

Alcohol License Process

The process for granting licenses to alcohol retailers (e.g., stores, bars, taverns, restaurants) and approving DOR permits for full-service retail alcohol outlets should be established by ordinance with clear criteria and guidelines for approval.

Best practice is that your criteria and guidelines should reflect community values and long-term goals. The application process should be consistent for every new applicant, regardless of whether the location itself was previously licensed.

All applicants must fill out the Wisconsin Form AT-106, Original Alcohol Beverage License Application, available at <https://www.revenue.wi.gov/DORForms/at-106f.pdf>. Use the most recent version, which provides more room for description of premises.

Your licensing ordinances should require applicants to provide additional information, based on your community's needs. Useful information includes:

- Ownership, including corporate ownership
- Type of business and what alcohol beverages will be sold or served
- Description of the business
- Description of anticipated customer base
- Written plans, including business, marketing, and security
- Floor plans and maps
- Menus
- Proof of property rights to the physical premises (ownership, mortgage, or lease)
- Proof of adequate funding or capitalization

To best safeguard public health goals, the ordinance describing the initial application process should include:

- Criteria that must be met for license to be granted
- Advance notice to community of new applicants and changes to existing licenses
- Information on how the public may view applications and changes to applications
- Information on when and how public comments may be made and heard

Municipalities may also want to require by ordinance:

- Consideration of the alcohol outlet density of the immediate area
- Regulation of outdoor operations such as patios
- The ability of the municipality to attach detailed conditions or restrictions to new licenses or permits to address specific public health or safety concerns, and to ensure that a violation of the conditions or restrictions can be counted and enforced as an ordinance violation. (The municipality should be prepared to enforce the conditions and treat violation of the conditions by the licensee as cause for suspension, revocation, or nonrenewal.)

- Police, fire, EMS, and health departments investigate the applicant and proposed location and provide a written assessment to the decision-making body (city council, village or town board, or licensing committee).

Avoid granting licenses to applicants or businesses that:

- Will not contribute to the social or economic goals of the community
- Do not have the background, experience, or financial resources to operate safely

For more information, see www.mcw.edu/wisapp.