



**CITY OF JERSEY CITY CANNABIS CONTROL BOARD APPLICATION**

**DIVISION OF COMMERCE**

**REQUIRED APPLICATION DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION**

**7. A workforce development and job creation plan.**

## BACKPACK BOYZ JC, LLC

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION PLAN**

Backpack Boyz JC, LLC (“Backpack Boyz”) will work closely with various local leaders and organizations in Jersey City and the surrounding areas, as well as the State of New Jersey, to develop an evolving Workforce Development and Job Creation Plan. The cannabis industry is rapidly growing across the country at a record pace. It is important that businesses and licensees in the cannabis industry provide opportunities for employment and growth, both professionally and personally, to individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, individuals with prior entanglements in the criminal and/or juvenile justice systems, and those individuals with disabilities. Backpack Boyz will work diligently to ensure these individuals are given opportunities to support our Class 5 Dispensary Retail operation in Jersey City.

Single owner, Elizabeth Sandberg, is a 35-year resident of New Jersey and has been the owner of a successful garden center, Victoria’s Nursery, in Paramus, New Jersey for over 30 years. During this time, Ms. Sandberg has provided ongoing job creation and managed over 20 full and part-time employees while maintaining ongoing operational compliance with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the New Jersey Environmental Authority, and maintains active membership with the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association (NJLCA).

As an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE), the Company pledges to not discriminate against employees based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information. We believe this is critical to our mission as a Class 5 retailer and hold this responsibility to the highest standard.

#### **Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Communities & Impact Zones**

Many socio-economically disadvantaged communities are located geographically proximate to Backpack Boyz in Northern New Jersey, as outlined in the Cannabis Regulatory Commission’s published Impact Zones. Jersey City itself is a designated Impact Zone, the only one listed in Hudson County, New Jersey.

As the cannabis industry continues to expand across the country and more and more states begin to implement both legalized medical and adult use cannabis programs, it is imperative job opportunities are provided to individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Historically, the majority of cannabis related arrests have taken place in these communities. As more states begin to decriminalize and expunge records for minor and sometimes even major cannabis offenses, companies must tap into these communities and offer living wage jobs for individuals eager to enter this emerging industry. Not only are job and advancement opportunities provided, but providing stable paying jobs into these communities will directly have a positive impact on the individuals living there.

The Company intends to participate in local job fairs and similar workforce development and recruiting events in these communities and will ensure that available jobs are posted and available for interested applicants on an ongoing basis.

#### **Individuals with Prior Entanglements in the Criminal and/or Juvenile Justice System**

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Backpack Boyz is working to identify local and regional Re-entry service providers to assist the Company with offering part-time and full-time employment opportunities to individuals impacted by the criminal justice system, poverty, and substance abuse. In collaboration with a Re-entry program, Backpack Boyz intends to create opportunities for personal and community economic development while inspiring ongoing professional growth through training and reintegration counseling. Our goal is to help end the cycle of revolving incarceration by providing access to stable employment, education, and professional development to reduce the risk of relapse.

According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program, on average New Jersey arrested over 30,000 individuals annually for marijuana possession and distribution charges from 2016-2018. According to the ACLU, New Jersey averaged approximately one cannabis arrest every 15 minutes, among the highest frequency of cannabis charges in the country. Compounding this issue, the ACLU also pointed out that African Americans were 3.45 times more likely to be arrested for a cannabis-related charge than a White person, leading to a disproportionately higher number of arrests of minorities during this time. In a state with among the most police officers per capita, there has historically been a higher frequency of traffic stops directly leading to an increase in cannabis-related offenses, until recent social justice efforts have begun to reduce this impact.

By aligning with a Re-entry program, Backpack Boyz can create direct opportunities for individuals impacted by the criminal justice system, poverty, and substance abuse. The goal is to create opportunities in person economic development while inspiring individual growth through individual and group counseling. The Company hopes to end the "revolving door" cycle of incarceration and relapse by providing concrete access to financial support, education, and workforce training and development in an emerging industry to reduce the risk of criminal behavior. We believe by promoting a holistic and comprehensive approach to wellness, healthy lifestyles, and recovery, individuals with prior entanglements in the criminal justice system can enjoy the economic and social benefits of a living wage job.

### **Individuals with Disabilities & ADA-Compliance**

Backpack Boyz understands the importance of providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities and service-disabled veterans. The Company has secured a storefront location at 746 Grand St. Jersey City, NJ 07304. The property is compliant with all municipal and state regulations and zoning ordinances and will be renovated to meet and exceed current ADA accessibility standards, ensuring that disabled staff, vendors, and customers are able to be welcomed safely and securely at the facility.

### **Job Creation, Timeline, and Staffing Plan**

Backpack Boyz intends to benefit Jersey City and the surrounding community in many ways directly through the creation of jobs for local residents. Backpack Boyz will provide a living wage to all employees, including benefits, annual bonuses and raises for outstanding employees, and clear advancement paths for those committed to their professional development. We anticipate the creation of approximately 8-10 jobs, including management and full-time and part-time positions.

Additionally, the Company has entered into a labor peace agreement as recommended for all annual applicants. The Company has agreed to terms with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), who represents close to 10,000 workers located throughout New Jersey

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and the surrounding area. Their work is integral to ensuring access to quality jobs for the citizens of New Jersey. The burgeoning personal-use cannabis has the opportunity to produce a large number of employment opportunities for local citizens, and UFCW has deemed Backpack Boyz to be a strong supporter of fair employment practices and community development. The Company also signed a neutrality agreement with the Union, ensuring that our employees have access to comprehensive representation and fair compensation.

### **Commitment to Local Hiring**

Backpack Boyz aims to integrate our organization into the Jersey City community while providing jobs that all pay more than \$15 per hour to local residents. The Company will provide our full-time employees with an attractive benefits package including medical benefits, paid time off (PTO), volunteer time off (VTO), and other customary benefits. Backpack Boyz is committed to recruiting the best, most diverse team possible, as our operation depends on having a motivated and talented team of professionals. We will train and support our employees; high potential to learn and a deep passion for quality, compliance and service will be key qualifiers for employment. We are prepared to invest time and funds into proper employee education and training, particularly in regard to what the cannabis industry entails, the part our company will play in the industry and the various ways in which we will help the communities served by our retail operation.

Our education and recruitment efforts will begin with a job and career fair to be hosted within ninety (90) days of license issuance and we will additionally coordinate with UFCW, local vocational schools, community colleges, and universities for our hiring needs. The Company leadership team will attend other local career fairs to speak with members of the community and interested candidates about the positions available as well as our company mission. Backpack Boyz will also establish local partnerships with universities, community organizations, and other business leaders so as to reach the greatest number of qualified local candidates. These partnerships will create pipeline opportunities to pair qualified candidates with career opportunities within the Company.

### **Working with Local Vendors and Service Providers**

Beyond directly employing a diverse workforce from the local community, the Company will also endeavor to engage with local, diverse ancillary businesses and contractors, to promote economic development among our fellow business operators whenever possible. Within sixty (60) days of being awarded an Annual License from the Commission, the Company will develop a Local Vendor/Service Provider List, to be referred to as a first source when selecting a vendor or service provider. Backpack Boyz will work with local and state offices to populate this list and will define preferred vendors as local and/or owned by women, veterans, minorities, or disabled persons. The Company is committed to supporting companies and businesses that share in our core values and recognize that building and maintaining mutually respectful relationships will help both our business and our local, regional, and state economy to flourish. Local businesses we plan to potentially engage include:

- Specialized Service Providers and Vendors
- General Contractor(s)
- Electrician, Lighting, Plumbing Technicians
- Mechanical and HVAC Technicians
- Security System Installer

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- Landscaping Team
- Waste Disposal Company
- Automotive Service Provider
- Advertising/Marketing Agency
- Merchandising Vendors
- Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment Suppliers
- Office Supplies Vendor
- Safety Equipment Suppliers

Working side-by-side with the diverse residents and businesses within our community and across the state will enrich our company culture as our business develops. We aim to be a role model employer and pillar of exemplary company values and business ethics, as we feel these elements truly uphold the Company's definition of success.

### **Criminal Background Check and Employee Training**

As a condition of employment, every potential employee will be required to pass a criminal background check prior to beginning work at Backpack Boyz in accordance with N.J.A.C 17:30-7.12(d). Employees shall be required to self-report any event that would disqualify them from employment within 24 hours of occurrence, and the Company will also conduct ongoing background checks for all employees on an annual basis to ensure ongoing compliance.

As required by N.J.A.C. 17:30-8.1, all owners, principals, management services contractors, employees or volunteers of the business will register with the Commission and request a Cannabis Business Identification Card. Prior to requesting an Identification Card, all individuals will complete a training course from a license applicant, license holder or a third-party approved by the Commission, including training on the following key topics; history of cannabis use, prohibition, and legalization; common cultivation techniques and strain/cultivar varieties; chemotypes of cannabis; packaging, labeling, and advertising; cultivation and manufacturing processes; health education regarding the risks of cannabis uses and over-use; the medical use of cannabis and Laws and rules pertaining to cannabis as covered in N.J.A.C 17:30.

In addition, all employees will receive an employee handbook and participate in a new employee orientation program. Backpack Boyz will provide onsite, hands-on training for management and employees in each facet of its operations before opening its doors. Training content will be reinforced with written materials, a manual of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), instruction from managers, and performance evaluations. Employees will be trained in all safety and security measures, as well as possess a full understanding of how to report hazards and safety concerns. The Company will comply with all applicable state and federal OSHA workplace safety and health requirements and maintain occupational safety and health standards that equal or exceed the current best practices in the industry.

### **Drug-Free Workplace**

As part of its commitment to creating a safe and drug-free workplace, Backpack Boyz will develop and implement a comprehensive Drug-Free Workplace Program in accordance with guidance provided by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), a division of the US Department of Health and Human Services. The company will routinely test for illegal

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drug use, not including THC, and not hire employees who test positive for illegal drugs under any circumstances at any time.

### **Conclusion**

Backpack Boyz will be a welcomed, trusted, and valued member of the Jersey City community and model of exemplary company values and culture. We will create jobs for Jersey City residents and foster their continued education. We have a clear plan on how to create jobs for the community, with a focus on veterans and minorities, while contributing to the economic development of Jersey City and the state. Our focus on community wellness, education, and economic prosperity will be the driving force behind our company and is embodied in every aspect of our business plan. By creating jobs, engaging in philanthropic and business relationships with local companies and organizations, educating the community, and dispensing safe and high-quality personal-use cannabis, the Company will ensure its workforce, outside vendors, and community stakeholders prosper and thrive in this emerging new industry.



## Diversity Plan

Backpack Boyz JC, LLC (“Backpack Boyz” or the “Company”) stands proud as a woman owned cannabis business. As an American owned enterprise, we are excited for the opportunity that the legal cannabis industry brings to shift perspectives and create an industry modeled after our diverse state. We recognize how important it is for minorities and historically marginalized peoples to have a voice within the incoming cannabis industry. As such, we present an absolute commitment to recognizing and empowering efforts for diversity in cannabis business ownership, management, employment, and contracting.

The War on Drugs has caused needless damage to those of culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse identities, especially Black and Brown individuals. We understand these hardships and adversities, as we have lived with them ourselves. To ensure that the cannabis industry progresses beyond its discriminatory past, we vow to provide our time and resources to adopting multicultural philosophies and investing in women, BIPOC individuals, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those living with disabilities.

Backpack Boyz is striving to create an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and respected because of their difference – a place where every employee can be themselves so they can reach their potential and help us achieve our business goals. We want our business to be innovative and productive so we can deliver the best products and services to our customers, and we need diversity to help us achieve this. The more we collaborate and value difference the closer we get to living in a truly inclusive community. This diversity and inclusion strategy provides us with a road map to create an inclusive workplace. To help us achieve this, we need the commitment of every employee to understand what we are trying to achieve, to work together and be open to change. This strategy is everyone’s responsibility and I encourage you to get involved.

Backpack Boyz is determined to be a unique leading presence for diversity, equity, and inclusion within New Jersey’s cannabis market as authentic entrepreneurs who walk the walk of diverse representation. This diversity plan is a welcome decree to hiring from, developing, and educating about communities that have been negatively impacted by cannabis prohibition. The following plan elaborates on our vision, mission, leadership, responsibilities, and goals in making Backpack Boyz a culturally conscious enterprise, assuring that New Jersey’s cannabis industry is as diverse and equitable as possible.

### *Vision*

To have a respectful and supportive workplace that enables us to attract and retain a diverse workforce that represents our customers and community.

### *Purpose*

This strategy is a two-year plan to help us achieve our business and people goals. It provides a shared direction and commitment for the organization so we can work together to respect and value our diverse workforce and build a more inclusive workplace.

It comprises of three key goals and identifies the priorities and actions we will take over the next two years. It outlines the key roles and responsibilities and how we will track progress and measure success.

### *Goals*

1. Workforce diversity – recruit from a diverse, qualified group of candidates to increase diversity of thinking and perspective
2. Workplace inclusion – foster a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable all employees to contribute to their potential and increase retention
3. Sustainability and accountability – identify and breakdown systemic barriers to full inclusion by embedding diversity and inclusion in policies and practices and equipping leaders with the ability to manage diversity and be accountable for the results

## **Policy Transparency**

### *Diversity and Inclusion Mission Statement*

We dedicate our efforts to promoting diversity and inclusion within our organization, our community, and the industry at large. The following mission statement was carefully crafted to follow strategies and responsibilities that best serve those who have been disadvantaged and negatively impacted by cannabis prohibition. Again, we iterate that we understand how important it is for equitable access and representation within this industry. These are not commitments we take lightly, and ones that we will surely see made manifest and maintained.

- Backpack Boyz is fully committed to creating, developing, sustaining, and expanding a workplace that fosters diversity and inclusion for staff, employees, and clientele.
- We at Backpack Boyz are dedicated to equal opportunity employment and the participation from all team members in all employment classifications throughout our organization. This commitment to equal opportunities also applies to any potential business partners, vendors, suppliers, and independent contractors.
- Backpack Boyz vows to engage with and hire candidates that provide a range of skills, talent, and strong work ethic to meet and exceed our business goals. We will ensure that at all levels of operation, we recognize and cherish diverse viewpoints as we are all aligned in achieving professional success and creating a prosperous industry.
- Diversity in background can lead to diversity of thought. Diverse thinking will prevent stagnancy and protect our shared future.
- Backpack Boyz will ensure that the recruitment, training, and advancement of working people occur without discrimination or bias against race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, family status, lifestyle, age, culture, religion or spiritual practice, military and veteran status, citizenship status, and/or disability.
- As a woman-led group, we are dedicated to upholding equity and inclusion by working with business partners and suppliers that share our values.

### *Evaluation Methodology*

The effectiveness and achievement of our goals for diversity and inclusion will be reviewed and reported on quarterly. The report will be provided to the CEO and the executive team. The review will focus on the implementation of the actions, the progress made and successes. It will also identify any adjustments required to improve effectiveness. The evaluation will include:

- A qualitative assessment of progress or achievement of the actions
- A quantitative assessment of the impact of the strategy on employee perceptions and experience of the culture of the organization

The outcome of the evaluation and review will guide the development of further action plans.

Backpack Boyz is proud to lead the industry with robust standards of compliance for Backpack Boyz and develop an educational curriculum that works for all customers.

### **Continuing Accountability**

We at Backpack Boyz shall hold ourselves accountable to the fulfillment of our mission to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. This strategic plan must be implemented and followed from the highest levels of our company to find success as a dynamic twenty-first century business. Our Chief Executive Officer and General Manager shall be tasked with ensuring accountability regarding our organization's efforts in cultivating diversity, equity, and inclusion in our business.

Backpack Boyz understands that efforts to realize and sustain diversity and equity at our company require ongoing conversation, honesty, and accountability. We will do our part to create a safe place to work by identifying any circumstances that may jeopardize the security of our team members, especially threats and hazards that would jeopardize the safety of our workplace environment or the happiness of our team members. In any event that causes conflict, confusion, or controversy regarding diversity and inclusion, we will be forthcoming in how we approach issues, keeping open and honest dialogue as we navigate the problem(s) and work towards an ultimate solution.

In the event that a company executive, employee, or business partner behaves in any way that threatens equity and inclusiveness, we will approach the situation discursively. We will use this initial opportunity to clarify any wrongdoings and allow the individual to take honest accountability. Should negative behavior continue that goes against our diversity policies, we will take appropriate disciplinary actions.

### **Company Roles and Responsibilities**

With our comprehensive plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organization, Backpack Boyz establishes roles and responsibilities for each team member to comply with.

All employees have the responsibility to maintain an environment that is safe, respectful, and productive. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly within the workplace in an environment that recognizes and accepts diversity.

We can all contribute by participating in workplace diversity and inclusion activities and opportunities and complying with all anti-discrimination and workplace diversity legislation.

Managers and supervisors can contribute by displaying a positive commitment to workplace diversity and inclusion, being role models, fostering an inclusive workplace culture, dealing quickly and effectively with inappropriate behavior, and participating in diversity training and encouraging team members to attend.

- All employees of Backpack Boyz will uphold and maintain a workplace environment that is safe, respectful, and conducive to maximizing our business goals and honoring the presence of diversity and equity. Everyone within our operation has the right to be treated with kindness, dignity, and fairness regardless of their diversity status, and diverse individuals should feel welcome to work within our company.
- All employees, workers, and business partners of Backpack Boyz must comply with our Diversity and Inclusion Statement, as well as all concordant anti-discrimination policies.
- All managers and supervisors for Backpack Boyz must contribute to the collective strategizing and efforts to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion amongst employees and customers. We expect that our managers and supervisors will also function as role-models in their capacities, following accountability protocols when dealing with any conversation or behavior that threatens workplace inclusiveness and the safety of our executives, staff, employees, customers, and any other business stakeholder.
- The success of our organization’s diversity, equity, and inclusion plan is dependent on the active engagement from all members of our executive, managerial, and customer facing teams. Everyone has the responsibility to contribute towards a workplace that not only perceives diversity and inclusion but makes every effort to welcome and cherish those of diverse backgrounds and identities.

**Communication Plan**

Efforts to realize diversity, equity, and inclusion within Backpack Boyz require the establishment and maintenance of ongoing communication within our operation and with the outside world.

Below is a chart that illustrates how our messages for diversity, equity, and inclusion are conveyed and made accessible to stakeholders:

Audience	Content of Communications	Means of Communications
<b>Executive, Staff, Employees and Business Partners</b>	Programming for diversity efforts including strategy meetings, training, volunteer opportunities, open-dialogue events, panels, data discussions on company diversity progress, the recognition and observance of Holidays and days of significance.	Emails, newsletters, fliers, posters, social media posts, in-person and online announcements, and in-person and online training.

<b>Customers, Stakeholders, and Shareholders</b>	Awards and recognition for diversity and inclusion, results on any data regarding diversity and inclusion, social media communications regarding diversity programming.	Emails, newsletters, social media posts, reports, and online announcements.
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**Partnerships, Suppliers and Contractors**

Backpack Boyz is determined to engage and enhance all diversely identified populations within the communities in which we will operate. We intend to have established commitments and partnerships with vendors and contractors, at least commensurate with or proportionate to those diverse groups' representation in the general population and economy of New Jersey.