

AmeriCorps VISTA Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is different about my status as a VISTA during a funding lapse?

Because you are not a federal employee, the lack of funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service (Corporation) and its staff does not directly affect your status as a VISTA.

If you are serving in a grant-supported project or your position is funded via a cost share agreement, there is no difference in your status of service.

However, the majority of VISTA member positions are not financially supported by a grant or cost-share agreement. This means that most VISTAs will receive their living allowance retroactively, once the Corporation is provided funding. To clarify how your VISTA position is funded, ask your supervisor whether you will continue to receive your living allowance or you can contact the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

For all VISTAs, all terms, conditions and benefits remain in place, and the goals of your service are unchanged during a Corporation funding lapse.

2. What if I have issues or questions about service benefits (e.g., health care, child care, life insurance, worker compensation)?

Contact the VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) via the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677 with questions or issues.

3. What if I have questions or issues about my Segal Education Award?

AmeriCorps Trust technicians will be available to answer questions and to process education award requests. The Trust technicians can be reached via the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677

4. Will I continue to receive living allowance payments during a funding lapse?

Living allowance payments will cease during a funding lapse for the majority of VISTAs (see question number 2). Those VISTAs will be paid retroactively once the funding lapse has ended. However, if you are serving at a VISTA grant-supported project or your position is funded via a cost share agreement, you will continue to receive your living allowance during the funding lapse. To clarify to how your VISTA position is funded, ask your supervisor whether you will continue to receive your living allowance or you can call the contact the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

5. Can my sponsor provide me an “advance of emergency funds” to assist with an emergency, as stated in the Memorandum of Agreement?

Yes. An advance of emergency funds up to \$500 is available from your sponsoring organization for emergencies as described in the VISTA Member Handbook. Once the funding lapse has ended the sponsor will work with the Corporation State Office to be reimbursed for the advanced funds.

However, asking the sponsor for funds during the funding lapse to cover rent, utilities or daily expenses is a loan made between individuals whose conditions would be agreed upon by you and the sponsor. You and the sponsor would be responsible for complying with those conditions; the Corporation and VISTA are not party to such an agreement.

6. In the event of an emergency, who do I contact?

Contact your supervisor and the VISTA Member Support Unit via the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

7. Can I still access My.AmeriCorps.gov?

Yes. The My AmeriCorps portal (my.americorps.gov) will be accessible during a funding lapse. For technical assistance with the portal, contact the National Service Hotline toll-free at 1-800-942-2677.

8. If I choose to terminate my VISTA service early during a funding lapse due to the stress of service without a living allowance, is that considered a “compelling reason” for early termination?

Yes, but only if you are not receiving a living allowance during a funding lapse. If you are serving in a grant-supported or cost share project, and therefore receiving a living allowance, the criteria set forth in VISTA policy to determine compelling reasons for early termination will be applied.