



VIRGIN ISLANDS OFFICE OF
CANNABIS REGULATION

TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND
AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN
ISLANDS

RE: UPDATE ON THE OVERALL
STATUS OF OFFICE OF
CANNABIS REGULATION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF ACT 8680

PRESENTED BY:
JOANNE MOOREHEAD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1 Good morning, Senator Javan E. James, Chair of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Economic Development
2 and Agriculture, other members of this Committee, other members of the 35th Legislature present, fellow
3 testifiers, and the listening and viewing audience. I am Joanne Moorehead, Executive Director of the Virgin
4 Islands Office of Cannabis Regulation (OCR), a subsidiary division of the Department of Licensing and
5 Consumer Affairs (DLCA). I am joined today by my OCR Office Assistant, Ms. Lyn-Marie Mc Carthy, and my
6 DLCA support team represented today by Assistant Commissioner Horace Graham. Thank you for the
7 opportunity to provide testimony before this body regarding the overall status of operations and administration
8 of the Office of Cannabis Regulation.

9 HISTORY

10 The Virgin Islands Office of Cannabis Regulation was first created pursuant to Act No. 8167, the Virgin
11 Islands Medicinal Cannabis Patient Care Act which was a direct result of a 2014 referendum whereby 56.5%
12 of the Virgin Islands voting public voted to support “the licensing and regulation of medicinal marijuana,
13 patients, care-givers, cultivators and distribution centers”. Approximately one year after the passage of Act
14 8167, the 34th Legislature enacted the more comprehensive Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act (Act No.
15 8680). The Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act recognized the need to expand the Cannabis industry in order to
16 provide additional opportunities for employment and business ownership for Virgin Islands residents,
17 alleviate social injustices experienced by persons subjected to the criminal justice system in matters related
18 to the cultivation, sale, and possession of marijuana, recognized cultural and sacramental uses of Cannabis,
19 and will generate much needed tax revenues for the Territory. This Cannabis Use Act further establishes a
20 holistic, regulated system for the cultivation, manufacture, and sale of Cannabis for adult, medicinal, and
21 sacramental use.

22 Governed by the Cannabis Advisory Board, a body of eleven persons appointed by the Governor and
23 approved by the Legislature, the Office of Cannabis Regulation has the executive authority to implement

24 and administer the provisions in Act 8680 including but not limited to promulgating rules and regulations
25 related to the cultivation, manufacture, sale, dispensary, testing, licensing, and use of Cannabis, prescriptive
26 use of Cannabis, and Sacramental Use.

27 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

28 As we enter the last quarter of 2024, the Office of Cannabis Regulation, under the oversight of the Cannabis
29 Advisory Board (CAB), is realizing significant progress towards the fulfillment of many of the mandates
30 found in Act 8680. We recognize that this has been a long time coming and appreciate the patience of the
31 public as we work diligently to get this right.

32 The OCR Rules and Regulations were adopted and approved in April 2024. With the adoption of those rules
33 and regulations, the OCR has been able to begin building the framework by which the legalized cannabis
34 industry will operate. I strongly encourage anyone in the listening or viewing audience who is interested in
35 any aspect of the Cannabis industry here in the Virgin Islands to familiarize themselves with these Rules and
36 Regulations as they provide in great detail all of the requirements for not only individual cards but also all
37 licensing requirements related to dispensaries, cultivation, manufacturing, research and development, and
38 testing. The Rules and Regulations as well as Act 8680 can be found on our website, ocr.vi.gov, on the
39 Governance and Regulations page.

40 When this Office last testified before this Committee in March of this year, it was mentioned that The
41 Registry system initially rolled out on January 17, 2024. The Registry system is an online system where all
42 Practitioners, Patients, Sacramental Organizations, Sacramental Users, and Designated Caregivers can apply
43 for, register, and receive their identification cards and certifications. At the time of the last testimony in
44 March, only the applications for Sacramental Organizations and Practitioners were live. At this time, all five
45 of the online application systems are now live. What that means for our Virgin Islands residents is that any
46 medical patients and/or their designated caregivers, sacramental organizations and users, and medical

47 practitioners can go to our website at ocr.vi.gov right now and apply for their identification card. To date,
48 we have two certified Practitioners and two applications pending. We have one registered medical patient,
49 and we have had two non-resident medical patient cards registered.

50 The roll-out of Cannabis Business Licenses is probably the topic most frequently asked about and the OCR
51 is happy to report that it will be happening in a matter of weeks. Act 8680 makes very clear the intention of
52 this body to ensure that the license application process for cannabis business license be a fair, impartial,
53 merit-based process. And the OCR takes that mandate very seriously. Ultimately, the goal of the OCR is to
54 be able to fold the business license application process into the existing portal that we use, also known now
55 as The Registry. However, being able to integrate that licensing software application in the manner required
56 will take approximately one year based on projections from our software vendor. In the meantime, we
57 understand the urgency of having licenses issued as soon as possible, while always maintaining the integrity
58 of the process as mandated. For the first round of licensing, we have devised a system that allows us to
59 create an intermediary solution that also upholds the integrity of the process. We hope to have that
60 application process approved by the Cannabis Advisory Board at its next meeting and will publicize the
61 specifics as to how, where, and when to apply with the community so that all who are interested can avail
62 themselves of the system. As I have said at every public speaking opportunity the OCR has undertaken thus
63 far, I would like to reiterate to the public that the requirements for the application processes for dispensary
64 and cultivation licenses are lengthy and potentially complex. Take the time now to familiarize yourself and
65 your business partners with the requirements as the application window will be for a specific time only and
66 then applications are closed until this time next year. Based on current timelines, the OCR expects that the
67 first licenses will be issued by December of this year.

68 In addition to focusing on the business licensing process, the Office of Cannabis Regulation has been
69 assiduously seeking and fostering collaboration with other Government partner agencies. The breadth of the

cannabis industry is wide and varied and will involve many GVI agencies such as the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Department of Finance, the Department of Property and Procurement, Virgin Islands Police Department, Division of Personnel, Department of Justice, Virgin Islands Bureau of Internal Revenue, and Department of Planning and Natural Resources. Ensuring that all of our GVI team is working cohesively will aid in a smooth roll-out of this new program.

OCR STAFFING

As the OCR continues to do the work necessary to roll-out Cannabis business license applications, funding and staffing of the OCR remains critical to maintaining our momentum. Thanks to the hard work and assistance of the DLCA business administration team, the OCR has officially onboarded its second team member, Ms. Lyn-Marie Mc Carthy, who started mid-August. Having her on the team is a tremendous asset and we expect that she will help us move administrative business along a little more quickly than when the office was just staffed by one person. Additionally, we're working with the Division of Personnel to ensure that all paperwork has been properly vetted and approved so that we can staff the OCR Enforcement Division. To start, the Enforcement Division will be comprised of a staff of four (4), including two supervisory positions. As the work of the OCR continues to increase and the issuance of business licenses comes to fruition, the OCR anticipates the need for additional staffing. In the coming months, a communications and training staff member will likely become the next hiring priority.

As the roll-out process continues to full licensing and regulatory operations and the needs and demands of the industry are assessed and measured, there will no doubt be a need to increase the staffing capacity at the Office of Cannabis Regulation to include, at minimum, additional administrative support position(s), a public safety coordinator, a training specialist, and a full enforcement team. These additional personnel would in all likelihood not be hired before FY26.

93 BUDGET

94 Looking ahead to Fiscal Year 2025, it will be vital that the Office of Cannabis Regulation continues to be
95 funded to fully realize the scope of work outlined in the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act.

96 GOALS

97 One of the biggest factors that will determine the growth of the Office of Cannabis Regulation, and the
98 industry in general, will be the actual submitted responses for licensing. As mentioned, individual and
99 sacramental organization identification cards are available now. We have not been able to open applications
100 for Cannabis business licenses yet.

101 While we are focusing on the business licensing and have focused on dispensaries and cultivation licenses
102 because they are the two most complicated application processes, we are not ignoring the opportunities, and
103 requirements, for other licensing. Due to the lengthy evaluation and investigatory process for the dispensary
104 and cultivation licenses, we believe that the processes for additional licenses or certifications can run
105 simultaneously so that we do not further delay the much-anticipated issuance of business licenses. For
106 example, there will be, as mandated, Requests for Proposals (RFPs) issued for private testing facilities, as
107 well as applications available for third-party vendors, manufacturing, and more.

108 The Office of Cannabis Regulation strongly believes that as we continue moving forward to a fully realized
109 industry, a key component to the success of the roll-out is a robust public education and outreach campaign
110 with the participation of key partner agencies. Not only will it be critical to the success of those individuals
111 and entities who will be licensed either as consumers or business owners but the messaging will also be
112 critical for the public, those who reside here or just visit and those who actively participate in the industry or
113 those who choose not to, to understand clearly what is permissible and what is not.

114 CONCLUSION

115 With the continued support of the 35th Legislature and this Committee, I am certain that the Office of
116 Cannabis Regulation will continue to evince tangible progress so that the vision of a thriving Virgin Islands
117 cannabis industry in which our medicinal, sacramental, and recreational users may safely and healthily
118 partake is fully realized. As I conclude, I would like to extend a public thank you to the Cannabis Advisory
119 Board Chair, Dr. Catherine Kean, and the other Board members for their guidance, the Office of the
120 Governor and specifically the Special Advisor to the Governor the Honorable Positive T.A. Nelson,
121 members of this body for their support, the DLCA team led by Commissioner Nathalie Hodge, and my
122 newest team member, Ms. Lyn-Marie Mc Carthy, for their unwavering support of the OCR.

123 I thank you for the opportunity today to share with your Committee the current status of the Office of
124 Cannabis Regulation, I stand ready to field any questions arising.



VIRGIN ISLANDS OFFICE OF
CANNABIS
REGULATIONS



ISSUED CARDS



Issued Cards



2

Approved
Practitioners

2

Pending
Practitioners

1

Resident
Qualified
Medical
Patient

2

Non-Resident
Medical
Patients





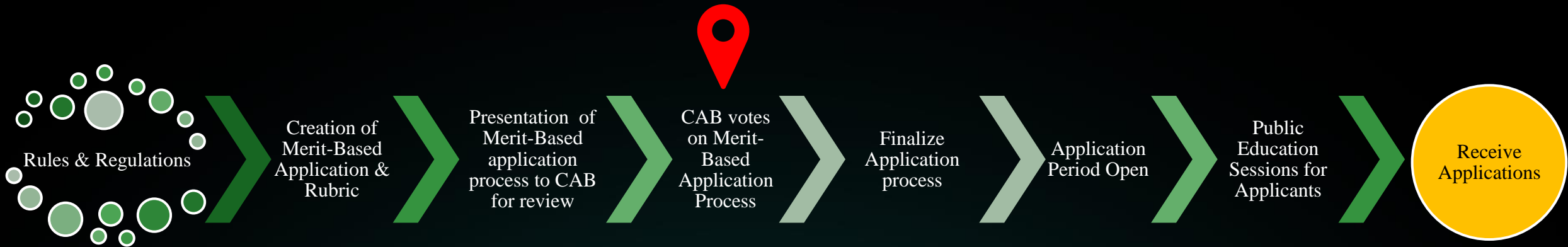
VIRGIN ISLANDS OFFICE OF
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DISPENSARIES &
CULTIVATION LICENSES
TIMELINE

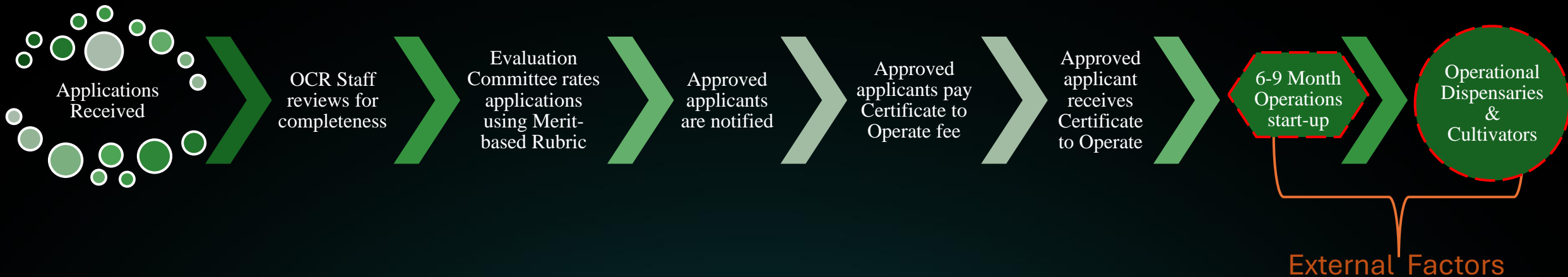


Dispensary & Cultivation License Timeline - Application





Dispensary & Cultivation License Timeline - Evaluation





VIRGIN ISLANDS OFFICE OF
CANNABIS
REGULATIONS



FEE SCHEDULE
2024/2025

Medical use - individuals

Form #	License Type	Description	Fee
OCR-0110	Resident Adult Medical Patient	Identification Card	\$50.00
OCR-0111	Resident Adult Medical Patient Renewal	Identification Card	\$50.00
OCR-0120	Resident Medical Patient (Under 21 years old)	Identification Card	\$50.00
OCR-0121	Resident Medical Patient (Under 21 years old) Renewal	Identification Card	\$50.00
OCR-0130	Non-Resident Medical Patient	Identification Card	\$50.00
OCR-0140	Designated Caregiver	Identification Card	\$35.00
OCR-0141	Designated Caregiver Renewal	Identification Card	\$35.00
OCR-0142	Caregiver Request for Additional Patients		\$20.00
OCR-0143	Patient Request for Additional Caregiver(s)		\$20.00
	At-Home Cultivation for Medical Patients & Sacramental Users	Add-On	\$100.00



Medical use - practitioners

Form #	License Type	Description	Fee
OCR-0210	Practitioner Registration (2 Years)	Certification	\$250.00
OCR-0211	Practitioner Registration Renewal (2 Years)	Certification	\$250.00



Sacramental

Form #	License Type	Description	Fee
OCR-0810	Sacramental Organization	Identification Card	\$200.00
OCR-0820	Sacramental Organization Renewal		\$200.00
OCR-0830	Sacramental User	Identification Card	\$50.00
OCR-0840	Sacramental User Renewal	Identification Card	\$50.00



Business

Form #	License Type	Description	Fee
OCR-0310	Agent Registration	Identification Card	\$250.00
OCR-0311	Agent Registration Renewal	Identification Card	\$250.00
OCR-0330	Third Party Vendor	Certification	\$1,000.00
OCR-0331	Third Party Vendor Renewal	Certification	\$1,000.00
OCR-0440	Approved Vendor	Certification	\$1,000.00
OCR-0441	Approved Vendor Renewal	Certification	\$1,000.00
OCR-0460	Research & Development	License	\$1,500.00
OCR-0461	Research & Development Renewal	License	\$1,500.00



Business

Form #	License Type	Description	Fee
OCR-0720	Request to Change Ownership		\$1,000.00
OCR-0730	Request to Change Business Location		\$500.00
OCR-0740	Request to Add Financial Interest Holder		\$1,000.00
OCR-0750	Request to Modify Licensed Premises		\$500.00



Business

Form #	License Type	Description	Fee
OCR-0850	OCR Certified Testing Facility	Certification	\$1,500.00
OCR-0851	Testing Facility	License	\$2,500.00
OCR-1000	Adult-Use Lounge	Permit	\$1,500.00
OCR-1100	On-Site Cannabis Use	Permit	\$1,500.00
OCR-1200	Cannabis Temporary Use	Permit	\$1,000.00

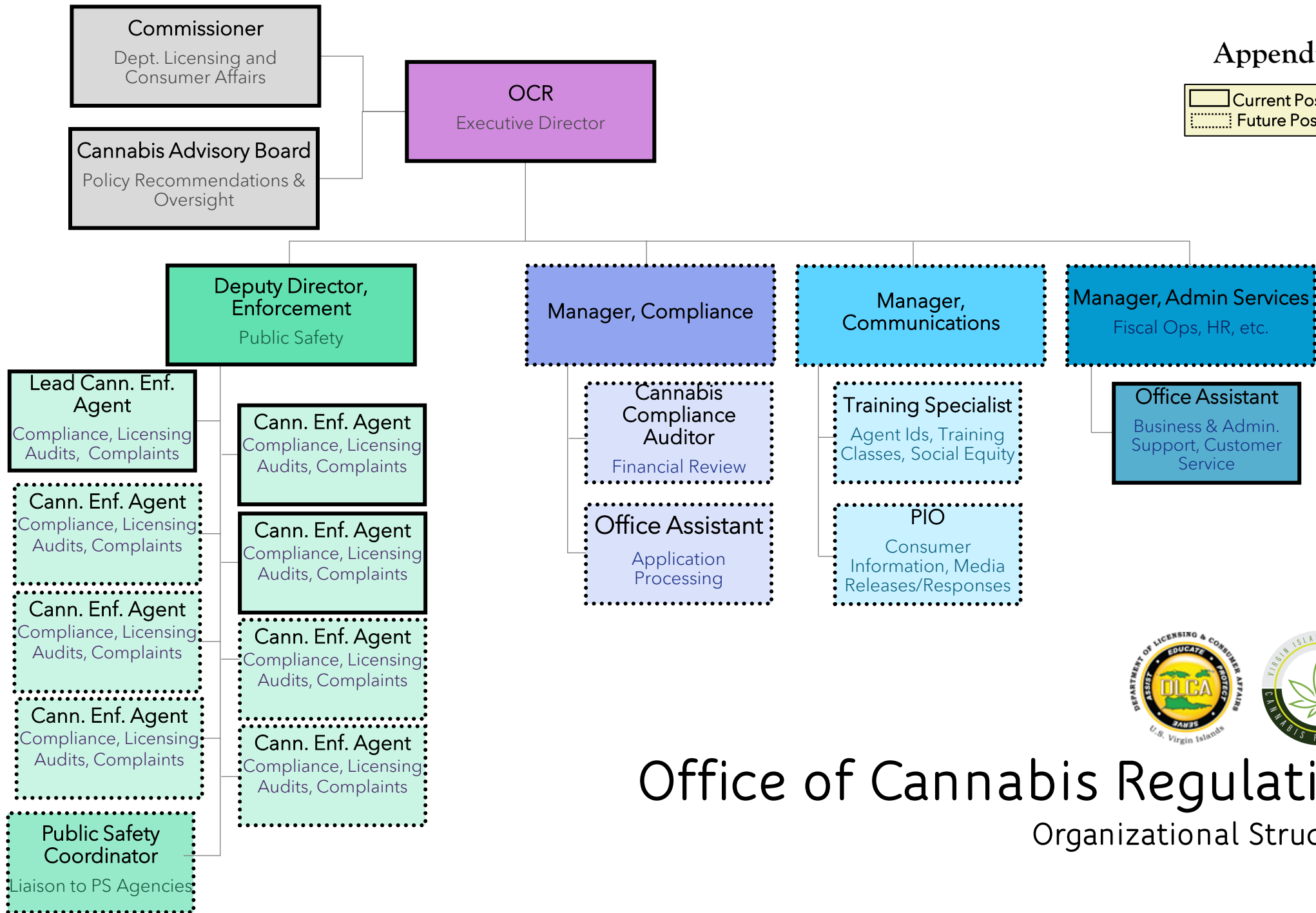


Business- Cultivation & dispensaries

Form #	License Type	Description	Fee
OCR-0410	Cannabis Cultivation	License	\$2,500.00 - \$10,000.00
OCR-0411	Cannabis Cultivation Renewal	License	\$2,500.00 - \$10,000.00
OCR-0420	Cannabis Manufacturing	License	\$5,000.00
OCR-0421	Cannabis Manufacturing Renewal	License	\$5,000.00
OCR-0430	Cannabis Dispensary* Application	License	\$10,000.00
OCR-0431	Cannabis Dispensary* Renewal	License	\$25,000.00
OCR-0480	Certificate to Operate*	Certification	\$15,000.00
OCR-0900	Micro-Cultivation	Permit	\$1,000.00



Appendix D



Office of Cannabis Regulation

Organizational Structure