



# A STEM Community for All



As the world faced unprecedented changes, it was imperative that *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> continued to reach and support all students to be leaders. Programs like *FIRST* are essential for creating scientists and innovators, and the global pandemic showed us it is more critical than ever to bridge gaps by providing equitable access, opportunity, and meaningful participation for all students to solve world-changing problems and prepare themselves and global communities for a better future.

*FIRST* is actively engaged in developing strategies, collaborations, grants, and initiatives that remove barriers and ensure greater access to *FIRST* programs for all youth to participate. Our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) strategy is grounded in the *FIRST* strategic pillar to increase diversity such that our programs serve an inclusive and diverse audience, reflecting the population of the communities we serve. To attain this goal, in FY21 (July 2020 - June 2021) we expanded our strategy to ensure the priorities of equity, diversity, and inclusion are implemented across all *FIRST* programs.

## Our Expanded ED&I Strategy Focuses on the Following:

1. **Increasing Capacity** through the committed *FIRST* Headquarters ED&I, Education, and Access Teams, dedicated AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers supporting underserved communities, a growing community of volunteers, participants, and educators, galvanizing alumni to champion STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education and engaging advisory committees for youth and industry leaders
2. **Increasing Skills and Resources** through developing inclusive and accessible programs, curriculum, and events; [ED&I training](#) for *FIRST* volunteers and students, all *FIRST* Headquarters staff and Program Delivery Organizations and Partners; professional development for classroom teachers, and activating thought leadership to share our best practices internally and externally
3. **Engaging Youth Where They Are** through a focus on all PreK-12 students, [STEM Equity Community Innovation Grants](#), partnering with youth serving organizations, opportunities to learn STEM via [FIRST at Home](#), and in school through [FIRST Class Pack](#)
4. **Building Community** through expanding our alliances and partnerships with mission-driven organizations that embody and align with [FIRST Core Values](#)
5. **Strategy Refinement** through assessment and reflection, we continuously refine our ED&I strategy at *FIRST*, to meet the needs of the communities we serve and integrated in our work across all departments at *FIRST* Headquarters

### We Believe that STEM is for Everyone

*FIRST* is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We embrace and encourage differences in race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, income, language, learning difference, or any other characteristics that make our adult-force and students unique.

# Connecting All Youth to STEM

## SoKno Robotics Knoxville, Tennessee

Throughout program history, the students at Dogwood Elementary have not had access to an adequate surface to practice hands-on skill building and prepare for *FIRST* events. The students instead worked on the floor and cramped surfaces. That was until SoKno Robo Alliance, which consists of two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school located in Knoxville, Tennessee, was awarded the 2020 *FIRST* STEM Equity Community Innovation Grant. A portion of the grant provided the funding for materials to be purchased to build *FIRST*® LEGO® League Challenge tables for the two elementary schools. Members of the South Doyle High School robotics team built the tables for their younger peers, which was important for strengthening connections in the community.

The grant gave students opportunities to learn and engage in robotics through funding that provided materials needed to host *FIRST* programs at four schools across grades K-12 and built a culture of support between teachers and students. **During this challenging time of a global pandemic, SoKno Robotics built community and unity through a pipeline of *FIRST* programming across all grade levels so that students could create connections and engage in STEM.**

## American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Okaloosa County, Florida

With the 2020 *FIRST* STEM Equity Community Innovation Grant, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics brought *FIRST* LEGO League Explore to students in Okaloosa County. Students who participated were able to **increase their skill set, build confidence, and get engaged in STEM education.**

Through the activities, final expo, and storytelling aspects of *FIRST* LEGO League Explore, students shared what they learned, and students with academic challenges were able to demonstrate their learning. The mentors of this program are proud of their students. During the final sessions of the 2020-2021 PLAYMAKERS<sup>SM</sup> season, students expressed their excitement and are looking forward to the next opportunity to participate in STEM and *FIRST* LEGO League.

### FIRST STEM EQUITY COMMUNITY INNOVATION GRANT

Launched in 2016, the annual competitive *FIRST* STEM Equity Community Innovation Grant (SECIG) increases the opportunity for historically marginalized students to participate in *FIRST* programs. The goal of this grant is to expand reach and inclusive practices by removing barriers to provide students access and opportunity in STEM.

## Notable Highlights in 2020-2021

### Expanded recognition and celebration

Sharing and elevating voices from across the *FIRST* community through the **expanded recognition and celebration of affinity days and months** throughout the year, specifically Black History Month, Women's History Month, and Pride Month



**DR. JANELL N. CATLIN**  
DIRECTOR OF EQUITY,  
DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION, *FIRST*

“ It is my hope that when young people see me, that my story, my work, inspires them. Not only because I am a Black woman in the STEM field, but because I am a human being. A human being, that has experienced both losses and wins and to know that we can all overcome and reach our dreams. ”



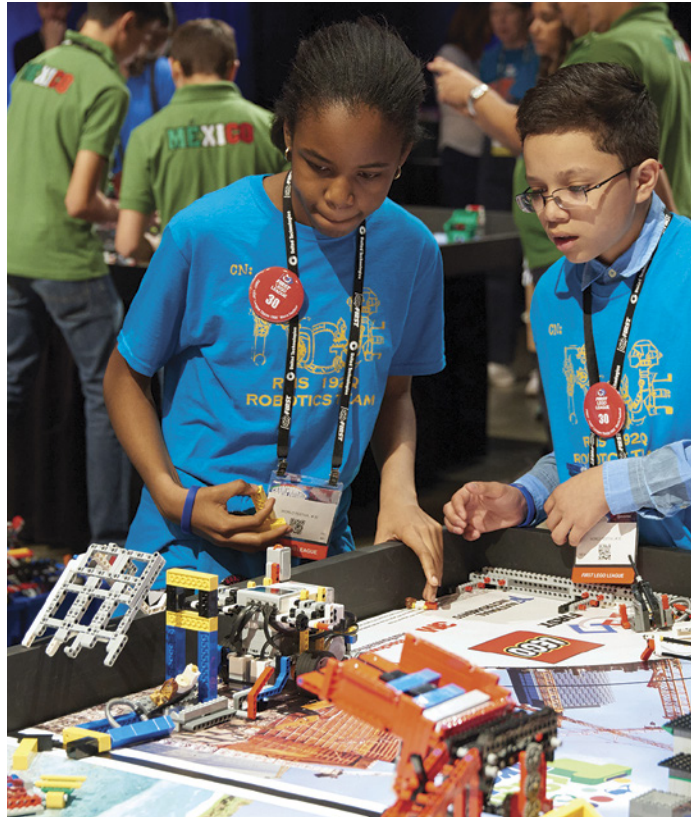
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# Partnering with Boys & Girls Clubs of America to Bring *FIRST* to Youth

Funding from *FIRST* ED&I and Bechtel provided program materials, registration, and training for **49 Boys & Girls Club sites** for the *FIRST* LEGO League Challenge RePLAY<sup>SM</sup> season.

## Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Minnesota Roosevelt, MN

“Our staff team was excited when two of our quietest members signed up to participate in *FIRST* robotics. When they were put on the teams, these two youth were picked to be the captain of each team. As captains, they really flourished. These youth stepped up as leaders and made sure each team member had a job. They helped others with a challenging build and really developed strong leadership qualities. We could see they were confident in their abilities to build and think like an engineer. By the end of program, **all the members who participated were so much more confident in their abilities to problem solve on the fly and code their robots** to do some pretty cool things. It was a great experience for everyone involved!” — Coach



## *FIRST* Welcomes New Director

In October 2020, **Dr. Janell N. Catlin** joined *FIRST* as the Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, reporting to the President of *FIRST* and as part of the Executive Leadership Team

## Thought Leadership in FY21

### *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> INSPIRE BLOG POSTS:

- [Celebrating Black History and Game Changers](#)
- [Celebrating LGBTQ+ Pride Month](#)

### NEWS ARTICLES:

- [Bridging the Gap: How Women in STEM are Carving Out Their Place and Making Room for Future Generations](#)
- [How to Empower the Next, Diverse Generation of Inventors](#)

## Project THRIVE

In June 2021, we announced our partnership with the Human Rights Campaign’s Project THRIVE in order to reinforce our commitment to ED&I at *FIRST* and the importance of allyship to support LGBTQ+ colleagues, mentors, volunteers, and student participants



## STEM to the Future

Partnering with **STEM to the Future** to expand *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> LEGO<sup>®</sup> League Challenge to Black, Latinx, and non-binary youth in Los Angeles, California



## New Tip Sheets

Offering two new tip sheets:

***FIRST* Volunteer Recruitment Strategies Tip Sheet**

***FIRST* Student Recruitment Strategies Tip Sheet**



## FIRST Core Values

The *FIRST* Core Values emphasize friendly sportsmanship, respect for the contributions of others, teamwork, learning, and community involvement and are part of our commitment to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The *FIRST* Community expresses the *FIRST* philosophies of *Gracious Professionalism*<sup>®</sup> and *Coopertition*<sup>®</sup> through our Core Values:



### Discovery

We explore new skills and ideas.



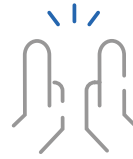
### Innovation

We use creativity and persistence to solve problems.



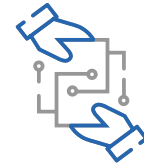
### Impact

We apply what we learn to improve our world.



### Inclusion

We respect each other and embrace our differences.



### Teamwork

We are stronger when we work together.



### Fun

We enjoy and celebrate what we do!



Thank you to our sponsors for supporting our initiatives



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