

# Planning an event where alcohol will be sold?

## A guide to assist licensees of entertainment venues to apply for a special licence

Te Whatu Ora  
Health New Zealand

*If you want to sell or supply alcohol at an event, you must hold an alcohol licence. This may be an on-licence or a special licence. If you need to apply for a special licence, there is a lot you should know and do before you formally apply.*



Make sure you obtain your alcohol licence before putting tickets on sale otherwise you may put your event at risk.

- **Start talking with the right people as early as you can.** The Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 requires that an application must be filed at least 20 working days before the day on which the event concerned begins. It takes a minimum of 25 working days to go through the alcohol licensing process and it can often take up to 75 working days (fifteen weeks). For major entertainment events you need to start the process several months in advance.
- Start by **contacting your local council's licensing inspector** who will be able to advise you on the process and put you in touch, or arrange a meeting, with the local Police Alcohol Harm Reduction Officer and public health team who also have a say in your application. The Police, public health and the council are known as the 'regulatory agencies'.
- If you have held the same, or a similar, event before then **review how you managed the event** and think about what worked and what didn't.
- Hold a **pre-application meeting** with the agencies who will have a say in your application. Consider inviting others who will be involved in the event such as security and/or ambulance officers. Make sure you know when and where the event will be held before you have this meeting. The pre-application meeting can be an opportunity to talk through any issues and address any problems that could arise before the special licence application is lodged.
- You will need to obtain all **permissions and consents** for the event before you lodge your special licence application – for example do you need permission from the land owner or consents from the council for the event? Owner's consent should be obtained prior to the pre-application meeting otherwise some important points of discussion could be missed.
- Develop an **Alcohol Management Plan** specific to your event and venue. This plan is your chance to think through how you will manage alcohol and minimise any alcohol-related harm. It is a very important document. Think about who needs to be involved in drafting the plan – you should probably involve all those who will have roles in implementing the plan as they will have a good idea about what will or won't work.

Once you have drafted the plan you need to make sure that everyone with a role is aware of what they need to do.

Go to [resources.alcohol.org.nz](https://resources.alcohol.org.nz) to download an **alcohol management plan template**.

Alcohol Management Plan				
Host Responsibility				
Identified risk	Risk level (LOW, MEDIUM or HIGH)	Risk management actions	Persons responsible	Resources / recording / outcomes
Consider		Consider		
Type of beverages available		Is the type of alcohol proposed suitable for the demographics of the audience? Will there be a sufficient range of low-alcohol products available? How will low-alcohol beverages be promoted?	Licensee? Duty manager? Security? POS staff?	
Pricing		Will the purchase price deter excessive consumption? Will lower-alcohol products be sold at a reduced price (recommended)?		
Number of serves		Is it appropriate to restrict the number of serves a person may buy or one time? Should it be reduced at any time? What happens if the levels of intoxication in the crowd rise? Is there a time that the points of sale should close? How will this be communicated to patrons?		

Your **Event Management Plan** needs to incorporate the key elements of your Alcohol Management Plan. The Alcohol Management Plan may impact many areas of your Event Management Plan such as marketing, communications, and ticketing. For example, if one of the strategies in your Alcohol Management Plan is to provide early communications to patrons around behavioural expectations and consumption of alcohol at the event, then you need to build these messages into your communication plan from the beginning.

Consider how you will **communicate with patrons and staff during the event** in relation to alcohol consumption. Depending upon the advice of the regulatory agencies you may need to make changes to the sale of alcohol during the event, such as reducing the number of serves per customer. Think about what you need to put in place so that any such messages can be quickly and clearly communicated to bar staff and patrons.

Think about how you will minimise the impact of alcohol consumption at your venue so that you **do not affect surrounding areas**. Under the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 you may not reduce the amenity and good order of the surrounding area to more than a 'minor

extent'. You need to think about what to put in place to achieve this.

Find out **what else is happening in the area** at the time of your event; are there any other major events which could impact on your event or mean that resources (such as Police or security) are not available and your plan is no longer achievable.

How will you manage the **welfare of your patrons?** Under the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 you have a duty of care to your patrons. Plan ahead for their safety and welfare. Think about how you will manage your duty of care. For example, will you need to meet with ambulance officers or similar providers prior to the event to work through what will happen on the day?

**Lodge a comprehensive alcohol licence application.** Check that you have provided all the information needed. If you have talked with all the interested parties and addressed any concerns before you lodge the application then it is less likely that the regulatory agencies will raise any concerns or object to the application.

Have an **event de-brief** shortly after the event. Include the regulatory agencies and security, ambulance service provider, and any other important stakeholders. Discuss what worked well, and what didn't work so well. Think about your Alcohol Management Plan: would you need to make any changes for future events? Were you able to put the plan into place as you intended? If not, why not? Record any changes that you would like to make in the future.



If your venue operates an on-licence and you are not required to apply for a special licence for the event, it is still recommended that you contact the regulatory agencies at an early stage and hold a pre-event meeting to ensure your event runs safely.

**Freephone:** 0508 258 258

**Email:** [enquiries@hpa.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@hpa.org.nz)

To order resources visit [resources.alcohol.org.nz](https://resources.alcohol.org.nz)