

**ARKANSAS BEST ROBOTICS GRANT PROJECT
GUIDELINES**

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1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

The Arkansas Science & Technology Authority was created by Act 859 of 1983 and given the mission to bring the benefits of science and advanced technology to the people and the State of Arkansas. The Authority's enabling legislation (Arkansas Code Annotated, Section 15-3-101 et seq.) and governance require the Authority to adopt certain rules and guidelines for carrying out its mission.

1.0. PROJECT NAME

These guidelines govern the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority's *Arkansas BEST Robotics Grant Project*.

1.0. PURPOSE

The purpose of the BEST Robotics Grant Project is to promote and fund the development of BEST Robotics Hubs to be established in regions of Arkansas that will serve school districts currently with limited or no access to these projects.

1.0. AUTHORIZATION

The BEST Robotics Grant Project is authorized by Arkansas Code Annotated Section 15-3-109 (a)(7). The Arkansas Science & Technology Authority shall have all the powers necessary to carry out programs which include, but are not limited to engaging in innovative demonstration and pilot projects involving improved education and preparation of the future workforce in the areas of science, technology and mathematics.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Arkansas Science & Technology Authority supports a competitive cash-matching grant project for the BEST Robotics Grant Project. The goals of the robotics grant project are to promote and support the growth and development of Regional BEST Robotics Hubs that will serve Arkansas school districts currently with limited or no access to these programs.

The goals of these hubs shall be to enhance the engineering curriculum in Arkansas classrooms and promote the engagement of Arkansas students in activities that will promote interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields and career options and to enhance significantly the capacity of schools to provide a challenging curriculum for students, and to encourage more students to participate, and succeed, in advanced mathematics and science courses.

2.1. TYPE OF AWARD

- 2.1.1. The Board of Directors of the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority awards grants to qualified applicants.
- 2.1.2. The Authority is authorized to defray up to, but not more than, fifty percent (50%) of the total cost of establishing the new hub up to \$15,000. The remaining fifty percent (50%) of the total cost of the proposed BEST Robotics Hub project must be funded by cash or in-kind services provided by the community, industry, college or university collaborating in the robotics project.

2.2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.2.1. For the purpose of the Authority's BEST Robotics Grant Project, the following words and phrases have the following definitions:
 - 2.2.1.1."BEST Robotics Inc." or simply BEST (Boosting Engineering Science and Technology) shall refer to the national, non-profit, volunteer organization whose mission is to inspire students to pursue careers in engineering, science, and technology through participation in a sports-like, science and engineering-based robotics competition. <http://www.bestinc.org/MVC/>
 - 2.2.1.2."In-kind services" shall mean scientific or technological equipment and/or supplies, release time, and indirect costs at fifty percent (50%) of the predetermined Health and Human Services rate.
 - 2.2.1.3."Officially submitted" shall mean a project proposal which has been submitted by an office of an Arkansas college or university that is legally empowered to accept grants on behalf of a qualified applicant.
 - 2.2.1.4."Qualified applicant" shall mean a designated individual associated with an Arkansas college or university.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY

- 3.1. **CRITERIA.** Applicant eligibility will be determined on the basis of the following criteria:
 - 3.1.1. A representative of the institution of higher education must have attended a BEST orientation for new Hub development before application.
 - 3.1.2. The proposed project must be for the purpose of establishing a new hub in an area of the state that does not currently have local access to a BEST Robotics competition and must promote the purpose of the Authority to provide the benefits of science and/or advanced technology to the State of Arkansas and its people.

- 3.1.3. Proposals must be submitted on behalf of a PARTNERSHIP by an institution of higher education in conjunction with a minimum of eight public, parochial or private preK-12 schools in a geographic region of Arkansas.
- 3.1.4. Partnerships that meaningfully engage additional stakeholders in the BEST Hub enterprise are *strongly encouraged*. Effective partnerships likely will include community organizations, business and industry, professional societies, research laboratories, local volunteers, district-level educational support centers, private foundations, and other public and private organizations with interests in regional education such as local business roundtables or chambers of commerce
- 3.1.5. The proposal must address the area of the state to be served and the need for a hub within that area.
- 3.1.6. The proposal must address the general management and organizational plan for the BEST Hub and the strategies for sustainability.
- 3.1.7. The proposal must be officially submitted by an Arkansas college or university.
- 3.1.8. The Arkansas college or university officially submitting the grant application must assure funding for not less than fifty (50%) of the total cost for establishing the Hub by institutional/industry/community support through either cash monies or in-kind services.
- 3.1.9. The proposals must be submitted by an announced deadline date to be considered for a given solicitation.

3.2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- 3.2.1. No Director, officer or employee of the Authority for purpose of personal gain shall have or attempt to have, directly or indirectly, any interest in any contract or agreement of the Authority in connection with the Arkansas BEST Robotics Grant Project of the Authority.
- 3.2.2. It shall not be a conflict of interest for the Authority to permit any college or university with which a Director of the Authority is affiliated to participate in any program of the Authority provided that such Director shall promptly disclose the nature of the affiliation to the Board of Directors.

4.0 APPLICATION PROCESS

Application for an Arkansas BEST Robotics Grant shall be in a format prescribed by the Authority. The following information shall be included.

4.1. APPLICATION

- 4.1.1. A Project Summary and Completion of Application Cover Sheet which contains the following information:
 - 4.1.1.1. Name of the college or university applying for robotics grant funds;
 - 4.1.1.2. Name of the principal investigator;
 - 4.1.1.3. Name, mailing address and email address of the institutional contract officer;
 - 4.1.1.4. Mailing address and email address of the principal investigator;
 - 4.1.1.5. Telephone number of the institutional contract office;
 - 4.1.1.6. Telephone number of the principal investigator;
 - 4.1.1.7. Title of the project proposal (Hub name);
 - 4.1.1.8. Amount of funds requested from the Authority;
 - 4.1.1.9. Technical abstract;
 - 4.1.1.10. Dated signature of the institutional contracting official;
 - 4.1.1.11. Signature of the principal investigator, department, and date.
- 4.1.2. A statement of the specific objectives to be attained by the proposed project, and a description of the broader impact of this project and resulting outreach on STEM curriculum in partner schools.
- 4.1.3. A review of the region to be served by the hub, including an assessment of schools with experience previously participating in a competition and new teams to be organized with spatial description of travel to hub for each partner school district.
- 4.1.4. A clearly-described implementation plan for the development of the Hub. This should include a description of the proposed Hub management plan, including organization and storage of capital equipment and key staff, outreach plans, collaborating partner school (teams), industry or community partners in the establishment and support of the hub, timetable, and information detailing the availability of supporting facilities, equipment, and personnel necessary to the attainment of the project's objectives.
- 4.1.5. A detailed budget for the coming year including capital equipment and consumables, accessory supplies, travel, and estimates of support requirements for events.

- 4.1.6. A statement addressing the extent to which the proposed project will establish or build upon a regional effort to improve STEM educational curriculum and enhance STEM career awareness.
- 4.1.7. A statement detailing the sources and amount of the required matching funds to establish initial hub.
- 4.1.8.** A statement of plans for future support of the robotics hub from sources other than the Authority. This section should include identification of the specific funding sources to be approached and types of support available from these sources that will insure sustainability. **Applicants are encouraged to attach support letters from the co-funding partners and the communities.**
- 4.1.9. A description of the qualifications of the personnel to be involved in the proposed project. Relevant information would include the academic credentials of key professionals, and the record of current and past projects that are relevant to administration or management of a hub.
- 4.1.10. A statement that a final summary report will be submitted to the Authority within 60 days after expiration of the award period (one year). The final summary report shall include:
- 4.1.10.1. A topic sentence stating the project's major focus and service area;
 - 4.1.10.2. The primary objectives and scope of the project;
 - 4.1.10.3. The summary of the techniques or approaches used to establish project ;
 - 4.1.10.4. The results of first year efforts stated as concisely as possible with a description of evaluation procedures used to assess results.
 - 4.1.10.5. Other information as requested by the Board of Directors.

4.2. PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Proprietary information related to robotic project will be maintained subject to the limitations of the Freedom of Information Act.

5.0 EVALUATION

Applications meeting the eligibility requirements will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

5.1. CRITERIA

- 5.1.1. The educational merit of the proposal, including the quality and importance of the proposed project, and the suggested service area.
- 5.1.2. The competence of the professional personnel involved in the project as evidenced by relevant technology training, administrative experience, and support of institution.
- 5.1.3. The availability of technical and support personnel and resources necessary to ensure a reasonable probability of project success.
- 5.1.4. The soundness of the implementation plan and the likelihood that the project objectives will be achieved.
- 5.1.5. The probability that the requested support will result in the permanent and sustainable hub with potential capabilities for expansion.
- 5.1.6. The potential of the proposed project for attracting support from sources other than the Authority.
- 5.1.7. The overall probability of success of the proposed project.

5.2. PROPOSAL REVIEW

- 5.2.1. Each proposal shall be initially reviewed by a member of the Authority staff to determine that eligibility requirements have been met.
- 5.2.2. The Research Committee of the Board of Directors shall be responsible for final review and evaluation of each eligible proposal. The Research Committee shall select reviewers whose expertise in specific scientific/technological areas will aid in the evaluation of each robotics proposal.
- 5.2.3. Each eligible proposal will be reviewed and evaluated in terms of the purposes of establishing the project, the area to be served, the evaluation criteria, and the adequacy of the requested level of funding.
- 5.2.4. The Authority will make every effort to complete the review and evaluation process within 90 days after the deadline for receipt of solicited proposals.

5.3. AWARDS

The final decision to commit funds to an applicant shall be made by the Board of Directors of the Authority. The decision to fund/decline will be based on information derived from the review process and its accompanying criteria and the Board's own interpretation of the accompanying information. The Board's decision shall be final.

6.0 AWARDS LETTER

Cash awards will be distributed by the Authority on the recommendation of the Board of Directors based on terms and conditions agreed upon by the Board of Directors of the Authority and the submitting college or university.