



Rental Unit Modification Assistance

FAQ

Thank you for your interest in the Rental Unit Modification Grant Program. This program has funding available to assist individuals for the payment of accessible modification work needed on **rental units** to make them accessible for a specific tenant. The Virginia Housing Development Authority Rental Unit Accessibility Modification program provides financial assistance to make modifications to the rental units of elders, adults with disabilities, and families with children with disabilities. These modifications allow people to remain in their rental units and live independently in their communities.

Who is eligible?

Tenants with disabilities who earn 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI) may be eligible for grant assistance up to **\$2,800 per rental unit**. Income guidelines are based on persons earning 80% or less of the area median income based on [HUD's 2016 median income limits](#) effective March 28, 2016.

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

What kinds of modifications are eligible?

In order to be approved for assistance, modifications must directly relate to the disability of the applicant. Typical modifications include, but are not limited to, installation of ramps, chairlifts, widening of doorways and sidewalks, remote entry devices, alterations to bathrooms (i.e. tub cuts, grab bars, toilets, faucets, etc.) and kitchens.

What if the modifications needed exceed \$2,800?

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). Rental Unit Accessibility Modification funds can only be disbursed after other sources of funding have been utilized.



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How are applications evaluated?

Applications are processed on a first come, first served basis. Complete applications are reviewed usually within two business days except when informed otherwise. The total length of time before approval depends on the time it takes the Applicant and the Agent to gather the documents and get bids from contractors. **Failure to provide all “mandatory” documentation at the same time will result in the disqualification of the Application.**

Applications are reviewed to determine income and proposed modification eligibility. This is done by evaluating documentation submitted with the application including, but not limited to, income verification, and certification as it relates to the individuals’ ability to function on a day-to-day basis.

If the income, required paperwork, and proposed modifications meet VHDA guidelines, the VHDA Grant Coordinator will then issue a Confirmation of Approval to the Agent. If the application is not eligible for the program, the Agent will be notified in writing. The Agent will attempt to provide appropriate referrals to other programs or sources of funding. Information on other programs which fund home modifications can be found on our website at www.vhda.com or you can request a list from the Provider Agency.

Who will do the actual work to modify the home?

A contractor will be selected by the Agent and Applicant under the terms of the Grant Program. VHDA does not choose contractors to do the work, but can provide some resources and guidance towards finding and selecting a contractor. VHDA retains the right to reject the use of certain contractors.

Can volunteers be used to make the modifications?

Yes. Volunteers may be utilized to make modifications, but there must be an organization overseeing the work with the appropriate license, insurance, etc. A building permit, when needed by the locality, is also required. Material purchases, plus the cost of the building permit when required, will be at the cost of the agency. VHDA will reimburse the agency at the completion and approval of the job.

What should I expect during construction?

When the work begins, the Applicant and the Agent should keep a copy of the contract handy and refer to it often. If something is not going the way you feel it should or if you do not understand it, speak directly to the contractor. If the problem is not resolved, let the VHDA Grant Coordinator know and they may be able to refer you to resources that may help resolve the situation. VHDA does not get involved directly with contractors.

Can the contractor receive reimbursement for work completed prior to application approval?

No. This program does not provide reimbursement for modifications until the work is completed and approved by the Agent and Applicant.

Can a landlord apply for the grant to modify a rental unit?

Yes. A landlord who has identified a tenant with a disability may assist the tenant in applying for the grant. The modifications to be made must be documented and must relate to the tenants functional needs.

Who is responsible for the costs associated with making the rental units accessible for a tenant?

The Fair Housing Act provides that while the housing provider must permit the modification, the tenant is responsible for paying the cost of the modification.

Do I need approval from the landlord before making a reasonable modification to the dwelling?

Yes. A person with a disability must have the housing provider's approval in writing before making the modification.

Can an applicant apply more than once for the grant?

The maximum amount of assistance per person is \$2,800. The applicant cannot apply again for any unused funds if the maximum amount is not used. Agents should assess all of the applicant needs at one time. Subsequent submissions will only be considered for applicants that have moved or are in a unit where work was done 5 years or more ago and now needs to be replaced. Applicants who are evicted due to the failure to follow management policies will also be denied funding.

Does the contractor need a contractor's license to make the modifications?

Yes. If the work being considered is valued at \$1,000 or more, a valid Virginia Contractor's License is required for the license category in which the contractor is to work. (¹Board for Contractors, Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation)

¹ Board for Contractors: <http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/Boards/Contractors/>
Eff. 3-31-14
Updated 4-19-16

Does the contractor need a permit to make the modifications?

Yes. The contractor should obtain any necessary building permits. This should be spelled out in the contract; otherwise, the applicant may be held legally responsible for failure to obtain any required permits. The permit holder becomes the general contractor and assumes responsibility for the overall job – which may include taxes, workers' compensation, and other legal liabilities. (Board for Contractors, Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation)

What about historic properties or properties in an historic district?

Local historic districts have preservation ordinances requiring proposed work on designated historic properties be reviewed by a local historic preservation commission or design review board. When the board reviews and approves proposed changes to a historic building, they issue a "Certificate of Appropriateness," a document stating that the proposed work is appropriate for the historic district and meets local code criteria. Contact your local government's preservation official for specific information about what is needed for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the design review process, and to obtain an application for proposed exterior work.

Do I need to have a design plan for the work to be done?

Yes, it is recommended that one is prepared. A design plan is important because it presents ideas in a visual format. The visualization of the sketch puts the applicant and the contractor on the same page so that both parties know exactly what is to be accomplished and how much it will cost. The design plan should include dimensions, location, elevations.

Do I need a contract from the contractor to do the work?

Yes. A contract binds the contractor and applicant to the project. Since a written contract protects the applicant and the contractor, all agreements should be put in writing. It should include everything agreed upon and the extent of work to be done. Get all oral promises and guarantees in writing, include start and finish dates, and spell out exactly what the contractor will and will not do.

The contract should specify all materials to be used, such as the quality, quantity, weight, color, size, or brand name as it may apply. Be as specific as possible. Make sure the contract includes everything that is important to the job, including complete cleanup and removal of debris and materials.

What if the contractor did not complete the job in a workmanship like manner?

The Applicant and the Agent **should not** sign off on the inspection sheet if the work is considered unsafe, incorrect, or not up to code. If the issues at hand cannot be resolved, the Applicant will need to follow the process for consumer assistance in dealing with building contractors. This information is available at the ²Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation. The VHDA Grant Coordinator must be notified in writing describing the issue, this document will be placed in the Applicants file.

²Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation:
<http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/dporweb/dpormainwelcome.cfm>