SYNERGIES **WORK**

Media & Press Kit

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SYNERGIES **WORK**

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Alvaro Silberstein, EDDIE Award 2024 recipient.

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Mission & Pillars of Change

At Synergies Work, **we believe in building one world where people with disabilities belong.** Our mission is to unleash the power of entrepreneurship by providing opportunities, breaking barriers, and leveling the playing field.

We drive change through three key pillars:

1. Nurturing Grassroots Innovation

Providing small businessowners with resources, mentorship, and training through Igniting Ideas and Blaze Business Accelerator programs.

2. Building Collective Action

Strengthening anecosystem where entrepreneurs with disabilities can access networks, expertise, and financial inclusion.

3. Creating Access to Capital

Offeringfinancialsupport through **Synergies Seed Fund**, the first rising CDFI dedicated to entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Kadence Rodrigue completed the Blaze Business Accelerator in 2024.

Logos

SYNERGIES
WORK

SYNERGIES
WORK

SYNERGIES **WORK**

SYNERGIES **WORK**

Colors & Fonts

#004263

#FFE181

#48C6BE

#FF6F5A

#282828

Poppins - Regular

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R
S T U V W X Y Z a b c d e f g h i j k
l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Bubblebody Neu - Bold

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q
R S T U V W X Y Z a b c d e f g h
i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Resources

EDDIE Awards

Synergies SEED Fund

News

Our Story

Synergies Work Reveals Finalists for 3rd Annual EDDIE Awards Celebrating Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

Honored Guests Include Steven Braskamp of Capital One, Maria Town of American Association of People with Disabilities, and former U.S. Ambassador Andrew J. Young

ATLANTA, Aug. 19, 2025 /PRNewswire/ – Synergies Work, an Atlanta nonprofit supporting entrepreneurs with disabilities, today announced the 15 finalists across five categories for its 3rd annual EDDIE Awards taking place Thursday, September 25, from 5 to 9 p.m. at Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre in Atlanta. To learn about the finalists and their respective categories, go here.

One winner will be named in each category. Additionally, an Entrepreneur of the Year selected from the finalists will receive a $10,000 grand prize to further their business aspirations.

Honored guests and speakers at this year's black-tie event include Steven Braskamp, Executive Vice President of Capital One; Maria Town, President and CEO of American Association of People with Disabilities; and Andrew J. Young, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and two-term Mayor of Atlanta. During the event, Young will receive Synergies Work's Lifetime Achievement Award for his decades-long work as a civil rights activist and leader.

Entertainment includes musical performers and brothers Dom & Sean Kelly of the acclaimed band A Fragile Tomorrow (Dom is also President and CEO of New Disabled South), and Deshaymond Solomon, known as the "Blind Savage," a singer, songwriter, and entrepreneur redefining what it means to be blind.

"Now in its third year, the EDDIE Awards showcase the creativity, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit of the disability community—and this year's finalists have raised the bar even higher," said Aarti Sahgal, Founder & CEO of Synergies Work. "We're inspired by the talent and innovation we've seen from across the nation. These entrepreneurs aren't just growing; they're redefining the future of business—and reinforcing our commitment to invest in ability and equity."

Judges for this year's EDDIE Awards include Al McRae, President of Bank of America Atlanta; Shakir Moin, President of Marketing, Coca-Cola North America; Stephen Ewell, Executive Director of Consumer Technology Association Foundation; Jason Bearden, Market President and CEO of CareSource Georgia; Tasha Allen, Vice President, People & Corporate Citizenship, Georgia Chamber of Commerce; Lachi, CEO of RAMPD (Recording Artists & Music Professionals with Disabilities); Melissa Pomeroy, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Cooperative Credit Union Association; and Bryan Clagett, Managing Partner of Jamestown Associates Virginia.

Become an EDDIE Awards Sponsor

The EDDIE Awards harness the support of leaders committed to cultivating disability-led entrepreneurship and economic inclusion. This year's sponsors include: CareSource, ZenBusiness, Georgia Advocacy Office, The Coca-Cola Foundation, Southern Company, Great Lakes Credit Union, Cooperative Credit Union Association, Hypepotamus, Lighthouse Credit Union, Wise, and Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. Information on remaining sponsorships can be found here.

"The EDDIEs are a powerful celebration of what's possible when talent meets opportunity," said Ruby Moore, Co-Chair of this year's event and CEO of the Georgia Advocacy Office. "The creativity and drive we're seeing from ~~our entrepreneurs~~ is extraordinary, and it's a joy to honor their accomplishments while helping to build a more inclusive and vibrant business ecosystem."

Tickets for the September 25 event are still available but are selling quickly. Attendees will enjoy food and entertainment prior to the awards ceremony. Ticket information can be found here.

All 15 finalists will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the EDDIE Awards to participate in the evening's celebration. Remaining proceeds from the event will be reinvested in Synergies Work's free programs that support entrepreneurs with disabilities.

To date, Synergies Work has served over 300 founders nationwide and helped launch numerous startups.

Big News: Synergies Seed Fund Launches First Loans

Synergies Work announced today that the Synergies Seed Fund (SSF)—a pioneering Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) expanding access to capital for underrepresented entrepreneurs, including people with disabilities—has issued its first loans. SSF is a nonprofit lender that looks beyond credit history, offering competitive loans alongside practical guidance and real-world connections. The goal: to help small business owners build independent, resilient ventures that strengthen local economies and create an economy driven by talent, not credit scores. More information can be found here.

About Synergies Work

Synergies Work is the largest startup hub in the United States for entrepreneurs with disabilities. To date, it has supported more than 300 disability-led founders through inclusive accelerators, personalized coaching, and access to capital via the Synergies Seed Fund. Its mission —to build one world where people with disabilities belong—is realized through a fully integrated ecosystem that supports founders across the full spectrum of disabilities, from idea to scale.

Synergies Work also leads initiatives like the Synergies SEED Fund—a pioneering Community Development Financial Institution expanding access to capital for underrepresented entrepreneurs, including people with disabilities—and the national EDDIE Awards, which provide visibility, capital, and recognition to founders with disabilities across the country. As the only national nonprofit hub of its kind, Synergies Work is transforming entrepreneurship by proving that when ability is invested in, opportunity, innovation, and economic mobility follow. For more information on Synergies Work, visit www.synergieswork.org or contact the organization at synergies@synergieswork.org.

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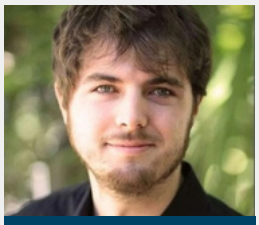
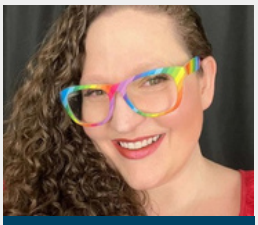
EDDIE Awards
Finalists 2025

The EDDIE Awardscelebrate trailblazers—entrepreneurswhoare not only building businesses but alsotransforming narrativesand making a lastingimpact. They remind us that real change happenswhen most people won't— but a few do. These founders turn obstacles into opportunities,breaking down stereotypes and redefining what success looks like.



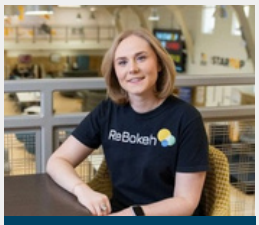
The Techpreneur Award: Finalist

BRANDON BIGGS
XR NAVIGATION



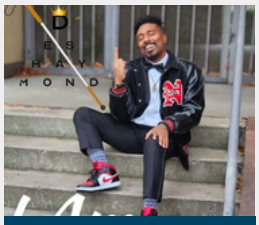
The Techpreneur Award: Finalist

HEATHER LAWVER
CEEMO



The Techpreneur Award: Finalist

REBECCA ROSENBERG
REBOKEH VISION TECHNOLOGIES

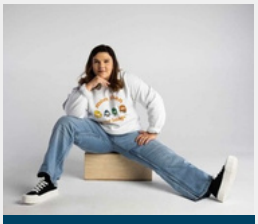


The Creativity Award: Finalist

DESHAYMOND SOLOMON
DESHAYMOND MEDIA LLC

The Creativity Award: Finalist

ALEXANDRA ADLAWAN
AMAZING ARTISTSLLC

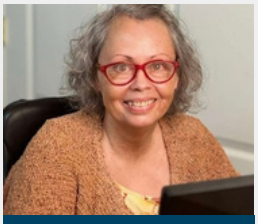


The Creativity Award: Finalist

ERICA COLE
NO LIMBITS

The Social Impact Award: Finalist

FRANCES A IM ER
OPEN DOOR BILLING, LLC

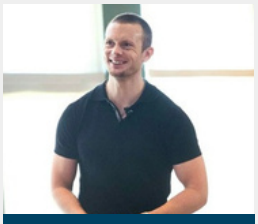


The Social Impact Award: Finalist

LORRAINE WOODWARD
BECOMING RENTABLE

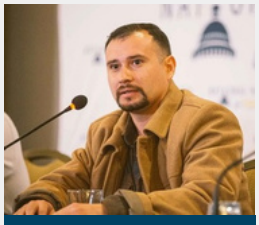
The Community Champion Award: Finalist

ADDISON LOERZEL
ADDIE'S SUNSHINE AND TREATS AND SPREAD YOUR SUNSHINE



The Social Impact Award: Finalist

RUSSELL LEHMANN
RUSSELL LEHMANN



The Community Champion Award: Finalist

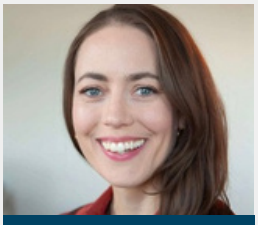
FERNANDO OLIVAREZ
SPEAK 4 HOPE

The Community Champion Award: Finalist

RODNEY T AYLOR
COMMUNITYDEEPLY ROOTED INC DBA PAC THE BARBER

The Newcomer Award: Finalist

GERENE KEESLER
ADMISSIONS UNTANGLED



The Newcomer Award: Finalist

KENDRA KOCH
DIVERGENTLY

The Newcomer Award: Finalist

MARISSA DITKOWSKY
NATIONAL DISABLED LEGAL PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

Meet our Team

Aarti Sahgal

Founder & CEO

"My work is focused on building inclusive communities by constantly challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations that excludes people with disabilities from living their full potential."

David Eckoff

Head of Accelerator & Operations

"I'm passionate about training entrepreneurs, bringing business education to life with real world examples from my career, and helping people to achieve breakthroughs in their businesses. At Synergies Work, I feel like I'm doing good in the world."

Paola Blanco

Program Manager

"I am passionate about showcasing the talent and determination of entrepreneurs in our community and working to build connections to the business community as a whole. As a part of Synergies Work, I can strive for more equity in the world and show up authentically as a disab led professional."

Jennifer Parr

Multimedia Strategist

"As someone with a disability, I'm driven by the joy of seeing hope ignite in new business owners' eyes as they gain the confidence to turn their ideas into reality and forge their own path. Helping them realize their potential is what fuels my work at Synergies Work."

Meet our Board

SHAKIR MOIN
Chairman President, Marketing, Coca-Cola North America

DR. SERENA LOWE
Vice Chairperson
AnereS Stategies

ARJUN SAHGAL
Secretary
Ascent Platform

ATHAR KHAN
Treasurer
Delta Air Lines

TASHA ALLEN
Georgia Chamber of Commerce

AARTI SAHGAL
Founder of
Synergies Work

Meet our Advisors

RAYMOND REYNOLDS
Fundraising Advisor

DR. JAGDISH SHETH
Emory University

ASHISH THAKUR
Atlanta CEO Council

Our Impact in 2024

Business Accelerator Programs

15
founders participated in 2 accelerator programs in 2024.

80
served via accelerator programs, all time.

Community Hub

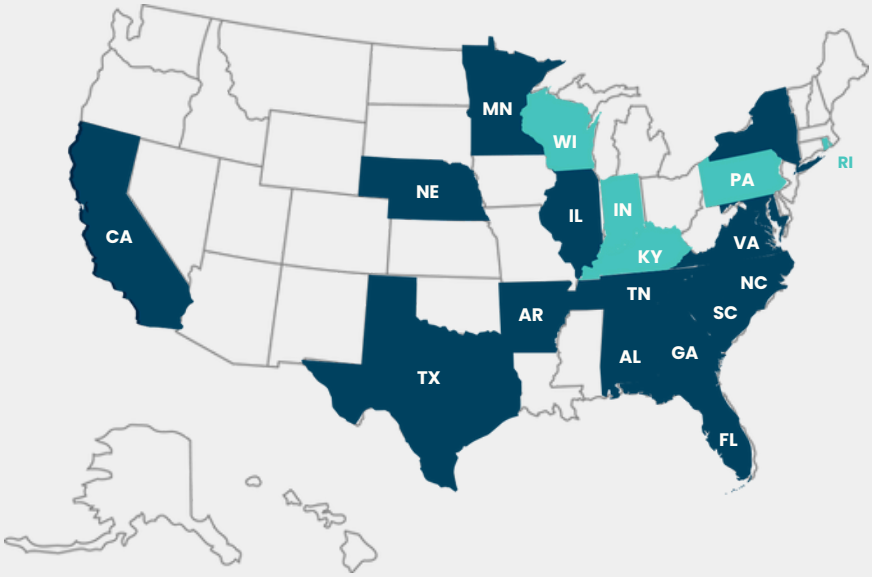
Peerto peerlearning andacentralized digital platform for entrepreneursto connect, share ideas, access resources, and grow their business.

109
new members registered in 2024.

338

206%

Expanding Our Reach: A Nationwide Movement

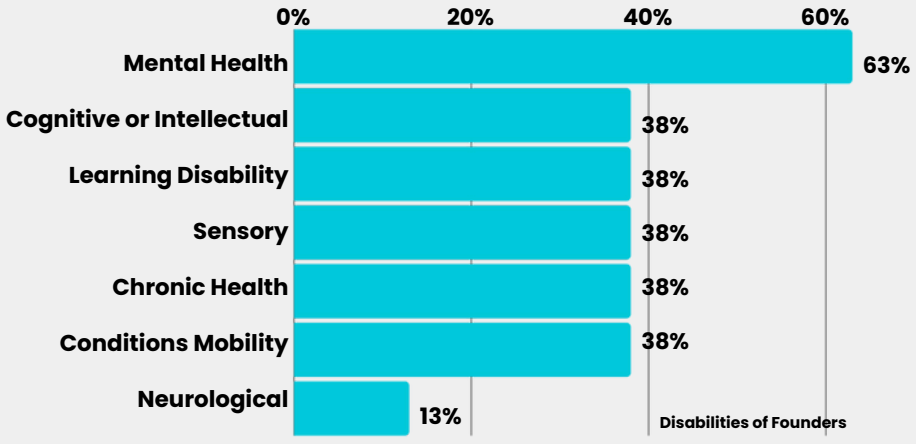


21 States

New in 2024: RI, WI, KY, IN, PA

62%

23%
people of color



Impact in Numbers: Blaze Business Accelerator

206%
increase in key entrepreneurial skills

The big picture

Participantsratedthemselves206%higher in 12 key skills for entrepreneurs,asaresultofparticipating in the Blaze Business AcceleratorFall2024cohort.

Driving the results

significant gainsinkeyentrepreneurial skills.

425% Founders said they exited the program significantly better equipped to know how to think about customer acquisition and retention.

389% Participants said they made the most gains in understanding how to test their theories about their ideal customers.

High score: participants completed the program top-rating their ability to communicate about their business with people (9.8 on a scale of 0-10).

Why It Matters

Founders exited the program significantly better equipped to mitigate the biggest risks of startup failure, and with skills for long term success.

"When you change how you think, you change what you do. When you change what you do, you change results."
— David Eckoff

SYNERGIES **WORK**

“Most people won’t.
Which means those that do change everything.”

Contact Us

Visit www.synergieswork.org

Follow us @SynergiesWork

- **Empower a founder.**
  Sponsor a program, mentor an entrepreneur.
- **Invest in the movement.** Support Synergies Work & Synergies Seed Fund.