



Cannabis Empowerment Framework for States with Medical Marijuana Programs

Objective: To establish a comprehensive framework that promotes equity in the cannabis industry by offering Title 21 exemptions, **expanding research opportunities**, and **ensuring funding access** to individuals who complete Cannabis and Hemp education programs while **leveraging state and federal resources**.

This Cannabis Empowerment Framework is designed to level the playing field in the rapidly growing medical cannabis industry, ensuring that historically marginalized communities have access to the resources, education, and exemptions necessary to participate and thrive in the legal cannabis market. By fostering equity through research opportunities, financial support, and regulatory reforms, states can build an inclusive and prosperous cannabis industry.

I. Title 21 Exemptions for Medical Marijuana Programs

To enable equitable participation in medical cannabis markets, the following measures would allow for exemptions under Title 21 of the Controlled Substances Act:

1. State-Level Licensing Exemptions:

- Medical cannabis cultivators, manufacturers, and distributors operating under state-approved programs should be exempt from Title 21 penalties as long as they meet regulatory requirements and abide by state laws.
- Streamlined processes should be implemented for businesses in historically marginalized communities to access these exemptions, reducing legal and financial barriers.

2. Patient and Caregiver Protections:

- Medical cannabis patients and their designated caregivers shall not be subject to federal prosecution for possession, use, or cultivation of cannabis in accordance with state laws.

3. Federal Cooperation:

- State medical cannabis programs shall collaborate with federal agencies to explore pathways for federal exemptions in light of state-specific regulations, with particular emphasis on **decriminalizing cannabis use for medical purposes nationwide**.

II. Expansion of Cannabis Research & Development Opportunities

1. Federal-State Research Partnerships:

- **Establish federal grants to support state-led research** into the medical benefits, safety, and efficacy of cannabis.
- Collaborate with academic institutions, licensed cultivators, and healthcare providers to **create research opportunities that explore diverse cannabis applications**, including mental health, pain management, and chronic disease treatments.

2. Incentivizing Cannabis R&D:

- **Offer tax credits and incentives for companies** that invest in research and development of new cannabis-based products and technologies.
- **Prioritize minority-owned businesses and enterprises** from underrepresented communities in research and development opportunities through **earmarked grants and equity-based initiatives**.

3. Access to Federal R&D Facilities:

- **Create access to federally funded labs and research facilities** for state-approved medical cannabis research programs, ensuring a more scientific understanding of cannabis.

III. Access to Funding for Cannabis and Hemp Education Program Graduates

1. Cannabis and Hemp General Education Program:

- State residents who complete a Cannabis and Hemp General Education program at accredited institutions (including community colleges, universities, and accredited non-profit organizations) will **qualify for state and federal grants, low-interest loans, and other funding mechanisms to start or expand cannabis-related businesses**.

2. Accreditation Standards:

- The Cannabis and Hemp General Education Program should cover key aspects such as cultivation, business management, legal compliance, and the medical uses of cannabis.
- Accredited institutions must meet rigorous standards for curriculum design, inclusivity, and equity in training, ensuring participants from all backgrounds are **adequately prepared for the cannabis industry**.

3. Funding Opportunities:

- Federal Grants: Graduates may apply for **federal business grants or start-up funding** from federal cannabis research and entrepreneurship programs.
- **State Support Funds:** State-funded cannabis and hemp initiatives will provide additional grants, loans, and equity funds aimed at creating pathways for disadvantaged individuals, **minorities**, and those disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition.
- **Private Sector Collaboration:** Establish partnerships with private companies to provide **matching funds for graduates to secure start-up capital and technical support**.

4. Non-Profit Participation:

- Non-profit organizations focused on cannabis **education** and **social equity** will be eligible for federal and state grants to **support underrepresented entrepreneurs** entering the cannabis market.
- These organizations will also be tasked with providing technical assistance, legal counsel, and mentorship programs for graduates.

IV. Community Empowerment & Reinvestment

1. Priority Licensing for Impacted Communities:

- Ensure that a portion of **cannabis business licenses** is reserved for individuals from communities disproportionately affected by cannabis prohibition, with particular attention to **communities of color and low-income neighborhoods**.

2. Reinvestment in Communities:

- A portion of cannabis tax revenues should be **earmarked for community reinvestment**, including job training programs, healthcare services, and public infrastructure in areas hardest hit by the War on Drugs.

V. Regulatory Oversight and Accountability

1. **Creation of an Equity Task Force:**

- A state-level task force, including community leaders, policymakers, and cannabis industry representatives, will oversee the implementation of the framework, ensuring that the benefits reach the intended populations.

2. Annual Reporting:

- States will publish annual reports on the demographic makeup of cannabis business owners, R&D funding recipients, and community reinvestment outcomes, **focusing on transparency and accountability**.

3. Creation and Utilization of Public Health Workers for Medical Cannabis Program

*“Safe integration of medical cannabis into public health systems while **providing education and support** to both the public and healthcare providers.”*

(1.) **Establishment of Public Health Workforce:**

A specialized team of Public Health Workers (PHWs) shall be **created within the Department of Public Health to support** the implementation, education, and regulation of the medical cannabis program. These individuals will be trained specifically in cannabis science, patient care, and public health standards related to the safe and responsible use of medical cannabis.

(2.) Roles and Responsibilities:

- Conducting public education campaigns to promote awareness of medical cannabis use, potential benefits, and risks.
- Supporting medical professionals in identifying and managing eligible patients under the medical cannabis framework.
- Offering community outreach services, especially to vulnerable populations, to ensure equitable access to medical cannabis resources.
- Assisting with the monitoring and evaluating medical cannabis outcomes, including health data collection and reporting on the program's effectiveness.
- Providing guidance and information to caregivers, patients, and the general public on the legal and safe use of medical cannabis products.

(3.) Training and Certification:

All PHWs must undergo certified training on medical cannabis laws, patient care protocols, and the latest scientific research on the therapeutic uses of cannabis. Ongoing education will be required to maintain competency as new regulations and medical advancements emerge.

(4.) Collaboration with Medical Providers:

PHWs shall work with licensed healthcare providers to ensure that medical cannabis is prescribed and used in a manner that promotes patient safety and public health. They will also collaborate with pharmacies and dispensaries to track the dispensation of cannabis products and provide patient education at the point of care.

(5.) Funding and Resources:

The creation and utilization of PHWs will be funded through designated appropriations within the State General Fund or Medical Cannabis Regulatory Framework. Grants and partnerships with public health organizations may also be pursued to ensure adequate resources and workforce capacity.