

Providing Volunteer Income Tax Assistance to Underserved Rural Communities through Virtual VITA

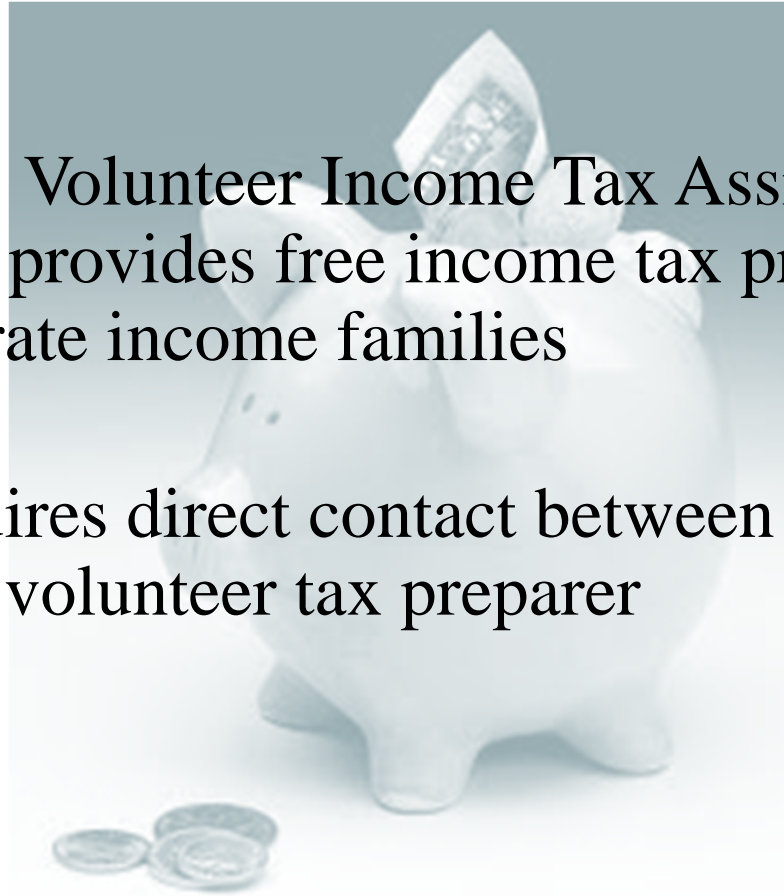
NACDEP 2012 CONFERENCE
PARK CITY, UTAH



Dean Miner, Utah State University Extension
Margie Memmott, Utah State University Extension
Mike Johnson, Utah State University Extension

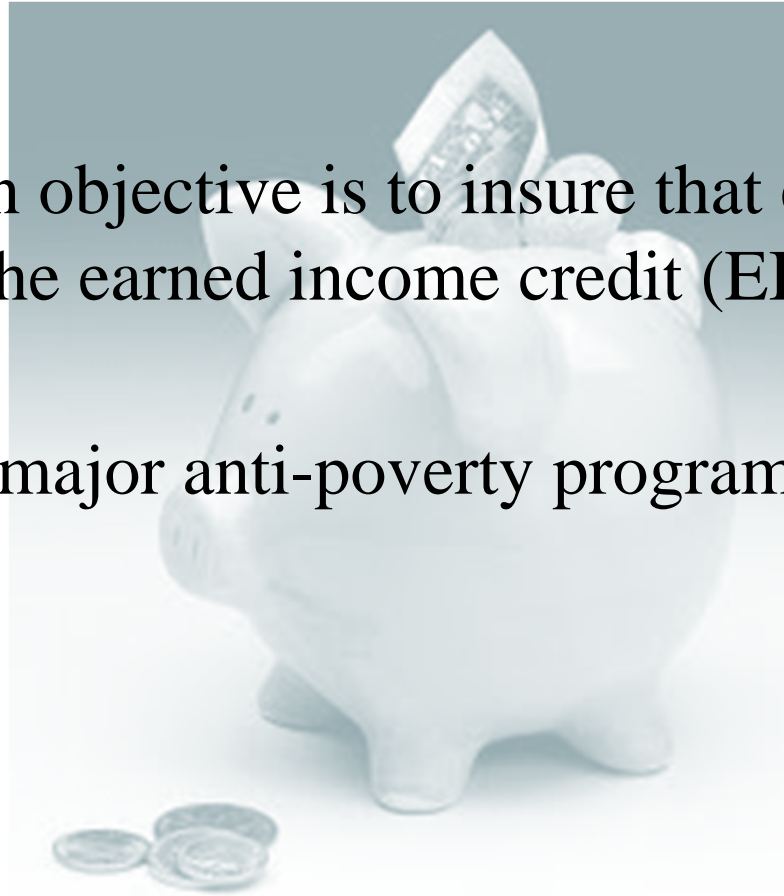
What is VITA?

- ▶ The IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program provides free income tax preparation for low to moderate income families
- ▶ IRS requires direct contact between taxpayer and certified volunteer tax preparer



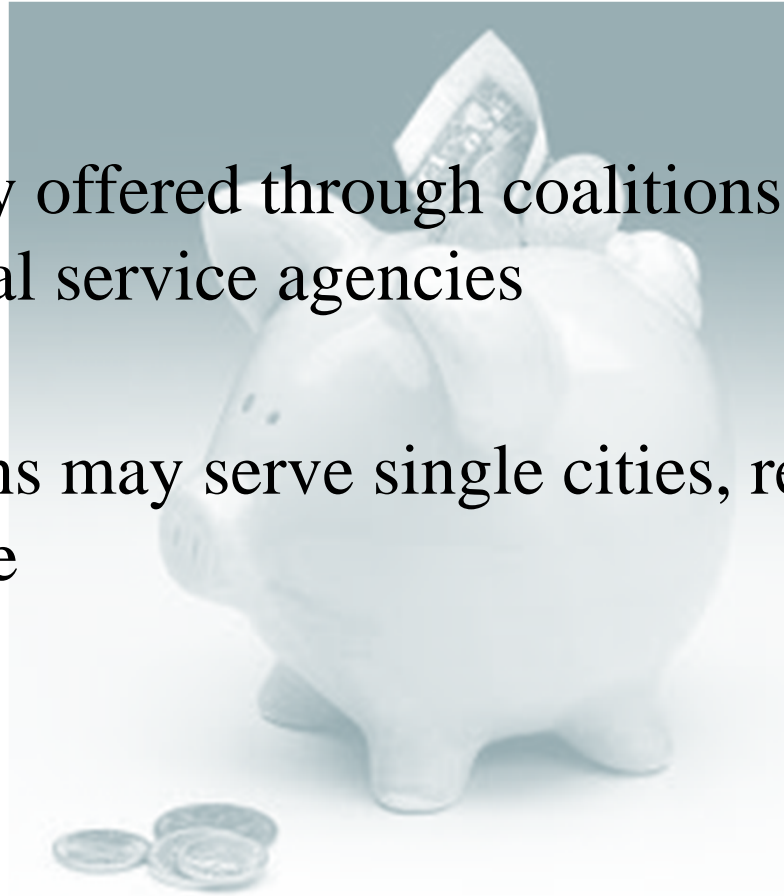
What is VITA?

- ▶ The main objective is to insure that eligible taxpayers receive the earned income credit (EIC)
- ▶ EIC is a major anti-poverty program in the U.S.



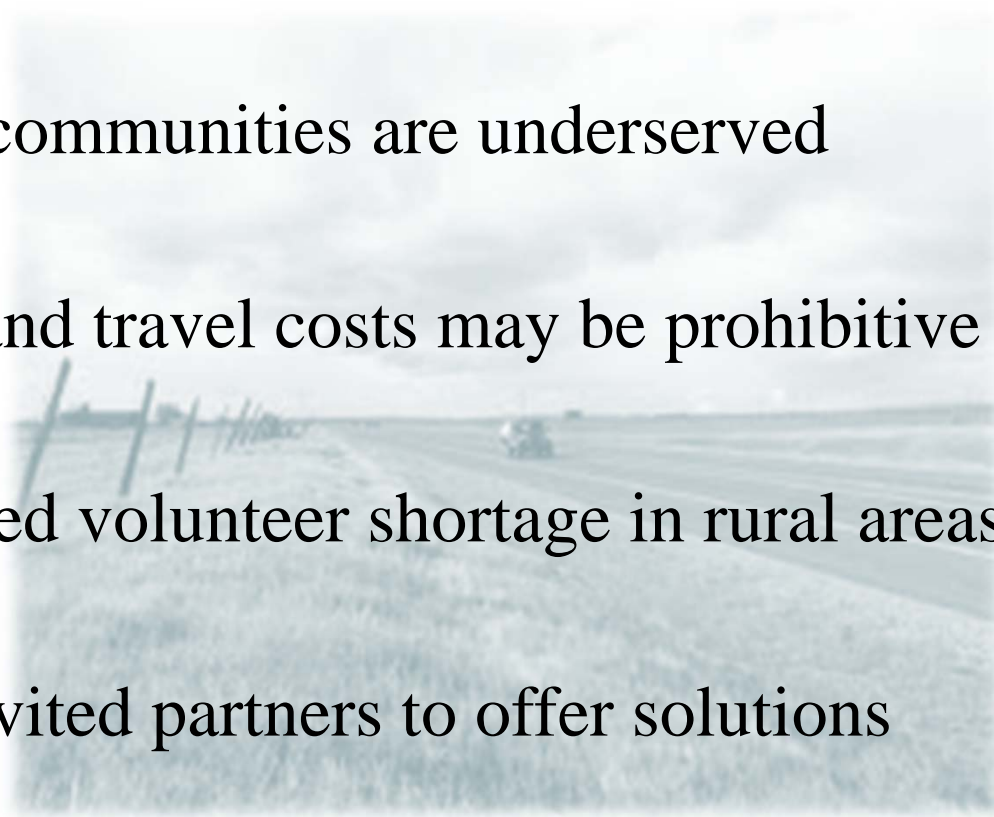
What is VITA?

- ▶ Typically offered through coalitions of non-profits and social service agencies
- ▶ Coalitions may serve single cities, regions or be statewide



VITA Challenges

- ▶ Rural communities are underserved
- ▶ Time and travel costs may be prohibitive
- ▶ Certified volunteer shortage in rural areas
- ▶ IRS invited partners to offer solutions



Virtual VITA

- ▶ In 2009, USU Extension initiated a VITA delivery process, now called Virtual VITA
- ▶ This procedure offers exciting opportunities for Extension to become involved with VITA




This session will:

1. Describe the procedure
2. Identify the role Extension can play and the responsibilities that agents would have
3. Outline the benefits that can be gained from Extension participation

Virtual VITA

- ▶ Live interaction via shared files over internet
- ▶ Certified preparer in urban area, and tax payer at rural Extension Office with trained facilitators
- ▶ Rural location does not require certified preparer ‘on-site’
- ▶ Process increased VITA availability to taxpayers in rural Utah
- ▶ IRS promoting nationwide to enhance VITA outreach in rural America

- ▶ Many Extension Offices may promote awareness of Earned Income Tax Credit
- ▶ Few are involved with VITA due to concerns about demands of participation



Money Talks!
Have you heard?


As Much As **\$5,666** – or More – Could Be Waiting for You!

File a Tax Return to Claim the Benefits You Earned
Earned Income Credit and Child Tax Credit

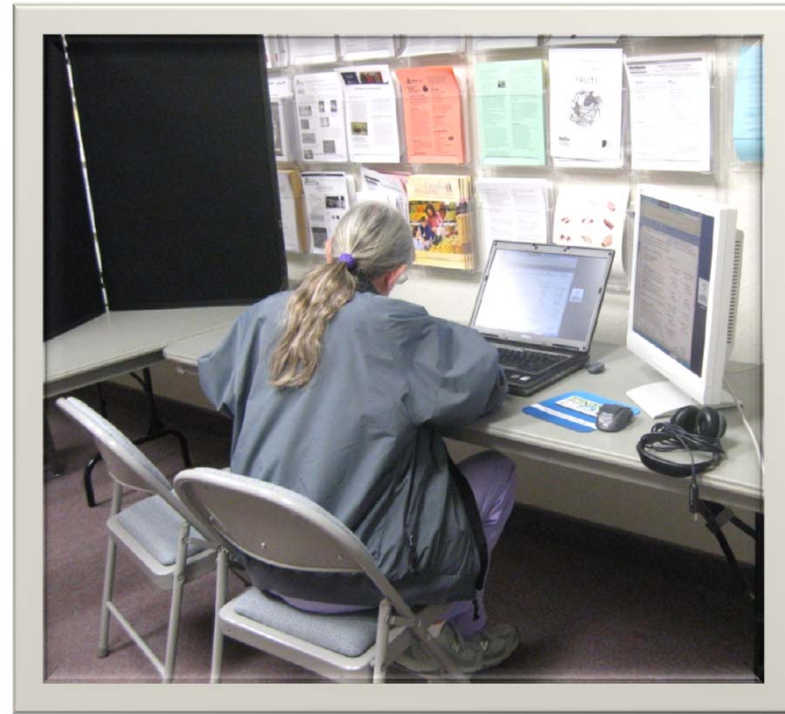
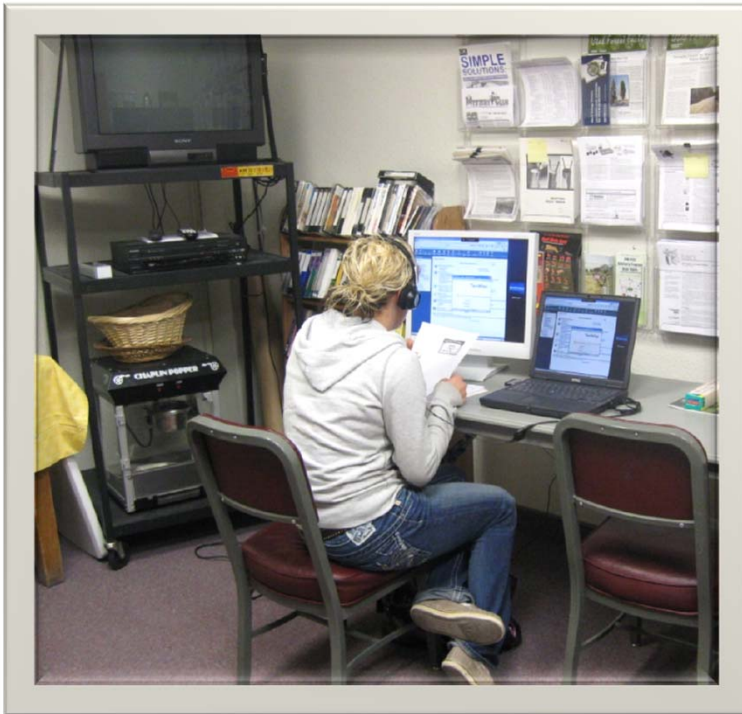
Ⓢ If you worked in 2010, had children living with you and earned less than about \$45,000
OR
Ⓢ Did not have children living with you and earned less than about \$13,400

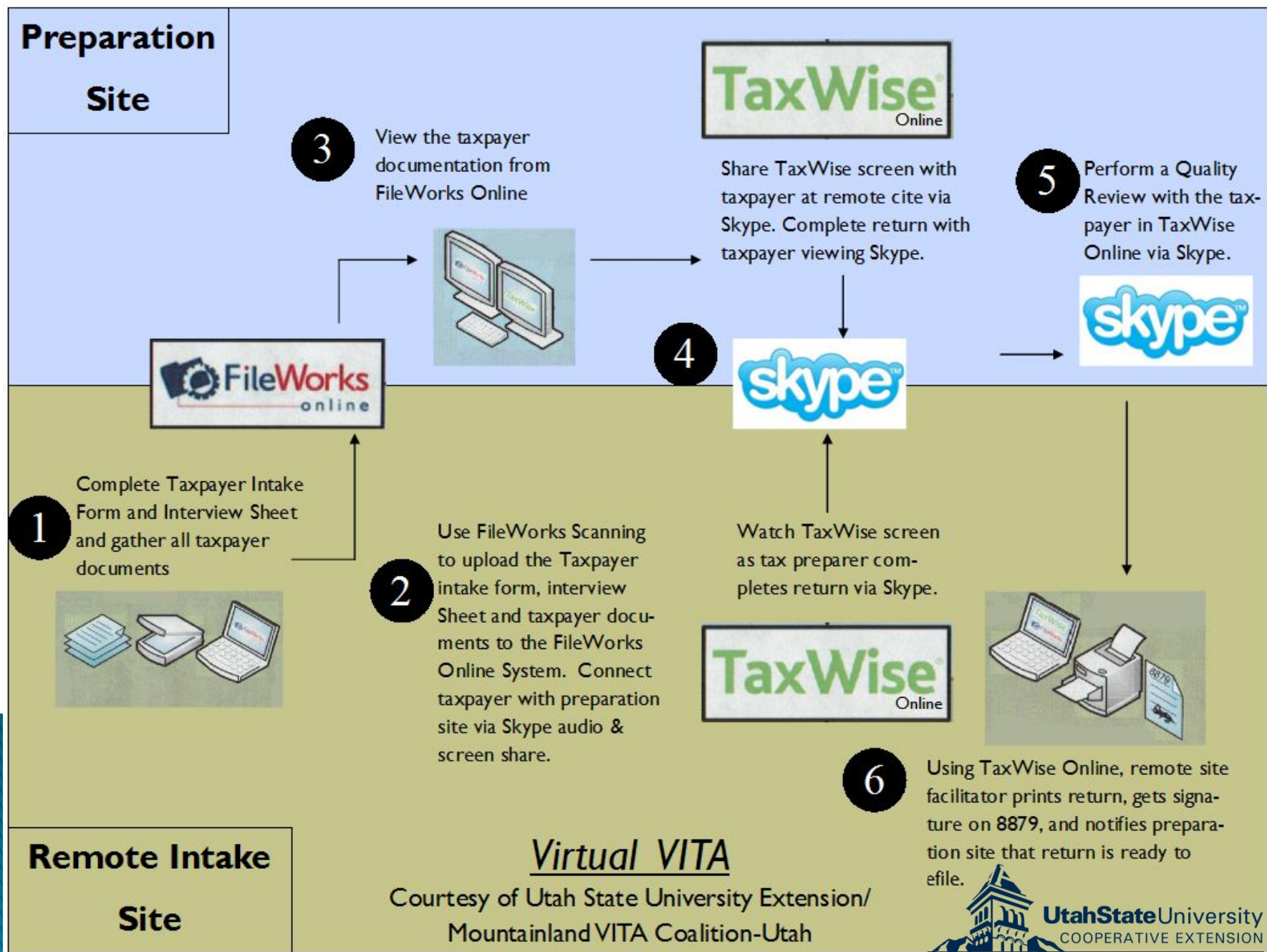
You could qualify! You can get **FREE** tax help.
☑ **Make sure you get the Making Work Pay Credit!**
Call the IRS at **1-800-829-1040** to learn more.

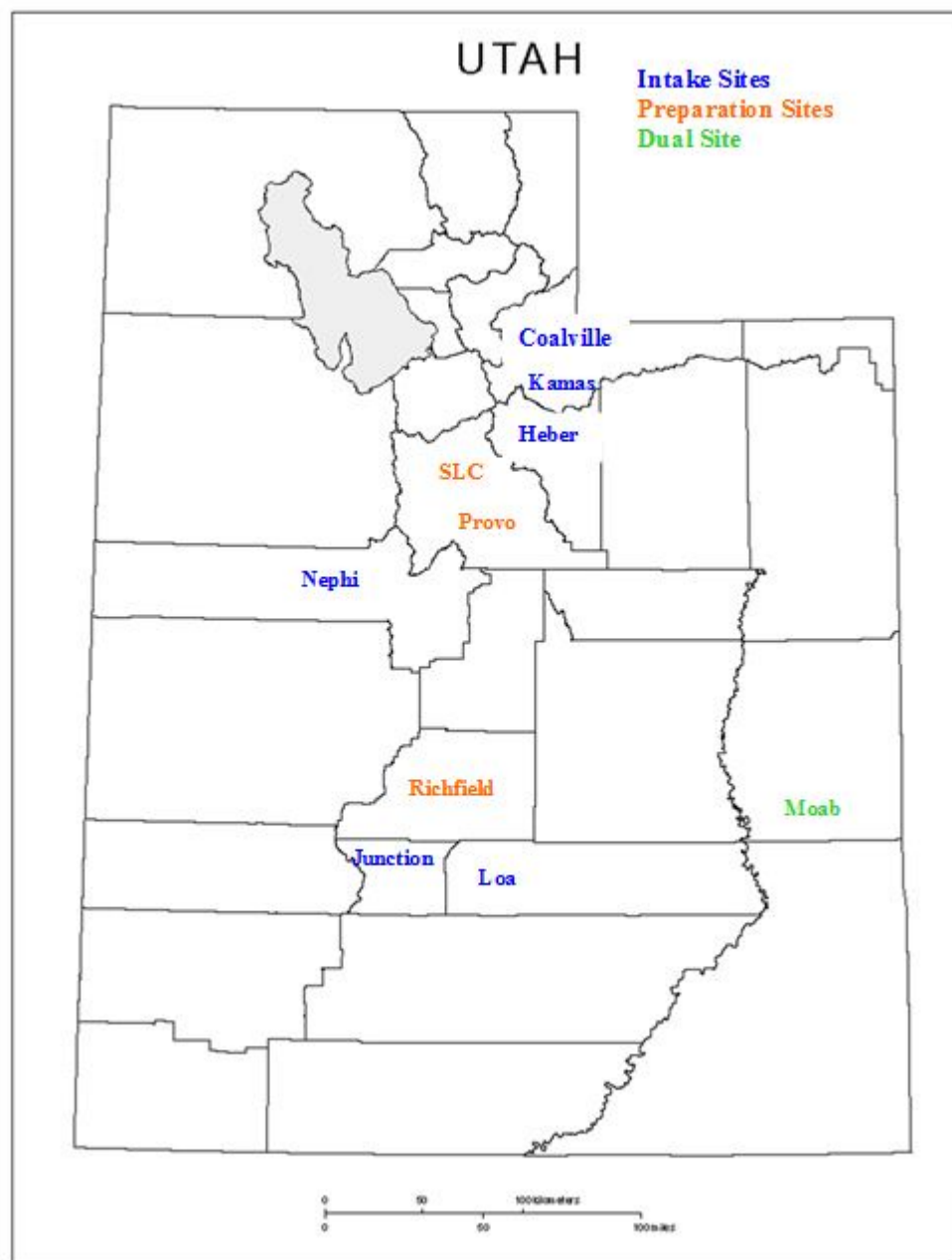
For More Information:



Virtual VITA Procedure







Virtual VITA Impacts

	Coalville	Heber City	Moab	Nephi	Total
# of returns	14	37	85	39	175
Refunds	\$19,966	\$63,844	\$63,034	\$65,463	\$212,306
Prep Savings	\$2,240	\$5,920	\$13,600	\$6,240	\$28,000

Virtual VITA Impacts

	Coalville	Heber City	Moab	Nephi	Total
Economic Impact	\$26,647	\$83,716	\$91,960	\$86,043	\$288,366

Benefits

- ▶ Extension faculty provides financial education, etc. to taxpayer



Other Extension programs . . .



SNAP-Ed



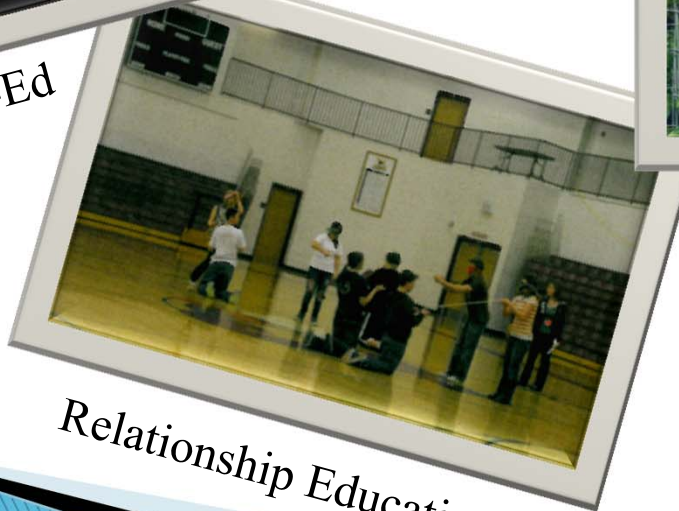
FCS



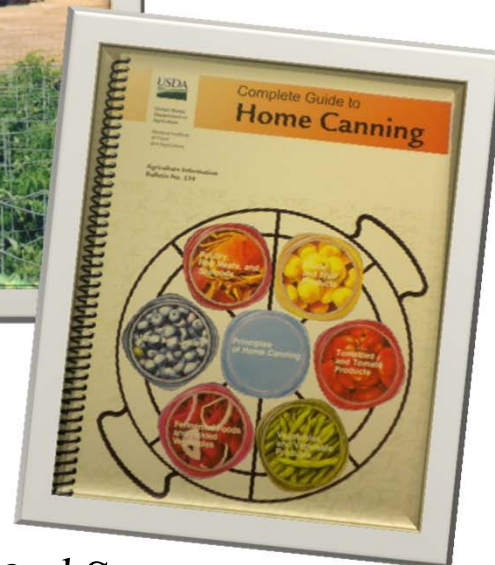
4-H



Horticulture/
Master Gardener



Relationship Education



Food Safety/Preservation

Benefits to Extension

- ▶ Reach underserved audiences that otherwise would not come to Extension Office
- ▶ Multiple opportunities to provide finance education during Virtual VITA process
- ▶ Provided other education and services.
- ▶ Repeat/returning customers
- ▶ Satisfied customers spread the news
- ▶ Trained volunteers facilitate Virtual VITA and also promote Extension services available



Past Four Years of Virtual VITA Development

- ▶ 450 returns
- ▶ \$526,000 federal and state refunds
- ▶ Includes \$213,000 in Earned Income and Child Tax Credits
- ▶ \$62,000 savings in preparation costs




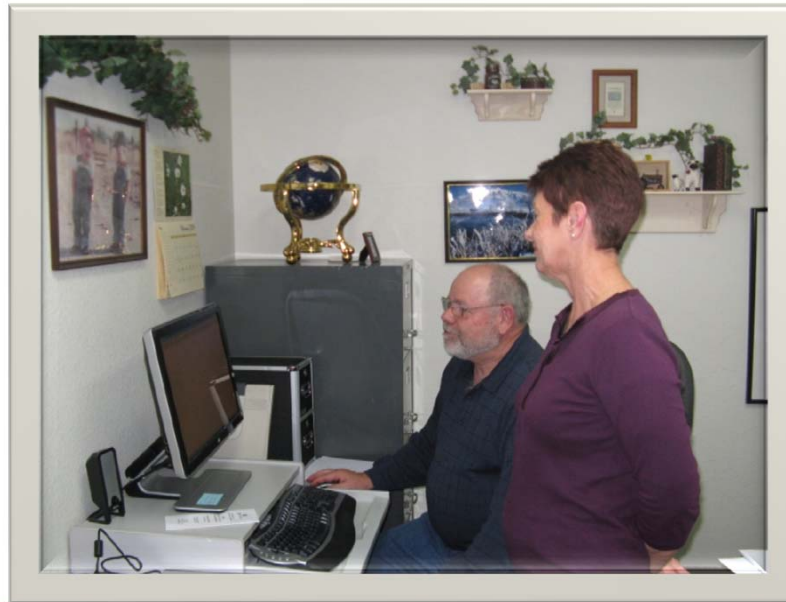
Taxpayers and Virtual VITA

Rate (5-1) your comfort level with the process used to prepare your return.

	All taxpayers	Taxpayers < 50	Taxpayers > 50	
Virtual VITA	4.83	4.89	4.73	
Face-to-face	4.85	4.89	4.80	

Get involved with Virtual VITA

- ▶ IRS encourages coalitions to use Virtual VITA
- ▶ Coalition  Extension



Virtual VITA and Extension- Win/Win



Find Your Coalition

- ▶ National Community of Tax Coalitions (NCTC)
<http://tax-coalition.org/>
- ▶ National EITC Outreach Partnership
<http://www.cbpp.org/eitc-partnership/state-links.htm>



Find VITA Coalitions at NCTC

Step 1



Click 'OUR COALITION'

<http://tax-coalition.org/>

Step 2

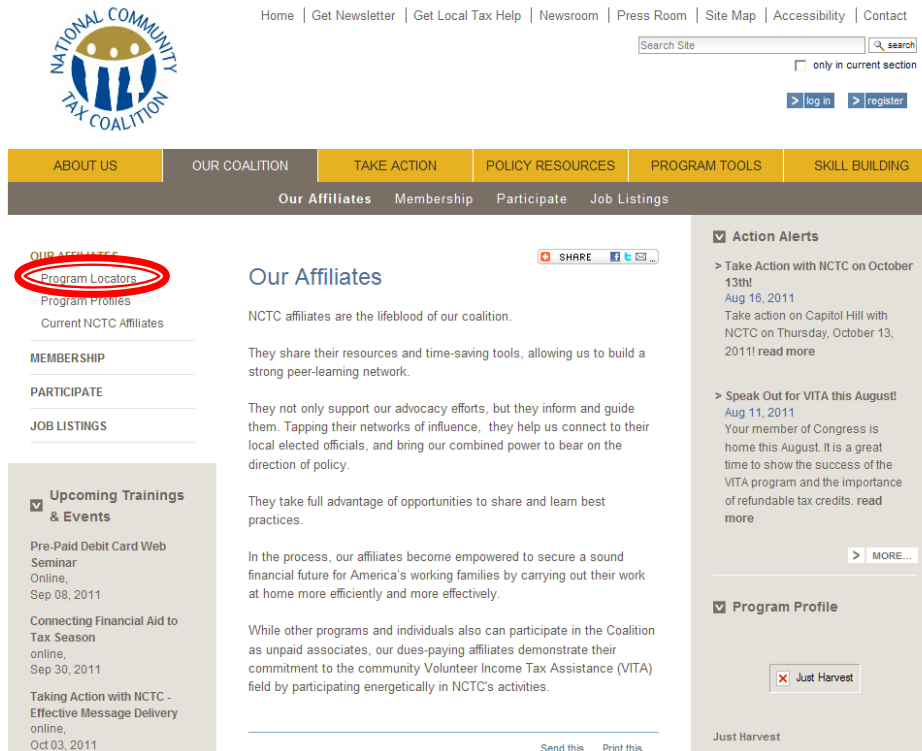
The screenshot shows the National Community Tax Coalition website. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, Get Newsletter, Get Local Tax Help, Newsroom, Press Room, Site Map, Accessibility, and Contact. A search bar is located on the right. The main navigation menu has tabs for ABOUT US, OUR COALITION, TAKE ACTION, POLICY RESOURCES, PROGRAM TOOLS, and SKILL BUILDING. Below these are sub-links: Our Affiliates, Membership, Participate, and Job Listings. The left sidebar contains links for OUR AFFILIATES (circled in red), MEMBERSHIP, PARTICIPATE, and JOB LISTINGS. The main content area features a section titled 'Our Coalition' with a quote: "We attribute a large measure of our success with VITA and asset building to our relationship with NCTC and their affiliates". Below this is a quote from Dennis J. Campa, City of San Antonio, Department of Community Initiatives. A section titled 'One Cause, One Voice, One Coalition' describes the NCTC's mission. A pie chart titled 'NCTC Sectors' shows the distribution of members across various sectors: Non-Profit Organizations, Low-Income Tax Clinics, Education, Foundations, Labor, Other, Government, State, County, and Municipal. The right sidebar contains 'Action Alerts' and 'Program Profile' sections.



Click 'OUR AFFILIATES'

<http://tax-coalition.org/our-coalition>

Step 3



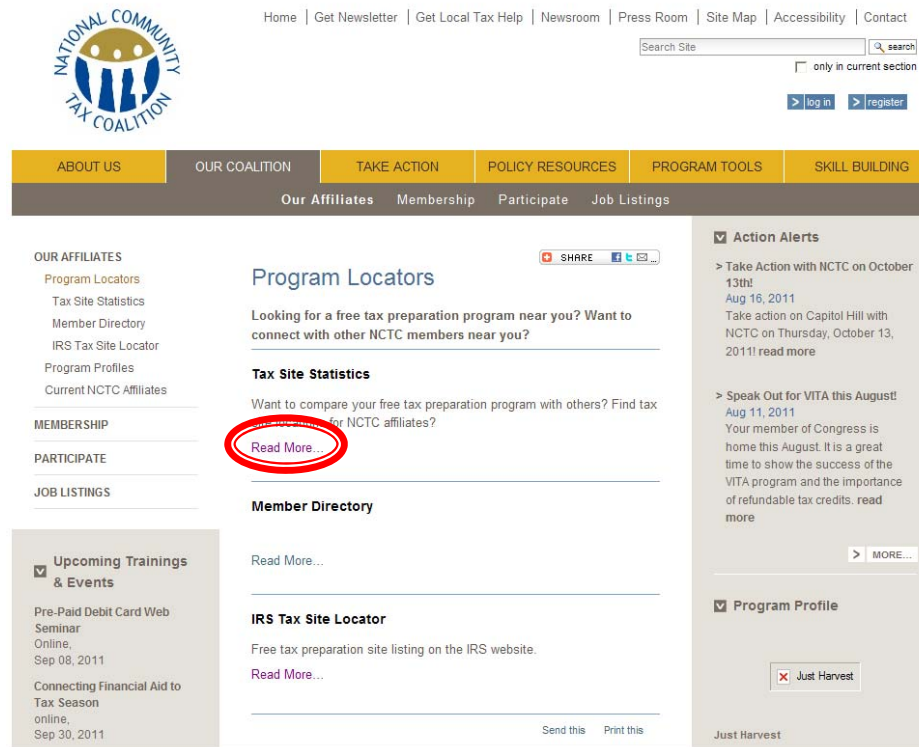
The screenshot shows the National Community Tax Coalition website. The header includes the logo, navigation links (Home, Get Newsletter, Get Local Tax Help, Newsroom, Press Room, Site Map, Accessibility, Contact), a search bar, and a checkbox for 'only in current section'. The main navigation bar has tabs for ABOUT US, OUR COALITION, TAKE ACTION, POLICY RESOURCES, PROGRAM TOOLS, and SKILL BUILDING. Below this is a sub-navigation bar with links for Our Affiliates, Membership, Participate, and Job Listings. The 'Our Affiliates' page is displayed, featuring a sidebar with links to Program Locators (circled in red), Program Profiles, Current NCTC Affiliates, MEMBERSHIP, PARTICIPATE, and JOB LISTINGS. The main content area has a title 'Our Affiliates' and a description of NCTC affiliates. It includes sections for 'Upcoming Trainings & Events' and 'Action Alerts'. The footer of the page has a 'Just Harvest' button.



Click 'Program Locators'

<http://tax-coalition.org/our-coalition/our-coalition>

Step 4



The screenshot shows the National Community Tax Coalition website. The header includes the logo, navigation links (Home, Get Newsletter, Get Local Tax Help, Newsroom, Press Room, Site Map, Accessibility, Contact), a search bar, and login/register buttons. The main navigation bar has tabs for ABOUT US, OUR COALITION, TAKE ACTION, POLICY RESOURCES, PROGRAM TOOLS, and SKILL BUILDING. Below this is a sub-navigation bar with links for Our Affiliates, Membership, Participate, and Job Listings. The main content area is titled 'Program Locators' and includes a sidebar with links to Program Locators, Tax Site Statistics, Member Directory, IRS Tax Site Locator, Program Profiles, and Current NCTC Affiliates. The main content area has sections for 'Tax Site Statistics' (with a 'Read More...' link circled in red), 'Member Directory' (with a 'Read More...' link), and 'IRS Tax Site Locator' (with a 'Read More...' link). The right sidebar contains 'Action Alerts' and 'Program Profile' sections.



Click 'Read More under Tax Site Statistics'

<http://tax-coalition.org/our-coalition/our-coalition/program-locator>

Step 5



The screenshot shows the National Community Tax Coalition website. The 'Tax Site Statistics' section is active, displaying a map of the United States with Minnesota highlighted in red. The page includes navigation links at the top, a sidebar with 'OUR AFFILIATES' and 'MEMBERSHIP' sections, and a main content area with a description of the statistics and a list of states.



Click your state on the map for a list of coalitions in your state

<http://tax-coalition.org/our-coalition/our-coalition/program-locator/tax-site-statistics>

minnesota

program	phone	federal returns	total refunds	site locations
AccountAbility Minnesota	651-287-0187	8,326	\$21,471,428	Minneapolis, St. Paul, Hopkins, Bloomington, Brooklyn Park
Community Action Duluth's Free Tax Preparation	218-726-1665	1,462	\$2,888,877	Duluth
Prairie Five Head Start Free Tax Clinic	320-598-3118	103	\$221,993	Madison

<http://tax-coalition.org/our-coalition/our-coalition/program-locator/tax-site-statistics#ut>

Or Find Your Site at The National EITC Outreach Partnership

The National EITC Outreach Partnership

[Home](#) | [Introduction](#) | [Mission](#) | [Partners](#) | [Resources](#) | [EITC Directory](#) | [Fact Sheet](#)

EITC State Links

Each state link is an Excel spreadsheet file, which you can view on-line or download to your computer. On the page tabs at the bottom of each spreadsheet are shown the locations of one or more coalitions in the state.

Alabama	Illinois	Montana	Rhode Island
Alaska*	Indiana	Nebraska	South Carolina
Arizona	Iowa	Nevada	South Dakota
Arkansas	Kansas	New Hampshire	Tennessee
California	Kentucky	New Jersey	Texas
Colorado	Louisiana	New Mexico	Utah
Connecticut	Maine	New York	Vermont
Delaware	Maryland	North Carolina	Virginia
District of Columbia	Massachusetts	North Dakota	Washington
Florida	Michigan	Ohio	West Virginia
Georgia	Minnesota	Oklahoma	Wisconsin
Hawaii	Mississippi	Oregon	Wyoming
Idaho	Missouri	Pennsylvania	Puerto Rico

(*Links are not available at this time for Alaska in which an EITC coalition may not yet be organized: However, individual organizations may conduct EITC outreach efforts in those states. Please [contact us](#) for information about contacts in those states or to inform us of outreach activities with which you are familiar.)

<http://www.cbpp.org/eitc-partnership/state-links.htm>



Click your state name for a list of coalitions in your state



Questions?



Reference Contact Information:

- ▶ dean.miner@usu.edu
- ▶ margie.memmott@usu.edu
- ▶ mike.johnson@usu.edu