



# An Analysis of the Problems and Countermeasures of Government Purchase of Community Sports Guidance Services

Siyu Chen

School of Architecture, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, China

Email: 945496339@qq.com

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## Abstract

As a new model of public service, government purchase of services has played an active and effective role in many areas of China's social operation. However, as a kind of institutional innovation, there are certain obstacles between the willingness of the purchasing subject, the formulation of the relevant system and the actual supply of services, and the existence of these obstacles has led to the emergence of various practical problems. This paper attempts to examine how to break through these barriers, avoid problems that may arise in the process of purchasing public services, and improve purchasing performance. And this paper also attempts to explore the significance of the purchase of sports guidance services in the community from the perspective of the government's purchase of community sports coaching services, and to analyze the problems that exist when the government purchases public sports services and the countermeasures to solve them through literature research and practical case studies.

## Subject Areas

Public Economics

## Keywords

Government Purchase of Services, Social Sports Guidance Service, Public Services

## 1. Background of the Research

The continuous development of the economy and society has put forward higher standards for national physical fitness, and the task of improving national phys-

ical fitness has become an important part of the government's work, so the government's purchase of services for the public is increasingly focused on the field of sports, and the government's practice in purchasing sports services is also increasing. At present, the main form of government purchase of public sports services is to entrust qualified social organizations with the funding of government departments to carry out social sports guidance, relying on professional organizations to improve the level of guidance safely, efficiently and scientifically on the one hand, and to select the most cost-effective service provider by means of tendering on the other, so as to promote the efficient use of government funds.

### **1.1. Government Purchase of Services**

The purchase of public services by the Chinese government began in the Shanghai Municipal Government's home care business, but in recent years, Chinese government departments have expanded the scope of purchase to include public education, labor education, medicine and health, housing protection, community assistance, social and cultural sports, etc. The purchase of public services by government departments is a common term for the purchase of public services by government departments from economic and social organizations. The state organ will pay the supplier according to the quantity and quality of the service [1]. This new model of public service is playing an active role in various areas of China's social operation, has had an important and far-reaching impact on the economy, politics, culture and society, and has also played a great role in deepening the "administration and service" reform and building a service-oriented government.

### **1.2. Social Sports Guidance Services**

The construction of a higher level of public service system for national fitness is one of the major goals and tasks in the development of sports in China during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, so the construction of a system of government purchase of public sports services should become an important part of the construction of a higher level of public service system for national fitness. The most important part of the development process of sport in China, which has gone through different periods, is the development of social sport, which is also an important part of the four beams of the "four beams and eight pillars" proposed by our President Xi Jinping. In addition, the level of development of social sports can effectively reflect the overall level of development of sports in China, which is conducive to the improvement of the physical and mental quality of the people and social stability, therefore, social sports guidance services to improve the physical quality of the nation is very necessary. However, at present, social sports guidance institutions in China are generally composed of professional instructors and exist in the form of social organizations, which are profit-making and cannot fully meet the needs of the public for sports guidance [2] [3]. The government's purchase of social sports coaching services is of great importance to

the equalization of public services, and relying on professional social sports coaching organizations to improve the physical quality of the nation through safe, efficient and scientific training methods can make sports really reach the people.

### **1.3. Current Status of Research Related to Government Purchase of Sports Services**

In today's growing development of national fitness, the state attaches great importance to improving the quality of public sports services, and relevant policies have been issued at the national, provincial and municipal levels, and the government's purchase of public sports services has been carried out in an orderly manner. From the perspective of the government, Zhang Dachao [4] points out the problems that affect the government's purchase of public sports services and the uneven quality of public sports services, and identifies the risks faced by the government at each stage of purchasing public sports services, by delineating the specific aspects of the purchase of public sports services. The study also identifies the risks faced by the government in purchasing public sports services and proposes preventive measures. Lu Wei [5], on the other hand, analyses the value of government purchase of public sports services through various research methods, such as literature research and interview methods, and points out that there are problems such as government purchase of sports services failing to effectively reduce costs, failing to effectively transfer [6] government functions and unfair competition among contractors, and puts forward corresponding optimization strategies. From an empirical perspective, Tian Si takes the data related to public sports services in 30 provinces and cities across China from 2013 to 2017 as a sample to study the impact of government purchase of services on the efficiency of public sports services, so as to make suggestions for the market-oriented development of public sports services. This study will provide suggestions for the market-based development of public sports services. Through the analysis of the current situation of sports social organizations and their development of government purchased services, Cui Jianing [7] examines their real-life dilemmas and analyses the specific reasons based on the requirements of relevant policy texts and laws and regulations, and proposes a mixed governance path that can improve the capacity and efficiency of government purchased services in accordance with China's social background.

By collating and analyzing the research of Chinese scholars on government purchase of public services, it can be found that most of the relevant studies are based on the current situation of government purchase of sports services, the problems faced and the solutions; and the practice of government purchase of sports services in China is slightly inadequate compared with that of developed countries. The quality of public sports services provided in the market varies, and the lack of understanding of public services on the part of the purchasing body also significantly reduces the efficiency of purchasing. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the problems of government purchase of community sports

guidance services from the practice of government purchase of community sports guidance services and proposes countermeasures to improve the efficiency of government purchase of community sports services, with a view to providing a reference for the diversified development of government purchase of public sports services in China.

## **2. The Significance and Practice of Government Purchase of Community Sports Guidance Services**

### **2.1. Significance of Government Purchase of Community Sports Coaching Services**

#### **2.1.1. Effective Ways to Improve the Physical Quality of the Nation**

The continuous development of China's economy and society has placed higher demands on the physical quality of the nation, and the task of improving the physical quality of the nation has become an important part of the government's work. The government's purchase of social sports guidance services can stimulate people's enthusiasm to participate in social sports, create a good atmosphere for all people to play sports, make social sports guidance institutions, sports associations, universities, individuals and other social forces to join them, and make full use of public space in the city as a sports venue, so as to make the popularization of a broader range of people, by making people more involved in sports will continue to enhance the interest and enthusiasm for sports. The aim is to increase the interest and enthusiasm of the public in sport, and ultimately to improve the physical quality of the population.

#### **2.1.2. Important Ways to Promote the Development of Social Sports Organizations**

Under a highly monolithic economic and social management system, government departments are the main providers of public services, resulting in a relatively small number of channels for community groups to provide public service and sporting activities. By purchasing community sports guidance services, the government has transferred some of the public sports services originally undertaken by local government departments to sports social organizations, providing them with the opportunity to transform and upgrade, creating huge room for development and relevant policies and regulations to guide and secure funding, which to a considerable extent has promoted the development and expansion of sports social organizations. It has further enhanced the community credibility of sports social organizations, making them the core organizations of the government in guiding the healthy development of public sports, improving the overall service level of the government's community sports guidance, and promoting the development and growth of community sports guidance organizations.

#### **2.1.3. An Inevitable Choice to Improve the Quality and Efficiency of Social Sports Guidance Service Supply**

Traditionally, government departments have often monopolized the provision of social sports coaching services, which has led to various disadvantages such as

high costs, low effectiveness and poor professionalism. At the same time, government departments are motivated by their own interests, their own profits, and the personal preferences and mentality of government officials, which can make the provision of social sports coaching services unprotected in terms of quality and effectiveness. If the government purchases services from the government, or outsources services to social sports organizations through contracts, or gives funding to social sports organizations according to the quality of the services they provide, the government, once properly supervised, will be able to give full play to the professional advantages of social sports organizations, thus improving the overall level of social sports guidance services, especially under the new system of competitive bidding and elimination, and will be able to promote and improve the quality and effectiveness of social sports guidance services. In particular, under the new system of competitive bidding and elimination, the quality and effectiveness of social sports coaching services will be enhanced.

#### **2.1.4. Transforming Government Functions and Promoting Innovative Exploration of Service-Oriented Government Construction**

The purchase of social sports guidance services by the government has completely changed the traditional monopoly on the supply of public social sports services, which was mainly provided by the national government administrative system and extended organizations. At the same time, it has fully mobilized the community to actively participate in the supply of public social sports guidance services, separating the “output” from the “supply” of social sports guidance services, and implementing the separation of government services. By purchasing social sports guidance services, the government can change its traditional role as provider, producer and supervisor in the process of purchasing public services, and devote more energy to formulating relevant laws and policies and strengthening supervision, which adapts to the characteristics of the current change in the governmental system and enhances the responsibilities of government departments, promoting the construction of a social service government department.

### **2.2. Exploration of Government Purchase of Community Sports Guidance Services**

#### **2.2.1. Provisions of Relevant Legislation and Government Systems**

In order to further promote the institutionalization of public service procurement and to regulate the public sports services and activities procured by the government, articles 2 and 5 of the Regulations on Fitness for All, which were implemented in 2009, stipulate that when formulating social development plans, people’s governments at or above the county level are required to include the cause of comprehensive fitness in their plans and encourage social organizations and associations at all levels to carry out fitness activities for all, and to clarify the scope of responsibilities of various departments is clearly defined. The National Fitness Plan (2011-2015), promulgated in 2011, has led to a growing enthusiasm for sports among the people and

a growing demand for public sports services from the corresponding government departments, but due to the limited capacity and resources of government departments and the corresponding social sports administrative departments, the services provided by the government are unable to meet the needs of the public [8]. In order to assist in the planning of policies, the government must plan the implementation of social sports guidance in terms of the work of government departments, their areas of responsibility and the tasks of the various authorities.

### **2.2.2. Improve the Service Level of Social Sports Instructors and Increase the Number of Service Stations**

The number of sports instructors is gradually increasing in more social sports instructing institutions, and to ensure not only an increase in quantity but also in quality and in conjunction with the implementation of the Health Behaviour Plan, the government has simultaneously introduced the Community Sports Instructor Scheme, among others. The relevant provisions of Articles 4, 7, 24, 28 and 36 of these articles clearly allow sports instructors at all levels to actively participate in community activities, encourage physical education teachers to voluntarily participate in community sports activities and place the management of community sports instructors under the administrative management of sports in each municipality; certain associations of instructors have been established in the province or region to undertake the management of community sports; provincial People's governments and sports administrators should invest a portion of local financial expenditures and the allocation of sports lottery funds for the benefit of community instructors, but should invest more as the work of social sports instructors develops; they also advocate private enterprises, community groups and individuals to invest in supporting the work of social sports instructors; where possible, local people's governments and sports administrators can also provide social sports instructors with Where possible, local people's governments and sports authorities can also provide social insurance for the work of social sports instructors. In addition, in Shenzhen, for example, the management of community sports instructors' services has been standardised in recent years, and a large number of social sports instructors' service stations have been set up (Table 1).

### **2.2.3. The Practice of Government-Led Purchase of Social Guidance Services**

There is a national trend for governments to purchase social sports guidance services, and many provincial and municipal governments and social sports administrations have already begun to implement the purchase of public sports services. Beijing's 12th Five-Year Plan stipulates that communities should invest at least 50,000 yuan to purchase public sports services, and by the end of the 12th Five-Year Plan, the city's community sports should reach sports standardization and cover public sports services across the city; in Hubei and Changsha, the government has purchased public sports services by providing free swimming

services for primary and secondary school students; Guangdong has also actively carried out mass sports activities and included public sports services such as the organization and management of public sports competitions in the government procurement catalogue. Guangdong is also active in mass sports activities and has included public sports services such as the organization and management of public sports competitions in its government procurement catalogue.

**Table 1.** Excerpts from the list of social sports instructor service stations in Shenzhen.

Serial number	Site name	Guidance projects	Practice area	Practice time
1	Huangbei Street Yijing Community Social Sports Instructor Service Point	Waist Drum, Mulan Fist, Rally Ball, Yangge, Handclapping Drum, Exercise Ball	Excelsior Garden Basketball Court, Dance Studio (within the same community)	7:40-9:40 daily 8:30-10:30
2	Social Sports Instructor Service Point of Luohu Taiji Research Association in Xinxing Community, Liantang Street	Tai Chi, Fitness Qigong, Softball	Luohu Stadium Square	Wednesdays and Thursdays 7:30-9:30
3	Social Sports Instructor Service Point in Honghu Park, Honghu Community, Zhuanggang Street	Tai Chi, Square Dance, Softball, Folk Dance Fitness Instruction	Hong Hu Park, Tian Bei Sunshine Activity Centre	Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun 7:30am-9:00am Tue, Thu 9:00am-10:30am
4	Nanhu Street Jia Nan Community Social Sports Instructor Service Point	Square dance, ghost step, aerobics fitness instruction	Golden Glory Plaza	Mon-Sat 20:00-22:00 pm
5	South Lake Street Friendship Community Social Sports Instructor Service Point	Square Dance, Ghost Dance, Table Tennis	Spring Wind Cultural and Sports Park	Every evening Regular 7:40-9:40
6	Pengxing Community Social Sports Instructor Service Point, Liantang Street	Tai Chi, Yangge, Softball	Cultural Square, Phase 1, 2 and 3 of Peng Hing Garden, Training Ground outside the Water Field	Monday to Sunday 8:00-9:30
7	Cuizhu Community, Cuizhu Street, Cuizhu Court Social Sports Instructor Service Point	Table tennis, basketball, dance	Chui Chu Court Basketball Court, Chui Chu Court Activity Centre, Chui Chu Court Living Area Park	Daily: 8:30-10:30 Saturday: 17:30-19:30
8	Tsui Tsui Ling Community Social Sports Instructor Service Point, Tsui Tsui Street	Stretchball, Tai Chi, Square Dance	Chui Chu Cultural Square, Park West Square	Monday and Friday: 8:30-9:30 7:00-9:00
9	Social Sports Instructor Service Point of Nong Yuan Community Elderly Association of Xiang Mi Lake Street	Wushu, Taijiquan, Fitness Qigong, Fitness Yangge	East Ocean Plaza, Xiangmi Lake	Daily 7:00am-9:00pm Monday to Saturday 20:00pm-21:00pm
10	Social Sports Instructor Service Point at Fotan Sports Park, Xinhua Community, Sha Tau Street	Square Dance, Aerobics, Yangge, Exercise Ball, Taijiquan, Aerobic Combined Exercise	Futian Sports Park Plaza	Monday to Saturday 7:30-9:00 (Grandstand Promenade) 20:00-21:00 every evening (Gymnasium Plaza)

(Source: Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Film and Tourism Sports).

### **3. Problems of the Government's Purchase of Community Sports Guidance Services**

#### **3.1. Lack of Government Willingness to Buy on Its Own Initiative**

The public sector is an important market player in ensuring the provision of public sports services, but in the new normal of government purchase of services, the public sector still faces the ideology of not wanting to buy or not being willing to buy [9]. This is a major factor preventing the government from purchasing social sports coaching services. For a long time, the government has attached slightly less importance to the purchase of public services in sports compared to other services, and the management of these services is directly under the responsibility of government departments. Lacking a comprehensive understanding of the purchase of public services, the government has been reluctant or even unwilling to let go of the purchase of public services for fear of losing departmental interests, resulting in a large number of public services not being truly delivered to social organizations and enterprises in the form of commissions. This has not only resulted in the failure to smoothly implement the purchase of public services, but also in the government departments themselves lacking sufficient staff and energy to ensure the quality and effectiveness of public services. On the other hand, due to the influence of the current social system, some sectors such as education and sports still resist decentralization and gradually tend to monopolize the public sports services provided by the government to the society. Under the influence of social inertia, government departments often do not choose to use direct social procurement methods in the first place, but instead expand their institutional set-ups and increase the cost of services by expanding their staffing levels, which ultimately results in the expansion of government administrative organizations, confusion in management structures and a serious reduction in the effectiveness of the provision of public sports services. However, government departments often outsource the direction of social sports to social organizations such as sport, reducing the power of government departments and adding to their own regulatory workload, while some departments prefer to use government power to achieve their objectives directly and quickly due to time and efficiency constraints. This is compounded by the fact that some government departments are no longer able to cope with the market, are unsure of how to change their functions, are unaware of what community sports coaching and other services should be outsourced to the market, and are offering unrealistic service options. In addition, social sports guidance services usually focus on the bidding process and ignore the actual quality of service, once the cost is in hand, the service is greatly reduced so that the government purchase of services is also a formality, easily resulting in poor service quality and efficiency, which is very likely to cause government administrators "lazy", and in the long run, government departments are reluctant to independently procure public services.



### 3.2. Insufficient Government Regulation

An effective monitoring system is a key guarantee for the quality and effectiveness of government procurement of social sports guidance services, but a variety of factors have caused a lack of scientific, powerful and systematic effective supervision of the quality of government procurement of social sports guidance services. According to relevant statistics, there are 661,000 grass-roots administrative units in China, with 48,000 legal human sports social organizations, an average of 1 legal human sports social organization for every 13.8 grass-roots administrative units, and an average of 1 official sports social organization for every 9660 sports exercisers, measured by 460 million people who regularly participate in physical exercise, which is a small number. At present, there is no third-party organization to evaluate the government's purchase of sports services, and even if there are some service evaluation benchmarks, there are no scientific and systematic evaluation guidelines, and they only point out the general problems on a macro level and lack guidance on a micro level. When it comes to service evaluation, research reports are mostly used as the main reference material, lacking objectivity and scientificity; in the actual implementation process, the phenomenon of "hello, I'm good, everyone's good" has emerged, making supervision and evaluation more formalized. Secondly, due to the small number of sports organizations and their weak economic power, government procurement is mostly not conducted in a competitive manner. Social sports guidance organizations usually lack the necessary sense of competition and elimination, as the number of competitors is small, even if the quality is not sufficient. Similarly, the dependence of sports organizations on local governments, combined with the profit motive brought by the national economic system, makes public procurement prone to "connected transactions".

### 3.3. Lack of Relevant Policies and Regulations

As a binding, authoritative and standardized tool for governments to promote institutional reform, policies and regulations play an important regulatory role in the public service purchasing process. However, institutional imperfections remain the most important factor affecting the progress of public service procurement. In countries where public procurement was introduced earlier, it is governed by strict legislation based on the principles of socialist market economy. The law covers a wide range of areas, including purpose, criteria, content, procedures, principles, methods, agreements, types, cost ranges, evaluation, disputes and operational steps. The Government Procurement Law and the Law on Bidding and Tendering are not yet able to provide for and control the government's purchase of social and sports guidance services. The relevant regulations on social sports also lack descriptions of the specific content of the government's purchase of social sports service projects. In some regions, government departments mainly promote the purchase of public social sports service projects through relevant local government documents, interim measures for manage-

ment, guidelines and relevant documents, but are unable to ensure the standardized operation of the local government's purchase of social sports guidance services, thus leading to the local purchase or The quality of the effect of the government's purchase of social sports service projects is poor.

### **3.4. Insufficient Resident Participation**

The effectiveness of public services for the public depends to a large extent on the participation of the population, but in general, the general public has little awareness of the right to free services and monitoring, and feels that free services are not relevant to them, so they rarely participate in social sports guidance, which makes the services superficial. In addition, social sports guidance services are mostly provided to older people, with fewer young people, and the content of the guidance is mainly traditional sports, with fewer new forms of sports, resulting in less interest and enthusiasm from residents. On the other hand, because of the lack of publicity for this type of service by the purchasing body, the public is less or even unaware of the availability of such public services in the community, which also leads to inefficient service provision.

## **4. Measures to Enhance the Government's Ability to Buy Community Sports Coaching**

### **4.1. Increase Purchasing Efforts to Stimulate the Initiative of Government Purchases**

In the whole process of government purchase of social sports guidance services, because of poor market information, weak social institutions of sports services, weak awareness of social supervision and inadequate quality assessment system, the government often fails to supervise, which seriously affects the effectiveness of the purchase of public service products and service quality, and the government has a "lazy" mentality, or even unwilling to purchase. Therefore, it is necessary to mobilize the enthusiasm of government procurement and to strengthen the power of purchasing community sports guidance services. With the increase in the scale of government procurement of youth and public sport services and the accumulation of successful experiences, there is an urgent need to improve the financial support and to innovate in the ways and means of purchasing. With the needs of the masses as the dominant factor in deciding the content, scale and strength of procurement, government procurement has become more effective and has gradually completed the transition from "trying to buy" to "buying only when the people need it". First, the government should study the needs of the people in the field of sports and consider regional differences, and establish a catalogue of public sports services procured by the government according to the different needs of sports in each region, so as to continuously improve the services procured by the government. Secondly, citizens should be given more say in the evaluation of the performance of public service purchases. Thirdly, the cost of social sports guidance services purchased by the

government should be included in the government budget and the level of procurement should be gradually increased. This is to ensure that the national economy and social sports for the masses grow in tandem with each other due to the growth in demand.

#### **4.2. Strengthen the Supervision of the Whole Process, Focusing on the Effectiveness and Quality of the Purchased Services**

To strengthen the whole process of supervision, so that the policy product is not only purchased, but also bought for value, in order to achieve the best results of the government's financial investment. Firstly, we need to change the view of administrative power, the rights and obligations of both the policy for consumers and the participation of sports and social development organizations in policy purchases are equal, while the department should also do a good job of supervision, in order to prevent the department from using its own authority to avoid economic responsibility, and to avoid the government's administrative authority and vacancies. Secondly, a rigorous standard policy purchase process should be formed to further subdivide and strictly regulate the requirements, contents, standards, conditions and process of policy purchase. In addition, in order to prevent the emergence of policy information rent-seeking, a scientific and effective policy evaluation system should be formed, a special policy third-party monitoring and evaluation system should be formed, a corresponding information evaluation platform should be established, attention should be paid to the diversity of evaluation subjects, and problems found in the process of social institutions sports guidance government public services should be dealt with in a timely manner, and accountability should be pursued. Finally, a platform should also be set up between the public sector, groups and the general public in order to improve communication and interaction between the two sides and to effectively grasp the situation of military purchases, to guide sports social development services, to supervise the work of the sector, to create a good and healthy atmosphere, and to promote the regular development of government purchases and community sports coaching operations.

#### **4.3. Build Relevant Policy and Regulatory Systems to Regulate Commodity Purchasing Behaviour**

The government's purchase of social sports guidance services is a comprehensive activity with a wide scope and strong policy, and there must be a complete system, scientific and standardized, efficient operation of the regulatory system to regulate the process of government procurement, to ensure and promote the results of reform and development. At present, the state has not yet formulated special regulations for government procurement of public sports services. Therefore, in order to regulate the government's purchase of social sports guidance services, China urgently needs to formulate the Government Procurement Law and authoritative legislation on government procurement of public sports services, so as to consider public social sports services as a specific category of

government purchase and build a scientific and authoritative legislative system to regulate government procurement activities; it is necessary to promote the legislation on the basic law of social organizations, so as to clarify the relatively It is necessary to promote the legislation of the basic law of social organizations, so as to clarify the relatively independent legal status of social organizations, and to break the relationship of power and dependence between government departments and social organizations, so as to release the legitimacy of social organizations. In conclusion, however, the government's purchase of social sports guidance services is still new, and there is an urgent need for a legal system to regulate the implementation process, in order to reduce the costs of trial and error in the process of exploration.

#### **4.4. Purchase of Services Oriented to the Needs of the Public, Increase the Publicity of Public Services**

The main target audience of public services is the entire nation, and the social sports guidance and advisory services purchased by the government cover a wide range of areas and reach a large number of people. Therefore, local government departments should fully investigate and understand the actual needs and interests of the people when purchasing community sports guidance services, and make the purchase of services more detailed according to the characteristics of different genders and age groups, and purchase services that are suitable for more people to participate in, so as to avoid the dilemma of having services that are not enjoyed by anyone. In addition, increased publicity for the purchase of sports guidance services can increase public awareness of such services, and regular publicity of the purchased public sports in various media can increase the enthusiasm and active participation of the public.

### **5. Conclusion**

At present, the level of national physical fitness is increasingly becoming an important criterion for evaluating a country's comprehensive national power, and it is imperative to enhance the efficiency of government purchase of public sports services. However, the government's purchase of public sports services is still at the stage of feeling the stones to cross the river in China, and the scope of the pilot project is not large. In the process of implementation, there are inevitably a series of problems, such as the enthusiasm of government departments, the inherent competitiveness of sports organizations, the strength of government purchase, supervision, legal standards, etc. How to develop social sports guidance institutions, cultivate competitive, unique and charming social sports guidance service organizations, explore diversified and mutual check and balance service supply mechanisms, and form standardized policy and regulatory incentive mechanisms and guidance, etc., is necessary to promote the normal development of state financial purchase and public sports service projects. Based on the above exploration, the author puts forward three prospects: 1) standard-

ize social sports guidance organizations to ensure that the government is the main purchaser of high-quality public services; 2) strengthen the government's awareness of purchase and cultivate the awareness of the relevant departments' personnel to take the initiative to purchase public services; 3) purchase public services should be oriented to the actual needs of citizens, and the problem of inefficient purchase should be solved from the practical point of view.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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