

VISTA Travel Fact Sheet



Relocating to Your Service Site

Many AmeriCorps VISTA members move to a new community for their VISTA service. If you are one of them, you may be eligible to receive financial assistance from the VISTA program for the move.

Relocation Assistance is financial support intended to help defray the costs associated with establishing yourself in a new community for VISTA service, but it may not cover all expenses or alleviate all inconveniences associated with the move.

Relocation Assistance consists of a Relocation Travel Allowance and a Settling-In Allowance.

Relocation Travel Allowance: This allowance is based on the direct mileage between your home address and your VISTA service site. The allowance is calculated at \$0.34 per mile, up to a maximum of \$1,000, and is paid six to eight weeks after you submit a relocation voucher.

Settling-In Allowance: This one-time payment of \$550 is intended to help cover initial settling-in costs, such as utility deposits and rental application fees. The allowance is automatically included in your first living allowance payment. (Please note that federal taxes are deducted from your settling-in allowance but state and local taxes are not. You must pay state and local taxes on this allowance come tax time.)

Eligibility & Considerations

Relocation Assistance is available for VISTA candidates or members who do both of the following:

- Sign up for a 12-month term
- Move more than 50 miles from their permanent address, also referred to as a home of record (HOR), to a new residence at their service site

Before committing yourself to relocating to serve in VISTA:

1. Weigh the professional and personal costs against the benefits of relocation when accepting a position.
2. Know the amount of the Relocation Travel Allowance you are entitled to so you can make informed decisions about arranging your travel.
3. Recognize that Relocation Assistance provided by the VISTA program may not cover all expenses that you incur, or fully meet your hopes or preferences.
4. At the end of your service, you are expected to arrange your return travel to your HOR. You will receive the same relocation travel allowance at the end of service as you do at the beginning, but not the settling in allowance. Please plan your finances accordingly.

Requesting Relocation Assistance & Arranging Travel

How to request Relocation Assistance depends on whether your Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) is a 3½-day in-person training or a four-week online curriculum.

If you're not sure which type of training you'll participate in, log in to my.americorps.gov and click on "My Events" in the left menu.

- Events with the word "virtual" in the code are conducted online and you'll participate from your VISTA project site.
- Events with a city name in the code are in-person orientations, and you'll travel to that location for the training.

VIRTUAL PSO

If you're attending a virtual PSO, the VISTA Member Support Unit will calculate your Relocation Travel Allowance and inform you of the amounts by email.

Once you have heard from the VMSU, you must arrange to be at your site on your service start date. Your sponsor or the VISTA Member Support Unit can remind you of that date if you're unsure.

IN-PERSON PSO

If you're attending an in-person PSO, then please complete a "Training and Relocation Travel" Travel Request Profile in my.americorps.gov to indicate your needs related to relocation travel. Because you'll also need to travel to PSO, please indicate your travel preference to PSO as well.

The VMSU will e-mail you to let you know if your travel plans are approved. Do not arrange and pay for travel until you receive written approval from the VMSU.

Once the VMSU approves your request to relocate, and informs you of the amount you will receive in Relocation Assistance, you should personally arrange travel from your HOR to your service site. How you get there is up to you— air, rail, bus, or personal vehicle.

In traveling to PSO, you can relocate prior to attending PSO, after attending PSO, or attend PSO on your way to your service site. You must, however, contact the VMSU well in advance of your travel to confirm that your proposed itinerary and travel dates are acceptable to your sponsor and the VISTA program.

Arranging Travel to Pre-Service Orientation (PSO)

If you're attending a virtual, online PSO, you do not need to travel to PSO. You'll participate from your VISTA service site.

If you're attending an in-person PSO, then there are a few points to consider.

- **Travel by Car:** If approved by the VMSU to travel to PSO by car, you will be reimbursed for mileage from your approved departure point to the PSO at a rate set by the VISTA program. You may request reimbursement for the cost of tolls and parking at the PSO, as long as you provide receipts.
- **Travel by Air, Rail, and Bus (Ticketed Travel):** For ticketed travel, the VISTA program will arrange and purchase tickets for you to travel from your approved departure point to the PSO. You will receive an itinerary by email the week prior to your scheduled departure date. You may request reimbursement for certain costs associated with getting to the airport (or station); see the next paragraph.
- **Other Travel Expenses:** VISTA will reimburse you for certain travel expenses.
 - If any part of your trip is by car, please note the round-trip mileage for reimbursement.
 - If you park your car at an airport or train station, park in long term (economy) parking for the lowest rate and note the daily rate. Please bring your parking lot ticket for verification. The maximum reimbursement for such parking is \$50 total and you will only be reimbursed at the economy rate.
 - If you take public transit or a shuttle to the airport, train, or bus station, please save all receipts and submit them during registration. The maximum reimbursement for such transportation is \$50 total. If public transit or a cost effective shuttle is not available, you must request approval from the VISTA Training Coordinator at least two weeks prior to PSO to be reimbursed for a taxi, Uber, Lyft, etc.

Reimbursement for all training related travel will be made by direct deposit about six to eight weeks after PSO.

Requesting Help

Contact the VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) at 800-942-2677 to request support in relocating to your service site. The VMSU can answer any questions, and approve your travel, if appropriate.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I relocate to my service site without approval from the VMSU?

If you relocate to your service site without written approval from the VMSU, you must arrange your own travel to PSO as well (if attending an in-person event) and you will receive reimbursement, if at all, to the amount that VISTA policy permits.

How do I actually receive the money related to the Relocation Assistance?

If you attend an in-person PSO, you will sign a relocation travel voucher at PSO. If you participate in a virtual PSO, you will download a relocation voucher from my.americorps.gov, sign it, and submit it to the VMSU. VISTA will then electronically transfer your relocation travel allowance to your bank account through the US Treasury, usually within six to eight weeks of PSO.

Your settling-in allowance will be added to your first living allowance payment.

If you do not receive your reimbursement or allowance within this timeframe, contact the VISTA Member Support Unit.

How do I contact the VISTA Member Support Unit?

- By phone: Call the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 and select the option for the VISTA Member Support Unit.
- Online: Submit your question using a web form at <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask>.

How do I contact my Corporation State Office?

Visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/stateoffices> and click on the state that manages your VISTA project.