



The Uniquely Abled Academy® Replication Guide

Element 0 – The Uniquely Abled Academy® Replication Guide

Exhibit 0.7NL - A UAA is a Partnership

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Note: The links in this public version have been deactivated.

A. The Ten Required Elements

A unique and critical aspect of a Uniquely Abled Academy (UAA) is that the program is comprehensive; covering almost everything an individual might need to start out on a satisfactory career. For example, this includes:

- Training in a skill that is in demand
- Training in job readiness skills
- Financial support for educational, job placement, and job coaching costs
- Support in finding a job
- Support while in the job

As described in Exhibit 0.1 - Ten Critical Elements of a Successful Vocational Education Program, a successful vocational training program for the uniquely abled needs to include ten critical components:

- Element 1: Match the Individual to the Job - ensure they have the target uniquely abled skills to create a class with the same diagnosis and unique skills and on-board students to the UAA
- Element 2: Establishing and Managing the Training Program
- Element 3: Marketing, Recruiting, Selecting, and Onboarding Trainees
- Element 4: Provide a Vocational Training Curriculum, e.g., how to program and operate a CNC machine.
- Element 5: Provide a Job Readiness Curriculum
- Element 6: Provide Resources for UAA Instructors on how to teach this population.
- Element 7: Provide Job Development
- Element 8: Support Employment, e.g, post-hire support, job coach, internship, etc.
- Element 9: Provide External Support Systems
- Element 10: Provide Funding



Various agencies provide different components, but we have not encountered any organization that provides all ten components. To date, other than the UAA, we have not heard of any project that brings multiple agencies together, thus leading to the lack of vocational training opportunities for the uniquely abled and an 80-90% unemployment rate.

Finally, a long-term sustainable program must produce something of value that others are willing to pay for, e.g., skilled employees for in demand jobs.

B. A UAA is a Partnership

Thus, a project team of multiple service organizations is required. A UAA is not a program operated by a single agency or facility; it is a partnership of a number of organizations. Operating as a partnership is a critical success factor for a UAA.

A partnership is the organizational equivalent of a team of individuals. By definition, a team is:

“a well-defined group with a common commitment and common work-product for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.”

Being a well-defined group means it is clear who is on the group and who is not, the individual and organizational promises arising from being a member of the group, how decisions will be made, etc. For a UAA, the common commitment is usually something like “A world in which every person lives a quality and fully productive life.” (the Uniquely Abled Project (UAP) Vision). The common work-product is that uniquely abled individuals in the area served by the UAA “have access to and successfully enjoy meaningful and gainful employment.” (from the UAP Mission). The mutual accountability arises as the group works together. The successful operation of the UAA is most important. People make decisions based on what is best for the UAA and the trainees, not necessarily just their own organization¹. It is important that the leader of the UAA project team keep the common commitment and the common work-product present as the project team does its work.

The needed partners typically include:

- A facility with experience and the appropriate equipment to deliver the skills training. This is often a local community college.
- An agency providing job readiness skills training and support.
- Financial support, which could come from government agencies and/or contributions from foundations, businesses, and individuals.
- A source to teach the skills instructors what they need to know concerning

¹ Frequently we've seen agencies that provided the same or similar services worked issues out for the best interests of the UAA trainees.



how to teach the particular student population.

- A source to coach and support potential and actual employers how to evaluate, select, and manage the particular student population.
- An agency to provide support in finding a job.
- An agency to provide on-site job coaching.

It is important that each agency understands what each agency provides, the status of students, and share the information they have. For this a signed FERPA is required (see Exhibit 3.3 - FERPA Release Form). Thus, the form might be included in the Intake Packet for each accepted student.

C. Strategic Alliances

In order to be successful in achieving a goal of sustainable funding, and to be efficient with resources, a UAA should establish collaborative relationships with a broad spectrum of agencies and companies, each specializing in a different, but equally important aspect of the program. More specifically, collaborate with public and private special education agencies for the purposes of mutual referrals. Present at professional associations in order to promote the UAP vision and make parents and professionals in private practice aware of the UAA program. Manufacturers and their associations can provide invaluable career education for students, as well as contract work, so that the students can hone their skills. Also work with the software companies that furnish software products to manufacturers so that students will be trained on the very software they will be using when they become employed.