



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Social Equity Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: 8/4/2025

Number	Question	Answer
1	How do I become a Social Equity Applicant?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First you must go through the qualification process to receive social equity applicant status. To get that, you must meet one of the criteria listed in the definition of social equity applicant (and provided below). Broadly, a social equity applicant is an applicant that has been disproportionately impacted by criminal enforcement of marijuana laws and meets one of the following criteria:• (i) An applicant with at least fifty-one percent (51%) ownership and control by one or more individuals who have resided for at least five (5) of the preceding ten (10) years in a disproportionately impacted area, as determined by the Commission.• (ii) An applicant with at least fifty-one percent (51%) ownership and control by one or more individuals who:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (A) Have been arrested for, convicted of, or adjudicated delinquent for any offense that is eligible for expungement under the Cannabis Act; or• (B) Is a member of an impacted family.• (iii) For applicants with a minimum of ten (10) full-time employees, as defined in § 1.2 of this Part, and has at least fifty-one percent (51%) of current employees who:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (A) Currently reside in a disproportionately impacted area, as determined by the Commission; or• (B) Have been arrested for, convicted of, or adjudicated delinquent for any offense that is eligible for expungement under the Cannabis Act or is a member of an impacted family.



Cannabis Control Commission

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (C) For individual applicants to qualify under this criterion, the individual must demonstrate that they are either the majority owner of or occupy the highest position on the organizational chart for the employing entity. For entity applicants, the employing entity must be the same as the applicant entity to qualify under this criterion.• (iv) The applicant can demonstrate significant past experience in or business practices that promote economic empowerment in a disproportionately impacted area, as determined by the Commission. An applicant is considered to have met this criterion if:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (A) The applicant is an individual or an entity that is owned and controlled by one or more individuals who have either:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (i) Volunteered with one or more organizations, for at least five (5) of the last ten (10) years for at least four hundred (400) hours per year, where they worked directly with individuals in disproportionately impacted areas offering services designated for economic empowerment, and can provide an attestation signed by an authorized representative of said organization affirming both the scope of the work performed as well as the hours committed; or• (ii) Held a full-time position for at least five (5) of the last ten (10)
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		<p>years in a company, business, or other organization, including both for-profit and not-for-profit entities, that is primarily engaged in work supporting economic empowerment where the primary responsibilities included working directly with individuals in disproportionately impacted areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (v) The applicant has at least fifty-one percent (51%) ownership and control by one or more individuals who each had income which does not exceed four hundred percent (400%) of the median income in a disproportionately impacted area, as defined in § 1.2 of this Part and as determined by the commission, for at least five (5) of the past ten (10) years.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (A) For the purpose of this criterion, qualification shall be determined for an applicant based on the adjusted gross income of all adult individuals within the applicant's household inclusive of all:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (i) Federal taxable wages and income;• (ii) Tips;• (iii) Unemployment compensation;• (iv) Social security income;• (v) Self-employment income;• (vi) Social security disability income;• (vii) Retirement or pension income;• (viii) Realized capital gains;• (ix) Investment income;• (x) Rental and royalty income;
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (xi) Excluded (untaxed) foreign income;• (xii) All forms of imputed income;• (xiii) Taxable non-cash fringe benefits;• (xiv) Alimony;• (xv) Legal settlements, awards and damages;• (xvi) Insurance awards;• (xvii) Gambling winnings;• (xvii) Prizes and awards; and• (xix) Any other income documentation requested by the Commission. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (B) Only the individual who earned income in the disproportionately impacted area is eligible to have their ownership contribute to qualification as a social equity applicant. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• **Each of these criteria will require specific documentation to prove eligibility. <p>560-RICR-10-10-1.11(B)(1)(e)(1)-(5); R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-3(39)(i)-(v).</p>
2	One criteria involves demonstrating significant past experience in or business practices that promote “economic empowerment” in a DIA. What does economic empowerment mean?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Economic empowerment" means the process through which individuals gain increased ability to participate fully in economic activities and make decisions that affect their financial well-being by being provided access to financial education, employment opportunities, financial services, and other resources that support economic wellbeing and professional success. This may be satisfied through demonstrating volunteer work or paid employment in the above types of direct services. <p>560-RICR-10-10-1.2(A)(8)</p>



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3	One criteria involves have been arrested for, convicted of, or adjudicated delinquent for any offense that is eligible for expungement under the RICA § 21-28.11. What are the offenses that are eligible for expungement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offenses that are eligible for expungement under the RICA are nonviolent cannabis possession offenses. The table below provides each cannabis possession offense that is eligible for expungement along with the corresponding statute.• Less Than One Ounce (1 oz.) § 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(ii)• More Than Two Ounces (2 oz.) of Concentrate § 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(iii)• More Than Ten Ounces (10 oz.) Exclusive of Live Plants § 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(iii)• More Than One Ounce (1 oz.) but Less Than Two Ounces (2 oz.) - Person 21+ years old - 1st or 2nd+ Offense Within 18 Months § 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(iv)• Two Ounces (2 oz.) or Less - Person between Seventeen (17) and Twenty (20) years old - 1st or 2nd+ Offense Within 18 Months § 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(v)
4	One of the criteria involves receiving income in a DIA. Does that mean I have to live and work there or just work in that DIA?	This criterion applies to applicants whose primary place of business is located in a disproportionately impacted area (DIA). This criterion can also apply to applicants whose work is primarily performed in a DIA. An applicant does not have to live in the DIA under this criterion.
5	How many Social Equity Qualification Applications can I submit?	Only one Social Equity Qualification Application can be submitted for each individual and/or business entity during the submission period. However, an applicant may qualify under more than one criterion but both qualification criteria and supporting documents should be submitted within the same application.
6	How many Social Equity Retail License Applications can I submit?	Each individual and/or business entity can only submit one Social Equity Retail License Application per zone. There are 6 zones.



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7	How long is the provisional license period for a social equity license retailer?	Provisional social equity licensees have twelve (12) months from being selected to begin retail operations.
8	If I live in a disproportionately impacted area (DIA), and I receive a Social Equity license, does my cannabis retail establishment need to be located in that same disproportionately impacted area?	No. Proving you live or have lived in a DIA only matters for purposes of qualifying as a social equity applicant (aka – you met the definition of “what is a social equity applicant”). As an applicant, you choose which zone and municipality you hope to open a cannabis retail shop in irrespective of what DIA you live/lived in.
9	If I apply for and am selected for multiple retail license types, can I hold any combination of the three retail license types: General license, Social Equity license, Workers’ Cooperative license?	No. If you apply and are selected for more than one retail license, whether it be in different zones or of different license types, you must choose only one retail license. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Example 1: You apply and are selected for a Social Equity Retail License in Zone 1 and a Workers’ Co-Operative Retail License in Zone 2. You must choose which of the two Retail License types you will pursue and forfeit the other.
10	If I submit a Social Equity Applicant Qualification Application, do I also have to submit a Social Equity Retail License Application?	No. An individual or entity can apply for social equity applicant status certification (SEASC) if they seek any of the three license types (General, Social Equity, or Workers’ Cooperative). However, SEASC is a prerequisite to applying for a Social Equity Retail License.
11	Can a retail license holder cultivate cannabis under the retail license?	No, a retail license holder cannot cultivate cannabis. Cultivation requires a separate cultivation license, as retail licenses are only for the sale of cannabis, not its production. A retail license holder cannot also hold a cultivation license.
12	When will a social equity applicant receive funding	Only applicants who have completed the Social Equity Status Certification process and have certified social



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	from the Social Equity Assistance Program and Fund (SEAF)?	equity status and who have been selected for licensure may apply for funds from the SEAF. These applicants will need to go through a separate application process to receive grant funding through the SEAF. The grant application process will open after all applicants have been selected for retail licensure. Approved social equity applicants who have been selected for licensure will be able to apply for and receive grant amounts that will vary by license type.
13	Will Workers' Cooperative applicants go through eligibility qualifications to ensure that the co-op is in fact structured as a worker-owned entity?	Yes. A workers' cooperative applicant will need to be structured as and meet the requirements of Chapter 6.2 of Title 7, the Rhode Island statute governing Workers' Cooperatives.