



**2015-2016 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 a FIRST?

FIRST stands for "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology". It is a national program with a mission to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including 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 2015-16 FIRST Grant Materials.

What does 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.

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 7-12 through participation in middle school FTC and high school FRC.

What is the structure of the FIRST Robotics Grant?

The FIRST Robotics Grant has been structure to provide three unique awards: Coach's Stipend, Support, and Advancement.

- Coach's Stipend Award are available to be used for a single coach's salary only. Awards are limited to 100 applicants for middle school FTC teams and 500 applicants for high school FRC teams.
- Support Award are available to cover the cost of event registrations, travel, supplies and materials, etc. The amount of funding for the support award ranges from \$300-\$7,500 depending if the team is a middle school FTC or high school FRC and if the team is new or existing.
- Advancement Award will be made available depending on funding to middle school FTC teams that qualify to participate in the State Championships, Super-Regional, and/or World Championship events. They will also be made available depending on funding to high school FRC teams that qualify to participate in the State Champion and/or World Championship FRC events. Teams must also participate in the events to qualify for the advancement support.

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

ELIGIBILITY/ELIGIBILITY REQUIRMENTS

Who can apply?

All individual local education agencies (LEAs), public school academies (PSAs), and intermediate school districts (ISDs) that enroll students, or operate a middle school FTC team or high school FRC team on behalf of their constituent districts are eligible.

What are the eligibility requirements?

- Have a new or returning middle school FTC or high school FRC team registered with US FIRST to participate during the 2015-2016 school year.
- Be willing to start a middle school FTC team within their district middle schools.
- Program must serve students in grades 7-12.

- FTC middle 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.
- Districts 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 assessments in the appendix. 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.
- Willingness to provide a roster of participants to the MDE prior to May 1, 2016.
- Willingness to offer elective high school credit for FRC students, who have successfully logged 60 hours, provided the high school team attends a minimum of 2 district competitions.

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.

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.

Can the FRC middle school and FTC high school coaches receive State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECH's) for their time coaching?

Yes, coaches 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 2015-2016 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, 2015 and ends September 30, 2016. Grant award notifications will be issued through MEGS+ to reflect the date. 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 2015-16 grant funds can be carried forward by school districts until June 30, 2017. However, the MDE encourages teams to expend the funds in the year they receive them.

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.

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 coaches time is that considered supplanting funds?

Supplement versus supplant applies only to Federal Funds. There are not supplement/supplant rules in state aid.

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 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% (\$375) is required by section 99h. The match can include payment of a coaches FICA and social security. If the coach is not an employee and simply in receipt of the stipend the district may pay out the full award of \$1,500 plus the matching funds of \$375 toward the coach a total of \$1,875.

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.

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, which can be used by the middle school FTC or high school FRC team.
- 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, printing, phone usage, internet, etc.

The advancement award for the high school FRC team is not yet determined, when do you anticipate it will be announced?

The MDE anticipates to announce the amount of the high school FRC team advancement to State Championships and World Championships in January or February. 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?

MDE will know which teams will be advancing to 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 [Revised FIRST Robotics RFP \(10-22-2013\)](#) 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 applied 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, or a combination of FTC and FRC teams - 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.

When is the MEGS+ 2016 FIRST Robotics Application due?

The MEGS+ 2016 FIRST Robotics Application is due on November 3, 2015.

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?

- School districts applying for a grant for more than one team in the district - whether for multiple FTC teams, FRC teams, or a combination of FTC and FRC teams - 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.
- Team name and five digit middle school FTC or high school FRC team number. Teams with a temporary team number at the time of application should enter the last five digits of the temporary number. Team numbers shorter than 5 digits may precede the real number with zeros.

- Name and contact information (email address and phone number) of middle school FTC or high school FRC team coach.
- Agree to contribute a match of at least 25% of the Stipend Award and Advancement Award and 50% 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 middle school FTC or high school FRC team sponsor.
 - Business
 - Higher Education Institute
 - Technical School
 - Individual
- District-wide cumulative FIRST spending plan.