



AmeriCorps VISTA

Relocation Benefits Fact Sheet

Relocating to Your Service Site

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

Relocation assistance is financial support to help with the costs associated with moving to a new community for AmeriCorps 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 in the U.S.A. and your AmeriCorps service site. The allowance is calculated at \$0.40 per mile, by road where possible and by air if over sea. It is paid by separate direct deposit from the U.S. Treasury within ten weeks after you submit an approved Relocation Allowance Request Form to the VMSU.

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. Once your Relocation Allowance Request Form has been approved by the VMSU, your Settling-In Allowance will be disbursed together with your next 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 those who:

- Sign up for a 12-month service term in the AmeriCorps VISTA program, 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 AmeriCorps:

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 AmeriCorps 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 back to your HOR accordingly.

Requesting Relocation Assistance & Arranging Travel

If you intend to relocate to serve, be sure to mention it during your interview. The AmeriCorps VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) will email a Relocation Allowance Request Form and instructions to all members who've been marked as eligible for relocation benefits before they start service.

To complete the Relocation Allowance Request Form, you must enter:

1. The address you were living at when you applied to the VISTA program, from which you have moved or will move within 45 days of signing and submitting the form to the VMSU. This address should be listed as your Permanent Address in your my.americorps.gov account, and is considered your home of record (HOR). If your HOR is not part of the U.S.A., please enter your first Port of Entry into the U.S.A. (i.e. the airport or border crossing where your passport is stamped).
2. The address of your VISTA service site. This address can be found in your my.americorps.gov account by clicking "Edit My Contact Information," then scrolling to the bottom of the page and clicking to view "Site/Campus/Local Address." If the address in your account is incorrect, please enter the correct address on your Relocation Allowance Request Form and notify the VMSU of the discrepancy.
3. Your signature and the date on *either* the top *or* the bottom of page 2 to verify either that you've already moved to your project site community, or that you plan to move within 45 days of signing and submitting the form to the VMSU.
4. Save the form as "REL [Last Name]_[First Name]_[NSPID]", e.g. "REL_Doe_Jane_1234567", using your own name and National Service Participant ID (NSPID) number, and email it to VMSU@cns.gov with the subject line "Relocation Travel [Last Name] [First Name]".

The VMSU will calculate mileage from the ZIP code of your Home of Record to the ZIP code of your service site to determine your Relocation Travel Allowance and will send an email to confirm that your relocation benefits have been approved, usually no later than your service start date. Receipts are not required.

You must make your own arrangements to move from your home to your 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 supervisor or the VMSU can remind you of that date if you are unsure.

Requesting Help

If you are enrolled in a VISTA Member Orientation event but have not received a notification of your eligibility for relocation benefits, or if you have questions about the application process, contact the AmeriCorps VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) at 800-942-2677 or VMSU@cns.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I qualify for Relocation Assistance?

To qualify for relocation assistance, your HOR (listed as your permanent address in your my.americorps.gov account when you applied to the VISTA program) must be at least 50 miles from your service site, and you must have plans to relocate to your project site community no later than 45 days from the date you submit your Relocation Allowance Request Form to the VMSU. Use Google Maps to calculate the driving distance from the ZIP code of your HOR to the ZIP code of your service site, or Wolfram|Alpha if you must travel by air to your site. You can find the ZIP code of your service site in my.americorps.gov by clicking "Edit My Contact Information."

If you qualify but you have not received an email from the VMSU confirming your eligibility for relocation assistance, please check your email spam filter and ensure VMSU@cns.gov is in your "trusted senders" list, then complete a [Relocation Allowance Request Form](#) and email it to VMSU@cns.gov with an explanation of your eligibility.

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

If you have submitted a Relocation Allowance Request Form to the AmeriCorps VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) at VMSU@cns.gov, the VMSU will either send an automated approval notification or email you directly to follow up on any discrepancies, usually within one week of receiving your form.

If you are unsure if you have been approved for relocation assistance, please contact the VMSU at 1-800-942-2677 or VMSU@cns.gov to confirm your eligibility.

When and how do I receive my Relocation Assistance?

The VMSU will not approve you for relocation assistance more than 45 days before you move to your project site community.

Once you have submitted your Relocation Allowance Request Form and received an emailed approval notification, you can expect to receive your payments by direct deposit to your bank account.

The benefits are issued in two separate payments:

- The one-time \$750 **Settling-in Allowance** will be disbursed as part of your next regular living allowance check for the pay period in which the approval was granted.
- The **Relocation Travel Allowance** is disbursed separately, via the U.S. Treasury, within 10 weeks after the VMSU initially received your Relocation Allowance Request Form.

If you do not receive your benefits within this timeframe, please contact the VMSU.

Does AmeriCorps provide housing for members in the VISTA program?

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

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

The project site where you will serve 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.

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. The VMSU does not collect receipts for relocation travel.

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

How do I contact the AmeriCorps VISTA Member Support Unit?

- **By phone:** Call the AmeriCorps Hotline at 1-800-942-2677 and request to be transferred to the VISTA Member Support Unit.
- **Online:** Submit your question using a web form at <https://questions.americorps.gov/app/ask>
- **By email:** Email VMSU@cns.gov

How do I contact my AmeriCorps Regional Office?

Visit <https://americorps.gov/contact/region-offices> and click on the state that manages your AmeriCorps VISTA project to find the phone number and email address for your Portfolio Manager.