



A Process for Establishing a Uniquely Abled Academy

This is a very high-level outline of a process for establishing a Uniquely Abled Academy (UAA). Anyone, e.g., a parent, and any organization, e.g., a company or non-profit, can be the “spark” that starts the process. It generally takes 6-12 months to establish a UAA from start to graduation of the first class.

The UAA Project Team is the group of individuals and organizations committed to establishing and operating a UAA. Each UAA is locally “owned” and independently operated and is designed for the local situation.

A UAA Replication Guide provides extensive information on the formation and operation of a UAA. In addition, the Uniquely Abled Project (UAP) provides coaching and consulting.

The steps to establishing a UA Academy are:

Establish Relationship with the Uniquely Abled Project

1. Contact the UAP at info@UniquelyAbledProject.org
 - a. Let the UAP know of your situation and intended results
 - b. Informal coaching is available for the initial process.

Determine Feasibility

2. Identify the target diagnosis and target job for the UAA
 - a. The UAP’s current focus is on the establishment of UAAs serving those with a diagnosis of high functioning autism (Asperger’s) and a target job of an entry level CNC machinist. This document is based on that pairing.
 - b. However, the basic concepts and processes of the UAA can be adapted. Contact the UAP if you have a different pairing of diagnosis and target job and we will see how we can support you.
3. Identify the target geographic area.
 - a. Often young adults with autism are living with their parents, and thus the educational institution where the training will take place and the available jobs need to be within reasonable driving and public transportation access.
 - b. A target geographic area is typically no more than a 30-minute drive or 1-hour public transportation ride in diameter.
 - c. The target area generally includes the location of the family or organization planning to start the UAA



4. Validate that there is a demand in the target geographic area for CNC machinists and operators.
 - a. This can be done by a Google search, e.g., “CNC jobs in the Glendale area”.
 - b. You can also check with local companies who employ CNC machinists on the demand and availability of such jobs in the target area.
 - c. Government and non-profit job placement organizations may also be a good source of information, e.g., Workforce Investment Boards and Job Centers.
 - d. Ideally there are 100’s of openings.
5. Validate that there is a sufficiently large population of individuals with high functioning autism (Asperger’s) in the target geographic area.
 - a. This can be done by checking with non-profit organizations and/or government agencies who serve those with autism.
 - b. If you are a parent of an individual with autism, then you probably know the organizations.
 - c. Relevant non-profit organizations can be found by a Google search, e.g., “autism organizations in the Los Angeles area”.
 - d. The relevant government organizations are those oriented to supporting uniquely abled individuals. In California those include the Department of Rehabilitation and Regional Centers.
 - e. A UAA graduates 20-40 entry level CNC machinists a year.
6. Identify and recruit an educational institution that will provide the training in CNC operation.
 - a. The educational institution needs to be in the target geographic area.
 - b. Identification can be done with a Google search, e.g., “CNC training in Glendale area”. In California, many community colleges provide such training.
 - c. Capabilities should be for 10-15 trainees at a time, and ideally the CNC machines and instructors are available during the day. Most UAAs are 4-5 days/week, starting at 8 or 9am and ending 3 to 5pm. The UAA training program generally lasts 13-16 weeks (equivalent to a college semester). The training personnel ratio is typically 5-1, with one instructor and 2 teaching assistants.
 - d. Ensure the cost of the training is not too high (since funding will be needed to ensure the program is free for the trainees).
 - e. Enroll the head of the workforce training or CNC training at the educational institution in hosting a UAA. Their benefits include additional income and positive publicity.



Establish Formation Team

7. Establish a formal relationship with the UAP.
 - a. The UAP is available to coach and often is involved from this point until the UAA graduates its first class. The fee for this service is \$10,000, and the UAP will help the UAA Project Team raise these funds.
 - b. Read the UAA Replication Guide (provided by the UAP).
8. Establish one or two people as the driving force for establishing the UAA.
 - a. These are generally the person(s) who started the organization effort, e.g., a parent, and the head of the group providing the CNC training.
9. Invite organizations to the Formation Team Meeting
 - a. The Formation Team consists of 4-6 people, including
 - i. The individual(s) who are the driving force for establishing the UAA.
 - ii. The head of the organization providing the CNC training.
 - iii. One or two non-profit social service and/or governmental organizations that provide one or more of the following: job readiness training (soft skills training), job search and placement, post-hire support, or funding.
 - b. Such organizations are generally known to parents of the potential trainees and by the service non-profits and government agencies.
10. Hold a Formation Team Meeting
 - a. The Formation Team selects the organizations and individuals to be invited to attend the first meeting of and be on the UAA Project Team.
 - b. The UAA Replication Guide provides extensive information on who might be invited to be on the UAA Project Team.
 - c. It would not be unusual to invite up to 18 organizations and up to 40 people to attend the first UAA Project Team meeting.
11. Consider whether to incorporate.
 - a. UAA's are most frequently not incorporated, using the non-profit status of the educational institution as a vehicle for receiving funds. In some circumstances it may be useful to have a separate non-profit.

Establish UAA Project Team

12. Hold the first meeting of the UAA Project Team
 - a. The UAA Replication Guide provides extensive information on how to conduct this and future meetings.
 - b. During the first meeting the various committees are established, and the UAA Project Plan is reviewed and revised.
 - c. Normally the UAA Project Team meets once a month for 2 hours until the UAA is established and smoothly operating.
13. Execute the UAA Project Plan