



Community Action on Alcohol Availability Toolkit.

The following toolkit provides a step-by-step approach to Community Action on Alcohol Availability, supporting your Local Drug Action Team (LDAT) and your community to take action to address local issues.

It can be used with other toolkits to support community activities to reduce alcohol harms or it can inform a stand-alone Community Action on Alcohol Availability Community Action Plan (CAP).

1. Community Action on Alcohol Availability – key points for LDATs

- Community Action on Alcohol Availability refers to the involvement of local communities in issues related to alcohol harms and alcohol availability. This can include:
 - creating awareness of alcohol-related harms and how they link to availability
 - building capacity of organisations to respond to alcohol-related harms associated with alcohol availability
 - supporting the community in making a submission relating to a proposed liquor licence
 - involvement in local liquor licensing processes.
- Communities can influence decision-making and make an objection in response to a liquor licence application. This may involve communities objecting to proposed licences and asking that the licence either not be granted or be granted with certain conditions placed on it.
- Reducing the availability of alcohol by participating in liquor licensing can help reduce harms from alcohol. The availability of alcohol is linked with levels of alcohol consumption, and associated harms.⁷⁻¹⁰
- Community Action on Alcohol Availability is most effective when communities are well organised and can show evidence of alcohol-related harm to inform decision makers.
- The influence of community objections in liquor licensing decision-making is complex, evidence including local data will assist decision makers – but a submission may not lead to your desired outcome.

Table 1: Risk and protective factors relating to alcohol availability¹⁻⁶

Protective factors	Risk factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting availability of alcohol in the community through reduced trading hours, outlet density, and restrictions on online sales and delivery of alcohol • Increased awareness of harms relating to alcohol use • Positive peer influence that supports lower risk drinking • Culture that encourages lower risk drinking • Promotion and advertising of alcohol being appropriately regulated • Alcohol pricing policies, such as minimum unit pricing and tax reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased alcohol availability through liquor outlet density and trading hours • Increased alcohol availability via online delivery • Lack of awareness of health harms relating to alcohol use • Negative peer influence • Culture that supports harmful drinking • Promotion and advertising of alcohol

A guide to icons used in this toolkit

Strength of evidence

The coloured stars show how strong the evidence is for each program/activity and the potential benefit to your community.



Cost, resources and expertise required

The coloured figures indicate how simple, or difficult, it is for LDATs to deliver each program in your community.



1.1 Drawing on existing programs

LDATs may like to consider the following program to support Community Action on Alcohol Availability:

Communities that Care

Prevention program that promotes the development and maintenance of protective factors for youth, including strong family bonds and opportunities for prosocial behaviour, while disrupting risk factors that encourage early substance use such as accessibility and availability of alcohol, and parental alcohol supply. Based on the idea that prevention is most effective and sustainable when local communities understand the scientific basis for prevention, when programs are informed by local youth-related data, and when it is planned and carried out by responsible coalitions of local stakeholders.¹¹

<https://www.communitiesthatcare.org.au/>

1.2 Guiding principles

Community Action on Alcohol Availability works best when LDATs can:

- allocate adequate preparation time for any liquor licensing submissions
- engage with community leaders and representatives from marginalised groups
- set objectives that are based on a shared vision between community partners
- set realistic expectations in relation to the outcome of licensing submissions
- share community experiences of alcohol-related harms
- include evidence, local data and information relating to alcohol harms in licensing submissions
- thoroughly research the impact on the local community using local and national data, as well as any relevant academic literature on alcohol availability in the community, liquor licensing and alcohol-related harms.^{10, 12}

1.3 Considerations for planning and delivery

Attention to **how** an activity is delivered or implemented is just as important as **what** is delivered, when it comes to your project's outcomes.

Implementation considerations

The 5Ws

Being clear about what you want to do and the outcomes you want to achieve will support you to deliver Community Action on Alcohol Availability in your community safely and effectively, as well as track success.

Consider the 5Ws:

- **What** do you want to happen? (activity)
- **Who** will it happen with? (direct audience)
- **Why** will it happen? (outcome - e.g. improving an identified gap for that audience)
- **When** will it occur? (time frame - e.g. over 6 months)
- **Where** will it occur? (location).

Measuring success

Once you know what outcomes you want to achieve you need to measure the success of your activities so that you know how effective they are. Do this by evaluating your activities using process and impact measures.

- **Process measures:** these relate to how your activity is being delivered. In other words, they help you to monitor if the implementation of your activity went according to plan, e.g. did you get the targeted number of attendees to your event? Did you establish partnerships with the number of community representatives you had planned?
- **Impact measures:** these relate to the short-term difference your activity has made on the community. Impact measures seek to increase protective factors, decrease risk factors or change how people think about alcohol and other drug (AOD) harms, e.g. did people report knowing more about alcohol harms linked to availability after attending your event? Did people report feeling more connected to their community after participating in your workshop? Did people report a commitment to support future actions? Was a licence granted with certain conditions/not granted after your submission?

Working with community partners

Consider what population groups are in your community and who may be at risk of experiencing alcohol-related harms – you can partner with individuals and organisations who represent these groups.

Partners may include:

- local council
- police
- local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations
- religious organisations
- schools
- school-parent committees
- various community groups (e.g. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, women's, migrant and/or refugee, or groups of young people and other priority populations)
- local businesses
- Rotary and Lions clubs
- liquor accords (partnerships or agreements between the liquor industry, local and state governments and police)
- Elder groups
- social and emotional wellbeing services.

The LGA tool 'Mapping Alcohol Priorities' may also be a useful guide:

[Mapping alcohol-related priorities in a community](#)

Resources required

Below is an indication of the type of resources required to deliver Community Action on Alcohol Availability:

- basic administrative tools, such as stationery and office supplies
- venue/s for meetings
- catering for events and meetings
- skilled personnel to coordinate the objection process, including collecting local evidence and formulating a response
- time to liaise with community organisations (e.g. attend meetings, provide advice, etc.)
- knowledge/materials to engage community members and work in partnership with local organisations
- insurance and liability coverage (where appropriate)
- additional activities (e.g. delivering an awareness campaign or running a networking event).

Your LDAT may choose to consider allocating some of your CAP grant money towards some of these resources (where money is required).

Key risks to consider

- Preparing liquor licensing submissions can be time consuming and may not result in your desired outcome, leading to community disengagement and frustration.
- Coalitions not sharing a common vision can disrupt activities and impact your partner relationships.
- Evidence collection can be time consuming and you may not always achieve your desired liquor licensing outcome.

2. Delivering Community Action on Alcohol Availability: key activities and measuring success

This section outlines key measurable activities associated with delivering and evaluating Community Action on Alcohol Availability.

You will need to deliver at least one of these activities and evaluate it using process and impact measures to determine whether or not you have achieved your intended results (see 1.3 above: Considerations for planning and delivery).

- **Campaigns or education and awareness raising activities** – a coordinated series of targeted messages delivered across one or more platforms (e.g. social media, pamphlets, radio commercials, etc.).
 - **Local media** - unpaid coverage in local media through interviews, narratives, or individuals' experiences of the issue can be a good way of raising awareness and understanding of the need to take action.
- **Events or forums** – one or more planned occasions where community members and/or relevant stakeholders come together, either face-to-face or virtually, to share ideas, learn new information, and discuss the community impact of the alcohol availability or alcohol-related harms and the experience of people affected.
 - **Open house** – meetings held in community centres where the coordinators organise presentations to inform and educate interested people and collect people's questions and concerns.
 - **Community events** – attending pre-existing community events to inform, educate, make presentations to, and engage in discussion with attendees.

- **Training or workshops** – An event that is held for the specific purpose of training community members in how to lodge a license objection, and/or delivering a structured presentation aimed at increasing knowledge about alcohol availability and related harms.
- **Submission of a liquor licensing objection** – either directly to the relevant authority for your state/territory, or indirectly by supporting community members or organisations within your community with submissions.¹³

Note: you can also tailor your approach by adding additional activities that suit your community's needs and evaluating them using additional process and impact measures.

Evaluation is a critical component of delivering your program and needs to be factored in at every stage of planning and delivery. You'll find more detailed information on effective evaluation measures in our essential guide for LDATs: [Evaluation Measures Guide](#). Your LDAT will also be guided to select appropriate process and impact measures when you're developing your CAP online.

3. Delivering Community Action on Alcohol Availability: key steps

The key steps involved in developing and delivering a Community Action on Alcohol Availability approach in your community are outlined below. Note: these steps are an indicative guide only and it's important to tailor your approach to your local community. Not all steps may be relevant for addressing the alcohol availability issues identified in your community.

Step 1: Identifying and understanding the local issues around alcohol availability

This preparatory stage involves gathering a sense of what local issues associated with alcohol availability exist in your community, how it might be impacting your community and what you would like to address.

It may involve:

- collecting local and national data to help create an understanding of the overarching issues
- building a profile of what's going on in your community. You can speak with local community services who are on the frontline (e.g. AOD workers, health, police, hospital emergency department, local government, youth workers, etc.)
- identifying individuals and groups that could support participation in your community, for example: existing partners, new partners, key organisations, community members including local council, local influencers, parents, decision makers, etc.¹³⁻¹⁶
- bringing insights together and mapping priorities to guide consultation and engagement with stakeholders and community.

Make sure you cast a wide net for supporters and consider involving organisations that may not be overtly health-related but are influential in the community and capable of providing support in various ways.¹⁷

USEFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- [Local alcohol and other drug \(AOD\) issues | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](#)
- [Consult your community on AOD issues | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](#)
- [Alcohol and other drug lifecycle planner | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](#)
- [Prevention strategies | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](#)
- [Mapping alcohol-related priorities in a community](#)

Step 2: Collecting evidence to support your community action activities

As you collect evidence to support your activity you will be building a profile of your community.

LDATs can create local community profiles in advance, so you are ready to respond to potentially problematic liquor licence applications as they arise, and to build awareness of the issues to mobilise the community to take action.

Being proactive and collecting evidence early is also recommended so communities can make strong submissions as they arise, particularly when timeframes for community participation are short.

The following information can be useful:

- liquor outlet density data, including:
 - the number of licensed premises in your Local Government Area (LGA)
 - the number of licensed premises in your LGA compared with other LGAs
 - how the number of licensed premises has changed over time
- alcohol-related health impacts and injury. Data on alcohol-attributable hospitalisations and deaths in your LGA may be helpful to a submission:
 - local hospitals
 - the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s (AIHW) data on [alcohol](#)
 - alcohol treatment providers
- property damage and safety of the general public:
 - local council
 - police
 - local business association
- community profiles, including educational attainment and population demographics:
 - local council
 - [ABS website](#)
- socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA) map relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage:
 - [ABS website](#).

As well as the above evidence, personal stories and experiences of community members impacted by alcohol-related harms may be useful. This can bolster your scientific evidence and help you engage more community members who have been affected. While storytelling alone may not impact liquor licensing objections, it can be a powerful tool to gain support and advocates through the media or other means.¹²

USEFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- [High quality data sources](#)
- [Local government alcohol-related data](#)



Step 3: Establishing the right partner networks and planning for your Community Action on Alcohol Availability

This step involves building relationships in the community and finding allies that will support action on alcohol availability.

Key community partners are listed in Section 1.3, above.

Your local council and police, in particular, might also object to a new liquor licence, and may be able to assist you with gathering some of the data about your local area (e.g. stats on alcohol-related crime, anti-social behaviour, and property damage).

Consider engaging with partners that have a strong voice in the local community, and those who are well established and active in health promotion.¹⁸

Make sure you also connect with groups representing marginalised communities and those affected by alcohol-related harm, as these organisations are often left out of alcohol action and policy processes.^{12, 19, 20}

The use of the Partnerships Analysis Tool can assist at this stage. This tool was developed by VicHealth as a way to help organisations working in health promotion to select and maintain suitable partners and ensure all partners and supporters understand their obligations and responsibilities.²¹ You can access the tool here: [VH Partnerships Analysis-Tool web.pdf \(vichealth.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/partnerships-analysis-tool)

To evaluate the effectiveness of your partnership activities, measure the commitment of your partners to support your prevention CAP. This can be done by simply counting the number of partners who agree, at this stage, to support the delivery of your prevention CAP once it has been submitted and approved.

You may find that commitments to support your CAP increase after you conduct your awareness raising activities and planning process (Steps 3 and 4 below). We encourage you to treat this measure as a baseline and repeat the measure a second time with the same partners, including those who did not commit originally, at the end of Step 4.

USEFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- [Partnerships and identifying partners | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](https://www.adf.org.au/partnerships)



Step 4: Engaging community

This step involves raising awareness about why alcohol availability matters, how the community can get involved in the process, and gathering local feedback and needs.

You can address alcohol availability and related harms in a number of ways, such as:

- submitting an objection to a licensing application – following the steps that apply in your state/territory
- encouraging and assisting local residents to submit their own objections
- raising awareness of alcohol availability harms or other localised alcohol-related harms in the community to build a community voice on how alcohol availability impacts on your community.

If your LDAT lodges an objection to a licence, it's worthwhile encouraging community objections and assisting community partners and local residents to submit their own objections to that same licence.

The number of objections may be seen by decision-makers as an indicator of social impact and could influence decisions.

Key messaging and stigma

When engaging community, you will need to carefully consider how you deliver your messaging.

For example, Community Action on Alcohol Availability can be difficult for some people, as alcohol may be a central part of their social and personal life. Some communities may also have different views about the way to approach alcohol-related issues. They may have uneven feelings about action on alcohol issues and attempts to moderate drinking norms may be perceived as unwelcome.

That's why it's important when starting awareness raising activities relating to alcohol to acknowledge that alcohol plays a role in many peoples lives, and that many people will continue to enjoy drinking responsibly.²²

You can use these guides to help inform your messaging and avoid stigmatising language:

- [Message Guide Drug Stigma.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)
- [The Power of Words - Alcohol and Drug Foundation \(adf.org.au\)](#)

Inclusivity

People of lower socio-economic status, or other vulnerable groups who may be disproportionately affected by alcohol issues, are often not recognised or consulted on community issues.

Make sure you gather opinions and involvement from all sectors of the community, including marginalised groups who may not have capacity to speak up on their own.¹²

For different cultural groups where alcohol is taboo, LDATs may also need to engage with Elders, religious and cultural leaders as a way of reaching these communities.

USEFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- [Consult your community on AOD issues | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](#)
- [Prevention strategies | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](#)
- [Partnerships | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](#)
- [Promote | Community Hub \(adf.org.au\)](#)

Step 5: Completing a liquor licensing submission

To successfully object to a liquor licence, you must be able to provide evidence that links an individual liquor licence to alcohol-related harms in your community. The evidence mapping in Step 2 will assist with this step.

It is important to draw on expert opinion and research to support your liquor licence objection (see Step 2).

All liquor licence objections must be in writing and clearly state the reasons for the objection. When formulating your response, focus on the following:

- **Community concerns:** you need to clearly show how the new licence would affect the community, including risks or benefits. Consider how you can demonstrate the validity of those concerns with the data you have. Draw on expert opinion and research when possible. Consider the concerns of your LDAT, community members and partner organisations.
- **Community voice:** the number of objections may influence decision-makers – ensure you collaborate with a wide range of community members and organisations with similar concerns and encourage them to make independent submissions.
- **The outcome you are seeking:** depending on the specific licence application you may be seeking different outcomes. Perhaps you want restrictions such as a cap on trading hours, a ban on late-night trading, and certain types of drink restrictions (like: no shots or doubles) or you may not want the licence granted at all. You may be more likely to get restrictions placed on a licence than to have the licence denied.

The process for submitting an objection varies by each state and territory. Find out more from your relevant state or territory authorities.

Case Studies

Examples of community liquor licensing submissions and their impact can help guide and inform your planned activities. The below includes a short list of case studies of community participation in liquor licensing, we encourage further research into case studies from your local area.

Case	Outcome	Key insights
Woolworths Group's proposal to build a Dan Murphy's in Darwin (NT) – 2019	Proposal was blocked by the independent Liquor Commission	<p>A coalition of Aboriginal health organisations led a targeted and effective campaign against the proposal, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media messaging and targeted advertising • national change.org petition and open letter published • informing Woolworths' investors of the health and wellbeing implications of the proposed store and corresponding with the Woolworths Board • extensive evidence gathering and communication • powerful storytelling.²³ <p>More info</p>
Iris Hotels Casula Property Pty Ltd v Liverpool City Council (NSW) - 2022	Proposal was refused by senior commissioner	<p>Extensive evidence was collected for the submission, along with a range of individual and group submissions (over 300) from community members. It was demonstrated that the community believed that the proposed pub would likely worsen alcohol-related harm in their immediate locality.</p> <p>More info</p>
Hunt Club Commercial Pty Ltd v Casey City Council (Vic) - 2013	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) directed Casey Council to remove the proposed packaged liquor permit requirement	<p>In 2013, Casey Council proposed a packaged liquor permit requirement to address issues associated with the sale and consumption of alcohol. However, VCAT ruled that a broad concern about the social impacts of the consumption of alcohol products was unlikely to be relevant in a planning decision. VCAT held that it is likely to be even harder to establish that social impacts of alcohol are relevant in decisions about planning permits for packaged liquor outlets as the sale and consumption of packaged alcohol happen in different locations.</p> <p>More info</p>

Disclaimer

The information provided in this resource was accurate at the time of publication, but may not account for legislative or regulatory changes that have taken place since publication. It is for reference purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. While the Alcohol and Drug Foundation has taken all reasonable care in preparing this resource, it is the responsibility of users to be aware of the accuracy and currency of the information provided and to separately seek legal advice about their particular circumstances.

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