

Colorado Asset Growth Project

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

VITA is an IRS assistance program, however, it is community based and community driven. The VITA program began with the Tax Reform Act of 1969. 104,000 taxpayers were assisted by 7,500 volunteers in its first year of operation (1970). VITA is one example of aid for the low income which can positively impact the community.

VITA volunteers prepare tax returns (Federal and State) for low income, English as a Second Language, elderly and persons with disabilities. The income limitation varies slightly from state to state; Colorado uses a graduated scale based on income and number of dependents.

1 million citizens in Colorado qualify for VITA. 66% pay to have their returns completed, 5% receive assistance from VITA, leaving 29% of taxpayers who are eligible for free income tax assistance.

The IRS will help a community set up and train volunteers to prepare tax returns for low-income individuals and families. The community, however, is ultimately responsible for the coordination and implementation of the VITA sites and volunteers. However, how large or small the Volunteer tax site effort (goal for increase of filers, number of days for the volunteer tax site, the number of volunteers) will be is the community organizers' decision.

Contact CRAG for proven ways of developing a VITA site in your community.

If you are interested in a VITA volunteer opportunity, please contact (303) 446-1363 or e-mail Christine.R.Bertin@irs.gov to request a VITA volunteer application.

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Table 1.. Southern Co Earned Income Tax Credit

Southern Colorado EITC Statistics					
<i>County</i>	<i>Pop.</i>	<i># of VITA Sites</i>	<i>Est. % Hshlds. < 35K</i>	<i>Est. Lost EITC \$ to Families</i>	<i>Estimated \$ Loss to Community.</i>
Alamosa	14,966	1	21	771,398	257,133
Archuleta	9,898	0	18	436,188	145,396
Baca	4,517	1	26	287,288	95,763
Bent	5,998	0	20	293,400	97,800
Conejos	8,400	0	24	484,355	161,452
Costilla	3,663	0	31	276,041	92,014
Crowley	5,518	0	16	220,539	73,513
Dolores	1,844	0	23	103,913	34,638
Huerfano	7,862	0	25	472,374	157,458
La Plata	43,941	1	17	1,843,775	614,592
Las Animas	15,207	1	25	922,010	307,337
Montezuma	23,830	1	21	1,220,300	406,767
Otero	20,311	0	22	1,115,409	371,803
Prowers	14,483	0	21	758,684	252,895
Pueblo	141,472	5	20	7,074,608	2,358,203
Saguache	5,917	0	26	375,797	125,266
Totals/Avg.	327,827	10	22%	\$16,656,079	\$5,552,030

Sources:

County Populations from US Census 2000; Number of VITA Sites, Estimated Households with Income Below \$34,999, Estimated Lost EITC Dollars to Families, Estimated Lost Revenues to Community: provided by the Denver IRS SPEC Office