The American Journal of Political Science Law and Criminology
ISSN 2693-0803 Volume 08 - 2026

Organizational and Legal Problems in The Implementation of Programs Aimed at Developing Regional Infrastructure

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Received: 06 February 2026 | Received Revised Version: 22 February 2026 | Accepted: 04 March 2026 | Published: 31 March 2026

Volume 08 Issue 03 2026 | Crossref DOI: 10.37547/tajpslc/Volume08Issue03-26

Abstract

The article examines the organizational and legal framework for the formulation and implementation of public programs aimed at developing regional infrastructure in the Republic of Uzbekistan. It analyses issues relating to cooperation among competent public authorities, financing, project selection, public procurement, construction quality, and performance evaluation. Drawing on regulatory legal acts governing the new programme for the development of social and productive infrastructure in 2026–2028, the "Prosperous Village" and "Prosperous Neighbourhood" initiatives, and the procedure for formulating infrastructure programmes, the article identifies potential institutional inconsistencies that may arise in practice. It puts forward proposals to clearly delineate powers and responsibilities in programme implementation, select projects according to needs-based criteria, introduce a unified electronic monitoring system, strengthen public participation, and plan in advance for the subsequent operation and maintenance costs of completed facilities.

Keywords: Regional development, infrastructure, public programme, local government, budgetary funds, public procurement, project management, public oversight, monitoring, performance.

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Cite This Article: Sh. Rafiqov. (2026). Organizational and Legal Problems in The Implementation of Programs Aimed at Developing Regional Infrastructure. The American Journal of Political Science Law and Criminology, 8(03), 204–209. https://doi.org/10.37547/tajpslc/Volume08Issue03-26

1. Introduction

The development of regional infrastructure is one of the key prerequisites for implementing the State's regional policy, promoting economic growth, and improving the quality of life of the population. Road and transport networks, drinking water and wastewater systems, electricity and gas supply, preschool and school education facilities, healthcare institutions, communications infrastructure, and production facilities directly affect a region's investment attractiveness and social stability. Accordingly, the construction or modernisation of such facilities should not be viewed as an isolated construction activity, but rather as a comprehensive public administration task comprising interrelated processes of planning, financing, procurement, construction, commissioning, and subsequent operation.

Article 122 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan empowers Councils of People's Deputies to approve programmes for the socio-economic development of territories, consider local budgets, and oversee their implementation. Article 123 establishes the powers of khokims to implement measures aimed at the economic, social, cultural, and environmental development of their respective territories, as well as to formulate and execute local budgets [1]. These

constitutional provisions demonstrate the need to ensure a functional balance between representative and executive authorities in the implementation of regional programmes.

In recent years, increased attention has been paid to roads, engineering and utility networks, and social infrastructure facilities through the "Prosperous Village" and "Prosperous Neighbourhood" programmes, as well as programmes for the development of social and productive infrastructure. In particular, Presidential Resolution No. PQ-393 of 27 December 2025 sets out measures for the development of social and productive infrastructure in 2026–2028. Its priority areas include the use of green technologies, energy efficiency, and renewable energy sources [2]. However, the mere inclusion of tasks in programme documents does not in itself guarantee their effective implementation. The outcome primarily depends on the clarity of organisational mechanisms and the consistent application of legal provisions in practice.

The purpose of this article is to identify the organisational and legal problems arising in the implementation of programmes for regional infrastructure development, systematically analyse the factors underlying these problems, and formulate scientifically grounded proposals for improving the mechanisms for programme planning, financing, implementation, and oversight.

2. Methodology

The regulatory and legal framework of the study comprises the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Urban Planning Code, the regulation governing the formulation of programmes for the development of social and productive infrastructure, presidential resolutions relating to the "Prosperous Village" and "Prosperous Neighbourhood" programmes, and the infrastructure programme for 2026–2028 [1–6]. The formal legal method was used to examine the substance of powers and procedures; systems analysis was applied to establish the links between the various stages of programme implementation; and comparative legal and logical analysis were employed to identify legal gaps and assess possible ways of addressing them.

The article is based on regulatory legal and doctrinal analysis. It does not claim to have conducted independent empirical research, such as surveys, interviews, or audits of construction facilities in individual regions. Accordingly, the identified problems are assessed from a theoretical and legal perspective, taking into account the structure of existing regulatory mechanisms, the allocation of powers, and the logical stages of programme implementation.

3. Main Part

A regional infrastructure programme is a set of interrelated organisational and legal documents that brings together projects, sources of financing, implementation deadlines, responsible entities, and expected outcomes in order to meet the economic and social needs of a particular territory or group of territories. Unlike a simple list of measures, such a programme should incorporate clearly defined objectives, measurable outcomes, resource allocation, and accountability mechanisms.

The procedure approved by Resolution No. 206 of 21 April 2022 regulates the formulation of programmes for the development of social and productive infrastructure and the management of public investment. It defines an infrastructure project as activity related to the design, construction, reconstruction, major repair, and equipping of social, road and transport, water management, and engineering and utility infrastructure facilities [3]. This approach confirms the multi-sectoral and multi-stage nature of infrastructure programmes.

From an organisational perspective, the formulation of such programmes involves ministries and agencies at the national level, local executive authorities, Councils of People's Deputies, procuring entities, design institutions, contractors, and utility service providers. Although each of these entities has its own powers, they share a common ultimate objective: to create infrastructure facilities that provide the population with high-quality and uninterrupted services. The problem is that, in practice, even where a responsible entity is designated for individual stages, the mechanism for assigning clear overall responsibility for the project's final outcome may remain insufficiently defined.

Under the constitutional model, a Council of People's Deputies is authorised to approve regional development programmes and oversee budget execution, while the khokim is responsible for implementation and the management of the local budget [1]. It is therefore necessary to distinguish the Council's oversight functions concerning programme objectives, the list of designated projects, financing, and results from the day-

to-day executive activities of the khokimiyat. Otherwise, the functions of approval, implementation, and assessment of one's own performance may become concentrated within a single entity, thereby weakening accountability.

The effectiveness of an infrastructure programme depends, first and foremost, on the facilities selected for inclusion. Resolution No. PQ-5048 of 2 April 2021, concerning the "Prosperous Village" and "Prosperous Neighbourhood" programmes, identifies such criteria as remoteness, severe natural and climatic conditions, applications submitted by residents, and local community initiatives [4]. Resolution No. PQ-172 of 18 March 2022 establishes an approach whereby the actual condition of infrastructure facilities is assessed and priority is given to villages and neighbourhoods that have recorded the lowest indicators and have not previously been included in the programme [5].

These criteria are important because they help identify social needs. Nevertheless, the number of applications received or the level of activity demonstrated by local communities does not always fully reflect the actual needs of a territory. Residents of remote areas, communities with small populations, or groups with limited access to information may submit fewer applications. As a result, areas generating a greater number of applications may receive more attention, while territories experiencing the most severe infrastructure shortages may not be adequately covered.

In this regard, it would be appropriate to introduce a multi-criteria assessment model for project selection. At a minimum, the following indicators should be taken into account: the population's level of access to basic services; the technical condition of the facility and the risk of accidents; the number of service users; the remoteness of the area; poverty and social vulnerability indicators; project cost and expected social benefits; climate and environmental risks; and the capacity to maintain the facility after completion. The methodology should openly specify the scoring procedure for each criterion, the source of the relevant data, and the frequency of assessment.

Another problem in project selection is the lack of coordination in planning projects across different sectors within the same territory. For example, a road surface may have to be broken up again to upgrade water or gas networks after the road has already been repaired, resulting in inefficient use of budgetary funds. Therefore, before approving targeted programmes, a unified map of the territory's engineering and utility networks should be prepared, and mandatory coordination with network operators and the sequencing of works should be ensured.

Regional infrastructure projects often fall within the remit of several public authorities. For example, a drinking water project requires the involvement of water management authorities, sanitary and epidemiological services, environmental authorities, construction supervision bodies, local khokimiyats, and utility service providers. Road construction, in turn, is closely connected with land allocation, urban planning documentation, the relocation of utility networks, environmental requirements, and transport safety.

It is not sufficient to establish inter-agency cooperation merely as a general obligation. For each project, the lead procuring entity, authorities responsible for agreeing on the technical specifications, entities issuing permits and opinions, relevant deadlines, and the consequences of delays should be clearly specified. This would not only prevent overlapping powers but also ensure that no important task becomes a responsibility shared by everyone and, in practice, owned by no one.

In the author's view, it would be appropriate to establish the principle of a "single project owner" for regional infrastructure programmes in the regulatory framework. The single project owner would be responsible for overall project coordination, compliance with deadlines and budgetary discipline, inter-agency coordination, and the completeness of documentation required for commissioning. This entity would not assume the independent powers of state expert review bodies, construction supervision authorities, or local Councils; its role would be limited to managing the project as an integrated whole.

In addition, an outcome-oriented inter-agency regulation should be adopted between the khokimiyat, the procuring entity, and sectoral agencies for programme implementation. The regulation should specify the forms of information exchange, deadlines for reviewing documents, procedures for escalating problems, mechanisms for approving changes, and reporting arrangements.

Sources of financing for infrastructure programmes may include the national and local budgets, funds of sectoral enterprises, loans, resources provided by international

financial institutions, and other sources permitted by law. The availability of different sources expands financial opportunities; however, differences in the timing and conditions of disbursement, as well as reporting requirements, may complicate project schedules.

One of the principal organisational and legal risks is the failure to adequately account for post-construction operating costs when initially estimating project costs. The construction of a new water facility, street lighting system, or social infrastructure facility gives rise to expenses for electricity, personnel, spare parts, routine repairs, and technical maintenance. If no source of financing is identified for these expenses, the completed facility may lose its operational effectiveness within a relatively short period. It is therefore proposed that project documentation include a calculation of the facility's entire life-cycle costs, covering construction, operation, repair, and renewal.

At the public procurement stage, risks may arise from insufficient competition, the preparation of technical specifications tailored to a particular bidder, and unjustified changes to construction materials or the scope of works. To prevent such practices, procurement documents, contract prices, contractor selection criteria, certificates of completed works, and amendments to contracts should be publicly accessible. Exceptions relating to legally protected information and security considerations should, of course, be preserved.

The Urban Planning Code provides for state supervision during construction, technical supervision by the procuring entity, author supervision by the design organisation, and internal supervision by the contractor [6]. These forms of supervision do not replace one another; rather, they complement each other. The practical challenge is not merely to ensure that these forms of supervision exist in the documentation, but to ensure that their findings have a tangible impact on construction quality and the facility's suitability for use. Accordingly, acceptance of a facility should involve verification not only of the volume of completed works but also of its design capacity, safety, service quality, and warranty obligations.

Another important aspect is the need to take environmental and climate-related risks into account at the design stage. The emphasis placed by the 2026–2028 programme on green technologies, energy efficiency, and renewable energy sources demonstrates that infrastructure policy is being oriented towards long-term sustainability [2]. However, unless these requirements are supported by specific technical indicators, project appraisal, and monitoring during the operational phase, they may remain merely declaratory.

The disbursement of allocated funds or the percentage of completed construction and installation works does not, in itself, fully reflect the final outcome of programme implementation. The actual effectiveness of an infrastructure facility should be measured by the number of people using it, continuity and quality of services, safety, and operating costs. For example, the key result of a drinking water project is not simply the construction of a water network, but the uninterrupted supply of drinking water to households at the prescribed quality and pressure.

For this reason, it is proposed that the monitoring system use three levels of indicators. The first level comprises input indicators (allocated funds, equipment, and labour resources); the second consists of process indicators (completion of the design, procurement, and construction stages); and the third covers outcome indicators (the proportion of the population using the service, continuity of service, reduction in accidents, and savings in time and costs). For each indicator, the baseline value, target value, data source, and responsible authority for submitting the information should be specified.

Public participation should begin at the project selection stage. When residents take part in identifying problems, setting priorities, discussing project solutions, and monitoring construction works, the social legitimacy of decisions is strengthened. However, public opinion cannot replace feasibility assessments or statutory expert review. Its role is to identify needs, enhance transparency, and ensure public oversight of the activities of public authorities.

The proposed electronic monitoring platform should contain, for each facility, its address and coordinates, project cost, source of financing, procuring entity, contractor, planned completion date, implementation status, technical supervision findings, photographs and geospatial data, contractual amendments, and commissioning date. Information on the platform should be accessible, within the limits of their respective powers, to Councils of People's Deputies, oversight bodies, and the public.

Furthermore, a mechanism should be established to monitor the technical condition of a facility for at least

the duration of its warranty period following commissioning. The contract should clearly specify the contractor's warranty obligations in respect of identified defects, the period within which the procuring entity may submit claims, and the procedure for remedying deficiencies.

First, it is proposed that a unified needs-based methodology for formulating infrastructure programmes be approved. The methodology should jointly assess, across territories, access to services, the technical condition of facilities, social vulnerability, remoteness, environmental risks, and economic efficiency. The assessment results and project selection scores should be published openly, and brief reasons should be provided for proposals that are rejected.

Second, a unified project passport should be introduced for each project. The passport should contain the project objective, description of the problem, number of residents who will benefit, technical solution, land and utility network status, sources of financing, procurement strategy, deadlines, risks, environmental requirements, operating costs, and outcome indicators. It should be updated whenever the project moves to a new stage or undergoes changes and maintained on an electronic platform.

Third, an inter-agency regulation governing cooperation among competent authorities should be developed. It should identify the responsible authorities and establish clear deadlines for each stage, including submission of project proposals, obtaining technical conditions, coordination of design and cost-estimate documentation, expert review, procurement, construction, acceptance, and transfer to operation. The grounds for applying administrative liability or disciplinary measures in cases of unjustified delays in coordination may be further specified in accordance with legislation.

Fourth, the oversight function of local Councils should be focused on results. Councils should receive periodic reports not only on the utilisation of funds but also on the technical condition of facilities, service quality, the number of users, and compliance with warranty obligations. Public hearings may be organised on problematic projects on the basis of these reports.

Fifth, the life-cycle approach to infrastructure facilities should be introduced as a mandatory element of project planning. Before a project is approved, it should be determined who will operate the facility, which entity will hold it on its balance sheet, and which source will cover utility bills and repair costs. This would reduce the risk of completed facilities remaining unused or of unforeseen financial obligations being imposed on local budgets.

Sixth, a unified information standard should be developed for public monitoring. Citizens should be able to submit proposals and applications concerning a project and report construction defects by providing photographs or geolocation data, while the competent authority should respond by informing them how the application was considered and what measures were taken. At the same time, a high number of unfounded or repeated applications should not be treated as a substitute for assessing the project's actual performance.

Seventh, programmes should be linked to environmental and climate-resilience criteria. Infrastructure investment that fails to take account of water scarcity, heatwaves, floods, landslides, and other natural hazards may generate additional costs in the future. Therefore, it would be appropriate to include a separate section in feasibility studies addressing climate risk assessment, energy efficiency, and the rational use of resources.

4. Conclusion

The effectiveness of public programmes aimed at developing regional infrastructure is not determined solely by the amount of funds allocated or the number of facilities constructed. It primarily depends on whether projects correspond to actual needs, the coordination among public authorities, financial discipline, construction quality, public participation, and the possibility of using the facilities over the long term.

First, regional infrastructure programmes should be treated as comprehensive organisational and legal mechanisms, with all stages—from needs identification to operation—integrated into a single management chain.

Second, in addition to the number of applications and local initiatives, project selection should be based on a multi-criteria methodology that takes into account infrastructure shortages, service quality, social vulnerability, remoteness, technical risks, and life-cycle costs.

Third, the powers of national and local authorities, procuring entities, and sectoral organisations should be clearly delineated for each project. Accountability for implementation should be strengthened through the

designation of a single project owner and the adoption of inter-agency regulations.

Fourth, transparency in public procurement and construction supervision should be ensured, while the independence of technical supervision, author supervision, and the enforcement of warranty obligations should be directed towards achieving tangible results.

Fifth, it is proposed that an electronic passport for infrastructure facilities and a monitoring system based on performance indicators be introduced. In this regard, operating and repair costs arising after the completion of construction should be taken into account at the initial planning stage.

Sixth, public participation should be ensured at the stages of project selection, implementation, and evaluation, but it should not replace technical expert review or the statutory decision-making powers of competent authorities. If implemented at the regulatory and institutional levels, these proposals may help improve the transparency, targeting, and long-term social effectiveness of regional infrastructure programmes.

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