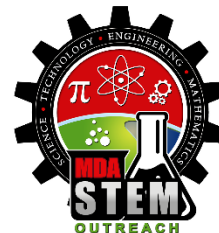# Request for Applications

MDA STEM BEST Robotics Grant

Educational Software Licenses and Robotic Sensors
2025/2026

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Outreach Program's goal is to: **Increase STEM awareness and proficiency among K-12 and college students to enhance the number of U.S. scientists and engineers capable of solving future missile defense challenges in the government, industry, and academia.**

MDA STEM's participation in this initiative aligns with the MDA efforts to develop and foster an engaged STEM talent pool. By making these proactive investments, MDA STEM strengthens and broadens the STEM competent talent pool across the education continuum to support future workforce needs.

The MDA STEM Boosting Engineering, Science, and Technology (BEST) Robotics Grants provide a means for official Local Competition Hubs, to obtain financial support for upgrading the robotics kits, in accordance with the BEST Inc. guidance for the 2025 or 2026 competition season.

What is BEST Robotics?

BEST Robotics, Inc. (www.bestinc.org) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization whose mission is to inspire students to pursue careers in engineering, science, technology, and mathematics through participation in a sports-like, science-and-engineering-based robotics competition.
BEST's mission is to engage, inspire, and excite students to pursue STEM majors and STEM careers through the vehicle of an after-school robotics program and competition. BEST values universal access and encourages participation of all students and schools by providing a free program supported through the fundraising and mentoring efforts of a large higher education and industry volunteer corps.

II. DEFINITIONS

Educational Software Licenses: Commercially available educational software licenses distributed to participating teams as part of the official BEST robotics kit, as defined by BEST Robotics Inc. in the 2025 or 2026 game rules. These licenses must be for a single year of software use.

Robotics Sensors: Returnable sensors that support Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration and are distributed to participating teams as part of the official BEST robotics kit, as defined by BEST Robotics Inc. in the 2025 or 2026 game rules.

Title I Schoolwide Program eligibility: As defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

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Some items in this grant are available specifically to support BEST Robotics teams who are associated with schools that are eligible to use Title I funding for schoolwide programs. Henceforth referred to in this document as a "Title I School". Please review the site below for more information on Title I Schoolwide Program eligibility:

https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/laws-preschool-grade-12-education/every-student-succeeds-act-essa

Higher Education Agency (HEA): Refers to a post-secondary education institution, such as a junior college or university

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

To be eligible for this grant, all applicants must meet the following five (5) criteria:

1. The applicant must be registered with BEST Robotics Inc. as an Official BEST Robotics Inc. Local Competition Hub, Regional Competition Hub, or national BEST Robotics Inc. organizer

2. The applicant must be EITHER:
   - Managed by a Higher Education Agency (HEA), such as a junior college or university; or
   - A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working closely with an HEA
     - All receipts and payment portions of the grant must be processed through the HEA's grant office

3. The HEA associated with the applying Official BEST Robotics Inc. applicant submitting a application must have:

   - Current information in the System for Award Management (SAM). SAM registration must be current from time of application until final payment is received, unless exempt from the requirement under 2 CFR 25.110. Additional information about registration procedures may be obtained by telephone (866-606-8220) or web site (https://www.sam.gov). For detailed instructions on registering with SAM, refer to: https://sam.gov/entity-registration

   - A Grants.gov account with current information. For detailed instructions on registering with Grants.gov, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration

   - A Procurement Integrated Enterprise Environment (PIEE) account. PIEE accounts must remain current until all grant payments and reporting requirement are complete. Additional information about PIEE accounts and instructions may be obtained by telephone (866-618-5988) or website: https://piee.eb.mil/xhtml/unauth/help/newuser.xhtml

     When viewing the website, select "New Vendor Organization - Getting Started Help" under the "New Vendor Getting Started" box on the top left of the screen.

4. If the applying Official BEST Robotics Inc. Local Competition Hub, Regional Competition Hub, or national BEST Robotics Inc. organizer was awarded an MDA STEM BEST Robotics Grant during any previous competition year:

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- All reporting requirements, including deadlines and content requirements for the previous grant were met; and
- Projected team registration goals proposed in the application were attained (if applicable)

5. Grant award recipients must be able to accomplish all required hub tasks (including material preparation, distribution, and safety) **without any involvement or additional funding from MDA**.

IV.   APPLICATION DATE

Grant applications must be received through Grants.gov by August 20, 2025 at 4:00 PM MT. Applications received after this date will not be considered for funding.

V.   AWARD INFORMATION

Anticipated Awards
Multiple awards are anticipated under this funding opportunity. However, MDA is under no obligation to make any awards in response to the applications submitted. The number of awards is not predetermined.

Funding Availability
MDA will award no more than $30,000 through this grant opportunity to Official BEST Robotics applicants only. Each individual grant award will vary. The cost of licenses/sensors may vary by region and vendor, however the proposal must align with the table below. Applicants should be aware that funding availability may change with little or no notice.

Title	Purpose and Quantity
Educational Software Licenses	Educational Software Licenses supported by this grant are to be distributed to teams for the 2025 and/or 2026 competition season. The license must be a one-time purchase that covers one year of software use.
Robotics Sensors	Robotics Sensors supported by this grant are to be distributed to teams for the 2025 and/or 2026 competition season.

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VI.   APPLICATION SUBMISSION

For detailed information on how to apply for a grant through Grants.gov, please visit:
https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants

Applications should contain the completed Application for Federal Assistance SF-424 (R&R), as required by Grants.gov. Instructions for completing this form can be found here: https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/instructions/SF424_4_0-V4.0-Instructions.pdf. Applicants may choose to include the Research & Related Personal Data form; this is an optional form to be completed by the grant coordinator.

In addition to the completed SF-424 (R&R), applications must include items 1-7 below, items 8-10 are optional. These items should be submitted as part of the application on Grants.gov using the Attachments Form. **Please use the attachment names and order listed in the table below.**

Item Number	Required File Name	Required Contents
1	**Hub Information and Funding**	• Statement that the applicant will be able to independently accomplish all required hub tasks (including material preparation, distribution, and safety) without any involvement or additional funding from MDA • Number of middle and high schools participating in previous competition season (2024) • Number of adults, teachers, and students that participated in the previous competition season (2024) • Number of teams in the previous competition season (2024) whose schools are eligible to use Title I funding for school-wide programs • Supporting information indicating Title I status of participating schools, such as an official website URL • Statement that the applicant has reasonable expectation for a similar team participation from the previous competition season • Itemized list of items to be purchased (name, quantity, vendor, and cost) • Total requested funding amount
2	**Proposed Schedule of Events**	A proposed schedule of events for the 2025 and/or 2026 competition season
3	**Support Letter 1**	A signed support letter on official letterhead (internal) from the HEA's senior leadership, such as a University President or Vice-President or School Administrator.
4	**Support Letter 2** *Local or Regional Competition Hubs Only*	A signed support letter, on official letterhead (external), from BEST Robotics National Headquarters: o Naming the applicant as an Official BEST Robotics Local Competition Hub, Official BEST Robotics Regional Competition Hub, or national BEST Robotics Inc. organizer o Voicing support for the hub to receive the grant

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Item Number	Required File Name	Required Contents
5	**Post-Award Agreement**	A signed letter, on official letterhead, of acknowledgement and agreement from the applicant to provide MDA with required post-award reporting as defined in Section VII of this document
6	**SAM Certification**	Certification that SAM information for the associated HEA is current
7	**WAWF Certification**	Certification that a WAWF account for the associated HEA is current
8 (Optional)	**Local Government Support Letter #**	A signed support letter(s) on official letterhead (external) from local and/or state government Limited to three (3) letters or less
9 (Optional)	**STEM Professional Support Letter #**	A signed support letter(s) on official letterhead (external) from STEM professional or technical nonprofit societies or organizations Limited to five (5) letters or less
10 (Optional)	**Local Industry Support Letter #**	A signed support letter(s) on official letterhead (external) from local (within hub service region) industry Limited to three (3) letters or less

Additional Resources for the Grant Submission Process

Grants.gov applicants can apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), you can create individual instances of a workspace. For an overview of applying on Grants.gov using Workspaces, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview/

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number: 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the point of contact listed in the application package of the grant for which you are applying.

VII. GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Applications failing to demonstrate the eligibility requirements outlined in Section III - Eligibility Information, will not receive further consideration for this grant.

MDA will evaluate applications based upon the following three (3) areas – need, impact, and support as defined in the table below:

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Area	Description	Application Submission Data (Section V)	Evaluation Weight
Need	Evident from the information provided by the applicant that: o The hub/organization is well-established with a reasonable expectation for a similar team participation from the previous competition season o There are Title I schools that are expected to register teams for the 2025 and/or 2026 competition season that would benefit from this grant award	Item 1	50%
Impact	Evident from the information provided that the Official BEST Robotics Local Competition Hub, Regional Competition Hub, or national BEST Robotics Inc. organizer can feasibly expect to further STEM interest in: o Elementary, middle, and/or high school students in their local area o Populations that are underserved (e.g. Title 1 schools)	Items 1 and 4	30%
Support	Evident from the information provided that the applicant is: o Managed by or works closely with an HEA, who will process receipts and payment portions if grant is awarded o Supported internally o Supported externally	Items 2, 3, and 6-10	20%

Evaluation of applications may result in funding levels lower than the proposed amount(s).

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VIII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Acceptance Notices

Successful applicants will receive an e-mail notice from the MDA Grants Officer stating their application has been accepted. The notification shall not be regarded as an authorization to commit or expend funds. **An acceptance notice should be sent to selected applicants by September 30, 2025.**

The Government is not obligated to provide any funding until the MDA Grants Officer and the appropriate official from the selected entity sign the grant award document. Events or purchases taking place before the grant award document is fully executed are not reimbursable by this grant.

Reporting Requirements

All awardees must submit the following three (3) items to the MDA STEM Outreach Program Office (STEM@mda.mil) and the MDA Grants Officer:

1. Map of applicant's service region identifying (using a map pinpoint dot) all competing teams' schools, with school name and city

2. Completed MDA-provided reporting template, detailing:
   - Demographics for 2025 and/or 2026 competition year, with annotations about significant differences which may be attributed to receiving the MDA grant
   - Competition results
   - List of competing teams and contact information, indicating Title I Schools

3. 10-30 pictures (saved as **.**JPG files), documenting all significant 2025 and/or 2026 competition season events (Kick-off, Game day, etc.)

The reports should be sent to STEM@mda.mil and ambros.d.montoya.civ@mda.mil with the e-mail subject "MDA STEM BEST Robotics Grant 2025/2026 – [Hub Name] and [Grant Number]".

The MDA Grants Officer will provide notification once all reporting requirements are accepted by the MDA STEM Outreach Program Office.

Grant Vouchers

Grant vouchers should be submitted in WAWF (https://pieetraining.eb.mil/wbt/wawf/documents/Grant.pdf) after the grant award document is fully executed by the MDA Grants Officer and must meet the following criteria:

1. Contain receipt(s), invoice(s) and any other supporting documentation for the Educational Software Licenses (one year only) and/or Robotics Sensors

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2. Does not exceed the amount identified in the grant agreement

The Office of Naval Research (ONR) will serve as the administrative office (Grant Award, Block 6). ONR will approve the voucher and supporting documents. Visit the ONR website for more information on electronic payments for grants: https://www.onr.navy.mil/

After ONR approves the voucher and supporting documents, ONR will forward the information to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) for payment. DFAS is the payment office (Grant Award, Block 12).

Both ONR and DFAS are completely separate entities from MDA

All awardees must:

• Include the MDA STEM Program Office and the MDA Grants Officer in all communications with ONR and DFAS;

• Forward to the MDA STEM Outreach Program Office and the MDA Grants Officer any e-mail correspondence with ONR or DFAS regarding invoice submissions (whether rejected or approved); and

• Comply with the policies of the Implementation of a 15 Percent Indirect Cost Cap on Assistance Awards to Institutions memos if applicable for the entirety of the award if there is a court decision permitting application of the policies

IX. AGENCY CONTACTS

Any questions about this funding opportunity announcement should be directed to:

• Ambros Montoya, MDA Grants Officer, ambros.d.montoya.civ@mda.mil

• MDA STEM Outreach Program Office, STEM@mda.mil

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