

Practice and Experience in the Standardization of Third-Party Service Management for Government Informatization

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Abstract

The introduction of third-party services has become a key way to enhance professional support and project management in government informatization projects. However, practical problems such as vague service content, lack of unified standards, weak evaluation mechanisms, serious talent loss, and lack of industry cooperation platforms have limited project quality and the effectiveness of digital government construction. Guangdong Province has explored third-party service standardization by building a service standard system, strengthening talent training, and improving evaluation mechanisms, offering replicable practical experience for the whole country.

Keywords Third-Party Service; Standardized Management; Digital Government; Practical Experience

1 Introduction

In recent years, the state has attached great importance to the construction of digital governments and smart societies. The Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee emphasized strengthening digital government construction to promote the modernization of public governance systems and capabilities [1]. To achieve this, governments at all levels are promoting government informatization projects to improve administrative efficiency and public service levels. These projects are highly professional, technically demanding, and have long management chains [2]. To address manpower and technical shortages, government departments generally introduce third-party services for consultation, supervision, and acceptance evaluation [3]. In Guangdong Province, a leader in digital government construction, third-party services play a vital role in project initiation, system design, cost estimation, supervision, and acceptance evaluation. However, with the increasing number and complexity of projects, problems in third-party services have emerged, such as vague service content, lack of unified standards, weak performance evaluation mechanisms, serious talent loss, and lack of industry cooperation platforms. These issues affect service quality and delivery, reducing government trust in external services. This paper, using Guangdong as a sample, summarizes its practical experience in third-party service management from policy guidance, industry standardization, capacity building, and mechanism innovation perspectives, and proposes replicable and promotable experience paths [4].

2 Research Methods

This study mainly uses qualitative analysis. By interpreting policies, conducting field research, and interviewing experts, it summarizes Guangdong's practical experience in third-party service management for government informatization projects. First, it examines national and Guangdong policies on digital government construction and informatization project management to clarify the policy requirements and institutional background for third-party service management [5]. Second, it interviews project implementation units and third-party service providers to understand the current status, problems, and management measures of third-party services. Third, it collects typical cases and data on Guangdong's government informatization project consultation and supervision services to summarize their management models and effects [6]. Finally, it combines this information to distill Guangdong's practical experience, discusses it from institutional design, industry development, and service efficiency perspectives, and proposes feasible suggestions. The research combines policy analysis with field research to ensure the summarized experience is policy-based and reality-grounded, aiming to

comprehensively and objectively present Guangdong's practical situation and experience in third-party service management [7].

3 Current Situation and Problem Analysis

The development of third-party services for government informatization projects is still in the standardization stage, with some common problems restricting service quality and management efficiency. The main issues are as follows:

3.1 Instandard Service Content

The responsibilities of third-party service institutions in government informatization projects lack unified definition, and service scope and content standardization is low, often relying on project units' own agreements. Some consultation and supervision services are superficial, lacking clear implementation guidance. Different suppliers provide varying service depth and professionalism, leading to inconsistent service quality. Over 80% of user units are unclear about the specific tasks of supervision services in government informatization projects, reflecting a general lack of responsibility awareness. Consequently, third-party services are seen as "process-accompanying" or "formalities-going-through," focusing on procedural support and failing to effectively undertake technical support and risk control functions, weakening their professional value in project quality assurance [8].

3.2 Lack of Evaluation System

A systematic and scientific performance evaluation mechanism for third-party services in government informatization projects has not been established. Post-project service quality assessment and feedback are insufficient. The absence of quantifiable, operable, and objective evaluation indicators and assessment systems makes it hard for service providers to identify improvement directions based on evaluation results. Service-capable institutions cannot be effectively distinguished, leaving high-quality service providers without incentives and average ones without improvement mechanisms. The industry faces a "same reward regardless of performance" dilemma. In the long term, the lack of a sound evaluation system hinders the formation of an effective "survival of the fittest" mechanism, limiting industry-wide service level improvement and professional trust establishment.

3.3 Severe Talent Loss

The third-party service field for government informatization projects suffers from unstable talent teams and serious talent loss. According to Deloitte's "Industrial Digital Talent Research and Development Report (2023)," about 33.66% of surveyed enterprises report talent loss pressure, especially in technical and management positions. The main reasons are unclear career development paths, lack of professional growth systems and honor incentive mechanisms, and the absence of unified industry exchange and learning platforms [9]. Frequent project-to-project personnel flow leads to insufficient systematic skill enhancement opportunities and weak technical experience passing down, affecting service quality stability and depth.

3.4 Lack of Industry Shared Platform

The third-party service industry for government informatization projects generally lacks unified resource-sharing and exchange platforms. Service institutions operate independently, with no industry association-level cooperation and experience-sharing mechanisms. Excellent cases and methods are not easily disseminated within the industry. Government departments also lack authoritative information platforms to identify quality third-party service providers, resulting in a fragmented industry. The lack of a shared platform hinders knowledge and experience accumulation and increases government-to-third-party connection costs.

These problems interact, preventing third-party services from fully functioning. Instandard services and lack of evaluation reduce government trust in third-parties, while talent loss and lack of platforms further undermine service quality. Urgent institutional and mechanism innovation is needed to address

these issues. Guangdong Province has actively explored solutions to third-party service weaknesses during digital government construction, accumulating valuable experience.

4 Guangdong's Practical Experience

As a pioneer in digital government reform, Guangdong has taken innovative measures to standardize third-party service management, forming effective experience. The main measures are as follows:

4.1 Establishing a Service Committee to Give Full Play to the Role of Industry Organizations

Guangdong has set up a third-party service special committee for digital government projects under its provincial digital government project industry organization. This committee brings together government departments, consulting agencies, supervision companies, and testing organizations to discuss industry development. Led by industry organizations, it regularly holds seminars and experience-exchange meetings to promote self-discipline and cooperation. This mechanism strengthens government-to-enterprise communication, forming a standardized management synergy and laying an organizational foundation for formulating standards and assessment systems.

4.2 Formulating Management Guidance to Clarify Service Standard Requirements

To address instandard third-party services, Guangdong's Provincial Government and Data Administration has issued management guidance documents for project initiation design consultation, supervision, acceptance evaluation, etc. For example, the "Guidance on the Management of Supervision Services for Provincial Level Government Informatization Projects in Guangdong" specifies the responsibilities, work processes, and delivery requirements of supervision and other third-party services at project stages. Problem-oriented and combining practical cases, this guidance provides operational requirements for government departments to purchase and manage third-party services. Training and publicity ensure relevant parties understand the guidance, putting third-party services on a standardized track.

4.3

Promoting Service Standard Development and Unifying Industry-Wide Quality Thresholds To resolve the issue of inconsistent service standards, Guangdong has driven the establishment of a third-party service standard system. It has completed the development and release of service norms for project initiation consulting, supervision, acceptance evaluation, and cost consulting. Tailored to third-party service institutions, and combining national standards with industry norms, Guangdong innovatively developed standards like the "Supervision Service Standards for Government Informatization Projects" with a "business service scenario" focus. These standards set uniform requirements in personnel skills, service content, methodology, and deliverable quality, forming the basic threshold for third-party services. In practice, these standards are incorporated into government procurement bidding and contract terms to ensure suppliers' strict compliance. This standardization has enhanced the consistency and professionalism of third-party services and provided an objective basis for performance evaluation. Due to the remarkable implementation results, Guangdong was selected as a "benchmark unit for standard implementation effects" and awarded the highest honor of "Outstanding Organization".

4.4

Building a Training System and Cultivating a Professional Talent Pool Guangdong emphasizes enhancing third-party service personnel capabilities by establishing a regular talent training system. Led by the Guangdong Digital Government Association, training programs such as the "Professional (Supervision Service) Skills Training for Digital Government Projects" have been organized. These programs feature customized curricula for local service scenarios and are taught by seasoned front-line experts. For example, in August 2022, Guangdong held its first supervision service skills training, offering 15 general and specialized courses to 46 trainees. The training covered digital government development concepts, relevant policies, supervision service standards, and practical skills. Through

ongoing training and certification, Guangdong has gradually built a third-party service talent pool that is policy-savvy, technically proficient, and skilled in management. This has alleviated talent loss and capability shortages.

4.5

Establishing an Evaluation Mechanism and Refining a Survival-of-the-Fittest System To guarantee third-party service quality, Guangdong has built a service performance evaluation and feedback mechanism. It has developed third-party service evaluation indicators tailored to the implementation features of digital government projects. These indicators assess service providers comprehensively in areas such as progress control, quality management, service attitude, and innovation capability. After project completion, the project unit and experts score the third-party service. The evaluation results are recorded in the provincial third-party service provider credit archive and the high-quality supplier resource pool. Guangdong has created an industry-leading supplier resource library platform to accumulate evaluation information for government departments to select quality service partners. Meanwhile, the industry association publicizes high-quality service cases and evaluation results to set benchmarks and foster healthy competition. This evaluation mechanism has achieved closed-loop management of third-party services — with standards beforehand, supervision during the process, and evaluation with feedback afterward. This has continuously improved the management level of service standardization.

These measures, working in tandem, have formed a comprehensive system for the standardized management of third-party services in Guangdong's digital government initiatives. Under provincial-level planning and guidance, localities in Guangdong have gradually implemented these measures. For instance, they strictly enforce guidelines and standards in government procurement, rely on supervision committee experts during project implementation, and conduct service satisfaction surveys at project completion. Tested in practice, these approaches have effectively enhanced the quality and integrity of third-party services. It's reported that since implementing these standardized management measures, Guangdong has seen a significant increase in digital government projects delivered on time and in user satisfaction. The role of third-party consultation and supervision services in project risk control and quality assurance has become more prominent. Guangdong's experience shows that improving systems and strengthening enforcement can effectively address prominent issues in third-party service management and unleash its due value.

5 Discussion and Implications

Guangdong Province's exploration and practice in the standardized management of third-party services for digital government projects offer valuable experience and insights for other regions. Overall, the dissemination of these experiences is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

5.1

Institutional Design Guangdong's experience indicates that establishing a robust institutional framework for third-party services is essential for enhancing management effectiveness. By introducing guidelines and standards, the rights, responsibilities, and operational norms of all parties can be clarified, paving the way for unified management of third-party services nationwide. This top-down approach is universally applicable. Other regions can tailor Guangdong's model to their specific circumstances, formulating local third-party service management regulations to ensure clear protocols. During implementation, it's crucial to align institutional building with the overarching digital government plan, integrating third-party service management into the digital government governance system.

5.2

Industry Development Guangdong's emphasis on leveraging industry organizations to foster the healthy development of third-party services offers an important insight: cultivating and relying on industry self-regulation mechanisms can drive progress. Establishing third-party service industry associations or professional committees can create platforms for collaboration and exchange, bringing

together resources from industry, academia, and research. This approach can facilitate knowledge sharing and professional talent cultivation. Similarly, other regions can encourage the formation of local industry alliances in electronic government, organize training and seminars, and strengthen supplier databases and credit systems. A well-functioning industry ecosystem can, in turn, promote institutional implementation. Industry development and standardized management are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

5.3

Service Efficiency Improvement The integration of standardization and evaluation mechanisms is crucial for enhancing the efficiency of third-party services. Guangdong's model of using standards to define service requirements and evaluations to drive service improvement is highly instructive for other regions. When adopting this approach, regions can focus on introducing third-party service performance appraisal systems. By linking evaluation results to subsequent procurement and qualification certification, service providers can be incentivized to improve service quality. Continuously refining evaluation indicators and incorporating quantitative data analysis can ensure objective and fair assessments. This will effectively address the historical challenge of uncontrollable service quality due to the lack of evaluations and significantly boost the support of third-party services for digital government projects.

5.4

Areas for Improvement Despite Guangdong's positive outcomes, its experience requires adaptation to local conditions during promotion. First, challenges remain in implementing institutional documents. Grassroots units need to enhance their understanding and execution of new guidelines, with follow-up supervision, inspection, and training guidance essential to ensure institutions function effectively. Second, third-party service standard systems must be continuously updated and improved in line with technological advancements and practical feedback to avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach that might stifle service innovation. Third, in terms of talent guarantee, beyond training, it's necessary to establish career development and incentive mechanisms for third-party service professionals to attract and retain high-caliber talent for long-term service in digital government projects. Finally, the development of industry-wide sharing platforms can be further expanded, such as creating a national knowledge base and case library for third-party digital government services to promote cross-regional experience exchange. These improvements will help achieve better results when replicating Guangdong's experience on a broader scale.

Overall, Guangdong's practical experience underscores the necessity and effectiveness of strengthening the standardized management of third-party services in digital government projects. With meticulous arrangements from institutional design to implementation, third-party services can be better integrated into the project life cycle to create value. Of course, when drawing on Guangdong's experience, localities should flexibly adjust specific measures according to the development stage and characteristics of local digital government construction. At the national level, unified guidance can be considered to promote Coordinated third-party service management improvements across regions, fostering a well-ordered development landscape nationwide.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Third-party services for digital government projects are indispensable in digital government development, and their standardized management directly impacts the projects' success and service efficiency. Using Guangdong Province as a case study, this paper analyzes the main problems currently faced by third-party services and sums up Guangdong's practical experience in boosting service quality through institutional innovation and mechanism improvement. Research shows that establishing institutional norms, improving evaluation systems, strengthening talent development, and promoting industry collaboration are effective ways to enhance third-party service levels. Guangdong's exploration offers replicable and referential experience, proving the feasibility and effectiveness of the "government guidance + industry self-regulation" dual-driver mechanism in practice.

Looking ahead, we propose strengthening efforts in five areas. First, refine the national-level top-level design. Clarify third-party services' role and management norms, and integrate them into the digital

government governance system for unified deployment. Second, improve the performance evaluation and credit supervision mechanisms. Promote transparent contract performance evaluation and effective result application to foster a "survival of the fittest" market environment. Third, enhance professional talent guarantee. Stabilize the workforce and boost capabilities through training, certification, and career path development. Fourth, promote industry exchange and knowledge sharing. Leverage industry organizations' platforms to collect excellent cases, facilitate supply-demand alignment, and showcase capabilities, thus enhancing the industry's overall vitality and trust. Fifth, strengthen whole-process project collaborative management. Define the interfaces and responsibilities of government, service providers, and contractors, and establish a regular communication mechanism to fully leverage third-party organizations' professional and supervisory roles.

With these measures continuously implemented, the standardized management of third-party services in digital government projects is expected to reach new heights. Service institutions, under clear rules and professional incentives, can better utilize their technical and managerial advantages to support government digital transformation. Government departments, with institutional guarantees, can confidently draw on external expertise to improve project quality and mitigate construction risks. In general, standardized management and high-quality services are mutually reinforcing. Only by continuously improving institutional mechanisms based on practical experience can the third-party service industry achieve sustainable and professional development, providing a solid guarantee for digital government development.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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政府信息化第三方服務管理標準化的實踐與經驗

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摘要：第三方服務的引入現已成為提升政府信息化項目專業支撐與項目管理的關鍵途徑。然而，服務內容模糊、缺乏統一標準、評估機製薄弱、人才流失嚴重以及行業合作平臺匱乏等實際問題，限制了項目質量和數字政府建設成效。廣東省通過構建服務標準體系、強化人才培養以及完善評估機製等舉措，積極探索第三方服務標準化，為全國提供了可複製的實踐經驗。

關鍵詞：第三方服務；標準化管理；數字政府；實踐經驗

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