

# 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 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

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 qualify for, usually a few weeks before your service start date.

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 any 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 home of record (as listed in your account in [my.americorps.gov](http://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 home of record to the ZIP code of your VISTA service site. You can find the ZIP code of your service site in [my.americorps.gov](http://my.americorps.gov) by clicking “Edit My Contact 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 living expenses, including housing, food, utilities, and transportation. Some VISTA sponsors offer free housing or provide a housing subsidy. Ask your sponsor if they offer this kind of assistance.

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

Your VISTA sponsor is probably best equipped to offer suggestions for finding housing, as they will likely be familiar with various neighborhoods, housing costs, traffic patterns, and other useful information. They can probably point you to other local resources for finding a place to live.

## **How do I receive my Relocation Assistance?**

The VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) will send you instructions on how to download a relocation voucher for your Relocation Travel Allowance from [my.americorps.gov](http://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.

## **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 six to eight 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 I relocate to serve but I don't get an email from the VMSU?**

If you move 50 miles or more to your VISTA site and you have not received a relocation approval email from the VMSU by your service start date, please contact the VMSU at 800-942-2677 to ask about the status of your relocation benefits.

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

Relocation Assistance is intended to help defray or offset 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 the move. You will have to consider the likely 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.