



Article

Analysis of the Effectiveness of Youth Employment Programs and Organizational-Economic Instruments Implemented by the Youth Affairs Agency

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Abstract: This article evaluates, from a management perspective, the effectiveness of programs and organizational-economic instruments used within the Youth Affairs Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan to support youth employment. The empirical base combines data from the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the Agency's primary 2026 records on the 'Unemployed Youth Balance,' concessional lending for youth entrepreneurship, the development of business projects at the mahalla level, and financing under the 'Youth Register.' The analysis draws on systems, comparative, and structural approaches, statistical grouping, index methods, and efficiency ratios. The calculations show that UZS 2,192.6 billion in credit resources directed to entrepreneurial projects involving 81,875 young people were associated with the creation of 58,145 jobs. On average, each UZS 1 billion of credit corresponded to 26.5 jobs, while the amount of credit per job was UZS 37.7 million. Based on these findings, the study develops a management model that evaluates program performance through coverage, actual employment, sustainability, resource returns, and institutional coordination.

Keywords: youth employment, Youth Affairs Agency, employment programs, organizational-economic mechanism, active labour market policy, youth entrepreneurship, NEET, concessional credit, resource efficiency, sustainable employment, institutional cooperation, performance.

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1. Introduction

The large share of young people in Uzbekistan's demographic structure makes their entry into the labour market, the productive use of their skills, and access to stable sources of income an important area of economic management. According to the National Statistics Committee, the permanent population aged 14–30 stood at 9,630,556 as of 1 January 2025, accounting for 25.7% of the total population [1]. At this scale, the economic performance of youth employment programs has direct implications for the allocation of public resources, regional development, and the use of human capital.

Youth employment cannot be assessed adequately through the unemployment rate alone. The length of the school-to-work transition, the formality of employment, the match between vocational training and employer demand, job stability, and income levels provide a fuller picture of management outcomes. National SDG statistics show that unemployment among people aged 16–30 fell from 16.4% in 2020 to 11.2% in 2024, while the share of 16-24-year-olds classified as NEET declined from 30.5% to 12.4% over the same

period [2]. These trends suggest broader coverage of existing policy measures, although micro-level data are needed to identify the causal contribution of individual programs.

The International Labour Organization recommends assessing youth employment together with job quality, informal work, temporary employment, and the transition from education to work [3]. International evidence on active labour market policies also indicates that outcomes tend to improve when youth segmentation, vocational training, job-search assistance, subsidies, and entrepreneurship services are tailored to individual needs [4].

In Uzbekistan, the institutional foundations of state youth policy are set out in the Law 'On State Youth Policy' [5] and Presidential Decree No. PF-6017, which established the Youth Affairs Agency [6]. The Agency acts as a central coordinating body in identifying problems faced by young people, aligning the activities of public institutions and other organizations, and directing young people toward employment, vocational training, and entrepreneurship programs.

Since 2025, the range of economic instruments used to support youth employment has expanded through new programs. Presidential Resolution No. PQ-62 introduced the 'Youth Business' program, with targets to reach 350,000 young people and create at least 100,000 additional jobs during 2025-2027 [7]. Resolution No. PQ-61 launched the 'Step into the Future' program for higher-education graduates, bringing together business idea development, financing, vocational preparation, and links with employers [8].

At the national video-conference held on 3 September 2026, the allocation of credit was explicitly distinguished from the final result: projects were to be assessed by their ability to generate permanent jobs and stable income. The meeting also called for youth entrepreneurship resources to be managed at district level according to project characteristics, with loan terms and repayment schedules adapted to the business model and with wider use of instruments such as leasing, factoring, guarantees, and insurance [9]. This approach provides an institutional basis for shifting youth employment programs from an 'allocated resources' logic toward an 'achieved outcomes' logic.

In his research on improving the management system of the Youth Affairs Agency, A. Usmonov treats organizational structure, decision-making processes, information exchange, staff capacity, and social partnership as interrelated management components [10]. In a separate study devoted to performance indicators, he identifies planning, coordination, motivation, and monitoring as core functions shaping the Agency's management effectiveness [11]. These approaches provide a useful methodological basis for judging youth employment programs by the quality of the management process and the outcome achieved, rather than by coverage figures alone.

International research has examined the effectiveness of active labour market programs across different instruments and time horizons. In their meta-analysis of more than 200 studies, Card, Kluve, and Weber show that program effects are strongly time-dependent: job-search assistance tends to produce results more quickly, while programs focused on vocational skills and human capital often deliver stronger gains later [12]. Kluve and co-authors likewise demonstrate that the type of intervention alone does not determine success; the integration of services, accurate identification of target groups, and implementation quality materially affect the outcomes of youth employment interventions [13]. Caliendo and Schmidl reach a similar conclusion in their analysis of youth-oriented active labour market policies in Europe, where the effects of training, job-search assistance, and wage subsidies vary with the institutional environment [14], while Escudero, Kluve, López Mourelo, and Pignatti synthesize 296 impact estimates from 51 studies in Latin America and the Caribbean and find that active labour market programs can improve formal employment and other labour-market outcomes, with well-targeted services particularly effective for young people and other vulnerable groups [15].

Evidence on vocational training specifically is more nuanced. A randomized evaluation in Colombia finds that subsidized vocational training increased women's probability of paid and formal employment [16], whereas evidence from Turkey shows that some of the initial gains from vocational training weakened over time [17], and a four-year comparison of vocational training with firm-based training in Uganda documents different trajectories of impact [18]. Evidence from transport subsidies for young jobseekers in Ethiopia further shows that lower search costs increase the likelihood of finding stable work, implying that economic support should be tied to the specific barrier preventing a young person from entering employment [19]. Taken together, these studies support treating 'completed training' as an intermediate outcome on the pathway to employment, rather than as the final result.

Research on youth entrepreneurship points in the same direction. Long-term evidence from grants and skills support in Uganda reports improvements in assets, labour supply, and earnings [20], while a business-plan competition in Nigeria shows that financing high-growth-potential entrepreneurs can improve business survival and job creation [21], and evidence on business practices shows that marketing, bookkeeping, inventory management, and financial planning are associated with stronger firm performance [22]. A three-year follow-up of business training for female entrepreneurs in Kenya finds positive effects on sales and profits [23], and a systematic review of interventions aimed at micro and small enterprises finds that combining finance with training and business-development services tends to strengthen employment effects [24]. At the same time, evidence on youth job-placement services identifies displacement effects, whereby better employment outcomes for program participants may partly come at the expense of other jobseekers, underscoring the importance of reporting 'placement into an existing vacancy' separately from 'creation of a new job' [25].

Taken together, this literature yields three methodological implications for evaluating youth employment programs. First, coverage captures the scale of management activity, not the final economic result. Second, sustainable employment requires follow-up over 6-12 months, while entrepreneurship projects need observation over 12-24 months. Third, the likelihood of durable results rises when financial support is combined with skills development, advisory services, mentoring, market access, and follow-up monitoring.

Against this background, the research problem addressed in this article is how to improve the methodology for evaluating Uzbekistan's wide range of organizational and economic youth-employment instruments as a single management system built around the sequence coverage – actual employment – sustainability – resource efficiency – institutional performance. The study therefore aims to assess the composition, results, and management effectiveness of youth employment programs and organizational-economic instruments implemented by the Youth Affairs Agency and to develop practical, research-based proposals for their improvement.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology treats youth employment support as a system made up of interconnected management actors, organizational instruments, financial resources, and outcome-evaluation processes. The study uses systems analysis, comparative analysis, structural analysis, statistical grouping, dynamic analysis, index methods, efficiency ratios, desk research, and content analysis.

Systems analysis was used to map the functional relationships among the Youth Affairs Agency, local authorities, mahalla youth leaders, assistants to district governors, commercial banks, employment bodies, educational institutions, and employers. Comparative analysis placed Uzbekistan's youth employment instruments alongside international evidence on active labour market policies. Structural analysis was used to assess the role of permanent job placement, vocational training, entrepreneurship lending,

provision of equipment and land, self-employment, and other employment pathways within the overall system.

The empirical analysis is based primarily on the Youth Affairs Agency's 2026 administrative data: the 'Unemployed Youth Balance,' concessional lending for entrepreneurial projects, business projects developed at the mahalla level, and financial records for the 'Youth Register' [26]. These data were used to construct a set of relative indicators covering program reach, employment outcomes, sustainability, and resource efficiency.

The share of the target group reached by a program is measured using the following indicator:

$$Q_s = (N_q / N_m) \times 100 \quad (1)$$

where: Q_s is the program coverage rate, %; N_q is the number of young people reached by a specific program or management measure; and N_m is the number of young people identified as the target group for that program.

The extent to which program participants move into actual employment is measured using the employment outcome ratio:

$$B_n = (N_b / N_i) \times 100 \quad (2)$$

where: B_n is the employment outcome rate, %; N_b is the number of young people employed as a result of the program; and N_i is the total number of participants in the relevant program.

The persistence of employment over time is assessed using the sustainable employment ratio:

$$B_{bt} = (N_{bt} / N_b) \times 100 \quad (3)$$

where: B_{bt} is the sustainable employment rate, %; N_{bt} is the number of young people who remain employed after a 6- or 12-month monitoring period; and N_b is the number initially placed in employment. Because the aggregate dataset provided for this study does not contain complete 6- and 12-month follow-up records, no artificial estimate was produced for this indicator.

The subsequent survival of entrepreneurship projects is measured using the following ratio:

$$T_y = (N_f / N_t) \times 100 \quad (4)$$

where: T_y is the survival rate of entrepreneurship projects, %; N_f is the number of businesses still operating after 12 or 24 months; and N_t is the total number of businesses launched through the program.

The amount of financial resources associated with the creation of one job is calculated as follows:

$$R_i = M / I \quad (5)$$

where: R_i is the financial resource per job, million UZS; M is the total amount of financial resources allocated under the program, million UZS; and I is the number of jobs created by the program.

The number of jobs created per UZS 1 billion of financial resources is expressed as:

$$R_m = I / M_{mlrd} \quad (6)$$

where: R_m is the number of jobs created per UZS 1 billion of financial resources; I is the number of jobs created; and M_{mlrd} is the total financial resource expressed in UZS billions.

The share of bank credit in the total value of projects is calculated using the following formula:

$$K_u = (M_k / M_j) \times 100 \quad (7)$$

where: K_u is the share of bank credit in total project value, %; M_k is the amount financed through bank loans; and M_j is the total value of the projects. Taken together, these indicators allow the analysis to link program reach, results, sustainability, and resource returns.

3. Result and Discussion

The scale of youth employment management in Uzbekistan is closely tied to the country's demographic structure. According to the National Statistics Committee, the permanent population aged 14-30 reached 9,630.6 thousand at the beginning of 2025 [1]. Compared with 9,992.4 thousand in 2018, this represents a decline of 361.8 thousand people, or 3.6%. The demographic decrease does not diminish the policy significance of youth employment, as young people still make up roughly one quarter of the country's population.

Table 1. Trends in youth demographics and labour-market indicators in Uzbekistan

Year	Population aged 14–30, thousand	Unemployment rate, age 16– 30, %	NEET rate, age 16– 24, %
2018	9,992.4	—	—
2019	9,891.7	—	—
2020	9,790.4	16.4	30.5
2021	9,726.6	15.1	28.6
2022	9,685.6	14.4	26.5
2023	9,676.6	12.1	22.8
2024	9,640.0	11.2	12.4
2025	9,630.6	—	—

Source: compiled from data of the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan [1], [2].

Between 2020 and 2024, the unemployment rate among people aged 16–30 declined from 16.4% to 11.2%, a decrease of 5.2 percentage points. Over the same period, the NEET rate fell from 30.5% to 12.4% [2]. The fact that both indicators moved in the same direction is consistent with a broader integration of young people into education, vocational preparation, and employment. Establishing the causal contribution of specific programs, however, would require panel data and a dedicated impact-evaluation design.

The Youth Affairs Agency's 2026 records show a stronger move toward mahalla-based and individualized employment management. At the beginning of the year, 85,000 unemployed young people were identified and assigned by name to 5,814 responsible managers from ministries, agencies, state-owned enterprises, and other organizations [26]. The management process was organized around the sequence 'identify the unemployed young person – assign a responsible manager – define a specific solution – monitor the result.'

Of the 85,000 young people identified, 39,128 were placed in permanent jobs; 8,465 received entrepreneurship loans; 2,038 were allocated agricultural land; and 6,586 received equipment. A further 8,376 were directed to organized labour migration, 2,086 to compulsory military service, 1,519 to education, and 6,755 to vocational and modern-skills training, while 10,124 entered self-employment [26]. The structure of these interventions shows that youth employment challenges are being addressed through differentiated solutions matched to individual circumstances rather than through a single standard instrument.

Table 2. Structure of employment solutions applied to 85,000 unemployed young people

Employment pathway	Number of young people	Share of total group, %
Permanent job placement	39,128	46.0
Entrepreneurship loan	8,465	10.0
Allocation of agricultural land	2,038	2.4
Provision of equipment	6,586	7.7
Organized labour migration	8,376	9.9
Compulsory military service	2,086	2.5
Enrollment in education	1,519	1.8
Vocational training	6,755	7.9
Self-employment	10,124	11.9

Source: author's calculations based on Youth Affairs Agency data [26].

From a management perspective, the meaning of the phrase 'employment ensured' needs to be disaggregated. Permanent job placement is an immediate labour-market outcome. Referral to vocational training or further education is an intermediate management step intended to improve subsequent employability. Credit, equipment, or land provide inputs for economic activity. It is therefore methodologically more sound to monitor these pathways separately under categories such as final employment outcomes, preparation for employment, employment through entrepreneurship, and other forms of economic activity.

A survey conducted by the Agency across 8,992 mahallas in 208 districts and cities identified 543,302 unemployed young people entering the labour market. Of these, 523,671 were graduates: 378,492 from schools, 86,393 from technical colleges, and 58,786 from higher-education institutions [26]. This composition indicates that much of the management burden in youth employment policy falls on young people entering the labour market for the first time.

The mahalla-based employment program developed for this group envisaged placing 188,197 young people in permanent jobs, moving 182,009 into the next stage of education, providing vocational training to 121,426, allocating UZS 714.8 billion in entrepreneurship loans to 26,168, directing 13,172 toward organized labour migration, allocating 3,045.5 hectares of agricultural land to 7,193, and providing equipment worth UZS 20.4 billion to 5,137 young people [26]. The structure combines immediate job placement with instruments designed to strengthen human capital.

Financing youth entrepreneurship is one of the main economic instruments used to support employment. According to the Agency's 2026 credit database, UZS 2,192.6 billion in concessional loans was allocated to 81,875 young people, with 58,145 jobs created [27]. Using formula (5), the average amount of credit per job was UZS 37.7 million; formula (6) gives 26.5 jobs per UZS 1 billion of credit. The average loan per young borrower was UZS 26.8 million.

Table 3. Calculated performance indicators for youth entrepreneurship lending

Indicator	Value
Young people receiving loans	81,875
Total credit allocated	UZS 2,192.6 billion
Jobs created	58,145
Average credit per young borrower	UZS 26.8 million
Credit per job	UZS 37.7 million
Jobs created per UZS 1 billion	26.5

Source: author's calculations based on Youth Affairs Agency data [27].

These figures capture the initial resource return from lending. A full assessment of economic effectiveness would also need to track whether the jobs created remain in place after 6, 12, and 24 months, together with wages, tax payments, and the operating status of the businesses. At the meeting of 3 September 2026, it was reported that 15,000 of the 86,000 small enterprises established over the previous year had ceased operating and that 62,000 people who had started businesses with credit were experiencing repayment difficulties [9]. This nationwide evidence reinforces the methodological point that the date on which credit is issued should not be treated as the final point of program evaluation.

At the mahalla level, a package of business projects worth UZS 2,019.1 billion was developed for 23,225 young people under the principle of 'at least two business projects in every mahalla.' Of this amount, UZS 542.6 billion was expected to come from the applicants' own funds and UZS 1,476.5 billion from bank loans [28]. Formula (7) shows that bank credit accounts for 73.1% of total financing, while own funds account for 26.9%.

Of these projects, 4,514 are in manufacturing, 9,182 in agriculture, livestock, and other agrarian activities, and 9,529 in services [28]. In proportional terms, services account for 41.0%, agrarian projects for 39.5%, and manufacturing for 19.4%. The 23,225 projects are expected to create 39,706 jobs, or an average of 1.71 jobs per project. This suggests that a large share of the portfolio is closer to a micro- and small-enterprise model than to larger-scale business expansion.

Since the beginning of the year, the 'Youth Register' funds had received UZS 414.0 billion and spent UZS 152.5 billion, equivalent to a utilization rate of 36.8%. A total of UZS 27.2 billion in support was provided to 12,018 young people in need, or an average of UZS 2.26 million per recipient. Most of the support covered tuition fees and other social needs, while 96 young people received assistance for vocational and entrepreneurship training [29]. These figures show that the fund serves a broader function than direct job creation: it also addresses social and educational barriers that can prevent young people from entering employment.

Discussion

The empirical findings reveal several methodological weaknesses in the existing management mechanism. The first concerns the need to distinguish clearly between a management action and an economic outcome. Issuing credit, sending someone to training, or providing land or equipment records an intervention; such measures can be treated as final economic outcomes only after their effects are confirmed through sustained employment and income. This distinction is consistent with the broader international evidence reviewed above, which shows that program reach and final economic results are conceptually and empirically distinct [12], [13].

The second issue is the lack of sufficiently developed longitudinal monitoring. The datasets provided do not contain consolidated information on the employment status of beneficiaries 6 or 12 months after placement [26]. International studies consistently show that the follow-up period is a central element in assessing program effectiveness, since the relative performance of different instruments can change substantially over time: job-search assistance tends to show results earlier, while vocational training and entrepreneurship support often reveal their true effects only over a longer horizon [12]. The finding that 15,000 of 86,000 nationally supported small enterprises had already ceased operating, and that 62,000 credit recipients were experiencing repayment difficulties [9], illustrates concretely why crediting a business at loan disbursement, rather than at a later survival checkpoint, risks overstating program effectiveness. This concern echoes a broader synthesis of business-training and entrepreneurship evaluations across developing countries, which finds that initial gains in profits or sales do not always translate into durable improvements in firm survival or household welfare [30].

The third issue is the absence of a common methodology linking costs and outcomes across programs. In credit programs, the relationship between resources and jobs can be

calculated directly, as shown by the UZS 37.7 million in credit per job and 26.5 jobs per UZS 1 billion of credit reported above. In vocational training, however, cost per trainee, completion, entry into employment within three months, and remaining employed for 12 months are not yet presented as a single statistical chain. This limits meaningful comparison of economic returns across instruments, a limitation also noted in cross-country reviews of youth employment interventions, where inconsistent reporting of costs alongside outcomes constrains comparative assessment of value for money [13].

The fourth issue concerns inter-agency data integration. Linking results recorded in the 'Unified Youth Platform' with tax, banking, employment, and education databases would make it possible to verify automatically whether a credit-supported business remains active, whether a placed young person has a valid employment contract, and whether vocational training has translated into actual employment [26]. Without such integration, the Agency's own figures — for example, the finding that bank credit accounts for 73.1% of financing for mahalla-level business projects, against only 26.9% from applicants' own funds — cannot easily be cross-checked against independent repayment or survival data held by banks and tax authorities.

The fifth issue is the quality of management capacity at the local level. At the 3 September 2026 meeting, particular attention was given to strengthening the practical skills of assistants to district governors and mahalla bankers in developing business projects, choosing suitable financial instruments, and converting an initial idea into an operational business [9]. This means that program results depend not only on financial resources but also on the quality of diagnosis and advice provided by the responsible staff, a point that resonates with international evidence showing that the quality of service integration and targeting, and not the mere existence of a program, determines outcomes for young people [13], [15].

Taken as a whole, the findings suggest that the main reserve for improving youth employment management lies less in multiplying the number of programs than in measuring the real outcomes of existing instruments, comparing their economic returns across regions and target groups, and redirecting resources toward interventions that produce stronger and more durable results. This interpretation is consistent with evidence on youth entrepreneurship programs elsewhere, where combining finance with training, mentoring, and business-development services has been shown to produce stronger and more durable employment effects than financing alone [22], [23], [24], and with evidence that better-targeted placement services can avoid simply displacing employment from one jobseeker to another rather than creating additional net employment [25].

Based on the findings, the study proposes introducing a 'Model for Evaluating the Management Effectiveness of Youth Employment Programs' into the work of the Youth Affairs Agency. The model follows the sequence below (Figure 1).

The scientific contribution of the proposed model lies in moving beyond the practice of recording coverage and allocated resources as the end result of management activity. Instead, outcomes are re-verified over time, resource efficiency is measured, and the resulting assessment is fed back into the next management decision.

Table 4. Proposals for improving the youth employment management mechanism

Source: developed by the author.

Proposal	Implementing entity	Instrument	Expected outcome	Evaluation indicator
6/12-month employment monitoring	Youth Affairs Agency	Unified platform	Short-term and sustainable outcomes are distinguished	12-month sustainable employment
Integration of tax and banking databases	Agency, Tax Committee, banks	API-based data exchange	Outcomes are verified automatically	Share of verified outcomes
Credit-efficiency ranking	Agency, banks	Resource-return coefficient	Resources are redirected toward more effective programs	Sustainable jobs per UZS 1 billion
Business-survival monitoring	Agency, banks, Tax Committee	12/24-month follow-up	Share of active businesses is identified	Business survival rate, %
Align vocational training with employer demand	Agency, education providers, employers	Demand-led and dual training	Skills mismatch is reduced	Employment within 3/6 months
Risk segmentation	Agency, mahalla	Digital youth profile	A suitable instrument is selected for each young person	Program-to-employment conversion
KPI system for responsible staff	Youth Affairs Agency	Performance ranking	Management accountability is strengthened	Sustainable outcomes / assigned youth

Source: developed by the author.

4. Conclusion

With more than 9.6 million people aged 14-30, youth employment remains a distinct and significant field of economic management in Uzbekistan. The decline in youth unemployment and NEET rates between 2020 and 2024 points to positive movement in the labour market. The Youth Affairs Agency's 'Unemployed Youth Balance' and individualized mahalla-based approach have created a mechanism for identifying young people, assigning responsibility, and selecting an intervention suited to each case. According to the data examined, 39,128 of the 85,000 identified unemployed young people were placed in permanent jobs, while the remainder received a mix of entrepreneurship loans, vocational training, equipment, land, education, and other forms of support. This structure reflects a genuinely differentiated approach to youth employment management. At the same time, the analysis shows why training, credit, equipment, or land should be treated as management interventions rather than final economic outcomes: their real value is established only when they lead to sustained employment, income, or business continuity. In the entrepreneurship component, UZS 2,192.6 billion in loans was allocated to 81,875 young people and 58,145 jobs were created. The author's calculations indicate UZS 37.7 million of credit per job and 26.5 jobs per UZS 1 billion of credit. These figures describe the initial return on resources; a full assessment of economic effectiveness requires follow-up on business survival after 12–24 months, repayment discipline, formal employment, and income. The financing structure of 23,225 mahalla-level business projects, in which bank credit accounts for 73.1%, also reveals substantial dependence on

external finance, while the average of 1.71 jobs per project suggests that most initiatives belong to the micro- and small-business segment. Support provided through the 'Youth Register' mainly helps remove social and educational barriers to employment, so its effectiveness should be assessed by following recipients' later education, skills, and labour-market status. International evidence similarly shows that short-run program reach does not automatically translate into long-run effectiveness in vocational training, entrepreneurship, or active labour market programs. On this basis, the Youth Affairs Agency would benefit from 3-, 6-, and 12-month outcome monitoring, 12- and 24-month business-survival indicators, and integration of Agency information systems with tax, banking, employment, and education databases. The coordination, information-exchange, management-function, and monitoring approaches developed in A. Usmonov's research provide an institutional foundation for such a mechanism. The model proposed in this study creates a closed management cycle from identifying a young person and diagnosing needs, through selecting the appropriate employment instrument and providing organizational or economic support, to recording results, monitoring at 3, 6, and 12 months, measuring resource efficiency, and revising the management decision. In practical terms, this shifts the Youth Affairs Agency from asking 'How many young people were covered?' to asking 'For how many young people was sustainable employment and income created, and what resources were required to achieve that result?' It also provides a methodological basis for comparing performance across regions and instruments and for reallocating resources toward areas that generate stronger and more durable economic returns.

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