



2016-2017 Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
FIRST (For the Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology)
Robotics Grant - Section 99h
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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 2016-17 FIRST Grant Materials.

What does FLL Jr., FLL, FTC and FRC stand for?

FTC stands for FIRST Tech Challenge for middle school students and FRC stands for First Robotics Competition for high school.

FIRST in Michigan Adjusted Progression of Programs	
Elementary School Programs	Junior <i>FIRST</i> LEGO League (Jr. FLL): Kindergarten - Grade 3
	<i>FIRST</i> LEGO League (FLL): Grade 4 - end of elementary
Middle School Program	<i>FIRST</i> Tech Challenge (FTC)
High School Program	<i>FIRST</i> Robotics Competition (FRC)



What is the purpose of the grant?

Michigan has been fortunate to receive state aid dollars through section 99h to award FIRST Robotics Grants. The purpose of these grants are to support the State Board of Education's mission in making "All students graduate ready for careers, college, and community." The FIRST Robotics grant will support students in grades K-12 through participation in early elementary school FLL Jr, late elementary school FLL, middle school FTC and high school FRC.

What is the structure of the FIRST Robotics Grant?

The FIRST Robotics Grant has been structured to provide three unique awards: Coach's Stipend, Support, and Advancement. Each award is structured to provide a maximum number of team support. However, this is a competitive grant and funds are limited. Therefore, priority will be given to:

- 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).
- Rookie teams, as defined by FIRST, participating in the FIRST Robotics.
- Districts that establish feeder teams (teams that generate student populations that will potentially move up to high school or middle school programs).
- Districts in a broad geographical distribution.

The Coach's Stipend Award is available to be used for a single coach's salary only. The award will be an amount up to \$1,500.

The Support Award is available to cover the cost of event registrations, travel, supplies and materials, etc. The amount of funding for the support award ranges from \$100-\$7,500 depending on the program level of the team and whether or not the team is rookie or veteran.

The Advancement Award will be made available depending on funding levels for the state and world championship competitions, which will be awarded in equal amounts per team for those teams that advance to the state championship and a second equal award amount to those teams that advance to the world championship. Teams must participate in the events to qualify for these awards.

For additional questions regarding the award amounts, see the Financial Section of the FAQ.

ELIGIBILITY/ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Who can apply?

All individual local education agencies (LEAs), public school academies (PSAs), and intermediate school districts (ISDs) that enroll students that provide pupils with expanded opportunities to improve mathematics, science, and technology skills by participating in events hosted by FIRST in Michigan.

What are the eligibility requirements?

All individual LEAs, PSAs, and ISDs 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.
- Applicants 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;
- Applicants shall pay at least 25% of the cost of the FIRST Robotics program;
- Applicants shall provide a local match from other private or local funds for the received under the subdivision for support awards equal to at least 50% of the costs of participating in an event.

What are the grant requirements?

The grant requirements are outlined below.

- Register the team with www.firstinspires.org.
- Provide MDE with an electronic roster, which includes student Unique Identification Code (UIC).
- Have a current FIRST Robotics program, team number, and coach in place.
- Be willing to offer elective high school credits for students who have successfully logged 60 hours, provided the team attends a minimum of two FIRST in Michigan district competitions.¹
- Be willing to participate in the digital badging program established by the statewide FIRST Robotics team of coaches.

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.



- Be willing to start a FIRST Team *above or below your current program(s)*² to build a full K-12 FIRST in Michigan progression within the school district.
- FTC middle school and FLL elementary school teams must agree to participate in at least one FTC middle school qualifying event, and FRC high school teams must agree to participate in at least two FRC high school district events.

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

Per section 99h eligible applicants shall demonstrate in its application that it 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 anyone assisting the team who is not a student team member and 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.

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 area, 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 at all levels for the FIRST in Michigan progress 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.

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

Additional information regarding earning SCECHs can be found at <http://www.techplan.org/professional-development/first-robotics-sb-ceu/>.

FINANCIAL

What is the 2016-2017 FIRST Robotics Grant Award Payment Schedule?

At this time we anticipate that the award payment will continued 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 1/11 th 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, 2016 and ends September 30, 2017. 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 Robotic 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 2016-17 grant funds can be carried forward by school districts until June 30, 2018. However, the MDE encourages teams to expend the funds in the year they receive them.

Who is eligible to receive the FIRST Robotic Program Coach Stipend?

The individual that serves as the head coach, who may or may not be a teacher within the district.

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, only once the coach has received the funding from the district. The coach can donate those funds back to the team.

Our school/district already pays a stipend to the coach. We plan on using the funds for other expenses. Can the stipend funding be directed to supply costs for the team?

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 the school/district already pays a stipend to the coach, then the 99h (a) award can be used to replace the local funds, added on to the existing stipend to bolster coach compensation, or returned to the Michigan Department of Education.

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 \$1,500 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 coaches FICA and social security if they are employed by the school district or it can be paid directly to the coach.

Total Stipend Amount = MDE Stipend Award + Match

\$1,875 = 1,500 + \$375

Does the district pay each coach \$1,500 and incur FICA/Retirement costs as part of the required match or do they pay the coach less than \$1,500 so that FICA/Retirement is covered by the award?

This is determined by the school/district accounting office.

How can the support award funds be used?

This portion of the award can be used for registration, kits, supplies and materials, and travel. 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. Even as a reimbursement for expenses paid for prior to receiving the first payment in the State Aid Management System.

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

Yes, a match of 50% is required by section 99h.

What qualifies as match?

Match can be many things, such as:

- Cash donations from sponsors, donors, parents, partners, and/or community members.
- Dollars for fundraising
- Additional funding sources from the district
- Other grant funds (*i.e., a grant from 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.*)
- 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 advancement award amount for all teams has not yet been determined, when do you anticipate it will be announced?

The MDE anticipates to announce the amount of the team advancement awards after the first of the year. 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 7, 2014 and which teams will be advancing to world championships no later than Monday, April 14, 2014. 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 8/11th 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 1/11th of the total advancement awards will be dispersed on June 20, July 21, and August 20.

The [2016-17 FIRST Robotics RFP \(9-15-2016\)](#) states that grants (99h (c)) will be given to those teams that advance to the State/World Championship. Can we receive these funds even though we 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.

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.

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 FTC teams, FRC teams, FLL teams, or JR FLL team 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/>.

When is the MEGS+ 2017 FIRST Robotics Application due?

The MEGS+ 2017 FIRST Robotics Application is due on November 7, 2016.

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.

What are the application requirements?

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.