



# VOLUNTEERS

## HANDBOOK

*Updated 06.2023*

## WELCOME LETTER

On behalf of everyone here at *FIRST*®, I want to thank you for generously giving your time as a volunteer. We are proud to be supported by a strong network of volunteers, sponsors, educational institutions, professional organizations, teachers, individual donors, parents/guardians and many others. Without the support of people like you, *FIRST* could not make the impact that it does. No matter how much time you're able to offer, there is a volunteer role suited to your unique talents and interest, and you will make important contributions towards furthering [our mission](#).

When you provide your time and talents as a *FIRST* volunteer, your contributions have amazing ripple effects. As a volunteer you give more students access to STEM programs and hands-on education experiences. Your efforts help prepare students to solve problems, build a wide variety of critical skills, and adopt a life-long love of learning.

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead*

We hope that your experience as a *FIRST* volunteer allows you to be energized about giving back to your community, feel fulfilled by the impact you're making in students' lives, and – most of all -- have FUN! Thank you for helping us build a better future for kids everywhere. We couldn't do it with your support.

Chris Moore, CEO, *FIRST*

# WELCOME TO THE *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

HELPING TO CHANGE LIVES, CHANGE OUR CULTURE, AND CHANGE THE FUTURE.

Welcome to the *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> volunteer community! As a *FIRST* volunteer, you are part of a global community supporting *FIRST* youth in developing their skills and building tomorrow. Together, we're inspiring the next generation of innovators and technology leaders and impacting over 655,000 youth around the world each year. Whatever your expertise, *FIRST* has a volunteer opportunity for you. Whether you have a few weekend hours, the desire to mentor a team for a season, or want to work behind the scenes to help *FIRST* grow, opportunities abound for people who want to give back – helping to change lives, change our culture, and change the future.

In this handbook, you will find the materials you need to start and enjoy your journey as a *FIRST* volunteer. This includes information about our organization, the resources you need to join our community and select the right role for you, your rights, responsibilities, and requirements as a volunteer, instructions on where to access training, resources, and support for your role, and important policies.



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# 1. ABOUT *FIRST*

*FIRST* is the world's leading youth-serving nonprofit advancing STEM education, preparing a new generation of young people for the future through engaging, hands-on robotics programs. Thrilling robotics competitions from *FIRST* leave students with a sense of accomplishment and the understanding that they can do anything with their collective skills, leadership, and confidence, and that their experience will positively impact their future and take them further than any other sport can. Whether it is finding their people or finding their path, students gain the skills and confidence to forge ahead and build their future with *FIRST*.

*FIRST* is a nonprofit, volunteer-driven and operated organization, and as such promotes a culture of gratitude. Without this support, *FIRST* could not make the impact it does.

*FIRST is more than robots. The robots are a vehicle for students to learn important life skills. Kids often come in not knowing what to expect - of the program nor of themselves. They leave, even after the FIRST season, with a vision, with confidence, and with a sense that they can create their own future."*

- DEAN KAMEN



## 1.1 MISSION OF *FIRST*

The mission of *FIRST* is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders and innovators, 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.

## 1.2 FIRST CORE VALUES

We express the *FIRST* philosophies of *Gracious Professionalism*<sup>®</sup> and *Coopertition*<sup>®</sup> through our Core Values:



## 1.3 GRACIOUS PROFESSIONALISM<sup>®</sup> AND DR. WOODIE FLOWERS

[Gracious Professionalism](#) is part of the ethos of *FIRST*. Created by one of the Distinguished Advisors of *FIRST*, [Woodie Flowers](#), it is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community. *Gracious Professionalism*, fierce competition, and mutual gain are not separate notions. Gracious professionals learn and compete like crazy but treat one another with respect and kindness in the process. Knowledge, competition, and empathy are comfortably blended. In the long run, *Gracious Professionalism* is part of pursuing a meaningful life. One can add to society and enjoy the satisfaction of knowing one has acted with integrity and sensitivity.

At *FIRST*, volunteers use *Gracious Professionalism* in all interactions. One way to model *Gracious Professionalism* as a volunteer is to always treat everyone with respect, even if you disagree. If you have a conflict, set aside some time and space to hear each other out and come to a resolution privately.

[Coopertition](#) produces innovation. At *FIRST*, *Coopertition* is displaying unqualified kindness and respect in the face of fierce competition. *Coopertition* is the philosophy that teams can and should help and cooperate with each other, even as they compete.

*Coopertition* involves learning from teammates. It is learning from mentors. And it is managing and being managed. *Coopertition* means competing always but assisting and enabling others when you can.

## 1.4 FIRST CODE OF CONDUCT

The *FIRST* mission is to inspire a generation of science and technology leaders who are both gracious and professional. This *FIRST* [Code of Conduct](#) lists some of the basic behavior mentors, coaches, volunteers, team members, affiliate partners, contractors, staff, and other participants should adhere to while participating in *FIRST* activities.

- Exhibit *Gracious Professionalism*.
- Ensure the safety of all participants in *FIRST* activities.
- Not engage in any form of bullying, harassment, use of profane or insulting language, or any actual or threatened violence.
- Adhere to all *FIRST* Youth Protection Program policies.
- Report any unsafe behavior to event or local *FIRST* leadership.

Persons who do not comply with this Code of Conduct may be barred from participating in *FIRST* activities.

## 1.5 NOTABLE MOMENTS IN FIRST HISTORY

Founded by renowned inventor Dean Kamen in 1989, *FIRST* has reached more than 2.5 million youth participants in more than 100 countries over the past three decades.

- **1951** Dean Kamen is born.
- **1956** Dean creates his first invention – a bed-making machine.
- **1989** *FIRST* is incorporated.
- **1992** 28 *FIRST*® Robotics Competition teams meet in a high-school gym for the inaugural *FIRST* event.
- **1995–2002** EPCOT hosts *FIRST* Championship.
- **1996** Inaugural *FIRST* scholarship made available by Worcester Polytechnic Institute.
- **1998** *FIRST* and LEGO® join forces to launch junior robotics program with 200 teams in the pilot.
- **2004** *FIRST*® LEGO® League Jr. launches for children ages 6 to 10.
- **2004–2010** Georgia Dome hosts *FIRST* Championship.
- **2005** *FIRST*® Tech Challenge is introduced as pilot to provide a more accessible *FIRST* experience.
- **2007** U.S. President George W. Bush honors *FIRST* teams at the White House.
- **2011** *FIRST* Championship moves to St. Louis. Inaugural *FIRST*® LEGO® League Global Innovation Award Ceremony, presented by XPRIZE, held at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.
- **2012** Global Music Artist, Entrepreneur, and Philanthropist will.i.am honors *FIRST* as part of the Super Bowl halftime show. The technology he wore on field was created by a *FIRST* Alum.
- **2013** *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams kick off the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade®.
- **2017** A dual *FIRST* Championship structure is scheduled.



## 1.6 FIRST PROGRAMS

FIRST offers a suite of robotics programs for PreK – 12 (ages 4 – 18). Each program can be facilitated in school or after-school, and students can join at any level.



### 1.6.1 FIRST® LEGO® LEAGUE

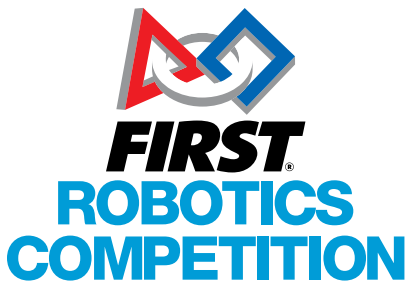
[FIRST® LEGO® League](#): Grades PreK – 8 (ages 4 – 16; age varies by country) introduces STEM to children through fun, exciting hands-on learning. Participants gain real-world problem-solving experiences through a guided, global robotics program, helping today's students and teachers build a better future together. FIRST LEGO League's three divisions inspire youth to experiment and grow their critical thinking, coding, and design skills through hands-on STEM learning and robotics centered around a yearly theme.

- FIRST® LEGO® League Discover (ages 4 – 6)
- FIRST® LEGO® League Explore (ages 6 – 10)
- FIRST® LEGO® League Challenge (ages 9 – 16)



### 1.6.2 FIRST® TECH CHALLENGE

[FIRST® Tech Challenge](#) teams (grades 7 – 12; ages 12 – 18) work together to design, build, and program a robot to play a themed competition challenge by brainstorming innovative ideas, exploring advanced engineering concepts, and developing career-ready practices.



### 1.6.3 FIRST® ROBOTICS COMPETITION

[FIRST® Robotics Competition](#) (grades 9 – 12; ages 14 – 18) combines the excitement of sport with the rigors of science and technology. Teams of students are challenged to design, build, and program industrial-size robots and compete for awards, while they also create a team identity, raise funds, hone teamwork skills, and advance respect and appreciation for STEM within the local community.

## 2. VOLUNTEERING WITH FIRST

Volunteers make up 99% of the *FIRST* workforce. You'll be inspired when you join our community and feel the energy and excitement that our programs bring to students and adults alike. When you say, "Yes, I want to help!", you're also helping our non-profit organization achieve its mission of changing the world – one student at a time.

### 2.1 VOLUNTEER IMPACT

Your impact as a *FIRST* volunteer is significant. *FIRST* teams, competitions, and events are organized and operated by volunteers, including employees of corporate sponsors, teachers, parents, community leaders, *FIRST* alumni, and friends. Volunteers share their skills and knowledge with students while helping expose students to real-world careers and connect them to their work in *FIRST*. In return, volunteers nurture and grow their own skill sets and engage more meaningfully in their careers and in their communities.

Evidence from the ongoing *FIRST* Longitudinal Study, conducted via a multi-year partnership with Brandeis University, demonstrates that *FIRST* is meeting our mission and goals to increase the number of young people interested in STEM – and *FIRST* alumni's interest extends beyond their participation in the program to their educational and career choices. In addition to gains in STEM outcomes, *FIRST* participants develop skills in teamwork, problem solving, and communication, preparing them for success in school and the workforce, no matter what path they take.

#### FIRST Alumni

By their fourth year of college, *FIRST* alumni are more likely to be majoring in STEM fields than comparison group peers.



##### DECLARE A MAJOR IN STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH)



##### DECLARE A MAJOR IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE



#### Women in FIRST

Young women in *FIRST* have significant gains in all STEM areas including STEM interest, career interest, activity, knowledge, and identity compared to young women in the comparison group.

##### DECLARE A MAJOR IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE



##### MORE LIKELY TO TAKE COURSES IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE



\*x = times as likely

\*Comparison group includes students who did not participate in *FIRST* programs but were enrolled in science and technology classes at the same grade schools. All students received a baseline survey and follow-up surveys each year.  
SOURCE: [FIRST Longitudinal Study: Findings at 72 Month Follow-Up](#), The Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University, May 2020; All differences statistically significant,  $p \leq .05$ .

#### Benefits of FIRST

*FIRST* students are two times more likely to show an increase in STEM-related attitudes and interests than comparison group students. Positive impacts are evident for all *FIRST* students regardless of race, gender, income, or community type.



##### FIRST STUDENTS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO SHOW GAINS IN STEM OUTCOMES THAN COMPARISON STUDENTS





## 2.2 HOW YOU CAN HELP

**Event Volunteers:** *FIRST* hosts more than 3,600 events around the globe a year including our world championship event(s). These events are made possible through the support of event volunteers. There are various event volunteer roles ranging from robot inspector and safety glass monitoring, to judging, emcees and referees. Event volunteer roles range in time commitment and can accommodate those even with the busiest of schedules.

**Coaches & Mentors:** As a coach or mentor of a *FIRST* team, you empower students to be future gamechangers. You are working side by side with *FIRST* participants to build their leadership and problem-solving skills and, more importantly, their sense of belonging and self-confidence. Your contribution to the success of *FIRST* programs is immeasurable. Build up the next generation of innovators as a *FIRST* coach or mentor.

## 2.3 EVENT VOLUNTEER ROLES

There are 250,000 people like you around the world working to support the next generation. Whether you have a few hours, a day, or a weekend to help, or whether you have technical or non-technical ability, there is an event volunteer role suited to your schedule and unique interest.

The following links give a general description of most event volunteer positions by program:

- [FIRST LEGO League Explore](#)
- [FIRST LEGO League Challenge](#)
- [FIRST Tech Challenge](#)
- [FIRST Robotics Competition](#)

Roles requiring previous experience or training are addressed in the [Event Volunteer training](#) section.

## 2.4 COACHES AND MENTORS

As a coach or a mentor, you have the opportunity to teach others what you know, be inspired by the students, give back to your community, and build your own skills and resume. Each program offers unique opportunities to be involved as a coach or mentor.

### 2.4.1 FIRST LEGO LEAGUE

**Coaches** – Coaches facilitate team meetings and make sure the children have fun while they learn. A coach provides support to their team and guides them in completing the season’s Challenge. The coach asks questions, encourages the team to explore options, promotes teamwork and participation by including all members, exemplifies *Gracious Professionalism*, reinforces *FIRST* Core Values, and commits to having fun. Students can only be on one team, but a coach may coach multiple teams. Each team must have two adult coaches.

**Mentors** – A mentor has a certain ability a team may need. The mentor may contribute their ability through instruction, guidance to the team, or serve as a resource on a one-time or multiple-time basis. Mentors may be experts on the yearly challenge theme. Mentors can contribute to more than one team.

[How to Start a FIRST LEGO League Team](#)

[Watch FIRST LEGO League Coach Quick Tips](#)

### 2.4.2 FIRST TECH CHALLENGE

**Coach or Mentor**–*FIRST* Tech Challenge does not differentiate between coaches and mentors. A coach/mentor works with their students by helping them to develop skills and to design and build a successful robot. They guide teams through any issues they encounter, making them stronger in both their academic and personal lives. They inspire students in ways far beyond learning about science and technology and enable both students and adults to appreciate the value of sportsmanship, teamwork, and *Gracious Professionalism* in a way that might not be possible otherwise.

Each team needs two or more adult coaches/mentors who are willing and motivated to coach the team through the build and competition season. Other adults can volunteer to help with administration, fundraising, community outreach, and other tasks. Coaches, mentors, and additional volunteers helping teams can do so for more than one team.

[How to Start a FIRST Tech Challenge Team](#)



## 2.4.3 FIRST ROBOTICS COMPETITION

**Mentors** – *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams have two or more adult mentors willing and motivated to “coach” the team through the build and competition season. Mentors are individuals from all backgrounds and disciplines who work with students to share their knowledge with them and guide them through the season. Each team needs at least one adult mentor with technical ability. Also highly recommended are two or more other adults to help with administration, fundraising, community outreach, and other tasks.

Many mentors contribute on a weekly basis during competition season or support the team with subject-matter ability on an as-needed basis. Teams may have additional or more specialized mentor roles, or a combination of mentor roles as needed. In addition, mentors help to foster the idea of Gracious Professionalism and have the students do as much of the work as possible. Mentors can help more than one team.

[Guide to Running a \*FIRST\* Robotics Competition Team](#)

## 2.5 HOW TO SIGN UP TO BECOME A *FIRST* EVENT VOLUNTEER

To be assigned as a *FIRST* volunteer you will need to sign up in the [Dashboard](#) and complete a free background screening (if you are 18 years old or older). If you volunteer for an event, you can select what roles you are interested in and will be assigned a volunteer role based on your preferences. Once you are assigned, you will receive communications about your role from the volunteer coordinator. If your role requires training, you will receive that training either before or on the morning of the event.

All volunteers utilize our [Volunteer Registration System and Dashboard](#) to register at events, see volunteer assignments, utilize the [FIRST Mentor Network](#), and to receive communications from *FIRST* staff. A [user guide](#) for Volunteer Registration is available for reference.

### 2.5.1 CONTACT YOUR LOCAL *FIRST* PARTNER

Once you apply online, you may also want to contact the local *FIRST* partners in your area to be proactive, introduce yourself, and let them know of your interest. You can search for them [here on our website](#).



## 2.5.2 FIRST MENTOR NETWORK

More than ever, our *FIRST* teams need mentors to help ignite curiosity, empower, and guide the collective skills needed to make a positive impact on each other, and the world. Mentors can be parents, teachers, professional engineers, veterans, and can be a person of any age who brings technical or non-technical ability to the team.

Bring your passion and ability to a *FIRST* team by [registering with the \*FIRST\* Mentor Network](#), sponsored by NI. The *FIRST* Mentor Network is an interactive platform allowing teams and interested mentors to easily find each other for mentorship. This community platform provides new and returning teams access to passionate, engaged mentors, while giving mentors the opportunity to use their unique skill sets and have meaningful involvement with one or multiple teams. You can specify if you are looking to mentor virtually, in person, or both.

Teams can also register with the *FIRST* Mentor Network. Coaches and Mentors can build a team profile highlighting your successes, goals, and desired mentor skill sets and experience. Soon you will be able to quickly find and communicate with *FIRST* verified mentors to provide you and your team with ability and collaboration. Teams can specify if they are looking for mentors that are available virtually, in person, or both.

## 2.5.3 STEPS TO ACCESS THE *FIRST* MENTOR NETWORK FOR MENTORS AND TEAMS

**Follow these steps to access the *FIRST* Mentor Network:**

1. Login to your dashboard on the *FIRST* website.
2. Click on the Volunteer Registration tab and choose *FIRST* Mentor Network.
3. Follow the steps to create your Mentor Profile and publish it to see teams that match your profile.

**If you are a Lead Coach/Mentor with a team, you can also use the *FIRST* Mentor Network to connect with additional mentors for your team.**

1. As the Lead Coach/Mentor 1 or 2, login to your dashboard on the *FIRST* website.
2. Go to 'My Teams' and select the Team Information dropdown on your team.
3. Click on 'Find Mentors.'
4. Follow the steps to create your Team Post and publish it to see mentors that match your team needs.

All mentors must be at least 18 years of age and complete the required Youth Protection screening. The *FIRST* Mentor Network is only available in the US and Canada at this time.

Please note:

- *This platform is not for students to find teams in their area or for mentor-to-mentor communication.*
- *Only a team's Lead Coach/Mentor 1 or 2 may create a profile on behalf of a registered team.*
- *This platform is not for students/teams to communicate with other teams and students.*

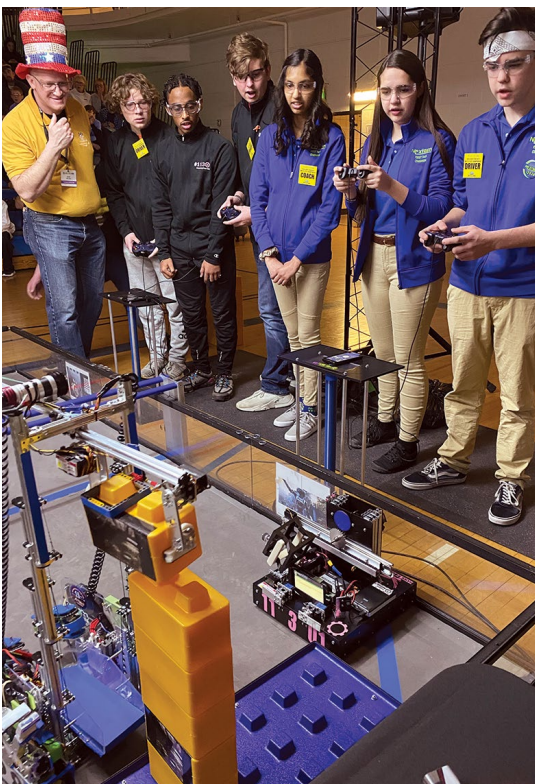
## 2.5.4 LOGGING YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS

You may want to log your volunteer hours after the event if you are volunteering for school credit, for your employer, or for other reasons. Refer to the [Volunteer Registration User Guide](#) on how to record your contribution.

# 3. BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING AND RECOGNITION FOR FIRST VOLUNTEERS

## 3.1 BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

*FIRST* is a community of people who are passionate and dedicated to contributing to something big. Volunteers at *FIRST* are not just passionate about robotics and STEM education but also about equipping students with life skills such as [Coopertition](#) and [Gracious Professionalism](#). For many of our volunteers, the value of their experience is more than the feeling of giving back to their community; volunteering leaves a deep, personal impact on their life. As a volunteer at *FIRST* you will make new, long-lasting friendships, relationships, and connections. You will feel rewarded from sharing your knowledge with students and seeing them use that knowledge to enhance their own skills. You might just find yourself having fun and learning something new!



*“Volunteering with FIRST for the past ten years has been the best choice I’ve made in my career as a teacher. I love how FIRST fosters community relationships and builds connections between organizations, schools, clubs, and businesses.”*

**- Liz Colton, volunteer for over 10 years**

*“The most rewarding part of volunteering with FIRST is the feeling of giving back to a community that gave me so much.”*

**- Jon Kentfield, volunteer and alumnus in Indiana**

*Most volunteers are here because they love robotics and love everything FIRST does. You can really see that everyone embodies the values of FIRST, and everyone wants to see all the teams succeed.”*

**- Ricardo Delfin, volunteer at events in Mexico and Texas**

*“Volunteering at events around the country, I have made a number of great friends. My fellow volunteers have become like a family to me. We travel together and have a great time when we are gathered together!”*

**- MK Baldwin, volunteer at events across the US for over 12 years**

## 3.2 GROWING IN YOUR VOLUNTEER ROLE

As a *FIRST* volunteer, you have opportunities to grow with and within the organization over time into new roles with expanded responsibilities. This may look like working towards a key volunteer role or one day participating in our *FIRST* Senior Mentor program. These routes are both described below.

### 3.2.1 KEY VOLUNTEER ROLES

Key volunteer roles require additional commitment, experience, training/certification, and may have an additional age requirement. Some of the roles that you can work to achieve are listed below:

- Emcee
- Field Supervisor
- Judge Advisor
- Pit Administration
- Referee
- Robot Inspector
- Score Keeper
- Technical Advisor
- Tournament Director
- Volunteer Coordinators

You can learn more about these roles from your volunteer coordinator after volunteering with *FIRST* and on the links below by program. They may be referred to as key volunteers, lead volunteers, roles requiring pre-requisites, or roles asking for previous experience.

- [FIRST LEGO League Explore](#)
- [FIRST LEGO League Challenge](#)
- [FIRST Tech Challenge](#)
- [FIRST Robotics Competition](#)



### 3.2.2 FIRST SENIOR MENTOR PROGRAM

Another way to grow with *FIRST* is our *FIRST* Senior Mentor program. *FIRST* Senior Mentors are a group of highly skilled and talented technical and non-technical individuals, who focus on recruiting, supporting and expanding *FIRST* programs. Through outreach events, expositions, and demonstrations, *FIRST* Senior Mentors are able to attract new volunteers, coaches, and mentors to sustain and support both rookie and veteran teams.

*FIRST* Senior Mentors are recruited through a cross-program nomination process that occurs locally and upon collaborative recommendation from *FIRST* representatives because of their previous relationships with *FIRST* Programs and their general understanding of the culture of *FIRST*. Most, if not all *FIRST* Senior Mentors have had existing relationships with *FIRST* as team mentors, coaches, or event volunteers.

### 3.3 VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

At *FIRST*, Volunteers inspire and empower more than 655,000 students from 106 countries to become innovators, problem solvers, and better global citizens. While nothing we can offer will equate with what you give to our students, please take advantage of some of our recognition items.

- Be sure to grab each season's digital swag! With wallpapers, social media covers, and electronic badges, you will be virtually outfitted as a *FIRST* volunteer. These are refreshed annually and available each season on our [website](#).
- Pick up [a \*FIRST\* Volunteer Year of Service pin or a \*FIRST\* Coach Mentor pin](#) for you or a friend!
- Snag digital versions of the [FIRST Volunteer Year of Service pins](#) and [FIRST Coach Mentor pins](#). Add them to your online profiles or email signature!
- At participating events, pick up a volunteer passport and get your passport stamped as a cherished record of your time spent volunteering with *FIRST*!
- Coaches and mentors can download a *FIRST* Coach Mentor Certificate of Appreciation from their [FIRST Dashboard](#) by following these [instructions](#).

## 4. SUPPORT FOR *FIRST* VOLUNTEERS

There is a large network of passionate, friendly, and talented people available to guide all *FIRST* volunteers through their volunteer journey. As a *FIRST* volunteer, you will have access to resources from staff at *FIRST* Headquarters and resources, communication, and support on the local level from program delivery partners and volunteer coordinators. There is also specialized Youth Protection Program Staff at *FIRST* Headquarters available for assistance.

### 4.1 VOLUNTEER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

The *FIRST* Volunteer Resources Department, located at *FIRST* Headquarters, focuses on recruitment, training, communication, and recognition of volunteers to create a positive volunteer experience. [Resources](#), like this handbook, are created by the Volunteer Resources Department to share directly with volunteers and with our program delivery partners. We encourage you to share feedback with us on our resources and how we can improve them.

Volunteer Resources Department | (800) 871-8326 | [volunteer@firstinspires.org](mailto:volunteer@firstinspires.org)

#### 4.1.1 COMMUNICATION

It's important to us that volunteers have the resources they need to serve and feel supported. On a quarterly basis, *FIRST* HQ sends out a newsletter with updates and news for all volunteers. [Register here](#) to get on the volunteer newsletter list. We are always looking to share stories, receive feedback, and get ideas and inspiration from our volunteers. Feel free to interact with us on social media by using the hashtag #FIRSTvolunteer. [Tweet it](#), [Instagram it](#), post it on [Facebook](#), or [send us an email!](#)

#### 4.1.2 GENERAL VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

The Volunteer Resources Department provides [cross-program resources](#) for mentors, coaches, and event volunteers. Whether you are new to volunteering or returning, these are important resources that you can readily access online. They cover many aspects of volunteering with *FIRST* including registering to become a volunteer, a deeper dive into using the different features of the Volunteer Registration system, how to complete your Youth Protection screening process, mentoring and coaching resources, information about the mission, vision, and Core Values of *FIRST*, and all the things you wanted to know about being a *FIRST* volunteer.

Event volunteers will receive program specific resources and trainings dependent on your role and program from your volunteer coordinator after being assigned to an event.

### 4.1.3 VOLUNTEER CHECKLISTS

As a *FIRST* volunteer, there is a lot to know about how to get started volunteering with *FIRST* and how to prepare yourself to be an effective *FIRST* volunteer. “You don’t know what you don’t know.” Research has proven that checklists can help improve processes and eliminate mistakes. Please use these checklists to help guide you through your journey as a *FIRST* volunteer.

- [Event Volunteer Checklist](#)
- [Coach/Mentor Checklist](#)

## 4.2 PROGRAM DELIVERY PARTNERS

*FIRST* programs are operated locally within an ecosystem that supports the *FIRST* mission and includes sponsors, partners, alumni, mentors, volunteers, business and civic leaders, educators, parents, and students. Leading these local *FIRST* ecosystems are program delivery organizations that partner with *FIRST* to operate *FIRST* programs in each community.

Program delivery partners, appointed by the program delivery organizations, provide overall leadership for *FIRST* programs and work collaboratively to create and maintain volunteer-driven and self-sustaining programs and grow *FIRST* programs in a community. *FIRST* program delivery partners are your local program contacts, and they manage the events in your area. You can search for your [local program delivery partners on our website](#).

## 4.3 VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

Most volunteer coordinators are key volunteers and others are paid staff of a local partner organization. Volunteer coordinators work with program delivery partners and are responsible for recruiting, assigning, and managing volunteers at their *FIRST* event. Your local volunteer coordinator will be your main point of contact when volunteering at events. As a leadership volunteer position, there is a significant level of responsibility for volunteer coordinators. You can message the volunteer coordinator in your area through the [FIRST Dashboard](#) after applying for an event.

## 4.4 YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM

The purpose of the *FIRST* Youth Protection Program is to provide coaches, mentors, event volunteers, employees, program delivery partners, teachers, team members, parents or guardians of team members, and others working with *FIRST* programs with information, guidelines, and procedures to create safe environments for *FIRST* participants. The *FIRST* Youth Protection Program sets minimum standards for *FIRST* events and team-based activities.

Our Commitment to Protecting Youth:

- *FIRST* will strive to create an environment in which team members can grow, learn, and have fun with minimal risk of injury.
- *FIRST* will inform everyone involved in its programs of its Youth Protection Program and [related resources](#) and to assist in meeting its standards.
- *FIRST* will maintain a Youth Protection Department at its Manchester, New Hampshire headquarters for the purpose of fulfilling its commitment to protection youth.

Please contact us with any questions about Youth Protection guidelines, resources, screening or to report an issue. Youth participants are also encouraged to reach out to the Youth Protection Department for support and help if they have any concerns about their own safety and/or treatment or that of other participants *FIRST* programs.

Youth Protection Program

Phone: (603) 206-2050 | [safetyfirst@firstinspires.org](mailto:safetyfirst@firstinspires.org)

[Reporting Portal](#)

## 5. FIRST VOLUNTEER RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND REQUIREMENTS

Volunteers are the most valuable asset of *FIRST*. Your selfless contribution of time and resources is instrumental in carrying out our mission of inspiring the next generation of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics leaders and innovators. The foundation of the relationship between *FIRST* and our volunteers is respect.

### 5.1 IT IS YOUR RIGHT TO:

- Be treated with *Gracious Professionalism*. *Gracious Professionalism* is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community.
- Feel valued and recognized for your volunteerism. *FIRST* recognizes the significant efforts that volunteers contribute. The time that you donate not only helps *FIRST* succeed but also builds the *FIRST* community.
- Understand your role. *FIRST* will inform you about what is expected of you, your schedule, any meals you will be provided, any changes to program or policy, and who to contact should you need help.
- Expect a safe environment. *FIRST* strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all volunteers and participants and will always factor safety into program planning.
- Receive fair treatment and inclusion. All volunteers will be treated with respect and dignity in an inclusive environment. *FIRST* does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, status as a veteran who served in the military, religion, sexuality, gender, gender identity, or gender expression in its programs and activities.
- Request and receive reasonable accommodations to successfully complete your volunteer role when possible.
- Reevaluate your time commitment. *FIRST* appreciates our volunteers and understands that volunteers experience life situations that may affect their commitment.
- Communicate with your volunteer coordinator or your local *FIRST* leadership about:
  - Concerns or limitations that are affecting your volunteer role.
  - Any mistreatment towards you or others. You may be required to fill out a [non-medical incident reporting form](#).
  - Contact *FIRST* Headquarters directly if you feel that you are being treated improperly and attempts to resolve issues and conflicts at the local level are not successful. Volunteers can call (800) 871-8326 or email: [volunteer@firstinspires.org](mailto:volunteer@firstinspires.org).

## 5.2 IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Treat others with *Gracious Professionalism*.
- Follow the schedule and the role description provided for your position.
- Contact your local *FIRST* leadership if there are any issues.
- Respect others. Treat them with fairness and kindness.
- Be inclusive and follow the [non-discrimination policy](#) of *FIRST*.
- Follow safety rules and ensure safety of others.
- Adhere to all [FIRST Youth Protection Program \(YPP\) policies](#).
- Adhere to the [FIRST Code of Conduct](#).
- Complete the required training/certifications for your role.
- Complete the [Youth Protection Screening](#).
- Have FUN!

## 5.3 WHAT EVENT VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM *FIRST*:

*FIRST* is a volunteer-driven organization and our success depends on you. *FIRST* has many different event volunteer opportunities to offer. Each opportunity offers a variety of exciting experiences. Here are the expectations you can have as a *FIRST* event volunteer.

**Communication** – Communications will occur through volunteer coordinators, who will be available to answer all your questions prior to and during the event. Once registered as a volunteer, communications may also be sent from your local program delivery partner and [FIRST Headquarters](#).

**Training** – You will receive training specific to your assigned volunteer role and will be notified as to what those are. There are other general training courses available for volunteers on our [website](#).

**Volunteer Lounge with Food** – Generally, at a full-day or multi-day *FIRST* event, a volunteer lounge with food and refreshments away from the crowd will be supplied to show our appreciation for your time and to help re-energize you.

**Volunteer T-Shirt and Name Badge** – Depending on the program and event, you may be given a t-shirt and name badge. These appoint you as a *FIRST* volunteer for the event. These items will grant you access to the areas you will need to access to complete your volunteer role and are also your ticket to the volunteer lounge for food and refreshments throughout the day if a volunteer lounge is provided.

**General Volunteer Resources** – Looking for instructions, descriptions, policies, and forms to ease you into your volunteer experience and guide you throughout? Our [general volunteer resources webpage](#) has several documents to help support *FIRST* volunteers in their volunteer journey.

## 5.4 WHAT MENTORS/COACHES CAN EXPECT FROM *FIRST*:

*FIRST* creates powerful mentorship relationships between young people and adult coaches and mentors. Here are the expectation you can have as a coach or mentor.

**Communication** – Communications will occur through your Program Delivery Partners and through *FIRST* HQ team blasts to keep you up-to-date on all things happening for teams.

**Training** – *FIRST* provides mentor and coach training for coaches in all programs as well as game manuals filled with each season’s specific game rules and information.

**Access to Additional Coaches and Mentors** – Use the *FIRST* Mentor Network as a resource to find additional verified *FIRST* mentors to provide you and your team with expertise and collaboration.

**General Volunteer Resources** – Looking for instructions, descriptions, policies, and forms to ease you into your volunteer experience and guide you throughout? Our [general volunteer resources webpage](#) has several documents to help support *FIRST* volunteers in their volunteer journey.

## 5.5 MINIMUM AGE REQUIREMENT

**13 years old** – the minimum age requirement for a *FIRST* volunteer. However, in *FIRST* LEGO League Explore and *FIRST* LEGO League Challenge youth under the age of 13 may act as co-volunteers for select roles under the direct supervision of and in partnership with a parent/guardian that is volunteering and with the approval of the event volunteer coordinator.

**15 years old** – the minimum age requirement for a *FIRST* volunteer at *FIRST* Championship. No age exceptions are permitted for the championship event. Individuals under the age of 15 will not be accepted as walk-on volunteers at *FIRST* Championship.

**18 years old** – A minor must have a parent or guardian give written permission to volunteer. In addition, the *FIRST* Consent and Release Forms will need to be signed by a parent or guardian in the Volunteer Registration system for any volunteer under age 18.

## 5.6 YOUTH PROTECTION SCREENING REQUIREMENT

The *FIRST* Youth Protection Program requires all event volunteers that are 18 years or older to be screened for *FIRST* events. All *FIRST* teams cross-program are required to have two screened lead coaches/mentors for the entire season. These should be the two individuals who direct a team's day-to-day activities. It is recommended that one be at least 25 years old. *FIRST* encourages veteran team members to serve as Youth Mentors to teams with younger participants. To minimize safety risks, teams with Youth Mentors are still required to have two adult lead coaches/mentors that are 18 or older. Background screening is integrated into the volunteer and team registration systems.

Here is more information about the Youth Protection screening/clearance process and what to expect:

- [U.S. Screening Process Step by Step](#)
- [Canadian Screening Process Video](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Please visit the [FIRST Youth Protection Program webpage](#) for up-to-date materials including the [FIRST Youth Protection Guide](#) and more information about the Youth Protection screening/clearance process and what to expect.

## 6. TRAINING FOR *FIRST* VOLUNTEERS

*FIRST* provides its volunteers with the training necessary to fulfil the duties of our varied volunteer roles. Below outlines the general training for any *FIRST* volunteer cross-program.

Some roles may require more extensive training to be completed before the event via phone call, webinars, or online certification. Some volunteer roles require focused training that may last multiple days, while other roles can be learned at the event itself. For program and role specific training, you will receive more information from the [FIRST Dashboard](#) when assigned a role at an event and from your volunteer coordinator. If a role or procedure is not properly explained, please ask for further clarification from your volunteer coordinator.



## 6.1 CROSS-PROGRAM TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS IN ANY ROLE

Below is a list with descriptions and links to trainings available to any *FIRST* volunteer in any role within any of our programs.

### 6.1.1 VOLUNTEERING WITH *FIRST* – ONLINE TRAINING FOR ALL ROLES

[Volunteering with \*FIRST\*](#) is an introductory learning module for mentors, coaches, and event volunteers that explores what *FIRST* is and what it means to volunteer with *FIRST*.

### 6.1.2 STRATEGIES FOR INSPIRING SUCCESS FOR ALL – ONLINE COURSE

[Inspiring Success Training](#) is for coaches, mentors, volunteers, partners, and other key stakeholders who work directly with students and are committed to creating diverse, inclusive, and equitable teams and are committed to creating a sense of belonging for students. This training is delivered in three modules. We recommend completing each module in one sitting.

### 6.1.3 *FIRST* VOLUNTEER CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

The [FIRST Volunteer Customer Service Training](#) will equip you with the tools needed to provide inspiration, safety, support, and a positive experience to our customers. Our customers are anyone who participates in *FIRST* including teams, parents, coaches/mentors, teachers, sponsors, spectators, and other volunteers.

### 6.1.4 *FIRST* YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM GUIDE

Adults working in *FIRST* programs must be knowledgeable of the standards set by the *FIRST* Youth Protection Program, as well as those set by the school or organization hosting their team. *FIRST* expects all teams in the United States and Canada to adhere to all provisions of the *FIRST* Youth Protection Program. *FIRST* also expects that the standards set forth in the *FIRST* Youth Protection Program be applied outside of the United States and Canada to the extent possible based on local laws and regulations. At a minimum, adults in *FIRST* programs must comply with local regulations regarding youth protection. The [FIRST Youth Protection Program Guide](#) is your resource for this information. For more information, please contact [safetyfirst@firstinspires.org](mailto:safetyfirst@firstinspires.org).

### 6.1.5 YOUTH PROTECTION TRAINING VIDEOS

[Youth Protection Training](#) will enable you to recognize situations that may pose a threat to team member safety and learn the steps to take the actions necessary to prevent and report injuries. Coaches and mentors will be required to take the Youth Protection Training online through the Dashboard after registering their team each season.

## 6.2 EVENT VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Some event volunteer roles require pre-event role-specific certification that you must complete before your event to serve in your role. Details about which roles require certification can be found in the program specific volunteer role descriptions linked below.

- [FIRST LEGO League Explore Event Volunteer Role Descriptions](#)
- [FIRST LEGO League Challenge Event Volunteer Role Descriptions](#)
- [FIRST Tech Challenge Event Volunteer Role Descriptions](#)
- [FIRST Robotics Competition Event Volunteer Role Descriptions](#)

Depending on the program, these certifications may be accessed via the [FIRST Dashboard](#) after you are assigned to a volunteer role.

## 6.3 CROSS-PROGRAM COACH/MENTOR TRAINING

Below is the training available for all coaches and mentors in any of our *FIRST* programs.

### 6.3.1 MENTORING AND COACHING WITH *FIRST* TRAINING

[Mentoring and Coaching with \*FIRST\*](#) is designed to allow you to develop a deeper understanding of the expectations of your role and where to find support.

### 6.3.2 REMOTE MENTORING WITH *FIRST* TRAINING

[Remote Mentoring with \*FIRST\*](#) explores the fundamentals of remote meetings for mentors and coaches. The training will also provide you with resources for further support.

### 6.3.3 TEAM SAFETY MEETING RESOURCES

These video trainings outline the basic principles of the Youth Protection Program and how you can create a safe environment during team meetings for your students.

- [Team Safety Meeting Video – High School version](#)
- [Team Safety Meeting Video – Middle School version](#)
- [Keeping Kids Safe – for adults working with youth](#)

At the start of the season, Lead Coaches/Mentors are required to conduct a Safety Meeting. This meeting may be combined with the team's existing start-of-season meeting or be held as a separate meeting. Subject to the Lead Coaches'/Mentors' discretion and judgment, the Safety Meeting may be as brief or extensive as necessary. Below are resources for ages 6 – 10 that assist in guiding these meetings and include interactive activities for the students.

- [Traffic Light Activity](#)
- [Surprises vs. Secrets Activity](#)
- [Buddy System Activity](#)

## 7. FIRST VOLUNTEER POLICIES, FORMS, AND INCIDENT REPORTING OPTIONS

### 7.1 NON-SOLICITATION POLICY

As a *FIRST* volunteer, you may not accept any tips or gifts with monetary value from participants, their families, or friends. We do not want to create an atmosphere where our participants feel obligated to reward *FIRST* volunteers for doing their job.

You may not promote or solicit your own business enterprise, political agenda, or religious beliefs while volunteering with *FIRST*. Solicitation for a private charity is also prohibited.

## 7.2 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social media is a broad term used to describe certain online communications. There are many social media platforms, including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Instagram), professional networking sites (e.g., LinkedIn), video sharing (e.g. YouTube), and blogs and microblogging (e.g. Twitter, Tumblr). Volunteers should follow the [FIRST Code of Conduct](#) for online activities just as you would for in-person activities.

Social media can be a powerful tool for sharing the joys and triumphs of participating in *FIRST* programs, but if not used properly, it can be a detriment to having a positive *FIRST* experience for you and others. As such, engage in social media activities wisely. Refrain from sharing information that you feel should not be shared in public, or that might cause undue distress to any *FIRST* participants. This will ensure the *FIRST* community stays true to the commitment of creating environments in which students and volunteers can grow, learn, and have fun with minimal risk of injury or harm.

Social media is a great way to share your team's accomplishments with the *FIRST* community. However, you should always gain the consent of parents before posting any images of students to social media, and, if you are at a school, you should make sure you are in compliance with your district's social media and privacy policies. Many *FIRST* Tech Challenge and *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams appoint students to manage their social media accounts. If students are allowed to control your team's accounts, be sure they are aware of your social media guidelines and be sure a coach or mentor is monitoring their posts regularly.

*FIRST* recognizes that many volunteers and youth participants use social media strictly on a personal basis, and *FIRST* respects your right to do so. If you use social media for personal purposes, you must not discuss or disclose any confidential or internal information regarding the *FIRST* business operations or *FIRST* employees, volunteers, or students. If you choose to identify yourself as a volunteer of *FIRST* (either in a post, comment, or in your profile), please bear in mind that some readers may view you as a spokesperson for *FIRST*.

## 7.2 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (CONTINUED)

*FIRST* reserves the right to remove any social media posts on *FIRST* platforms that are inconsistent with our values or [Code of Conduct](#). If you engage in any *FIRST*-related communications using social media, even if you use a personal account to do so, the following rules apply:

- Social media shall not be used to make any statement that is made or purports to be made on behalf of *FIRST*, except by those who have been expressly authorized to engage in such activities.
- Use of *FIRST* logos on social media sites or in social media posts must comply with the requirements of the Policy on the Use of *FIRST* Trademarks and Copyrighted Materials.
- Information, documents, or data that is confidential or proprietary to *FIRST*, or any *FIRST* employees, shall not be shared or disclosed.
- Photographs or videos depicting any *FIRST* event, employee, volunteer, or youth participant shall not be posted or shared without express consent of the data subject and/or their parent/guardian if a minor.
- Social media shall not be used in any manner that harasses, discriminates against, retaliates against, threatens, bullies, or intimidates any *FIRST* employee, volunteer, or participant. *FIRST* has a diverse community of employees, volunteers, and students with different views and different opinions on matters, and *FIRST* expects that all participants will treat each other respectfully.
- Expectations for in-person team meetings and activities also apply when utilizing social media and other team based online activities. All remote meetings, including the use of virtual break out rooms, should have at least two adults present any time adults are interacting with youth online. You should also consider whether additional adult oversight may be needed to monitor team activities conducted in a virtual environment.
- Do not initiate contact with any students via any *FIRST* platforms, social media, or other electronic means unless it is about a *FIRST*-related project or activity.
- When contacting youth participants about *FIRST* or team related activities, parents, guardians, and other team coaches/mentors should be included on the communications whenever possible/practical.
- If a student communicates with you about personal matters, remember it is your role to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. Either redirect the communication to an appropriate *FIRST* team topic or seek assistance from Youth Protection for help in navigating the situation.

## 7.3 FIRST EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

*FIRST* is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We embrace and encourage differences in race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, disability, age, religion, income, or any other characteristics that make our adult-force and students unique.

Exploring, developing, and implementing strategies to become more inclusive and ensure access to our programs to all students (as well as access to key supports) is critical for *FIRST* to reach its goal and mission. All young people should have the opportunity to become science and technology leaders. *FIRST* will remove barriers to program participation for underserved, underrepresented students. Per that end, [FIRST Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion](#) is a concerted, organized effort to develop strategies to make its programs more accessible and inclusive.

## 7.4 NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

*FIRST* [does not discriminate](#) based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, age, religion/creed, and military/veteran status in its programs and activities.

## 7.5 CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM

Volunteers are required to electronically sign the *FIRST* Consent & Release Form each season. Volunteers will see a red notification in the upper right corner on their [FIRST Dashboard](#) if they have not yet completed the form and can access this by going to “Acknowledgement Forms” in the drop down menu.

Volunteers under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian sign the Consent & Release Form and can invite a parent to sign electronically through the [FIRST Dashboard](#).

Walk-on volunteers will be permitted to sign a paper [Consent & Release](#) form onsite at the event.

## 7.6 CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORM

Some key volunteers are required to sign a [Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Statement](#), such as field supervisors, judges, robot inspectors, referees, scorekeeper/field power controllers, team queuers, and safety advisors. A volunteer who has a relationship with a team is not excluded from serving in these positions, but they must disclose any relationship they have with a competing team and agree not to bias any match process and/or results.

## 7.7 MEDICAL INCIDENT FORM

All injuries or illnesses that occur at a *FIRST* event must be reported to *FIRST* through the [Medical Incident Form](#) that is available online or at each event. Ask your volunteer coordinator or pit supervisor for a form.

## 7.8 NON-MEDICAL INCIDENT FORM AND ONLINE NON-MEDICAL REPORTING FORM

While *FIRST* desires every volunteer and participant to receive fair and impartial treatment always, it does recognize that conflicts, misunderstandings, and other behavioral problems may occur. These concerns or problems may involve other event volunteers, event participants, mentors, or *FIRST* policies.

The [Reporting Portal for Youth Protection Concerns](#) has been designed to create ease of access for reporting concerns at any time by anyone. All reports received through the Online Reporting Portal are reviewed by trained personnel and responded to accordingly. A process has been created to loop in the programs and program delivery partners when appropriate. *FIRST* will not tolerate any form of retaliation against those that report concerns or those that cooperate in the investigation of reported concerns.

A paper non-medical incident reporting form is available at each event through the volunteer coordinator, filled out, and sent to: [safetyfirst@firstinspires.org](mailto:safetyfirst@firstinspires.org).



## GET STARTED VOLUNTEERING WITH *FIRST*:

- Create your account on the [FIRST Dashboard](#).
- Sign up for the [FIRST Mentor Network](#).
- Contact your [local FIRST partner](#).

## QUESTIONS:

Volunteer Resources Department

Phone: (800) 871-8326 | [volunteer@firstinspires.org](mailto:volunteer@firstinspires.org)