

A Study on the Multi-Dimensional Evaluation, Practical Paths and Optimization Strategies of the Impact of Public Welfare Projects

Zhiyu Miao¹, Jing Zhang¹, Chunlin Li²

¹*Liaoning Institute of Science and Technology, Benxi, Liaoning, China*

²*Liaoning Hualian Department Store Co., Ltd.*

Abstract:Against the backdrop of the global public welfare sector transitioning toward precision and effectiveness and China's public welfare field entering a critical phase of coordinated development in both scale and quality, this study, addressing such current issues as the overemphasis on implementation over evaluation, short-term outcomes over long-term impacts, and misalignment between resource input and impact effectiveness in public welfare projects, as well as academic-level problems including the absence of a unified framework for deconstructing impact dimensions, fragmented evaluation methods, and insufficient research on sustainability, conducts research on the impact of public welfare projects in accordance with policy requirements such as the *Charity Law (Revised 2023)*; first, the study defines the core concept of public welfare project impact and identifies a multi-dimensional framework that takes the well-being of beneficiary groups as the core, resource allocation efficiency as the guarantee, social ecosystem optimization as the extension, and industry development promotion as the elevation, with specific value manifestations at the beneficiary, social, and institutional levels further specified under each dimension; next, following the logical framework of "principles-indicators-processes", it constructs a scientific evaluation system, clarifying the evaluation principles of objectivity, systematicness, and differentiation, designing evaluation indicators that integrate quantitative and qualitative approaches and cover multiple levels, and planning the implementation process of full-cycle evaluation; subsequently, taking the "Beautiful China" Volunteer Teaching Project as a case study, it analyzes

the project's impact in the dimensions of beneficiaries and institutional industry and summarizes relevant experiences; finally, the study points out existing problems in the current impact development of public welfare projects, including the lack of evaluation mechanisms, insufficient resource input, poor sustainability, and low public participation, and puts forward corresponding optimization strategies such as improving the collaborative evaluation mechanism involving the government, institutions, and third parties, promoting donors to focus on long-term value, strengthening the localized and community-based design of projects, and innovating the ways of public interaction and communication, aiming to provide a scientific basis for the optimization of public welfare projects, enhance the efficiency of resource utilization and the credibility of the industry, promote the transformation of the public welfare industry from experience-driven to evidence-driven, and facilitate public welfare undertakings in achieving the leap from scale to quality.

Keywords:Public Welfare Project Impact; Multi-Dimensional Evaluation System; Optimization Strategies

1.Introduction

Against the backdrop of the global public welfare sector's shift towards precision and efficiency, and as China's public welfare field enters a critical period of concurrent growth in both quantity and quality, the "China Philanthropy Development Report (2024)" reveals that China's total charitable donations in 2023 exceeded 150 billion yuan, a 42.8% increase from 2019. The scope of projects has expanded to cover diverse areas such as ecological protection and social governance.

However, the investment of public welfare resources and the improvement of their effectiveness are not in sync. There is a prominent issue of overemphasis on execution and neglect of evaluation, as well as a focus on short-term rather than long-term outcomes. Some projects have achieved coverage targets but failed to enhance capabilities, and while effective during the project period, they experience a gap after completion. This leads to inefficient resource allocation and undermines the credibility of public welfare. Academically, current research faces three major gaps: the lack of a unified framework for deconstructing the dimension of influence, fragmented assessment methods, and weak research on sustainability. The revised "Charity Law" in 2023 and the "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Social Organizations" by the Ministry of Civil Affairs both explicitly require public welfare projects to strengthen evaluation and shift towards impact assessment. Under this context, clarifying the dimension of influence, constructing an evaluation system, and exploring improvement paths are crucial for addressing the mismatch between resources and effectiveness, responding to academic gaps and policy directions, and are of significant importance for the transformation of the public welfare sector from scale to quality. From a practical perspective, research on the influence of public welfare projects can provide scientific basis for project optimization, enhance the efficiency of resource utilization, and avoid ineffective investment. It can also prove the effectiveness of projects to stakeholders, enhance industry credibility, and promote the inflow of social resources. From the perspective of industry development, it can distill replicable project models, drive the industry's transformation from experience-driven to evidence-driven, and provide support for the standardized development of the industry.

2.The Core Concepts and Multi-Dimensional Aspects of the Influence of Public Welfare Projects

2.1The Multi-Dimensional Dimensions of The Impact Of Public Welfare Projects

The influence of the public welfare project is constructed through the coordination of multiple dimensions to form a comprehensive value system. Among them, the dimension of the

well-being of the beneficiary group is the core. It alleviates the living difficulties of the beneficiaries materially, enhances their sense of social belonging spiritually, and equips them with sustainable development skills, converting the original intention of the public welfare into practical results. The dimension of resource allocation efficiency is an important guarantee for the continuous operation of the project. By precisely matching demands with resources and strictly controlling the cost-benefit ratio, it ensures that the public welfare investment produces obvious effects and avoids resource waste, maintaining the long-term stable development of the project. The dimension of social ecological optimization is the extension of the influence. Through supporting disadvantaged groups to narrow the gap of fairness, spreading the public welfare concept to shape social trends, and coordinating with multiple entities to build a collaborative network, the public welfare project creates a favorable external environment for the public welfare cause. The dimension of industry development promotion is the elevation of the influence. By summarizing standardized experiences from successful projects, constructing a scientific evaluation system, and promoting innovative operation models, it provides practical examples for the public welfare industry to break through development bottlenecks and achieve high-quality transformation.

2.1.1. At the level of beneficiaries, it progresses from improving survival to empowering capabilities.

The beneficiaries are the key bearers of the influence of the public welfare projects, and their value realization is based on two important dimensions. The basic needs satisfaction dimension focuses on the most urgent survival issues of the beneficiaries at present. By providing resources such as economic, medical, and living supplies, it promptly resolves the difficulties they are facing. For example, the "Free Lunch" project, through meal subsidies, effectively solved the problem of rural children going hungry to attend school. By the end of 2024, this project had covered over 1,000 schools and benefited 300,000 children, significantly reducing the malnutrition rate among children

The capacity enhancement and rights realization dimension aims to empower, not limited to short-term material assistance, but more focused

on helping beneficiaries achieve sustainable development. For example, the "Women's Handicraft Skills Training" project has constructed a complete system of "training - market connection - organization operation", which not only improves women's handicraft skills but also provides them with channels to convert their skills into economic benefits, promoting women's economic independence and more actively participating in social activities, completing the important transformation from passive assistance to active development, fully demonstrating the deep value of public welfare projects.

2.1.2 At the social level, it has progressed from partial improvement to systematic optimization. The influence of the public welfare projects extends beyond the individual beneficiaries and spreads to the social level, generating extensive social value. This is mainly reflected in two aspects. Firstly, it alleviates social problems. By addressing prominent social pain points, public welfare projects can achieve large-scale improvements. For instance, environmental protection public welfare projects, through river governance and waste sorting publicity campaigns, effectively reduce environmental pollution and optimize public ecological environments. Elderly care public welfare projects, by building community elderly care stations, alleviate the problem of insufficient elderly care resources in an aging society. Secondly, it nurtures social atmosphere and promotes policy advancement. Some public welfare projects, through public attention, promote changes in social concepts and policy improvement. Taking the rare disease care project as an example, it triggers social attention by spreading patient stories and actively advocates for policies, not only enhancing public awareness of the rare disease community but also enabling the country to include over 20 rare disease drugs in the medical insurance directory, solving the problem of difficult and expensive medication for rare disease patients from the institutional level.

2.1.3. Institutional level from project implementation to industry demonstration
From project implementation to industry demonstration at the institutional level, the influence of public welfare projects plays a significant role in promoting the development of public welfare institutions themselves and the standardization process of the entire industry. It

mainly manifests in two dimensions: Firstly, in terms of enhancing the credibility and brand value of the institution, clear and specific project influence can be presented to donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders through quantitative data and specific achievements, eliminating information asymmetry and enhancing their trust in the institution. For example, the Children's Safety Classroom Project of Yifan Foundation, by regularly releasing evaluation reports to showcase specific indicators such as a 60% increase in children's safety knowledge awareness, has become a benchmark brand in the field of children's safety education, driving the annual average donation income of the institution to grow steadily. Secondly, in terms of industry standard demonstration and standardization promotion, the assessment methods and successful experiences of high-quality public welfare projects can be transformed into industry standards. For instance, the South Day Foundation, based on its own practice, has launched a public welfare project influence assessment guide, sorting out core indicators and analysis frameworks, and providing lightweight assessment tools for small public welfare institutions, reducing the difficulty of assessment and promoting the entire industry to form an operation concept oriented towards effectiveness, helping the industry transform from an operation mode relying on experience to a scientific operation mode based on data.

3. Construction of the Evaluation System for the Impact of Public Welfare Projects

Scientific evaluation is the key to measuring the impact of public welfare projects. It should follow a logical framework of principles, indicators, and processes to ensure the objectivity, systematicness, and practicality of the evaluation results.

3.1 Evaluation Principles

3.1.1. Objectivity Principle

The evaluation process must eliminate subjective speculation and always rely on real data and facts as the basis for judgment. For example, in the evaluation of educational poverty alleviation projects, one cannot simply determine the project's impact based on the good feedback from the beneficiaries, but should combine quantifiable data such as the improvement in academic performance and the

reduction in dropout rates, and also involve a third-party evaluation agency to reduce the potential biases in the self-evaluation of public welfare organizations and ensure the objectivity and credibility of the evaluation results.

3.1.2. Systematicness Principle

The evaluation work should cover the entire cycle of the public welfare project and cannot only focus on the immediate results after the project ends. For example, in the evaluation of rural medical station construction projects, it should include pre-evaluation, that is, the investigation of the local medical resource gap; mid-evaluation, that is, the examination of the progress and rationality of the medical station construction; post-evaluation, that is, the analysis of the proportion of shortened medical distance for villagers and the improvement rate of common diseases cured; in addition, long-term tracking should also be carried out to pay attention to the sustainability of the medical station operation three years later, and through the entire process evaluation to comprehensively measure the actual effectiveness of the project.

3.1.3 Differentiation Principle

Different types of public welfare projects have different focuses in impact evaluation. It is necessary to avoid the one-size-fits-all phenomenon of using a uniform standard. For example, the evaluation of environmental protection projects focuses more on ecological indicators, such as water quality improvement grades and vegetation coverage; while the evaluation of educational projects focuses more on capability indicators, such as the improvement of the educational attainment of beneficiaries and the strength of their employment competitiveness. Based on the project type, accurately set the evaluation focus to accurately reflect the unique value of the project.

3.2 Evaluation Index Design

Based on the multi-dimensional aspects of the impact of the public welfare projects, the evaluation indicators can be divided into quantitative indicators and qualitative indicators, forming a complementary system. They specifically cover three levels. At the beneficiary level, quantitative indicators include income growth rate, improvement in academic performance, and acquisition rate of skill certificates, etc.; qualitative indicators focus on the improvement of family relationships. At the

social level, quantitative indicators include the number of communities covered by the project, the number of policy promotions, and public attention, etc.; qualitative indicators focus on changes in community cohesion and the degree of social concept transformation. At the institutional level, quantitative indicators are the main focus, including donation income growth rate, growth rate of volunteer participation, and the number of project replications.

3.3 Evaluation Implementation Process

The implementation process of the public welfare project evaluation includes three stages: pre-planning, mid-tracking, and post-evaluation and long-term tracking. Pre-planning needs to clearly define the evaluation goals and methods before the project starts. For example, the psychological support project for left-behind children can set the evaluation goal as improving the mental health level and parent-child communication ability of left-behind children, and select questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews, and psychological scale tests as evaluation methods and determine the evaluation period; Mid-tracking requires collecting evaluation indicator data regularly during the project implementation process, promptly identifying problems and adjusting the project plan. For example, if the mid-term evaluation of the skills training project shows that the employment rate of trainees is only 10% lower than the expected 30%, interviews can be conducted to understand the reasons and then adjust the course settings; Post-evaluation and long-term tracking require a comprehensive analysis of the data after the project ends to form an impact report, and establish a long-term tracking mechanism. For example, the college student assistance project can track the employment status, income level, and social contribution of the beneficiaries in rural areas for 5 years after the project ends, thereby evaluating the long-term impact of the project.

4. Analysis of Practical Cases for Enhancing the Impact of Public Welfare Projects

4.1 Project Overview

"Beautiful China" was established in 2008. Its core business is to send outstanding volunteer teachers to rural schools, adopting a two-year long-term teaching and lifelong alumni network model. It not only provides high-quality

educational resources for rural children but also focuses on cultivating young people with a sense of social responsibility. As of 2025, this project has sent over 3,830 volunteer teachers to more than 534 rural schools in 19 provinces across the country, with a total of 4,165,195 lessons taught, benefiting over 1,216,094 students. As of August 7, 2025, the project has implemented 15 public welfare projects of three types - traditional culture, community activities, and space renovation - in 18 villages in Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, and Gansu, directly benefiting over 1,800 rural children and involving 1,500 community residents. Under the influence of the project, 22 local young people from the countryside have also joined the project team, working together to achieve the vision of rural growth.

4.2 Impact Analysis

From the perspective of beneficiaries, this public welfare project not only quantitatively improves the academic performance of rural children, but also statistically shows that the average scores of the schools with volunteer cooperation are 12 percentage points higher than those of non-cooperative schools; More emphasis is placed on the capacity building and mindset reshaping of the beneficiaries. Through the provision of diversified teaching contents such as art literacy courses and scientific practice courses, the cognitive boundaries and horizons of rural children are expanded. At the same time, through continuous growth and companionship services, the self-efficacy, confidence and interpersonal communication skills of the beneficiaries have significantly improved. The specialized research data from third-party institutions show that after the implementation of the project, the proportion of beneficiaries who are willing to leave the countryside to explore external development opportunities has increased from 35% before the project's launch to 70%, fully demonstrating the empowerment value of the project for the long-term development potential of the beneficiaries.

From the perspectives of institutional operation and industry development, the systematic training system and long-term dynamic tracking mechanism for volunteer teachers established by this project have become a benchmark for standardized practices in the rural education charity sector. The innovative model of

professional talent cultivation combined with precise support of educational resources has been adopted and borrowed by many similar charity organizations, effectively reducing the research and development costs and trial-and-error risks of similar projects in the industry. At the same time, the alumni network established by the project, where volunteer teachers enter different fields such as education, charity and enterprises after their service period, continuously plays a social mobilization role, voices for rural education through various channels, and further links cross-border social resources. Eventually, a virtuous ecological cycle is formed where the project outputs talents, talents provide feedback to industry development, and social resources flow back to the project, providing a practical example for the sustainable development of the rural education charity industry.

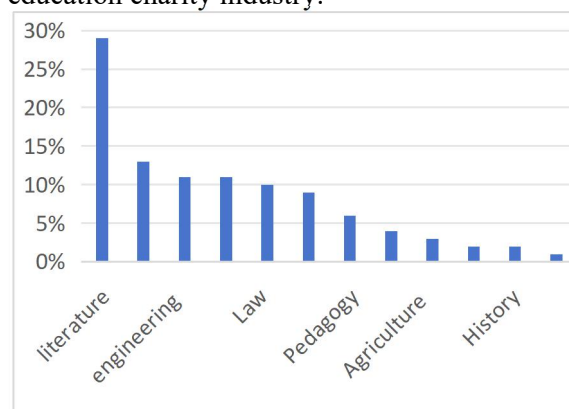


Figure 1. Professional Distribution of Project Teachers for the 2024-2025 Academic Year

4.3 Experience Summary

The Beautiful China Teaching Project has established a clear path for enhancing its influence. Firstly, it combines short-term teaching assistance with long-term empowerment, discarding the short-term effects brought by one-time teaching assistance, to ensure that the project's impact on rural education continues to deepen; secondly, it attaches great importance to the setting of dual goals, helping rural children obtain high-quality education while also focusing on cultivating young talents with a sense of social responsibility, further expanding the value coverage of the project; finally, it relies on the alumni network to build a sustainable influence ecosystem, allowing the positive effects of the project to break through the limitations of the teaching period and provide support for rural

education development in a longer time dimension.

5. Issues and Optimization Strategies for the Impact Building of Current Public Welfare Projects

5.1 Existing Problems

5.1.1 Lack of Evaluation Mechanism

Most small and medium-sized public welfare organizations currently have significant shortcomings in terms of awareness and capacity in impact assessment. This is mainly manifested in two aspects. At the cognitive level, some organizations view assessment as an unnecessary cost, believing that it will consume project funds and time. Therefore, they prioritize attention to surface-level execution indicators such as the number of beneficiaries and the number of activities, using these indicators instead of conducting in-depth evaluations of the project's effectiveness, neglecting the supporting value of assessment for project optimization and resource efficiency improvement. As a result, they fall into a simplistic operation mode. At the practical level, impact assessment requires professional personnel with data collection and statistical analysis capabilities, as well as dedicated funds for the development of assessment tools and cooperation with third-party institutions. However, small and medium-sized public welfare organizations generally have weak resource endowment, making it difficult to attract and retain professional assessment personnel and lacking stable funding channels to support assessment work. This leads to the assessment remaining at the stage of simple data aggregation and formal presentation of reports, unable to truly play the role of verifying project effectiveness and promoting improvement, ultimately forming a vicious cycle where the assessment becomes merely a formality, the project's optimization is weak, and the attractiveness of resources declines.

5.1.2 Insufficient Resource Investment

The long-term impact of public welfare projects requires continuous investment, such as long-term tracking and capacity training. However, current donors tend to support short-term projects with visible results, such as material donations and one-time activities, and have a lower willingness to fund long-term work like assessment, training, and policy advocacy.

For example, a rural women's entrepreneurship project of a certain public welfare organization was forced to stop due to a lack of subsequent funds after completing the training, unable to provide market connection, entrepreneurship loans, etc. as subsequent support, limiting the project's impact to the level of skill acquisition and failing to achieve the ultimate goal of helping women start businesses and increase income.

5.1.3 Insufficient Sustainability

Some public welfare projects overly rely on external resources, such as donation funds and volunteers, and fail to deeply integrate with local communities, resulting in the inability to sustain the project's impact after its conclusion. For example, a rural library project was funded by an external public welfare organization with books and responsible for its operation, but after the project ended, the local community, lacking management capabilities and financial support, gradually abandoned the library, and the initial investment resources failed to form long-term value, interrupting the positive impact of the project.

5.1.4 Low Public Participation

The impact of public welfare projects not only requires actual implementation but also effective dissemination. However, most public welfare organizations' impact dissemination only stops at the stage of result announcement, such as publishing WeChat posts and annual reports, lacking interaction and communication with the public. This makes the public's understanding of the project's impact relatively vague, making it difficult to form a virtuous cycle of donations, participation, and dissemination, limiting the further expansion of the project's social influence.

5.2 Optimization Strategies

5.2.1. Establish a collaborative mechanism among the government, institutions, and third parties

The government level should issue guidelines for impact assessment of public welfare projects, incorporating assessment results into the rating standards of public welfare organizations, guiding institutions to attach importance to assessment work; the public welfare organization level can establish an internal assessment team or apply for assessment through public welfare investment, project funding, etc.; at the same time, introduce

third-party assessment institutions, which can independently and professionally conduct assessments to ensure the objectivity of the results, and the third-party institutions can also provide assessment capacity training for public welfare organizations to help enhance their assessment levels.

5.2.2. Encourage Donors to Focus on Long-Term Value

Public welfare organizations should strengthen impact narrative, using cases and data to show donors the value of long-term investment ; Actively encourage donors to participate in the evaluation process, allowing them to gain a direct understanding of the long-term impact of the project through on-site visits and data interpretation, thereby enhancing their willingness to fund long-term projects. Additionally, explore innovative financing models such as social impact bonds, linking project impact with financial returns to attract diverse stakeholders, including enterprises and foundations, to participate in long-term investment.

5.2.3. Promote localization and community-oriented approaches

To ensure the sustainability of the project's impact after its completion, it is necessary to establish an implementation system centered on the community. During the project design stage, conduct demand and resource research, establish a participatory planning mechanism for community members, and ensure that the project aligns with community needs; implement a local talent cultivation plan, design tiered training based on operational capabilities, and promote the community's transformation from passive assistance to active management; establish a community self-governance mechanism, clarify rights and responsibilities through the establishment of a council and supervision group, and transform the project into a community-owned public service to ensure the long-term continuation of the impact.

5.2.4. Innovate ways of spreading and interacting with influence

To enhance public recognition and trust, and drive a shift from passive donations to deep participation, three core strategies can be implemented to build an efficient interaction system. Implement a visual communication strategy, using platforms such as short videos, documentaries, and data visualization charts to present the project's impact visually. For

example, the Free Lunch project filmed a series of short videos of a child's day, with a cumulative view count of over 1 billion, effectively expanding the project's impact and public awareness; design a scenario-based public participation mechanism, combining interactive forms such as public check-ins and online donation tracking, among which the online donation tracking function enables donors to query the details of fund usage and project progress in real time, strengthening the connection between donation behavior and project outcomes; establish a standardized influence feedback mechanism, regularly release evaluation reports to disclose project outcomes, resource usage, and subsequent plans, and set up channels for public opinion solicitation to invite public participation in discussions on project optimization suggestions, using transparent and interactive methods to enhance public trust and sense of belonging.

The core value of a public welfare project lies in creating real and sustainable impact, from individual changes of beneficiaries, to the alleviation of social problems, to the standardized development of the public welfare industry. Impact is the fundamental criterion for evaluating the success or failure of a public welfare project."The Time-Traveling Game (Scripted Murder + Cross-Border Integration)", Project Number: To be determined] This study, by reviewing the multi-dimensional dimensions of the impact of public welfare projects, constructing a scientific evaluation system, and summarizing experiences from practical cases, has found that current efforts to build the impact of public welfare projects still face issues such as the lack of an evaluation mechanism, insufficient resource investment, weak sustainability, and low public participation. In the future, the public welfare industry needs to shift from scale orientation to impact orientation, public welfare organizations should strengthen the awareness of evaluation, design sustainable project models, donors should focus on long-term value and optimize resource allocation, and the government and society need to form a collaborative mechanism to provide support for the construction of the impact of public welfare projects. Only in this way can public welfare projects truly achieve giving people not only fish but also teaching them how to fish, injecting lasting positive energy into social development.

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