

Event Planning Guides

Introduction

FIRST has worked to create Event Planning Guides to help provide guidance and recommendations for Planning Committees to use while planning *FIRST* Robotics Competition events.

This introduction guide provides information on *FIRST* Robotics Competition events applicable to Districts and Regionals. Planning Committees and Program Delivery Partners (PDPs) should also reference the additional guides on our [Event Planning Guide](#) webpage for specifics on other topics.

It's worth noting that every area operates and functions differently and these guides are starting points. What may work in one area, may not work best in your area.

Appearance of Bias

We expect all Program Delivery Partners and all planning committee members to follow and enforce these standards at their event(s). Adhering to both of these standards can help avoid the appearance of bias:

- Volunteers should only congregate around the scoring table or playing field as is necessary to fulfill the duties of their volunteer position.
- No one in official event apparel (volunteer shirt or *FIRST*/Partner staff clothing) around the playing field should be openly cheering for one team but are encouraged to cheer for ALL teams. Following this guideline helps avoid the appearance of bias.

Planning Committees

Planning Committees are responsible for organizing and executing the *FIRST* Robotics Competition events in cooperation with *FIRST*, the Program Delivery Organization, and for supporting local teams. Having a planning committee in place balances the many responsibilities of running the program and helps to ensure the program's success and sustainability.

The Planning Committee works closely with the Program Delivery Partner and *FIRST* in organizing and staffing these and other competition-related areas. *FIRST* recommends that planning meetings begin no later than September, although July/August is preferable. Monthly meetings usually suffice through December, but biweekly are better January – April (as applicable for when the event occurs).

Role & Responsibilities

Planning Committees assist with planning and executing a *FIRST* Robotics Competition event, and agree to follow the requirements set forth by *FIRST*, including, but not limited to:

- Game Manual
- Judging Rules
- Advancement Criteria
- Safety Rules
- Volunteer Screening Rules
- Volunteer Certification Rules

Forming a Committee

It is important that program planning responsibilities are shared and not championed by one individual to foster program sustainability. Building a committee of the right people is critical and will be the function of the Chairperson/co-chairs. *FIRST* strongly recommend that within the Planning Committee,

each member be assigned a specific area of responsibility in the event planning process. Sub-committees of two or three people are recommended, where possible, for most functions.

Some questions that a PDP can ask themselves when determining their committee needs:

- What are your strengths as a Program Delivery Partner?
- What weaknesses do your strengths produce? Example:
 - Do you document so much that people cannot use the materials?
- What are the downsides to your strengths? Example:
 - Are you so detail-oriented that it can be difficult to keep your eye on the big picture?

As a PDP, evaluating your own strengths is the first step in identifying what you will need on a committee. This will allow you to bring in committee members that complement your strengths and balance your weaknesses. Bring people in that love doing the things that you as a Partner may not enjoy.

Determining the best candidates for the committee can be a challenging task; however, it is important that the right candidate is chosen for each position.

Committee Roles

Since the purpose of the committee is to split up the amount of work and time it takes to run the program, there are multiple roles that can be filled to help a PDP balance the different areas of responsibility. This is not an all-inclusive list; however, each PDP is suggested to identify the following committee positions. These roles may vary by event and not all events will have all roles detailed below:

- Committee Co-Chairperson(s)
- Public Relations Manager
- Sponsor Development Manager
- Volunteer Coordinator (must be approved by *FIRST* each year)

Other optional positions that might be beneficial depending upon the size of the program are:

- Accommodations Coordinator
- Administrative Assistant
- Alumni Coordinator
- Load In/Load Out Manager
- Machine Shop Coordinator
- Student Ambassador Coordinator
- Team Coordinator
- Team Social Coordinator

Position	Role Description	Key Success Factors
Committee Co-Chairperson(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit and assign committee members to roles within the planning committee in partnership with the Program Delivery Partner Schedule and hold regular meetings of the planning committee. These are scheduled straightway at the formation of the committee. Typically, once per month in August – December, and twice a month in the two-month period prior to the event, as well as one review meeting post event. Ensure consistent clear communication between committee members, including up to date meeting minutes and assigned tasks. Support committee members as needed to meet responsibilities and expectations in a timely manner. Provide on-site leadership and a positive representation of the local planning committee during the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong attention to detail Effective communication skills Organizational and planning skills Experience as a facilitator
Public Relations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writes and distributes press releases before and after the event Manages the invited guests, VIPs, or sponsor representatives on site for the event Manages other outlets such as social media to keep the community informed and involved in the program year-round Recruit and train volunteers to assist with media relations activities before, during, and after the event. Work with team of volunteers in advance of event to create materials for media relations such as press releases (for team templates and event coverage), social media post graphics, schedule press appearances, and media alerts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent communication skills Detail oriented Highly organized Energetic and enthusiastic when entertaining VIPs or other invited guests

Sponsor Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and works with sponsors • Continues to recruit and develop new sponsors to help support the program locally • Works closely with the Public Relations Manager and Program Delivery Partner to ensure proper press is given to each sponsor • Oversee any sponsor/VIP activities that occur during the event (including, but not limited to, sponsor benefits onsite, Sponsor Row and VIP Tours.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent communication skills • Networking skills • Professional attitude • Ability to establish new relationships and foster those relationships long term
Volunteer Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruits all volunteers • Works with the PDP and Event Manager during the event • Primary contact for all volunteers • Works closely with PDP or planning committee • Manages and inspires volunteers. <i>FIRST</i> relies heavily on dedicated volunteers to help staff and execute successful events • Volunteer liaison – ensures that all volunteers have appropriate training, event schedules, and clear expectations for the day of the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong attention to detail • Effective communication skills • Ability to assess a person's skills and match them to the appropriate position • Ability to create and adhere to timelines and schedules • Exceptional organizational skills • Networking skills • Professional attitude • Experience as a facilitator
Accommodations Coordinator (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See role description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication skills • Professional attitude • Organized
Administrative Assistant (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists the PDP with the finer details of the event • Orders event merchandise such as awards, banners, and plaques • Orders/procures event signage, including signs for teams in the pit • Orders/procures all event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong attention to detail
Alumni Coordinator (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates alumni activities • Plan and facilitate alumni networking and activities at an event. • Work with current alumni to represent the Alumni Council to seniors in high school and facilitate a process to gather contact information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication skills • Professional attitude • Organized

Load In/Out Manager (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops plan for load in and load out and helps implement plan at event • Recruit and train volunteers for both load in and load out. • Create materials to communicate process and expectations for all loading to teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication skills • Detail oriented • Professional attitude • Organized
Machine Shop Coordinator (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the point of contact on the machine shop • Coordinate Machine Shop. This may be sourcing a company or organization who bring everything, including the volunteers; or they may be sourcing the tools/equipment & the volunteers • Work with volunteers/organization on set up time & tear down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication skills • Professional attitude • Organized • Knowledge of machines and safety practices
Student Ambassador Coordinator (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See role description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication skills • Professional attitude • Organized
Team Coordinator (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for helping coordinate team communication prior to the event • Produces content of the team information packet for event day • Responsible for helping draft all communication with teams during the year, including periodic updates and upcoming deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication skills • Detail oriented • Professional attitude • Organized
Team Social Coordinator (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates team social and works with PDP and Team Coordinator (if applicable) to communicate the social prior to the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication skills • Professional attitude • Organized

ADDENDUM A

Planning Reminders for Accessibility (Persons with Disabilities) at FIRST® Events

As part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring *FIRST* is welcoming to all, this document was created to help Partners with event planning and to help event organizers think through different aspects of the event, including preparing the event space. As events vary, this document is intended primarily as a guide, and additional points of consideration may apply to specific events.

General

- Staff and volunteers know the locations of restrooms, Quiet Room(s), Prayer Rooms (as applicable), and elevators
- Concessions, café entrances, dining spaces, and conference rooms have wide aisles and follow [ADA](#) regulations
- Elevators must remain operational throughout events (including during the exit period)
- All informative event signs are posted and clearly visible

Pits

- Digital warning screens and signage that notify attendees there will be flashing lights, haze/fog, loud music, and confetti (as applicable)
- Closed captioning on screens (when available)
- Extra chairs in Pit Admins (to be available when someone requests accessible seating with backing)
- [ADA](#)-compliant spacing must be maintained in all queuing areas
- All accessible seating areas must be clearly marked and must not require steps. Areas will be kept clear for those who require accommodation.
- Volunteers must be informed to ensure accessible pathways remain clear throughout pit areas

Customer Care

- Remind staff and volunteers to listen with care and embody *Gracious Professionalism®* in all interactions
- Inform staff and volunteers on procedures to address accommodation requests

FIRST Program Resources

[Best Practices for Accessibility \(Persons with Disabilities\) FIRST® Robotics Competition Events](#)

[FIRST Tech Challenge Accessibility Guide](#)

For general questions or concerns related to accessibility, please email sie@firstinspires.org