

Preparing Returns with FSA

Only a small percentage of low-to moderate income taxpayers interested in using volunteer tax preparation service are assisted through the direct model.

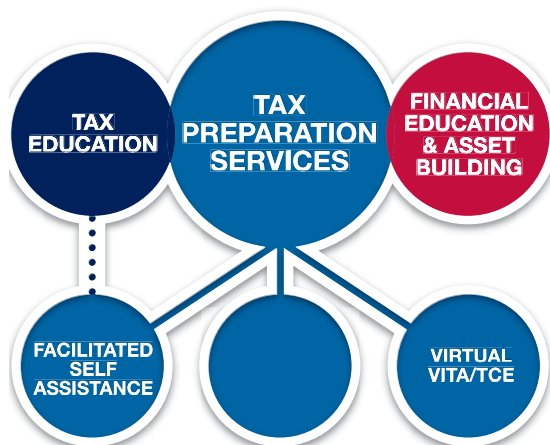
In order to provide assistance to more taxpayers, while increasing taxpayer education and promoting self-sufficiency, SPEC also captures returns through Facilitated Self Assistance (FSA) models. The FSA approach gives taxpayers access to self-preparation software while also providing access to assistance from IRS certified volunteers.

This approach allows sites to offer alternatives by assisting taxpayers preparing their own returns on-site or at home from a phone, tablet or other device. Compared to traditional tax preparation sites, FSA sites require less support and offer flexibility to the taxpayers you serve and the volunteers providing support.

SPEC can assist your FSA efforts in the following ways

- Identify underserved locations based on filing data (potential FSA sites)
- Provide loaner laptops to your FSA Fusion or Standalone sites
- Discuss ways to successfully market FSA
- Promote the use of FSA nationally
- List FSA locations on the VITA locator tool
- Discuss FSA site and software options
- Provide customized URL for tracking accepted FSA returns
- Assist with site setup as needed
- Ensure accepted returns are counted and credited toward program goals
- Provide overall guidance and support

SPEC Business Model



Please contact your local **SPEC Tax Consultant** or **Territory Manager** for additional information, or if you have any questions.

For more information, you may email partner@irs.gov

Facilitated Self Assistance

FSA

A concept designed to provide increased taxpayer access to **free tax preparation services.**



FSA SERVICE MODELS

- Through FREE volunteer return preparation programs, organizations like yours help more than 3 million people file their taxes each year
- The IRS estimates that 16 million additional taxpayers would seek FREE tax help if it were readily available
- Organizations are asked to do more with less
- A growing number of people are conducting business online

Different FSA models are available to fit your organizational and community needs:

FSA Fusion

Co-located with an existing traditional tax prep site. Provides a space for taxpayers to prepare with assistance nearby.

FSA Standalone

Physical site established solely for on-site taxpayer self-prep with certified volunteers present. Common venues are libraries or school auditoriums/classrooms. Great for events or groups.

FSA Remote

No space, no problem. Volunteers can assist taxpayers from home through phone, email or other chat tools. Your site is provided a unique hyperlink (web link) that is shared with taxpayers. Taxpayers can prepare their own return from home with or without assistance.

Choose FSA today!

Self-Service – A Way of Life

Adding a self-service option expands on the IRS's current tax assistance programs. Traditionally, volunteer tax preparation sites use one volunteer to assist one taxpayer at a time. FSA allows one volunteer to facilitate and help many taxpayers at once. Taxpayers who utilize FSA products may never ask for assistance. This not only increases efficiency in sites, but also teaches people about their taxes.

You can expand your reach to taxpayers and increase taxpayer access by adding an FSA option at your existing site or opening a new dedicated site either physically or on-line.

There is no quality review since FSA returns are self-prepared by the customer and there is a reduced adherence to the number of Quality Site Requirements since this is a taxpayer self-prep tool.

Benefits to VITA/TCE Partners

- Prepare and e-file more tax returns
- Identify those who really need one-on-one help
- Reduce lines at peak times
- Offer more volunteer opportunities
- Increase options for taxpayers
- Receive credit for accepted returns
- Volunteer Flexibility
- Less Paperwork

Benefits

Access + Assistance = Accomplishment

People who prepare their own tax returns are among the fastest growing segments of taxpayers. Step-by-step interview questions in the tax software make it easier than ever for people to prepare an accurate return.

Although tax software programs are fairly simple to navigate, questions may come up and it's always helpful to have some guidance. By providing a certified volunteer to answer questions, FSA gives taxpayers the confidence they need to prepare their own return and enables them to file future returns on their own. The access, ease, support and versatility of FSA Tools provide your organization with an option that is easy to market.

Benefits to Taxpayers

- Free tax preparation and e-filing of federal and state return
- Brand-name interview-based software helps taxpayers file more accurately
- Leverages existing computer skills
- Assistance from IRS-certified volunteers as needed
- Reduced wait time for tax prep
- Expanded free tax help options
- Increased education and understanding about their tax return
- Builds confidence to file without assistance

Benefits