

St. Croix Cannabis Testing Lab Under Construction as USVI Market Moves Closer to Launch

Officials told the Cannabis Advisory Board that as the Virgin Islands moves closer to a regulated cannabis market, a testing laboratory is being built on St. Croix, cultivation is expected to begin soon, and several dispensaries could open by the fall.

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The V.I. Cannabis Advisory Board met on Thursday to update attendees on the territory's progression toward a regulated market. Office of Cannabis Regulation Executive Director Joanne Moorehead reported that medical and sacramental registrations remain steady, though they have tapered off as many potential patients wait for movement in the licensing space. The agency is now processing annual renewals for patients and practitioners, but limited staff requires careful focus, Director Moorehead noted, with little flexibility to perform a multitude of tasks

simultaneously.

Commercial cultivation is slated to begin by the end of this month for a small group of the approximately 14 current licensees, Ms. Moorehead said. Micro-cultivation is expected to follow in six to eight weeks, and the application window for new commercial cultivation licenses is projected to reopen in June 2026. Moorehead stated that ten dispensaries currently hold conditional approval, with at least four or five [on track to become fully operational by the fall](#). The OCR is also processing 10 manufacturing applications and several research and development submissions which do not have legal license caps. An evaluation committee is expected to meet by the end of the month to issue conditional approvals for these categories.

To support the growing industry, mandatory responsible vendor training commenced last week, with 40 participants split equally between the St. Croix and St. Thomas districts. The OCR is also working to approve a memorandum of understanding with an outside vendor to provide additional training dates.

Regarding infrastructure, a laboratory testing facility is currently under construction on St. Croix with an additional hub planned for St. Thomas. Board member Gary Jett questioned the selection of this lab by the Department of Property and Procurement (DPP), arguing that the board was a more appropriate body to evaluate such critical technical facilities.

Ms. Moorehead clarified that administrative rules required the use of the DPP system, which utilized a committee of territorial and national lab experts. Following a brief public session, the board entered a relatively lengthy executive session to discuss a legal matter. Board chair Katherine Kean declined to provide details of the matter before executive session, however the board is [currently being sued](#) in conjunction with other government regulatory agencies over the implementation of a new law that requires retailers of intoxicating hemp products to surrender their inventories.

Following their return from executive session, board members tentatively agreed on April 9 as the date of the next CAB meeting.