Economic Security CA

MARCH 2026

Toolkit for Coordinated Free Tax Prep Outreach Initiatives

Practical Guidance for Counties and Nonprofits Replicating the Claim Your Cash LA Warm Handoff Model

Welcome & How to Use This Toolkit

Purpose and Audience

- ➔ A public-private collaboration between county departments and community organizations to connect thousands of low-income families with the tax credits they're owed.
- ➔ Designed as a **practical operating manual**.
- ➔ Intended to set agencies/nonprofits up for **strong planning, coordination, relationship-building, roll-out, and measurement**.

What This Toolkit Provides

This toolkit is a compendium of practical guidance grounded in operational learnings from Los Angeles County's 2024-2025 pilot effort.

- ➔ Concrete advice on team structure, planning processes, and timelines
- ➔ Templates, timelines, and sample communications
- ➔ Lessons learned and pitfalls to avoid
- ➔ A menu of options for internal and external outreach

How to Use This Toolkit

Every jurisdiction is different. Use the advice and templates in this toolkit as a starting point to help you ask the right planning questions, build effective partnerships, and get all the essential operational pieces in place for a successful project. Use the menus of activity options to build a project that suits your county's context and capacity.

This toolkit is written with the assumption that this model is being implemented at a county level.

01. Overview of the Warm Handoff Model

1.1 What is the Problem?

- ➔ Many **low-income people miss out on cash payments offered through state and federal tax credits and stimulus programs.** Black, Latino, and Indigenous households are disproportionately impacted.
- ➔ **Many of these households receive assistance from county-administered programs** that offer assistance to low-income people (e.g., cash, utility, food assistance).

1.2 What Is the Warm Handoff Model?

- ➔ **A coordinated, intentional approach** to connecting current county clients to free tax preparation support via VITA.
- ➔ Aims to **leverage the pre-existing trusting relationships between county programs and households eligible for low-income tax credits** for the purposes of referring them to free tax preparation assistance to secure tax credits.
- ➔ Client-facing county workers provide **active, relationship-based tax assistance outreach and referrals** to VITA, rather than just making passive referrals ("here's a flyer").
- ➔ Optional VITA-run **tax prep clinics held on-site at trusted county offices ("on-site clinics")** are held on a regular schedule.

1.3 What the Pilot Demonstrated

Los Angeles County evaluated their warm handoff pilot project and learned:

- ➔ **Trusted messengers matter**, but trust is layered: workers must trust VITA providers before clients trust them.
- ➔ **Leadership buy-in** is essential but not sufficient; mid-level leads and internal champions drive success.
- ➔ **Internal communication "echo chambers" are vital.** Workers need reminders, updates, and easy-to-use materials to do warm handoffs on a consistent basis.
- ➔ Both county staff and clients need **multiple, multi-format exposures** to trust the service and act.
- ➔ **Structural constraints** (slow timelines, contracting cycles, union rules, staffing shortages) must be anticipated in planning.
- ➔ **Strong tracking systems are essential** to effectively measure the impact**.**

02. Foundations for Successful Replication

Successfully implementing a VITA warm handoff initiative requires intentional coordination across multiple partners and clear governance from the start. This section outlines the essential team structure, planning process, and timeline needed to build a strong foundation. Whether piloting in one department or rolling out countywide, these elements will help align stakeholders, clarify roles, and set realistic expectations before tax season begins.

This toolkit outlines a project structure for initiatives that include multiple county departments and multiple VITA partners. The warm handoff model can, however, absolutely be implemented with just one dedicated county department and one strong VITA partner, which simplifies some set-up systems.

2.1 County-Level Commitment

Tax credit outreach is not typically a core function of any existing county department. A commitment to engaging in tax credit outreach, especially one that includes proactive worker participation, will require explicit commitment and direction from county leadership. This might come in the form of:

➔ **Board of Supervisors resolution** naming tax credit outreach as a priority and identifying county department outreach efforts, including warm handoffs, as key strategies.
➔ **Funding commitments**, ideally including at least some dedicated county funds, and likely some outside philanthropic funds.
➔ **Time commitments.** We recommend a 2-3 year minimum commitment to allow for planning and iteration of implementation strategies based on early learnings.

Choosing the Right County Departments

Not every county department is equally suited for warm handoff outreach. Focus on departments and programs that have **frequent, direct contact with low-income residents** and where the nature of client interactions allows time for meaningful conversation about tax assistance. Consider both the **volume of clients served and the typical workflow for staff**. Some service models involve longer appointments or case management relationships that naturally create opportunities for referrals, while others involve brief transactional interactions where adding a warm handoff conversation may be unrealistic.

Departments and programs to consider:

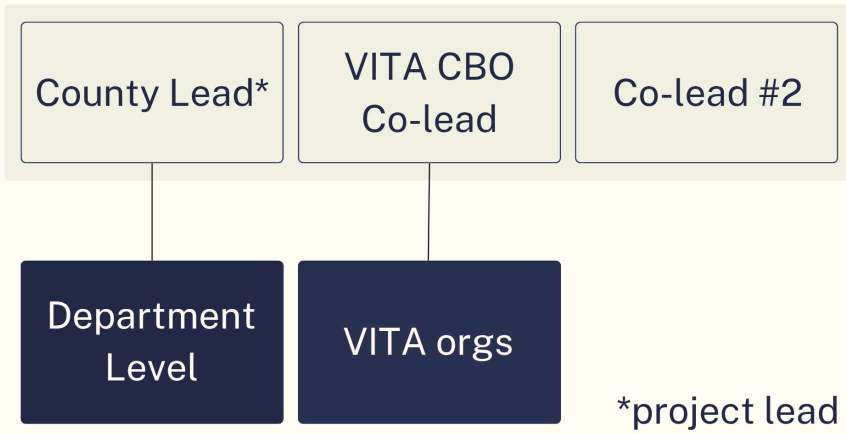
➔ CalFresh/SNAP
➔ CalWORKs/TANF
➔ General Assistance/General Relief

→ In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
→ Public health programs (WIC, maternal health)
→ County health clinics and community health centers
→ Workforce development and job centers
→ Aging and disability services
→ Housing assistance programs

2.2 Core Team

The core team should include a county lead and a VITA lead at a minimum.

Project-level Core Team



Who are the Co-Leads?

1. **County-Level Project Lead:** The project needs a **centralized lead** at the county level.[1] This lead should be one that has the authority to engage Director-level commitments at the partner department(s). For projects that are starting with only one department, a department-level project lead is a reasonable option, though that structure may need to shift if the project expands to other departments in the future.
2. **VITA Co-Lead: A nonprofit VITA subject matter expert entity** with strong expertise in operationally running VITA programs. Pre-existing connections to VITA providers, expertise in both VITA operations, timelines, and tax credits technicalities are essential elements that are likely to lie outside the county leadership entity. Ideally, this co-lead should also have existing relationships (contractual or not) with other VITA providers in the county. Community-based Co-Leads can also play an important role in securing additional philanthropic funds, maintaining relationships with VITA providers, and providing additional coordination, training, and communication capacity.

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[1] In Los Angeles, the project was led by the county's CEO's office, as a part of their Poverty Alleviation Initiative.

3. *(Optional)* **CBO Co-Lead #2: An external nonprofit entity** with an interest in improving tax credit uptake and has the capacity to lead project-level roles, such as fundraising, collateral design, PR, training, etc.

The core team should collaboratively develop a **written implementation plan** that serves as the project's guiding document throughout tax season and beyond. This plan ensures alignment across all partners, defines roles, and provides a reference point when questions arise. It should include things like the vision, goals, partner roles and expectations, timelines, and metrics.

Assigning Roles & Responsibilities

Identify who will be responsible for the following areas of work. Depending on the size of the project, multiple roles may be filled by the same staff person. Detailed responsibilities for each of these roles is included in Appendix A.

Project-Level Roles

- ➔ Leadership Roles
    - ◆ Project Lead - Provides leadership on overall project vision, agreements, budget, and fundraising. This role should be filled by the county lead entity.
    - ◆ VITA Co-Lead - Advises all high-level planning based on an operational understanding of VITA and tax season realities. Supports fundraising work.
    - ◆ Project Manager - Consolidates and documents all planning work, keeps the project on schedule, supports convenings, and onboards new partners.
- ➔ Operational Roles - each of these project areas will need intentional shepherding by someone knowledgeable in related processes. They might be handled by Co-Leads or by other project partners.
    - ◆ Communications - Develops project-wide plan for content development, approval, printing, and deployment.
    - ◆ Worker Training - Creates training content for various platforms, schedules, and tracks training sessions.
    - ◆ Scheduling Platforms - Manages set-up of scheduling systems (e.g. hotline and website), including data collection systems for tracking attribution and reporting.
    - ◆ Evaluation - Develops and executes a plan for evaluation work.
    - ◆ Public Relations - Coordinates media outreach and messaging.

Department-Level Roles

- ➔ Leadership
    - ◆ Executive Sponsor - Sets departmental strategy, commits resources, elevates the project to department staff as a priority

        - Departmental Project Manager - Maintains timelines for operational work, serves as a liaison to Co-Leads and to evaluators.
- Operational Roles
    - Communications - Manages customization of project outreach materials and secures necessary departmental approvals.
    - Worker Education & Internal Communication - Identifies best worker training and education formats, supports implementation.
    - On-Site Clinic(s) - Coordinates with VITA partners on on-site operations planning & implementation, supports troubleshooting.

VITA Partner Roles

- Leadership
    - VITA Project Liaison(s) - Supports ongoing planning and troubleshooting work.
- Operations
    - On-Site Clinics(s) - Advises on VITA partner needs for operational implementation of on-site clinics
    - Evaluation - Supports set-up of data tracking, reporting, and structures for qualitative evaluation efforts.

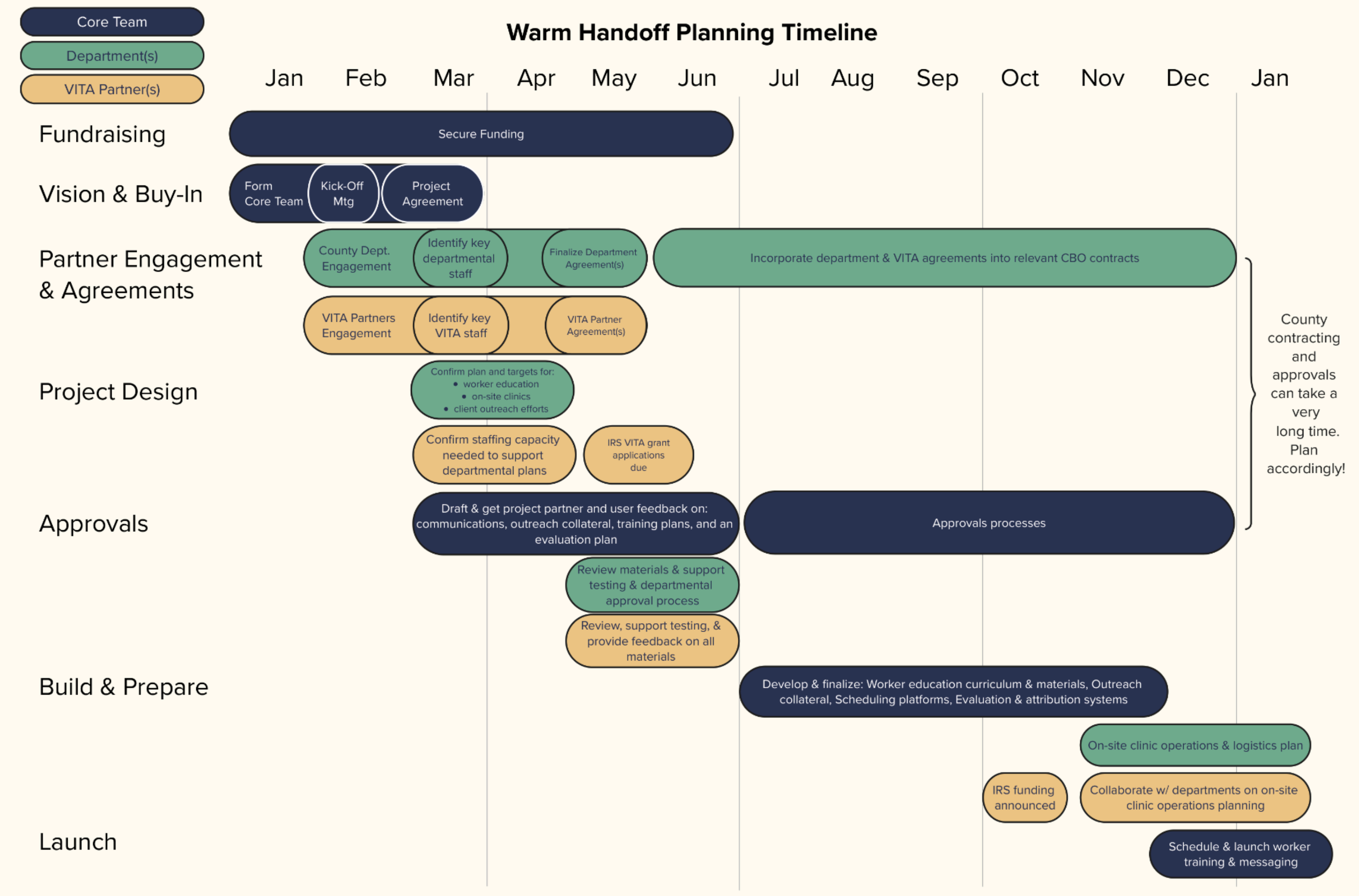
2.3 Planning Timeline

For first-time or large-scale initiatives, **a full planning year is strongly recommended** due to approval processes, contracting timelines, and coordination complexity. Smaller-scale projects that include only one department and one VITA site may be able to complete planning work in less time, but will probably still need **at least 6 months** before tax season implementation.

The major phases of work are:

- Fundraising
- Vision & Buy-In
- Partner Engagement & Agreements
- Project Design
- Approvals
- Build & Prepare
- Launch

See the example timeline on the next page. Appendix B includes a more detailed description of each piece of this timeline.


Warm Handoff Planning Timeline
Core Team
Department(s)
VITA Partner(s)
Jan
Feb
Mar
Apr
May
Jun
Jul
Aug
Sep
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan
Fundraising
Secure Funding
Vision & Buy-In
Form Core Team
Kick-Off Mtg
Project Agreement
Partner Engagement & Agreements
County Dept. Engagement
Identify key departmental staff
Finalize Department Agreement(s)
Incorporate department & VITA agreements into relevant CBO contracts
VITA Partners Engagement
Identify key VITA staff
VITA Partner Agreement(s)
County contracting and approvals can take a very long time. Plan accordingly!
Project Design
Confirm plan and targets for:
• worker education
• on-site clinics
• client outreach efforts
Confirm staffing capacity needed to support departmental plans
IRS VITA grant applications due
Approvals
Draft & get project partner and user feedback on: communications, outreach collateral, training plans, and an evaluation plan
Approvals processes
Review materials & support testing & departmental approval process
Review, support testing, & provide feedback on all materials
Build & Prepare
Develop & finalize: Worker education curriculum & materials, Outreach collateral, Scheduling platforms, Evaluation & attribution systems
On-site clinic operations & logistics plan
IRS funding announced
Collaborate w/ departments on on-site clinic operations planning
Launch
Schedule & launch worker training & messaging

2.4 Budget

Operating a comprehensive countywide warm handoff model does incur new costs. Existing county or community-based assets or resources may be leveraged, but budgeting for staffing, infrastructure, and materials is essential. In your planning, consider budgeting for the following line items:

- VITA partners
  - Increased staffing capacity to handle increased referrals
  - Evaluation participation
  - On-site clinic costs
  - Planning & coordination staff time
- Client-Facing Collateral
  - Staff time for campaign planning
  - Design
  - Printing
  - Shipping
- Co-lead coordination staffing
  - Regular staff participation in coordination meetings
- Training materials development
  - Staff time
- Scheduling infrastructure
  - Hotline set-up and staffing
  - Website creation and hosting
- Website attribution set-up and tracking
- Special Events
  - Retreat/Off-site gathering for all participants
  - Meals for partner meetings
- Communications
  - SMS campaigns
  - Targeted digital advertising
- Evaluation

A detailed budget template can be found in (Appendix C).

2.5 Agreements

Codify commitments in writing whenever possible (preferably in MOUs). Verbal agreements fade with staff turnover and when other priorities inevitably arise; written agreements create institutional memory and accountability.

1. **Project Agreement** - An agreement between the Co-Leads that defines the overarching project purpose and scope and spells out all aspects of the project-level roles, responsibilities, budget, and projected outcomes. This should be a formal MOU.
2. **Departmental Agreement(s)** - Agreement(s) between the county co-lead and each participating county department. Use the County Departmental-Level Roles table and the Departmental Planning Tool as the framework for these agreements.
3. **CBO Partner Agreement(s) | VITA Partners** - Agreements between project lead(s) and specific VITA partners to establish expectations, metrics, and budgets for any roles and responsibilities needed to make the project successful. These should be formal MOUs or worked into existing contracts if they already exist between the right parties.
4. **CBO Partner Agreements | Department Service Providers** - When county services are provided by CBO contractors (e.g. job centers), it can be helpful to revise existing contracts to include project-related activities such as training participation, outreach work, and reporting.

TIP!

Make it clear in the vision, goals, and formal agreements that the county warm handoff outreach initiative is an enhancement, not a replacement, to the existing free tax prep outreach ecosystem.

In some places, there may already be a robust ecosystem of free tax preparation services, funding streams, and outreach efforts. Bringing the county into the picture runs the risk of feeling threatening to existing service providers.

2.6 Onboarding Materials

Expect leadership and liaison transitions throughout the year and have onboarding materials ready to prevent disruption when someone new steps into the role. As departments join your coordinated tax outreach effort, they need a clear orientation to participate effectively. Onboarding materials can be drawn from overarching planning documents as they evolve over time. They should include:

- **How this initiative fits with other tax outreach work** - Clarify the relationship between county warm handoffs, community-based VITA services, other free tax prep programs, and state/federal tax credit campaigns so new partners understand their role in the broader ecosystem
- **Roles and expectations** - What is this department or organization committing to? What support will they receive? Who are the key contacts?

2.7 Essential Meetings

Planning Kickoff Event

The Co-Leads should host a meeting with all project-level staff, including the Departmental Executive Sponsor(s) and Project Manager(s), to align on foundational elements of the initiative. It should be scheduled at least 6 months before the start of tax season. The agenda should be structured to discuss and agree upon answers to these key questions:

Goal Setting

- ➔ How many new VITA filers are we hoping to generate?
- ➔ How many workers do we think we can reasonably reach with training/education messaging?
  - ◆ What's the pool of workers you could reach, and how many you think you can reasonably reach with training messages?
  - ◆ Are we targeting all, or XX% of workers in certain locations?
  - ◆ Are we targeting all, or XX% of workers in certain sub-programs?
- ➔ What feels like a reasonable set of goals and expectations for data collection and evaluation? (See Section 7.1)

Worker Engagement & Training

- ➔ Are there champions in departments who will really run with this? Who?
- ➔ What strategies will work well for each department for worker training and internal communication messaging? (see Section 4.2)
- ➔ How will training, outreach, and other communications need to be approved by the various partners? How long will that really take? What about printing and distribution?

Operations Planning

- ➔ Where might on-site VITA clinics make sense?
- ➔ How does this plan fit into other tax credit outreach efforts in the county? How might we coordinate best with those efforts?
- ➔ What kinds of constraints do departments and VITA partners anticipate (timeline, union, reporting, capacity)? How might the project plan to mitigate those? (See Section 2.8)
- ➔ Reviewing the tax-season timeline and aligning on key milestones (See Section 2.3)

Ongoing Co-Lead Meetings

A regularly scheduled Co-Lead meeting is essential for the success of this initiative. These standing meetings will improve trust and foster open communication between Co-Leads, helping mitigate challenges and ensure smooth planning for future tax seasons. Regular meeting attendance should be included in initial MOUs with the cadence set by the core group.

Agendas for these meetings should include:

- ➔ Timeline review
- ➔ Outreach campaign progress review
- ➔ Evaluation/data review
- ➔ Communications opportunities
- ➔ Fundraising opportunities
- ➔ Operational troubleshooting
- ➔ Future tax season planning

All Partner Coordination Meetings

Starting approximately six months before the beginning of tax season, Co-Leads should host a regular monthly meeting that includes all key project, departmental, and VITA partner staff to keep all partners in the loop about project progress and to facilitate collective problem-solving.

2.8 Predictable Constraints & Strategies for Navigating Them

Several structural constraints can limit coordination and a smooth roll-out.

- ➔ Slow county timelines for materials development, approvals, etc.
- ➔ Long contracting cycles
- ➔ Union constraints
- ➔ Staffing shortages
- ➔ Competing priorities
- ➔ Staff turnover

The good news is that these constraints are well-known and can be addressed through strategic planning and engagement.

- ➔ Build in enough time for planning to allow for long contracting and approval processes
- ➔ Document the work in written project plans, agreements, and shared files to ensure institutional knowledge when turnover inevitably happens.
- ➔ Escalate approvals early (e.g., communications campaigns & content, training engagement expectations, on-site operational needs)
- ➔ Use passive internal communications when mandatory training is impossible
- ➔ Use duplicated versions of pre-approved messages
- ➔ Assign one internal “champion” who keeps warm handoffs top of mind within their department, even as other priorities emerge.

04. Worker Education & Internal Communications

4.1 Why Internal Campaigns are Essential

Securing frontline worker participation in a single warm handoff training presents significant challenges, even when leadership supports the initiative. By broadening the worker education approach from a traditional training format to a more flexible, responsive internal communications approach, more staff can gain the basic knowledge and confidence they need to make warm handoff referrals without running into capacity or labor barriers.

Just as clients need multiple exposures to messaging before taking action, county staff need repeated touchpoints in varied formats to understand, trust, and incorporate warm handoffs into their workflow. The section below includes a detailed menu of options.

The goal is to make it easy for any staff member to feel prepared to mention tax assistance, even if they never attend a formal training session.

TIP!

If your county's staff are members of a union, it is important to plan for worker education and outreach in a way that recognizes union contract realities.

This can mean avoiding broad mandates and tailoring the worker engagement approach to more frequent passive outreach communications and short-form education snippets that are easy to digest without feeling like "training" that can be perceived as out of scope.

4.2 Menu of Internal Communication Channels & Tools

To reach the greatest number of workers, Departments should choose at least two from each of the categories below to create an echo chamber of information and reminders to workers:

Information Channels	Training Formats	Reinforcement Tools
Weekly internal emails	Short video	Supervisor scripts
Intranet FAQs	1-Pager	Quick-reference cheat sheets
Newsletter blurbs	Microtraining slides	Monthly reminders
Print signage in breakrooms	Optional in-person briefings	Flyers at staff stations
Add 5-minute tax reminders to standing team or department meetings	Joint meetings with VITA partners	Advertise on screens in offices/lobbies

4.3 Worker Education and Internal Communication Messaging

In order to expect county workers to talk about VITA and free tax preparation services, they need to feel confident and knowledgeable about the basics. Worker-facing training and education materials should include three fundamental elements:

➔ **Tax credit education**: Staff should know enough to feel comfortable talking about the basics of tax credits and their potential impact on clients. They do not need to become tax experts; that's VITA's job!

➔ **How to make a warm handoff**: Strategies for folding referral information into current client workflow, tailored to different types of workers/workflows. Explicitly encourage workers to directly distribute collateral (don't just put it out on a table and hope it's discovered)

➔ **General staff script:** What to say / not to say, with reassurances that "it's ok" to talk to clients about taxes, addressing potential liability concerns.

➔ **What to expect from the process:** Information about the process of using VITA services (e.g., scheduling, screening conversations, gathering and processing of paperwork).

➔ **FAQs addressing common fears:** For example, the fear that clients will end up owing taxes rather than receiving a net credit, concerns about scams, or immigration status issues.

If your county offers different types of VITA training (e.g., training for staff to serve as VITA tax preparation volunteers), training and communication for the warm handoff element should be separate. Warm handoff training must be more general, high-level, and without specific deep-dives into tax law.

TIP!

Worker trust in the VITA program is essential. When program staff already have a trusting rapport with clients, they can be more cautious about referring to less familiar services. Workers might trust VITA generally, specific VITA service provider organizations, and/or individual VITA staff people. It feels safer to refer to an organization that has a strong community reputation, and even better when you know that "Mary will take good care of you." Foster this trust through:

- Shared lists of the organizations that are offering VITA services - some organizations may be familiar!
- Direct introductions between county program and VITA staff
- Inclusion of VITA staff in training content, either live or in video format
- Placement of VITA staff at on-site clinics to build familiarity
- Direct scheduling pipelines to VITA providers that have had specialized training related to the target populations being referred by county departments.*

** For example, transitional-age foster youth often have more complex tax circumstances, and they can be at high risk for identity theft. County workers in Los Angeles often preferred to refer their foster youth clients to VITA providers who either specialized in that group or who had received additional training on their unique circumstances.*

05. External Outreach to Potential Filers

5.1 County-Level Pre-Approved Messaging Package

Communications campaign planning requires an intentionally shared, coordinated, cross-partner approach. While departments may tailor messages to their specific target population, outreach should be treated as a county-level campaign with lots of options, not a series of bespoke departmental campaigns. Departments can use the parts that work best for them. Budget enough time to develop approved templates that all departments can use; those approval processes are often slow and may need to happen at multiple levels.

The final pre-approved package should be a comprehensive plan that includes editable templates.

Readiness Check: Do you have templates for the following messaging tools?

- ☐ Client-facing emails
- ☐ Client-facing text messages
- ☐ Posters
- ☐ Flyers
- ☐ Social posts on multiple platforms
- ☐ Worker scripts & FAQs

5.2 Minimum Requirements

Every participating department should send at least **two or three** client-facing messages per tax season, depending on available budget. People often need to see outreach multiple times before deciding to act.

Menu of External Communication Options

Digital	In Person	Passive Outreach
Text blasts	Posters in lobbies, on bulletin boards	Include flyers in routine mailers
Email campaigns	Scripts for staff-client conversations	Add to monthly client-facing newsletters
Website banners	Tabling at community events	

QR Code flyers	On-site VITA clinics
Social media campaigns	Postcards in customer service areas

See select examples of materials used in Los Angeles County in Appendix H.

TIP

Keep track of who requested which items and when they were sent. Use a tracker that is accessible to all relevant parties (e.g. a simple spreadsheet).

06. On-Site Clinics

6.1 Planning for On-Site Clinic Operations

Successful on-site clinics require **clear roles, detailed operational planning, and time to build trust** between county departments and VITA providers. These relationships are driven by day-to-day interactions between staff and should be established well in advance of tax season.

Clarify Roles & Responsibilities

Before any on-site clinic launches, confirm **who is responsible for what** across all parties. Document these roles in writing to avoid confusion during implementation. Identify:

- A **planning lead** for each participating department, site, and VITA organization.
- A **named day-to-day point of contact** for clinic operations.
- Additional contact roles (e.g., facilities, IT, security, communications).
- Who will:
    - Orient VITA staff to the site
    - Support set-up and breakdown
    - Alert other department staff that a clinic is taking place and explain what to expect

Set Boundaries and Clear Expectations

Align in advance on what VITA teams are and are not permitted to do on-site. This should be explicitly approved by department leadership. Examples to clarify include:

➔ Distributing flyers or printed materials
➔ Tabling in public or lobby areas
➔ Approaching clients in waiting rooms

Confirm Operational Details

Operational details should be confirmed early and validated with a site visit that includes the front-line staff who will be managing operations (not just leadership) whenever possible.

Operational Details Check: Have you discussed and confirmed these items with the host of the on-site clinic?

- [ ] Minimum space requirements (private, secure, accessible)
- [ ] Reliable internet access
- [ ] Weekly clinic schedule and hours
- [ ] Printing needs (paper provided vs. bring-your-own)
- [ ] Equipment logistics (printer, cart, storage cabinet)
- [ ] Parking access or passes for VITA staff

6.2 Plan for Ongoing Troubleshooting

Even well-planned clinics require adjustment once they are live. Establish a plan for early and frequent check-ins between the county and VITA leads.

➔ Create a clear process for addressing operational issues, space constraints, or workflow challenges.
➔ Be prepared to adjust procedures based on staff and client experience.

07. Data, Tracking & Measurement

Tracking a small number of clear data points can help counties understand what's working, what isn't, and where to focus limited time and resources. **The goal is learning and improvement, not perfect attribution.** Acknowledging the inherent data quality constraints, measuring the success of your initiative will be important for understanding impact.

TIP!

Filers may not know that a program that referred them is a "county program."

Find out how community members refer to various services and make sure that hotline and VITA site questions and lists of potential answers about where people heard about free tax prep use that language.

7.1 Metrics

Project leads may choose to track some but not all of these metrics.

Hotline Activity - If your county operates a hotline for this initiative, tracking basic volume and referral sources will help you understand demand and awareness of the service. If piggy-backing on an existing hotline, consider creating a different phone number for the county referral collateral to easily track call volume metrics. A simple intake spreadsheet works for hotline tracking.

- ➔ Number of hotline calls
- ➔ How callers heard about free tax preparation (e.g., which department, email, flyer, staff referral)
- ➔ Are callers
    - ◆ New to VITA?
    - ◆ Previous non-filers?
    - ◆ Previous users of a paid preparer service?

Website Activity - Setting up attribution systems beyond total visits needs to be carefully considered ahead of launch. Ideally, set up a custom URL for each department that is used in each major department's print collateral, emails, texts, and social media posts. If you want to know which marketing pushes converted to website engagement, that is also possible to set up fairly simply using the native analytics on whatever website hosting platform the project chooses. At a minimum, ask departments to keep a record of when they did certain marketing efforts - you may see spikes in volume that correlate with those days.

- ➔ Number of website visits (total)
- ➔ Number of website visits from each department
- ➔ How callers heard about free tax preparation (e.g., which department, email, flyer, staff referral)

Department Engagement- Understand which departments are actively participating in worker education and how. Use an intake form for training sessions. Training video engagement can be tracked with trackable custom links for each department that redirect to a single training video(s).

- ➔ Number of staff trained (compared to targets)
- ➔ Participation in other worker education activities (emails, briefings, meetings)
- ➔ Views and completion rates of training videos

Worker Experience - Use simple questions in a quick survey at the end of training activities to gauge whether staff feel informed and confident about offering referrals.

- ➔ Knowledge of VITA services and how to refer clients

- ➔ Perceived value of filing taxes for clients
- ➔ Comfort level making referrals to VITA

Outreach Activities - Develop a centralized system for documenting what outreach actually happens.

- ➔ Department-led outreach activities (emails, texts, posters, reminders)
- ➔ Timing and frequency of outreach efforts

On-Site Clinic Activity - For counties operating on-site clinics, track basic operational data to inform future planning.

- ➔ Number of on-site clinic days & hours
- ➔ Approximate number of filers served
- ➔ Were sites fully booked?

VITA Filers - Work with VITA partners to add questions to their tax preparation software, TaxSlayer. See Appendix D for tips about working with TaxSlayer for data collection. The project-level evaluation lead will need to collaborate with VITA partners to develop a consistent set of questions (and translations) to be added to that system at each VITA partner site. A standardized and common-sense data dictionary is important. Appendix E has example questions.

- ➔ Total filers
- ➔ How filers heard about free tax preparation
  - ◆ From a county department?
  - ◆ Which department?
  - ◆ How? (email, text, social media, flyer, staff referral)
- ➔ Are filers
  - ◆ New to VITA?
  - ◆ Previous non-filers?
  - ◆ Previous users of a paid preparer service?
- ➔ Consider conducting interviews or focus groups with people who were referred by county departments to understand their qualitative experience.

7.2 Data Reporting & Analysis

There are many sources for project metrics. Effective evaluation and continuous improvement work will prioritize:

TIP!

Data collection at VITA sites will likely be implemented by volunteers, which typically results in messy data.

A hands-on approach to data collection training and early data review is necessary to ensure usable data.

- ➔ Clear data reporting expectations that are built into partner agreements, including a budget for staff time to vet proposed questions, get translations, set up tracking systems, pull regular reports, and troubleshoot issues.
- ➔ Centralized data collection, cleaning & analysis.
- ➔ Technical assistance - partners who are collecting data may not have technical expertise in data tracking and reporting.

Appendix A: Roles & Responsibilities Details

Project-Level Roles

Co-Lead Roles	Responsible For
Project Lead *County co-lead*	• Define and gain consensus on vision, goals, partner roles, and expectation, timeline, and metrics • Develop written agreements (e.g. MOUs) for departments to clarify expectations, including any on-site clinic plans • Solicit philanthropic funds in partnership with Co-Leads • Manages project budget • Lead regular check-ins with core leadership team

VITA Co-Lead
CBO co-lead
	• Advise the project lead, based on operational understanding of VITA and tax season realities, on:
	    ○ Vision, goals, partner expectations, and metrics
	    ○ Project timelines
	    ○ Communications campaign content and alignment with other tax outreach efforts
	    ○ On-site clinic planning
	• In partnership with Co-Leads, solicit philanthropic funds
	• Co-lead regular check-ins with core leadership team
	• Serve as liaison from project leadership to VITA network
	• Advise on roll-out of on-site VITA clinics
	• Subgrant portions of project management to additional VITA partners, as appropriate

Project Manager
Either co-lead
	• Draft & socialize implementation plan, in partnership with other project leads. Plan should include:
	    ○ Departmental-level training, outreach, & on-site clinic plans
	    ○ Communications content, approvals, & distribution plans
	    ○ Hotline & website deployment & referral attribution plans
	    ○ Evaluation plan
	    ○ PR plan
	• Convene partners for:
	    ○ Co-lead kick-off work to gain consensus on vision & goals
	    ○ All partner kick-off
	    ○ Co-lead ongoing alignment meetings
	    ○ All partner coordination meetings for updates & troubleshooting
	    ○ Year-end all partner debrief & celebration
	• Provide ad hoc technical support
	• Conduct outreach to additional project partners as opportunities arise (funders, VITA partners, county partners)
	• Gather project onboarding materials

Additional Project Roles	**Responsible For**

Communications Content & Materials	• Develop, with input from all partners:
	    ○ Internal & external communications plans & timeline
	    ○ Client-facing outreach toolkit
	    ○ internal communications toolkit
	• Navigate approval processes for communications toolkits

	• Manage printing & distribution of physical collateral • Keep the communications plan moving by reminding and supporting departments to complete agreed-upon actions on schedule
Worker Training	• Create training curriculum & content • Schedule, conduct, & track participation in training sessions

Scheduling Platforms	• Set up of scheduling website & hotline
	  ○ Staffing, infrastructure, operations
	  ○ Attribution data tracking systems
	  ○ Reporting systems

Evaluation	• Determine evaluation strategy
	• Gather targets from all partners
	• Support implementation of tracking and reporting for
	  ○ Worker training & education systems
	  ○ VITA sites
	  ○ Hotline
	  ○ Website
	• Review data and troubleshoot tracking issues
	• Provide mid-project updates on progress toward target
	• Analyze final outcomes and share findings with partners & funders

PR	• Coordinate media outreach and messaging - press pitches, earned media opportunities, and head up alignment with partner communications teams • Plan and support press moments and public events, such as kickoffs, site visits, or milestone announcements

County Department-Level Roles

At the County Department level, dedicated leads should be assigned to coordinate the various elements of the initiative. Executive sponsors should assign dedicated staff to lead specific operational functions critical to the initiative's success. **Depending on the size of the department, multiple roles will likely be filled by the same staff person**. These roles should be documented clearly to maintain a clear understanding in the case of staff turnover (see Departmental Planning Template).

Departmental Role	Responsible For
Executive Sponsor	• Committing department resources to support the initiative • Setting department-level strategy and communication • Assigning relevant staff to support • Decision-making (must have authority to implement) • Liaison with executive sponsor from county departments and lead VITA partner
Departmental Project Manager	• Maintaining timelines and tracking deliverables • Serving as liaison to evaluation team • Attending project coordination meetings and sharing back relevant information internally • Liaison with project manager(s) from county departments and

	community VITA partners
Communications	• Drafting/editing internal and external outreach materials • Managing internal and external campaigns (including securing necessary approvals)
Worker Education & Internal Communication	• Determining training formats and alignment with staff needs • Conducting trainings, developing training materials • Tracking desired training metrics
On-Site Clinic(s)	• Lead on-site clinic planning meetings, in partnership with VITA on-site clinic lead(s) • Advise on operational plans for each location • Provide technical assistance as needed
Evaluation	• Confirming that attribution systems are accurately implemented for the department • Tracking desired attribution metrics • Providing timely data to evaluators

VITA Partner Roles

Project Co-Leads should identify VITA partner staff to manage these roles. These roles could be handled by the CBO co-lead organization or subcontracted to other VITA partners.

VITA Partner Role	Responsible For
VITA Project Liaison(s)	• Regular attendance/participation in ongoing coordination and troubleshooting calls • Share updates about tax preparation services data with project team on an ongoing basis
On-Site Clinic(s)	• Attend on-site clinic planning meetings w/ department counterparts • Advise on operational plans for each location • Provide technical assistance as needed
Evaluation	• Initial set-up of tracking systems within tax filing database • Ongoing oversight and troubleshooting of data collection • Reporting at established intervals • Operationalizing informed consent interview processes and filer interviews

Appendix B: Planning Timeline

Phase 1: Project Set-Up & Early Buy-In

January

- Identify and confirm **project Co-Leads** (e.g., CEO's Office + lead department).
- Hold a **co-lead kickoff meeting (see Section xx above)** to define project goals and success measures
- Identify and pursue **outside funding** to support outreach, training, and evaluation.

Phase 2: Partner Engagement & Pitching

January – March

- Conduct outreach to **county departments**:
    - Educate leadership on the tax ecosystem (VITA, credits, timelines).
    - Pitch the initiative and clarify expectations for participation.
- Conduct outreach to **VITA partners**:
    - Pitch the project model.
    - Discuss anticipated roles, capacity needs, and timelines.
- Begin documenting **early commitments and constraints** from both sides.

Phase 3: Program Design & Approvals

March – April

- Confirm **departmental and VITA partner leads** and liaisons.
- With participating departments:
    - Secure **approval for worker education and training plans**.
    - Assess feasibility of **on-site clinics**.
    - Estimate potential referral volume.
- With VITA partners:
    - Identify service capacity and staffing assumptions.
    - Clarify who will lead which components.
- Begin drafting **communications, training, and evaluation plans** for approval.

Phase 4: Capacity & Funding Alignment

May – June

- **May:** VITA partners submit IRS VITA grant applications and request federal funding levels for the upcoming tax year.
- Kick off **implementation preparation**, including:
    - Communications planning (accounting for approval and testing timelines).
    - Initial evaluation and data tracking setup.

Phase 5: Build & Prepare

July – October

- Develop and finalize:
    - Worker training curriculum and materials.
    - Outreach collateral
    - Scheduling platforms and referral tools.
    - Evaluation and attribution systems.

    - On-site clinic locations and logistics.
- **October 15:** Key tax filing deadline (extensions end), enabling clearer planning for the upcoming season.
- Funding levels for VITA partners typically become clearer in **October/November**.

Phase 6: Final Readiness & Launch

November – January

- Schedule worker training sessions and other worker education messaging plans for **December–February**.
- Launch detailed **on-site clinic operations planning**.
- Finalize:
    - Communications approvals (internal and external).
    - On-site operations approvals.
- Conduct worker trainings (December–February).
- Complete on-site clinic planning by **January**.

Appendix C: Budget Template

Budget Category	Line Item	Estimated Cost (Placeholder)	Notes / Assumptions
VITA Partner Capacity	Increased staffing for referrals	$____	Additional staff or overtime during tax season
	On-site clinic staffing & operations	$____	Includes prep staff, space, supplies
	Evaluation participation	$____	Staff time, reporting, interviews
Project Management & Coordination	Central project lead (staff or consultant)	$____	Planning + implementation oversight
	Co-lead coordination staffing	$____	CEO's office / lead department time
	Cross-department coordination meetings	$____	Staff time for recurring meetings
Worker Education & Training	Training curriculum development	$____	Slides, handouts, recorded materials
	Training delivery & participation time	$____	Union-compliant, paid staff time
	Scheduling infrastructure	$____	Tools, coordination support
Client-Facing Outreach & Materials	Campaign planning staff time	$____	Messaging, approvals, coordination
	Design (print & digital)	$____	Templates, translations
	Printing	$____	Flyers, posters, handouts
	Shipping & distribution	$____	Internal mail, partner delivery
Communications & Outreach	SMS/text campaigns	$____	Platform fees + per-message costs

	Targeted digital advertising	$____	Social, search, geo-targeted ads
	Media & public awareness	$____	Press support, materials
Technology & Infrastructure	Hotline setup & staffing	$____	Phone system + staff
	Website creation & hosting	$____	Landing pages or microsite
	Attribution & tracking tools	$____	QR codes, analytics setup
Evaluation & Learning	Evaluation design & data collection	$____	Surveys, focus groups, tracking
	Analysis & reporting	$____	Internal or external support
Convenings & Special Events	Partner retreat / off-site convening	$____	Space, facilitation
	Meals & hospitality	$____	Meetings, trainings
TOTAL ESTIMATED BUDGET		$______	

Appendix D: TaxSlayer Tips

VITA providers use the TaxSlayer software to process tax returns. The Los Angeles pilot learned some important lessons about leveraging that system for data collection.

1. **Adding evaluation questions -** TaxSlayer software does allow for the addition of custom questions that can be set as required for each return. Unfortunately, it does not have a systematic way to add a consistent set of questions for intake at multiple VITA providers.
2. **Linking TaxSlayer Reports** - Reports from the TaxSlayer system do not always have a unique identifier that allows for easy linking of evaluation questions with final tax credit information, and VITA providers are legally prohibited from sharing personal identifying information (PII) about filers to outside entities for any purpose. If that technical constraint remains an issue in future years, it is possible to create an Excel template that concatenates PII in each data report and links them together. The VITA site can paste data into the template and then share a copy of the resulting merged dataset, first removing any identifying information. Expect this process to require plenty of technical support!

Appendix E: Example Questions for VITA Filers

TIP! Test data report outputs early! Question headers sometimes have character limits, which can result in difficulty in differentiating between questions in the output.

Did the client do their taxes last year?//¿Declaró sus impuestos el año pasado??

- ☐ Yes, filed taxes last year//Sí, declaré impuestos el año pasado
- ☐ No, did not file because they weren't eligible to file (e.g. too young, were claimed on someone else's return, waiting for ITIN, etc.)//No, no declararon porque no eran elegibles para presentar (por ejemplo, menores de edad, fueron reclamados en la declaración de otra persona, esperando ITIN, etc.)
- ☐ No, did not file taxes last year for another reason (e.g. they could have filed, but chose not to because it wasn't required)//No, no declararon impuestos el año pasado por otra razón (por ejemplo, podrían haber presentado, pero eligieron no hacerlo porque no era obligatorio)
- ☐ Don't remember / Not sure//No recuerda / no está seguro
- ☐ Prefer not to answer//Prefiere no responder

How did the client do their taxes last year?//¿Cómo declaró el cliente sus impuestos el año pasado?

- ☐ Did not file taxes last year//No declaró impuestos el año pasado
- ☐ Paid to do taxes last year (e.g., H&R Block, local paid tax preparer, paid version of TurboTax, etc.)//Pagó para hacer los impuestos el año pasado (por ejemplo, H&R Block, preparador de impuestos pagado local, versión pagada de TurboTax, etc.)
- ☐ Did taxes last year with free help from Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) at this or another community organization//Hizo los impuestos el año pasado con la ayuda Voluntaria a los Contribuyentes del Impuesto sobre el Ingreso (VITA, por sus siglas en inglés) en esta u otra organización comunitaria.
- ☐ Did taxes last year with free help from a different, non-VITA, free tax prep service (e.g. IRS DirectFile, GetYourRefund, MyFreeTaxes, free version of TurboTax, etc.)// Hizo impuestos el año pasado con la ayuda gratuita de un servicio de preparación de impuestos gratuito diferente, que no es de VITA (por ejemplo, IRS DirectFile, GetYourRefund, MyFreeTaxes, versión gratuita de TurboTax, etc.)
- ☐ Did another way (e.g. help from a friend/family, did on their own, etc.)//Lo hizo de otra manera (por ejemplo, con la ayuda de un amigo/familiar, por su cuenta, etc.)
- ☐ Don't remember / Not sure//No recuerda / no está seguro

What is the primary way the client heard about us?//¿Cuál es la forma principal en que el cliente se enteró de nosotros?

- ☐ Did taxes with VITA last year//Declaró sus impuestos con VITA el año pasado
- ☐ Heard about VITA from a county program (e.g. DPSS CalFresh, CalWORKs, county workforce / job center, senior & community center, DCFS program, WIC, DPH Home Visiting,

DCBA, etc.)// Se enteró de VITA a través de un programa del condado (por ejemplo, Departamento de servicios sociales (DPSS por sus siglas en inglés) CalFresh, CalWORKs, fuerza de trabajo del condado / centro de empleo, el Departamento de Envejecimiento y Discapacidades, el Departamento de familias y niños (DCFS en inglés), WIC, DPH Visitas al Hogar del condado, DCBA, etc.)

- ☐ Heard another way (e.g. online, friends/family, non-county organization referral, IRS referral, etc.)//Se enteró por otro medio (por ejemplo, Internet, amigos/familiares, referencia de una organización no municipal, referencia del IRS, etc.)

Optional additional responses

- ☐ *Family or friends shared information about VITA//Familiares o amigos compartieron información sobre VITA*
- ☐ *Another nonprofit shared information about VITA// Otra organización comunitaria compartió información sobre VITA*
- ☐ *Community event//Evento comunitario*
- ☐ *Social media post//Publicación en las redes sociales*
- ☐ *IRS website and/or referral// Página web del IRS y/o referencia*
- ☐ *Google search// Búsqueda en Google*
- ☐ *News Outlet (tv, radio, newspaper)//Medios de comunicación (televisión, radio, periódicos)*
- ☐ *Advertisement (billboard, metro, bus bench, etc)//Publicidad (anuncio en cartelera, metro, parada de autobús, etc.)*

Did the client hear about VITA from any of the following county programs?// ¿Se enteró el cliente de la existencia de VITA a través de alguno de los siguientes programas del condado?

- ☐ No, didn't hear about VITA from a county program//No, no se enteró de VITA a través de un programa del condado
- ☐ DPSS - CalFresh// Departamento de Servicios Sociales: DPSS - CalFresh (en inglés)
- ☐ DPSS - CalWORKS// Departamento de Servicios Sociales: DPSS - CalWORKS (en inglés)
- ☐ DPSS - Other program// // Departamento de Servicios Sociales: DPSS - otro programa
- ☐ County workforce center / job center / AJCC//Centro de fuerza laboral del condado / centro de empleo / AJCC (en inglés)
- ☐ Department of Aging & Disability (A&D) Senior and Community Center //el Departamento de Envejecimiento y Discapacidades y centro comunitario
- ☐ Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or Independent Living Program (ILP)//el Departamento de familias y niños (DCFS en inglés) o Programa de vida independiente (ILP en inglés)
- ☐ Department of Consumer Business Affairs (DCBA) (e.g. DCBA counseling hotline, South Whittier Community Resource Center)//Departamento de Asuntos Comerciales del Consumidor (DCBA, por sus siglas en inglés) (por ejemplo, línea directa de asesoramiento de DCBA, Centro de Recursos Comunitarios del Sur de Whittier)
- ☐ Other county program (e.g. WIC, DPH home visiting program, etc.)//Otro programa del condado (por ejemplo, WIC, programa de visitas a domicilio del DPH, etc.)

If the client heard about us from a county program, how did that program tell them about VITA? If they heard about it from a case worker / social worker and another way, choose the case worker option.// Si el cliente se enteró de nosotros a través de un programa del condado, ¿cómo le informó ese programa acerca de VITA? Si se enteraron de esto por un trabajador social y de otra manera, elija la opción de trabajador social.

- ☐ Not Applicable - didn't hear about VITA from a county program//No aplicable - no se enteró de VITA a través de un programa del condado
- ☐ A case worker / social worker gave them information or a referral// Un/a trabajador/a social oles dio información o una referencia
- ☐ The program sent a text// El programa envió un texto
- ☐ The program sent an email//El programa envió un correo electrónico
- ☐ A poster or flier in the county program office// Un cartel o volante en la oficina del programa del condado
- ☐ A social media post from the county program//Una publicación en las redes sociales del programa del condado

Where did the client complete this return?

- ☐ VITA location - specific location
- ☐ VITA location - specific location
- ☐ A Community Event
- ☐ Onsite clinic - specific location
- ☐ Onsite clinic - specific location
- ☐ Virtually / online

Month filed [this is not automatically included in TaxSlayer output]

- ☐ January 2025
- ☐ February 2025
- ☐ March 2025
- ☐ April 2025
- ☐ May 2025
- ☐ June 2025
- ☐ July 2025
- ☐ August 2025
- ☐ September 2025
- ☐ October 2025
- ☐ November 2025

What is the client's primary language?

- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Tagalog

- ☐ Chinese (Cantonese or Mandarin)
- ☐ Farsi
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Armenian
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Decline to State

Did the client qualify for the Foster Youth Credit? (540 Box 77)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Did the client qualify for the Young Child Tax Credit (540 Box 76)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Appendix F: Worker Feedback Survey Examples

ESCA County Staff Training Intake Form

These questions should be filled out by all trainees at the beginning of each training.

1. Name [Open field]

2. Agency [Drop-down, single select]
   - ☐ Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
   - ☐ Department of Public Health Home Visits Program (DPH-HV)
   - ☐ Aging and Disability (A&D)
   - ☐ Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)/ American Job Centers of CA (AJCC)
   - ☐ Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)

3. Program [drop down, multi-select?]
   - ☐ Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
     - ☐ Independent Living Program
     - ☐ Other
   - ☐ Department of Public Health
     - ☐ Home Visits Program
     - ☐ WIC
   - ☐ Aging and Disability (A&D)
     - ☐ Utility Assistance Program
     - ☐ Other Community and Senior Center programs
   - ☐ Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)/ American Job Centers of CA (AJCC)
   - ☐ Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)
     - ☐ CalFresh
     - ☐ CalWORKs
     - ☐ General Assistance

4. Date of Training [date field]

5. Did you do a Claim Your Cash warm handoff training last year?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ I don't remember
   - ☐ Yes {Branches} If yes, about how often were you able to use the script you got at the CYC warm handoff training last year with your clients?
     - ☐ I never used the script
     - ☐ I used it about 25% of the time
     - ☐ I used it about 50% of the time
     - ☐ I used it about 75% of the time

- ☐ I used it 100% of the time

6. How do you <u>most often</u> interact with your clients?
   - ☐ In person
   - ☐ On the phone
   - ☐ Video conference (Zoom, Teams, GoogleMeet)

With this project, we're targeting people who didn't file their taxes last year or paid someone to file their taxes for them. These are our "target population".

7. About how many clients do you talk to each day who fit the target population for a warm handoff?
   - ☐ 0-10
   - ☐ 11-20
   - ☐ 21-30
   - ☐ 31-40
   - ☐ More than 40

8. What language(s) do you speak with your clients? Select all that apply [Multi select]
   - ☐ English
   - ☐ Spanish
   - ☐ Tagalog
   - ☐ Cantonese
   - ☐ Mandarin
   - ☐ Farsi
   - ☐ Vietnamese
   - ☐ Russian
   - ☐ Korean
   - ☐ Japanese
   - ☐ Other (open field)

9. Which of the following demographics are common among your clients? Select all that apply. [multi-select]
   - ☐ Older adults (seniors)
   - ☐ Foster youth/Transitional age youth
   - ☐ People who do not speak English
   - ☐ People with disabilities
   - ☐ People in mixed immigration-status households
   - ☐ Families with children
   - ☐ Other

ESCA County Staff Training Follow-Up Survey Questions

All trainees should receive a link to this survey at the end of their training session. Online learning platform trainees will be required to fill it out before receiving a certificate of completion.

Thank you for participating in a "Warm Handoff" training!

1. How confident do you feel about being able to integrate this script into your conversations?
   - ☐ Very confident – I'm certain I can integrate it without any issues
   - ☐ Somewhat confident – I believe I can integrate it with minor challenges
   - ☐ Neutral – I'm unsure whether I will be able to integrate it
   - ☐ Somewhat unsure – I have concerns about being able to integrate it successfully
   - ☐ Not confident at all – I don't believe I can integrate it successfully

2. Which of the tools do you think you'll use most often to connect clients to VITA?
   - ☐ Hotline
   - ☐ Website
   - ☐ I don't know
   - ☐ Both

3. How easy do you expect it to be to support a warm handoff to the Claim Your Cash hotline?
   - ☐ Very easy – No challenges anticipated
   - ☐ Fairly easy – Minor challenges, but manageable
   - ☐ Moderate difficulty – Some challenges are expected, but achievable
   - ☐ Fairly difficult – Significant challenges that will require extra effort
   - ☐ Very difficult – Major obstacles expected, making it very hard

4. How easy do you expect it to be to support a warm handoff to the Claim Your Cash website?
   - ☐ Very easy – No challenges anticipated
   - ☐ Fairly easy – Minor challenges, but manageable
   - ☐ Moderate difficulty – Some challenges are expected, but achievable
   - ☐ Fairly difficult – Significant challenges that will require extra effort
   - ☐ Very difficult – Major obstacles expected, making it very hard

5. How confident do you feel that connecting your clients with VITA free tax preparation services will help them file for and receive tax credits?
   - ☐ Very confident – I'm certain it will help many of my clients
   - ☐ Somewhat confident – I believe it's likely to help many of my clients
   - ☐ Unsure –I'm unsure whether it will help many of my clients
   - ☐ Not very confident – I doubt it will help many of my clients
   - ☐ Not at all confident - I don't believe it will help many of my clients

6. What concerns do you have about this process that we should know about?

[Open text]

Appendix G: Department Planning Tool

For use by county department leadership in preparation for implementing a free tax prep campaign

Department:
Planning Lead:
Date Completed:

SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP & TEAM STRUCTURE

Executive Commitment

- ☐ Department Head has reviewed and committed to this campaign plan
- ☐ Plan for sustained executive leadership through tax season identified

How will department leadership stay engaged throughout implementation? (e.g., weekly check-ins, monthly updates, attendance at key meetings)

Department Workgroup Members

Identify team members with decision-making authority or direct connection to decision-makers:

Role	Name	Contact	Decision Authority
Communications Lead			
Operations Lead			
Training Lead			
Additional Member			
Additional Member			

SECTION 2: KICKOFF PLANNING MEETING

Meeting Details

Date: ____________________________
Time: ____________________________
Location/Platform: ____________________________
Attendees: ____________________________

Meeting Agenda (DRAFT)

I. Define components of internal communications plan
II. Develop timeline-based implementation plan by reviewing and selecting communication channels and tools
III. Build out external communications plan with timeline and responsible parties
IV. Determine if on-site tax prep clinics will be offered (if yes, complete Section 5)

SECTION 3: COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

A. Information Channels for Staff

Select at least TWO:

- ☐ Weekly internal emails — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Intranet FAQs — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Newsletter blurbs — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Print signage in breakrooms — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Add 5-minute tax reminders to standing team/department meetings — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Advertise on screens in offices/lobbies — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Other: _______________

B. Training Formats for Staff

Select at least TWO:

- ☐ Short training video — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ 1-Pager overview — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Microtraining slides — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Optional in-person briefings — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Joint meetings with VITA partners — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Other: _______________

C. Reinforcement Tools for Staff

Select at least TWO:

- ☐ Supervisor scripts — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Quick-reference cheat sheets — Responsible: _______________

- ☐ Monthly reminders — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Flyers at staff stations — Responsible: _______________
- ☐ Other: _______________

D. Client Outreach Strategy

Email/Text Campaign Commitment:

- ☐ We commit to email campaign (2-3 rounds)
- ☐ We commit to text message campaign (2-3 rounds)

Budget needed for email/text campaign?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
  If yes, estimated amount: $ _______________

Other client outreach methods selected:

- ☐ Social media campaign — Platform(s): _______________
- ☐ Flyers/posters in client waiting areas
- ☐ Information at reception/intake points
- ☐ Referral during case management appointments
- ☐ Other: _______________

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

December: Planning Phase

Task	Responsible Party	Completion Date	Status
Complete this planning template			
Identify departmental workgroup			
Hold a kickoff planning meeting			
Review CEO's office content toolkit			

January: Implementation Launch

Task	Responsible Party	Start Date	Status
Train department staff on referral process			
Launch internal communication campaign			
Begin client outreach			
Attend CEO's office planning check-in			

February - April: Tax Season Execution

Task	Responsible Party	Frequency	Notes
Send staff reminder communications			
Monitor referral/participation data			
Adjust strategy as needed			
Report back to CEO office			

SECTION 5: CONTENT & SUPPORT NEEDS

Materials We Need from CEO's Office:

- ☐ Client-facing talking points
- ☐ Social media toolkit
- ☐ Email/text message templates
- ☐ Training videos for staff
- ☐ Desk guides/quick reference
- ☐ Flyer/poster templates
- ☐ Other: _______________

Additional Support Needed:

- ☐ Technical assistance filling out this template
- ☐ Budget for text/email campaigns
- ☐ Training facilitation
- ☐ Content customization
- ☐ Translation services
- ☐ Other: _______________

SECTION 6: SUCCESS METRICS

How will we measure the success of our campaign?

- ☐ Number of staff trained
- ☐ Number of referrals made
- ☐ Number of clients served (if on-site clinic)
- ☐ Client feedback collected
- ☐ Other: _______________

Target goals for this tax season:

____

____

SECTION 7: ON-SITE CLINIC PLANNING

Complete this section only if your department will host on-site tax preparation clinics

A. On-site Clinic Leadership Team

Role	Department Contact	VITA Partner Contact
Overall Planning Lead	*Name* *Phone* *Email*	*Name* *Phone* *Email*
On-site Operations Lead		
Day-to-Day Contact		
Setup & Orientation Lead		
Staff Communication Lead		

B. VITA Team Permissions

What activities are VITA teams permitted to do at our site?

- ☐ Distribute flyers — Where: _______________
- ☐ Table in lobbies — Where/When: _______________
- ☐ Approach clients in waiting rooms — Guidelines: _______________
- ☐ Other: _______________

What activities are NOT permitted?

C. Operational Requirements Checklist

Space & Setup:

- ☐ Private space meeting minimum requirements identified
  - Location: _______________
  - Square footage: _______________
  - Number of stations: _______________
- ☐ Internet access confirmed — Network: _______________
- ☐ Electrical outlets available and sufficient
- ☐ Waiting area for clients designated

Weekly Schedule:

- Days: _______________
- Hours: _______________
- Start Date: _______________
- End Date: _______________

Equipment & Supplies:

- ☐ Paper provided by: _______________
- ☐ Printer cart available — Location: _______________
- ☐ Secure cabinet/storage for VITA materials — Location: _______________
- ☐ Parking passes for VITA staff arranged — Quantity: _______________
- ☐ Signage/wayfinding in place

D. Communication & Coordination Plan

How will other department staff be alerted to the clinic schedule?

How often will department staff and VITA staff check in?

- ☐ Weekly — Day/Time: _______________
- ☐ Bi-weekly — Day/Time: _______________
- ☐ As needed

Appendix H: Select Examples of Materials

(For information purposes only – do not use as information will not be accurate)