

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

December 12, 2024

**CONTACTS:**

[Vanessa.Cheeks@ocm.ny.gov](mailto:Vanessa.Cheeks@ocm.ny.gov)

[TaylorRandi.Lee@ocm.ny.gov](mailto:TaylorRandi.Lee@ocm.ny.gov)

## **NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF CANNABIS MANAGEMENT AND OUR ACADEMY PARTNER TO PROVIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND MENTORSHIP FOR JUSTICE-IMPACTED CANNABIS ENTREPRENEURS**

*OCM Partners With Our Academy to Provide Workforce Training for  
CAURD and SEE Licensees, Opening Pathways to Employment and  
Supporting Growth in New York’s Cannabis Market*

*Budtender Training and “Office Hours IRL” Events Provide Workforce  
Development and Networking for Future Industry Leaders*



**NEW YORK, NY** – Last week The New York State Office of Cannabis Management (OCM), in partnership with [Our Academy, a nonprofit business accelerator supporting justice-impacted cannabis entrepreneurs](#), held two events to advance workforce development and support New York’s inclusive cannabis market. Over the past two years, OCM and Our Academy have collaborated to create the largest

educational initiative for cannabis entrepreneurs in the U.S., helping Conditional Adult-Use Retail Dispensary (CAURD) and Social Equity Enterprise (SEE) licensees build successful businesses.

On December 5, 2024, Our Academy hosted a one-day intensive Budtender Training Workshop in partnership with the Wana Brands Foundation and Cannabis Science Educator Justino Rodriguez. Budtenders, the frontline workers of the cannabis industry, received comprehensive training to prepare for roles within dispensaries. This workshop provided dispensary owners with a pool of job-ready, trained professionals, addressing a critical barrier to operational readiness—staffing. The day concluded with a Job Fair, where participants connected with cannabis businesses actively seeking skilled employees. These events underscored OCM and Our Academy’s shared mission to support workforce development and reduce barriers to market entry for New York’s cannabis entrepreneurs.

“Partnerships with folks like Our Academy helps create collaborative spaces for licensees to get the mentorship, attention, and support they need to thrive as entrepreneurs in the regulated cannabis industry,” **said Felicia A.B. Reid, Acting Executive Director of the New York State Office of Cannabis Management.** “I want to thank everyone on the Our Academy team for their unwavering dedication to the promise of economic development as it intersects with the goals of the Cannabis Law.”

On December 6, 2024, Our Academy and OCM hosted the final “Office Hours IRL” session and graduation event, marking the culmination of this impactful program. The session included live workshops, networking opportunities, and one-on-one mentorship from industry leaders. Hundreds of mentees, who had completed over 110 hours of specialized training and workshops, were celebrated for their achievements. The graduation ceremony solidified their readiness to lead in New York’s growing cannabis industry and equipped participants with the tools, connections, and confidence needed to navigate this rapidly expanding market.

"By partnering with Our Academy, we are not only equipping CAURD and SEE licensees with the necessary skills to thrive but also opening pathways to employment and supporting growth within New York’s cannabis market. This workforce training is a vital step toward fostering an inclusive industry that provides opportunities for all while ensuring long-term success for justice-impacted entrepreneurs," **said Tabatha Robinson, Acting Chief Equity Officer of the New York State Office of Cannabis Management.**

"This program's inception reflects our commitment to building an equitable cannabis market, empowering justice-impacted entrepreneurs, and supporting small business success. Workforce development like this is essential to what we do at the OCM," **said Jim Rogers, Director of Small Business Development at the New York State Office of Cannabis Management.**

Since 2020, Our Academy has been a leading nonprofit accelerator dedicated to supporting justice-impacted entrepreneurs in the cannabis industry. To date, it has empowered over 1,000 social equity participants through innovative programming and partnerships, creating opportunities for equity and inclusion in the evolving cannabis marketplace.

The New York State Office of Cannabis Management’s (NYS OCM) Social and Economic Equity (SEE) Program is a cornerstone of the Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act (MRTA), signed into law on March 31, 2021, to legalize adult-use cannabis in New York State. The SEE Program is designed to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion by incentivizing participation from individuals and communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition. The law mandates that 40% of all adult-use cannabis tax revenue be reinvested into rebuilding communities harmed by the War on Drugs and sets a goal to

award 50% of all adult-use licenses to SEE groups, including individuals from impacted communities, minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, distressed farmers, and service-disabled veterans. This comprehensive program represents New York's commitment to fostering a fair and equitable cannabis industry. To date, 54% of adult-use licenses have been awarded to SEE applicants, exceeding the mandate in the MRTA.

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