

California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University
**OVERVIEW OF NEVADA COUNTY'S CANNABIS EQUITY
ASSESSMENT & LOCAL EQUITY PROGRAM**

Purpose of Cannabis Equity Assessment

- Nevada County contracted with the California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University to conduct a cannabis equity assessment and develop a local equity program manual in 2020-2021.
- The goal of the cannabis equity assessment and local equity program manual is to assure that individuals who were adversely impacted by the criminalization of cannabis have access to assistance in entering the legal cannabis industry.
- The cannabis equity assessment provides recommendations to guide the county to develop its local equity program.
- The cannabis equity assessment utilizes primary and secondary data to document Nevada County's history with the prohibition and criminalization of cannabis, and its impact on the community.

Summary of Nevada County's History of Cannabis Criminalization

- Nevada County has a deep history of cannabis criminalization as a significant hub for countercultural "back to the land" migration and attendant cannabis cultivation ("legacy community").
- The county was subject to relatively less CAMP eradication focus in the late 1980s and 1990s, attracting migration from other parts of the state, especially from the region known as the Emerald Triangle, where eradication was more intense.
- Enforcement diminished after the passage of Prop 215 in 1996, and the county developed a robust non-commercial medical cannabis community related to both the intergenerational legacy community as well as new actors that shared their ecological values and dedication to local community-building.
- The county also attracted less communitarian, more commercially oriented cannabis market actors associated with a statewide "Green Rush" that accelerated after 2008, due to a combination of factors.
- Between 2011 and 2016, the county passed highly restrictive ordinances in reaction to the Green Rush, eventually moving to ban all outdoor cultivation in the county.
- Non-commercial medical cannabis activists were targeted in the subsequent crackdown which was especially intense between 2013 and 2016 as wholesale cannabis prices crashed. Small scale cultivators and noncommercial medical cannabis actors experienced significant hardship during this time.

Assessment Recommendations for Local Equity Program

- Eligibility factors for the equity program should be focused on specific targeted populations most harmed by the criminalization of cannabis.
- Ensure that equity participants have adequate opportunity to take advantage of the program.
- Create specific services that mitigate barriers to entering the legal market including lack of access to capital, business space, technical support and regulatory compliance assistance.

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- Cannabis operators should provide equitable employment opportunities including hiring those with past non-violent convictions, local residents, and historically disadvantaged populations.
- Update the equity assessment every three years.
- Create a data tracking and evaluation plan to monitor and share progress of the equity program, monitor, and share trends in the emerging legal cannabis industry, and identify areas for course correction.
- Assist equity participants with opportunities to market and network with other cannabis businesses participating in equity programs across the state.

For more details, please see the complete reports: *Nevada County Cannabis Equity Assessment (2021)* and *Nevada County Local Equity Program Manual (2021)*.