



# Washington State Liquor Control Board

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[Home](#) > Special Occasion Licenses FAQ

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## Special Occasion Licenses FAQ

- [Applying for a special occasion license](#)
- [Obtaining alcohol and donations](#)
- [Allowed activities](#)
- [Prohibited activities](#)

### Applying for a special occasion license

#### What does the special occasion license allow?

The license allows a bona fide nonprofit organization to sell spirits, beer and wine by the individual serving for on-premises consumption at a specified date, time and place (i.e. fundraising dinner, gala event, auction, wine tasting). All proceeds from the sale of liquor must go directly back into the nonprofit organization.

#### Who can apply for a special occasion license?

A bona fide nonprofit organization is the only entity that can get a special occasion license. The organization is limited to 12 single-day events per calendar year.

#### How can I apply for a special occasion license?

Applications are [available online](#) <sup>[1]</sup> and at state and contract liquor stores. The cost is \$60 per day, per location. The application and fee must be submitted 45 days before the event to:

Washington State Liquor Control Board  
Licensing and Regulation Division  
P.O. Box 43085  
Olympia, WA 98504-3085

The local authority (i.e. mayor or county executive) will be notified of your application and have the opportunity to weigh in on the application.

#### Can I have alcohol at an event if I'm a nonprofit and I didn't get a special occasion license?

Yes, if you hire a caterer who is licensed to sell alcohol at events. The proceeds must go directly to the caterer, not the nonprofit. The caterer will need to notify their local liquor enforcement officer and advise them of this activity.

### **Can I use a banquet permit to sell alcohol at my nonprofit event?**

No, a banquet permit is for a private function where alcohol is provided to the guest for free. A banquet permit is not available for events that include alcohol sales to the public.

## **Obtaining alcohol and donations**

### **Where can I purchase alcohol?**

- Liquor store
- Licensed retailer
- Beer or wine distributor
- Brewery or winery
- Certificate of Approval Holder who can ship directly to Washington retailers

### **Can I receive alcohol donations?**

If you are a nonprofit 501(C)(3) or a 501(C)(6), you may accept donated product from a winery, brewery, craft distillery or an accredited representative of a distillery.

### **Can I collect sponsorship money from a manufacturer or distributor to help me pay for my event?**

No, you are considered a retailer while operating under a special occasion license, and therefore cannot accept any money from a manufacturer or distributor under any circumstances.

A manufacturer or distributor can pay a third party for advertising. Third party entities would include a publishing company or radio station; not employees of the special occasion license holder, such as a promoter.

### **What happens if I don't sell all my alcohol at my event and I have some left over?**

Alcohol can be returned to the manufacturer or distributor for a refund, if the manufacturer or distributor is willing.

## **Allowed activities**

### **Can a manufacturer or distributor help me at the event?**

- A winery and a representative of a distillery can help pour at an event
- A winery, a representative of a distillery and a brewery can conduct presentations that educate the public on the alcohol being offered for sale
- A brewery can help install dispensing equipment

### **May I sell bottles of wine for consumption during the event?**

No, you may only sell alcohol by the individual serving during an event. With the proper approval from the WSLCB Licensing Division (360-664-1600), bottles may be sold to go.

**Can I auction beer or wine at my event?**

Yes, in conjunction with sales of alcohol for on premises consumption, you may auction or sell unopened beer and/or wine above acquisition for off premises consumption.

**Prohibited activities****Can employees of the nonprofit organization drink during the event?**

No, anyone working at the event may not consume alcohol on duty. This includes all volunteers or employees of the manufacturer or distributor.

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**Source URL:** <http://liq.wa.gov/enforcement/special-occasion-license-faq>

**Links:**

[1] <http://liq.wa.gov/publications/licensing/LIQ%20285%20Special%20Occasion%20App.pdf>