

# YouthBank for Issyk-Kul Oblast



Youth Bank is the most successful youth program model used by the Eurasia Foundation Network in several countries. Local Youth Banks provide small grants to fund young people's good ideas benefiting their own communities. The model was established in Northern Ireland in 1999. Then the methodology was implemented around the world including in Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and in Central Asia.

In 2005 the Eurasia Partnership Foundation launched the Youth Fund program in Azerbaijan. From March 2010-May 2012, the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia (EFCA) applied the concept to unite young people from divided Kyrgyz and Tajik cross-border communities. In 2012 EFCA launched a YouthBank project for Issyk-Kul, which develops personal skills and empowers youth. The project is financed by Kumtor Company. The main partners are local governments and NGOs.

## Context

In Kyrgyzstan, youth lack opportunities to implement any ideas. Young people in particular face several problems:

- often their opinion is not taken into account in decision-making at the regional or national levels
- high unemployment and corruption also leads young people to stay out of the socio-economic and political processes
- certain political groups begin to manipulate young people
- youth is involved in protests or even illegal acts of violence.

The Kumtor Gold Mining Company plays a key role in the development of the national economy as well as the Issyk-Kul region. However, young people in the region are, in some cases, excluded from the opportunities that Kumtor offers for personal and community development.



## Goal and objectives

The project aims to enable young people to lead community development initiatives. The project will achieve its main goal by accomplishing several objectives:

- To empower young people to become active, responsible and respected citizens in their communities
- To give young people skills and experiences to help them realize their personal and economic potential
- To enable community development through investments that are initiated, prioritized, implemented and sustained by the communities themselves.

*YouthBank is not a financial institution but a bank of young people's ideas. Young people are involved in developing and running community initiatives for themselves. It is an effective tool to create employment, widen opportunities and improve facilities for young people, by young people.*

## Activities

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Each YouthBank is composed of a group of 8 young volunteers acting as a local grant-making committee. Workshops for YB members and mentors are conducted. The YouthBank methodology is based on the promotion of core values - citizenship, capacity-building, and self-responsibility. Youth acquires additional knowledge, skills and experience.

### YouthBank members are supposed to:

- assess local needs
- review applications from other young people,
- select and fund youth-led community initiatives
- implement their own projects

### Youth-led community initiatives can include:

- infrastructure rehabilitation
- employment and training activities
- cultural, sport and social events
- other activities

Young people make all their decisions independently. They decide what issues need to be solved in the first place and how to do it better. YouthBank members' work is supported by an adult mentor.

## Outcomes and expected achievements

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- Six YouthBanks have been established across the Issyk-Kul region, including Karakol, Balykchy, Bokonbaevo, Tamga, Tyup and Kyzyl-Suu.
- All members of the youth committee acquired the necessary knowledge and skills at special educational trainings.
- The young people are supposed to assess the needs of their communities and then begin practical work on the review and implementation of prioritized social projects.
- Each bank will support youth and implement about 20 projects.
- Each project can be awarded grants of \$500 - 2500.



*"I'd love to implement my own ideas to improve my hometown, so that it becomes prosperous. I believe the idea of the YouthBank will attract a lot of young people, and we together can do something interesting and really useful for our city."*

*Daniar Abduvaliev, 17- years-old student, Karakol.*

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