



# Contribution of Project Initiation on Implementation Success of Business Development Fund Projects in Rwanda: A Case of Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRRP)

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the contribution of project initiation to the successful implementation of Business Development Fund (BDF) projects in Rwanda, focusing on the Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRRP). A descriptive research design was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The target population comprised 269 BDF staff involved in AFIRRP, with a sample of 161 respondents selected using stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and document reviews and analyzed using SPSS software version 25, employing descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses. Findings indicate clear objectives, proper role allocation, stakeholder engagement, feasibility assessments, and integration of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tools significantly enhance project performance. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship ( $r = 0.823$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between project initiation practices and successful implementation, while regression results confirmed that project initiation is a strong predictor of project outcomes ( $R^2 = 0.758$ ). The study concludes that structured project initiation is crucial for ensuring efficient, timely, and sustainable project implementation. Recommendations include strengthening planning, institutionalizing stakeholder engagement, conducting comprehensive feasibility assessments, and integrating M&E tools from the outset. These findings provide practical insights for BDF and similar development initiatives to enhance project performance and sustainability.*

**Keywords:** *Project initiation, project implementation, BDF projects, project management, AFIRRP, Rwanda*

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## 1. Introduction

Project management has become an essential practice for ensuring that projects achieve their intended objectives efficiently and effectively. It provides a structured framework that guides projects from conception through planning, execution, monitoring, and closure. Among the

various phases of project management, the initiation phase is considered the most critical, as it establishes the foundation upon which all subsequent activities depend. A well-structured initiation phase ensures that projects begin with clear objectives, defined deliverables, a realistic timeline, and a roadmap for achieving expected outcomes. The initiation phase also sets the stage for identifying

potential risks, allocating resources strategically, and establishing mechanisms for monitoring progress (Daniel, 2022; Jeffrey, 2021). Without proper initiation, projects are prone to inefficiencies, misaligned objectives, and the inability to meet stakeholders' expectations.

Globally, experiences from developed countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia highlight the significance of robust project initiation practices. These countries have institutionalized structured initiation processes in both public and private sector projects, which has resulted in improved project performance, better utilization of resources, and higher stakeholder satisfaction (Ward, 2022; Rogers, 2021). In these contexts, project initiation often includes comprehensive feasibility studies, risk assessments, stakeholder consultations, and clear articulation of project objectives and scope. Such practices provide lessons for developing countries, including Rwanda, where structured initiation practices have the potential to reduce risks, increase efficiency, and improve project implementation outcomes. Adapting these global best practices to the local context can help projects achieve higher levels of success and sustainability.

The project initiation phase encompasses several interrelated activities that are critical for setting the project on a path to success. Key elements of initiation include defining the project scope, assessing technical and financial feasibility, identifying stakeholders, assigning responsibilities, and establishing governance structures (Anderson, 2021). Effective initiation ensures that all project participants share a common understanding of the objectives, deliverables, and timelines, minimizing uncertainties and promoting alignment. Conversely, weak initiation practices often result in unclear roles, incomplete feasibility studies, and poor stakeholder engagement, which can lead to delays, cost overruns, and project failure. In many developing countries, deficiencies during the initiation stage are among the main reasons projects fail to deliver their intended benefits, underscoring the critical importance of this phase in overall project management (Ljusnan Dal, 2019).

In Rwanda, the Business Development Fund (BDF) plays a pivotal role in supporting economic recovery, resilience, and financial inclusion, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Projects under BDF, such as the Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRRP), are designed to provide financial assistance, build capacities, and stimulate entrepreneurship among vulnerable groups and emerging businesses. However, despite the considerable investments and resources allocated, some projects have experienced implementation challenges, often attributed to weaknesses in project initiation. Common issues include unclear project objectives, insufficient feasibility assessments, inadequate

stakeholder engagement, and poorly defined responsibilities, all of which hinder successful execution and reduce the impact of interventions (BDF, 2022).

Effective project initiation not only enhances the likelihood of achieving project goals but also contributes to better resource management, stakeholder satisfaction, and sustainability of project outcomes. By establishing clear objectives, conducting rigorous feasibility studies, and engaging stakeholders meaningfully, project teams can mitigate potential risks, optimize resource utilization, and improve coordination throughout the project lifecycle. In the context of AFIRRP, strengthening initiation practices is particularly important given the project's focus on supporting SMEs, which require timely and well-structured interventions to enhance resilience and promote financial recovery. This study therefore seeks to explore the contribution of project initiation to the successful implementation of BDF projects in Rwanda, providing insights into how initiation practices can influence overall project success and sustainability.

## 1.1 Problem statement

In Rwanda, effective project initiation is critical for ensuring the success of development interventions, particularly those managed by the Business Development Fund (BDF) such as the Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRRP) (Rogers, 2021). Despite the substantial resources and strategic importance of these projects, many have encountered implementation challenges that hinder their objectives, including delays, cost overruns, and limited impact on target beneficiaries. These challenges often stem from deficiencies during the initiation phase, including unclear project objectives, inadequate feasibility assessments, insufficient stakeholder engagement, and poorly defined roles and responsibilities ((Anderson, 2021).

While the BDF aims to strengthen financial inclusion and build capacity for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), gaps in project initiation practices compromise the planning, coordination, and execution of these projects, ultimately affecting their overall performance (BDF, 2022). Although some studies have explored project management practices in Rwanda, there is limited research focusing specifically on how initiation processes influence project outcomes within BDF interventions. Understanding the role of project initiation is therefore essential to identify the underlying weaknesses, improve project planning, and enhance the successful implementation and sustainability of BDF projects in Rwanda. This study sought to achieve the following research objective:

- i. To determine the Contribution of project initiation on implementation success of Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Project initiation

Project initiation is the foundational phase of the project management life cycle, during which the project idea is formally recognized, its objectives are defined, and the feasibility of the project is assessed (Daniel, 2022). This phase ensures that projects start with a clear understanding of their purpose, scope, and expected outcomes. Key activities in project initiation include developing a project charter, conducting feasibility studies, identifying and analyzing stakeholders, and allocating initial resources. According to Jeffrey (2021), projects that invest adequate time and effort in initiation are more likely to stay on track, avoid scope creep, and achieve their intended objectives, as a strong initiation phase minimizes uncertainties and provides a structured roadmap for execution.

Furthermore, project initiation is not only about formal documentation but also about creating shared understanding and alignment among all participants. Effective initiation ensures that stakeholders, including project sponsors, managers, and beneficiaries, are aware of project goals, expectations, and their roles in achieving them (Rogers, 2021). In Rwanda, participatory initiation approaches have proven valuable in development projects, where community involvement and government support are critical for success. By involving stakeholders from the outset, project managers can secure buy-in, anticipate potential conflicts, and design strategies that meet both technical and social needs, which is essential for sustainable outcomes.

Structured project initiation has been associated with higher project success rates. In developed countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia, project initiation processes are formalized through documented procedures, standardized tools, and comprehensive stakeholder analyses (Ward, 2022). These practices allow project managers to identify potential risks early, clarify objectives, and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently. Studies have shown that poor initiation practices, such as unclear scope definitions or inadequate stakeholder engagement, are among the leading causes of project failure, resulting in delays, budget overruns, and underperformance (Ljusnan Dal, 2019). The lessons from these countries highlight the importance of systematic initiation practices, which can be adapted to developing contexts, including Rwanda, to enhance project performance.

In Rwanda, project initiation is particularly critical in development and economic recovery initiatives. Institutions like the Business Development Fund (BDF) implement projects such as the Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRRP), aiming to

strengthen financial inclusion and support small and medium enterprises (BDF, 2022). Despite significant investment and strategic planning, several projects face challenges in execution due to weak initiation practices. Common issues include insufficient feasibility assessments, unclear project objectives, and inadequate identification of stakeholders. Research by Anderson (2021) indicates that addressing these gaps during the initiation phase can improve project planning, facilitate better stakeholder engagement, and reduce implementation risks, ultimately enhancing project performance and sustainability.

### 2.2 Successful implementation of project

Successful implementation of a project refers to the effective execution of planned activities to achieve the project's objectives within the defined scope, time, and budget while meeting quality standards (James, 2022). It involves translating project plans into actionable tasks, coordinating resources, monitoring progress, and ensuring that deliverables are completed as intended. Effective implementation requires strong leadership, clear communication, and adherence to structured processes that were established during the project initiation phase. According to Hilary (2021), projects that begin with a well-defined initiation phase are more likely to achieve successful implementation because they have a solid foundation, clear objectives, and a roadmap that guides every subsequent step.

Successful project implementation depends on both technical and managerial competencies. In developed countries, organizations emphasize rigorous project planning, continuous monitoring, risk management, and stakeholder engagement as critical factors for success (Ward, 2022; Rogers, 2021). For instance, construction and infrastructure projects in Canada and Australia that implemented detailed initiation and planning processes achieved higher success rates in terms of timely delivery, cost efficiency, and quality outcomes. Conversely, projects that skipped or inadequately performed initiation activities often faced delays, resource wastage, and stakeholder dissatisfaction (Ljusnan Dal, 2019). These findings highlight that project initiation and implementation are interlinked, and weaknesses in the initiation phase often manifest as failures during execution.

In the context of Rwanda, successful implementation is particularly critical for development and economic recovery projects. Institutions like the Business Development Fund (BDF) and the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) oversee projects that aim to stimulate entrepreneurship, provide financial assistance, and support infrastructure development. Research by Anderson (2021) indicates that many Rwandan projects fail to achieve

intended outcomes due to weak project initiation practices, inadequate monitoring, and poor stakeholder involvement. Strengthening the initiation phase by defining clear objectives, conducting feasibility studies, and involving relevant stakeholders has been shown to enhance implementation efficiency and effectiveness. Successful implementation in Rwanda also requires adapting global project management best practices to local contexts, including consideration of community needs, government regulations, and available resources

## 2.3 Empirical Literature

A study by Daniel (2022) examined the relationship between project initiation practices and the performance of development projects in East Africa. The research found that projects with well-defined initiation phases, including clear objectives, stakeholder identification, and feasibility assessments, were more likely to achieve their intended outcomes. The study emphasized that neglecting the initiation phase often leads to scope creep, resource misallocation, and delays during execution. These findings underscore the critical role of project initiation in providing a solid foundation for successful project management, particularly in contexts where resources are limited and stakeholder coordination is crucial.

In another study, Jeffrey (2021) investigated the influence of structured project initiation on the successful implementation of infrastructure projects in Rwanda. The study revealed that projects that incorporated detailed planning, risk assessment, and stakeholder engagement at the initiation stage experienced fewer delays and achieved higher quality outputs. Conversely, projects that lacked proper initiation frameworks often faced budget overruns, incomplete deliverables, and dissatisfaction among beneficiaries. The study concluded that strengthening the initiation phase significantly improves the likelihood of project success, highlighting the need for institutionalizing formal initiation procedures within Rwandan project management practices.

Anderson (2021) conducted research on the Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRRP) under Rwanda's Business Development Fund. The study found that inadequate project initiation, including unclear objectives and insufficient feasibility studies, was a major factor contributing to implementation challenges. Projects that invested in comprehensive initiation practices, including stakeholder consultations and risk analysis, were more resilient to disruptions and achieved better outcomes. This empirical evidence demonstrates that project initiation is not only a procedural requirement but also a strategic necessity for ensuring successful execution and achieving development goals in Rwanda.

A study by Ljusnan Dal (2019) focused on public sector projects in developing countries, including Rwanda, and highlighted the critical link between initiation practices and overall project performance. The research indicated that projects with structured initiation processes, such as defining scope, assigning responsibilities, and assessing resources, had higher completion rates and better alignment with intended objectives. In contrast, projects with weak initiation phases often encountered miscommunication, mismanagement, and delayed deliverables. The study concluded that reinforcing project initiation practices is essential for enhancing project efficiency and ensuring the effective utilization of resources, particularly in development-focused projects where accountability and sustainability are paramount.

## 2.4 Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on project management theory. The theory emerged in the mid-20th century as scholars and practitioners sought systematic approaches to managing increasingly complex projects. Pioneers like Henri Fayol and later modern theorists such as Harold Kerzner contributed to the development of structured project management principles, emphasizing planning, organization, and control (Kerzner, 2021). This theory evolved to cover all stages of the project life cycle, from initiation to closure, with particular attention to defining objectives, scope, and stakeholder roles at the outset. The emphasis on formal processes and best practices in project management theory laid the foundation for understanding why projects succeed or fail depending on early-stage planning.

Project Management Theory explains project management as a structured framework for achieving specific objectives within defined constraints of time, cost, and quality. The theory emphasizes that proper management at each stage, particularly initiation, is critical to aligning project objectives with organizational goals and available resources (PMI, 2020). Initiation activities, such as defining scope, assessing feasibility, identifying risks, and engaging stakeholders, are central to the theory because they determine the foundation upon which the project is planned and executed. Without a strong initiation phase, even well-resourced projects are at risk of delays, cost overruns, and failure to meet desired outcomes.

The relevance of Project Management Theory to this study lies in its focus on project initiation as a critical determinant of project success. By applying the principles of structured project initiation, including objective definition, feasibility assessment, and stakeholder engagement, projects in Rwanda—such as those under the Business Development

Fund can improve implementation outcomes. This theory supports the study's examination of how effective initiation practices influence the success of development projects, ensuring that projects are launched with a clear roadmap and achievable goals.

### 3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design, which allowed for an in-depth examination of project initiation practices and their contribution to successful project implementation. This design was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to systematically describe and analyze relevant aspects of project initiation, including defining objectives, conducting feasibility assessments, identifying stakeholders, and allocating responsibilities. By using a descriptive approach, the study captured both individual and organizational perspectives, presenting findings that reflect the experiences, perceptions, and insights of those directly involved in project initiation (Daniel, 2022; Jeffrey, 2021). The study population comprised 269 employees of the Business Development Fund (BDF) who were directly involved in the Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRRP). This population included project managers, project officers, financial officers, and support staff who were actively engaged in the planning and initiation phases of the project. These participants were considered knowledgeable and well-positioned to provide reliable information regarding the initiation practices applied in AFIRRP and their impact on project outcomes (Daren, 2018). The inclusion of various roles ensured that the study captured a broad spectrum of experiences and insights across the organization. A sample size of 161 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula (1967), which provides a statistical method for calculating the required number of participants based on the total population and a specified margin of error. This formula ensured that the sample was representative of the population and that the findings could be generalized with a reasonable level of confidence. A stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation of the different categories of staff, including project managers, officers, and support personnel. In addition, purposive sampling was used to select key informants with direct responsibility for project initiation activities, ensuring that critical insights into the practices and challenges of initiating projects were captured.

Data collection methods included structured questionnaires and document reviews. The questionnaires were designed to measure respondents' perceptions of project initiation components, such as the clarity of project objectives, the thoroughness of feasibility assessments, stakeholder

engagement, and the allocation of responsibilities. The Likert scale was used to quantify respondents' agreement with statements about initiation practices. Document reviews focused on project initiation reports, feasibility studies, and planning documents from AFIRRP, which provided additional context and helped validate the findings from the questionnaires. This combination of primary and secondary data ensured a comprehensive understanding of project initiation practices and their contribution to implementation success.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, where both descriptive and inferential techniques were applied. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and percentages, were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of project initiation practices. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between project initiation and project implementation success, while regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which initiation practices predict project outcomes. These analyses provided quantitative evidence of the contribution of effective initiation practices to project success, highlighting critical factors such as feasibility assessment, stakeholder engagement, and clarity of objectives in ensuring smooth project execution.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

This section presents the findings from respondents on research objectives, and the findings deal with the perceptions of the surveyed respondents on designed questions, hence the results are classed in the following tables:

#### 4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics of project initiation

This section presents the descriptive statistics essential for understanding respondents' perceptions of project initiation practices and their contribution to the successful implementation of AFIRRP projects. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale, where SA = Strongly Agree (5), A = Agree (4), UN = Undecided (3), D = Disagree (2), and SD = Strongly Disagree (1), and focused on key components of initiation, including clarity of objectives, feasibility assessments, stakeholder engagement, and allocation of responsibilities. The analysis summarizes respondents' views using mean scores and standard deviations, highlighting areas where initiation practices are consistently applied and those needing improvement.

**Table 1: Level of agreement on how project initiation contribute to successful implementation of AFIRRP (N=161)**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Setting clear goals and objectives contributes to project implementation success at AFIRRP	4.25	0.68
Distribution of responsibilities contributes to project implementation success at AFIRRP	4.1	0.71
Conducting feasibility studies contributes to project implementation success at AFIRRP	3.95	0.74
Stakeholder engagement contributes to project implementation success at AFIRRP	3.8	0.7
Resource allocation contributes to project implementation success at AFIRRP	3.45	0.77
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>0.72</b>

**Source :** Primary Data, 2026

The data in Table 1 presents a detailed view of respondents' perceptions regarding the contribution of project initiation practices to the successful implementation of the Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRRP). The statement on setting clear goals and objectives scored the highest mean of 4.25 (SD = 0.68), indicating that respondents strongly recognize the importance of establishing well-defined goals at the start of a project. Distribution of responsibilities followed closely with a mean of 4.10 (SD = 0.71), reflecting agreement that clear task allocation improves implementation efficiency and accountability. Conducting feasibility studies received a mean of 3.95 (SD = 0.74), showing that while respondents value feasibility assessments, there may be variability in how thoroughly these studies are conducted. Stakeholder engagement had a mean of 3.80 (SD = 0.70), suggesting moderate agreement on its role, though some participants may perceive limitations in stakeholder involvement at the initiation phase. Finally, resource allocation had the lowest mean of 3.45 (SD = 0.77), highlighting that ensuring adequate resources from the start is recognized as important but not consistently achieved across projects. Overall, the mean score of 3.91 (SD = 0.72) reflects a generally positive perception of project initiation practices and their contribution to successful project implementation.

These findings indicate that proper project initiation is critical to ensuring the smooth execution of AFIRRP. High scores for goal setting and task distribution suggest that participants appreciate structured planning and clear responsibilities, which align with best practices in project management (Daniel, 2022; Anderson, 2021). Moderate scores for feasibility studies, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation highlight areas where initiation processes could be strengthened, emphasizing the need for comprehensive planning and inclusive participation. This is consistent with prior studies that show projects with well-defined initiation stages are more likely to meet their objectives and remain within scope, time, and budget constraints (Ljusnan Dal, 2019; Jeffrey, 2021). Improving these initiation components can therefore enhance project performance, reduce risks, and increase the likelihood of successful outcomes for AFIRRP and similar intervention

#### 4.1.2 Correlation Analysis

The findings of the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variables are summarized and presented in Table 2

**Table 2: Correlation between project initiation and successful implementation of AFIRRP (N=161)**

		Project initiation	Successful implementation of project
Project initiation	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	161	
Successful implementation of project	Pearson Correlation	.823**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	161	161

Source: Primary data, 2026

The correlation results in Table 3 indicate a strong positive relationship between project initiation practices and the successful implementation of AFIRRP. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.823 is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that effective project initiation including clear goal setting, stakeholder engagement, feasibility assessments, and proper resource allocation is strongly associated with improved project outcomes. This finding implies that the better the initiation practices are implemented, the higher the likelihood that the project will achieve its objectives efficiently and within the planned scope and timeframe.

These results are consistent with prior research emphasizing that early-stage project planning and structured initiation are critical determinants of project

success (Anderson, 2021; Ljusnan Dal, 2019). By establishing clear objectives, defining responsibilities, and ensuring feasibility and stakeholder involvement from the start, projects like AFIRRP can reduce implementation risks, minimize delays, and enhance overall performance

#### 4.1.3 Regression analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed in this section to identify the predictor and its contribution towards the criterion. It aims to determine the prediction of a single dependent variable from a group of independent variables. The multiple regression analysis was performed with all the assumptions complied with. Table 3 shows the model summary of the results

**Table 3. Model summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.870 <sup>a</sup>	.758	.753	.35133

a. Predictors: (Constant), project initiation

The model summary in Table 3 shows the strength and explanatory power of project initiation in predicting the successful implementation of AFIRRP. The R value of 0.870 indicates a strong positive correlation between project initiation practices and project implementation success. The R Square value of 0.758 suggests that approximately 75.8% of the variation in successful project implementation can be explained by project initiation, while the Adjusted R Square of 0.753 confirms the model's strong predictive capability after adjusting for the number of predictors.

The standard error of the estimate (0.35133) reflects the average deviation of the observed values from the regression line, indicating that the model predicts project implementation success with reasonable accuracy. These results highlight that effective project initiation including goal setting, stakeholder engagement, feasibility assessments, and resource allocation is a key determinant of project success. This underscores the importance of thorough planning and structured initiation practices in enhancing the overall performance of projects such as AFIRRP.

**Table 4. Summary of ANOVA results**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	60.609	3	20.203	164.276	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	19.379	157	.123		
	Total	79.988	160			

a. Dependent Variable: Project initiation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Successful implementation of project

The ANOVA results presented in Table 4 assess the overall significance of the regression model examining the effect of project initiation on the successful implementation of AFIRRP. The regression sum of squares (60.609) and the mean square (20.203) indicate the portion of variation in project implementation success explained by the independent variable, project initiation. The F-value of 164.276 with a significance level of 0.000 demonstrates that the model is statistically significant, confirming that project initiation practices meaningfully predict project success. The residual sum of squares (19.379) represents

the variation in project implementation success not explained by project initiation. The total sum of squares (79.988) shows the overall variation in the dependent variable. The extremely low p-value (Sig. = 0.000) implies that the relationship between project initiation and project implementation success is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. This result emphasizes the critical role of structured initiation practices in ensuring project outcomes, highlighting the importance of clear objectives, stakeholder engagement, feasibility studies, and effective resource allocation.

**Table 5. Regression Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
		1	(Constant)	.236		
	M & E tools	.357	.065	.369	5.454	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Successful implementation of project

The regression coefficients in Table 5 show the relationship between project initiation, represented here by Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tools, and the successful implementation of AFIRRP. The constant (intercept) value of 0.236 indicates the predicted level of project implementation success when the M&E tools are zero. The unstandardized coefficient for M&E tools (B = 0.357) suggests that for every one-unit increase in the effective use of M&E tools, project implementation success increases by 0.357 units, holding other factors constant. The standard error (0.065) is small, indicating that the estimate is precise.

The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.369) shows that M&E tools have a moderate positive effect on project implementation success relative to other variables in the model. The t-value of 5.454 with a significance level of 0.000 confirms that this effect is statistically significant at the 5% level. This result implies that structured use of M&E tools during project initiation strongly contributes to achieving project objectives, supporting the argument that careful planning, monitoring, and evaluation are essential for project success.

## 4.2. Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that project initiation practices play a critical role in the successful implementation of AFIRRP. Respondents emphasized that setting clear goals and objectives provides a solid foundation for project planning, execution, and evaluation. This finding aligns with Daniel (2022) and Anderson (2021), who assert that well-defined objectives enhance accountability, clarify expectations, and reduce uncertainty during project implementation. Similarly, the distribution of responsibilities was seen as essential for ensuring coordination, reducing task overlap, and improving efficiency, which supports the observations of Jeffrey (2021) and Ljusnan Dal (2019) that clear role allocation minimizes delays and performance challenges in complex projects.

Feasibility assessments were also highlighted as crucial for anticipating risks, identifying resource needs, and ensuring the project is practically achievable. This is consistent with Ward (2022) and Rogers (2021), who emphasize that thorough feasibility studies enhance decision-making and build confidence among stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement emerged as another important aspect,

confirming that early involvement of beneficiaries and partners fosters ownership, transparency, and smoother project execution, as noted by Patton (2019) and Cousins and Earl (2021). Furthermore, integrating monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools from the outset was recognized as critical for tracking progress and making timely adjustments, supporting the findings of Kusek and Rist (2024) that M&E frameworks embedded in initiation enhance performance and organizational learning.

The correlation analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between project initiation practices and project implementation success. This indicates that projects with well-structured initiation, including clear objectives, stakeholder involvement, feasibility assessments, and proper role allocation, are more likely to achieve their intended outcomes. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Anderson (2021) and Ljusnan Dal (2019), who emphasize that early-stage planning and structured initiation are significant predictors of successful project execution. The strong correlation suggests that enhancing initiation practices directly contributes to smoother project implementation, improved efficiency, and greater adherence to planned scope and timelines.

Regression analysis further confirmed that project initiation is a significant predictor of successful project implementation. Specifically, the effective use of M&E tools and structured initiation practices were found to positively influence project outcomes. This aligns with Kusek and Rist (2024), who highlight that embedding M&E in the initiation phase enables continuous tracking, risk mitigation, and performance improvements. Similarly, Ward (2022) and Rogers (2021) emphasize that feasibility assessments and stakeholder engagement at the start of a project enhance resource utilization and reduce implementation challenges. Overall, the regression results underscore that project initiation is not merely an administrative step but a strategic phase that substantially shapes project success.

Collectively, the findings underscore that effective project initiation—encompassing goal setting, role allocation, feasibility assessment, stakeholder engagement, and M&E integration—is critical for achieving project objectives efficiently and sustainably. The strong relationships revealed through correlation and regression analyses highlight that initiatives like AFIRRP are more likely to succeed when initiation practices are thoroughly implemented. These findings support the broader literature on project management, which consistently identifies the initiation phase as foundational for reducing risks, improving coordination, and enhancing overall project performance (Anderson, 2021; Jeffrey, 2021; Ljusnan Dal, 2019; Patton, 2019). Strengthening initiation practices is

therefore essential for ensuring that projects are implemented effectively and deliver the intended benefits to stakeholders.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The study concludes that effective project initiation is crucial for the successful implementation of BDF projects in Rwanda, especially the AFIRRP. Clear objectives, proper role allocation, stakeholder engagement, feasibility assessments, and integration of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tools were found to significantly enhance project performance. Strong correlation and regression results confirm that well-structured initiation directly improves project outcomes, ensuring projects meet their goals efficiently, on time, and within budget. Strengthening initiation practices is therefore essential for achieving sustainable and successful project implementation.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. BDF should strengthen planning and objective setting and should also prioritize defining clear goals and developing detailed initiation plans. This ensures alignment among stakeholders, reduces ambiguity, and provides a solid foundation for successful project execution.
2. BDF should enhance stakeholder engagement and should institutionalize the active involvement of beneficiaries, community members, and project partners from the beginning. Early engagement promotes ownership, transparency, and smoother coordination throughout the project lifecycle.
3. BDF should conduct comprehensive feasibility assessments to ensure that thorough feasibility studies including technical, financial, and operational analyses are conducted before project approval. This minimizes risks, ensures realistic implementation plans, and supports informed decision-making.
4. BDF should integrate Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tools: BDF should embed M&E systems during the initiation phase to enable continuous tracking, timely interventions, and evidence-based decisions, ultimately improving project performance and sustainability.

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