

Volunteer Planning & Staffing Guide

2020-2021

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Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteering and participating in VEX Robotics events can help others get inspired, fuel their passion, learn new skills, expand their network, and get exposure to new ways of doing things. There are many sources where you can recruit volunteers. You need to get the word out early about your event and share the key message of robotics and STEM programs to find people who feel this truly resonates with them.

Consider the following sources:

- **Parents, Teachers, School Administrators, Mentors, Local VRC Teams, and Siblings** – Remember volunteering can be a family affair! Younger siblings are often good at Field Reset.
- **Partner with Local Schools** – Contact nearby schools and agree to do a “volunteer swap” so they provide volunteers for your event, and you provide volunteers for their event.
- **Local Businesses and Sponsors** – VRC events are perfect for a team-building experience, so contact the HR department if you don’t know someone in the company.
- **Schools, Colleges, Universities** – Classes, honor societies, sororities and fraternities may have community service requirements for membership, scholarships, or graduation. Also look to clubs/groups, College of Engineering, and ROTC programs for assistance. Give your local Army recruiter a table in exchange for providing volunteers. Pre-service tech and student teachers are also ideal candidates for volunteering.
- **Community Groups, Organization Chapters, Church Groups** – Many are looking for guest speakers or ask if you can set up a table to hand out materials. Check with your local maker community, TechSoup, Local UAW, NSBE, IEEE, SWE, Chamber of Commerce, Library, etc.
- **Online Resources** – *LinkedIn* has a site dedicated to volunteer opportunities, and there are free and subscription services like [VolunteerMatch](#) where you can post about your event. *Idealist.org* and *thecommunitycorps.org* are among many sites offering volunteer opportunities to the public. Don’t forget social media like Facebook and Twitter, if you have existing accounts, or participate in groups with followers.
- **Employee Programs and Corporate Responsibility** – Many local and national chains have community service and philanthropy goals, and employee volunteering is part of their culture. Some even provide a grant donation to your event if you get so many volunteers from their location.
- **REC Foundation Volunteer Care Team** – Email volunteers@roboticseducation.org for assistance.

Involving Volunteers

Encourage potential volunteers to visit www.roboticseducation.org/volunteers to learn more about how they can become involved in supporting your event. Volunteering at our event competitions can be rewarding and fun.

There are a variety of volunteer roles available and volunteer positions do not require technical skills or experience, only a desire to support engaging learning opportunities for students.

Whatever your potential volunteers are interested in, help them identify the role that best suits them. Volunteers can view volunteer training materials, additional resources, and sign up for a local event in their area or for the VEX Robotics World Championship at www.roboticseducation.org/volunteers.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Post clear information about roles needed in your event listing on RobotEvents.com. Give prospective volunteers more information than simply, "Volunteers need – please contact <person's name>." Fill out the Volunteer tab in RobotEvents.com as completely as possible, listing needed roles to spark interest. A list of the most common volunteer positions is available in the [Volunteer Roles Overview document](#), including basic skills and experience needed. On the [Volunteer Downloads page](#), you will find detailed volunteer role information, including responsibilities, required training and apparel for those most common roles. Simply select the program (VIQC, VRC, VEX U) tab to view volunteer materials. Volunteers may also register in the Volunteer Management System to see detailed information on every role.

Volunteer Expectations

Encourage volunteers to dress comfortably and appropriately for events. Clothing should be team- neutral, and a polo shirt or t-shirt with jeans or dress pants is fine. Volunteers should wear comfortable closed-toed shoes, and safety glasses in the practice area and near the game field. If you are providing volunteer t-shirts, please advise your volunteers ahead of time. Volunteers should plan to arrive at your event early enough for any on-site training (recommend 30 minutes minimum), be on time for their assignments, share a cheerful, positive attitude, and be flexible and open to helping other volunteers, if assistance is needed.

Recommended Volunteer Staffing Plan

The following are sample volunteer staffing plans the volunteer needs for each event will vary, depending upon size, format, and layout. Use this table only as a guide for your volunteer recruitment and planning. Volunteers such as Inspectors, Team Check-In, Team Queuing, and Referees, can be used in dual roles in order to fully utilize their event support. For example, one volunteer can be working Team Check-In in the morning, and then transition to a Scorekeeper Referee or Queuer once matches begin. Teams can help reset fields after each match under the supervision of the Head Referee, as can younger siblings watching the competition. Optional roles are also included for events with additional volunteer support.

VEX Robotics Competition							
	Local Levels (1 Day Events)			Signature Levels and/or State Tournaments (1-2* Day Events)			
	16-24 Teams	24-60 teams	60+ teams	10-24 teams	24-48 teams	36-96 teams*	64-144 teams*
Qualification Matches	2 fields	3 fields	3 fields	2 fields	3 fields	3 fields	3 fields
Emcee	1	1	1	1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2
Head Referee	1	1	1	1	1	2	2 to 3
TM Operator	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 per division
Scorekeeper Referee	2	4	4	2	8	8	12
Queuer	2	3	3	2	3	3 to 6	3 to 6
Field Resetter	4 to 6	6 to 8	6 to 8	4 to 6	6 to 8	6 to 12	6 to 12
Robot Skills Challenge	2 fields	3-4 fields	3-4 fields	3 fields	3-4 fields	3-4 fields	4-6 fields
TM Operator (Optional)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Scorekeeper Referee	1 per skills field			1 per skills field			
Other							
Judge (2 per 8 teams)	4	4 to 6	8 to 12	4	6 to 8	5 to 12	8 to 18
Judge Advisor	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Team Check In	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Volunteer Coordinator	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inspector	3	4 to 6	4 to 6	3	4 to 6	4 to 6	6 to 12
Practice Field Official	1	2 to 4	2 to 8	1	2 to 4	2 to 8	2 to 8
Pit Admin (optional)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
*If a 2 Day event, Check In, Inspection, and Skills will usually begin on Day 1							
* over 60 teams will typically have multiple divisions (recommended numbers are based on single division tournaments)							

VEX IQ Competition							
	Local Levels (1 Day Events)			Signature Levels and/or State Tournaments (1-2* Day Events)			
	16-24 Teams	24-60 teams	60+ teams	10-24 teams	24-48 teams	36-96 teams*	64-144 teams*
Qualification Matches	2 fields	3 fields	3 fields	2 fields	3 fields	3 fields	3 fields
Emcee	1	1	1	1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2
Head Referee	1	1	1	1	1	2	2 to 3
TM Operator	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 per division
Scorekeeper Referee	2	4	4	2	8	8	12
Queuer	2	3	3	2	3	3 to 6	3 to 6
Field Resetter	4 to 6	6 to 8	6 to 8	4 to 6	6 to 8	6 to 12	6 to 12
Robot Skills Challenge	2 fields	3-4 fields	3-4 fields	3 fields	3-4 fields	3-4 fields	4-6 fields
TM Operator (Optional)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Scorekeeper Referee	1 per skills field			1 per skills field			
Other							
Judge (2 per 8 teams)	4	4 to 6	8 to 12	4	6 to 8	5 to 12	8 to 18
Judge Advisor	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Team Check In	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Volunteer Coordinator	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inspector	3	4 to 6	4 to 6	3	4 to 6	4 to 6	6 to 12
Practice Field Official	1	2 to 4	2 to 8	1	2 to 4	2 to 8	2 to 8
Pit Admin (optional)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

*If a 2 Day event, Check In, Inspection, and Skills will usually begin on Day 1
*over 60 teams will typically have multiple divisions (recommended numbers are based on single division tournaments)

Volunteer Management System (VMS) – Volunteer Scheduling Resource

In 2019, the REC Foundation implemented a new Volunteer Management System (VMS). You may utilize the VMS for all events once they have been approved in RobotEvents. A detailed [VMS training manual](#) can be found on our website in the Event Partner tab. The training manual is a step-by-step guide to successfully utilize the VMS as your primary scheduling tool. Event Partners can link their RobotEvents account with the VMS.

Volunteer Training and Preparation

Online Resources – Please instruct all volunteers to carefully review the *Volunteer Role* document and all posted training materials for their position(s) a week prior to your scheduled event. In addition to the training materials the REC Foundation provides, you may wish to include videos, narrated PowerPoints, and more. Give volunteers the opportunity to ask questions and prepare before the event date.

- **Watch Matches** – Advise them to watch matches on YouTube to get familiar with the event style. For a view of two different programs, Log onto youtube.com and search for recent matches to view.
- **Scorekeeper Referee Training Videos** – Referees are required to watch the Referee Training Videos and to be knowledgeable about the current game rules. Referee training resources can be found posted on the Volunteer Resources page under Scorekeeper Referee.
- **Head Referee Certification** – In addition to training videos, Head Referees are required to complete the Referee Certification courses. Select the course(s) you are interested in below:
 - [VRC Head Referee Certification Course](#)
 - [VEX IQ Challenge Head Referee Certification Course](#)

Training Calls – Consider holding your own training calls a week prior to your event, setting expectations and giving volunteers the opportunity to ask questions.

Attend a Local Event – Encourage volunteers to attend another local event if possible, to get a feel for how tournaments are run, and perhaps even shadow another volunteer in their upcoming role.

Train volunteers at a Skills Only event – If you host a Skills Only event, this is an ideal time to train volunteers and give them some hands-on experience.

Sensitivity Training – Remind volunteers this is a student event where they are working with children, so do what they can to make the kids feel comfortable – like taking a knee to get down on their level, talking firmly but positively, never touching or grabbing them, and also how to be sensitive to different cultures who may be competing.

Onsite Orientation – If you are able, hold an in-person training session the evening before your event (often referred to as the “Night Before” event) so that volunteers can meet the volunteer team and get on-site training. Many “Night Before” events run practice matches if there is a host team or home team available to help set up. This will help build volunteers’ confidence, making the morning of your event run smooth. Whether you host training the night before, or provide training onsite the morning of your event, plan to provide volunteers with the training documentation and materials required to successfully perform their roles and enjoy their event experience. This may include printing out hard copies of *Volunteer Role Guides*, field diagrams for reset, score sheets, etc., which can all be found on the [Event Partner Downloads](#) page.

Volunteer Care and Appreciation

Food & Drink – Make water and snacks available throughout the day and provide lunch for those who volunteer for a full event day. Hydration, food, and appropriate breaks are important to the volunteer experience. If it is possible, stop the entire competition for lunch so that ALL volunteers can take a break and eat. If you have space, set up a Volunteer Break Room or roped-off area as well.

Comfort – Be sure to advise your volunteers to wear comfortable shoes, bring (or provide) a water bottle, and have a few packs of lozenges in the volunteer break area to help soothe vocal cords.

Recognition & Certificates – If funding is available, use t-shirts and/or name tags to identify your volunteers as a valuable event resource. Share your appreciation with your volunteers, who provide invaluable support to your efforts. Recognize volunteers by providing them with a Community Service Certificate that you can customize with your event name and also record individual volunteer hours – many companies and schools require documentation either to allow employees to volunteer or some may even provide an incentive for validating volunteering time. The Community Service Certificate for volunteers is also available on [Event Partner Downloads](#) page for your chosen program under the Judge/Volunteer Resources tab. There is also a “Volunteer of the Year” trophy, included in the standard Qualifying Event Trophy Pack. You may order trophy packs as well as individual trophies and plates from VEX at <http://www.vexrobotics.com/event-partners>.

Tokens of Appreciation – Even on a small budget, consider giving volunteers (or key volunteers) a small gift certificate, like \$5 to Starbucks or a local food venue.

Hand-written notes – The power of a hand-written “Thank You” goes a long way today!

Social Media – If you are active on social media, consider writing a brief recommendation for a key volunteer on LinkedIn or giving a shout out on Twitter with a photo if they go above and beyond the call of duty. Tag them on Twitter along with @REC_Foundation. You can also send volunteer and event photos to the REC Foundation at media@roboticseducation.org.

Follow Up & Keep in Touch – Email your volunteers after the event to gauge satisfaction and collect opinions on event success, or use www.surveymonkey.com to send some short questions. Also keep in touch with volunteers for future events. If you have the budget, host a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner or Party. A happy volunteer who has a great experience will usually return!

Sharing Best Practices

Volunteer Recruitment

- Share Head Refs with EPs of nearby events. Check out event map on RobotEvents.com.
- If short, use the power of the mic to recruit help: “Looking for a few smiling faces to help us out!”
- If abundant, don’t turn volunteers away! Use as relief/floaters.
- Consider adding a requirement to participate in League Play:
 - Every team must provide five volunteers, or...
 - Every member of a team must volunteer for one or more events
- Partner with school Club Advisors. Volunteering is an easy way to earn service hours for both the club members and the club as a whole
- Inquire with local Religious schools and Catholic Educational Institutions. May require parents to do community service in lieu of tuition.

Volunteer Appreciation

- As a Thank You, make a collage of photos from the event in Shutterfly or equivalent online service, have the kids write a personal message (yearbook style), and print them out to send to volunteers.
- If you want to encourage volunteers to “move up the ranks,” provide a badge or button they can wear, based on experience and how many events they have attended.

















Volunteer Training









- Have a Succession Plan for Key Volunteers. Younger students can shadow/learn. Train a minion!
- Encourage volunteers to attend multiple events now that they have the process down.

Event Setup and Tear Down

- Add volunteer roles for “Setup Crew.” It’s best to have 6-8 adults, and plentiful students helping. ROTC and local Civil Air Patrol are fantastic at helping set up (give them a table at your event).
- Pre-stage materials in advance. For example, start massing tiles, etc.
- For Setup Day:
 - If possible, set up the day before the event! There is rarely enough time to set up an event the morning of the tournament.
 - Have two people set up Tournament Manager.
 - Have two people running cables.
 - Have one adult and two kids constructing each field.
 - Use power tools.
 - Appoint a head/leader in charge of each area: Pits, Floor pieces, Concession stand, etc.
 - Be sure to test the TM computer, all field electronics, projectors, printer, etc. before leaving; everything should be fully functional and ready to go!
- Make it mandatory for the kids to stay after school on the night before an event to help set up.
- Seven days before your event, email all school club advisors to provide two volunteers.
- For Tear Down:
 - Utilize parents sitting in bleachers. They have “fresh legs” and can help.
 - Partner with other host teams. Have them help with your event tear down and you help with theirs.
 - Any school club needing service hours can help with tear down. They don’t need any VEX experience, just willingness to help.

Volunteer Roles Overview

Role	Description	Activity	Experience	Skills
Field Reset	Accurately reset the competition field after each match and assist the Field Manager or Head Referee as needed. Note students with high energy and younger children do well.	 <p>HIGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Constant standing (or walking)</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Beginner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No experience is needed Ability to review field diagrams to place game objects in correct location on the competition field Move quickly around the field Good listening skills
Queuing	Assist with staging teams for upcoming matches.	 <p>HIGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Constant standing (or walking)</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Beginner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No experience required Communicate effectively Attention to detail Stay organized in fast-paced environment Follow Instruction
Pit Admin Assistant	Serve in a customer service role by assisting teams and guests with competition and venue related questions.	 <p>LOW PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Mostly sitting</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Beginner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No experience required Ability to troubleshoot issues Communicate effectively
Team Check-in	Welcome teams as they arrive. Verify teams, hand out materials, and collect Engineering Notebooks. Answer basic questions.	 <p>MODERATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Mix of sitting and walking</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Beginner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No experience required Attention to detail Communicate effectively Comfortable using a computer
Volunteer Check-in	Welcome volunteers and guests. Verify schedule, hand out materials, direct volunteers to appropriate locations. Answer basic questions. Can be a fast-paced role.	 <p>MODERATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Mix of sitting and walking</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Beginner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No experience required Attention to detail Communicate effectively Comfortable using a computer
Practice Field Official	Oversee practice fields and ensure that all teams have access to practice time and proceed in an orderly fashion.	 <p>MODERATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Mix of sitting and walking</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Beginner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No experience required Monitor students and keep order Communicate effectively
Judge	Evaluate student teams through interviews, Engineering Notebooks, multi-media presentations, and on the field performance. Present awards as needed.	 <p>MODERATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Mix of sitting and walking</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Intermediate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer some judging experience but not necessary Attention to detail Be impartial Communicate effectively
Inspector	Conduct inspections to verify the robots comply with the rules and specifications outlined in the Game Manual.	 <p>MODERATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Mix of sitting and walking</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Intermediate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic knowledge of robot construction and familiarity with VRC & VIQC parts helpful, not mandatory Collaborate with others as a team Attention to detail Follow inspection checklist (provided)

Role	Description	Activity	Experience	Skills
Scorekeeper Referee	Record scores using TM Mobile app or paper score sheets. Verify recorded scores with the Head Referee as needed and with the student drivers after each match. Discus possible rule violations with the Head Referee after the match. Ensure field is reset and robots are ready for the next match. (Same for Skills)	 <p>HIGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Constant standing tor walking</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Intermediate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experienced volunteers preferred however; Scorekeeper Referees can be new volunteers and trained quickly Apply knowledge of the game and rules and be impartial Attention to detail Work effectively as a member of a team Interact positively with students
VEX TM Operator	Use Tournament Manager software to initiate matches and record scores. Coordinate with the Emcee on displaying of match results at appropriate times.	 <p>LOW PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Mostly sitting</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Intermediate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experienced volunteers are preferred, but new volunteers can be trained in advance Comfortable using a computer Attention to detail
Emcee	Provide the play-by-play during the tournament and informative program knowledge between matches. Add enthusiasm and energy, as well as a high level of engagement and understanding, for all event participants.	 <p>HIGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Constant standing tor walking</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Advanced</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience is preferred but not required Outgoing and charismatic communication style to engage and energize the audience Work as a team with other volunteers Think quickly and improvise
Head Referee	Organize and oversee all Referee/Scorekeepers. Interpret and consistently enforce the rules of the game to score the match upon completion and is the final authority for any disputes or rulings. Train Referees/Scorekeepers as needed.	 <p>HIGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL Constant standing tor walking</p>	 <p>EXPERIENCE LEVEL Advanced</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous referee experience is required Apply knowledge of the game and rules Lead a team effectively Interact positively with students and coaches Arbitrate disputes fairly and quickly deescalate arguments