

Minority Participation Program

Mid-Year Progress Report | July 2014

City of Springfield
Sangamon County
Hanson Professional Services Inc.





“This minority participation program has been developed because of our collective concern about increasing minority participation in the workforce and is intended to be a continuing program for years to come.”

» **Mike Houston**

Mayor of the City of Springfield



“This program is a good demonstration of what we can accomplish if we work together modestly to achieve a goal.”

» **Andy Van Meter**

Sangamon County Board chairman



“The employee owners of Hanson are excited to have the opportunity to lead this important effort. We are trying to ramp up as many opportunities as possible so that these kids can get excited about science, technology, engineering and math and determine if this is the career path they want to take.”

» **Sergio “Satch” Pecori**

President and CEO of Hanson Professional Services Inc.



“I have learned an immense amount throughout my first summer with Hanson Professional Services Inc. pertaining to both my career pursuit and life in general, but something that truly stuck with me was the realization that scholastic performance can only take you so

far, to be successful in anything you must also learn from the lessons not written in books.

My favorite part of this internship is getting the opportunity to travel, as well as meeting others with a passion for what they do, who were eager and willing to teach and guide me.”

» **Alexander Diop**

Intern for project delivery services at Hanson who plans to attend Tuskegee University to pursue a bachelor’s or master’s degree in computer science. Expects to graduate in 2018.



“My favorite part about this internship is the exposure to multiple markets in civil engineering and the opportunity to experience different disciplines while learning valuable engineering skills.

Hanson’s internship opportunity allowed me to understand the practical applications of things I learned in school. I could never imagine concepts such as interpolation, statistical analysis and calculus-based applications would be so common and useful in the real world!”

» **Harrison Williams**

Railway engineering aide at Hanson who plans to attend the Georgia Institute of Technology to pursue a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering. Expects to graduate in 2018.



“Hanson has provided me with an opportunity to gain practical experience, by applying methods and theories that I’ve learned in class.”

» **Nicholas Moore**

Infrastructure engineering aide at Hanson who is pursuing a master’s degree in civil engineering. Expects to graduate in 2015.

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Contents

Program History	4
Program Overview	4
Program Management	5
Project Timeline	5
Getting Involved	6
Student Participation.....	6
Program Partner Involvement.....	6
Program Accomplishments	6
Minority Participation Workshop	7
Implementation Considerations	7
Program Suggestions	9
Schedule of Activities	10
Next Steps	12



Mayor Houston's December 16th, 2013 press conference
announcement of the Minority Participation Plan.

I. Program History

The City of Springfield and Sangamon County, in conjunction with Hanson Professional Services Inc. (Hanson), are committed to the continued involvement and participation of minority and disadvantaged businesses as part of the Springfield Rail Improvements Project and the Multimodal Facility. Our goal with the Minority Participation Program is to create a model that will be successful in mentoring minority youth toward full-time employment in engineering, science and railroad-related fields. The program involves a multi-pronged approach to existing and proposed programs and ideas to further develop the minority participation for these and other projects. This report documents the program's first six months of progress.

II. Program Overview

The Minority Participation Plan originally was conceived in response to community desires for greater minority and disadvantaged business participation in the Springfield Rail Improvements Project and Multimodal Facility. While project sponsors agreed to undertake a number of business inclusion initiatives, we recognize that long-term success requires investing in the minority talent and entrepreneurship pipeline. To accomplish this, a program was developed in late 2013 for mentoring minority youth toward college degrees and full-time employment in engineering, science and railroad-related fields. The Minority Participation Plan is located in Appendix A.

The Minority Participation Program offers a combination of exposure, education and employment opportunities for high potential minority youth who have an interest in and aptitude for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). These youth, who range from middle-school students to college scholars, are recruited through area schools, minority-based organizations and individual referrals. To the best extent possible, those who meet the program's criteria of good grades, STEM interests and a strong program reference are invited to participate in events, experiences, programs and internships offered by a range of community partners.



Hanson, the program's manager, is working with minority-based organizations, businesses, colleges and universities, IDOT and others within the Springfield community to link students to existing programs that advance learning, skill development and professional growth. Among these programs is a mentoring initiative led by Hanson employees along with paid summer internships that Hanson offers to high school or college-level minority students each year. Older students like these are supported in applying for, attending and completing not only Hanson's program, but also others like IDOT's Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's National University Rail (NURail) Center Diversity Programs. Younger students are connected with groups like Frontiers International Inc.'s Junior Frontiers program to go on field trips and participate in hands-on learning experiences. No matter where students fall on the education spectrum, the Minority Participation Program is working to expand their access to enriching career pathways that promote bright, prosperous futures.

III. Program Management

In late 2013, the City of Springfield and Sangamon County approved an intergovernmental agreement authorizing the implementation of the Minority Participation Program. Hanson was selected to administer and manage this program for a two-year term, with an option for unlimited future extensions.

To help launch the program, the City and County agreed to contribute one third of the initiative’s costs along with Hanson. A fund was established at \$60,000 per year to implement the program, with each sponsor donating \$20,000 annually toward activities and expenses.

As the program’s manager, Hanson is charged with overseeing administration and routine operations. In its role, it recruits and selects participating youth and program partners; connects students with promising opportunities; organizes and staffs events and activities; provides mentoring and internships; and engages the community to grow public involvement and support. It also produces this semi-annual progress report that it provides to its partners and the community at large a means of tracking, measuring and publicizing the success of the program.

IV. Project Timeline

To maximize student participation and capitalize upon various program opportunities, the Minority Participation Program orients its operations around an academic calendar. It engages students from October through August in preparation, placement and programming activities.

A general timeline is featured below for ease of reference and review.

Month	Activity
October	» Fall workshop for minority organizations and schools
November	» Deadline for student referrals to be submitted
December–January	» Screening and interviews for student placement
February	» Student placement and application assistance
March–August	» Student program and activity involvement

V. Getting Involved

There are two ways to get involved in the Minority Participation Program. One way is to refer a young person to the program or to be a student who wants to participate in the initiative. The other way is to have a program or event that you would like minority youth to attend and to become a community partner. Below are more detailed descriptions of how to connect to the program's work.

Student Participation

High-achieving minority youth in middle school, high school and college are eligible for participation in the program. Students must demonstrate an interest in the fields of science, technology, engineering and/or mathematics (STEM) through coursework, extracurricular activities or independent study. They also must secure a reference from someone familiar with their interests and their aptitude and then submit a completed referral form to Hanson. Because the program is organized around an academic calendar, the deadline for referral forms is in November. This helps to ensure spring and summer program placements for participating youth. The student referral form is located in Appendix B.

Program Partner Involvement

Community, business, academic, civic and faith-based organizations that conduct STEM-related programs and events are invited to partner with this program to extend their opportunities to its participating youth. Representatives from interested organizations are encouraged to attend an October workshop to learn more about the program's goals and operations. They are also requested to submit a community program information form, located in Appendix C that provides the following details:

- » Program name and focus
- » Targeted age or grade level
- » Program capacity (number of students served)
- » Program duration (starting and ending dates)
- » Participation cost
- » Participation benefits
- » Description of the application process (i.e., where applications can be found, when they are due, when selections are made, etc.)

VI. Program Accomplishments

The following table contains a schedule of events and programs that minority youth were encouraged to explore and pursue during the minority program's inaugural year of 2014. Students referred to the program with an interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) can learn more about these programs, their enrollment requirements and their activities by contacting Hanson directly. Through student interviews, the program's administrator (Hanson) contacts potential students with an interest in the event topics and invites them to participate in one or more of these featured events. Program participation is limited to the availability of space, opportunities and resources.

Minority Participation Workshop

On Feb. 3, 2014, nearly 40 Springfield stakeholders met at Hanson to discuss implementation of Springfield's new minority participation program. The program's primary goal initially is to help Springfield's minority youth attain education, job skills and full-time employment in engineering, science and railroad-related fields. Representatives from more than 25 local organizations committed to developing minority talent, engendering positive social change and expanding access to opportunity were invited to attend this two-hour workshop to:

- » learn more about the program, its purpose, components and deliverables;
- » provide referrals for high-aptitude students, currently enrolled in STEM courses, who could benefit from involvement in the program's efforts;
- » share information about existing community programs for youth; and
- » work with the City, County and Hanson on the refinement and implementation of the Minority Participation Program.



During the course of the workshop's discussions, participants identified a wide range of considerations for the program partners to explore in the public rollout of the program and its initiatives. Their insights and ideas are presented below for ease of reference and review.

Implementation Considerations

Infrastructure Supports

- » **Transportation assistance:** It was suggested that many participating youth are likely going to need transportation supports (i.e., bus passes) and the underwriting of travel expenses in order to consistently get to the programs that they select.
- » **Parental involvement:** Getting parents involved will be important to ensuring that students participate in programs and follow through on their commitments. Parents and students should be required to sign a commitment document.
- » **School participation:** Schools are integral to identifying high-aptitude talent and to creating opportunities for exposure to STEM materials, activities, experts and curricula. They also serve as an accountability mechanism because they can follow up with students on their program involvement and progress.
- » **Program coordination and capacity building:** A number of community programs may need assistance (financial, transportation, volunteers, etc.) to effectively partner with the program implementation.
- » **Assistance with participation/administration fees:** Some students and families may have difficulty capitalizing on program opportunities because the participation or administration fees are cost prohibitive. Program partners may need to consider underwriting some of the expense to ensure that money is not an impediment to participation.

Student Criteria

- » **Selection criteria:** What are the criteria for making student selections? There will likely be more referrals than anticipated. How will decisions be made to determine which students move forward and which ones do not?
- » **Referral form:** The existing referral form may need to be altered so that there are three distinct forms — one for middle school students, one for high school students and one for college students. By doing this, Hanson can customize its selection criteria to student age/grade level and thus provide further guidance for referring agencies.
- » **Nonselected students:** What will happen to the students who are not selected? What is the rejection process, and will these students be eligible for future consideration?



Mentoring

- » **Mentoring process:** What does the mentoring process look like from an implementation standpoint? What ages/grade levels are eligible for STEM mentoring? How many mentors are there? What is the program capacity in terms of the number of students who could be mentored? How frequent will contact with the mentors be and how structured or informal will the mentoring process be?
- » **Volunteers:** Will mentors be Hanson-based only or perhaps open to volunteers from the larger community?

Tracking Implementation Progress

- » **Rollout and timeline:** What exactly is the implementation process? What schedule will Hanson follow and what are the key milestones that community partners and groups need to be aware of? What are the program's major components and what does implementation look like for each one?

Generating Interest and Participation

- » **Student involvement:** Even after referrals are made, getting students interested enough to get and stay involved will require additional effort. What will Hanson do to generate student interest? Engineering open houses and having STEM experts talk about their fieldwork, motivations and successes are some activities that have been effective in the past.

Recruiting Community Partners

- » **Greater business involvement:** Hanson mentioned working with the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce's Quantum Growth Partnership (Q5) initiative to recruit other community and business partners to hire minority interns.

Engaging Middle-School Students

- » **Field exposure:** Exposure to STEM fields and curricula is critical to attracting minority talent to the sciences. Early connections drive eventual pursuits. What exposure opportunities already are out there? Who is providing them? (Note: the Illinois Society of Professional Engineers has a program targeted to fifth-graders called Engineers in the Classroom. Hanson already participates in this program.)

Community Efforts to Grow the Pipeline

- » **Data sharing and organic connections:** Hanson will offer the program data that it collects from community organizations to other interested parties so that they can reach out to and engage these groups directly. There may be synergies and opportunities for collaboration that can be more broadly explored beyond Hanson's own efforts. Hanson also will share community organization's contact information to help facilitate connections through a website.

Program Suggestions

At the conclusion of the workshop, some suggestions for the program partners and attendees to develop were listed and include:

- » Obtain program information from the organizations that participated in the workshop. Hanson has developed a community program information form and database to track the various programs.
- » Further refine the student selection criteria. Hanson has developed a student referral form to target grade levels (middle school, high school, college) and emailed the forms to interested community groups and individuals.
- » Hanson updated the program implementation timeline (for the first-year rollout) and provided more detail about the process based on community input.
- » Community group contact information will be shared with all of the organizations featured in the program and placed on the program's website.
- » A workshop discussion summary was sent out to all meeting attendees and invitees.
- » Student referral forms were obtained from community groups during the following few weeks of the workshop.

The workshop resulted in 20 student referrals comprised of four college-aged, eight high school-aged and eight middle school-aged students.



2014 Schedule of Activities

Date	Sponsoring Organization	Program / Event	Target Audience	Attendance
March 15, 2014	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign — Rail Transportation and Engineering Center (RailTEC)	2014 Engineering Open House	Middle and high school students	25 middle and high school minority students
March 29, 2014	American Association of University Women	Expanding Your Horizons: Math & Science Careers Are For You	Middle school girls	1 middle school student
May 15, 2014	Lincoln Land Community College	Hanson Hands-On Workshop	College-level math, science, engineering students	11 students, (3 minority students)
Summer 2014	Hanson/City of Springfield/IDOT	Summer internship program	High school juniors and seniors and college students	3 students — Hanson 1 student — City of Springfield 1 student — IDOT
July 27–Aug. 2, 2014	Michigan Technological University and University of Wisconsin-Superior	Summer youth program — rail and intermodal transportation	High school students	2 high school students
Winter/spring 2014	Hanson	Full-time employment	College graduates	2 minority graduates

University of Illinois Engineering Open House

Hanson partnered with the Frontiers International Inc.'s Springfield club to organize a field trip to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on March 15, 2014. All of the student referrals in the middle school and high school groups were invited to attend. The program partners provided transportation via charter bus and lunch for 25 students and 12 adults. Six of the students that attended were student referrals of the Minority Participation Program. The bus departed Springfield at 8 a.m. and returned at 5 p.m. A flyer for this event is located in Appendix D.



American Association of University Women — Expanding Your Horizons Conference

This program was a one-day workshop on March 29, 2014, geared toward middle school-aged girls. Four of the student referrals that met these criteria were invited to attend, and the program partners offered to pay the \$15 registration fee. One girl from the program attended the workshop. A flyer for this event is located in Appendix D.

Lincoln Land Community College — Hanson Hands-On Workshop

Hanson met with members of Lincoln Land Community College's Board of Directors on April 22, 2014, to discuss potential partnering opportunities for their minority students. As a result of this meeting, Hanson offered a project workshop for the college's math, computer science and pre-engineering students on May 15, 2014. The workshop focused on a presentation of the services that Hanson provides its customers and where Hanson is located around the country. The workshop also included a demonstration of their geospatial imaging unit that encompasses many areas of expertise that the students were interested in learning more about. Three of the 11 attendees were minority students.



Summer Internship Program

As part of the Minority Participation Program, Hanson committed to hiring three minority interns each year through the duration of the program. For the summer of 2014, Hanson has hired one college-aged student and two high school seniors for our internship program. In addition, Hanson hired one college senior from Southern Illinois University for an internship during the winter break and hired him for full-time employment after his graduation this past spring. Hanson's Springfield office also hired another full-time minority graduate from Purdue University in January 2014.

Other program partners, the City of Springfield (Public Works) and IDOT have both hired one summer intern from the program that were contacted through the referral process.



Michigan Tech University — Rail and Intermodal Summer Camp

Through the University of Illinois' NURail program, an opportunity for high school students to attend a weeklong summer camp at Michigan Tech University in Houghton, Mich., was identified. The camp focuses on rail and intermodal transportation for students interested in this type of engineering. Tuition is valued at \$900 per student and is covered for qualifying students. Six of the minority program's high school students were invited to attend this camp, and two students accepted the offer. A flyer for this event is located in Appendix D.

The program partners will cover transportation arrangements by air to and from Springfield to Houghton. This program was held from July 27 to Aug. 2, 2014, and will be covered in more detail in the next progress report.

VII. Next Steps

Minority Participation Website — Grow Our Own, <http://growourown.net>

One of our team partners, Vector Communications Corp., has developed a website for the transparency and interaction of the public to assist in achieving the goals of this program. This program, which is sponsored by the City of Springfield, Sangamon County and Hanson with support from IDOT, is committed to helping Springfield's minority youth attain college degrees and eventually full-time employment in engineering, science and railroad-related fields. Springfield Alderman Gail Simpson best summarized the program's mission by stating that we (Springfield) wish to grow our own and provide opportunities for their futures in Springfield. Therefore, the program, which from this point forward will be named Grow Our Own, selects students from middle school through college to participate in mentoring, educational initiatives, job training and internships. Opportunities along each of these pathways help to prepare high-performing youth for successful, prosperous jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers.



Information that the public will need to know about this program — its goals, timeline and ways to get involved — can be found on this website. Users will be encouraged to visit often for the latest updates and may sign up to receive periodic email notifications about upcoming events. The website will be linked on the City of Springfield, Sangamon County, and Hanson's web pages.

Railroad Engineering Partners Recruitment Presentation

The Minority Participation Plan includes a commitment to encourage Hanson's engineering partners in Springfield to participate in the Minority Participation Program. Hanson will schedule a meeting with the consulting firms that are working on the Springfield Rail Improvements Project to discuss the success that the program has achieved since its inception and to encourage their future participation in the program. It is the intent of the plan to expand the program to other businesses throughout the community to allow for the diversification and participation of minorities in all areas of business, including health care, insurance, banking, etc.

October Workshop

As we prepare to embark on a new school year, the program partners will review the successes of this inaugural year to share with the participants of the next annual workshop. We hope to gain additional information from the workshop and support from the community that will allow the program to expand into new opportunities for Springfield's minority youth. Hanson, with assistance from Vector Communications Corp., again will coordinate with minority-based organizations in the Springfield community to identify middle school through college-aged students with an interest in STEM that may wish to pursue careers in engineering, science or related fields. The program schedule listed in Section IV will be followed through the course of the academic school year.

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