



Policy Planning and Choice:

Guide to Feasible Interventions

Adapted from:

Stimson, G., Grant, M., Choquet, M., & Garrison, P. (Eds.). (2007). *Drinking in Context: Patterns, Interventions, and Partnerships*. New York: Routledge

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of alcohol policies relies on the ability to maximize benefits while minimizing harm. Immediate needs and concerns must be addressed quickly and efficiently, while at the same time leaving room for an overarching policy framework within which specific actions can be put into practice.

Policy options can be divided broadly into two approaches: population-level policy measures, implemented through governmental action and legislation that address the general population; and targeted interventions, an array of measures aimed at specific populations, behaviors, and contexts in which risk related to drinking is increased and that involve a spectrum of stakeholders. The latter group of interventions recognizes the diversity of drinking patterns across populations and cultures, as well as the importance of garnering the resources and expertise of a range of (often non-traditional) partners.

Using the Guide

This Guide to Feasible Interventions examines a range of different measures aimed at reducing the potential harm associated with drinking. It provides an overview both of population-level approaches and targeted interventions, weighing their relative strengths and weaknesses in various areas. A more detailed discussion can be found in *Drinking in Context: Patterns, Interventions, and Partnerships* (Stimson, Grant, Choquet, & Garrison, 2007).

The selection and design of interventions requires a clear specification of objectives, strategies for achieving them, and targets (populations, behaviors, or contexts). It also requires assessment of available resources—human, technical, or financial. Finally, which interventions may be most appropriate for a given situation and for achieving a specific objective also depends on an assessment of its likely outcomes, both intended and unintended. Table 1 lists the criteria that can be applied to individual interventions to assist with the assessment of their feasibility.

Table 2 applies these criteria to a range of different interventions. It is intended to be used as a guide by those seeking to design, monitor, and implement alcohol policy measures, focusing on what is most suitable and practical within particular contexts. It can be used as an aid in comparing and weighing various approaches against each other, to be updated and modified as best fits the particular circumstances in question. IARD suggests that Table 2 be used as a complement to the ICAP Blue Book: Practical Guides for Alcohol Policy and Prevention Approaches.

What we have attempted to demonstrate is that the criterion for selecting a particular intervention is not just dependent on whether there is available scientific evidence for effectiveness. Other criteria include what is feasible, what can be realistically accomplished, and what can be implemented with the resources available. The key criteria for the selection of some measures over others is that they do not require procedural or structural changes, or intensive allocation of resources.

For ease of reference, measures are grouped by intervention type, though policy-makers should be encouraged to think logically in terms of objectives and the strategies for achieving them. Depending on the particular circumstances, these measures may be implemented alone or as a mix of approaches. For example, the reduction of alcohol-impaired driving might involve various strategies and measures, applied alone or, in combination.

Most of the interventions listed in Table 2 clearly require cooperation among a wide range of potential partners. Quite simply, interventions cannot be introduced in opposition to major organizations or groupings in the population. Many need active cooperation, support, and endorsement in order to be implemented and to work successfully. Reducing alcohol-related harms is “everybody’s business”—including consumers, producers, retailers, educators, law enforcement, and governments.

Not every available measure is listed here, and the outcomes (intended or otherwise) and mode of implementation may differ from country to country. As well as being an aide-mémoire to common interventions, Table 2 serves as a useful reminder to policy-makers of some of the things that need to be considered when selecting, designing, and implementing interventions.

TABLE 1. INTERVENTION PLANNING AND CHOICE

OBJECTIVES	
Target(s)	The population, behavior, or context that is the object of the intervention; this should also include an indication of the required coverage of the intervention.
Outcomes	Changes expected as the result of the intervention. Positive outcomes are generally sought, but there may also be unintended outcomes, both positive and negative.
Shortcomings	Limitations of the intervention.
Obstacles to overcome	Societal, community, and other factors that may inhibit the introduction of the intervention, impede its implementation, or hinder its success.
Procedural requirements	The actions needed - and at which level - in order to introduce and implement the intervention.
Resources for implementation	Required human, technical, and organizational resources.

Suggested resources:

Stimson, G. V., Grant, M., Choquet, M., & Garrison, P. (Eds.) (2007). *Drinking in Context: Patterns, Interventions, and Partnerships*. New York: Routledge.

International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP). (2005). *ICAP Blue Book. Practical Guides for Alcohol Policy and Prevention Approaches*. Available: <http://www.IARD.org>.

TABLE 2. FEASIBLE INTERVENTIONS FOR MINIMIZING HARM

Among the many interventions that may be applied at the national or local levels and that target the population, groups, contexts, and behaviors associated with increased risk of harm, some may be implemented quickly and efficiently. These measures (highlighted) may often be implemented without major procedural or structural changes (such as changes in legislation) and many do not require intensive allocation of resources. The omission of other measures from selection does not imply that they are ineffective in minimizing harm around drinking, but simply that their implementation may be more difficult. In fact, measures such as the setting of legal age limits for the consumption and purchase of beverage alcohol, random breath testing, or alcohol education are valuable tools with proven impact.

Whole-population Measures

	TOTAL BAN ON SALES	TAXATION AND PRICING
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of alcohol from market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise prices and reduce overall consumption
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole population
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero or minimal consumption • Reduced abuse • Reduced physical harm (chronic and acute) • Reduced social cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced alcohol abuse and heavy drinking • Reduced social cost • Reduced physical harm (chronic and acute)
Unintended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise in illicit production and trade; black market • Rise in organized crime • Increased availability of lower-quality beverages • Reduced pleasure and benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced pleasure and benefits • Increased black market, cross-border trade, illicit production, and consumption of low-quality beverages • Social inequality of access / affordability
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of commercial sector • Inconsistency with policies in neighboring countries • Restricted consumer freedoms • Reduced pleasure and benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of revenue • Individual responsibility not encouraged • Inconsistency with policies in neighboring countries
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural resistance to / acceptability of government control • Consumer demand for alcohol • Illicit trade • Loss of revenue from taxation and pricing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural resistance • Requires education for acceptance
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation for prohibition • Institution of penalties for breaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation • Standards for taxation rates
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government at national level • Government at local level, where jurisdictions have autonomy • Enforcement by police and customs • Religious leaders and institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government at national level • Government at local level, where jurisdictions have autonomy • Adequate and efficient enforcement • Collection of revenue • Private sector • Commercial market / products

Whole-population Measures

	GOVERNMENT MONOPOLY OF RETAIL SALES	RESTRICTED HOURS AND DAYS OF SALE
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated access to alcohol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to alcohol
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole population
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited private sector involvement Increased government revenue Reduced alcohol abuse Reduced social problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced consumption Reduced alcohol abuse Reduced social problems
Unintended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited free market and trade Impact on economy around production, distribution, and sale Restricted private sector Rise in illicit production and trade; black market Rise in organized crime Shifts trade to neighboring jurisdictions Impact on social outcomes (e.g., drinking and driving across borders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistency with policies in neighboring countries Restricted consumer freedoms
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistency with policies in neighboring countries Restricted consumer freedoms Limited choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased availability of lower-quality beverages Limited free market and trade Impact on economy around production, distribution, and sale Loss of revenue Trade shifts to neighboring countries or jurisdictions
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural resistance to/ acceptability of government control Harmonization of regional alcohol policies Traditionally unresponsive to consumer demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural resistance to / acceptability of government control Harmonization of regional alcohol policies Unresponsive to consumer demand
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislation Institution of penalties for breaches of regulation
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government at national level Government at local level, where jurisdictions have autonomy Infrastructure for retail Enforcement through police force Customs and border control agencies for law enforcement and monitoring of cross-border trade and black market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government at national level Government at local level, where jurisdictions have autonomy Enforcement through police force Customs and border control agencies for law enforcement and monitoring of cross-border trade and black market

Whole-population Measures

	RESTRICTIONS ON ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONS	RESPONSIBLE DRINKING MESSAGES
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce consumption by reducing enticement to purchase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce consumption by alerting consumers to health hazards of immoderate consumption
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole population May also target particular groups (e.g., sports audiences, young people) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole population Particular groups (e.g., pregnant women and young people)
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce harmful drinking, especially among young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce abusive drinking patterns and harm Encourage responsible drinking
Unintended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restriction of commercial freedoms Disregard of beneficial aspects of alcohol consumption Limited brand information Restriction on funds to TV/radio programming, sports, and arts from alcohol advertising and / or sponsorships 	
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not take other influences into account (e.g., family and peer influences) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer-term approach: awareness building and information Implementation best when combined with other measures (e.g., education)
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumer demand for alcohol Advertising practices in neighboring jurisdictions, the Internet, and the media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of industry motivation in messages Prevailing drinking culture
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislated regulatory or self-regulatory framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislated regulatory or self-regulatory framework
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government at national level Enforcement mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producers of beverage alcohol Advertisers and the media

Targeted Measures: Groups at Risk

MINIMUM LEGAL PURCHASE/DRINKING AGE	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of drinking under legal age
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people under the legal purchase and drinking age
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of health and social problems among those below legal age • Adherence to law
Unintended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on social outcomes, such as drink and driving across borders • Makes underage drinking underground • Criminalization of underage drinking
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal consumption and purchase ages vary across countries • Inconsistency between age of majority and legal purchase age • Incongruity with reality of drinking among young people • Does not teach responsible drinking patterns • Inconsistency of legal age across neighboring jurisdictions
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinking culture among young people • Permissiveness of underage drinking • Lack of viable alternatives to drinking for many young people • Ignorance about drinking patterns and relationship to outcomes • Ignorance about the legal purchase age • Lack of enforcement
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation • Enforcement and implementation of punitive measures for breaches of regulation
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government at national level • Government at local level, where jurisdictions have autonomy • Educators, medical professionals, social workers, and others to pass information • Training, education, and awareness building (e.g., through public campaigns) • Compliance among retailers and servers • Effective enforcement measures • Community support • Parents, guardians, and other adult role models

Targeted Measures: Groups at Risk

SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate young people about alcohol and its effects • Reduced consumption in group younger than the legal purchase age • Reduced problems among young people
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstinence in group younger than the minimum mandated age • Responsible and moderate drinking (as legally permissible) • Raised awareness • Harm reduction
Unintended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised interest in alcohol • Interest in alternative psychoactive substances
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation suggests that changes in behavior are not immediate • Longer-term approach: building awareness and providing information • Implementation best when combined with other measures
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of parents and peers • Didactic approach may not resonate with young people • Active participation of young people needed • Does not reach marginalized groups due to attrition from schools (e.g., in many developing countries)
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education policy
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education system and school boards for integration into school curricula • Teachers, parents, and students • Training of teachers and educators • NGOs, beverage alcohol industry (e.g., social aspects organizations [SAOs]), and others to develop and sponsor programs • Community leaders • Funding for development of materials, training, and implementation

Targeted Measures: Groups at Risk

	LIFE SKILLS	EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND BRIEF INTERVENTION
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of heavy or harmful drinking patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early prevention of harm in those at risk
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nondependent problem drinkers
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior change and awareness - building around responsible drinking Integration of responsible drinking with healthy lifestyles and decision-making Addressing hard-to-reach populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modify harmful drinking patterns Reduce risk of social and physical harm
Unintended Outcomes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients lie to medical practitioners
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not focus exclusively on drinking Longer-term approach: awareness building and information Behavior changes may not be immediate 	
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attrition from schools, especially in developing countries Requires involvement of parents Requires commitment from teachers to learn / teach the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reluctance to undergo screening Ensuring follow-up Social stigma of drinking problems
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education or health policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration into health care system Referral for treatment, where appropriate
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be integrated into existing programs and education measures Community, educators, and religious leaders Range of programs for young people Funding for development of materials, training, and implementation NGOs, beverage alcohol industry (e.g., SAOs), and others to develop and sponsor programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any health care setting (e.g., pharmacy, emergency room, clinic, or doctor's office) Availability of screening instruments Training of practitioners in screening Treatment resources available Technology resources for Internet-based tools

Targeted Measures: Contexts

	SERVER TRAINING	RESTRICTIONS ON DENSITY OF SERVING AND RETAIL OUTLETS
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced incidence of intoxication • Reduced violence and public disorder • Reduced potential for harm and injury • Reduced liability for outlet owners and operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced access to alcohol
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed premises and other public venues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertainment and retail districts
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced harm • Reduced violence • Reduced public disorder • Reduced drink driving • Reduced intoxication • Reduced liability for outlet owners and operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced incidents of violence and public disorder • Reduced heavy drinking
Unintended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased sales • Shifts heavy drinking to home or other venues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifts heavy drinking to home or other venues • Reduced revenue for businesses and communities
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignores undisruptive heavy drinkers • Implementation best when combined with other measures (e.g., education and campaigns) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced competition, selection, and choice
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General support needed • Cost for hospitality and retail sector operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer demand • Resistance from retailers • Political interests
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible linkage to licensing requirements • Insurance and liability • Self-enforcement needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing and zoning laws
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail and service sector outlet owners, managers, and staff • Producers of beverage alcohol • Incentives or penalties needed • Training of staff • Broad coverage of outlets and trade support • Police presence • National or regional government • Community support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community support • Enforcement • Changes in infrastructure (e.g., transportation)

Targeted Measures: Contexts

	LOCAL ACCORDS AND COMMUNITY ACTION	BREATH TESTING IN WORKPLACES WITH HIGH RISK OF INJURY
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced social harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced risk of harm
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities/ areas where harm indicators are high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nondependent problem drinkers
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of violence, crime, and disorder • Efficient use of available resources • Involvement of all segments of community; general support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace
Unintended Outcomes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced accidents and injury to self and others • Increased awareness / deterrence
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on immediate community concerns, not long-range goals • May be motivated by political expediency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May neglect low-profile issues
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication between sectors of community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be supplemented by employee support programs
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement needed • Repercussions for breach of accord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation or voluntary codes and self-regulation by employers and professional groups
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community support and involvement • Involved police, media, local government, retailers and servers, insurance providers, community and religious leaders, educators, and others • Mechanism for communication • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer support • Resources for testing needed • Implementation of penalties • Employee training

Targeted Measures: Behaviors

	SOCIAL NORMS MARKETING	RANDOM SOBRIETY CHECKPOINTS
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of heavy drinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced drink driving
Target(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme drinking (especially among young people) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving while intoxicated
Intended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instilling realistic expectations and attitudes toward drinking Reduction of social harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced incidents of violence and public disorder Reduced heavy and irresponsible drinking Increased awareness Sober driving, driving below legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits Reduced accidents, injuries, and mortality from road traffic crashes Encourage designated drivers or alternative transportation
Unintended Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible drinking among young people Realistic expectations and attitudes around drinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to outlets relying on driving patrons Impact on rural economy Discriminatory targeting of enforcement (e.g., ethnic groups)
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer-term approach: awareness - building and provision of information Changes in behavior may not be immediate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infringement of personal freedoms Inconvenience to sober drivers Diversion of resources Implementation best when combined with other measures (e.g., education and awareness campaigns)
Obstacles to Overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misperceptions of peer drinking behavior may be hard to overcome Drinking culture among young people (e.g., on college/university campuses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad-based support Cultural/ societal views on individual freedoms Corruption around enforcement Access to alternative transportation helpful
Procedural Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education or health policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislation
Resources for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators, school boards, and university governance bodies Integration into school curriculum Funding for development of materials, training, and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government at national or local level Police enforcement Training of police, equipment, and resources for implementation Campaigns to raise awareness Beverage alcohol industry: retailers and servers Community support



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Toolkit

IARD Toolkits provide an overview of key topics, including approaches to developing and implementing alcohol interventions, policies, and situation assessments. While the *Toolkits* provide a comprehensive overview we recommend they be used in conjunction with IARD's other, more comprehensive resources, including *IARD Policy Reviews*.

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IARD is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to addressing the global public health issue of harmful drinking. Our mission is to contribute to the reduction of harmful drinking and promote responsible drinking worldwide. This is a problem that requires new insights, urgent action, and open dialogue. Central to IARD's work is our role as Secretariat of the Beer, Wine and Spirits Producers' Commitments to Reduce Harmful Drinking.