



Immigrants and Workers Whose First Language is Not English



Neighborhood Tax Centers' (NTC)

year-round free tax

preparation initiative operates 17 VITA sites in Houston, Texas during tax season — most of which provide assistance in both English and Spanish. NTC helps immigrant tax filers who need to apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) and distributes “Next Step” flyers that instruct participants when and where they can meet with an Acceptance Agent at select NTC VITA sites to complete the application process. To serve Houston’s Chinese, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese populations, NTC also has a tax center at the Chinese Community Center.

Partnerships within Houston’s immigrant community help NTC to determine the best strategies to reach residents, such as through community presentations, schools, press releases, radio, television, or grassroots activities. For example, an NTC employee and the owner of NTC’s printer reached out to Houston’s Eritrean population by distributing flyers and making announcements at local events for their community. In 2010, NTC prepared 22,079 tax returns claiming \$11,732,571 in EIC refunds. NTC also completed 830 ITIN applications.

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Workers who are not proficient in English often earn low incomes and may not understand that they can qualify for the EIC and the CTC. It is especially important for outreach messages to emphasize that immigrants who are legally authorized to work and have Social Security numbers (SSNs) may be eligible for the EIC, and that families may qualify for the CTC even if all family members do not yet have SSNs. Conducting outreach only in English will miss eligible workers who can greatly benefit from this information and assistance.

Strategies

- Use bilingual materials. This kit includes flyers, posters and envelope stuffers in English and Spanish. Flyers in 19 additional languages also are available on our website at www.eitcoutreach.org.
- Dispatch bilingual staff or volunteers to explain the tax credits and answer questions at presentations to community groups or in one-to-one conversations. Immigrant workers may have trouble understanding complex tax rules or they might have been denied other public benefits, such as food stamps (now called SNAP) or Medicaid, in the past and might assume they do not qualify for tax benefits. Immigrants may incorrectly believe that claiming tax benefits could jeopardize their immigration status or their ability to become a citizen.
- Provide information about the EIC and the CTC through Newcomers Clubs, settlement houses, immigrant aid associations and legal services. Organizations such as Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Services and Mutual Assistance Associations (MAA) provide helpful services to refugees. *To find the MAA in your state, call the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center at (202) 667-4690 or visit www.searac.org.*
- Partner with organizations that are likely to have bilingual and bicultural staff, including educational and social programs sponsored by churches, mosques or synagogues. Encourage schools to provide bilingual material about the tax credits, and work with English as a Second Language (ESL) programs or migrant education coordinators. Community events, such as health fairs, educational programs, job fairs, or holiday festivals also present outreach opportunities.

- Enlist businesses in immigrant communities, such as ethnic grocery stores or restaurants, barber shops or nail salons. They are important places to display posters and flyers and to talk directly to customers.
- Promote multi-lingual free tax help in the community. Immigrant workers and workers who have limited English proficiency may be especially vulnerable to ill-trained or dishonest commercial preparers. To provide an alternative, encourage trusted institutions in the community to establish VITA sites and recruit VITA volunteers. When advertising VITA sites, indicate which sites provide services in languages other than English.
- Work with non-English language media. Many non-English-speaking communities have their own radio and TV programs and newspapers. Encourage news coverage, run ads, write articles and develop public service spots on the tax credits. Identify the best times for broadcasting. For example, farm workers may listen to the radio in the pre-dawn hours before beginning work in the fields. *For information on Spanish language media, contact National Council of La Raza at (202) 785-1670. For other non-English media by language or ethnicity, visit New America Media at news.newamericamedia.org/directory. Note: Membership is required to access some features.*

FACT:

According to the 2009 American Community Survey, over 57 million people reported speaking a language in addition to or in place of English at home.

Glad You Asked That!

Q:

Can immigrant workers get the EIC?

A:

Many immigrants who are legally authorized to work can get the EIC. The immigrant worker, his or her spouse, and children listed on the Schedule EIC must each have a valid Social Security number that permits work in the U.S. The “qualifying children” must have lived with the worker in the U.S. for more than six months of the year. Also, the worker’s main home must be in the U.S.

Q:

Can immigrant workers get the CTC?

A:

If they qualify, immigrant workers can get the CTC if they or their qualifying children have either a valid SSN (including a non-work SSN) or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). The child must be a U.S. citizen or resident alien who lives in the U.S.



Find It On the Web www.eitcoutreach.org

Tax credit flyers in 21 languages including English and Spanish
More Outreach Strategies and Examples
More Questions and Answers on Tax Credits and Immigrant Workers
Information on Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs)