

Felice Borisy-Rudin, JD, PhD, Maureen Busalacchi, Wisconsin Alcohol Policy Project, Comprehensive Injury Center, Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI
 Contact: fborisyrudin@mcw.edu; mbusalacchi@mcw.edu; www.mcw.edu/wisapp

Introduction

Alcohol is the most misused drug in Wisconsin. It harms primary users and the people around them. But each community is unique and has different issues. A municipal inventory is most useful if you use it to address specific problems with alcohol in your community. Before you start, identify what those problems are.

The next step after identifying alcohol-related problems in a community is to identify possible solutions. An inventory of municipal alcohol policies can identify resources already available within a community. Conducting a municipal inventory includes five steps: 1) review the existing written policies; 2) interview the people involved in law enforcement; 3) learn the alcohol licensing process in your community; 4) interview local officials; and 5) evaluate your results.

Municipal inventories reveal actionable solutions. Some communities may have a strong set of laws but need greater resources and capacity for enforcement. Other communities may want to consider additional ordinances to reduce availability and accessibility of alcohol. Sometimes the solution requires better cooperation between public health and law enforcement to collect, analyze, and use data.

1) Review the Existing Written Policies

- You can review one topic at a time, choosing the topic to focus on, e.g.: licensing, underage drinking, or outdoor consumption in public.
- Identify and read each local alcohol ordinance or policy related to that topic. Read the full text, not just the title, since the details matter. Compare it to state law. Think about whether it works to prevent or reduce the problem – for example, does it prevent or reduce excessive alcohol use?
- Possible sources include:
 - Municipal Clerk
 - Local government (city, village, town, or county) website
 - Municode, <https://library.municode.com/wi> **municode**
 - Wisconsin State Law Library, <https://wilawlibrary.gov/topics/ordinances.php>
 - Public library
- Use search words to find relevant code – ordinances may be in more than one chapter. Useful search words include:
 - Alcohol, Fermented malt beverage, Beer, Wine, Cider, Liquor, Intoxicant

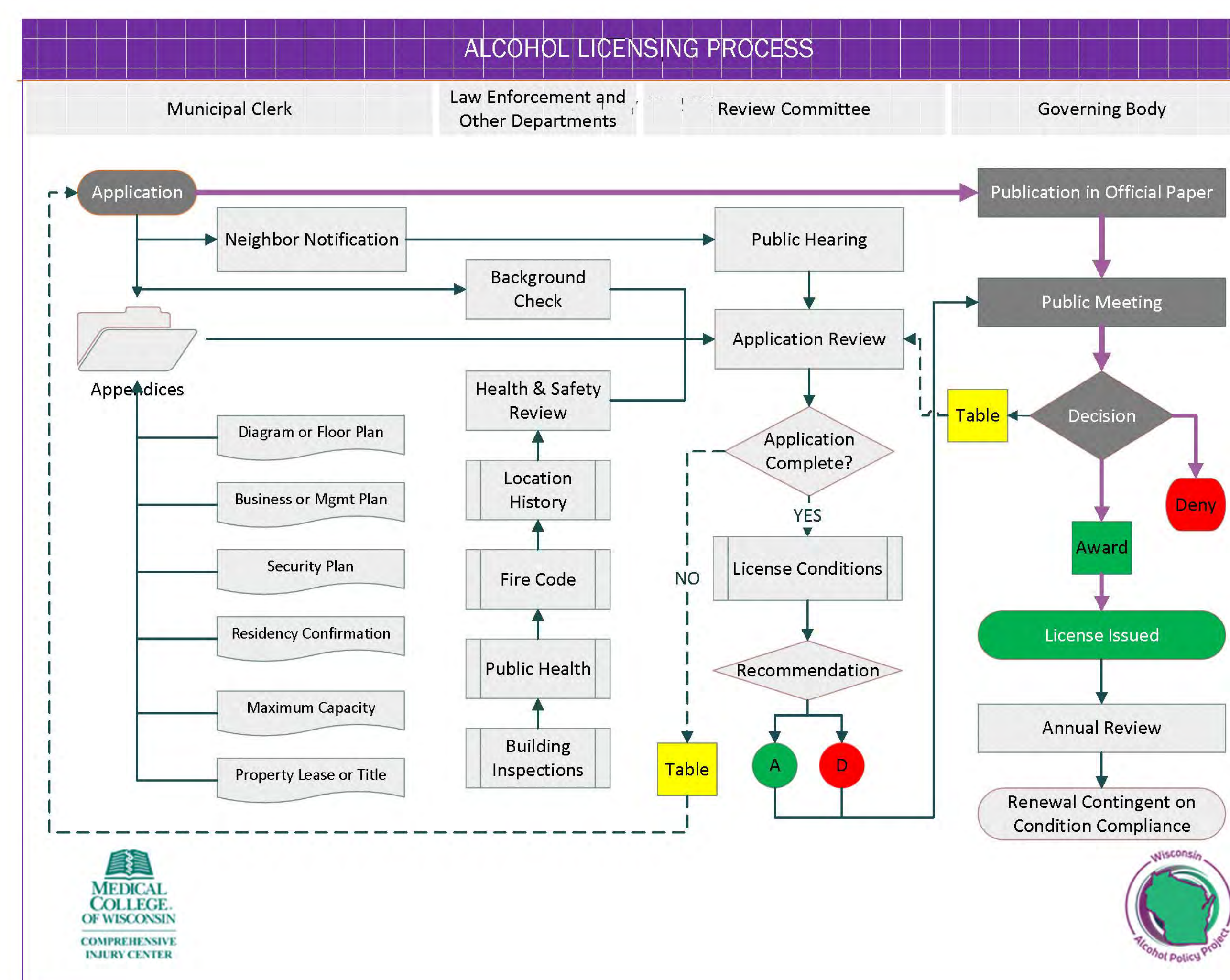
2) Interview Law Enforcement process

- Interview law enforcement (LE) officer(s) involved in alcohol-related issues.
- Examples of questions to ask about:
 - How is LE involved in alcohol licensing decisions?
 - Does LE compile Place of Last Drink (POLD) data and how is it used?
 - How often does LE conduct Alcohol Age Compliance Checks (AACC)?
 - How strictly are underage drinking ordinances enforced?
 - Are social host law violations enforced?
 - Are public intoxication or public carry of open beverages violations enforced?
- Learn:
 - What attitudes does the Chief have towards alcohol regulation? LE officers?
 - What training do officers receive?
 - How supportive are municipal officers of alcohol regulation & enforcement?
 - What capacity is available to deal with alcohol issues?

3) Example: Alcohol Licensing Process

Knowing your municipality's alcohol licensing process is key.

- State requirements are shown by path on the top and right of the diagram below, marked with dark grey boxes and purple arrows.
- Lighter grey boxes and green arrows show optional, best practices.
- Some municipalities have alcohol license review committees or boards – others have alcohol licenses reviewed by a general licensing committee or have them go directly to the governing body.
- Knowing your municipality's process allows you to understand when and how community members and department heads can provide input to the licensing decisions.
- Identify what steps your municipality takes in its licensing process.



4) Interview Local Officials

- Fill in gaps by talking with local officials who can help you understand how things happen locally.
- Talk with one or more of:
 - Municipal clerk
 - Municipal administrator
 - City council member, village trustee, or town supervisor
- Ask about:
 - Informal policies or traditions that influence alcohol decisions
 - Whose opinion gets listened to the most
 - Alcohol regulation priorities
 - What alcohol problems concern them
 - The history of a specific unusual ordinance or policy

5) Evaluate Your Results

Complete an Inventory Table to keep track of ordinances and policies. A set of useful questions and a table can be found at [Municipal Inventory of Policies \(www.mcw.edu/wisapp\)](http://www.mcw.edu/wisapp).

Hypothetical Example (for table below): licenses being granted to problem businesses:

- Is the licensing process described by ordinance? Does it include clear criteria or guidelines?
- Are the written procedures followed? Do the people making decisions understand their options? How is community input collected? Is it encouraged and listened to?
- Does your community apply conditions to the license?

Topic	Ordinance # / Policy Name	Summary	Enforcement	Link
Chapter 125 Adopted?	10.1	Yes	Mostly	
Guidelines and criteria adopted for granting alcohol licenses?	10.4 (1)	Yes	Only criminal background check and residency	
Public notice & involvement in application review?	10.4 (2)	Short notice, in person only	Listened to public comment, but usually no comment.	
License conditions applied?	N/A	No	N/A	

It's not necessary to review all your alcohol ordinances at once. You can focus instead on a single issue, such as licensing, underage drinking, or outdoor consumption.

Once you have finished collecting information on a policy, or after you complete the full inventory, compare your municipality's policy to the 30 recommendations for municipalities in the recent SCAODA alcohol prevention report.

You can also compare them against 26 Policy Recommendations for Preventing Underage Drinking, under Community Action in the WisAPP website, or in greater detail in SAMHSA's 2020 Report to Congress.

Decide which policies to work on. Consider:

- What is within your community's capacity to change?
- How can you encourage enforcement of existing ordinances?
- How can community voices be better heard?
- Which policies could help reduce excessive alcohol use, violence and injury?

Next Steps

- A municipal inventory is an effective tool for assessing your community's alcohol regulatory environment – but it's only as good as what you do with it.
- The next step is to use the information you collected to create specific solutions focused on preventing or reducing excessive alcohol use.
- In order to promote public safety & health, create community awareness of the process and people making decisions. Train your people in how the process works and how they may be effective in creating community dialogue to solve problems.

Resources:

- Wisconsin Alcohol Policy Project (WisAPP) website at www.mcw.edu/wisapp.
- Alcohol Prevention Ad Hoc Workgroup, State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse. (2021). Moving Forward: Policies and Strategies to Prevent and Reduce Excessive Alcohol Use in Wisconsin. State of Wisconsin, available at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/scaoda/alcohol-prevention-report.pdf>.
- SAMSHA, State Performance & Best Practices for the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking Report (SPBP) (2020), available at https://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/media/ReportToCongress/2020/report_main/2020_State_Perf_Best_Pract_Report.pdf.

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