzbekistan, this issue has become increasingly important as civil society institutions continue to strengthen their role as 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-government bodies, and the mass media—as fundamental components of civil society. Furthermore, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Social Partnership* establishes the legal framework for cooperation between state authorities and civil society institutions, including government grants, government subsidies, and social contracting mechanisms. Under this legislation, government grants are awarded on a competitive basis to support projects pursuing socially beneficial objectives, while subsidies contribute to the implementation of statutory and socially significant activities of non-governmental non-profit organizations and other civil society institutions.

The national importance of this topic is further reinforced by the *Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy* and the national concept for the development of civil society. These policy initiatives prioritize expanding public participation, strengthening social partnership, increasing transparency, and improving the quality of public governance. Within this context, public funding for civil society institutions should be viewed not only as a financial support mechanism but also as an effective instrument for achieving measurable social outcomes, encouraging citizen participation, improving local problem-solving capacity, and strengthening public trust and cooperation between the state and society.

Despite the continued development of financing mechanisms, several methodological and institutional issues remain relevant. First, the indicators used to evaluate project effectiveness are often fragmented and primarily focused on activities rather than measurable outcomes. Second, financial reporting and social impact reporting are not always fully integrated within a unified evaluation framework. Third, monitoring systems may place greater emphasis on financial compliance than on beneficiary satisfaction, long-term sustainability, and the broader public value created by projects. Fourth, the absence of a standardized evaluation index limits the comparability of projects across regions, sectors, and different types of civil society institutions. Fifth, there remains considerable potential to expand the application of digital monitoring tools to enhance transparency, real-time supervision, and evidence-based decision-making.

Accordingly, the scientific problem addressed in this study is that 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. Consequently, there is a need to develop a comprehensive methodological framework that systematically links public expenditure with 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 particular attention to Uzbekistan's institutional and financial context. The scientific contribution of the research lies in integrating internationally recognized evaluation criteria with national mechanisms of social partnership and public financial management. Its practical contribution consists of proposing a system of measurable performance indicators and policy recommendations that can be applied by public funding agencies, parliamentary commissions, local authorities, grant-making organizations, and civil society institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic study of evaluating projects implemented by civil society institutions is grounded in several theoretical perspectives, including public finance theory, results-based management, social accountability, institutional economics, public value theory, and evaluation methodology. Together, these approaches provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how public financial resources can be effectively transformed into measurable social outcomes.

From the perspective of public finance theory, public resources should be allocated in accordance with the principles of legality, efficiency, economy, effectiveness, and accountability. Public funds are not merely financial transfers but strategic instruments for achieving public policy objectives. Musgrave's classical theory of public finance emphasizes the allocation, distribution, and stabilization functions of the state. When governments finance civil society institutions, they entrust selected public service functions to non-state actors. Consequently, evaluation should determine the extent to which such cooperation contributes to improving public welfare, expanding access to public services, and enhancing the efficient use of public resources.

Results-based management (RBM) emphasizes the logical relationship among inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impact. Within this framework, project performance is assessed not only by the volume of financial resources utilized or the number of activities implemented but, more importantly, by the measurable changes achieved for beneficiaries and communities. For example, a legal aid project should be evaluated not only by the number of seminars conducted but also by the number of citizens who received legal assistance, the quality of advisory services, the successful resolution of legal issues, and the level of beneficiary satisfaction.

Research conducted by the OECD on results-based management indicates that public institutions often encounter challenges in linking financial resources with final development outcomes. Evaluation systems may become overly complex, performance indicators may not adequately capture project results, and reporting processes may place greater emphasis on administrative compliance than on analytical assessment. These findings suggest that evaluation systems for civil society projects should prioritize a concise set of meaningful performance indicators that accurately reflect the public value generated by projects.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria constitute one of the most widely recognized international evaluation frameworks. Relevance examines the extent to which a project responds to beneficiary needs and policy priorities. Coherence assesses consistency with related interventions and institutional strategies. Effectiveness measures the achievement of planned objectives. Efficiency evaluates the relationship between resources utilized and results achieved. Impact considers broader, long-term, and indirect effects, while sustainability assesses the likelihood that project benefits will continue after external financing has concluded. These criteria are particularly appropriate for civil society projects because such initiatives typically generate social, institutional, and community-level outcomes simultaneously.

The World Bank's social accountability framework emphasizes the importance of citizen participation, community monitoring, transparency, and feedback mechanisms in improving the quality of public service delivery. Civil society institutions may perform a dual function by both implementing publicly funded projects and participating in the oversight of public resource utilization. This creates valuable opportunities for strengthening local responsiveness, public participation, and institutional trust. At the same time, effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms are essential to ensure that public resources are managed transparently and efficiently. Therefore, project evaluation should incorporate not only administrative oversight but also beneficiary feedback and public disclosure mechanisms.

Institutional economics also provides valuable analytical insights. According to this approach, the effectiveness of publicly funded projects depends on formal regulations, informal institutions, incentive structures, transaction costs, and accountability mechanisms. When grant allocation procedures are transparent, reporting requirements are clearly defined, and performance indicators are measurable, civil society institutions are encouraged to improve project quality and effectiveness. Conversely, where evaluation criteria lack clarity or consistency, organizations may place greater emphasis on procedural compliance than on achieving substantive social outcomes.

Public value theory argues that public programs should be evaluated according to the value they generate for society. In the context of civil society institutions, public value may include improved access to social services, increased civic participation, enhanced protection of vulnerable groups, environmental improvements, greater legal awareness, community development, and stronger public trust. This theoretical perspective is particularly important because many outcomes achieved by civil society organizations cannot be fully measured through financial indicators alone. Consequently, comprehensive evaluation should integrate both quantitative and qualitative performance measures.

In Uzbekistan, research on the legal and institutional foundations of financing civil society institutions has gained increasing importance. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Social Partnership* defines government grants, government subsidies, and social contracting as key mechanisms for supporting socially significant initiatives. Government grants are awarded through competitive procedures for projects pursuing socially beneficial objectives. Government subsidies support the statutory activities and organizational development of civil society institutions, while social contracting enables state authorities to engage civil society organizations in delivering socially important services. Together, these mechanisms establish a solid legal foundation for results-oriented financing while emphasizing the importance of effective evaluation systems.

Existing research in Uzbekistan has primarily focused on the legal regulation of civil society institutions, the organizational development of non-governmental non-profit organizations, public oversight, and social partnership. However, greater attention could be devoted to developing an integrated quantitative and qualitative methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of projects financed through public funds. In particular, there is considerable value in establishing a unified evaluation index that combines financial discipline, output achievement, outcome achievement, beneficiary satisfaction, transparency, sustainability, and institutional capacity.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that the evaluation of projects implemented by civil society institutions should adopt a multidimensional approach. Evaluation should extend beyond financial compliance and expenditure verification to address four fundamental questions: Were public resources utilized legally and efficiently? Were planned activities successfully implemented? Did beneficiaries experience measurable improvements? Can the achieved results be sustained, expanded, or replicated over time?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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

First, economic analysis is applied to examine the relationship between allocated public funds and the results achieved by projects. This includes cost-output analysis, cost-per-beneficiary analysis, assessment of administrative expenditures, 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, while the administrative cost ratio is determined by dividing management and overhead expenditures by total project costs. These indicators provide an objective basis for assessing the efficient and economical use of public resources.

Second, comparative analysis is used to examine internationally recognized evaluation approaches alongside Uzbekistan's current institutional practices. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria, results-based management principles, and social accountability mechanisms are compared with national financing instruments, including government grants, government subsidies, social contracting, and public funding mechanisms. This comparison makes it possible to identify methodological gaps as well as opportunities for adapting international best practices to the national context.

Third, statistical methods are employed to structure the proposed evaluation indicators. Since civil society projects vary in terms of sector, scale, geographic coverage, and target beneficiary groups, the study proposes a standardized evaluation model. Under this model, each project is evaluated across several performance dimensions using a scoring scale ranging from 0 to 100 points, and the overall effectiveness index is calculated as a weighted average.

Fourth, institutional analysis is used to examine the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, including state authorities, public funding agencies, parliamentary and public commissions, civil society institutions, beneficiaries, auditors, and local communities. This method helps identify the institutional allocation of evaluation responsibilities and clarifies the flow of information between project implementers and decision-making bodies.

Fifth, the Logical Framework Approach (LogFrame) is applied to establish a systematic relationship among project inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impact. This approach helps avoid the common assumption that the completion of planned activities alone reflects project effectiveness. For example, conducting ten legal awareness training sessions represents an output, whereas improving the legal literacy of vulnerable citizens constitutes an outcome. Consequently, project effectiveness should be assessed primarily at the outcome and impact levels.

The study proposes an Integrated Civil Society Project Effectiveness Index (ICSPEI) consisting of six evaluation components:

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

The overall effectiveness index is calculated using the following formula:

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

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 proposed weighting system reflects the principle that social outcomes should receive the greatest emphasis, as the primary objective of publicly funded civil society projects is to generate measurable social benefits. Financial discipline is also assigned a substantial weight because public resources should be managed in accordance with the principles of legality, transparency, and accountability. Sustainability receives a comparatively lower, yet still meaningful, weight because although not every short-term project can produce long-term institutional effects, each project should demonstrate a clear strategy for maintaining or extending its positive outcomes (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 indicates that evaluating the effectiveness of projects implemented by civil society institutions using public funds requires a transition from a primary focus on expenditure control to a comprehensive assessment of results and public value. In many public finance systems, the principal evaluation question has traditionally been whether public funds were spent in accordance with the approved budget. Although financial compliance remains an essential requirement, it alone does not provide a comprehensive assessment of project effectiveness. A project may fully comply with financial regulations while generating limited social outcomes. Conversely, a project may produce substantial social benefits while requiring further improvements in documentation and reporting practices. Therefore, an effective evaluation system should integrate financial, social, institutional, and sustainability dimensions.

The first finding of the study is that the legal framework of Uzbekistan provides a solid foundation for financing civil society institutions through public resources, while offering opportunities for the further development of evaluation methodologies. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Social Partnership* clearly regulates government grants, government subsidies, and social contracting mechanisms. It also establishes the principles of openness, transparency, targeted use of public funds, and compliance with project obligations. At the same time, the legislation provides a general legal framework, creating opportunities for the further development of standardized performance indicators, evaluation methodologies, rating systems, and digital monitoring mechanisms.

1 author's development

The second finding is that Uzbekistan's priorities for the development of civil society are consistent with contemporary international trends. Globally, civil society institutions are playing an increasingly important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), improving public service delivery, supporting vulnerable groups, and strengthening community participation. Likewise, Uzbekistan's ongoing reforms emphasize public participation, social partnership, and the institutional development of civil society. Consequently, publicly funded civil society projects should be evaluated in accordance with both national development priorities and internationally recognized evaluation standards.

The third finding is that financial compliance should be regarded as a fundamental prerequisite rather than the sole indicator of project effectiveness. For example, if a civil society institution receives a government grant to implement a youth employment project, the evaluation should extend beyond verifying invoices, contracts, and expenditure reports. It should also assess the number of young people who completed training, secured employment or self-employment opportunities, acquired labor market–relevant skills, and improved their employability or income-generating capacity. Such an approach requires the systematic use of outcome indicators and post-project evaluation.

The fourth finding is that beneficiary feedback should constitute a central component of project evaluation. Civil society projects are generally designed to address the needs of citizens, local communities, vulnerable groups, women, young people, persons with disabilities, older adults, and other target populations. Therefore, obtaining beneficiaries' perspectives regarding the usefulness, accessibility, and relevance of project activities is essential for a comprehensive assessment. Beneficiary surveys, focus group discussions, grievance mechanisms, and community scorecards provide valuable evidence regarding the quality and effectiveness of project implementation.

The fifth finding is that digitalization has considerable potential to enhance transparency while reducing administrative burdens. A unified electronic monitoring platform could enable civil society institutions to submit project proposals, budgets, contracts, progress reports, performance indicators, and final reports through a single digital system. Public funding agencies could monitor implementation in real time, while beneficiaries could provide feedback through online platforms or mobile applications. Such an approach would streamline administrative procedures, improve data quality, and strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

The sixth finding is that an integrated evaluation index can significantly improve the comparability of projects. At present, projects are frequently evaluated according to sector-specific or institution-specific criteria, making cross-sectoral and regional comparisons more difficult. The proposed Integrated Civil Society Project Effectiveness Index (ICSPEI) provides a standardized framework that enables projects to be compared using common evaluation dimensions while preserving sector-specific performance indicators where appropriate. For example, although a public health awareness project and an environmental protection project may use different outcome indicators, both can be evaluated consistently with respect to financial discipline, achievement of planned outputs, social outcomes, beneficiary inclusion, transparency, accountability, 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 illustrates that a project may demonstrate strong financial discipline and successful achievement of planned outputs while showing comparatively lower performance in the areas of sustainability and transparency. Its overall effectiveness score of 77.25 indicates a satisfactory level of performance while also identifying areas with potential for further improvement. This type of multidimensional evaluation provides considerably more practical value than a simple "approved/not approved" decision because it offers a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of project performance.

2 author's development

A key scientific finding of this study is that the effectiveness of projects implemented by civil society institutions should be understood as the relationship between the public resources utilized and the public value created. Public value encompasses both measurable and qualitative outcomes. Measurable outcomes may include the number of beneficiaries served, legal consultations provided, employment opportunities created, reductions in social risks, improvements in legal awareness, expanded access to public services, and environmental improvements. Qualitative outcomes may include increased public trust, citizen empowerment, civic participation, institutional learning, and stronger social cohesion. Accordingly, a comprehensive evaluation methodology should integrate both quantitative and qualitative assessment approaches.

Another important aspect is the distinction between outputs, outcomes, and long-term impact. Many projects primarily report outputs because they are relatively straightforward to quantify, such as the number of events organized, publications distributed, participants involved, meetings conducted, or informational materials produced. However, these indicators do not necessarily demonstrate whether meaningful change has occurred. Outcome indicators provide a more accurate measure of project effectiveness because they reflect improvements in knowledge, behavior, access to services, institutional capacity, or social well-being. Impact indicators capture broader and longer-term changes. For example, in a project supporting persons with disabilities, the number of vocational training sessions represents an output, improved employment skills represent an outcome, and greater social inclusion represents the long-term impact.

The study further demonstrates the importance of placing greater emphasis on sustainability in project evaluation. Although publicly funded projects are frequently implemented within relatively short timeframes, the social challenges they address often require long-term solutions. Sustaining project outcomes beyond the funding period substantially increases the long-term public value created by these initiatives. Sustainability can be strengthened through local partnerships, volunteer networks, co-financing arrangements, institutional capacity development, integration with local development strategies, and digital tools that continue to operate after project completion. Accordingly, grant agreements should incorporate a clearly defined sustainability plan.

In Uzbekistan, the practical application of the proposed evaluation framework can further strengthen the work 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. In addition to narrative reports, decision-makers would have access to standardized performance indicators. Projects demonstrating high levels of effectiveness could be considered for expanded funding or wider implementation, while projects requiring improvement could receive methodological support and capacity-building measures before participating in subsequent funding opportunities.

The proposed model also contributes to strengthening transparency and integrity in the management of public resources. When project objectives, performance indicators, budgets, beneficiary information, and implementation results are presented in a standardized and accessible format, public oversight becomes more effective. Citizens, journalists, researchers, and public councils can compare planned objectives with achieved results, thereby promoting transparency, improving resource allocation, minimizing duplication of activities, enhancing spending efficiency, and supporting objective funding decisions.

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

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

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;
– Improvements in beneficiaries' knowledge, access to services, income, legal awareness, or quality of services;
– Number of issues resolved or referrals successfully completed;
– Sustainability of project benefits after completion.
– From the perspective of institutional accountability, relevant indicators include:
– Public disclosure of project information;

– Availability of financial and final project reports;
– Existence of complaint-handling 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 strengthen evidence-based financing. Within such a system, future allocations of government grants and subsidies would be determined not only by the legal status or previous reputation of an organization but also by its demonstrated capacity to achieve measurable social outcomes. This approach encourages constructive competition among civil society institutions and promotes professional project management.

At the same time, evaluation requirements should remain proportionate to the scale of funded projects. Many civil society institutions operate with limited administrative capacity. Excessively complex reporting requirements may reduce the participation of smaller community-based organizations in public funding programs. Therefore, it is advisable to apply a proportional evaluation framework in Uzbekistan, whereby small grants are subject to simplified reporting procedures, medium-sized projects are evaluated using standardized performance indicators, and large-scale projects undergo comprehensive outcome and impact evaluations. Such an approach appropriately balances accountability with accessibility.

The expanded analysis confirms that an effective evaluation system should consist of three complementary levels. The first level is internal monitoring conducted by the implementing civil society institution. The second level is external administrative monitoring carried out by the grant-making organization or public funding agency. The third level is public and beneficiary oversight supported through transparency, open data, and structured feedback mechanisms. The integration of these three levels provides a comprehensive framework for ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

The first proposed approach is the introduction of results-based financing. Under this model, a portion of public funding is linked to the achievement of predefined milestones and outcome indicators. For example, an organization may receive the initial installment after signing the funding agreement, the second installment after verified completion of planned outputs, and the final installment upon demonstrating the achievement of agreed outcomes. This approach strengthens accountability while promoting the efficient use of public resources.

The second approach involves developing a national evaluation standard for projects implemented by civil society institutions using public funds. This standard should establish minimum requirements for project objectives, performance indicators, baseline data, target values, beneficiary verification, reporting procedures, and final evaluation. It should be aligned with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria while reflecting Uzbekistan's legal and institutional context.

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

The fourth approach is the application of the Integrated Civil Society Project Effectiveness Index (ICSPEI). This index is intended to serve as both a diagnostic and comparative evaluation tool. While it should complement rather than replace expert judgment, it can improve the objectivity, consistency, and transparency of project evaluations. It can also support project ranking, the identification of best practices, and decisions regarding project expansion or replication.

The fifth approach emphasizes capacity development 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 enables organizations to meet evaluation requirements more effectively and enhances the overall quality of project implementation.

The sixth approach promotes independent and participatory evaluation. For large-scale projects, evaluation may involve independent experts or academic institutions to strengthen objectivity. Beneficiaries should also participate in assessing project relevance, accessibility, and quality. Such an approach enhances public trust, strengthens stakeholder engagement, and contributes to balanced and evidence-based evaluations.

The practical significance of this research for Uzbekistan is substantial.

First, it supports the modernization of public financial management by linking government support for civil society institutions with measurable performance results. This is particularly relevant in the context of expanding public participation and strengthening transparency in public governance.

Second, the proposed methodology can improve the quality of grant selection. Evaluating project proposals according to standardized and transparent criteria enables public resources to be directed toward initiatives with the greatest potential to generate positive social outcomes and public value.

Third, the methodology strengthens accountability throughout the project cycle. Civil society institutions are informed in advance about the indicators that will be used to assess project performance, encouraging more effective planning, stronger documentation, and higher-quality implementation.

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

Fifth, the model supports balanced regional development. Local civil society institutions often possess a deeper understanding of community needs than centralized public institutions. When adequately supported and evaluated through objective performance criteria, they can become effective partners in addressing challenges related to poverty reduction, youth development, women's empowerment, environmental protection, legal awareness, healthcare, education, and social inclusion.

Sixth, the proposed methodology contributes to the implementation of the *Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy*. Achieving many of the Strategy's objectives requires not only effective government action but also active public participation, community engagement, and meaningful involvement of civil society institutions. A comprehensive evaluation framework helps ensure that publicly funded projects generate measurable and sustainable social outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of projects implemented by civil society institutions using public funds represents one of the key issues in contemporary public financial management and social governance. The principal conclusion of this study is that the effectiveness of such projects cannot be assessed solely on the basis of financial reporting. A comprehensive evaluation framework should incorporate financial discipline, achievement of planned outputs, social outcomes, beneficiary inclusion, transparency, accountability, sustainability, and scalability.

The findings demonstrate that internationally recognized standards—particularly the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria and the principles of Results-Based Management (RBM)—provide a robust methodological foundation for project evaluation. At the same time, these approaches should be appropriately adapted to Uzbekistan's legal and institutional environment. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Social Partnership* already provides a solid legal basis for government grants, government subsidies, and social contracting mechanisms. Building upon this foundation, further efforts may 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 (ICSPEI) offers a practical and systematic instrument for evaluating publicly funded projects. It enables public authorities and civil society institutions to move beyond compliance-oriented reporting toward comprehensive performance assessment. In addition, the index facilitates project comparison, supports the identification of areas for improvement, recognizes high-performing organizations, and contributes to more informed funding decisions.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed.

First, Uzbekistan should introduce a unified national standard for evaluating publicly funded projects implemented by civil society institutions. This standard should include mandatory indicators covering financial discipline, achievement of planned outputs and outcomes, beneficiary coverage, transparency, accountability, and sustainability. The evaluation framework should also be proportionate to project size in order to ensure that smaller organizations are not subject to unnecessary administrative burdens.

Second, a comprehensive digital monitoring and evaluation platform should be established for all government grants, government subsidies, and social contracting mechanisms supporting civil society institutions. The platform should incorporate electronic reporting, automated performance indicator tracking, public information dashboards, beneficiary feedback mechanisms, and integrated effectiveness scoring. Such a system would enhance transparency, improve the quality of evaluation, and reduce administrative costs.

Third, future public financing should increasingly be linked to demonstrated project performance. Civil society institutions achieving high effectiveness scores could be considered for priority access to future funding opportunities, project expansion, and methodological support. Organizations requiring further improvement could receive targeted recommendations, institutional capacity-building assistance, and opportunities to strengthen project implementation before participating in subsequent funding programs.

The establishment of a results-oriented evaluation system will further strengthen the contribution of civil society institutions to Uzbekistan's social development, improve the efficiency of public resource utilization, enhance transparency, and generate greater public value for citizens. Accordingly, publicly funded projects should be evaluated not only on the basis of how financial resources are utilized but also according to the measurable, positive, and sustainable outcomes they create for society.

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