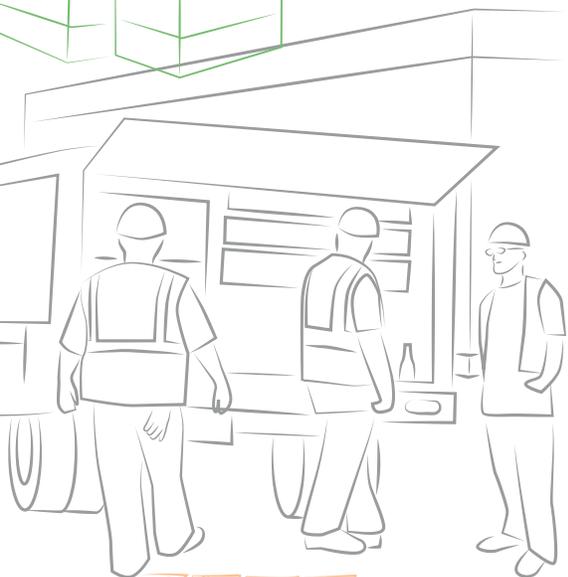
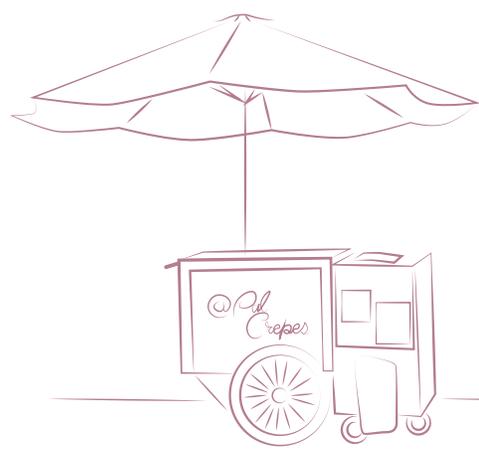




Navigating the complex approval process for food entrepreneurs to start, run and grow their business in Chicago



Part 1/2
PROJECT REPORT



**Communication Design Workshop
Fall 2018
Institute of Design
Illinois Institute of Technology**



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Navigating a rich and complex food approval system

An introduction

Food in Chicago

Chicago's vibrant food culture owes itself to much more beyond the food. While the city boasts 7,300+ restaurants¹, 262 grocery stores², 150+ summer food festivals³, 61 farmers markets⁴, and other food outlets, there are two additional factors that contribute to its vibrancy.

Chicago remains one of the world's most diverse cities. The city is home to a still-growing array of ethnic and cultural groups. Each brings food from their homeland—whether to cook at home or to share with the community at large—adding to the cornucopia of Chicago's dining table. Food is an easy entrée for these groups, by extending the production to deliver on a scale that can provide an economic source.

Chicago is entrepreneurial. Terms like 'entrepreneurship' and 'start-ups' are currently in vogue, but small mom-and-pop shops and individually owned businesses have long been a mainstay of Chicago's economy. Well before big box retailers, chain outlets and online stores, these entrepreneurially-spirited individuals brought with them creativity and ingenuity to Chicago's streets and neighborhoods. This entrepreneurial approach to business development and ownership still flourishes in the food industry today.

Meanwhile, the local city government remains necessarily involved in the food business community as it works to ensure the safety of consumers while promoting the economic health of the city. Through the establishment and enforcement of food policy, these departments strive to protect the public while also educating entrepreneurs on good business practices so that their businesses may become enduring contributors to the local economy.

The reality is that, at times, these food entrepreneur behaviors and municipal requirements have come into conflict. On the one hand, the rules that govern the businesses' commercial behavior are often presented in a form that is not easily accessible or understood, making compliance difficult. On the other, many unique, individual, and authentic or innovative styles of food preparation are not well understood by those writing the rules or enforcing them, resulting in cultural friction or the businesses abandoning Chicago for more progressive locations.

Our charge

The 2018 Fall Communication Design Workshop at the Institute of Design (ID) at Illinois Institute of Technology, in partnership with Chicago Food Policy Action Council (CFPAC), was initially charged to create visualizations of the food licensing, permitting, and certification processes to help food entrepreneurs more easily navigate the myriad pathways that exist to become compliant so that they may start a viable business. Students were tasked to research various participants of this ecosystem, learn about the processes, and ultimately translate from a text-based expression into a graphic representation—all with the goal of bringing clarity and simplicity to these licensing processes.

Through interviews with the various participants of this ecosystem, the team came to understand that the food business licensing process in Chicago ...

... is not a simple process, but rather a path involving many processes.

... often requires multiple licenses, each with its own prerequisite certificates and permits.

... involves interacting with not just one government entity, but likely several, each requiring different ways of interacting and points of contact.

... does not have a stable set of rules, but one that is constantly in flux.

... does not begin with a simple decision as to which license to obtain, but rather a complex set of decisions based on multiple business variables.

As a design effort, we are constantly learning how the world *is* so that we may provide solutions to what the world can *become*. In addition to the navigation maps, we will present in this document three models that emerged from our learnings that help us understand the larger context in which food licensing and food entrepreneurship lives.

By doing this, we are able to shift our understanding from what we know to what we can do as next steps. This shows the power of visualization which will be discussed in a later section.

References

¹ <https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/about/facts.html>

² Mid-America Real Estate Group, cited by <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-grocery-store-report-0813-biz-2-20170811-story.html>

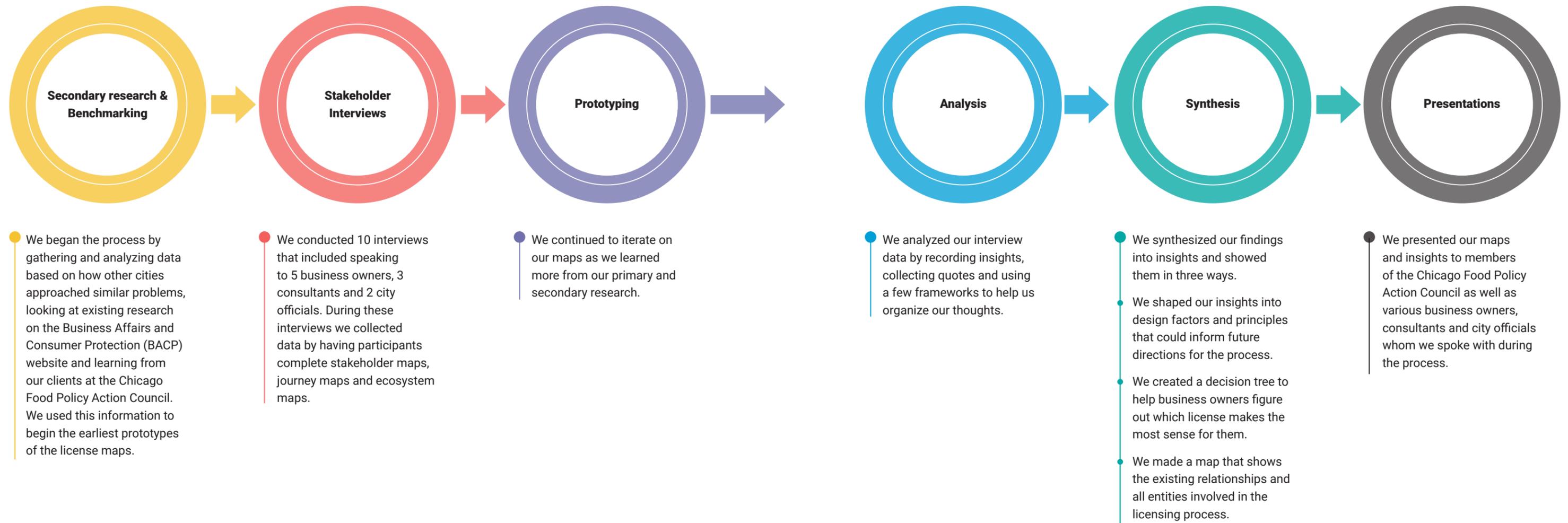
³ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/redeye/ct-redeye-chicago-summer-festivals-guide-2018-htlstory.html>

⁴ https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/farmersmarkets0.html

Our design process

Section authors:
Divya Iyengar, Yuan Feng

We leveraged our understanding of design in order to better visualize the paths and processes for a food entrepreneur to acquire various licenses in the City of Chicago. We went through many steps in the design process to create our maps and insights, and worked closely with the Chicago Food Policy Action Council along the way.



Supporting food entrepreneurs

A snapshot of the world of starting a new food business in Chicago

Section authors:
Vidya Mantrala, Cristina Tarriba,
Divya Iyengar

Overview

Starting a food business in Chicago is a great way to support and grow the local economy. It is important to keep in mind the institutions that need to be—and some that should be—involved in order to ensure that business owners are able to successfully launch and operate their businesses. Navigating the key relationships within the system is a critical first step towards that success.

Government Officials

Government Officials create and enforce the requirements and processes that need to be followed in order to start and run businesses.

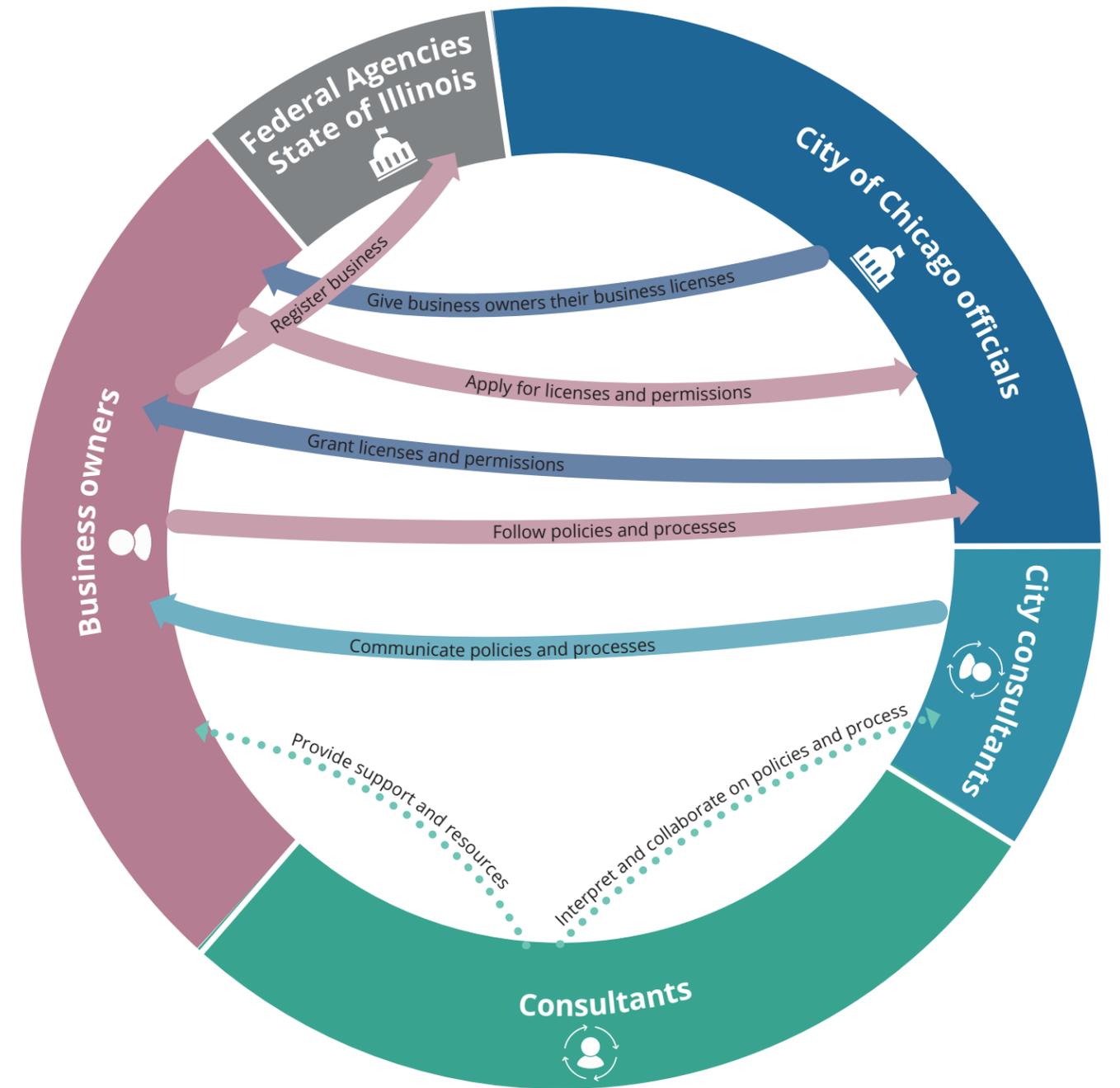
Consultants and support organizations

Consultants and support organizations advise and guide new business owners through the correct processes they need to follow in order to fulfill the requirements associated with their specific business type.

Business owners

Business owners want to open their food business quickly, efficiently, and in the way that makes the most sense for the type of business they are opening.

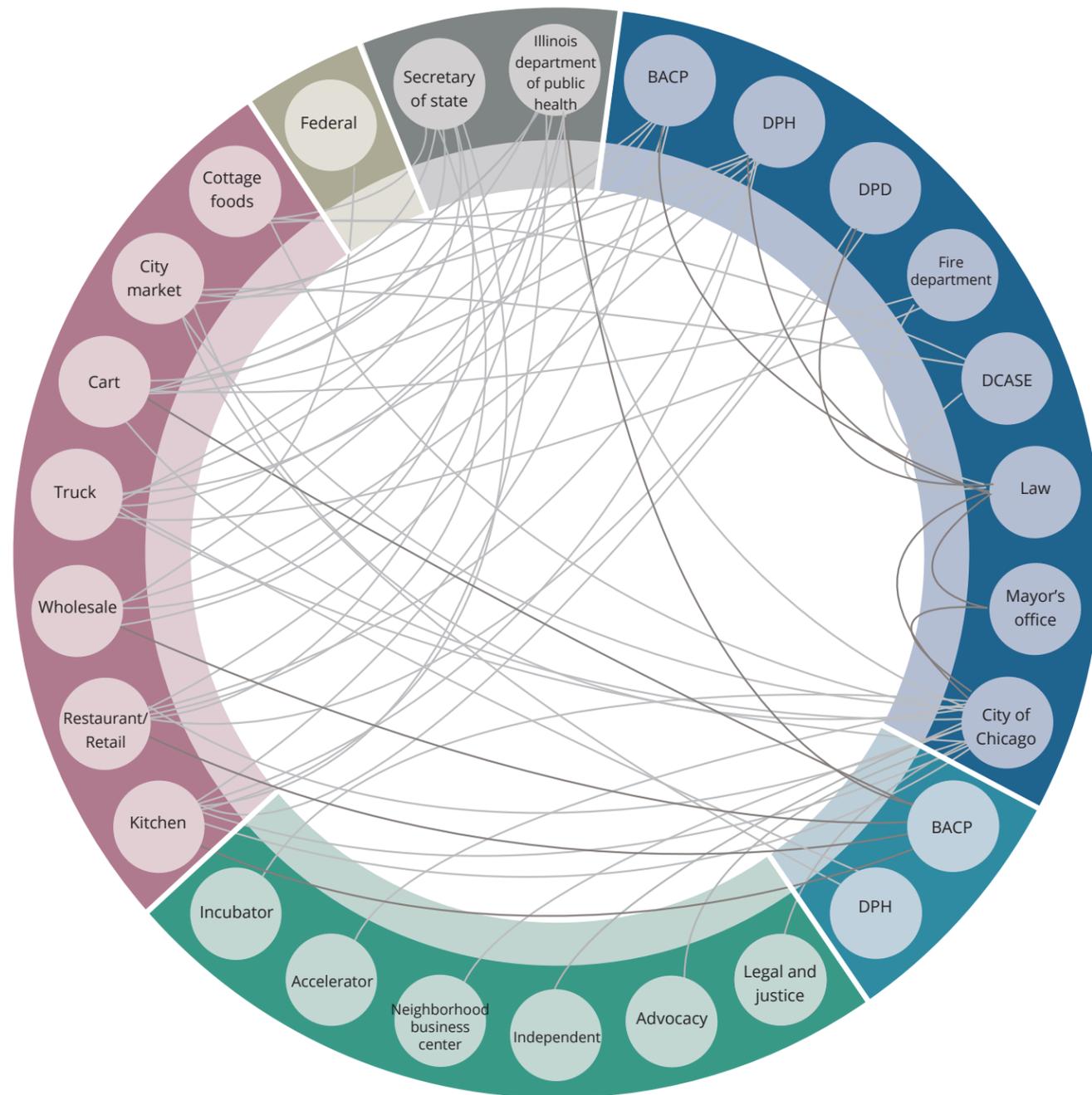
Please note that not all entities (business owners, city officials, vendors, consultants, partners etc.) have been represented in this map. This map includes those who we have interacted with throughout the map development process.



A web of relationships

Within the Chicago food business landscape exists a web of complex interactions and flows of information. It must be navigated differently depending on everything from how food is prepared to where it is sold.

The success of a new food business ultimately depends on holistically addressing the needs and requirements of all of the community stakeholders involved.



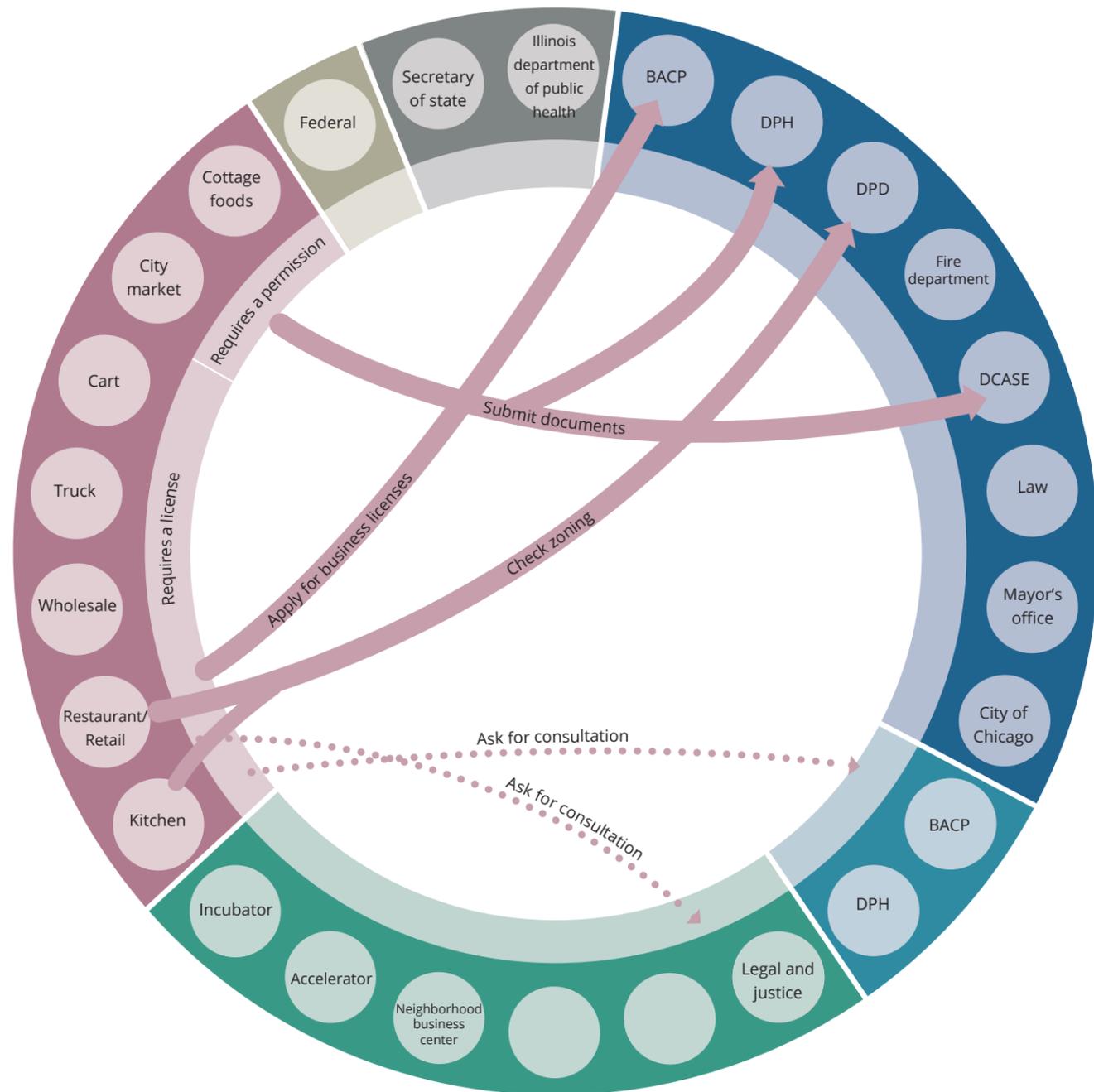
How to read

- State of Illinois
- City of Chicago officials
- City official consultants
- Consultants
- Business owners
- Descriptive relationships between entities
- Optional relationships between entities
- Relationships between entities

The business owner's perspective

Business owners are driven by a desire to start their business as quickly as possible, and they want to be able to sell their food in an authentic fashion.

However, the process can be cumbersome and costly. Many factors influence the types of businesses they decide to start, as well as the types of guidance that they seek.



Business owners are expected to know the technical details as soon as they start planning.

Think About:
 What channels might be most accessible to different communities of business owners in Chicago for business planning information?

"I used LegalZoom. I shouldn't have. I could have done it on my own. Like I had no idea what it took. I didn't realize that you could go online and just incorporate at the beginning. I was so not savvy. I wish I wouldn't have used LegalZoom in retrospect.

— Business owner

"I think every food entrepreneur needs a consultant that knows what to look for and knows how to set things up, because, when the health inspector came in, I passed on the very first inspection and I've heard horror stories from other chef colleagues that it's taken us three, four times before inspector helps give something.

— Business owner

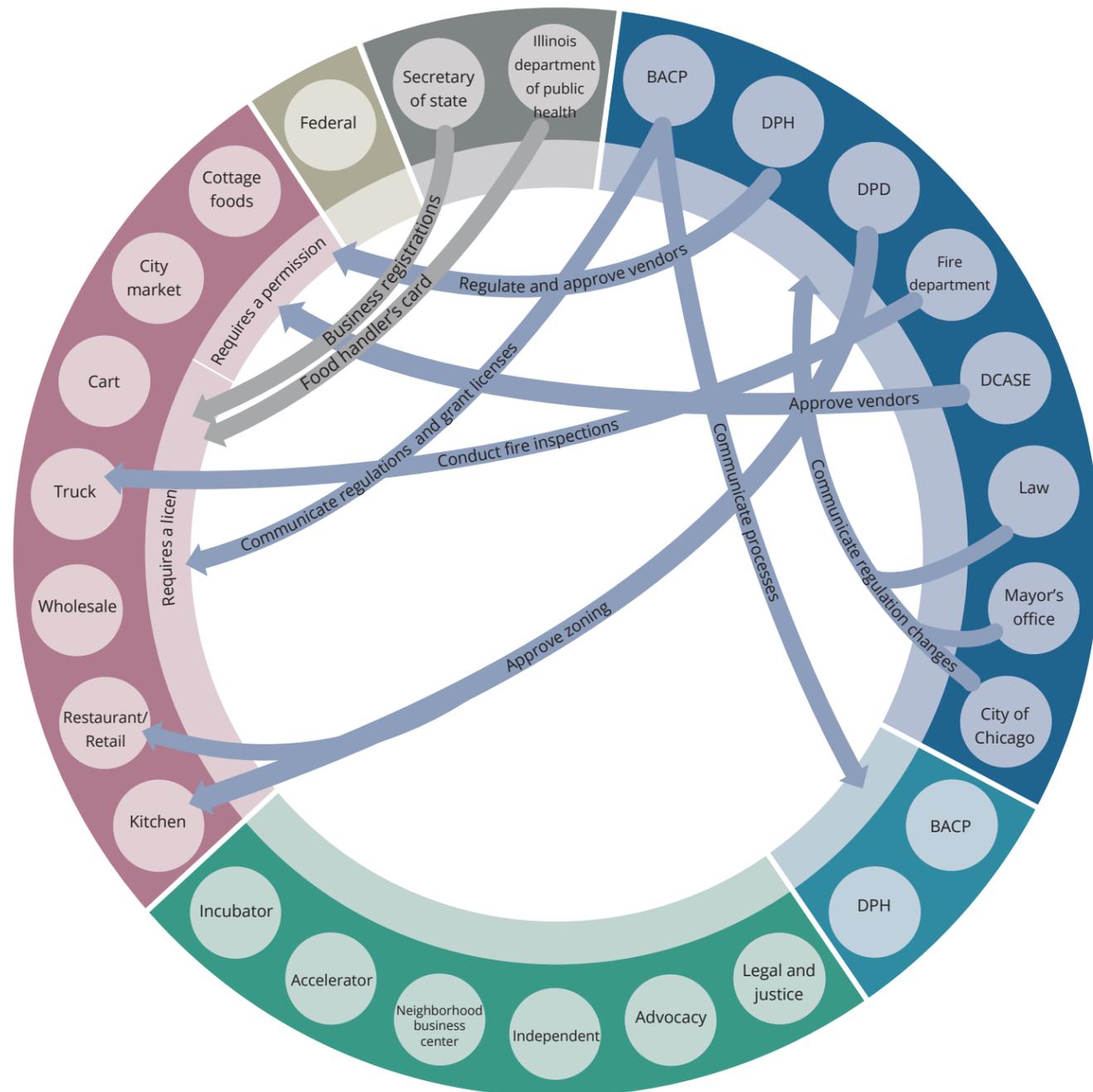
"They said 'is your cart ready to be inspected by the public health department?' And I said, 'tell me what "ready" means.' I need to know because there was nowhere that says what you need. So, the person who we sat down with a really did help us in terms of before even applying and paying for it.

— Business owner

The government officials' perspective

Government officials are interested in supporting new businesses, as they contribute to the local economy, however they are also interested in business owners complying with the current regulations.

While the city does try to be flexible, their top concern is public health with regards to food safety.



Government officials have to both enforce rules and address changing community needs.

Think About:
 What are ways that the city can co-create with new business owners to handle emerging business requirements?

"We are advocates for business. We want entrepreneurs to succeed, and we don't want it to be cumbersome to everyone."
 – Government official

"We are fighting misinformation and we are trying to get the information out the best way that we can."
 – Government official

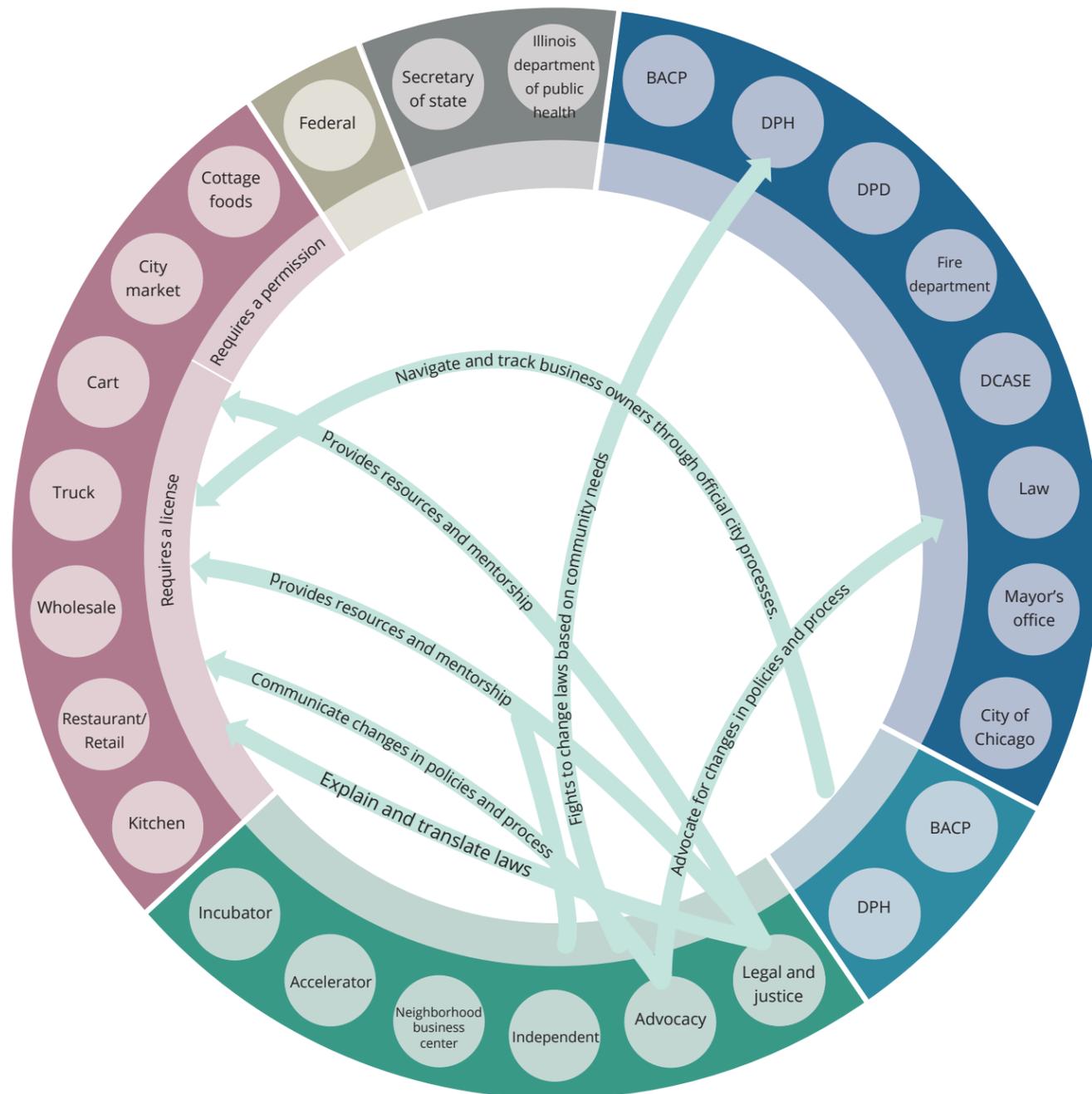
"Everyone who is serving food has the same regulations applied to everyone. We don't want people to get sick. The City gets blamed for this issue."
 – Government official

The consultants' and support organizations' perspective

Business owners can approach multiple types of consultants to navigate the licensing processes:

- City consultants guide business owners through the process.
- Legal justice consultants empower underserved communities and help them navigate an inaccessible process. (Institute for Justice)

- Advocacy consultants care about achieving policy changes and clarifications to better serve all communities. (CFPAC, AVA)
- Entrepreneurship consultants provide business planning and legal resources to new business owners. (John Marshall Law Clinic, Good Food Accelerator)



Consultants and support organizations are liaisons and interpreters.

Think About:
How could all the different types of consultants work together to provide complementary services to new business owners?

“The city funds some of it, but mostly at least the folks that I’m kind of networked with are also going to be serving low to moderate income entrepreneurs or small businesses.”
– Entrepreneurship Consultant

“...The process can be a problem, certainly for individuals who are undocumented that are starting businesses. There’s nothing wrong with that, but the point is that a lot of folks won’t be able to navigate that if they’re starting their business on their own or they don’t necessarily have legal assistance or another individual who’s helping them in the process.”
– Entrepreneurship Consultant

“So then there are no permits for street sellers, because the procedure for them doesn’t exist. The procedure doesn’t exist because the old rules don’t apply, because there is a proposal for new rules. And we’re still stuck in limbo.”
– Advocacy Consultant

Making research actionable

Abstracting data to principles

Design research is used to uncover the processes, behaviors, and biases of the people that live and operate in a given context. It allows designers to develop a holistic understanding of what is happening and why it is happening.

Features of this process include principles, statements, and factors generated from the detailed qualitative data we amassed through the interviews to provide interpretation and create meaning.

Design Principle

A design principle is a directive for action. It provides you with a simple set of rules to follow when creating solutions.

Need Statement

A need statement is a call to the issues in the system that need to be addressed.

Factor

A factor is an element of the system that, if addressed, will help solve for needs.

The model on the right—and details on the following pages—is a distillation of the interviews the team conducted with the various stakeholders. This helps us move from descriptive, narrative views of the food entrepreneurs' experience to an actionable set of principles, needs and factors for designers. This guides designers to take action, for example by exploring possible areas of intervention, or facilitating conversations between stakeholders for alignment and improvement.

Section authors:

David Pollack, Grace Go Eun Lee, Kyungtae Kim

Design principles: high level directive for action



Education and progress is rooted in the ability to leverage information and apply it in meaningful ways. Information for food entrepreneurs lives both in a static form—online or in print—and also dynamically, as it flows through people and their networks. Designing for communication processes will enhance the ability to access that information and promote system improvement.

"I have no idea how they could have helped us, especially if the department didn't know what this processes is either. I think we were kind of the pioneers that helped determine the hot holding food process with city."

— Business owner



Developing a business requires entrepreneurs to embark on a journey of education and persistence. Since the food entrepreneurship ecosystem is organized by many stakeholders, the interactions and engagements that occur to advance a process must be seen as moments of co-production. All stakeholders are dependent on each other, and thus, all share the responsibility and accountability for creating and maintaining a functional system.

"What I'm interested in is making sure that people really actually have control over how their communities develop and that they have access to the things that they need."

— Consultant



Chicago's history is complex. Its narrative derives from a network of experiences that relate to the individual, family, and community. Mindfulness—the act of remembering someone or something and considering them/it when you do something—is a critical element for shaping a new narrative. This concept is a core feature of designing for an improved future.

"They've probably never had corn on the cob and its just like, its so anti-, its just weird. Like - that would be a really weird way to give out this product culturally. They would never want the corn if it was packaged this way."

— Business Owner

Key

Design Principles

Need Statements

Factors

**Design principles detailed:
Need statements and factors**

**Exchange information
through government resources and your network**

**Distribute responsibility
for improvement across food ecosystem**



Provide clear pathways for new business owners



Use networks to your advantage



Improve internal alignment



Understand barriers and avoid violations



Celebrate benefits to community



Strive for equal enforcement of the law

Thinking ahead

Business owners need help to understand the future consequences of their business decisions (e.g. legal structure of business).

Clear and updated information

Government curated information needs to be updated and at a reading level that is understandable to everyone.

Access to information

Information needs to be accessible to all populations. Use different mediums (e.g. print, digital) and channels (e.g. website, app, neighborhood locations) to ensure that everyone has equal access.

Network with peers

Personal networks can help provide a safety net for entrepreneurs. Don't limit this network to neighborhood friends, but extend it to professionals.

Network with governments

Government representatives and consultants are there to assist business owners. Build a relationship with them to earn trust and gain influence.

Be proactive

Networks don't build themselves. Food entrepreneurs should seek opportunities to meet people who will help them reach their goal.

Network with associations

Non-for-profit organizations and other associations use their network to coordinate and streamline business processes. These pre-established networks can be utilized to speed up processes that business owners are struggling with.

Improve internal alignment

Business owners are put in a disadvantageous position because they rarely speak with the same government representatives, each of whom are not equally knowledgeable about the law.

Financial concern

There are many ways to finance a business. Business owners should understand the opportunities available, and seek opportunities to work with others to do what is best for them.

Desire to be compliant

Food entrepreneurs often miss steps in the legal process because of a low desire to navigate the bureaucracy. This leads to city violations or innovative food businesses leaving the city.

Speed to sales

Licensing decisions are often made based on how fast it will allow entrepreneurs to sell their product.

Documentation of food preparation process

Documenting a process is often an easy way for entrepreneurs to show that they are working to become licensed.

Economic stimulus

Food entrepreneurs provide economic stimulus to their neighborhoods and the city.

Cultural vitalization

Food entrepreneurship is an expression of culture and allows communities to enrich their identity.

Social fulfillment

Food entrepreneurs facilitate and support the social needs of the community.

Varying degree of inspector enforcement

Throughout the city of Chicago, food laws are enforced with different degrees of rigidity. This directly influences the cultural development of a neighborhood. Additionally, there is a gap between "legal documents and what is implemented in the world."

Stakeholder key

-  Government officials
-  Consultants & support organizations
-  Business owners

**Design principles detailed:
Need statements and factors, cont.**

**Engage with others
by taking a mindful approach**



**Demonstrate
flexibility**

Workable ordinances

Laws are open to interpretation and can apply to different business types and food production processes. This understanding of the law needs to be conveyed to food entrepreneurs.

Empathetic mindset

Cultural differences between populations are reflected in the legislation of regional areas. For example, corn husks are seen as suitable packaging for a tamale in Mexico, but in Chicago, they need to be in plastic bags. Be cognizant of this when working with populations that are new to an area.

Highlight opportunities to give feedback

Incorporating feedback is an easy way to make improvements and demonstrate that a relationship is being built. Showcase ways for business owners and consultants to give this feedback.



**Learn
from the others**

Sharing success

Entrepreneurs are experts in creating “the new.” Find ways to capture this information.

Education within community

Education programs within communities are essential to create leaders. Give ambitious entrepreneurs the tools they need to be leaders.

**Legal workarounds as a signal for
improvement**

On occasion, business owners may use a workaround to get through the legal system. Use these workarounds to identify process breakpoints.



**Be cognizant
of tension**

Cultural differences

Different populations carry different mental models of what is right and wrong. Adapt the way you communicate to demonstrate why the law is the way it is.

Law as provocation

Some laws can be seen as provocations toward the community. Try to understand and avoid them.

Historic tensions

Tensions between food entrepreneurs and government is embedded in the past. Show awareness of discomfort and work to make situations more comfortable.

Collaborating around design principles

How might we use design principles to have a conversation?

Card activity

To make the research more actionable, we designed a card deck to be a tool for conversation in meetings. The cards each contain design principles, need statements, and design factors.

Card decks contain the collective reported experience of people that we interviewed in our research, but not necessarily the biases of people that would use them in a workshop or

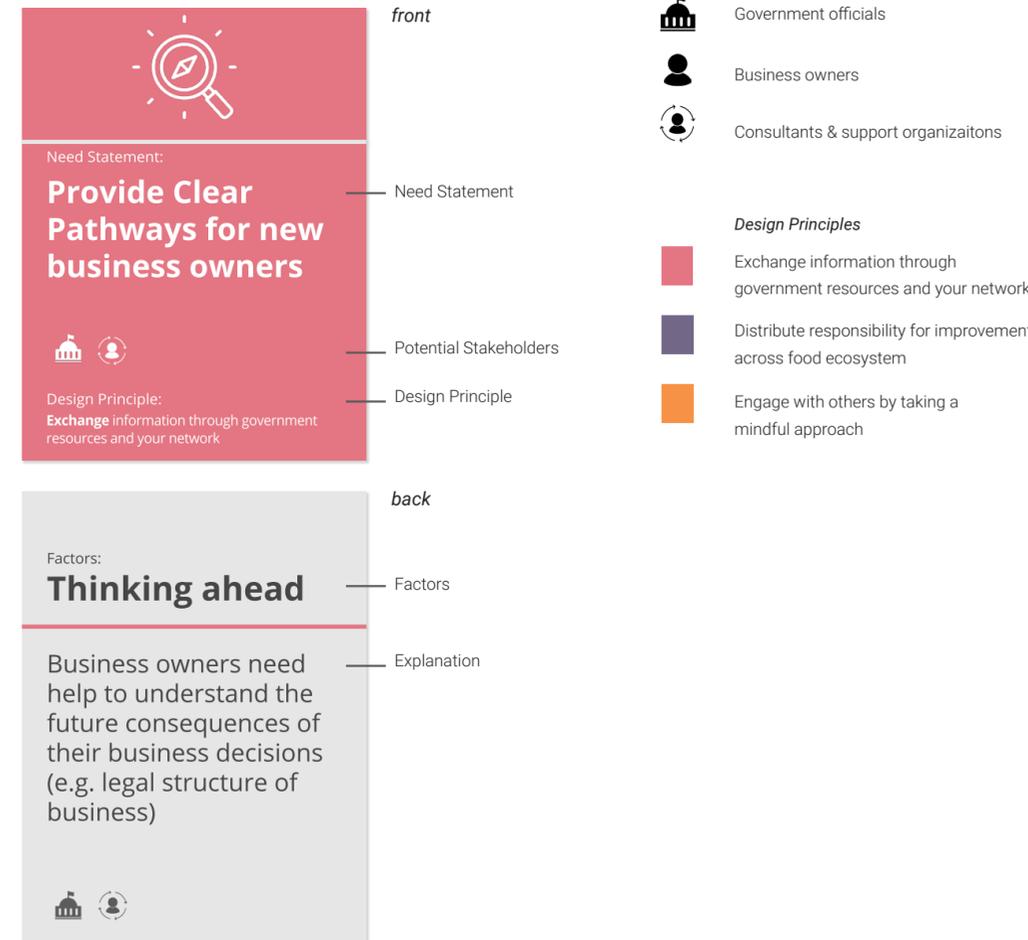
conversational setting. These cards can be a good object for workshop participants to share their different perspectives and suggest new ideas. Cards will be a helpful tool for one to remove some of the subjectivity and start important conversations.

Use scenarios

Card decks can be used in many different scenarios: setting up an internal agenda, exploring new partnership opportunities, and exploring solutions. Try creating a clever way of using the card deck.



How to read



Chicago Food Licence Decision Tree

An overview of the licenses and other permits

Simplifying and clarifying the decision-making process

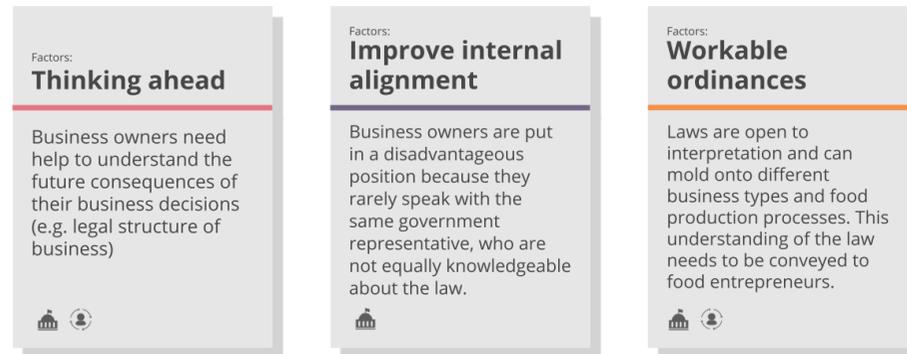
This decision tree helps Chicago food entrepreneurs define which license(s) they need to start their business in Chicago.

Perhaps you want to sell tamales but are not sure how to go about it. Maybe you want to start a food truck business but are not sure what kind of food to sell. This diagram can act as a guide to help you clarify your business vision and begin the process of making it legal in Chicago.

Front



Back



Chicago food license decision tree for Chicago food entrepreneurs

This diagram covers food-related licenses in Chicago only. It does not apply if...
 ... you are selling beverages or liquor.
 ... your business is from Chicago but is selling outside the city.

You will likely need multiples licenses and permits. Therefore you should follow any pathways that apply to your situation.

This diagram may not have all the answers you need. Requirements vary as policies change. In addition, each license may have additional requirements (approvals, permits, certificates, etc.). Check with the City of Chicago or BACP (Business Affairs and Consumer Protection) for the latest information.

The present information is based on interviews and online research. This is a starting point, but not an exhaustive document.

How to read

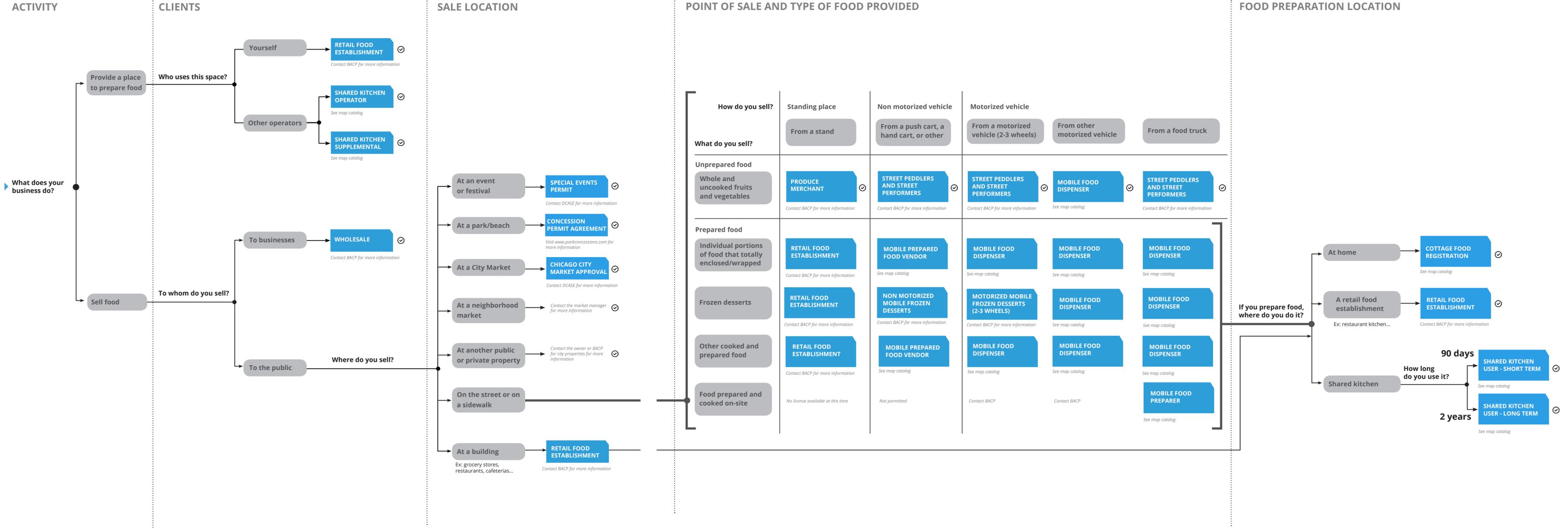
CATEGORY

Questions

Options Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP)

LICENSE Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)

☉ End of process



Developing the process maps

The rationale of this work

Through our secondary research and field work, we discovered that the licensing process for food vendors was often quite difficult to navigate. The following areas stood out:

Information is discrete and decentralized

BACP publishes fact sheets for various kinds of businesses, as well as fliers with updated information. There are also play lists of educational videos on the internet that are published by city departments that provide information as well as workshops conducted by the city. All of this content requires curation in order to access the necessary information. In the absence of this curated content, various third-party organizations may create workarounds to educate new business owners, however, this causes policy-makers to lose control of the information leading to tension and potential misinformation.

It is hard to keep pace with changing information

In July of 2018, the food code changed. Food business owners were suddenly required to meet new standards (including allergen certifications). In January 2019, more changes will go into effect with new food policies. If new business owners are unaware of these changes, they are likely to be caught in violation of something that they didn't even know they had to keep in mind.

This highlights the importance of a centralized, accurate and up-to-date information source.

Text is linear and hard to distinguish

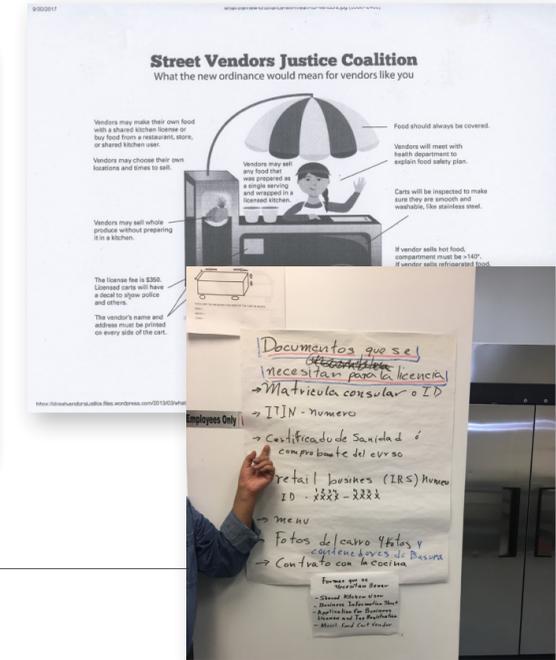
Text based directions and rules tend to be overwhelming due to the fact that often the reading level is quite high, and it is difficult to distinguish the subtle differences between processes purely by reading through them. This leads to missed opportunities to be proactive about taking certain steps, and possible mistakes in the process as well.

This work was meant to take in the published information regarding different food licenses, permissions, certifications and requirements and codify them in a way that maintains their accuracy, while enhancing visibility and accessibility.

Section authors:
Vidya Mantrala, David Pollack



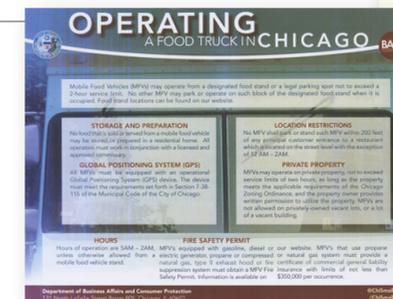
Fliers from BACP on starting a food cart business, English and Spanish translation



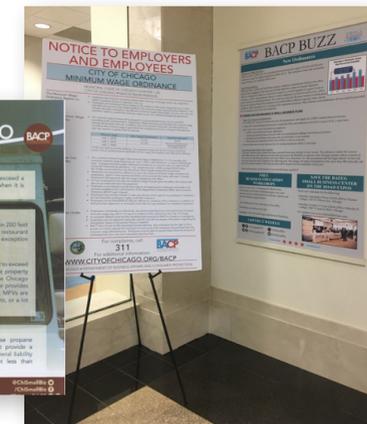
Resources provided by the AVA regarding starting a food cart business



July 2018 Chicago Food Code update



Flier from BACP communicating procedures on food truck operation



Posters on updates and ordinances at city hall

Evolving the information on food licensing

From legal codes to visual maps

As an entity, the government has processes to create products and provide them to the public. Their products range from law enforcement to health insurance, but at the core, their product is translating the will of the public into law.

The machines at work to create the law are our politicians, who must write laws that can be used by themselves

first, and by the public second. Lawyers need to interpret law that is valid for the court system. They communicate the law to the public at a high level.

However, in reality, the communication and practical application of the law to the public is left to middle and lower tier governmental employees. The work of this Communication Design Workshop was to bring clarity and simplicity to a

process which governmental employees, consultants, and food entrepreneurs all must understand and act upon.

Interviews that we conducted helped us understand the efforts of the department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) employees to communicate to the public. These employees are not trained in the art of communication, but are individuals

who have the job of supporting the food entrepreneurship community in Chicago.

Yet, even without official training, they understand that new tools for interpretation need to be created. The following exhibits represent an evolution of understanding this information.

Exhibit 1 - Municipal Code (Shared Kitchen Operator License)

Produced by: law makers

Produced for: law makers, government employees, consultants, food entrepreneurs



Exhibit 2 - User Fact Sheet (Shared Kitchen Operator License)

Produced by: government employees

Produced for: government employees, consultants, food entrepreneurs

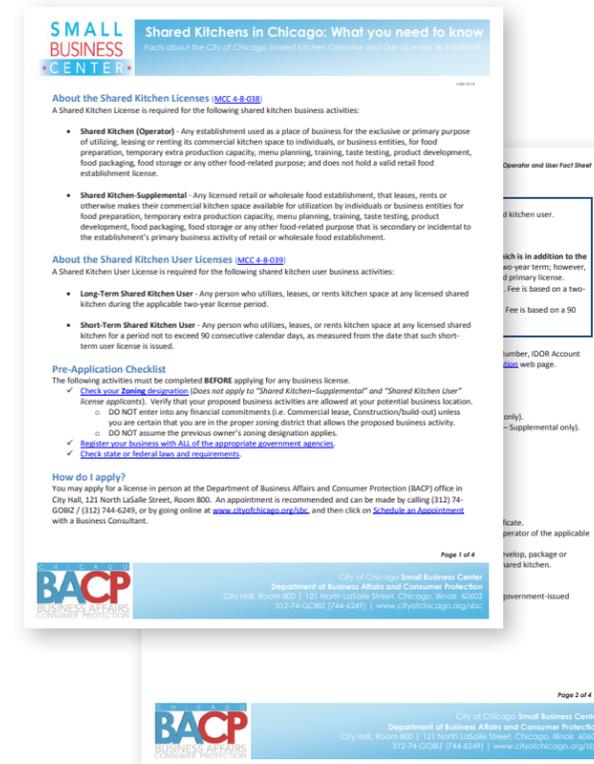
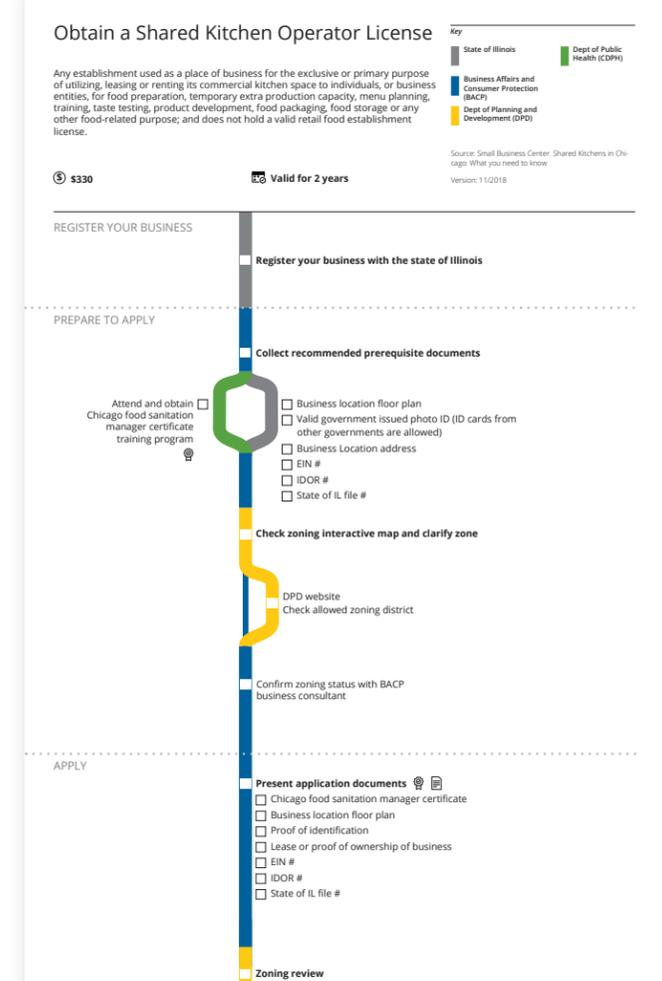


Exhibit 3 - Shared Kitchen Operator License Map

Produced by: Institute of Design

Produced for: government employees, consultants, food entrepreneurs



Codifying processes and actions

A new visual language

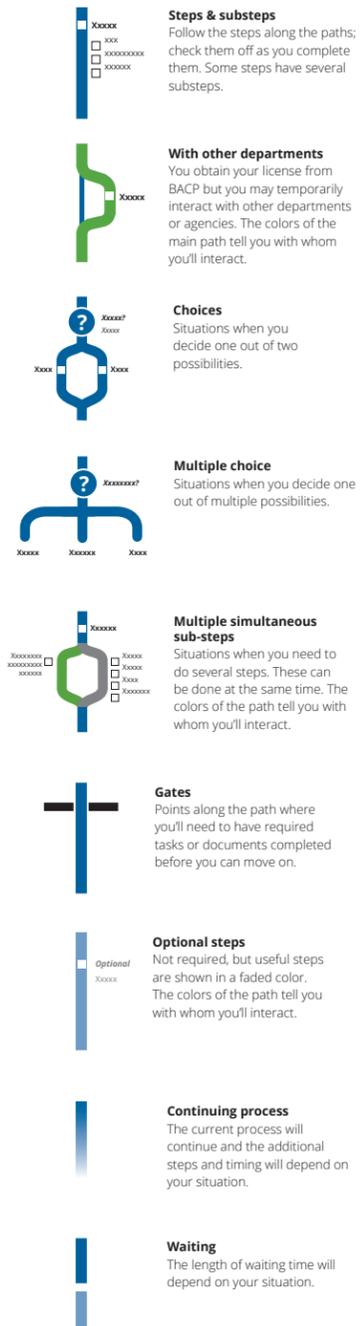
Regulatory information is hard to digest and differentiate in its current form

Portraying the licensing processes in a visual manner is very important in order to address the aforementioned challenges in a consistent and understandable way. Any visual standards need to be: clear, familiar, and repeatable across multiple agencies, licenses and permissions. After reviewing quick facts sheets of different licensing processes, patterns of activities were also discovered and needed to be revealed through the system of maps.

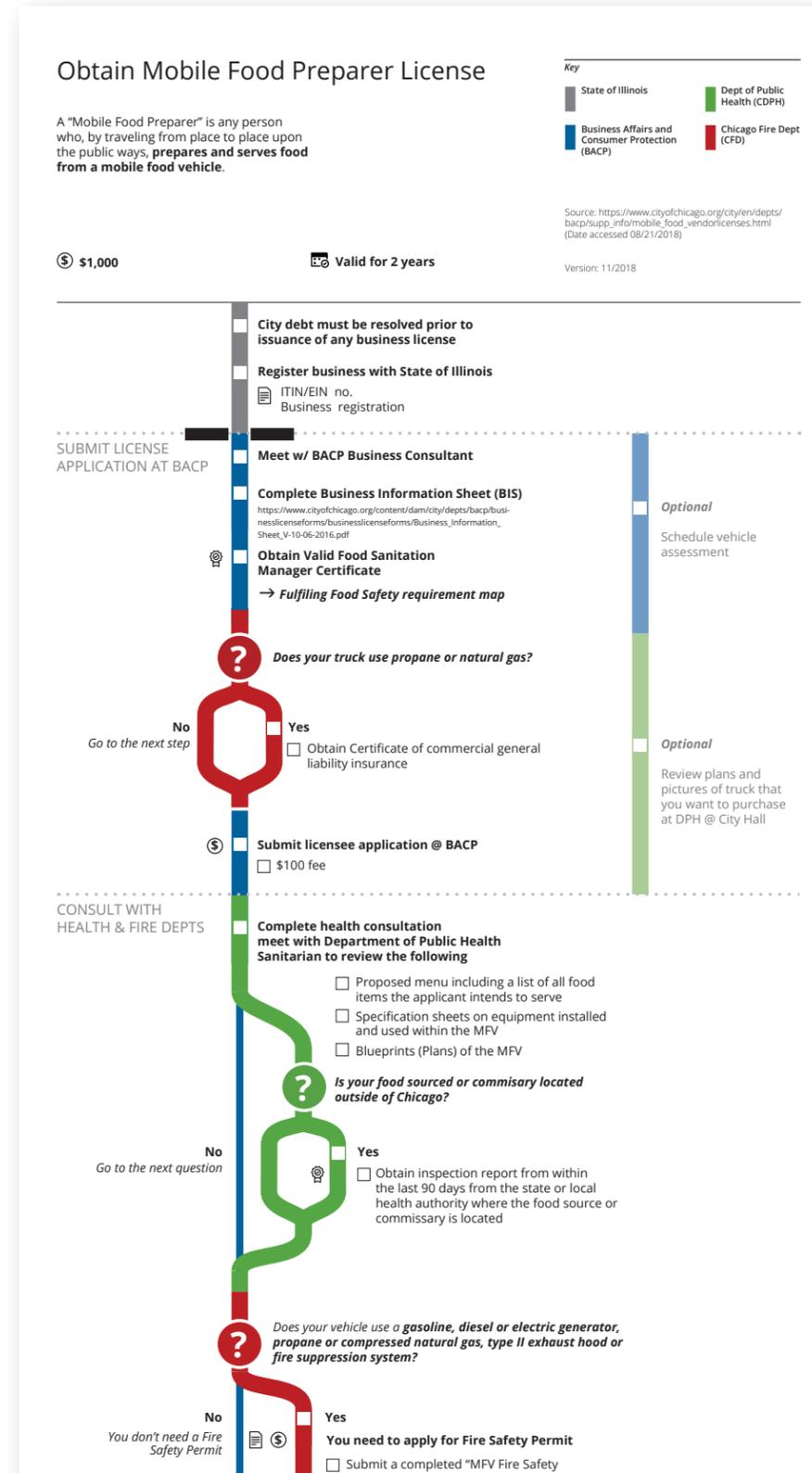
The maps need to be modular. Pieces can fit together to describe particularly complex interactions. Many of these licensing processes are not just one process, but paths with multiple processes. Some processes are optional, while others are required. Some are dependent on each other, while others must happen simultaneously. There are multiple steps and sub-steps—and sub-steps may have an additional list of requirements that need to be met—before a new business owner can proceed. The visual maps address some of these issues by focusing on the steps and requirements of acquiring a specific license. They also reveal interactions between agencies.

We imagine this system of visual modules be used as building blocks. There are repeated common actions, and the visuals can be mixed and matched to suit the particular process that needs to be represented. Each map can be useful by itself, but they will all make sense as a whole body of work as well.

These are the visual building blocks...



... that create a family of maps to help navigate complex processes.



In a companion piece to this report (Part 2/2 Navigation Map Catalog), there will be a collection of process maps representing several different types of food business licenses and certificates. It is a representative, but not exhaustive view of the varied and complex licensing processes for different types of food vendors in Chicago. The maps available in this catalog are:

LICENSES:

- Mobile Prepared Food Vendor License
- Mobile Food Preparer License
- Mobile Food Dispenser License
- Shared Kitchen Operator License
- Shared Kitchen Supplemental License
- Shared Kitchen User License

CERTIFICATES:

- Initial Retail Health Inspection
- Food Safety

GUIDELINES:

- City markets vendor guidelines

REGISTRATIONS:

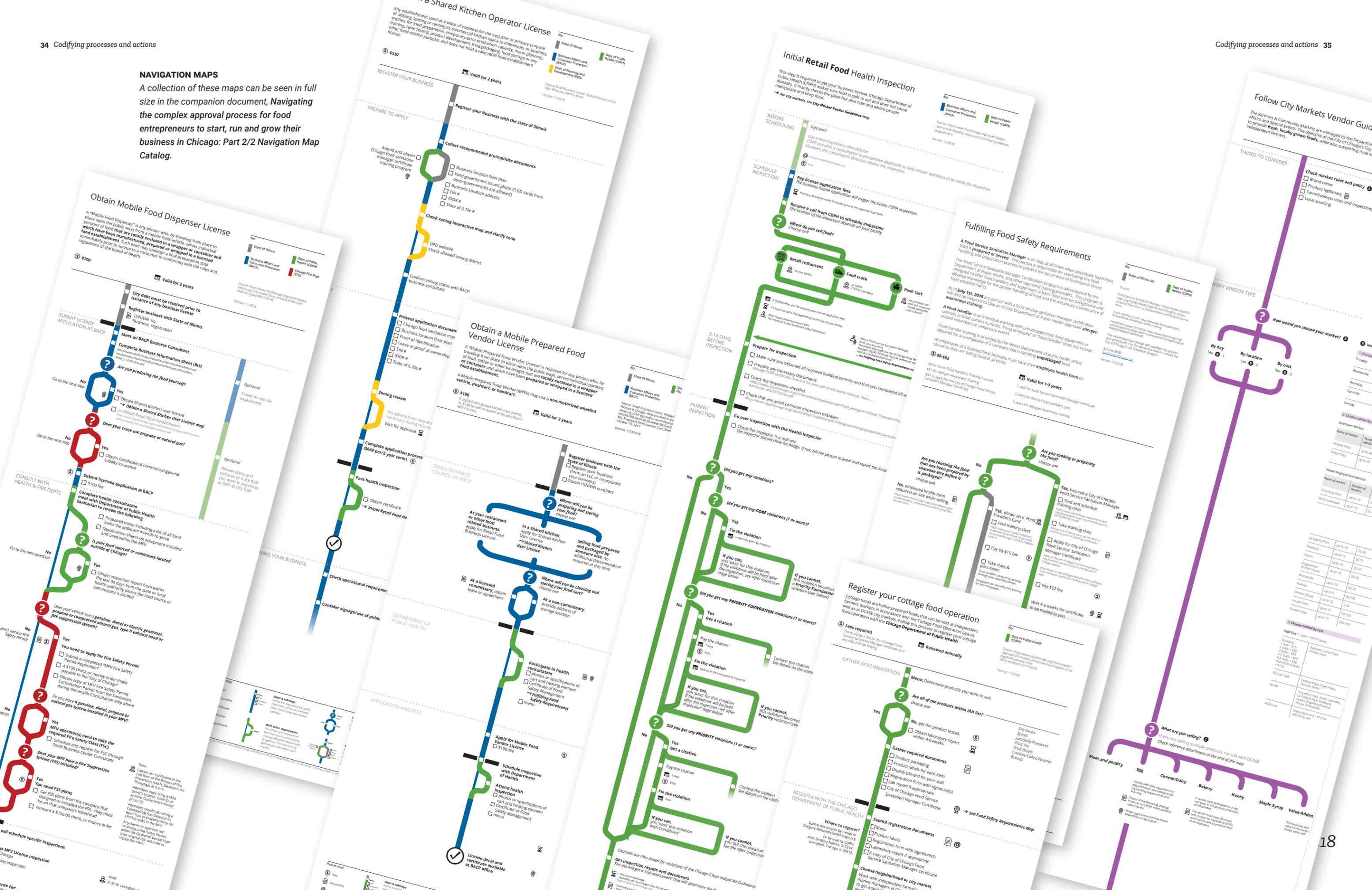
- Cottage food operation

DISCLAIMER

The navigation maps are for reference purpose only. The information can change with updated city policies and procedures. Anyone applying for a license or permit should contact the relevant city departments directly.

NAVIGATION MAPS

A collection of these maps can be seen in full size in the companion document, *Navigating the complex approval process for food entrepreneurs to start, run and grow their business in Chicago: Part 2/2 Navigation Map Catalog.*



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