



# Up2Us VISTA FAQ 2021



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## VISTA General (Summer and VISTA)

### What is VISTA and what duties can a VISTA perform?

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) is a national service program that aims to fight poverty. Up2Us Sports receives a grant from AmeriCorps, which allows us to place VISTA members at sports-based youth development programs nationally.

VISTA members are capacity builders and help to strengthen and support organizations.

VISTA members DO NOT perform direct service. They can do the following:

- Recruit and train community volunteers
- Apply for funding sources and write grants
- Design and implement databases and evaluate programs
- Market the organization and manage social media platforms
- Establish and build new partnerships
- Plan fundraisers and special events

### What are my responsibilities as a host site?

Each site is responsible for the following items:

- Recruitment: Finding, interviewing, and selecting your VISTA. Up2Us Sports provides some support, but the recruitment process falls heavily on each site to find the best fit for their individual project.
- Management of the VISTA: Each VISTA needs a supervisor that they can go to for support and direction during their programming year. We recommend this is someone who is available to, in some cases, heavily support and, at times, micromanage their VISTA. We do not recommend someone who has an extremely busy schedule or someone who isn't flexible or lacks patience.
- Workspace and Equipment: Sites are responsible for providing a computer (working remotely or in office), desk space, and a desk phone while in the office for the Up2Us VISTA program (full year). Sites are not responsible for providing the above items for the Up2Us Summer VISTA program.
- Cost Share Payment: Payment of the cost share on time when invoices are issued.

You are **NOT** responsible for:

- Payment of your VISTA: Your VISTA is paid by AmeriCorps.



- Managing Grant Requirements: Up2Us Sports manages all grants and all reporting associated with those grants. You will be asked two times a year to respond to narrative questions to support the completion of the grant.
- Benefits for your VISTA: AmeriCorps is responsible for all benefits (health care, end-of-service awards, relocation assistance, and child care). The only benefit available to summer VISTAs is the end-of-service award.

### **How do I apply to host an Up2Us VISTA (Summer or VISTA)?**

Apply here: [surveymonkey.com/r/VISTAApplication22-23](https://surveymonkey.com/r/VISTAApplication22-23)

### **How do VISTA members get paid?**

AmeriCorps provides a living allowance to each VISTA. Even if the VISTA does not pay rent, they will still receive the allowance. The living allowance is based on the poverty line of your organization's county. It is not determined by where the VISTA lives. You can use [this document](#) to determine the day rate for your county. The living allowance is provided bi-weekly via direct deposit and is taxed federally.

Up2Us Summer VISTA: multiply the day rate by 63

Up2Us VISTA: multiply the day rate by 365

### **Can organizations provide additional compensation to the VISTA?**

You cannot pay your VISTA in the form of cash. You can give your VISTAs other incentives like rent stipend, food gift cards, transportation passes, gas cards, internet/cell phone support. However, checks cannot be made directly to the VISTA, they must be made to the landlord, internet company, etc.

### **Can a previous full or part time employee work as an Up2Us VISTA?**

A previous employee can work as a VISTA in certain situations. For example, if you'd like to hire a previous Coach to join your organization as a member of the Marketing team as the Marketing Summer VISTA or full-year VISTA, that is allowed. You cannot let the Marketing Manager go, then rehire that person as the Marketing VISTA.

Up2Us VISTAs cannot be used to replace an employee or previously held full or part time position within the organization. A VISTA, also, cannot replace or fulfill the duties of an employee who is out on leave (maternity, paternity, strike, ect). A VISTA can join an existing team and collaborate with that team to complete the projects designed by the organization. A VISTA can take on some responsibilities of other employees (taking over social media, researching grants, writing LOI's, developing curriculum), but they should not replace a previously full-time member of the organization.

### **Can an organization share a VISTA?**

A VISTA can work at various locations within an umbrella organization (YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, ect.). If there are two sites who can mutually agree to splitting a VISTA's time, we can



work with those two sites to come up with a plan. When you apply, indicate both sites and your plan for implementation.

### **What are the hour requirements?**

VISTA members should work in a full-time capacity. They should average 35-40 hours a week. The absolute minimum hours they can work is 30 hours per week.

### **Can my VISTA work in person?**

Your VISTA is able to work in person according to your state and local regulations. You must ensure that your organization is following all of the guidelines that are outlined in your city and state.

### **Can my VISTA work remotely?**

Your VISTA is able to “teleserve” or work remotely. We do recommend that you develop a highly comprehensive work from home plan that you share with your VISTA on the first day.

### **What are the eligibility requirements to serve as an Up2Us VISTA?**

VISTAs must be:

- 18 years or older
- A US Citizen or permanent resident

A VISTA member **does not**:

- Need to have a college degree

A VISTA **cannot** be related by blood or immediate family to anyone at the organization (No nepotism clause)

### **How does the VISTA apply?**

AmeriCorps requires all candidates to apply to VISTA positions through the My AmeriCorps Portal to site specific opportunity listings. The Up2Us Sports VISTA team will work with each organization to create an opportunity listing, which is similar to a job posting. We will provide you with the link to the opportunity listing. When completing the application through the opportunity listing, the VISTA must respond to the following sections: motivational statement, skills and experience, education, community service, criminal history questionnaire, demographic information, and references.

### **Do candidates need to provide references when applying?**

A complete application includes two references. References will be notified via email to respond to a list of questions. A letter of recommendation is not required. Teachers and professors, supervisors, coaches, and mentors are valid references, while peers, co-workers, friends, and family members are not. If your VISTA is using a professor or another reference





with an “edu” email they should attempt to get their reference’s personal email. Edu email accounts usually have a firewall set up against the reference emails and they do not receive them.

### **How does the VISTA receive the end-of-service awards and are there any limitations when using them?**

VISTA members can choose between the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award OR the end-of-service cash stipend.

If the VISTA chooses to receive the education award, they can access it through the My AmeriCorps Portal after the successful completion of their service term. It is a voucher and must be used toward school expenses or repaying existing loans. The education award may be used up to seven years after completing service and is considered taxable income. An AmeriCorps member is limited to two full-time education awards.

If the VISTA chooses the end-of-service cash stipend, the stipend is paid in the last two living allowance payments. There are no limitations on how the VISTA uses this stipend.

### **What documents does a VISTA need to provide in order to start their service term?**

The VISTA must complete the required onboarding forms, which are found in the My AmeriCorps Portal. This includes their direct deposit information, a selection of their end-of-service award (education award or stipend), Federal Tax Withholding (W4), and unpaid compensation information.

### **Does my VISTA still qualify for unemployment during or after the VISTA program?**

Unemployment stipulations vary state by state. It is important to understand the unemployment regulations around AmeriCorps programming in your state. Please note that in most states AmeriCorps members are not able to apply for unemployment benefits during or after the program term ends. They are under a contract and once the contract ends they do not qualify for the same benefits.

### **Can VISTA members have a part-time job?**

VISTA members can have a part-time job while participating in the VISTA program. It is extremely important that this job does not interfere with their service. They will need to complete the “Outside Employment Request Form” found [here](#). This form must be signed by their host site supervisor and sent to the Up2Us Sports VISTA team.

### **Can VISTA members enroll in classes during their service term?**

VISTA members can take classes while in service. They must notify and get approval from their host site supervisor. The classes must not interfere with their service. There is no form required for taking classes, but this can be a reason for termination if not communicated and approved by the host site.



## **If I have additional questions about the Up2Us Sports VISTA programs, who can I contact?**

Please contact Kim Chinn, Assistant National Director of VISTA, at [kchinn@up2ussports.org](mailto:kchinn@up2ussports.org).

## **How can organizations continue to partner with Up2Us Sports?**

Up2Us Sports also offers our year-round Up2Us Coach program and individualized training opportunities that can meet the needs of your organization. If you're interested in learning more about either one of these programs, please contact:

- Up2Us Coach: Jack Callahan ([jcallahan@up2ussports.org](mailto:jcallahan@up2ussports.org))
- Up2Us Training: Nate LeJune ([training@up2ussports.org](mailto:training@up2ussports.org))

## Up2Us Summer VISTA Program

### **What is my organization's financial obligation to host an Up2Us Summer VISTA?**

The Up2Us Summer VISTA program has a cost share of \$300. It will be made in one payment within 30 days of signing the MOU. The payment must be made prior to the nomination of your VISTA. No matter if a VISTA starts or not, your organization is responsible for a non-refundable deposit of \$100 that is included in the payment of \$300.

### **What if my summer VISTA quits? Will I get a refund for my cost share?**

Upon signing the Up2Us Sports Summer VISTA Program MOU you will receive an invoice for the cost share of \$300. This is expected to be paid within 30 days of signing the MOU. If you are unable to fill the position prior to the nomination deadline you will be refunded \$200. The nomination deadline will be communicated in advance with plenty of time for recruitment. If your VISTA quits within the first seven days of the program you will receive a refund of \$200. If your VISTA serves past the first seven days no refund will be given.

### **What duties can the summer VISTA perform?**

All projects will be in one of four key areas: program operations/coaching, marketing, development or community engagement. Summer VISTAs **are able to serve as coaches during the summer 22 program.** Each VISTA will have a Summer Assignment Description (SAD), which outlines what projects the VISTA will work on during their term. Each site will create a SAD that you'll submit to Up2Us Sports.

Up2Us Sports will submit one universal VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) that all VISTAs will be assigned to in the AmeriCorps system. The SAD will serve as the guiding document you should use to ensure your project is meeting all project goals outlined in your application.



### **I hosted an Up2Us Summer VISTA last summer. Can I hire the same person again?**

You can bring on the same person that was your summer VISTA for a second year. The summer VISTA program does not count against the five terms a VISTA member can serve. The education award does count toward the two full education awards they can receive.

### **How do I calculate the living allowance rate that my summer VISTA will receive?**

The living allowance is based on the county in which your organization is located. You can use [this document](#) to determine the day rate for your county. To determine the full rate of the nine-week summer program, multiple the day rate by 63.

### **In addition to the living allowance, does my summer VISTA receive any benefits?**

Your Up2Us Sports Summer VISTA receives the following benefits:

- The choice of **ONE** end of service summer benefit
  - Education award of \$1,345
  - End of service stipend of \$311

### **Does my summer VISTA have PTO?**

Up2Us Sports Summer VISTAs do not receive any PTO time for the nine-week summer program. They are able to request 1-2 days but are expected to make up that time with additional assignments or weekend work. Summer VISTAs are able to take any holidays your organization observes (4th of July). If the VISTA plans to miss more than two days they are unable to serve in the summer VISTA program.

### **What is the background check process?**

AmeriCorps will run a National Sex Offender Public Website (NSPOW) for the summer associates. This is a sex offender check. They do not conduct a state or federal violent crime background check for summer VISTAs. Any additional or specific background checks for your summer VISTA will need to be completed on a site level. We are unable to access the results of any background checks run by AmeriCorps.

### **What additional support and resources does Up2Us Sports provide during the summer program?**

The Up2Us Summer program is a comprehensive nine-week program. Your VISTA will have an orientation in their first week, followed by eight weeks of programming. The program will include two professional development sessions and two check-in calls with their Cohort Leader. They will also have access to affinity groups developed by the Cohort Leaders. Each VISTA will be expected to collect weekly data information about their role. Your VISTA will also receive a weekly newsletter with additional resources and relevant information in the SBYD field.





## **My organization really needs a coach this summer. How can I get a coach for the summer?**

For the 22 Up2Us Summer VISTA Program, sites are able to utilize the summer VISTAs as coaches in a full time capacity for the entire nine-week program. If you need coaching support outside of the nine week summer program, please contact Jack Callahan at [jcallahan@up2ussports.org](mailto:jcallahan@up2ussports.org).

## Up2Us VISTA Program

### **What is my organization's financial obligation?**

For the 2022-2023 VISTA year, the cost share to host a VISTA is \$7,500. The cost share is broken into four payments of \$1,975 (25%), \$1,975 (25%), \$1,975 (25%), \$1,975 (25%). The initial payment of \$1,975 is a non-refundable deposit, must be paid within 45 days of signing the MOU and must be paid in full prior to your VISTAs start date. Organizations are also responsible for providing a computer to their VISTA (whether working from home or in the office) along with an office phone and desk space when working in the office.

### **When are the cost share payments due?**

The initial non-refundable deposit is due within 45 days of signing the MOU. It must be paid prior to your VISTA's nomination. The remaining three payments are made on the first of the month every three months from the start date (per quarter).

### **If my VISTA doesn't successfully complete their term of service, do I still owe the full cost share?**

You will owe the non-refundable deposit (1st payment) whether your VISTA does or does not start. Since the payment schedule is set quarterly, you will pay the cost share for your VISTA at the beginning of each quarter. Once your VISTA starts a quarter you will not be refunded for that quarter, even if they only serve for one day. You will not owe the remaining cost share amounts.

### **What is a VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)?**

A VAD serves as the roadmap for your VISTA project. It acts as a project description for the VISTA year and is designed specifically by each organization to outline the project into clear objectives and activities to complete the objectives. Each VISTA project usually has three to four objectives and three to five key activities to complete each objective. You can see an example of the VAD [here](#).

### **Can I continue my current VISTA Project?**

The AmeriCorps VISTA program is generally designed for three year project cycles. The first year of your projects is laying the foundation. From year one to year two the VISTA should be



streamlining and refining the processes established in year one. From year two to year three the project should focus on the sustainable transition of the project from VISTA to the project site.

### **Can our VISTA serve another year with our project?**

If your organization is awarded again, the VISTA can serve another year at your site. In total, VISTA members can serve up to five years. Your VISTA must select re-enrollment when filling out their Future Plans Form. AmeriCorps will notify the VISTA if their re-enrollment was approved and processed. VISTA benefits will continue. However, it is important to note that VISTA members can only receive the value of two full education awards. After two full education awards they will automatically receive the end of service cash stipend.

### **What additional support and resources does Up2Us Sports provide to the VISTA cohort?**

The Up2Us Sports VISTA team offers comprehensive programming support during the service year. Each VISTA will be assigned a Cohort Leader, who is the VISTA's main point of contact at Up2Us Sports. Cohort Leaders will check in with VISTA members monthly to answer any VISTA-related questions and ensure VISTA members receive their benefits and are satisfied at their site. Cohort Leaders will send a monthly newsletter that includes program requirements, optional events, and resources. Each month, Up2Us Sports offers a professional development session and communities of reflection. Topics of professional development include time management, financial literacy, cultural competence, sports-based youth development, resume and cover letter writing, mental health, and more. Up2Us Sports also provides each VISTA member with a data tracker to track their progress and accomplishments over the course of their service term. Lastly, Up2Us Sports offers affinity groups as a way to build community among the VISTA cohort.

### **How do I calculate the living allowance rate that my VISTA will receive?**

The living allowance is based on the county in which your organization is located. You can use [this document](#) to determine the day rate for your county. To determine the full rate for the year program, multiply the day rate by 365.

### **What is the background check process?**

Each VISTA is required to submit information for an online background check. AmeriCorps investigates for past sexual offenses, violent crimes, and crimes that have direct negative implications on their service assignment. This is at no cost to the VISTA member. Up2Us Sports does not have access to the results of these background checks. If you need any additional background information on file for your organization you will need to conduct background checks independent of the ones done by AmeriCorps.

### **In addition to the living allowance, what benefits does a VISTA receive?**

- Leave: 10 sick days and 10 personal days.
- Relocation assistance: VISTA members who are moving 50 miles or more from their home are eligible to receive a settling-in allowance of \$750. Additionally, members

receive a travel allowance to cover any travel expenses and is based on the mileage from the VISTA's home address to site address. The relocation benefits fact sheet can be found [here](#).

- End-of-service benefit: Choice between the Segal Education Award (\$6,495) or cash stipend (\$1,800) upon successful completion of their service term.
- Health benefits: If VISTA members have insurance, they can enroll in the Allowance Plan, which will help to cover out-of-pocket expenses. If members do not have insurance, they can enroll in the Benefits Plan, a basic health plan, at no cost.
- Loan postponement: VISTA members who select the education award, may request to put their loans in forbearance. Upon successful completion of a VISTA's service term, AmeriCorps will pay any interest accrued during the service year. VISTAs who select the end-of-service cash stipend, may be eligible to defer their student loans.
- Non-competitive eligibility: VISTA alumni applying to federal agencies have a faster application process.