

DBR LIQUOR APPLICATION PROCESS – FAQ

THIS FAQ APPLIES TO APPLICATIONS FOR DBR-ISSUED LIQUOR LICENSE APPLICATIONS ONLY (e.g. manufacturer, wholesaler, etc.) *The process for municipal issued liquor licenses varies and the municipality will need to answer those questions.*

Please review this FAQ and contact the municipality (if applicable) and if you still have remaining questions, contact leeann.desilets@dbr.ri.gov.

When do I apply for my liquor license and what if I don't have all the required documents?

The best time to apply for the license would be after you have obtained all the required documents listed on the application. That will ensure a faster process to the final license being approved. You may apply online if you do not have all the documents, however the application will remain pending until all documents are provided.

What do I need from the city/town?

Zoning and fire compliance is required for all manufacturer and wholesaler applicants. These documents would come from your local city or town where the business is going to be located. They will be able to guide you on how to obtain these required documents.

For a brewpub license (not a brewery), you also need a local liquor license.

Other manufacturer and wholesaler licenses do not require a separate local liquor license, but still require the zoning and fire approval.

The city/town may require other types of business licenses other than liquor licenses. Therefore, applicants should always contact the city/town.

Do I need anything from the federal government?

If you are applying for a manufacturer or wholesaler license, you also need a permit from the federal government. All questions about the federal process and timeline should be directed to the agency, TTB. <https://www.ttb.gov/>

Do I need to send in original hard copies?

No, everything can be sent in electronically, through the online licensing system or by e-mail.

What is the advertisement requirement process?

Once the application is reviewed and approved to go forward, the department will start the advertisement process for the applicant. We ask that the applicant send us the name of the local newspaper published in the municipality where the premises is located and we will set up the legal ad with the paper for a period of 2 full weeks (as required by law). The applicant is responsible for the payment for the ad, directly to the newspaper.

What is an abutter notice and when do I send them out?

The abutter notice is a letter that will go out to all owners of any properties within a 200 foot radius of your premises. The department will provide a sample letter for your use. This notice would be mailed out during the advertisement run. The letter(s) and proof of mailings (certified green slips, list of addresses, or email addresses and copy of email(s)) must be sent to the department prior to the hearing date.

What can I expect at the hearing?

The Applicant should be prepared to give a short presentation regarding their proposed business model and any unique aspects of the application. Following the Applicant's presentation, the Hearing Officer will hear comments from the public. The Hearing Officer will determine the appropriate level of participation per the applicable procedural rules. The Applicant should be prepared to respond to any abutter or public comments presented at the hearing (or you can respond in writing after the hearing). The department's role in the hearing is to confirm that the proper application documents were received and answer any questions.

When do I pay the required license fee, and are the fees prorated?

Payment is not due until the license is issued. The fees are prorated throughout the year. The department will let the applicant know the exact amount of the license fee.

When can open my business?

The business can open to the public only once the final license is issued (after passing inspection and completing all application requirements). Prior to opening the business to the public, the employees may begin work, including manufacturer licensees making test batches to test the equipment. No products made or received before the license is actually issued may be sold to the public.

How long is the application process from start to finish?

We cannot guarantee a specific timeline because there are many factors such as scheduling and advertising the hearing date, complexity of the application or any unique legal issues, objections to the license, etc. Typically, once the completed application is submitted, for a routine application without complexities, you should allow at least six weeks lead time before planning on opening.