

Request For Proposals

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program

Tax Years: 2019, 2020, and 2021

Since 2005, United Way of Rhode Island has been a proud partner in the statewide Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Campaign. The VITA program provides individuals and families who earn a low to medium income with no-cost tax preparation. United Way's funding for VITA sites is typically provided as part of a comprehensive strategy to meet the immediate needs of Rhode Islanders. United Way invests in a continuum of services designed to create income stability for individuals and families, with a focus on financial stability, affordable housing, and health.

Funding Availability:

- The total amount to be awarded for VITA program sites is approximately \$250,000 a year for three years, contingent upon annual fund availability.
- Funding will begin in December of 2019 and be offered on a three-year cycle for tax seasons: 2019, 2020, and 2021.
- Grants will be annually renewable based on successful site performance and United Way fund availability.
- For the first year, VITA site funding will be for up to five months (December – May) and may change to eight months (October-May) in consequent years.

Who's Eligible to Apply?

Organizations that:

- Demonstrate a demographic need and have the willingness and ability to provide VITA services according to the guidelines herein.
- Can provide program and participant level outcome data using United Way's on-line reporting system (program results, financial report, client characteristics, and geographic beneficiary information)

- Have a letter of determination of 501(c) 3 status from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), or have a fiscal agent with 501(c) 3 status.
- Meet United Way's Community Accountability Standards.
- Can provide a current Form 990 and the Form 990 from the prior year.
- Can provide a copy of their **most recent** audit OR review and management letter.

*We expect the most recent audit/review to have been completed nine months after the end of the applicant's fiscal year: If on a calendar year the most recent audit/review should be for the year ending December 31, 2018. If on a fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, the most recent audit/review should be for the year ending June 30, 2019.

Grant Criteria:

VITA sites applying for United Way funding **must:**

- Provide volunteer tax preparation services free of charge.
- Have a Site Coordinator
- Have a greeter, facilitator or intake person.
- Have a minimum of 3 volunteers per site, per day of operation.
- Be open at least 15 hours per week, for a minimum of 9 weeks.
- Sites should be open at least one evening or weekend to accommodate working families (preferred but not required).
- Have a complete system in place as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the second week in January.
- Have bilingual materials and interpreting services available where appropriate.
- Utilize and be certified in the **TaxSlayer** return preparation software provided by the IRS.
- Actively recruit tax preparation and other volunteers.
- Agree to be part of, and participate in, all United Way alliance-building efforts to discuss best practices and lessons learned. Maintain regular communications with other funded sites. Examples of this participation include, but are not limited to off-site tax preparation events, convenings, focus groups, surveys, etc.
- Assist with EITC campaign awareness by participating in EITC Awareness Day, by coordinating materials distribution, outreach efforts, speakers, etc.
- Plan to work towards annually increasing the number of VITA returns.
- Earnestly attempt to reach out to families who earn a low to moderate income in order to help achieve United Way's goal of successfully completing 15,000 tax returns by 2020.
- Meet the United Way final reporting and file-sharing deadline.
- Not knowingly prepare false returns.
- File all eligible returns electronically using the IRS provided tax preparation software.
- Use the approved forms, provided by the IRS. Sites must use intake forms distributed by the National Community Tax Coalition, IRS, or similar forms used for tracking participation.

- Collect anonymous demographic information for all clients.
- Submit signed forms to the IRS.
- Verify social security numbers to ensure that errors are kept to a minimum.
- Work closely with the local Stakeholder Partnerships Education & Communication (SPEC)/ IRS Territory office and provide timely submission of all required forms to the local SPEC/IRS office in keeping with IRS deadlines, such as:
 - Form 13715: SPEC Site information Sheet (site hours of operation).
 - Form 13206: Volunteer Assistance Summary Report. Lists all of the volunteers working at the VITA site, including their certification dates and level of training.

VITA sites **must** abide by the Quality Site Requirements, including:

- **Certification:**
All volunteers must complete the Volunteer Standards of Conduct training and sign Form 13615. Tax law certification is required for all volunteers who answer tax law questions, instruct tax law, prepare or correct tax returns and/or conduct quality reviews of tax returns.
- **Intake and Interview Process:**
All sites must use an intake and interview process, Form 13614-C provided by the IRS.
- **Quality Review:**
All sites must use a quality review process, which includes reviewing 100% of the returns.
- **Availability of Reference Materials:**
All sites must have reference materials available for use, including Pub 4012, Volunteer Resource Guide, Pub 17, Your Federal Income Tax for Individuals, Pub 3189, and Volunteer e-file Administrator Guide.
- **Volunteer Agreement:**
All individuals involved in the program must agree to follow the conditions outlined on Form 13615. In addition, agencies will be responsible for tracking the number of volunteers and the number of volunteer service hours as part of this VITA initiative.
- **Timely Filing:**
All sites must have processes in place to ensure every return is timely filed.
- **Civil Rights:**
All sites must display Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.
- **Site Identification:**
All returns prepared must contain the correct and unique Site Identification Number (SIDN) provided by SPEC/IRS.
- **Electronic Filing Controls:**
All returns prepared electronically must contain the correct Electronic Filing Identification Number (EFIN) provided by SPEC/IRS and follow all security, privacy, and confidentiality guidelines as outlined in Pub 4299. Privacy and confidentiality: a public trust, to ensure taxpayer information is provided reasonable protection and

to reduce the threat of identity theft. This includes safeguarding equipment used to support the program.

Grant Funding Requests:

- Single-site applicants may request up to \$10,000 per year of funding.
- Coalitions may request up to \$10,000 per site, per year, with no more than 10% of total funding being used for overhead costs.

Timeline:

Applicants will be notified of United Way’s funding decisions by early to mid-November 2019, and awards will be distributed monthly for year one, December 2019 through May 2020.

- September 13, 2019 United Way Requests for Proposal released to public.
- October 10, 2019 Deadline to submit online proposals.
- Mid-November Applicants are notified of proposal funding decisions.
- Late November Selected applicants will participate in a VITA meeting.
- November 2019 Contracts are developed and sent to funded organizations.
- December 2019 Disbursement of monthly payments will commence.
- January – April 2020 VITA season, elected applicants will participate in all of United Way’s various VITA alliance-building efforts.
- May 2020 Last payment for year one will be disbursed.

How to Apply:

- Applications for United Way funding are requested through the online agency portal.
- All agencies interested in applying must [request access](#).
- All applicants must complete the online application questionnaire.
- Direct questions about requesting access to Gabriela Ledesma: Gabriela.Ledesma@uwri.org or 401-444-0645.

All VITA application materials must be submitted through the online application system by the close of business on Tuesday, October 8, 2019.

For questions or further information, please contact Larry Warner at 444-0660 or Larry.Warner@uwri.org.

Thank you for your interest in United Way of Rhode Island.