

## Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

### CERTIFICATE OF GOOD STANDING

I, the undersigned Director of Commerce and Consumer Affairs of the State of Hawaii, do hereby certify that

HAWAII TAX HELP AND FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT SOLUTIONS

was incorporated under the laws of Hawaii on 04/26/2016 ;  
that it is an existing nonprofit corporation; and that,  
as far as the records of this Department reveal, has complied  
with all of the provisions of the Hawaii Nonprofit Corporations  
Act, regulating domestic nonprofit corporations.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set  
my hand and affixed the seal of the  
Department of Commerce and Consumer  
Affairs, at Honolulu, Hawaii.

Dated: January 10, 2022

Director of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

## Application Submittal Checklist

*The following items are required for submittal of the grant application. Please verify and check off that the items have been included in the application packet.*

- 1) Certificate of Good Standing (If the Applicant is an Organization)
- 2) Declaration Statement
- 3) Verify that grant shall be used for a public purpose
- 4) Background and Summary
- 5) Service Summary and Outcomes
- 6) Budget
  - a) Budget request by source of funds ([Link](#))
  - b) Personnel salaries and wages ([Link](#))
  - c) Equipment and motor vehicles ([Link](#))
  - d) Capital project details ([Link](#))
  - e) Government contracts, grants, and grants in aid ([Link](#))
- 7) Experience and Capability
- 8) Personnel: Project Organization and Staffing

  
AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE

SUSAN TAMANAHA – PRESIDENT / CEO  
PRINT NAME AND TITLE

1/18/2022  
DATE





## **APPLICATION FOR GRANT**

### **I. CERTIFICATION**

**1. Certificate of Good Standing – attached immediately after Cover Page per the instructions.**

**2. Declaration Statement (see document before immediately before this page and after the Application Submittal Checklist)**

#### **3. Public Purpose**

Applicant declares that the grant will be used for a public purpose pursuant to Section 42F-102, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

### **II. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY**

#### **1. Applicant's Background**

Hawaii Tax Help and Financial Empowerment Solutions is a 501(C) (3) non-profit organization founded in 2016 for the purpose of carrying on and expanding the mission of the **Hawaii VITA** (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program. The Hawaii VITA Program has been in existence since 2005, first as a pilot program under Aloha United Way, and then as a program under the Hawaii Alliance For Community Based Economic Development (HACBED). In 2016, the Applicant was established to provide the Hawaii VITA Program with its own platform dedicated to expanding its services and achieving its mission.

**Our Mission:** To vastly improve the ability of those who seek to achieve financial stability and self-sufficiency, and build stronger communities by:

**(1) Saving low-to-moderate income (LMI) Hawaii residents money and helping them claim valuable tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit** by providing them with free tax return preparation in conjunction with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (**VITA**) program of the Internal Revenue Service. Thus far, our Hawaii VITA Program has saved 55,821 Hawaii residents over \$11.7 Million in tax preparation fees and helped them claim over \$39.7 Million in refundable tax credits and \$83.7 Million in refunds. Every dollar saved or returned to these residents is used by them to reduce debt and/or purchase needed

goods and services which benefits local businesses and helps to strengthen local communities.

**(2) Educating and empowering Hawaii residents** through presentations and distribution of information relating to:

**(a) Financial literacy, with a focus on preventing tax-related debt** which hinders the long-term success of current financial programs and interferes with the efforts of those who are striving to achieve self-sufficiency and

**(b) Avoiding fraud and scams** which target the poor, less educated, and elderly, particularly during tax season when many expect refunds from the IRS and are more susceptible to fraudulent demands for personal information by scam artists posing as IRS agents.

**2. The goals and objectives related to the request**

There are three (3) objectives sought to be achieved by this grant request:

**(a) Expansion of VITA services into rural and/or hard to reach areas of the State and to those who are homeless.** This Program began with only 4 sites on Oahu and 32 volunteers. As of the 2020 Tax Season, prior to the COVID shutdown, this Program operated 53 sites and clinics on every island except Lanai. For the last several years, the Program's volunteer force has exceeded 200 volunteers. However, there are many areas of the State, particularly the more rural or remote areas, where residents still do not have access or have very limited access to this service. As a result, many of these residents either unnecessarily pay for tax preparation services or do not file their returns, often missing out on claiming valuable tax credits. A similar problem is faced by those who are homeless but who are also employed.

The primary objective of this aspect of our Program is to expand free tax preparation services in those areas of the State that will help more LMI taxpayers access this valuable service.

The occurrence of COVID has revealed one major obstacle to expansion, especially on Oahu. Prior to the COVID pandemic, the Program's partners, such as credit unions and other non-profits, provided the physical locations where training and educational sessions could be held and free tax preparation services were offered to the public. When COVID occurred, many of these sites closed. Those that remained open

altered their tax preparation operations so that clients were required to drop off their paperwork on one day and pick up their returns on a subsequent date in order to reduce the amount of time that volunteers spent with clients. Returns were prepared by certified volunteers off premises.

This system enabled the Program to continue offering free tax preparation but training sessions could not be held, which deterred many individuals from volunteering and prevented us from assisting clients with other issues that arose, such as reviewing and explaining notices received from the IRS, providing guidance for the self-employed, and allowing use of on-site equipment for those who were willing to prepare their own returns but had no equipment to do so.

Accordingly, a portion of the funds being requested in this application will be applied towards securing a location that will be under the control of the Applicant. This location is intended to be opened year-round and provide a place where training and educational sessions can be held and where residents can use available equipment to, among other things:

- learn basic computer skills such as setting up a free email account, scan, upload, and send PDF documents by email (now required by many organizations and agencies)
- prepare their own tax returns and print out copies of back returns
- apply for IRS tax transcripts
- learn how to establish a Social Security account online and apply for a replacement Social Security card
- apply for a General Excise Tax license
- access information available on the internet about other benefits they may be entitled to receive

This Program already has volunteers who are willing to help residents perform these tasks.

With respect to the neighbor islands, one of the main obstacles to expansion is the increase in travel costs resulting from having to send recruiters, trainers, and volunteers to those islands and the increase in marketing costs associated with outreach to promote and expand the service.

**(b) Expansion of educational efforts with a focus on preventing tax related debt.** In 2018 (the last year for which the IRS has complete data), 44,390 Hawaii residents earning less than \$50,000 owed more than \$55.16 Million to the IRS after filing their tax returns ("Balance Due Returns"). From a review of our own clients' Balance Due Returns, we have determined that approximately 80-90% of their debt to the IRS could have been avoided if they had been aware of certain basic tax laws such as:

- A debt forgiven by a creditor (such as a credit card company) results in taxable income that equals the amount of the debt forgiven.
- Unemployment benefits are taxable. Unfortunately, the withholding of taxes from unemployment compensation is not mandatory. Instead, the recipient must request that taxes be withheld and many of the claimants fail to understand the importance of doing so.
- Using scholarship funds for ineligible expenses such as room and board can result in taxable income.
- Withdrawing funds from an existing retirement plan before retirement age will result in taxable income and a 10% early withdrawal penalty.
- Hobby income and the fair market value of any service received in a bartering arrangement (service for service or goods for service) are taxable.
- General excise taxes (State) and income taxes are not the same thing.

Despite the seriousness of this problem, there is no resource where ordinary people can access basic tax information, other than the IRS' website which is difficult to navigate and understand, and most, if not all, **financial literacy programs do not incorporate into their curricula basic tax laws and concepts that would help individuals to avoid making decisions and choices that could result in tax-related debts.** The objective of financial literacy programs is to teach participants about budgeting, managing credit, and savings. Yet, those who strive for self-sufficiency can easily find their personal budgets and savings decimated by an unexpected debt to the IRS and, once such debt is incurred, the ordinary individual is ill-equipped to deal with the IRS. In short, **unexpected tax debt can negate any positive effects of financial**



**literacy and asset building programs and seriously hinder the efforts of individuals to achieve self-sufficiency.**

Applicant seeks to address this problem by:

(1) holding train-the-trainer workshops where financial literacy instructors can receive training on these issues and be provided with information that they can incorporate into their existing financial literacy programs without any substantial disruption to their program's schedule, and

(2) developing and distributing easy-to-understand information (in printed form, such as booklets and/or brochures, and via the internet and social media), regarding basic but important tax information-including changes in the tax law-scams and fraudulent practices, and options available to those who already have existing tax debt.

(c) **Expansion of the "Learn Early. Live Smarter" initiative.** In 2012, as part of its educational effort, Applicant began its "Learn Early. Live Smarter." initiative pursuant to which high school students were recruited and trained to be volunteer tax return preparers. As of 2020, 292 high school students had trained and obtained certification as volunteer tax return preparers and volunteered to prepare returns under supervision, primarily at Leeward Community College. As a result of COVID, Leeward Community College closed its site early in 2020, did not participate in 2021 and will not be participating in 2022 so most of those schools stopped participating. Only Waipahu High School has continued to participate. In 2021, 30 Waipahu high school students passed the VITA certification and a similar number is expected this tax season. Because of the many benefits that result from participation in this initiative, we believe that it is imperative to restart and expand the program to other high schools and colleges throughout the State.

This initiative focuses on accomplishing the following:

(1) Providing these students with valuable tax knowledge that will help them to avoid costly financial mistakes in the future when they enter the workforce. Simply by participating in the training for this Program, students learn the basic tax laws that will help them to avoid balance due returns in the future and will also learn about valuable credits and deductions that can reduce their tax liability and/or increase the

amount of their refunds - e.g., education credits, student loan interest deduction, and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

(2) Helping these students to realize the economic situation of many Hawaii residents and, as a result, instill in them a desire to continue participating in volunteer activities to give back to their communities. In this regard, there are numerous studies which show that students who participate in community service are more likely to graduate from college than those who do not and are more likely to have improved scores in Reading, Math, Science, and History.

### **3. The public purpose and need**

#### **(a) Free Tax Preparation (Direct Positive Impact on the Individual and on the Local Economy)**

Tax return preparation fees vary but based on a sample price list of one major commercial tax preparer that was shared by the Tax Opportunity Network, the charges for basic tax preparation forms are as follows:

▪ Form 1040	\$150
▪ Sch EIC (To claim EITC benefits)	\$ 45
▪ Form 8812 (Child Tax Credit)	\$ 30
▪ Sch A (If person itemizes)	\$ 50
▪ State Return	\$100

A 2020-2021 survey by the National Society of Accountants of its own members revealed that the average tax preparation fee for a Form 1040 with no itemization was \$220. Additional fees were charged for preparing Earned Income Credit form (\$65), Interest and Dividends (\$42), Schedule C for small business (\$192) and Self-Employment tax (\$42). The survey also found that the majority of tax preparers will charge between \$97 to \$154 for dealing with disorganized or incomplete files and assess extra fees for preparing additional commonly used Forms

Therefore, the Hawaii VITA Program's estimate that its free tax preparation service saves the average low-to-moderate income (LMI) taxpayer at least

\$250 is a modest one. Based on that estimate, **the Program has thus far saved 55,821 LMI residents more than \$11.7 Million in tax preparation fees.**

Free tax preparation also helps people claim valuable tax credits to which they are entitled without reduction of benefits due to tax preparation fees. One of the most important tax credits is the earned income tax credit (**EITC**). According to the IRS, in 2018, 82,960 Hawaii taxpayers claimed the EITC. The amount of EITC received by these claimants totaled \$185.2 Million. This represents **\$185.2 Million of NEW federal funds being infused into the local economy.**

<u>STATE:</u>	<u># of Claimants</u>	<u>Aggregate</u>
HI	82,960K	\$185.196 M

**Source: IRS Statistics for 2018 Tax Returns with EITC**

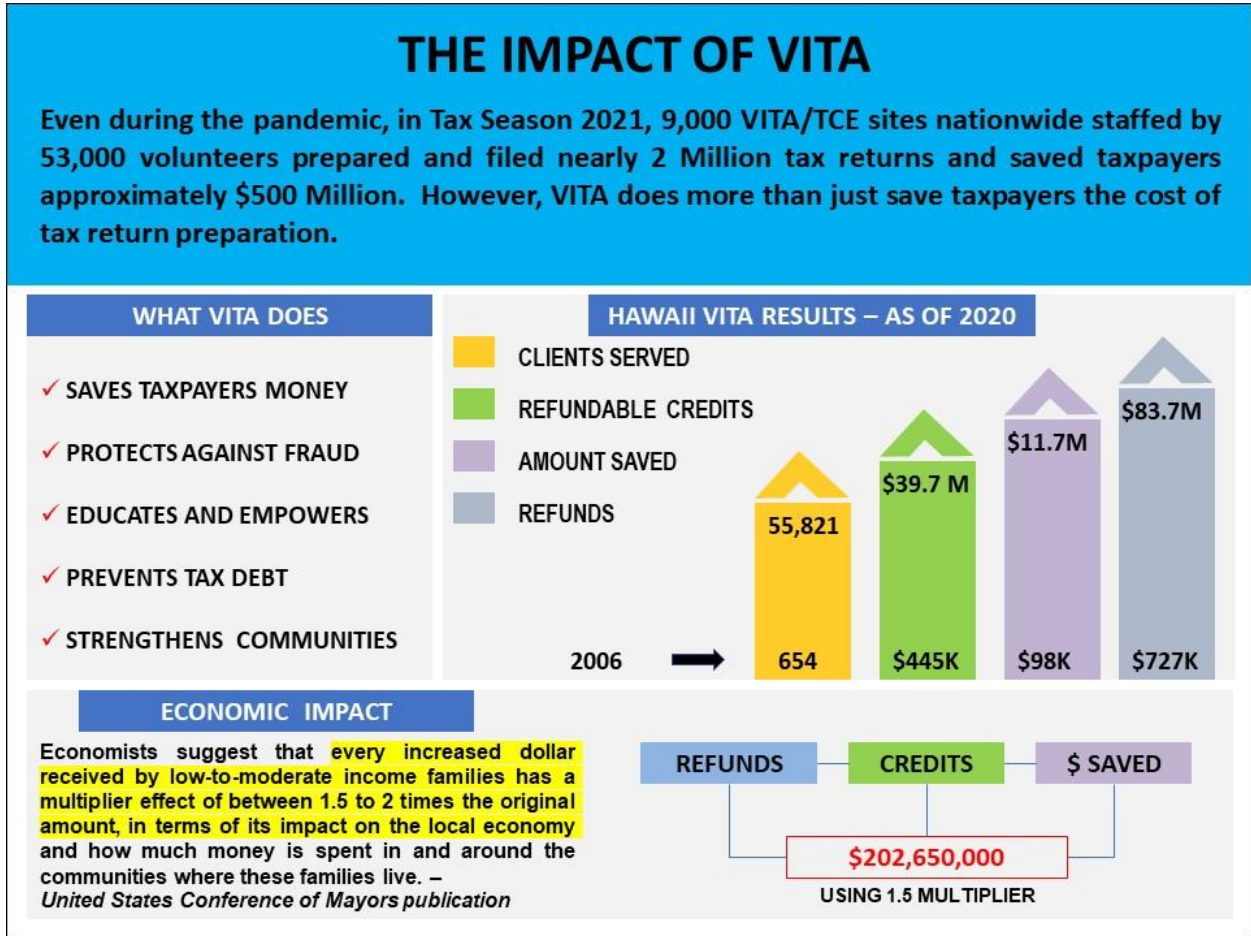
However, also according to the IRS and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), between 15% and 25% of households who are entitled to the EITC fail to claim it. Therefore, **in Hawaii, approximately \$32.7 Million to \$61.7 Million of federal EITC funds were not claimed in 2018.** In addition, every year in Hawaii, millions of dollars of refunds are not claimed by those who fail to file returns. The two main reasons for the failure to claim these funds are cost of tax preparation and lack of awareness.

Furthermore, since taxpayers who qualify for free tax assistance and credits such as the EITC are low-to-moderate income, they typically use a substantial portion of their refunds to purchase needed goods and services. **This benefits local businesses which results in benefits to the State** through an increase in general excise and income taxes and a reduction or at least a stabilization of the burden on welfare. This **Multiplier Effect** was discussed in a report published by the U. S. Conference of Mayors (Dollar Wise Best Practices 2nd Ed).

"Every increased dollar received by low- and moderate-income families has a multiplier effect of between 1.5 to 2 times the original amount, in terms of its impact on the local economy."

Using the multiplier of 1.5, the Hawaii VITA Program has thus far had an economic impact on the local economy of \$202,650,000. That positive economic impact on local communities will continue to increase as the Program expands its services.

**The need for the services provided by this Program is evidenced by the Program's growth.** Below is a graphic posted on our website which shows the Program's growth, and therefore the demand and need, for its services, and the impact of savings, tax credits, and refunds on the local economy:



**(b) Education relating to tax-related debt prevention.**

The need for education relating to tax-related debt prevention is clear from the following facts:

- An enormous amount of Balance Due Returns occur every year. As previously noted, in 2018, 44,390 Hawaii residents earning less than \$50,000 owed more than \$55.16 Million to the IRS.
- A substantial percentage of that debt could have been avoided if taxpayers understood very basic tax law.

- An unexpected tax-related debt can wipe out savings, render personal budget plans useless, and generally negate any positive effects of financial literacy programs and asset building efforts.
- Current financial literacy programs do not incorporate basic tax law into their curriculum. Similarly, programs that assist individuals in establishing small businesses provide very little education regarding the tax responsibilities of small business owners.

The foregoing statistics pertain only to IRS-related debt. However, many individuals who have an IRS debt also owe taxes to the State.

Once a tax-related debt is incurred, ordinary individuals are ill-equipped to deal with the taxing authorities, particularly the IRS, and as a result, their tax-related debts continue to increase. By the time that many of these individuals obtain help, they owe considerably more than their original debt. Therefore, although there may be organizations that will assist certain qualified taxpayers to resolve IRS debts, we strongly feel that the more effective approach to this problem is **debt prevention** through education, rather than debt resolution.

**(c) "Learn Early. Live Smarter." initiative** The "Learn Early. Live Smarter." initiative is an important part of our debt prevention education goals. This initiative recruits high school students and trains them to become certified volunteer tax return preparers. Student participation accomplishes 4 important things:

- (1) provides a valuable service to the community,
- (2) provides students with the benefits that are associated with volunteerism,
- (3) teaches students how to prepare their own tax returns which will save them money in the future, and
- (4) teaches students basic tax laws that will enable them to make better financial choices in the future, making it less likely that they will become one of the many thousands of taxpayers who are faced with a tax-related debt.

The "Learn Early. Live Smarter." initiative had 5 participating high schools on Oahu - Waipahu, Pearl City, Campbell, Kapolei, and Kalani. As of 2020, 292 high school students had trained and obtained certification as volunteer tax return preparers



and volunteered to prepare returns under supervision, primarily at Leeward Community College. As a result of COVID, Leeward Community College closed its site early in 2020, did not participate in 2021 and will not be participating in 2022 so most of those schools stopped participating. Only Waipahu High School has continued to participate. In 2021, 30 high school students passed the VITA certification and a similar number is expected this tax season. Because of the many benefits that result from participation in this initiative, we believe that it is imperative to restart and expand the program to other high schools and colleges throughout the State.

**4. Target population to be served**

**(a) Free Tax Preparation:** The Hawaii VITA Program operates under the Internal Revenue Service's VITA Program which is intended to provide free tax preparation services to **low-to-moderate income individuals**. The income limits are closely tied to the maximum income level allowable for those claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). For tax year 2021, the EITC income limit is \$57,414 (applicable to a married couple with 3 or more children). However, since Hawaii has a higher cost of living than most States, the Hawaii VITA Program is offering its services to Hawaii residents earning up to \$66,000. For those earning above that limit or anyone who want to prepare their own returns, this Program also offers two self-preparation programs - MyFreeTaxes and Taxslayer. Both allow individuals to file their federal AND state tax returns for free.

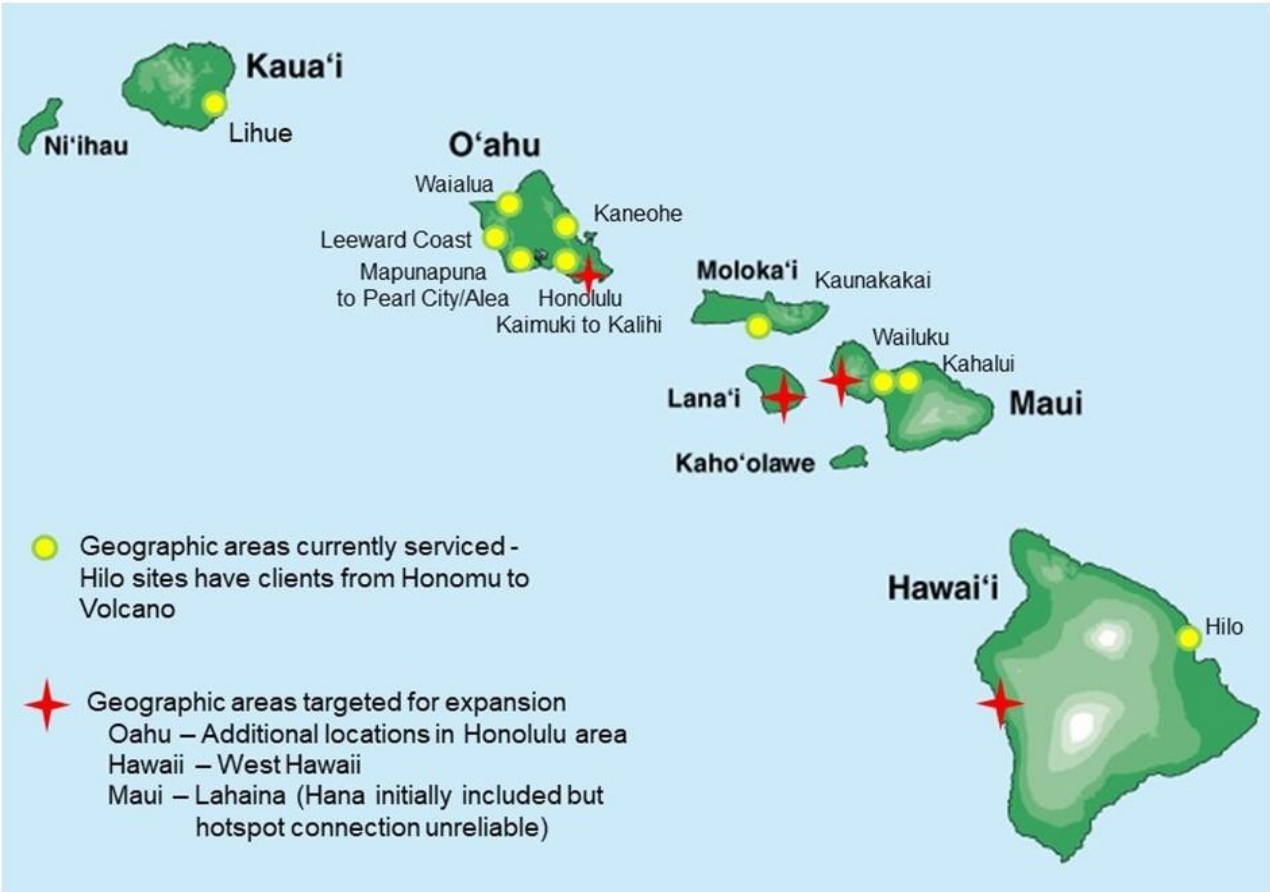
**(b) Education Relating To Prevention Of Tax-Related Debt.** The target population would be (1) trainers and participants of financial literacy programs and (2) the general public, particularly those who are considered low-to-moderate income, who will have free access to the information that we intend to publish and distribute through our partners as well as make available through our website at [www.hawaiitaxhelp.org](http://www.hawaiitaxhelp.org) and other internet-based and social media venues such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and possibly a private YouTube channel. The grant will also allow us to secure a permanent location under control of the Applicant so that training, access and assistance can be offered throughout the year. The information to be provided will focus on tax law, changes in the tax law and issues that arise most often for those who are low-to-moderate income, warnings of scams and fraudulent

offers that often arise during tax season and target the poor and elderly, and resources and procedures relating to resolution of existing tax debt.

(c) **"Learn Early. Live Smarter"** The target population would be high school juniors and seniors. Since four of the five high schools stopped participating when Leeward Community College closed its operations due to COVID, our focus will be to persuade them to participate once again. The Program is also trying to recruit a high school in the town area of Oahu where demand for services is high and at least one school on Hawaii Island which has the greatest demand for VITA services among all the neighbor islands.

**5. Geographic coverage**

(a) **Free Tax Assistance Program.** This Program already operates Statewide with sites and clinics on all islands except, for the time being, Lanai. Several sites closed down in 2020 when COVID hit the islands but have indicated that they would like to return once the COVID situation improves. The demand for services on all islands, particularly Hawaii Island, is high and additional sites are needed. However, additional funds are required to enable us to expand our services to meet the demand and need, particularly in the rural and/or remote areas of the State. The map below shows where we intend to expand if grant funds are provided subject, of course, to the COVID situation.



**(b) Education Relating To Tax-Related Debt Prevention.**

The geographic coverage for tax-related debt prevention efforts will also be Statewide. The training sessions for financial literacy instructors will initially be held on Oahu before additional sessions on the neighbor islands are offered. However, informational material will be distributed through our partners who are located throughout the State of Hawaii and the general public will be able to access the information that will appear on our website - [www.hawaiitaxhelp.org](http://www.hawaiitaxhelp.org) - and on any other internet and social media venues that we establish.

**(c) "Learn Early. Live Smarter"**

The geographic coverage is also intended to be Statewide eventually. However, for the purposes of this grant, we intend to target Oahu High Schools in the town area of Oahu between Kaimuki and Kalihi since Waipahu High School and the other participating schools, if they return after COVID improves, are located in Central

and West Oahu. We also intend to recruit one high school on Hawaii Island since the demand for services there is high. How quickly we can expand this initiative will depend on the responsiveness and cooperation of educators and the target schools and on the availability of funds.

### **III. Service Summary and Outcomes**

#### **1. Scope of work, tasks, responsibilities**

##### **(a) The Free Tax Assistance Program:**

The Applicant serves as the primary coordinator of all tax return preparation sites of the Hawaii VITA Program, most of which are operated by other non-profits and organizations that are partners of Program. The Applicant continually seeks new community partners and volunteers through:

- Organizations such as the Hawaii Credit Union League which has resulted in the participation of several credit unions - Hawaii FCU, HawaiiUSA FCU, Waialua FCU, Hickam FCU, Valley Isle Community FCU, Maui FCU, and Maui County FCU.
- Other non-profits and governmental agencies that provide services to low income Hawaii residents, such as Alu Like, Inc. which operates 5-7 VITA sites during the regular tax season, and Hawaii County which provides a location for tax preparation in Hilo and assists with outreach to its clients and other agencies.
- Educational institutions. For several years, Leeward Community College and Chaminade Community College has offered training for volunteers, some of whom are recruited from its student body, and a location for a VITA site. However, both of these schools stopped their VITA operations when COVID occurred. We are hoping that they will return during the next tax season.

As the primary coordinator for all sites, the Applicant:

- a. Arranges for and coordinates the training of site coordinators and volunteers.
- b. Recruits new volunteers through a marketing campaign that utilizes (depending on available funds) print and internet ads and public service

announcements on radio and television and coordinates the placement of these volunteers.

c. Acts as a liaison between the organizations participating in the Hawaii VITA Program and IRS representatives with respect to assuring that all required paperwork is completed and timely submitted and that the organizations' sites are approved to process returns

d. Arranges for participating sites to receive whatever equipment and supplies they need to facilitate their preparation and electronic filing of tax returns.

e. Provides cell phone and temporary cell phone service to sites that need a dedicated line to accept calls from individuals seeking free tax assistance and secures the services of appointment schedulers for sites upon their request.

f. Advertises all sites through a marketing campaign which includes (depending on available funds) print ads, social media posts, radio ads, and distribution of flyers through agencies such as the Honolulu County Housing Department and the Hawaii County Housing Department.

h. Provides mentors for new site coordinators and volunteers to make their participation easier and more enjoyable.

i. Compiles all tax-related and survey data collected from the individual sites and prepares all necessary reports for the IRS, other funders, and any interested party at the conclusion of the tax season.

The Applicant's ability to provide all of the foregoing services makes participating in the Hawaii VITA Program more attractive to organizations who realize the value of the service but find it overwhelming to deal with all aspects of recruiting, advertising, training, and dealing with the IRS. This support system is the primary reason that Applicant has been able to expand the Hawaii VITA Program from 4 sites and 32 volunteers in 2006 to 53 sites and clinics staffed by 230 volunteers during Tax Season 2019 (2020 and 2021 adversely affected by COVID). However, budget limitations have prevented more rapid expansion, especially on the neighbor islands since that requires additional air travel and additional trainers. Also, as previously mentioned, the COVID situation has made it clear that the VITA Program requires a permanent physical location that operates under the Program's control. Since the



Program began, site and meeting facilities provided by the Program's partners were sufficient to allow the Program to fulfill its objectives. When COVID occurred, many of these facilities were no longer available and the Program and its clients were greatly and adversely affected.

**(b) Education Relating Prevention of Tax Debt.**

The scope of the work will require:

- Developing additional content for and improving Applicant's existing website to facilitate ease of use.
- Hiring a subcontractor to update Applicant's existing social media sites, establish new social media accounts, launch a campaign on social media to develop a social media presence for Applicant
- Designing and publishing certain printed materials for distribution to Hawaii VITA clients and clients of selected organizations that provide services to low-to-moderate income Hawaii residents.
- Developing a Speakers' Bureau comprised of experienced VITA trainers and site coordinators as well as tax instructors who can give presentations to community groups and organizations that are involved in financial literacy efforts or entrepreneurship since the self-employed often find themselves in financial trouble because they are unaware of applicable tax laws or their tax responsibilities.
- Conducting workshops for financial literacy providers to encourage them to incorporate vital tax information into their curricula and provide them with guidance and assistance to accomplish that goal.
- Establishing a location that is open year round where training and educational sessions can be held and where residents can use available equipment to, among other things:
  - learn basic computer skills such as setting up a free email account, scan, upload, and send PDF documents by email (now required by many organizations and agencies)
  - prepare their own tax returns and print out copies of back returns
  - apply for IRS tax transcripts

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- learn how to establish a Social Security account online and apply for a replacement Social Security card
- apply for a General Excise Tax license
- access information available on the internet about other benefits they may be entitled to receive

**(c) "Learn Early. Live Smarter." initiative**

The scope of the work will require presentations to educators from various schools to provide them with information about the Hawaii VITA Program, how they and their students can get involved, and how students will benefit from that involvement. If an educator agrees to get involved, the Applicant would provide:

- Training for the educator
- All necessary training materials free of charge
- Assistance in presenting the materials to the students
- Guidance in helping students get certified
- Sites where students could participate under supervision
- Feedback from site coordinators regarding student performance

**2. Projected annual timeline for accomplishing the results or outcomes.**

**July through August.**

- Follow up meetings with potential new partners who have expressed an interest in sponsoring a VITA free tax preparation site and with educators who have expressed an interest in having their students participate in the Hawaii VITA Program.
- Confirm return of partners who participated in the Hawaii VITA Program during the previous tax season
- Conduct seminars/workshops for financial literacy providers to encourage them to incorporate vital tax information into their curricula and provide them with guidance and assistance to accomplish that goal.

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- Recruit speakers for Speakers' Bureau and schedule presentations to community groups and organizations that are involved in financial literacy efforts or entrepreneurship.
- Develop additional content for Applicant's existing website.
- Hire and work with subcontractor to update Applicant's existing social media sites and establish new social media accounts for the purpose of creating a strong social media presence for Applicant and awareness of Applicant's services.
- Designing and publishing certain printed materials for distribution to Hawaii VITA clients and clients of selected organizations that provide services to low-to-moderate income Hawaii residents regarding basic tax concepts and important resources

**September through October**

- Prepare and submit necessary paperwork to the IRS establishing new tax sites and re-establishing tax sites from the previous tax season
- Recruit new VITA volunteers through a marketing campaign that utilizes (depending on available funds) print and internet ads, social media posts, distribution of flyers to various organizations and agencies, and public service announcements on radio and television
- Continue working with educators who will be training high school students-assist them in planning training schedule. **Training cannot commence until training materials with current tax law are received from the IRS.**
- Continue presentations to community groups and organizations that are involved in financial literacy efforts or entrepreneurship.
- Continue working with financial literacy providers

**Late October through December.**

- Establish schedule for live training sessions for VITA volunteers at available sites.
- Conduct training sessions for selected partners
- Advertise all sites through a marketing campaign which includes (depending on available funds) print ads, social media posts, radio ads, and distribution of flyers

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through agencies such as the Honolulu County Housing Department and the Hawaii County Housing Department.

- Provides mentors for new site coordinators and volunteers to make their participation easier and more enjoyable.
- Continue working with educators who will commence training their students in January.
- Continue updating of content on website and social media as new tax information from the IRS becomes available.

### **January.**

- Live training sessions are held for regular and student volunteers.
- Advertising of sites and VITA services continues
- Some sites begin opening during late January. For the past several years, the Program has held a Kick-Off site at the Hawaii State Capitol
- Start collecting data from financial literacy trainers who agreed to incorporate tax information into the curricula for their programs.
- Kick off event at Hawaii State Capitol (late January or early February) where experienced site coordinators and volunteers from various sites come together to provide tax preparation services.
- Coordinate volunteer placement as volunteers begin obtaining their certification.
- Arrange for travel of selected volunteers and site coordinators to neighbor islands to oversee site operations and prepare returns

### **February through April.**

- Placement of student volunteers
- Sites begin operating according to their own schedules.
- Process returns and resolve all rejected returns
- Collect surveys with demographic information
- Collect information from financial literacy providers
- Collect feedback from sites where student volunteers worked

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- Collect volunteer lists from all sites to calculate total number of participating volunteers

**April through June.**

- Compile demographic information from surveys
- Obtain feedback from students regarding their experience as tax return preparers
- Generate reports from TaxSlayer tax preparation software regarding site production, including amount of returns processed, refunds obtained, tax credits received, and other relevant information
- Prepare report on Tax Season 2019 for VITA Grant Office
- Prepare all other required reports and distribute to partners and other interested organizations
- Update website and social media accounts.
- Continue preparing late returns for Hawaii residents at selected sites

**3. Quality assurance and evaluation plans.**

(a) **Free tax preparation:** Quality assurance and monitoring of results is required under the rules of the IRS' VITA Program.

- All VITA sites are required to be registered with the IRS and receive unique Identification numbers for electronic filing (EFIN) and for their sites (SIDN). These identification numbers enable the Applicant to determine the overall production of each site and extract reports that indicate total number of completed returns, rejected returns, total refunds, and types and amounts of tax credits claimed by taxpayers.
- Each VITA site is also required to have a site coordinator who is responsible for assuring that each return prepared is quality reviewed by another volunteer with Advanced Certification to insure accurate preparation, that all tax returns are properly submitted to the IRS, all rejected returns are properly handled, and that the site adheres to VITA procedural and privacy rules.
- All Volunteers, whether or not preparing returns, are required to pass a Volunteer Standards of Conduct Exam (ethics). Volunteer tax return preparers, including



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all high school students, are required to train and pass an online certification exam. Each volunteer must print out their Volunteer Agreement showing the level of their certification and submit the same to the Site Coordinator where they will be volunteering. Volunteers cannot get access to the tax preparation software until they present their Volunteer Agreements to the Site Coordinator. The Site Coordinators must submit a list of all volunteers working at their sites to the IRS and to the Applicant. The total volunteer count is determined from these forms. Volunteers are also required to sign in and out when working at a site. These sign-in sheets are used to calculate volunteer hours spent on the Program.

**(b) Education Related to Prevention of Tax Debt**

- **Speakers and Trainers** All speakers and trainers who give presentations to community groups and organizations will be experienced VITA trainers and/or site coordinators familiar with the Hawaii VITA Program and tax law. Attendance will be tracked through sign in sheets and attendees will be asked to submit feedback that will help to improve future presentations.
- **Website and printed materials** Content for Applicant's website, social media accounts, and for printed materials will be developed by the President of Applicant and experienced VITA trainers. Distribution of printed materials will be tracked by the organizations receiving the same for their low-to-moderate income clients. The Applicant's website and social media platforms are able to track visitors to the site and visitors are able to contact the Applicant with questions or comments.
- **Workshops for financial literacy providers** All individuals who will be conducting workshops for financial literacy providers will be experienced VITA trainers and/or site coordinators who are also familiar with financial literacy programs. The number of individuals who subsequently receive training from a participating financial literacy provider will be tracked by the provider through attendance and completion records. Attendees and providers will be asked for feedback.

Applicant: Hawaii Tax Help and Financial Empowerment Solutions aka Hawaii VITA

- **"Learn Early. Live Smarter."** Educators trained by a VITA trainer who is an accounting professor will train their students and collect from their students feedback regarding their experience volunteering for VITA.
- **Social media presence and awareness campaign.** If awarded grant funds, Applicant intends to hire a subcontractor who has expertise in various social media platforms and can develop and execute a plan that will result in a strong presence of Applicant on social media platforms. Activity on social media sites are tracked by the sites.

**4. Measure(s) of effectiveness to be reported.**

**(a) Free Tax Assistance Program:** We are able to report all of the following data:

- Number of sites and clinics
- Number of volunteers who participated
- Number of volunteer hours
- Number of federal returns filed
- Number of state returns filed
- Total refunds obtained for clients
- Total refundable tax credits (EITC and Additional Child Tax Credit) received
- Number of clients filing balance due returns.
- Total amount of balance due to the IRS (the IRS' software may not extract this same information for the State; it might be possible to do it manually)
- Amount saved for clients through use of free tax preparation services
- Average AGI of clients

All of the above data will be obtained from reports generated by the TaxSlayer software that the IRS requires VITA sites to use. However, due to IRS' privacy regulations, no personal data of taxpayers can be shared with anyone.

The Applicant also creates and provides a survey intended to collect demographic data from all VITA clients, the results of which are manually compiled. That survey, which is voluntary, has in the past collected the following type of data:

Ethnicity

Marital Status

No. of children

Gender

Age

Housing situation

Sources of income (work, unemployment, self-employment, social security, etc.)

Credit card situation

Whether they have ever used a payday lender or pawn shop

Whether client or member of family is disabled

Whether client has a bank account

Whether client expects a refund

Whether client will direct deposit their refund

What client intends to do with the refund

.

**(b) Education for tax-related debt prevention** We are able to report all of the following data:

- Name of initial participating organizations
- Name and curriculum of financial literacy program used by those organizations.
- Number of individuals who are enrolled in the programs
- Number of individuals who received the new curriculum regarding basic tax law
- Number of trainers who attend train-the-trainer sessions
- Results of comprehension tests which we will propose be administered.

**For social media and website:**

- Number of unique visitors to each social media site
- Number of people who "click thru" to Applicant's website from other platforms
- Number of people who request information and why
- Number of re-tweets on Twitter
- Number of Facebook hits, followers, and "likes"

(c) **"Learn Early. Live Smarter."** We are able to report all of the following data:

- Name of participating schools
- Number of students who complete the required training
- Number of students who pass the required exam to become volunteer tax return preparers
- Level of certification of each student
- Number of students who actually prepared returns at a free tax assistance site.
- Student feedback

**IV. Financial**

1. **Budget:** Attached
2. **Anticipated quarterly funding requests for the fiscal year 2023**

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total Grant
\$15,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$15,000	\$70,000

3. **Sources of funding being sought for FY 2023**

Applicant intends to apply for another VITA grant for FY 2023, the application for which is due on May 31<sup>st</sup>. The amount Applicant has received in the past has fluctuated, depending on how many applicants across the U.S. are awarded grants from a fixed pool of federal funds. Federal funds available for VITA nationwide is currently set at \$30 Million. For the previous fiscal year, Applicant was awarded \$72,807. Those funds have not yet been received.

No other sources of funding are being sought for FY 2023.

4. **State and federal tax credits granted within prior 3 years or applied for:** NONE

**5. Listing of all government contracts and grants received in last 3 years and will be receiving in fiscal year 2023 for program funding**

Applicant has received the following government grants in the last 3 years.

2019-2020 - \$90,000 (State GIA—only \$65,134.99 received due to COVID)

2019-2020 - \$54,935 (IRS VITA)

2020-2021 - \$61,979 (IRS VITA)

2021-2022 - \$72,807 (IRS VITA – awarded not yet received)

2022-2023 – No requests made yet other than this GIA

**6. Balance of unrestricted current assets as of December 31, 2018.**

\$15,961.83

**V. EXPERIENCE AND CAPABILITY**

**1. Necessary Skills and Experience.**

The President and CEO of Applicant has been in charge of the Hawaii VITA Program and has provided leadership and oversight of the Program since it began in 2006 at Aloha United Way. She is an attorney with an undergraduate degree in business and extensive experience in business management and operations, which has enabled her to develop successful marketing and expansion plans while working within a budget.

The President also obtains certification every year as a tax return preparer (Advanced Level) and as a Site Coordinator and works in the "field" with the volunteers. This has allowed her to understand the problems encountered by the volunteers in connection with tax preparation and to address and resolve them quickly. The President is also a trainer and this year, due to COVID, has conducted training on a one-to-one basis for several new and returning volunteers. By working in the "field" and training volunteers, the President has been able to develop a good relationship with volunteer preparers and site coordinators. The President believes this to be the primary reason that the return rate for volunteers has been consistently high and the volunteer pool has been growing.

Related contracts or projects for the last 3 years: The Applicant's sole mission is providing VITA and related services. The Hawaii VITA Program is the largest and most expansive VITA Program in Hawaii and was the recipient of the first VITA grant offered by the IRS in 2009 and has been awarded a VITA grant every year since then. For the past two years, Applicant has offered services to the deaf clients at the Comprehensive Services Center. Applicant has also held workshops at CSC for its deaf clients regarding tax laws pertaining to disabled individuals. The Program also provides services to seniors at Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center which is operated by Catholic Charities. For the past several years, the Program has its Kick-Off Event (1<sup>st</sup> site opening) at the Hawaii State Capitol. Last year, due to COVID, we operated in the rotunda area. The same will occur this year on January 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

2. The "Learn Early. Live Smarter" initiative began in 2012 with one participating high school - Waipahu High. As of 2020, 5 high schools were participating - Waipahu, Kapolei, Campbell, Pearl City, and Kalani with 292 high school students achieving certification as Volunteer Tax Return Preparers. When COVID occurred, however, all schools except Waipahu High, stopped participating. Applicant is now working with the trainer/educator at Waipahu High School to develop a plan to encourage the previous high school participants to return and to recruit additional high schools to participate as soon as the COVID situation improves.

## **2. Facilities**

Since the Hawaii VITA Program began, all facilities used in connection with training and providing free tax preparation services to the public have been provided by the Program's partners. However, when the COVID situation forced the closure of many of the partners' sites, it became clear that the Program requires a physical location over which it has control. Therefore, if the Applicant's request is granted, an appropriate location will be found which can stay open year round for training, tax preparation, and to provide clients with access to computers for the purposes set forth in Section II.2(a) above. Since the Program operates under the IRS' VITA Program, all facilities are required to meet ADA requirements for access by the disabled. On Hawaii Island, tax preparation site facilities are provided by Hawaii

County. On all other islands, tax preparation is being provided by credit unions, most of whom have remained opened subject to health protocols such as mask wearing and social distancing. The training of high school students on Oahu would take place on school grounds and/or at the permanent location secured by the Program.

## **VI. PERSONNEL: Project Organization and Staffing**

### **1. Proposed Staffing, Staff Qualifications, Supervision and Training.**

The Hawaii VITA Program is unique in that it is primarily volunteer driven. Volunteers provide the tax preparation services to the clients. The trainers of tax preparation volunteers have, thus far, donated their time since they are long-time participants of the VITA Program. Most partnering organizations have been willing to permit the use of their equipment and provided site coordinators and volunteers from among their own employees. The President/CEO has been the only full-time paid position and has been overseeing all VITA operations. The President's qualifications are discussed in Paragraph V.1. above. IT services to manage the Program's website and update and configure the Program's computers and other equipment will be done by a subcontractor. Bookkeeping services are also performed by an outside contractor. If a permanent location is secured by Applicant with grant funds, volunteers are available to assist clients.

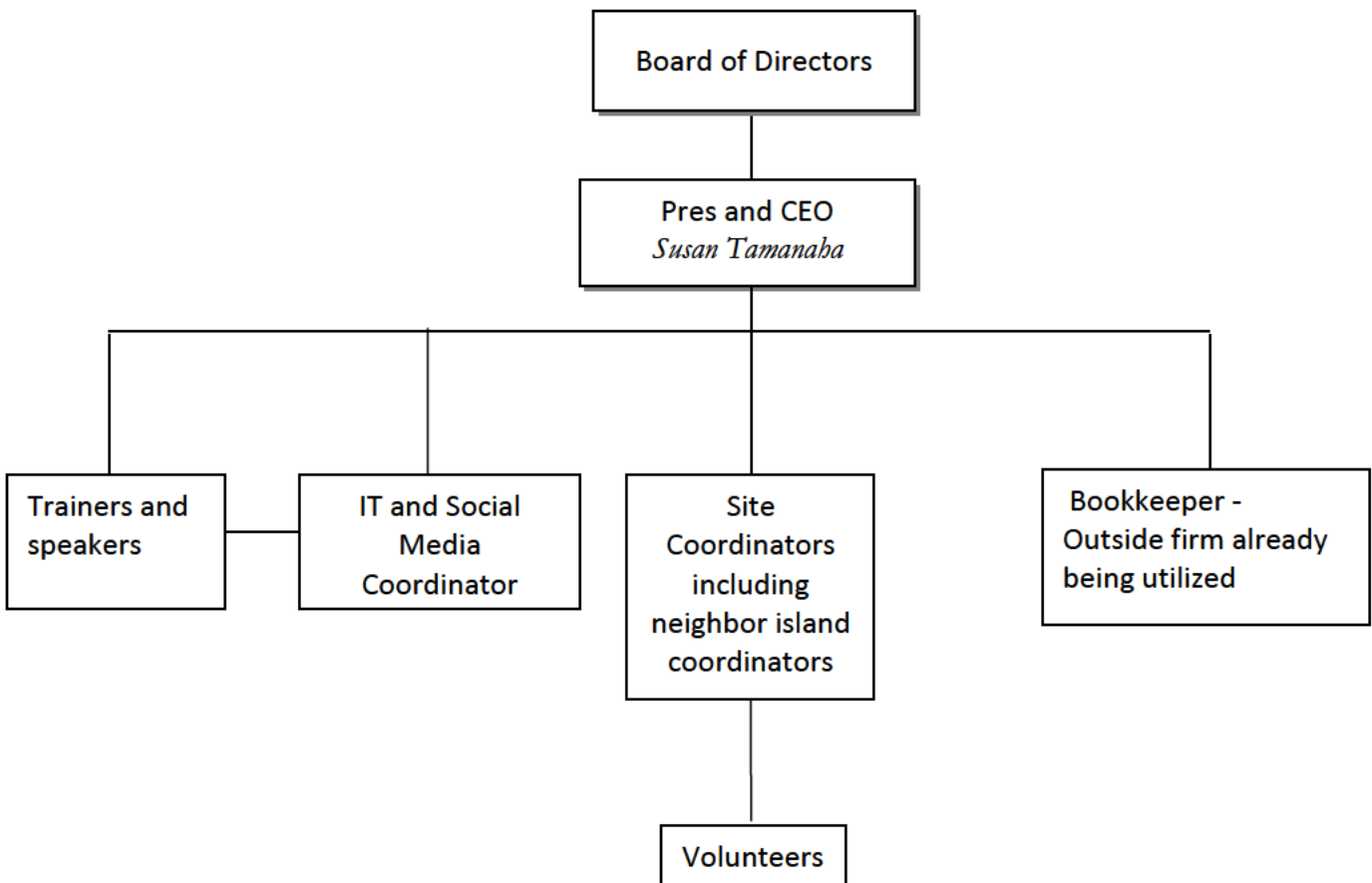
**Neighbor Island Coordinators:** Subcontracted position - Neighbor Island Coordinators will be experienced VITA volunteers who have already coordinated a VITA site. The purpose of these coordinators would be to identify the geographical areas in their own counties that would benefit the most from VITA services, contact potential partners located within their own county who would be willing to sponsor a VITA site and/or assist with recruitment of volunteers, coordinate volunteer recruitment and arrange for training of those volunteers. Neighbor Island Coordinators would report directly to the President of Applicant.

**Speakers/Presenters:** Stipend - These individuals will be experienced VITA volunteers who are familiar with the Hawaii VITA Program, its goals and objectives, and the basic tax concepts that low-to-moderate income individuals should be aware of in order to avoid financial mistakes that could result in tax debt. Their

presentations would be coordinated with the President and/or participating partner organizations.

**Social Media Coordinator** - Subcontracted position - This person would be an experienced VITA volunteer who is proficient in navigating various social media venues and has the ability to and experience in launching social media campaigns. This person would work directly with the President of Applicant and with the Speakers and Presenters to do outreach for upcoming workshops and speaking events.

2. **Organization Chart**





**3. Compensation (Annual salaries of three highest paid officers)**

President and CEO : \$54,285

No other paid officers, directors, or employees of Applicant

**VII. OTHER**

**1. Litigation**

There is no pending litigation to which Applicant is a party.

**2. Licensure or Accreditation of Applicant**

Applicant's Hawaii VITA Program was selected for the first VITA grant offered by the IRS in 2009 and has received that competitive grant every year since then.

**3. Private Educational Institutions**

This grant will not be used to benefit or support a sectarian or non-sectarian private educational institution.

**4. Future Sustainability Plan**

As previously noted, the Hawaii VITA Program has received an IRS VITA every year since 2009. Inasmuch as the Hawaii VITA Program is the largest free tax assistance effort in the State and it has been able to consistently deliver the outcomes set by IRS, we believe that Applicant will continue to be a recipient of the VITA Grant as long as funding is made available by Congress. However, the federal government only provides \$30 Million for VITA grants for the ENTIRE nation and more populous States receive a larger share of the funds. Therefore, the amount of the VITA Grant is not expected to substantially increase unless and until the nationwide VITA program receives additional funding. Since the counties directly benefit from the Program, it is hoped that they will provide some funding to facilitate the expansion of services on their respective islands. The Applicant is a 501(C)(3) organization and can therefore solicit donations. However, this has proved to be slightly problematic since it is against Applicant's policy to solicit donations from its volunteers or from its clients. The IRS also prohibits VITA organizations from charging any fees for its tax preparation services.

## BUDGET REQUEST BY SOURCE OF FUNDS

Period: July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

Applicant: Hawaii Tax Help and Financial Empowerment Solutions

BUDGET CATEGORIES	Total State Funds Requested (a)	Total Federal Funds Requested (b)	Total County Funds Requested (c)	Total Private/Other Funds Requested (d)
A. PERSONNEL COST				
1. Salaries	38,000			
2. Payroll Taxes & Assessments	2,907			
3. Fringe Benefits	4,757			
TOTAL PERSONNEL COST	<b>45,664</b>			
B. OTHER CURRENT EXPENSES				
1. Airfare, Inter-Island	800			
2. Insurance	350			
3. Lease/Rental of Equipment				
4. Lease/Rental of Space	19,200			
5. Staff Training				
6. Supplies	686			
7. Telecommunication	600			
8. Utilities				
9. Contractual Services	2,500			
10. Postage	200			
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
TOTAL OTHER CURRENT EXPENSES	<b>24,336</b>			
C. EQUIPMENT PURCHASES				
D. MOTOR VEHICLE PURCHASES				
E. CAPITAL				
<b>TOTAL (A+B+C+D+E)</b>	<b>70,000</b>			
<b>SOURCES OF FUNDING</b>		Budget Prepared By:		
(a) Total State Funds Requested	70,000	Susan Tamanaha (808) 381-0881		
(b) Total Federal Funds Requested		Name (Please type or print) Phone		
(c) Total County Funds Requested		<i>Susan Tamanaha</i> 1/18/2022		
(d) Total Private/Other Funds Requested		Signature of Authorized Official Date		
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>70,000</b>	Susan Tamanaha President/CEO		
		Name and Title (Please type or print)		



## BUDGET JUSTIFICATION - EQUIPMENT AND MOTOR VEHICLES

Period: July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

Applicant: Hawaii Tax Help and Financial Empowement Solutions

DESCRIPTION EQUIPMENT	NO. OF ITEMS	COST PER ITEM	TOTAL COST	TOTAL BUDGETED
			\$ -	
Not Applicable			\$ -	
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
TOTAL:				
JUSTIFICATION/COMMENTS:				

DESCRIPTION OF MOTOR VEHICLE	NO. OF VEHICLES	COST PER VEHICLE	TOTAL COST	TOTAL BUDGETED
			\$ -	
Not Applicable			\$ -	
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
TOTAL:				
JUSTIFICATION/COMMENTS:				

## BUDGET JUSTIFICATION - CAPITAL PROJECT DETAILS

Period: July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

Applicant: Hawaii Tax Help and Financial Empowerment Solutions

FUNDING AMOUNT REQUESTED						
TOTAL PROJECT COST	ALL SOURCES OF FUNDS RECEIVED IN PRIOR YEARS		STATE FUNDS REQUESTED	OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDS REQUESTED	FUNDING REQUIRED IN SUCCEEDING YEARS	
	FY: 2020-2021	FY: 2021-2022	FY:2022-2023	FY:2022-2023	FY:2023-2024	FY:2024-2025
PLANS						
LAND ACQUISITION						
DESIGN						
CONSTRUCTION						
EQUIPMENT						
<b>TOTAL:</b>						
<b>JUSTIFICATION/COMMENTS:</b>  <p style="text-align: center;">NOT APPLICABLE</p>						

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS, GRANTS, AND / OR GRANTS IN AID**

Ap: Hawaii Tax Help and Financial Empowerment Solutions

Contracts Total: 72,807

	<b>CONTRACT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATES</b>	<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>GOVERNMENT ENTITY (U.S./State/Hawaii/ Honolulu/ Kauai/ Maui County)</b>	<b>CONTRACT VALUE</b>
1	IRS Vita Grant for Fiscal Year 2021	10/1/2021 -9/30/22	Dept of Treasury-IRS	US	72,807
2	(awarded not yet received)				
3					
4					
5					
6					
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