



BUSINESS TOOLKIT

FloridaUniqueAbilities.org

WELCOME LETTER

The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program recognizes businesses in our state that are committed to providing career and financial opportunities to individuals with unique abilities and to the organizations that support them.

Thanks to dedicated business partners and advocacy organizations, the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program will strengthen our state's economy and workforce by giving a talented but untapped group of Floridians who want to work more opportunities to do so.

The program was designed to raise awareness about the economic and social benefits of employing individuals with unique abilities. Participating businesses demonstrate their dedication to strengthening communities and the economy by helping these Floridians with untapped talents to become more independent. The program also provides opportunities to partner with other businesses, organizations and state resources in this endeavor.

We hope the contents of this toolkit will help you join us in this endeavor as businesses and organizations alike work to advance the independence of individuals who have a disability.



CISSY PROCTOR, *Executive Director*
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

"I believe our work product will make a significant impact on the lives of individuals with unique abilities and their families for generations to come."

– Senate President Andy Gardiner

QUICK FACTS

▶ ABOUT THE FLORIDA UNIQUE ABILITIES PARTNER PROGRAM

The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program highlights businesses that are committed to providing career and financial opportunities to individuals with unique abilities and to the organizations that support them. Participating businesses demonstrate their dedication to strengthening communities and the economy by helping these Floridians with untapped talents to become more independent and to partnering with other businesses, organizations and state resources in this endeavor.

▶ ELIGIBILITY

The program requires a business entity to meet one of the three criteria below:

- Employ at least one person with a disability for at least nine months prior to applying;
- Provide a financial or in-kind contribution to programs that serve individuals with unique abilities;
 - For businesses of 100 employees or fewer, the contribution must be at least \$1,000.
 - For businesses with more than 100 employees, the contribution must be at least \$5,000.
- Contribute to the establishment of a program that helps individuals with unique abilities achieve independence.

▶ HOW TO APPLY

- Takes less than 15 minutes
- Application may be submitted online at FloridaUniqueAbilities.org
- Nomination form also available

▶ ADVANTAGES

- **Recognition:** Business entities designated as Florida Unique Abilities Partners will receive name recognition on the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program website, special designation in the Employ Florida Marketplace (if currently listed), the Florida Unique Abilities Partner logo for commercial use, and a window display.
- **Demonstration of socially responsible community leadership:** Participating partners send a strong message of social responsibility to their communities and to current and prospective customers.
- **Connect with and support like-minded businesses:** Designated businesses are encouraged to connect with other like-minded companies and organizations and to share best practices to businesses that do not yet employ Floridians with unique abilities. Additionally, participation in the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program opens the door for businesses to network and partner with fellow designees, fostering new business opportunities and collaborations.

PARTNER PROGRAM APPLICATION FORM

A business entity interested in being designated as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner must apply to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

By submitting this application form, you certify the following information is true and correct and that you agree to the Terms and Conditions listed. Please do not include or attach any personally identifying information about any employees of your business. An asterisk (*) denotes required information.

▶ BUSINESS INFORMATION:

*Name of the Business: _____

Doing Business As (DBA) (if different from official name): _____

Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) of the Business: _____

[For businesses listed in the Employ Florida Marketplace, providing your FEIN Number will help us identify your business as a Unique Abilities Partner in the Employ Florida Marketplace.]

Business Website: _____

▶ PHYSICAL ADDRESS OF THE BUSINESS:

*Address: _____ *City: _____

*County: _____ State: _____ *Postal Code: _____

▶ MAILING ADDRESS OF THE BUSINESS (Only if different from Physical Address):

Mailing Address of Business: _____

Mailing City: _____ Mailing State: _____ Mailing Postal Code: _____

▶ BUSINESS CONTACT PERSON (Name of Person Submitting the Application):

*First Name: _____ *Last Name: _____ Title: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

(*Email **OR** phone number is required)



Continued ▶

PARTNER PROGRAM APPLICATION FORM

▶ PLEASE SELECT ALL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA THAT APPLY TO THE BUSINESS:

(*Selection of at least one criterion is required)

- A. Employment of at least one individual with a disability.** Such employees must be residents of Florida and must have been employed by the business for at least nine months before the business applies for a Unique Abilities Partner designation. *(Note: By checking this box, you acknowledge that your business meets the criterion selected.)*
- B. Contributed to local and/or national disability organizations or made contributions in support of individuals who have a disability.** Such contributions may be financial or in-kind, including employee volunteer hours. A business with 100 or fewer employees must make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$1,000 and a business with more than 100 employees must make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$5,000. *(Note: Contributions must be documented by providing copies of written receipts or letters of acknowledgement from recipients, volunteers or the organization.)*
- C. Established or contributed to the establishment of a program that contributes to the independence of individuals who have a disability.** A business with 100 or fewer employees must make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$1,000 in the program and a business with more than 100 employees must make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$5,000. *(Note: Contributions must be documented by providing copies of written receipts, a summary of the program, program materials, or letters of acknowledgement from program participants or volunteers.)*

Note: If you are completing an online application, you can select more than one file from the same folder on your computer by using the "browse" feature. If you are completing a hard copy application, please attach all required documentation to your application and mail to:

**Unique Abilities Partner Program
Department of Economic Opportunity
107 East Madison Street • MSC G-229
Tallahassee, FL 32399**

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. For purposes of the Unique Abilities Partner program, "individuals who have a disability" (as defined in section 413.801(2)(b), Florida Statutes) means persons who have a physical or intellectual impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, persons who have a history or record of such an impairment, or persons who are perceived by others as having such an impairment.
2. By accepting designation as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, the business agrees and acknowledges that DEO will display its name on the Florida Unique Abilities Partner program website.
3. By accepting designation as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, the business agrees and acknowledges that DEO will provide its name to VISIT FLORIDA for consideration in the development of marketing campaigns and that DEO and VISIT FLORIDA may feature the business in future marketing campaigns.
4. By accepting designation as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, businesses listed in the Employ Florida Marketplace agree that their job postings in the Employ Florida Marketplace will be marked as Unique Abilities Partner program opportunities.
5. By accepting designation as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, the business agrees to use the Unique Abilities Logo in compliance with the Unique Abilities Partner program logo guidelines.
6. By accepting designation as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, the business agrees that it will not provide any personally identifying information pertaining to any individual with a disability or employee of the business as part of the process to nominate or designate a business as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner. Under no circumstance should a Social Security number, date of birth, or medical information be provided as part of this process.
7. A designated business will be required to certify that it continues to meet the program criteria on an annual basis. Failure to submit an annual certification will result in removal of the designation.
8. Designation as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner does not establish or involve licensure, does not affect the substantial interests of a party, and does not constitute final agency action. As provided in section 413.801(3)(d), Florida Statutes, the Florida Unique Abilities Partner program and designation are not subject to Chapter 120, Florida Statutes.

PARTNER PROGRAM NOMINATION FORM

Individuals and businesses can also nominate companies who they believe deserve this recognition.

Note: Businesses cannot nominate themselves, but can apply directly for a Unique Abilities Partner designation by submitting the Unique Abilities Partner Program Application Form. An asterisk (*) denotes required information.

▶ BUSINESS INFORMATION:

*Name of the Business: _____

▶ PHYSICAL ADDRESS OF THE BUSINESS:

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

▶ CONTACT PERSON AT THE NOMINATED BUSINESS:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____
(Email **OR** phone number is required)

▶ CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PERSON SUBMITTING THE NOMINATION:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Relation to Business: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____



Continued ▶

PARTNER PROGRAM NOMINATION FORM

▶ **PLEASE SELECT ALL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA THAT YOU BELIEVE APPLY TO THE NOMINATED BUSINESS:** (**Selection of at least one criterion is required*)

- A. Employment of at least one individual with a disability.** Such employees must be residents of Florida and must have been employed by the business for at least nine months before the business applies for a Unique Abilities Partner designation.
- B. Contributed to local and/or national disability organizations or made contributions in support of individuals who have a disability.** Such contributions may be financial or in-kind, including employee volunteer hours. A business with 100 or fewer employees must make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$1,000 and a business with more than 100 employees must make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$5,000.
- C. Established or contributed to the establishment of a program that contributes to the independence of individuals who have a disability.** A business with 100 or fewer employees must make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$1,000 in the program and a business with more than 100 employees must make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$5,000.

▶ **IF YOU ARE COMPLETING A HARD COPY NOMINATION, PLEASE MAIL THE NOMINATION FORM TO:**

Unique Abilities Partner Program
Department of Economic Opportunity
107 East Madison Street • MSC G-229
Tallahassee, FL 32399

NEWSLETTER / BLOG

The following is a sample article for your website, newsletter or member communication. Please feel free to use this to help create a custom message for your audience.

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR FLORIDA BUSINESSES

Our state is at the forefront in enhancing opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In 2016, the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program was signed into law to give a talented but untapped group of Floridians who want to work more opportunities to do so and to recognize the businesses that make this a priority.

The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program will spotlight Florida businesses that advance the independence of individuals who have a disability by employing, or contributing to programs that support, these individuals. It also allows participating partners to send a strong message of social responsibility to their communities and to current and prospective customers.

We encourage all Florida businesses to stand united in this endeavor to provide opportunities to those who are willing, ready and able to contribute to our workforce. Together, we can foster stronger businesses and strengthen our state's economy and workforce.

For more information on the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program, visit FloridaUniqueAbilities.org.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

Social media is a great way to spread the word about the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program. Below, you'll find helpful information to help you craft posts for your social media platforms.

▶ PRIMARY HASHTAG

- #UniqueAbilities

▶ SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES (FOR TAGGING)

- Twitter: @FLDEO (<https://twitter.com/FLDEO>)
- Facebook: @FloridaUniqueAbilities (<https://business.facebook.com/floridauniqueabilities>)

▶ SOCIAL CONTENT BANK / EXAMPLES

FACEBOOK/LINKEDIN

- Businesses across the state are demonstrating their dedication to strengthening communities and the economy by helping Floridians with untapped talents to become more independent. Join the movement. FloridaUniqueAbilities.org
- Did you know employing individuals with unique abilities has social and economic advantages for the company? Learn more about the advantages. FloridaUniqueAbilities.org
- Interested in learning more about how your organization can diversify its workforce and employ individuals with unique abilities? Check out the resources at FloridaUniqueAbilities.org
- Did you know that Florida's unemployment rate for individuals with unique abilities is higher than the national average? The Florida Unique Abilities Designation Program was designed to take this challenge head-on. Show your support for the movement by signing up for alerts. FloridaUniqueAbilities.org
- Does your company employ persons with unique abilities? Do you know a company committed to hiring or supporting unique abilities issues? Apply or nominate today! FloridaUniqueAbilities.org

TWITTER

- The social and economic benefits to our state of diversifying our workforce are many. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/2dnLJz>
- If you employ an individual with unique abilities, or donate to causes that support them, be recognized at FloridaUniqueAbilities.org
- Know of a company that supports individuals with unique abilities? Nominate them at FloridaUniqueAbilities.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

▶ ABOUT THE FLORIDA UNIQUE ABILITIES PARTNER PROGRAM

Q. WHAT DOES “UNIQUE ABILITIES” MEAN?

- A. The phrase “unique abilities” references an individual who has a disability. In Florida law, this is defined as a person who has a physical or intellectual impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; a person who has a history or record of such impairment; or a person who is perceived by others as having such impairment.

Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE UNIQUE ABILITIES PARTNER PROGRAM?

- A. The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program was signed into law by Governor Rick Scott on January 21, 2016. It highlights businesses that are committed to providing career and financial opportunities to individuals with unique abilities and to the organizations that support these individuals.

This program was designed to help provide opportunities to those who are willing, ready and able to contribute to our workforce by raising awareness about the economic and social benefits of employing these individuals.

The Florida Unique Abilities Program also allows participating business partners to send a strong message of social responsibility. In turn, this gives consumers the opportunity to make educated decisions about businesses to patronize.

According to a survey conducted by Forbes¹, 88 percent of consumers think companies should try to achieve their business goals while improving society and the environment.

▶ ELIGIBILITY

Q. HOW DO I KNOW IF MY ORGANIZATION QUALIFIES?

- A. The program requires a business entity to meet one of the three criteria below:
- Employee at least one person with a disability;
 - Provide a financial or in-kind contribution to programs that serve individuals with unique abilities
 - For businesses of 100 employees or fewer, they must contribute \$1,000.
 - For businesses with more than 100 employees, they must contribute \$5,000.
 - Contribute to the establishment of a program that helps individuals with unique abilities achieve independence.

Q. DOES THE ORGANIZATION THAT MY COMPANY SUPPORTS HAVE TO BE LOCATED IN FLORIDA?

- A. No. Contributions can be made to any local or national disability organization.

¹ “Consumers Overwhelmingly Want CSR.” *Forbes*. *Forbes Magazine*, n.d. Web. 14 Sept. 2016.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. I SEE THAT A BUSINESS MAY QUALIFY IF THEY CONTRIBUTE TO ORGANIZATIONS, OR CONTRIBUTE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAMS, THAT SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES. WHAT TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS QUALIFY?

A. Any organization or business that meets the criteria may qualify for the Unique Abilities Partner Program.

Q. I WANT TO BE A UNIQUE ABILITIES PARTNER, BUT I'M NOT SURE IF I QUALIFY. WHAT CAN I DO TO MEET THE QUALIFICATIONS?

A. You can visit the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program website to access resources and learn how to qualify at FloridaUniqueAbilities.org.

► BENEFITS

Q. WHAT RECOGNITION DO I RECEIVE AS A PROGRAM PARTNER?

A. By accepting designation as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, your business will receive the following:

- Name recognition on the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program website
- Special designation in the Employ Florida Marketplace (if currently listed)
- Florida Unique Abilities Partner logo for commercial use
- Window display
- By accepting designation as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, the business name will also be provided to VISIT FLORIDA for consideration in the development of marketing campaigns.

Additionally, businesses will have the opportunity to be spotlighted on the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program website. Please email your story and contributions to employing those with unique abilities to UniqueAbilitiesPartners@deo.myflorida.com.

Q. IF I EXCEED THE MINIMUM PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, DO I RECEIVE SPECIAL RECOGNITION?

A. No. All businesses will be recognized in the same manner.

Q. DOES MY RECOGNITION AUTOMATICALLY RENEW NEXT YEAR?

A. No. All designated businesses and organizations will be required to certify that it continues to meet the program criteria on an annual basis.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION THAT IS NOT INCLUDED HERE?

Visit FloridaUniqueAbilities.org for more information about this program. If you still can't find what you're looking for, please email us at UniqueAbilitiesPartners@deo.myflorida.com.