

Cannabis Legalization Pages Architecture

A three-tier programmatic SEO architecture for cannabis legalization content, interlocking a national summary hub, state-specific pages, and condition-specific intersections against the location-qualified search behaviour the category rewards.

TIERS	STATE PAGES	STATUS-TYPE PAGES	AUTHORITY SOURCES
3	50	4	5+

Overview

Cannabis legality in the United States is one of the most structurally location-dependent content categories in search. Federal law treats cannabis one way, state law can treat it another, and city and county ordinances can overlay both. A reader asking whether cannabis is legal is almost never asking a national question; they are asking whether it is legal *where they live*, under the specific conditions that apply to them, at the specific moment they are searching. The content architecture has to match that shape.

This document specifies a three-tier programmatic architecture designed against that requirement: a national summary hub at the top, fifty state-specific pages at the middle tier, and condition-specific intersections at the third tier. Each tier carries its own heading structure, word-count targets, and interactive element specifications. The architecture was specified against the constraint that cannot be escaped in this category: a single page cannot rank across all fifty states, and fifty disconnected state pages cannot rank nationally. Interlock is the only shape that captures both.

Market Context

Location-specific search behaviour

The search pattern in this category is overwhelmingly location-qualified. Queries take the form “is cannabis legal in [state],” “[state] medical marijuana laws,” “how to get a medical card in [state],” and variations thereof. Generic queries (“marijuana legalization status,” “states where weed is legal”) account for meaningful volume but are outnumbered by the location-specific long tail. The architecture has to rank both types, which is what produces the tier split.

The interlock requirement

A national page attempting to rank for every state query fails because it cannot carry the depth each state warrants. State pages attempting to rank for national queries fail because they cannot demonstrate national scope. The interlock between tiers, enforced through explicit internal linking, is what produces a single content ecosystem in which national queries land on the hub, state queries land on state pages, and users move between them without friction.

Three-Tier Architecture

The architecture is specified below tier by tier. Each tier specification covers the heading structure, the interactive and visual elements required, the word-count targets, and the internal-linking obligations to the other tiers.

Tier 1: National Summary Hub

The entry point. Ranks for national queries and acts as the dispatcher to the state and condition tiers. Must-have interactive elements: an **interactive color-coded map**, a **summary list by legalization status**, an **FAQ section**, and **3 to 4 featured articles** related to legalization.

HEADING STRUCTURE (TIER 1)

```
[h1] Where Is Marijuana Legal? A Guide to Marijuana Legalization
```

```
[h2] Is marijuana legal in the United States?
  [h3] Marijuana legality in the United States
  [h3] Types of weed legalization
[h2] Are you wondering what the marijuana laws are in your state?
  [h3] Marijuana legalization map
  [h3] State by State Guide to Marijuana Legalization
[h2] FAQ
[h2] Common Medical Marijuana Conditions
[h2] Learn more about marijuana legalization in the US
```

CONTENT AND WORD-COUNT SPECIFICATIONS

- **Introduction to the map:** 100 to 150 word introduction framing what the map shows and how to use it.
- **Summary list by legalization status:** five status categories each with a 25 to 50 word summary, each linking to its own summary page. Status categories: Prohibition, Decriminalization, Medical Legalization, Legalization. Illegal status carries an explicit feature badge.
- **Featured articles block:** 3 to 4 featured pieces related to legalization, each with a 150 to 200 word summary.
- **Status graphic boxes:** Recreational States, Medical States, Illegal States, each linking to the corresponding summary page.
- **FAQ section:** list of questions and answers with **FAQ schema** applied.
- **Common Medical Marijuana Conditions:** list of common conditions with a brief blurb per condition, each linking to the condition page (Tier 3).

Tier 2: State-Specific Pages

Fifty pages, one per state, built to a shared template so coverage scales uniformly. Must-haves at the top of the page: FAQ, featured articles (3 to 4 max), a **150 to 200 word summary**, and a **legality status badge**. CTAs anchor the page at multiple points to route users into dispensary discovery, cashback rewards, and provider connection flows.

HEADING STRUCTURE (TIER 2)

```
[h1] Is marijuana legal in {STATE NAME}?
<CTA: Find {STATE NAME} Dispensaries Nearby>
[h2] {STATE NAME} recreational marijuana laws
[h2] {STATE NAME} medical marijuana laws
[h2] {STATE NAME} qualifying conditions for medical marijuana
[h2] How to get a medical marijuana card in {STATE NAME}
<CTA: Get A {STATE NAME} Marijuana Medical Card>
  [h3] Does {STATE NAME} accept out-of-state medical cards?
  [h3] When does my {STATE NAME} medical card expire?
[h2] {STATE NAME} marijuana growing laws
[h2] {STATE NAME} marijuana reciprocity laws
[h2] {STATE NAME} public consumption laws
  [h3] {CITY} specific laws
[h2] {STATE NAME} cannabis DUI laws
```

```
[h3] Cannabis DUI penalties
[h2] {STATE NAME} cannabis testing regulations
[h2] Common questions about marijuana legislation in {STATE NAME}
[h2] Learn more about marijuana legalization in {STATE NAME}
```

INTERNAL LINKING FROM EACH STATE PAGE

- A few condition-specific pages (not all) relevant to the state’s qualifying conditions.
- Find A Dispensary in {STATE NAME}.
- Get Cashback Rewards on your next {STATE NAME} cannabis purchase.
- Connect with a Provider in {STATE NAME}.

EXTERNAL LINKING FROM EACH STATE PAGE

- State regulatory pages for authoritative primary-source citations.

Tier 3: Status-Type and Condition-Specific Pages

The third tier splits into two parallel tracks. The first track carries the four status-type pages (Recreational, Medical, Decriminalization, Prohibition history). The second track carries condition-specific intersections that link state qualifying-condition lists to nationally-recognised condition names.

STATUS-TYPE PAGE: RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA LAWS

```
[h1] Recreational marijuana laws
[h2] What is recreational marijuana?
[h2] What is the difference between recreational and medical marijuana
legalization?
  [h3] Purchase and possession limits
  [h3] age restrictions
  [h3] growing differences
  [h3] tax exemptions
  [h3] product selection and potency limits
  [h3] shopping experience and customer support
[h2] Marijuana legalization map
  [h3] States where recreational marijuana is legal
[h2] How to buy cannabis in a legal recreational state
  [h3] step 1: find a cannabis dispensary near you <CTA>
  [h3] step 2: learn the cannabis basics
  [h3] step 3: choose your cannabis products
[h2] Cannabis Legalization Guide
[h2] Learn more about marijuana legalization in the US
```

STATUS-TYPE PAGE: MEDICAL MARIJUANA LAWS

```
[h1] Medical marijuana laws
[h2] What is medical marijuana?
[h2] Common qualifying conditions
  [h3] Chronic Pain
  [h3] Cancer
  [h3] Epilepsy and seizure disorders
```

- [h3] Multiple sclerosis (MS)
- [h3] Neurodegenerative disease
- [h3] Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- [h3] Cachexia/wasting syndrome
- [h3] Nausea
- [h3] HIV/AIDS
- [h2] What are the benefits of having a medical marijuana card in a legal state?
 - [h3] Lower costs and taxes
 - [h3] Higher potency limits
 - [h3] Cannabis patients under age 21
 - [h3] Grow what you need
 - [h3] States where medical marijuana is legal
- [h2] States that accept out-of-state MMJ cards
- [h2] How to buy cannabis in legal medical states
 - [h3] step 1: Check your medical cannabis qualifying conditions
 - [h3] step 2: Get your medical cannabis card <CTA>
 - [h3] step 3: Find a cannabis dispensary near you <CTA>
 - [h3] step 4: Learn the cannabis basics

STATUS-TYPE PAGE: DECRIMINALIZATION

- [h1] Decriminalization of marijuana
- [h2] What is decriminalization?
- [h2] Why decriminalize marijuana possession?
- [h2] States where marijuana is decriminalized
- [h2] Cannabis Legalization Guide

STATUS-TYPE PAGE: PROHIBITION HISTORY

- [h1] The history of cannabis prohibition
- [h2] How weed came to the Americas
 - [h3] Hemp in the United States
- [h2] The beginnings of prohibition
- [h2] The Marihuana Tax Act of 1937
- [h2] The Controlled Substances Act
- [h2] The War on Drugs
 - [h3] The medical and recreational cannabis eras

Internal Linking Specification

The interlock between tiers is enforced through four internal-linking patterns. Together, they ensure no page in the architecture is orphaned and every user path between national, state, and condition content is one click or less.

Hub-to-state linking

The Tier 1 hub links to every state page through two surfaces: the interactive map (by clickable state region) and the state-by-state table (by state name). The status graphic boxes (Recreational States, Medical States,

Illegal States) link to the status-type summary pages, which in turn link into their respective state lists.

State-to-state linking

State pages do not link directly to each other. Cross-state navigation routes through the hub to prevent the authority-dilution problem that would emerge from a fully-meshed inter-state link graph.

State-to-condition linking

Each state page links to a curated subset of condition pages (“a few not all” per the specification) matching the state’s qualifying-conditions list. Condition pages link back to all states in which the condition qualifies. This is what converts condition searches into state-qualified commercial traffic.

Commercial surface routing

Every state page routes into three commercial surfaces: “Find A Dispensary in {STATE},” “Get Cashback Rewards on your next {STATE} cannabis purchase,” and “Connect with a Provider in {STATE}.” The hub carries parallel non-state-specific versions of the same CTAs. Commercial traffic capture does not depend on which tier the user lands on first.

External Authority Sources

Every tier in the architecture carries a standard external-reference shelf positioning the content within the broader policy landscape. Five organisational sources plus one book reference form the core. State pages add state regulatory authorities on top.

- **NORML** (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws). *norml.org*
- **Marijuana Policy Project (MPP)**. *mpp.org*
- **Drug Policy Alliance (DPA)**. *drugpolicy.org*
- **Americans for Safe Access**. *safeaccessnow.org*
- **Cannabis Voter Project**. *cannabivoter.info*
- **Marijuana Legalization: What Everyone Needs to Know** (book, referenced on every tier).

The Prohibition-history page adds three additional references specific to historical context: Last Prisoner Project, ProCon.org’s history of marijuana, and the PBS marijuana timeline. State pages add links to the relevant state regulatory agencies as primary-source citations.

Strategic Insight

The category’s structural constraint is simple and inescapable. A single page cannot rank across all fifty states because it cannot carry the state-specific depth Google’s relevance signals require. Fifty disconnected state pages cannot rank nationally because each page demonstrates local expertise, not national scope. The attempt to solve either problem in isolation produces the dominant failure pattern in the category: thin national pages that lose to state DMV sources, or deep state pages that lose to national trackers at NORML and NCSL.

The three-tier interlock resolves the constraint by accepting it. The national hub is optimised for national queries and deliberately thin on state-specific detail because its job is to dispatch rather than to answer. State pages carry the depth each state warrants without attempting to duplicate the national comparison. Condition pages occupy the third tier because condition searches are neither national nor state-specific; they are condition-first, and the architecture lets them rank that way while still routing into state-qualified traffic. The architecture does not beat the constraint. It is shaped *by* the constraint, which is why it works where single-tier attempts do not.

Deliverable Summary

Five deliverable classes were specified across the architecture.

- **Tier 1 national summary hub** with interactive color-coded map, summary list by status, FAQ with FAQ schema, featured articles block, and external reference shelf.
- **50 Tier 2 state-specific pages** built to a shared heading template with state-variable substitution, carrying legality-status badge, FAQ, featured articles, and three commercial-surface CTAs per page.
- **4 Tier 3 status-type pages** (Recreational, Medical, Decriminalization, Prohibition history), each with its own heading specification.
- **Condition-specific page set** covering the core medical-qualifying conditions (Chronic Pain, Cancer, Epilepsy, MS, Neurodegenerative disease, PTSD, Cachexia, Nausea, HIV/AIDS) with cross-links into applicable state pages.
- **Interactive-element specifications** across all tiers: maps, status graphic boxes, status-specific tables, and schema implementations for FAQ sections.