

Compass Alliance Pathways: Outreach

Welcome to The Compass Alliance Outreach Pathway. FIRST is about more than just the robot. Making an impact in the community and bringing attention to FIRST and STEM could be considered the true mission of FIRST. Start with your community through simple robot demonstrations and eventually move to more involved (and more impactful) outreach activities.

Stepping Stones - Start Internally

Start within your own school, community, and sponsors to make them aware of what you do. The more they know and appreciate your accomplishments and the publicity and attention you bring to them, the more they will support you.

1. Social Media is an easy and effective way to keep all of your stakeholders- team members, parents, school, community, sponsors- up to date with what you're doing.
2. Robot Demonstrations -
The simplest form of FIRST outreach is to show off your robot. Have handouts and students ready and able to talk about the program. This can help increase your team's standing in the community and increase awareness for both your team and FIRST in general. Why is this important? If our mission is to increase awareness of FIRST and STEM, the first step is to make people aware of FIRST- and what better way to do that than to engage them with something interesting and fun.
<https://detroit.makerfaire.com/maker/entry/64/> These activities are best done outside of the build and competition seasons so they don't stretch your team too thin. You can use a previous year's FRC robot to show them the exciting things that we do, but even smaller FTC-sized robots work. Where should you do demonstrations? Anywhere. Libraries, scouts, community centers, and especially schools are usually great venues.
3. Don't forget about team recruitment. Show off your robot and other activities at your school (club events, pep rallies, school announcements, etc.), and let your fellow students know that you're there, and all of the benefits that come from belonging to a FIRST team. <http://frogforce503.org/page-news-item.html?ID=4>
4. Make sponsorship a two-way street. The bare minimum is to make sure to send a personalized Thank You to each sponsor, and don't forget those that help with in-kind (non-monetary) donations- the company that cuts your sheet metal or prints banners for your team. Host an open house and invite everybody, including parents and sponsors, to come see what you've been able to do with their support. The weekend before Bag Day works well, but you can also take the robot out of the bag for demonstration purposes as long as you don't use the time to do any driving or work on the robot. Visit your sponsors in their place of business. Many will be happy to give you a tour and show you how they work. Making personal connections is a great way to attract mentors. Write a periodic (at least monthly, possibly more frequent during build season) newsletter to keep your sponsors in the loop. Include your non-robot activities as well; they like to know how

you're making use of their support. Check out a great overall Outreach guide from FRC1538: The Compass Alliance - Best Practices for Community Outreach

Venturing Onwards - Expand Your Reach

The next step is to make your outreach even more impactful. Start targeting audiences that aren't already "inside the tent". Go outside of your school and immediate community to reach people that might not already know about FIRST or your team.

1. Volunteering takes many forms, both STEM-related and those focused on community service.
 - a. Volunteer at FIRST events. FIRST events require 100+ volunteers to run; you can improve your experience and that of dozens of other teams by carrying some of the load.
 - i. Start with the events that your team is competing at. For smaller teams, consider volunteering at events where you're not competing.
 - ii. Consider hosting your own event. As you're helping to grow the FIRST programs, those new teams need more competitions at which they can compete. If you're writing a Chairman's Award essay- and you should- don't forget to read the FIRST definitions for terms like "run", "host", and "assist".
 - b. Volunteer at non FIRST events. There are as many community service events as there are FRC teams, and more. Volunteer at a food bank, river cleanup, community center, etc. Most charitable fundraisers would love to have a group of students come volunteer. Wear your team shirts to raise awareness and help a good cause at the same time.
2. Form and mentor teams. Build the pipeline for your own team by helping to form teams at all levels of FIRST. Think of all the good things your team accomplishes, both internally and within the community- now start a second team and double the benefits. If you write a Chairman's Award essay- and you should- don't forget to read the FIRST definitions for terms like "assist", "mentor", and "start".
3. Help teams to help other teams. Perform workshops or one-on-one training to teach other teams to do what you've done. Expand your reach by teaching other teams how to form and mentor newer teams. Consider becoming a Compass Alliance Tag Team or Help Hub!

Forging New Paths - Make an Impact

1. Finally, do something really impactful. The mission of FIRST is to change culture. Changing culture can happen close to home or halfway across the globe.
 - a. Improve results. How can you improve grades or graduation rates, or increase the number of females or underrepresented students in STEM?
 - b. Change the culture. The benefits of participating in FIRST are well known... to participants of FIRST. Reach out to groups that aren't already interested in

robotics, approach communities that don't benefit from regular exposure to STEM professionals.

2. Work with your local school board to add STEM classes to the curriculum.
3. Work with your local or national political representatives to support STEM legislation.
4. Make it Loud. Do something flashy that gets media notice; making FIRST a household name makes all of our efforts easier.