

2006-2007 NASA *FIRST* Robotics Competition Sponsorship Planning and Instructions

Some Comments from the NASA Robotics Alliance Team

On behalf of NASA's Robotics Alliance Project, welcome to this year's application process. We are very excited that your school or organization is planning on participating in one of the NASA-related *FIRST* Robotics Competition regional competitions this year. Our experience here at NASA with *FIRST* over the past few years has convinced us that this will be one of the most significant experiences your students, teachers, and mentors have ever had. You are choosing to provide your students with the opportunity to use their minds to accomplish an incredible task: starting with a bunch of unrelated parts and the ideas that exist only in the minds of your team members, create a functioning robot in only 6 weeks. Wow! As you get started with the process of applying to be sponsored by NASA, we want to explain a few things to you. First the facts, then a bit of philosophy. . .

Facts:

- Three classes of NASA sponsorship are available to *FIRST* teams. Teams may only submit one application for a NASA sponsorship, and must select which one of the three types of sponsorships to request.
- **Regional “Challenge Grants”:** In conjunction with the sponsorship of regional competition events, NASA is making Regional “Challenge Grants” available to teams that participate in these events. The grants provide \$6,000 funding to cover the registration costs for that event. All funding will be sent directly to *FIRST*, and *FIRST* will credit the accounts of teams selected to receive a NASA sponsorship. The Regional Challenge Grants are primarily intended for new rookie teams that are entering the *FIRST* program for the first time. Rookie teams that successfully participate in the program may apply for a second year of sponsorship. Second-year funding is available only to those teams that received a “rookie year grant” for that event during the prior competition year. During the first year of a new regional competition event, a series of “veteran team” grants will also be awarded. These grants are for one year only, and are awarded to veteran teams that are electing to attend the new event. By involving veteran *FIRST* teams in the new events, it is expected that the overall level of the competition, the quality of the experience, the transfer of knowledge and experience to the rookie teams, and the demonstration of values associated with the *FIRST* program will be increased. For the 2006 competition season, Regional Challenge Grants will be available for the following events:
 - San Diego Regional: 10 rookie grants and 10 veteran grants
 - New Orleans Regional: 10 second-year grants and 10 veteran grants
 - Las Vegas Regional: 10 rookie grants and 10 second-year grants
 - Boilermaker Regional: 10 rookie grants and 10 second-year grants

- Milwaukee Regional: 10 rookie grants and 10 second-year grants
- **University Space Grant Sponsorship:** NASA University Space Grant Sponsorships are available to **teams from Idaho, Louisiana, Montana, Arizona, and Washington, DC** through the NASA University Space Grant Program. Teams from these four states and the District of Columbia are encouraged to apply for NASA University Space Grant funding which will provide \$10,000 per year for one to three years. These funds may be used for event registrations, materials, travel expenses, and other costs associated with implementing the team. Funding for the sponsorships will be distributed through the corresponding University Space Grant Consortium for the selected state. The University Space Grant Sponsorships are primarily intended for new rookie teams that are entering the *FIRST* program for the first time. Rookie teams that successfully participate in the program may apply for a second and third year of sponsorship.
- **Program Growth Grants:** A third type of grant is being offered to rookie teams from across the country. Up to forty (40) “Growth Grants” are being offered to teams participating in the *FIRST* competition for the first time. These sponsorships are not tied to any particular regional competition or limited to teams from any specific state. The grants will provide \$6,000 funding to cover the registration costs for the team to attend one regional competition event. All funding will be sent directly to *FIRST*, and *FIRST* will credit the accounts of teams selected to receive a NASA grant. Depending upon the availability of Congressionally-appropriated funding, rookie teams that successfully participate in the program may apply for a second year of sponsorship for 2007.
- Except as noted above, these NASA grant programs are primarily intended to provide support for rookie teams that are just entering the *FIRST* program. The intent of all three types of NASA sponsorships (Regional Challenge Grants, NASA University Space Grant Sponsorship, and Program Growth Grants) is to assist in the formation of new teams. However, upon occasion it may not be possible to award all available grants to qualified rookie teams. In those situations, qualified veteran teams that have applied for the grants may receive grant awards. Awards to veteran teams will be considered after all rookie team selections have been awarded.
- Finally, while NASA strongly supports the expansion of the *FIRST* competition into a truly international event, *we regret that we cannot offer sponsorships to non-US teams.*

Several Important Notes:

- *FIRST* will **NOT** be making travel arrangements for sponsored teams. Teams will

make their own Kickoff and event travel reservations.

- Applications must be submitted no later than November 3rd, 2006.
- NASA will review submitted applications and inform teams of their selection via the NASA Robotics Alliance Project Web site (<http://robotics.nasa.gov>) during the week of November 15th 2006.

Requirements:

All teams selected by NASA agree to the following conditions of sponsorship. Teams not complying with all sponsorship requirements will not be considered for future NASA grants and may be required to provide reimbursement of funds applied toward their team during the current year.

1. "NASA" must be identified as a team sponsor and appear in the sponsored team's official name on record with *FIRST*. Other sponsors may be listed before or after NASA, but NASA must be included.
2. Sponsored teams agree to have *all* members complete a brief general survey at the beginning and end of the season to assist NASA in assessing the impact of the program. Teams will be made aware of this survey via emails sent to the main team contact. Please make sure that the email you provide for the main contact is kept current.
3. Sponsored teams **MUST** complete a Chairman's Award submission and provide a duplicate copy to NASA. If the team is a rookie team (and therefore ineligible to submit a Chairman's Award to *FIRST*), the team must compose a narrative equivalent to the Chairman's Award and submit it to NASA. Either of these options will satisfy the requirement to submit a written annual report, as required of all Federal grant recipients.
4. Sponsored teams agree to complete a robot by the deadline specified by *FIRST*, and ship this robot to the appropriate competition.
5. Sponsored teams must attend the regional *FIRST* competition associated with the sponsorship that they applied for and received, if the sponsorship is associated with a specific regional event.
6. Sponsored teams agree to attend all three days (Thursday-Saturday) of the sponsored competition.
7. Sponsored teams acknowledge that the NASA sponsorship may not be transferred to another team, and must be used by the original team applying for sponsorship.

Additionally, teams applying for a second or third year of NASA sponsorship must:

8. Demonstrate at least \$6000 of existing corporate or community funding and
9. Agree to mentor a rookie *FIRST* team either directly or via telephone/E-mail.

Philosophy

And now, a little philosophy behind the NASA application process. Participating in *FIRST* is incredibly rewarding but it is difficult - it will likely be one of the most difficult things your students have ever done. But, as Albert Einstein said, "In the middle of

difficulty lies opportunity." Here at NASA we want you to succeed. It is our goal to use this application process for three purposes:

1. Enable new teams to get involved with *FIRST*
2. Ensure that selected teams are likely to succeed and
3. Assist teams by explaining what is necessary to succeed

The application consists of four parts. In Section 1, you will select the type of sponsorship (Regional Challenge Grant, University Space Grant, or Program Growth Grant) and the specific location to which you will be applying, if required. Section 2 deals with logistical information including contact names and addresses. Section 3 consists of a series of open-ended questions designed to help you organize your team and your plans while also helping NASA to evaluate the strength of your approach and program. These questions have been carefully selected to represent those elements that are required to have a successful *FIRST* team. Answers dealing with who will help mentor your students, where you will build your robot, and how you will finance the project will help NASA to evaluate your proposal, but are actually more important in assisting you to plan a successful program. By fully answering these questions you are demonstrating that you have put some thought into the basic organization of your team and you are well on your way to a rewarding experience.

Finally, Section 4 applies only to those teams seeking a Regional Challenge or Program Growth grant. Teams applying for University Space Grant Sponsorships do NOT need to submit any supplemental material, but each team seeking a Regional Challenge Grant or Growth Grant must submit supporting documentation to NASA via U.S. Mail, postmarked by the application deadline, or their application will be incomplete and will not be considered for funding. The supplemental documentation must include a letter from the accredited educational sponsor of the team indicating the team's desire to apply for funding, the sponsoring organization's commitment to the team, and the agreement to the conditions of sponsorship outlined above. Teams should begin working on this supporting information immediately, to avoid any last-minute problems.

The evaluation of the application Sections 1, 2, and 4 is easy, since they will not be "scored" by the NASA review committees. If these elements are incomplete, Section 3, the narrative section of your application, will not be evaluated since without the most basic information from the first two sections, and the supporting documentation, your team is certainly not ready to participate in *FIRST*.

As you begin working on the application, don't view it as just paperwork that you must complete, but rather a tool for planning the success of your team. The entire NASA Robotics Alliance Project Team wishes you success, and we look forward to supporting you along the way!

Instructions for 2006-2007 Application for NASA Sponsorship for the 2007 *FIRST* Robotics Competition

Applications accepted through November 3rd, 2006

How To Apply . . . A Quick Summary:

1. Plan by printing a hardcopy of the instructions and application.
2. Complete and submit the sponsorship application (Sections 1, 2, and 3)
3. Send supporting documentation to NASA (Section 4).
4. Register with FIRST for the appropriate NASA-related regional competition.

How To Apply. . . Detailed Instructions:

1. Download and print out a paper version of the instructions (this file) and the electronic application, which have both been provided as PDF files. Use the hardcopy version to plan and gather necessary information then prepare answers to the essay-style questions in your favorite word processing application. You can then cut and paste your answers into the electronic form. **PLEASE NOTE:** Completion and submission of the application requires only the freely available Adobe Acrobat Reader software and e-mail access. Make sure that you have downloaded and installed the latest version of the Acrobat Reader prior attempting to complete your application (<http://www.adobe.com/reader/>).
2. When you are ready to submit your application, make sure you have the most recent version of the Adobe Acrobat Reader software as mentioned above, then go to the NASA Robotics Alliance Project web site (<http://robotics.nasa.gov/>) and download the actual application form to make sure you have the most recent version of the application in case any changes have been made. The application is a PDF document with fillable fields. Fill out the PDF document completely and then press the "Submit via Email" button on the application. This will generate an email message from you to the NASA sponsorship review team that will include your responses as an attachment to the e-mail. *Incomplete or hardcopy applications cannot be considered* due to the nature of the review process (national reviewers in many different locations). The electronic application process will allow you to complete Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the application. **PLEASE NOTE:** You will NOT be able to save an electronic copy of your application for your reference unless you have a full version of Adobe Acrobat (not just the reader). You can PRINT a copy of the application once it is completed using the free Acrobat Reader software. Since many teams will only be using the free reader software, please make sure that you print a copy of your completed application for your records prior to submitting, as this will be your only record of your completed application. This is also another reason to type and save your answers in word processing software prior to filling out the actual application.

3. Teams applying for Regional Challenge Grants or Growth Grants must prepare a letter, on official organizational letterhead, from the accredited educational sponsor of the team. This letter must indicate the team's desire to apply for funding, the sponsoring organization's commitment to the team, and their agreement to the conditions of sponsorship outlined above. This letter constitutes Section 4 of the application. The letter must be sent via US Mail, postmarked no later than the application deadline, to:

NASA Robotics Alliance Project, *FIRST* Sponsorship Program
c/o Mr. Seth Carter
NASA Ames Research Center
Mail Stop T28-B
Moffett Field, CA 94035

4. REMINDER: Prior to closing your application in PDF form, please make sure that you print a copy of your completed application and keep this for your records since you will not be able to save the electronic file.
5. This NASA application only applies to the NASA grant process. You must also register with *FIRST* to actually attend one or more events using the *FIRST* web-based registration process. While you may attend multiple events, you *must* register for and attend the event associated with the NASA Center from which you are requesting sponsorship. Register your team for one or more of the 2006 *FIRST* competitions at:

<https://my.usfirst.org/>

Grant applications and all supporting materials will be accepted through **November 3rd, 2006**. The application review panels will consider your application, with grant award notifications being made during the week of November 15th, 2006.