Cannabis Control Commission
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Frequently Asked Questions – Social Equity Program

Last Updated: 10.2.2026

1. **How do I become a Social Equity Applicant?**
   Individuals and entities seeking to become Social Equity Applicants must submit a Social Equity Applicant Status Certification application. This application will be made via a digital portal that is available on the Commission's Social Equity Resource page.

   Broadly, interested individuals must demonstrate they have been disproportionately impacted by criminal enforcement of cannabis laws by meeting the criteria established in the recently amended Rhode Island Cannabis Act found here.

2. **The qualification criteria involve having been arrested for, convicted of, or adjudicated delinquent for an eligible offense under the Rhode Island Cannabis Act or an equivalent offense in another jurisdiction. *See* R.I. Gen. Laws 21-28.11-3(39). What are the eligible offenses?**
   The list below provides the eligible offenses along with the corresponding operative Rhode Island statute.
   - Possession of less than one ounce (1 oz.) – equivalent RI Statute 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(ii);
   - Possession of less than ten ounces (10oz.) (exclusive of live plants) within the person's residence – equivalent RI Statute 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(iii);
   - Possession of more than one ounce (1oz.) but less than two ounces (2oz.), by a person 21+ years old, as 1st or 2nd offense within 18 months – equivalent RI Statute 21-28 4.01(c)(2)(iv); and
   - Possession of two ounces (2 oz.) or less, by a person between seventeen (17) and twenty (20) years old, as 1st or 2nd offense within 18 months – equivalent RI Statute 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(v)

   Individuals with an offense from a different jurisdiction must provide official documentation that the offense is substantively equivalent to the above.

3. **How many Social Equity Applicant Status Certification applications can I submit?**
   Only one Social Equity Applicant Status Certification application can be submitted for each applicant (whether an individual or entity) during the submission period. Individuals may not be an interest holder in more than one applicant for certification.

4. **How many Social Equity Retail License applications can I submit?**
   Each applicant (whether an individual or entity) may only submit one License Application, regardless of license type, in each of the six zones established by the Rhode Island Cannabis Act.

5. **How long is the provisional license period for a Social Equity Retail Licensee?**
   Provisional Social Equity Retail Licensees will have twelve (12) months from being selected to meet the prerequisites for license issuance and an additional six (6) months from when the license is issued to begin retail operations. *See* 560-RICR-10-10-1.5(I).

6. **If I apply for and am selected for multiple retail license types (General; Social Equity; and Workers' Cooperative), can I hold multiple licenses as long as they are not the same type?**
   No. If you apply and are selected for more than one retail license, whether in different zones or different license types, you must choose only one retail license. For example, if you are selected for a Social Equity Retail License in Zone 1 and a Workers' Cooperative Retail License in Zone 2, you may only accept one license and must forfeit the other.

7. **If I am certified as a Social Equity Applicant, am I only allowed to apply for Social Equity Retail License?**
   No. Social Equity Applicants may apply for any available license type (General, Social Equity, or Workers' Cooperative). However, Social Equity Applicant Status is a prerequisite to apply for a Social Equity Retail License.

8. **Can adult use cannabis retailers cultivate cannabis under their retail license?**
   No. Cultivation may only be done by licensed cultivators or vertically integrated compassion center licensees. Interest holders in an adult use cannabis retailer may also hold an interest in a licensed cultivator or vertically integrated compassion center provided they are not a "controlling person" in more than one license.

9. **When will a Social Equity Applicant receive funding from the Social Equity Assistance Fund ("SEAF")?**
   Only certified Social Equity Applicants who either hold a license or have been selected for licensure are eligible to apply for grants from the Social Equity Assistance Fund. This includes licensed cultivators or compassion centers who qualify, apply for, and receive Social Equity Applicant Status. Grant funding opportunities will be announced at a future time.

10. **Will there be another Social Equity Applicant Status Certification ("SEASC") application window?**
    At this time, there is no scheduled date for another Social Equity Applicant Status Certification application window. The Commission will provide public notice if a future window is announced.

11. **How will retail licenses be allocated, and will Social Equity Applicants receive any preferences or protections?**
    The Social Equity Retail License application selection process is outlined in 560-RICR-10-10-1.5. Prospective Social Equity Applicants can apply for Social Equity Applicant Status Certification at no cost (see 560-RICR-10-10-1.5(E)). Approved Social Equity Applicants can apply for one of the six Social Equity Retail licenses at no cost. Social Equity Retail License fees will follow the graduated fee structure below:
    - Year 1: $0 license fee
    - Year 2: $7,500 license fee
    - Year 3: $15,000 license fee
    - Year 4: $22,500 license fee
    - Year 5 and all subsequent: $30,000 license fee

In addition, Approved Social Equity applicants will be able to apply for resources from the Social Equity Assistance Program and Fund at a later date.

12. **If an individual was arrested for but not charged with an eligible cannabis offense, does that count towards qualification for Social Equity Applicant Status? If so, what documentation would need to be submitted?**
Yes, the individual would need to submit an arrest report containing the details of the arrest including the quantity of cannabis possessed.

13. **What occurs if no Social Equity Retail License is awarded in a zone?**
If there is no qualified Social Equity Applicant, the Commission, in its discretion, may open up a new application window. 560-RICR-10-10-1.4(H)(6).

14. **Are applicants for Social Equity Applicant Status Certification ("SEASC") required to provide plans for operations?**
No, however, operational plans will be required at the time of a license application.

15. **Are applicants for Social Equity Applicant Status Certification ("SEASC") required to be current on taxes?**
Tax information is not collected during SEASC but will be required at the time of a license application.

16. **I'm having trouble filling out my SEASC application. Who should I contact?**
If you need assistance with the SEASC application at any point during the process, please contact Creative Services, Inc., our certification vendor, by email at rhodeisland@creativeservices.com, or by phone at (800) 227-0002.

17. **Do I have to reside in Rhode Island at the time of submitting a SEASC application?**
No.

18. **Would a conviction for an eligible cannabis offense from any state make me eligible for SEASC?**
Yes, provided that the conviction is equivalent to the operative Rhode Island statutes listed in the answer to Question 3. See § 21-28.11-3(39) in the amended Rhode Island Cannabis Act found here.

19. **Can you please list which family members are included as part of an "impacted family" when looking at family members of a person who was arrested for a cannabis offense?**
Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-3(34), "member of an impacted family" is defined as an individual who has a parent, legal guardian, child, spouse, or dependent, or was a dependent of an individual who, prior to May 25, 2022, was arrested for, charged with, convicted of, or adjudicated delinquent for any cannabis offense that has been decriminalized under the Cannabis Act, or for an offense from another jurisdiction that is equivalent to an offense that has been decriminalized under the Cannabis Act.

20. **Are eligible offenses for Social Equity Applicant Status Certification limited to possession only, without any additional charges?**
Relevant criminal offenses are limited to offenses that have been decriminalized under the Cannabis Act and equivalent offenses from other jurisdictions occurring before May 25, 2022. These are nonviolent cannabis possession offenses, specifically those described in Question 2. While a disqualifying offense will not prevent someone from getting Social Equity Applicant Status, applicants *are* required to get a background check prior to the random selection process (i.e. lottery) for licensure and the results of the check may be disqualifying for licensure, in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-12.1. The Social Equity Applicant Status Certification process only assesses whether the applicant can be certified as a Social Equity Applicant under the criteria. Applicants should consult with an attorney to determine whether any other charges, beyond those listed in R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28-4.01(c)(2)(ii)-(v), may be disqualifying at the license application stage.

21. **In a Workers' Cooperative, do the individuals who qualify as Social Equity Applicants need to have a financial interest that is directly proportionate to their ownership interest?**
Yes. Pursuant to the Cannabis Act and the Commission's Regulations, if applying for Social Equity Applicant Status Certification, at least 51% of the entity must be owned and controlled by individuals who qualify as Social Equity Applicants under the same criteria. Under R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-3(35), "ownership and control" is defined as ownership of at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the cannabis establishment, **and** control over the management and day-to-day operations of the cannabis establishment, and an interest in the capital, assets, and profits and losses of the cannabis establishment proportionate to percentage of ownership.

    By statute, ownership and control are tied together and cannot be considered separately. For example, in a Workers' Cooperative with 10 members, if 6 individuals collectively make up the 51% ownership and control of the Workers' Cooperative by qualifying individuals, all 6 must have a financial interest proportionate to their ownership interest for the Workers' Cooperative to be qualified for Social Equity Applicant Status.

22. ***UPDATED 8/14/2026:*** **I would like to change my interest holders after SEASC qualification. Is this permitted?**
Approved Social Equity Applicants who wish to modify their ownership structure, change interest holders, or transition from individual to entity must submit an Interest Holder Change Request in person or via certified mail to:

    Cannabis Office – Social Equity Applicant Interest Holder Change Request
    560 Jefferson Blvd, Warwick, RI 02886

    All changes must maintain at least 51% ownership and control by qualified Social Equity Applicants and must be submitted by the close of the Interest Holder Change Request window. Any modifications are subject to review and approval by the Cannabis Office and/or the Commission and may not be made without prior approval.

23. **Can I still submit a SEASC application if I missed the September 11th deadline?**
No new applications can be submitted after the deadline. There is currently no scheduled date for a future SEASC application window. If another application period is announced, the Commission will issue a public notice with details and instructions.

24. **I have been notified I am an Approved Social Equity Applicant. Can I apply once in each of the 6 zones, with the application fee waived for all 6 applications?**
Yes, however, if selected for licensure in more than one zone, the applicant may only proceed with licensure in one zone.

25. **Can I partner with and receive funding from an entity that has a majority ownership in an existing Rhode Island cannabis license if they will be a minority owner in my proposed new business?**
Yes. However, under R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-3(21), the definition of a "controlling person" applies both to individuals and to groups of individuals acting collectively. An individual or group of individuals cannot be controlling persons in more than one entity.

26. **Will information on the number of Social Equity Applicant Status Certification applications submitted by zone be available during the application period or before the application deadline?**
Once the Commission completes its final review and processing of all applications, the Commission will publicly post the names of all qualified applicants for each zone, including Social Equity applicants, and publicly announce the date, time, and manner of selecting qualified applicants for provisional licensure in each zone.

27. **If an Approved Social Equity applicant is awarded a license in the upcoming round, would they be permitted to submit an Interest Holder Change Request after being selected, subject to CCC review and approval?**
Provisional licensees, including both Social Equity Applicants and non-Social Equity Applicants, who seek to make changes to the interest holders disclosed on their application must submit a request for a variance to the Commission, in accordance with the requirements of 560-RICR-10-10-1.3.3, at least sixty (60) calendar days prior to the proposed effective date of the change.

28. **Can an Approved Social Equity Applicant applying for a Social Equity Retail License and a General Retail License be awarded 2 licenses (1 of each type)?**
An applicant can only apply for one retail license per zone, regardless of license type. Applicants who apply and are selected for licensure in multiple zones may only select one license to pursue and will have to make such decision at the time of the random selection process (i.e. lottery).

29. **Do Approved Social Equity Applicants need to provide proof of funds in the application?**
Yes, all applications for an Adult Use Retail license will be held to the same standard, and, regardless of license type, need to disclose amounts and sources of funds.

30. **What should an applicant do if they secure a special use permit but later encounter issues because the landlord's bank does not allow cannabis operations on the property?**
It is the applicant's responsibility to conduct due diligence and ensure that the proposed cannabis establishment location is suitable for a retail cannabis establishment, including that the landlord's bank is aware of the intended cannabis use and permits the landlord to lease the property to a cannabis establishment. Applicants should confirm this with the landlord before committing to a property, as resolving these types of conflicts is the responsibility of the applicant, not the Commission. From the date of selection for licensure, it is the applicant's responsibility to complete all the prerequisites for the final issuance of an Adult Use Retail license within the allotted timeframe, which is nine (9) months for a provisionally approved Adult Use Retail license and a Workers' Cooperative Retail license, and twelve (12) months for a provisionally approved Social Equity Retail license, in accordance with Sections 1.4(I), 1.5(I), and 1.6(I) of 560-RICR-10-10-1.

31. **I was certified as an Approved Social Equity Applicant and am preparing to apply for an Adult Use Retail license, and I have a criminal record. Are there any charges or crimes in my record that could prevent me from being eligible to be a part of a retail cannabis establishment license?**
Yes, the Commission may deny licensure to any individual who has a prior conviction that is substantially related to the occupation for which they seek licensure, as determined by the Commission, and individuals who have pled guilty or nolo contendere to, or been convicted of, a disqualifying offense may be disqualified from licensure. *See* R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-12.1. Applicants are encouraged to complete their NCIC background check, which is a requirement for licensure, as early as possible, and to review the list of presumptively disqualifying crimes listed in 560-RICR-10-10-1.3.6(F). All interest holders or key persons, as defined in 560-RICR-10-10-1.2(A)(12), must complete a NCIC as a requirement for licensure, and all applicants have a continuing duty to truthfully and fully disclose all pleas and criminal convictions to the Commission. The Commission will consider any convictions in accordance with the procedure set forth in R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-28.11-12.1 to determine whether an individual may remain as an interest holder in a retail cannabis establishment license.

32. **I was certified as a Social Equity Applicant based on my having been previously charged with a cannabis offense, but I have other types of charges in my criminal record as well. Can I still be disqualified from being an interest holder in a cannabis establishment license because of those other offenses, even though I have been certified as a Social Equity Applicant?**
Yes. The Social Equity Applicant certification process determined whether an individual was charged with a qualifying offense to be granted Social Equity status. Social Equity Applicant Status does not exempt an applicant from meeting all requirements needed for licensure. An approved Social Equity Applicant may be disqualified for licensure based on offenses disclosed in their NCIC. If an NCIC background check shows that an individual has pled guilty or nolo contendere to, or been convicted of, a disqualifying offense that the Commission determines is related to the licensed occupation, the individual may be disqualified for licensure. Any individual who may be denied licensure based on the results of a NCIC will be notified by the Commission and will be provided an opportunity to respond as to why they should not be denied licensure and/or the ability to be an interest holder in a cannabis license.

33. **If an Approved Social Equity Applicant applies for and is awarded a General Retail License, will the license fee be waived?**
Approved Social Equity Applicants can seek a waiver from the Commission to waive all or part of a license fee once selected for a General or Workers' Cooperative retail license. The Commission may exercise its discretion on approving or denying any amount of any fee waiver.

34. **If an Approved Social Equity Applicant applies to and is awarded a General Retail License, will they have access to the Social Equity Assistance Fund?**
Approved Social Equity Applicants selected for an Adult Use Retail License will be eligible to apply for grants from the Social Equity Assistance Fund, regardless of license type. The Commission may exercise discretion on amounts of grant funding per applicant through the Social Equity Assistance Fund.

35. **Can an entity applying for an Adult Use Retail License use the Social Equity Certification Number of an approved entity that owns 51% or more of the applying entity?**
Only the entity that was itself approved as a Social Equity Applicant and issued a certification number may use that certification number for the purpose of applying for one of the licenses allocated to Social Equity applicants or any fee waivers. The certification number cannot be transferred or used by a different applying entity, unless approved by the Commission via an Interest Holder Change Request or a variance.

36. **What happens if I am an approved Social Equity Applicant, and I change my interest holders without getting a change request approved by the Cannabis Office prior to submission of an Adult Use Retail License application?**
If an approved Social Equity Applicant submits an Adult Use Retail License application with interest holders different from those that were originally certified, the applicant will no longer be considered an Approved Social Equity Applicant and may proceed with the new structure for a Workers' Cooperative or General Retail License. As such, all application fees will be required at application submission.

37. **If an Approved Social Equity Applicant is selected for an Adult Use Retail License, would they be permitted to submit an Interest Holder Change Request after the license is issued, subject to CCC review and approval?**
Once selected for licensure, a provisional licensee must submit any proposed changes in ownership structure, makeup or membership to the Commission as a request for a variance, provided that no variance will be approved in the first year of licensed activities, except upon the Commission's determination that public health, safety, welfare or other grounds requires such variance, pursuant to 560-RICR-10-10-1.3.3(A)(4)(b). Social Equity Applicant licensees are required to maintain Social Equity Applicant status, and any interest holder change request that reduces the interest of the Social Equity Applicant to below 51% will risk loss or revocation of the license.

38. **If an Approved Social Equity Applicant applies for and is selected for a General Retail License, will the application fee be waived?**
Yes. The Adult Use Retail application fee is waived for Approved Social Equity Applicants regardless of license type. An applicant who applies using an active Social Equity Applicant (SEA) certification number will automatically be deemed to have requested and qualified for the application fee waiver.

39. **Can current licensees apply for Social Equity Applicant Status?**
Yes, current licensees who are owned and controlled by one or more qualifying individuals may apply for SEASC. Current licensees who are certified may be eligible to receive grant funding from the SEAF at a future time.

40. **What documentation should I provide for a prior cannabis-related offense if the amount of cannabis is not stated in the disposition?**
Applicants should provide all available documentation regarding the offense, including documentation showing the original charge, final disposition, and any reduction or plea to a lesser charge. If the amount of cannabis is not stated in the available records, applicants should also provide the applicable law and any other available documentation that may establish the amount involved. The Commission will review the information provided to determine whether the offense involved an amount of cannabis that has been decriminalized under Rhode Island law.

41. **I received a letter from CSI stating that I have been cleared. Does this mean I am now certified?**
Not yet. A clearance letter from CSI means that you have successfully completed the review process and will be included on a list of individuals recommended for certification at an upcoming Cannabis Control Commission meeting. As a final step, the Commission will vote to approve the list at a publicly noticed Commission meeting. Following the Commission's vote, you will receive a final determination letter containing your Social Equity Applicant Certification Number, which can be used in the licensing portal to apply for a license reserved for Social Equity Applicants.