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## Detailed Profile Fundación Acción Joven (FAJ) 2024

**Name of Organization:** Fundación Acción Joven (FAJ)

**Type of Organization:** It is a Costa Rican, private and non-profit organization.

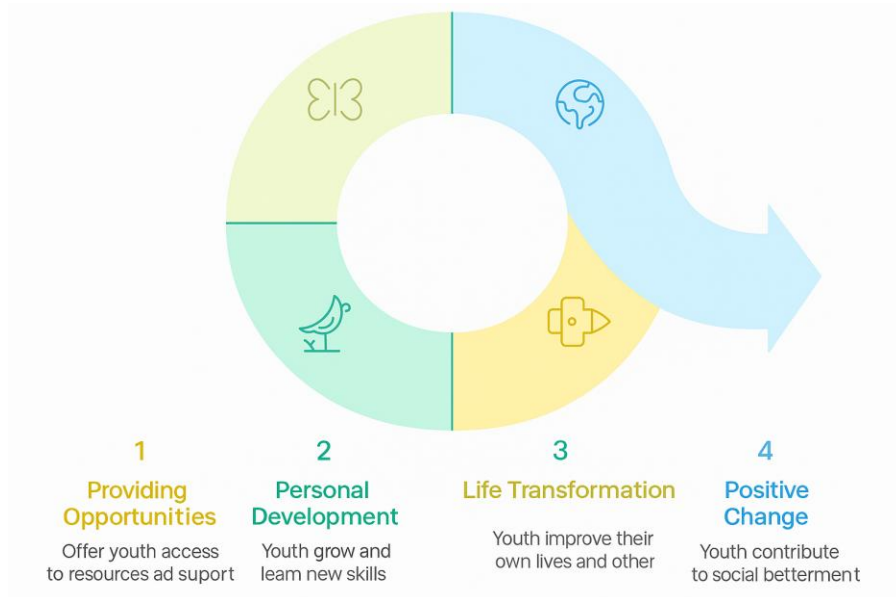
**Date of Creation:** It was created in 2006.

**Location and Contact:** Its headquarters are located in San José, Curridabat, Urbanización Cataluña, house E32. It can be reached at +506 2271-4407 or through the emails [info@accionjoven.org](mailto:info@accionjoven.org) and [alianzas@accionjoven.org](mailto:alianzas@accionjoven.org). They also maintain a presence on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn, and their official website is [accionjoven.org](http://accionjoven.org).

**Mission:** To connect young people in situations of social vulnerability with real opportunities to transform their lives, through social inclusion and the development of successful educational and work trajectories.



**Vision:** To contribute to a society in which young people have development opportunities that allow them to transform their lives and become agents of positive change.



**Philosophy and Fundamental Values:** FAJ is dedicated to empowering young people in vulnerable situations. Its philosophy is based on the deep conviction that investing in youth is a direct investment in the future of Costa Rica, actively seeking to build a more prosperous, just and secure country for all.



The foundation actively promotes peaceful coexistence, the development of skills for employability, the establishment of strategic alliances to ensure the permanence of young people in the classroom and joins the fight against educational lag. They promote a comprehensive education that facilitates the social mobility of young people. They recognize that sustainable development is only possible with an active and meaningful inclusion of all members of society, including young people.

They value collaborative work with key actors in society to generate lasting actions that transform the direct context of young people and guide public policies at the national level. Innovation is one of their main values, as they constantly seek to identify challenges and opportunities for improvement for Costa Rican youth. In addition, they promote inclusion, equity and non-discrimination, guaranteeing equal access and opportunities for all children and adolescents.

**Target Population:** They work with adolescents and young people between 13 and 30 years of age who are in a situation of social and economic vulnerability. They also train officials of public institutions for the replicability and sustainability of their projects.

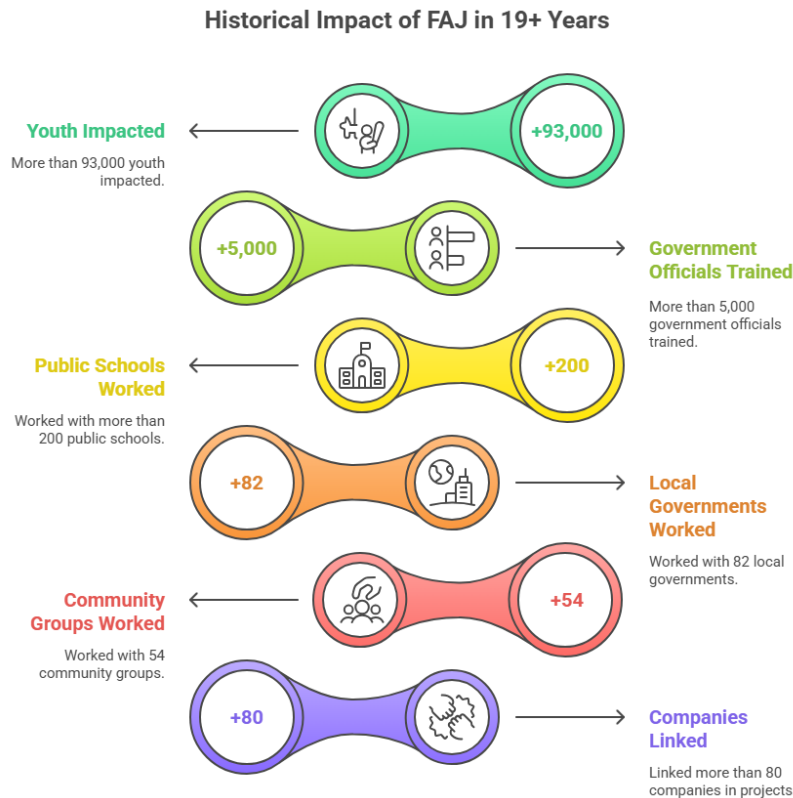
The challenges they address for this population are significant:

- 23.493% of people between 13 and 17 years of age do not attend formal education.
- 19.3% of unemployment at the national level corresponds to young people between 15 and 24 years old.
- 53% of those convicted are young people between the ages of 15 and 34.
- 21% of people between 15 and 24 years of age do not study or work.



## Historical Impact

Throughout more than 19 years of history, FAJ has achieved a significant impact:



## Rights-Based and Equity Approaches

FAJ manages its initiatives under a rights-based approach. This means that program planning, implementation and evaluation are guided by principles such as universality, non-discrimination, meaningful participation of young people and accountability. In practice, this translates into: (1) ensuring effective access to opportunities for school-retention and re-integration; (2) removing structural barriers that deepen exclusion; and (3) strengthening individual and institutional capacities so that every young person can exercise their rights and expand their agency. This orientation is aligned with the Foundation’s institutional purpose and the way it defines its mission of “connecting” youth with opportunities to transform their lives.

The equity approach complements and operationalizes the rights-based approach within FAJ’s management. The organization designs interventions that take into account differentiated contexts (rural, coastal, border areas and urban neighborhoods) and specific access and outcome gaps, prioritizing those who face greater disadvantages. Equity guides the allocation of resources, the selection of educational



centers and partners, and the measurement of results with a focus on closing gaps. This perspective means working with young people from different ethnic groups and social classes, as well as with different gender identities and sexual orientations, including LGBTQIA youth, fostering safe, non-discriminatory environments and referral protocols when risk factors are identified.

In sum, FAJ integrates within its management model principles and practices that place young people at the centre: a clear and measurable mission, public-private and community partnerships, and monitoring mechanisms oriented to results and accountability. This combination of a rights-based and equity approach ensures that intervention not only expands individual opportunities but also contributes to transforming educational and community environments so that no young person is left behind.

### **Objectives and Purpose**

The main objective of the Youth Action Foundation is to generate real opportunities for Costa Rican youth. Its efforts are aimed at:

- Ensure the permanence of young people in the educational system: This is achieved by providing comprehensive support and resources that allow them to achieve their educational goals.
- Strengthen their skills for employment: They train them in an increasingly competitive and demanding labor market, preparing them for successful insertion and contribution to the economic development of the country.
- Prevent violence: They promote a culture of peace, foster life skills, and empower young people as agents of positive change in their communities.
- Enhance effective decision-making in educational administration: Allowing government and community actors to access and share essential information in an agile and relevant way.
- Improve the job profiles of young people: And facilitate their success in both finding and retaining employment.
- Promote strategies that promote better coexistence and the prevention of violence.
- To encourage the development of leadership skills and expand knowledge about culture, society and the educational system.
- Promote and strengthen the rights of children and adolescents: as well as their psychosocial well-being, integration and social inclusion of the migrant population.

## Strategic Lines of Action:

FAJ works from three fundamental axes, with a fourth strategic axis that has a transversal impact on all its interventions:

1. **Successful Student Permanence:** Identify challenges and propose solutions together with the educational community to promote the successful permanence of young people in secondary schools. They focus on capacity building at the individual, institutional, and local levels.
2. **Employability:** They provide tools, develop skills and link opportunities, training young people capable of adapting to the challenges of the labour market. Its goal is to enhance the human capital of young people.
3. **Coexistence and Culture of Peace:** They seek the social inclusion of young people in contexts of social conflict and promote strategies that promote better coexistence and the prevention of violence.
4. **Governance:** They develop actions in all their interventions to influence the governance of key social issues for youth, ensuring the sustainability of their methodologies and the installation of capacities in government and civil society entities, including the institutional strengthening of the Juvenile Criminal Care Level.





## Key Programs and Projects

FAJ implements various programs and projects, many of which are recurrent and aligned with its lines of action. Among them are:

### High Opportunity Colleges (CAO)

- **Description:** It is a central program in the line of Successful Student Permanence, which accompanies public schools nationwide that face high percentages of educational exclusion. It prepares, trains and accompanies schools to prevent and address educational exclusion and, in turn, promotes life skills, employability and vocational guidance for students.
- **Impact 2024:** It linked 463 students, trained 68 officials, carried out 20 vocational tours to companies, 154 sessions on employability and vocational guidance, and 48 training sessions for officials.
- **Location 2024:** It was present in schools in **Guanacaste** (CTP of Liberia, CTP of Carrillo, Guanacaste Institute), Puntarenas (CTP of Puntarenas and José Martí Day High School), **San José** (Jose Joaquín Vargas Calvo High School and San Miguel de Desamparados High School) and **Limón** (CTP de Liverpool and Liceo de Cahuita).
- **2025 Goals:** To link at least 300 young people, train at least 50 officials, carry out 182 sessions on coexistence, employability and human training, in 7 educational centers located in Guanacaste, Puntarenas, Cartago and San José.
- **Background:** Since 2013, with the "Villareal Skate Park" (Australian Aid) in Guanacaste, the "Comprehensive Model for the Prevention of School Dropout" (UNDP 2014) in Alajuelita, and has been continuously implemented with support from Tinker (2018-2019, 2020-2021), Strachan Foundation (2018-2019, 2020-2022), Creciendo Juntos (2018-2020), Cummins Foundation (2021), and FIFCO (2020).

### Young Talent

- **Description:** A program under the Employability line that aims to build strong connections between public institutions, training opportunities, and the private sector to enhance the job profiles of adolescents and young people aged 17 to 30. Implemented in the canton of Heredia in close collaboration with the local government, the initiative focuses on facilitating access to education, vocational training, and sustainable employment pathways. In addition, it extends its scope to support Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation, promoting their social and economic reintegration through tailored training, psychosocial accompaniment, and coordinated efforts with institutional and community partners.



- Impact 2024: the initiative in Heredia strengthened pathways to education and employment for young people in conditions of social vulnerability. The program directly supported 30 participants through 25 employability and skills training sessions, while also facilitating access to educational continuity opportunities in collaboration with the National Technical Institute and ALIARSE. Building on these achievements, the initiative was replicated in the cantons of Liberia and Puntarenas with a specific focus on Victims of Trafficking, aiming to train at least 40 participants, provide two demonstrative work experiences, and conduct 12 sessions centered on human development, educational reintegration, and labor inclusion. This expansion reflects Fundación Acción Joven's commitment to fostering protection, empowerment, and social reintegration for individuals recovering from situations of exploitation, through inclusive, rights-based, and equity-driven approaches.
- 2025 Goals: It is divided into two main projects:
  - Young Talent: Community (Heredia): Train at least 30 young people, 5 officials, and carry out 12 sessions on human training and employability in the Municipality of Heredia and an educational center (to be defined).
  - Young Talent: Aimed at: in 2025 the initiative seeks to strengthen its impact by training an additional 45 victims of trafficking and designing an integrated model for educational and labor reintegration, in coordination with the Ministry of Public Education and the National Employment Agency, to ensure sustainable pathways for recovery and inclusion.
- History: Related to employability projects since 2015 such as the "Program for the Improvement of Soft Skills and Promotion of Entrepreneurship" (PROEDUCA) in 41 secondary schools, the "Youth Employability Program" (International Monetary Fund 2016), "Youth Employability Program" (UPS Foundation 2017), "College-Technical University Scholarships" (TCR HOLDING 2016-2020), and the "Young Women's Employment Program" (Australian Aid 2018-2019).

## Safe Spaces

- Description: An initiative spearheaded by UNICEF, which creates specially equipped physical environments with community-managed humanitarian supports, in partnership with various local institutions and organizations. Its purpose is to promote and strengthen the rights of children and adolescents, as well as their psychosocial well-being, integration and social cohesion of the migrant population. They promote inclusion, equity and non-discrimination.
- Impact 2024: 4 new spaces were added, totaling 41 active shelters distributed throughout the country. They assisted 9,014 children and adolescents in support services, 8,428 participated in recreational and prevention workshops, 1,195 were referred to care services for violence or abuse, and 10,189 people benefited with hygiene and education kits. The National Meeting of Safe Spaces was held.



- 2025 Goals: Under the *Safe Spaces* project, the goal for 2025 is to establish four humanitarian safe spaces along Costa Rica's northern and southern borders. These spaces will be designed to provide protection, psychosocial support, and essential services to migrant children and adolescents in transit who are walking from South America toward the United States. The initiative seeks to create secure, child-friendly environments that uphold human rights and dignity, while coordinating with national institutions and humanitarian partners to ensure comprehensive care and assistance throughout their journey.
- History: Started with "Listening Classrooms" (UNICEF CR 2020) and the installation of the Safe Spaces Model (UNICEF CR 2021) in 14 communities.

## Project FENIX

- Description: Strengthens the institutional governance of the Department of Juvenile Criminal Care of the Ministry of Justice and Peace, as a comprehensive strategy for the prevention of violence in young people and adolescents.
- Impact 2024: the program successfully linked more than 260 young people within the Juvenile Criminal System, providing opportunities for personal growth, education, and social reintegration. Additionally, 30 institutional officials were trained to strengthen their technical and psychosocial competencies in working with adolescents in conflict with the law. As part of its community outreach, three social projects were developed in the provinces of Puntarenas, Guanacaste, and Limón, focused on violence prevention and the promotion of positive youth engagement within their communities.
- 2025 Goals: the program aims to work with 230 young people within the Juvenile Criminal System, strengthening their pathways toward social reintegration and inclusion. In parallel, it seeks to train 7 senior officials from the Department of Juvenile Criminal Care of the Ministry of Justice and Peace in the design of public policies for violence prevention grounded in a rights-based and equity approach. Additionally, the program will focus on documenting and systematizing a comprehensive care model for young people under assisted freedom, providing technical and methodological tools to enhance institutional responses and promote sustainable reintegration processes.
- History: Includes "Mechanics Workshops, FENIX Project" (Cummins Foundation 2022).

## Education Governance

- Description: A project in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica, whose objective is to establish an information and knowledge management system to strengthen the governance of the prevention and attention of exclusion in 4 educational centers of different modalities in Puntarenas and Zona Norte. It seeks to promote effective decision-making in educational administration.
- Impact 2024: the program successfully linked 45 students, trained 90 institutional officials and 13 community members, and conducted 23 sessions with teaching, administrative, and support staff.



These actions strengthened coordination between educational and community actors, fostering safer, more inclusive, and supportive learning environments for children and adolescents.

- **2025 Goals:** the program aims to consolidate a comprehensive Governance Model for the Management of Educational Exclusion that effectively articulates all levels of coordination within the Ministry of Public Education. This model seeks to strengthen institutional capacities, ensure timely detection and response to cases of exclusion, and promote interdepartmental collaboration to guarantee every student's right to inclusive and continuous education.
- **History:** This project began between 2022 and 2025.

### Women's Employability Program

- **Description:** This program promotes the educational and labor reincorporation of young women. It also seeks to promote an intersectoral work strategy to increase the participation of young women in the labor market in Limón.
- **Impact 2024:** the program engaged more than 350 young women and adolescent girls, trained 55 female public officials, and conducted 150 sessions addressing the determinants of the female labor market and women's empowerment. These activities were implemented across the cantons of Pococí, Limón, and Talamanca, as well as in nine educational centers, strengthening local capacities and promoting gender equity through education, training, and access to opportunities.
- **2025 Goals:** the program aims to work with 250 women, strengthening their skills and access to employment opportunities. Additionally, it will systematize the experience of developing intersectoral strategies to increase female employability, generating evidence and best practices to inform public policies and collaborative initiatives that promote gender equality and economic empowerment.
- **Background:** It has been implemented since at least 2018 with the support of Australian Aid and Konrad in schools in San Jose.

### Breaking down the impact by line of action in 2024:

**Educational Permanence:** Through the High Opportunity Colleges (CAO) program, 463 students were linked to processes that strengthened their educational trajectories and prevented school exclusion. The program delivered 154 sessions on employability and vocational guidance, 48 training sessions for officials, and 20 vocational tours to companies, while training 68 public officials. These efforts covered schools across Guanacaste, Puntarenas, San José, and Limón, reinforcing the national strategy for inclusive and successful student permanence.

**Employability:** Under the Young Talent initiative, the program strengthened educational and employment pathways for young people in vulnerable conditions. In Heredia, 30 participants completed 25 training sessions, and partnerships were established with the National Technical Institute and ALIARSE to promote educational continuity. Additionally, the initiative expanded to Liberia and Puntarenas, where it supported Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation, training new participants, providing demonstrative work



experiences, and conducting sessions on human development and labor inclusion. The Women's Employability Program also trained 55 female officials, engaged over 350 young women and adolescent girls, and held 150 sessions on female labor market determinants and empowerment in the cantons of Pococí, Limón, and Talamanca.

**Coexistence and Culture of Peace:** The Project FENIX strengthened the governance and capacities of the Department of Juvenile Criminal Care of the Ministry of Justice and Peace, linking over 260 young people within the Juvenile Criminal System and training 30 officials. It also supported three community social projects on violence prevention in Puntarenas, Guanacaste, and Limón. The Safe Spaces project, led in partnership with UNICEF, expanded its coverage to 41 active shelters, assisting 9,014 children and adolescents with support services, engaging 8,428 in recreational and prevention workshops, referring 1,195 cases to protection services, and distributing hygiene and education kits to 10,189 beneficiaries.

**Educational Governance:** The Education Governance project, implemented with the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica, linked 45 students, trained 90 officials and 13 community members, and carried out 23 coordination sessions with teaching, administrative, and support staff in Puntarenas and the Northern Zone. These actions strengthened the governance mechanisms for preventing and addressing educational exclusion, promoting safer, more inclusive, and collaborative school environments.

### Other Relevant Projects Over the Years

- 2014: Strengthen Security through Educational and Employment Opportunities for Youth (Embajada de EE. UU.).
- 2016: PREJUVE: Undertaking a life without violence (UNDP) in Osa and Quepos. Safe Streets Project: education, employment & recovering public spaces in Limón & Puntarenas (U.S. Embassy).
- 2017: Building Positive Masculinities (Strachan Foundation). Tools for Success (CINDE) at technical colleges in San José. Strengthen Government through Civil Society Engagement (U.S. Embassy) in Municipalities of Limón, Liberia, and Puntarenas.
- 2018: Appropriation of Public Spaces as a Tool for Cultural Promotion and the Fight against Violence (Ministry of Culture - Points of Culture) in Chacarita, Puntarenas. Catalyzing Donations Fund: Development of a virtual platform (CRUSA) for internal management of FAJ. Strengthening organizations for youth violence prevention (U.S. Embassy) for youth on probation. Prevention of dropout in CTP Uladislao Gámez Solano (CRUSA).
- 2019: Employability workshops at CTP Escazú (IMAS). Creation of a Community Articulation Protocol with the Judiciary (NCSC) for socio-labor reintegration. Creation and formation of leadership and school success networks "Empoderate" (PROEDUCA) at the national level. Life Skills Workshops (Ally) at several CTPs in San José. Prevention of Drug Use at the Daniel Oduber Educational Center (HOLCIM) in Cartago. Comprehensive strengthening and capacity building (Costa Rica Forever Association) in San Carlos, Guápiles, Barra El Colorado.
- 2020: Court – USA – NCSC Cooperation Project on Restorative Juvenile Justice II Phase (NCSC) in Puntarenas. Model making community alliances (SOS Children's Villages) in San José.



Establishment of Networks of Judicial Mentors (UNICEF CR) in Alajuela, Limón, Cartago and San José. IPM Services Proposal (FIFCO) in San Jose. Employment readiness and market labor insertion of socially vulnerable youth (U.S. Embassy) nationwide.

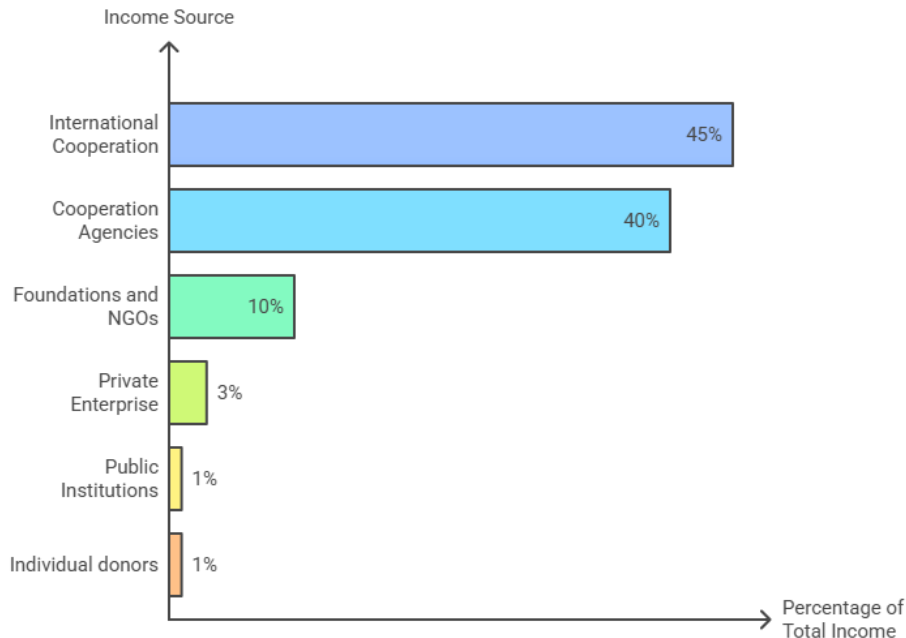
- 2021: Strengthening of the Juvenile Criminal Alternative Sanctions Program (ICD) in GAM, Guanacaste, Limón, Puntarenas. Workshops to Intersectoral Networks (NCSC) in San José. Community Development Initiatives (HOLCIM) in Lourdes de Cartago.
- 2021-2022: Preparation of a manual of procedures for the provision of internal services of the MEP (UNICEF CR) at the national level.

### Partnerships and Financing

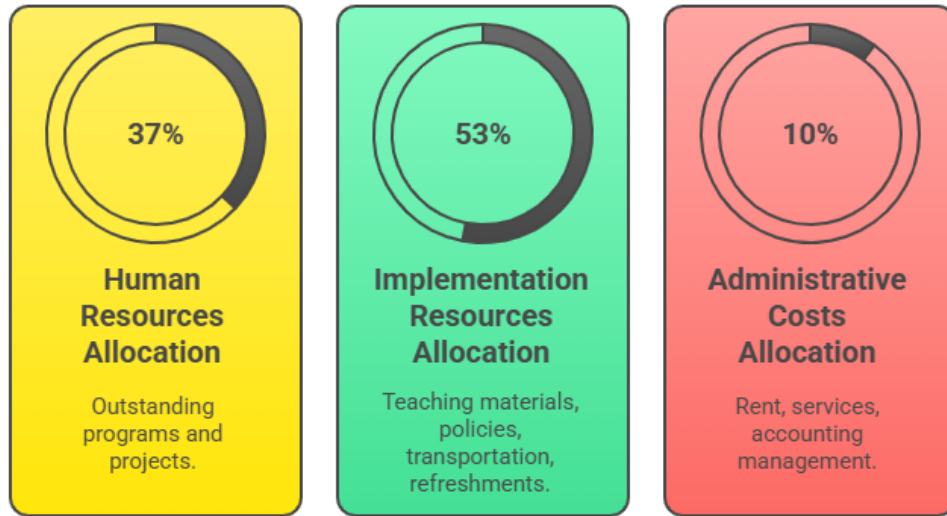
FAJ extends its deep gratitude to its donors, partner organizations, state authorities, its work team and Board of Directors, who make its work possible. They maintain alliances with various international agencies, bilateral bodies, institutions, organizations and companies committed to Costa Rican youth.

Its main allies include: USA Embassy, FOCUS Foundation, Abbvie, ALIARSE, Food Bank of Costa Rica, Cummins, Georgetown University, Grupo Pasquí, Hotel Casa Colón, Costa Rican Institute on Drugs (ICD), Ministry of Public Education (MEP), Ministry of Justice and Peace, Public Entertainment Commission, Municipalities (Heredia, Limón, Pococí, Talamanca), Flor de la Sabana Restaurant, SUBWAY, Tecnológico de Costa Rica, University of Costa Rica (UCR), and Invenio University.

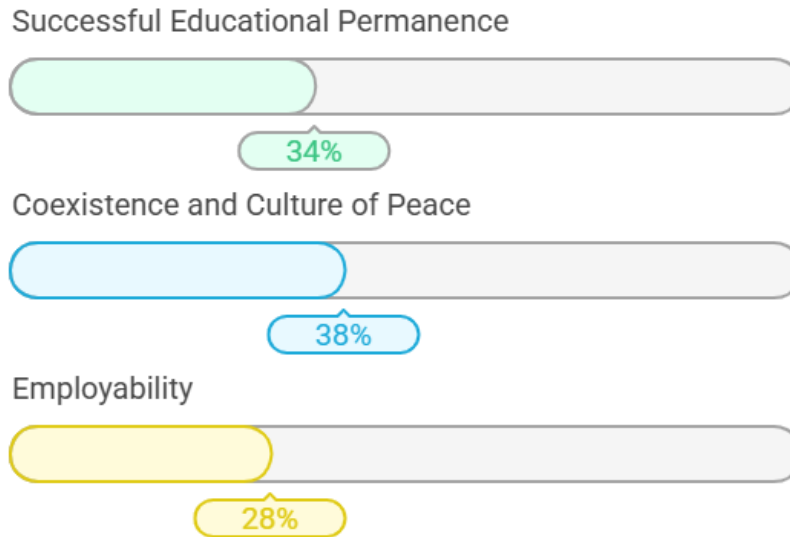
In 2024, its sources of income were:



Operating expenses in 2024 were distributed as follows:



The investment by Main Line of Action in 2024 was:



The foundation offers various forms of support, such as donations deductible from Income Tax, participation in vocational tours, contracting of social services, donation campaigns through CSR (Benevity, Your Cause, Globalgiving) platforms, donation of technological equipment and furniture (authorized by IMAS for Free Trade Zones), and donations via SINPE MÓVIL at 7007-7327.