Third-party Organization's Effect Evaluation and Improvement Suggestions on Financial Budget Performance Management

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Abstract

In September 2018, China issued the "Opinions on the Comprehensive Implementation of Budget Performance Management", which is a programmatic document for China to deepen fiscal budget performance management, and has great guiding significance for accelerating the promotion of budget performance management innovation at all levels of government. Third-party organizations represented by accounting firms, colleges and universities, etc., have actively participated in consulting services such as performance review and evaluation of fiscal budget projects (overall expenditures, project expenditures) through entrusted methods in recent years, and gradually deepened their budgets for government agencies. Understanding of the implementation process of performance management. This paper intends to adopt a systematic analysis and evaluation of the implementation path and effects of fiscal budget performance management, and propose policy ideas and work recommendations for improving fiscal budget performance management from the perspective of external observers, which can be used as a reference for decision-making by governments and financial departments at all levels. Third-party agencies provide performance management consulting work ideas.

Keywords

Financial budget, Performance management, Suggest.

1. Target Setting of Financial Budget Performance Management

The general idea of China's fiscal budget performance management is: guided by Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, fully implement the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the Party and the 2nd and 3rd Plenary Sessions of the 19th Central Committee, uphold and strengthen the Party's overall leadership, and maintain stability. The general tone of the work of seeking progress in China is to adhere to the new development concept, closely follow the main contradictions and changes in Chinese society, and in accordance with the requirements of high-quality development, closely focus on the overall promotion of the "five in one" overall layout and coordinated promotion of the "four comprehensive" strategic layout, Adhere to the supply-side structural reform as the main line, innovate budget management methods, pay more attention to result-oriented, costeffectiveness, and harden responsibility constraints, and strive to basically build a comprehensive, full-process, and full-coverage budget performance management system within 3-5 years, To achieve the integration of budget and performance management, focus on improving the efficiency and use efficiency of financial resource allocation, change the fixed pattern of budgetary fund allocation, improve the level of budget management and policy implementation effects, and provide a strong guarantee for economic and social development. The specific goals of China's fiscal budget performance management include: sound scientific and standardized performance management systems and processes; establish a budget

performance standard system; strengthen performance target management; establish expert consultation mechanisms; innovate evaluation methods; establish performance evaluation mechanisms; Monitoring; carry out performance evaluation and promote the application of evaluation results; strengthen performance management incentives and constraints; clarify performance management responsibility constraints; strengthen performance management work evaluation; promote performance information disclosure systems.

The key information conveyed by the above general ideas and specific goals includes: a framework description of the overall requirements for future financial budget performance management, and the future direction of work has been clarified; each specific target involves the relevant links of budget performance management and has strong The core of the new framework for fiscal budget performance management has two points: one is to integrate the two management tools of "budget management" and "performance management", namely: the integration of budget and performance management; the second is to focus on performance management incentive constraints Make system adjustments to ensure the realization of the overall goal of financial budget performance management.

2. Evaluation of the Implementation Effect of Financial Budget Performance Management by Third-party Agencies

This article is based on the author's analysis and conclusions on the financial budget performance of the local government agency's budget performance evaluation project that the author has participated in as a third-party organization since 2017 and the evaluation sample (performance evaluation report) obtained through website queries. The implementation effect of management has been specially evaluated. The general evaluation conclusion is: financial budget performance management and performance evaluation have improved, but no breakthrough has been made. Slightly insufficient in the implementation of management control measures; the state that has been reached so far is helpful for controlling actual expenditures within the approved budget, but is limited for improving the efficiency of fund use (only observe from the projects that have passed the review and implemented, But do not have the project data deleted by the financial department in the preliminary evaluation. This data can help explain the control of invalid or inefficient projects); there is still more room for improvement in the specific methods of financial budget performance management and performance evaluation.

(1) Budget performance management system and process design lag behind

The system and process for standardizing budget performance management procedures and methods is not only a document that should be submitted during performance management appraisal and inspection, but also a standard and norm for the unit to implement budget performance management. If the system does not exist, standardized performance management will inevitably not exist. Judging from the information and practical cases, about 80% of the units have not established a budget performance management system based on specific conditions (some state-owned enterprises that undertake financial budget projects have established a performance management system), and their work is limited to-preparation Budget and submit self-assessment report. Moreover, the self-evaluation work is mainly completed in the financial department of the unit, and the participation of other departments is limited.

(2) Inadequate control of budget preparation

In the budget preparation process, the financial department has better control over the basic expenditure budget, and the preparation basis is basically clear. However, the control of project expenditures is not ideal. The main problems are:

The project review lacks judgment standards. How does the financial department judge the necessity and rationality of many project applications? From the perspective of project implementation, projects with unobvious implementation benefits, unreasonable projects, "rich-rich" projects with small beneficiaries, and government public welfare projects whose goals cannot be assessed still exist. In individual fields, in financial subsidy projects for enterprises, the method of determining subsidy targets does not show the characteristics of fairness and fairness of fiscal policy.

The quantitative criteria for determining budget funds are incomplete. The budget funds for engineering projects are generally determined based on the feasibility study report, project estimates, and the approval of the superior department. Among expense items, well-managed budget units can provide control standards for individual expenditures, including expenditure content and corresponding cost prices. For example, a legal aid project in a city determines the expenditure according to the number of cases, and the service cost standard is 3,000 yuan/piece (The fee standard is subject to investigation and decision-making approval procedures). However, there are also a large number of projects for which the content of project expenditure and the corresponding cost and price are not clear.

(3) The unit's performance indicator setting has not established standardized procedures

At present, the procedure for setting performance indicators is unit declaration, financial department review and approval. From the statistical analysis of the selected sample (the unit's budget project declaration form), the performance indicators do not need to be adjusted or only need to be adjusted individually, accounting for less than 10%. There is no systematic setting of performance indicators for many projects. The most typical example is that only two indicators are set on a project application data of a certain unit, and they are all qualitative indicators (one related to output, one related to output). Benefit related). From the perspective of the actual preparation procedure of performance indicators, the unit does not pay enough attention to the preparation of performance indicators-the project implementation department did not conduct research and analysis on the design of project performance indicators before project declaration, and the internal financial department of the unit lacked the basis for indicator design and indicator review The management of capabilities and units has not included performance management in the work procedures. This situation is not accidental or an individual phenomenon, indicating that the integrated concept of budget management and performance management is still not understood and accepted in some units.

(4) System design ignores the need for cost control

The efficiency and benefit issues involved in performance management are closely related to cost control, but the idea of cost control in system design conflicts with the requirements for budget execution. On the one hand, the financial department reduces the unit's investment or operating costs by improving government procurement procedures, and on the other hand, it places special emphasis on the control of budget implementation rate indicators. Some local financial departments require budget implementation rates between 95% and 100% (some are directly 100%). In this case, if the cost is effectively reduced (for example, more than 5%), it means that the budget implementation rate is not up to standard. A common situation is that the budget unit does not tend to save budget funds, but uses up the budget as much as possible, leading to unreasonable use of fiscal funds (overestimation of budget funds is more common), and the overall budget performance management system And the evaluation framework, the requirements for cost management either do not exist or are seriously ignored. There is no encouragement for cost savings and no penalties for invalid expenditures are common problems.

(5) Budget execution control is too extensive

The core indicator of budget execution control is the budget execution rate. From the setting of the budget execution rate index value, it can be seen that the financial department attaches importance to budget execution control. From the perspective of self-interest, better budget execution indicators are not only the demands of the financial department, but also the demands of the budget unit. However, through the evaluation of various samples, it is found that the budget implementation control situation has not reached the ideal state. The three core elements of budget execution control are fund use, project content compliance and project progress. Fund use control has always been the focus of various inspections, audits, and evaluations. Project progress lags will also be assessed (such as the "planned completion rate" in the evaluation framework) or accountable, but some projects (mainly cost-related projects)) The compliance difference between the implementation content and the budget content is basically not investigated. As a result, the current status of budget execution control in these areas has become "the question is how much money was spent (whether it exceeds the budget), not whether he spends it at will (weak restrictions on the use of money)." The situation of controlling the use of funds and the progress of the project and not controlling the content of the project is rarely found in engineering projects, but is more common in the expense category. This also reflects the arbitrariness of budgeting in some units and the deviation of understanding of budget execution control.

- (6) The supervision and management of the procurement business needs to be strengthened Expenses incurred in procurement operations (government procurement and non-government procurement) account for a large proportion of budget expenditures, especially in project expenditures. Problems include: deliberately evading the bidding and procurement methods stipulated by the system; manipulating the results of bidding in bidding and procurement; weak internal control of procurement in the canteen of the agency; insufficient attention to the control of sporadic procurement, etc.
- (7) The results of budget performance evaluation were disclosed but the expected effect was not realized

Disclosure of performance evaluation results was once considered a "killer weapon", which can have a greater impact on the mentality of the financial departments, budget units and performance evaluation agencies. The common concerns of the tripartite agencies (financial departments, budget units, and performance evaluation agencies) focus on whether the ability to perform their duties and results, and the quality of their work are recognized by the society. Some regions and some projects have published performance evaluation reports through the official website of the organization, but the results are not as good as expected. Mainly caused by the following reasons:

- 1) The official website of government agencies is not a "traffic star", and the social awareness is relatively low, so the attention will naturally not be high.
- ②Even if someone is concerned, the channels for expressing formal opinions are not known to the public.
- 3 Before the performance appraisal report is disclosed, after communication and coordination with multiple parties, sensitive information will not be disclosed. The information provided by the performance evaluation report is basically not "readable".
- (8) Inadequate use of performance evaluation results by budget units

Performance evaluation results generally include three aspects: concluding comments of the evaluation, internal control problems found in the evaluation process, and suggestions for improvement. The application of performance evaluation results includes two directions: one is the use of financial departments, which will involve budget review and budget adjustment; the other is the use of budget units, which mainly involves the rectification of internal management defects (including but not limited to performance management). Now the

financial department places more emphasis on the use of evaluation results in budget adjustments, but the operating space is limited. Because most of the projects are led by a certain administrative department of the government, the basis for project establishment and funding requirements have been recognized by the senior management.

There are also significant obstacles to the use of performance evaluation results in budget units. First of all, the "problems" described by the performance evaluation results can generally be summarized into two categories: one is "financial problems" (the responsible entity is the financial department), and the other is "management problems" (the responsible entity is the project implementation department). The financial department is relatively easy to solve financial problems, and what the financial department can do for management problems is problem feedback and situation reporting. As for whether the project implementation department has the willingness to rectify and how to rectify it, the financial department's ability to intervene is relatively weak. Secondly, the rectification willingness of the budget unit and the rectification willingness of the internal project implementation department of the unit are related to the overall performance management method of the government agency. When the performance management system is generally imperfect, the use of performance evaluation results mainly depends on the parties (units or Sector) individual awareness and quality.

3. Challenges Facing the Budget Performance Management and Performance Evaluation of the Financial Sector

If budget performance management is regarded as a financial management issue or the path design for perfecting budget performance management is limited to the financial field, the improvement goals of the budget performance management system may not achieve the expected vision. From the perspective of the financial sector, there are still some problems that require long-term planning or rely on the strong support of the government's administrative system.

(1) The nature of the game of interest between the financial department and the budget unit will exist for a long time

The management goal of the financial department is to allocate resources rationally, control expenditures (expenses and projects) through budgets, and keep the scale of expenditures (total amount) unchanged. The fundamental interest of budgetary units in the budget field is to ensure supply, and the more the better. There is a game of interest between the two. The advantage of the financial department is the power arrangement to give or not; the advantage of the budget unit is to perform certain functions on behalf of the government, which often affects the whole body. In terms of obtaining information related to the declared project, the budget unit has an advantage, and the information and resources available to the financial department are relatively limited. The positions of the two sides are independent and evenly matched. The current leading capabilities and powers of the financial sector do not match the control capabilities needed to achieve system design goals. In the allocation of budget funds, the results of budget approval are often not based on actual needs, but on the results of the game. To a certain extent, the budget performance management of the financial sector is not a fiscal tool issue, but an overall issue that inevitably involves the entire administrative system of the government.

(2) Path dependence on traditional budget management methods is not easy to quickly eradicate

The management level of a business area depends not only on the governance ability of the manager, but also closely related to the management infrastructure of the managed object itself. From the observations, the thinking mode of many budget units still stays at the stage of long-term implementation of project budgets in the past, and they lack understanding and

understanding of the system design of integrated budget performance management. From the perspective of presumption of responsibility, the financial department can play a role in overcoming path dependence, but the main difficulty in improvement is the budget unit. Unless the budgetary unit's thinking mode and supporting management problems are resolved, the expected effects of budget performance management will not appear.

(3) The capacity building of the budget review of the finance department is a long-term bottleneck

As far as project expenditure is concerned, once the budget is approved, it is justifiable to spend money-regardless of whether the project has actual implementation value or not, any remedial measures taken afterwards can only be reduced and cannot avoid capital losses. Therefore, the budget review ability and attitude of the financial department is very important to ensure the efficiency of fund use. Judging from the evaluation results of the implemented performance evaluation projects, the arrangement of projects and project funds is not impeccable. The difficulty of project review mainly lies in the professional understanding of the project and the qualitative expression of review standards (necessity, rationality, legality, etc.). In the short term, the internal review or expert review of the financial department can only alleviate this problem but cannot completely solve it. However, if the performance evaluation results are used well, the problems in the project review can be reversed.

(4) The establishment of basic budgeting standards lacks forward-looking arrangements In enterprises, the basis for the preparation of cost budgets is production forecasts and standard quotas (material quotas, auxiliary material quotas, expense allocation standards, working hours quota, labor cost base, etc.). Under a certain production scale, the planned cost of the amount is determined (standard cost). In the fiscal budget, most of the basic expenditures have control standards, while the budgeting standards for project expenditures are incomplete. The cost control methods for project expenditures of engineering, service, and goods have been basically determined. At present, the most lacking is the cost budget method for expense projects, such as exhibitions held by government agencies, economic forums, employment incubators, and public welfare activities. , Office system maintenance, subsidies to enterprises and case handling funds of discipline inspection departments, etc. The formulation of cost control standards for such project expenditures requires the financial department to put forward management requirements for budget units, and solidify measurement standards through decision-making procedures.

(5) The establishment of budget performance accountability system requires multidepartmental coordination

Accountability is not only a tool of the performance management system, it is also widely used in other management fields. The five basic questions that the performance accountability process should address are: who asks whom? what? Where? What is the basis for the judgment? How to deal with it? Our conclusion is that the financial department is not capable of completing the accountability process alone. In addition to political procedures and cadre management procedures, the financial sector also faces some "technical problems."

As a political procedure, the responsibilities of the people's congress deputies are random, mainly based on the information and cognitive abilities of the deputies. Since there is no mechanism for systematic evaluation based on investigation and research, in fact "selective accountability" has been formed. , Unable to effectively implement the policy design goal of "spending money must be questioned for effectiveness, invalidation must be accountable". In the performance accountability process, the financial department is both the subject and the object of accountability. Regardless of the role, a "technical problem" that must be defined iswhat is "invalidity"? Without a definition, there is no "standard of sentencing."

From the literal meaning, "invalid" means no effect. But this obviously cannot be a "criteria for sentencing." In addition, from the current system design plan, the probability of defining a unit as "invalid" as a whole is extremely small; how to accountability if a specific item is defined as "invalid"? An engineering project generally undergoes project approval, feasibility study, budget unit decision review, financial department review, project design, project implementation, project supervision, and completion acceptance. Who should be blamed? This issue should be clearly defined in the system design and communicated with the relevant management departments or regulatory agencies.

On the surface, the above problems are all problems of the financial sector or related to finance, but in essence, they are the overall administrative management of the government. The finance department can play a role, but it cannot take full responsibility for solving the problem on its own.

4. Policy Recommendations for Budget Performance Evaluation and Management Improvement (Take City-Level Budget Performance Management as an Example)

Compared with government agencies, corporate performance management is much more mature and has accumulated a lot of experience and lessons, which can be a useful reference for government agencies.

(1) The corporate path of budget performance management

Compared with government agencies, corporate performance management is much more mature and has accumulated a lot of experience and lessons, which can be a useful reference for government agencies.

- 1) The establishment of the budget performance management system is the basic condition for the effective implementation and function of budget performance management. Government agencies can separately formulate or revise the management system of financial budget performance management at the municipal level and budget units (independent units) as a normative document to guide performance management within their respective responsibilities. Clarify key issues such as management subject, management responsibilities, target setting, implementation control, assessment procedures and linkage methods.
- ②Extract key performance indicators (KPIs) from the key functions of budget units, and use third-party resources to evaluate their compliance and appraisal value.
- ③Establish a system for compilation, statistics and reporting of basic assessment data. No performance indicators that cannot be accessed are not set. If the performance indicators that have been set are not established in accordance with the regulations, they will be assessed as incomplete (the financial department can entrust a third party

Institutions check and evaluate the effectiveness of the data collection system in advance).

- 4 If it does not involve malfeasance or major dereliction of duty, it is not appropriate to assign too many missions to performance management and evaluation. Performance management can only be linked to the budget adjustment and salary of the budget unit (of course, relevant departments can use performance evaluation or evaluation data).
- (5) The implementation of the performance management system requires the support of professionals. In an enterprise, the managers responsible for salary and performance are generally of good professional quality and have been specially trained. Some financial cadres or financial cadres responsible for performing performance management functions in government agencies have insufficient knowledge of performance management and lack the necessary training. The financial department may consider summarizing the budget performance management model, implementation methods, implementation points, etc.,

conduct special training for relevant personnel, and provide professional guidance for the establishment of the performance management system of the budget unit.

(2) Encourage cost savings in system design

The pursuit of the value of funds is an important consideration for result-oriented budget performance management. From the actual situation, the space for saving basic expenditures is small, which is basically a rigid budget, while the operability of saving project expenditures is greater. More and more budget units have included cost saving indicators in the performance evaluation indicator framework, but this indicator has a different value orientation from another indicator "budget implementation rate"-the budget implementation rate indicator pursues "finish" (The closer to 100%, the better), and the cost-saving indicator pursues "reduction" (the lower the better when the price/performance ratio is certain). It is recommended to define the cost saving index as a mandatory index in project declaration and performance evaluation of project expenditures, and assess the efforts made by the budget unit in capital control and cost saving. At the same time, the financial department should also note that the setting of the cost-saving rate index may cause the budget unit to push up the cost budget out of self-interest in order to facilitate the acquisition of its own interests. In addition, adjust the evaluation thinking of the budget implementation rate, adjust the value orientation from "funding completion" to "funding completion" and "project content completion". If the budget implementation rate is lower due to cost savings, give encourage.

(3) Promote the use of flexible budget methods

The flexible budget method has wide applicability. In the field of fiscal budgeting, it is particularly suitable for "contingent budgets" that must be arranged such as "discipline inspection case handling fees" but do not know whether it will happen. According to the current budget management method-first approve the budget and then adjust the budget according to the use situation, the management efficiency is low. Taking the "legal aid" project as an example, the flexible budget preparation method is to determine the cost assistance standard for a single case, and prepare the budget at the beginning of the year as standard cost × planned (estimated) number of cases. At the end of the period, the annual budget is calculated based on the standard cost × the actual number of cases in order to reduce the cumbersome procedures of budget adjustment.

(4) Improve the basic standards of project expenditure budgeting

In fact, the budgeting standards for basic expenditures have been basically resolved, and what is needed now is to classify and establish basic budgeting standards for project expenditures. Examples are as follows:

- ①The configuration standards of the office system of government agencies, including: system function specifications, equipment selection standards, system upgrade and update conditions, etc.
- (2) The cost standards for activities with macroeconomic significance, such as exhibitions, economic forums, employment incubators, public welfare activities, etc. held by government agencies, should be determined through legislative procedures or administrative approval procedures to determine the maximum limit or the proportion of expenses to make such expenses Institutionalized budgeting and approval.
- ③Subsidy procedures and standards for small and micro enterprises, such as: grain and oil subsidies, comprehensive agricultural development subsidies, loan interest subsidies, etc. Currently, there is a lack of procedural norms for determining subsidy targets, and actual operations may deviate from fair and impartial system requirements; project implementation agencies also do not have restrictive procedural arrangements for determining subsidy amounts, and control risks are relatively high. The financial department or project implementation agency shall formulate relevant procedures and methods for determining

subsidy standards before the implementation of the project, so as to reasonably ensure the efficiency of fund use and social equity.

(5) Improve the construction of budget performance indicator system

From the perspective of the implementation of performance evaluation projects, the core indicator system of budget units (overall expenditures, project expenditures) has basically not been established, and the construction of related standard systems has not seen signs of initiation, which will restrict the improvement of performance management and performance evaluation. And quality improvement. In fact, the performance indicators of most of the projects implemented are redesigned on-site. Whether the third-party organization implements the performance evaluation project commissioned by the financial department or the self-evaluation project commissioned by the budget unit, the performance indicator design cannot completely avoid the biased influence of the budget unit or the project implementation unit, thereby making the performance evaluation objective. It was not built on the proper foundation at the beginning.

The construction of the budget performance indicator system is just a matter of workload, it does not have any technical barriers or functional allocation barriers. The delay in this matter may be due to the inadequate understanding of the value of the performance indicator system by the budget performance management department. Without establishing an open, proven, and comparable index system, the results or objectivity of performance evaluation may be manipulated and not easily discovered. The financial department may consider formulating a plan for the preparation of performance indicators and standard systems, and the content should cover as much as possible the basic functions of regular projects and government agencies. The implementation of the plan may consider entrusting third-party institutions, government professional institutions, and academic research institutions to carry out the plan, and ensure that functional stakeholders and stakeholders have a reasonable degree of participation.

(6) The realization path of budget performance management autonomy of planning budget

From the results of sample analysis, in actual work, whether it is overall expenditure or project expenditure, the proportion of budget implementation rates reaching or close to 100% is extremely high (generally between 95%-100%). This is the result of the high level of budget preparation and the rigor of budget execution. The more common reason is that the final accounts are reflected in the budget number rather than the actual expenditure data; the second is that the budget unit spends the last cent as much as possible. Paths for improvement include:

- 1) Adjust the assessment thinking of budget implementation rate.
- (2) Give the budget unit a certain percentage of budget adjustment authority (divided into overall expenditure adjustment authority control and project expenditure adjustment authority control). When the budget execution number is lower than the budget number, the budget unit is allowed to be within the specified control ratio (such as: 10%) Adjustment or carry-over (the final account statement reflects the carry-over situation). Its significance is to reduce the degree of ineffective use of funds and reduce the motivation of budget units to provide false financial information.
- (7) Improve the performance accountability system through the combination of "question" and "responsibility"

In addition to solving the problem of monitoring methods, performance accountability is also more important to three procedural issues:

1. How to define "invalid". Zhongfa Document No. 34 proposed the concept of "invalid accountability", but at the implementation level, the concept alone is not enough, and the concept should also be defined. Generally speaking, many budgetary expenditures are

ineffective or inefficient to varying degrees. To what extent should they be held accountable or held accountable? It is recommended that the financial department make a definition of "invalidity" and enumerate the scope or type of accountability.

- 2. Avoid selective accountability. At present, the accountability of deputies to the National People's Congress has received more attention, but due to the limitation of information sources and different personal concerns, the scope of accountability or topics of the deputies must be selective. However, in terms of system design, accountability should not be an accidental procedure. The financial department should take advantage of information to systematically sort out the accountability list for the improvement of budget management, financial accountability and submit it to the departments that require such information. Or institutions.
- 3. "Ask" and "responsibility" should not be neglected. "Question" and "responsibility" are two procedures. The current situation is that there is no system for "question". For procedural defects, internal control problems, and violations of discipline and regulations discovered in budget performance management, "question" or "no question" All belong to the autonomous arrangement of the financial department or the selective arrangement of the NPC meeting. In addition, it is not the original intent of the performance accountability system once asked, and the follow-up system of accountability procedures should be accountability. Specific institutional arrangements should be made for the scope, subjects, procedures, and handling methods of accountability.

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