

Tax Credit Outreach in Colorado

PROJECT GOAL:

INCREASE TAX CREDIT CLAIMS IN COLORADO TO REDUCE CHILD AND HOUSEHOLD POVERTY

The project uses new and existing partnerships to increase outreach and referral to free tax filing, with a focus on populations who can benefit most but are not claiming tax credits owed to them. These groups include rural and non-English-speaking households, immigrants, refugees, and low-wage workers.



IMPACT

Research indicates that income from tax credits benefits individuals at every stage of life. Children whose families receive tax credits do better in school, are more likely to attend college, and can be expected to earn more as adults. The recently expanded federal child tax credit is estimated to have the power to lift 40% of children out of poverty. Expanded tax credits:

- Reduce child and household poverty
- Boost food security
- Improve childhood nutrition
- Incentivize employment
- Reduce child maltreatment, trauma, adverse childhood events (ACEs)
- Reduce recidivism rates

KEY STRATEGIES

- 1) **Outreach, dissemination and communications activities** designed to:
 - A) increase awareness of the benefits of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) and how to claim tax refunds among Coloradans who do not file taxes; and
 - B) improve coordination among cross-sector partners to increase awareness and uptake of benefits among low-wage Coloradans.
- 2) **Navigation and referral activities** designed to increase referrals to tax filing, including partnerships with Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites.

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PARTNERSHIPS

A network of new and existing partnerships support outreach, communications, and referral activities aimed at increasing tax filing. Partnership activities include:

- Facilitating a state agency workgroup convened by the Governor to support outreach and alignment across state agencies including health policy, public health, human services, education, public safety, employment, and economic development.
- Collaborating with programs including Bright by Text, HungerFree Colorado, 2-1-1, Denver Housing Authority and the Colorado Benefits Management System to get the word out across Colorado to those who can benefit most.
- Close collaboration and funding of Mile High United Way's Tax Help Colorado and other volunteer income tax assistance sites to connect more Coloradans to free tax help through free call center and in-person tax assistance.
- New collaborations with AmeriCorps and Code For America to offer Coloradans services such as free online tax filing, remote tax filing options, and free in-person tax help through a statewide network of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites and clinics.
- Building relationships and contracting navigator services with small community-based organizations to reach immigrant and refugee communities.

COMMUNICATIONS

- English and Spanish tax credit outreach campaigns – [Get Ahead Colorado](#) and [Hacia Adelante Colorado](#) – encourage Coloradans to file their taxes and connect them to information and free tax filing.
- Each campaign reaches Coloradans through a combination of statewide radio and texting campaigns as well as digital search, display, and social media advertising and campaign websites in English and Spanish.
- An open-access partner toolkit of free campaign resources including flyers, brochures, social media content, and newsletter messages to help us spread the word. Resources are available in multiple languages. Visit: www.getaheadcolorado.org/outreach
- To address disparities in tax filing and tax credit uptake, outreach and communication is focused on reaching non-filers who are not engaged with the IRS, usually because their income is too low to require filing taxes. Non-filers tend to be disproportionately low income, non-English speaking, and rural residents, including residents who do not have a social security number and would need a tax ID number to file (ITIN number).



2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Launched statewide media campaign (getaheadcolorado.org/ / haciaadelantecolorado.org) including TV, statewide radio, partner toolkit, social media and text blasts in English and Spanish, including videos in 11 languages about the child tax credit.
- Leveraging numerous public health and human services programs to get the word out, including training 2-1-1 operators statewide on phone and web-based support.
- Using cross-program and cross-agency promotion to couple tax outreach with other benefits, for example using the Colorado Department of Labor's unemployment insurance application website to also promote tax credits.
- Supporting Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites that provide free in-person tax assistance to low-income filers through grants and partnership.
- Leveraging an AmeriCorps partnership to place two National Civilian Community Corps volunteer teams at two of the largest VITA site networks in the state; resulting in millions of dollars so far in additional tax refund claims this tax season.
- Contracting with community-based organizations to reach immigrant and refugee communities using trusted voices.

FUNDING

The program secured \$1.7 million to support tax credit outreach and communication efforts in advance of the 2022 tax season, with the potential to add additional funds over the next two years. Funding sources include Gary Community Ventures, the US Department of Labor Women's Bureau, and CARES and American Rescue Plan federal pandemic recovery funds. In 2022, SB182 passed into law, securing 4 million in funding to continue outreach and support community partnerships to increase filing.

LEARN MORE

Visit getaheadcolorado.org
Visita haciaadelantecolorado.org

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