

Introduction Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program?

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help to individuals or families who earn less than \$57,000 and need assistance in preparing their federal income tax returns. Certified volunteers prepare and electronically file basic tax returns free of charge for qualified individuals in our community.

2. Why should I volunteer with VITA?

VITA helps working families access federal benefits in a complex tax system while helping clients to avoid predatory practices often surrounding the tax experience. Tax filers often seek help from commercial tax preparers who may charge high fees that reduce the value of any refund. The alternative for those families is the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. Our volunteers inform taxpayers about special tax credits for which they may be eligible such as Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) are federal tax benefits for low- to-moderate income workers who struggle financially. EITC encourages work while reducing poverty and helping families meet basic needs. CTC offsets the cost of raising children, increasing the financial stability of families and improving children's achievement in school and life. This is not possible without our certified volunteers that prepare and electronically file basic tax returns free of charge for qualified individuals in our community.

3. Do most volunteers have an accounting background?

No. Our volunteers come from all types of backgrounds and professions. You don't have to be an accountant to be a volunteer.

4. What type of volunteer opportunities are available?

Choose your VITA volunteer job: Screeners help clients fill out paperwork; Tax Preparers electronically file tax returns; Interpreters help English-speaking volunteers communicate with Spanish-speaking clients; Quality Reviewers check the accuracy of each tax return before filing; and Site Coordinators oversee VITA sites. Free training is provided and does not require previous experience in tax preparation or tax law. Please see VITA Volunteer Roles in the Reference Section for more details.

5. How can I start the certification process?

Please fill out an application form at <https://www.unitedwayrgv.org/vita-volunteer-application>. Attend an orientation or begin following the VITA Certification Plan.

6. Do I have to submit an application if I am a returning volunteer?

Returning volunteers do not need to submit a new application unless your contact information has changed.

7. Is VITA training Free?

The only cost associated with the training is the donation of your volunteer service hours at a VITA site. We ask volunteers to commit to at least 3 hours per week for 6 weeks of the tax season in order to receive the free tax training. You may volunteer more than the minimum required hours.

8. What is the time commitment of a VITA volunteer?

We ask volunteers to commit to at least 3 hours per week for 6 weeks of the tax season in order to receive the free tax training. You may volunteer more hours. Without volunteers, VITA would be unable to operate so any additional time you can contribute is much appreciated.

9. When is the last day to apply or certify?

Review our VITA Coalition Timeline to learn more about our certification process.

10. What if I don't know how to do something?

Our instructors and staff will guide you during the certification process. At the VITA Site, a Site Coordinator will be available for questions and will review tax returns. When in doubt, ask! We're here to help!

11. How do I attend the virtual VITA Orientation on Zoom?

First, RSVP via e-mail to Taxproject@unitedwayrgv.org and read How to Join a Zoom Meeting under references. You will receive a confirmation e-mail that will include an invitation link. On November, 17th join the Zoom meeting at any time, from 5:30 to 7:00 pm, following the mentioned instructions. Downloading Zoom is not required.

For more information contact taxproject@unitedwayrgv.org.