



Faith-Based Institutions and Organizations

As centers of worship and social activity, faith-based institutions — churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples — play an integral role in many communities. They are generally stable and reliable institutions, maintaining membership and leadership over long periods of time. As a result, religious leaders are often trusted by not only their own members but also by the larger community. Religious institutions also may have social action agendas which may present opportunities for members to become involved in tax credit outreach.



Lafayette Urban Ministry (LUM), a partnership of 47

congregations, coordinates a free tax program as part of its efforts to provide assistance to children and families in Lafayette, Indiana. To promote the site, LUM's member churches include information about the VITA site in their church bulletins. LUM also mails a postcard to its clients and distributes flyers through other community programs including LIHEAP and the Jubilee Christmas Program. Newspaper articles, television news coverage and radio PSAs also help inform the community about this service. In 2008, LUM prepared 1,257 tax returns providing more than \$1.5 million in total tax refunds.

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Strategies

- Enlist faith-based groups to become involved in tax credit outreach activities. They can participate both by alerting congregants who may qualify for the credits and also by conducting outreach in the community. Because religious institutions often call upon members to aid and serve others, partnering with faith-based organizations can not only assist your outreach efforts, but can help them meet their own goals.
- Identify the right person to approach within the organization. For example, a leader of the church Social Ministry or Peace and Justice Committee may be the person who can introduce the subject of becoming involved in outreach and taking on volunteer opportunities. Or, identify a congregant who may be knowledgeable about the needs of low-wage workers or about the tax credits — for example, a social worker or an accountant — who may be willing to champion the idea of becoming involved in outreach.
- Offer to provide posters, flyers and other materials on the tax credits that can be made available to members. Volunteer to give a talk about the credit at the next gathering of members.
- Work with religious institutions that may sponsor emergency food pantries, child care programs, or schools. These settings all present opportunities to share information about the tax credits and free tax filing assistance.

- Motivate the organization to consider hosting a VITA site. The buildings which house churches, synagogues or mosques are a valuable resource because they are likely to be in well-known locations and they may already be accessible to people with disabilities. Congregants may be willing to volunteer as tax preparers or site coordinators. Help arrange for training and to find sources of computer equipment and other site needs.
- Explore faith-based organizations as a source of funding for tax credit outreach campaign activities. Find out the process for obtaining financial support and make the case for contributing to the campaign as a high-impact way to assist working families in the community.
- Engage social services organizations such as Catholic Charities, Jewish Family and Children's Services and Lutheran Social Services. They have direct contact with families who may be eligible for the tax credits and they may have connections to individual congregations that would be eager to join outreach efforts. *To find a local affiliate, visit www.catholiccharitiesusa.org, www.ajfca.org or www.lutheranservices.org.*
- National faith-based organizations such as The Council of Churches and the North American Interfaith Network include partners or members of various faiths that work to address a wide range of issues, including poverty. Outreach Campaigns can partner with members of these networks to share information about the tax credits and free tax filing assistance through newsletters, websites or special events. *To find a local affiliate visit www.nccusa.org/ecmin/councils-links.html or www.nain.org.*

FACT:

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, more Americans volunteer through religious organizations than any other type of organization.



Find It On the Web www.cbpp.org/eic2009

More Outreach Strategies and Examples
Links to national faith-based organizations