

**From:** [Dundas, Michael](#)  
**To:** [Board of Aldermen](#)  
**Cc:** [City Clerk Contact](#); [COS-Website-Planning](#); [Mayor](#)  
**Subject:** The Sira Accelerator  
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**Attachments:** [Sira Accelerator Program Overview.pdf](#)

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Hon. Board of Aldermen:

I am writing at the request of Alderman Niedergang to give the Board more information about the Sira Accelerator program. The Sira Accelerator is a small business development and mentoring program designed to help entrepreneurs and economic empowerment applicants succeed in the notoriously complex and competitive cannabis industry. Sira Naturals, one of the oldest and largest medical marijuana providers in the Commonwealth, brings Sira Accelerator participants into our secure manufacturing facilities to assist them in developing their cannabis infused products.

Moreover, the Sira Accelerator provides a clear path to profitability for these small businesses by providing shelf-space for qualified products in our retail establishments. We believe that this program will do more to launch and empower small businesses and economic empowerment applicants than licensing advantages alone could ever do. The barriers to entry for small entrepreneurs in the cannabis industry are extraordinarily high. Capital is expensive and difficult to raise, the cost of building infrastructure is prohibitive, and the required technical skills are rare. The Sira Accelerator helps small businesses do an end-run around these traditional obstacles.

Please have a look at the attached brochure about the Sira Accelerator and about our first class of accepted small businesses. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

All the best,

**Michael Dundas | Chief Executive Officer**  
**Sira Naturals, Inc.**  
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# SIRA ACCELERATOR

YOUR IDEAS, ACCELERATED.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

THE NATION'S FIRST AND ONLY  
CANNABIS BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

[SIRAACCELERATOR.COM](http://SIRAACCELERATOR.COM)



“As an Economic Empowerment applicant, the barriers to entry in the cannabis industry are extremely high.”

– Leah Samura

Co-Founder, 612 Studios

Read more from the press release



## The Problem

Barriers to entry in the Massachusetts regulated cannabis industry are often insurmountably high for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Capital formation is difficult, facility design and building costs are high, and regulatory compliance requires developed skill and expertise. Moreover, the Massachusetts legislature and the Cannabis Control Commission have expressed a clear public policy preference in favor of assisting underrepresented groups in participating in the industry. Indeed, the regulated cannabis industry is uniquely positioned to help right the wrongs of decades of misguided drug policy by providing a pathway for budding entrepreneurs to enter the space.



Sira Accelerator members are educated on the stages of the production process.

## The Solution

The Sira Accelerator Program: The Future of Cannabis Innovation for Entrepreneurs in Massachusetts. Sira Naturals, Inc. hopes to be part of the solution by launching the nation's first cannabis entrepreneur and microbusiness accelerator program: the Sira Accelerator. The program provides motivated entrepreneurs with workspace, expertise, and infusible cannabinoid substrate to help develop their cannabis infused product ideas. For those who successfully develop a marketable product, Sira Naturals then provides an immediate path to business viability by putting these products directly on the shelves of its medical and adult-use retail establishments.

The goal is to give cannabis entrepreneurs a platform from which to launch their cannabis business. Entrepreneurs retain ownership and control of their businesses, granting Sira a small equity stake in return for participating in the program. Sira Naturals believes that the future of the cannabis industry rests upon the enthusiasm and creativity of motivated, socially and environmentally conscious entrepreneurs who will recognize and embrace the benefits and the challenges inherent in bringing responsible, professional infused products to market. The Sira Accelerator program was created to empower them to succeed.



Michael Dundas explains the labeling of marijuana products to the Accelerator Program members.



# The Nation's First Cannabis Business Accelerator Accepts Its Inaugural Round of Applicants

First participants made up exclusively of women, economic empowerment, and minority owned small businesses.

**MILFORD, Mass.** Sira Naturals, Inc., a Massachusetts-based registered marijuana dispensary (RMD) group, has accepted the inaugural class of applicants into the Sira Accelerator program, its small-business accelerator designed to help entrepreneurs navigate and succeed within the emerging regulated cannabis industry.

From an initial response of more than 400 applicants, three groups were chosen based on the quality of the teams and viability of the products. The three companies include: Healing Tree Edibles, a women-owned producer of craft cannabis infused edibles and pet snacks based on Cape Cod; Hothouse Holyoke, an aspiring craft cannabis cultivator and product manufacturer based in the disproportionately impacted community of Holyoke; and 612 Studios, an Economic Empowerment applicant based in Boston that produces a women's and couples' cannabis infused product line.

"We looked at hundreds of inspiring and enthusiastic entrepreneurs during our application process, and these three successful applicants have demonstrated a vision and dedication to their work that is second to none," said Michael Dundas, president and chief executive officer of Sira Naturals. "Sira Naturals is grateful to have the opportunity to share what we have learned throughout our journey as an organization, and to accelerate these small businesses to enormous success. Many of the other groups that applied showed tremendous potential and we hope to work with many of them in the future."

"We are very excited about this opportunity and I can't wait to start working," said Leah Samura, one member of the husband and wife team that makes up 612 Studios. "As an Economic Empowerment applicant, the barriers to entry in the cannabis industry are extremely high. This program is so unique and valuable in how it can help our company make the transition to the regulated marketplace."

"When we moved to Massachusetts we deliberately chose Holyoke as our new community," said Audrey Park, co-founder of Hothouse Holyoke which has applied to the Cannabis Control Commission for Cultivation and Product Manufacturing licenses. "We believe that the cannabis industry has the economic potential to give back to disproportionately impacted communities and we want to be a part of this movement."

"This is truly a historic moment in the cannabis industry," said Michelle Bennett, founder of Healing Tree Edibles. "For a small business like mine, the Accelerator offers the potential to reach a much wider market than I could achieve on my own," she said. Healing Tree currently manufactures cannabinoid-infused pet treats.

The goal of the program is to provide cannabis entrepreneurs an immediate path-forward in product development, slicing through barriers to entry, and accelerating them to profitability. The Sira Accelerator provides access to world-class lab technology, workspace, and executive mentorship. Additionally, each small-business receives an allotment of Sira Naturals-produced cannabinoid substrate, or cannabis oil, that is invaluable to product development, and often the most prohibitive hurdle for these small businesses to overcome.

# The First Class of Sira Accelerator Startups

The inaugural class was chosen in July of 2018, and each of these groups has started work in the program.



## Hothouse Holyoke

Hothouse Holyoke creates gluten-free & vegan food products. Each cannabis-infused edible is home inspired and made with integrity. Audrey and Lucas hope to pave the way for a diverse, craft-centric cannabis industry in Massachusetts. After receiving positive feedback from friends and family, they decided to take a leap of faith and join the industry. As an emerging craft edibles kitchen, Hothouse Holyoke knew they could benefit greatly from the Sira Accelerator. They are extremely grateful for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and are excited about the upcoming journey.

“We have been navigating the cannabis start-up process ourselves, learning a lot along the way. The Sira Accelerator will expedite our growth and allow us to bring our home-inspired edibles to dispensary shelves faster than we ever could have imagined.” - Audrey Park

## 612 Studios



Leah and Sieh Samura are the dynamic husband and wife team behind 612 Studios, LLC. Leah Samura has been a dedicated community technology instructor and program manager in Roxbury, MA, for local non-profits. Sieh Samura, a combat veteran of the Iraq War, started New England's Original Private Cannabis Club, Mass Bay Cannabis, and is a vocal cannabis consumer rights activist. Together they will offer Purient, a premium line of cannabis-infused intimate products designed for women and couples.



## Healing Tree Edibles

For Michelle Bennett, CEO of Healing Tree Edibles, the journey to become a cannabis entrepreneur has been a personal one. First, when a young family member was diagnosed with brain cancer, and again, when she herself went through a major ankle surgery, she saw the power of the plant. During her recovery, Bennett refused to take opiates for painkillers and chose cannabis chocolates instead.

“My vision is to have cannabis be an accessible medicine which can help with PTSD, anxiety and is a safer alternative to alcohol and opiates.”



Michelle Bennett gets a close up look at the edibles production process with a Sira Naturals team member.

Through this journey of culinary exploration, Healing Tree Edibles began infusing their confections with more than just cannabis. Each recipe is made with unending care, thought, and meticulous attention. Why? Because there's just no other way to create the best cannabis-infused granola bars and healthy snacks around. All Healing Tree products are made with all natural, non-GMO ingredients combined with the purest cannabis extractions available, ensuring that customers get the highest quality experience possible.