



IMPROVING UZBEKISTAN'S BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT THROUGH B-READY INDICATORS: INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY PRIORITIES

Egamberdiyeva Asilaxon Kamoliddin qizi

Researcher

Abstract

This thesis examines how the World Bank's Business Ready (B-READY) indicators can inform priorities for improving Uzbekistan's business environment. B-READY assesses the regulatory framework, public services, and operational efficiency across ten topics in the life cycle of a firm. This structure makes it possible to distinguish the quality of formal rules from the services and procedures businesses experience in practice.

The study aims to identify institutional and regulatory priorities by examining Uzbekistan's B-READY results alongside the methodology used to produce them. It applies document analysis and a comparative assessment of the three pillars, with attention to gaps between written requirements, access to public services, and implementation. The proposed approach treats indicator scores as diagnostic evidence rather than as a complete measure of business conditions. It argues that reform priorities should be selected by tracing low-performing indicators to specific procedures and responsible institutions, then assessing whether changes reduce the time, cost, and uncertainty faced by firms. The thesis offers an analytical framework for setting reform priorities; it does not claim that proposed measures have already improved business outcomes.

Keywords

Uzbekistan, B-READY, business environment, regulatory reform, public services, operational efficiency, institutional reform.





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Introduction

Improving the business environment requires more than changing laws. Firms also need accessible public services and predictable procedures when they register, obtain permits, pay taxes, resolve disputes, and carry out other routine activities. A regulation may be clear on paper yet difficult to follow in practice if information is hard to find, agencies apply requirements inconsistently, or a procedure takes longer than expected. For this reason, reform priorities should be based on both the content of regulations and businesses' experience of their implementation.

The World Bank's Business Ready (B-READY) framework offers a way to examine these issues together. It assesses ten topics related to the life cycle of a firm through three pillars: the Regulatory Framework, Public Services, and Operational Efficiency. The first pillar focuses largely on formal rules, while the other two help assess the services available to firms and how procedures work in practice. Uzbekistan is included in the B-READY assessment, making the framework relevant to an analysis of its current business environment.

For Uzbekistan, the central analytical question is how B-READY results can be translated into practical reform decisions. An indicator may point to a weakness, but its score alone does not explain which rule, administrative step, or institutional arrangement causes the difficulty. Identifying a priority therefore requires closer examination of the underlying indicator, the procedure it measures, the agency responsible, and the effect on firms. This distinction also helps avoid treating a higher score as the sole objective of reform.

This thesis aims to identify institutional and regulatory priorities for improving Uzbekistan's business environment using the B-READY framework. It compares the three pillars, considers where formal rules and practical implementation may diverge, and proposes criteria for selecting reforms. The analysis is based on published B-



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READY materials and official documents; it does not present a new firm survey or claim to measure the impact of reforms already undertaken.

Main Body

B-READY as a framework for identifying reform priorities

The B-READY framework evaluates the business environment across ten topics, from business entry to insolvency. Each topic is assessed through three pillars: the quality of the regulatory framework, the provision of public services, and operational efficiency. This design is useful for policy analysis because a strong legal framework does not necessarily mean that firms receive timely and effective services. Conversely, an efficient procedure may still require clearer or more consistent legal rules.

For Uzbekistan, the first step is to examine results within each topic, rather than relying on an aggregate score. A difference between pillar scores can help formulate a specific question. If regulatory quality is comparatively strong but operational efficiency is weaker, the next task is to examine how the relevant procedure is carried out. If public services are weaker, attention should turn to the availability of information, access to services, and coordination among responsible agencies. These are analytical starting points, not automatic explanations of why a score is low.

Institutional priorities

Institutional reform concerns the way public bodies deliver and coordinate services used by firms. Business procedures often involve more than one agency. Even where each agency has a defined role, repeated requests for the same information or unclear responsibility can make the overall process difficult to navigate. A B-READY-based review should therefore identify the full sequence a firm follows, including where it submits information, receives a decision, and seeks clarification when a problem arises.

The practical priority is to assign clear responsibility for each stage of a procedure and make requirements accessible to users. Where services are delivered digitally,



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attention should be paid to whether the system allows a firm to complete the procedure and track its outcome. Digital access alone is not sufficient if applicants must repeat the same steps on paper or visit an office to resolve routine issues. These matters should be assessed through the relevant B-READY indicators and, where available, administrative data and feedback from firms.

Regulatory priorities

Regulatory reform should focus on requirements that are unclear, duplicated, or difficult to apply consistently. For each selected topic, policymakers can compare the stated legal requirement with the documents and steps firms are asked to complete in practice. Such a comparison helps distinguish a problem in the wording of a rule from a problem in its implementation. The appropriate response may be to clarify a regulation, remove a redundant requirement, improve public guidance, or change how agencies administer an existing rule.

Reforms should also be assessed from the firm's perspective. A change in legislation is meaningful when it produces a clearer and more predictable process. Suitable measures include the number of steps required, the time needed to complete them, the transparency of decisions, and the availability of a way to correct errors or challenge a decision. The B-READY methodology's combination of formal rules and practical implementation provides a basis for this assessment.

Selecting and evaluating reforms

A reform priority should meet three conditions. First, it should address a clearly identified weakness in a B-READY topic or pillar. Second, the responsible institution and the procedure to be changed should be identifiable. Third, its effect should be measurable after implementation. Applying these conditions can turn an indicator into a testable policy proposal: what will change, who will implement it, and how will improvement be observed?





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B-READY results should be used alongside legal analysis, administrative records, and evidence from firms. The indicators can reveal where closer examination is needed, but they cannot by themselves establish the cause of every problem or prove that a particular reform will succeed. A regular review of implementation is therefore necessary to determine whether changes to rules and services improve the experience of businesses in Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

The B-READY framework provides a structured basis for identifying priorities in Uzbekistan's business environment. Its three pillars make it possible to examine whether a difficulty arises from the regulatory framework, the public services available to firms, or the way procedures operate in practice. Reform decisions become more precise when results are reviewed by topic and linked to a specific procedure and responsible institution.

The analysis indicates that institutional and regulatory changes should be planned together. Clearer rules have limited practical value if firms cannot obtain information or complete a procedure efficiently. Likewise, faster services require consistent legal requirements and transparent decisions. For each priority, policymakers should define the change to be made and assess its effect using observable measures, such as the steps and time required to complete a procedure.

B-READY indicators are a starting point for diagnosis, not proof of what causes a particular weakness. Further analysis of administrative processes and firms' experiences is needed before selecting a reform and evaluating its results. This approach would allow Uzbekistan to use B-READY data to improve the conditions businesses encounter in practice.

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