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## Practices of Implementing Museum Projects with the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation's Support: Problems and Recommendations

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### ABSTRACT

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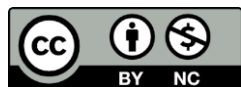
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The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of museum projects supported by the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, aiming to identify key institutional, regulatory, and managerial barriers that prevent museums from fully participating in grant competitions. The relevance of the study is determined by Ukraine's European integration course, the need to modernize the cultural sector and strengthen the role of museums as outposts for preserving heritage and building national resilience in the context of full-scale war. The study aims to identify and systematize the patterns of success, regional distribution and institutional problems of museum initiatives supported by the UCF. The methodological basis comprises a systematic and comparative analysis of the regulatory and legal framework, as well as an empirical analysis of the UCF's rating lists and project registers for the period 2018–2025. Quantitative methods were used to calculate the share of successful applications and track regional distribution, as well as a case study method for in-depth analysis of the partnership model for project implementation. The main results show that, despite the UCF's catalytic role in stimulating digitalization, inclusiveness and innovation in the museum sector, the direct competitiveness of state and municipal museums remains low. This is due to limited financial autonomy, complex budgetary and treasury procedures, as well as low institutional capacity and staff shortages. As a result, the partnership model ("civil society organization as executor – museum as partner") dominates, covering about 80% of successful museum initiatives, providing flexibility but not solving the problems of systemic reform. Significant regional unevenness in the distribution of projects has been identified. It has been established that museum projects that are structurally "rigid" (exhibitions, digitization) are structurally losing out to "mixed" (event-based, educational) projects within the existing UCF lots. The conclusions emphasize the critical need for systemic reform of the legal status of museums to increase their financial autonomy. Further research should focus on developing specific proposals for the creation of a specialized grant lot for "hard" museum projects within the structure of the UCF, which is a necessary condition for ensuring their sustainability and full participation in Ukraine's cultural policy.



### KEYWORDS

Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, museum projects, project management, grant funding, institutional capacity, cultural policy, partnership model, digitization, regulatory restrictions, cultural heritage.



## Практики реалізації музейних проєктів за підтримки Українського культурного фонду: проблеми та рекомендації

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### СТАТТЯ

### АНОТАЦІЯ

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У статті здійснено комплексний аналіз практик реалізації музейних проєктів, підтриманих Українським культурним фондом, з метою визначення ключових інституційних, нормативних та управлінських бар'єрів, які перешкоджають повноцінній участі музеїв у грантових конкурсах. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена євроінтеграційним курсом України, необхідністю модернізації культурного сектору та посиленням ролі музеїв як форпостів збереження спадщини та формування національної стійкості в умовах повномасштабної війни. Мета дослідження полягає у виявленні та систематизації закономірностей успішності, регіонального розподілу та інституційних проблем музейних ініціатив, підтриманих УКФ. Методологічну основу склали системний та компаративний аналіз нормативно-правової бази, а також емпіричний аналіз рейтингових списків та реєстрів проєктів УКФ за 2018–2025 рр. Застосовано кількісні методи для розрахунку частки успішних заявок та простеження регіонального розподілу, а також метод кейс-стаді для глибокого аналізу партнерської моделі реалізації проєктів. Основні результати демонструють, що, попри каталітичну роль УКФ у стимулюванні цифровізації, інклюзивності та інновацій у музейній сфері, пряма конкурентоспроможність державних і комунальних музеїв залишається низькою. Це спричинено обмеженою фінансовою автономією, складними бюджетними та казначейськими процедурами, а також низькою інституційною спроможністю та кадровим дефіцитом. Як наслідок, домінує партнерська модель («громадська організація як виконавець – музей як партнер»), яка охоплює близько 80 % успішних музейних ініціатив, забезпечуючи гнучкість, але не розв'язуючи проблеми системної реформи. Виявлено значну нерівномірність регіонального розподілу проєктів. Встановлено, що музейні проєкти, які є структурно «твердими» (експозиції, цифровізація), структурно програють у конкуренції зі «змішаними» (подієвими, освітніми) проєктами в межах існуючих лотів УКФ. У висновках наголошено на критичній необхідності системної реформи правового статусу музеїв для підвищення їхньої фінансової автономії. Подальші дослідження мають бути сфокусовані на розробці конкретних пропозицій щодо створення спеціалізованого грантового лоту для «твердих» музейних проєктів у структурі УКФ, що є необхідною умовою для забезпечення їхньої сталості та повноцінної участі в культурній політиці України.



### КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

Український культурний фонд, музейні проєкти, проєктний менеджмент, грантове фінансування, інституційна спроможність, культурна політика, партнерська модель, цифровізація, нормативні обмеження, культурна спадщина.

## 1. Introduction

In the current context, as Ukraine develops into a democratic, open, and European-oriented state, culture plays a key role, as it is a factor that not only strengthens social stability and preserves national heritage but also actively contributes to the development of civic identity. Given that cultural institutions, particularly museums, are evolving from simple centers for preserving historical memory to multifunctional platforms for public dialogue, informal education and innovation in public administration, it is only logical that the state's attention is focused on finding effective mechanisms to support the cultural sector, among which grant instruments stand out for their transparency, flexibility and compliance with established European practices. The proposed topic is particularly relevant given Ukraine's European integration course, as the fulfilment of obligations under the Association Agreement with the EU, as well as active participation in the Creative Europe, Horizon Europe and EU4Culture programmes, requires a comprehensive modernization of approaches to cultural process management, which includes the mandatory implementation of project management and a significant increase in the institutional capacity of relevant organizations.

Therefore, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (UCF), which was established as an instrument for the consistent implementation of state policy in the field of culture, has become a key link in the process of bringing the national funding system closer to European standards based on the principles of openness, competitiveness, independent expertise and a focus on clear results, and it is thanks to its programmers that museum institutions have been among the most active beneficiaries. Given that grant support allows museums to effectively overcome chronic underfunding, implement necessary inclusive solutions, actively use digital technologies and expand educational and research programmes, their role has significantly increased in the context of full-scale war, when they have become important outposts performing the functions of preserving cultural heritage, documenting war events, supporting communities and building national resilience, which makes improving the effectiveness of their funding mechanisms a direct state interest. Of additional importance is the cooperation of museums with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charitable foundations, which, as project applicants, ensure that the excessive regulation inherent in state and municipal institutions is circumvented, thereby contributing to greater flexibility, innovation and mobility of museum projects, which is a critically important element of modern public administration, and therefore research into the implementation of museum projects supported by the UCF is urgently needed.

## 2. Literature Review

State cultural policy is a comprehensive system of management decisions and mechanisms, the primary purpose of which is to shape, develop comprehensively, and sustainably support the cultural environment. Its integral task is to ensure broad access for citizens to cultural goods, as well as to preserve the national heritage. The essence of this policy lies in the synergistic combination of regulatory, financial, institutional and infrastructural measures, which together create the necessary conditions for the sustainable development of culture in the state, while guaranteeing the realization of citizens' constitutional rights in the field of culture. According to the works of Ukrainian researchers, including O. Kulynych, A. Havrashenko [1], A. Bondarenko [2], and others, cultural policy should be based on key principles of democracy, subsidiarity, public participation, and systematic support for cultural institutions.

Contemporary conceptual approaches to cultural policy increasingly view culture not simply as a humanitarian sphere or a space for symbolic production, but as a powerful strategic tool for developing human capital, strengthening local communities and increasing social resilience. In international documents, including recommendations from UNESCO, the EU and the UN, culture is clearly defined as one of the basic factors of sustainable development, capable of ensuring the necessary synergy between social, economic and institutional transformations [3–5]. In particular, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, it acts as a catalyst for educational change, the development of innovative infrastructure, the strengthening of inclusiveness and the expansion of public participation in the production of cultural products [6]. It is through cultural institutions, such as museums, that society gains the opportunity to critically reflect on the past, shape national identity and integrate different social groups. Thus, culture becomes a strategic resource that actively works to strengthen national

unity, social cohesion, and ensure sustainable development in the face of challenges, including military ones [7].

The European approach to the development of culture and creative industries emphasizes the strategic role of the cultural sector as a key factor in economic growth, employment, and social cohesion. The European Parliament's Resolution "On promoting the European cultural and creative sectors as sources of economic growth and job creation" clearly states that "cultural and creative industries are one of the most dynamic sectors of the EU economy, generating high added value and providing around 8.5 million jobs" [8], which emphasizes the critical need to support the institutional capacity of cultural organizations, simplify access to funding and develop partnerships between public and non-public institutions. The requirements outlined in the documents directly correlate with the Ukrainian context, where museum institutions, as part of a broader cultural ecosystem, need to strengthen their financial autonomy, professionalize their management, and improve grant mechanisms, reinforcing the argument for the need to reform state cultural policy mechanisms in Ukraine.

The effectiveness of state policy in the field of culture today is determined by the ability of its instruments to respond quickly to current challenges, ranging from military threats and large-scale risks to cultural heritage to the need for digital transformation. In the context of full-scale war, these challenges are becoming increasingly acute, and culture is being seen as a critical element of national security, social stability, and memory policy [9–11]. In this context, the role of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation is growing significantly, as it not only ensures the transparent distribution of state resources but also creates an environment for innovation and modernization of cultural infrastructure. This is in line with UCF's development strategy, which emphasizes the priorities of inclusiveness, innovation and support for cultural heritage [12], and correlates with international approaches to the role of culture in sustainable development [13]. Thus, grant-making institutions are becoming a catalyst for the state's strategic priorities, contributing to the preservation of heritage and the strengthening of Ukrainian society's resilience.

### 3. Problem Statement

This study aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of museum projects supported by the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, to identify key institutional and regulatory issues that hinder the full participation of museums in grant competitions. Additionally, it aims to systematize the patterns of success and regional distribution of museum initiatives.

### 4. Methods and Materials

The methodological basis of the study was a comprehensive approach that combined qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, as well as systematic and comparative analysis methods. The first stage involved a systematic analysis of the regulatory and legal framework to determine the institutional, financial, and legal framework in which museum institutions operate as applicants for grant programs, as well as an analysis of reporting documentation and grant agreements to identify typical operational problems related to budgeting, treasury services, and risk management. The key quantitative method was empirical analysis of the UCF's rating lists and project registers for 2018–2025 [14–21], which made it possible to conduct a comprehensive selection of museum-related projects (exhibitions, re-exhibitions, digitization) and calculate the share of successful applications, as well as track the regional distribution of initiatives and the dynamics of the dominance of the partnership model. In the second stage, the case study method (in-depth analysis of individual successful and problematic projects) was used to detail the identified patterns and reveal the cause-and-effect relationships between the institutional status of the applicant and the effectiveness of the grant initiative. Thanks to comparative analysis, the requirements of the UCF were compared with the practices of financing cultural heritage in leading European programs in order to formulate recommendations for improving Ukrainian grant policy, and based on the quantitative and qualitative data obtained, using methods of synthesis and generalization, a unified model of the problem field of museum project implementation was formulated and practical recommendations were developed, covering the need for structural changes in the regulatory framework, museum management practices and the architecture of the UCF's grant programs.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The Ukrainian Cultural Foundation is a key and central institution for grant support in Ukraine, performing strategic functions in the implementation of state cultural policy aimed at modernizing the cultural sphere, enhancing its institutional capacity and introducing modern European management standards. Its activities are clearly defined and regulated by the Law of Ukraine “On the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation” [22], which directly names the Foundation as an instrument for implementing state policy in the fields of culture, arts, creative industries and cultural heritage. According to the Law, the key functions of the UCCF include providing competitive support for cultural projects, offering independent expertise, stimulating innovative practices, fostering international cooperation, and creating conditions for integrating Ukrainian culture into the global space. Over the years of its work, the Foundation has formed a large-scale support ecosystem: reports show that the total amount of state investment exceeded UAH 2 billion for more than 2,900 funded projects, reaching an audience of millions of people [23], confirming its significant social impact and its role as a catalyst for new cultural practices and the development of human capital in the cultural sphere.

The UCF provides support within a multi-sectoral model that encompasses a wide range of cultural practices, including visual and audio arts, cultural heritage, literary initiatives, performing arts, and creative industries [24–25]. This model not only reflects the diversity of Ukraine’s cultural field, but also creates an opportunity to implement a comprehensive approach, supporting both traditional forms (restoration, heritage preservation, museum exhibitions) and contemporary and experimental practices, including digital platforms, VR/AR projects and cross-sectoral partnerships. The Foundation’s strategic documents, particularly the UCF Strategy for 2019–2021 [26], emphasize the importance of a systematic transition from passive heritage preservation to an active model of creating contemporary cultural meanings, engaging communities, and developing cultural participation. In this context, museum projects play a crucial role in ensuring the continuity of cultural memory and serving as platforms for representing identities. The 2024–2027 strategic cycle further emphasizes that culture and creativity should become key factors in the victory, restoration, and strengthening of national identity [12], which indicates the Fund’s transition from an institution supporting individual projects to one of strategic influence that shapes cultural priorities in response to wartime challenges.

According to Ukraine’s multi-level system of state cultural policy (Table 1), cultural policy operates as a comprehensive, hierarchically structured model, where each level performs a distinct yet interrelated function, ensuring the comprehensive implementation of strategic tasks in the cultural field.

**Table 1. Multi-level system of Ukraine’s state cultural policy**

Level	Content and main elements
<b>1. Strategic level (regulatory and legal framework)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Constitution of Ukraine</li> <li>– Law “On Culture”</li> <li>– Law “On the Protection of Cultural Heritage”</li> <li>– Law “On Museums and Museum Affairs”</li> <li>– Law “On the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation”</li> <li>– Cultural development strategies, state programs, concepts</li> </ul>
<b>2. Institutional level (policy implementation bodies)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine</li> <li>– Ukrainian Cultural Foundation</li> <li>– Ukrainian Institute</li> <li>– State Service for the Protection of Cultural Heritage</li> <li>– Regional and local cultural administrations</li> </ul>
<b>3. Level of instruments (implementation mechanisms)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Legal instruments: normative acts, regulations, instructions</li> <li>– Economic instruments: grants, subsidies, budget programs</li> <li>– Organizational instruments: planning, programs, institutional changes</li> <li>– Administrative instruments: control, supervision, monitoring, reporting</li> </ul>
<b>4. Operational level (policy implementers)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Museums and nature reserves</li> <li>– Public organizations</li> <li>– Cultural institutions</li> <li>– Creative enterprises</li> <li>– Educational and scientific institutions</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Thus, at the strategic level, the legal and conceptual foundations of cultural policy are established, including constitutional norms, relevant laws, and long-term state strategies. It outlines the fundamental principles, overarching goals, and guiding directions for the country's cultural development. The institutional level is represented by state bodies and institutions responsible for policy formation and implementation. The key actors in this context are the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, which ensure the implementation of state policy in the organizational and managerial dimensions. The instrumental level combines all the means and mechanisms for implementing cultural policy. It covers legal, economic, administrative and organizational instruments, including grant programs, financial incentives, regulatory documents and monitoring mechanisms. The operational level encompasses the direct implementers and beneficiaries of the policy – museums, public organizations, cultural institutions, creative groups, and educational institutions – which actually implement cultural projects and initiatives in practice.

It is important to emphasize that the grant mechanisms of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation occupy a central place in the instrumental level of this system. The UCF is a key instrument for implementing state policy aimed at supporting innovative projects, ensuring the development of the cultural ecosystem, and forming a long-term social impact. The role of the UCF in the public administration system is primarily to perform a modernization function – the transition from an administrative and distributive model of cultural funding to a competitive, independent and expert-oriented model that fully complies with European standards [27–28]. The Foundation contributes to the formation of a culture of transparent, responsible, and effective management of budget funds, and also acts as an intermediary between the state, the public sector, and cultural institutions. The UCF grant programs mustn't be only a financial mechanism but also a tool for introducing values and modern management approaches into the museum sector, particularly in the areas of inclusiveness, digitalization and project management, as a mechanism of “soft power” [29], which contributes to the gradual modernization of museum institutions, the expansion of their competence and the formation of a new management culture through competitive requirements and project implementation standards. Thus, the UCF acts as a catalyst for structural changes that would not have taken place solely through traditional budgetary mechanisms.

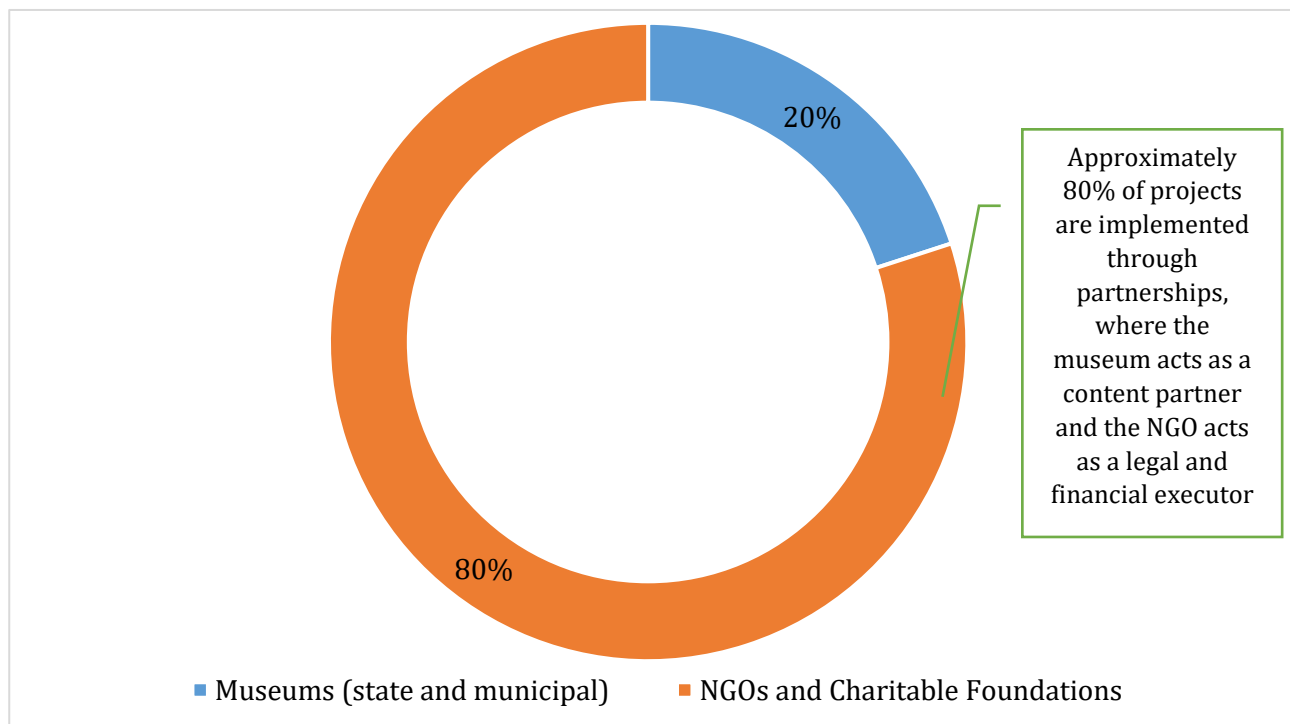
The regulatory framework governing the activities of the UCF, in particular the Law of Ukraine “On the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation”, subordinate acts and instructions of the applicant, creates a systemic framework for competitive selection and implementation of projects, which has a direct impact on the conditions for participation of museum institutions in grant programs. The relevance of analyzing this framework is reinforced by the fact that museum institutions, as budgetary organizations, face legislative restrictions that do not apply to the public sector [30], leading to unequal conditions in the field of project activity. The correlation between UCF grant support and the functioning of museums is systemic and directly follows from current legislation: according to the Law of Ukraine “On Museums and Museum Affairs” [31], museums perform a socially important mission of preserving and promoting cultural values, which is inherently a knowledge-intensive and infrastructure-related activity. That is why UCF's grant instruments, aimed at modernization, digitization, heritage preservation, and inclusive practices (in particular, the “Cultural Heritage”, “Inclusive Culture”, and “Local Culture”), are becoming key mechanisms for development, as basic budgetary funding does not usually cover such needs.

In addition to special legislation, the opportunities for museums in grant activities are significantly determined by regulations such as the Regulations on the Museum Fund of Ukraine [32], which establishes requirements for the accounting, protection, scientific attribution and accessibility of museum objects. Since the UCF funds projects aimed at preserving, researching and promoting cultural heritage, the regulatory obligations of museums to preserve their collections set the basic institutional context and framework for grant activities, determining the specifics of competitive applications. Thus, there is a direct correlation between the UCF's grant support and the fulfilment by museums of their legally defined functions of collecting, studying, preserving and exhibiting cultural values. In the context of the competitive selection procedure, updated in 2025 [27], particular attention is paid to the expert evaluation procedure, which is of fundamental importance for museum institutions, as it is at these stages that the project's compliance with the Fund's strategic priorities, the museum's level of institutional readiness and the realism of the work plan are determined. As a result, museum institutions' projects are subject to a dual reporting system – to the UCF and to their governing bodies (e.g., regional culture departments) – which creates an increased administrative burden and requires

museums to have additional resources, including competent personnel in project management and accounting.

The applicant's instructions and descriptions of LOTs (programs) are no less important, as they define specific thematic priorities and specific requirements for projects, which shape not only the content of future projects, but also the strategic priorities of the museums themselves, which are forced to adapt their activities to current trends in cultural policy. At the same time, an analysis of grant agreements [14–21] and regulatory documents reveals that state and municipal museums are often unable to act as direct project implementers due to several institutional, financial, and legal restrictions outlined in budgetary and treasury legislation. In particular, requirements regarding the procedure for advance payments, the opening of special accounts with the State Treasury Service (STS), and the need to make purchases through the Prozorro system make it extremely difficult to meet the deadlines set out in grant agreements.

The situation is further complicated by the legal regime of martial law, since, in accordance with CMU Resolution No. 590 [33], the STS makes payments according to special rules, where priority is given to defence and critical expenditures. This often leads to delays, blocking, or postponement of payments for cultural institutions, making it virtually impossible to implement project schedules within the established deadlines. It is precisely because of these financial, legal, and administrative barriers that, in about 80% of museum projects (Fig. 1) implemented with the support of the UCF, civil society organizations, or charitable foundations acted as formal implementers, while museums took the position of partners, providing content and access to their collections.



**Fig. 1. Distribution of types of applicants for UCF museum projects**

Source: Compiled by the authors.

This model of “CSOs as implementers – museums as partners” did not arise as a structural choice of institutions, but as a forced adaptation to the limited financial autonomy of museums and their insufficient institutional capacity. An example of this is a comparison of two projects in Ostroh: the project “Exhibition “Ostroh Icon Painting Workshop” [34], implemented by the museum itself (KZ “DIKZ m. Ostroh”), was burdened by numerous treasury and procurement procedures, while the project “Exhibition “Ostroh Tatars” [35], implemented in partnership with a non-governmental organization, proved to be much more mobile and dynamic in its operational processes. Therefore, such a structural imbalance clearly demonstrates the discrepancy between the high potential of museum specialists and the limited capabilities of museum institutions as legal entities. Thus, although the regulatory framework of the UCF defines a clear logic of support, legislative restrictions on budgetary institutions form a unique regulatory ecosystem in which the participation of museums in grant programs is

possible but requires partnerships and the adaptation of management practices to the current requirements of grant funding.

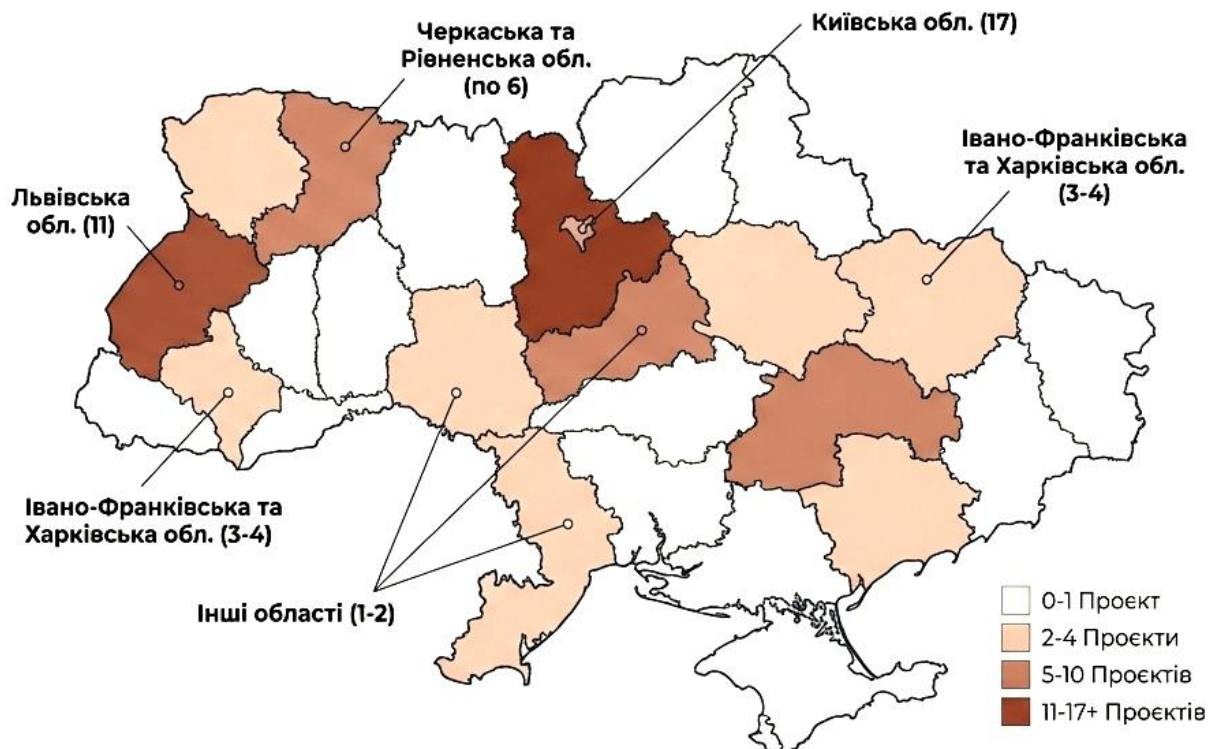
The analysis of grant agreements, reporting documentation, and rating lists from the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation is crucial for tracing the actual mechanisms of museum project implementation and identifying patterns that may not be apparent in regulatory documents alone. Unlike general conceptual provisions and procedures, it is empirical material (agreements, registers of beneficiaries, final and interim reports) reflects the practice of applying grant instruments in the museum sector, which allows us to assess not only the quantitative parameters of support, but also the specifics of budgeting, staff participation, and partnership formation, as well as to identify typical difficulties that arise in the process of implementing initiatives.

The rating lists of projects obtained as a result of a targeted analysis of the UCF programme archive for 2018–2025 [14–21] enabled the tracking of the dynamics of museum participation in competitions and the identification of success factors. Methodologically, the study was based on a comprehensive selection of projects whose primary product was an exhibition, re-exhibition, creation of a museum space, digitization, or digitization of museum collections. Based on the coding of projects according to the criteria of applicant type, programme, lot, and competition result, the share of successful applications was calculated, which ranged from 18 to 25% for the museum sector. This indicator is relatively high for a sector that traditionally operates under conditions of limited resources, but it shows that projects related to digitization and inclusion had a better chance of success in 2020–2025 because they matched the Fund's strategic priorities, while large infrastructure projects were more likely to be rejected due to high budget risks.

At the same time, the ranking lists show a clear trend towards the dominance of projects submitted in partnership with non-governmental organizations or charitable foundations, confirming the general model according to which most museums can only participate in grant competitions through more institutionally flexible structures that act as official project implementers. A notable example is the project "Ostroh Academy: 445 Years of Higher Education in Ukraine", which was implemented by the International Charitable Foundation "Renaissance of Ostroh Academy" [36]. It demonstrates the advantages that a museum institution gains when the applicant is a charitable foundation with broader financial and organizational capabilities, which ensures greater flexibility and efficiency in the implementation of complex exhibition tasks, such as modernizing a museum space into a contemporary educational and communication platform.

To assess the regional activity of the museum sector, 71 completed museum projects supported by the UCF were analyzed, the main result of which was the creation of new exhibitions (Fig. 2). The data revealed a significant unevenness in the spatial distribution of museum initiatives: the highest concentration of projects is in the Kyiv region (17 projects), which is explained by the presence of a significant number of cultural institutions, specialists and active public organizations. The Lviv region ranks second in terms of the number of implemented projects (11 projects), reflecting its strong cultural potential and extensive network of museum institutions. Cherkasy and Rivne regions are in third place (6 projects each), demonstrating the cultural dynamics of these regions. Ivano-Frankivsk and Kharkiv regions show an average level of activity (3 to 4 projects), indicating developed local initiatives and effective partnerships between museums and NGOs. In a number of other regions – namely Zakarpattia, Volyn, Poltava, Luhansk, Kherson, Ternopil, and Zhytomyr – the number of projects implemented ranges from one to two, indicating the sporadic activity of individual museums or a lower level of institutional capacity and grant infrastructure. However, the presence of implemented initiatives in most regions of Ukraine, such as the Kherson region project "Competitive Community – Competitive Museum!" [37], demonstrates the nationwide nature of grant programs and confirms the potential for further strengthening regional museum institutions.

Summarizing the results, it can be said that the spatial distribution of UCF museum projects is uneven and depends on the development of the local cultural environment, the density of the museum network, the level of training of specialists and the activity of the public sector, and among the successful cases there are projects of various nature – from digital reconstructions to inclusive solutions and large-scale exhibitions. Thus, the project "Virtual Museum of the Heritage of the Princes of Ostroh" [38] was one of the first examples of systematic digital representation of heritage, while "History to the Touch: The Fortress of Chyhyryn" [39] focuses on inclusivity through the creation of tactile models for blind visitors, which is in line with the barrier-free strategy.



**Figure 2. Territorial distribution of museum projects supported by the UCF, the main result of which was the creation of new exhibitions**

Source: Created by the authors.

It should be noted that the most successful museum initiatives are those that combine three key factors: alignment with the UCF's strategic priorities (digitalization, inclusiveness, local culture, heritage), a high level of institutional capacity of the team, and a clear concept for interpreting cultural content. UCF grants are not only a financial support tool, but also a catalyst for qualitative changes in the museum sector, stimulating innovation, digital transformation and the development of inclusive and educational practices, which confirms the need for institutional changes to meet the requirements of the modern grant model.

At the same time, an analysis of grant agreements and regulatory documents reveals that state and municipal museums are often unable to act as direct project implementers due to several institutional, financial, and legal restrictions embedded in the current budget and treasury legislation. In particular, requirements regarding advance payments, opening special accounts with the State Treasury Service of Ukraine, and the need to make purchases exclusively through the Prozorro system make it extremely difficult to meet the deadlines set out in grant agreements. The situation is further complicated by the legal regime of martial law, since, in accordance with CMU Resolution No. 590 [30], the State Treasury Service makes payments to budgetary institutions according to special rules, where priority is given to defence and critical expenditures, which often means delays, blocking or postponement of payments for cultural institutions.

It is precisely because of these financial, legal, and administrative barriers that, in about 80% of museum projects implemented with the support of the UCF, civil society organizations or charitable foundations acted as formal implementers, while museums took the position of partners, providing content and access to their collections. The model of "CSO as implementer – museum as partner" arose not as a structural choice of cultural institutions, but as a forced adaptation to the limited financial autonomy of museums and insufficient institutional capacity.

UCF grants have become a key factor in the modernization of the museum sector, but the level of accessibility and effectiveness of their use largely depends on the institutional capacity of museums and the existence of partnerships with public organizations. This confirms the need to improve both the regulatory framework governing the activities of budgetary cultural institutions and the internal organization of museum activities, which will enable the fuller utilization of the potential of grant support in contemporary cultural policy.

The experience of implementing museum projects within the framework of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation's grant programs shows that the main barriers to the full participation of museums in competitions are not the weakness of their ideas, but limited institutional capacity, an imperfect regulatory environment and unequal conditions of competition between different types of applicants. As a result, a significant portion of potentially important and socially valuable museum initiatives do not receive funding, as confirmed by rating lists, in which museum-related projects consistently rank highly but are not supported due to fierce competition with other, more flexible sectors.

One of the key problems is the institutional inability of many museums to operate in the context of the modern project cycle, which requires rapid decision-making, flexible budget planning and the ability to quickly engage highly qualified external specialists. Researchers emphasize that most state and municipal museums remain institutions with a complex administrative hierarchy, low salaries, limited human resources and a lack of specialized project management, communications or fundraising departments [40–41], which creates a significant imbalance between the budgetary sphere and non-governmental organizations, which operate in a more flexible legal environment, have financial autonomy and can quickly form teams for the needs of a specific project.

The institutional capacity of most Ukrainian museums remains limited due to an outdated management model inherited from the Soviet administrative-command system, which operates within a rigid vertical hierarchy that hinders rapid decision-making, restricts autonomy in programming activities, and reduces flexibility in responding to audience needs. In this context, a review of contemporary models of cultural heritage management in Ukraine reveals that the effectiveness of museum projects depends directly on the ability of local institutions to adapt to new financial and management mechanisms. The White Paper on Local Cultural Heritage Management emphasizes that the traditional budgetary maintenance model is insufficient for modern tasks such as digitizing collections or creating innovative exhibitions [42]. That is why it is crucial to attract grant resources, non-governmental partners, and develop project capacity, which in fact reflects the recommended approach to multi-level financing – a combination of budgetary, grant, partnership and philanthropic resources.

The staffing crisis is one of the most critical institutional problems: low salaries, lack of competitive working conditions and the outflow of young professionals lead to chronic ageing of the workforce. Many museums lack specialists in modern areas of museum work, such as project management, digital technologies, communications, or fundraising, which reduces their ability to attract extra-budgetary resources and implement innovative formats. A separate problem is the technical incapacity and backwardness of the material and technical base, as the lack of modern equipment and digital infrastructure makes it impossible to digitize collections, create multimedia products and implement inclusive solutions.

In addition, regulatory and financial constraints significantly hinder the development potential of museums. Current legislation provides museums with extremely limited opportunities to independently manage their own revenues, and the budget system does not allow for the flexible redistribution of resources or rapid procurement, which is critically necessary for the implementation of grant initiatives. An additional institutional challenge is the lack of a systematic model for interaction with local authorities, where the activities of museums are often perceived as “subsidized” – with no expectation of innovation or economic impact.

In summary, the institutional problems of Ukrainian museums are complex and cover managerial, legislative, financial, and personnel and technical components. Without systemic reform aimed at increasing autonomy, modernizing the regulatory framework, creating professional teams and upgrading infrastructure, museums will remain uncompetitive in the project environment and will not be able to fully fulfil their role in the state cultural policy system.

Another important factor that reduces museums' chances of receiving funding is the structure of the UCF's grant programs, which do not have a separate category for museum projects. Most museum applications are submitted in “mixed” lots – “Cultural Heritage”, “Local Culture”, “Reintegration through Culture”, “Inclusive Art”, etc., where they have to compete with event, marketing, educational, or product projects. An analysis of the rating lists shows that it is precisely such “soft” projects – festivals, residencies, video production – that more often receive high ratings due to faster implementation, predictable results, and lower cost.

In contrast, museum projects are structurally “hard”: they involve the creation of new exhibitions, the purchase of equipment, the digitization of collections, and the production of tactile models, which is

accompanied by high technical risks, longer production times, and more complex logistical processes. This makes them less attractive in a competitive environment where expert councils are forced to compare projects from different sectors based on the same criteria, and a serious challenge is the large number of museum projects that, according to existing ratings, could be supported but did not receive funding due to the limited budget of the lot or the significant number of applicants from other sectors.

The UCF grant structure lacks a programme that would guarantee national or regional museums at least a minimum amount of funds directed exclusively towards institutional capacity building or exhibition renewal, creating an imbalance in the museum sector, which remains “dissolved” between several lots. All this suggests that museum projects require special competition conditions rather than participation in mixed programs, where they are structurally disadvantaged in terms of risk, complexity and cost, as confirmed by the results of expert surveys, which revealed the low project capacity of regional cultural institutions [43].

Therefore, the key challenges for the implementation of museum projects are low institutional capacity, regulatory and staffing constraints, systemic inequality between museum and “soft” projects, as well as the fragmentation of grant programs, which require not only the adaptation of internal museum procedures, but also a review of state policy regarding their legal status and funding. The effectiveness of museum projects largely depends on the ability of museum institutions to implement modern management practices adapted to the conditions of grant activity, which requires the formation of the museum’s internal institutional capacity for project activity and the creation of structural units responsible for the preparation and support of grant projects. Equally important is the optimization of internal administrative procedures to ensure greater synchronization with grant requirements, minimizing the time required for the approval of financial transactions and the conclusion of contracts. Improving project management is inextricably linked to the digital transformation of the museum’s internal activities, including the introduction of digital document management and progress monitoring systems, as well as the development of partnerships with non-governmental organizations, universities and IT companies that can provide access to professional competencies that museums lack.

Improving the effectiveness of project management is impossible without addressing the issue of low wages in the museum sector, as salary restrictions effectively prevent museums from attracting highly qualified specialists – designers, programmers, engineers, managers – to implement complex digital or innovative projects on their own. Thus, improving the effectiveness of project management requires comprehensive changes: from the development of staff competencies and internal administrative optimization to the introduction of digital tools, partnership models and updated approaches to risk management, which will enable museums to become full participants in the grant sector and competitive applicants within the framework of state cultural policy.

## 6. Conclusions

Thus, the analysis shows that although the grant mechanisms of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation have become a key catalyst for the modernization of the museum sector, stimulating digitalization, inclusiveness and innovative project activities, structural institutional barriers, including low financial autonomy, outdated management models and regulatory restrictions on budgetary institutions, significantly reduce the direct competitiveness of museums, which has led to the dominance of the partnership model, which, although it ensures the operational implementation of projects, at the same time exacerbates the issue of the need for systemic reform of the legal status of museums and their institutional capacity. In view of this, further research should focus on developing specific recommendations for the creation of a specialized grant lot for “hard” museum projects within the structure of the UCF, as well as on exploring opportunities to update the legislative framework in order to increase the financial autonomy of museum institutions, which is a necessary condition for ensuring their sustainability and full participation in the implementation of state cultural policy in the context of wartime and post-war challenges.

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