



Relocating to Serve

VISTAs who move to a new community when they begin their year of service are eligible to receive relocation assistance from the VISTA program.

Who is eligible for relocation assistance?

VISTA candidates who:

- Sign up for a 12-month term;
- Move from their permanent address (Home of Record or HOR) to a new residence near their service site; and
- Move more than 50 miles

What are the constraints or expectations around relocation travel?

You are expected to travel by the most [cost-effective method](#), which means travelling from your HOR to Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) to your service site.

At the end of your service, you are expected [to return to your Home of Record](#) in the same manner you used at the beginning of your term.

How do I ask for relocation assistance?

Contact your [Corporation State Office](#) to request support in relocating to your service site. Your State Office can answer any questions, and authorize your travel, if appropriate.

For more information on the relocating as a VISTA, please review Chapter 7 of the [VISTA Member Handbook](#).

What types of relocation assistance can VISTA candidates receive?

1. [Settling-In Allowance](#): This one-time payment of up to \$550 is intended to help cover initial relocation costs, such as utility deposits, rental application fees, etc. Your State Office determines the allowance amount, which 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.)
2. [Baggage Reimbursement](#): You can be reimbursed for the cost of shipping personal belongings (baggage) or renting a trailer, up to an allotment amount. Your allotment is calculated at the rate of \$25 for every 100 miles between your HOR and service site, up to \$500. To claim this reimbursement, you must provide legible receipts, in your name, within 30 days of your first day of service. (Your new residence must be at least 100 miles from your HOR to receive this type of reimbursement.)
3. [Relocation Travel Reimbursement](#): Your relocation travel reimbursement varies based on your mode of travel. VISTA will reimburse you for mileage from your HOR to PSO and then to site if you drive, or purchase ticketed travel on your behalf. Requested travel changes are subject to approval and must be made no later than 10 days prior to the scheduled departure date.
 - **Travel by Car**: If approved by your state office to travel by car, you will be reimbursed for mileage from your HOR to PSO to site, according to the VISTA Relocation Policy. If your VISTA position requires a car, your project supervisor will instruct you to complete the *Use of Vehicles or Public Transportation* (V-81) Form in the My AmeriCorps portal.

- **Travel by Car as a Passenger:** If you ride as a passenger with someone (for example, another VISTA or family member), you will be reimbursed \$10 for every 100 miles travelled.
- **Ticketed Travel (Air, Rail, and Bus):** For ticketed travel, VISTA will arrange and purchase tickets for you to travel from your HOR to PSO to service site. You will receive an itinerary by email at least a week prior to your scheduled departure date. You can request reimbursement for the cost of getting to the airport (or station) and up to two checked bags, so long as you provide receipts.

If you make your own travel arrangements without approval, you will receive reimbursement, if at all, only to the amount VISTA policy permits.

How do I know if I am approved to relocate?

Follow the checklist below to begin the approval process:

- Talk to your project sponsor about your relocation travel and your travel to PSO.
- Complete the *Travel to VISTA Service Location* form, which you should receive from your project sponsor or your Corporation State Office, to document your relocation travel plan by the deadline given by your project sponsor.
 - If your travel request includes more than one mode of travel (for example, car and plane) or you are requesting nonstandard routing, please provide details in the comments section on the Travel to VISTA Service Location form.
- Complete your *Trainee Registration Profile* on My.AmeriCorps.gov to document your travel to PSO by the deadline given by your project sponsor.
 - Your state office will review the travel plans you submitted and contact you with any questions. Your relocation request is processed by the VISTA Member Support Unit; they may contact you for additional information.
 - At least one week before your scheduled travel date, you will receive your travel information and/or itinerary.
- Review your travel itinerary immediately. If you notice a problem or have questions, contact the VISTA Member Support Unit.

How am I reimbursed for my relocation expenses?

Bring all travel and shipping receipts to PSO to complete required paperwork. For expenses incurred after PSO, you must submit receipts to the VISTA Member Support Unit within 30 days of your first day of service.

VISTA, through the US Treasury, will deposit your travel reimbursement within eight weeks of PSO to your bank account. Your settling-in allowance will be added to your first living allowance deposit.

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

How do I contact my Corporation State Office?

Visit <http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/stateoffices.asp> and click on the state that manages your VISTA project. (Note that this may be different from the state where your project is located).

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>.