



2019 EITC Campaign Fund Award Summary

Background

Established in 2017, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Campaign Fund (CF) was developed to provide year-long support to state-based policy and advocacy efforts to raise awareness of the importance of strong state EITCs. Awards are made on a rolling basis and range from \$30,000-\$50,000. The Fund is administered by Economic Opportunity Funders (EOF) and the EITC Funders Network in partnership with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) and The Hatcher Group. EOF and the EITC Funders Network support a virtual fund structure – a table around which multiple funders can align support for key ideas and awardees. Sometimes, these funds are pooled in a centrally administered fund while other funders work collaboratively but deploy their own funds directly.

Why the EITC

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) puts money back into the pockets of working families struggling to make ends meet. It helps provide immediate relief— so that they are able to buy groceries, pay utility bills, and buy school supplies—and helps them begin to break the cycle of poverty for future generations by getting additional education and training, better transportation, and saving for their children’s education. The EITC lifts more than 6 million Americans, including 3 million children out of poverty each year, making it one of the nation’s largest and most successful anti-poverty programs. In addition to the federal EITC, 29 states and the District of Columbia have established state EITCs.

2019 Campaign Fund Activities

The Campaign Fund supports two kinds of activities: program contracts to support the work of state groups and technical assistance provided by national partners.

Program Contracts to State Groups

The Campaign Fund awarded campaign funds to state networks in five states for a total of \$230,000 of support.

Technical Assistance from National Partners

To help shape the work of the Campaign Fund and deliver technical assistance to state groups, the Fund provides support to two national field partners – CBPP and The Hatcher Group. Each year, these two national partners work collaboratively to prepare a scan of the state EITC policy field and identify opportunities and challenges the Campaign Fund could work to address. National field partners provide direct technical assistance to Campaign Fund awardees and share learnings with the field.

2019 Campaign Fund State Contract Overview

In 2019, the EITC Campaign Fund supported two organizations in their efforts to expand existing state EITCs:

- New Jersey Policy Perspective
- Oregon Center for Public Policy

The Fund also supported two organizations advocating for the creation of state EITCs:

- Georgia Budget & Policy Institute
- West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy

Finally, the Oklahoma Policy Institute was also awarded funds to protect its EITC.

State	Organization	Amount	Contract Period	Strategy	Outcome/Status
GA	Georgia Budget & Policy Institute	\$50,000	2018-2019	Create	Three bills introduced and remain viable for passage in the 2020 legislative session.
NJ	New Jersey Policy Perspective	\$30,000	2019	Expand	Four bills introduced to expand eligibility to young childless workers and increase the refundability rate.
OK	Oklahoma Policy Institute	\$50,000	2018-2019	Protect	Increased bipartisan support; nine bills introduced to restore refundability, but no legislative champion to push for passage.
OR	Oregon Center for Public Policy	\$50,000	2018-2019	Expand	State EITC renewed and increased to 9% and 12% for families with children under age 3
WV	West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy	\$50,000	2018-2019	Create	A bipartisan bill was introduced in the legislature but did not make it out of committee.

Expansion Awards

New Jersey

At the beginning of the award period, New Jersey's state refundable EITC was set at 37% of the federal credit, set to rise to 39% in 2019 and 40% in 2020. New Jersey Policy Perspective (NJPP) advocated for several areas of expansion over the course of the year, with their primary goal being expanding the state EITC to include young childless workers aged 18 to 24. A secondary goal was to increase the income threshold to \$25,000 for childless workers.

Four bills were introduced to the state legislature to expand eligibility to childless workers between the ages of 18 and 24, to increase the refundability rate to 50% over two years, to increase refundability for childless workers to 100%, and to allow childless workers who care for loved ones to claim them as dependents for the EITC. The income threshold increase for childless workers has not been included in legislation yet. NJPP is exploring other potential avenues for this change.

CF funds helped NJPP develop and release a research report on the impact of the state EITC and potential expansions, share this report with legislators, and build partnerships with the United Way of Northern New Jersey, Make the Road New Jersey, New Jersey Citizen Action, and AARP of New Jersey. This coalition did not previously exist. One of the primary challenges was a lack of data to demonstrate the racial equity component of a state EITC on a county by county basis. NJPP believes that legislators are open to additional expansion opportunities.

Oregon

At the beginning of the award period, Oregon's state EITC was set to expire. It was set at 8% of the federal credit with a higher rate of 11% for families with children under three. Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCCP)'s goals were to renew the credit, expand it, and to ensure access to immigrant families. The credit was renewed with an increase to 9% and 12% for families with young children.

The cornerstone of the campaign was a research report on Oregon's working poor families which garnered significant media coverage. OCCP used CF funds to produce targeted reports on the EITC's return on investment and its importance for immigrant families as well as district specific data reports for each legislator. OCCP engaged a leadership team of organizations that met every two weeks during the legislative session. One important component of OCCP's success was the Renew and Raise campaign, a branded social media communications effort. Having a branded campaign helped advocacy partners coalesce under shared goals. OCCP convened 52 partners under this campaign.

There was initial support for a broader expansion and inclusion of immigrant filers, but an ambitious \$2 billion education funding package was passed that relied on the same funding structures necessary for support of the EITC so the final bill was pared back. Ultimately, the credit was renewed, but only expanded from 11% to 12% of the federal credit for families with young children and from 8% to 9% for

all other eligible filers. This is still a success as there was some discussion of simply renewing the credit at its current level and even reducing it from that level due to financial constraints.

Creation Awards

Georgia

The Georgia Budget & Policy Institute (GBPI) is leading the push to create a state EITC through research, citizen education, and coalition building. CF funds supported research focused on presenting data on ways the EITC will grow Georgia's middle class, detailing benefits of expanding the EITC to cover young childless workers, and examining the impact of the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 with a lens on how a state EITC may provide some tax relief to working families. Much of GBPI's education work was done in partnership with organizations across the state, including VITA sites, food banks, workers' rights advocates, and chambers of commerce. The Georgia Work Credit effort maintains a dedicated website that features collaborative content and resources, www.georgiaworkcredit.org, which had 3,800 users in 2019. In addition, the Georgia Work Credit email distribution list consists of 613 subscribers, a 212% increase from 2018. GBPI convenes monthly calls to share information and suggest avenues of action.

Georgia has a two-year legislative session, so final outcomes are unknown at this time. However, three bills have been introduced – two in the House and one in the Senate. One bill has bipartisan support, presents the most potential for success, and includes enactment of a nonrefundable state EITC at 10% of the federal credit.

West Virginia

West Virginia legislators have been working towards creating a state EITC since 2017. This year, the goal was to introduce legislation, which was successful, but the bill did not make it out of committee. The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy (Center) used CF funds to update the investinwvfamilies.org website with district-level data that was sent directly to every legislator. Throughout the legislation session, the Center also maintained a social media presence, keeping the EITC in conversation. The Center partnered with the West Virginia Poor People's Campaign to mobilize the governor's home county's activists and media.

The bill introduced in the House centered on removing personal income taxes on Social Security benefits with a state EITC as a method of balancing the tax benefits between wealthy and low-income West Virginians. Unfortunately, the bill became very publicly political when opinion leaders voiced concerns over leaving some older adults out of the tax benefits and the bill did not move forward.

Protection Award

Oklahoma

In 2016, the Oklahoma state EITC became nonrefundable. The Oklahoma Policy Institute (OPI) is fighting to reinstate refundability into the statute. Using policy research, communications, and advocacy, OPI used CF funds to increase awareness of the impact of refundability. They led a coalition of food banks,

faith leaders, and child advocates and created a website to house all information on the state EITC, including ways for people to get involved and district level data. Major successes included educating policymakers who introduced nine bills to restore refundability, inclusion of restoring the EITC as part of the Democratic Caucus's Brand New State Budget policy agenda, and the beginning of three studies on the impact of the EITC as directed by legislators. While there was bipartisan support and interest, there was no legislative champion willing to take ownership of the issue and push for passage.

Lessons Learned

The voices of those impacted need to be heard. Stories are powerful influencers, so finding people who have received the EITC and are willing to share their stories of how they used the funds and what they are currently doing is a powerful way to get people to both understand the EITC and support it. In both Oregon and Georgia, VITA sites were critical partners in helping the Oregon Center for Public Policy and the Georgia Budget & Policy Institute find EITC recipients to share their stories.

Policymaker champions are essential. In Georgia, two legislators were critical to raising awareness of a state EITC. One sponsored a bipartisan bill and the other encouraged public hearings during which advocates could testify, helping legislators better understand how an EITC would work and its potential impact. Adversely, despite bipartisan interest, bills did not progress in Oklahoma due to the lack of a legislative champion. Similarly, in West Virginia, the state EITC's legislative champion lost a reelection battle, hampering efforts to get legislation passed this year. The Center pursued an amendment strategy, though they acknowledge that developing a stronger relationship with the governor may have been more fruitful.

Lack of equity data. Data, especially at a local or legislative district level tells powerful stories. One such story is the impact of a state EITC on communities of color. Unfortunately, this data is not always available, as in New Jersey, where only state-level data existed on the potential race equity impact of the policy.

Branding a campaign gives it credibility and cohesiveness. In Oregon, 52 organizations came together under the Renew and Raise campaign to boost the state EITC. By branding the campaign, all 52 organizations shared similar messaging and language, making the appeal broad and cohesive.

Examples of Impactful Communications Work

New Jersey:

- Op-ed on impact of EITC expansion on childless workers in [NJ Spotlight](#)
- [Interactive map](#) of EITC claims by county
- Graph demonstrating [stagnation of EITC](#) given to legislators
- [Report](#) detailing effects of expanding EITC

Oregon:

- One pager on use of EITC by [House](#) and [Senate](#) districts
- One pager on EITC expansion designed for [advocates](#)
- [Op-ed written by two lawmakers](#) calling for EITC expansion in The Oregonian
- Analysis of [poverty among working Oregonians](#)
- [News release](#) detailing impact of legislative walkout on low-income Oregonians
- [EITC videos](#) on Facebook

Georgia:

- One pager on [House Bill 588](#)
- Report: [Georgia Work Credit Grows the Middle Class](#)
- [Op-ed from CEO of St. Vincent de Paul Society](#)
- [Testimony and blog from the CEO of Buckhead Christian Ministry](#)

West Virginia:

- Updated [investinwvfamilies.org](#) website
- [District level fact sheets](#)
- One pager on [impact of creating a state EITC](#)

Oklahoma:

- [Infographic](#) detailing benefits of state EITC
- [Interactive map](#) showing county level impact of cutting the state EITC
- [Social media graphic series](#) to help share information at the county level