

VISTA Relocation Benefits 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 to help with the costs associated with moving to a new community for VISTA service. Relocation assistance may not cover all expenses or alleviate all inconveniences associated with your 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 \$0.40 per mile and is paid eight to ten weeks after you submit a relocation voucher.

Settling-In Allowance: This one-time payment of \$750 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:

- Sign up for a 12-month term, AND
- Move more than 50 miles from their permanent address, also referred to as 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, 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 relocation to your HOR accordingly.

Requesting Relocation Assistance & Arranging Travel

If you intend to relocate to serve, be sure to inform the VISTA sponsor during your interview. The VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) will calculate your Relocation Travel Allowance and inform you by email of the amount of assistance you will receive, usually no later than one week prior to your service start date

The allowance is calculated on mileage from the ZIP code of your Home of Record to the ZIP code of your Service Site. To verify that the correct addresses are used, please view the following:

- **Home of Record:** This address is listed as your Permanent Address in your My.AmeriCorps.gov account
- **Service Site Address:** This address can be found on your My.AmeriCorps.gov account by clicking "Edit My Contact Information," then scroll to the bottom of the page and view "Site/Campus/Local Address."

If either of these addresses are incorrect, please contact the VISTA Member Support Unit.

You must make your own arrangements to move from your home to your VISTA service site. How you get there is

up to you – air, rail, bus, or personal vehicle – but you must make sure that you are present at your site on your service start date. Your sponsor or the VISTA Member Support Unit can remind you of that date if you are unsure.

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 your questions and approve your travel, if appropriate.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How do I know if I qualify for Relocation Assistance?

To qualify for relocation assistance your HOR (as listed in your account in my.americorps.gov when you applied to serve with VISTA) must be at least 50 miles from your VISTA service site. Use Google Maps to calculate the distance from the ZIP code of your HOR to the ZIP code of your VISTA service site. You can find the ZIP code of your service site in my.americorps.gov by clicking “Edit My Contact Information.”

How do I know if I’ve been approved for Relocation Assistance?

If you will participate in a Virtual Member Orientation (VMO), you will receive an email notification from the VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) no later than one week prior to your service start date with the approved amount you will receive for the relocation travel allowance. A voucher will then be posted onto your My AmeriCorps account. If you are unsure if you have been approved for relocation benefits, please contact the VMSU at 800-942-267 to confirm your eligibility.

How do I receive my Relocation Assistance?

The VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) will send you instructions on how to download a voucher for your Relocation Travel Allowance from my.americorps.gov, sign it, and submit it to the VMSU. You do not need to sign a voucher for the Settling-In Allowance. Payments are made by direct deposit to your bank account, unless you have not provided direct deposit information.

Does the VISTA program provide housing for VISTA members?

The VISTA program does not provide housing for VISTA members. The VISTA living allowance is intended to cover some living expenses, such as housing, food, utilities, and transportation.

What help is available for finding housing in the location where I will be serving?

Your VISTA sponsor may be able to help you find housing since they are familiar with local neighborhoods, housing costs, traffic patterns, and other useful information. They can probably also point you to other local resources to help in your housing search.

When do I actually receive the money related to my Relocation Assistance?

Your Settling-In Allowance will be included with your first living allowance payment. Your Relocation Travel Allowance will be sent as a separate payment from the US Treasury, usually within eight to ten weeks of when you submit your relocation voucher. If you do not receive your reimbursement or allowance within this timeframe, contact the VISTA Member Support Unit.

What if the amount of Relocation Assistance offered is not enough to cover my moving expenses?

Relocation Assistance is intended to help with some of the costs associated with moving and getting established in a new community. It is not designed to cover all expenses or alleviate all inconveniences associated with your move. You will have to consider the costs of moving, along with the Relocation Assistance offered as well as your own financial situation to determine whether relocating to serve makes sense for you.

If you would like to relocate to serve but do not have the financial means to move to your VISTA site, contact the VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) to find out about additional support that may be available.

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 CNCS State Office?

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