

NCSHA 2016 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

Deadline: Wednesday, June 15, 2016

Visit ncsha.org/awards to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

Instructions: Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact awards@ncsha.org or 202-624-7710.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

Entry Name: _____

HFA: _____

Submission Contact: (Must be HFA Staff Member) _____ **Email:** _____

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

HFA: _____

Entry Name: _____

Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			



2016 NCSHA

Award Submission

ENTRY NAME:

**VHDA's Accessibility Modification Grant
Program**

ENTRY CATEGORY:

**Special Needs Housing
Housing for Persons with Special Needs**

"The grants from VHDA's Accessibility Modification Grant Program have been wonderful – they have greatly helped our customers to live independently in their homes and have provided them with the ability to access their communities."

*Keith Jenkins, Integration Specialist
disAbility Resource Center – Fredericksburg, VA*

Brief Description of the VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program

VHDA believes that everyone, regardless of their disability, has the right to enjoy a full range of life experiences in their community. Disabled individuals also have the right to dignity and independence when it comes to housing options. This means their housing should be accessible as well as affordable. VHDA's Accessibility Modification Grant program funding is available to assist individuals to pay for modification work needed on rental units to make them accessible for specific tenants. The program's financial support is provided by VHDA's Resources Enabling Affordable Community Housing (REACH) Program, VHDA's initiative to serve the housing needs of Virginia's diverse communities.

The grant program provides financial assistance to make accessibility modifications to rental units occupied by the elderly, adults with disabilities and families with children with disabilities earning 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI). Applicants are eligible for grant assistance of up to \$2,800 and authorized agents assist applicants in submitting applications. Examples of organizations benefiting from VHDA's program include Centers for Independent Living, local housing authorities, rehabilitation hospitals that have patients who need modification work on their rental unit prior to discharge, or property owners in need of specific modifications for tenants. Grant funds may be used to widen doorways, lower countertops, install wheelchair ramps, grab bars, shower chairs, visual smoke detectors, and other modifications that improve home accessibility and safety. The authorized agent and grant applicant obtain bids and, under the terms of the grant program, select a contractor. VHDA does not choose contractors to do the work, but provides resources and guidance in finding and selecting a contractor.

The grant program began as an outreach effort between VHDA and the Christopher Reeve Foundation. Partnerships, from beginning to end, are a critical part of what makes this strategic initiative successful. VHDA promotes the grant program through VirginiaHousingSearch.com and AccessVa.org. We also dedicate a page to this program on our website, which can be reviewed by clicking [here](#). The site also includes an online application.

Why it was established

A statewide Housing Needs Assessment conducted jointly by VHDA and the Department of Housing and Community Development clearly identified a gap in housing options for those with disabilities. The assessment notes: *"Disabled residents who earn 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) continue to lack adequate access to affordable, accessible housing, and to assistance in making needed rental unit modifications."*

In addition, Virginia's statewide housing policy framework reflects the need to ensure a wide range of housing options to meet the needs of people with disabilities. The Accessibility Modification Grant aligns with the priorities of the state and VHDA's mission. It not only increases the overall number of accessible rental units in the Commonwealth, but also opens up opportunities for people with special needs to live where they choose.

What the Accessibility Modification Grant Program has accomplished

Through VHDA's Accessibility Modification Grant program, 781 households needing modifications to their rental units received the assistance they needed to make their homes more livable. VHDA's community outreach program educates organizations and individuals about the benefits of the program and VHDA was honored with the Corporate and Community Partners Award from Insight Enterprises, Inc. and the Peninsula Center for Independent Living, which recognized our partnership in helping them meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Why the Accessibility Modification Grant Program is Meritorious and Meets NCSHA Judging Criteria

Innovative

Most similar programs require homeownership to qualify. VHDA's program is unique in that it provides accessibility modifications for rental properties. VHDA recognizes that as people get older or disabilities become more difficult, homeownership can become more challenging. This grant program enables people with disabilities who are renting to make simple modifications which result in a better quality of life. Another unique feature of our Accessibility Modification Grant program is that it also provides assistance to property owners if the time comes when the modification needs to be undone.

Replicable

Any HFA can replicate this program. VHDA tracks and monitors the program and conducts agent webinar training. Authorized agents employed by one of the Centers for Independent Living or a local housing authority, rehab hospital or property owner can take grant applications. The application and supporting documentation is submitted to VHDA for review. VHDA supports agents by educating them regarding the process. HFA's wishing to implement such a program should ensure that checks and balances are in place so that grant recipients receive the most benefit from the modification.

Responds to an important state housing need

The Governor's Executive Order Number 10, establishing a housing policy framework for the Commonwealth, calls for a range of housing options that meet the needs of people with disabilities. The VHDA Accessibility Grant program increases the number of accessible rental units by providing an opportunity to renovate homes based on an individual's specific needs. In addition, this program supports Virginia's affordable housing efforts by serving disabled persons earning 80% or less of the AML.

Demonstrates measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers

The VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant program has been extremely successful. In just a few years, these grants have improved the lives of 706 households by making their rental accommodations more comfortable, less challenging and simply more like home. As of the third quarter of FY14, VHDA had helped 62 applicants and distributed more than \$107,999 in grant funds. To date, the program has issued a total grant amount of \$933,606.

Proven track record of success in the marketplace

In the past four years, the number of grants provided by this program has increased regularly. This is a clear indicator that the program addresses a critical affordable housing need, and that there is real demand for the program.

Provide benefits that outweigh costs

Fair housing laws require property owners to permit modifications to an apartment to make it barrier-free. Normally, tenants bear the cost of these modifications; therefore options for improved accessibility can be limited. For as little as \$2,800, simple modifications – such as ramps, railings or remote entry devices – can create independence or easier living for someone with special needs. Modifications made possible by the grant program also provide more opportunities for those with disabilities to live in locations that may not have adequate accessible housing.

Demonstrates effective use of resources

For a grant amount of up to \$2,800 per rental unit, VHDA has been able to assist 781 special needs households with only \$1,177,958.66 in funding. In some of these households, there were multiple members with special needs, thereby optimizing the benefits of the accessibility modifications.

Effectively employs partnerships

Authorized agents on behalf of the tenant make applications for the grants. VHDA has made the application available on our website – VHDA.com. Examples of approved agents include: Centers for Independent Living (CILs), local housing authorities, rehab hospitals with patients needing modifications on a rental unit prior to discharge, or property owners in need of accessibility modifications to a rental unit for a specific tenant. An administrative stipend of \$200 is awarded for the agent's assistance.

Achieve strategic objectives

One of VHDA's core strategic objectives is to preserve and create partnerships, as well as to facilitate programs serving populations with the most challenging housing needs, including people with disabilities. The VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant program provides a unique opportunity for tenants to modify their home to accommodate their specific needs. This increases affordable housing options for people with special needs by taking an affordable unit that is not accessible and making moderate renovations to meet these needs. This, in turn, increases Virginia's accessible housing inventory.

Conclusion

Finding affordable, accessible housing can be extremely challenging for seniors and people with disabilities. With the help of VHDA's Accessibility Modification Grant program, people with disabilities who earn 80% of AMI can receive up to \$2,800 in grant assistance for modifications to their rental unit. To date, this award-winning program has helped 781 households make necessary accessibility modifications to their rental units, and has issued a total grant amount of \$1,177,958.66.

Most importantly, this program helps create more accessible rental units in the marketplace, thereby increasing the opportunity for Virginians with special needs to find housing in a location of their choice.

VHDA believes that everyone, regardless of their disability, has the right to enjoy a full range of life experiences in the community of their choosing. By modifying affordable rental housing to make it more user-friendly, our grant program helps transform that belief into reality.

Please see the attachments below: VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Brochure



Improving Daily Living for People with Disabilities.

Each of us is born with a desire for independence. When physical disabilities threaten that independence, improved accessibility is one key to restoring it. However, improving accessibility — especially in rental housing — is often easier said than done.

Landlords are required by fair housing laws to permit modifications to an apartment to make it barrier-free. However, tenants usually bear the cost of these modifications which can be substantial. Fortunately, help is available in the form of accessibility grants administered through VHDA and our Accessible Rental Housing program. Some of the accessibility enhancements our grants pay for include:

- Ramps
- Railings
- Tub cuts
- Grab bars
- Remote entry devices
- ADA toilets
- Accessible cabinets



Virginia Housing Development Authority
 601 South Belvidere Street
 Richmond, Virginia 23220

VHDA Main Number 877-VHDA-123

Southwest Virginia Office 800-447-5145

Español 877-843-2123

Virginia Relay Partner 711 (in Virginia)
 800-828-1140

VHDA Website vhda.com

VHDA is a self-supporting, not-for-profit organization created by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1972, to help Virginians attain quality, affordable housing. VHDA provides mortgages, primarily for first-time homebuyers and developers of quality rental housing. We use no state taxpayer dollars, but raise money in the capital markets to fund our loans. We also teach free homeownership classes, and help people with disabilities and the elderly make their homes more livable. VHDA works with lenders, developers, local governments, community service organizations and others to help put quality housing within the reach of every Virginian.





The Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, familial status or disability.

The information contained herein (including but not limited to any description of VHDA and its lending programs and products, eligibility criteria, interest rates, fees and all other loan terms) is subject to change without notice.

VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant

Making Rental Housing More User-friendly

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. For more information on income eligibility, visit vhda.com and enter "Search Income and Rent Limits" in the search box.

Application Process

All applications must be made through accepted agents. Our accessibility grant funds can assist agents in leveraging local grant funding to further extend their services to those who need them most. These agents include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Centers for independent living (CILs). (See accessva.org for a listing.)
- Local housing authorities. (See vhda.com and click on Virginia Housing Directory under Business Resources for this information.)
- Rehab hospitals (for patients who require modification work to their living quarters before discharge).
- Landlords in need of accessibility modifications for a specific tenant.

* Costs associated with some modifications may exceed the \$2,800 grant limit and would require additional funding. See agent for more information.

Notification and Disbursement

In order to request funds, agents will need to supply VHDA with the following:

- Completed application.
- Contractor's estimate, tax information (W-9), contractor's license or business license and building permit when required by locality.
- Applicant's current income verification: Supplemental Security Income (SSI) form or pay stubs.
- Written proof signed by the landlord and tenant that the landlord has approved the work to be done.

VHDA can only provide funding to eligible applicants. Upon approval of the application, VHDA will issue the agent a grant confirmation form allowing four months to have the work completed.

How to Get Started

To view a copy of the grant application which must be submitted by the agent, visit VHDA's website at vhda.com, and enter "Accessible Rental Housing" in the search box. Funding is available on a first come/first served basis. For more information, please call us at 804-343-5579 or toll free at 877-VHDA-123.



Wooden Ramps

"Improving accessibility definitely increases the ability of individuals to remain active and participate in life."

*Karen Michalski-Kamey, Executive Director
 Blue Ridge Independent Living Center, Inc.*



Tub Cut & Grab Bars

"Grants from this program have helped customers to live independently in their homes and has provided them with the ability to access their communities."

*Keith Jenkins, Community Integration Specialist
 disAbility Resource Center - Fredericksburg*



Accessible Cabinets



Remote Entry Devices

"There are many programs that provide services for homeowners. However, it is extremely difficult to meet the needs of the renters."

This program has allowed us to provide portable aluminum ramps to families in great need."

*Howard Evergreen, Executive Director
 Fluvanna/Louisa Housing Foundation*



Portable Ramps