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# **Accessibility Grant Program Handbook**

**Includes Granting Freedom, Rental Unit Accessibility, and Owner-Occupied Modification**

**Grants Programs and Initiatives**  
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# 1. Program Description

Virginia Housing's Accessibility Grant Program makes funding available to assist with modifications to housing units to make them accessible for persons with disabilities. The modifications made to the home must relate to the occupant's functional use of the home. Typical modifications include, but are not limited to:

- Installation of ramps and chairlifts
- Widening of doorways and sidewalks
- Remote entry devices
- Alterations to bathrooms (tub cuts, grab bars, toilets, faucets, etc.) and kitchens

Applicants with modifications exceeding the maximum grant amount will need to find additional sources of funds to supplement the project cost (e.g. funds from local civic organizations, personal or family funds, or other government funded programs).

The organization shall designate and identify to Virginia Housing a person or persons to serve as Virginia Housing's sole point(s) of contact for this grant. Such person or persons shall be employees of the organizations and not a contractor or consultant.

Applications will be accepted from Agents on behalf of the applicant. Approved Agents include but are not limited to Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and Local Housing Authorities. Applications are processed on a first come, first served basis.

All communications for the work to be completed will be between the Agent, Contractor, Applicant, and Landlord. Virginia Housing's Grant Programs Administrator does not intercede in this communication process. The Agent should be the only point of contact between the program participants and Virginia Housing.

The home requiring modifications must be the primary principal residence of the individual with a disability.

The Accessibility Grant Program consists of three funding opportunities:

## 1.1 Granting Freedom

Virginia Housing's Granting Freedom Program, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Veteran Services, makes funding available to assist with modifications to owner-occupied homes or rental units in Virginia to make them accessible for Virginia servicemembers and veterans who sustained a line-of-duty injury resulting in a service-connected disability. Funds can only be used for any renovations that are needed to make the residence accessible for servicemembers or veterans with a service-connected disability. For rental units, these funds will not pay for the cost of items that are required to be provided by the housing owner.

The service-connected disability must be documented by either:

- US Department of Veteran Affairs Notification, Award or Rating Letter citing service-connected disability, for Veterans.
- MEB/PEB documentation citing service-connected disability, for Servicemembers.

Tenants paying rent to a person who owns and resides in the residence are not eligible. A copy of a valid lease agreement listing the eligible tenant is required with the application.

Homeowners must provide documentation of their ownership of the property.

## 1.2 Rental Unit Modification

Virginia Housing's Rental Unit Modification Grant makes funding available to assist with modifications to rental units to make them accessible for a specific tenant. The modifications made to the rental unit must make the unit accessible to the tenant. These funds are available to persons earning 80% or less of the area median income, based on HUD guidelines. These income limits are available here: <https://www.virginiahousing.com/partners/rental-housing/income-limits>. These funds will not pay for the cost of items that are required to be provided by the housing owner.

Applicants paying rent to a person who owns and resides in the residence are not eligible. A copy of a valid lease agreement listing the eligible tenant is required with the application.

## 1.3 Owner-Occupied Modification

Virginia Housing's Owner-Occupied Modification Grant makes funding available to assist with modifications to homes to make them accessible to, primarily elderly, owners with disabilities. The modification must directly address barriers created by the disability. These funds are available to persons earning 80% or less of the area median income, based on HUD guidelines. These income limits are available here: <https://www.virginiahousing.com/partners/rental-housing/income-limits>. This program is targeted at homeowners aged 65 and older. Applicants under 65 must provide written documentation of the need for the accessibility improvement, such as a doctor's letter, insurance documentation, or social security documentation showing the nature of the disability. Applicants must provide documentation of their ownership of the property.

## 2. Eligibility Guidelines

The grant provides funds on a first come/first served basis, for a maximum of \$8,000. Funds can be used for any renovations that are needed to make the unit accessible for a person who is disabled. Agents are eligible for an administrative stipend of \$500.

### 2.1 Restrictions

- Applicants are limited to one grant every five years unless the applicant moves to a new location which requires modification or if the modification was damaged due to natural causes (weather).
- Funds may not be used to cover modification expenses previously covered by another funding source.
- Applicants living in units with shared common areas must have an individual lease to be considered as an individual household.
- Contractors receiving funds pursuant to this grant may in no way have an existing relationship (current employment, contractual or voluntary) with the organization during the term of this grant.
- The Accessibility Grant program is intended to modify the home to make it more accessible to persons with disabilities. These grants are not intended for short term needs.

### 2.2 Freedom of Information Act

Virginia Housing is subject to and will, at all times, comply with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"). Virginia Housing will endeavor to protect from disclosure any financial information of the Applicant which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA.

### 2.3 Conflict of Interest

No officer or employee of an applicant or awarded organization shall have a personal interest in a contract with that organization of which he/she is an officer or employee.

## 3. Application Process

### 3.1 Application Requirements

To apply for an Accessibility Grant, the Agent must provide the following documentation. **All documentation must be provided in a single application submitted by a Virginia Housing approved agent through the Grants Management System (GMS).** Please mark out account numbers and social security numbers before submitting paperwork.

1. Written documentation for additional funding from other sources.
2. Applicant Agreement
3. Contractor Documents - Contractor must provide:
  - a. Contractor's estimate with materials and labor separately itemized. Estimate must include statement from contractor that work will be completed within 120 days of approval.
  - b. A current Contractor's license and applicable trade licenses
  - c. Certification of Insurance
  - d. A statement as to whether or not a building permit is required by the locality. If so, this must be procured by the contractor.
  - e. A statement as to whether or not a Certificate of Appropriateness is required by the locality for work being proposed in a Historic District. If so, this must be procured by the contractor.
4. Digital photos of the specified work area(s) taken before work is started.
5. Proof of Power of Attorney (if applicable)
6. For **Rental Unit Modification** or **Owner-Occupied Modification**
  - a. Proof of all sources of current year income (pay stubs, copy of social security letter, bank statement, etc.) for applicant and all others living in the household.
7. For **Rental Unit Modification** and **Granting Freedom Tenants**
  - a. Landlord/Owner Agreement
  - b. A copy of the Rental Lease Agreement (If the applicant is living in the residence of a family member, the family member must provide a copy of a valid rental agreement. An applicant paying rent to a person who owns and resides in the residence is not eligible for this funding).
8. For **Granting Freedom**
  - a. US Department of Veteran Affairs Notification, Award or Rating Letter citing service-connected disability, or
  - b. MEB/PEB documentation citing service-connected disability
9. For **Owner-Occupied Modification** or **Granting Freedom Homeowners**
  - a. Documentation of ownership of the home, such as a copy of the deed, mortgage statement, or property tax records.

### 3.2 Approval

Once a complete application has been received by the Grant Programs Administrator, it will be reviewed and if accepted, a Grant Acceptance Letter will be emailed to the Agent within 15 business days.

**Do not begin work until the Grant Award Letter has been received.**

If the application requires additional information, the Grant Programs Administrator will inform

the Agent of missing content. If the application is rejected, the Grant Programs Administrator will notify the Agent and provide an explanation for the decision.

### **3.3 Denial**

The following are possible reasons for denial of a modification grant:

- Requested modification is the legal responsibility of the landlord.
- Requested modification is unrelated to the disability and will not increase the accessibility of the home.
- Applicant has received an award within five years at the same residence and did not cite destruction of the previous modification due to natural causes.
- Modification completed prior to grant approval.
- Contractor has in the past 24 months failed to complete a contract to the satisfaction of an applicant or agent under this grant program. The applicant may submit all applicable documents for an alternate contractor within fifteen (15) days.

## 4. Completion of Work

From the date that the Grant Award Letter is issued, the Agent has 120 days to work with the applicant, the contractor, and other involved parties to have the work completed. The work completed must meet ADA guidelines and the building code requirements.

**Note:** Virginia Housing Compliance Officers or other assigned Virginia Housing associates may stop by any location to inspect the work that has been done. If the Compliance Officer or other Virginia Housing associate needs access to the housing unit, the Agent will be contacted in advance to schedule an appointment to visit the unit.

Once the work is completed and (if applicable) a building inspector has signed off on the work, the Agent must submit the Final Report in the Grants Management System. The Final Report must include:

1. Final Contractor invoice addressed to Virginia Housing on behalf of the Applicant with full disclosure of the work performed in an itemized list. Virginia Housing will disburse the amount of the grant directly to the Contractor for work approved by the Applicant and the Agent.
2. Copy of and receipt for the Building Permit and/or Certificate of Appropriateness (if required by locality).
3. A completed Inspection Report signed by the approved Agent and the Applicant.
4. Digital photos of the specified work areas taken after work is completed.
5. A claim from the Agent, for the administrative stipend, submitted via the Grants Management System.

If any of the required items are not received by the Grant Programs Administrator, payment will be delayed. **Please advise contractors of the required information.**

### 4.1 Extensions

Funds must be used within the 120-day period. If the work cannot be completed in the allotted time, a completed Contractor Request for Extension form must be sent to the Agent no later than 15 days prior to the deadline for completion of work. The request must explain the reason for the extension and how much time is required to complete the work.

If the work has not been completed by the deadline and the Agent has not issued an approval for an extension (copying Virginia Housing), the Grant Programs Administrator will contact the Agent letting them know that the applicant's application will be voided.

Extensions may be granted for the following reasons:

- Weather hindered completion of work within 120 days.
- Delay attributable to the manufacturer in delivery of materials needed for modification; written documentation of delay must be provided by contractor.
- Awardee is hospitalized or has a medical circumstance delaying the contractors access to the unit / property.

**If for any reason an extension cannot be granted, the application will be voided.**



## **4.2 New Contractor**

If the approved contractor has not completed work to the satisfaction of both the applicant and the agent; and the award is still within the 120 award period, the agent should request cancellation of the award via correspondence to the Grant Programs Officer (GPO). A new application will have to be submitted via GMS with the new contractor information.

## **4.3 Deceased Applicant**

If an individual passes away after the grant has been awarded, Virginia Housing will honor the grant and pay the contractor for the work completed.

## **4.4 Disbursement**

Payment to the contractor and the administrative stipend will not be issued until the job is complete and inspected, and final paperwork has been received and approved by the Grant Programs Administrator.

Once the required documentation has been received and approved, the Agent will receive notification through GMS.

The Grant Programs Administrator will complete the process for payment and send it to the Grants Programs Manager for approval. Please allow 30 business days for payment to be made to the contractor. Payment to the contractor will be issued directly from Virginia Housing to the contractor.

## 5. Program Documents

The following program documents are part of the application package. Be sure you have the latest versions by downloading them from the funding opportunity in the Grants Management System.

### 5.1 Application Checklist

Agents should complete this checklist to ensure that all documentation is provided.

### 5.2 Application

This is a paper copy of application that must be completed in the Grants Management System. It is a tool for gathering information from the applicant and should not be submitted with the application.

### 5.3 Applicant Agreement

This certifies that all applicant information is true, accurate, and complete to the best of the applicant's belief and knowledge.

### 5.4 Landlord/Owner Agreement

This certifies landlord/owner agreement to the modification, and stipulations of the grant.

### 5.5 Request for Contractor Information

This ensures the contractor is properly informed of his/her role and responsibilities concerning this program and provides a checklist of required contractor information.

### 5.6 ACH Authorization Agreement

This provides payment information and authorization for electronic fund withdrawal. It is only needed for a contractor who is new to working with Virginia Housing's Accessibility Grant programs. Do not submit the ACH agreement prior to being contacted by the Program Administrator for instructions.

### 5.7 Final Inspection Report

This certifies that the applicant and Agent are satisfied with the work done to the residence and that it has been completed in a workmanship-like manner.

### 5.8 Claims Checklist

Agents should complete this checklist to ensure that all documentation is provided.

### 5.9 Resource Documents

Additional information provided to assist renters and landlords.

### 5.10 Contractor Request for Extension

This permits a contractor to request an extension to the construction timeframe necessary due to specific permissible conditions hindering completion of the work.

## **5.11 Sample Documents**

These are provided as examples of certain documents required by the grant process.

### **5.11.1 Lease Agreement**

Required to show that the applicant resides at the location where the work will be performed.

### **5.11.2 Ramp Agreement**

Required to show that the applicant understands the conditions of an accessibility ramp installation.

### **5.11.3 Contractor Estimate Sheet**

Required as part of the grant application process.

### **5.11.4 Contractor Invoice**

Required at the completion of the construction process.