



The cannabis industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Anticipated to reach an [excess of \\$50 billion](#) as an industry by 2025 and quickly coming up on the coattails of the tobacco and alcohol industries, now is the time to get involved.

Whether it's getting right into the commercial grow setting, working behind the counter at a dispensary, or working at an ancillary business, there is a vast array of opportunity populating the cannabis landscape.

If you know how to look.

Over half the country — 33 states and the District of Columbia— have broadly legalized cannabis by some means, whether through decriminalization, a medical cannabis program, or full blown legalization. And (almost) all of them are hiring, or will be hiring in the future.

This cannabis industry employment guide serves as your personal guide to understanding how to get into the industry in your state of choice. While this guide may not cover every state, it will cover the biggest industries and fastest growing markets in cannabis, both recreational and medical.

We hope this cannabis industry guide will help demystify some of the challenges of getting into the industry by showing you the requirements, restrictions and specifications of these state's laws, and how their respective markets operate.

As the entire industry is run on a state level, this gives every state the option to try different policies, requirements, licenses, etc. This also means that every state will be different. You need to know these differences, especially should you decide to relocate once you enter the industry.

So, without further ado, scroll on down and get started on The Real Dirt Cannabis Industry Employment Guide!

Industry Employment Guide (by state)

Colorado



Working in the Colorado cannabis industry may seem like the safest option. After all, Colorado was the *first* state to legalize cannabis, and so the state must have regulations and such in order by now, right?

For the most part yes, Colorado has a well-regulated and monitored industry, but like any legal industry, it isn't perfect. Regulations change constantly. As it stands now, here are the basic qualifications for getting into the Colorado cannabis industry.

1. In order to work in the recreational cannabis industry legally in Colorado, you must [obtain a MED badge](#). This can be done through a simple application process, but there are a few prerequisites.
2. In order to qualify for application for a MED badge, you must:
 - a. Have a relatively clean criminal record, which means no felony convictions in the past several years. The only exception here are non-violent cannabis-related offenses, which may not count against your application.
 - b. Owe no outstanding differences to the IRS or to the Colorado Department of Revenue.
 - c. Not be affiliated with organized crime. And yes, you'll be required to provide photos of any tattoos on your body.
 - d. Not be a licensed physician.
 - e. Not be a member of law enforcement, either.
3. The application process itself is straightforward enough. There's two types of licenses you can apply for. "Key Employees" are employees in management or supervisor positions. "Support Employees" are employees who don't make operational decisions. Both Key and Support Employees fill out the same form.

4. You'll need to prove that you're a Colorado resident (which requires a Colorado driver's license). You can apply without a Social Security Number, but if you don't have one, you'll need to fill out a sworn affidavit stating you don't have a Social Security Number.
5. Lastly, you'll have to go to the actual MED office to apply. So fill your forms and relevant information out at home, and make sure you bring everything with you when you go.

There is more to do in the recreational industry after obtaining your MED badge, from licensing for cultivation facilities, running a grow operation and more.

California



Unlike Colorado, California does not require any sort of application process for a badge or certification to work in the legal cannabis industry. However, there are certification courses that aren't required, that many take to have an advantage.

However, there are plenty of hoops and licensing processes to jump through should you decide to start your own business. In regards to the specific licenses you can obtain, there are three:

1. The [Bureau of Cannabis Control](#) (Bureau) is the lead agency in regulating commercial cannabis licenses for medical and adult-use cannabis in California. The Bureau is responsible for licensing retailers, distributors, testing labs, micro-businesses, and temporary cannabis events.
2. The [Manufactured Cannabis Safety Branch](#), a division of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), is responsible for regulating the manufacturers of cannabis-infused edibles for both medical and nonmedical use.
3. [CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing](#), a division of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), is responsible for licensing cultivators of medicinal and adult-use (recreational) cannabis and implementing a track-and-trace system to record the movement of cannabis through the distribution chain.

For each sector of the industry from cultivating, to manufacturing, to retail is separately regulated by their respective agency. But annual licenses are limited, and first come first serve.

Some businesses instead will opt to apply for a **temporary license**. This gives that business a 120-day period to operate legally in the cannabis industry in California. Some do this as a means to get business running while waiting for an annual license, while others might maintain their temporary license and apply for extensions.

Oregon



Currently, Oregon has two legal cannabis markets; recreational and medical. While the recreational market is quickly becoming vastly larger there, working in a recreationally licensed business requires a “Marijuana Worker Permit” issued by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC).

To obtain a permit, workers must take an exam, pass a background check and once passed, pay a \$100.00 fee.

Working at a medical business, those regulated by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), existing under Oregon’s nearly 20 year old medical marijuana program (OMMP) doesn’t require a permit. However, some employers may complete a background check, and some may insist on hiring permit-holding workers only.

Applying for a Marijuana Worker Permit is relatively simple and similar to Colorado. Here’s the basic steps:

1. To apply for an OLCC marijuana worker permit, applicants must be 21 years of age or older.
2. After studying and completing the required exam, you must wait to hear your results from the OLCC.
3. Once accepted, an OLCC marijuana worker permit is valid for five years before it needs to be renewed. Applicants may be disqualified [for any number of reasons](#). Various prior felony convictions are typically cause for denial, although some marijuana offences are accepted.
4. Employees of marijuana producers (growers, etc.), processors (extract makers, edible makers, etc.), wholesalers (distributors), or retailers (dispensaries, etc.)

must obtain a permit to work. **This includes the coveted position of budtender among Oregon's growing number of recreational dispensaries.**

If you're ready to move up to starting your own cannabis business in Oregon, there's a separate licensing process. While all the details you need to know would take up the rest of this guide, [you can see all the requirements for starting a cannabis business in Oregon here](#).

Washington



Similarly to Oregon, the cannabis industry in Washington is run by the same board that controls the alcohol industry. If your potential business will be involved with the production, processing, or retailing of marijuana then you need a marijuana license.

There are no requirements for working in the Washington cannabis industry.

Looking for work in states like Washington and others on this list with no mandatory requirements for entry is pretty broad, so check out local job boards. You would be surprised how many ads for budtenders or growers you can find on Craigslist or Ganjapreneur.

Starting your own business in the Washington cannabis industry however has several applications you can fill out depending on the business you are pursuing.

There are five licenses you can apply for in Washington: producer, processor, retailer, transportation, and research.

Producer's License

There are three tiers to the producer license that you can apply for, each for the variable sizes of your operation. Tier 1 covers 2,000 feet or less of dedicated canopy. Tier 2 covers 2,000 to 10,000 feet. Tier three covers 10,000 to 30,000.

You currently cannot apply for a producer's license.

Processor's License

A processor's license covers processing, packaging and labelling for cannabis and cannabis-infused products. The license allows you to blend tested useable marijuana from multiple lots into a single package for sale to a marijuana retail licensee, providing

the label requirements for each lot used in the blend are met and the percentage by weight of each lot is also included on the label.

Retailer's License

A retailer's license allows you to sell only usable marijuana, marijuana-infused products, marijuana concentrates and marijuana paraphernalia at retail in retail outlets to persons twenty-one years of age and older. A retail license does come with restrictions:

- Internet sales and delivery of product is prohibited.
- Marijuana retailers may not sell marijuana products below their acquisition cost.
- Any entity and/or principals within any entity are limited to no more than three retail marijuana licenses with no multiple location licensee allowed more than thirty-three percent of the allowed licenses in any county or city

The cost of application for each license is \$250, with a \$1,480 fee for issuance and renewal.

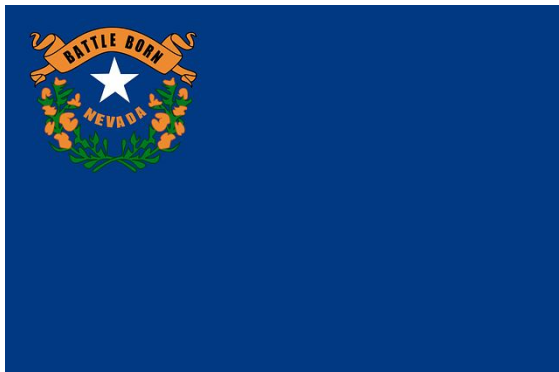
There is currently no license or permit required to work in a dispensary as a budtender. You must be 21, and employers may still utilize a background check. However the way the recreational industry works is different in Washington.

In Washington state, it is against the rules to speak of cannabis' therapeutic benefits at a dispensary, so other knowledge like growing practices and a deep understanding of the shops various vendors is an excellent start.

Recreational shops see a lot of "newcomer" customers looking for knowledge to guide their first time buying legal weed, and the Medical Marijuana Certified Consultant certification process includes a 20 hour training program that teaches workers what they can and cannot do when selling retail marijuana.

This certification is not a prerequisite for working in recreational cannabis in the state, only at medical shops, but the certificate can be very helpful in getting hired at a retail dispensary.

Nevada



Working for a recreational cannabis business in Nevada requires what is called a Registered Agent Card.

The application process is extremely simple in Nevada, with a website portal dedicated to the process. You just need to go to the [Marijuana Agent Portal](#), create an account and complete the application.

Other than the registration card, the only requirements for working in the industry in Nevada are as follows:

1. You must be 21 years of age
2. You cannot have been convicted of an excluded felony offense

For business owners, the Nevada state Department of Taxes handles all licensing. The Department is also responsible for the state's medical program.

There are five types of retail marijuana establishment licenses:

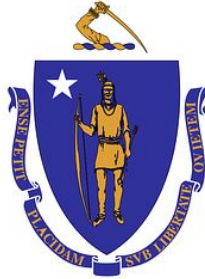
- **Cultivation Facility** - licensed to cultivate (grow), process, and package marijuana; to have marijuana tested by a testing facility; and to sell marijuana to retail marijuana stores, to marijuana product manufacturing facilities, and to other cultivation facilities, but not to consumers.
- **Distributor** - licensed to transport marijuana from a marijuana establishment to another marijuana establishment. For example, from a cultivation facility to a retail store.
- **Product Manufacturing Facility** - licensed to purchase marijuana; manufacture, process, and package marijuana and marijuana products; and sell marijuana and marijuana products to other product manufacturing facilities and to retail

marijuana stores, but not to consumers. Marijuana products include things like edibles, ointments, and tinctures.

- **Testing Facility** - licensed to test marijuana and marijuana products, including for potency and contaminants.
- **Retail Store** - licensed to purchase marijuana from cultivation facilities, marijuana and marijuana products from product manufacturing facilities, and marijuana from other retail stores; can sell marijuana and marijuana products to consumers.

As of the writing of this guide, Nevada is [now accepting applications](#) for recreational businesses that were not previously medical marijuana dispensaries. Prior to November 2018, only medical marijuana dispensaries that were already established could apply.

Massachusetts



Massachusetts is another state that has recently legalized recreational cannabis use, but has yet to set up any sort of strict employment guidelines or restrictions. This can be a good and bad thing, depending on your situation.

There is an emphasis on opening up employment opportunities in the industry for those who were negatively impacted by the previous laws. Those who were convicted of minor offenses involving cannabis, mainly people of color, will have an advantage in this market.

There is no required certification to work in a dispensary or other cannabis business. Though, if you want to get into the processing side a chemical engineering or scientific background is required.

Like other states without mandatory certification requirements, there are still optional courses that will put you above the competition for wherever you decide to apply.

Also keep in mind with Massachusetts, [recreational sales of cannabis have yet to even begin](#). This means that much could change after sales start, as the state has yet to see the scale and impact of the new industry.

Massachusetts is a state on very unstable ground when it comes to cannabis, as many local governments still do not approve, holding the industry back for now. So keep an eye on Massachusetts, and start looking into opportunity once the market opens up.

Maine



Maine is in a similar position to that of Massachusetts. The people voted to legalize cannabis possession in 2017, allowing up to 2.5 ounces for personal use.

However, the current governor of Maine is very anti-cannabis, and has vetoed numerous bills meant to move forward the legal market in Maine. While legislators have fought back for the people and overruled the most recent veto, the market won't be opening up this year.

Maine is another state to keep an eye on, as once the market does open, there will be a plethora of opportunity. Unfortunately that may not be until 2019 or even 2020 depending on how much push back legislators continue to get from opponents.

With that said, it is *not* possible to work in the Maine legal cannabis industry at this time, because it doesn't really exist yet.

For now, citizens of Maine can possess 2.5 ounces, and grow up to 3 flowering plants. If you build up some growing experience you might have an in to the industry in a year or so when businesses are looking for experienced growers.

Vermont



While legal in Vermont, the bill that passed the law in 2017 did not include any plan for a regulated and taxed marketplace. I.e, there are no legal cannabis businesses yet.

Due to this, Vermont is very similar to Washington D.C., who also legalized possession, cultivation and consumption, with no regulated marketplace. This obviously causes serious problems when people still have no legal place to go and get their cannabis.

This helps the private (black) market thrive, as anybody can grow their own cannabis and “gift” it to someone, accepting a “donation” in return. Basically, the private market in Vermont can now operate with impunity through a loophole.

As long as this is the case, don’t expect to find any recreational cannabis jobs in Vermont in the near future. It would seem that the main purpose of the legalization bill being passed, despite its problems, aimed to solely legalize cannabis in the state.

More bills will be passed in the future to resolve the issues caused by the current bill, and a functioning cannabis marketplace will be up and running Vermont soon enough.

For now, it is possible Vermontians will take a tip out of the DC handbook and start their own donating-gifting grey market, which has become very successful in the District of Columbia. There may be opportunity in this market in Vermont, but remember that it will come with risks.

Washington D.C.



As previously stated, the District of Columbia legalized cannabis in an almost identical way to that of Vermont. The plant counts for personal cultivation might be different, but the state and district are almost identical otherwise.

Where Vermont has the private market where most business is done, D.C. has made moves into what would be called the “grey market” of legal cannabis. This is all in part due to the gift/donation aspect of the industry.

Just like Vermont, citizens in D.C. can grow their own cannabis and gift it to anybody. They can also receive a donation for their gift. The people of the District have capitalized on this loophole in the bill, creating an explosive cannabis delivery market.

For example, a customer can contact a delivery service and order a specific offering — like a grinder and sticker for \$250 — and as a “free gift” with their “donation”, they happen to get an ounce of cannabis with their grinder.

This means that *there are* jobs in D.C., if you know where to look...and are willing to take the risk.

Since all of these businesses operate in a grey area of the industry, where they technically aren't breaking the law, just working around it, there can be some shadiness to the D.C. industry.

Additionally, job security is not very high in this industry, as these grey area businesses can be shut down out of nowhere as soon as they cross a line or step out of the grey market accidentally, which could also result in legal repercussions.

Nevertheless, the opportunity is there for those who seek it, and the reward of getting in on the ground level a new industry that has yet to really begin in the legal sense is a great set up for success in D.C. in the future.

Medical Only States

These selections are the most promising medical industries currently. Not every medical state is included

Maryland



Maryland's medical marijuana program has three license you can apply for through the state; Growers, Processors and Dispensary licenses

Grower License: Required to cultivate, manufacture, process, or package, or dispense medical cannabis; or to processes medical cannabis products; and is authorized by the Commission to provide cannabis to a qualifying patient, caregiver, processor, dispensary, or independent testing laboratory.

- The Commission has announced the names of the 15 Pre-approved Growers. The Commission is to establish an application review process for granting 7 additional medical cannabis grower licenses.
- Growers will contract with one or more independent testing laboratories for the laboratory to test every batch of medical cannabis
- The Commission will rely upon the zoning and planning approval issued by the local jurisdiction. The local jurisdiction will determine whether a zoning designation that permits agricultural production included production of medical cannabis.
- There are no limitations to the number of plants that a licensed grower must or may cultivate.
- Applicant must demonstrate Maryland residency by providing one or more of the following:
 - Most recent Maryland tax return;
 - Most recent Maryland property tax bill;

- Local gas and electric bill that is no more than 4 months old;
- Valid Maryland Driver's license; or
- Another record that corroborates the Maryland residency.

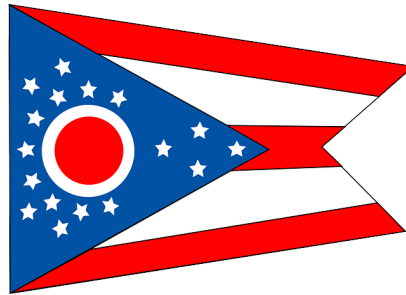
Processing License: Required to transform the medical cannabis into another product or extract; and package and label medical cannabis.

- The Commission has announced the names of 15 Pre-approved Processors. The Commission is to establish an application review process for granting 13 additional medical cannabis processor licenses.
- A processor will process usable medical cannabis into medical cannabis concentrates, or medical cannabis-infused products, to include oil, wax, ointment, salve, tincture, capsule, suppository, dermal patch, cartridge or other product containing medical cannabis concentrate, or usable cannabis that has been processed so that the dried leaves and flowers are integrated into other material.
- Processors will contract with one or more licensed growers to obtain medical cannabis to process. They will need to follow inventory controls specified in the regulations, and in the standard operating procedures of the processors and growers.

Dispensary License: Required to acquire, possess, repackage, process, transfer, transport, sell, distribute, or dispense, products containing medical cannabis, related supplies, related products including tinctures, aerosols, oils, or ointments, or educational materials for use by a qualifying patient or caregiver.

- The Commission awarded 100 pre-approved dispensary licensees
- The regulations state that there be no more than two dispensaries located in each of the 47 legislative districts in the state.
- Dispensaries may distribute medical cannabis in processed form or dried flower. Dispensaries will also be permitted to supply devices to administer medical cannabis.
- Dispensaries may offer delivery services to patients.
- The Commission will rely upon the zoning and planning approval issued by the local jurisdiction. The local jurisdiction will determine whether a zoning designation that permits retail or commercial activity includes dispensing of medical cannabis.

Ohio



While all the licenses for cultivation, testing, processing and dispensary have all been assigned in Ohio, it is still possible to work in the Ohio medical marijuana industry.

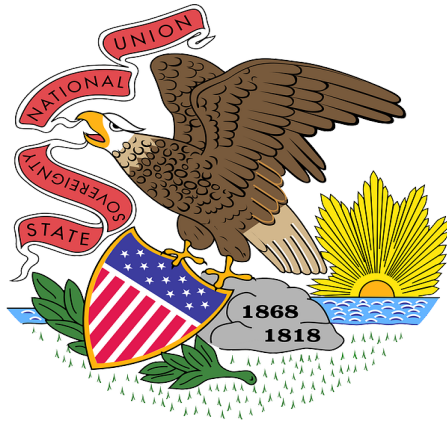
There is no base requirement or badge required to work in an Ohio dispensary. However, like other states in this guide, most dispensaries that are hiring are looking for the most qualified candidates.

The need for educated and “certified” employees for medical marijuana dispensaries has spawned various programs for potential industry employees to learn more about the laws, medical program, and how to be professional in a medical marijuana dispensary.

Should the Ohio program expand, or enact a lottery system where when one license is up another business can try to obtain it, there will be specific licenses available.

[These licenses are cultivation, processing, testing, caregiver, physicians and dispensary licenses.](#)

Illinois

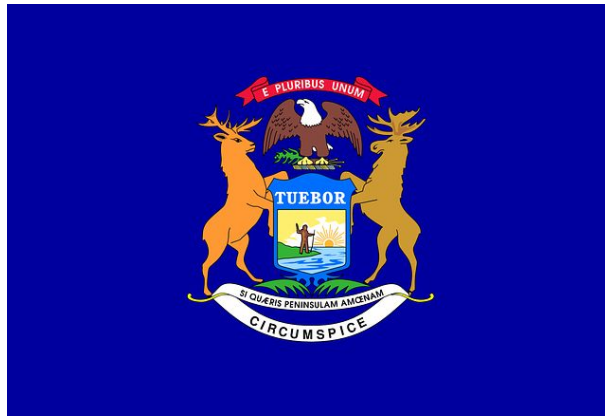


Similar to Ohio, Illinois doesn't have a required certification in order to work at a medical marijuana dispensary. For business owners, there is an application process for both cultivation and dispensing.

There are currently no licenses available, and so your best chances in Illinois will be working at a dispensary or cultivation facility. While there are no required certifications, expect employers to look for some kind of certification, obtained through training events in the state.

With few cultivators and dispensaries in the state as it stands now, competition is fierce for applicants looking to start their career in the Illinois medical marijuana industry. Having a certification course under your belt will put you leagues ahead of the competition.

Michigan



The Medical Marihuana Facilities Licensing Act (MMFLA), 2016 PA 281, provides for the licensure and regulation of medical marijuana growers, processors, provisioning centers, secure transporters, and safety compliance facilities.

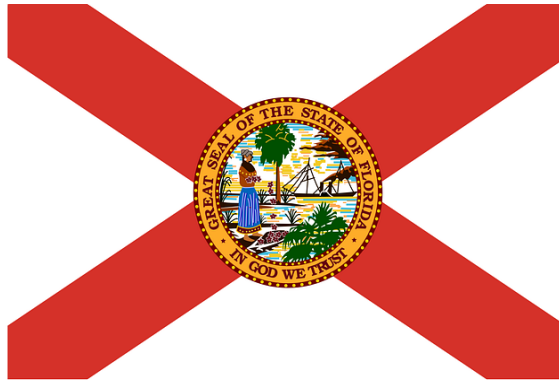
The state has only approved 16 medical marijuana licenses so far, with any unlicensed dispensary being forced to close down after September 15, 2018. There are also still applications that have yet to be reviewed, with issues on the state level causing delays.

Should you decide to pursue a license for your own cultivation facility or dispensary, there is a lengthy application process that isn't cheap. The base fee for a license application is \$6,000, and applying for additional licenses adds an additional \$6,000 with each application.

Like many other medical states, including those in this guide, Michigan does not require a certification or badge to work in the Michigan medical marijuana industry. However, like other states, employers are looking for applicants that go the extra mile and take a certification course in the state.

If you're a cultivator, it is also plausible to enter the Michigan medical marijuana industry as a grower. There are select licensed growing facilities in the state, and many will look to bring in experienced growers from other states.

Florida



Florida has one of the fastest growing medical cannabis industries in the country. This means there is a lot of opportunity in the state.

Another benefit of applying to Florida industry, is that there is no required certification, just a clean criminal record. And the opportunities are quickly growing.

From budtender positions to customer service and accounting, job opening across the state need to be filled. This opens up the door to those who want to get into the backend of the industry as opposed to up front in a dispensary.

Florida law requires all medical marijuana employees to undergo a criminal background check. Any felony will almost automatically disqualify a candidate. But if you can pass the background check and meet the business' requirements, you're in.