

# The Chairman's Award

FRC1114 – Simbotics  
Karthik Kanagasabapathy  
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# Karthik Kanagasabapathy

- 23 years of *FIRST* experience
- Lead Mentor for Team 1114, 2004-2016, Team Advisor 2017-present
  - 51 Blue Banners
  - 2008 World Champions, 2010 & 2014 World Finalists
  - 2012 Championship Chairman's Award
- 2005 Waterloo Regional Woodie Flowers Finalist Award
- TEDx Speaker - <http://youtu.be/MfC3JdkEVgQ>
- Host of the ESPN & CBS High Robotics Specials (VEX Worlds)
- Former - Global Competition Manager, Innovation First International, Canada
  - Chairman of the VEX Robotics Game Design Committees
- Current – Manager - Operations, Digital Strategy & Analytics – *FIRST* Canada



# Outline

- Overview
  - What is the award for?
  - Why should we submit?
- What does it take to win
  - What do we need to do?
- The Submission
- Essay
- Presentation
- Video
- Executive Summary
- Extras
- General Tips



# Overview

- What is the award for?
  - *"It honors the team that, in the judges' estimation, best represents a model for other teams to emulate, and which embodies the goals and purpose of FIRST."*
- What is the mission of *FIRST*?
  - *"To transform our culture by creating a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology leaders."*



# Overview

- Why should we submit?
  - Common question
  - All teams should and many already are fulfilling the mission of *FIRST*
    - Submitting is just about documenting what you have done
  - Documenting captures your team history
  - Useful for marketing and sponsorship recruitment
  - Helps diversify the team, provides avenues for students with a variety of skillsets
    - Having a wider cross section of students, makes culture change within your school and community much easier
- It's a lot of work...
  - Golden rules, priority list, jack of all trades master of none...



# What do we need to do to win

- Executive Summary
  - *“Describe the impact of the FIRST program on team participants within the last 3 years. This can include but is not limited to percentages of those graduating high school, attending college, in STEM careers, and in FIRST programs as mentors/sponsors.”*
    - Don’t just focus on the students, cover all the areas!
      - Mentors, teachers, parents, etc.
    - How has *FIRST* changed lives!
      - e.g. Graduation rates, scholarships, workforce success, corporate growth, employee development
  - *“Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.”*
    - All communities are different
      - e.g. Urban vs Rural, demographics, etc.
    - This is your opportunity to tell the judges about the opportunities and difficulties specific to your community, without have to use characters else
    - Point of equity



# What do we need to do to win

- Executive Summary (cont'd)
  - *“Describe the team’s methods, with emphasis on the past 3 years, for spreading the FIRST message in ways that are effective, scalable, sustainable, and creative. How does your team measure results?”*
    - The question is here to guide you!
    - Effective
      - Projects that have shown measurable impact
    - Scalable
      - Projects that have room to grow and expand into the future
    - Sustainable
      - Projects that will live into the future and not just last for one year/cycle
    - Creative
      - Things that are new and not being done by other teams.
      - If your creative way to spread the message is the same as everyone else, you’re doing it wrong...



# What do we need to do to win

- Major Criteria (cont'd)
  - Again, set yourself apart!
    - If your creative way to spread the message is the same as everyone else, you're doing it wrong...
  - The judges want proof that your initiatives are working, can grow, and will continue
    - You need to provide data!
  - 1114 Examples
    - Ontario Science Centre Exhibit, Degrassi: The Next Generation, CFL Game, student created curriculum is Design and Tech centre
    - SimPhone App & Kitbot on Steroids
      - Dream big!!!





# What do we need to do to win

- Major Criteria (cont'd)
  - *“Please provide specific examples of how your team members act as role models within the FIRST community with emphasis on the past 3 years.”*
    - Focus on what you do best, that helps fulfill the mission of *FIRST*
    - Make sure you set yourself apart, what do you do that is unique?
      - If you focus on the standard, you’ll sound like every other team; you need to stand out here
      - Talk about what you are the best at in your region
    - On 1114 we focused on team growth, and FRC community resources
      - Things we felt that we were the best in the world at
  - *“Describe your team’s initiatives to Assist, Mentor, and/or Start other FIRST teams with emphasis on activities within the past 3 years.”*



# What do we need to do to win

- Executive Summary (cont'd)
  - *“Beyond starting teams, what initiatives have you done to help inspire young people to be science and technology leaders and innovators? What results have you seen from your efforts in the past 3 years?”*
    - Again, set yourself apart!
      - If your creative way to spread the message is the same as everyone else, you’re doing it wrong...
    - The judges want proof that your initiatives are working, can grow, and will continue
      - You need to provide data!
    - 1114 Examples
      - Ontario Science Centre Exhibit, Degraasi: The Next Generation, CFL Game, student created curriculum is Design and Tech centre
    - SimPhone App & Kitbot on Steroids
      - Dream big!!!
  - **The Chairman’s Award is about more than starting teams!!!**



# What do we need to do to win

- Executive Summary (cont'd)
  - *“Describe the partnerships you've created with other organizations (teams, sponsors, educational institutions, philanthropic entities, etc.) and what you have accomplished together with emphasis on the past 3 years”*
    - Partnership takes many forms and goes in BOTH directions
    - Teams focus too much on what organizations do for students, and not enough on what students do for organizations
      - Easy way to set yourself apart!
    - e.g. Doing demos for sponsors to help generate business, sponsors using the team to train new employees, team used as a recruiting tool for employers, etc.



# What do we need to do to win

- Executive Summary (cont'd)
  - *“Describe your team's efforts in the past 3 years to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within your team, FIRST, and your communities.”*
    - One of the new questions for 2021
    - Teams need to do some introspection here and find ways to promote and improve
    - How are you reaching new groups within your community? Which groups are underrepresented on your team? What barriers exist and how are you taking them down?
  - *“Explain how you ensure your team and the initiatives you have created will continue to run effectively for the foreseeable future.”*
    - A specific question on sustainability. A new point of emphasis for 2021
    - Opportunity to showcase existing initiatives that continue to have impact, less pressure to do new things for the sake of doing new things



# What do we need to do to win

- Executive Summary (cont'd)
  - *“Describe your team’s innovative strategies to recruit, retain, and engage your sponsors within the past 3 years.”*
    - How do you get your sponsors, how do you keep them, how you involve them with your team.
      - For a team to be truly effective sponsors should not just be passive funding sources
  - *“Highlight one area in which your team needs to improve and describe the steps actively being taken to make those improvements.”*
    - Let the judges know what you’re doing to become better
  - *“Describe your team’s goals to fulfill the mission of FIRST and the progress you have made towards those goals.”*
    - Why do you deserve the Chairman’s Award



# What Shouldn't We do

- Don't do things just for the sake of winning the award
  - Many teams partake in endeavours solely because of the award
  - Focus on doing things that the team actually wants to do
    - If you are invested in the idea, you'll naturally do a better job and make a larger impact
    - “We need to plant trees for Chairman's!”
      - Really?
    - Focus on what you love and what you're good at
    - Don't try and be someone else
      - What worked for Team X might not work for Team Y
- Team Award
  - Everyone needs to be behind the efforts
    - You can't achieve culture change, if the culture doesn't exist within yourself



# The Submission

- The entirety of the submission needs to cover the six major criteria, while fitting within the limits in the rules
- Just like building an FRC robot
  - FRC Robots are limited to a 120" perimeter, 120 lbs, one battery, X number of motors, etc.
  - CA submissions are limited to 10,000 character essay, 7:00 presentation, 5:00 question period, 3:00 video, etc.
    - Like a robot focus on your high priority items
    - We usually picked to major topics to focus on
      - e.g. SimPhone & Degrassi
    - Don't needlessly duplicate, it wastes resources
      - Presentation shouldn't rehash the essay



# The Submission

- Each portion of the submission can be used to tell a different portion of the story
  - Some teams divide it up by major criteria, I prefer to divide it up by style
    - Executive Summary – Answer the questions directly to provide an overview of your team
    - Essay – Used for factual information about team achievements and endeavours. Don't rehash the executive summary, but go further in depth and expand.
    - Presentation – Tell the story behind the numbers. Emphasize the key points in the essay, go in depth, highlighting what's important.
    - Video – Used to tell the emotional side of the team story (no video in 2021)
      - Much easier to convey impactful emotion through edited video
    - Question Period – To reinforce and clarify key points, also an opportunity to introduce new information
  - The better this “puzzle” fits together, the more cohesive and powerful your submission will be.
    - Work to eliminate gaps!





# The Submission

- Common Question!
  - Should we have a theme?
    - Themes are nice way to help make the puzzle look more complete
    - Provide a sense of unity
    - A point of differentiation from other teams
      - DO NOT PLAIGIARIZE
    - Some teams theme the entire submission, others just the presentation
    - Don't force a bad fit!
    - Examples
      - 67's recipe, 1114's museum tour, GPS, Quilt
    - The theme should fit with your team branding/identity
    - Being topical is good



# The Essay

- *“The essay portion of the Chairman’s Award submission provides teams an opportunity to describe their activities and achievements in narrative form. While Judges encourage creativity of expression, the essay must clearly deliver information and facts describing what the team is about.”*
- Start early!
  - 10,000 characters (1,500 words) doesn’t seem like much
  - You needed time to edit, review, and rewrite
  - “The key to effective writing is rewriting”
    - Teams go through hundreds of versions. You can’t do that in one night.
  - Have the essay proofread by multiple people
    - Get professional help, don’t rely only on your peers



# The Essay

- Use numbers and statistics to illustrate impact
  - Raw numbers without context are weak
    - “68% of our students went on to study engineering” vs. “68% of our students went on to study engineers, which is an increase of 35% since our team’s inception, and is 42% higher than the national average”
    - Effective statistics take time, need a lot of research
  - Make sure all your numbers are verifiable!
    - You need to be able to prove all your numbers to the judges
      - Documentation is strongly encouraged via the documentation form
    - Your biggest claims will be the most scrutinized
      - Virtual footnotes
  - Do not exaggerate or lie
- Do not plagiarize



# Defintions

- Created in 2016 by the Chief Judges and Hall of Fame teams
- To ensure teams used the same language and definitions to describe common Chairman's terms
  - Started, Mentored, Assisted {teams}
  - Ran, Hosted, Assisted {events}
  - Reached (new for 2020)
    - *"A team has Reached someone if someone has interacted or observed the team in some capacity whether it be digitally or in person, regarding the Reaching team's program(s)."*
- You must use these in both your essay and presentation and you must use them accurately
  - And you must document using the documentation form!



# Documentation Form

- Teams are encouraged to provide documentation for all instances of “Started”, “Mentored”, “Resources Published”, “Ran”, or “Reached”
- Documentation should verify the claims made in the essay/presentation
- Examples include:
  - Letters from teams who have been started/mentors or event organizers
  - Download statistics or view counts of resources
  - Social media impressions
  - Attendance statistics on public events
- Basically, if you make a claim, you want to back it up with documentation
  - Like footnotes and bibliographies for a research paper



# The Presentation

- Use the presentation to tell the story behind the facts given in the essay
  - The presentation should complement the essay
  - It should not duplicate nor replace the essay
- Who should present
  - Students who are outgoing, enthusiastic, well spoken, calm under pressure, and quick thinking
    - Often a skillset not found on a team. Recruit!
- How should the presenters look?
  - Good...
    - Professional or tie it in with the theme
      - Make sure they're comfortable! Events are long days.



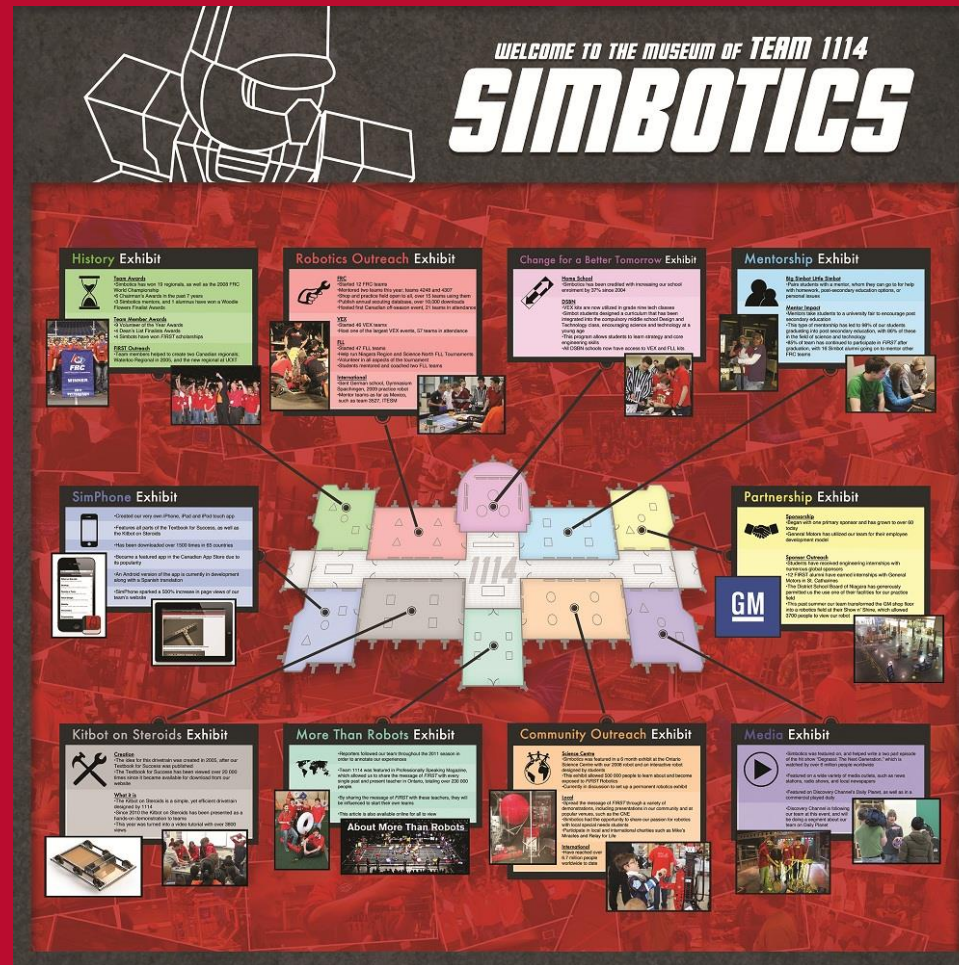
# The Presentation

- Visual Aids
  - Useful for both the judges and the presenters
    - Great for cueing the presenters, giving them something to point at and focus on
  - Some teams prefer Powerpoint via a projector
    - You must supply your own equipment
    - Setup time counts towards your 7:00
  - We preferred presentation boards
    - Quick to setup, no technology risk
- Virtual for 2021
  - Can screenshare
  - Body language and eye contact becomes even more important



# The Presentation

- Presentation Board Example





# The Presentation

- Presentation Board Example



# The Presentation

- Question Period
  - 5:00 vital minutes to clarify and emphasize points both from the essay and presentation
  - Answering questions is like playing tennis
    - Three ways to return a shot
      - Just get it back into play
      - Hit it towards your opponent
      - Hit it to a spot that sets up your next shot
    - Three ways to answer a question
      - Just say something in response
      - Answer the specific question
      - Answer the specific question, then add something that emphasizes one of your main points
    - Also useful for job interviews
  - Practice, practice, practice
    - Use a variety of question askers
  - Presenters must know all content inside and out
    - Past and present



# The Presentation

- You must rehearse the overall presentation
  - Do not try and wing it
- I prefer not to have the presentation fully scripted
  - Most students who memorize a script, end up sounding robotic and unnatural
    - Exception: drama students
  - Presenters with a deep understanding of content and point form notes sound much more natural
- Beware of monotony
  - Vary your intonation to add variety
  - BAM points – Say it with emphasis!
- Make regular eye contact with all judges in the room
- Look interested!



# The Video (Not for 2021)

- A great way to tell the emotional story of your team
  - So much harder to do in a 10,000 character essay
  - Even in a live presentation, takes an extreme amount of skill
- Have fun with it
  - This is your story. Be creative.
    - Do not plagiarize!
- Use the media for inspiration
  - Movie trailers, commercials, etc.
  - What moves you? What gives you “all the feels”
- Music enhances any story
  - Must be free of copyright restrictions
- Production values make up for a lot
  - Use a microphone!
- Huge project, needs a dedicated subteam of students



# The Video

- Video Examples
  - Team 5672 – 2019
    - [https://youtu.be/6uCih3\\_loQs](https://youtu.be/6uCih3_loQs)
  - Team 1538 – 2013
    - <http://youtu.be/p62jRCMkoiw>
  - Team 1114 – 2012
    - <http://youtu.be/qFwz3FZqiuc>
  - Team 1114 Chairman's Inspiration Video – 2012
    - <http://youtu.be/or42k-Mmb6c>



# Extras

- Extras
  - Create buzz about your team via social media
  - Nice to give something to the judges
    - We provided a booklet of submission content, and supporting material that verified all our numbers
      - Virtual footnotes. e.g. “Daisy by the numbers”
    - Letters of support
    - Visuals
  - Handouts in the pit, spread the word about your program
  - Judging is based on interview, however it doesn't hurt to impress other judges



# Final Thoughts

- The Chairman's Award process should be fun
  - If it starts to feel like a chore, you need to re-evaluate why you are submitting
- Always remember what the Award is meant to recognize
- The goal isn't to win the award, the goal is change culture. If you make real strides towards a culture change and document it well, the award will come in time.



# Resources

- [www.facebook.com/frc1114](http://www.facebook.com/frc1114)
- Twitter: @frc1114
- [YouTube.com/Simbotics](http://YouTube.com/Simbotics)
- [www.simbotics.org](http://www.simbotics.org)
  - Our entire 2012 submission is available online
- Contact
  - Email: [karthik@simbotics.org](mailto:karthik@simbotics.org)
  - Twitter: @kkanagas
  - Facebook: /karthik.kanagasabapathy

