



# ADAMBOTS

*Team* **245**

Rochester Hills, Michigan  
Adams High School

## *Entrepreneurship Award Guide*

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## About this Resource

*Entrepreneurship Award Guide* was written to help teams prepare for the Entrepreneurship Award sponsored by Kleiner Perkins Caufield and Byers. However, understand that the award isn't the important part. Good business planning helps to sustain and develop a team regardless of trophies. Also, while there is lots of useful information inside, it is hardly comprehensive. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at

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The guide is separated into two main sections: "The Basics" and "Winning the Award." If you've never submitted for the award, "The Basics" is a great place to start to make sure you have everything you need. If you're an experienced team, "Winning the Award" has more advanced tips for you.

The tips inside are what we've found successful. However, we are not judges. Nothing in this document should be taken as the end-all and be-all of awards submissions. With that said, several teams have also used these tips to help to win the Entrepreneurship Award. Good luck with your submission!

# The Basics

## The Spirit of the Award

**“This award celebrates the entrepreneurial spirit and recognizes a team which has developed a comprehensive business plan in order to define, manage and achieve the team’s objectives. This team displays entrepreneurial enthusiasm and the vital business skills to ensure a self-sustaining program.”**

The Entrepreneurship Award boils down to two main things: achieving objectives and sustaining the team. *FIRST* encourages teams to do these things by requiring a written business plan for the award. The process of answering their questions can bring about team self-awareness and encourage students to address problems they didn’t realize existed. By extension, submitting for the award helps to make a team better. They’ll ideally be able to better accomplish their mission (which likely aligns with *FIRST*’s mission, but not always) and sustain for longer, deepening the impact of *FIRST* as a whole.

Part of the reason *FIRST* requires both a business plan and an interview is to stimulate communication skills. As students write, they practice and develop the ability to eloquently answer these tough questions. Sooner or later, everyone will have to go through a job interview or make a presentation. By tying these things to a prestigious award, *FIRST* motivates students to prepare themselves for the real world.

## Judging – Online Submission

The first part of the Entrepreneurship Award judging process is the online submission. The questions can be found on *FIRST*’s website linked below, and answers should be submitted by students before the end of the build season. Although the date changes from year to year, it typically lies mid-February. Check the linked website for year-specific deadlines. As with all award submissions, try to have it ready a day or two early. Check to see that your responses fit in the answer boxes early in case the website has issues.

**<https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/frc/submitted-awards>**

The submission is how the judges first get to know your team. While you can elaborate on points in your presentation, this is your first chance to wow the judges with all the awesome things you do. Make sure that you answer every part of each of their questions. Your goal is to show them that you embody the ideals of the award in a way that sets you apart from the competition.

**TEAM MISSION STATEMENT:** For this section, start with your 1-2 sentence mission. If you haven't written one yet, check out the guide linked at the bottom. You're allowed 1600 characters, so elaborate a bit. Why is this important to your team?

**TEAM ORIGIN:** Just list your founding date, location, rookie team size, and current team size, all in as few characters as possible. The rest of the space can be spent on how your team deals with its biggest challenges, which is a primary part of the criteria.

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:** Write who is responsible for fundraising and how it gets done, your process to spend them, how you have gained sponsors in the past, anything you do to get the attention of future team members, and something about *FIRST's* values in relation to your team.

**RELATIONSHIPS:** How are you involved in your community? Write a separate paragraph for how you teach students, retain mentors, and retain and educate both sponsors and the public. For example, you might have student training programs, mentor recognition, and robot demos.

**DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES:** How do people outside your team find out you exist? Do you reach out to the public? Within the team, what do you do to make sure everyone is learning and participating? How does your time and money play into this?

**FUTURE PLANS:** Write anything you reasonably want to get done in the next three years and your plan to get the resources to do so.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:** List your total budget and expenses, and if possible, sources of each.

**RISK ANALYSIS:** How do you deal with threats? Use an example. If you don't have a SWOT analysis, read our guide at the bottom and write one.

## Judging - Pit Interview

Throughout the competition, blue-shirted judges will roam the pits to ask teams questions. At the district/regional level, they almost certainly talk to every team that submitted for the Entrepreneurship Award. These informal pit interviews are typically five minutes, but they can be longer. They'll ask some questions about content in your submission and some to better compare you to other teams. They'll also ask at least one question that's open-ended enough that you can take it any direction you want, so make sure you know what parts of your team you want to highlight most.

Make sure you have prepared students in the pits at all times, excluding lunch. There is no indication of when a judge may come around for information. They can start as early as the pits opening on the first day of the qualification matches. Typically the judges will be done by the time elimination matches begin.

After the judges have visited each team that submitted, they will discuss amongst themselves for awhile. They narrow down the teams into a few strong candidates, then return to judging. You will not know if you are one of these candidates or not, so you'll need to stay in your pit to present throughout the entire event until elimination matches. They may return to ask certain teams to clarify on key points with more specific questions. Don't worry if they only ask your team once. They may already have the information they need.

# Winning the Award

## Judging – Online Submission

In general, your goal is to have the judges see that you meet 100% of the basic criteria while expanding beyond it in some places. They'll be hard-pressed to give the award to a team that has excellent succession planning but no evidence of sponsor relations, for example. Below is each essay question's core principles so you can better respond to what the judges are looking for.

**TEAM MISSION STATEMENT:** There's a reason this comes before basic team facts. Teams should be oriented almost completely towards their mission statement. The rest of the submission is just broadly how you plan on accomplishing it. If you haven't written one yet, check out the business planning guide linked in the next section. You're allowed 1600 characters, so elaborate a bit. After simply writing the mission, you could introduce your business plan's contents and why you wrote it all. Another option is to explain why it's important to your team. You could even explain if you've been successful at accomplishing it and leave a feeling that you will continue to do so.

**TEAM ORIGIN:** This is so they have some sort of context for your team, but the team facts are a great place to cut down on characters. Get the necessary information down in as few characters as possible so you can focus on challenges, one of the big parts of the criteria. They're looking to answer two questions: "What is the process this team uses to respond to problems?" and "Is that process successful?"

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:** Beyond recording the organizational structure, you can explain why your structure is the way it is and how it makes tasks easier. First and foremost, they want to see that you considered the challenges listed in the criteria. Showing that your structure keeps these things core while responding to other issues can help you to stand out. You can also save characters by alluding to your organizational structure, but making a graphic for it and submitting it as a picture in addition to the essay.

**RELATIONSHIPS:** The core concept here is that you understand it takes more than one person to run a team and that you have plans to maintain and grow your network. This is a great place to roll in some anecdotal evidence. After fully answering the specific points they ask for, give an example of one or two strong relationships your team has. Try to make it relatable. For example, you could talk about one of your closest sponsors, as well as a mentor who's been there for several years, and why they stick around.

**DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES:** This question is essentially the team's "*FIRST*ification." That is, making sure your team's goals keep *FIRST*'s goals in mind. The goals in question are: getting involved in communities to improve cultural impact, growing to improve educational breadth, and developing a good program to improve individual student education. Some resources you should consider are: money, mentor time, student time, and networking connections. A standout team will have a majority of the resources available to them focused on supporting *FIRST*. It's less about the actual spending of resources and more about caring where you put them.

**FUTURE PLANS:** Nothing in this section can be verified, so it's easy to claim whatever you think sounds good. However, simply writing down wild "plans" misses the point of the question. First, they want to see that you have plans in mind to improve on the things mentioned in the last question. Next, they want to see that you have the means to do so, or at least that you have a plan to get the means. This part could also link back to the organizational plan as you explain who will execute the plan and how. Lastly, you could add insight on how you make plans like these, with reference to your mission and *FIRST*'s goals.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:** This isn't a great section to wow them other than actually having solid financials, so the best thing you can do is report accurate information in a readable way. Show the general categories for uses of funds, why you allocate money that way, and some examples. Then do the same for sources of funds. If it fits your team, this is a good opportunity to talk about your team like a business. Things like team fundraisers and sponsor relations can go here if they don't fit better elsewhere. You could also show budget trends over the past few years and if you've had to overcome any major challenges.

**RISK ANALYSIS:** In detail, explain how your team identifies and responds to threats. If you don't have a documented risk mitigation plan yet, take a look at our guide linked in the next section. If you have space after explaining the process, give an example of a risk that you saw coming and managed to respond to using your process.

## Writing a Business Plan

Your Entrepreneurship Award submission is great to make sure your team is considering and documenting the most important things, but it can be improved. Many teams write a separate business plan to improve sustainability and continuity and to better accomplish their mission. This process can vary greatly, but if you'd like our advice on it, you can find our guide *Writing a Business Plan* at:

**<http://www.adambots.com/resources/business-plan/>**

If you have your own business plan, make sure you bring at least two copies to each competition. You can give one set to the judges for them to reference during judging, which they'll return at the end. The other can be a good presentation tool. Having a business plan shows dedication to the ideals of the Entrepreneurship Award and provides more info on how your team does things.

## Judging - Pit Interview

When presenting to judges, you have three priorities:

- 1) Show respect
- 2) Show that the students know about the team
- 3) Show off the most important parts of the team

That's not to say that the content doesn't matter, but a bad impression around respect or knowledge can easily make a solid award submission much less successful. You might run into judges anywhere in the pit or even see judges in the stands, so make sure that 100% of your students can do these three things. Politely saying hello and providing one detail about the team goes a long way to showing your depth.

In a more typical pit interview, you'll spend most of your effort on the third point. The judges almost always ask a vague question that allows you to take it in any direction you'd like, so choose 2-3 focal points you want to drive home. Keep answers between 30 seconds and 2 minutes. If you cut off early, they'll assume that's all of the info you have on that entire topic, but if you go on for too long, you won't be able to talk about the other topics. If you don't get to talk about a topic that's super important, you can tell the judge, "There's just one last key point that we want to make sure you have." Use this sparingly though and keep it short. The last thing you want to do is annoy the judge.

The last consideration is the style of presenting. You won't win the award just because you can speak well, but it helps a ton to keep it going smoothly. Keep it conversational. You're just telling someone about your team, not giving a formal presentation. If you slip up, don't worry about it. The judges are looking for content to write down, not for reasons to take points away.



Present with at least two people and help each other out. That both shows that multiple people are involved in your team and allows you to cover for each other's mistakes. Typically, this happens when one person blanks on an answer and their partner takes over for a bit.

To stand out more, use unique personal stories. These make your team more relatable, engaging the judges more. Stories of growth and lessons learned are a safe bet. Also, use a few statistics. Too many can make it seem too formal, but 2-3 numbers can back up your big points and almost always get written down. You can also make visual aids. Anything from presenting touch screens to pit posters to documentation can provide engaging visuals.

For larger points, try explaining them as a process, starting in past years and expanding into future years, with emphasis on the previous year. This shows commitment to your plan. It also gives insight into your decision-making process and what you value.

Practicing can bring your interview to another level. If your students aren't comfortable with the information, start as casually as possible. You can introduce presenting by having your presenters sit around a table and talk about anything on the team, just to get used to the information. Once they're more experienced, conduct mock pit interviews. Groups of two or three stand with your visual aids and a student or mentor acts as the judge. Each person introduces themselves as they would at a competition. The judge then asks the presenters a handful of questions from the list below. Don't worry if you need to pause, check resources, or ask for help. It takes several rounds to get used to it.

Before the competition, you might find it helpful to write up a focus list. Write down the most important things that you want the judges to remember. Go through the major subject areas below and record your smaller focal points to be prepared. Think about what personal stories you can get in. Make sure that the entire focus list is communicated to everyone in the pit and the focal points are communicated to everyone on the team.

# Practice Questions

## Open-Ended

- Tell me about your team
- What makes your team different?
- What other information do you want us to know?-\*+

## Business Planning

- Tell me about your business plan
- What's new in your business plan?
- What drives your team?
- How do you enrich and retain members?
- How is your team organized?
- How do you get new students?
- How has your team grown over the past year?

## Strategic Planning / Risk Analysis

- What challenges has your team faced? How have you overcome them?
- How does your team respond to threats?
- How do you mitigate risks?
- Tell me about your SWOT analysis
- What are your plans for the next few years?
- How did you get to this point?

## Finance

- Tell me about your finances
- Tell me about your sponsors
- How do you gain sponsors?
- How do you retain sponsors?
- Who is your closest/biggest sponsor?

## FIRST Support

- How does your team spread the message of *FIRST*?
- How do you get involved in your community?
- How do you maintain relationships with people outside of robotics?