

Cannabis Retailer Licensing Journey Map



AGCO

Alcohol and Gaming
Commission of Ontario

The AGCO thanks the Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS) for its collaboration in the development of this document.
For additional resources for each step please see the **Cannabis Retailer Licensing Journey Map page on AGCO.ca**.

1. Pre-Application Assessment *Party Responsible: Retailer*

Before applying for an AGCO licence, prospective cannabis retail Applicants should:

- consider the time it will take to meet requirements, such as acquiring insurance and setting up their banking accounts
- review OCS wholesale pricing, and begin developing a merchandising strategy
- review the AGCO licensing process
- take note of which municipalities allow/prohibit cannabis retail stores

Applicants are encouraged to reach out to OCS Client Services for more information on insurance and banking requirements.

3. Find a Suitable Retail Location *Party Responsible: Retailer*

To apply for a Retail Store Authorization (RSA), retail Applicants:

- must obtain a lease for, or own, their store
- must ensure their store is >150m from a school (Submission of an application via iAGCO is not confirmation that the proposed retail store complies with the school proximity requirement)
- are encouraged to contact and work with the local municipality they wish to operate in
- should assess whether the municipality has opted-in to cannabis retail, or if any zoning challenges exist for their prospective store

A manual review of your proposed location's proximity to schools will take place prior to any review or activities taking place. An Eligibility Officer will contact you for more information should there be a potential proximity issue.

5. ROL Issued *Party Responsible: AGCO*

If the application meets all requirements, the AGCO will send the Applicant an automated email and issue a ROL.

Retailer may now start to engage with OCS Client Services. An Applicant is not permitted to order product from the OCS until they receive their RSA.

Note: If an Applicant has entered into **agreements**, these should be disclosed at the time of applying for an ROL, where possible. Failure to disclose agreements early in the application process can slow down the review and issuance of a ROL and RSA. Amendment applications, submitted after a licence / authorization is issued, will **not** be expedited and could also delay the issuance of a ROL and RSA.

7. Validate/Update Business Plan and Review Regulatory Requirements *Party Responsible: Retailer • OCS • AGCO*

Upon receiving information about working with the OCS the Applicant:

- is encouraged to continue to build out their business plan and merchandising strategy
- may reach out to OCS to receive high-level support for these activities

There will be a wait between the time an Applicant is issued a ROL to the time that Applicant receives their RSA. During this stage, Applicants are encouraged to review their licensing and reporting requirements.

9. Public Notice – Written Submissions *Party Responsible: AGCO • Retailer*

Once the public notice period has ended, the AGCO will provide the Applicant with copies of any submissions received. An Applicant can expect to receive copies of submissions within 10 business days after the submission deadline.

Applicants have 5 calendar days, from the time written submissions are sent to them, to provide the Registrar with a response to submissions from local residents and from the municipality.

The Registrar will consider written submissions as to why the proposed store is not in the public interest as set out in the regulation made under the *Cannabis Licence Act, 2018*. The Registrar will also consider the Applicant's response to the submissions.

11. Pre-Authorization Inspection *Party Responsible: AGCO • Retailer*

Working with the Applicant, the Compliance Official will schedule and conduct a pre-authorization inspection of the store to ensure compliance with AGCO regulations and standards. This inspection (virtual or physical) takes approximately 1 hour to complete.

13. RSA Issued *Party Responsible: Retailer • AGCO*

Once the AGCO issues the RSA, an automated email from iAGCO will be sent to the Applicant with their RSA attached. An Applicant is not permitted to order product from the OCS until they receive their RSA. RSAs are issued with a condition that prevents retailers from opening to the public until such time that a pre-opening inspection is completed and confirms that the retailer meets the requirements of that inspection.

15. Order Product/Receive Product from OCS *Party Responsible: OCS • Retailer*

Once the Applicant has signed their commercial agreement with the OCS, they will be assigned a first order date.

Once product is ordered through the OCS Wholesale Portal, the delivery typically occurs within 2 business days.

After cannabis has been received by the authorized retail store, the authorized retail store may not open to the public until AGCO has completed a pre-opening inspection and given notice of approval. This condition shall expire upon notice of AGCO approval of the pre-opening inspection.

17. Open Store *Party Responsible: Retailer*

The retailer has completed the retailer licensing process and is permitted to open their store to the public.

Retailers must:

- display the Provincial Retail Seal provided in your iAGCO approval notice
- comply with retail reporting requirements, the Registrar's Standards and all applicable regulations and legislation.

2. Apply for ROL on iAGCO *Party Responsible: Retailer • AGCO*

To apply for a Retail Operator Licence (ROL), retail Applicants should check the requirements in the AGCO Cannabis Retail Regulation Guide. All applications are submitted on iAGCO, the AGCO's online licensing portal.

There are a variety of factors that impact processing time of an ROL including, the complexity of the Applicant's corporate structure, the complexity of any third party agreements, the number of interested parties, and the extent of the due diligence investigation required.

4. Apply for RSA on iAGCO *Party Responsible: Retailer • AGCO*

Once the retail Applicant has applied for their ROL and has found a location, they must submit their RSA application on iAGCO.

The submission of your RSA application does not guarantee its approval. The determination that an RSA application satisfies all requirements is made based on information available at the time of issuance of the RSA and not at the time of submission of the application through iAGCO.

Applications are reviewed in order of receipt. There are a variety of factors that impact processing time of an RSA including, but not limited to, the Applicant's responsiveness in providing required information, how soon the Applicant is taking possession of their proposed store in order to undergo public notice, the volume of written submissions received during public notice / types of issues raised, the complexity of any third party agreements, the number of interested parties, and the time the Applicant takes to build out their store to a point of readiness for inspections.

6. Contact OCS Client Services *Party Responsible: Retailer • OCS*

Once the Applicant receives their ROL from AGCO, the Applicant:

- can contact OCS to begin to receive resources about working with the provincial cannabis wholesaler
- will sign a non-disclosure agreement with the OCS to begin receiving business information.

8. Public Notice Posting Period *Party Responsible: Retailer • AGCO*

Public Notice is an opportunity for the Municipality and its residents to make written submissions to the Registrar as to whether the issuance of the RSA is in the public interest. The Applicant can enter the public notice period only once they have taken possession of their proposed store location.

The AGCO will determine the dates of the posting period (15 calendar days) and will email the Public Notice placard (in PDF format) to the Applicant.

The Applicant is required to post the Public Notice placard at their store location in full public view for 15 days as identified on the placard. The application will also be searchable on iAGCO for submissions to be made during the 15 day period and the AGCO will Tweet about the application.

Failure to post the Public Notice for the required period of time will result in a delay in the processing of the application and may result in reposting the Public Notice for a further 15 days.

10. Retailer Education *Party Responsible: AGCO • Retailer*

An AGCO Compliance Official is assigned to the retail Applicant. The Compliance Official will reach out to the Applicant to schedule an education session. The Compliance Official will provide information to the Applicant on the cannabis regulatory framework, and requirements under the Registrar's Standards in relation to the pre-authorization and pre-opening inspection criteria. The Compliance Official is available to provide ongoing retailer education.

12. Entering the Queue for RSA Issuance *Party Responsible: AGCO*

The AGCO will make a decision on whether to approve the application when:

- The Applicant has been issued a ROL
- The Public Notice process is complete, including consideration of submissions and Applicant's response
- The pre-authorization inspection requirements have been met
- All supporting application documents and activities have been reviewed / completed

The application will enter the queue for issuance of a RSA if the Deputy Registrar has made a decision to approve the application. Issuance is subject to a final school proximity review on date of issuance.

14. Enter into Commercial Agreement with OCS *Party Responsible: OCS • Retailer*

The Applicant must enter into a commercial agreement with the OCS before making their first cannabis order.

The Applicant will also be able to register for a wholesale account on the OCS Wholesale Portal.

Note: It takes approximately 10 business days from the time the Applicant receives their RSA to the point in which they have completed their onboarding process with the OCS and can place their first inventory order.

16. Pre-Opening Inspection and Authorization to Open *Party Responsible: AGCO • Retailer*

An AGCO Compliance Official will reach out to the retailer to conduct a pre-opening inspection.

Once the pre-opening inspection criteria is met, the Applicant should expect to receive a notice of approval authorizing the store to open to the public. The store may only open to the public after the approval notice is issued.

18. Retail Reporting and Ongoing Education *Party Responsible: Retailer • AGCO*

In their first month of opening, prior to the first reporting deadline, retailers are invited by the AGCO to participate in a training session on their reporting requirements. Operators of authorized cannabis retail stores are required to meet periodic and incident-based, federal, and sales reporting requirements. Federal and sales reports must be submitted monthly, while periodic and incident-based reports are submitted as required.

To make it easier for cannabis retailers to delegate regulatory reporting to their staff, the AGCO is providing Applicants with the option to set up a store-specific iAGCO account for reporting purposes.

AGCO Compliance Officials may visit the retail store location at any time to confirm compliance with the *Cannabis Licence Act, 2018* and regulations and Registrar's Standards. They will also be available for education inquiries upon request.

Disclaimer

Note: While the process is laid out in a linear fashion, some steps may occur in a different order. The journey map is meant to capture the process at a high level. Timelines indicated in the document are estimates and may vary for each retail Applicant.

Note: Anyone wishing to operate a store on a First Nations Reserve or any Licensed Producer interested in operating a retail store should contact the AGCO and OCS for details on their respective licensing application process.

Note: As an Applicant, it is your responsibility to ensure your proposed retail store location meets school proximity and other requirements at all times throughout your entire application review

AGCO contact information:

Anytime via the
iAGCO online portal

or Mon–Fri 8:30am–5:00pm
416-326-8700 / 1-800-522-2876
(toll-free in Ontario)

OCS contact information:

OCS Client Service Centre
1-877-627-1627