

## What is a Competitive Bid?

When the Department of Revenue's Cannabis & Alcohol Regulation Division (CARD) determines a quota area is eligible for a license, the [competitive bidding process](#) is then used to allow interested parties to bid on the opportunity to apply for an available license. The highest bidder must meet specific requirements when applying for the license.

### Before Bidding

Think about how you want to run the business. The information you submit on the **bid application** is how you must apply for the **license**. For example, ownership Information:

- If you bid as "John Smith," you must apply as a sole proprietor, "John Smith."
- If you bid as an entity, such as "John's Bar, LLC," you must apply as "John's Bar, LLC."

Please review the following information before beginning the competitive bidding process. (For more detailed information about licensing criteria, refer to [16-4-401, MCA](#), and go to the CARDs website or click [here](#) to find the Competitive Bidding Terms and Conditions.)

- The bidder must be 19 years or older (this includes all members of an entity if bidding as an entity).
- A license issued through a competitive bidding process is **not eligible** to offer gambling under [Title 23, chapter 5, part 3, 5, or 6](#).
- The Bidder must create an account in OKTA, click on the TransAction Portal (TAP) to access the competitive bid form, complete it, and submit it online before the competitive bid deadline.

### Timeline

- The Department publishes notice of quota areas eligible for new licenses when available.
- The Department will contact the highest bidder if their bid form has deficiencies and will allow the bidder to resubmit the bid form within five (5) business days to correct any deficiencies.
- After the bid closes, the Department will notify the winning and unsuccessful bidders.
- Once notified, see "After Winning the Bid Apply for the License" below.

### Submitting a Bid

- Submit a bid under the name you wish to operate the business under. For example, if you have an LLC and would like the license and business to operate under that LLC, use that LLC as the bidder name, NOT John Smith.
- Submit the bid before the deadline.
- Submit the bid online through TAP. (go to our website [Alcoholic Beverage Retail Competitive Bidding Process - Montana Department of Revenue](#), to see instructions on where to click on TAP) [Home - Montana TransAction Portal](#)
- See the website for more instructions on TAP.

## Disqualification from Competitive Bid

The following is a brief list of what may disqualify applicants from the competitive bidding process (a detailed list can be found [ARM, 42.12.503](#)):

- The competitive bid form is not received on or before the deadline.
- The bidder is younger than 19 years of age.
- The bid amount is less than the minimum bid amount.

## After Winning the Bid - Apply for the License

- Submit the [Alcoholic Beverage - Gambling Operator Combined On-Premises License Application \(form 5\)](#) and **within 60 days\*\*** of notification of date of notification.
- You may request CARD in writing for an additional 60 days\*\*.
- The proposed location may not have been licensed for the same license type within the previous 12 months\*\*.
- The information on the [application](#) must match the information on the [bid form](#).
- You must pay the bid amount when CARD is ready to approve the application.
- You must commence business within 1 year of CARD's notification of winning the bid.

\*\*Keep these dates in mind. Even if you are applying for the license with a no-premises application, the same one (1) year deadline from notification still applies.\*\*

## After Approval of the License

- Transfer of ownership of the license is not allowed for one (1) year unless it is due to the death of an owner.
- Licensed premises must be operational within one (1) year of the Department's notification of being the highest bidder.
- Nonuse status is not available for 5 years.

## Questions? [Contact an Alcohol Licensing Specialist](#)

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All licensees must comply with all Federal and Montana alcoholic beverage laws and rules. [16-4-105](#), [16-4-201](#), [16-4-401](#), [16-4-430](#), MCA and ARM, [42.12.501](#), [42.12.502](#), [42.12.503](#), [42.12.504](#), [42.12.505](#)

[8.2025](#) Please note that the information in department communications may have been modified, superseded, or made obsolete by changes in federal or state law or the Administrative Rules of Montana. If you need to verify the current validity of this fact sheet or have any questions, please contact us at [DORABCD-O&E@mt.gov](mailto:DORABCD-O&E@mt.gov).

