**Talking Points**

*How to Talk about IRS-sponsored Free Tax Prep Services*

To encourage taxpayers to take advantage of IRS-sponsored free tax preparation services (such as Free File, VITA, TCE, etc.), it is helpful to have a set of basic messages to guide conversations and address important aspects of the programs. These talking points provide insight into how to describe each of the programs and their benefits and can be used as a basis for outreach, promotional materials, and more. We also encourage you to include stories about how IRS-sponsored free services have helped taxpayers specifically in your community.

**What is Free File?**

Through the Free File program, over 70 percent of all American taxpayers—upwards of 100 million individuals—are eligible to use brand-name tax preparation software to file their Federal (and in many cases, state) taxes completely free of charge. Millions of Americans have already used Free File and trust this service to help them get their taxes right.

* If you earned $66,000 or less last year, you qualify to use at least one of 12 brand-name tax preparation software products free of charge.
* This could save you hundreds of dollars on tax preparation fees, which can then be put towards things that benefit you, like setting aside some of your refund in savings, paying bills, or making new purchases.
* The program allows you to e-file your taxes for speed, safety, and reliability.
* You can also have your refund deposited directly into your account and track it electronically.

**Can Free File Help with State Taxes?**

Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia have similar partnerships to offer Free File at the state level, meaning eligible taxpayers can file both their federal and state returns at no cost using secure, industry-leading software products.

**Why is Using Free File Important?**

The IRS relies on Free File to help millions of individuals and families file their Federal taxes each year, free of charge. The program helps taxpayers save hundreds of dollars on tax preparation fees, which can be used to help jumpstart savings and empower those seeking financial independence.

* Many low-to-moderate-income families receive over 30 percent of their annual income in tax refunds, making the accurate preparation of their tax returns especially consequential.
* More than 53 million Americans have taken advantage of the Free File program since it started in 2003.
* Through this program alone, Americans have saved $1.6 billion in tax preparation fees.
* If you are eligible for Free File, you may also qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The Free File software will help you determine if you are eligible and the amount of your tax credit.
* Active-duty military personnel, including National Guard and Reserves, with an AGI of $66,000 or less, can also use Free File.
* For more information about Free File, visit [www.irs.gov/freefile](http://www.irs.gov/freefile).

**What is VITA? What is TCE?**

If a taxpayer does not have computer access or needs additional support, they can get in-person help from local IRS-certified volunteers. They can visit one of the 12,000 IRS-certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites across the country to maximize their refund and claim all the credits that they deserve. In addition, the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program offers free in-person tax help to individuals who are age 60 or older.

* The volunteers and staff tax preparers at VITA tax preparation sites go through a minimum of 15 hours of training and are certified by the IRS.
* These sites are generally located in community or neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations.
* For more information on VITAs and their expert tax preparation services, visit [www.irs.gov/vita](http://www.irs.gov/vita).

**What is Tax Time Allies?**

The Tax Time Allies program is designed to bring together community leaders, community groups, private companies, and local VITA programs to help inform their communities about the free IRS-sponsored tax preparation resources available to qualifying taxpayers, and to show them how these resources can help them save more and improve their overall financial health and well-being.