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# Granting Freedom Program Handbook

## Grants Programs and Initiatives

Effective: September 1, 2017

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# 1. Program Description

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VHDA's Granting Freedom Program, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Veteran Services, makes funding available to assist with modifications to homes and 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.

Applications will be accepted from Agents on behalf of the homeowner or tenant. Examples of approved Agents include but are not limited to Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Local Agencies and Non-profit Organizations. 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 (if applicable). VHDA's Grant Programs Administrator does not intercede in this communication. **The Agent should be the only point of contact between the program participants and VHDA.**

The home or rental unit requiring modifications must be the primary principal residence of the individual with a disability. Typical modifications include, but are not limited to:

- Installation of ramps and chairlifts
- Widening of doorways and sidewalks
- Remote entry devices
- Alterations to bathrooms (walk-in showers, 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).

## 1.1. Eligibility Guidelines

The grant provides funds on a first come/first served basis, for a maximum of \$6,000. Funds can be used for any renovations that are needed to make the following types of residences accessible for servicemembers or veterans with a service-connected disability:

- Home
- Rental unit

For rental units, the funds do not pay for the cost of items that are required to be provided by the housing owner.

Agent's are eligible for an administrative stipend of \$400.

## 1.2. 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).
- Applicants paying rent to a person who owns and resides in the residence are not eligible.
- Funds may not be used for walk-in tubs such as jacuzzi's and spa-like tubs.
- Applicants who apply for and are awarded funds under this program may not apply for VHDA Rental Unit Accessibility Modification grant funds.

### **1.3. Freedom of Information Act**

VHDA is subject to, and will at all times comply with, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"). VHDA will not disclose the personal financial information of the Applicant which is protected by law, but under the current version of FOIA, the rest of the file for this grant is entirely subject to disclosure.

### **1.4. Conflict of Interest**

By submitting this application for a grant, the Applicant certifies to VHDA that he or she (1) does not have any ownership interest in the contractor(s) bidding on the job, (2) has not received anything, and has not received the promise of anything, from the contractor(s) bidding on the job that the Applicant has not already paid for in full, (3) does not have any personal or family relationship with the contractor(s) bidding on the job, and (4) has not given anything of value to any employee or agent of VHDA at any time prior to this application.

## 2. Application Process

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### 2.1. Application Requirements

To apply for a Granting Freedom Grant, the Agent for the homeowner or tenant must provide the following documentation. **All documentation must be completed in full and submitted in a single application package through our Grants Management System (GMS) at <http://vhdagrants.com>.**

1. A completed application, including a detailed description of the work to be done (download the latest form on VHDA.com<sup>1</sup>; be aware that this form may be revised at any time, so be sure you are using the latest form)
2. Service-connected disability documentation
  - a. For Veterans: US Department of Veteran Affairs Notification, Award or Rating Letter citing service-connected disability
  - b. For Servicemembers: MEB/PEB documentation citing service-connected disability
3. Written documentation for additional funding from other sources.
4. Applicant Agreement
5. Contractor Documents: Each contractor must provide:
  - a. Contractor 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. ACH form (to be completed by the contractor)
  - e. W-9
  - f. A statement as to whether or not a building permit is required by the locality. If so, this must be procured by the contractor.
  - g. 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.
6. Digital photos of the specified work area(s) taken before work is started (email to VHDA's Grant Programs Administrator as attachments to the application package)
7. Agent Agreement (for portable ramps only)
8. For homeowners:
  - a. Title Deed, Mortgage Statement or Real Estate Tax Assessment citing applicant name and property address (Note: If veteran does not own the home, veteran must provide a letter signed and dated by the homeowner authorizing the modification)
9. For renters:
  - a. Landlord/Owner Agreement

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.vhda.com/Programs/Pages/GrantingFreedom.aspx#.V9a4rU32bcs>

- 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 that **owns and resides** in the residence is **not eligible for this funding**.)

## 2.2. 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.

### 2.2.1. Denial

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

- Requested modification is the legal responsibility of the landlord.
- 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.
- Applicant did not have required proof of a service-connected disability
- Modifications were completed prior to approval of the grant.
- 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.

## 2.3. 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:** The Compliance Officer or other assigned VHDA associate may stop by any location to inspect the work that has been done. If the Compliance Officer or other VHDA 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 following must be submitted to the Grant Programs Administrator for payment.

1. Final Contractor invoice addressed to VHDA on behalf of the Applicant with full disclosure of the work performed in an itemized list. VHDA will disburse the amount of the grant directly to the Contractor for work approved by the Applicant and Agent
2. Copy of and receipt for the Building Permit and/or Certificate of Appropriateness (if required by locality).
3. Invoice from Agent **addressed and billed to VHDA** for administrative stipend of \$400. Please reference Agent and Applicant name on the invoice.
4. A completed Inspection Report signed by the VHDA-approved Agent and Applicant.

5. Digital photos of the specified work area taken after work is completed.

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

### **2.3.1. 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 VHDA), 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

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

## **2.4. 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 VHDA to the contractor.

## **3. Program Documents**

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The following program documents are part of the application package. Be sure you have the latest versions by downloading them from VHDA.com<sup>2</sup>.

### **3.1. Application**

This is the official application required for a Granting Freedom Grant.

### **3.2. Application Checklist**

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

### **3.3. Applicant Agreement**

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

### **3.4. Landlord/Owner Agreement**

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

### **3.5. 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.

### **3.6. ACH Authorization Agreement**

This provides payment information and authorization for electronic fund withdrawal.

### **3.7. 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.

### **3.8. 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.

### **3.9. Agent Request for New Contractor**

This permits an Agent to request a new contractor if the approved contractor has not completed work to the satisfaction of both the applicant and the Agent.

### **3.10. Sample Documents**

These are provided as examples (not as templates) of certain documents required by the grant process.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.vhda.com/Programs/Pages/GrantingFreedom.aspx#.V9a4rU32bcs>



**3.10.1. Contractor Estimate Sheet**

Required as part of the grant application process.

**3.10.2. Contractor Invoice**

Required at the completion of the construction process.

**3.10.3. Lease Agreement**

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

**3.10.4. Ramp Agreement**

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