



Maria Shriver
California's First Lady

About WE Connect

The WE Connect campaign is a groundbreaking public/private partnership designed to help California's working families become more financially secure by connecting them to important programs and resources. Many of these programs, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), are available to Californians but are not fully taken advantage of. This statewide campaign connects those eligible with the information and tools they need to access these valuable resources, empowering them to live their dreams.

During this challenging economic downturn, WE Connect is bringing together community organizations and businesses, government agencies and state leaders, congregations and schools as partners in responding to the needs for the millions of Californians who are struggling to make ends meet.

WE Connect offers everyone an opportunity to become part of the solution by becoming a 'Connector,' someone that helps to spread the word about important resources and volunteer opportunities to serve in their communities.

National Movement

On February 21, 2009, Maria Shriver spoke at the National Governors Association meeting, asking them to join her in creating a national movement to empower struggling individuals and families by connecting them to resources that can help them become more financially secure. Maria offered governors and first ladies three tools they can use in their own efforts to raise awareness about critical programs that can make a difference in the lives of those in need, all at no cost: 1) A federal version of the WEb Connector that will screen for five federal programs (Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Child Care Credit, WIC and Food Stamps); 2) An inspirational PSA featuring celebrities such as Bono, Heidi Klum, and many others encouraging everyone to become a Connector and help spread the word about these important programs and; 3) the WE Connect supplement as an example of an effective media partnership that can be emulated in their own states.

Campaign Elements

As one of the most innovative statewide efforts promoting the EITC, WE Connect uses all available channels to reach out to the over 625,000 eligible families in California who currently are not claiming this credit and connects them with other key programs and services. The campaign partners with community organizations, statewide programs and major corporations to reach working families where they shop, eat, work, live and learn.

To achieve this, the WE Connect campaign includes the following components:

www.WEconnect.net

Our website is a one-stop-shop connecting Californians to programs and services for which they may be eligible. The site now houses an all-inclusive resource map, the first of its kind in the country, which connects visitors to hundreds of locations near them offering free tax assistance, job fairs and other resourceful events. The campaign highlights programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), Golden State Advantage Cards, Lifeline Telephone Service, CARE for lower cost gas and electric, California's Low-Cost Auto Insurance, Health Insurance Programs, WIC and College Savings Accounts (529 plans).

WEb Connector

The WEb Connector, our exclusive online tool developed by our partner Intuit for this campaign, helps working families determine exactly which programs they may be eligible for and how to apply - all with the click of a mouse. Californian's can access this tool on the WE Connect website from the convenience of their home, at the WE Connect community events and through our partnering community organizations statewide.



WE Connect Supplement

Through a partnership with La Opinion, the nation's largest Spanish-speaking newspaper in the country, WE Connect has developed two editions of a 24 page, full color, bi-lingual supplement that has been distributed to over 2.5 million Californians in need. The supplement contains pertinent information on all of the programs and services that the campaign covers and highlights success stories of those who have benefited from the resources provided.



WE Connect Events

WE Connect Events take place throughout the state in partnership with a network of statewide partners providing free tax preparation for eligible working families and individuals with one-on-one assistance. Families can learn about and apply for key services and programs while having the opportunity to have their taxes prepared for free. WE Connect materials, including the 2009 La Opinion supplement and 10 Tips for Financial Empowerment, are made available at all events.



WE Connect Neighborhood Center

WE Connect will help Neighborhood Centers provide a more holistic approach to helping and empowering families. These Centers will give access to families to computers and volunteers who will help them navigate the WE Connect website and Web Connector tool to learn about programs they may be eligible for. The Centers will provide year-round support to families who need it most and an opportunity for WE Connect to become a more permanent part of California's communities. The first WE Connect Neighborhood Center was established in partnership with the Legal Aid Society of Orange County on April 15, 2009. WE Connect will expand this effort in the coming year.



WE Connect Sunday

WE Connect Sunday, a once a year, statewide event allows WE Connect to reach out to congregations in communities across California as a unique way of connecting families to information that could significantly improve their lives. WE Connect has been able to spread the word to over 350 places of worship reaching tens of thousands of Californians through bulletin inserts and the distribution of our bilingual supplements - all free of charge. Pastors, priests, rabbis and other religious leaders are also encouraged to include WE Connect's message in their sermons, reaching out on a more personal level to their worshipers.



Connecting Working Families in the Workplace

WE Connect reaches out to working families through their workplace by providing information to a network of small businesses, business associations, unions and small business development centers. Our goal is to engage small business owners in educating their employees about important resources that may help them. Materials available will include "Connector" tool kits, workplace posters and brochures, payroll inserts and email blasts.

About the Programs

Money

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the Golden State Advantage Card help working families put money in their pocket and build their savings. Applying for the EITC alone can mean anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. Programs like California's Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE), Lifeline and California's Low Cost Auto Insurance can help working families save on their monthly bills. Finally, housing resources, such as California's Consumer Home Mortgage Information website, help families deal with foreclosure issues and learn about ways they can keep their home.

Opportunity

Job resources and educational tools provide working families with the best opportunities to get ahead. The Employment Development Department, Icanaffordcollege.com and the ScholarShare 529 college savings plans are just some of the most helpful resources for information about job training opportunities and saving and paying for a better education.

Dreams

WE Connect provides the programs and services that can help families get ahead and reach their dreams. The success stories of working families touched by these programs and this campaign are an essential part of the WE Connect efforts and working families are encouraged to share their story.

Become a Connector

WE can do better together. Connecting working families to resources that matter is something anyone can do. WE Connect is an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors. Those who want to get involved can join Maria and so many others who are helping to get word out by becoming a Connector. Information about how becoming a connector through service opportunities are also available.

About the WE Connect Partners

The WE Connect campaign partners with community organizations, statewide programs, unions, small businesses and major corporations to connect with working families. WE Connect partners include: Intuit, The Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women, Legal Aid Society of Orange County, Central California Legal Services, California Volunteers, AmeriCorps, California Department of Social Services, United Way of Greater Los Angeles, United Way of Bay Area, La Opinión, California Association of Food Banks, ClearChannel, California First 5, SEIU, AFSCME, Save the Children, AT&T, PG&E, Sempra Energy Utilities, California Black Media Association, Visa, Inc., California Network of Small Business Development Centers, and Wal-Mart, in addition to over 200 regional organizations across the state.

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