

How To: Sponsor Relations

Sponsorships are a two-way street: the support sponsors provide is a big benefit to your team, but it also helps them be seen as a contributor to activities in their community that are in line with their own goals. Be sure that when you communicate with sponsors, they understand how their goals are aligned with yours and how a sponsorship benefits you both. You want your sponsors to feel that they are a real partner with your team and a contributor to your success, both in competition and in supporting STEM education for students. Your team has a unique story to tell, and you should communicate that story when you reach out to potential sponsors.

Level 0: The Sponsor Package

Before you can begin reaching out to businesses for sponsorship it's important to have a sponsor package. This is a document that highlights all the important information about your team and the various opportunities for support. Your sponsor package should be as accessible as possible and tailored specifically for individuals with no prior knowledge of *FIRST*[®] or *FIRST* Robotics Competition.

Examples of *FIRST* Robotics Competition Team sponsor packages

- [Team 254: The Cheesy Poofs](#)
- [Team 3683: DAVE](#)

Sponsor Package Contents

About *FIRST* & *FIRST* Robotics Competition – For this section it is important to emphasize not just what *FIRST* and *FIRST* Robotics Competition are but their impact and scale as an international non-profit organization. *FIRST* itself shares data on its impact every year which can be helpful in quantifying the value of *FIRST* and your robotics team by extension

- [FIRST Robotics Competition Impact Infographic](#)
- [FIRST Alumni Infographic](#)
- [FIRST Alumni Statistics](#)
- [Overall FIRST Impact Infographic](#)

General Team History and Info

Here is your opportunity to share your team's story which should briefly cover your team's history including where the team operates, who's involved with the team, and most importantly what your team stands for.

Team Impact, Accomplishments, and Plans

This section can be used to expand on the achievements of your team and outline future events that a sponsor could attend or get involved with.



Sponsorship Details

This part of the sponsor package should detail the teams annual expenses for a year, all the ways a business can support your team, and what you can offer them in return for their support.

- **Expenses** – It's important to show a breakdown of your expenses so that businesses can get a good idea of where their money would be going should they sponsor your team.
- **Types of Sponsorship** – Money is not the only thing that can help your team: in-kind donations and mentorship are other forms of support that business can offer so make sure to communicate that to potential sponsors. Since it is likely that local small businesses will be much more willing to offer in-kind donations than money, you can strategically contact businesses whose goods and services your team can benefit from. For instance, a partnership with a local print shop can be valuable for printing and posters or documentation your team creates.
- **Sponsorship Tiers and Benefits** – You should have no more than three tiers of sponsorship with more benefits at every tier. The sponsorship benefits are more to show gratitude than they are used to sell yourself to the business, but it is still very important to only list benefits that you know can be delivered.

Sponsor Acquisition

Identify companies in your community or area that might be interested in sponsoring your team. Companies involved with STEM related activities are the best prospects since your team members could be their future employees or consumers of their product or service. Look for companies that have similar goals to your team.

Applying to Sponsorship Programs

Many large companies now have programs in place that provide sponsorships/grants to organizations promoting STEM or education. The advantage to applying to these programs is that the criteria for eligible organizations is clearly given and you won't have to go looking for a point of contact.

Level 1: Sponsor Acquisition

1. Identify who you will be contacting.
 - a. The best way to find new sponsorship opportunities is to leverage your teams' network of alumni, parents, and mentors to connect with a company.
 - b. Get the whole team involved to see if anyone could have someone in their network that could help with securing sponsorships. Mapping your network can be difficult but it's also the most reliable way to get sponsors.



- c. If you don't have prior contact however you'll want to communicate with a HR or Marketing manager but first look to see if they have a Sponsorship Organizer.
2. Make initial contact
 - a. If you're planning on contact a lot of companies or splitting the work between many people you should draft a template message to be used for all initial contacts.
 - b. In that first message be sure to include all necessary information: your name, your team name, what is *FIRST*, how long has your team been around, what your team does, what your team believes in, why this sponsor should sponsor you, and an explanation of what they will receive in return.

Ex. The following is an example template email for contacting a large STEM related company:

Hello Mr./Mrs. contactName,

My name is firstname lastname, and I am a student on teamName at schoolName. We at teamName compete in the *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) for high school students. The aim of the *FIRST* Robotics Competition is to help young people discover and develop a passion for science, engineering, technology and math (STEM). The ultimate "Sport for the Mind", FRC challenges students to build and program industrial-size robots to play a new game every year.

We are reaching out to you because we would love for companyName to join us this year. At teamName one of the ways we contribute to the development of our members is to expose them to experienced professionals from whom they can learn and take inspiration. Thus, a partnership with companyName would be a great opportunity for our members to be exposed to a leading business in STEM.

Please find attached our sponsorship package, which details how companyname can get involved in our events and our partnership benefits. In order to tailor this opportunity to match your company's needs, I would be happy to speak to you over the phone or in-person. Please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

- c. Some of this can be in your Sponsorship Information packet.



- d. You should not rehash your Packet and send it to your sponsor in an email.
 - e. Keep your message short and to the point. A long, complicated email message won't get read.
 - f. Attach a PDF of your Sponsorship Information Packet
 - g. Make sure to send your emails at a reasonable time to make sure it gets seen. Preferably you should be sending emails between Monday to Friday during business hours.
 - h. Be extremely professional. Remember, professional does not necessarily mean stuffy and boring, but it does mean polite, well-worded, and gracious. Address your contact with "Ms." or "Mr.", sign off with your name, your team, and your position (if you have one), and check for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and clarity multiple times.
 - i. If they do not respond, write a follow-up email using the above guidelines, as they might have missed it.
3. Follow-Up with a Personal Phone Call
- a. This can be stressful, but is extremely important in pulling in sponsors to your program.
 - b. Stay professional throughout the entire call, using a similar tone to your email.
 - c. Unless they ask for detail, keep things short . It can be difficult to remember a lot of information when you've only heard it once, so be brief. If they want more detail, feel free to talk more about your team, but also offer to email them more information
 - d. If they do not pick up, state your name, team name, a brief mention of who you are and what you want (e.g., "a high school robotics team calling in regards to a possible sponsorship with your company"), and list your contact information twice.
 - e. After any calls send a short email summarizing the next steps. This ensures that you and the sponsor lead are both on the same page with how to move forward.

Make a Presentation

Offer to bring your robot for a presentation at the sponsor's business, or to give a presentation to the company's decision makers about the team and *FIRST* robotics, including a robot demonstration. Once they see what you are doing, and hear from your team members, they are often more inclined to be a sponsor.

Level 2: Sponsor Retention

Once you've gained a new sponsor it's important to develop that relationship so that you can count on their continued support for the following years. Work with your existing sponsors every year to understand what steps your team can take to improve your sponsor relations process. The best way to keep a sponsor is to get them emotionally invested in your team by showing them first hand the magic of *FIRST* and all that your team does.



Sharing Team Updates

Create newsletters to keep them updated about your teams activities throughout the year, particularly during the build and competition season. This is an easy way for a company to stay connected and they can easily distribute the newsletter to their entire employee base.

Inclusion in Team Events

Invite your sponsors to events whether it's an FRC competition you are competing in or an end of year banquet. If contacts from your sponsors are working in STEM fields you can get them involved in your robot design process by inviting them to a design review session where students on your team can share everything that they've done so far.

Offering Robot Demos and Team Awards

Finally it's important to share the success of your team with your sponsors by offering to do robot demos for your sponsors at their events and giving them plaques or medals that your team has won.

About The Compass Alliance

The Compass Alliance was founded by 10 teams from around the world with the mission of helping *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams sustain and grow. A growing Resource Repository, and 24/7 Call Center give anyone of any skill level the tools to learn something new or learn more from anywhere in the world. Remote teams lacking mentors can sign up for a Tag Team to be their remote guide throughout the season, and Help Hubs pinpoint where to gain access to local services other *FIRST* teams offer. Hear For You provides the resources and tools to help teams and volunteers develop mental wellness on their teams and at events. You can learn more about The Compass Alliance, find quality assistance, and get involved at www.thecompassalliance.org

About This Resource

This resource was prepared by The Compass Alliance, with the support and overview of *FIRST*. If you have questions about this resource, please contact thecompassalliance@gmail.com or firstroboticscompetition@firstinspires.org.

Resource Revision History

Revision #	Revision Date	Revision Notes
1.0	Dec. 2018	Initial Release