



Team Management: Budget By Asha Seshan

“FIRST LEGO League is certainly not nearly as expensive as many club-level sports teams, but it is good to know the costs up front and plan ahead.”

FLL Coach's Corner

I often get asked how much it costs to run a team. Every team will need to pay for team registration, an EV3 robot set, a field set up kit, an FLL table and local tournament fees. However, there are other expenses to consider that we discuss below.*

** These costs can vary by region - Check the FIRSTInspires website as well as EV3Lessons Quick Guide for budget information.*

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Which EV3? You can buy the robot from FIRST, Lego Education (#445544) or the EV3 retail set (#31313). FIRST just provides a well priced, pre-bundled product for you to purchase at the time of registration. You can supplement your purchase any time. Just make sure you know what parts are allowed in the contest (some sensors in the retail set are not allowed in FLL).

I personally recommend two robots per team. More hands on the robots, the better. Having a spare robot is always useful for tournament day. Plus, when the programmers are using one robot to program, the builders still have something to work with. If at all possible, if you have team of 4 or more, add a second robot to your budget.

Extra parts: The Core EV3 set + Expansion Set are a great place to start in your first year. Even if you take all your robots and field set up kits apart for parts, you will soon find in your 2nd or 3rd year that your team is running out of parts. The best way to tell what you need to buy is to have your team sort all the LEGO into bins. When you see a particular bin running low, you know that's what the kids need more of. You can order individual items from sites such as bricklink.com. Budget about US\$100/yr in your second year and beyond for supplemental LEGO. You do not need to buy another robot set to get parts. Your team might also want a second color sensor for for line squaring or alternative wheels for their robot.

Supplies: Poster boards, markers, color printouts, and team t-shirts are needed. While these are not enormous expenses, they are expenses you need to budget for.

Giveaways: Inexpensive giveaways are additional team expenses. They are not required, but fun to give and receive at events.

Snacks: Team snacks are a staple of FLL teams. One suggestion is to outsource this to other parents on the team. Each week, a new parent brings snack.

Travel: Some teams have to travel far to their state-level tournament. This might even involve an overnight stay at a hotel. Check to see where your events are and include these costs in your budget.

What if you qualify for the next level? FLL Opens and World Festivals are expensive. Registration alone is around US\$1000. Add to that booth decorations, food, housing and travel for every team member and coach.

Who pays for what? There are lots of different ways to manage the costs. Fundraising/sponsorships is always an option. This is harder if you are not affiliated with a non-profit. Some teams charge a set yearly fee (amount varies by how much funding they have). Private groups usually split the costs across all team members. Just make sure there is clear understanding of who owns what at the end of the season. I have heard this is sometimes a problem for teams.