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## PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS FOR THE EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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**Abstract.** *The relevance of this research lies in the necessity of applying strategies to increase the efficiency of resource usage in the public sector. One of these strategies is project management. Project management implies the development and implementation of projects which are time- and resource-limited. A project has distinct targets, task decomposition, and certain measures of success (targets to be achieved). In public management, projects are often implemented to manage investments and to achieve a high social impact considering the conservation of resources. Projects are also executed to accommodate strategic planning in the development of specific branches and sectors. The objective of this research is the evaluation of project management in order to increase the efficiency of resource use in the Republic of Kazakhstan. To achieve the objective, the general principles of the project management approach as a tool for increasing the efficiency of resource usage in public management are given consideration, and the implementation of the project management approach in strategic planning and public-private partnership is assessed.*

**Keywords:** *project management; national projects; state programs; public-private partnership projects; resource management; program-target management; resource efficiency.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** *projektų valdymas; nacionaliniai projektai; valstybės programos; viešojo ir privačiojo sektorių partnerystės projektai; išteklių valdymas; programos taikinio valdymas; išteklių efektyvumas.*

### Introduction

The relevance of this research lies in the achievement of a large number of socially significant objectives funded by the state administrative body and enabled by increased efficiency of resource use. In this case, project management works as a tool for increasing the efficiency of resource use. The project itself is a time-limited set of acts which have

a distinct and measurable target, deadlines, resources, and person responsible for implementation (Radujković and Sjekavica 2017, 608). The project is supposed to include a set of operations intended to achieve its objectives considering efficient resource use. The set of operations mentioned above are planned in such a way that the tasks meet a target date (Müller 2023, 14–15). Project management in the public sector is also used in order to control changes in the work of public authorities, to achieve the social significance of investment activities, and to enable strategic management (via the creation of large-scale development projects) (Tileubayeva et al. 2017, 147). Taking this into account, project management can be considered from different perspectives. The project approach has been applied in public management in economically developed countries such as Japan, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Aleinikova et al. 2020, 565–567; Kuntuov and Abil 2023, 155–156). In Kazakhstan, before 2021 project management was mainly connected with investment activity (including public-private partnership), managing social changes, and other local projects implemented by public authorities. However, since 2020 Kazakhstan has begun to transition from accountability management to project management in the main sectors of social and economic development.

The objective of this research is the evaluation of project management in public governance in order to increase the efficiency of resource use in Kazakhstan.

## Literature review

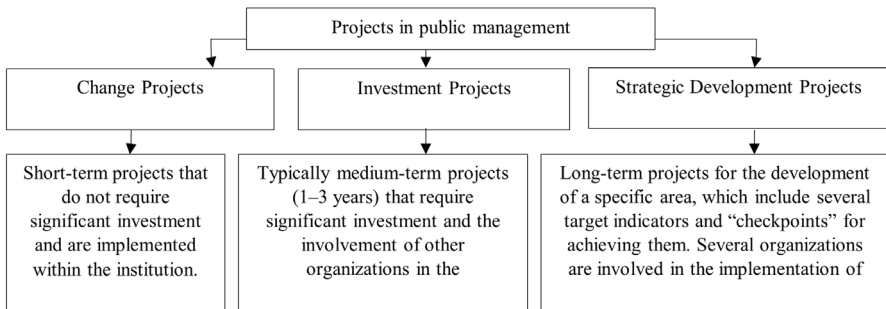
The issue of project management in the public sector has not been studied in great depth in the scientific literature. This issue concerns projects that are planned and implemented by public (state and municipal) management bodies.

In academic publications, the definition of the term “public project” has provoked a number of approaches. Krpan et al. (2023, 143) defined a public project as a project that meets the criteria of having a goal and “volume–price–time–quality” constraints, which help to ensure the “optimal spending of budget funds with maximum benefit to society”. This therefore requires the high-quality selection of strategic development projects financed from the state or local budget. Gasik (2016, 351) defined a public project as a “project implemented by or with the help of public administration, or the project implemented with the attraction of financial resources from public administration”. This is a broad definition which can include different kinds of projects which are implemented in the public sector and correspond with the main specific features of the “project” which were mentioned above: a distinct and measurable target, deadlines, committed resources, and a person responsible for implementation. There is also a similar definition of “community projects,” provided by Liviu et al. (2014), which are implemented at the regional or national level. These types of projects involve multiple institutions, not just government organizations. The projects executed by these institutions are implemented in the short-term (most often

around 1 year, while in the case of large-scale work and investments they may take longer). Conversely, strategic long-term projects are similar to programs which include a set of operations, different objectives, and target indicators (Liviu et al. 2014, 1734). Mikkelsen and Røiseland (2024) pointed to specific features of projects in public management, including their orientation towards the public good and the optimal selection of initiatives for implementation in order to maximize the production of public goods, which is the task of public management. Wagner (2022, 6) also pointed out that goal orientation plays a key role in the management of public projects, as these projects are implemented to achieve a socially significant goal (social effect).

Žurga (2018) pointed out that a public project (using the European Union as an example) is a sequence of actions to achieve goals, which consists of the following phases: programming, identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation upon completion. In the European Union, there are projects that are financed by European funds. That is, first, the areas in which projects should be selected to form portfolios must be identified, then the projects themselves are selected, and after planning, they are implemented and must be evaluated for the success of their implementation (Žurga 2018, 147).

Sidorova et al. (2019), Miroshnichenko and Shpiro (2019), and Atamas (2020), who inquired into the matter of project management in the public sector, defined the following types of projects: “strategic development project,” “investment project,” and “organizational project” (or “change project”). These definitions correspond to short-term, medium-term, and long-term projects in the system of public management. There are also different approaches to defining projects. According to some authors, the word “project” can be considered as a mainly short-term process with a distinct, reachable aim. Strategic projects can be related to longer-term programs, even though they do not include process management – they only represent measures for development. This can be depicted in the following scheme (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Types of projects in public management

Source: compiled by the author based on Sidorova et al. (2019), Miroshnichenko and Shpiro (2019), and Atamas (2020).

Liviu et al. (2014, 1734) pointed out that public projects can be grouped as follows:

- 1) the pipeline of projects – a set of projects in one sphere which are implemented sequentially or at the same time in order to achieve closely-related objectives;
- 2) the program – an implementation schedule for projects, the pipeline of projects, and process management in order to achieve goals in a particular sphere.

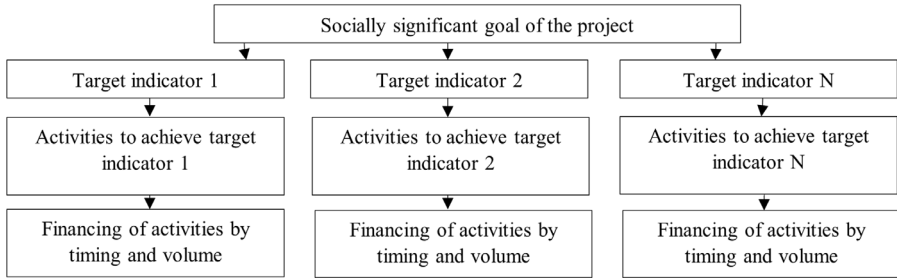
Krpan et al. (2023, 143) divided project groups into types:

- 1) project portfolio: a group of unrelated projects aimed at achieving similar goals with a common source of funding from the budget. The selection of projects in the portfolio and the distribution of resources for funding between them is one of the most important tasks of public management;
- 2) program: a group of interrelated and complementary projects aimed at achieving one goal;
- 3) project chain: a group of interrelated projects implemented sequentially (the output results of one project are the input resources for another project).

Common factors in public management include: the requestor – the public authority which approves a project; the executor – the project committee, which works under the supervision of a project manager and implements the necessary project operations; and the project manager – the person responsible for the supervision of the implementation of a project, the allocation of resources, and the results of the work (Gasik 2016, 355).

Considering this, the following important elements of a project are highlighted: target indicators; practical mechanisms for achieving the targets; and the amount of finance (Khalimon et al. 2019, 106).

The application of the project approach is oriented towards development rather than funding, as in particular spheres it is necessary to boost figures, set goals, and achieve them using resources. This is why in Kazakhstan in 2017 (before the application of project management), it was noted that project management with the optimal utilization of budgetary resources would encourage goal setting and achievement in the spheres of education, public health, employment, tourism, sport, etc. (Tileubayeva et al. 2017, 147). The application of projects also facilitates the introduction of new products and the implementation of services in the public sector. The project approach, unlike the traditional process approach, is innovative (Selepe and Thusi 2023, 207). Project management in the public sector makes it possible to develop and improve controllable objects, create new innovations, and at the same time use budgetary resources efficiently or attract extra-budgetary resources (da Assunção Moutinho and Rabechini 2020, 1261). The scheme of project financing and the achievement of socially significant goals can be depicted as follows (Figure 2).



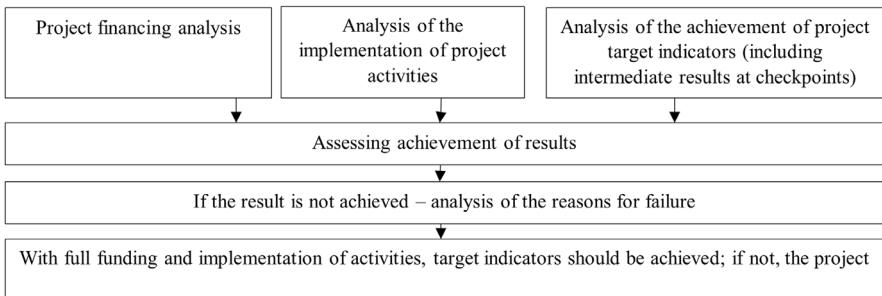
**Figure 2.** The interrelation of a goal, target indicators, project activities, and project financing

Source: compiled by the author based on Khalimon et al. (2019) and da Assunção Moutinho and Rabechini (2020).

The planning system for short-term projects can be fairly simple. Long-term projects, however, require the following:

- 1) a common methodology for all the institutions involved in project activities;
- 2) expert personnel capable of providing project management;
- 3) the help of a coordinating body – a project management office which can help with project development and the coordination of plans (Project Portfolio Management Office, PPMO) – if necessary (Gasik 2016, 352);
- 4) program material which helps optimize and accelerate planning processes (Hurochkina and Zvonar 2020, 567).

A supervisory control system for the implementation of projects in the public sector is also required (Khalimon et al. 2019, 106). The scheme of supervision over long-term strategic projects can be depicted as follows (Figure 3):



**Figure 3.** The organization of project implementation supervision

Source: compiled by the author based on Gasik (2016) and Khalimon et al. (2019).

Supervision functions are usually exercised by PPMOs, which assess project success regularly (Gasik 2016, 352).

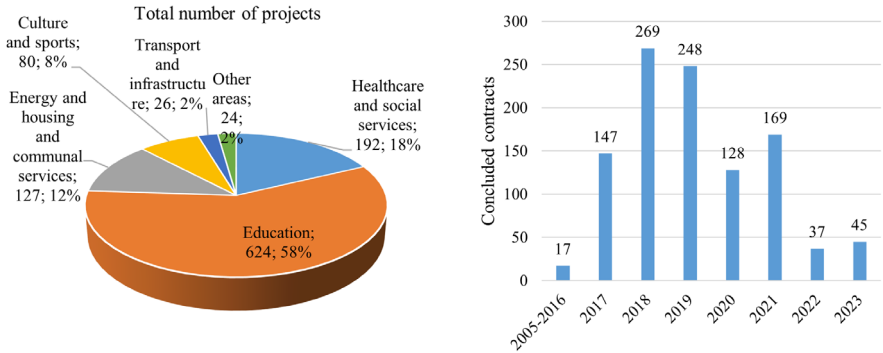
## Materials and Methods

In this study, reports on the implementation of project management in the fields of state strategy planning in Kazakhstan (the operation of national projects) and the application of public-private partnership projects were examined. The data used for the analysis were derived from: the Center of Public-Private Partnership of The Republic of Kazakhstan (<https://ppp-center.kz/>), and the National Project Management Office of The Republic of Kazakhstan (<https://ujo.kz/>).

The period under analysis is 2017–2023.

## Results

It is necessary to further examine project management in Kazakhstan. Before 2020, there was no particular system of project management in the country. However, when legislative projects such as the “Plan of the Nation – 100 Concrete Steps” (2015) were adopted by the President, it was often mentioned that a management system should be orientated towards results, with standardized and minimum monitoring procedures as well as adequate evaluation and supervision. The “Plan of the Nation” also noted the necessity of cutting some government programs and reconsidering strategic development plans. For this purpose, it was proposed to proceed to project management in public management, but there was not yet a common system of project management (Tileubayeva et al. 2017, 146). However, in 2015 the Law “On public-private partnership” (October, 31, 2015, No. 379-V) was adopted. In this law, the approach towards project management is described. The concept of a project is defined as a set of sequential measures on the implementation of public-private partnership, which are taken in a limited period of time and remain in place until the end of the project, according to the current law and Kazakhstan’s budget legislation. In compliance with this law, project activity financing major projects began. These major projects were connected with the achievement of socially significant targets and the attraction of private partners. Although the center of public-private partnership was established in 2008 (after the adoption of the Law of Concessions in 2006), new types of public-private partnership were only integrated into the system in 2015. New types of public-private partnership included life cycle contracts, service contracts, fiduciary management, and contracts for research and development, which complemented concessions. Before 2015, concessions were the only type of public-private partnership. As a result, in Kazakhstan there are currently 1,073 public-private partnership projects, which can be broken down into the following sectors (Figure 4):



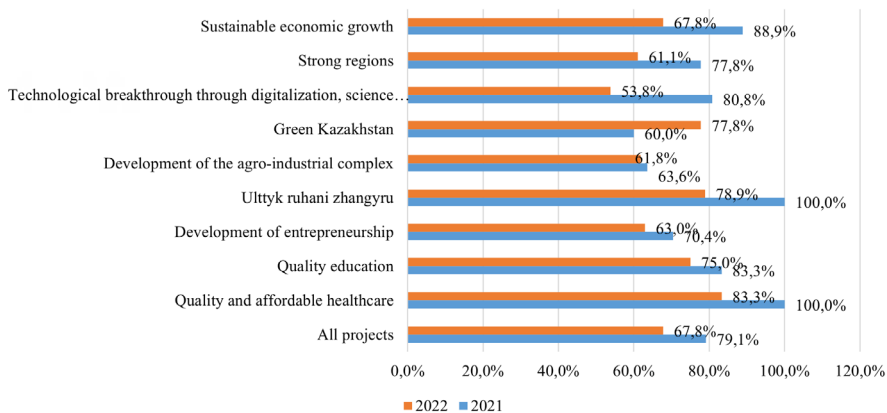
**Figure 4.** Implementation of public-private partnership projects in Kazakhstan as of August 1, 2024

Source: compiled by the author based on Kazakhstan PPP Center (2024).

Analyzing the diagram, it can be seen that most contracts were concluded in the fields of education and healthcare and social services. The brisk growth of public-private partnerships began in 2017, after the law on public-private partnerships came into effect. Currently, most contracts are concluded at the local level (1,059 contracts with a total value of 0.9 trillion tenge). As for the national level, this comprises only 14 contracts, with a total value of 1.2 trillion tenge (Kazakhstan PPP Center, 2024).

In 2020, it was decided to integrate project management in state strategic planning. On September 1, 2020, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan stated that “the preparation of government programs with a great number of aggregate targets and indicators should be stopped. It’s time to switch to intelligible national projects which are comprehensible for all citizens. The primacy of result over the process should be determined.” This resulted in the scuttling of state programs and their substitution for national projects. The list of national projects was established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on October 7, 2021. The national projects that were initially included in the list of projects are shown in Figure 5. In 2022, three new, more detailed projects were approved: “Modernization of Rural Healthcare,” “National Project in the Field of Education “Comfortable School,”” and “National Project in the Field of Communications “Accessible Internet”” (Sembieva and Alikulova 2022, 15). These projects were devised for a period of 5 years (p. 16). In 2023 the National Project Office and project offices of State executive bodies were established.

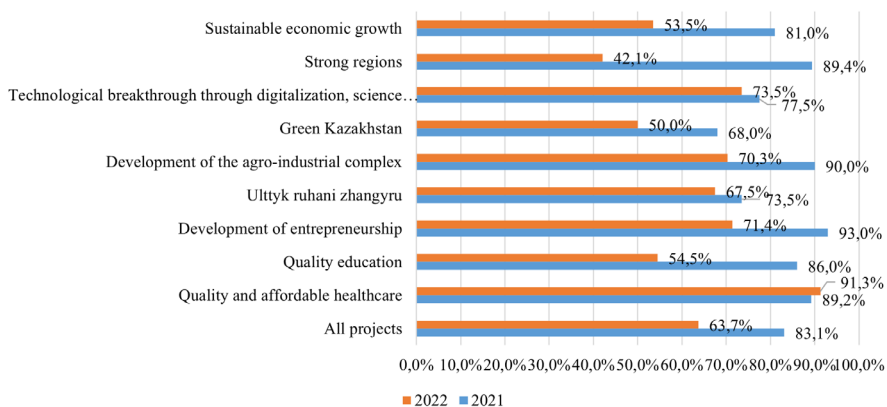
However, the implementation of the first list of projects faced substantial problems connected with both funding and missing deadlines for the execution of project activities. In Figure 5, the levels of achievement of target indicators for 9 national projects approved in 2021 are shown.



**Figure 5.** The levels of achievement of target indicators in the 9 national projects of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved in 2021

Source: compiled by the author based on NPO of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023).

It can be seen from Figure 5 that the levels of achievement of target indicators in 2022 were worse than in 2021. Complete success was not achieved by any project. In contrast with 2021, there was a decrease in the efficiency of national project implementation in 2022 (with the exception of the “Green Kazakhstan” project). In addition, the level of efficiency of project implementation was low. The implementation of actions in national projects is depicted in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** The implementation of actions in the 9 national projects of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved in 2021

Source: compiled by the author based on NPO of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023).



Figure 6 also shows the decline in the implementation of national projects. In 2021, this figure for all projects was 83.1%, but in 2022 it fell to only 63.7%. This is connected with the underfinancing of projects (though in 2021 funding is 90.8% , and in 2022 financing amounted to 94.5%, without taking into account the influence of inflation). It is also related to a slow policy decision-making process, which is aligned with the implementation of project actions. Taking into account all of these points of weakness, the Government of Kazakhstan issued decree No. 828 “On recognition of invalidation of some decisions of the Government of Kazakhstan” on September 22, 2023. The decree shut down 9 projects; hence, only 3 projects approved in 2022–2023 are now officially being implemented.

## Discussion

The negative experience of Kazakhstan in the implementation of national strategic management projects along with the full substitution of state programs for national projects have come under discussion in numerous scientific publications. The flaws of national projects rejected in 2023 have also been pointed out. Akhmetov, Evniev, Abil, and Zhumagali (2023) highlighted the following flaws: the low skill level and lack of expertise among civil servants working in the sphere of project management; the lack of a centrally directed IT solution system which could manage projects and supervise them; challenges in the relevance and reliability of data in the information project management system; weak interdepartmental and interpectoral interaction (including interaction among heads of state bodies) when planning projects; the lack of public access to the project offices of state bodies (lack of public reports); and the lack of access to the project offices of state bodies for the expert community (Akhmetov et al. 2023, 30–33).

There have also been concerns that these national projects were too complex in structure as there were too many target indicators and approved actions. All of these weaknesses were evidenced across the previously existing national programs (Askerov 2024). It was thus decided to cease working with vast, complex projects, and instead to work with more narrowly focused projects. This decision was oriented towards defining clear goals and objectives, aligning the responsibilities of state bodies in particular directions.

Akhmetov et al. (2023) also suggested the improvement of the project management system in the following directions:

- 1) the establishment of a “competence center” based on the National Project Management Office;
- 2) capacity building of civil servants in the sphere of project management along with the increase in their motivation to take part in project activity;
- 3) systematized cooperation between state bodies’ project offices;
- 4) the integration, development, and enhancement of the unified management and planning system;

- 5) the enhancement of collaboration with the expert community;
- 6) the provision of access to project offices to society (Akhmetov et al. 2023, 33).

It is also important to take into account the experience of foreign countries in this sphere. In the UK, the Government Major Projects Portfolio, a pipeline of national projects, has been successfully applied for more than 10 years. Projects which are included in the pipeline for prioritized selection are analyzed by certain criteria, and are approved only if more than one department is working on them, demand a rise in budget expenditures, risk unwanted rises in expenditures, or require changes in the law. In addition, much attention is paid to the systematic analysis of project execution, including interim results. Based on this analysis, a project can be rejected or changed (Gerasimova and Ivchenko, 2019).

In Kazakhstan, the project management system is now changing. Currently, the concept of a three-tiered system of project management is under consideration:

- 1) at the highest tier – the pipeline of project management through the implementation of national-level priorities with the help of the Government Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- 2) at the middle tier – program management in state bodies, with the implementation of the national planning system;
- 3) at the lowest tier – project management which is implemented by project teams (where the project becomes a part of a program) within particular short-term goals (Schwarzkopf 2023)

In 2024, legislation was introduced that defines the terms “project,” “pipeline of projects,” and “state program.” The interconnection of these terms was also introduced in the legislation. The proposed law also suggested the development of the legal regulation of project activity within the Administrative Procedure Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (the procedure code was adopted in 2020, and now, in 2024, there are minimum regulations of project management, as set out in Article 3-1 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Introducing Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Project Management Issues”).

## Conclusions

1. Increasing the efficiency of resource use in the public sector can be achieved by using a project approach to management, when quantitatively measurable goals are set and actions to achieve them, deadlines, and resources are planned. Projects are selected for project portfolios based on the principle of maximum social efficiency. The success of a project is determined by the results of monitoring and analysis, and depends on achieving goals while observing resource and deadline constraints. Therefore, projects are implemented both for change and investment management and for strategic public administration.

2. In 2015, the necessity of transitioning to project management was stated in the Republic of Kazakhstan. This transition began in several sectors – for example, in public-private partnership, where the adoption of the law on public-private partnership fostered the number of projects implemented in this sphere. However, it was not until 2020 that it was decided to replace state programs with national projects in the strategic planning system. In total, 10 projects were approved in 2021; in 2022–2023, 3 of them (more detailed and narrow-focused) were singled out.
3. The repeated failure to achieve target indicators and the ongoing non-execution of activities in projects adopted in 2021 led to their cancellation. This decision was based on 2021 results, although the 2022 indicators were even worse. Only 3 narrow projects were retained. Now, the establishment of a three-tiered system of project management (pipelines of projects–programs–projects) is under discussion.
4. Challenges with the implementation of national projects approved in 2021 were connected with the complexity of these projects, as well as with poor project work organization at the first stage of project management development. Poorly organized interactions between state bodies, project offices, and the expert community was another reason for underachievement and underperformance. At present, the development of the legal regulation of project activity within the Administrative Procedure Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan is under discussion. The improvement of the organization of project office functions and the development of an analysis system to select and evaluate them are currently being discussed.

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## PROJEKTŲ VALDYMO ĮRANKIAI, SKIRTI EFEKTYVIAI NAUDOTI IŠTEKLIUS VIEŠAJAME SEKTORIUJE

Anotacija. Tyrimo aktualumas yra būtinybė pritaikyti strategijas siekiant padidinti išteklių naudojimo efektyvumą viešajame sektoriuje. Viena iš šių strategijų yra projektų valdymas. Projektų valdymas reiškia projektų, kurie yra riboti laike ir ištekliuose, plėtrą ir įgyvendinimą. Projekto tikslai skirtingi, nevienodos užduotys, jam būdingos tam tikros sėkmės (tikslų pasiekimų) priemonės. Viešajame valdyme projektai dažnai įgyvendinami siekiant valdyti investicijas, tikintis reikšmingo socialinio poveikio, atsižvelgiant į išteklių taupymą. Projektai taip pat vykdomi siekiant įgyvendinti strateginį konkrečių šakų ir sektorių plėtros planavimą. Tyrimo tikslas yra projekto valdymo vertinimas siekiant padidinti išteklių naudojimo efektyvumą Kazachstano Respublikoje. Siekiant tikslo straipsnyje aptariami bendrieji projekto valdymo principai kaip priemonė didinti išteklių naudojimo viešajame valdyme efektyvumą, taip pat įgyvendinti projekto valdymo metodą, strateginį jo planavimą viešajame ir privačiame sektoriuose.

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