



2026 *FIRST*® Robotics Competition *FIRST*® Leadership Award Guide

FIRST® is a global robotics community that prepares young people for the future.



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What is the **FIRST**® Leadership Award?

The **FIRST**® Leadership Award recognizes the dedication and individual contributions of outstanding secondary school students participating on **FIRST**® Tech Challenge or **FIRST**® Robotics Competition teams. Students in 10th or 11th grade are eligible to be nominated by their team for the **FIRST** Leadership Award for excelling in areas such as leadership, entrepreneurship, and dedication to advancing the mission of **FIRST** within their communities.

There are four (4) levels of **FIRST** the **FIRST** Leadership Award.

- **FIRST Leadership Award Semi-finalists** – comprised of the two (2) students in their 10th or 11th school year* nominated by each team.
- **FIRST Leadership Award District Championship Semi-finalists** (**FIRST** Robotics Competition only) – The students selected at District events to be interviewed at the District Championship for Finalist consideration.
- **FIRST Leadership Award Finalists** - The students selected for each Regional and District Region.
- **FIRST Leadership Award Winners** - comprised of the ten (10) **FIRST** Robotics Competition and ten (10) **FIRST** Tech Challenge students selected from the applicable **FIRST** Leadership Award Finalists.

The students who earn **FIRST** Leadership Award status as a Semi-finalist, Finalist or Winner, are great examples of student leaders who have led their teams and communities to increased awareness for **FIRST** and its mission, champion **FIRST** Core Values such as Inclusion, and embody *Gracious Professionalism*®. It is the goal the **FIRST** Leadership Award Winners will continue, post-award, as great leaders, student alumni, and advocates of **FIRST**.

In 2019, the [Woodie Flowers Memorial Grant](#) was established for **FIRST** Leadership Award Winners pursuing STEAM fields of study.

***NOTE:** For regions of the world that do not use grade levels such as this to identify years of schooling: This award is intended for students who are two (2) to three (3) years away from entering college or university. Students that would be attending college or university in the next academic year are not eligible. Mentors will be asked for the year of graduation during the nomination process.

FIRST Leadership Award Criteria & Eligibility

Criteria

Our global *FIRST* community is diverse in thought and experience, and *FIRST* Leadership Award students reflect the excellence of our community. Criteria for selection of the *FIRST* Leadership Award shall include, but not be limited to a student's:

- Demonstrated leadership and commitment to the [FIRST Core Values](#)
- Effectiveness at increasing awareness of *FIRST* in their school and community
- Demonstrates passion for a long-term commitment to *FIRST*
- Individual contributions to their team contribute to the overall success of the team
- Proven experience in areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)
- The student is a role model and can motivate and lead fellow team members

Eligibility

After careful review of the criteria for the *FIRST* Leadership Award, each team is invited to nominate up to two student members as Semi-finalists who are 10th or 11th grade students. It's important that teams nominate only those students they believe are truly deserving of this honor. Students who are in 10th and 11th grade that mentor the team (and do not actively participate as members of the team) are not eligible.

A mentor, who is not related to either of the students chosen as the team's Leadership Award Semi-finalists, shall complete and submit the application in the Team Registration System. Students previously selected as *FIRST* Leadership Award Semi-finalists or Finalists in a prior year are eligible for nomination again this year provided they meet all of the criteria.

Students from both *FIRST* Robotics Competition and *FIRST* Tech Challenge are eligible to be nominated for the *FIRST* Leadership Award in their state/region's program. There is no rule that states a student cannot be nominated for both programs. However, the coach or mentor writing the nomination should focus the essay on the student's accomplishments in the program in which they are being nominated. If the student is nominated in each, the coach/mentor should adjust the content of each essay to the specific program.

Please note: By making a submission, the Submitter irrevocably grants *FIRST* and *FIRST* designees the right to use any or all of the submission in any and all media for the purpose of describing the submission, describing the award, and/or otherwise promoting *FIRST* and *FIRST* programs.

Preparing a Nomination

What Information is Required for the Nomination?

Although a single mentor must submit the nomination, members of the team must verify the accuracy of the submission. *FIRST* is relying upon the team to review the accuracy of the submission data.

The mentor, who is not related to either of the students chosen as the team's *FIRST* Leadership Award Semi-finalists, should gather the required information for the gather the required information for the nominated student. The submission form will require:

- Nominee name
- Nominee year of graduation
 - This award is intended for students who are two (2) to three (3) years away from entering college or university. Students that would be attending college or university in the next academic year are not eligible.
- How many years the student has participated in *FIRST*
- Event in which the *FIRST* Leadership Award interview will take place (where the team will be competing)
 - *Note for District teams:* the event will default to your District Championship event. Your District's judges will notify you which of your team's events the interview will occur at.
- Nomination essays following the prompts outlined in the next section.
- Student Address (if the student is not registered in the Youth Registration System)
- **To be nominated and to receive an interview, students MUST have a signed *FIRST* Consent and Release form.** Students with a *FIRST* Dashboard account and a signed Consent and Release form in their profile can be selected in the drop-down list in the nomination portal. If the student does not have a signed form in their Dashboard account, or does not have a Dashboard account, mentors may check off a checkbox in the nomination acknowledging that they have a signed paper copy of the *FIRST* Consent and Release form before submitting. Paper forms may be acquired by reaching out to your [local leadership](#).

FIRST Leadership Award submissions may be completed in a team's native language *only if* the team is interviewing at an event that speaks that language. If the submission is made for an event that does not speak the team's native language, it must be submitted in English.

Additionally:

- If the student is selected as a *FIRST* Leadership Award Finalist at a week 1-6 event, the Lead Coach must submit a translated submission within 1 week following the event.
- If the student is selected as a *FIRST* Leadership Award Finalist at a week 7 event, the Lead Coach must submit a translated submission the Monday **immediately** following the event.
- Send translated submissions, with the event name in the subject line of the email, to FRC-LeadershipAward@firstinspires.org.
- If we do not receive a translated copy of the submission by the deadline, the student will no longer be eligible for selection as a *FIRST* Leadership Award Winner at the *FIRST* Championship event.

Teams are permitted to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist in the creation of award submissions, handouts, writing robot code, etc. *FIRST* views AI resources as tools available to students in the same way that CAD programs, Programming Languages, and 3D printers are tools available for their use. Teams using AI to assist with code or content generation must provide proper credit and attribution, and respect intellectual property rights and licenses. Proper Credit can look like this: Essay created by Team XXXX and ChatGPT.

Essay Prompts

Mentors must write and submit essays following the five prompts below. Each essay is limited to 800 characters (punctuation and spaces included). Essays should be specific about the Semi-finalist's individual contributions to *FIRST* and to their team. Specific examples are helpful to the judges. Information about the Semi-finalist outside of *FIRST* may also be supportive of the nomination (as it relates to skills learned in *FIRST*) but is secondary to information about the student's participation in *FIRST*. Essays must be submitted in English.

1. Explain how the student embodies the philosophies of *Gracious Professionalism*[®] and *Coopertition*[®] through the *FIRST* Core Values: Discovery, Innovation, Impact, Inclusion, Teamwork and Fun. Please provide examples.
2. How has the student increased the awareness of *FIRST*? Describe the student's interests and/or plans to continue to engage with *FIRST* beyond high school. Please provide examples.
3. How does the student's individual contribution to the team benefit the team as a whole? Please provide examples.
4. Describe the student's experience in and mastery of areas of STEM. This could include, but is not limited to, skills in engineering, software, CAD, fabrication, etc. Please provide examples.
5. Explain the student's leadership to their fellow team members and/or others in the community. How do they motivate others? What is their leadership style? Please provide examples.

Additionally, there is a 500-character limit prompt for sharing additional information about the student:

6. Please share anything else you'd like us to know about the student, including academic performance, specialized skills, technical expertise, or additional extracurricular activities.

Please note that nominations submitted without the essays will not be considered for an interview.

Best Practices for Writing a Nomination

When writing the essays, it is important to remember that they are a vital tool used to decide which students should advance to the next level. Only including a few short sentences in the essays can limit an otherwise great candidate from moving to the next level. Try to be as detailed as possible while remaining within the character limit. Additional tips to keep in mind when writing an essay are:

- The nomination essay should mainly focus on *FIRST*-related activities and accomplishments.
 - Mentioning other achievements outside of *FIRST* as they demonstrate leadership, entrepreneurship, etc. is okay but should not be the sole focus of the nomination.
- Include specific examples of what makes the nominee so exceptional and how they meet the award criteria. Don't just say it – prove it!
- Describe the difference your nominee's contributions have made and show why they are important. Include benefits from their efforts and what the impact was. Use measurable results whenever possible.
- What sets this student apart from others? Focus on why you selected this student, apart from all others on the team, to nominate.
- Consider: How this student is a model *FIRST* participant – for example, major position on the team, has created/furthered the team's initiatives in a meaningful way, and believes in the missions of *FIRST*.
- Avoid sweeping generalities and run-on sentences.
- Be concise. Make the narrative clear and easy to read.
- Topics in the submission should be able to be validated in an interview. If the submission talks about certain things the student should expect questions about those things during the interview.
- We recommend reviewing Appendix A: *FIRST* Leadership Award: Helpful Terms in this document.
- Follow the prompts and keep the criteria for the award in mind. Remember things such as:
 - How is the student a leader?
 - How has the student helped increase the awareness of *FIRST*?
 - Describe the student's interest and passion that demonstrates their long-term commitment to *FIRST*.
 - Describe their experience in areas of STEM.
 - What are the student's *individual* contributions to the Team, whether it is building, programming, team captain, etc.?

If you feel as though you need guidance when writing an essay, consider reaching out to other mentors on your team or on another team. Our community is a great resource – utilize it!

Nomination Instructions

Who Submits the Nominations?

The Lead Coach 1 or 2, or the *FIRST* Leadership Award Submitter can submit the *FIRST* Leadership Award nominations.

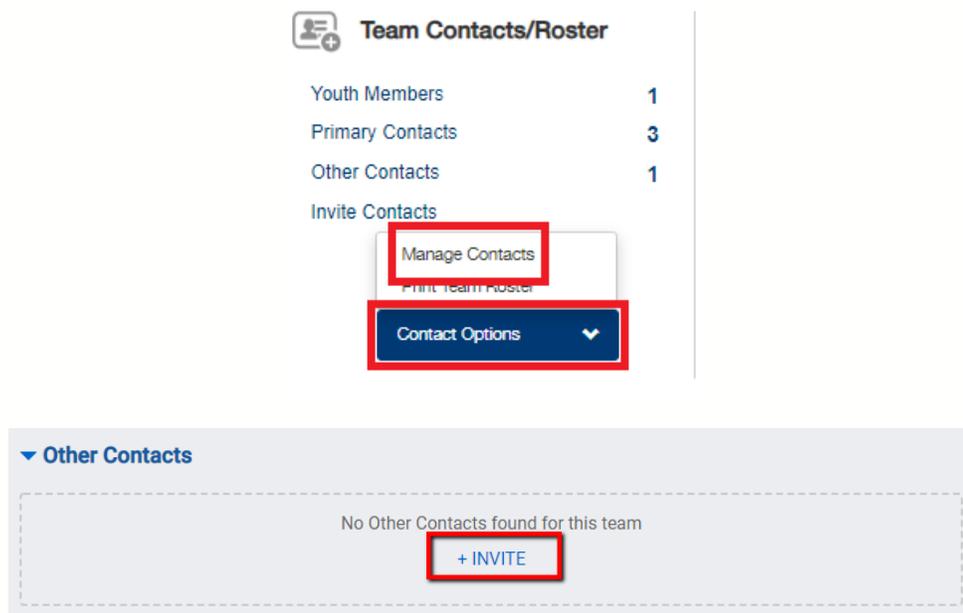
Lead Coach 1 and 2

Lead Coaches 1 and 2 can make the nomination through the [FIRST Dashboard](#). If another mentor would like to nominate a student for the *FIRST* Leadership Award, they can send the nomination essay and required information to the team's Lead Coach 1 or 2 to be officially submitted through the team dashboard or be assigned as a *FIRST* Leadership Award Submitter. All nominations **must** be entered through the system, any nominations sent straight to *FIRST* will not be considered.

FIRST Leadership Award Submitter

The Lead Coach 1 or 2 has the option to add the role “*FIRST* Leadership Award Submitter” to the team to complete the nomination. This can be done when the mentor or team admin would like to submit the nomination or if both the Lead Coach 1 and 2 are a parent of the nominee. Follow these steps to add this role to the team from the team's dashboard:

1. Login to the *FIRST* Dashboard: <http://my.firstinspires.org/Dashboard/>
2. Click “Contact Options” from the *FIRST* Dashboard. Click “Manage Contacts”.



3. Under “Team Leadership”, click “INVITE CONTACTS (LEGACY)”

TEAM LEADERSHIP

INVITE CONTACTS (LEGACY)

4. Select “Mentor” or “Team Administrator” and enter the full name and email address of the person who will be submitting the nomination. Check the box for the Captcha.

Invite Team Contacts



FIRST Robotics Competition Team# 10372

All fields are required

* Contact Type	Full Name	Email Address
Mentor	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Add another

Mentors are responsible for mentoring participants of a team

<input type="checkbox"/>	I'm not a robot	
--------------------------	-----------------	--

Email me a copy

Cancel

Send Invitation

5. Click on “Send Invitation”.
6. The **FIRST Leadership Award Submitter** **MUST** accept the invitation, complete Youth Protection screening requirements, and have a signed consent and release on file prior to this step being completed. Select the “FIRST Leadership Award Submitter” button. This will allow the user to follow the next set of instructions and nominate a student.

Mentor	ACCEPTED	Options
Email:	Phone Number:	Legal Guardian Name:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent & Release is on record	<input type="checkbox"/> Dean's List Award Submitter	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Youth Protection: Meets Youth Protection Policy Requirements	Include In Team Roster Printout <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Submitting the Nomination

The Lead Coach 1 or 2, or **FIRST Leadership Award Submitter**, must login to the [FIRST Dashboard](#) and follow the steps below to submit a nomination:

1. Select “Certificates & Awards” under “Team Options”. Then, select “FIRST Leadership Award Submission”.

- a. The team must not have any outstanding tasks and must have paid for registration to submit for the *FIRST* Leadership Award.

The screenshot shows a dashboard with three main sections: MY TEAMS, PARENT/GUARDIAN, and VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION. Under MY TEAMS, there is a 'CREATE NEW TEAM(S)' button and a 'Teams List' section. A team named 'Dean's List Test Team' is selected, showing details like team number (#201701535) and type (Individual Team). Three red boxes highlight key requirements: 'All tasks MUST be completed before nominating a student.' (pointing to 'Outstanding Tasks (3)'), 'Team Registration fee MUST be paid before nominating a student.' (pointing to 'Balance Due \$275'), and 'Certificates & Awards' (pointing to the dropdown menu).

This close-up shows the 'Team Options' dropdown menu. The 'Outstanding Tasks (2)' button is highlighted in red. The 'Certificates & Awards' dropdown is open, showing two options: 'FRC Dean's List Awards Submission' (highlighted with a red box) and 'FIRST Robotics Competition Season Calendar'.

2. On the next screen, the Region field is automatically populated based on the team's location. The team must next choose the Regional event (or in the case of District teams, select the District Championship) where they will be competing from the drop-down menu, as this is where the nominee will be interviewed.

< Back to Dashboard

First Nominee

Second Nominee (optional)

If you would like to submit a second nomination, please select Second Nominee (optional) from the Left Menu. You may nominate up to 2 nominees from your team for Dean's List Awards.

If a parent/relative is the mentor of a youth team nominee selected to be nominated, the nomination must be submitted by a non-related mentor on the team.

If the student you wish to nominate is registered with *FIRST* but does not have a signed consent and release form on file, the student will not show in the dropdown list. You must manually fill in the information and a signed paper Consent and Release form **MUST** be brought to each event where the student participates in *FIRST* activities. We strongly encourage to have every youth register in the *FIRST* dashboard and have a parent complete the youth's consent and release form. <https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/youth-registration-system>

For help writing your submission please select the link below:
<https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/frc/submitted-awards>

Region: Texas

Event to be Judged at: FIRST in Texas District Championship

- After selecting the event where the nominee will be competing, you must choose the student from the Youth dropdown list. Students will only appear in the dropdown list if they have an account with a completed profile, have selected a qualifying graduation year in their account, and have a signed *FIRST* Consent & Release form.

Youth

Please Select or Type

- Student in List:** If the student is in the list, select the student's name. The mentor nominating the student must then fill out any remaining fields and write the nomination essays.
 - Student Not in List:** If the student is not listed in the dropdown, select "Not in list". You will then need to manually add the nominee's first and last name, email address, year of graduation from secondary school, and address into the system and then write the nomination essays.
- Once you have chosen the student and filled out the required information, enter the student's nomination essays.

There are five separate essay boxes with 800-character limits (the limit includes spaces and punctuation) for each box. Each box includes a prompt question that aligns with the *FIRST* Leadership Award criteria. Mentors should follow each prompt and provide examples. Fill out the additional comments prompt (500-character limit) as well.

REMINDER: Do not use the < or > characters in your submission. Using these characters may result in your submission not saving.

5. Once you have completed the nomination, check the acknowledgement boxes, and click “Save Changes”. ALL fields on the nomination screen **must** be filled out to save changes. **Be sure to select SAVE CHANGES** before you proceed to entering in your second nominee *or* leaving the page if only submitting one nomination. If you do not select SAVE CHANGES, information entered into the form will not be saved when you leave.

The screenshot shows a nomination form with three checkboxes. The third checkbox is highlighted with a red box and has an arrow pointing to it from a separate red box containing the text: "This checkbox will only appear when a student 'not'". Below the checkboxes is a blue button labeled "SAVE CHANGES". Underneath the button, there is a notice: "Nominee submissions will automatically be submitted at 3:00 PM ET on February 10, 2022. You can make changes until 3:00 PM ET on February 10, 2022. At that time, all submissions will be auto submitted."

6. If you would like to make a second submission, navigate back to the top of the page. Select “Second Nominee” and repeat steps 1-5 for the second nominee.

The screenshot shows the "DEAN'S LIST AWARDS" nomination form. It includes a back button, a "First Nominee" section, and a "Second Nominee (optional)" section which is highlighted with a red box. Below these sections are two dropdown menus: "Region" (set to "New Hampshire") and "Event types associated with the region" (set to "Please Select").

IMPORTANT: The second student nomination must be for the same event chosen for the first student nomination. If you choose to submit only one student to an event, you will not be able to go back and add another student to a later event once the deadline has passed.

Reminder! At the bottom of the page check the boxes and **be sure to select SAVE CHANGES**. If you do not select SAVE CHANGES, information entered into the form will not be saved when you leave.

I acknowledge that i am not a parent/relative of the semi-finalist.

I acknowledge that the youth team members of the team have verified the accuracy of this submission.

By clicking this box, you acknowledge that you have collected a Consent and Release form signed by the student's parent or legal guardian. A signed Consent and Release form is required to nominate the above student. For those students who do not have a signed Consent and Release form in the *FIRST* Dashboard, a signed paper Consent and Release form **MUST** be brought to each event where the student participates in *FIRST* activities. The student will not be interviewed at an event without a form.

SAVE CHANGES

Nominee submissions will automatically be submitted at 3:00 PM ET on February 10, 2022. You can make changes until 3:00 PM ET on February 10, 2022. At that time, all submissions will be auto submitted.

If you have not saved the first student information, you will see the following notice. Please 'Stay on the Page' and complete the first student submission before moving on.

Do you want to leave this page? Changes you made will not be saved.

Stay on Page **Leave Page**

Preparing for the Interview

What to Expect

After the submission deadline, every Semi-finalist will receive an email from *FIRST* which provides the Semi-finalist the essay nomination written by the mentor. Semi-finalists should make sure to read the nomination to help prepare for the interview. Be prepared to discuss topics written in your nomination essays and anything else that you might want to mention that is relevant. It is also helpful to prepare a list of topics you want to discuss during the interview.

Interviews are 6-10 minutes long. Interviews are conducted in English (with the exception of teams interviewing at events in Brazil, China, Chinese Taipei, Israel, Mexico, Quebec, and Türkiye). Students needing a translator or sign language interpreter may include an additional person to act as that translator/interpreter. The translator/interpreter does not need to be a team member. For these students, the duration of the interview is increased by up to 5 minutes.

During the interview, please remember that it is about YOU, your contributions, leadership, etc. in relation to the criteria of the award. For example, if you are discussing accomplishments of your team as a whole, make sure to specify how your individual efforts were vital in the success of those accomplishments. Do not be afraid to share your personal successes!

Remember that this is a conversational interview, **there are no presentations or informational handouts involved**

The interview is where the judges can meet you and potentially learn some new information about you. There is no need to dress up for your interview, but we do recommend that you prepare for it as if it were a job interview. Come up with some talking points so you can remember things that you want to tell the judges in response to questions, do mock interviews, and come into the interview planning to be confident and engaging.

Only the nominated student is allowed to offer information or answer questions from the judges. In instances where a mentor is present, the adult team mentor may observe and later provide feedback to the student, but the mentor is not allowed to provide any assistance during the interview.

Recording video, audio or taking pictures (including screenshots) are prohibited during the interview. In addition to *FIRST* prohibiting recording, there may be other legal restrictions governing recording.

Although judges are not prescribed a list of required questions to ask, they are given a list of suggestions. Examples of questions you might expect:

- Describe your roles and responsibilities on your team.
- Describe one example of how you are a leader.
- Describe how you plan to continue to be active in *FIRST* beyond high school.

- Describe a time you had to motivate fellow teammates. How did you do it? What were the results?
- Can you provide examples of your *FIRST* activities in your school and/or community?
- What are your plans for post-high school?
- Is there anything not included in your essay, or that we haven't discussed, that you would like to share?

We also recommend reviewing the Appendix A: *FIRST* Leadership Award: Helpful Terms in preparation for your interview.

When is My Interview?

Semi-finalists will be interviewed at one (1) event where their team is competing. Signed *FIRST* Consent & Release forms MUST be completed in the Dashboard or a signed paper form must be brought to the event in which the student is to be interviewed at and submitted with the Team Roster to Pit Admin. If the student does not have a signed form at the event (whether shown on the Team Roster as being signed in Dashboard or a paper form), the student will be ineligible to receive an interview and will be unable to continue on for selection as a *FIRST* Leadership Award Finalist.

Regional Events:

Students will be randomly assigned to a time slot for an interview. The schedule will be posted at Pit Admin, who will then make an announcement for students to see which slot they are assigned to. Some students may request to change their time slot. In order to do so, the student must find another student that is willing to switch with them. Both students will then come to Pit Admin who can approve the change and Pit Admin must alert the Judge Advisor.

District Events:

If competing in a District, the mentor that submitted the nomination will receive an email containing which event the interview will take place. The interview will be scheduled at an event in which the team is attending. Upon arrival at the designated event, students should check in at Pit Administration to see when their interview is scheduled for.

Districts will conduct a second set of interviews at the District Championship if the student is selected as a District Championship Semi-finalist. The student should check in at Pit Administration at the District Championship to see when their second interview is scheduled for.

How Are Students Notified if They Advance to the Next Level?

Regional Teams

Judges will select two (2) students at each Regional event as *FIRST* Leadership Award Finalists. Regional Finalists are announced at the Regional Event that they interviewed at. After the event, FRC-LeadershipAward@firstinspires.org will reach out to Finalists with information on next steps.

District Teams

The District Semi-finalists moving on to the next level are announced as the *FIRST* Leadership Award District Championship Semi-finalists at the District event that the student interviewed at. A second round of interviews will be conducted at the District's Championship Event, where Finalists will be selected and announced. After the District Championship, FRC-LeadershipAward@firstinspires.org will reach out to Finalists with information on next steps.

NOTE: There are no further interviews after the student is selected as a Finalist. The Championship *FIRST* Leadership Award Judge Committee will review the essays and any available interview feedback for each Finalist to determine who the ten winners are. Finalists need not be present at the *FIRST* Championship in order to be considered.

Appendix A: *FIRST* Leadership Award: Helpful Terms

These terms are intended to assist mentors in writing the nomination essays and for students to use during the interview. The use of these terms is not a requirement of submitting a nomination.

Possible Leadership Titles	
Captain	<p>A top-level position of responsibility over the team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams with a flat leadership structure may have captains that cover specific areas, while making larger decisions as a group with no defined leader Teams with a structured leadership would have one or more captains with multiple Leads working under them to lead smaller team areas. Can be preceded by "co-" to indicate they shared that responsibility with one or more individuals.
Lead	<p>A leadership position over a specific area of responsibility and should include a "team area" below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be preceded by "co-" to indicate they shared that responsibility with one or more individuals.
Team Areas	
Marketing	Responsible for items like team branding, newsletters, website, etc.
Awards	Responsible for working on award submissions or pit presentation preparation.
Finance	Responsible for fundraising, grant writing, and sponsor relationships
Outreach	Responsible for organizing and leading demonstrations and events not tied to competitions.
Drive Team, Scouting, and/or Strategy	Responsible for guiding the team's strategy, representing the team at competitions, and collecting data on the performance of other teams.
Mechanical	<p>Responsible for the mechanical design and build of the robot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAD can be included as a separate lead position or included alongside mechanical
Electrical	Responsible for the electrical design and build of the robot, including any sensors or custom circuits.
Programming	Responsible for programming the robot.
Other	Any team area that falls outside of the areas listed above should be detailed to provide the judges with appropriate context.
Action Specific Words	
Mentored	The student advises or trains, either in person or via phone/email/video conference, another team or team member, helping with technical or non-technical <i>FIRST</i> program specific issues.
Lead	<p>The student leads an event if they are responsible for planning and execution. Can be preceded with "co-" to indicate a shared responsibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned - worked on the planning of the event but did not lead the execution. Executed - responsible for the execution of the event - onsite leader throughout the event.
Conceived	Indicates the student introduced the initial concept.
Helped/Assisted	Indicates the student had significant impact or participation, without being a leader in that situation.