United Way of Rhode Island
Request For Proposals (RFP) for
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program
(Tax Year: 2017)

Since 2005, United Way of Rhode Island (UWRI) has been a proud partner in the statewide Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Campaign. UWRI'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, including a focus on financial stability, affordable housing, and health. This RFP is for a one-year UWRI Opportunity Grant. We are seeking VITA site proposals in order to expand our VITA efforts throughout the state of Rhode Island. This grant is specifically for agencies interested in in starting and maintaining a VITA site for one income tax season commencing in January 2018. *Current **individual** UWRI VITA site grantees are **not** eligible to apply. Coalitions may apply on behalf of proposed new Coalition member sites.*

The VITA program provides low and middle-income individuals and families with free tax preparation services. During the 2016 tax year:

- Over **13,000** tax returns were filed through the VITA Program
- Over **$23,000,000** was refunded to RI VITA clients including **$7.4 million** in Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC).
- Participants saved over **$4 million** in tax preparation fees

Funding Availability

The total amount to be awarded for VITA program sites is $20,000 for one year. Funding will begin in October of 2017, and will be offered for one tax season. Grants will not be renewable, however, based on successful site performance and United Way fund availability; it will be possible to apply for funding again for the 2018 tax season. The VITA site-funding year will be for up to eight months (October – May).

Who Is Eligible to Apply?

Organizations that:

- can demonstrate a demographic need, willingness, and ability to provide VITA services according to the guidelines herein
- can provide program and participant level outcome data using the UWRI 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 of Rhode Island'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 that the most recent audit/review will 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, 2015. If on a fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, the most recent audit/review should be for the year ending June 30, 2015

GRANT CRITERIA

VITA Site Program Requirements

VITA sites applying for UWRI 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 three 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 by January, and 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** income tax return preparation software provided by the IRS.
- **Actively recruit tax preparation and other volunteers.**
- Agree to be part of and fully participate in ***all*** UWRI alliance-building efforts to discuss best practices and lessons learned, and 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: coordinate materials distribution, outreach, and speakers, participate in and attend EITC Awareness Day, etc.
- Attend mandatory orientation sessions at UWRI, the first of which will be held in October 2017.
- Participate in an evaluation of the program by collecting relevant data as directed by UWRI, and by providing it in a timely manner as requested.

- Open your site for visits from key stakeholders and policymakers. These visits may be scheduled in advance through UWRI.
- Respond to all UWRI requests in a timely manner.
- Plan to work towards annually increasing the number of VITA returns.
- Earnestly attempt to reach out to low-to-moderate-income families.
- Meet the UWRI final reporting and file-sharing deadline.
- Not knowingly prepare false returns.
- File all eligible returns electronically. *(The IRS provides the tax preparation software to use)*
- Use the approved program forms provided by the IRS; sites must use intake forms distributed by the National Community Tax Coalition, IRS, or similar forms, for tracking of participation.
- Collect anonymous demographic information for all clients.
- Submit signed forms to the IRS
- Verify social security numbers to ensure that error rates 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. Listing of all volunteers working at the VITA sites and includes the dates the volunteers received certification and their level of training

- **Abide by the Quality Site Requirements**
  - **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 100 percent review of all returns.
  - **Availability of Reference Materials** - All sites must have reference materials available for use Pub 4012, Volunteer Resource Guide, Pub 17, Your Federal Income Tax for Individuals, and Pub 3189, 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 used and the number of volunteer service hours put in 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 information about 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
- 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.

Timeline

Applicants will be notified of UWRI's funding decisions by 30 September 2017, and awards to successful applicants will be distributed monthly for eight months, commencing by 31 October 2017.

All Applicants:

• 5 September 2017	RFP Deadline
• 29 September 2017	Final grant recipients are notified
• 6 October 2017	Contracts & Scopes of Work are signed by grantees
• 18 October 2017	VITA meeting & luncheon at UWRI
• 31 October 2017	Disbursement of eight monthly payments will commence
• January – April 2018	VITA season – selected applicants will participate in all of UWRI's various VITA alliance-building efforts
• May 2018	Last payment for the one-year Grant 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, and all applicants will be expected to complete the online application questionnaire. To request access please contact:** Jennifer Chapman at Jennifer.Chapman@UWRI.org or 401-444-0624 to register and for additional online application information.

All VITA application materials must be submitted through the online application system by the close of business on Tuesday, 5 September 2017.

For questions or further information, please contact Anne Quinterno at 444-0661 or anne.quinterno@uwri.org. Thank you for your interest in United Way of Rhode Island.

Please click **HERE** to request access to the VITA Opportunity Grant online application