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Transcript

Webinar | Expert Industry Panel

Restaurant Business Owner's Policy (BOP) Q&A

Serving Up Broker Success



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Host - Ritchie Vener

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PRIMARY HOSPITALITY

Ritchie Vener:

Hello everyone and thank you for joining us for our webinar, "Restaurant Business Owners Policy (BOP): Q&A Serving Up Broker Success." My name is Ritchie Vener, and I'm the Chief Growth Officer at Distinguished Programs. I'm very excited to be leading this discussion today with members of our Restaurant program. We pride ourselves on having the experience, flexibility, and depth of expertise to help brokers get the deals done, and this team really exemplifies that.

At the end of today's webinar, we'll send all registrants a copy of the slides, the webinar recording, and a PDF with the questions and answers from today's session. If anyone has a question during the presentation, please use the Q&A button at the bottom of the screen. Even if we don't get to it during this presentation, because we've already received a lot of questions ahead of time, we'll make sure that we answer all the questions and send them out to everyone, so that everyone sees all the answers to the questions that were asked.

Distinguished Programs is a leading national insurance program manager providing specialized insurance programs for real estate, community associations, executive lines, inland marine, hotels, marine cargo, restaurants, fine arts and collectibles, environmental and construction professional, and surety bonds.

Our Restaurant program offers umbrella, package, BOP, and cyber coverage. During this 30-minute session, you'll hear directly from our underwriters about Distinguished's Restaurant Business Owner's Policy (BOP) offering, and how we can help you better support your restaurant customers. Are you ready to expand your market with Distinguished? Let's get started.

Joining us today are Alex Montclair and Christine Lind. Alex brings over a decade of experience in the insurance industry, having started as a wholesale broker before working in the MGA space for the past seven years. In 2023, Alex joined Distinguished to spearhead business development initiatives within the Primary Hospitality program. Outside of work, Alex enjoys spending time with his wife and energetic five-year-old, exploring the diverse and scenic landscapes of North Carolina.

Christine brings more than 30 years of experience in the insurance industry, starting a career as an account manager and progressing to the underwriting commercial package policies. In 2025, she joined Distinguished as an underwriter for our Restaurant BOP program. Christine lives in North Idaho with her husband and two Jack Russell Terriers. In her free time, she enjoys gardening, camping, and crocheting.

All right, let's jump right in. I'm going to start with you, Christine, who is the carrier and can we write in all states?

Christine Lind: The carrier is Arch Insurance Company, part of Arch Capital Group Limited, an S&P 500 company with over \$23 billion in gross written premium in 2025.

We have nationwide availability except for Alaska, Hawaii, Florida, and New York. Arch Insurance is an admitted carrier with an "A+" rating.

Ritchie Vener: Alex, what type of restaurant businesses are eligible for our BOP?

Alex Montclair: Distinguished's BOP Insurance is available to a variety of restaurant businesses, including limited service or fast casual, casual dining, and upscale dining establishments. Limited service or fast casual restaurants typically offer higher-quality food than fast food, with customers ordering at a counter and paying before eating. Many are takeout only.

Franchises are eligible. Casual dining restaurants with full table service are also eligible. They typically close by 10:00 PM, have liquor sales of 30% or less, and are locally owned. Also, our program includes small to midsize upscale dining establishments that are less formal than traditional fine dining, generally closed by 11:00 PM, and maintain limited liquor sales.

I know our brokers have a million markets each with their own apps and requirements, so we want to avoid heartache in any way we can. So reach out to us first, and we can talk it through to see if it's a fit.

Ritchie Vener: Another follow-up question to you, Alex. What are the advantages of our Restaurant BOP program?

Alex Montclair: Numerous, but here's some of my favorites. Our BOP is designed to be both flexible and efficient. Brokers can submit applications online 24/7 through our Broker Connect portal, and we typically turn around responses within 24 to 48 hours. Policies are non-auditable and written on an admitted basis. A big point there, given the market, we can provide excess limits from up to \$1M to \$5M.

Liquor liability is included, and we're open to new ventures as long as there's adequate management experience. From an appetite standpoint, we're comfortable with sushi restaurants and mixed-use buildings, which is something our competition is pulling back on.

Ritchie Vener: Christine, could you walk us through some sample deals or ideal restaurant types?

Christine Lind: On the slide, you'll see some examples. The breakfast/lunch cafe benefited from strong safety practices and well-maintained cooking and equipment. Because they operate during limited daytime hours, we were able to highlight the reduced severity risks and improve pricing leverage to secure the bind.

The neighborhood deli's carrier had non-renewed due to being in a mixed-use building. We were able to offer coverage based on very limited cooking, the deli's reliable refrigeration maintenance, and a clean loss history.

The pizza shop was a new venture and finished up with the builder's risk policy. These new ventures and new location build-outs can be hard for agents to place. With the agent's help, documenting the experience of the owners and understanding the business plan, I was able to lock in the bind.

The gourmet burger restaurant's carrier rating dropped to a "B-", and the franchise required "A" or better. Since fast casual operations typically carry less liability severity than full-service restaurants, and there was no delivery exposure, I was able to issue a policy and keep the franchise in good standing.

The retail bakery is yet another example of an operation in a mixed-use building. The renewing carrier's premium increased over 20% using the mixed-use building as the basis for the renewal increase. It has fresh-baked food items that they sell at the cafe, which is open for breakfast and lunch. Although it was fully sprinklered, most carriers shy away from these kinds of operations. After assessing the controls in place and excellent ongoing housekeeping, I was able to offer a quote below the expiring premium and place the account with Distinguished.

Ritchie Vener: Could tell us what kind of coverages that the BOP program offers places like these?

Christine Lind: Absolutely. Our restaurant BOP offers comprehensive coverages, including business income on an Actual Loss Sustained basis, Liquor Liability, Hired and Non-Owned Auto coverage, and Blanket Additional Insured coverage. We also include a robust Restaurant Enhancement Endorsement that adds specialized coverages designed for the unique risks that restaurants face.

On top of all of that, we offer a variety of optional coverages to give brokers the flexibility they need. This includes EPLI in select states, Data Breach or Cyber Liability coverage, Employee Benefits Liability, Stop Gap for states with monopolistic state funds, and excess coverage up to \$5 million. We can also increase the GL limits to \$2 million and \$4 million, and increase the Damages to Premises (or fire legal or tenant legal liability) coverage up to \$1 million.

Ritchie Vener: Hey Alex, can you take us just a little bit into what our BOP doesn't cover?

- Alex Montclair: There are a few important coverages that Distinguished's BOP doesn't provide. It doesn't include Workers' Compensation, Commercial Auto, Flood, Earthquake, or coverage for coastal properties. It's important to really understand your client's needs.
- Ritchie Vener: For some clients, the BOP isn't going to be quite right or sufficient. What other products does Distinguished offer for restaurants, and why should brokers choose the program?
- Alex Montclair: Distinguished offers a comprehensive suite of insurance solutions designed specifically for restaurants, making a true one-stop shop for brokers and their clients. In addition to our BOP, we offer a healthy Package policy that defines Property and General Liability with optional coverages such as Employment Practices Liability, Cyber, and Liquor Liability for most accounts.
- Our Package policy covers the same eligible Restaurant classes as the BOP, while also expanding to include wine bars, off-premise caterers, and new ventures with experience. It's available nationwide, except Alaska. To round out the program, we also offer a monoline Umbrella coverage up to \$125 million and standalone Cyber options, both available in all 50 states. Brokers choose Distinguished because our policies are non-auditable, provide predictability, and peace of mind for their clients. They also gain access to a dedicated team that truly understands the restaurant business.
- We have "A+" XV exclusive rated paper, multiple coverage options, and a robust Restaurant Enhancement Endorsement that addresses the unique risks restaurants face.
- Ritchie Vener: How do brokers submit business?
- Alex Montclair: Our BOP is available exclusively on the Broker Connect portal, which is open 24/7. Submit a BOP application directly on the Broker Connect portal, and we will review and respond within 24 to 48 hours. To submit business for our other products (package, umbrella, cyber), you'll need to fill out the applicable application and send it to restaurants@distinguished.com.
- These applications can be found on the product pages of the Distinguished website. Please note, you must be registered with Distinguished to submit business to us.
- Ritchie Vener: Who should they contact with questions?
- Alex Montclair: If you have additional questions, feel free to reach out to me at amontclair@distinguished.com, or always give me a call at 203-606-6580. For submissions or underwriting questions, you can also email our team directly at restaurants@distinguished.com. We're here to help.
- Ritchie Vener: Christine, do we offer an umbrella product?

Christine Lind: Yes. Excess is offered over our BOP with limits up to \$5M. Of course, you must bind the BOP coverage to have the Excess.

Ritchie Vener: What is the maximum number of locations you can write on a BOP policy?

Christine Lind: The Broker Connect portal only allows for two locations. If you have three or more locations, you can send me accords directly to me at my email address, clind@distinguished.com. Keep in mind, the more locations that you have, the policy size limitations. We have \$5 million in sales per policy and \$10 million TIV.

Ritchie Vener: Alex, what are the guidelines for acceptable risks?

Alex Montclair: Restaurants are complex and require careful underwriting. Generally, the acceptable risks we look for include fast casual, family casual, or upscale dining concepts. Liquor sales should be up to 30% of total revenue with gross sales under \$5 million, and restaurants that close by midnight. We typically avoid locations with entertainment such as trivia nights, bingo, karaoke, DJs, or pool tables, since those can introduce additional risk.

Ritchie Vener: Christine, what is your underwriting appetite for fast food restaurants?

Christine Lind: When it comes to fast food, our appetite is focused on fast casual restaurants rather than traditional fast food. If you consider Panera Bread, for instance. Fast-casual concepts typically use higher-quality, often fresh ingredients and allow for a lot of customization of the meal. Customers will usually order at the counter, but the food could be brought out to the table, and the atmosphere is more modern and comfortable, like a café. Prices are moderate, around \$10 to \$15 a meal, and while service is quick, it is going to be a bit slower than traditional fast food.

In contrast to that, traditional fast food uses more standardized processed ingredients, it has limited customization, and focuses on speed and efficiency, and usually has a very basic environment. Prices are much lower, and meals are picked up immediately at the counter or at the drive-thru. Those are your two differences there.

Ritchie Vener: Alex, will you offer hired and non-owned auto with delivery exposure?

Alex Montclair: We will. Delivery is acceptable if it's by a third party such as Uber Eats, DoorDash, GrubHub. But unfortunately, if delivery is provided by your employees, we will not provide Hire & Non-Owned Auto.

Ritchie Vener: Are accounts audited?

Christine Lind: We do not audit our Restaurant BOP policies. Restaurant owners already deal with tight margins, long hours, and a lot of paperwork. We completely understand why financial audits feel more like a burden than a benefit. We trust owners are working with an accountant to make sure that their investments stay protected and they are not surprised by unexpected costs.

Ritchie Vener: Are restaurants with high alcohol receipts eligible for the BOP?

Alex Montclair: Our Restaurant BOP program allows up to 30% liquor sales, but if you have over 30%, our Restaurant Package can consider this.

Ritchie Vener: Alex, are restaurants with food trucks eligible?

Alex Montclair: Food trucks are not acceptable in the BOP program.

Ritchie Vener: How about restaurants with CBD, CBN, THC drinks, are they eligible for the BOP?

Christine Lind: Cannabis and its byproducts are specifically excluded from our BOP program. When using these products, dosing is unpredictable. Effects may vary widely between individuals. Improper handling can create serious liability issue. In a family-friendly environment, keeping ingredients consistent, predictable, and universally appropriate is absolutely essential. That is why we exclude that product.

Ritchie Vener: Christine, do we write restaurants located in Protection Class 10?

Christine Lind: No, we will write restaurants in Protection Class 1 through 5. Anything higher than that is out of appetite. That's because Protection Class 6 through 10 is at least 500 feet from a fire hydrant and could be more than 5 miles from a fire station. This will significantly increase the risk of total loss from fire.

Ritchie Vener: Alex, do we write frame construction restaurants?

Alex Montclair: Yes. We'll write frame construction if it's sprinklered. Any frame and non-sprinklered building is unfortunately going to be a decline.

Ritchie Vener: Are drive-through-only kiosks for building equipment and liability eligible for BOP?

Christine Lind: No. Drive-through-only kiosks are out of appetite. What we are really looking for in our Restaurant BOP is some form of customer service and interaction. Whether it's ordering at the counter or being served by a wait staff, we want restaurant staff responsible for order taking, prepping of the meals, and handing off the order to the customer.

Ritchie Vener: Let's dive into a few frequently asked questions. Do we cover catering?

Christine Lind: Catering is a complex and different term for every agent. Catering can mean anything from having a place set aside in your restaurant that is a separate room, where people will consider that to be catering. Catering can also be something where they just prep the meals, and someone comes and picks them up for an event.

Catering can also mean setting up and serving the meal at an event away from the premises. We need to drill that down when we're having the conversation. I will always check to see what is catering, and if I can't quite figure that out, I will ask for more information. Catering in the BOP is okay as long as you are not taking your employees and having them staff and set up at the location, like a wedding or a birthday party. But we will remove the Hired and Non-Owned Auto coverage because they are driving back and forth with that product, and that's just not something we're willing to take on.

Alex Montclair: When they start having employees on-site, hanging out and serving, it moves into the special-event arena, where they're maybe also doing some design, which is a decline for us. If they're really heavy into that, it probably won't be a fit either.

Ritchie Vener: Does the EPLI cover wage and hour?

Christine Lind: That particular I do not have an answer to, but I'd be happy to dive into it and let you know.

Ritchie Vener: How do we get appointed with Distinguished?

Alex Montclair: You go to Distinguished's website ([Distinguished.com](https://www.distinguished.com)), top right corner, hit "Register." I think the process takes maybe less than five minutes, except this is nearly instant and you can start writing. The beautiful thing about Distinguished is that there are no premium requirements for our program. I'm not sure about others. We really want to be a partner when you need us, which is hopefully more times than not.

Ritchie Vener: Christine, do you know off the top of your head, does the excess policy provide excess over liquor?

Christine Lind: Yes, it does. It provides over our BOP liquor. We can go up to \$5 million, which I think is pretty nice in these times. We're seeing some carriers are getting off either liquor, or they're getting off the excess, or they're getting off in excess that we'll go over a liquor. We have a range of options available to your clients.

Ritchie Vener: Are the policies rated based on sales or square feet?

Christine Lind: Our policies for the BOP are rated based on sales, and there's a lot that goes into the rating. It's not just the sales, but that's primarily what we're going to want to know. We also need to know what the construction of the building is. We'll need to know whether or not it is sprinklered, and how old the building is, and where it's located. There are so many different things to consider within the rating, but the sales are going to drive that premium.

Ritchie Vener: Do we have an age of building limitation?

Christine Lind: No, we do not. But the caveat is that the building age really doesn't matter. If it is over 30 years old, all of the updates need to have been done within the last 20 years. As of now, 2026, updates had to have been done by 2006.

Ritchie Vener: What are our coastal guidelines?

Christine Lind: For the BOP, we have certain states that we do not want to write any closer to the coastline than 50 miles.

There's about four or five different coastal areas, so the BOP will not write anything that is within those 50 miles, but Alex could probably speak to how the package reacts to that or not.

Alex Montclair: It mirrors it pretty much. We are not looking for a lot of these accounts with huge wind risks associated with it. 50 miles from the coast, in general, is probably a very good measurement to think of us as.

Ritchie Vener: Do we require loss runs in order to get a quote?

Christine Lind: Yes. I will ask for loss runs. In order to get through the portal, we don't require that you put loss runs in there unless there was a claim. If there was a claim and you're open with that, the portal will ask you to upload your losses.

After you get through the portal, I will ask you for the current year plus four years prior. So you might want to just prepare for that now. That is going to be a requirement that I ask for.

Ritchie Vener: We're close to running out of time. We'll send all registrants a copy of the slides, the webinar recording, and a PDF with your questions and answers from today's session, including the ones that were submitted in the chat during the webinar.

Feel free to reach out directly to Alex and Christine, whose contact information will also be sent to you. If you enjoyed today's webinar, stay up to date with our latest events by following us on social media. We post about insurance, market insights, and industry news, and you'll learn about our latest free webinars, eBooks, and case studies.

I'd like to thank everyone who joined us for today's webinar, and especially to our panelists, Alex Montclair and Christine Lind for sharing your valuable insights. We hope you found this information useful and that you now have all the information you need regarding our Restaurant Business Owner's Policy (BOP) so you can better support your clients. Remember, our underwriters will be available to answer any follow-up questions you may have. Thank you everybody.

Restaurant Business Owner's Policy (BOP)

Below are additional attendee questions we could not address during the session.

Eligibility & Appetite

Q: Are new ventures eligible?

A: Yes. When submitting through the portal, please indicate the location has been open for a year and continue with the submission. We do require additional underwriting information on new ventures and the BOP underwriter will be in contact after receiving your submission.

Q: Are restaurants in a mixed use building eligible, and do they require a sprinkler system in mixed-use building?

A: Restaurants in mixed-use buildings are eligible for consideration, subject to individual underwriting. Provided the restaurant is a tenant and not the building owner, we typically do not require a sprinkler system.

Q: Do you write restaurants located in protection class 10?

A: We will write restaurants in protection class 1-5. Anything higher is out of appetite.

Q: Are there limitations on the age of the building?

A: We do not write building coverage in the program. We do require information on building updates and will review on an individual risk basis, but there is no automatic cut-off based on building age.

Q: Are franchise QSR's like Taco Bell, KFC's, and Dunkin' Donuts eligible?

A: Traditional fast food franchises like Taco Bell, KFC, and Dunkin' Donuts are not eligible. We do write fast casual restaurants, which are one step up from fast food in terms of menu offerings and ambiance. Franchises like Panera, Crisp & Green, or Jimmy John's would fit this category, as would local delis, sandwich shops, and other limited-service restaurants.

Q: Are restaurants located in FL eligible?

A: The Restaurant BOP is not available in Florida. However, our Restaurant Package program is available in Florida. Email submissions to:

restaurants@distinguished.com.

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Restaurant Business Owner's Policy (BOP)

Below are additional attendee questions we could not address during the session.

Q: Are restaurants with table-side cooking exposures, such as hibachi, BBQ, or hot pot, eligible?

A: Hot pot and BBQ that is cooked at the table by the customers is out of appetite. Hibachi is acceptable.

Q: Are restaurants with catering eligible?

A: We do not write restaurants with full-service catering in the BOP program. If they offer catering with drop-off service only, we would consider it as long as auto is excluded. If catering orders are always picked up by customers at the restaurant, the restaurant is within the BOP appetite.

Q: Are pizza shops with a separate delivery policy eligible?

A: If there is first-party delivery service and a separate auto policy, the restaurant is eligible. If delivery is exclusively through a third-party service like GrubHub or Uber Eats, that is also eligible.

Q: Are restaurants with buffets eligible?

A: A restaurant that is solely buffet-style is out of appetite. Restaurants that have a Sunday brunch buffet and/or regular lunch buffets will be considered on a case-by-case basis and require loss runs with the submission.

Q: How are risks with prior claims history evaluated?

A: Restaurants with one or more claims require additional evaluation for frequency and severity. We can often still quote restaurants that have claim activity.

Q: What are your coastal guidelines?

A: For restaurants located 50 miles or less from the coast in AL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, and TX, the BOP is not available. Coastal locations in the Northeast are evaluated on an individual risk basis.

Q: Are restaurants with food trucks eligible?

A: Food trucks are not acceptable in the BOP program.

Restaurant Business Owner's Policy (BOP)

Below are additional attendee questions we could not address during the session.

Q: What is your underwriting appetite for fast food restaurants?

A: When it comes to fast food, our appetite is focused on fast-casual restaurants rather than traditional fast food.

- Higher-quality, often fresh ingredients
- Customizable meals
- Counter ordering; sometimes table service
- Modern, comfortable café-style atmosphere
- Moderate prices (\$10–\$15)
- Quick, but slightly slower than traditional fast food

Q: What are the guidelines for acceptable risks?

A: Restaurants are complex and require careful underwriting. Generally, acceptable risks should look like:

- Fast casual, family casual, or upscale dining
- Liquor sales up to 30%
- Gross sales under \$5M
- Closes by midnight
- No entertainment (Trivia nights, bingo nights, karaoke, dj's, or pool tables)

Q: Are restaurants with high alcohol receipts eligible for BOP?

A: Our Restaurant BOP program allows up to 30% liquor sales. Over 30% liquor will need to be handed to our Package program.

Q: Are restaurants with CBD/CBN/THC drinks eligible for BOP?

A: Cannabis is specifically excluded in our BOP program. Any restaurant selling food or drink with cannabis products is out of appetite.

Q: Are restaurants going through a restructuring bankruptcy eligible?

A: No, restaurants going through a restructuring bankruptcy are not eligible.

Q: Do you write frame construction restaurants?

A: Yes, we will write frame construction if it is sprinklered. Any frame and non-sprinklered building is a decline.

Q: Are drive-thru only kiosks for building, equipment, and liability eligible for BOP?

A: Drive-thru only kiosks are out of appetite. What we look for in our Restaurant BOP is some form of customer service and interaction.

Restaurant Business Owner's Policy (BOP)

Below are additional attendee questions we could not address during the session.

Coverage & Program Structure

Q: Do you offer an umbrella product?

A: Yes, excess is offered over our BOP with limits up to \$5M.

Q: What is the maximum number of locations you can write on a BOP policy?

A: The Broker Connect portal will only allow for 2 locations. 3+ locations can be sent to CLind@Distinguished.com via accords.

Q: Will you offer Hired & Non-owned Auto with delivery exposure?

A: Delivery is acceptable if it is by a third party such as Uber Eats or GrubHub. If delivery is provided by your employees, the HNOA coverage will not be provided.

Q: Can the excess policy extend over Work Comp and EPLI, or commercial auto with proper underlying limits?

A: Our excess will go over a work comp policy so long as the carrier is A-rated. We will not extend over EPLI, commercial auto, or any other underlying policies outside of our BOP.

Q: Is plate glass coverage available?

A: There is tenant glass coverage included in our policy.

Q: Does the EPLI cover wage & hour?

A: No. EPLI does not cover wage and hour.

Q: Do you exclude wind/hail?

A: Typically not. We may apply a wind/hail deductible for some locations.

Q: Are accounts audited?

A: We do not audit our Restaurant BOP policies.

Q: Are BOP policies rated off sales or square footage?

A: The rating basis is sales.

Q: What are your TIV limits per location on Building/BPP/TIB and/or sales volume permitted in the program?

A: The max TIV per location is \$5M and per policy is \$10M. The max gross sales (food+liquor) is \$5M per policy.

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Restaurant Business Owner's Policy (BOP)

Below are additional attendee questions we could not address during the session.

Submission Questions

Q: Is this program available to agencies operating as a sole proprietorship under a DBA?

A: No, this program is not available to agencies operating as sole proprietorship under a DBA.

Q: How do we get appointed with Distinguished?

A: Register your agency with us, and you are good to go! Follow this link: [Distinguished Programs](#).

Q: If we have a risk that may not fit the BOP, can we still submit for a Package?

A: Yes, please send package submissions to restaurants@distinguished.com.

Q: Will you request POS reports?

A: In most cases, no, but we may do so in certain underwriting situations.

Q: Are renewals automatic, or do they require a renewal submission each year?

A: We require a basic renewal submission.

Q: Do you require loss runs in order to get a quote?

A: Many accounts can be quoted without loss runs or quoted "subject to" receiving them at binding. Loss runs will be required prior to quoting in some cases, such as when there is prior claim activity. We may also require loss runs to quote based on premium size or certain risk characteristics.

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How to Register Your Agency



1.

Go to

www.distinguished.com/site/brokers/

2.

Click on

'Launch Broker Portal'

3.

Login to quote, bind and issue
in real time

[Register Now](#)

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EXPERTS



UNMATCHED
SOLUTION



PROGRAM
STABILITY

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