

Sample article for organizations, employers and others to reach customers (383 word count)

Provide the following article in your communication vehicles about FREE tax preparation services.

Filing season begins and FREE tax preparation is available

The filing season for tax year 2011 is here. To get help with tax preparation and find out about possible tax credits and deductions, you should take advantage of IRS sponsored free volunteer tax preparation programs. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs are free for qualified people.

Qualifications for free assistance:

VITA offers free tax preparation help for people with incomes of \$50,000 or less. With more than 5,000 VITA sites nationwide, the IRS continues to expand its partnerships with nonprofit and community organizations performing vital tax preparation services.

TCE provides free tax help to people who are age 60 and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement unique to seniors. TCE is operated by AARP and other community organizations that receive grants to run these programs. With more than 6,000 TCE sites nationwide, you are sure to find one close to you.

Both the VITA and TCE programs provide free basic income tax return preparation to qualified individuals in local communities. Trained and certified volunteers can inform you about special tax credits for which you may qualify, such as the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#), [Child Tax Credit](#), and Credit for the Elderly.

In addition to the traditional face-to-face tax preparation services offered in previous years, IRS is launching a service which is available at select VITA and TCE locations for the upcoming filing season. Some sites will offer the opportunity for qualified taxpayers to prepare and e-File their own returns, with the help of an IRS-certified VITA/TCE volunteer, using popular, easy-to-use tax preparation software. Whether you prefer to have a volunteer prepare your return or choose to do it yourself with the help of a volunteer, these FREE services will give you the help you need.

You can typically find locations and hours for these volunteer tax preparation sites through city hotlines and local community organizations. Beginning in February, you'll be able to search on www.irs.gov, keyword VITA, and find the VITA site nearest you. You can also call the IRS toll-free at 1-800-906-9887.

To find a site operated by AARP Tax-Aide, visit www.aarp.org or call 1-888-227-7669.

Note: April 17 is the due date for filing individual tax returns, (April 15 falls on a Sunday and Monday, April 16, is Emancipation Day, a federal holiday).

NOTE TO EDITOR: Below are helpful resources on IRS.gov.

[FREE Tax preparation](#) help for you by Volunteers