



Welcome Packet

2025 Council Market Outlook

Prepared by the Success Strategy Team



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Dear Attendees,

The Social Equity Council (the Council), established in 2021, promotes economic equity by supporting licensed cannabis entrepreneurs and reinvesting in communities disproportionately impacted by the War on Drugs. Through funding, workforce development, educational opportunities, and targeted community investments, the Council works to address barriers to entry, expand opportunities, and foster long-term participation in Connecticut's cannabis industry—especially for those historically harmed by cannabis criminalization.

Over the past year, we have made significant strides within the organization. The Council has established a three-year strategic plan to guide our initiatives and align our programs and investments with our mission and vision. We continue to engage with social equity entrepreneurs to inform our programs and resources, identify specific regions for community reinvestment, and direct resources to address the effects of systemic injustice in disproportionately impacted areas.

The Council is committed to fostering discussions that inform policy and research. We are excited to launch the **2025 Market Council Outlook Working Group** (Public Act 25-166), featuring leaders from business, government, and the community. In partnership with the Council, we will explore and develop recommendations on key topics, including cannabis cultivation in affected areas, enhancing marketplace equity, and improving municipal relations. We will address critical issues such as identifying sustainable locations for cultivators, assisting local governments in accessing potential tax benefits, tackling market challenges, navigating zoning regulations, and examining equitable joint venture business models. Additionally, we are eager to engage with leaders from youth-serving organizations to gain insights on raising awareness and education regarding responsible cannabis use.

Your input will be invaluable for policy and program development and help the Council better understand the challenges faced by the industry, municipalities, and community members. Your decision to participate in this initiative is a commitment we do not take lightly, and we greatly appreciate your time, dedication, and expertise. We look forward to your involvement and final recommendations.

Thank you for joining us on this remarkable journey of learning and implementation.

Brandon McGee
Chief Executive Officer, Social Equity Council

Dear Partners,

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for the convening of the 2025 Council Market Outlook Working Group. We are excited to bring together a diverse group of individuals to collaborate on the group's goals.

We recognize that the expertise and insights provided by our co-chairs will play a vital role in shaping the future of the adult-use market. As the chair of the Council, I understand the importance of supporting the cannabis industry, particularly as it relates to social equity entrepreneurs, and the communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs.

I am excited to join Brandon in convening our stakeholders for thought partnership, ensuring robust conversation and collaborative input that will inform legislative and policy decisions.

We look forward to the meaningful work ahead and the chance to learn from one another. Thank you once again for being part of this important effort.

Sincerely,



Andréa Comer

Assistant Connecticut State Treasurer
Chief of Staff, State Treasurer
Chair, Social Equity Council

Definitions

The Council uses an array of acronyms and unique terms to define the Adult-Use licensing process, including license types, statuses in the e-license platform, organizational.

ACREⁱ: Retailer

- Retailers are licensed to purchase cannabis from producers, cultivators, micro-cultivators, product manufacturers and food and beverage manufacturers and to sell cannabis to consumer and research programs

AMHFⁱⁱ: Hybrid Retailer

- A licensed hybrid retailer may sell cannabis and cannabis products to adult consumers over 21 years of age as well as medical marijuana products to qualifying patients and caregivers

ACCEⁱⁱⁱ: Cultivator

- A licensed cultivator may cultivate, grow and propagate cannabis at an establishment containing not less than 15,000 square feet of grow space

ACME^{iv}: Micro Cultivator

- Licensed to engage in the cultivation, growing and propagation of the cannabis plant at an establishment that is between 2,000 square feet and 10,000 square feet of grow space

ACFB^v: Food & Beverage

- A licensed food and beverage manufacturer may incorporate cannabis into foods or beverages as an ingredient.

ACPM^{vi}: Product Manufacturer

- A licensed product manufacturer may perform cannabis extractions, chemical synthesis and all other manufacturing activities. A product manufacturer may sell, transfer or transport its own products to a cannabis establishment, laboratory or research program, provided such transportation is performed by utilizing its own employees or a transporter.

ACDS^{vii}: Delivery Service

- A licensed delivery service may deliver cannabis and cannabis products from certain cannabis establishments to consumers or qualifying patients and caregivers

ACTP^{viii}: Transporter

- A licensed transporter may deliver cannabis and cannabis products from between cannabis establishments

ACPP^{ix}: Product Packager

- A licensed product packager shall be responsible for ensuring that cannabis products are labeled and packaged in compliance with all state laws, regulations and policies

MMDF^x: Medical Marijuana Dispensary Facility

- A licensed medical marijuana dispensary facility may dispense, sell, and distribute medical marijuana to qualifying patients and caregivers

MMPR^{xi}: Medical Marijuana Producer

- A licensed medical marijuana producer may cultivate, grow and propagate marijuana for palliative use

E-License Terms

Active by Current^{xii}: Operational business

Active by Provisional^{xiii}: The business has not completed their Social Equity Plan, Workforce Development Plan, or final Department of Consumer Protection walk-through

Active in Renewal^{xiv}: Licensee is renewing license with Department of Consumer Protection

Pending^{xv}: The Licensee has not paid the Department of Consumer Protection fee or submitted required documentation

SEC^{xvi}: Social Equity Council

- The council consists of appointed council members, alongside staff, charged with promoting equitable economic prosperity by supporting Social Equity Entrepreneurs and reinvesting in the communities most impacted by the war on drugs.

DCP^{xvii}: Department of Consumer Protection

- The Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) is the organization responsible for regulating Adult-Use Cannabis. They set forth consumer protections including product quality, safeguards for minors and security of product against diversion. The DCP sets the parameters for how cannabis establishments should operate.

DECD^{xviii}: Department of Economic and Community Development

OWS^{xix}: Office of Workforce Strategy

Cannabis Establishment^{xx}:

- The name used for various cannabis business licenses.

DIA^{xxi}: Disproportionally Impacted Area

- A United States census tract in the state that has, as determined by the Social Equity Council, (A) a historical conviction rate for drug-related offenses greater than one-tenth, or (B) an unemployment rate greater than ten per cent

SEP^{xxii}: Social Equity Plan

- Social Equity Plans (SEP) are required for a cannabis establishment in accordance with section 21a-420d(h)(5). A SEP is a vehicle for cannabis establishments to support the DIA they are located in, or the closest DIA to their location.

SEA^{xxiii}: Social Equity Applicant (also SEE) or Social Equity Application

- A person that has applied for a license for a cannabis establishment that is at least 65% owned and controlled by and individual or individuals, or such applicant is an individual who meets income and residency requirements

SEE^{xxiv}: Social Equity Entrepreneur (Also SEA)

WFDP^{xxv}: Workforce Development Plan

- Workforce Development Plans (WFDP) are responsible for ensuring cannabis establishments are focused on reinvesting or providing employment opportunities for people in DIAs and are well organized to provide these opportunities to DIA residents.

R^{2xxvi}: Reimagined and Revitalized Grant Program

- A targeted reinvestment program by the Social Equity Council using a portion of the revenues from cannabis sales in CT to Strengthen DIA Communities. These funds are focused on the following priority areas: Economic Development, reentry Initiatives, and Youth Initiatives.

DEI: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

EJV^{xxvii}: Equity joint venture

- A business entity, partnering with a licensed producer, DIA cultivator or dispensary facility, that is at least 50% owned and controlled by an individual or individuals who
 - Had an average household income of less than 300 percent of, or three times, the state median household income over the last 3 tax years

AND, either

- Was a resident of a disproportionately impacted area for at least 5 of the past 10 years, OR
- Was a resident of a disproportionately impacted area for at least 9 years before the age of 18
- Must be approved by the Social Equity Council to apply for a provisional license
- Producers, DIA cultivators, and dispensary facilities may each create a maximum of two Equity Joint Ventures to qualify for the reduced license fee

Backer^{xxviii}: A Backer is an individual with a financial interest in a cannabis establishment, and either (1) owns 5% or more of the cannabis establishment, including in the aggregate with a spouse, parent and child, or (2) participates directly or indirectly in the control, management or operation of the cannabis establishment.

Medical Marijuana Product^{xxix}: cannabis that may be exclusively sold to qualifying patients and caregivers by dispensary facilities and hybrid retailers and are reserved for sale to qualifying patients and caregivers



Historical Background

History and Legalization of Cannabis in Connecticut Early Regulation and Criminalization (1800s–1970s)

Hemp, an annual mostly herbaceous plant, held a strong industrial presence in the United States in the mid-1800s. Hemp and marijuana hold the same classification as one species, *Cannabis Sativa*. Hemp production experienced its peak during this time with temporary increases throughout the duration of both World Wars.^{xxx} Hemp was utilized in industrial products such as rope, clothing, paper, and more.^{xxxi} Cannabis remained unregulated in Connecticut until the late 1930s, when both state and federal policies moved to criminalize its use. The federal Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 effectively outlawed non-medical cannabis by imposing heavy taxes and strict record-keeping requirements. In response, Connecticut amended its drug laws in 1939 to explicitly prohibit cannabis. In 1949, the Uniform State Narcotic Drug Act increased penalties for possession and distribution of narcotics, including cannabis, to up to \$2,000 in fines and five years imprisonment. The presence of these laws increased the price of hemp cultivation by means of product restriction leading to a lasting lull in the hemp industry of the United States.^{xxxii}

A shift in approach began with Connecticut’s 1967 comprehensive drug law reform, which introduced definitions for drug abuse and dependency, and allowed treatment and probation options for individuals with substance use disorders. Though still punitive, this law marked the beginning of a treatment focused approach. The federal Controlled Substances Act of 1970 classified cannabis as a Schedule I drug, denoting high abuse potential and no accepted medical use. This classification laid the groundwork for the federal War on Drugs, which intensified under President Nixon in 1971, emphasizing enforcement over decriminalization. Connecticut aligned with these national trends escalating enforcement and penalties.

Consequences of the War on Drugs

The War on Drugs had lasting social and economic impacts, particularly in marginalized communities.^{xxxiii} These included:

- Mass Incarceration – Incarceration disproportionately impacting minority communities without reducing drug use.
- Public Health vs. Punishment – Enforcement was prioritized over treatment and harm reduction.

- Policy Reform Momentum – Acknowledgment of racial disparities led to growing support for drug policy reform.

Path to Legalization (2011–2021)

In 2011, the possession of small amounts of cannabis was decriminalized in the state of Connecticut by PA 11-71.^{xxxiv} Subsequently, medical marijuana was legalized in 2012 following the passage of Chapter 420f – Palliative Use of Marijuana. On the 50th anniversary of the War on Drugs, Connecticut legalized adult-use recreational cannabis through Chapter 420h – Regulation of Adult-Use Cannabis, effective July 1, 2021.^{xxxv} The key provisions of this legislation include:

- Legal possession of up to 1.5 ounces.
- Expungement of certain cannabis-related convictions.
- Prohibition on cannabis odor being used as grounds for search.
- 50% of licenses for cultivation, distribution, and retail reserved for social equity applicants specifically residents from communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition.
- Reinvestment into Disproportionately Impacted Communities from the War on Drugs



About the Social Equity Council (the Council)

The Social Equity Council (the Council) was established in 2021 by the Responsible and Equitable Regulation of Adult-Use Cannabis Act. The Council was created to ensure fairness and inclusion in Connecticut's Adult-Use cannabis industry. The Council's Mission is to promote equitable economic prosperity by supporting Social Equity Entrepreneurs and reinvesting in the communities most impacted by the war on drugs. The Council addresses barriers to entry, expands opportunity, and fosters long-term participation in the state's cannabis industry. The Council is funded by licensing fees and a dedicated portion of state cannabis tax revenue. The Council is comprised of 17 members and is required to reflect racial, gender, and geographic diversity. It plays a key role in shaping an equitable cannabis market in Connecticut, aiming to redress the harms of past enforcement policies and ensure future benefits are broadly shared.

The Council has many programs tailored towards supporting Social Equity Entrepreneurs (SEEs) and the Disproportionately Impacted Areas (DIAs). Including and not limited to:

- **Research & Data:** Conduct inquiries on the historical and present-day consequences of prohibition, including racial and economic disparities.
- **Equity in Licensing:** Recommend policies for Social Equity Applicant qualifications and streamline license processing.
- **Workforce Development & Educational Opportunities:** Develop training, mentorship, and entrepreneurship programs, including for micro-cultivators.
- **Oversight & Accountability:** Review social equity plans and workforce development plans submitted by cannabis businesses; manage funding from the Cannabis Social Equity and Innovation Fund and ensure adherence to Social Equity Applicant Requirements for status verification.
- **Community Investment:** Support targeted reinvestment in impacted communities through access to capital, technical assistance, and business development.

On our website we have informational hubs for Entrepreneur Resources, Canna-Business, and the Revitalize and Reimagine Program (R2 Program). Our Entrepreneur Resources provides support for SEEs for their Social Equity Plans, Workforce Development Plans, includes information on industry partners, and the Minority Business Enterprise Program. The Canna-Business (Revolving Loan Fund) provides financial support to Canna-Businesses in the form of low-cost loans. The R2 Program reinvests in municipalities accounting for 194 out of the 237 DIA Census tracts. The Council will continue to develop

programs for SEEs and DIAs and is continuously striving to make the communities most impacted by the war on drugs prosperous and thriving.

In summary, Connecticut’s cannabis policy has undergone a significant transformation, from criminalization in the mid-20th century to full legalization in 2021. The creation of the Social Equity Council marks a pivotal commitment to ensuring that the emerging cannabis industry addresses the economic, racial, and social injustices caused by decades of punitive drug enforcement. By prioritizing community reinvestment, equitable access to licenses, and workforce development, Connecticut is working to create a more inclusive and restorative cannabis economy.

Link website: <https://portal.ct.gov/social-equity-council>



Andréa Comer
Assistant CT State Treasurer
Chief of Staff, State Treasurer
Chair, Social Equity Council



Brandon McGee
Chief Executive Officer
Social Equity Council



Ned Lamont
Governor
State of Connecticut



About the 2025 Council Market Outlook

According to Section 43 of Public Act No. 25-166, the SEC Working Group will explore and develop recommendations on key topics, including cannabis cultivation in affected areas, enhancing marketplace equity, and improving municipal relations. We will address critical issues such as identifying sustainable locations for cultivators, assisting local governments in accessing potential tax benefits, tackling market challenges, navigating zoning regulations, and examining equitable joint venture business models.

Additionally, we are eager to engage with leaders from youth-serving organizations to gain insights on raising awareness and education regarding responsible cannabis use. The goal of each of these subcommittees is to provide the council with research and perspectives of the community to inform future policy decisions, legislative recommendations, and produce a report on the overall state of the adult-use market informed by those who interface with it.

Expectations of co-chairs:

- Attend four meetings:
 - September 24th In Person Kick-off
 - (Suggested: October 15th) Virtual or In Person, Working Session 1
 - (Suggested: November 12th) Virtual or In Person, Working Session 2
 - (Tentative December 10th) Final In person meeting
- Collaborate on developing subcommittee deliverables
- Lead discussions, guide research priorities, and facilitate stakeholder input
- Coordinate with staff and fellow co-chairs to keep subcommittees focused on solutions

Guest Speaker



Tauhid Chappell, *Executive Director of New Jersey Department of State's Cannabis Training Academy*

Tauhid Chappell is the first Executive Director of the New Jersey Department of State's Cannabis Training Academy, a program targeted towards diversifying the cannabis industry through free education and informational resources. Tauhid, a medical marijuana patient and former budtender, solidifies his experience in the cannabis industry as a journalist covering legalization efforts as well as an Adjunct Professor at Thomas Jefferson University teaching on the impact of equity movements in the industry. Tauhid also serves as an Executive Board Member and a credentialed Parliamentarian of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists.

Find out more at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/>

Marketplace Subcommittee

Cannabis:

The marketplace subcommittee on cannabis aims to understand the challenges of cannabis businesses in areas such as cultivation and business structures. The subcommittee also aims to provide information on financial resources and workforce opportunities and create best practices and recommendations for CT's growing cannabis industry.

The Marketplace (Cannabis) Subcommittee is charged with:

- Identifying bottlenecks in starting cannabis cultivation operations
- Exploring how to help the Connecticut market scale successfully, learning from other states
- Promoting resource accessibility for cannabis entrepreneurs
- Supporting Cannabusiness workforce development in Connecticut





Nikole Burns, *CT Cannabis Chamber of Commerce*

Nikole Burns is the Executive Director for the CT Cannabis Chamber of Commerce. Burns also serves a director of Public Affairs and Events for City & State Public Affairs a range of services to businesses and individuals throughout the state. The chamber was founded in 2022, with a focus on collaboration in achieving the goals of a safe, fair, and equitable cannabis industry in Connecticut. The mission of the chamber is to promote sensible policy, responsible growth, and development of Connecticut's cannabis industry, and to facilitate better dissemination of information and resources to the businesses that will lead this burgeoning industry.

Find out more about the chamber, partner organizations, and future events online at <https://www.ctcannabischamber.org/>.

Non-cannabis:

The marketplace subcommittee on non-cannabis aims to further investigate pathways to meaningful employment by deepening an understanding of current workforce initiatives and aligning with industry needs. It also aims to explore how mid-sized to large companies can be anchors for communities most impacted by the war on drugs.

The Marketplace (Non-cannabis) Subcommittee is charged with:

- Investigate pathways to employment through workforce initiatives aligning with industry needs
- Explore mid-sized to large companies as anchors for communities most impacted by the war on drugs
- Supporting non-cannabusiness workforce development in Connecticut



Chris DiPentima, Connecticut Business Industry Association (CBIA)

Chris DiPentima is the President and CEO of CBIA, he chairs the Connecticut Manufacturer's Collaborative and serves on the board for the Connecticut Manufacturing Innovation Fund and the Connecticut Blue-Ribbon Panel on Childcare. CBIA is state's leading business organization with members from thousands of companies and industries for every part of the state. CBIA provides businesses with advocacy, energy purchasing, networking opportunities, and many other benefits to support business development.

Find out more at: <https://www.cbiam.com/>

Municipal Relations Subcommittee

The municipal relations subcommittee convenes municipal leaders to gain perspectives on Adult-Use Cannabis. It offers recommendations for a toolkit of resources for municipalities interested in supporting/creating local cannabis markets and creating appropriate safeguards against the misuse of adult-use cannabis.

The Municipal Subcommittee is charged with:

- Clarifying municipalities' positions on cannabis through open community dialogue
- Supporting intentional use of municipal tax revenues from cannabis
- De-stigmatization of cannabis within local communities
- Helping municipalities navigate zoning, planning, and local implementation





Arunan Arulampalam, Mayor of Hartford

Mayor Arulampalam, born in Zimbabwe to Sri Lankan refugees, assumed his role on January 1st, 2024. He moved to Hartford after the completion of his graduate degree. Mayor Arulampalam previously served as the CEO of the Hartford Landbank where he developed a first-in-the-nation program to train Hartford residents to become local developers and tackle blight in the city. Mayor Arulampalam also served as the former Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection under the Lamont Administration.

Find out more at: <https://www.hartfordct.gov/Home>



Vincent Cervoni, *Mayor of Wallingford*

Mayor Cervoni assumed his role on January 1, 2024, and was elected mayor after Wallingford held the same mayor for nearly 40 years. Mayor Cervoni the son of Italian immigrants, served in various elected positions for the Wallingford Town Council prior to becoming Mayor. Mayor Cervoni has his own law practice, Cervoni Law Office, LLC in Wallingford, and served as an attorney for multiple firms and various municipalities in the past.

Find out more at: <https://www.wallingfordct.gov/>

Youth Champion Subcommittee

The youth champion subcommittee aims to give youth an active voice in the realm of legalized Adult-Use Cannabis. Youth and youth-serving organizations will relay perspectives on responsible Adult Use, harm reduction, and how Adult Use can support youth in the future.

The Youth Subcommittee is charged with:

- Gathering insights on the current national data and best practices related to youth and cannabis
 - Cannabis diversion programs nationwide
 - Cannabis consumption metrics among youth nationwide
- Engaging leaders of youth-serving organizations to understand needs, challenges, and opportunities on substance use
- Enhancing awareness and education around responsible cannabis use



Eddie Brown, *Hartford Communities that Care*

Eddie Brown is a Managing Director at Hartford Communities that Care (HCTC). Eddie Brown has been with HCTC for over 9 years and also served as a Graduation Specialist for Hartford Public Schools and was a Member of the Civics and Media Literacy Task Force. HCTC is a nonprofit founded in 1998. HCTC offers multiple programs including a Youth Leadership academy, a Care Response Team, the Family, Academic, and mental Wellness program, the CT Hospital Violence Intervention Program Collaborative, and a Workforce and Career Readiness program. HCTC's mission is to create a thriving, non-violent and drug free environment for youth and families

Find out more at: <https://www.hartfordctc.org/>



John Torres, *Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders*

John Torres is the Executive Director of Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders (BCYL) and focuses on development and community engagement. John Torres founded BCYL with his brother Sam Torres in 2003 in honor of their late father, Martin Torres. Since then, BCYL has served over 10,000 young people and utilizes sports as a catalyst for education, leadership and community service. BCYL includes programs for baseball, academic enrichment, mentorship programs, stem education and leadership development. BCYL's mission is to empower the next generation through sports, education, and community engagement.

Find out more at: <https://bcyl.org/>

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2025 Council Market Outlook
Interest Form



Let us know what subcommittee
you're interested in joining!

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- ⁱ https://portal.ct.gov/cannabis/knowledge-base/articles/licensing/licensing-home-page?language=en_US
- ⁱⁱ https://portal.ct.gov/cannabis/knowledge-base/articles/licensing/licensing-home-page?language=en_US
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<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/ACT/PA/PDF/2021PA-00001-R00SB-01201SS1-PA.PDF>
- ^{xi} https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_420f.htm#sec_21a-408
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/ACT/PA/PDF/2021PA-00001-R00SB-01201SS1-PA.PDF>
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- ^{xx} <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/ACT/PA/PDF/2021PA-00001-R00SB-01201SS1-PA.PDF>
- ^{xxi} https://portal.ct.gov/cannabis/knowledge-base/categories/social-equity/social-equity-definitions?language=en_US
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- ^{xxxiii} <https://ctmirror.org/2021/07/26/reduce-harms-of-illegal-drugs-david/>
- ^{xxxiv} <https://ctmirror.org/2021/06/17/on-50th-anniversary-of-war-on-drugs-connecticut-legalizes-marijuana/>
- ^{xxxv} https://cga.ct.gov/2022/sup/chap_420h.htm