

## 6 Awards (A)

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*FIRST* Tech Challenge celebrates the excitement of competition both on and off the field. Through the following awards, we celebrate the *FIRST* Core Values which makes us so much “More than Robots”. Please note that different event types (e.g., League Tournaments, Regional Championship, *FIRST* Championship) or event sizes may offer different sets of awards. Not every award is presented at every *FIRST* Tech Challenge event. No awards are presented at League Meets, see section [14 League Play Tournaments \(L\)](#), additional details by event type are available in the sections below.

Judged awards are determined by volunteers from the community who prepare for the event with thorough training and certification. There are two key judging volunteer roles:

- JUDGES – meet with teams to learn about and celebrate the unique journey and accomplishments of each team and evaluate these against award requirements. JUDGES interact with STUDENTS during the interview process, and in the pits. As a group, JUDGES determine the teams that receive awards at events.
- JUDGE Advisor (JA) – trains, directs, and supervises JUDGES throughout the event. JUDGE Advisors oversee the judging processes and procedures to make sure they are in accordance with *FIRST* Tech Challenge judging guidelines.

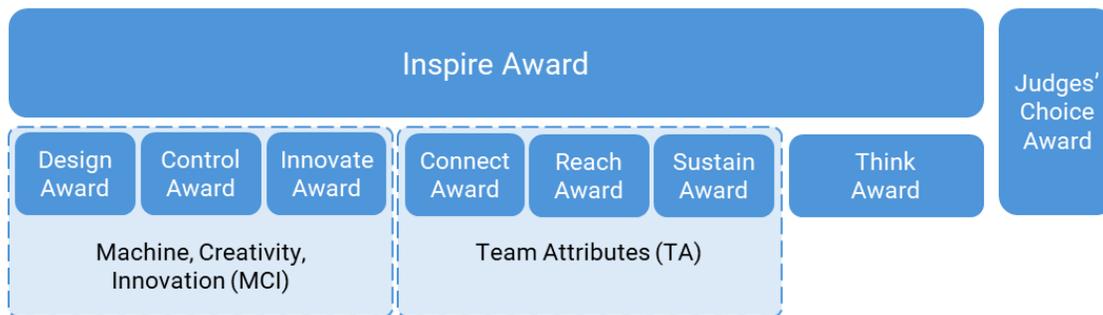
*FIRST* Tech Challenge judging is delivered in one of two ways. Most events will have in-person (“traditional”) judging along with the standard in-person gameplay. The second is hybrid format which has in-person gameplay, but judging is done remotely before in-person gameplay. This manual will primarily describe the traditional in person judging process. The remote judging process follows the same overall judging standards and requirements, but interviews are conducted online, and in-person meetings may not occur.

Teams may also read the [Judge and Judge Advisor Manuals](#) to gain more insight into the complete judging process. Teams are also encouraged to review the [Outreach Terms and Definitions Document](#) to ensure all teams can clearly communicate with judges and our community the great things they do to grow *FIRST*.

### 6.1 Team Judged Awards Overview and Schedule

Most *FIRST* Tech Challenge awards fall into two broad categories: Machine, Creativity, and Innovation (MCI), and Team Attributes (TA). In addition to MCI and TA awards, there are also two other separate awards, the Think Award and the Judges’ Choice Award. The final award is the Inspire Award which is a special overarching award (Figure 6-1). The local Program Delivery Partner may elect to give additional awards to celebrate local sponsors or initiatives, but these awards are not considered Team Judged Awards for the purposes of advancement calculations as described in Section [4 Advancement](#).

Figure 6-1: Award hierarchy



- The **Inspire Award** recognizes teams who excel in MCI, TA, and Think award accomplishments. This team is an all-around inspiration for others.
- **MCI awards** recognize the technical accomplishments of teams in the brainstorming, design, construction, operation, and control of their ROBOTS.
- **TA awards** recognize teams who have expanded their skillset, created a plan to sustain their program and team, and spread the message of *FIRST* throughout their outreach.
- The **Think Award** recognizes teams who masterfully document their team’s process and ROBOT using their PORTFOLIO.
- **Judges’ Choice Award** recognizes a team whose unique efforts, performance, or dynamics merit recognition, but does not fit into any of the other award categories.

The JUDGES will gather information from the teams through several different pathways (Figure 6-2). All teams will have the opportunity to submit a team PORTFOLIO which should document aspects of their team which directly support the judged award criteria or information which they wish the JUDGES to consider. Teams can participate in two different types of interviews: a structured interview and pit interview(s).

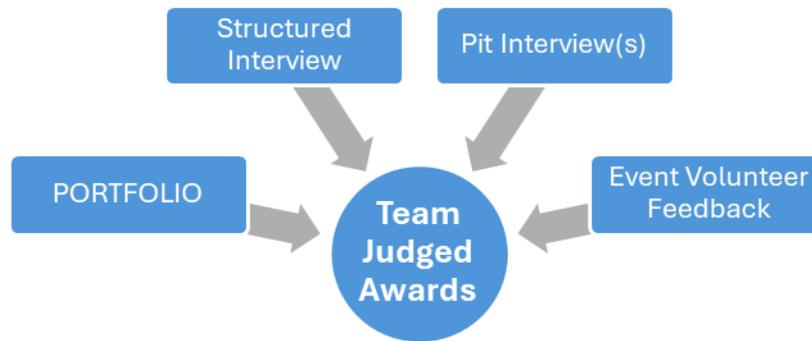
All award winners chosen by the JUDGES are recognized as being positive examples of the award criteria, not necessarily the “best” team. JUDGES will only consider the published award criteria in section [6.3 Team Judged Award Descriptions](#).

Teams may participate in judging regardless of the inspection status of their ROBOT and are eligible for awards even if they are attending the event without a ROBOT.

### 6.1.1 Sources of Information Considered for Awards

In addition to the information provided in a team’s PORTFOLIO (if submitted) and the interviews, JUDGE Advisors may also accept feedback about teams at the event from other volunteers to help inform their understanding of the team. All of the sources in Figure 6-2 help JUDGE Advisors facilitate discussions with JUDGES when award deliberations begin.

Figure 6-2: Sources of Information for Team Judged Awards.



In addition to the specific information sources JUDGES use to evaluate teams, there are also sources of information which are specifically disallowed. JUDGES are strictly instructed to only consider information from the current event and the current season and cannot consider information from outside what they have seen or heard at the current event.

Per [A201.E](#), progress, challenges, and accomplishments which have taken place since January 1, 2025, can be documented in the team PORTFOLIO and will be considered as part of the current season.

This means that information like past performance (good or bad), personal knowledge of a team, and external sources like websites and social media are not considered. JUDGES also do not consider ROBOT performance (for example, how many scoring tasks are completed) in an award unless it is specifically listed as part of the required or encouraged evaluation criteria. A team’s ROBOT placement in a competition (winner or finalist, etc.) or qualification ranking is not considered when evaluating teams for a judged award.

The awards are a method *FIRST* uses to inspire STUDENTS and open their eyes to building a better future together. The awards process should foster a positive STUDENT interaction with JUDGES who are independent caring adults and can recognize their achievements and encourage them to continue learning.

### 6.1.2 Structured Interview

All teams are encouraged to prepare for a structured interview session where the team can present a prepared oral presentation to a small panel of JUDGES, followed by a Q&A session. Typically, these interviews follow a standard timeline (Figure 6-3) and last at least 10 minutes long, per [A205](#).

Instead of the structured interview, interviews conducted at the *FIRST* Championship have a different format. Teams should refer to the interview format outlined in [Section 15.1.2](#) for more details.

Figure 6-3: Structured Interview Timeline



1. Team arrives and JUDGES welcome the team.
2. Teams may present to the JUDGES uninterrupted for up to 5 minutes.
3. JUDGES will ask open ended questions to the team for the remaining of the scheduled structured interview time.
4. Team departs from the interview space.
5. JUDGES discuss the structured interview and complete the feedback form.
6. JUDGES welcome the next team into the structured interview location and repeat the process.

Teams are encouraged to review the [Judge Interview Question Bank](#) prior to their judging interviews to understand the type of questions that may be asked by the JUDGES. At each event, the JUDGE Advisor will select two questions from the question bank that all teams will be asked at the start of the structured interview’s question and answer session. One question will be focused on the MCI award category, and one question will be focused on the TA award category. After the first two questions are asked and answered, JUDGES may ask additional questions to help evaluate the team’s performance against the award criteria.

Additional questions asked during interviews may come from the question bank but teams should be prepared to answer questions that are not listed within the document.

### 6.1.3 Pit Interview(s)

After all the judging panels have finished, the JUDGES compare notes and may elect to follow up with the teams in the pit area during the competition and conduct informal pit interviews. During pit interviews, teams have the opportunity to expand upon materials presented in the structured interview and share additional content with the JUDGES (for example, ROBOT prototypes, design artifacts, and photos or letters from outreach events). A team does not need to prepare another presentation for a pit interview but should be ready to answer questions from the JUDGES.

JUDGES may read additional information during pit interviews but will not bring back additional printed content to be referenced as part of the JUDGE deliberations.

#### 6.1.4 Sustained Outreach and Demonstrating Impact by Numbers

In general, JUDGES will consider ongoing, sustained outreach to be of higher quality than occasional or one-off outreach. JUDGES will seek to understand what is the impact of the outreach to the individuals being reached by the activity.

Teams are encouraged to review the [Outreach Terms and Definitions Document](#) to understand the requirements behind specific terms (starting a *FIRST* team, running an event, reaching x number of people). JUDGES may ask specific questions when a specific term listed in this document is mentioned in a team's PORTFOLIO or during an interview.

## 6.2 Team Judged Award Rules

This section outlines rules for in-person judging of Team Judged Awards. Modifications for the judging process at the *FIRST* Championship can be found in [Section 15.1](#).

**A201 \*Team PORTFOLIOS have limits.** Teams have the opportunity to submit a team PORTFOLIO to be used as part of the judging process. No other printed or digital content not directly included in this document will be collected by the JUDGES to consider during deliberations. Team PORTFOLIOS must meet the following requirements:

- A. must consist of 1 cover page including the team number and optionally: team name, PORTFOLIO table of contents, team organizations, sponsors, logo, motto, and picture of the ROBOT and/or team,
- B. no more than 15 pages of content,
- C. use only US Letter (8.5" x 11") or A4 (210 x 297 mm) size pages,
- D. if submitted digitally, the complete submission must be less than 15MB in size, and
- E. must only include progress, challenges, and accomplishments which have taken place since January 1, 2025.

None of the content of the cover page will be used by JUDGES to evaluate any awards criteria. Any content beyond the allowed 15 pages will not be reviewed by the JUDGES.

Teams are encouraged to limit Personally Identifying Information (PII) in the PORTFOLIO. Best practices would be to use only first names and optionally last initials of STUDENTS. Photographs including images of STUDENT team members are acceptable. The JUDGES use the cover page to identify the team associated with the PORTFOLIO. Teams who forget to include a cover page may be disqualified from judging if the JUDGES cannot determine what team the PORTFOLIO is associated with.

Teams should carefully consider font size, color, and graphic design when making their PORTFOLIO so that all JUDGES are able to read their submission. Teams whose design choices include small fonts (<10 pt) or low contrast text on images will not be excluded from consideration but understand that JUDGES will not be able to use anything they cannot read. Teams can use various free accessibility tools, like [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#), to help them design with readability in mind.

JUDGES will not open, view, or use any included links to other documents, websites, or videos referenced to linked to from the PORTFOLIO. JUDGES may

read additional information during pit interviews but will not bring back additional printed content to be referenced as part of the JUDGE deliberations.

Teams may use writing and research aids including Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help them compose their PORTFOLIOS. If AI or other resources are used, they must be credited via footnote or endnote, and respect intellectual property rights and licenses. Proper Credit can look like this: "PORTFOLIO created by Team XXXXX and ChatGPT".

A team may reference previous seasons (for example, in a team or organizational plan) to demonstrate growth, but the emphasis must be on the current season.

- A202 \*PORTFOLIOS must be submitted on time and as requested.** Teams must submit their PORTFOLIO as instructed by the Event Director and by the stated deadline if they wish to have it considered during the judging process. If no other instructions are provided, teams should submit 1 printed copy of their PORTFOLIO during the structured interview.

Instructions about when and how teams should submit their PORTFOLIOS should be communicated by the Event Director before the event.

If circumstances prevent a team from following the PORTFOLIO submission instructions, the Event Director should work with the JUDGE Advisor to make reasonable accommodations to accept all team PORTFOLIOS unless doing so poses an undue burden to the judging process.

- A203 \*Teams must attend a structured interview session.** To be considered for any judged awards the team must attend their assigned structured interview session.

Teams should be informed of their assigned time by the Event Director or local Program Delivery Partner in advance of the event. If there is a schedule conflict or the team misses their structured interview slot due to unforeseen circumstances the team should work with the Event Director or local Program Delivery Partner to make reasonable alternate accommodations for a structured interview at the event if possible.

- A204 \*Bring the right resources with you for your structured interview.** Teams attending their structured interview time slot should come prepared with the following:

- A. no less than 2 STUDENT representatives for teams of 2 STUDENTS and larger,
- B. a printed copy of their team PORTFOLIO (optional, submit as instructed by the Event Director),
- C. "show and tell" demonstration items which may include the team's ROBOT (encouraged, but optional),
- D. 1 silent observer per [A208](#) (optional), and
- E. 1 support person to fill accommodation needs per [A209](#) (optional, as needed).

Teams are encouraged to have as many STUDENTS as possible involved in the structured interview process.

A team does not have to have a ROBOT to participate in judging or be eligible for judged awards.

Teams may power on and demonstrate their ROBOT functions during the structured interview unless explicitly disallowed by the Event Director or Local

Program Delivery Partner. All teams should have the same demonstration restrictions.

- A205** **\*Everyone gets equal structured interview time.** All teams will be scheduled for the same length structured interview of at least 10 minutes with a minimum of 10 minutes reserved between structured interviews for JUDGES to confer.
- A206** **\*The structured interview timer starts when the team starts.** The timer starts after the team has entered the room and when they begin their presentation. Teams who take an extended amount of time to begin will be warned by the JUDGES to begin promptly and then the structured interview timer will be started regardless of the readiness of the presenting team.

Teams should enter the room and prepare to begin speaking in an expedited manner. This rule is aimed at letting large teams get lined up and oriented in the room and for the JUDGES to introduce themselves and provide reminders of the interview format.

Do not attempt to abuse the delayed start timer to set up equipment or otherwise gain an advantage.

- A207** **\*Prepared structured presentation time should not be interrupted.** The first 5 minutes of the structured interview are reserved for the team to present a prepared oral presentation uninterrupted, if they choose. The uninterrupted presentation time may be ended early by the team. Any remaining time should be a question and answer conversation with the STUDENTS and led by the JUDGES.
- A208** **\*One adult silent observer is welcome.** One adult mentor may attend the judging session and be present for any interaction between the JUDGES and the STUDENT team members. Adult mentor(s) may be present for any interactions between the JUDGES and the STUDENT team members outside of the structured interview. The adult observer and mentor(s) may not interact or actively coach during any interaction between the JUDGES and the STUDENT team members.

The purpose of the adult silent observer is to provide silent confidence to the STUDENT team members presenting in an unknown environment with new people.

- A209** **\*Translator and/or Sign Language Interpreter accommodations will be made for teams who need it.** Teams who need to use a translator to communicate with the JUDGES may provide one if the team's native language does not match that of the event host site provided JUDGES. This includes sign language or other adaptive technology. Teams who intend to interview with the assistance of a translator must work with the Event Director in advance to request additional interview time of between 2 and 5 minutes, if needed. The translator may be an adult and can be in addition to the silent observer in [A208](#).

In most cases the translator will need to be provided by the team. If other accommodation is needed, the team should [contact your local leadership](#) to discuss options.

- A210** **\*No Photos, Video or Audio recording during structured interview.** In addition to the restrictions of [E117](#), no recording of video or audio, or photos may be taken during the structured interview.
- A211** **\*The number of awards given scales with event size.** The total number of awards given is based on the number of teams checked in at the event. Not all awards are given at every competition. Only the awards specified in Table 6-1 based on the event size are points-eligible for advancement.

Table 6-1: Total judged awards available based on all event participating teams

		Total Event Participating Teams			
Award		4-10 Teams	11-20 Teams	21-40 Teams	41-64 Teams
Inspire Award		1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place
Think Award		1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place (3 <sup>rd</sup> Place*)
TA Awards	Connect Award	1 <sup>st</sup> Place (Only one of Connect, Reach, or Sustain will be given)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place (2 <sup>nd</sup> Place*)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place (3 <sup>rd</sup> Place*)
	Reach Award		1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place (2 <sup>nd</sup> Place*)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place (3 <sup>rd</sup> Place*)
	Sustain Award		1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place (2 <sup>nd</sup> Place*)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place (3 <sup>rd</sup> Place*)
MCI Awards	Design Award	1 <sup>st</sup> Place (Only one of Innovate, Control or Design will be given)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place (2 <sup>nd</sup> Place*)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place (3 <sup>rd</sup> Place*)
	Innovate Award		1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place (2 <sup>nd</sup> Place*)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place (3 <sup>rd</sup> Place*)
	Control Award		1 <sup>st</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> Place (2 <sup>nd</sup> Place*)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place (3 <sup>rd</sup> Place*)
Judges' Choice Award		Optional*	Optional*	Optional*	Optional*

\*Discretionary awards

Check the [Judge and Judge Advisor Manuals](#) for exact details.

See section [13.8 Dual Division Events](#) for the modified dual division version of this rule.

**A212 \*Judging feedback is provided to all teams.** All teams will receive feedback from their structured interview session. The JUDGES complete a form immediately following the structured interview based on their initial impression of the team. This feedback form is not used during deliberations and does not include any updated feedback based on later interactions by the JUDGES with the team.

The feedback form will either be returned with the PORTFOLIO for in-person judging near the end of the event, or the Lead Coach 1 will receive access to a digital version in [FTC-Scoring](#) following the event in the case of remote judging.

**A213 \*Teams are only eligible to win the Inspire Award in their own region.** Teams are only eligible to be considered for the Inspire Award (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place) when competing at a tournament within their own region.

**A214** \*Teams cannot win the Inspire Award at multiple Qualifying or League Tournaments. Teams are only eligible to win 1<sup>st</sup> place Inspire Award once per season from any Qualifying or League Tournament.

Teams who have won 1<sup>st</sup> Place Inspire are eligible to win 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place Inspire Award at subsequent Qualifying or League Tournaments.

**A215** \*Teams can only get one judged award. Teams are only eligible to win or be a runner-up for a single judged award at the event.

## 6.3 Team Judged Award Descriptions

### 6.3.1 Inspire Award

The team that receives this award is a strong ambassador for *FIRST* programs and a role model *FIRST* team. This team is a top contender for many other judged awards and is a gracious competitor.

The Inspire Award winner is an inspiration to other teams, acting with Gracious Professionalism® both on and off the playing FIELD. This team shares their experiences, enthusiasm, and knowledge with other teams, sponsors, their community, and the JUDGES. Working as a unit, this team will have shown success in performing the task of designing and building a ROBOT.

Table 6-2: Inspire Award Criteria

Inspire Award Criteria		
<b>Required</b>	1	Team must submit a PORTFOLIO.
<b>Required</b>	2	The Inspire Award celebrates the strongest qualities of all the judged awards. A team must be a strong contender for at least one award in each of the following judged award categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Machine, Creativity, and Innovation Awards,</li> <li>B. Team Attributes Awards, and</li> <li>C. Think Award.</li> </ul>
<b>Required</b>	3	Team must be positive and inclusive, and each team member contribute to the success of the team.
<b>Required</b>	4	Team is able to describe, demonstrate, document, or display their experiences and knowledge to the JUDGES.

### 6.3.2 Think Award

This judged award is given to the team that best reflects the journey the team took as they experienced their season. The content within the PORTFOLIO is the key reference for JUDGES to help identify the most deserving team. The team could share or provide additional detailed information that is helpful for the JUDGES.

Table 6-3: Think Award Criteria

Think Award Criteria		
<b>Required</b>	1	Team must submit a PORTFOLIO. The PORTFOLIO must include engineering content which includes at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. evidence of use of the engineering process,</li> <li>B. lessons learned and implemented related to the design of their ROBOT,</li> <li>C. trade off analysis /cost benefit analysis, and/or</li> <li>D. mathematical analysis used to make design decisions.</li> </ul>
<b>Encouraged</b>	2	Team PORTFOLIO may include information about resources which includes any number of the following examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. how the team learns from team mentors, and/or a development plan for team members to learn new skills,</li> <li>B. how the team recruited new people into <i>FIRST</i>, and/or</li> <li>C. how the team identified goals and tracked progress towards their goals throughout the season.</li> </ul>
<b>Encouraged</b>	3	PORTFOLIO information is organized in a clear and intuitive manner

### 6.3.3 Connect Award

This judged award is given to the team that connects with their local science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) community to learn and adopt new tools through effort and persistence. This team has a team plan and has identified steps to achieve their goals. A PORTFOLIO is not required for this award.

Table 6-4: Connect Award Criteria

Connect Award Criteria		
<b>Required</b>	1	Team must describe, display, or document a team plan that covers all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. The team's goals for the development of team member skills, and</li> <li>B. The steps the team has taken or will take to reach those goals</li> </ul>
<b>Encouraged</b>	2	Provide examples of developing in person or virtual connections with individuals in the engineering, science, or technology community.
<b>Encouraged</b>	3	Provide examples of how it actively engages with the engineering community.

### 6.3.4 Reach Award

This award celebrates a team that has introduced and recruited new people into *FIRST*. Through their efforts, they have sparked others to embrace the *FIRST* culture. A PORTFOLIO is not required for this award.

Table 6-5 Reach Award Criteria

Reach Award Criteria		
Required	1	Team must discuss, describe, display, or document their outreach objectives and how their outreach activities support the <i>FIRST</i> community.
Required	2	Team must discuss, describe, display, or document their successful recruitment of new teams, or coaches, or mentors and/or volunteers who are not otherwise active within the <i>FIRST</i> community.
Encouraged	3	Is an ambassador for <i>FIRST</i> programs in a way that makes <i>FIRST</i> loud.
Encouraged	4	Has a creative and evolving approach to outreach materials that market their team and <i>FIRST</i> .

### 6.3.5 Sustain Award

Sustainability and planning are essential for a *FIRST* team, because they ensure the program's long-term success. This award celebrates the team that has considered their future team members and has worked to ensure that their team or program will continue to exist long after they have gone on to develop their careers. A PORTFOLIO is not required for this award.

Table 6-6 Sustain Award Criteria

Sustain Award Criteria		
Required	1	Team must discuss, describe, display, or document their plan(s) which includes at least one of the following: A. finances and financial sustainability plan, B. season project planning, and/or C. team sustainability plans and/or objectives.
Required	2	Team must discuss, describe, display or document how a team tracks their progress towards their plan(s) listed above.
Encouraged	3	Team has clear team roles for all members of the team and a process for developing leadership.
Encouraged	4	Team can discuss, describe, display, or document how they manage the team's constraints and/or risks.

### 6.3.6 Innovate Award sponsored by RTX

The Innovate Award celebrates a team that thinks imaginatively and has the ingenuity, creativity, and inventiveness to make their designs come to life. This judged award is given to the team that has an innovative and creative ROBOT design solution to any specific components in the FIRST Tech Challenge game. Elements of this award include design, robustness, and creative thinking related to design. This award may address the design of the whole ROBOT or of a MECHANISM attached to the ROBOT and should work consistently during MATCHES, but does not have to work all the time to be considered for this award. A PORTFOLIO is not required for this award.

Table 6-7: Innovate Award Criteria

Innovate Award Criteria		
<b>Required</b>	1	Team must describe, display, or document examples of the team’s engineering content that illustrate how the team arrived at their design solution.
<b>Required</b>	2	ROBOT or ROBOT MECHANISM is creative and/or unique in its design.
<b>Required</b>	3	The innovative element must be stable, robust, and contribute positively to the team’s game objectives most of the time.
<b>Encouraged</b>	4	Designs often come with risks, the team should discuss, describe, display or document how they mitigated that risk.

### 6.3.7 Control Award

The Control Award celebrates a team that uses sensors and software to increase the ROBOT’S functionality during gameplay. This award is given to the team that demonstrates innovative thinking and solutions to solve game challenges such as autonomous operation, improving mechanical systems with intelligent control, or using sensors to achieve better results. The solution(s) should work consistently during MATCHES but does not have to work all the time. Solutions considered for this award are not solely limited to the AUTO period of the MATCH and may also be used during TELEOP. The team’s PORTFOLIO must contain a summary of the software, sensors, and mechanical control but would not include copies of the code itself.

Table 6-8: Control Award Criteria

Control Award Criteria		
<b>Required</b>	1	Team must submit a PORTFOLIO. The PORTFOLIO must include all of the following: A. hardware and/or software control COMPONENTS on the ROBOT, B. which challenges each COMPONENT or system is intended to solve, and C. how does each COMPONENT or system work.
<b>Required</b>	2	Team must use one or more hardware or software solutions to improve ROBOT functionality by using external feedback and control.
<b>Encouraged</b>	3	The control solution(s) should work consistently during most MATCHES.
<b>Encouraged</b>	4	Team could discuss, describe, display, or document how the solution may consider reliability either through demonstrated effectiveness or identification of how the solution could be improved
<b>Encouraged</b>	5	Use of the engineering process to develop the control solutions (sensors, hardware and/or algorithms) used on the ROBOT includes lessons learned.

### 6.3.8 Design Award

The Design Award celebrates the team that demonstrates an understanding of industrial design principles by striking a balance between form, function, and aesthetics while meeting the needs of this season’s challenge. The design process used should result in a ROBOT which is efficiently designed and effectively addresses the game challenge. A PORTFOLIO is not required for this award.

Table 6-9: Design Award Criteria

Design Award Criteria		
<b>Required</b>	1	A team must be able to describe or demonstrate how their ROBOT is elegant, efficient (simple/executable), and practical to maintain.
<b>Required</b>	2	The entire machine design, or the detailed process used to develop the design, is worthy of this recognition, and not just a single COMPONENT.
<b>Encouraged</b>	3	The ROBOT distinguishes itself from others by its aesthetic and functional design.
<b>Encouraged</b>	4	The basis for the design is well considered (that is inspiration, function, etc.).
<b>Encouraged</b>	5	Design is effective and consistent with the team’s game plan and/or strategy.

### 6.3.9 Judges’ Choice Award

This award is optional and not given at all FIRST Tech Challenge events.

During the competition, the judging panel may meet a team whose unique efforts, performance, or dynamics merit recognition, but does not fit into any of the other award categories. To recognize these unique teams, FIRST offers a Judges’ Choice Award.

## 6.4 Tournament ALLIANCE Awards

### 6.4.1 Winning Alliance Award

This award will be given to the winning ALLIANCE represented in the final MATCH of the Playoffs of a single-division Tournament or Championship event. If the event is a dual-division or multi-division event, there will be Winning Alliance Awards awarded to both the division playoff winners and the event finals playoff winner.

### 6.4.2 Finalist Alliance Award

This award will be given to the finalist ALLIANCE represented in the final MATCH of the Playoffs of a single-division Tournament or Championship event. If the event is a dual-division or multi-division event this will be awarded to the division playoff finalists and the event finals playoff finalist.

## 6.5 Individual Awards

### 6.5.1 FIRST Leadership Award

The STUDENTS who earn FIRST Leadership Award status as a semi-finalist, finalist or winner, are great examples of current 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 of FIRST that these individuals will continue, post-award, as great leaders, [STUDENT alumni](#), and advocates of FIRST.

Please visit the [FIRST Leadership Award Website](#) to see complete award submission details and to see past FIRST Tech Challenge winners.

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.

### 6.5.2 Compass Award

This is an optional award and is only offered at the Regional Championship tournament level of competition. All teams attending FIRST Championship will have an opportunity to submit for this award.

The Compass Award recognizes an adult coach or mentor who has given outstanding guidance and support to a team throughout the year and demonstrates to the team what it means to be a Gracious Professional. The winner of the Compass Award will be chosen from candidates nominated by FIRST Tech Challenge STUDENT team members, via a 40-60 second video submission. The video must highlight how their mentor has helped them become an inspirational team. The video should emphasize what sets the mentor apart.

Table 6-10: Compass Award Criteria

Compass Award Criteria		
<b>Required</b>	1	Team must be able to clearly articulate this mentor’s contribution to the team and explain what sets this mentor apart.
<b>Required</b>	2	Submission must be in video format and meet the following requirements: A. submitted by the deadline established by the Event Director or local Program Delivery Partner instructions,

### Compass Award Criteria

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B. be in one of the following formats: .mp4, .mov, .avi, or .wmv (no links to streaming services will be accepted),</li> <li>C. one video submission per team per event (videos can be updated or changed between events),</li> <li>D. all music must be used with permission from the copywrite owners and be indicated in the video credits, and</li> <li>E. videos cannot be longer than 60 seconds, including credits.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|

Teams are encouraged to review the [FIRST Branding and Style Guidelines](#) before creating their video.

## 6.6 Project-Based Global Awards

Project-based global awards are awards that are only judged and awarded once per season and are open to all registered FIRST Tech Challenge teams. Each award has its own independent requirements and deadlines. These awards do not contribute towards team advancement.

### 6.6.1 Digital Animation Award sponsored by Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)

This award, sponsored by Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), celebrates STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) and emphasizes the ability to tell a story through animation that integrates technological, social, and humanistic concepts.

The 2026 Digital Animation Award is offered to help encourage students to cultivate skills in design and creation of animation while telling a story about the impact of technology on society. This award is open to all FIRST Robotics Competition teams and FIRST Tech Challenge teams and is optional. More information can be found on the [Digital Animation Award webpage](#).

### 6.6.2 Safety Animation Award sponsored by UL Solutions

The 2025-26 theme for the Safety Animation Award, sponsored by UL Solutions, is: Unearth Safety! For this animation teams are invited to dig deep to uncover impactful ways to implement safe and sustainable practices. Use bold storytelling and imaginative artistry to create a memorable message that inspires responsible exploration and careful stewardship of our resources. More information can be found on the [Safety webpage](#).

