

# Annual Report

2023-2024



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# BUILDABILITY™

INCLUSION. OPPORTUNITY. EMPOWERMENT.

# about BuildAbility



BuildAbility has been a cornerstone of support for individuals with disabilities since its founding in 1967. As a nonprofit organization, we have positively impacted the lives of over 9,000 adults across the San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and San Gabriel Valleys.

For more than 50 years BuildAbility has championed independence and improved quality of life through tailored programs that foster personal growth and community integration. BuildAbility equips individuals with the tools they need to thrive.

We currently have expansion plans to grow us into the Antelope Valley and the Greater Los Angeles area. We remain dedicated to creating pathways toward greater independence and community involvement for adults with disabilities.

Our current service offerings are; Supported Employment, Vocational Training, Community Integration, Independent Living Services, and Behavior Management.

Cover page top left to right:  
Options manager Rachel with  
Options supervisor Dan'alle, ILS  
Lead Carissa with Doug and Kelli,  
Joey from Quest program

This page: BuildAbility team at  
Annual Staff Retreat 2024

# a word from our co - executives



It is with great pride and excitement that we present to you our first-ever annual report. The past year has been a period of immense transformation for BuildAbility. We've faced significant changes, both in leadership and in the ways we deliver our services, but these shifts have also presented us with new opportunities to grow stronger as an organization. Change is never easy, but it often brings with it the chance to reflect, innovate, and realign our mission with the evolving desires of those we serve.

At BuildAbility, we remain deeply committed to supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and through this time of transition, we have worked diligently to strengthen the foundation of our organization. We've set ambitious goals, honed our strategies, and begun building systems that will sustain us for years to come. We are not just responding to today's challenges; we are using them as a springboard to propel us toward a brighter, more inclusive future.

Our commitment to excellence remains at the heart of everything we do, and we are grateful for the unwavering support of our staff, partners, and community members. Together, we are not only stabilizing our organization but creating the conditions for it to thrive. Each of you plays a vital role in this journey, and it is your dedication and belief in our mission that continues to push us forward.

As we look ahead, we are guided by our vision to "Build Tomorrow, Today." This theme embodies our commitment to forward-thinking innovation, operational excellence, and building a future in which every individual we serve can thrive. We are deeply grateful for your support as we embark on this exciting chapter, and we look forward to continuing this important work with renewed energy and purpose.



**jonathan kim**  
Co-Executive Director

4

*Jonathan Kim*



**nicholle cash**  
Co-Executive Director

*Nicholle Cash*

## board of directors

**Avi Zaraya**  
Chair Person

**Jess Trinca**  
Vice-Chair Person

**Sheila Arasawa**  
Treasurer

**Kristin Lafirenza**  
Secretary

**Anarosa Estevez**  
Peter Lasky

**Dr. Eric Schallert**

**Stephanie Anderson**  
Sebastian Ardemagni

**Barry Baxter**  
Paul Nankivell

## leadership at BuildAbility

**Rachel Waddy**  
Director of Development

**Anna Polin**  
Manager, Quality Assurance/HCBS

**Sofia Good**  
Manager, People Operations

**Stephanie Cho**  
Accounting Manager

**Jamie Quaglino**  
Independent Living Manager

**Tina Gawronski**  
Supported Employment Manager

**Kikuyo Polk**  
Quest Manager

**Rachel Costello**  
Options Manager





# vision

To develop and maintain resources that allow our participants to actively shape their own futures within a community that includes them fully.

# mission

BuildAbility creates the space for individuals with disabilities to consider a life without limitations then helps them take the steps needed to make that life a possibility.



**INCLUSION.  
OPPORTUNITY.  
EMPOWERMENT.**

# values

At BuildAbility, we are driven by a collaborative spirit, where respect and teamwork lead to the best outcomes for those we serve. We champion diversity and integrity in everything we do, maintaining the highest ethical standards while responsibly managing public resources. Through community engagement and innovative thinking, we empower individuals to reach their fullest potential and live lives without limits.



Top: Options participant Lisa  
Bottom: Quest manager  
Kiku and Jackie

# organizational strategy



At BuildAbility, our strategy is centered on being leaders in the field for true person driven services; proactively adapting to change, and ensuring that each of our diverse programs uniquely supports our participants and partnerships. Our programs share common goals of; personal growth and development, community involvement and engagement, quality service, and sustainability, enabling us to make a lasting impact on the individuals we serve and the communities we engage with.



Some of our board members and leadership team speaking at our Annual Staff retreat 2024

## BuildAbility programs



SEP

Supported Employment



ILS

Independent Living



Options

Behavioral Management



Quest

Community Integration

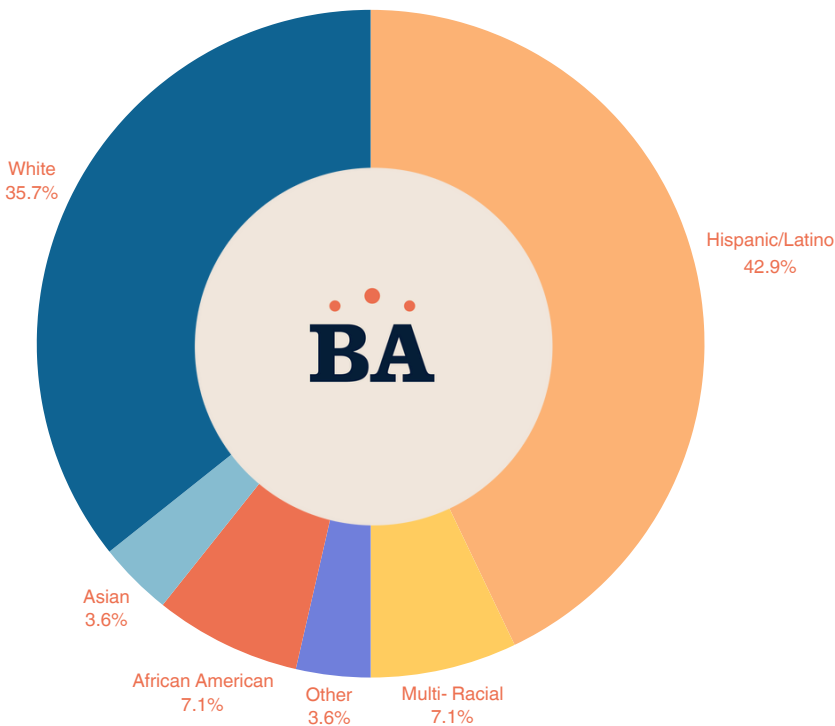
# looking beyond person-centered planning

At BuildAbility, we are committed to evolving our approach to best support the individuals we serve. While person-centered planning has been a cornerstone of our work, we are excited to move toward a person-driven way of operating. This approach empowers individuals not just by recognizing their unique goals and needs but by using these insights to inform and improve our services for everyone. By looking beyond the individual and leveraging what we learn from each person's experiences, we are building a stronger, more inclusive framework that enhances outcomes for all those we serve.

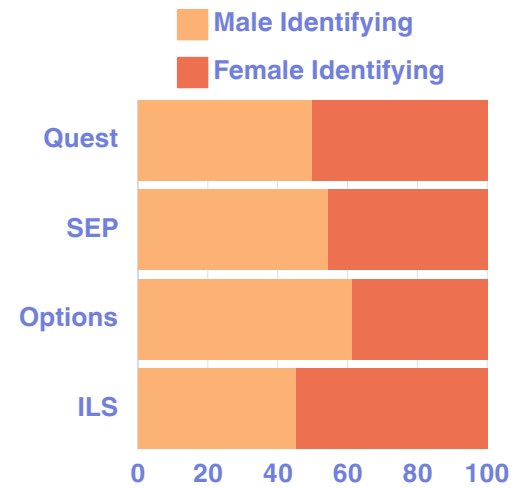
# BuildAbility impact 2024



## Participant Ethnicity

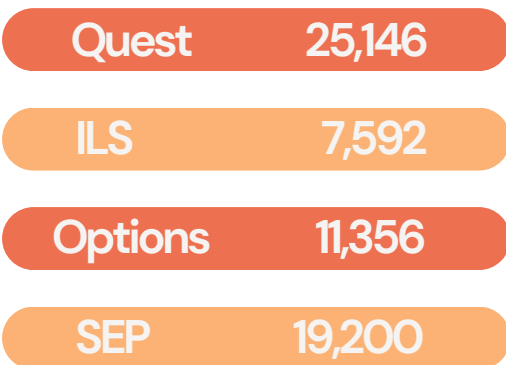


## Participant Demographics \*



\* Data reflects only those who identified as men or women; there were no participants identified as non-binary at the time of reporting.

Hours of Service: 63,294



## Current Disabilities Supported\*



- Intellectual Disability
- Developmental Disability
- Fragile X
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cerebral Palsy
- Angelman Syndrome
- Down Syndrome
- Borderline Intellectual Functioning
- Developmentally Delayed Learner
- Seizure Disorder (Epilepsy)
- Other ( Psychological, Dual Diagnosis)

\* Diagnoses listed are the majority, not full comprehensive list

# supported employment program

SEP



## Job Matching Magic: Empowering Abilities, One Hire at a Time

The Supported Employment Program, funded by the CA Department of Rehabilitation and Southern California Regional Centers, is designed to help individuals with intellectual disabilities thrive in competitive, integrated work environments. By focusing on personalized job placement and informed choice, the program matches participants with real job opportunities in the community that align with their skills and preferences. Participants benefit from 1:1 job coaching that provides ongoing support, with coaching gradually reducing from 100% to 20% over a six-month period. The program ensures participants develop critical workplace skills like task comprehension, attendance, and customer service. Ultimately fostering independence and long-term employment success.



Jose at his place of employment

## Expanding Horizons: Inclusion in Action

We are excited to expand our Supported Employment Services to new areas, having recently received referrals for participants in West Lake and Agoura Hills. To meet the growing demand, we are actively interviewing job coach candidates local to those areas. Additionally, we aim to extend services into the Antelope Valley, where there is a significant need for providers. We are currently working to strengthen our presence, hire staff and secure more referrals from the Antelope Valley Regional Center to better serve individuals in that community.



# program impact highlights

SEP



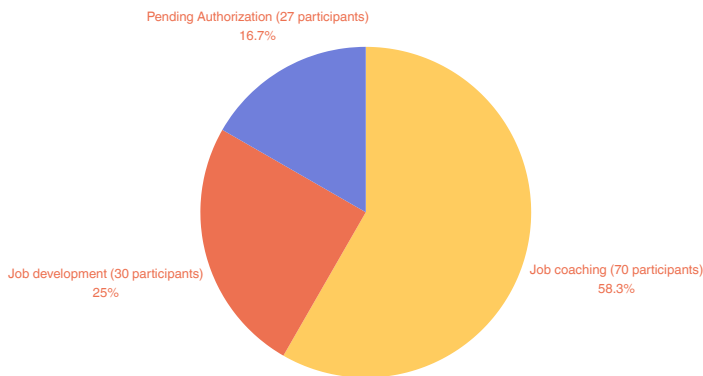
## Jose: From Worker to Wonder

Jose has spent six years in our Supported Employment program, making remarkable progress from the Work Activity Program to group employment and ultimately to individual competitive supported employment. His strong work ethic and rapport with the managers at Food 4 Less in Sylmar led to the interviewing and successful hiring of four additional program participants, each with their own unique skills and talents! This success story showcases the power of perseverance and community impact within our program.



Top: Jose and his Dad  
Bottom: George and Tina our SEP Manager

## SEP supported employment participant breakdown



This reflects the dynamic growth in SEP as more participants are being onboarded, and staff have recently received ACRE certification for customized employment, further expanding opportunities.

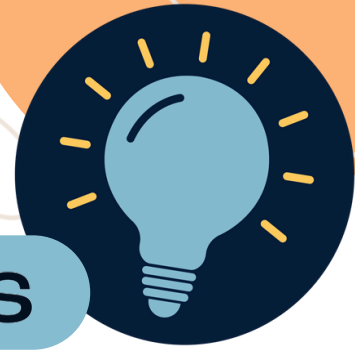


## George: Resilient Career Path

George dedicated two years to Happy Days Ace Hardware, earning rave Yelp reviews for his exceptional customer service. Although the store closed, his shining experience coupled with George's resilient spirit, he was successfully placed at Food 4 Less! Our job coaches continue to support him in navigating the fast-paced grocery environment, focusing on task understanding and attention.

# behavioral management program

## Options



## Empowering Growth Through Structured Support

The Options Program is a specialized site-based day program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and behavioral support needs. Focused on fostering personal growth, we emphasize positive behavior support, social inclusion, and the development of key life skills. Through individualized curriculum activities, participants work toward achieving their unique goals. Staff maintain a consistent support system with manageable ratios, carefully tracking behavior data and progress to ensure continuous improvement. Additionally, the program provides opportunities for participants to access the community, practicing essential skills needed for safe and independent exploration.

From left to right:  
Ahnania looking her best for "Dress to Impress Day",  
Lisa with DSP2 Salena, Raffi enjoying the sensory room



## Options Re - Opening

After having to close our program during the COVID pandemic, we finally re-opened our enhanced updated San Fernando location in November 13, 2023, expanding our ability to support participants with personalized care. Guided by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), we develop individualized Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) to address each participant's unique needs. Staff track daily progress and ensure activities are participant-driven, based on their interests and feedback. Our goal is to help each individual develop the skills needed to graduate to less restrictive support or maintain their independence in a supportive, inclusive environment.

# program impact highlights

## Options



### Spotlight on Talent

Participants in the Options program showcased their diverse talents, including singing, dancing, and telling jokes. We were thrilled to have our Director of Programs, QA and Compliance Manager, Development Coordinator, People Operations team, and FAB team join us in support of this exciting event.



Left: Abraham performing his favorite song  
To the right: Lisa reading at the San Fernando Library

### Christopher: Celebrate every step

Christopher is developing his verbal and written expression skills, with a starting point of working on writing words like “yes”, “no”, and his name. In mid-July 2024, he showed his growing confidence by actively participating in our collaborative mural project, where he wrote his full name for the first time. Since then, Christopher has made remarkable progress, further expanding his verbal skills and communicating more than ever before!

Top: Christopher smiling bright!  
Bottom: Christopher writing his name



### A Literary Journey: Poetry Workshop

The San Fernando Library graciously hosted our program, introducing participants to the art of found poetry—creating original poems from existing texts. Participants not only engaged in this creative process but also learned about obtaining library cards and selecting books from the library, enhancing their literacy skills and fostering a love for reading.

# community integration program

## Quest



## Building Bridges, Creating Communities:

Our commitment to equitable community engagement drives our efforts to build relationships and expand our network through outreach, advocacy, and partnerships. We focus on diversity in programming, gathering feedback from participants, caregivers, and staff to ensure our services are inclusive and reflect the varied interests and abilities of those we serve. Through ongoing staff training, we remain dedicated to providing a culturally responsive and high-quality service that adapts to the evolving needs of participants.

## Opportunities in Motion: Quest's Path to Progress

In February 2023, the Quest Program was officially vendored for Tailored Day Services, with our first participant starting in October 2023. For 2024, Quest achieved a significant milestone by passing both the NLACRC HCBS audit in January and the FDLRC HCBS audit in August, both with no recommendations. As part of our continued expansion, Quest will soon be extending services to the Burbank, Glendale, and West San Gabriel Valley areas with the opening of a new hub in South Pasadena. This new location will enable us to offer in-person, group services to Lanterman Regional Center participants.



picture of Quest group with their award certificates at our first annual awards party



# program impact highlights

## Quest



### Marvin: Finding His Voice

Since joining the program in 2023, Marvin has faced challenges in communicating his needs, often repeating phrases or giving one-word responses. However, in recent months, he began using a notepad to write full sentences, significantly improving his communication. This newfound ability has boosted his participation and strengthened his connections with the people in his life—an incredible accomplishment in his journey.



Marvin at The Broad

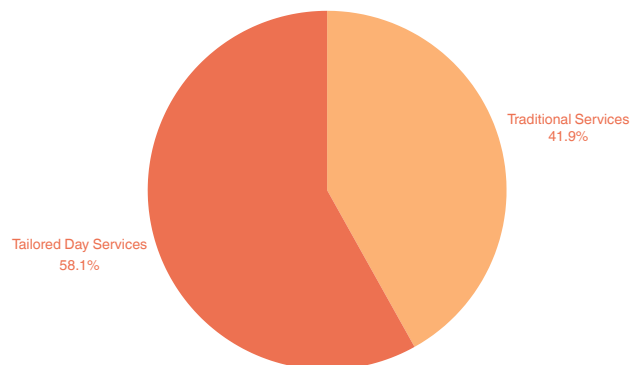


Jason (on the right) with peer David, smiling for his photo to be taken

### Jason: A Moment of Trust

Jason has been a part of the Quest program since 2021, and this is the first time he has felt comfortable allowing us to take his picture. Jason is building trust with our mentors as he continues to develop his skills and confidence; this moment marks a significant step for him. We are deeply proud and honored to have earned Jason's trust, and we celebrate this meaningful achievement together!

### Quest service attendance and hours overview



Traditional Services run 19 to 23 days per month with a 90% attendance rate, while Tailored Day Services offer about 125 support hours monthly, allowing us to serve a broader group of participants and enhance inclusivity.

# independent living program

ILS



## Personalized Pathways to Enhance Everyday Independence

Our independent living services provide functional skills training tailored to help adults achieve self-sufficiency in both their homes and communities. Delivered on a 1:1 basis, this training is customized to each participant's personal goals, ranging from household management to community engagement. By focusing on individualized support, we give participants the confidence and ability to maintain a sustainable, independent lifestyle that meets their needs and ambitions.



## Creating Community: Monthly Social Engagements

Our program has successfully implemented monthly Social Events designed to foster community and connection among participants. These events provide a welcoming environment where individuals can engage socially, share experiences, and build relationships. Additionally, we have introduced the "You and Me" program specifically for individuals experiencing social anxiety. This initiative facilitates small group interactions, allowing participants to gradually increase their comfort levels in social settings while receiving support tailored to their needs. By prioritizing personal interaction, we aim to enhance social skills and promote a sense of belonging within our community.



# program impact highlights



ILS

## Achievements in Independence

Three individuals in our program have recently graduated and no longer require Independent Living Services (ILS). Graduating is the highest accomplishment for our participants, and while we may no longer serve them in the ILS program, helping them move on to the next stage of their life path is our greatest success. Current program celebrations; Hector reached 15 months of sober living, and another participant has overcome severe social anxiety to actively engage in group events. These milestones reflect the incredible progress and resilience of our participants.



Hector holding up his one year sobriety chip with program manager Jamie

## Eddie: A New Chapter in Mobility

Eddie has always been an active community member however, traveling or navigating around his community could be challenging. The want for a more accessible life partnered with the unwavering determination of his ILS Mentor; Mario, Eddie's life took a transformative turn. Mario dedicated countless hours to researching, advocating, and navigating the complex process of securing the right durable medical equipment for Eddie. After months of persistence, Eddie was finally approved for a motorized scooter—one that would give him the freedom and mobility he had always dreamed of. Thanks to Mario's tenacity Eddie now moves through life with newfound independence, navigating his world with ease. This powerful journey shows that with the right support and a little persistence, true independence and person-driven services are within reach for all of BuildAbility's participants.



Top: Mentor Mario  
Bottom: Eddie attending an LA Dodgers game with ILS

# people operations

## Empowering people to deliver exceptional service

At BuildAbility, People Ops goes beyond traditional HR tasks, we emphasize creating a positive employee experience, fostering development, and aligning our people strategies with the organization's mission to empower our most valuable asset—our people!



Top reasons for staying?

Company Culture....

flexibility, meaningful work, and coworkers.



Top: Lisa, the Sr. People Operations Coordinator  
Bottom: Shelby, the Sr. Talent & Training Coordinator



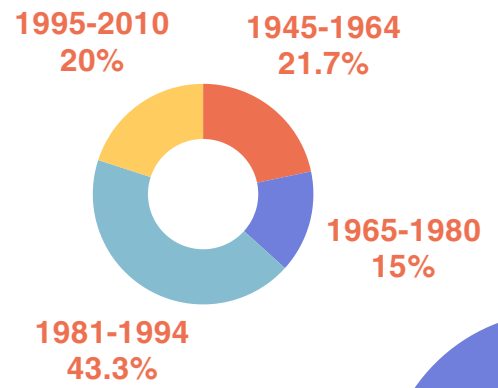
## Engagement Survey Strength Highlights

- 86% of staff are satisfied or very satisfied in their roles; over 80% would recommend BuildAbility as a great place to work.
- 90% take pride in working at BuildAbility and feel enthusiastic about their roles.
- 95% report strong relationships with coworkers, reflecting a positive team culture.
- 93% feel well-supported and maintain good relationships with supervisors.
- 90% feel that BuildAbility's flexibility supports a healthy work-life balance.

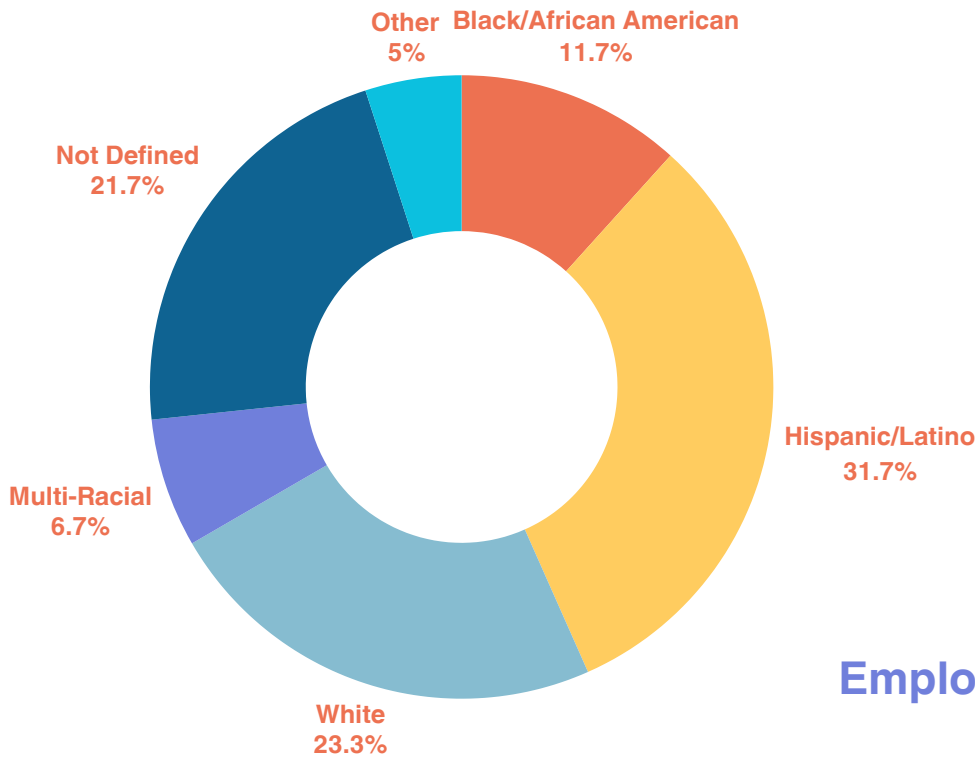


# people operations

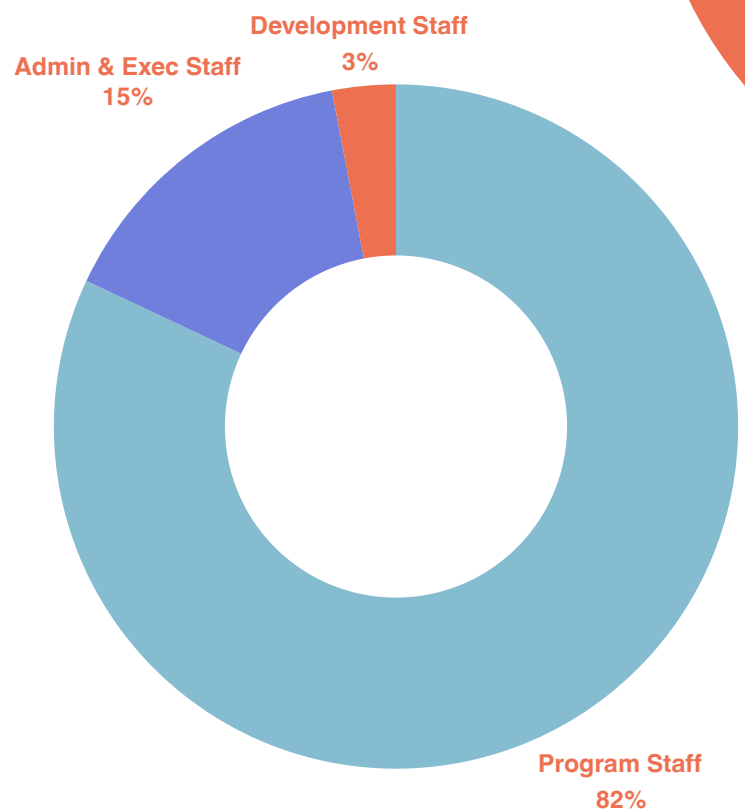
## Employee Generational Data



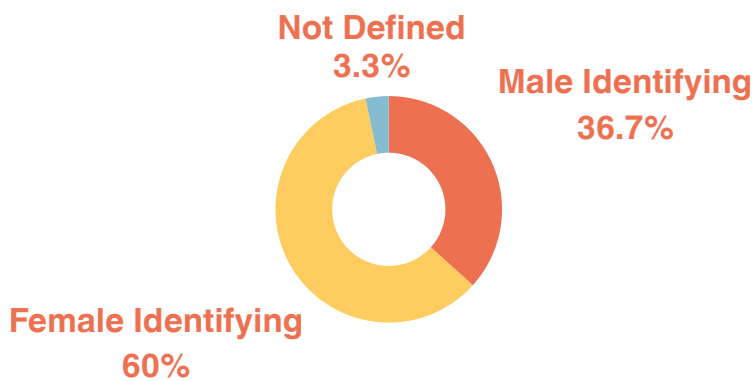
## Employee Race/Ethnicity Demographics



## Employee Role Distribution



## Employee Gender Demographics



# team highlights



Snapshots of some of our star employees!

## Monthly Newsletter Features



April

”

It's been amazing to see everything we've accomplished as an agency—from improvements to the atmosphere. It really feels like being in the right place at the right time.

Anna P.  
HCBS Compliance & QA



May

”

One of my proudest moments was helping a participant keep his job at Vons, and now he's celebrated 5 years there!

Ishkhan K.  
SEP DSP II



June

”

The community garden project is close to my heart—we're going to donate our harvest to local food pantries.

Kiku P.  
Quest Manager

## Veteran Award



”

Working with the inspiring individuals we have in our programs and the dedicated staff that work passionately with our members each day, motivate me to be better each day.

Jamie Q.  
ILS Manager

## Rookie Award



”

Life isn't always easy, but we can make it beautiful and meaningful if we allow ourselves to.

Riri H.  
Options DSP II

## Visionary Spotlight

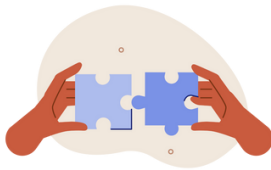


Annual Report Creative Acknowledgement

Bree RC.  
Development Coordinator



# community partner highlights



## Community Connectors: Together we thrive

Community businesses and locations become partners when they enhance the participant experience in profound ways. Such as the Winnetka Bowl, which has become a favorite, as their staff has consistently gone above and beyond to ensure experiences are inviting and enjoyable.

We are also deeply indebted to Sarah Velas, founder of The Velaslavasay, who waived all ticket fees, then proceeded to personally escort everyone on a tour, taking the time to speak with and engage our group.

A special recognition to Carver Wright, managing Partner of Chick-Fil-A Woodland Hills, CA. Not only has Carver been an All-Star Employer, but overall, his support of our participants, the Supportive Employment department, and BuildAbility as a whole has truly been remarkable.

As we are a friend to our local libraries, we want to give special recognition to the Burbank and North Hollywood Regional Libraries. They have consistently provided a quiet supportive space, that has been invaluable for our participants to build social skills and confidence

We provide outreach to the community through fairs, tabling, and other locally generated initiatives. These events let us engage the greater community, share our mission, and create lasting relationships that support the growth and inclusion of our participants. We look forward to fostering those connections and expanding community outreach efforts.



# financial statements

## FY2024 Unaudited Financial Statements:

(\$ in thousands)



### Revenue & Support

Jul '23 - Jun '24

#### Program Revenue

Supported Employment	994
Behavior Management Program	637
Independent Living	412
Community Engagement Program	440
Other Program Revenue	14
Program Grants	190

#### Fund Development

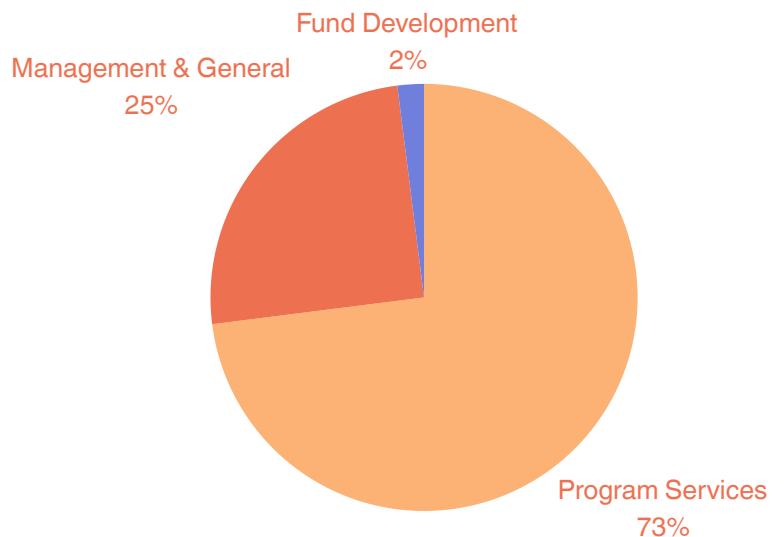
Contribution	18
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#### Other Revenue

Investment Income	27
Loan Grants	100
Gain on Sale of Asset	(1)
Other	16

**Total Revenue/Support** 2,848

### Where your money goes



### Expenses

Jul '23 - Jun '24

Program Services 2907

Management & General 975

Fund Development 73

Total Expenses 3,955 100%

Change in NET Assets (1,107)



# BuildAbility all stars



## BuildAbility AllStar Businesses

These are exemplary community businesses whose managers and supervisors demonstrate outstanding leadership; empowering our participants to build social capital, gain independence, enhance their self-worth, and achieve financial stability through employment opportunities.



John Kossian, the Vice President Relationship manager at Citizens Bank delivers a donation check to our accounting manager Stephanie



## Community Commitment

This page honors the support that drives BuildAbility's mission, including donations from staff, recycling partner Spectrolab, unsolicited funding from Citizens Business Bank for a Community Commitment Award, and companies providing job opportunities to our participants—all fostering community and teamwork.



## Staff AllStar Donors

These dedicated staff members generously donated supplies; including art materials, clothing for the Retail Room, grocery items, sensory tools, and furniture for the sensory room.

From Left to Right:  
Salena F.  
Jamie Q.  
Lisa F.  
Anna P.  
Jonathan K.  
Dan'alle F.  
Kiku P.  
Riri H.  
Rachel C.  
Nicholle C.



Monthly bottle/can recycling donation

# BuildAbility Grants & Funding

securing our future

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, 3rd district  
Sensory Rooms and Computer Lab

## SENSORY ROOM

MADE POSSIBLE BY FUNDING FROM:

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, 3rd District

BuildAbility Options Behavioral Management Day Program

Rachael Costello  
Program Manager

Lucie Pittman  
Chief Executive



## COMPUTER LAB

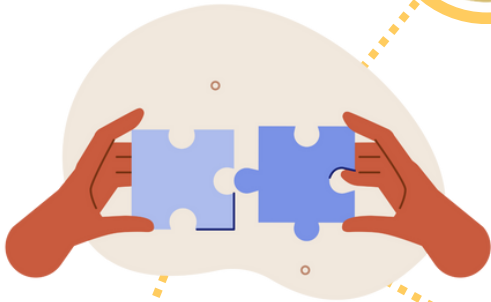
MADE POSSIBLE BY FUNDING FROM:

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, 3rd District

BuildAbility Options Behavioral Management Day Program

Rachael Costello  
Program Manager

Lucie Pittman  
Chief Executive



State Council on Developmental Disabilities



North Los Angeles Regional Center Social Recreation services grant

Cycle 47 Grant State Council for Developmental Disabilities



GAWRONSKI  
Program Manager

the majority of the people working in

# BuildAbility has plans

## Gather and Grow: Building Tomorrow Today

For this next year; our focus is on “Building Tomorrow, Today,” emphasizing staff training and development, collaboration, excellence, integrity, and consistency. Our goal is to grow as leaders in the industry providing only high-level service for our participants, families, businesses, and the community.

Each program and department have specific quality and foundation building goals, such as providing innovative, person-driven services tailored to future development and growth for all.

We aim to boost our presence and visibility through vendor fairs, school outreach, community assistance projects and local events. We're also expanding into the Antelope Valley to meet service demands and revamping job development to boost placements, aiming to be the “premiere provider” in Los Angeles. Quest is expanding by opening a new hub in South Pasadena, offering group services for Lanterman Regional Center participants in Burbank, Glendale, and West San Gabriel Valley. Stay tuned to see what we are Building!

Additionally, and most excitedly! As part of our “Gather and Grow” initiative, we’re building a share garden to foster unity in our community. We are partnering with local florists, nurseries and horticultural specialists for gardening curriculums, educational opportunities on sustainable food systems. Our participants will also be donating a portion of the harvest to local food pantries.



# change a life support today



## your generosity can change lives

Through the incredible support of individual donors, volunteers, and community leaders, BuildAbility has been able to touch the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families each year. Your generosity enables us to continue providing critical services and programs that empower individuals to achieve independence and inclusion within our communities.

## how you can help:

### Donate Online:

Make a tax-deductible donation today at [BuildAbility/Donate](#) to directly support our mission or scan our QR code here.

### Donate Stocks or Securities:

Gifts of appreciated stock and securities are a meaningful way to contribute. For more information, contact our development team.

### Mail Your Gift:

Prefer to donate by check? Please make checks payable to BuildAbility and mail them to:  
BuildAbility  
12432 Foothill Boulevard  
Sylmar, CA 91342

### For list of In-kind Donation Needs or Additional Questions:

Contact Director of Development  
Rachel Waddy  
Cell: 818-579-5895  
Email: [rwaddy@buildabilityla.org](mailto:rwaddy@buildabilityla.org)

### Planned Giving:

Leave a lasting legacy by including BuildAbility in your estate plans and receive recognition for your support.

### Tribute or Memorial Gifts:

Honor a loved one or commemorate a special occasion with a gift to BuildAbility. We will notify the honoree or their family with a special note.



small scan  
BIG impact

Ricky and Norberta  
from our Options  
program





# thank you!



**BUILD  
ABILITY™**



**INCLUSION.  
OPPORTUNITY.  
EMPOWERMENT.**



## Contact Us:

[www.BuildAbilityLA.org](http://www.BuildAbilityLA.org)  
(818) 898-0020  
[info@buildabilityla.org](mailto:info@buildabilityla.org)

## BuildAbility locations

### Headquarters

12432 Foothill Boulevard  
Sylmar, CA 91342

### Options Program

1235 Truman St. Unit 100  
San Fernando CA, 91340



**BA**