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OFFICE OF CANNABIS MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCES FIRST COHORT OF COMPLIANCE TRAINING & MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

With Classes Having Started on January 24, 2023, the Compliance Training and Mentorship program offers 241 growers and processors an opportunity to learn how to operate in a well-regulated adult-use cannabis market

Today the New York State Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) announced the first class of the State's new Cannabis Compliance Training and Mentorship (CCTM) program. The ten-week program is based on existing farmer apprenticeship and fellowship programs and aimed at growing and diversifying the pipeline of farmers and processors preparing to participate in New York's adult-use cannabis industry.

The inaugural CCTM program will consist of a series of structured webinars covering topics ranging from Cannabis Business Accounting, Labor Laws, Agricultural Human Resources, Environmental Controls, Track and Trace, Lab Testing, Recall Plans and Good Manufacturing Practices. The program was made available to applicants interested in cultivating or processing cannabis in a regulated market and who have advanced experience in horticulture, manufacturing, processing, packaging, or branding products for human consumption.

Members of communities traditionally underrepresented in farming were encouraged to apply, with the application window opening October 20, 2022, and closing November 3, 2022.

A thorough review process was conducted by OCM and the New York State Department of Labor, during which all applicants were scored based on objective criteria. A total of 242 applicants were selected to move on to live virtual interviews, which took place over a three-week period ending on January 9, 2023. The final cohort for the CCTM program will include 93 growers from the unregulated market, 80 traditional farmers, 43 processors from the unregulated market, and 26 traditional food and beverage processors. Through the program, they will learn how to operate in a well-regulated environment.

Of the 242 individuals admitted to the inaugural cohort, approximately 66% would be considered either historically underrepresented in farm ownership and/or social and economic equity (SEE) applicants per Section 87 of the Cannabis Law. Given that Black, Indigenous, and People of

Color (BIPOC) farmers and producers make up just 1.3% of producers in New York State, according to 2017 Census of Agriculture, the CCTM model has significant potential for transforming the agricultural landscape across the state.

The program will consist of over 40 different virtual webinars and take place between January and April 2023 and cover a range of topics including Cannabis Business Accounting, Labor Laws, Agricultural Human Resources, Environmental Controls, Plant Genetics and Pathology, Track and Trace, Lab Testing, Recall Plans and Good Manufacturing Practices. The webinars will be supported by the State University of New York, SUNY Morrisville, Cornell University, the Office, and holders of Adult-Use Conditional Cultivator (AUCC) and Adult-Use Conditional Processor (AUCP) licenses. Participants will also have the option to be paired with an AUCC or AUCP, allowing them to engage more directly with the topics covered in the webinars and better understand how to operate their businesses in a well-regulated marketplace.

“We look forward to building a work force that is not only compliant in understanding but also highly trained and skilled to serve New York’s booming and ever-growing Cannabis Market,” said **Tremaine Wright, Chair of the Cannabis Control Board**. “The CCTM training program will help us meet training goals while also helping to provide an on ramp for a diverse class of cultivators and processors.”

“New York’s Cannabis Market is not a one-size-fits all deal and we want our industry to reflect that across the entire supply chain,” said **Chris Alexander Executive Director of the Office of Cannabis Management**. “The CCTM program will exemplify that by preparing individuals with unique backgrounds, who already have extensive knowledge and skills in their craft, with all the information & tools necessary to take what they’ve already created to the next level in order to serve our blooming industry.”

“Equity happens when preparation meets opportunity,” said **Damian Fagon, Chief Equity Officer at the Office of Cannabis Management**. “When other states looked at their unregulated cannabis industry, they saw something that needed to be displaced. We see opportunity. When they rolled out licenses, they didn’t prioritize their family farms and F&B businesses. We see their experience and existing infrastructure as complimentary assets for building and growing our Cannabis Market. By following the guidance of the MRTA, a space has been created for individuals to access a real, fair shot at succeeding in a well-regulated environment where they can showcase their skills and make their communities proud.”

“A skilled workforce is absolutely essential to the success of this promising new industry,” said **New York State Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon**. “By educating these diverse growers and processors about the strong regulations, we are ensuring that the New York State market will be viable for years to come. I congratulate the inaugural class members for seizing the opportunity to receive this thorough training and hope they share their expertise with colleagues as this sector continues its evolution.”

“The burgeoning adult-use cannabis industry allows farms to seek new business opportunities and diversify their operations. More than 80 New York traditional farmers were accepted into the program with the training helping to position them to be successful,” said **Renée St. Jacques, New York Farm Bureau Associate Director of Public Policy**.

“SUNY Morrisville is excited to host the OCM Compliance Training and Mentorship program” said **Tony Contento, Ph.D, Dean for the School of Agriculture, Business and Technology at SUNY Morrisville.** “Our eight-year history with hemp cultivation and cannabis education aligns perfectly with the mission and vision of this mentorship program. We plan to share our expertise and passion for the industry with all participants.”

“Cannabis education and the advancement of agricultural sciences is crucial for a growing market, for traditional and legacy growers, people of color and minority populations, and those hindered by wars on drugs,” said **Dr. Daniela Vergara Emerging Crops Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension.** “Cornell is pleased to partner with OCM to support inclusivity and equity in a new industry.”

“OCM has developed this unique mentorship program for cultivators and processors, providing an important resource for success in NY’s growing cannabis industry,” said **Esta R. Bigler, Esq. Co-Chair, Cannabis Workforce Initiative and Director, Cornell ILR Labor and Employment Law Program.** “By including training in labor and employment law for employers, OCM is addressing MRTA’s goal of creating a fair, equitable, and diverse workplace in which workers have a voice.”