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2020-2021 *FIRST®* Tech Challenge

Fundraising Guide



FIRSTINSPIRES.ORG/ROBOTICS/FTC

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Introduction

What is FIRST® Tech Challenge?

FIRST® Tech Challenge is a student-centered program that focuses on giving students a unique and stimulating experience. Each year, teams engage in a new game where they design, build, test, and program autonomous and driver operated robots that must perform a series of tasks. To learn more about FIRST® Tech Challenge and other FIRST® Programs, visit www.firstinspires.org.

FIRST Core Values

We express the FIRST® philosophies of *Gracious Professionalism*® and *Coopertition*® through our Core Values:

- **Discovery:** *We explore new skills and ideas.*
- **Innovation:** *We use creativity and persistence to solve problems.*
- **Impact:** *We apply what we learn to improve our world.*
- **Inclusion:** *We respect each other and embrace our differences.*
- **Teamwork:** *We are stronger when we work together.*
- **Fun:** *We enjoy and celebrate what we do!*

Gracious Professionalism®

FIRST® uses this term to describe our programs' intent.

Gracious Professionalism® is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community.

Watch Dr. Woodie Flowers explain *Gracious Professionalism* in this [short video](#).

What is the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge Fundraising Guide?

Securing support to fund and promote your FIRST Tech Challenge Team

For more than twelve years, *FIRST* Tech Challenge supporters like you - coaches, alumni, mentors, parents, and other volunteers - have been successful in spreading the word about the many benefits of getting youth and adults alike involved in the *FIRST* experience.

You've told educators, administrators, parents, business owners, and other community leaders about the life-altering and game-changing social and educational experience *FIRST* is. And as a result, *FIRST* Tech Challenge has grown each year.

To keep that momentum going, we need supporters to continue to be "ambassadors" for *FIRST* Tech Challenge in their communities.

While there are many ways to build buzz about the world of *FIRST* and its importance in our future, you and your team know the best approach for your community. That's why this guide was created. It was designed to provide guidance and direction on the best way to build support to fund and promote your *FIRST* Tech Challenge Team.

Why seek community support?

FIRST Tech Challenge teams are responsible for obtaining funds to sustain their teams. Most teams secure funding through a combination of grants, fundraising activities, and sponsorships/private donations. While many teams seek funding for just one year, long-term funding can ensure there's continuing support for your team.

Grants

FIRST Tech Challenge is supported by a strong network of businesses, foundations, educational and professional institutions, and individuals that provide grants and other levels of support. To learn more about grants offered through *FIRST* check out our [grant page](#). To learn more about grants available for *FIRST* Tech Challenge teams in your area, contact your local Affiliate Partner. Use the [Regional Contacts](#) tool to find their e-mail address.

Sponsorships/private donations

Local businesses and other organizations in your community often want to sponsor your team because:

- *FIRST* Tech Challenge teams support the employment pipeline and the local economy.
- *FIRST* Tech Challenge prepares students to work as part of a team while nurturing leadership skills.
- *FIRST* Tech Challenge helps students identify and become proficient with problem solving methods.
- *FIRST* Tech Challenge builds confidence in students.
- *FIRST* Tech Challenge provides opportunities to promote their business or organization.

FIRST teams are encouraged to seek sponsorships not only to help fund the purchase of the competition equipment and registration fees, but also to highlight the collaboration with businesses and other organizations in your area.

Team Costs

On average, it can cost from \$1,000-\$5,000 for a *FIRST* Tech Challenge team to get started. This amount is variable, depending on equipment to purchase, tournament(s) and travel fees. Check out our [kit of parts pricing](#) for more information.

Breakdown of costs:

- Reusable Kit of Parts start at \$900 - multiple kit options available*
- \$275 - FIRST team registration fee*
- \$150 -Qualification tournament registration fee (each)*
- Team t-shirts & flare (variable)
- Extra tools & parts for the robot (variable)
- Lodging and travel costs to attend tournaments (variable)

*These are required fees.

How much funding do we need?

Before asking for any funding, your team should develop a plan that answers the following questions:

- How much money does your team need to get started?
- How much money does your team need to sustain it for multiple years?
- Does your team qualify for any grants after the first year?
- How much money does your team hope to raise through fundraising efforts?
- How much money does your team hope to raise through sponsorships/private donations?
- How will you promote a business/organization if you receive a sponsorship? (Logo on team t-shirts and flare, etc.)

**Who should we ask to donate?**

Ask your team to make a list of businesses and organizations that they have a personal relationship with.

Possibilities include:

- A business owned by a family member or friend.
- A business in which your family or friends are employed.
- A business they regularly visit (dentist, restaurant, etc.)..
- A business or organization that strongly supports the FIRST mission.
- Parent/teacher organizations.

Keep in mind that most sponsors make donations because they are personally asked by someone they know. And while there are benefits for each sponsorship level, most sponsors are more excited to support your team than to receive the benefits.

What's the best way to make the ask?

Determine the decision maker

It's important to determine the person at the business or organization who can make a decision about the sponsorship. Many times, the decision maker is the department head, the CEO/president/owner, or the head of charitable giving.

Assemble a sponsorship packet

Before asking for a sponsorship, your team should assemble a sponsorship packet. Materials to help you create this packet are found in the Appendices at the end of this document. Your team's packet should include:

- A cover letter addressed to the potential sponsor.
 - It's important to address the letter to the decision maker and personalize the letter with details about your team and community.
 - Make your request within the first few sentences. It's important to state your purpose early and clearly.
 - It's recommended that you suggest a sponsorship level in the cover letter (See the donor acknowledgement card for more information). If it makes sense, don't be afraid to ask for the top sponsor level and/or funding for multiple years. If it's too much for the donor, they will likely come back to you with a lesser amount.
 - Request a meeting so your team can present more information about *FIRST* Tech Challenge and the benefits of sponsorship.
- Sponsor information on *FIRST* Tech Challenge.
- Donor Acknowledgement Card.
 - Determine who on your team will be the contact person along with the Coach. Typically, it's the person with the personal relationship with the potential donor.

Present the Sponsorship Packet

Once you've created your packet, it's usually best to print the materials and present them in person. If there's a connection with a friend or a family member, you also can ask them to present the packet.

Prepare for your meeting

- Determine who the spokesperson will be when meeting with the decision maker. It could be one or multiple team members. Keep in mind that it's typically best if the students make the ask.
- Develop an elevator speech. In 60 seconds, summarize who you are, what you're doing, what is your goal and how can a sponsorship help?
- Consider creating and showing a short video of your team's work. Make sure to bring the appropriate technology you will need to show the video.

Meet with the decision maker

Consider taking your robot to help explain the program and let the decision maker drive it! The spokesperson should tell the decision maker:

- Why they're excited about *FIRST* Tech Challenge.
- Their 60-second elevator speech. (Who you are, what you're doing, what is your goal, and how a sponsorship can help.)
- Explain how a sponsorship level will specifically help the team.
- Indicate ways the team will help promote the sponsorship. (Logo on team t-shirts, etc.)
- If the business or organization is unable to commit to a sponsorship this year, it is recommended that students invite the business or organization to attend one of their events this season.

Gracious Professionalism® - "Doing your best work while treating others with respect and kindness - It's what makes *FIRST*, first."

Follow up

If you receive a yes, it's important to immediately send a thank you note. A template to help you write the thank you note is available in the appendix. You may also want to send a team photo with the thank you note.

If you don't immediately receive a response, one of your team members should follow up with a phone call about one week later to inquire about the decision. Continue to follow up until you receive a decision. Remember, most sponsors make donations because they are personally asked.

Appendix A – Resources

Game Forum Q&A

<https://ftcforum.firstinspires.org/>

Anyone may view questions and answers within the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge game Q&A forum without a password. To submit a new question, you must have a unique Q&A system username and password for your team.

FIRST Tech Challenge Game Manuals

Part 1 and 2 - <https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/ftc/game-and-season-info>

FIRST Headquarters Pre-Event Support

Phone: 603-666-3906

Mon – Fri

8:30am – 5:00pm

Email: Firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org

FIRST Websites

FIRST homepage – www.firstinspires.org

[FIRST Tech Challenge Page](#) – For everything *FIRST* Tech Challenge.

[FIRST Tech Challenge Event Schedule](#) – Find *FIRST* Tech Challenge events in your area.

FIRST Tech Challenge Social Media

[FIRST Tech Challenge Twitter Feed](#) - If you are on Twitter, follow the *FIRST* Tech Challenge Twitter feed for news updates.

[FIRST Tech Challenge Facebook page](#) - If you are on Facebook, follow the *FIRST* Tech Challenge page for news updates.

[FIRST Tech Challenge YouTube Channel](#) – Contains training videos, game animations, news clips, and more.

[FIRST Tech Challenge Blog](#) – Weekly articles for the *FIRST* Tech Challenge community, including outstanding volunteer recognition!

[FIRST Tech Challenge Team Email Blasts](#) – contain the most recent *FIRST* Tech Challenge news for teams.

Feedback

We strive to create support materials that are the best they can be. If you have feedback about this manual, please email firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org. Thank you!

Appendix B: Additional Resources

FIRST Fundraising Toolkit

<http://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/fundraising-toolkit>

FIRST Tech Challenge Fundraising Page

<https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/ftc/fundraising-resources>

Non-Engineer Mentor Organization

<http://www.firstnemo.org>

What is FIRST Tech Challenge Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLEvZgHWnrk>

FIRST Tech Challenge Grant Page

<http://www.firstinspires.org/robotics/ftc/grants>

Grants questions and applications e-mail

ftcgrants@firstinspires.org

Affiliate Partner Listing

<http://www.firstinspires.org/find-local-support>

Donors Choose

Several teams have received funding through this organization.

<http://www.donorschoose.org/>

Funding organization

<http://www.kickstarter.com/>

FIRST and FIRST Tech Challenge logos

<http://www.firstinspires.org/brand>

Appendix C: Sample Fundraising Letter

Enter School/organization name

Enter Address

Enter city, state and zip

(or use pre-made letterhead from your school or organization)

Date: XXXX

Dear XXXX,

I am a participant in the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge program from (Enter your school or organization).

FIRST® Tech Challenge is an out-of-school program for students, grades 7-12, to learn about the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through hands-on learning of the field of robotics. I am writing to you in hope of seeking team funding.

Through the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge program, my robotics team members build and program robots. These robots then compete at regional competitions, with the potential of qualifying for the *FIRST* Tech Challenge (insert your state) State tournament and the World Championship competition. (Enter details about number of students on the team. Include information about your Coach and Mentors).

Participating in *FIRST*® Tech Challenge allows me and my team members to learn more about math and science, while expanding my knowledge of careers involving computer programming, business, and engineering. As you may know, getting young people interested in these fields is very important, not only to our community, but also to our state and country.

Since this program is volunteer based, community support is important. Our team would like to set up a time with you to explain why we are so excited about *FIRST*® Tech Challenge. We'd also like to share with you the benefits of becoming (Enter suggested sponsorship level) and other ways to support *FIRST*® Tech Challenge.

More information about our program can be found at (URL of website, if available). Additional information about the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge program can be found at <http://firstinspires.org/robotics/ftc>.

In the next few days, my coach, (Enter name of Coach), will be calling to set up a meeting. You also can contact (him/her) at (phone) or send an e-mail to (e-mail).

Sincerely,

Name

FIRST® Tech Challenge Team #

E-mail address

Names of Coaches and Members

Appendix D: Donor Acknowledgement Card

A FIRST® Tech Challenge team is successful because of partnerships with local businesses, foundations, and individuals. Feel free to edit this donor acknowledgement card to fit your team's needs.

Sponsor Level	This amount will help to support the following:
\$15	General team support
\$16-\$49 Individual Donor	Helps teams to purchase tools to use over many seasons
\$50-\$249 Supporting Sponsor	Teams are able to purchase a Control & Communication Set or an Electronics Modules and Sensors Set Funds can also be used to cover the registration fee for one tournament
\$250 - \$499 Silver Sponsor	Teams are able to pay for the FIRST Registration fee. Teams are able to pay the registration fee for two tournaments (Plus all of the above)
\$500-\$999 Gold Sponsor	Teams are able to travel to tournaments out of town. Teams are able to purchase challenge specific equipment for practice. (Plus all of the above)
\$1,000 + Platinum Sponsor	Teams are able to purchase robot equipment (extra motors, sensors, etc.). If teams advance to the FIRST Tech Challenge World Championship, this will help with expenses. (Plus all of the above)

For informational purposes, the good news of your support will be shared with _____ FIRST Tech Challenge. Any individual, business or foundation that would like to contribute to the FIRST Tech Challenge - _____ statewide initiative, please contact (name and e-mail).

Thank you for your contribution of \$_____ on _____.

Your financial support will help our FIRST Tech Challenge team bring learning to life.

Organization: _____

FEIN #: _____

Contact person: _____

Appendix D: Sample Budget

The following sample budget was created for a rookie team and costs reflect one-time purchases for their robot and one event. Adding additional supplies, event registration, and travel will cost more. Teams should anticipate some of the costs as they are planning their budget and fundraising. For team longevity, teams will want to end the season with some surplus, if possible, to help get them started in the next season.

At the start of the season, create a budget that guesstimates expenses. Using the template below, put anticipated expenses and the projected amount in the column named “Budgeted Amt”. As money is spent, track the line items and the actual dollar amount in the column labelled “Actual Cost”. For teams who need to report their budgets out for awarded grants, sponsors, or schools, you might need to use the “Category” and “Rationale” columns to separate out how each expense is applied and the purpose for it.

To modify this budget in Microsoft Excel, download the template from the [Team Management webpage](#).

Item	Budget Amt.	Actual Cost	Category	Rationale/Explanation
Expenses				
Registration	275.00		Registration	Season registration fee (required).
Kit of Parts: Competition Set	477.00-545.00		Robot Supplies	Rookie teams will need to start with either a TETRIX or REV kit.
Kit of Parts: Control & Communication Set	180.00		Robot Supplies	Rookie teams will need to purchase the technology used in <i>FIRST</i> Tech Challenge, primarily phones and adapters for events. Veteran Teams may need replacements.
Kit of Parts: Electronics Modules & Sensors Set	239.00		Robot Supplies	Teams can choose to add modules, sensors, or other supplies to their kit.
Tools	200.00		Robot Supplies	Rookie teams will likely need to invest in purchasing some basic, essential tools.
Misc Parts & Supplies	200.00		Robot Supplies	Needs arise for parts, etc, so budget accordingly so you have the money.
Team T-Shirts	150.00		Team Supplies	To promote the team and show spirit.
Team Buttons	60.00		Team Supplies	To promote the team and raise funds.
Pit Display	50.00		Team Supplies	To promote the team at events.
Printing	100.00		Team Supplies	The team will likely incur printing costs (paper, ink), so plan for it in the budget.
Tournament Registration	100.00		Registration	Event registration fees vary by region.
Gas	100.00		Travel	Getting the team and the robot to the event often takes a bus.
Food	200.00		Travel	Feed the team at meetings and/or events.
Sub-Total	2,345.00			Approximate projected total expenses for the season. Actual costs may be lower/higher, but it's best to plan high.
Monies				
Rollover Amount	0.00			Money left over from the previous season (applies only to veteran teams)

Grant	500.00		Grants	Team applied for and received a grant from an organization.
School Allocated Club Funds	500.00		Income	Some schools provide clubs and organizations with a set amount of money each year.
Pizza Fundraiser	300.00		Fundraiser	Planned team fundraiser with ideal amount raised.
Car Wash	200.00		Fundraiser	Planned team fundraiser with ideal amount raised.
Button Sales	150.00		Fundraiser	Planned team fundraiser with ideal amount raised.
Sub-Total	1,650.00			Anticipated amount of money coming in throughout the season. Actual amount may be lower/higher, but it's best to over-plan ways to raise money.
Bottom Line				
Credit/Deficit	-695.00			Current money still left/Money owed that still needs to be raised (marked in red)
Rollover Amount				Any money that can be moved over to the next season's budget at the end of the current season.

Ways to Reduce Expenses for Rookies

The above budget is planned for a Rookie Team purchasing the maximum amount of supplies through the FIRST Tech Challenge Storefront and attending one Tournament Event. Reductions in this budget could include:

- Borrow tools – about \$200 savings
- Reduce extra parts and supplies needs with frugal robot design – about \$150 savings
- Don't buy Team Swag (T-shirts or Pit display) – about \$200 savings
- Parents donate gas, travel expenses, and food – about \$200 savings
- Get a local print shop to donate printing – about \$100 savings

Total potential savings: about \$850 if all above measures were combined. New Expense Sub-Total: \$1,823.

Ways to Reduce Expenses for Veterans

The above budget is planned for a Rookie Team purchasing the maximum amount of supplies through the FIRST Tech Challenge Storefront and attending one Tournament Event. Reductions in this budget could include:

- Don't buy a new Kit of Parts - about \$600 savings
- Use old tools – about \$200 savings
- Reduce extra parts and supplies needs with frugal robot design – about \$150 savings
- Use previous T-Shirts and Pit display – about \$200 savings
- Parents donate gas, travel expenses, and food – about \$200 savings
- Get a local print shop to donate printing – about \$100 savings

Total potential savings: about \$1,450 if all above measures were combined. New Expense Sub-Total: \$834.

Optional Costs

Many Teams want to build and test their Robots using off-the-shelf materials and a real Playing Field. This is, however, totally up to the Team and what they can afford but will increase their expenses throughout the season. Example expenses include:

- **FIRST Tech Challenge Playing Field Perimeter** – approximately \$595 (or you can save money by building one using the [Low-Cost Field Perimeter Build Guide](#)).
- **FIRST Tech Challenge Playing Field Tiles** – approximately \$230 for a full field (or you can save money by only buying a few tiles, like 6, to practice on).
- **FIRST Tech Challenge Field** – a full field will cost \$450 (or you can save money by buying just a partial field for \$340, or just a few of the field elements with varying costs by part).