

**L.R. Gimranova\*, T.P. Pritvorova, G.I. Gimranova**

Karagandy University of Kazpotrebooyuz, Kazakhstan, Karagandy

\*e-mail: leylagimranova@mail.ru

## **ANALYSIS OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT “SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT” IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

The establishment of links between small and medium-sized enterprises (hereinafter referred to as SMEs) and foreign investors/multinational companies in Kazakhstan primarily depends on the favorable conditions imposed by the state for such investors.

Business relationships with SMEs provide large firms with channels that reduce costs, increase productivity, enhance reputation, access local knowledge, and establish themselves in the local market. Actively expanding and strengthening business ties has been a major priority for the pilot of the Kazakhstan Supplier Development Project (hereinafter referred to as SDP).

Given the fact that large firms operating or planning to operate in Kazakhstan may find it difficult to find SMEs offering relevant products and services, as well as to assess their qualifications and obtain the information needed to reduce risk when conducting transactions with them, SDP plays an important role in providing information and matchmaking services.

The main purpose of this article is to analyze the management of a pilot PSA project in Kazakhstan. The authors considered the main stages of the project implementation and their results, proposed appropriate recommendations to prevent possible risks during the implementation of the second and subsequent cycles. A systematic approach and a method of data analysis were used in the study.

**Key words:** competitiveness, public administration, supplier, project management, SMEs, industry, multinational companies.

Л.Р. Гимранова\*, Т.П. Притворова, Г.И. Гимранова

Қазтұтынуодағы Қарағанды университеті, Қазақстан, Қарағанды қ.

\*e-mail: leylagimranova@mail.ru

### **Қазақстан Республикасында «Жеткізушілерді дамыту бағдарламасы» жобасын басқаруды талдау**

Шағын және орта кәсіпорындар (бұдан әрі – ШОК) мен Қазақстандағы шетелдік инвесторлар/көпұлтты компаниялар арасындағы байланыстарды жолға қою, бірінші кезекте, мемлекеттің осындай инвесторлар үшін енгізген қолайлы жағдайларына байланысты.

ШОК-пен іскерлік байланыс ірі фирмаларға шығындарды азайтуға, өнімділікті арттыруға, беделді нығайтуға, жергілікті білімге қол жеткізуге және жергілікті нарықта ыңғайлы болуға мүмкіндік беретін арналар ұсынады. Іскерлік байланыстарды белсенді кеңейту және нығайту Қазақстанда жеткізушілерді дамыту бағдарламасының (бұдан әрі – ЖДБ) пилоттық жобасын іске асыру үшін негізгі басымдыққа айналды.

Қазақстанда өз қызметін жүзеге асыратын немесе жүзеге асыруды жоспарлап отырған ірі фирмаларға тиісті өнімдер мен қызметтерді ұсынатын ШОК табу, сондай-ақ олардың біліктілігін бағалау, олармен операциялар жүргізу кезінде тәуекелді азайту үшін қажетті ақпарат алу қиын болуы мүмкін екенін ескере отырып, ЖДБ ақпарат ұсынуда және қызметтер көрсетуде маңызды рөл атқарады.

Осы мақаланың негізгі мақсаты – Қазақстандағы ӨБК пилоттық жобасын басқаруды талдау. Авторлар жобаны іске асырудың негізгі кезеңдерін және олардың нәтижелерін қарастырды, екінші және кейінгі циклдерді жүзеге асыруда ықтимал қауіптердің алдын алу үшін тиісті ұсыныстар ұсынды. Зерттеуде жүйелік тәсіл және деректерді талдау әдісі қолданылды.

**Түйін сөздер:** бәсекеге қабілеттілік, мемлекеттік басқару, жеткізуші, жобаларды басқару, ШОК, өнеркәсіп, көпұлтты компаниялар.

Л.Р. Гимранова\*, Т.П. Притворова, Г.И. Гимранова  
Карагандинский университет Казпотребсоюза, Казахстан, г. Караганда  
\*e-mail: leylagimranova@mail.ru

### Анализ управления проектом «Служба развития поставщиков» в Республике Казахстан

Налаживание связей между малыми и средними предприятиями (далее – МСП) и иностранными инвесторами/многонациональными компаниями в Казахстане, в первую очередь, зависит от благоприятных условий, которые введены государством для таких инвесторов.

Деловые связи с МСП предоставляют крупным фирмам каналы, которые позволяют сократить расходы, повысить производительность, укрепить репутацию, получить доступ к местным знаниям и освоиться на местном рынке. Активное расширение и укрепление деловых связей стало основным приоритетом для реализации пилотного проекта Службы развития поставщиков в Казахстане.

Учитывая тот факт, что крупным фирмам, осуществляющим или планирующим осуществлять свою деятельность в Казахстане, может оказаться сложным найти МСП, предлагающие соответствующую продукцию и услуги, а также оценить их квалификацию, получить информацию, которая необходима для снижения риска при проведении операций с ними, СРП играет важную роль в предоставлении информации и услуг по поиску партнеров.

Основная цель данной статьи – анализ управления пилотным проектом СРП в Казахстане. Авторами рассмотрены основные этапы реализации проекта и их результаты, предложены соответствующие рекомендации для предотвращения возможных рисков при реализации второго и последующих циклов. При исследовании был применен системный подход и метод анализа данных.

**Ключевые слова:** конкурентоспособность, государственное управление, поставщик, управление проектами, МСП, промышленность, многонациональные компании.

## Introduction

The Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan implemented a pilot project “Improving the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises in Kazakhstan”, the main purpose of which was to improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises and the capacity of their management. The project was also aimed at strengthening and supplementing the existing state programs (MNE of RK). One of the activities of this project was the creation of the Supplier Development Project (hereafter, SDP), whose role was to strengthen SME linkages with large local and multinational corporations operating in Kazakhstan. The project was implemented in well-developed industries such as: oil and gas, metallurgy and railways. The project provided reimbursement of part of the cost (70%) of obtaining international certification for SMEs participating in the Supplier Development Program, which allowed local suppliers to engage with large local and international companies to improve their capacity (SDP KZ, 2021).

Although many large companies are already implementing similar initiatives to develop their suppliers, they were positive about the SDP at the national level. They believe that such an initiative would save their firms the time and material costs of

identifying and selecting suppliers among SMEs, as well as provide them with a cost advantage by providing access to a competitive local supplier base.

The SDP in Kazakhstan as a tool for SME development was implemented on the basis of international experience. For example, the Irish Supplier Development Project was designed for sectors where Ireland had strong competencies. The National Linkage Program of Ireland (hereinafter – NLP) was launched in 1985 as part of the Irish government’s plan for balanced industrial development. Its main objective was to maximize the amount of raw materials and services supplied by local manufacturers.

NLP was founded by a consortium of five existing government agencies led by the Industrial Development Administration. NLP’s primary mission was to help domestic suppliers become reliable and cost-competitive suppliers of high-quality goods and services to major buyers at home and abroad (World Bank).

NLP targeted local firms using a “winner-take-all” strategy. Of the 5,000 SMEs within the targeted industries, NLP worked intensively with only the one hundred firms that had the greatest potential as suppliers. With these firms, NLP worked to solve operational problems, use all available incentive programs, conduct development activities, and sub-

contract with multinational affiliates. Other SMEs in targeted industries received more general services (SDP).

The Supplier Development Program (hereinafter referred to as SDP) in the Czech Republic was short but one of the most successful, running from 2000 to 2002 and covering the electronics and automotive industries.

The program was implemented by CzechInvest, an EU-supported business and investment promotion agency. The agency was established in 1992 by the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic. Its main purpose was to advise and support existing and new entrepreneurs and foreign investors in the Czech Republic (CzechInvest).

An evaluation carried out 18 months after the end of the PRP period, covering all 45 companies involved in the pilot project, showed that 15 companies had received new orders, which they attributed to the Program, with these contracts amounting to \$46 million for the period 2000-2003. Four companies also found new customers overseas, and three companies received higher value-added contracts.

SDP initiatives in Serbia were implemented twice, the first time from late 2005 to 2009, the second time from 2009 to 2012, and focused on three main components that were implemented in parallel:

According to statistics from the National Bank of Serbia, foreign direct investment inflows increased by 258% during the program. The program undoubtedly contributed greatly to the improvement of the investment climate in general (OECD, 2019).

In most cases, programs focus on building the capacity of institutional structures such as local industry bodies, state agencies, and enterprise development centers to support the overall growth and development of local businesses (Williams, 2017).

## Literature Review

The effective work of the Supplier Development Project is mainly aimed at improving the competitiveness of SMEs, in turn having a positive impact on improving the competitiveness of Kazakhstan's economy as a whole.

In order to more fully illuminate the essence of competitiveness of the enterprise, it is necessary to give as complete an idea of competitiveness as possible. Competitiveness is formed where the spirit of competition is present – it is a property of the object, characterized by the degree of real or potential satisfaction of a particular need by it in comparison with similar objects, presented in the given market. Competitiveness determines the ability to withstand

competition in comparison with similar objects on the given market. This is the opinion of V.S. Shkrabak.

As the analysis of literary sources has shown, there is no universally recognized concept of competitiveness. Competitiveness of the goods is a manifestation of competitiveness of the enterprise according to Porter M., and competitiveness of the enterprises reflects competitiveness of branches of national economy and the country as a whole (Porter, 1998). More often the term “competitiveness” by authors of scientific publications is applied in relation to the goods, less often – in relation to the enterprises, branches of national economy, and also the country as a whole (Krauhin, 1991).

## Methodology

The information base of the study consists of statistical data provided by the specialists of the Service of development of suppliers in Kazakhstan and the World Bank consultants who provided technical support to the project, government programs, development strategies, including the Plan of the nation “100 concrete steps”, Strategy “Kazakhstan – 2050”, Strategic Development Plan of Kazakhstan until 2020, the Entrepreneurial Code of Kazakhstan, the State Program of industrial and innovative development for 2020-2025 and other regulatory documents. Existing mechanisms for regulating relationships between SMEs and large buyers (including multinational corporations, large domestic corporations, state-owned companies or quasi-public buyers) were analyzed in terms of interaction between different categories of SME suppliers and large buyers. A review of international experience in the implementation of supplier development programs was also conducted.

## Results and Discussion

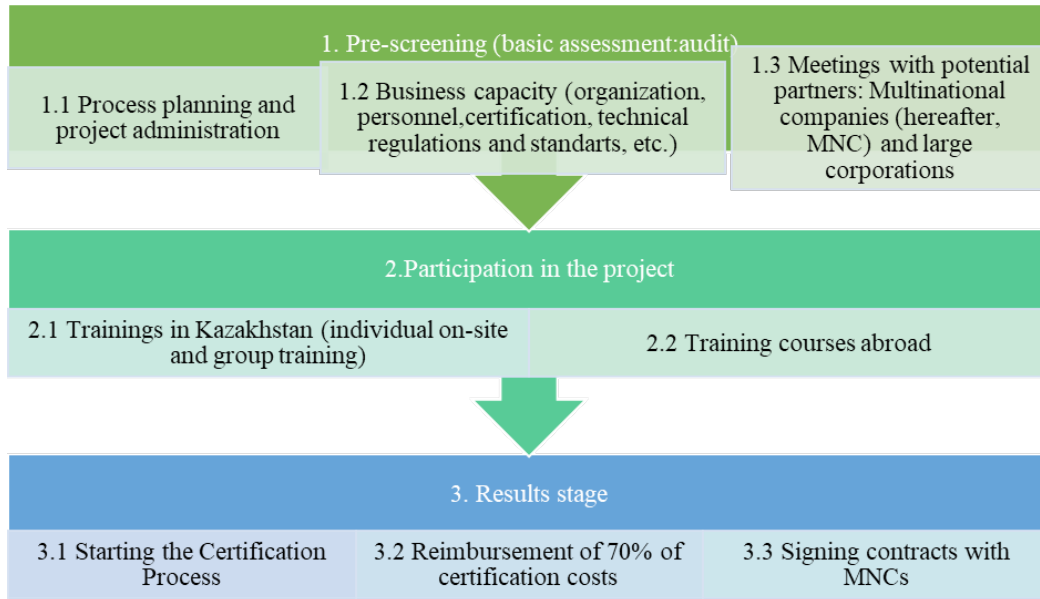
To build the capacity of the Suppliers Development Project in Kazakhstan in parallel with the implementation of the project solved the problems of forming its pilot base for the implementation of SME support projects, improving the competence of specialists, etc.

The aim of the project is to assist domestic suppliers of goods, works and services in confirming the quality of products of their activities for transnational companies operating in the territory of Kazakhstan and major domestic suppliers (GPIIR 2020-2025). In fact, we are talking about the forma-

tion of sustainable cluster structures on the basis of local suppliers for such major residents of Kazakhstan as Kazakhmys Corporation LLP, Kaz Minerals Management LLP, KSP Steel LLP, ArcelorMittal Temirtau JSC, RG gold LLP and others. The companies operate in the energy, metallurgy and mining industries.

Implementation of the project revealed a number of problems in its management, due to both objective (the epidemic of COVID-19) and subjective (both on the part of managers and participants in the project) factors that affected its results.

The project cycle consists of 3 stages, presented in Figure 1, having a linear sequence.



**Figure 1** – Supplier Development Project cycle  
Note – compiled by the authors

After conducting the first pilot sample, it is expected to launch the project in continuous operation and conduct it every two years.

The analysis and evaluation of the business process and results of the project was carried out on the basis of the data provided by the specialists of the service of development of suppliers and consultants of the World Bank, which provided technical support to the project.

The first stage of the project involved the selection of candidates for participation in the project from the initial set of companies that had expressed a desire to participate.

Applications were received from 300 companies of a wide range of activities: metalworking, production of auxiliary equipment for the main production process (electrical equipment, valves), production of products for service production (overalls, sanitary equipment, etc.) and others. According to the results of the selection, 110 companies could claim for reimbursement of costs for international certification.

The main content of stage 1.1 was the planning and development of the project administration procedure.

At the stage 1.2 an audit assessment of the business potential of companies wishing to participate in the project was carried out.

The assessment of business potential consists of 6 blocks, describing all the main indicators of business condition:

1. Project administration and management;
2. Human Resources;
3. Quality management and certification in health, safety and environmental protection;
4. Technical standards and certifications;
5. Equipment, facilities, capabilities;
6. Financial reporting.

On this stage we noted three omissions, which laid down the risks that manifested themselves in the following stages:

1. The audit assessment should have been carried out by at least three specialists in the field of finance, technical and technological state of the business,

human resource management. Whereas in reality it was conducted by two or even one specialist at best. Some of the suppliers participating in the project did not even have national certificates in some areas, not to mention international certificates, but were allowed to participate in the project (Saghiri & Wilding, 2021).

2. In our opinion, it was necessary to conduct an independent assessment of the marketing potential in the domestic markets of Kazakhstan, goods and services of suppliers – project participants for adequate market positioning of each project participant, including determination of the competitive position and share of the domestic market. Such assessment allows us to determine the supplier’s place in the market.

3. The financial condition of the business was checked very superficially. In fact, only equity capital as of the current date, availability of credit lines, company turnover for the last three years were evaluated. The company capacity to pay for the international certification procedure was not assessed. Since reimbursement of the cost of the international certificate in the amount of 70% occurs after its official registration in a foreign company, the supplier must have the financial resources to pay for it.

These risks further affected the company’s inability to complete the accreditation procedure and obtain an international certificate, and,

consequently, to reach the end result of the project in the form of contracts for the supply of products, works or services for MNCs or major manufacturers in Kazakhstan.

Phase 1.3 involved meetings with potential partners: MNCs and large corporations. The content of the meetings was to clarify MNC demand for the products offered by domestic small and medium-sized enterprises, to identify problematic issues of supplier development from the perspective of MNC requirements for them. The meetings were held, including on web platforms, in ZOOM and other Internet resources.

The planned and conducted monitoring of meetings was mainly aimed at their quantitative characteristics:

- number of meetings (planned, sent requests by SMEs, accepted requests by corporations, took place in reality);
- The overall results (finding partners, business agreements).

The results of this stage are presented in Figure 2.

Evaluation of monitoring indicators allows us to conclude that corporations rated the results of meetings lower than SME group suppliers.

78% of SMEs implemented their plans to meet with potential consumers and noted that they identified possible partners. At the same time, only 51% of suppliers recorded achieved business agreements.

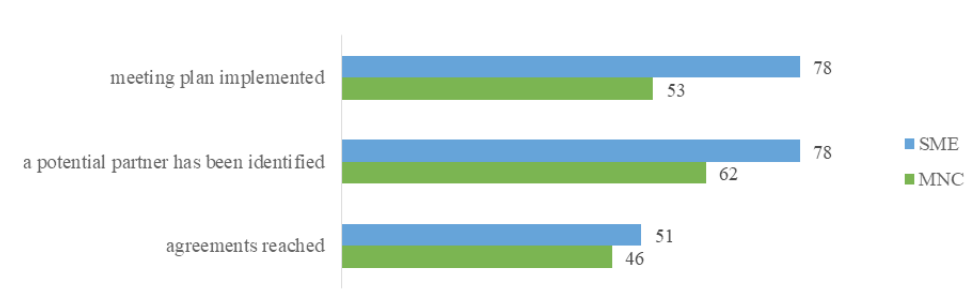


Figure 2 – Results of step 1.3

Corporations had lower scores. Corporations realized 53% of their planned meetings and 62% of participants said they had identified a possible supply partner. At the same time, only 46% of participants indicated that specific business agreements had been identified.

In our opinion, the monitoring indicators should be expanded and questions could be proposed for SMEs and corporations to clarify the problems that have prevented them from implementing their

meeting plans, identifying a potential partner and reaching agreements.

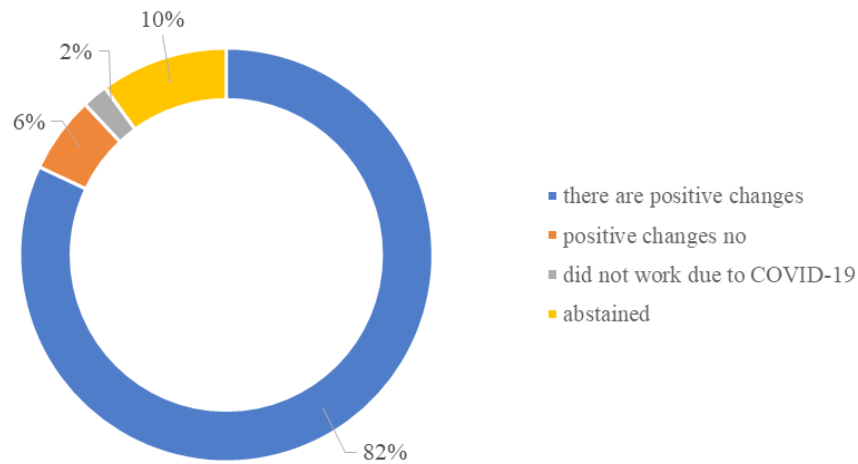
This will clarify both the claims of corporations and the weaknesses of suppliers.

Stage 2 involved two steps.

2.1 Individual consulting at the site and remotely, participation in trainings. The structure of individual consulting was not defined and was conditioned by the state of the business.

The results of individual consulting were assessed by a simple unidimensional scale, shown in Figure 3.

In our opinion, it is necessary to more clearly define the list of discussed issues, as effective project management involves clarification of a number of specific issues on the 6 blocks mentioned above, except for financial reporting, which is presented separately.



**Figure 3** – Assessment of the impact of individual consulting on the state of business processes and their management in companies

In addition to individual on-site consultations, Supplier Development Service also conducts group trainings, which are designed to enhance competence in the field of certification and skills to work with foreign organizations that conduct certification in a particular area.

Training courses abroad were carried out on an agreed program with a representative of the Supplier Development Service and consist of visits to businesses close to the profile of activities. In parallel, trainings and discussions on topical issues of bringing the management of Kazakhstani enterprises in accordance with international standards are held.

In the project under consideration, 15 representatives of SMEs attended training courses abroad, including due to restrictions in movement because of the Covid19 epidemic. All 15 participants were from among those SMEs with a positive trend in business process certification.

For further project management cycles, we propose the introduction of criteria for inclusion in the group of SMEs to be served by foreign internships. The criteria are necessary in order to

We consider it advisable to conduct a blitz-survey on the main blocks of the audit, which will reveal the final results of consulting.

Of the 100 companies – participants in the project, positive changes after six months were recorded in 72 enterprises.

Throughout the period, Supplier Development serves in an advisory role, maintaining ongoing contact with those entities that request assistance.

increase the likelihood of a successful end result of the project in the form of accreditation of business processes of the enterprise and the conclusion of supplier contracts with MNCs and large corporations in Kazakhstan.

According to the results of a foreign mission it is advisable to conduct a survey of participants to identify effective, in their opinion, activities and blitz-examination to identify the knowledge they have received (Benton & Prahinski, 2020).

Thus, on the second stage of the project we have identified two omissions, which form the risks of successful completion of the project by the participants with the access to international certification.

First, a formal method of assessing the effectiveness of individual consulting and training in Kazakhstan on the basis of a survey of participants using a simple scale: yes change, no change, hard to say. The accuracy of this method raises serious doubts, especially since the assessment is made by the participant.

Secondly, the formal selection of those willing to participate in foreign training courses for

international certification. In our opinion, for fruitful participation in foreign trainings it is necessary to select among SMEs by means of a criterion, which can be expressed quantitatively by means of a statistical index (Morobe, 2022). The index will measure:

- The achieved level of indicators reflecting business process certification 5-6 months after the first measurement;
- The dynamics of the process in the form of changes in the index over the period;
- SME activity in the form of participation of employees and specialists of the company in training sessions and trainings.

By setting the lower level of the index value, we can filter out those SMEs whose participation in the second stage is rather formal and did not show the required result.

### Stage 3. Getting Results.

The stage includes three consecutive steps that make it possible to ideally reach the conclusion of contracts with corporations.

3.1 Initiation of accreditation processes to result in certificates.

Of the 82 SMEs that had positive developments in certification and 15 of whom had attended a foreign internship, 79 had initiated accreditation

processes, some more than one. The cumulative number of accreditation processes reached 145.

Throughout the period, the Supplier Development Service organized working meetings and contacts with potential consumers of MNC products/works/services and large corporations in Kazakhstan. The meetings were held both in person and subsequently remotely on information platforms. Intensive working meetings were held to best explain to entrepreneurs the requirements to production and management processes by corporations, the establishment of health and safety systems and other issues.

3.2 After the certification process started, 50 SMEs applied for 70% reimbursement, after the project ended, 14 SMEs received certificates, but only 4 companies received reimbursement for international certificates.

3.3 10 SMEs signed contracts with corporations, which is the end result of the project.

At stage 3, risk situations lie only on the side of SMEs who cannot either start or complete the certification process for technical or financial reasons. The vendor support service has no active measures to influence the process at this stage.

Thus, the parameters of the business process of the project are presented in Table 1.

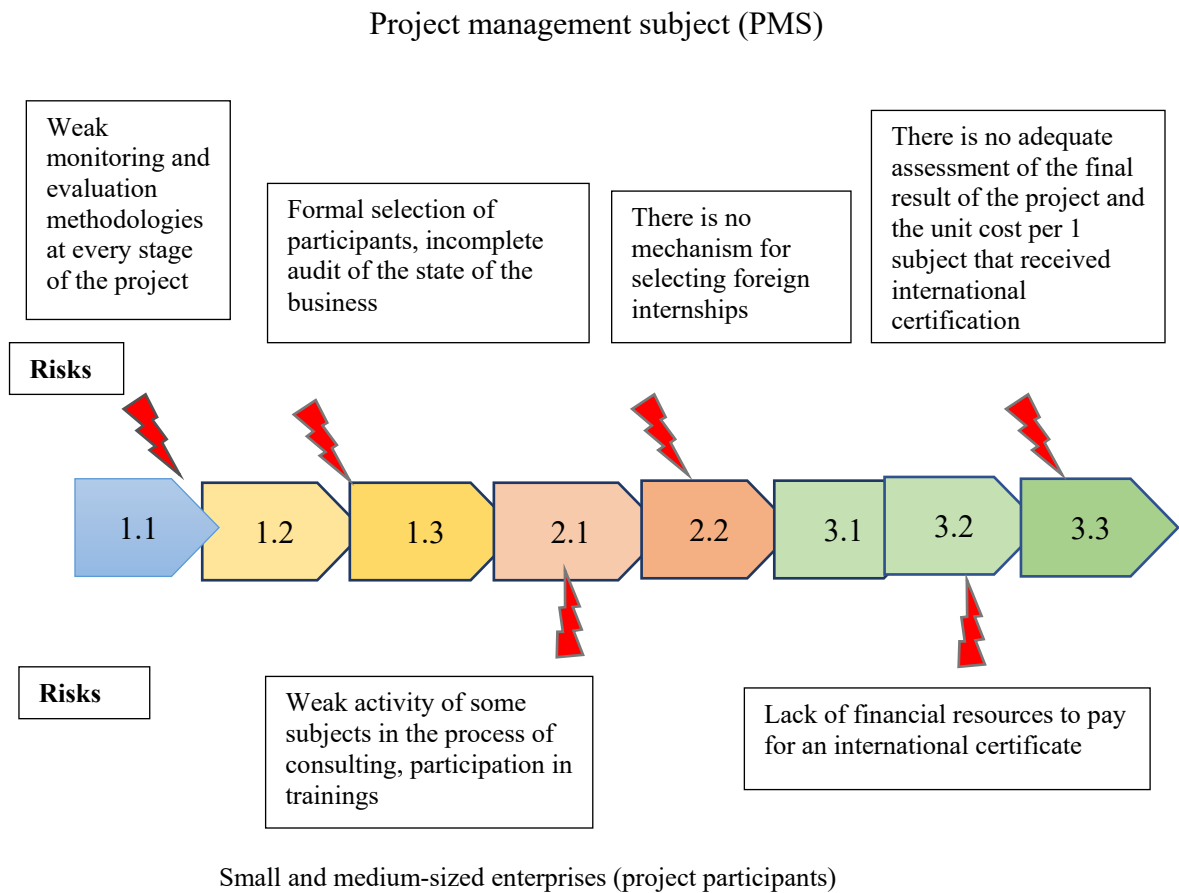
**Table 1** – Flow characteristics and business process outputs of the Supplier Development Project

| Stages   | Actions   | Participants                   | Assessment of intermediate and final results | Indicators         |                                 |
|--|---|--------------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1  | 1.1 Applied (subjects)  | 300                            | -  | Process indicators |                                 |
|  | 1.2 Passed the selection (subjects) and were eligible for reimbursement                     | 110                            | 100%   |                    |                                 |
|  | 1.3 Participated in meetings with potential buyers: IOCs and large corporations             | Minimum 1 meeting per industry | 77%  |                    |                                 |
| 2  | 2.1 There are positive developments after domestic consulting (subjects)                    | 82                             | 74%  |                    |                                 |
|  | 2.2 Have gone out to foreign internships  | 15                             | 13,6%  |                    |                                 |
| 3  | Started accreditation process for national/international certificates (entities)            | 79                             | 71%  |                    | Intermediate outcome indicators |
|  | 3.1 Cumulative number of accreditations initiated (number)                                  | 145                            | -  |                    |                                 |
|  | Have completed the accreditation process for national/international certificates (subjects) | 42                             | 38%  |                    |                                 |
|  | Received accreditation  | 70                             | -  |                    |                                 |
|  | 3.2 National/international certificates (number)  | 4/4                            | 3,6%   | Outcome indicators |                                 |
| 3.3 Received reimbursement of 70% of costs (subjects/international certificates) | 10  | 9%                             |  |                    |                                 |
| <i>Note – compiled by the authors</i>  |   |                                |  |                    |                                 |

The final results of the project after 1.5 years of its implementation, are:

- Obtaining international certificates – 3.6% of subjects;
- Conclusion of contracts with an MNC or a large corporation – 9%.

Wrong, in our opinion, is the lack of practice of applying the evaluation of the final results, which speak of achieving the goal of the project – international certification and contracting with the MNC or a major corporation in Kazakhstan.



**Figure 4** – Risks of the Supplier Development Project  
 Note – compiled by the authors

Since the resources of the state budget are always limited, and the economic evaluation of program management involves the calculation of unit costs per unit of the final result, two such values must be calculated (Everett & Watson, 1998). They can be determined both immediately after the end of the project, and after a time lag, for example, a year, because certification processes take a certain amount of time. Calculation of unit costs is designed, among other things, to find and evaluate the project risks, which need to be identified at the initial stage of the project. And if it is difficult, when building the project cycle (Kumar & Routroy, 2017).

Our analysis of the business process in the project, shown in Figure 4, showed that at several stages of the project a significant role played by risks that were not predicted and neutralized in time.

**Conclusion**

Summarizing the analysis and evaluation of project management in terms of outcomes, we can make the following conclusions on the methodology of strategic (SWOT) analysis presented in Table 2.



**Table 2** – SWOT analysis of project management

| Strengths  | Weaknesses  |
|--|---|
| - Clear project structure and actions by stages<br>- Project management in close collaboration with IOCs and large corporations of Kazakhstan  | - Weak methods of monitoring and evaluation at each stage of the project, which leads to unnecessary costs for consulting and higher budget costs for the project                     |
| Opportunities  | Threats   |
| - Possibility of parallel flow with time lag to combine active SMEs in stage 2.2 – international internship<br>- Application of adequate end result assessments, including one year after project completion | - The lack of risk management increases the unit cost per program participant (excluding the cost of reimbursing 70% of the cost of the certificate) who completes the certification. |
| Note – compiled by the authors   |   |

Thus, the implementation of the second and subsequent cycles of the project requires the use of management methods that will improve its final results and adhere to a certain standard of unit

costs, adjusted for inflation and the influence of other objective factors, as the sustainable operation of SDP is an important point for improving the competitiveness of SMEs.

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