

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
95th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2025

A Bill

SENATE BILL 391

By: Senator J. Dismang
By: Representative Eaves

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO CREATE THE ROBOTICS COMPETITION GRANT PROGRAM FOR ELIGIBLE ROBOTICS TEAMS IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGING STUDY IN THE FIELDS OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO CREATE THE ROBOTICS COMPETITION GRANT PROGRAM FOR ELIGIBLE ROBOTICS TEAMS IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGING STUDY IN THE FIELDS OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 16, is amended to add an additional subchapter to read as follows:

Subchapter 20 – Robotics Competition Grant Program

6-16-2001. Creation – Purpose.

(a) There is established a Robotics Competition Grant Program.

(b) The purpose of the program is to provide grants to expand opportunities that increase interest and improve skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through participation in robotics competitions that:

(1) Provide hands-on learning experiences;



(2) Establish community partnerships to increase awareness of local workforce and postsecondary opportunities;

(3) Highlight career opportunities through adult mentors;

(4) Prioritize a connection to manufacturing, machining, and fabrication skills for students in grades six through twelve (6-12);

(5) Prepare students for future career opportunities through industrial proficiency; and

(6) Develop students' skills through problem solving, design, programming, teamwork, critical-thinking abilities, communication, collaboration, time management, perseverance, and leadership.

6-16-2002. Definitions.

As used in this subchapter:

(1) "Allowable expense" means:

(A) Robotics competition fees, kits, and supplies required to:

(i) Establish or maintain a robotics team; and

(ii) Participate in a robotics competition;

(B) Event registration fees, materials, transportation and travel costs, and other expenses associated with attendance at and participation in a robotics competition; and

(C) The payment of a stipend for a robotics team mentor, coach, or sponsor;

(2) "Eligible school" means:

(A) A public school within a public school district;

(B) An open-enrollment public charter school; or

(C) A nonpublic school that is accredited by the Arkansas Nonpublic School Accrediting Association, Inc., or another organization identified by the State Board of Education;

(3) "Eligible team" means a robotics competition team that consists of:

(A) Students in grades six through twelve (6-12) who are enrolled in an eligible school; and

(B) At least one (1) adult who is a team mentor, coach, or sponsor; and

(4) "Robotics competition" means a competition that:

(A) Requires participating teams to design, construct, program, and operate a robot;

(B) Is sponsored by a nonprofit corporation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as it existed on January 1, 2025, that is exempt from taxation under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as it existed on January 1, 2025, and that has a purpose or goal of encouraging young people to develop an interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and

(C) Is hosted by a program provider that includes without limitation:

(i) For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition;

(ii) For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Tech Challenge; or

(iii) VEX V5 Robotics Competition High Stakes, hosted by the Robotics Education & Competition Foundation.

6-16-2003. Administration.

(a) The Robotics Competition Grant Program shall be administered by the Department of Education.

(b) A grant awarded under this subchapter shall be subject to an eligible team obtaining a matching contribution from other sources, which shall be equivalent to at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the total grant amount awarded to the eligible team under this subchapter.

(c) The department shall award a grant under this subchapter in a manner that maximizes the number of eligible teams that receive a grant and expands the geographical distribution of eligible teams.

(d) A grant awarded under this subchapter shall be distributed by the department to an eligible school on behalf of an eligible team.

(e) The availability of grants under this subchapter is subject to appropriation by the General Assembly for the administration of the program.

6-16-2004. Eligibility.

(a) An eligible team may apply for a grant from the Robotics Competition Grant Program under this subchapter through the process established by the Department of Education.

(b) In order to receive a grant under this subchapter, an eligible team shall show proof of the following in its application:

(1) A partnership for the purpose of a robotics competition with at least one (1) sponsor, business entity, institution of higher education, or technical school;

(2) An adult robotics team mentor, coach, or sponsor;

(3) A proposed budget, which shall include without limitation estimated allowable expenses of the eligible team for the school year in which the eligible team is applying for a grant under this subchapter;

(4) A commitment to compete in at least one (1) robotics competition within one (1) year from the date the award under this subchapter is granted;

(5) A commitment to create an original, iteratively designed robot; and

(6) The ability to meet all program requirements.

(c) An eligible team may apply for more than one (1) grant per school year if the eligible team participates in more than one (1) robotics competition, including without limitation the advancement to a regional, state, or national competition.

(d) Allowable expenses under this subchapter may include a stipend for a robotics team mentor, coach, or sponsor, which shall not exceed one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per school year.

6-16-2005. Rules.

The Department of Education shall promulgate rules for the administration of the Robotics Competition Grant Program established by this subchapter, which shall include without limitation the process for applying for a grant under this subchapter.