

Report No. 21-22-0002
Advisory Services Report
Medical Marijuana Education and Research Initiative (MMERI)



ACCOUNTABILITY • INTEGRITY • EFFICIENCY





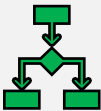





October 15, 2021



Advisory Service

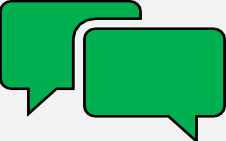


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the advisory project was to determine whether Medical Marijuana Education and Research Initiative (MMERI) is carried out in accordance with provisions set forth in Section 381.986 (7)(d), Florida Statutes and its expenditures were allowable and reasonable. The Division of Audit reviewed the effectiveness of MMERI’s fiscal processes and reporting requirements to ensure that management had established proper controls over expenses and performance. Our objectives and results are summarized in the below table.

| Review Objective | | Results |
|---|--|---|
|  | <p>Goals We reviewed MMERI’s goals to determine whether they were in alignment with statutory requirements.</p> | <p>Satisfactory</p>  |
|  | <p>Expenditure Analysis & Review We reviewed approximately \$500,000 of \$1.16 million in expenditures which occurred from October 26, 2018, to January 10, 2020, and \$136,066 in expenditures occurred from January 15, 2020, to June 15, 2021, to assess if expenditures were in compliance with statutory requirements.</p> | <p>Satisfactory</p>  |
|  | <p>Fiscal Processes We assessed MMERI’s fiscal processes to determine if controls were in place to review and approve budgets and expenditures involving MMERI, Office of Sponsored Programs, and Contracts and Grants.</p> | <p>Satisfactory</p>  |
|  | <p>Reporting We reviewed eleven (11) quarterly internal reports submitted to applicable management within FAMU and four (4) quarterly external reports submitted to state administrators to determine if the reports provided required updates on MMER’s activities and accomplishments.</p> | <p>Satisfactory</p>  |
|  | <p>Program Assessment We determined if MMERI had conducted ongoing internal and/or external assessments to evaluate MMERI’s performance to achieve its goals and identify opportunities for continuous improvement.</p> | <p>Satisfactory</p>  |



The Division of Audit assessed internal controls put in place to manage MMERI in accordance with the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission's (COSO) *Internal Control-Integrated Framework*.¹ In general, internal controls were in place and operating effectively to support compliance with statutory requirements related to MMERI funding and program goals. Meanwhile, we identified the following opportunities for the MMERI Executive Director to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness:

| Opportunity for Enhancement | Recommendation |
|---|---|
|  | <p>Communication Enhance communications with state administrators and legislators regarding quarterly reported activities, operations, scope, and performance to obtain and respond timely to feedback.</p> |
|  | <p>Job Description Review and Updates Periodically evaluate MMERI employees' job duties and responsibilities and update employee's position descriptions accordingly to ensure both are in alignment.</p> |
|  | <p>Continuous Monitoring Continue to regularly monitor and evaluate MMERI's performance to ensure that the program goals are achieved, and state funds are used effectively and economically through the establishment of measurable goals and metrics. For example, financial metrics could include determining the average cost per person contacted for an outreach event and performing expenditure trend analysis to identify opportunities for cost savings.</p> |

¹ The FAMU Board of Trustees adopted the COSO Internal Control – Integrated Framework in December 2019 through approval of Policy 2019-01 Internal Controls and Enterprise Risk Management



TABLE OF CONTENTS

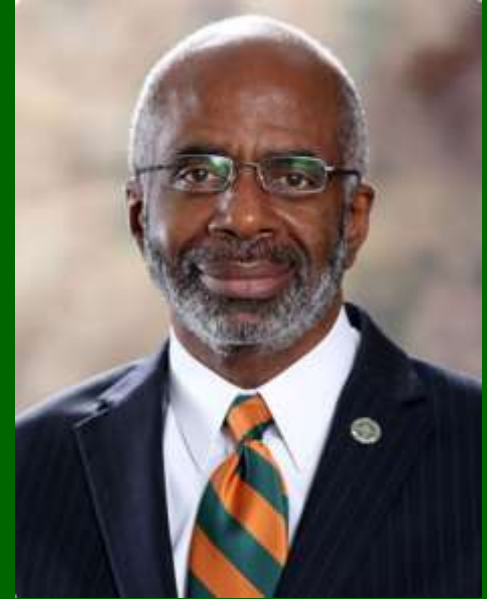
| | |
|---|----|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 2 |
| BACKGROUND..... | 6 |
| MMERI GOAL REVIEW..... | 8 |
| EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS..... | 11 |
| FISCAL PROCESS..... | 15 |
| PROGRAM REPORTING..... | 16 |
| PROGRAM ASSESSMENT | 18 |
| APPENDIX A – PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY..... | 19 |
| DISTRIBUTION..... | 21 |
| PROJECT TEAM..... | 22 |
| STATEMENT OF ACCORDANCE | 22 |

Larry Robinson, Ph.D.

FAMU President

“When the Florida Legislature beckoned, we welcomed the opportunity to establish MMERI as a vehicle for research and education on medical marijuana. Our specific charge is to inform Florida’s diverse communities about medical marijuana and about the impact that unlawful marijuana has on Florida’s communities of color.

At MMERI, our objectives are to ensure that the voices of Florida’s diverse communities are heard when policies are made, research is conducted, and that these communities benefit when medical usages are implemented. We are creating a repository to house the information that we are gathering and the findings from our research. As always, you can count on us to do high-quality research that will help inform legislative policy across the state, resulting in laws that will have positive impacts for all.”



Patricia Green-Powell, Ph.D.

MMERI Executive Director



“It is our intention to educate people of color and inspire them to learn and talk about the positive attributes of medical cannabis, as well as help them better understand the legal and health consequences stemming from the unlawful use of marijuana.

Educate. Learn. Talk.

These actions form the pillars upon which MMERI builds relationships and trust with culturally and ethnically diverse communities throughout our state. Furthermore, they are essential to the efficacy of the four core components of MMERI’s mandate — Education, Community Engagement, Communication and Evidence-based Studies. Through these four components MMERI will increase knowledge, change attitudes, and transform perceptions about medical marijuana among minorities in Florida, resulting in their voices being heard when marijuana-related policies are developed.”



BACKGROUND

Given the University’s historical role in educating minority students, [Chapter 2017-232, Laws of Florida](#), charged Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) to “educate minorities about marijuana for medical use and the impact of the unlawful use of marijuana on minority communities.” Pursuant to Section 381.986(7)(d), Florida Statutes, FAMU receives, from the Florida Department of Health (FDOH), \$10 (minus fees) from each \$75 identification card obtained by those who are approved to purchase medical marijuana.

The Medical Marijuana Education and Research Initiative (MMERI) was established in 2018 with a diverse team to conduct, consult, and oversee public education and engagement on medical marijuana.

Organization Chart²



MMERI Oversight & Compliance Workgroup³

Formed in 2019 to monitor four key areas of MMERI:

- 1) Fiscal Affairs and Reconciliation;
- 2) Achievement of Project Goals and Fulfillment of Mission;
- 3) Impact and Assessment; and
- 4) General Compliance.

Workgroup includes 12 members of FAMU faculty and staff from areas including Division of Research, Office of Compliance and Ethics, and Fiscal Management, who meet monthly.

MMERI External Advisory Council (MMERIEAC)⁴

This 11-member volunteer council is made up of active and retired professionals from various fields⁵ and serves as an impartial and objective adviser to MMERI leadership. A key responsibility of membership is helping MMERI make connections with community leaders and potential partners in minority communities. The council meets three times a year and each member is required to participate in at least two MMERI activities annually.

² Organization chart obtained from MMERI Quarterly Report April 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020

³ Information obtained from MMERI Quarterly Report January 1, 2021 – March 31, 2021

⁴ Information obtained from MMERI Quarterly Report January 1, 2021 – March 31, 2021

⁵ Some professions include but are not limited to Consultant Pharmacist, Program Evaluator, Law Practitioner, Pastor, Sheriff, and university professors.



MMERI TEAM⁶

Executive Leaders



Dr. Charles Weatherford

Vice President for Research, Principal Investigator (PI) for MMERI

Appointed in January 2020, and is responsible for the overall management and performance of MMERI.



Dr. Maurice Edington

Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Provides leadership in long-range planning for all University programs including MMERI.

Lead Team



Dr. Patricia Green-Powell

Executive Director

Joined MMERI in August 2019. She is the primary liaison between the FAMU Division of Research, the Office of Communications, the University President, FAMU Board of Trustees, and the Florida Department of Health. She also coordinates and oversees MMERI's daily operations.



Mr. GP Mendie

Budget & Program Manager

Oversees MMERI's budget and finance, operations, audit, contracts, strategic planning, and overall compliance with applicable statutes and regulations.



Ms. Bagnama Virginia King

Program Administrator

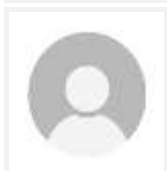
Provides administrative and executive support to MMERI.



Mr. Brian Howard

FAMU Assistant Director of Communications, MMERI Communications Liaison

Communications liaison for MMERI.



Mrs. Michelle Wilson

Coordinator of Education, Training and Community Engagement

Coordinates the education, training, and community outreach programs.

⁶ Team members as of October 8, 2021.



MMERI GOAL REVIEW

We evaluated whether MMERI’s program goals were in alignment with Florida Statutes, Section 381.986(7)(d). In the chart below, we depict FAMU’s statutory requirement with MMERI’s goals and supporting components.

Goal Comparison

FAMU’s Responsibilities per Florida Statutes, Section 381.986(7)(d)

“The Florida Department of Health shall allocate \$10 of the identification card fee to the Division of Research at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University for the **purpose of educating minorities** about marijuana for medical use and the impact of the unlawful use of marijuana on minority communities.”

MMERI’s Program Goals⁷

1. **Educate** Florida’s diverse minority communities about medical marijuana and the consequences of unlawful use of marijuana;
2. Increase the body of **Research** that promotes and advances knowledge about medical marijuana and the consequences of unlawful use of marijuana; and
3. Conduct ongoing **Assessment and Evaluation** of the effectiveness and impact of the MMERI project.

MMERI’s Program Components⁸

Education: Educate Florida’s diverse minority populations about medical marijuana and to develop and deliver curriculum and certified training programs.

Research: Study and understand the science and the impact of medical marijuana from diverse perspectives.

Community Engagement: Build and expand relationships and partnerships; and collaborate with leaders, community groups, faith-based organizations, educational institutions and others.

Communications: Partnerships and collaborations with the Florida Association of Broadcasters and other entities to ensure timely delivery of relevant information to communities statewide. MMERI conducts a statewide messaging campaign through various digital, audio, visual, print and in-person platforms.

⁷ Source: <http://mmeri.famu.edu/objectives/>

⁸ Source: <http://mmeri.famu.edu/key-components/>



Results:

In accordance with MMERI’s responsibilities outlined in the [Florida Statutes, Section 381.986 \(7\)\(d\)](#), MMERI’s main goal is to educate Florida’s minority populations about marijuana for medical use and the impact of the unlawful use of marijuana. MMERI developed the aforementioned program components to support the overall education goal. Our review of the following program activities supporting the identified program components was determined to effectively fulfill MMERI’s requirement to educate Florida minorities about marijuana for medical use and the impact of the unlawful use of marijuana on minority communities.

Education

The MMERI team uses a variety of venues and methods to educate Florida’s minority populations. Part of the educational component is a Basic Medical Marijuana Educational Course. The goal of the MMERI Basic Medical Marijuana Education Course is to educate participants about marijuana for medical use and the impact of unlawful use of marijuana.



Research

The MMERI team collects evidence-based research, which serves as a basis to develop and supplement educational content and furthers the promotion of community engagement and communication. Examples of MMERI evidenced-based research include:



John Luque, Ph.D., MPH
Mixed Methods Study of Medical Marijuana Use Among Minority Patients



Behnam Shadravan, Ph.D.
An Investigation on Marijuana Consumption in the Construction Industry in Florida



Askal Ali, Ph.D.
Knowledge and Perception of Pediatric Patient Caregivers on Medical Marijuana



Huijin Li, Ph.D.
Marijuana, Mental Health, and FAMU



Arie Christon
An Analysis of Marijuana Wellness Intervention on Community, Coping, Substance-Awareness, Self Efficacy, and Self Regulation Enhancement via Education (Marijuana WICSE) Project



Marisa Lewis, Pharm.D., MPH
Assessing the Knowledge and Perceptions of Community Members Specific to the Compassionate use of Marijuana



Andrew Chin
Medical Marijuana Dispensary Locations and Neighborhood Crime



Gwendolyn Singleton, Ph.D.
To What Extent Do Mental Health and Psychosocial Factors Predict Risk for Misuse and Neuropsychological Impairment in African American Marijuana Users?



Community Engagement

Prior to the start of the pandemic in March 2020, MMERI utilized contractors to conduct in-person educational outreach in minority communities in conjunction with virtual community forums in a two-pronged effort to engage and educate the public on medical marijuana use. While, the pandemic impacted MMERI’s plan to expand in-person outreach efforts, MMERI successfully grew its virtual outreach efforts through community forums and various electronic communication venues mentioned below.



Communications

The MMERI team communicates to the general public through radio, videocasts, newsletters, social media, and other media venues. The most notable of the communication venues are the MMERI Forum Radio, MMERI e-Newsletter, and MMERI Videocasts.



MMERI Forum Radio:
Weekly radio program used to discuss research and provide constituents throughout Florida the opportunity to discuss issues, concerns, and bodies of work in the area of medical marijuana.



MMERI e-Newsletter
The newsletters are designed to highlight MMERI activities and other educational information on the use of medical marijuana.



MMERI Videocast:
Videos designed to provide minorities and interested parties with insights from expert panelists and stakeholders about marijuana for medical use and the consequences of the unlawful use of marijuana.

Recommendation

Enhance communications with state administrators and legislators regarding quarterly reported activities, operations, scope, and performance to obtain and respond timely to feedback.

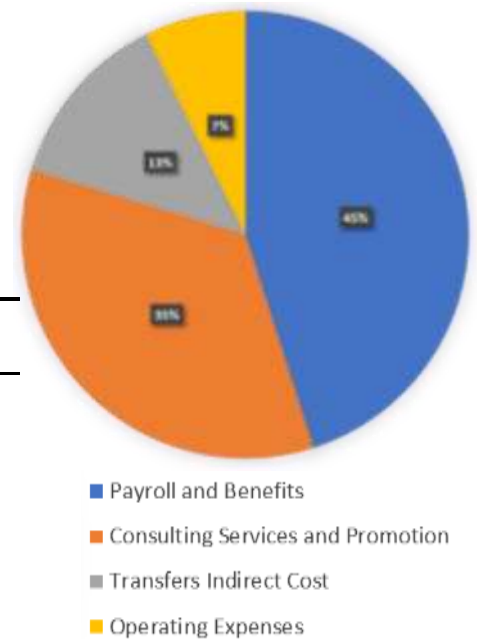


EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS

MMERI’s revenue is generated from the sale of medical marijuana identification cards by the FDOH. MMERI receives \$10 (minus fees) for each Medical Marijuana ID card issued by the FDOH. The FDOH disburses the funds to FAMU on a quarterly basis. The following table and chart depict MMERI’s expenditures from October 2018 to January 2020.

MMERI Expenditures October 2018 to January 2020

| Expense by Category | Amount | % of Total Expenses |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|
| Payroll and Benefits | \$522,697 | 45.06% |
| Salaries | \$416,588 | 35.91% |
| Payroll Taxes and Benefits | \$106,108 | 9.15% |
| Consulting Services and Promotion | \$401,835 | 34.63% |
| Graphic Design Brand Campaign | \$156,899 | 13.52% |
| Radio TV Ads | \$100,000 | 8.62% |
| Outreach Campaigns | \$93,622 | 8.07% |
| Photographs and Slides | \$26,575 | 2.29% |
| Other Consulting Services | \$11,825 | 1.02% |
| Printing and Reproduction | \$7,178 | 0.62% |
| Promotional Advertising | \$5,586 | 0.48% |
| Appraisal and Survey Services | \$150 | 0.01% |
| Transfers Indirect Cost | \$150,762 | 13.00% |
| Transfers Indirect Cost | \$150,762 | 13.00% |
| Operating Expenses | \$84,778 | 7.31% |
| Office Furniture | \$22,654 | 1.95% |
| IT Services and Supplies | \$22,418 | 1.93% |
| Rent | \$15,000 | 1.29% |
| Travel Related | \$9,152 | 0.79% |
| Office Supplies Consumable | \$6,803 | 0.59% |
| Telephone | \$2,350 | 0.20% |
| Equipment and Supplies | \$2,240 | 0.19% |
| Postage | \$2,018 | 0.17% |
| Cable and Network | \$1,356 | 0.12% |
| Other Materials and Supplies | \$785 | 0.07% |
| Grand Total | \$1,160,071 | 100.00% |



The Division of Audit evaluated whether MMERI’s expenditures between October 2018 and January 2020 were allowable and in line with provisions of Florida Statute, Section 381.986(7)(d).



Payroll and Benefits \$522,697 or 45.06%

The expenses covered the salaries, payroll taxes, and benefits for the following MMERI staff during the review period:



- Interim Executive Director (1.0 FTE)
- Deputy Director (1.0 FTE)
- Coordinator, Administrative Services (1.0 FTE)
- Public Affairs Liaison (1.0 FTE)
- Communications Liaison (0.3 FTE)

Payroll and benefits represented 45.06% of the total expense between MMERI's inception date of October 2018 and January 2020. Staff were hired to launch the brand-new program by establishing physical infrastructure, creating strategies and goals, and performing daily operations.

We reviewed the employees' position descriptions and determined that each role provides essential support to achieve MMERI's goals. We assessed the employees' salary ranges with the collaboration of University Human Resources. Our analysis shows the employees' salaries fall within market ranges based on the employees' duties, years of experiences, education level, job locations, size of the organization, and reporting structure.

We conducted detailed testing of \$54,983 in expenditures related to temporary employment. The expenditures were to fund an OPS Public Affairs Liaison position. We determined that the expenditures were appropriate to support the assigned duties to conduct state-wide MMERI community engagement activities and oversee integrated marketing including web, print, and digital components.

Payroll and benefits expenditures for the period were both allowable and in alignment with statutory requirements. Since the review the proportion of costs in the Payroll and Benefits category were expected to continue to decrease as other expenses (consulting, promotion, and course developments) were expected to increase as MMERI launched more programs and develops videocasts, MMERI Forum Radio, MMERI newsletters, and online Basic Education courses.

Recommendation

The MMERI Executive Director is advised to periodically evaluate MMERI employees' duties and responsibilities and update employee's position descriptions accordingly to ensure both are in alignment.



Consulting Services and Promotion \$401,835 or 34.63%



Website: MMERI used the funds to launch a website containing resources and information for the community on marijuana for medical use and the impact of its unlawful use.

Podcasts: MMERI produced various podcast series on the topics which can be accessed free of charge from the website.

MMERI has placed approximately 15,000 radio public service announcements; collaborated with more than 100 community

organizations, agencies, businesses and educational institutions; and attracted more than 20,000 attendees at community events across the State of Florida to educate minorities about marijuana for medical use and the impact of its unlawful use.

We conducted detailed testing of \$350,424 in expenditures involving website design and maintenance; public service announcements via radio and TV stations; graphic design, brand campaign, video production, and research; and community outreach campaigns. While all of the expenditures appeared to be allowable and in alignment with statutory requirements, we found that \$20,000 of \$166,212 (12%) community outreach campaign expenditures were not properly supported with complete and sufficient evidence of deliverables such as data collection and analysis as required by the service agreements.

In response to our inquiry, MMERI management stated that the insufficient vendor documentation supporting the deliverables occurred under the leadership of the former MMERI Director. The current MMERI Executive Director had strengthened controls to validate vendor deliverables. As a result, the Division of Audit reviewed additional transactions totaling \$14,179 between January 15, 2020 and June 15, 2021, the period under the current management. We verified that the deliverables “were received, reviewed, and accepted by the MMERI” as certified by the Budget and Program Manager. The documentation provided by the vendors was adequate to support the deliverables.

Transfers of Indirect Cost \$150,762 or 13.00%



The indirect cost rate for MMERI of 15% was negotiated by the Vice President for Division of Research, Provost, and FDOH representatives. Indirect costs are charged after an expenditure has occurred and are designed to reimburse the Division of Research for the administrative costs for overseeing the funding and research activities. Indirect costs were made using direct journal transfers from MMERI to the Division of Research during the review period. The

Division of Audit confirmed that the University charged indirect costs at the 15% negotiated rate. We also noted that the 15% negotiated indirect cost rate for MMERI activities, is significantly lower than the University’s federally negotiated indirect cost rate for general administration of sponsored projects of 48%.



Operating Expenses \$84,778 or 7.31%



The following bullets summarizes the \$84,778 in operating expenses:

- **\$45,072** to purchase assets such as furniture, computers, and printers for initial set up of the office;
- **\$15,553** on miscellaneous items including office supplies, small equipment, telephone, postage, cable and network;
- **\$15,000** to rent office space at the University Foundation. Due to the lack of office space on the main campus to accommodate all MMERI employees at its inception, MMERI began renting office spaces from FAMU Foundation. The monthly rent of \$1,000 was economical for four office spaces, one conference room, and one storage space. In response to concerns raised by some legislators regarding the rental fees, University Management and the FAMU Foundation reached an agreement to waive the rental fees for MMERI’s office space beginning in July 2021; and
- **\$9,152** for employee travels to outreach events and conferences.

We conducted detailed testing of \$53,868 operating expenses. While all of the expenditures were allowable and in alignment with statutory requirements, we found that 9 of 11 Inter-Departmental Transfers for operating expense purchases totaling \$32,825 (21%) did not have signature approval from the “Requesting Department’s (MMERI) Budget Authority” as required but were approved by Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) for payment.

In response to our inquiry, MMERI management stated that the incomplete signature approvals occurred under the leadership of the former MMERI Director. The current MMERI Executive Director had strengthened controls with Inter-Departmental Transfer approvals. As a result, the Division of Audit reviewed three additional Inter-Departmental Transfers between January 15, 2020 and June 15, 2021, the period under the current management. We verified that the three transfers totaling \$121,887 were properly approved by both the requesting department and the OSP for payment.



FISCAL PROCESS

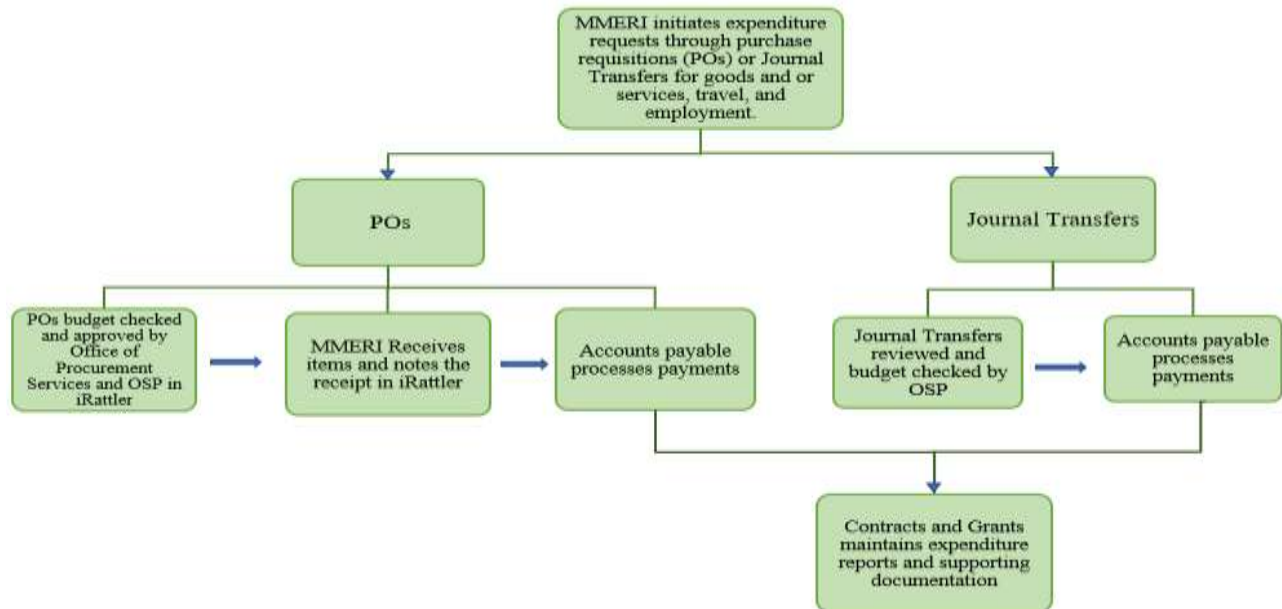
MMERI's Budget Process

MMERI established a budget process that includes independent reviews and approvals conducted by the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP). The budget process is controlled through the University's iRattler system allowing for continuous monitoring of available budget, while preventing payments if budget is not available. An overview of the budget process is depicted below.



Review and Approval of Expenditures

Review and approval of expenditures occurs through multiple organizational layers. MMERI performs a self-monitoring process over budget and expenditure. OSP provides oversight to ensure expenditures are within the budget setup in iRattler. Finally, Contracts and Grants provides expenditure reports with supporting documentation to MMERI, the Principal Investigator (PI), and management for review as depicted below.



Our review of the above processes determined that controls are in place around budget monitoring and expenditure management.



PROGRAM REPORTING

Timeline

Reporting Requirements

FY 2018 -2019 The **Interagency Agreement** between FDOH and FAMU required MMERI to provide quarterly written reports to FDOH beginning July 1, 2018, on program expenditures to include:

- a. The balance in the FAMU Medical Marijuana Minority Education Account.
- b. Report of expenditures related to the FAMU Medical Marijuana Minority Education Account.
- c. The products and or services related to each expenditure from the above account.

Results: MMERI submitted only one of four required expenditure reports to FDOH in July 2019 under the previous leadership. FDOH determined that the report and its supporting documents were not properly prepared with sufficient and complete documentation to support expenditures.

FY 2019-2020 The **Interagency Agreement** between FDOH and FAMU **did not continue to require MMERI to submit expenditure reports**. Provision of the agreement states “The University will use the funds transferred for the purpose of educating minorities about marijuana for medical use and the impact of the unlawful use of marijuana on minority communities pursuant to section 381.986(7)(d), Florida Statutes.”

August, 2019 - June 2020 At the direction of the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs, MMERI started to provide periodic internal reports on program progress.

Results: We reviewed all (11) internal reports submitted to the Provost between August 2019 and January 2020. Overall, the reports provided management an update regarding MMERI’s operational and financial activities.



**July 2020 –
March 2021**

Beginning fiscal year 2020-2021, MMERI was required to provide quarterly external reports according to provisions outlined in the *House Bill 5001*, passed by the Florida Legislature in 2020.

House Bill, Section 3 Human Services, Subsection 478 states:

```
478 SPECIAL CATEGORIES
TRANSFER TO FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL AND
MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY (FAMU) - DIVISION OF
RESEARCH
FROM GRANTS AND DONATIONS TRUST
FUND . . . . . 3,644,508
```

Funds provided in Specific Appropriation 478 shall be used exclusively for the purpose of educating minorities about marijuana for medical use and the impact of the unlawful use of marijuana on minority communities pursuant to section 381.986(7) (d), Florida Statutes.

The Division of Research at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University shall provide to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Department of Health quarterly update reports no later than 30 days after the close of each calendar quarter beginning July 30, 2020 for the calendar quarter ending June 30, 2020. At a minimum, these reports shall include the adopted fiscal year budget, expenditures to date, estimated expenditures remaining, program objectives, the public education plan with timelines, minority groups targeted, the number of minorities reached by program objective, copies of any documents disseminated during the quarter as part of the public education campaign for educating minorities about marijuana for medical use and the impact of the unlawful use of marijuana on minority communities, a list of all research projects on the impact of the unlawful use of marijuana on minority communities funded under this program, including project status and copies of any studies or reports funded by this program completed or published during the quarter.

Results: We reviewed MMERI’s quarterly reports covering reporting periods listed below:

1. April 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020
2. July 1, 2020 – September 30, 2020
3. October 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020
4. January 1, 2021 – March 31, 2021

The reports were timely distributed to the Executive Office of the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Department of Health, FAMU Vice President of Academic Affairs/Provost, and FAMU Vice President of Research. The reports provided updates of required information outlined in the House Bill 5001. This includes, but was not limited to fiscal budgets, expenditures to date, estimated expenditures remaining, education plan with timelines, program, achievements, and research projects funded under MMERI.



PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The MMERI team contracted with Florida State University (FSU), College of Medicine, to conduct an independent program performance assessment according to the evaluation criteria set forth by the state legislature. The independent assessment evaluated MMERI's objectives, strategies, core tactics of communication, community engagement, education, and other aspects based on data collected between partial State Fiscal Year 2020 and 2021.

The assessment report "Independent Assessment of the MMERI," released by FSU in September 2021, appraised MMERI's accomplishments made toward the program's goals. Some key observations included:

- Maximized number of individuals exposed to its outreach and education efforts;
- Equitable distribution of minority representation;
- A broadly diverse audience and population across the state;
- A growing directory of local education core partners;
- Active and informative social media campaign;
- A website rich with education and outreach content; and
- Web-based Basic Medical Marijuana Education course's individual surveys.

Some key advice provided by the FSU Evaluation suggested the MMERI team consider the following:

- Use methodologies that will assist in maximizing MMERI's data gathering capabilities from social media outreach;
- Develop data specifications that will assist MMERI with longitudinal data sources;
- Use SEO (Search Engine Optimization) on MMERI's website and its Internet-based channels to build a larger and returning audience; and
- Augment MMERI's streaming media and social media content with shorter topics that aim at a general and layperson audience.

The MMERI Executive Director stated that MMERI plans to conduct ongoing evaluations to measure the program's performance.

Recommendation

In addition to the independent program assessment, the MMERI Executive Director should continue to regularly monitor and evaluate MMERI's performance to ensure that the program goals are achieved, and state funds are used effectively and economically through the establishment of measurable goals and metrics. For example, financial metrics could include determining the average cost per person contacted for an outreach event and performing expenditure trend analysis to identify opportunities for cost savings.



APPENDIX A – PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The main **purpose** of the advisory service was to determine whether MMERI is carried out in accordance with provisions set forth in Section 381.986 (7)(d) Florida Statutes, and its expenditures were allowable and in line with the program goals. Our reviews covered the following MMERI’s aspects:

1. Goals;
2. Expenditure analysis and review;
3. Fiscal processes;
4. Reporting; and
5. Program Assessment.

The **scope** of the engagement included the review of MMERI’s goals, program activities, and expenditures recorded in the main project code 5970 between the period of October 2018 and June 15, 2021, unless otherwise specified.

The **methodology** included obtaining an understanding of the internal controls by interviewing University personnel and, as appropriate, applying procedures to determine that internal controls were working as designed, and to determine MMERI’s compliance to other guidelines, laws, and regulations. We also reviewed policies and procedures, and internal documents. We conducted walk-throughs of processes and conducted detailed expenditure testing as depicted in the tables below.

Part I: Non-Contract Expenditures \$153,439

| Expense Descriptions | Testing Criteria |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office supplies & equipment • IT services and products • Video production • Printing • Temporary employment • Postage • Employee travel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditures were allowable and in accordance with MMERI’s goals. • Inter-Departmental Transfers were approved by both MMERI’s Budget Authority and OSP. • Travel related expenses were supported with approved Travel Authorization (TA). |



Part II: Contract Expenditures \$350,424

| Expense Descriptions | Testing Criteria |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website design and maintenance • Public service announcements via radio and TV stations • Graphic design, brand campaign, video production, and research • Community outreach campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditures were allowable and in line with MMERI's goals. • Contracts went through proper competitive bidding/sole source process or evaluation. • Services/goods were delivered according to agreement terms. • Total payments made did not exceed contracted amount. |



DISTRIBUTION

Responsible Managers:

- Maurice Edington, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs
- Charles Weatherford, Vice President for Research
- Patricia Green-Powell, Executive Director, MMERI

Internal Distribution:

- Board of Trustees
 - Kelvin Lawson, Chair
 - Kimberly Moore, Vice Chair
 - Craig Reed, Audit and Compliance Committee Chair
 - Ann Marie Cavazos, FAMU Faculty Senate President
 - Carrington McKenzie Whigham, FAMU Student Body President
 - Otis Cliatt, II
 - Thomas W. Dortch, Jr.
 - Michael Dubose
 - Kristin Harper
 - David Lawrence, Jr.
 - Belvin Perry, Jr.
 - Kenward Stone
 - Nicole Washington
- Larry Robinson, Ph.D., President
- Linda F. Barge-Miles, Chief of Staff
- Rica Calhoun, Chief Compliance & Ethics Officer
- Shawnta Friday-Stroud, Vice President, University Advancement/ Executive Director, FAMU Foundation
- W. Rebecca Brown, Interim Vice President, Finance and Administration/CFO
- Denise Wallace, Vice President, Legal Affairs and General Counsel
- Danielle McBeth, Government Relations Director
- Keith Miles, Communications, Marketing, and Media Relations Director

External Distribution:

Julie Leftheris, Inspector General and Director of Compliance, Florida Board of Governors



PROJECT TEAM



Engagement was conducted by:
Ruoxu Li, CIA, CISA
Senior IT & Data Analytics Auditor



Engagement was supervised by:
Deidre Melton, CIA, CISA, CISM, CDPSE, CRISC, CFE, CIGI, CRMA
Associate Vice President for Audit and Chief Risk Officer



Engagement was approved and distributed by:
Joseph K. Maleszewski, MBA, CIA, CGAP, CISA, CIG, CIGA, CIGI, CCEP, CCA
Vice President for Audit

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joseph K. Maleszewski".

STATEMENT OF ACCORDANCE

The Division of Audit's mission is to provide independent, objective assurance and consulting services designed to add value and improve the University's operations. It helps the University accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

We conducted this advisory service in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing and Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require we plan and perform the advisory service to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our engagement objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions based on our objectives.

Please address inquiries regarding this report to the Division of Audit at (850) 412-5479.

<http://famu.edu/administration/division-of-audit/index.php>