

Unique Abilities Partner Program



Annual Report for
Calendar Year 2025

apd
agency for persons with disabilities
State of Florida

Table of Contents

Background.....	3
Purpose	3
Data	4
Program Development	4
Additional Program Development Initiatives.....	4
Conclusion.....	6

Background

The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program was established in 2016 to recognize Florida businesses and organizations that provide career opportunities to individuals with disabilities, establish programs to support their independence, or contribute financially to such programs.

During the 2024 Legislative Session, in alignment with Governor Ron DeSantis' proven record of supporting Florida's strong economy through business-friendly policies and opportunities for all Floridians to achieve economic vitality, the Unique Abilities Partner Program was transferred to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) to continue the program's focus of spurring dynamic employment opportunities within the disability community.

On March 21, 2024, Governor DeSantis signed Senate Bill 1758 into law, approving the transfer of the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program from FloridaCommerce to the Agency for Persons (APD) with Disabilities.

The bill directed the transfer of all powers, duties, functions, records, offices, personnel, associated administrative support positions, property, pending issues, existing contracts, administrative authority, administrative rules, and unexpended balances of appropriations, allocations, and any other funds relating to the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program by a type two transfer, as described in s. 20.06(2), Florida Statutes (F.S.).

On September 6, 2024, the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program and corresponding activities were officially transferred to APD.

As directed by s. 413.801(9), F.S., APD is required to provide an annual report on the progress and use of the program to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. At a minimum, the report must include all of the following from the most recent year:

- (a) The number of applications and nominations received.
- (b) The number of nominations accepted and declined.
- (c) The number of designations awarded.
- (d) Annual certifications.
- (e) The use of information provided under subsection (8).; and
- (f) Any other information the agency deems necessary to evaluate the program.

Purpose

The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program was designed as a recognition program to highlight businesses and organizations that demonstrate a commitment to providing career and financial opportunities to individuals with disabilities. The program supports resources like the Unique Abilities Tax Credit incentive through the Department of Revenue, and coordination of employment opportunities with business partners to assist clients in obtaining competitive integrated employment. This better enables Floridians with developmental disabilities to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Fostering Independence:** The program strengthens Florida's economy and workforce by elevating and equipping Floridians with unique abilities seeking employment with dynamic opportunities to do so.
- **Reducing Unemployment:** The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program is designed to help reduce unemployment among those who are willing, ready, and able to contribute to Florida's

thriving workforce by raising awareness about the benefits of a job, equipping job seekers with the tools they need to be successful, and providing continued support for goal advancement.

- **Strengthening Communities:** Job seekers and job creators contribute to strengthening communities by creating environments where everyone can succeed.

Data

2025 FLORIDA UNIQUE ABILITIES PARTNER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	2025 ACTUALS
Total number of current Unique Abilities Partners	199
APPLICATIONS, AWARDS, AND ANNUAL RE-CERTIFICATIONS	
Number of applications received	10
The number of nominations accepted	5
The number of nominations declined	0
Number of designations awarded	2
Number of applications pending approval	8
Number of annual re-certifications	22

*Data Source: Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Program Development

APD is continuously enhancing the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program to increase participation for job creators and identify partners for job seekers by updating and refining the toolkits designed to provide resources and information, increasing outreach efforts to prospective employees and employers.

In 2025, APD updated and refreshed the online resource webpage. This site includes general information, resources, and best practices for Floridians with disabilities and businesses. The site also serves as an information hub for organizations seeking the official designation of a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, including eligibility requirements, application, and a listing of participating entities by county. Organizations can apply to become a business partner by submitting the application online.

APD hosted several meetings with newly designated business partners. During these meetings, APD staff formally presented certifications of participation in person, reinforcing the agency's commitment to building strong relationships and recognizing the contributions of businesses that support individuals with disabilities.

Additional Program Development Initiatives

1. Digital Modernization

- APD is expanding the online dashboards to display real-time program metrics, such as applications received, certifications awarded, and active partners by region.
- APD is working to integrate the active list of UAPP partners with other workforce systems, including Employ Florida, to ensure seamless data sharing and improved tracking of partner engagement.

- APD is enhancing the UAPP website to include dedicated areas for new applicants, nominations, and recertification requests. These improvements streamline the process for businesses and organizations seeking designation or renewal as Florida Unique Abilities Partners.

2. Client and Partner Recognition:

- APD established a structured Partner Recognition Framework, which includes in-person delivery of partner certificates by the Agency's Regional Operation Managers to all new regional partners.



Robin Keller (APD Northeast Regional Operations Manager) presented a Unique Abilities Partner certificate to Susan Peters at PossAbilities Plus, Inc. Pictured from left to right are Josh Rickers, Chloe Kirkland, Susan Peters, Dana Davis, and Robin Keller. The PossAbilities Plus, Inc. offers many programs that help connect participants with the community, such as Building Better Job Skills through Music Therapy, Educational Drama Club, Growing in the Secret Garden, Parent and Family Support, Resource Group, and Bible Club.



Attending a Meet and Greet for National Disability Employment Awareness Month, to celebrate inclusion and employment of individuals with disabilities. Pictured from left to right: Liesl Ramos, APD Chief of Client Support & Community Services, Shawn Rosier, Jr., proud owner of *Shawn Goes Bananas*, a food truck in the Tallahassee area, Sean Freeman, Actor, and Daylis Zamora, APD Programmatic Support and Services Supervisor. With many exciting accomplishments still ahead, Shawn's journey beautifully reflects the mission of the Unique Abilities Partner Program.

3. Resource Development

- APD is designing toolkits to support both employers and job seekers. The toolkits include:
 - Best practices for inclusive hiring.
 - Guidance on workplace accommodations.
 - Information on available tax credits and incentives.
 - Connecting job seekers with disabilities with inclusive employers.
 - Information on how to start looking for job opportunities.
 - Information about resume writing and interview preparation.

4. Future Engagements

- As APD continues to reevaluate the evolving needs of job seekers and job creators, APD will facilitate outreach campaigns in 2026 to raise awareness of the program among statewide businesses and organizations.
- Regional webinars will be conducted to educate prospective employers, highlight success stories and demonstrate the benefits of becoming a Florida Unique Abilities Partner.
- APD, in collaboration with partners like the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation, will identify a variety of dynamic employment opportunities including those available by entities as part of the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program, to match those seeking employment and those providing employment opportunities in 2026.

Conclusion

APD will continue to strengthen collaboration among state agencies, private sector partners, and community organizations. By equipping employers with practical tools and resources, recognizing leaders in inclusive workforce practices, and supporting individuals with disabilities in achieving independence, the program is well positioned to help maximize opportunities for job seekers to connect with employers and help Floridians with disabilities achieve their employment outcomes. The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program remains committed to promoting inclusive workplaces while pursuing new partners willing to unlock job opportunities for Floridians with disabilities.