

FIRST® Leadership Award

Program Delivery Partner Guide

Contents

What is the <i>FIRST</i> ® Tech Challenge Leadership Award?.....	2
<i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award Criteria	2
Important <i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award Season Dates	3
<i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award Events	3
What is the Deadline for Team Nominations?	3
Interview Timeline.....	4
<i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award Evaluation Structure	4
<i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award Volunteer Roles.....	5
Number of Advancing Finalists by Region	6
Judges Portal.....	7
Recruiting Volunteers	8
Recognition at Events	8
<i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award FAQ's	10
Judges Portal Instructions	11
<i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award Events – Editing Interview Dates.....	16
Useful Links and Information.....	19

Revision History	
Revision	Description
V25-26.1	Initial 2025-26 Season Release
V25-26.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added “Interview Timeline” section Added “Editing Interview Dates” section
V25-26.3	Removed France and Cyprus from number of advancing finalists
V25-26.4	Removed Puerto Rico from international list, as they are part of the USA.
V26-26.5	Remove South Carolina from 2 finalists list in Advancing number of finalists – North America. SC has 3 spots as indicated on list
V25-26.6	Replaced “Dean’s List Award” with “ <i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award” throughout document

What is the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge 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 three (3) levels of *FIRST* Leadership Award students.

1. ***FIRST*® Leadership Award Semi-finalists** – comprised of the two (2) students in their 10th or 11th school year nominated by each team.
2. ***FIRST*® Leadership Award Finalists** - The students selected for each regional championship.
3. ***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 either 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 of *FIRST* that *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. This grant is awarded to a student selected from among the prior year's *FIRST* Robotics Competition and *FIRST* Tech Challenge Leadership Award winners.

Student Eligibility

Every registered *FIRST* Tech Challenge team can submit up to two (2) students as *FIRST* Leadership Award semi-finalists.

- Students must be a sophomore (grade 10) or junior (grade 11) to be eligible for this award.
 - 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.
- The coach or mentor nominating the student(s) must submit an essay explaining why the student should receive this award. The essay must be 4,000 characters or less.

FIRST Leadership Award Criteria

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

Important *FIRST* Leadership Award Season Dates

<i>FIRST</i> Leadership Award Important Dates	
September 6, 2025	Nominations open
December 15, 2025	Nominations due
February 15, 2026	Finalist selections due to <i>FIRST</i>
Various	RCMP's announce finalists
April 2026	Winners announced at <i>FIRST</i> Championship

FIRST Leadership Award Events

New in the 2025-2026 season, Program Delivery Partners are no longer required to create their own *FIRST* Leadership Award Interview event. Events will be created by *FIRST* for all regions prior to Kickoff. All regions will follow the same deadline for all *FIRST* Leadership Award nominations, as outlined in the next section.

Program Delivery Partners, however, must access their *FIRST* Leadership Award event using the *FIRST* Tech Challenge scoring system to set up the window in which the region will be holding interviews. The interview windows must only happen within the date ranges of December 15, 2025 through February 15th, 2026. Please be aware that Finalists are due to *FIRST* on February 15th, so interviews should be schedule prior to this date to provide enough time for finalist selection.

To select the window for your region, please see [FIRST Leadership Award Events - Editing Interview](#) Dates section of this document for step-by-step instructions.

What is the Deadline for Team Nominations?

The deadline for all teams to nominate students is December 15th, 2025 at 11:59pm **Eastern time**.

DECEMBER 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17			
21	22	23	24			
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

All regions will have a nomination deadline of December 15th at 11:59pm eastern time.

Interview Timeline

DECEMBER 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

Nominations Due (pointing to Dec 15)

Interview Window (spanning Dec 16-27)

JANUARY 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Interview Window (spanning Jan 1-17)

FEBRUARY 2026

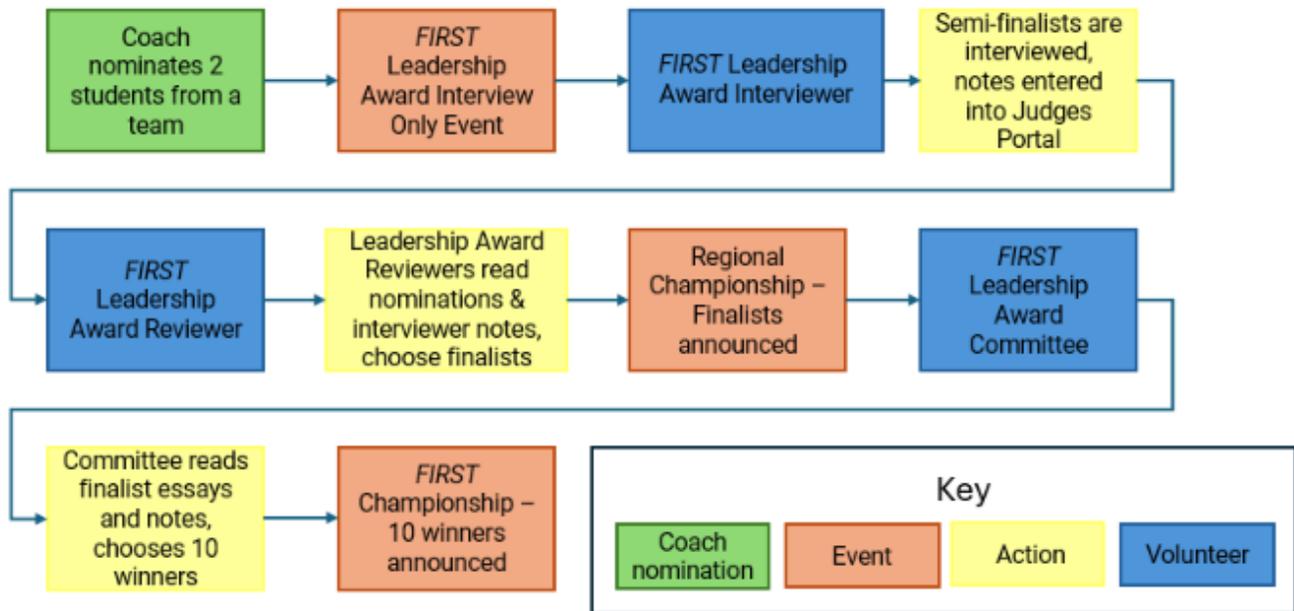
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Interview Window (spanning Feb 1-14)

Finalists Due (pointing to Feb 15)

FIRST Leadership Award Evaluation Structure

The chart below is a visual aid to show how each category feeds into specific levels of competition, starting with the coach making the nominations. *FIRST* Leadership Award interviewers are responsible for interviewing semi-finalists (nominees). Interviews are done either in person at a traditional event, or remotely (this will be region dependent, please check with your local program delivery partner). The *FIRST* Leadership Award reviewer will then review the nominations and the interviewer notes within a state/region to determine which students will move to the next level as *FIRST* Leadership Award finalists. Depending upon the size of the region, there will be 2-4 *FIRST* Leadership Award finalists within each state or region (see [Number of Advancing Finalists by Region](#) for further details). These finalists will be announced at the Regional Championship Tournament. A separate panel called the *FIRST* Leadership Award Committee will review the *FIRST* Leadership Award finalists and choose the 10 *FIRST* Tech Challenge Leadership Award winners.



FIRST Leadership Award Volunteer Roles

Overview

There are two volunteer roles that are required to evaluate the *FIRST* Leadership Award; the *FIRST* Leadership Award Interviewer and the *FIRST* Leadership Award Reviewer.

FIRST Leadership Award Interviewer

FIRST Leadership Award Interviewers main responsibility is to interview semi-finalists; however, there are other responsibilities the interviewer must take on before and after the event. These responsibilities include:

- Review nominations prior to the event.
- Interview the Semi-finalist during the event.
- Write a narrative about the interview after the event.

The *FIRST* Leadership Award Interviewer is not responsible for selecting the finalists for their region. Interviewers gather information to pass along to the *FIRST* Leadership Award Reviewers via a written narrative to assist the Reviewers in their role of selecting the region's Finalists.

FIRST Leadership Award Reviewer

The *FIRST* Leadership Award Reviewers are responsible for selecting the *FIRST* Leadership Award Finalists. There will be at least two reviewers in a region that work together to select the finalists for that particular region. The reviewers must access the [Judges Portal](#) to view the original nomination as well as the notes from the *FIRST* Leadership Award interviewers. Once all of the nominations and notes have been taken into consideration, the reviewers are responsible for choosing the number of Finalists allocated for that region. *FIRST* Leadership Award reviewers do not need to be present at the event;

rather they review each semi-finalist and enter the Finalists in the [Judges Portal](#). This information will feed up to the regional championship PDP.

Number of Advancing Finalists by Region

The number of semi-finalists that will move onto the next level as finalists depends upon the region. Regions with larger team numbers will have additional spots to advance students. Prior to the start of each season, finalist numbers are reevaluated. The following chart shows how finalist numbers are determined:

Number of Teams	Number of Finalists
0 – 49	2
50 – 139	3
140 +	4

The lists below outline the number of advancing finalists by region:

North America

2 Finalists	3 Finalists	4 Finalists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alabama • Alaska • Arkansas • Connecticut • Delaware • Four Corners • Hawaii • Idaho • Kentucky • Louisiana • Montana • Nebraska • Nevada • Newfoundland and Labrador • New Mexico • New York – Long Island • North Dakota • Puerto Rico • Quebec, Canada • Rhode Island • South Carolina • Tennessee • Texas – South* • Utah • Vermont • Wyoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta, Canada • Arizona • British Columbia, Canada • California – San Diego • Colorado • Indiana • Mexico • Mississippi • New Hampshire • New York – Excelsior • New York – NYC • Ohio • Oklahoma • Ontario, Canada • Oregon • South Carolina • Texas – West and Panhandle* • Wisconsin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California – LA • California – NorCal • Chesapeake • Florida • Georgia • Illinois • Iowa • Massachusetts • Minnesota • Missouri • New Jersey • North Carolina • Pennsylvania • Texas – Central* • Texas - Houston • Texas – North* • Washington

*Although these regions are now merged, they will continue to have separate allocations for the *FIRST* Leadership Award.

International

2 Finalists	3 Finalists	4 Finalists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese Taipei • Germany • Greece • Hungary • Indonesia • Italy • Lithuania • Malaysia • Morocco • New Zealand • Nigeria • Poland • Qatar • Saudi Arabia • Thailand • Vietnam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia • Benelux (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg) • Brazil • China • DoD • India • Israel • Jamaica • Libya • Republic of Korea • South Africa • Türkiye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kazakhstan • Romania • United Kingdom and Ireland

Judges Portal

The Judges Portal is the tool used to track nominations, interviewers' notes, and selected finalists. <https://my.firstinspires.org/Judging/> See the [Judges Portal Instructions](#) for more details.

Partner Access to the Portal

Program delivery partners have been granted access to the portal and should be able to view all of their events within the region. This will allow each partner to track the nominations, recruit enough volunteers based on the number of nominations, and ensure that notes have been submitted for each nomination.

Granting Access to Volunteers

In order to allow a volunteer access to the portal, they must first apply to the role of *FIRST* Leadership Award interviewer or *FIRST* Leadership Award reviewer in the [Volunteer Registration System](#). Once they have applied, they must be assigned by the PDP or volunteer coordinator to the role in the Volunteer Management System (VMS). The assignment in the VMS is what grants the Volunteer access to the Judges Portal.

Once the volunteer has been assigned to the role, they will only be able to access the event in which they have been assigned.

Note: If the Volunteer will be fulfilling the role at multiple events, they must be assigned to each event.

Recruiting Volunteers

Since partners have access to all nominations within their region, they should be sure to check the number of nominations when the nomination timeframe closes. Knowing how many nominations there are for an event is necessary to recruit enough volunteers to interview the semi-finalists.

Recruiting Interviewers

FIRST Leadership Award interviewers have two very important responsibilities: interviewing the semi-finalist and writing up notes after the interview. When recruiting for this position, keep in mind that the interviewer should have strong writing skills, and experience with interviewing is preferred. College admissions officers, or someone in a similar field, would make a great interviewer.

At a minimum, there must be two Interviewers on staff to conduct *FIRST* Leadership Award interviews. A panel of two interviewers should be able to interview up to five Semi-finalists. If there are more than five interviews, an additional panel of interviewers may be needed.

Recruiting Reviewers

The reviewers have the important task of reading through multiple nominations, notes from the interviewers, and making a decision on which candidates should move to the next level of competition as finalists. There are no rules that state an interviewer cannot serve as a reviewer, however it's important to remind them to keep an open mind to all of the candidates and choose the candidates that most closely match the award criteria.

There must be at least two reviewers assessing the candidate's essays and interview notes. Some regions choose to form a committee to work through all the nominations and make the decision on the Finalists.

Recognition at Events

Semi-finalist Recognition

Students nominated as semi-finalists should be proud of their accomplishments and should be recognized for these accomplishments. Below are two ways to recognize semi-finalists at the event.

Semi-finalist Pins

FIRST has created semi-finalist pins to be given out to students interviewed at an event. These can either be provided after the interview, or if the PDP chooses, can be handed out at the closing ceremony to recognize the student in front of their peers.

NOTE: The pins will be mailed in December 2025 directly to the Program Delivery Partners. PDPs should arrange to have pins sent to their event hosts who have *FIRST* Leadership Award Semi-finalists at their event.

Closing Ceremonies Recognition

PDP's and event hosts are encouraged to invite their semi-finalists to the center stage for recognition at the closing ceremonies if time allows. This is a very public way for the student to be recognized for their nomination. Some events also choose to announce the names of the semi-finalists and have them stand in the audience for applause. This should only be done at qualifying tournaments or league

tournaments. The awards scripts created for the Emcee include a script for the *FIRST* Leadership Award semi-finalists.

However, inviting students to the stage should **not** be done at a Regional Championship Tournament. Since Finalists are announced at the State/Region Championship, the Semi-finalist(s) that do not advance should not have to walk off the stage after not moving to the next level. Only do this at Qualifying Tournaments or League Tournaments.

Finalist Recognition Certificates

Each Finalist should receive a certificate in honor of their achievements. *FIRST* will send out the appropriate number of finalist certificates to each region along with certificate folders to present to the finalists at the award ceremonies. The event host or PDP will need to fill in the finalist's name and the date of the event prior to passing out the certificate. If you have not received blank certificates, please email FTC-LeadershipAward@firstinspires.org.

NOTE: The certificates will be mailed in December 2025.

FIRST Leadership Award FAQ's

Can a student be nominated for both *FIRST* Tech Challenge and *FIRST* Robotics Competition Leadership Award?

Both *FIRST* Robotics Competition and *FIRST* Tech Challenge students are eligible to be nominated as a *FIRST* Leadership Award semi-finalist within their program. There are no rules that state that a student that participates in both programs cannot be nominated for the *FIRST* Leadership Award for both programs.

Do Semi-finalists get a second interview at the Regional Championship?

No, semi-finalists for *FIRST* Tech Challenge will only have one interview before the regional championship tournament.

Do Finalists get a second interview at the *FIRST* Championship?

No. The *FIRST* Leadership Award Committee for *FIRST* Tech Challenge reviews all the finalists nominations essays and interviewer notes prior to the *FIRST* Championship. The winners of the award are selected prior to the event and announced at the *FIRST* Championship.

Can Submissions Be Made Past the Deadline?

There will be no exceptions to the deadline. *FIRST* Tech Challenge will not accept submissions after the deadline unless there is a verifiable issue with the Team's dashboard. Please forward any requests to FTC-LeadershipAward@firstinspires.org.

Who Submits the Nomination?

Please refer to the [FIRST Leadership Award Nomination Guide](#) for info on who can submit the nomination, as well as a walkthrough of submitting the nomination through the dashboard.

Judges Portal Instructions

Review Nominations

Link to Portal: <https://my.firstinspires.org/Judging/>

- Click "Login" at the upper righthand corner. This will redirect to the www.firstinspires.org login page.



- Log in using your username and password for your www.firstinspires.org account.

Login With *FIRST* Account

Email Address

Password

 Show Password Remember My Login

[Login](#)

[Forgot Password](#)
Not registered yet? [Sign Up here](#)

- Once logged in, click “FTC – Leadership Award”



- Click “Edit/View” to access the nominations for the event.

2022 Dean's List Award Summary

2022 FTC Events			
Event Name	Due Date	Winners / Finalists	
December			
January			
CHS-VA Dean's List Interview Event 1 <i>Interview Only</i> Remote Event, VA USA	Jan 07, 2023	(interview-only event) 1 Completed Submissions	EDIT/ VIEW
CHS Remote Dean's List Interview Event 2 <i>Interview Only</i> Remote Event, VA USA	Jan 08, 2023	(interview-only event) 2 Completed Submissions	EDIT/ VIEW

- Click “Details” to access each individual nomination

FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC)
 Dean's List Award System

2022 Dean's List Award - CHS Remote Dean's List Interview Event 2 [← Back to Event Summary](#)

Semi-Finalists to be Judged at this event

Semi-Finalist	Summary	
Nominee #1 Owings Mills, MD Modified: 04-Nov-2022	Team: 1234 Team Name: Ledge Street School	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Print All Contact Info </div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;"> Details </div>
Nominee #2 Owings Mills, MD Modified: 04-Nov-2022	Team: 1234 Team Name: Ledge Street School	<div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;"> Details </div>

- The student information, along with the essay from the coach will be shown on this screen. Make sure to read through the nomination essay prior to interviewing each student.
- **NEW! Preferred Name** – If the student has a preferred name, it will be listed in parenthesis next to their legal name.

Important: If a preferred name is present, please be sure to use the preferred name when addressing the student during their interview.

View Submission

Printable Page

Back

2023 NH Test DLA Interview Only Event Remote - Team 8845 - John (Jack) Smith 12-Oct-2023			
Team			Unlock
Team Number	8845	# Student on team	
City,State	Concord, NH		
Dean's List Award Nominee			
First Name	John (Jack)	Last Name	Smith
Year of graduation	2025	How long has the student been involved in FIRST?	5 years
Judging Venue			
Judge Nominee At	NH Test DLA Interview Only Event Remote		
Submitter Contact Information			
Submitted By	Coach Name		
Phone	6036663906	Email	coach1@gmail.com
Explain how the student embodies the philosophies of <i>Gracious Professionalism</i> [®] and <i>Coopertition</i> [®] through the FIRST Core Values: Discovery, Innovation, Impact, Inclusion, Teamwork and Fun. Please provide examples.			
Essay Test 1			
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.			
Essay Test 2			
How does the student's individual contribution to the team benefit the team as a whole? Please provide examples.			
Essay Test 3			
Describe the students' experience in areas of STEM. This could include but is not limited to skills in engineering, software, CAD, fabrication, etc. Please provide examples.			
Essay Test 4			
Explain the student's leadership to their fellow team members. How do they motivate others? What is their leadership style? Please provide examples.			
Essay Test 5			
Please share anything else you would like us to know about the student, including academic performance, specialized skills, or extracurricular activities.			
Specialized skills, extracurricular activities, etc.			

Select Finalists

- Locate the regional championship event from the Judges Portal and click “Edit/View”.

2023 Dean’s List Award Summary

2023 FTC Events			
Event Name	Due Date	Winners / Finalists	
September ▼			
October ↑ Back to top ▼			
November ↑ Back to top ▼			
December ↑ Back to top ▲			
CA-LA DLA Test Championship Hybrid LA, CA USA	Dec 18, 2023	(not selected) 1 Completed Submissions	 EDIT/ VIEW

- The finalist must be selected in the portal to be reported to *FIRST*. Select each finalist from the dropdown and click “save”.

Assign Award

Select Finalists

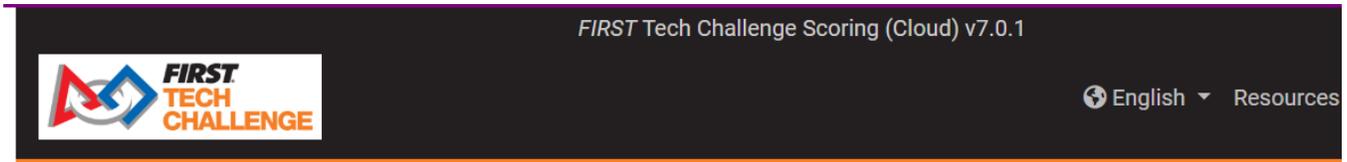
Finalist <input type="text" value="Please Select"/>	Finalist <input type="text" value="Please Select"/>	<input type="button" value="Save"/>
--	--	-------------------------------------

Finalists will receive a notification email from *FIRST* after the event has taken place, and after the student has been announced as a finalist at the regional championship.

FIRST Leadership Award Events – Editing Interview Dates

To edit the dates in your *FIRST* Leadership Award Interview event, follow these steps:

1. Log into <https://ftc-scoring.firstinspires.org>
2. Select your region using the hyperlink once you are logged in.



Regions

[Mississippi \(USMS\)](#)

3. Select your *FIRST* Leadership Award Interviews event from the event list. Note that prior to selecting your interview date window, this will show “Unscheduled”.

Code	Name	↑↓ Type	↑↓ City	↑↓ End Date	↑↓
USMSDL	Mississippi Dean's List Interviews	Dean's List Interview Only	Remote	Remote Event	⚠️ Unscheduled ⚠️

- Once the *FIRST* Leadership Award Interviews event is selected, the following popup window will appear. Enter the interview start date, interviews end date, and your local time zone.

Some important things to consider when selecting your dates:

- If the date range is more than 7 days, only the last 7 days will be visible in VMS, Event Search Results, and in the Volunteer dashboard.
- Finalists are due to *FIRST* on February 15th, 2026. Make sure to provide enough time for interviews to be completed, and for the *FIRST* Leadership Award Reviewers to make Finalists selections prior to the deadline.

Edit Interview Dates and Timezone for Dean's List Event ✕

If a date range of more than 7 days is chosen, only the last 7 days will be visible in VMS.

Interviews Start Date

Interviews must start no earlier than December 16.

Interviews End Date

Interviews must end no later than February 15.

Start date cannot be empty. End date cannot be empty

Timezone

Cancel Save

5. Click "Save".

Edit Interview Dates and Timezone for Dean's List Event ✕

If a date range of more than 7 days is chosen, only the last 7 days will be visible in VMS.

Interviews Start Date

01/19/2026
📅

Interviews must start no earlier than December 16.

Interviews End Date

02/01/2026
📅

Interviews must end no later than February 15.

Timezone

America/Chicago - Central (most areas)
▼

Cancel
Save

6. If the interview dates selected are more than 7 days, only a 7 day window counting back from the end date will be shown

FIRST Tech Challenge
Mississippi Dean's List Interviews

EVENT LOCATION: - Remote Event, MS

EVENT DATE(S):
01/26/2026 - 02/01/2026

SET UP DATE:
TBA

TEAR DOWN DATE:
TBA

VOLUNTEER

MISSISSIPPI DEAN'S LIST INTERVIEWS

Date: Jan 26 - Feb 1 2026

Event: Dean's List Interview Only Event Remote

Program: FIRST Tech Challenge

Volunteer Now!

Useful Links and Information

On-Call Support Numbers

On-Call Support

These numbers are for *volunteer support only*. Teams should not use these numbers to call about rulings or technical assistance.

Administrative, Judge, Referee and Non-Technical Issues: (603)206-2412

Scoring System (FTC Live) or other Technical Issues: (603)206-2450
Call or use the **built-in chat feature on FTC Live** available for events with internet access

Pre-Event Support



Mon – Fri 8:30am – 5:00pm Eastern Time (UTC-4 or UTC-5)

[Contact Support](#) including live chat or email customerservice@firstinspires.org

Program Resources



[FIRST Tech Challenge Website](#)



[Event Search](#)



[Game and Season Resources](#)



[FIRST Tech Challenge Blog](#)



[Volunteer Resources](#)



[Team Email Blasts](#)

Feedback

We strive to create support materials that are the best they can be. If you have feedback about this manual, please email customerservice@firstinspires.org or by [contacting support](#). Thank you!