STRATEGIC PLAN
2019 - 2020
Illinois Beyond Cannabis Legalization
Executive Summary

Chicago NORML is a registered 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that has been in existence since 2017. We are an active, regional chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. Our organization was founded by leaders in the cannabis industry who realized the need for increased cannabis conversations in underserved communities.

Our Vision for Chicago NORML is to grow our pipeline with individuals who wish to use the cannabis plant as a vehicle for health and wellness, economic development and political empowerment. We wish to restore our communities by creating marketplaces where the cannabis community will network, learn and build together. We endeavor to inspire and prepare the next wave of cannabis jobseekers and industry entrepreneurs throughout Chicago and beyond.

We were proud and honored to play a roll in the creation of HB1438. Over the past two years, Chicago NORML has gained the respect of the cannabis community and lawmakers by being true to the spirit of our mission to create more onramps into the industry. HB1438, the first legalization bill in the country to pass by legislative vote, was a good start -- but only the beginning of recreational cannabis legislation in Illinois. Our vision includes strengthening our partnerships with other community organizations, elected officials, and industry professionals to ensure the successful roll-out and implementation of the statute in our communities. Illinois will become an international model and we will continue to help make it happen.

This strategic plan renews our commitment to providing expanded & enhanced programming, and advocating on behalf of our members. Through this we will address public policy issues that impact the lives of our constituents. This work is not easy and cannot be done alone.

Recreational legalization will be accompanied by an increased activity to prepare the Illinois workforce to meet market demands, the type of which requires paid staff. However, as a 501c3 cannabis advocacy, membership organization, we are unique in that we are not readily recognized as a group that typically receives foundational support. Through strategic partnerships across multiple sectors, Chicago NORML is now pivoting to more intentionally build on our de-stigmatization work and address our growing developmental demands to further pursue our mission. Together we can make Chicago NORML the premier cannabis advocacy organization fighting for equity and social justice issues.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Goals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Policy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metrics</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Members</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Edie Moore
Executive Director
We believe in empowering our communities through a fierce yet methodical approach and positively changing the perception surrounding the legalization of Marijuana.

Chicago NORML believes in developing occupational standards, quality learning, and professional development for diverse groups.
MISSION

In existence since 1970, the NORML Foundation sponsors public advertising campaigns to better educate the public about marijuana and alternatives to current marijuana policy; provides legal assistance and support to victims of the current laws; and undertakes relevant research.

The Chicago chapter supports this mission and strives specifically to educate and motivate disproportionately impacted communities to destigmatize and accept the cannabis plant as a vehicle for health & wellness, political empowerment and economic development.
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Creating Pathways Into the Cannabis Industry: ONBOARDING, INCUBATING AND ACCELERATING EMPLOYEES & ENTREPRENEURS

MAINTAINING ROBUST AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE LEVELS

Chicago NORML has become a pipeline for individuals who are interested in the emerging legal cannabis industry through professional development programs. Chicago NORML is authorized to provide responsible vending training and credentialing for cannabis with the state of Illinois, which means that our classes and workshops are approved continuing educations units.

We’ve set our workforce development goals to include interested parties of all backgrounds and skill levels. By our charter, we’re committed to ensuring that all that aspire to can identify and begin learning about a range of cannabis career interests.

Our programs currently allow individuals to earn credentials, and in the future will encompass internships while pursuing their quest for professional development and will conclude with them moving into jobs and businesses linked to their long-term career plans.

OUR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH CAN BE BEST FULFILLED THROUGH:

- Partnering with re-entry programs that provide employment training.
  - Acknowledging transferable skills that foster success in the illicit market and honoring their relevance in the emerging legal industry.

- Engaging healthcare professionals and researchers to inform analysis and public policy.

- Providing professional business resources from industry professionals to assist participants with traditional business building skills

- Preparing participants for capital funding raises

Much of this work is currently underway through our responsible vendor training, our partnership with Elevated Education for curriculum development, our industry workshops focusing on community engagement and dispensary agents, partnerships with Chicago State University & Harper College, and various industry business partners.

We will further our approach to workforce development through a series of strategic private-sector partnerships with MSOs who may contribute to our professional development efforts as part of the R3 program. Chief amongst these partnerships are GTI, Revolution, Mission, Grassroots, Cresco and Weedmaps.
Engaging communities in partnerships is a consistently proven strategy to enhance outcomes and achieve statistically significant results. National Expungement Week and Cannabis Health Initiative partnerships are recent examples of our work in action.

Chicago NORML purposely engages people in black and brown communities that are underserved by and under-represented in mainstream cannabis industries. Although marginalized communities have historically suffered the most collateral damage because of the war on drugs, they have been largely left out of conversations about economic empowerment in the space.

We offer our constituency:

- Access to accurate information about the cannabis plant;
- Tools to combat disparities in the justice system and support in navigating legal distribution and the cannabis industry;
- Resources and/or access to capital and information to start a cannabis business or find employment in the industry;
- Doctors who can knowledgeably recommend cannabis as part of their medical profile and treatment regimen.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

Through feedback from our monthly meetings, trainings and classes, website, and social media outlets, we continually engage our constituency and address their concerns by updating our curriculum and event offerings and connecting our community with pertinent resources and industry experts.

NOTABLE ENGAGEMENTS INCLUDE:

- Annual Cannabis Health and Wellness Fair to educate, inform and promote the use of cannabis as a healing therapy to manage symptoms associated with pain, PTSD, women’s health, anxiety and a variety of mental and physical ailments.
- Chicago State University Job placement & expungement informational expo
- Annual National Expungement Week awareness campaign
- ChiCannabis Expo, trade show that showcases new industry products and services and provides an opportunity for new and existing operators to connect with vital cannabis vendors and suppliers.
- Federal, State and Municipal Lobbying.
SOCIAL EQUITY

Chicago NORML’s constituents are located throughout the city and state primarily in communities and neighborhoods that have been hardest hit by the war on drugs and disproportionately impacted by disinvestment.

We are resolute that Chicagoland’s economy will be transformed when African-American and Latino communities embrace legal cannabis as a tool to improve their economic and financial wellness.

With this in mind, we have formed an alliance with the Office of Justice, Equity and Opportunity to help implement new regulations to achieve social equity provisions as outlined by the new Restore, Reinvest and Renew (R3) Program.

We will work with the office to develop the concept of an Equity Audit for industry operators. Our existing relationships with multi-state operators such as Mission, Cresco, GTI and Revolution give us leverage to support them in creating internal policies and procedures to provide comprehensive diversity reports on an annual basis.

Understanding that the State will rely heavily on these metrics to help shape the future of the program, our relations with Legislative & Government Officials also provides leverage and points-of-contact that can determine the need for future changes to the Cannabis Tax and Regulation act.
According to a 2017 Marijuana Business Daily survey, 81% of cannabis businesses are owned and led by a white executive. That number is even higher in Illinois. Chicago NORML is collaborating with minority groups P3 Markets, MJM Strategies, Ignite Technologies, Cre8tive Capital and other thought leaders in the cannabis space to create a high-tech cannabis marketplace designed specifically to address the needs of social equity and minority owned cannabis businesses.

The proposed complex will assist local entrepreneurs entering the legal cannabis industry by providing access to funding, shared resources, educational programming, mentoring and networking opportunities. Our workforce development program will provide a pipeline of properly trained talent to the booming cannabis industry where available jobs are expected to quickly skyrocket to meet demand. The facility will also host retail and ancillary business operators.

Our concept provides a safe and welcoming space for consumption, community engagement, entertainment and education. Our project will help bring revitalization, energy, and most importantly dollars to neighborhoods that have suffered from years of divestment.

This project is designed with an intent to be replicated in disproportionately impacted neighborhoods throughout the city and state.

Chicago NORML will pursue public funding from the Cannabis Business Development Fund, the Restore, Reinvest and Renew Program, and local municipalities in addition to private equity funding options.
OBJECTIVES

We aim to broaden awareness of public policies that affect the cannabis community and ensure fair representation and participation on issues of public concern. By building collaborations with stakeholders and business owners to make recommendations to legislators, we will influence the operating context of sustainable business.

We advocate on behalf of our members at the local, state, and federal levels by engaging in public policy initiatives that impact the cannabis economy. We work to change unfair policies that affect how businesses and individuals interact with the cannabis plant in Illinois. Our policy agenda aligns with the interests of our members and has short and long term recommendations for our legislators.

In our policy advocacy work, we are guided by the overall quality of life for cannabis patients, consumers, employees, and business owners.

WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- Housing rights for cannabis consumers & patients;
- Fair employment cannabis testing policies;
- Medical cannabis patient rights;
- Fair zoning regulations for cannabis businesses;
- Fair & balanced social consumption regulations;
- Workforce diversity in hiring practices;
- Public engagement in disproportionately-impacted areas;
- Identifying and attending public comment sessions;
- Access to expungement information and assistance;
- Pragmatic DUID laws.
METRICS

Chicago NORML is committed to pursuing quantitative, qualitative and mixed method data collection practices to evaluate the impact of our strategic goals.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Program Performance and Monitoring
  - Focus Groups
  - Interviews
  - Observations
  - Documents
- Records and Communications
- External Statistics
- Surveys
- Online course offerings
- Courses for employees and entrepreneurs
- Expanding the use and engagement of the EMPOWRD App.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

- Hosting an increased volume of classes in new neighborhoods and DIAs
- Professionally developing instructors and building a roster of collaborators who can tackle actionable items such as on-site sales
- Developing an interview process for instructors
- Leadership trainings and defined volunteer teams/roles.
- Expanding the use and engagement of the EMPOWRD App.

CANNABIS MARKETPLACE

- Garner interest and support for the project within the public and private sectors.
- Collaborate with development and design teams to help create visualization models for the project
- Partner with the Pritzker Traubert Foundation if selected as a Chicago Prize finalist.
- Create a cost/benefit analysis
- Capital Fundraising Campaign

SOCIAL EQUITY

- Assist the R3 program in identifying their target metrics.
- Facilitating opportunities for social equity applicants in disproportionately impacted areas to learn key information about what and who they need to know to access R3 and CBD funds.

FINANCIAL TARGETS

- Securing grants from government entities and philanthropic foundations.
- Compensating course instructors and administrators for facilitating workshops
- Return on investments for exemplary members
- Invest in owned technology and equipment.
- Create a portal for online merchandise sales and automatic shipping
Chicago NORML's membership base has grown 92.94% over the past year. We are proud of our members and their commitment to our mission. Business memberships and constituent followers have grown 400%. While we are committed to embracing technology, we present each new member with a PHYSICAL member packet containing a membership card and other items. This has set us apart as a standout from other organizations.

CURRENT MEMBER BENEFITS

- MEMBER CARD
- 10-15% DISCOUNT FOR CLASSES AND EVENTS
- MEMBER T-SHIRT
- STAINLESS STEEL & HEMP BRACELET
- BUTTONS AND/OR CUPS

PROPOSED MEMBER BENEFITS

- JOB BOARD
- PATIENT CONSULTATION (GREEN NYLE)

SALE MERCHANDISE (ONSITE ONLY)

- SHIRTS
- BRACELETS
- BUTTONS
We continue to provide accurate, credible information about the cannabis plant, the cannabis industry, IL Medical Cannabis Programs, and efforts to legalize adult use of cannabis in IL.