Research on the Management Mechanism of BALIS Projects

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Abstract

Beijing Academic Library & Information System (BALIS), a nonprofit organization and the largest Regional Alliance of University Library (RAOUL) in Beijing, is the representative of Chinese RAOULs. BALIS founded in 2007 has 100 member libraries and covers almost all university libraries in Beijing. BALIS has achieved the aim of literature resources between member libraries, which define the life of BALIS and what it does well. BALIS Management Committee (BMCE) organizes the application of Subprojects (SPS) every year and ensures opportunity for every BALIS Member Library. After the SPS is approved, the BALIS Management Center (BMC) is responsible for monitoring and controlling the SPS. This article mainly adopts the method of case analysis to study BALIS's management of SPS, funds, and performance, and its purpose is to explain the management mechanism of Chinese RAOULs.

1. Introduction

BALIS is one of the higher education public service systems in Beijing, which is a nonprofit organization approved by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission (BMEC). The BMEC has given strong support to the development of BALIS, without the support of the BMEC, BALIS could not exist at all. It has to say that obtaining financial support from the education department of the local government is the key factor for the existence and development of Chinese RAOULs. BALIS is the representative of Chinese RAOULs. For the RAOULs, if they can improve the relationship with local governments and solve the problem of the source of funds, they will be half successful to transfer the literature resources

between libraries in a city. BALIS, established in 2007 (Ding et al., 2010), as the largest Regional University Library Alliance (RULA) in Beijing (Yi, 2014), has 100 member libraries nowadays, covering almost all university libraries in Beijing. BALIS has realized the sharing of literature resources between member libraries, which has handled the relationship with BMEC well and that is one of the important reasons for its rapid development since its birth. BALIS Management Committee (BMCE) organizes the application of Subprojects (SPS) every year (BALIS, 2007), these items will be disclosed to all members and allow each member of BALIS to declare. Although the number of SPS each year is not fixed, which mainly depends on the development needs of BALIS and the amount of financial support, BMCE should ensure opportunity for every BALIS Member Library who's willing to undertake. If BMEC gives more funds, the BMCE will approve more subprojects accordingly. If BMEC gives fewer funds or even does not allocate funds in the current year, the number of SPS approved by the BMCE will be reduced accordingly, or even no project will be approved. The BMC is the actual manager of the SPS, and it plays a role in monitoring and controlling the SPS.

2. Project Management

The Construction of BALIS (COB) is gradually promoted by adopting the method of Project Approval (PA), which is the key to the rapid development of BALIS. The PA means monitoring and controlling. Whether the monitoring and controlling are effective is determined by how well they help BALIS achieve its development goals. The COB is carried out in the way of project PA, that is, BALIS will achieve its own development goals through bidding projects every year, and the members of BALIS have the opportunity to win the projects, if BALIS Member Libraries can complete these projects. For large projects, some members of the BALIS usually work together to complete them. Generally speaking, BMCE will gather information from members of BALIS for alternative projects. To promote the COB, BCAL established BMCE, whose executive agency is BMC, BMCE Secretariat performs the duties of BMC in fact (Wang et al., 2008), which is located in the library of Renmin University of China, and it is responsible for the implementation and management of BALIS project (Yi & Lin, 2013), and it determines the construction of SP according to the project approved by the BCAL. A new project generally requires a library to make a substantial construction scheme. Each SP has a Construction Unit (CU) to be responsible for the BMC (BALIS, 2007), CU as the main executor of the project construction plays a very important role in the actual operation of the project. Without the monitoring and controlling of the CU in the whole project construction process, the project is also difficult to complete on time. So, the main purpose of setting up the CU is to improve work efficiency. Each SP is managed by the contracting member library, which needs to set up a Subproject Management Team (SPMT). SPMT is responsible for the management and completion of the project. For the subpro-

ject with multiple libraries participating in the construction, one or two members of the SPMT must come from non-constructing units, the purpose is to make the project management more scientific and efficient, and also to prevent corruption. The contractor shall prepare the "*Feasibility Study Report of Subproject Construction (FSROSPC)*", only when the *FSROSPC* is approved by the BMCE can the project is truly implemented. It can be said that BALIS has its management control system, which means BALIS can coordinate the planning and control decisions to guide the behavior of its members.

3. Fund Management

The Subproject Fund Management (SFM) is usually delegated to the BMCE, because the BMCE has a better management experience, which will be more efficient in the use of funds. If BMCE carries out financial management directly, the subproject contractors of BALIS can use these funds more conveniently. According to the requirements of the BMCE, the SFM must comply with the financial regulations of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Finance, the purpose of this is, on the one hand, to improve the efficiency of the use of funds, so that the limited funds can be used for projects, and on the other hand, to prevent the occurrence of corruption.

For the rapid start of sub-project construction, the SPCU should prepare an "SPS annual budget" well in advance, so that the BMC can apply for funds in time. The budget of the SPCU is used for two distinct purposes-planning and control. The planning involves the developing goal of the BALIS development; the control involves gathering feedback to ensure that the plan of BALIS development is being properly executed. The budget of the SPCU should usually include the data collection, integration, and processing costs. For RAOCUL, data processing is a big expense, especially for the construction of characteristic databases, it is also a place where libraries have been using digital technology for years (Xu & Lu, 2017). The adoption of new technologies, such as modern machine tools and computer systems in libraries had brought about continuous improvement of service level, therefore, the budget will also include the purchase of the latest information technology. At the same time, the budget must also include the cost of Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery (DD). In the practice of BALIS, the cost of ILL and DD is a huge expense (Yi & Zhang, 2012), which spends between 300,000 and 700,000 yuan annually. The BMCE shall organize experts to evaluate the budget every year. Expert opinions often fall into two categories—screening opinions and preference decisions. The screening opinions relate to whether a proposed project is acceptable; the preference decisions relate to selecting from acceptable alternatives.

The Subproject Construction Unit (SPCU) must use the funds in accordance under the budget (BALIS, 2007). The BMCE almost always needs to know both types of costs when it is making decisions. For instance, comparing budgeted costs to actual costs helps the BMCE to evaluate how well the SPCU controlling

costs. The funds are mainly managed by the BMC, not by the SPCU during the construction of the subprojects, if the SPCU needs to spend more money to do something, it can apply to the BMC, and the BMC will pay for it directly. In principle, the annual funding of the SP must be implemented as planned in the current year (BALIS, 2007), which will be reviewed by the BMC.

4. Performance Management

The Performance Management (PM) of the BALIS Subprojects (BSPS) is an important link to ensure the smooth completion of the BSPS. So, the PM of the BSPS is mainly concerned with the progress of the project, the construction quality, and the expenditure of funds of the project, which mainly includes two parts: document review and site investigation. According to the requirements of the BMCE, the contractor must submit *the Subproject Interim Inspection Report*, *the Subproject Acceptance Report*, and *the Subproject Performance Evaluation Report* to BMCE in time. According to the regulations of the BMFB and the BMEC, the BSPS also needs to accept the mid-term inspection and performance evaluation of the Beijing Municipal Financial Evaluation Center, which is a subsidiary of the BMFB, whose review and evaluation focus more on financial aspects. If the subproject fails to pass the mid-term inspection, the BMEC will stop funding. To ensure the quality of the BSPS, the SPCU must regularly report the progress of the project to the BMC at any time, and the MCE and the BMC have the right to check the progress of the SPS at any time (BALIS, 2007). The performance reports in nonprofit organizations are the same as the governmental performance reports. With one prominent difference, nonprofit organizations like BALIS, usually can't receive a significant amount of funding from sources. The SPCU can not change the construction content, if the BMCE finds that the contractor has violated the agreement, the BMCE has the right to cancel the SPS (BALIS, 2007). If any one or more of the provisions contained in the SPC Agreement shall be invalid, the validity of the remaining provisions contained herein shall not in any way be affected.

5. File Management

To access the archives in the future and provide experience for other BALIS' sub-projects, all the construction files of the SP should be submitted to the BMC. According to the regulations of the BMC, these documents should contain at least five aspects: "SPC Guidelines (SPCGs)", "SPC Feasibility Study Report (SPCFSR)", "SPC Agreement (SPCA)", "SP Mid-term Inspection Report and Evaluation Opinion (SPMIR and EO)" and "SP Acceptance Report and Conclusion of Acceptance (SPAR and CA)". These documents are very important, especially the first three documents, which can be said to be the basic files for the construction of the BALIS sub-project. The SPCG focuses on the overall situation and is the guiding outline for the construction of the whole subproject. It is generally formulated by the BMCE, mainly including the construction objectives, specific con-

tents, expected indicators, progress requirements, etc. (BALIS, 2007). The SPCG reflects the overall requirements of the BMCE for the construction of BALIS, and that is the guide for the development of BALIS. It contains the specific direction and steps of the development of BALIS, and is a strategic document to guide the development of BALIS. So, it is unthinkable to construct a sub-project without the SPCG, so the SPCG must be archived, which is very important for summarizing the construction experience of the subprojects. The SPCFSR is very important for the successful approval of the subproject and is a necessary document for experts to read when studying the feasibility of the applied project. From the SPCFSR, we can generally see whether the sub-project undertaking unit can complete the project. If even the SPCFSR is not well written, it means that the construction unit applying for the sub-project cannot complete the project at all. Therefore, the SPCFSR is one of the core documents for the construction of the BALIS sub-project, and it must be submitted to BMCE for management. Through The SPCFSR, the BMCE wants to know whether the contractor can achieve the construction goal of BALIS. If the CU can't complete the construction task required by the BMCE, the BMCE will not choose this contractor. The "SPCA" is a contract jointly signed by the management committee and the CU, which mainly includes the objectives, tasks, schedule, etc. (BALIS, 2007). The "SPCA" is a legally binding contract formally signed by both parties, which marks the formal establishment of the BALIS sub-project. Since the "SPCA" is a formal contract with legal effect, the content of the agreement on the rights and obligations of both parties will be more detailed. The formal contract has the same legal effect for both parties. Once the contract is signed, both parties must comply with the requirements of the contract to carry out the construction of the BALIS sub-project. The SPMIR and EO are the embodiment of the importance of process management in the construction of the BALIS subproject and an important link to guarantee the construction of the BALIS subproject. Through the SPMIR and EO, problems existing in the construction of BALIS subproject can be found in time, risk points can be found, and these problems and hidden dangers can be solved, to ensure the smooth construction of BALIS subproject. The SPAR and CA are the documents formed during the construction and acceptance stage of the BALIS sub-project, and are the last link of the whole sub-project construction. The SPAR and CA are the sign of the end of the construction of the BALIS subproject, representing the completion of the whole project. The main content of The SPAR and CA are the evaluation of the construction quality of the BALIS subproject and the overall evaluation of whether the project construction expectations are met. The above five documents are of great significance for standardizing the construction process of the BALIS subproject, supervising the construction progress of the project, and controlling the construction quality of the project. From them, we can well summarize the advantages and disadvantages of the construction of BALIS subprojects, to provide a better reference for the development of BALIS.

6. Conclusion

Through the above analysis, it is not difficult to find that we can understand the BSPS Management Mechanism (MM) from four aspects: subproject management, financial management, performance management, and file management. For the Chinese RAOULs, their project MM is the same. Therefore, we can also see the MM of the Chinese RAOULs from the BSPS. Because BALIS is the largest regional library alliance in Beijing, and is also a representative of URLAS in China. The MM is an indispensable condition to support the sustainable development of the RAOULs in China.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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