INSTITUTE OF CANNABIS RESEARCH

GOVERNING BOARD RETREAT MEETING MINUTES

September 23, 2026 9:30 – 4:00 PM
Colorado Gives Foundation Offices
Arvada, Colorado

CALL TO ORDER

The Institute of Cannabis Research (ICR) Governing Board Retreat was called to order at **9:47 a.m.**

PRESENT

Governing Board Members:
Sherard Rodgers; Joanna Zeiger; Jon Reuter, Board Chair; Elyse Contreras; John Harloe; Mellissa Reynolds; Chad Kinney; Gail Mackin (virtual); and Mike Hennesy (virtual).

ICR Staff and Participants:
Marion McNabb, ICR Director; Jeff Smith; Sang Park; Andrea Schaffer; Justyna Dubey; Sara Belamy, Colorado Attorney General's Office; Ean Seeb, Colorado Governor's Office; Matt Davidson; Allison Marchi-Young; and Keisha Phillips, Strategies 360.

I. STATE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CANNABIS RESEARCH

9:50 a.m.

ICR Director Marion McNabb presented an overview of the current state of the Institute. The presentation included updates and statistics related to:

- ICR research publications and patents;
- Active and completed research projects;
- The 2026 National Cannabis Research Conference;
- The ICR Certificate Program;
- Student support and engagement;
- The *Journal of Cannabis Research*;
- Media and social media outreach;

- ICR marketing and communications efforts with Strategies 360;
- Past and upcoming ICR events; and
- The upcoming ICR research funding opportunity/RFA.

The Board discussed the Institute's current activities, accomplishments, and opportunities for continued growth.

II. ICR INTERNAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

10:25 a.m.

Sang Park presented an overview of the ICR's internal research program. The presentation included:

- Current and historical sources of research funding;
- ICR research focus areas;
- Summaries of current internal research projects;
- International research collaboration opportunities;
- Plans for an upcoming trip to Korea with Dr. McNabb to promote international collaboration;

III. ICR RETURN ON INVESTMENT

10:57 a.m.

Dr. McNabb reviewed the ICR's current **Return on Investment (ROI) document**, which had been distributed to Board members.

The document is intended to provide a concise summary of the Institute's accomplishments, activities, and impact and to serve as a resource for communicating the value of ICR to legislators, policymakers, stakeholders, and other audiences.

IV. ICR STRATEGIC PLANNING

11:06 a.m.

Dr. McNabb led a discussion regarding development of a new ICR strategic plan addressing the Institute's medium-term priorities over the next **three to five years**.

Dr. McNabb presented a proposed **nine-month process** for development of a new strategic plan for consideration and approval by the Governing Board.

The Board expressed support for moving forward with the proposed strategic planning process. Discussion included:

- The anticipated workload associated with strategic planning;
- How responsibilities and additional workload could be distributed among Board members;
- Scheduling and rescheduling considerations;
- Board participation in strategic planning activities; and
- Potential development of a **2027 Colorado Cannabis Research Roundtable**.

The Board was asked to complete the ICR Research Funding Matrix worksheet and provide feedback on retreat flip-chart topics during lunch. Topics included:

- Industrial hemp;
- Annual gala/event planning;
- Public-private partnerships;
- Intellectual property; and
- Strategic planning.

V. LUNCH

The Board recessed for lunch and continued review of the assigned worksheets and retreat feedback materials.

VI. ICR RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND 2027 RESEARCH FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

12:43 p.m.

Dr. Elyse Contreras led a discussion regarding future ICR research priorities and development of the **2027 Research Funding Opportunity Announcement (RFA)**.

The Board reviewed findings and recommendations from the **2025 Colorado Cannabis Research Roundtable report** and discussed research priorities to be considered for the 2027 RFA.

The Board also discussed the need for the Research Subcommittee to review and update application and review materials, including:

- Governing Board Research Proposal Scoring Form;
- Conflict of Interest Form; and
- Other procedural and application forms as needed.

The Board discussed whether the 2027 RFA should use an open call for research topics or identify and advertise specific priority research areas.

Following discussion, the Board agreed that applications would remain open to all eligible research topics while identified priority areas would receive additional consideration during the review process. The Board also discussed the importance of communicating priorities in a manner that encourages, rather than discourages, applications outside of those areas.

The Board discussed providing applicants with appropriate information regarding historically funded research areas and the likelihood of funding multiple active projects for a single principal investigator.

MOTION

A motion was made that research priority areas identified through the Research Roundtable process receive additional consideration in Governing Board scoring, particularly priorities that are cross-cutting, address the betterment of Colorado, and meet the statutory requirements of the state.

Motion passed unanimously at 1:45 p.m.

VII. LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

12:50 p.m.

The Board reviewed and discussed the ICR legislative outreach worksheet distributed during the retreat.

Board members were asked to complete and return the worksheets within one week. The worksheets will be used to inform development of the ICR's legislative engagement strategy.

The Board discussed the value of providing Board members with standardized language and resources when communicating with legislators. The Board identified the following resources as potentially useful:

- Standardized talking points for Board members;
- Three concise key messages regarding the ICR;
- Contact information for individual Board members' legislators; and
- Information regarding legislation previously sponsored, supported, or passed by legislators.

The Board noted that knowledge of legislators' previous legislative activity may provide useful context for initiating conversations and developing opening remarks during legislative outreach.

VIII. STRATEGIES 360 MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS, AND LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH

1:59 p.m.

Matt Davidson of Strategies 360 joined the meeting and provided guidance regarding strategies for reaching and communicating with key legislators and other priority audiences.

Board member feedback from the retreat will be provided to Strategies 360 for consideration in ongoing communications and outreach planning.

Keisha Phillips discussed her role in the conference registration outreach campaign. Allison Marchi-Young discussed her role in messaging development.

Mr. Davidson provided an update on ICR marketing and communications activities, and Strategies 360 also provided an overview of anticipated deliverables and timelines.

The Board engaged in questions and discussion regarding marketing, communications, legislative outreach, media engagement, and measurement of communications activities.

IX. ICR-FUNDED RESEARCH PRESENTATION

3:17 p.m.

Dr. Jarrod Ellingson presented an overview of his ICR-funded research.

The presentation included a summary of the research objectives, activities, and findings, followed by questions and discussion with the Board.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **4:00 p.m.**
