



LAMBERT-ST. LOUIS
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT®

Lambert Airport Business Diversity Development Success Story

Hauling Gravel and Planting Trees Pay Off for MBE Contractors



Will Sanders, Owner, A-Plus Contractors, LLC

Will Sanders is living proof of how MBE/DBE certification and the support of the Lambert St. Louis Business Diversity Development (BDD) office can be instrumental in helping a young business take-off and thrive. His family business, A-Plus Contractors



Tyson Townsend, Owner, Top to Bottom Cleaning Solutions and Landscaping

Tyson Townsend is a success story in the making. In just two years this enterprising 27-year-old has grown his business, Top to Bottom Cleaning Solutions and Landscaping, LLC, from push mowing five residential lawns in his neighborhood to currently maintaining

LLC, was founded in 2009 and certified in 2014. The company is on track to do \$500,000 in business this year, and Will is setting his sights on reaching \$1 million in contracts for 2017. Will credits Amber Gooding, Airport Assistant Director of Community Programs & Business Diversity Development with playing a major role in the company's success story.



Will Sanders, A-Plus Contractors, LLC

In 2014, Will attended an informational meeting conducted by the Airport for new businesses interested in obtaining certification. "That meeting proved to be invaluable," he said. Up to that point he had been running A-Plus in addition to holding down another full-time position. He had just decided to leave his full-time job to devote all of his time and energy to growing A-Plus.



Will on the job at Lambert Airport

The decision to devote full-time to the fledgling business required a leap of faith from Will and his wife, Kadee. In their

up to 60 residential properties. The Festus-based business now has two full-time employees and Townsend is poised to take his business to a whole new level. As a result of earning Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) certification this past December, Townsend just landed his first commercial contract with the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) to perform sodding restoration work.



Tyson Townsend and his wife, Nikki.

"I wouldn't have gotten this job without the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) certification," he explained. "They found my company on Lambert Airport's Business Diversity Development (BDD) website." He noted that MSD offers a lot of jobs for landscapers to restore lawns following sewer work. Townsend hopes that the successful completion of this first commercial job will lead to many more. He is also looking forward to bidding on work at the Airport. Townsend was advised to apply for MBE certification by one of his previous employers. "They told me about all of the opportunities at the Airport for minority companies," he explained. The prospect of increasing the visibility of his

humble beginnings they were concerned about how the young business would weather the winter months, when work typically slows for a business that specializes in hauling, excavation, and mobile power washing. While in the process of seeking his certification, Will got an idea. He figured that snow removal at the Airport would require some hauling, so he asked Gooding about the contractor performing this service for the Airport. Gooding immediately put him in touch with Tom Green at Midwest Landscape, a certified prime contractor. Green readily agreed to bring A-Plus on board as a tier 2 supplier.

business and getting opportunities to pursue commercial contracts appealed to Townsend so he researched the process, completed the paperwork, and earned his MBE certification within a few short months. He noted that Pamela Paulette, BDD Contract Compliance Officer, was very professional and helpful in guiding him through the process. "There is a lot of paperwork," said Townsend. "Pam was great about answering any questions I had." The BDD Office has streamlined the certification process. *(Read more about the new system below).*



Will took advantage of this opportunity, making sure that his company performed at a high level, and advanced to tier 1 status. "That contract was paramount," he exclaimed. "We would not have gotten that work without Amber."

Townsend attributes his early success to hard work and an insatiable desire to learn new things about his field. Prior to starting his own business in 2014, he gained valuable experience working for three other lawn and landscaping companies, where he focused on learning everything he could about all aspects of the business. He picked up new knowledge and skills with each company, working his way up to management and supervisory roles. Those experiences include supervision over a large project for the Missouri Department of Transportation (MODOT) to cut down more than 400 trees.

*Minority Business
Enterprise (MBE)
Disadvantaged*

Business Enterprise

(DBE)



As a result, Will to this day is one of BDD's biggest boosters and is a strong proponent of the certification program. "The MBE and DBE programs get us a seat at the table," said Will. "It makes us visible to prime contractors." When the Sanders' were developing the first marketing plan for their business, they realized that most of their competitors were certified. "I needed to get on equal footing with them," explained Will. The certification process took about three months.

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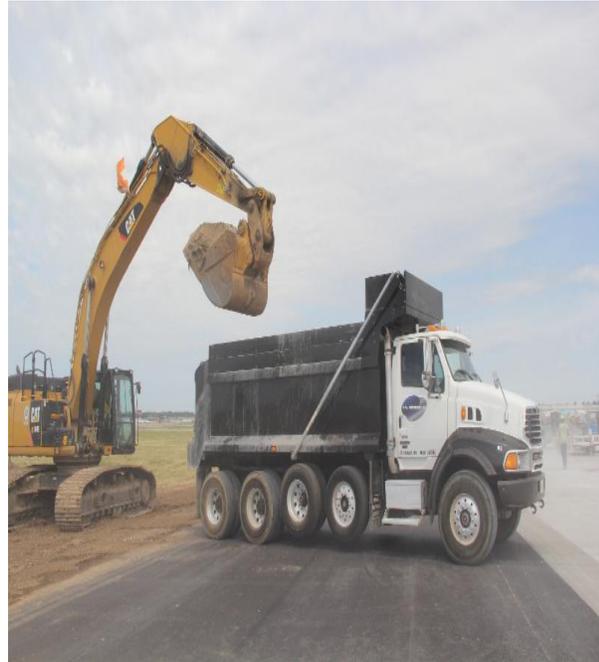
After landing that first snow removal contract with the Airport, Will was able to build on that success and quickly grow his business. He noted that he purchased his first dump truck for A-Plus in 2014 and that the company now owns four trucks and two trailers and is looking to purchase two-three more trucks this year. The company has also grown

Thanks to the experience he gained working for others, he can provide a wide variety of services to his customers, including installation of retaining walls, tree cutting, sodding, and lawn mowing. When he first started his business, Townsend explored the possibility of including janitorial services in his business model. He subsequently decided to focus exclusively on what he knows best, lawn care and landscaping.

As he looks to expand his business, Townsend is focusing on gaining new knowledge and skills. "If you're not learning every day, you're not doing something right," he declares. Long-term, he would like to branch out and offer additional services, such as sewer work. He would like to do more concrete work, excavating, and grading. Recalling his humble beginnings, Townsend also wants to contribute to the economic success of the community. His growth model includes providing employment for people who may not have the opportunities afforded to him. With Townsend's drive to succeed and thirst for new knowledge, there's no doubt that his business will soar.

"If you're not learning every day, you're not doing something right," said

from a one-man operation (Will) to a staff of four full-time and one part-time employees. A-Plus currently is a sub-contractor on another Lambert Airport contract to reconstruct the F and J runways. The scope of work involves tearing out the old concrete, using some of the broken concrete as a base, hauling dirt and old concrete, and laying new concrete. Will estimated that the project has yielded A-Plus about \$45,000 thus far, and when work is completed in October, the total contract will probably wind up at about \$90,000. Will credits his two stable Airport sub-contracts - the snow hauling and the taxiway reconstruction - with legitimizing his business. "They have enabled us to keep cash flow moving, and the runway work helps us stabilize revenue," he notes.



*Runway construction project at
Lambert Airport*



His advice for other companies considering certification is to "pre-plan and get your paperwork in order. You have to understand your business," he said. "The Airport is here to assist you, not to do your work for you. You have to be willing to help yourself."

Get Certified Online

How do I apply?

1. Go to www.flystl.com/getcertifiedbdd.
2. Create your online user account.
3. Follow the on-screen prompts and provide your contact information.
4. Complete the applications and upload documents.
5. Application complete! A Business Diversity Development representative will contact you soon!



Will Sanders has big plans for A-Plus. "I'm looking to grow to be a mid-size company of 40-50 employees over the next seven years," he said. "I have a strategic plan that looks to elevate our business beyond DBE/MBE status." Will wants to be an example in the community of a successful minority business. By all accounts he is doing just that.



Why apply online?

Applying online offers the benefit of streamlining and automating the application requirements for certification resulting in a shortened timeframe to complete the certification review process.

Contact us!

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