

Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) Community Outreach Report

Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications

June 2024



The Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications (OCPSC), housed within the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, initiates and executes campaigns related to the state's highest priority public awareness and community outreach efforts. As the single state entity coordinating California's most important community engagement efforts, the Office allows the state to realize more inclusive and effective outcomes while preventing equity gaps in statewide outreach.

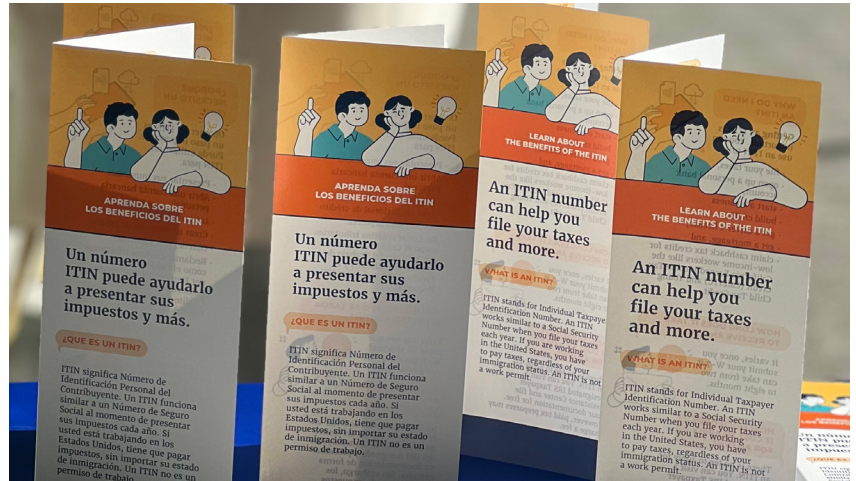
ITIN Defined

An ITIN is a tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to individuals who are not eligible to obtain a Social Security Number from the Social Security Administration.

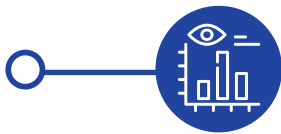
Why are ITINs Important?

When eligible Californians apply for an ITIN, it increases their ability to be eligible for valuable California tax credits, including the California Earned Income Tax Credit and the Young Child Tax Credit.

Requested by the legislature to support public awareness on the ITIN, OCPSC engaged its trusted messenger network of community-based organizations. These organizations provided those who could benefit from applying for an ITIN with accurate and culturally-relevant materials to increase awareness of eligibility and the application process.



Keys to Success



Informed by Research

Consulted with subject matter experts, engaged with target populations and executed a learning roundtable where staff members spoke about their ITIN experiences.

Using OCPSC's Build, Implement and Learn model, the Office is continuously refining its strategies based on insights from partners. This has sustained and increased interest in awareness and utilization.

Tailoring Messaging Based on Feedback

Emphasized tax credits and personal finance opportunities in California.

Cultivate Meaningful Relationships

Supported a network of trusted messengers and established relationships with organizations like the Franchise Tax Board, Internal Revenue Service, and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.



Using Data to Advance Equity

Partnered with community-based organizations to develop targeted outreach using the Healthy Places Index 3.0 (HPI) from the Public Health Alliance of Southern California. The HPI measures community health based on economic, housing, and environmental data.



Through partnerships with other agencies and organizations, and internal research, the Office was able to learn what an ITIN is, who is eligible, and its benefits. These partnerships were also vital in accessing resources and materials needed for community-based organizations to conduct meaningful outreach.

By the Numbers

Between April 2023 - May 2024, OCPSC accomplished the following by the numbers:

157 multi-language assets and reference guides shared with community-based organizations

129,000+ outreach materials from Golden State Opportunity, distributed by OCPSC Trusted Messenger Network

25 meetings with subject matter experts

22 presentations and feedback sessions

7 regional workshops

2 ethnic media briefings with **28 outlets**

98% of OCPSC Trusted Messenger Network conducted outreach on ITIN

1.16 million two-way conversations through door-to-door canvassing, phone banking or other in-person activities

1 million flyers or mailers distributed on ITIN

Partners

- OCPSC Trusted Messenger Network
- California Franchise Tax Board (FTB)
- California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD)
- Golden State Opportunity (GSO)
- United Ways of California
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

Lessons Learned

- **Difficult to measure full impact of outreach** due to lack of data on eligible ITIN applicants such as non-U.S. citizens.
- **Hesitancy among community members due to fears of deportation.** Understanding this sensitivity is crucial for developing trust and effective communication strategies.
- **More IRS-certified individuals, known as Certifying Acceptance Agents (CAAs), are needed to provide direct application support** to alleviate capacity issues in communities where the absence of free agents poses a significant barrier for potential ITIN holders who are reluctant to send original documents by mail, fearing loss.

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“The most exciting aspect of partnering with OCPSC on ITINs is the spread of knowledge and resources regarding ITINs amongst the community.”

Our ITIN application program has grown by over 100% since the prior year. It would grow more, but we are limited by the number of team members who can assist with processing ITIN applications due to funding limitations.”

Mario Ortega, CEO, Abrazar, Inc.

Stories

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“In the past year, Golden State Opportunity has shared vital resources and expertise on the benefits of securing Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs). We deeply appreciate the OCPSC’s initiative to extend these resources through their Trusted Messenger Network, reaching even more individuals. This collaboration exemplifies our shared commitment to empowering communities. By increasing the number of individuals who can secure an ITIN, we pave the way for access to crucial resources like the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) and the Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC), which provide essential financial support to low-income Californians. We look forward to strengthening this partnership and making a lasting impact.”

Amy Everitt, President,
Golden State Opportunity

ITIN holders, a two-parent household with 4 children, 2 under the age of 18 and 2 over 18 attending college, filed their taxes for the first time at CCNP this year. With two children in college, they are aware of the importance of their tax return for their children’s financial aid recertification and always file on time to provide their children with the information they need to complete their application. This year, they will be receiving a federal refund of \$7,802 and a state refund of \$2,374. They were also able to qualify for the Child Tax Credit, amounting to \$5,000, which is already included in their federal refund. They were grateful for the service received, especially since it was free, and stated that they will come back to file their taxes next year.

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“El reembolso que recibimos nos ayudara con mis hijos, ya que dos de ellos van a estar atendiendo la universidad.”

“The reimbursement we received will help me and my kids, especially now that two of them are attending college.”



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“Central City Neighborhood Partners (CCNP) is very grateful for the support provided by OCPSC regarding ITIN and community needs. When CCNP identified a need from the community for more workshops and training, OCPSC sprang into action in connecting us with the right resources. This collaboration strengthened the trusted messenger network, ensuring that both partners and community members had the correct information.”

Diana Alfaro, Associate Executive Director, CCNP



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