Volunteer Coordinator Manual

Revision History		
Revision	Date	Description
1.0	10/02/2024	Initial 2024-2025 Release
1.1	10/30/2024	Formatting edits and clarifications added.

Overview

Roles Covered: Volunteer Coordinator

Job Description

The Volunteer Coordinator is an administrative and customer service role that oversees all major communications and planning for volunteer recruitment, selection, registration, support, and recognition at an event.

Requirements	
Technical	Medium
Physical	Low
Administrative	High
Communication	High
Pre-event Training	High

Time Commitment

Volunteer coordinators should expect to spend 10-12 hours at a full day event and 5-6 hours at a league meet. 6-15 hours of pre-event training and planning is required, depending upon the size of the event and the number of volunteers required for the event. Time commitments for Volunteer Coordinators can vary depending on experience, working arrangements with the Program Delivery Partner, and the size of the event. Below is an estimated amount of time you may spend on staffing for an event:

Time Commitment Estimate	
3-6 months before the event	Between 1-6 hours a week
2-3 months before the event	Between 6-10 hours a week
1 month before the event	Between 10-15 hours a week
At League Meet	5-6 hours
At a Full Day Event	12-14 hours

> The Volunteer Coordinator role may be a higher time commitment for those who are participating in the role for the first time. Suggestions for how to split responsibilities of this role between multiple individuals can be found in the Roles and Responsibilities section of this document.

Attire

- Comfortable closed-toe, closed-heel shoes, much of the day will involve moving throughout the venue.
- ANSI Z87.1 certified safety glasses are required in the pit and competition areas.
- As one of the event leaders, comfortable professional wear is encouraged

Training and Certification

Volunteers must create an account on www.firstinspires.org and apply to the role. If you apply to an event role requiring training and certification, the 'Roles Missing Certification' section will appear on your Volunteer Dashboard. Click on 'Review Outstanding Tasks, then click the 'Resolve' button. This will take you directly to the training site. Alternately, you may also click on the 'Trainings/Certification' button on the top right of the screen. If you have applied for a role but have not received access to the training, please email FTCTrainingSupport@firstinspires.org. A separate confirmation of the role assignment will come later.

Volunteer Coordinators are required to complete the *FIRST* Data Protection and Privacy Training for volunteers, which is accessible through the Volunteer Dashboard. This training provides information about how to responsibly manage personally identifiable information that may be received at events.

The Volunteer Coordinator should speak to the Event Director to find out what additional requirements, such as meetings or run-throughs of the space before the event, are required. The approximate training time is 60 minutes.

All Volunteers are expected to read and comply with the Volunteer Handbook.

Roles and Responsibilities

> *FIRST* **is fun for all.** The most important role of a volunteer is to provide a safe, fun, and welcoming environment to all FIRST participants. When executing the duties of your role, always make decisions with the team experience in mind. Ask for help from event leadership if you feel your required duties conflict with the best team experience.

Volunteer Coordinator

The role of a Volunteer Coordinator can be split into these major categories: Recruit volunteers to staff an event, assign volunteers, function as the main liaison for volunteers, plan volunteer recognition activities, other pre-event responsibilities and event-day responsibilities.

	Responsibilities
Recruit Volunteers to Staff an Event	Consult with Program Delivery Partner (PDP) and Event Director to establish which volunteers are already committed to this event
	Determine who the key volunteers are for the event

	Responsibilities
	Recruit volunteers through various means such as utilizing social media, partnerships with other organizations, or collaborating with alumni
Assign Volunteers	Confirm volunteers have completed Youth Protection Screening
	Confirm volunteers have completed training
	Review and select the best fit volunteers for the role
	Assign the Volunteer in the Volunteer Management System
Act as the Main Liaison for Volunteers	Send out communications regarding event schedule and expectations of the day
	Answer questions volunteers have around the application process or event
Plan Volunteer Recognition Activities	Work with Event Director to order volunteer apparel or other materials ahead of the event
	Discuss Volunteer meals and headcount with Event Director
	Other Recognition Activities
Other Pre-Event Responsibilities	Attend pre-event planning meetings
Event-Day Responsibilities	Oversee volunteer check in process and confirm volunteer attendance
	Manage the execution of onsite volunteer recognition activities such as setting up volunteer merch tables, giving out volunteer of the year awards, etc.
After Event Responsibilities	Follow up with the Volunteers

Due to the number of responsibilities expected of the Volunteer Coordinator, it is common for *FIRST* Tech Challenge Program Delivery Partners to split these responsibilities amongst multiple people. Below are some examples of common methods for managing the Volunteer Coordinator responsibilities:

Regional Lead Volunteer Coordinator
Some regions may employ a Lead Volunteer Coordinator that takes on parts of the recruitment responsibility, trains the Volunteer Coordinators, and provides support to the event Volunteer Coordinators as needed.

Volunteer Recruiter
Some regions create a separate role that is focused on just the volunteer recruitment responsibilities. This is usually a behind the scenes role that focuses on establishing local relationships to recruit more volunteers.

Volunteer Administrator
Volunteer Administrators are behind the scenes working on assigning volunteers in the Volunteer Management System and managing all pre-event responsibilities associated with volunteer assignment.

> These are just a few examples of different ways of splitting up Volunteer Coordinator responsibilities. Please check with the Event Director or PDP to confirm the specific responsibilities you will be expected to perform in this role.

Prerequisites for volunteer Coordinator

A Volunteer Coordinator must have previous experience managing and communicating with multiple volunteers. In addition, the volunteer must complete the required BlueVolt training course and PII training before the event as they will be managing sensitive information. They must also review and be familiar with the major volunteer roles (Volunteer Role Descriptions).

Additionally, Volunteer Coordinators must review and be familiar with the common tools utilized in this role such as the Volunteer Registration System and Volunteer Management System.

Before the Event

The Volunteer Coordinator should review the VMS (Volunteer Management System) user guide and familiarize themselves with the resources available to assign, review, schedule, and notify volunteers of their assignment. The Volunteer Coordinator must ensure that volunteers have successfully completed their background screening, and any certifications required for the role.

Recruit Volunteers to Staff an Event

One of the most important responsibilities the Volunteer Coordinator performs is recruiting volunteers for the event. Before beginning the recruitment process volunteers you should know what roles you are recruiting for, how many volunteers to recruit and how to recruit! The following tools provide guidance on each of the key areas Volunteer Coordinators should be familiar with before starting the recruitment process:

- What roles are you recruiting for: Volunteer Role Descriptions
- Appendix A: Recruiting Volunteers

The sections below explore the main three recruitment responsibilities a Volunteer Coordinator will perform for an event:

Recruit Volunteers to Staff an Event
Consult with Program Delivery Partner (PDP) and Event Director to establish which volunteers are already committed to this event
Determine who the key volunteers are for the event
Utilize various recruitment mechanisms such as social media, partnerships with other organizations, or collaborating with alumni

Consult with the Event Director, PDP, or Planning Committee

Many FIRST Tech Challenge regions have an established pool of key volunteers, organizations, and alumni that are used to staff events. Likewise, an established Event Director or event planning committee, may have a pool of volunteers already committed to a specific event.

Volunteer Coordinators should consult with the Event Director, or other members of the planning committee, to get a preliminary headcount on volunteers. Asking questions like: "Are there volunteers already committed to this event," or "is there a volunteer pool we usually work with," is the best place to start the recruitment process.

> Some events may have a dedicated planning committee. This is often a group of Lead Volunteers that work together to plan an event. Review Appendix A: Recruiting Volunteers for information on suggested planning committee roles.

Determine Who the Key Volunteers are for the Event

Lead volunteers (or Key Volunteers) are the volunteer positions that have other volunteers reporting directly to them. Volunteer Coordinators should focus on staffing the Key Volunteer roles first for the following reasons:

1. Training - These positions require training and, in many cases, certification. The earlier these roles are assigned, the sooner the training can be completed.
2. Recruitment - Lead volunteers may also be able to help with recruiting volunteers for other roles at the event.
3. Selection – Some Key Volunteer roles, such as Head Referee and Judge Advisor, may participate in the final volunteer selection for the roles they oversee.

The following roles are considered Key Volunteer Roles and should be prioritized for recruitment.

Key Volunteers	
Head Referee	Lead Field Inspector
FIRST Technical Advisor	Lead Queuer
Judge Advisor	Pit Administrator
Lead Scorekeeper	Field Supervisor
Lead Robot Inspector	Volunteer Coordinator

> Once the Key Volunteers are identified the next roles a VC should prioritize for recruitment are Referees and Judges. While these roles are not considered Key Volunteer roles, they are two of the most crucial roles needed at an event and multiple volunteers must be recruited for each role. When recruiting for referees and judges Volunteer Coordinators should heed the suggestions made in the Appendix B: Conflict of Interest Section.

Key Volunteers should have prior experience with FIRST Tech Challenge and the role they are serving in, though that may not always be the case. For more information on what to consider when recruiting Key Volunteers, review the [Volunteer Role Descriptions.](#)

Utilize Various Recruitment Mechanisms
Beyond the established volunteer pool, additional volunteers may be needed to staff the event. Volunteer Coordinators may need to utilize several different mechanisms to recruit additional volunteers such as: posting on social media sites, reaching out to local organizations, or sending email blasts out to other community groups.

> Please review [Appendix A: Recruiting Volunteers](#) for additional information to find suggestions on recruiting volunteers.

> For more information about the Volunteer Management System and Volunteer Registration System please review the

Assign Volunteers

Once volunteers are recruited, they need to be assigned to the most fitting position. Since *FIRST* Tech Challenge is a youth organization, volunteer assignment is more than just assigning a volunteer to the best fit role. Volunteer Coordinators must work with *FIRST* systems like the Volunteer Registration System and the Volunteer Management System, to make sure that the volunteer has completed the necessary training and Youth Protection screening required to participate in their role.

> Important Tools section.

To sign up for an event the volunteers will utilize the Volunteer Registration System. Once the volunteer has signed up for a role the Volunteer Coordinator will be able to see the volunteer under their preferred roles in the Volunteer Management System. The Volunteer Coordinator can then complete the following tasks:

Assign Volunteers
Confirm volunteers have completed Youth Protection Screening
Confirm volunteers have completed training
Review and select the best fit volunteers for the role
Assign the Volunteer in the Volunteer Management System

Confirm Volunteers have Completed Youth Protection Screening
All volunteers over the age of 18 must complete a Youth Protection Screening before they can be assigned to a volunteer role in the Volunteer Management System. The Youth Protection Screening is a background check that is provided by FIRST, in partnership with Sterling, and can be accessed by the volunteer through the Volunteer Registration System.
*Please note our systems only cover US and Canada. If you are Outside of these areas in North America you will just need to accept the youth protection policy.

Many first-time volunteers are unaware that the Youth Protection Screening is required ahead of an event. If a volunteer has not yet completed the Youth Protection Screening, the Volunteer Coordinator should contact the volunteer to provide guidance on this process. *FIRST* has the following resources that can assist volunteers with completing this requirement

- Volunteer Registration User Guide – Page 12 provides guidance on how to access the screening in the Volunteer Registration System.
- Volunteer Screening Guide

> Information on how to see if the volunteer has completed the Youth Protection Screening, or other volunteer details can be found in the volunteer details section of the Volunteer Management System User Guide.

Confirm Volunteers have Completed Training

Many volunteer positions need training and certification before volunteering at the event. The chart below outlines the roles that have training manuals, BlueVolt training courses, or required certification testing.

Training and Certification by Role			
Role	**Training Manual**	**BlueVolt Course**	**Certification/ Test**
Control System Advisor (CSA)	X	X	X
Dean's List Interviewer	X	X	X
Dean's List Reviewer	X	X	X
Emcee and Game Announcer	X	X	
Field Inspector	X	X	X
Field Resetter	X	X	
Field Supervisor	X	X	
FIRST Technical Advisor (FTA)	X	X	X
FTC Scoring Administrator	X	X	X
Head Referee	X	X	X
Judge	X	X	X
Judge Advisor	X	X	X
Pit Administrator	X	X	
Queuer	X	X	
Referee	X	X	X
Robot Inspector	X	X	X
Scorekeeper	X	X	X
Volunteer Coordinator	X	X	X
Wi-Fi Technical Advisor (WTA)	X	X	X

If a role requires certification, the Volunteer Coordinator will be able to tell whether the certification has been completed or not in the Volunteer Management System.

Information on how to see if the volunteer has completed the Certification, or other volunteer Details can be found in the Volunteer Details section of the Volunteer Management System User Guide.

Review and Select the Best Fit Volunteers for the Role
Once the volunteer has completed the Youth Protection Screening and training requirements for a role the next step is to select the best fit volunteer for the role. We recommend collecting as much information as possible on a volunteer to determine if they are a good fit for the role. Consider asking some of the following questions:

How to Determine if a Volunteer is a Good Fit	
What roles is the volunteer interested in?	When signing up for an event, volunteers can choose and rank multiple roles they're interested in. The Volunteer Coordinator can view these preferences in the Volunteer Management System.
What experience does the volunteer have?	In the Volunteer Details section of VMS, Volunteer Coordinators can review a volunteer's previous experience with FIRST, including roles served at other events.
What is the volunteer's skill level?	Skill level can be assessed through prior experience or completed training/certifications. If a volunteer lacks these, the Volunteer Coordinator may need to contact them to identify other applicable skills.
What is the volunteer's availability like?	During sign-up, volunteers can choose their available dates and times. Volunteer Coordinators should communicate that the event is a full day but shouldn't turn away those who can only commit a few hours. Some positions may not require a full day, so these volunteers can assist with non-technical tasks, like giving breaks to others.
Does the Volunteer have a Conflict of Interest?	Volunteers that sign up may be affiliated with teams attending the event. While there is no official policy from *FIRST* Tech Challenge around assigning volunteer with Conflicts of Interest (COI) Volunteer Coordinators should be aware of best practices around COI that are being implemented in their *FIRST* Tech Challenge region. For more information see Appendix B: Conflict of Interest.
What input can the Key Volunteers or Event Director provided?	Key Volunteers or the Event Director may have insights on past volunteers and preferences for role assignments. Consult with the planning committee to assess a volunteer's compatibility with a role before assigning them.
What other factors could affect the volunteers assigned role?	Consider factors like proximity to the venue and any physical limitations of the volunteer. Volunteer Coordinators should refer to the volunteer manual for each role to identify any additional considerations.

While VMS provides critical insight into the volunteer's preferences, skill set, and experience, additional information may be needed to align a volunteer to the role best fit for them. It is especially important, if a first-time volunteer has been recruited, to make sure they understand the role opportunities available and to gauge their interest level in various roles.

Just as important as it is to match the right volunteer with the right role, it is equally important to make sure that the volunteers are aligned to a role that meets their interests. Keeping a volunteer enthusiastic and engaged improves their experience and increases the chances the volunteer will participate in another event.

Many volunteers already have an idea of their preferences, as many have volunteered before. Volunteer Coordinators should do their best to align volunteers with their preferred role. If the role they have requested has already been filled, make sure to communicate with that volunteer. Have recommendations ready for other positions that need to be filled, keeping in mind the volunteer's experience, skills, and interests.

Assign Volunteers in VMS
After the volunteer has been selected the Volunteer Coordinator must assign them to the role in the Volunteer Management system. Volunteer Coordinators should review the Volunteer Management System User Guide for information on how to assign the volunteers.

> The Volunteer Management System is a unique system, custom designed for FIRST. There are several steps to the volunteer assignment process, and it is easy to miss steps if you are unfamiliar with the system. We highly recommend that all Volunteer Coordinators review the Volunteer Management System User Guide before assigning volunteers for the first time.

Act as the Main Liaison for Volunteers

Throughout the recruitment, assignment, and pre-event processes: Volunteer Coordinators act as the main point of contact for all information regarding an event.

This manual assumes that all responsibilities related to volunteer recruitment and management fall to the Volunteer Coordinator. However, in some cases the PDP, Event Director, or other Key Volunteers may take on responsibilities that *FIRST* Tech Challenge defines as a Volunteer Coordinator responsibility. In the case of communication, other Key Volunteers may take ownership over of communications to the volunteers in their reporting line. Check with the other Key Volunteers or Event Director to determine responsibilities about communications.

Outside of recruitment the Volunteer Coordinators will manage the following communications:

Act as the Main Liaison for Volunteers
Send out communications regarding event schedule and expectations of the day
Answer questions volunteers have around the application process or event

Pre-event Volunteer Communications
Once a volunteer is assigned for an event, they need to know what to expect for the event. Volunteer Coordinators should send out the follow communications ahead of an event.

Communications Volunteer Need
Confirmation of what role(s) they have been assigned to
Expected work hours and reporting times
Overall Event Schedule

Role Expectations (such as additional resources for review, dress code, etc.)
Parking Information
Venue Map
Check In Requirements
Volunteer Meal Options

It is important to provide this information to the volunteer at least a week ahead of the event they are assigned to, to ensure they have all the information needed to arrive on time and be successful for the day. We recommend sending out at least two communications ahead of the event to volunteers regarding schedule and other relevant information. Multiple communications ahead of an event can help avoid issues like volunteers missing the initial email communication.

Answering Questions
As the volunteer is going through the assignment process and awaiting the event, they may reach out to ask questions. Common questions include:

- How do I sign up for the event?
- Do I have any trainings I need to complete?
- How do I complete the Youth Protection Screening?
- What is the event schedule?

Volunteer Coordinators should be prepared to assist volunteers with major questions they have regarding the sign-up process and the event. *FIRST* has many resources to help with the assignment process. Utilize the following resources to help the with questions the volunteer may have:

- Volunteer Registration User Guide
- Volunteer Screening Guide
- Event Volunteer Training Guide
- BlueVolt User Guide

Plan Volunteer Recognition Activities
Another pre-event responsibility for Volunteer Coordinators is planning Volunteer Recognition Activities. These are any activities like swag, meals, and awards that can used to make the volunteers event day experience better. It is important that volunteers feel welcome and appreciated for committing their time to FIRST events, and incorporating appreciating activities at an event can make all the difference for volunteers.

This section focuses on some of the most common things to consider for volunteer recognition and appreciation at the event. In addition to these common activities, Volunteer Coordinators are encouraged to think of creative ideas to make the day feel special for the volunteers involved.

Plan Volunteer Recognition Activities
Work with Event Director to order volunteer apparel or other materials ahead of the event
Discuss Volunteer meals and headcount with PDP and Event Director
Other Recognition Activities

Volunteer Apparel or Other Thank you Gifts

For apparel and other swag Volunteer Coordinators should work with the Event Director, to determine budget and ordering needs for the event.

FIRST provides free volunteer materials each season that Program Delivery Partners can order for their events. This includes buttons, stickers, and other materials that fit with the season theme. *FIRST* also provides other volunteer recognition materials, such as year of service pins, which are not free but can be ordered through the *FIRST* volunteer recognition storefront. An important first step is checking with the Event Director and Program Delivery Partner to determine if any of the materials can be ordered for your event.

> More information on volunteer recognition materials can be found on the FIRST Volunteer Recognition page.

Apparel is another great option for volunteer appreciation. Volunteer T-shirts can help make volunteers easily identifiable to event attendees, and serve as a giveaway item for volunteers. *FIRST* Tech Challenge offers some special shirts for judges and other volunteers that Program Delivery Partners can order for events. However, event planning committees are encouraged to create a volunteer t-shirt that is customized for their event. That way if volunteers are attending multiple events, they can receive different shirts (which can function as a collectable). Consult with the Event Director to determine if there is budget to order volunteer t-shirts for the event.

> Remember when creating custom volunteer swag to ensure that any usage of FIRST logos follow the *FIRST* Branding Guidelines.

Volunteer Meals

Due to the length of *FIRST* Tech Challenge events, volunteer meals should be provided at the event. For a league that is 4-5 hours, at least one meal (breakfast or lunch) should be provided for volunteers. For Qualifiers or League Tournaments which can be 10-14 hours, both breakfast and lunch should be provided.

The responsibility of ordering meals may fall to the Event Director or PDP, depending on the standard process within the *FIRST* Tech Challenge region. Volunteer Coordinators should consult with leadership to determine the process for ordering food, provide insight on volunteer food restrictions, and the number of volunteers that meals need to be purchased for.

> Within VMS there is an option to download a report of volunteer food restrictions. Considerations such as allergies and other preferences should be considered when placing orders for food.

Other Recognition Activities:

There are many more ways to show volunteer recognition and appreciation at events. Consider some of the activities below as options to show volunteers that their time commitment is appreciated:

- Selecting a volunteer of the year for the event (consult with the PDP about ordering a Volunteer of the year plaque)

- Setting up a volunteer swag table
- Bringing a cart of snacks and water around to field volunteers who may not be able to go to the volunteer lounge

Additionally, Volunteer Coordinators should consider actions in the `Follow Up` section such as "thank you" notes.

Other Pre-Event Responsibilities

The Volunteer Coordinator may be expected to participate in other pre-event responsibilities not currently defined in this manual. Make sure to work with the Event Director to determine if any additional responsibilities are expected.

Attend Planning Meetings

The most common additional responsibility that Volunteer Coordinators may be expected to participate in is pre-event planning meetings with other members of the event planning committee. Meetings are integral to making sure all the Key Volunteers participating in the event are on the same page about who is expected to manage different communications, or just to touchpoint on event planning statuses. Work with the Event Director to determine any meetings that the Volunteer Coordinator is expected to attend.

Event Day

Report Time

The Event Director will confirm the time you should arrive typically via email the week before the event. In most cases arriving 15 to 30 minutes before the earliest volunteer check in time is sufficient.

When you arrive onsite check-in with the Event Director.

Set-up

If not already set-up the night before, the Volunteer Coordinator should expect to immediately setup any volunteer recognition tables, the volunteer lounge, or the volunteer check-in area.

Volunteer Check-In

On-site at the event the Volunteer Coordinator should oversee and assist with the volunteer check-in process. Greet the volunteers when they come in, provide any materials they may need to perform their role, and guide them on the next steps once they sign-in.

The volunteer check-in process is the best way for the Volunteer Coordinator to meet volunteer face-to-face on the day of the event. This is a great time to highlight great customer service acumen by making the volunteers feel welcome.

Manage Recognition Activities

Based on the Volunteer Recognition Activities planned during the pre-event, Volunteer Coordinators may need to manage things such as beverage carts, handing out the volunteer of the year award, and any other activities planned.

Volunteer Interaction and Support

Volunteer Coordinators set the tone for an event by making the volunteers feel welcome and valued. Effective Volunteer Coordinators will employ *FIRST* Core Values and have a volunteer-centric mindset.

Below are some best practices to employ when interacting with volunteers at an event.

Creating a Welcoming Environment for Volunteers	
Create a welcoming environment	Volunteers, especially first-time volunteers, may feel uncertain about where to go or what to do when they arrive. Having someone there to welcome them and guide them to their next steps helps volunteers feel more confident in their role. Be quick to approach the volunteer, greet them, and help guide them to where the need to go for the day.
Check in with Key Volunteers	Throughout the day the Volunteer Coordinator should check in with key volunteers to ensure everything is going smoothly with the volunteers they are overseeing. Are volunteers getting breaks? Are all the volunteers working well in the role they have been assigned to? Collect any necessary feedback and help the key volunteer with additional support as needed.
Ask for feedback	Volunteers are committing a lot of their personal time to these events, and they want confirmation that sacrificing that time providing value both to the volunteer and to the event. Speak with volunteers as much as possible throughout the event. Ask questions: are they enjoying the event? Are they enjoying the role they are participating in? What do they think be done to improve the event? Volunteers feel more engaged when they feel they are participating actively in the event and contributing feedback. Their perspective is invaluable to know how to improve communications, align the best fit volunteer to a role, and show appreciation.
Show Appreciation	Make sure to always communicate that the volunteers time and experience are appreciated. Organize volunteer appreciation activities, compliment volunteers that are doing well in their role, and always express gratitude in one-on-one conversations.

Managing Volunteers who are Unsatisfied in their Role

Volunteer Coordinators may run into situations where a volunteer expresses discomfort in their assigned role after arriving at the event. If the volunteer expresses concern about their ability to fill a role introduce them to the key volunteer responsible for the assigned area and ask if it's possible for the concerned volunteer to "shadow" an experienced volunteer to help gain confidence.

Team Interaction and Support

When interacting with teams please always consider the team's perspective. The teams have put significant time and effort into preparing for this event and may be feeling stressed about everything working out as they have planned. **Today is a very big deal for the team and we are here to help!**

While it is our job to help guide the teams to a successful event, it is their responsibility to follow the rules and be on time for judging and matches.

If you feel there is an issue with an individual or individuals from a team that warrants specific intervention beyond just a kind reminder, please ensure the correct stakeholders for the team are aware. Here is an acceptable process when working with a student or team who you need to change their behavior:

The ABCs of Managing Team Behaviors

Ask for an Adult	Do not directly reprimand a student one-on-one without an adult from their team present. Ask the student to bring an adult who is responsible for the team to meet you, before moving forward with any discussion about the concerns at hand.
Be aware of the Environment	Is the environment conducive for the feedback you are about to give? Is it loud in the area where you are? Are there other teams around that may hear the reprimand? Moving the conversation to a quieter, more private space as needed can be helpful.
(Offer a) Clear Explanation	Explain the concern to the team and offer clear examples of the behavior that is concerning.
Discuss any Questions	Offer the opportunity for students and adults to ask clarifying questions
Explain Next Steps	Outline with the students and adults what the next steps are if the issue is not corrected. Certain behaviors may include the risk of yellow cards or ejection from the event.

Note: The only person at an event who can give an official warning or issue a yellow/red card is the head referee. Please refer to these more severe issues to the head referee and notify the program delivery partner.

Be cautious about passing on any negative feedback about any teams directly to the Judges or Judge Advisor (JA), because it is not possible to know all the contributing factors around such a complaint or observation. If there are issues which are repeated or egregious follow the Non-medical Incident Reporting process and inform the Program Delivery Partner or Event Director. The Judge Advisor may seek feedback from the Event Director to determine if there is any relevant information to provide the judges for their evaluation process.

Teams may only be completely disqualified from awards consideration for exceedingly rare egregious actions and only with approval from *FIRST* HQ. The Event Director and/or JA should call the on-call number to discuss the issue.

Emergencies
The program delivery partner, Event Director and the event site host organization are responsible for having safety and security plans in place for each event. Included in the plan should be topics such as:
- A map of all the emergency exits
- Knowledge of where on-site medical support is located
- Shelter in place plans in the case of severe weather
- Evacuation plans

Teams should have their own safety plans before attending the event. *FIRST* provides a few resources to help teams plan including:
- Team Member Safety at Events
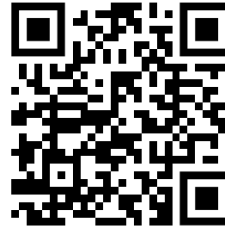- Preparing to Safely Attend a *FIRST* Event

Two important links to have handy are the issue reporting link and Youth Protection Policy pages:

Report a Concern	**Youth Protection Policy**
[QR Code]	[QR Code]
www.firstinspires.org/report	www.firstinspires.org/ypp

Lost Children

FIRST Tech Challenge events can be very hectic, and it can be easy for a child to get lost amongst the shuffle of a busy event. Ensure you have a plan prior to the event in the instance of a lost child.

In some cases, the team roster will list Coach phone numbers which can be used to reunite team members, in some regions they collect "Day-of" cell phone numbers from each team at check in. Coordinate your plan with your program delivery partner.

Code Adam Guidelines (www.missingkids.com/CodeAdam) are also a great resource.

Medical Incident Reporting

Event volunteers are not responsible for diagnosing students, handing out medication, or first aid equipment. You and other event volunteers should refer medical issues and emergencies to a medical professional on site, such as an EMT. If an incident or illness occurs at an event, the Event Director, Pit Administrator, or another trained delegate should do the following:

- Call 911 if there is any question that the injured person/persons require medical attention.
- Respond to the scene immediately. Bring a clipboard, pen, or a tablet to complete the incident report on the FIRST Reporting Portal.
- Complete the incident report for the injured party.

The Event Director or Pit Administration volunteers are responsible for completing incident reports. The incident reporting person should follow the best practices for incident reporting:

Best Practices for Incident Reporting	
Be Calm	Anyone managing incident reporting should have a calm demeanor. They should be able to collect information and talk to witnesses without assessing fault
Be Concise	In all conversations with the injured, witnesses, spectators, and/or media always say "the incident is being investigated" without any further comment. It is not the job of the report collector to provide any opinions on the situation at hand.
Be Risk Conscious	Do not imply liability or any payment, as no one knows for sure until all the facts are collected.

Be Prepared	Those taking in incident reports should be able to communicate with the insurance company if necessary. They should also be aware of who they need to share incidents with, including the local Program Delivery Organization or the Event Director.

Although most incidents will not result in a claim, it is better to act on the side of caution and report them. Should an incident result in a claim after the event, the documents will be on file, complete with witnesses and a written report.

Non-Medical Incident Reporting
Issues that are non-medical but are of a concern to a participant/participants should be reported. Anything that happens during an event that made a volunteer, team member or spectator feel uncomfortable or threatened should be addressed.

As appropriate and if you feel safe doing to, speak directly to the offending party and try to defuse the immediate issue quickly and calmly. Call the Event Director and/or the Program Delivery Partner and inform them of the issue and seek assistance as needed with any immediate remediation of the issue.

Ensure all issues are reported in a timely manner using the *FIRST* Reporting Portal. Have the participate select the correct category for their report:
- **Youth Protection Concern**: encompasses a wide variety of one-time or ongoing issues such as suspected abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination, questionable behavior, or violation to the FIRST Code of Conduct. Must involve a youth participate otherwise use the 'other' category.
- **Other:** For issues which do not fall under the Medical or Youth Protection Concern Categories.

Safety
An important priority for all volunteers is to observe their event areas to help promote a safe and orderly space for all the participants. It is likely that various volunteers and event participants will bring concerns to your attention, but you should also be proactive in identifying areas of concern.

Prioritize collaborating with the teams to help identify and correct potential safety issues in the area. Please review the section about

Safety Glasses and Closed Toe Shoes
All volunteers, teams, coach/mentors, and spectators are required to have safety glasses and wear closed toe shoes while in the pit and competition areas. It is important to watch out for anyone entering these areas without proper personal protective Equipment (PPE) and to ask them to put on proper PPE before entering. Some events will have volunteers staffed at the pit entrance with spare safety glasses to pass out. Other events may not have spares to provide.

End of the Day
Assist with breakdown of the event as needed and be sure to dispose of any Personal Identifiable Information data properly with direction from event leadership.

After the Event

Follow Up

It is always best practice to ensure that you follow up with a "Thank you" after the event. You can write out a personal note thanking the volunteer if time allows. However, even a general "thank you" will go a long way in the eyes of the volunteer. We recommend sending out the "thank you" notes via email.
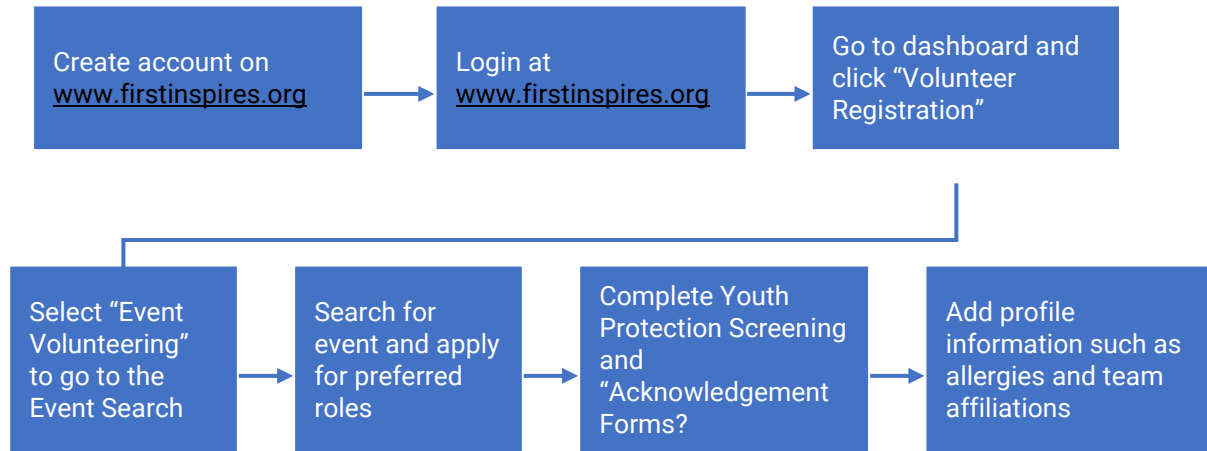
Depending on the size of your event and the resources that you have available, you could also follow up with a photo from the event, showing the volunteers that they were an important part of making that event successful and special.

Finally, we recommend providing an outlet for feedback, such as a survey, so that volunteers can provide commentary that may not have been given during the event.

Important Tools

Volunteer Registration System

The volunteer registration system is where volunteers can apply to the role they are interested in.

```
Create account on          →    Login at              →    Go to dashboard and
www.firstinspires.org           www.firstinspires.org      click "Volunteer
                                                           Registration"
```

```
Select "Event         →    Search for         →    Complete Youth        →    Add profile
Volunteering"              event and apply         Protection Screening       information such as
to go to the               for preferred           and                        allergies and team
Event Search               roles                   "Acknowledgement           affiliations
                                                   Forms?"
```

Volunteers need to successfully complete their Youth Protection screening to complete their first volunteer application and before volunteering at the event. Volunteers that do not complete Youth Protection and background screening before the event will be treated as "walk-on" volunteers with limited role assignment on the day of the event. For more information about walk-on volunteers, please talk to your Program Delivery Partner.

The FIRST Volunteer Management System (VMS)

The *FIRST* Volunteer Management System (VMS) is custom system designed to help in management of event volunteers. Through VMS, Volunteer Coordinators can check a volunteers YPP Screening, confirm volunteer details, and assign volunteers. While other tools can be used on top of VMS to manage volunteers (such as Excel), VMS must be used to assign volunteers and validate the completion of the YPP Screening.

> When interacting with the Personal Identifiable Information (PII) of volunteers, Volunteer Coordinator must abide by the FIRST Privacy Policy.

Review the VMS Resources below for more information on how to use VMS to assign volunteers.
- VMS User Guide
- VMS Training Videos

> Note: Volunteer coordinators may be any designated individuals the partner feels should have access to the information stored in the volunteer management system. This includes, but is not limited to event committee members, Event Directors, key volunteers, etc.

Public Schedule

The program delivery partner or the Event Director should publish the public schedule of events before the event. This schedule will have a high-level overview of all the activities for the event. It's important that everyone at the event does their best to stay true to the public schedule so that teams and volunteers who have planned their day around these times have a good experience.

Figure 1: Sample Public Schedule for a Typical FIRST Tech Challenge Event

Time	Agenda
7:15am	Doors Open for Volunteers
8:00am	Doors Open for Teams
8:30am	Judging & Inspection Commences
10:35am	Inspection Deadline
10:40am	Opening Ceremony & Driver's Meeting
11:00am	Qualification Matches Commence
12:00am	Lunch Time
12:30pm	Qualification Matches Resume
3:15pm	Alliance Selection
3:45pm	Playoff Matches
5:30pm	Closing Ceremony, Awards and Advancement Announcement

On occasion things that happen out of the event's control may impact the schedule. In these cases, work closely with the Event Director to adapt to any updated agenda.

Event Layout/Map

The Program Delivery Partner and Event Director should publish a map of the venue before the event. In some cases, map details might not be available until the day of the event.
The Event Layout / Map should detail the following:
- Load-In Path
- Parking for Personal Vehicles and Busses
- Team Check-in
- Volunteer Check-in
- Competition Area
- Pit Area
- Judging Room Locations (if applicable)
- Safety Details as available (Emergency Exits, AED, Shelter in Place Locations)

Volunteer Staffing Plan

This is optional, however a great way to let your volunteers know who they will be working with throughout the day of the event. Creating a staffing plan will allow you to communicate to all your volunteers the names and roles of the other volunteers they will be working alongside throughout the day. This can usually bring comfort to a volunteer as far as what to expect, and who they can reach out to if they need help.

Useful Links and Information

On-Call Support Numbers

> ### On-Call Support
> These numbers are for _volunteer support only_. Teams should not use these numbers to call about rulings or technical assistance.
>
> Administrative, Judge, Referee and Non-Technical Issues: (603)206-2412
>
> Scoring System (FTC Live) or other Technical Issues: (603)206-2450
> Call or use the built-in chat feature on FTC Live

Pre-Event Support
Mon – Fri   8:30am – 5:00pm Eastern Time (UTC-4 or UTC-5)
Phone: (603)666-3906
Email: firsttechchallengeteams@firstinspires.org

Program Resources

FIRST Tech Challenge Website

Event Search

Game and Season Resources

FIRST Tech Challenge Blog

Volunteer Resources

Team Email Blasts

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 A: Recruiting Volunteers

There are many ways that you can recruit volunteers. There is no right or wrong answer on how to do this. Feel free to be creative! Here are just a few examples of ways that a Volunteer Coordinator can recruit volunteers.

Creating Volunteer Personas

A common tactic to kick off the recruitment process is creating Volunteer Personas. A Persona is a fiction profile that represents groups of similar people in a target audience. Creating volunteer personas allows Volunteer Coordinators to create recruitment materials gauged towards a certain group. Common Volunteer Personas include:

Alumni	Sponsors	Teachers	Team Members	Professional Organization	Colleges and Universities
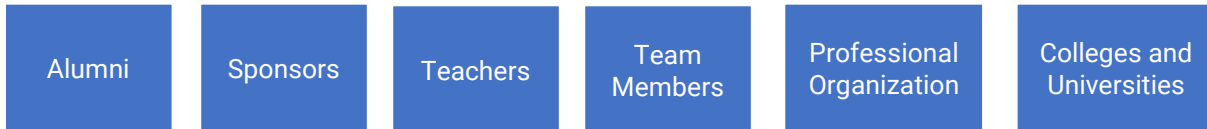
Each of these persona groups has different motivations, experiences, and communication preferences. However, those that fall within the persona group, will share common traits. For instance, potential volunteers within the *FIRST* Alumni persona share common traits like age, interest, and prior experience with *FIRST*.

The use of personas is a common marketing and recruitment strategy. Personas provide deeper insight into the potential volunteers and allows for volunteer recruitment tactics to be geared towards a specific group. The more you can connect to and understand the motivations of a group of volunteers, the more success you will have with recruiting from those groups.

When creating personas ask questions like:
- What are their values?
- What motivation would they have to want to volunteer?
- What are their communication preferences?
- What other traits to they have that may impact their interest in volunteering?

Alumni
FIRST Alumni make great volunteers due to their knowledge and enthusiasm for the program. Engage FIRST Alumni through Alumni Advisory Boards, Alumni groups, and special events such as dinners or information sessions.

Sponsors
Most events will have a sponsor or multiple sponsors supporting the event with donations. Asking a sponsor for volunteers to help staff the event is a great way to get them more involved with the program. Some companies even offer their employees volunteer hours which they can use to volunteer at the event.

Team Affiliated Volunteers
Teams or schools often host events. Teams and School Districts may be able to supply some of the volunteers for the event like teachers, parents, coaches, or team members. Be cautious that these volunteers may have a Conflict of Interest that should be considered when recruiting.

Colleges and Professional Organizations
Colleges and Professional Organizations often share a similar mission or value structure with FIRST and may be looking for community service activities to get engaged with locally. Reach out to organizations such as those below, to discuss potential partnerships and volunteer opportunities.

Professional Organizations
Local or regional chapters of professional and technical organizations.
The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME).
Society of Women Engineers (SWE).
National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE).
Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SPHE).
Entrepreneurial Associations and Economic Development Groups.
Information Technology Associations.
Area computing groups.
K-12 education associations.
School Districts.
Parent-Teacher Organizations.
Senior Centers and Senior Citizen Organizations.
Military organizations, recruiters, college ROTC instructors
Civic and Service Organizations – Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, Elks, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
Youth Service Organizations – Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, Boys and Girls Club.
Colleges and Universities – both faculty and students.

Ways to Recruit
Email
A common way to recruit is to reach out to a persona group through email. For colleges this may mean emailing the Dean of the Engineering school, or whoever is identified as an entry point for that persona group. In email you should:
- Start with a brief explanation of what the purpose of the email is
- Make a connection to the persona group by expressing how the program or event would align with their mission
- Focus communication on the motivators that are commonly associated with the person group.

LinkedIn®
LinkedIn® is a great resource that can be used to your advantage when recruiting volunteers. Like any other organization posting a job opening, the Volunteer Coordinator can work with the planning committee or program delivery partner to post volunteer positions that need to be filled. These postings can include the job descriptions, and the skills needed to fill the role.

Email Groups and Community Bulletin Boards
Look for local community groups or bulletin boards where information about the event can be shared with potential volunteers.

Volunteer Job Shadow
Some of the great feedback received over the years is that a volunteer who spends a day shadowing another volunteer feels more prepared and more successful to fill a role at a later event. Talk with the volunteers you have already recruited. See if they know someone who might be interested in tagging along for the day. This is a great way to expose the person not only to the position, but also to the excitement of the event.

Appendix B: Conflict of Interest

Please ask all volunteers to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, and to complete the conflict of interest and disclosure form. Some scenarios of conflict of interests include:

Conflict of Interest Scenarios
Coach or Mentor of a team
Parent or Relative of a team
Alumni from a team
Team Sponsor
An individual with a relationship with many teams in a region

Having a conflict of interest, or even the perception of a conflict of interest can affect a team's experience, even if decisions that were made throughout the day were not biased in any way. The belief of potential favoritism is enough to discourage a team, coach, or mentor, and take away from their overall experience. Knowing what conflict of interest is, and how to avoid being in a position that could be viewed as a conflict will ensure all teams feel they have been treated fairly.

Conflict of interest can sometimes be very black and white. In other cases, it may be a gray area, and it may be difficult to decide what makes up a true conflict of interest. Sometimes, the bias may be obvious, while other times a conflict of interest may be perceived by a team or a coach. It is best to keep the following in mind when volunteering:

Working with Conflicts of Interest	
Disclose COIs	Encourage volunteers to be open and forthcoming about conflicts they may have with a team competing at the event.
Avoid Roles that can Impact the event	If there is a known conflict of interest, avoid assigning that volunteer in a role where their decisions about a team that could change the result of the day, for example: • Assigning a judge to a panel where they would interview a team in which they currently or have had an existing relationship. • Assigning a referee at an event where multiple teams they coach are competing.

Working with Conflicts of Interest	
Consider Perception	Avoid assigning volunteers in any situation that could be perceived as a conflict of interest.
Discuss with Key Volunteers	Tell the Judge Advisor and Head Referee about volunteers in their reporting lines that have a real or perceived conflict of interest

Parent, Relative or Alumni of a Team

If a parent or a relative of a team member is volunteering at an event, this volunteer must abstain from making any decisions that could affect the results of the tournament. Whether volunteering as a judge or as field personnel (referee, field technical advisor, etc.) it is important to have that volunteer remove themselves from making any decisions related to that team. For example:

- If the volunteer is a judge, they must recuse themselves from any conversations about that team during deliberations.
- If the volunteer is a referee, they should not be involved in any decisions around penalties, match replays, etc.

Keep in mind there are many ways conflict of interest can be present, from parents to sponsors. Make sure to remove any seeming conflicts of interest, but also keep in mind any perceptions of conflicts.

Appendix C: Suggested *FIRST* Tech Challenge Planning Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Event Director
- Pre-event responsibilities:
    - Setting up load in/load out schedules and staffing
    - Setting up the schedule for the event and all competition and judging schedules
    - Tournament staffing
    - Serves as the principal liaison with the facility manager
- Key Success Factors
    - Attention to detail
    - Calm under pressure
    - Critical thinking skills
    - Flexible
    - Professional attitude
    - Comfortable with high level of responsibility
    - Ability to make decisions quickly and calmly

Volunteer Coordinator
- Pre-event Responsibilities
    - Recruit individuals to assist on the day of the event
    - Organize a volunteer workforce from various sectors: parents, community, teachers, etc.
    - Hold volunteer meetings prior to the tournament to explain *FIRST* Tech Challenge, train volunteers on their roles, generate enthusiasm, and foster a sense of teamwork
    - Supervise all volunteers on tournament day
- Key Success Factors
    - Excellent attention to detail

- o Good communication skills
- o Must be able to assess a person's skills and match them to the appropriate position

FIRST Tech Advisor
- Pre-event Responsibilities
  - o Recruit and train assistant field tech advisors
  - o Recruit and train scorekeepers
  - o Spec and order field electronics
  - o Confirm computer requirements are met
- Key Success Factors
  - o Calm under pressure
  - o Has a general comfort level with *FIRST* Tech Challenge technology and troubleshooting techniques
  - o Must be knowledgeable of the game to understand time and flow needs
  - o Excellent communication skills
  - o Ability to troubleshoot field and robot issues

Judge Advisor
- Pre-event Responsibilities
  - o Help recruit, train, and oversee all tournament judges
  - o With event manager, develop judging schedule
  - o Ensure that judge shirts, clipboards, score sheets, and pens/pencils are prepared for judges the morning of the tournament
  - o Provide additional support as necessary
- Key Success Factors
  - o Attention to detail
  - o Calm under pressure
  - o Presentation skills
  - o Professional attitude
  - o Critical thinking skills
  - o Facilitation skills
  - o Conflict resolution skills
  - o Time management skills
  - o Organizational skills
  - o Diplomacy

Head Referee
- Pre-event Responsibilities
  - o Help recruit, train, and oversee all tournament referees
  - o Perform quality assurance on *FIRST* Tech Challenge competition field set up the night before the event
  - o Ensure that referee shirt, clipboards, score sheets and pens/pencils are prepared for referees the morning of the tournament
  - o Perform other functions as necessary
- Key Success Factors
  - o Detailed knowledge of the current *FIRST* Tech Challenge game manual and referee manual
  - o Ability to share that knowledge with other referees

- o Ability to remain calm under pressure
- o Conflict management skills
- o Professional attitude
- o Ability to explain referee rulings clearly and calmly to the teams
- o Sense of humor