



Frequently Asked Questions

Open Recruitment for Retail Liquor Locations

TIMELINE

Q: What is the timeline for open recruitment statewide?

A: The open recruitment process began in fall of 2015 as a way of improving customer convenience and access. The OLCC Commissioners determine the schedule for the Open Recruitment phases. Information on specific timelines for the current Open Recruitment phase is available on [OLCC's web site](#).

Once the application period has closed, a list of proposed locations will be posted on OLCC's website for public comment for 14 days.

APPLICATION

Q: Where and when can I get an application?

A: Applications are available on [OLCC's web site](#). Applications are sorted by Individual, LLC, and Corporation. Applications are unique to each phase of Open Recruitment. Please make sure that the application you are using is the most current from OLCC's website.

Q: Does the commission have a preference for agent type? (Individual, LLC or Corporate)

A: No.

Q: Is a business plan needed with the application?

A: Yes. A detailed business plan MUST accompany each submitted application. Content at a minimum must include the following:

- Proposed retail liquor location including address
- Type of business to be operated in conjunction with the retail liquor location (if applying for a non-exclusive store type)
- Distance from the proposed location to a school, house of worship or an alcohol treatment center (if location is within 1000 feet)
- Control plan describing how the applicant will prevent access to minors and reduce opportunities for theft
- Expected consumer demand (with supporting data and sources) at the location including:
 - Population count (21 and older) within a one mile radius
 - Traffic patterns and traffic count
 - Estimated distilled spirits sales
 - Estimated impact to existing liquor stores
 - Other relevant business factors to be considered
- Hours of operation (distilled spirits sales can only be from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.)
- Photographs of proposed location (exterior/interior) and if applicable any architectural renderings of upgrades to the proposed location or new construction
- Configuration of retail location including:
 - Total square feet dedicated to the proposed distilled spirits area and stockroom; total linear feet of sales floor shelving dedicated to distilled spirits

- Detailed floor plan (including stockroom) indicating where the distilled spirits categories will be located
- Detailed description of exterior signage and internal fixtures and equipment that will be used to merchandise and account for distilled spirits sales and inventory
- Product selection: Number of products and space allocated for each distilled spirits category
- Detailed description and estimated cost breakdown for start-up costs, payroll, rent, site improvements, fixtures and equipment, etc. that will be used to merchandise and account for distilled spirits sales and inventory. Applications must include financial documentation that shows source of funds to accomplish the build-out. Note: If applying for more than one location, financial documents must show sufficient funds for each.

Q: Can I have business partners? There are two of us; can we apply together?

A: An application can be submitted by an Individual, a LLC, or a Corporation. OLCC does not have a limit on the number of members in an LLC or Principals in a Corporation. A legal entity must be registered with the Oregon Secretary of State.

Q: Is there a process for scoring applicants?

A: Each application will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The application and business plan will be evaluated based on but not limited to, capital investment and financing, retail or business experience, and knowledge of the alcohol industry.

Q: Experience seems to play a big role. Would existing liquor agents have an advantage?

A: Previous experience in an Oregon retail liquor location could be a benefit, but various levels of retail and business experience are encouraged to apply. Many managerial and sales skills are transferrable from one business model to another.

Q: How does public opposition affect selection?

A: After the Commissioners have appointed an agent for a specific location, a second public comment period will occur. The appointed agent will be required to post notice on the physical location and hand out a public notice flyer (content provided by OLCC) to all residents, schools, businesses, house of worships, etc., within 500 feet of the proposed location. The public has 14 days to provide written comment. If there is significant public opposition, the final determination on the proposed location may go back before the Commissioners at a future commission meeting.

RETAIL SALES AGENTS AND AGREEMENTS

Q: What is a retail sales agent agreement?

A: The retail sales agent agreement is a contract awarded by the OLCC Commissioners. It allows the sale of unopened bottles of distilled spirits direct to the consumer as well as to liquor-licensed businesses such as bars, restaurants, or caterers. The OLCC owns the distilled spirits inventory in the retail liquor location and pays the retail sales agent a commission based on sales. A retail sales agent agreement is initially approved for five years, and is evaluated annually by OLCC staff.

Q: Are the agreements renewable?

A: Yes. OLCC conducts annual performance evaluations for each store. Evaluations are scored in the areas of customer service, store appearance, merchandising, record keeping and fiscal practices, inventory management, compliance with law and policy. Based on the evaluation, agreements are renewed for 1, 5 or 10 year periods.

Q: How are retail sales agents compensated?

A: The two different pay structures available are exclusive and non-exclusive. An exclusive retail liquor location can sell distilled spirits by the bottle and related items from an [approved list](#) (mixers, ice, stemware, tobacco, etc.). A non-exclusive retail liquor location can sell distilled spirits by the bottle and does not have a limit on the other items that are sold (can sell anything from groceries to lawnmowers and anything in between). See OLCC's website for [estimated compensation](#).

Q: Can an existing liquor store be sold and have the retail sales agent agreement automatically transfer to the new owner?

A: The retail sales agent agreement cannot be sold, nor does it transfer automatically. There is an open competitive process for the appointment of a new agent in the event of a resignation. The OLCC owns the distilled spirits inventory in the retail liquor location, therefore the outgoing agent cannot sell this inventory.

Q: What happens if I want to terminate my retail sales agent agreement?

A: A formal process begins when an existing retail sales agent wants to resign. This process can take up to 120 days to advertise the opening and allow time for the Commission to appoint a new operator.

INVESTMENT/FINANCING

Q: What startup costs can I expect?

A: There are no costs associated with the purchase of distilled spirits inventory, since the OLCC owns the product. The retail sales agent is responsible for leasing/purchasing retail space, insurance, point-of-sale computer system, fixtures and equipment, utilities, inventory purchase of other non-distilled spirits inventory, and costs associated with staffing. If your business plan also includes beer, wine, cider and vermouth sales, there is a separate licensing fee and application for an Off-premises liquor license. Beer, wine, cider and vermouths are a C.O.D. payment upon delivery from a distributor.

Q: Do you have a guideline for credit and background checks? What would disqualify an applicant?

A: Credit and criminal background check results are evaluated on a case by case basis. The applicant's and/or representative's record of felony conviction, conviction of crime relating to money management fraud, or a history of conviction of crimes relating to the abuse of alcohol or controlled substances are reviewed.

Q: Would you check the background of the landlord or other tenant in the case of store within a store?

A: The landlord and other tenant typically are not required to undergo background checks unless they are involved in the management or ownership of the retail liquor location.

Q: Can you provide information on point-of-sale computer providers?

A: There are a number of independent Point of Sale computer providers currently being used in retail liquor locations and meet OLCC reporting requirements. However, OLCC does not endorse any specific provider. Specifications for computer coding can be requested by emailing OLCC.retailservices@oregon.gov.

LOCATIONS

Q: Where can I place my retail liquor location?

A: The OLCC has established different geographical locations for each phase of Open Recruitment. Please refer to the dates in the application material to make sure that your location coincides with the correct phase. If you are not sure, contact OLCC retail services at OLCC.retailservices@oregon.gov.

Q: What type of retail liquor location should it be, does it have to be liquor only?

A: Under this Open Recruitment process, applicants are encouraged to submit innovative proposals. This includes a wide variety of business models such as a free-standing, traditional liquor location, a retail liquor location located within a larger retail business, a boutique or niche retail liquor location, adding a distilled spirits section to an already existing beer and wine section, adding a distilled spirits section to another type of business (i.e.: pharmacy, lumber, etc.). Businesses interested in selling beer wine, cider and vermouths must apply for a separate Off-premises liquor license.

Q: If a letter of intent is rescinded through no fault of my own, would I be able to move forward with my appointment?

A: If a lease arrangement is cancelled, a new location serving the same trade area would need to be secured within a reasonable amount of time. The new location must be approved by the Commission and a public opinion period will occur for the new location.

Q: How close can my location be to another retail liquor location?

A: There is a document available on our web site that lists all of the [existing retail liquor locations](#) in the proposed counties. Each application will be examined individually. Proximity to an existing retail liquor location is one of the considerations that will be taken into account. Proximity will be evaluated in conjunction with the market conditions and type of location proposed. Density of population will also be considered when retail liquor locations are added to an area.

Q: Can I list more than one potential lease location address on my application if they're in close proximity to one another? Would I need to have different applications for each potential location?

A: You can submit more than one application. Each location needs to be submitted on a separate application with a business plan for each location. Each application will be evaluated independently. Applicants applying for more than one location will need to provide supporting financial documentation showing the ability to finance all locations submitted.

Q: Are you willing to allow liquor to be sold in grocery stores as it is in other states?

A: Corporations and LLC's in addition to Individuals can apply for a retail sales agent agreement. Currently, large retailers, including grocery stores, can apply. Under the Open Recruitment process, large retailers can submit applications for business models that add a secured spirits section to existing retail merchandise or a separate retail liquor location within a larger retail store.

LIQUOR LICENSE

Q: I already have a liquor license. Do I have to relinquish it if I get a retail sales agent agreement?

A: That depends. You can have an Off-premises liquor license to sell beer, cider, and wine "to-go" in conjunction with a retail sales agent agreement to sell distilled spirits. However, you cannot have a liquor license to sell distilled spirits by the glass, such as a Full-Commercial (on premise), Full-Catering, Full- Private Club in conjunction with a retail sales agent agreement. Except in certain cases, a Limited license to sell beer or wine by the glass in conjunction with a retail sales agent agreement is also prohibited if the limited license is at the same address as what appears on the retail sales agent application.

Q: Do I need a liquor license to have a retail liquor location?

A: No. A retail sales agent agreement allows the retail sales agent to sell distilled spirits by the bottle to individual consumers and liquor license holders (bars, restaurants, caterers). A retail liquor location that has a non-exclusive designation can apply for an Off-premises liquor license to sell beer, wine, cider and vermouths to go.

Q: Where do I get more information about applying for an Off-premises liquor license (beer and wine sales)?

A: Information about applying for a liquor license is available on [OLCC's web page](#). You can also contact one of the [OLCC field offices](#) with licensing questions.

Q: Can I sell growlers as a retail sales agent or do I need a liquor license?

A: A retail sales agent agreement does not come with the authority to sell growlers. However, you can apply for an Off-premises sales license — if applying as a non-exclusive store — to use in conjunction with the retail sales agent agreement to be able to fill and sell growlers to go. The person operating the growler fill station, and anyone managing that individual, must have a valid Alcohol Service Permit. Additional local permitting requirements may also apply.

DISTILLED SPIRITS PRODUCT

Q: Does the retail sales agent own/lease the location and equipment and OLCC owns the liquor?

A: Yes. OLCC owns the distilled spirits product in the retail liquor location. The retail sales agent owns or leases the retail space, and owns all of the fixtures, equipment, and non-liquor products sold.

Q: Who sets the price for liquor?

A: OLCC sets the price of distilled spirits, which is uniform statewide. The OLCC uses a formula to mark up the price of distilled spirits on a monthly basis. Items go on sale when the manufacturer changes their base price to the OLCC. Monthly price lists are available on [OLCC's web page](#).

Q: What is the distinction between the words alcohol, liquor, distilled spirits, beer, and wine?

A: Alcohol generally refers to all alcoholic beverages including wine, beer, malt beverages, cider, and distilled spirits. Distilled spirits is the hard liquor that can only be sold by the bottle by an appointed retail sales agent or by the glass from a business with a Full-On premises liquor license. Wine, beer, malt beverages, and cider can all be sold in unopened containers from a business with an Off-premises liquor license or by the glass from a business with a Limited liquor license. Liquor can often be interchanged with the word alcohol – such as a liquor license or a retail liquor location. However, when there is a reference to liquor sales at retail liquor locations, it is specifically meant in reference to distilled spirits.

Q: Where do bars and restaurants (licensees) purchase their liquor?

A: Businesses with a liquor license to sell distilled spirits by the glass must purchase their distilled spirits from an Oregon retail liquor location. Liquor licensees receive a 5% discount on distilled spirits products that are used for their business. Many retail liquor locations offer delivery services to bars and restaurants. Retail liquor locations with an Off-premises license cannot sell beer, wine, cider or vermouth directly to a bar or restaurant.

Q: Can I sell recreational marijuana in my retail liquor location?

A: No. Marijuana and distilled spirits cannot be sold in the same business.

Q: What is the minimum amount for an order of liquor from OLCC? How does the delivery schedule work?

A: There is no set minimum, but sales volume will dictate the size of an order. Typically, contracted carriers will make one delivery per week. Stores with a low volume will take deliveries every other week and stores with a high volume may take multiple deliveries each week.

GENERAL

Q: Is there help from the OLCC to support new retail locations?

A: Yes. OLCC Retail Services Division has a team of experienced district managers who work with retail liquor agents to provide oversight and direction for the business processes. This includes orienting new agents to OLCC's policies and procedures, visiting the locations to oversee processes, assess compliance, promote customer service, and enforce the retail sales agent agreement. They help the agent in controlling and taking

inventory; ordering and merchandising product; improving store layout and signage; using computer systems; handling cash; preventing theft; following OLCC's banking procedures; or other agent concerns. They also recommend appropriate store hours and days of operation to meet customer demand. They are the liaison between the agent and OLCC.

Q: Is there any protection if privatization occurs? What if I haven't had my liquor location for five years?

A: Recent legislation (ORS 471.473) has created a process where existing liquor agents may be compensated a percentage of their business if total system privatization occurred. The amount of compensation is based on four percent of the average annual gross distilled spirits sales for the last five years or if less than five years, four percent of the average annual gross distilled spirit sales of the average of the years in operation.

Q: Can I talk to someone and get more information about retail expansion?

A: Yes. You can call the OLCC Retail Services Division at 503-872-5020 or email at OLCC.retailservices@oregon.gov . OLCC Headquarters in Portland is open Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST.

Q: Are there any expectations or requirements for how long a store should be up and running once appointment is granted?

A: Your opening date will depend on the timeline in your business plan and will vary based on the complexity of the store build out. OLCC will work with each applicant to ensure the store is opened within a reasonable amount of time.

Q: Are there any guidelines for allocation of sales floor space vs. storage room space?

A: No. Industry standards vary depending on the type of business (i.e. 70% sales floor vs. 30% stockroom).

Q: How do licensees (bars and restaurants) purchase distilled spirits?

A: Licensee purchases must be made through a liquor store. The licensee may choose where they shop which makes the process competitive. Because of the competitive nature of the licensee sales, stores will need to provide a high level of service to earn/retain accounts and may offer delivery.

Q: How long typically does it take for a liquor store to be self-sufficient?

A: As with any retail business, success and self-sufficiency of a liquor store depend on the business plan, location, and dedication of the agent.

Q: Will the applicant's name and proposed locations be available for public view?

A: Yes. Once the application period closes, a list will be created with the applicant's name and the proposed address and posted on OLCC's website.