# Tax Time & Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): Bankable Moments & Resources for Banks and Consumers

National Webinar

January 22, 2025



## Moderator

## **Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation**

## **Paola Diaz**

Senior Community Affairs Specialist Strategic Partnerships & Program Development Depositor and Consumer Protection Washington, DC <u>PDiaz@fdic.gov</u>





# Disclaimer

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# Agenda

#### • Opening Remarks

- Montrice Yakimov, Associate Director Community Affairs, FDIC
- Overview
  - Mia Sowell, Acting Project Manager, Community Affairs, FDIC
  - Paola Diaz, Senior Community Affairs Specialist, FDIC
- Volunteering and Building Partnerships with Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Sites: Don Dill, Strategic Partnerships, Education and Communications (SPEC), Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Successful Bank/VITA Partnership Highlight: Mona Fontella, Director of Community Development & CRA Officer, Royal Business Bank
- Encouraging Savings During Tax Season : Amy Miller, America Saves, Director, Consumer Federation of America
- Q&A
- Potential Next Steps Mia Sowell, Paola Diaz, FDIC

# FDIC

# **Opening Remarks**

## **Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation**

## **Montrice Yakimov**

Associate Director, Community Affairs Depositor and Consumer Protection Washington, DC <u>monyakimov@fdic.gov</u>





#### **Objective of the FDIC's Tax Time Savings Initiative**

- 1. Tax time is an opportunity to encourage more U.S. households to:
  - Open foundational bank accounts; <u>and</u>
  - Build savings (increase financial stability).

Click here to learn more!

- By working with IRS' Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) providers during tax time, households can file their taxes at no cost and receive tax credits and refunds for which they qualify.
  - Reach low- and moderate-income (LMI) individuals, people with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, as well as young adults many of whom are unbanked or underbanked.
  - LMI consumers who receive tax refunds via direct deposit into an insured account can also save a portion of their refund.
- 3. Opportunities and Benefits for Banks and VITA/TCE Providers to Partner:
  - Potential for new customer relationships;
  - VITA volunteer opportunities; and
  - May be eligible for favorable consideration under CRA regulations, including Community Service hours.



6

# Today's Objectives

- 1. Increase awareness about:
  - Free tax filing services for low- and moderate-income (LMI) households provided by the IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs
  - Earned Income **Tax Credit** (EITC)
  - Receiving a tax refund via direct deposit into a federally insured account Get Banked! initiative.
  - Opportunities to **save a portion of the tax refund**
  - Benefits of bank-VITA/TCE partnerships
- 2. Encourage banks and VITA/TCE providers to form **local partnerships** to assist LMI households during tax season and encourage account openings



# **Overview: FDIC Tax Time Savings Initiative**

## **Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation**

## **Mia Sowell**

Acting Project Manager, Community Affairs Depositor and Consumer Protection Washington, DC <u>misowell@fdic.gov</u>

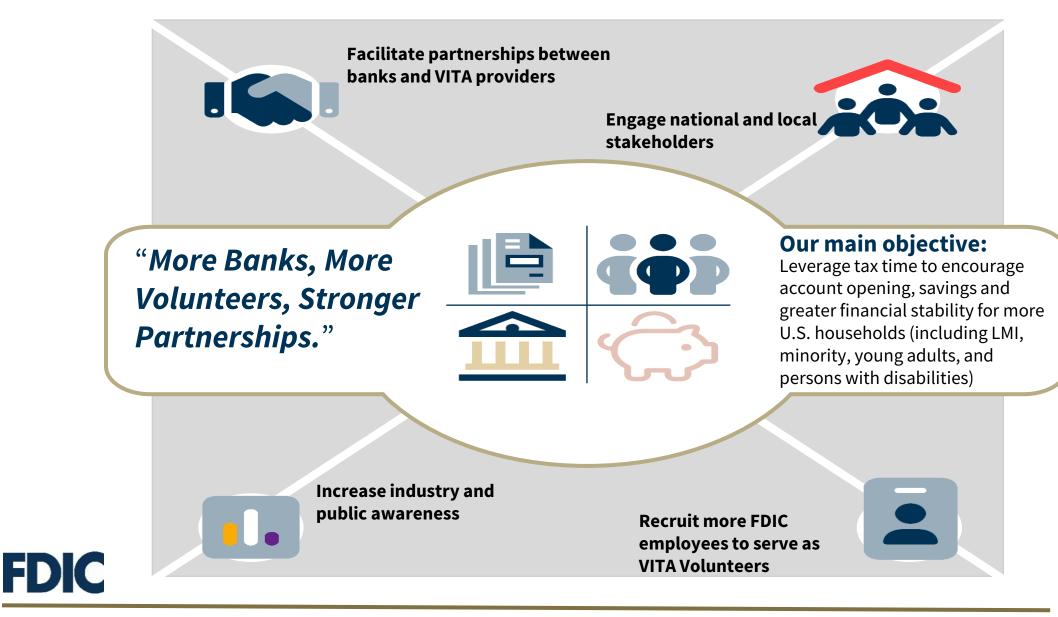




# **FDIC Tax Time Savings Initiative**



#### **Supporting Financial Stability through VITA Collaborations**



#### The Importance of Reaching Households During Tax Time

#### **FDIC research highlights:**

- Among recently banked households that received a government payment during the pandemic, almost half said the payment contributed to their opening a bank account ("a bankable moment")\*;
- Many VITA providers are open to partnerships that would provide safe & affordable banking products for their clients;\*\*
- Increased collaborations between FDIC-insured banks and local VITA providers may help unbanked tax filers open and sustain bank accounts;\*\* and
- The use of tax refund anticipation loans in 2023 (2.5 percent) was more prevalent than the use of other mainstream credit alternatives noted in that year.\*\*\*

\* 2021 FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households



\*\*\* 2023 FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households \*\*FDIC Survey of VITA Providers

#### **Considerations for Bank Participation in VITA/TCE**

#### Banks can participate in the VITA/TCE programs in various ways, including:

- Notifying staff of opportunities to be VITA/TCE volunteers.
- Co-sponsoring a VITA/TCE program.
- Hosting a VITA/TCE site at a bank branch.
- Donating old computer equipment or other supplies.
- Promoting EITC and VITA/TCE programs to bank customers.
- Offering taxpayers the opportunity to begin the process of opening a bank account at a VITA/TCE site.
- Offering other banking products responsive to the needs of VITA/TCE clients.
- Making financial education available to consumers at VITA/TCE sites.

Source: <u>https://www.fdic.gov/banker-resource-center/creating-partnerships-between-financial-institutions-and-organizations</u>

## FDIC



# **Volunteering and Building Partnerships with VITA Sites**

## Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

## Don Dill

Senior Tax Analyst Strategic Partnerships Education and Communications (SPEC)

Donald.C.Dill@irs.gov



# **VITA and TCE Programs**

- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Serves:
  - Individuals and families who generally make \$67,000 or less
  - Persons with disabilities; and
  - Limited English-speaking taxpayers

#### • Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Serves:

- Individual and families with special emphasis on individuals over age 60
- Specializes in questions about retirement and issues unique to seniors
- Primarily offered through AARP Foundation Tax-Aide sites

# **VITA and TCE Sites**

- Sponsored by Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Provide free tax preparation services for over 55 years
- Local sites operated by community-based organizations with volunteers completing tax preparation services
- IRS provides:
  - Tax law support
  - Tax software
  - Access to free e-filing services
  - Competency tests for volunteers
- Volunteers are protected from liability by Volunteer Protection Act

## The value provided by local VITA and TCE Sites

- Individuals receive free, high quality tax preparation services
- Individuals receive all credits and deductions to which they are entitled
- Preparation and filing of accurate tax returns at no cost allows individuals to make use of the money they would have paid a commercial tax preparer
- Individuals avoid downstream IRS compliance issues due to quality of VITA/TCE services

## The value provided by local VITA and TCE Sites (cont'd.)

- Individuals are afforded the opportunities to make decisions about the use of tax refunds, including saving, that can be automated and executed through the tax return filing process
- Individuals are connected to other community-based services offered through the host organization in each community
- Individuals are offered access to free financial coaching or counseling in communities that have those services available

#### VITA and TCE Sites Impact in the 2024 Tax Filing Season

- Over 7,000 free tax preparation sites in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico
- Over 70,000 volunteers
- Completed over **2.7 million** free **federal tax returns**
- Completed over 1.9 million free state returns
- Secured over \$2.6 billion in federal tax refunds (for over 1.9 million taxpayers)
- Secured over \$642 million in state tax refunds
- Saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in tax preparation fees

#### **Critical Tax Credits for Working Individuals and Families**

#### 1. Earned Income Tax Credit

- Available to working individuals and families earning less than \$68,675
- Maximum credit for working family with 3 or more children \$8,046
- Fully refundable tax credit
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) | Internal Revenue Service

#### 2. Child Tax Credit

- Available to working families with qualifying child/children
- Maximum credit is \$2,000 per qualifying child
- Partially refundable tax credit
- <u>Child Tax Credit | Internal Revenue Service</u>

#### What can you do to support/promote free tax preparation in your community?

- 1. Make customer aware of the value and quality of VITA/TCE services
- 2. Refer customers (and employees) to local VITA/TCE sites in your community
  - IRS VITA locator (tool shows VITA site availability by zip code) NOTE most
    VITA/TCE sites do not start providing services until around January 31<sup>st</sup>
  - AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Locator (tool shows availability of Tax-Aide sites by zip code NOTE – most AARP Foundation Tax-Aide sites do not start providing services until February 1st
- 3. Reach out to local VITA/TCE sites to offer support during the filing season -Review listing of VITA/TCE sites that receive grant funding from IRS to provide services in their community: <u>2025 VITA Grantees List</u>
- 4. Consider becoming a VITA/TEC site in future years <u>Publication 5683 (Rev. 10-2024)</u>

# Successful Bank/VITA Partnership Highlight

#### Royal Business Bank Royal Business Bank

皇佳商業銀行

Mona Fontela Director of Community Development & CRA Officer

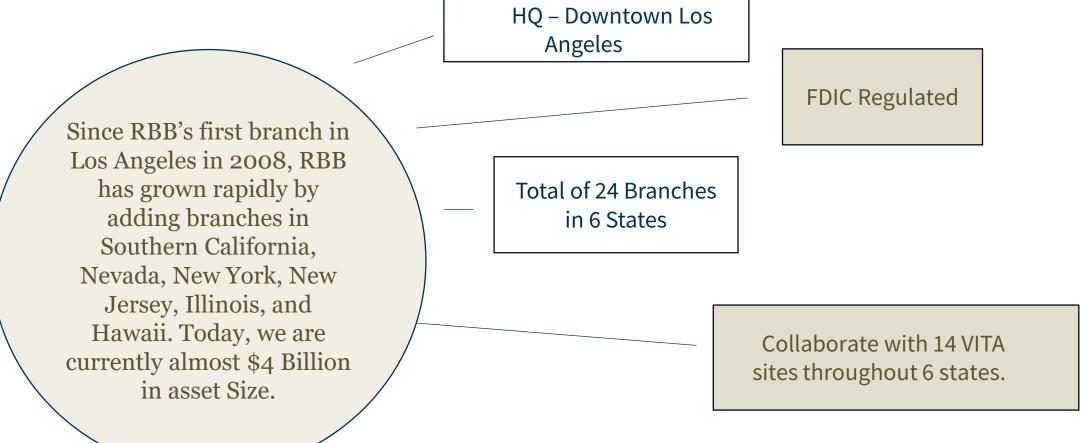
Mfontela@rbbusa.com

RoyalBusinessBankUSA.com





"At RBB, we combine the service and benefits of a nationwide bank with a personal banking touch that only a community bank can offer. We serve our community by offering Commercial and Industrial loans, residential and small business loans."



# **VITA Program History**

Royal Business Bank is a member of the FDIC's Alliance for Economic Inclusion (L.A. AEI) where we first learned about the VITA Program in 2018. Since then, the program has grown, expanding to all 6 states of RBB's footprint. This allowed the RBB team to expand outreach efforts and connect with more VITA partners offering more options for community involvement.



VITA Participants since 2018

Today, RBB collaborates with 14 VITA sites throughout 6 states.

Year	# Returns Filed	# Volunteers	# Hours
2024	1468	67	1582
2023	1157	64	1166



#### VITA Program at Royal Business Bank



RBB establishes VITA partners local to our volunteers. During COVID, virtual tax preparation was popular. Today, most VITA sites are in person, so collaborating with sites close to RBB branches and offices is key to a successful VITA program. This enables our team members to serve our communities to have a greater impact.



## Ongoing Collaboration with VITA Partners

Through VITA, RBB has built impactful partnerships supporting programs benefiting underserved communities. Some examples of ongoing collaborations are: Financial Literacy workshops delivered to the members of Goodwill Hawaii, Central City Neighborhood for their Food Security and Clothing Distribution Program, hosting Field Trip activities for students of Little Tokyo Service Center, Haven Neighborhood Services board participation.

- Mexican American Opportunity 
  Fund
- Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)
- Central City Neighborhood Partners
- Chinatown Service Center (CSC)
- Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC)

- Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Cerritos & Monterey Park (BTCF)
- Haven Neighborhood Services
- United Way of Ventura
- Center for Family Life in Brooklyn
- GROW Brooklyn
- United Way of Central Jersey

Ladder Up

Goodwill Hawaii

# **Encouraging Savings During Tax Season**

#### **Consumer Federation of America**

#### **Amy Miller**

Program Manager, America Saves

amiller@consumerfed.org

www.americasaves.org





The <u>Consumer Federation of America (CFA)</u> is an association of non-profit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education. Today, nearly 250 of these groups participate in the federation and govern it through their representatives on the organization's Board of Directors.



**Mission**: America Saves empowers all, particularly those who are financially vulnerable, to build financial confidence through effective saving, debt reduction, and wealth-building strategies.

**Vision**: For all Americans to have an account in which they save automatically, successfully, and with at least \$500 on hand to meet unexpected expenses

**How:** By creating and amplifying <u>resources</u> and communications for Savers + Partners - Pledge, Blogs, Downloads, Decision Trees, Videos - Social Media, Emails, Partner Resource Packets, Educational Workshops, Webinars, and Podcast

**Our Annual Campaigns: America Saves Week and Veteran Saves Week** 



# **AMERICA SAVES WEEK**

#### 2024 Economic Impact



**4608** Participating organizations



231,000

Individuals increased the amounts of their automatic savings

#### 3.9M

Total individuals Reached



#### \$353 M

Total deposits made during America Saves Week 2024



#### THEME: SAVING FOR YOUR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE DURING THE WEEK, WE'LL BE FOCUSING ON THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

Monday, April 7, 2025 | Saving Automatically

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 | Saving for the Unexpected

Wednesday, April 9, <u>2025</u> | Saving for Major Milestones

Thursday, April 10, 2025 | Paying Down Debt is Saving

Friday, April 11, 2025 | Saving at Any Age



# Insights & Successes



#### Participating VITA Sites Show:

- Consumer who saved a portion of their tax refunds were less likely to accumulate new debt and show a higher likelihood of reaching their financial goals in 1 year, compared to those who do not save.
  - Many will continue making regular deposits Significant decrease in payday loan usage
- Participating VITA sites that have partnered with a local bank have reported an increase in new account openings during tax season

Partnership In Action:

\*Community Events \*Social Media & Local Campaigns \*Education Events & Workshops

\*On-Site Account Opening: staff onsite or ability to open online and fund with refund

\*Challenges & Incentive Programs: weekly prizes, savings match programs

# Los Angeles (L.A.) Saves



- Success Factors:
  - An initiative of the FDIC Los Angeles Alliance for Economic Inclusion (L.A. AEI)
  - 40 Banks Participating providing volunteers
  - Promotion at Intake is KEY using AS Resources /Pledge with BankOn (bankable moment)
  - Average 40 events per year 10 during ASW 2024(community events, workshops, virtual webinar, libraries)

	2024	2023
# Returns Filed	14,657	10,414
Total Refund Amount	\$14,697,676	\$10,033,591
Banks Participating	21	23
# Bank Staff Volunteering at VITA Sites	325	204
# Hours spent at VITA Sites by Bank Staff	5,244	n/a
America Saves Pledges during AS Week	236	188

#### Partnership = Empowering Financial Confidence

Partnership adds MOMENTUM to our shared mission.

Together we can create the thriving, equitable, and resilient America we all know is possible

#### Get Involved:

\*Collaborate with VITA Sites \*Offer Onsite Account Opening & Savings Incentives \*Utilize the <u>America Saves Pledge & Tax Time Toolkit</u> \*Become an America Saves <u>Partner Organization</u>



Saving for your Past, Present & Future April 7-11, 2025 <u>Americasavesweek.org</u>

# **Potential Next Steps**

# - ACA

#### **VITA/TCE Providers:**

- Encourage VITA/TCE clients to set up a bank account including savings before their tax-filing appointment
- Use FDIC resources to find banks (see Appendix slides)
- Contact banks in the summer to identify opportunities to collaborate for next tax season

#### Banks:

- Inform your LMI customers about free tax-preparation services and tax credits they may be eligible for
- Review FDIC resources to learn about eligibility for favorable consideration under CRA regulations
- Locate local VITA/TCE providers using IRS resources
- Consider offering an affordable account
- Contact VITA/TCE providers in the summer to identify opportunities to collaborate next tax season

#### VITA/TCE Providers and Banks:

Register for local and national FDIC Community Affairs events



#### Stay Connected with FDIC Community Affairs

#### **Upcoming Tax Time Events (January/February):**

DATE	EVENT
January 29 <sup>th</sup>	FDIC Programs and Resources to Help Consumers Build Savings During Tax Season ( <b>National</b> )
January 29 <sup>th</sup>	VITA Community Development Opportunities and Bank On Resources Forum in Salt Lake ( <b>Utah</b> )
February 20 <sup>th</sup>	Los Angeles Tri-Annual Alliance for Economic Inclusion Forum: Promoting Economic Inclusion <b>(Los Angeles, CA)</b>

**<u>CLICK HERE</u>** to register and see the list of local and national Community Affairs events (updated monthly).



# Wrap Up

#### **Review of Today's Objectives:**

- 1. Increase awareness about:
  - Free tax filing services for low- and moderate-income (LMI) households provided by the IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs
  - ✓ Earned Income **Tax Credit** (EITC)
  - Receiving a tax refund via **direct deposit** into a federally insured account Get Banked! initiative.
  - ✓ Opportunities to save a portion of the tax refund
  - ✓ Benefits of **bank-VITA/TCE partnerships**
- 2. Encouraged banks and VITA/TCE providers to form **local partnerships** to assist LMI households during tax season and encourage account openings

Slides with resources and links will be emailed to registrants after the webinar and posted on the <u>Tax Time & EITC event webpage</u> in a few days



#### FDIC Resources that could be linked to your websites/ communications

- <u>Survey of VITA Providers</u>
- <u>Tax Time resources</u> (on the FDIC Banker Resource Center)
  - Overview of FDIC <u>tax time savings initiative</u>
  - Information for bankers
  - Information for consumers
- Get Banked! (open a bank account)
- <u>Community Affairs events</u> (register for upcoming events)
- <u>Money Smart</u> (financial education program for people of all ages)
- <u>Money Smart News</u> and Consumer News (newsletters for consumers)
- <u>Money Smart Alliance</u> (teaches Money Smart and/or trains others)
- <u>Recording to this webinar</u> (will be available around 1/29/25)



# Appendices

The following information was not presented during the webinar but might be helpful to the audience.

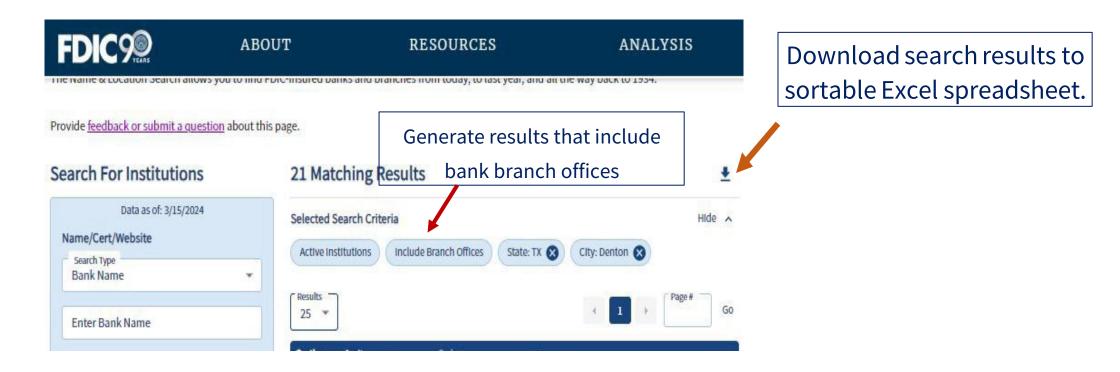
For questions about any of the resources included in this section, contact <u>TaxTimeInitiative@fdic.gov</u>



#### Forming Collaborations with Banks (for VITA/TCE Providers)

#### FDIC can help VITA/TCE Providers find potential bank partners using:

BankFind (https://banks.data.fdic.gov/bankfind-suite/bankfind)



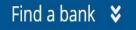
### **Forming Collaborations with Banks** (for VITA/TCE Providers – cont'd.)

#### FDIC can help VITA/TCE Providers find potential bank partners using:

Get Banked! (FDIC.gov/GetBanked)

# Get Banked!

#### Secure your money, simplify your life



Vea esta página en español



Open an account online or in person with a low opening deposit

#### Considerations for VITA /TCE Providers Seeking Bank Partners

- 1. Contact banks early in your local VITA/TCE area
- 2. Articulate your VITA/TCE needs for the upcoming tax season (e.g., volunteers, computer equipment, bank account opening, co-sponsoring, etc.)
- 3. Inquire about the bank's ability to offer virtual/remote bank account openings and affordable accounts
- 4. Advise banks of your timelines
- 5. Update local VITA/TCE websites to include:
  - Direct link to <u>FDIC.gov/GetBanked</u>
  - Announcements regarding VITA/TCE collaborations with banks offering affordable accounts
  - Direct link to bank websites for opening a bank account
- 6. Describe your organization and its VITA/TCE program successes (e.g., # people served last year; # refunds, \$ refunds)

## Forming Collaborations with VITA/TCE Providers (for banks)

Banks can use IRS resources to find potential local VITA/TCE partners:

IRS - Volunteers (https://www.irs.gov/individual s/irs-tax-volunteers)

MIRS	Help   News   English 🗸	
File Pay Refunds	Credits & Deductions Forms & Instructions	
iome / <u>Our Agency</u> / IRS tax voluntee	rs	
RS tax volunt	eers	
	English <u>Español</u> <u>中文(简体)</u> <u>中文(繁體)</u> <u>한</u>	
IRS organization	Learn to prepare taxes and make a difference in your community at the same time How can you make a difference? Simple. Volunteer to help your community by	
A closer look	preparing taxes free of charge with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Programs. You will receive training to provide free tax help for low-to-moderate income families who need assistance preparing their tax returns. As a volunteer, you will join the thousands of others who each year prepare millions of tax returns at	
Financial and budget reports		
Tax statistics		
Do business with the IRS	thousands of tax sites nationwide.	
Criminal Investigation	If you have an interest in partnering with us to sponsor or host a free tax preparation site in your area you can also complete and submit the <u>VITA/TCE</u>	
Whistleblower Office	<u>Volunteer and Partner Sign Up</u> I form and we will be sure to follow-up on your inquiry.	
Volunteer	As a committed tax volunteer, you'll be assigned to work with a sponsoring organization, first to receive training and then to begin volunteering at a location i your community. Training is offered both online and in the classroom. Tax sites are generally open nights and weekends, and the hours are flexible. You will surely fin a volunteer site close to you.	
Freedom of Information Act		
Privacy policy		
Civil rights	Interested?	
Vulnerability disclosure policy	For additional information and next steps, submit your inquiry now using the <u>VITA/TCE Volunteer and Partner Sign Up</u> C form and you will be one step close	

## Forming Collaborations with VITA/TCE Providers

ABOUT

## Banks can use FDIC resources to learn about:

- Eligibility for favorable consideration under CRA regulations
- Opportunities for unbanked households to open a bank account to receive their tax refunds
- Offering affordable and sustainable accounts

Visit the FDIC's Banker Resource Center

Banker Resource Center	By pro
Community Reinvestment Act 💉	afford
Pocket Guide For Directors	We inv
Cybersecurity Resources	Ava
Predatory Lending Resources	n va
Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program	
Large-Bank Deposit Insurance Determination Modernization (12 C.F.R. § 360.9)	
12 CFR Part 370 Recordkeeping for Timely Deposit Insurance Determination	<u>Expan</u> Learn

**FDIC** 

Recordkeeping Requirements for Qualified Financial Contracts (QFCs) - Technical Points By promoting affordable insured transaction and savings accounts, our vision is that all Americans have access to secure and affordable insured banking services and every bank offers affordable transaction and savings accounts.

ANALYSIS

*N*e invite your bank to take action and be responsive to the needs of Low- and Moderate- Income (LMI) populations.

#### Available Resources



RESOURCES

Expanding Account Access Through Affordable Accounts (PDF) Learn about offering affordable and sustainable accounts at your bank. Creating Partnerships to Reach Consumers During Tax Time

NEWS

<u>Creating Partnerships to Reach Consumers During Tax Time</u> (PDF)

Learn about eligibility for favorable consideration under Community Reinvestment Act regulations and opportunities for unbanked households to open a bank account to receive theirtax refunds.

Q

#### Stay Connected with FDIC Community Affairs

#### Connect with your Regional Community Affairs Team

Region (states served)	Email	
Atlanta (AL, FL, GA, NC, SC, VA, WV)	atlcommunityaffairs@fdic.gov	
Chicago (IL, IN, KY, MI, OH, WI)	chicommunityaffairs@fdic.gov	
Dallas (AR, CO, LA, MS, NM, OK, TN, TX)	dalcommunityaffairs@fdic.gov	
Kansas City (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	kscommunityaffairs@fdic.gov	
New York (CT, DE, DC, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, PA, PR, USVI, RI, VT)	nycommunityaffairs@fdic.gov	
San Francisco (AK, AZ, CA, Guam, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)	sfcommunityaffairs@fdic.gov	

Connect with your Headquarters (Washington, DC) Community Affairs Teams for general questions and inquiries.

Headquarters Section	Email	
General questions and inquiries		
Strategic Partnerships & Program Development	<u>CommunityAffairs@fdic.gov</u>	
Outreach & Program Development ( <i>Money Smart</i> financial education)		

Invite FDIC to participate in your organization's activities and speaking engagements

#### **Other Tax Time Resources**

- <u>American Bankers Association Tax Time Webinar</u> (recording of 12/4/24 event to encourage banks to volunteer, partner with and support VITA sites featuring FDIC presentation on FDIC Survey of VITA Providers)
- National Disability Institute Taxes Website (resources)