# 2017-2018 Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
# *FIRST* Robotics Grant - Section 99h
# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### *What is FIRST?*

FIRST stands for "**F**or **I**nspiration and **R**ecognition of **S**cience and **T**echnology". It is an international program for students K-12 to foster interest and passion for a career in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) through a progression of robotics competitions. Working alongside technical mentors from industry to design, build, and program their competition robots, students have a chance to develop science, engineering and technology skills, as well as

self-confidence, communication, and leadership. For information specific to FIRST in Michigan visit: http://www.FIRSTinmichigan.org/index.html.

### *Where can I find information about the FIRST Robotics Grant?  How can I get a copy of the application?*

Information regarding the FIRST Robotics Grant can be found at www.techplan.org/rdi/. The grant RFP can be found at the top of the page under 2017-18 *FIRST* Grant Materials.

### *What are the FIRST programs and how are they positioned?*

FIRST in Michigan's (FIM) Progression of Programs differs from FIRST national's progression. To be eligible for the MDE grant, all Michigan FIRST teams must be aligned to Michigan's progression below. Refer to the FIRST in Michigan Progression of Programs Overview for details across programs.

| *FIRST* in Michigan Progression of Programs | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Program Level** | **Grades** | **Program Name** | **Program Acronym** |
| Early Elementary | Grades K-3 | FIRST LEGO League Jr. | FLL Jr. |
| Late Elementary | Grades 4-5 | FIRST LEGO League | FLL |
| Middle School | Grades 6*-8 | FIRST Tech Challenge | FTC |
| High School | Grades 9-12 | FIRST Robotics Competition | FRC |
| *If 6th grade is part of a separate K-6 bldg, then FIRST LEGO League is the appropriate program* | | | |

### *What is the purpose of the grant?*

Michigan's schools have been fortunate to receive state aid dollars through section 99h to award *FIRST* Robotics grants.  The purpose of the grant is to support the State Board of Education's mission in making "All students graduate ready for careers, college, and community."  The grant will support students in grades K-12 that participate in any of the FIRST programs this season: early elementary school FLL Jr, late elementary school FLL, middle school FTC and high school FRC.

## ELIGIBILITY/ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

### *Who can apply?*

Eligible districts include all individual local education agencies (LEAs), public school academies (PSAs), intermediate school districts (ISDs), and MDE registered non-public schools that enroll students grades K-12 and provide pupils with expanded opportunities to improve mathematics, science and technology skills by participating in events hosted by FIRST in Michigan.

As noted above, nonpublic schools are now eligible applicants for the 2017-18 school year, but they must be registered with the MDE prior to the application deadline. To register with the MDE, visit: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Vendor_Registration_509828_7.pdf

Please note: The available funding differs between public and non-publics. Public districts have access to $2,500,000 while the available funding for non publics is $300,000 and will be split with Science Olympiad. A non-public school must choose between applying for a grant for their Science Olympiad team or their FIRST team but cannot apply for both.

***Is there a legal challenge to section 99h related to non-public schools receiving funds under this grant?***

At this time, there are no legal challenges to this section of State Aid.  There are no signs that the non-public language will be removed or of litigation related to section 99h.

***What are the eligibility requirements?***

All individual LEAs, PSAs, ISDs, and registered nonpublic schools that enroll students, and operate a FIRST in Michigan aligned FIRST Team are eligible if they meet the following requirements:

● Applicants must apply on behalf of teams that are aligned in accordance with the FIRST in Michigan progression of programs.
● Teams must establish a partnership for the purpose of the FIRST program with at least one sponsor, business entity, higher education institution, or technical school;
● Applicants shall submit a spending plan (see http://www.techplan.org/rdi/ for sample plan);
● Applicants must agree to provide a local match from other private or local funds for each type of award. (See Grant Structure FAQ's below for full discussion). The required match is:
  ○ at least 25% of the stipend award
  ○ at least 25% of the advancement award (may be in cash or fair market value of in-kind donations)
  ○ at least 50% of the team support award. (may be in cash or the fair market value of in-kind donations, such as providing a room to build, transportation to and from events, food, robot materials, etc.)

***What are the grant requirements?***

The grant requirements are outlined below.

● The district must have a properly aligned FIRST Robotics team registered with www.FIRSTinspires.org for the current season
  ○ the team must have a number and coach in place this season.
● The teams must participate in at least the following number of official FIRST in Michigan competitions during the current season:
  ○ Two district competitions for all high school FIRST Robotics Competition teams
  ○ One qualifying event for all middle school FIRST Tech Challenge teams and all upper elementary FIRST Lego League teams
  ○ One expo for all early elementary FIRST Lego League Jr teams
● The district must be willing to offer elective high school credits for students who have successfully logged 60 hours, provided the team attends a minimum of two district competitions.[1]
● The district must be willing to start a FIRST Team(s) *above or below your current program(s)* to build a full K-12 FIRST in Michigan progression within the school district.[2]

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[1]To issue credit for participating on a FIRST Robotics team, a school district must assign a certified teacher as the teacher of record. Because robotics is not a core subject, the teacher of record must be certified in the grade range, but not by a specific content area, i.e., science or mathematics.

[2] Note that the italic text has been added from the original RFP language to help clarify the intent of the requirements.

- The district must be willing to participate in the digital badging program established by the statewide FIRST Robotics team of coaches.
- Provide MDE with an electronic roster. Template is available at http://www.techplan.org/rdi/.
- Each nonpublic school applicant must, in addition, be registered with the MDE and meet all state reporting requirements for nonpublic schools.

### *What type of partnerships are required to receive the FIRST Robotics Grant?*

Per section 99h eligible applicants shall demonstrate in its application that has established a partnership with at least one sponsor. The sponsor can be a business entity, higher education institution, technical school, or individual.

### *What is the difference between a FIRST sponsor and a mentor?*

A sponsor represents an organization, company, agency and/or individual that provides cash or in-kind donations to the team, school district, or directly to FIRST on behalf of the team. A mentor is a person assisting the team, who is not a student team member, and who works to help the team achieve their goals. Each team must have two adult, screened Mentors. Coach and Mentor are used interchangeably.

### *Can a sponsor be a mentor?*

Yes, a sponsoring organization could provide staff to be the mentor.

## GRANT STRUCTURE

### *What is the structure of the FIRST Robotics Grant?*

The FIRST Robotics Grant provides three unique awards: Coach's Stipend, Support, and Advancement. Each award is structured to provide a maximum number of awards. However, this is a competitive grant and funds are limited.

### *As this is a competitive grant, how will applicants be prioritized?*

Applicants will be prioritized, in this order:
- High economically disadvantaged populations (focus and priority based schools).
- Schools that serve a high percentage of low income families (based on Free and Reduced Lunch count data).
- First time teams participating in FIRST Robotics starting with the high school program and working down to kindergarten
- Districts that are running multiple levels of FIRST programs culminating in FRC.
- Districts in a broad geographical distribution.

Please note: in the past, all teams that applied have been awarded the grant.
### Stipend

### *Who qualifies as the coach?*

The team designates one person to receive the coach stipend. While there may be a few people in charge, the team and school decide who to designate as the coach. The coach can be any adult running the team. The coach does not have to be a teacher employed by the school.

### How do we apply for the stipend?

In the Team Information section of the MEGS+ grant application, choose "Yes" to indicate the the team is applying for the coach stipend AND check the box that the District agrees to provide at least a 25% match of the stipend. If the box isn't checked indicating that the district agrees to the match, even if the application shows a "Yes" that the team is applying for the stipend, the stipend award will not be considered.

### How can the coach's stipend award funds be used?

The coach's stipend award can **ONLY** be spent on the salary or contract for the time of a coach.

### Can the coach donate their stipend to the team?

Yes, but only after the coach receives the award from the district and takes it into income.  Once the stipend is paid to a single coach and is taken into income, the coach may do anything he/she wants with the money including donating it back to the team.

### Can the stipend be split between two or more coaches?

The Coach's Stipend Award is available only to a single coach of the team and cannot be paid by the district to pay more than one coach.  Once the stipend is paid to a single coach and is taken into income, the coach may do anything he/she wants with the money, including splitting it with another coach.

### Our school/district already pays a stipend to the coach.  Can the stipend be used to pay for other team expenses?

The district can only use the funds to pay a coach stipend to a single coach.  The funds in Section 99h (a) are meant to compensate the coach for his/her time and dedication.  If the school/district already pays a stipend to the coach, then the 99h award can be used in one of three ways:
- to replace the local funds
- add it to the coach's current compensation
- return it to the Michigan Department of Education.

Those are the district's only choices.

### If our school/district uses the 99h (a) award to replace the local funds already used to compensate a coach's time is that considered supplanting funds?

There is no current state regulation regarding supplement/supplant for state aid funds. However, federal regulations will apply to supplement vs supplant in this case to ensure appropriate use and intent of funding. The use of award funds to reimburse the school/district for the compensation of the coach is not considered supplanting, if the school/district made the payment within the grant expenditure period.

### Our school/district does not pay stipends to coaches as they are considered volunteers.  Can we use the stipend award for something else?

Stipend funds may be used to pay coach stipend only. The funds in Section 99h (a) are meant to compensate the coach for his/her time and dedication. If funds are not paid to the volunteer coach as a stipend, then the award must be returned to the Michigan Department of Education. If the district is

unable to provide stipends due to union regulations, then the coach stipend can be paid to the teacher via salary. In this case the stipend funds can be used for salary and benefit costs.

### *Is the district required to provide a match to the coach stipend (Section 99h a) award?*
Yes, a match of 25% is required by section 99h.  The match can include payment of a coach's FICA and social security, if they are employed by the school district.

### *How is the coach stipend and match handled for coaches who are employees of the district and for those who are not?*
This is determined by the school/district accounting office.

For coaches who are employed by the district, there are two choices:
- Increase the gross stipend: The stipend match can simply be added to the stipend amount and paid to the coach:
  - Example 1: MDE Stipend award + 25% match = gross stipend amount
    (FICA/Retirement costs are deducted to arrive at the net stipend)
    FRC: $1,500 stipend + $375 match = $1,875 gross stipend

- Or increase the net stipend: the match can be used to reduce the FICA/Retirement costs:
  - Example 2: MDE Stipend award - (FICA/Retirement costs - 25% stipend match)
    = Net amount to be paid to coach

For coaches that are not employed by the district, this is the only choice:
- Example 3: MDE Stipend Award + 25% Match = Total Stipend Amount
  - FRC Example: $1,500 stipend + $375 match = $1,875

### *What are the anticipated stipend amounts?*
. The anticipated stipend award amounts are:
- Up to $1,500 for a High School FIRST Robotics Competition team (limit one high school program stipend per school)
- Up to $1,000 for a Middle School FIRST Tech Challenge team (limit one middle school program stipend per school)
- Up to $750 for an Upper Elementary FIRST LEGO League Team (limit one upper elementary program stipend per school)
- Up to $300 for an Early Elementary FIRST LEGO League Jr. team (limit one early elementary program stipend per school)

The stipend amount for a given program level will be awarded equally among all recipients at that level. Example: All recipients of the high school stipend will receive $1,500. The same applies for each of the other programs.

### *Can every one of our FIRST teams qualify for a stipend?*
Only one team per FIRST program per school is eligible.

- Example: A K-12 school has 4 FLL Jr. teams, 3 FLL teams, 2 FTC teams and 1 FRC team. The total stipends available for this school are:
  - One $300 FLL Jr. stipend

- One $750 FLL stipend
- One $1,000 FTC stipend
- One $1,500 FRC stipend

Grant funds are limited and will be awarded based on the prioritization of needs that support underrepresented areas addressed in the prioritization question above. Actual award amounts may be adjusted based on availability of funding.

## Team Support Award

### *What is the team support award?*

The Team Support Award is available to cover the costs of any FIRST related team expenses including, but not limited to, registrations, transportation, travel to competitions, food for the team, supplies and materials, etc. The funds must be used SOLELY for expenses related to the FIRST team.

### *What are the anticipated team support award amounts?*

The amount of the team support award varies by program. For high school FRC support awards are determined by the age of the team, with rookies receiving the most and support decreasing over a period of years. These are the anticipated amounts of support across all four FIRST programs:

High School FRC Teams: Year 1:$6,000  Year 2:$5,000  Year 3:$2,000 Yr 4 and beyond: $1,000
Middle School FTC Teams:         $300
Upper Elementary FLL teams:    $200
Early Elementary FLL Jr. teams:  $100

### *How can the support award funds be used?*

The team support award can be used for registration, kits, supplies and materials, and travel or any other expenditures related to the running of the FIRST team. Regardless of how the support award is presented on the submitted spending plan, this award can be for any expenses incurred during the grant expenditure period. This is true even if the expense was incurred after the start of the grant period but before the money was received from the state.

Grant awards are state restricted funds and must be used SOLELY on expenses related to the team. In the situation where a district/school pays a team expense in advance of receiving the full amount of the grant award, the district/school can put the money into their general fund as a reimbursement for costs incurred on behalf of the team.

The district may not charge an administrative fee on the money.

It is recommended that teams keep detailed accounting records and retain receipts for all team related expenses. It is recommended that teams build a positive working relationship with their affiliated district/school business office staff i.e. meetings and other communications.

### Are unspent support awards lost?

Unspent awards may be carried forward for use SOLELY by the team during the next fiscal year. Unspent funds cannot just be lumped into the general fund and spent on items unrelated to the FIRST team.

### Is there a district requirement to provide a match for the support award?

Yes, a match of 50% is required by section 99h which may be in cash, or comprised of in-kind support.

### Where may the cash come from for a support match comprised of cash?

The cash can come from anywhere, such as:
- Cash donations from sponsors, donors, parents, partners, and/or community members
- The district
- Dollars from fundraising
- Additional funding sources from the district
- Money from other grants (i.e. a grant from FIRST or FIRST in Michigan, etc.).
- Donations of supplies and materials.
- Donation of mentor's time.
- "Pay to Play" Fees (this is not recommended and if used should be structured to allow ALL students the opportunity to participate. The intent of this grant is to reduce barriers to STEM learning opportunities.)
- Fair market value of In-kind contributions

### What are in-kind contributions?

In-kind contributions come from the district and are items such as space, busing, printing, phone usage, internet, equipment, custodial services, etc. The fair market value of these count toward your required match.

The spending plan sample at [www.techplan.org](www.techplan.org) assumes the district is using the fair market value of their in-kind support to satisfy the team support match in full.

### Advancement

### What are advancement awards?

Advancement Awards are available to teams that qualify and participate in competition levels beyond the qualifying events. These include The State Championship, The World Championship and, for FTC teams only, the Super Regional.

### What is the anticipated amount of the advancement award at each level?

The amount of the advancement award will depend on the amount of funding available after team support grants and stipends have been awarded. The district is automatically awarded the advancement award each time the team qualifies and participates in the next level of competition. Advancement awards will be in equal amounts across the teams in a given FIRST program.

- Example: All high school FRC teams will receive the same amount for advancing and participating in the State Championship. The same applies to FTC states, although the amount may be less than the amount received by FRC State Championship teams.

### Does the district have to fill out another application when teams advance to receive the advancement award funds?

No. Teams that advance and participate in the State Championship, The World Championship, or FTC Super Regional do not have to submit any additional information to the MDE. FIRST in Michigan will provide a list of all teams that advanced to a given level and participated. If that district received the initial grant, they will automatically receive the advancement award.

For timing of when the additional funding will be included in the monthly state aid payment, see the Financial Section of the FAQ.

### When will the award amount of the advancement funding be announced?

The MDE will announce the dollar amount each team will receive for advancement to the next level sometime after the first of the year. The Department must first assess what funds remain after total payouts for team support awards and coach stipends have been determined. The field will be notified by State Superintendent E-blast, e-mail notification from FIRST in Michigan and via the Techplan.org website.

### When will teams receive advancement awards if they qualify?

The MDE will be provided a list from FIRST in Michigan for advancement awards to the state championships no later than Monday, April 16, 2018 and which teams will be advancing to world championships no later than Monday, April 30, 2018. The 99h (c) funds will begin to be dispersed in the May 20 State Aid Payment. The May payment will be in the amount of 8/11$^{th}$ of the total state/world championship qualification award. The remainder of the payments will be dispersed along with the remainder of the initial grant award for (a) and (b). Payments of 1/11$^{th}$ of the total advancement awards will be dispersed on June 20, July 21, and August 20.

### Can districts receive advancement funds even though they were not awarded the FIRST grant/did not apply for the grant?

No, only those teams that received for the FIRST Robotics grant are eligible to receive funding for reasonable expenses for participation in State/World Championship.

### If our team advances from a waitlist or lottery, can we still be eligible to receive advancement awards?

No, teams must qualify for an advancement spot from their participation in Michigan events.

## PROGRAMMING

### Does the district have to offer FRC students elective high school credits?

No, just a willingness to provide the credits. If a district chooses to offer elective credits the school district must assign a certified teacher as the teacher of record. Because robotics is not a core subject, the teacher of record must be certified in the grade range, but not a specific content  i.e., science or mathematics. The teacher of record cannot be a college professor, unless the credits are

for dual enrollment.

### Can the coaches receive State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECH's) for their time coaching?

Yes, coaches and mentors at all levels for the FIRST in Michigan progression can receive a minimum of 10 SCECHs and a maximum of 40 SCECHs upon completion of the season. Hour must be logged and submitted to Amanda Stoel at stoela@michigan.gov. Time spent at competitions/events does not count toward the hours logged. Additional information regarding earning SCECHs can be found at http://www.techplan.org/professional-development/FIRST-robotics-sb-ceu/.

## FINANCIAL

### What is the 2017-2018 FIRST Robotics Grant Award Payment Schedule?

At this time we anticipate that the award payment will continue to be dispersed in the School State Aid payments according to the schedule below for Section 99h (a) and (b).  The first payment on December 20 will consist of the total of three months – October, November, and December.

| Additional Award Dates (each payment totaling 1/11th of full award amount) |
| :---: |
| January 21 |
| February 20 |
| March 20 |
| April 21 |
| May 20 |
| June 20 |
| July 21 |
| August 20 |

### What are the grant expenditure period begin and end dates?

The grant expenditure period began October 1, 2017 and ends September 30, 2018. Grant award notifications will be issued through MEGS+ to reflect the expenditure period. The expenditure period is the timeframe in which expenditures for the FIRST Robotics program are allowable. FIRST Robotics grant funds can be carried over by districts for the following fiscal year per section 18(a) of the State School Aid Act. Therefore, the 2017-18 grant funds can be carried forward by school districts until June 30, 2019. However, the MDE encourages teams to expend the funds in the year they receive them.

## EVALUATION

### Will FIRST Robotics Grantees be required to submit evaluation data to the Michigan Department of Education?

No, districts are not required but must be willing to provide the MDE with pre and post student data based on the aggregate team roster average from one or more of the state identified assessment(s). The MDE is requesting this data from districts in order to monitor the academic impact of participation

in FIRST Tech Challenge and FIRST Robotics Competition. This is part of the MDE's closing the achievement gap initiative.

### What data points will be reviewed?

Currently the MDE is working to identify consistent data points for all section 99 grant programs, which includes section 99h FIRST Robotics and several other grant programs. Once these data points are identified they will be shared with grantees.The MDE is determined to reduce redundant and burdensome reporting by districts.

## GRANT SUBMISSION AND TIMELINE

### Where can I find the FIRST Robotics Grant Application?

The FIRST Robotics Grant Application can be found in the Michigan Electronics Grant System *Plus* (MEGS+).  Here is the link to MEGS+

https://mdoe.state.mi.us/MEGSPlus/Login2.aspx?APPTHEME=MIMDE_MEGSPLUS&ReturnURL=/megsplus/

### Who can initiate the MEGS+ Application?

Level five authorized officials must initiate the MEGS+ grant application. The level five authorized official is usually found in the superintendent's office.

### If my district has multiple teams, do I submit multiple applications?

No, school districts applying for a grant for more than one team in the district - whether for multiple FRC teams, FTC teams, FLL teams, or FLL Jr. teams or a combination of all the above - shall submit a single district-wide application adding a separate page for each team. The application must include a single cumulative spending plan encompassing all of the district's teams. A spending plan template can be found at: http://www.techplan.org/rdi/.

### How do we add additional pages to the grant application for each of our teams?

Team pages are added by clicking the save button at the top of the MEGS+ team page and then clicking add.  Once the add button is clicked, a blank team page will appear.  Complete the team page, click save.  Repeat this process for as many teams as you are entering.

### How do we upload/attach the spending plan as part of the application?

Within the MEGS+ Application under the View/Edit page, there is an attachment link.  Click this link. The attachment page appears.  Follow the instructions on the attachment page to upload the file. Click save to ensure that the uploaded file is saved within the application.

### When is the MEGS+ 2017 FIRST Robotics Application due?

The MEGS+ 2017 FIRST Robotics Application is due by 11:59 p.m. on November 6, 2017.

### When will the awards be announced?

The MDE anticipates announcing grant awards in the MEGS+ system and via a State Superintendent e-blast notice in early December.

FRC teams - Please note the December date is after your money is due to FIRST for the season.. FIRST will accept a purchase order conditioned upon your FRC team being on the recipients list for the MDE grant. The MDE money comes to your school, not to FIRST. You are responsible for paying FIRST.

### *What information does the application require?*

The application requirements are outlined below.

- Team name and full permanent team number. Teams with a temporary team number at the time of application should enter the full temporary number.
- Name and contact information (email address and phone number) of team coach.
- Agree to contribute a match of at least 25 percent of the Stipend Award and Advancement Award and 50 percent of the Support Award. The required match may be in the form of cash or the fair market value of in-kind donations from any of the following sources, including but not limited to: the school district, other grants, and donations from corporate partnerships or individuals.
- Name and classification of FIRST team sponsor.
    - Business
    - Higher Education Institute
    - Technical School
    - Individual
- District-wide cumulative FIRST spending plan.

### *Can a modification be made to the grant application once it has been submitted?*

Yes, modifications can be made to the grant application prior to the deadline date of November 6.  An email must be sent to Amanda Stoel at stoela@michigan.gov requesting that the application is opened for modification. Include the FIRST program, Team Number, and reason for opening the application within the email.  Once the modification has been completed the application status must be changed to Modification Submitted.  To submit the modification, click on Change Application Status and follow the instructions for submission.