

Team Forum – Outline

- ▶ Why we need Mid-Atlantic Robotics
- ▶ The case for change
- ▶ Why can't we wait for next year?
- ▶ The concept for a new competition format
- ▶ What qualifying events might look like
- ▶ What a regional championship might look like
- ▶ Open Issues

Our Track Record

- FIRST, with our help, has been very successful
- Regional events have been large lavish affairs
 - Large arenas
 - Beautiful decorations, sponsor signage, t-shirts for all volunteers, catering, golf shirts for judges, ceiling to floor draping separating areas, expensive AV, wall to wall sound
 - Travel to somewhat exotic locations (for those who could afford it)
 - Florida, San Diego, Hawaii
- Up until recently, growth rate has been good
 - We are victims of our success
- We want our growth to continue.
 - We want more students to be able to compete and get the benefits of the program.

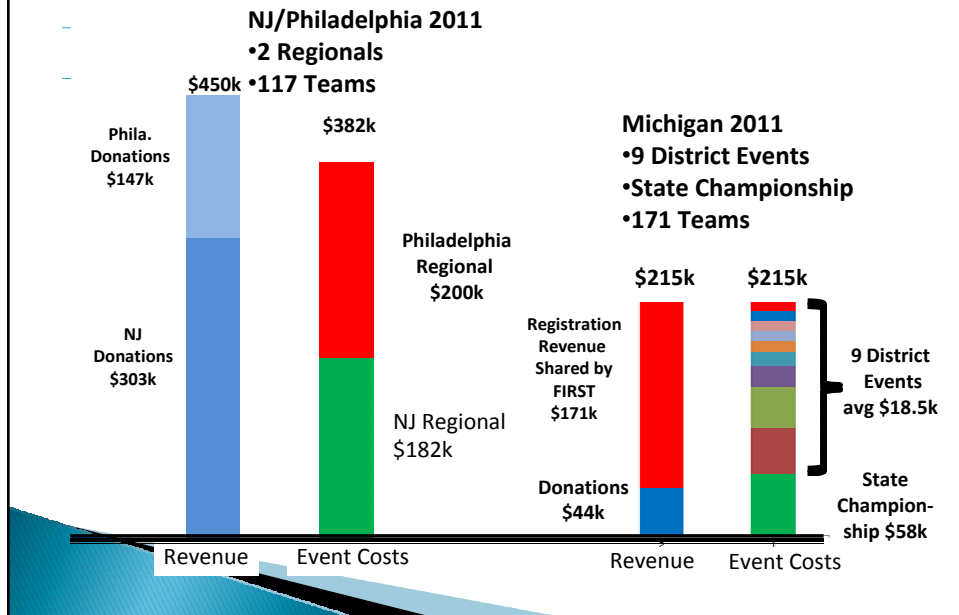
The New Reality

- ▶ Former lower cost “large” venues have dried up!
 - After 10 years, Drexel management has changed. Interested in making money. Cannot afford to be so generous. They are now a business.
- ▶ Costs across the board have risen.
- ▶ More and more donations are going to pay for the large events.
- ▶ Venues, many unionized, treat FIRST as normal full charge customer.
 - No break for non profits
 - Every little item has a related expense
 - Right now we have no facility for the New Jersey Regional.
 - We are looking at Temple for the 2012 Philadelphia regional.

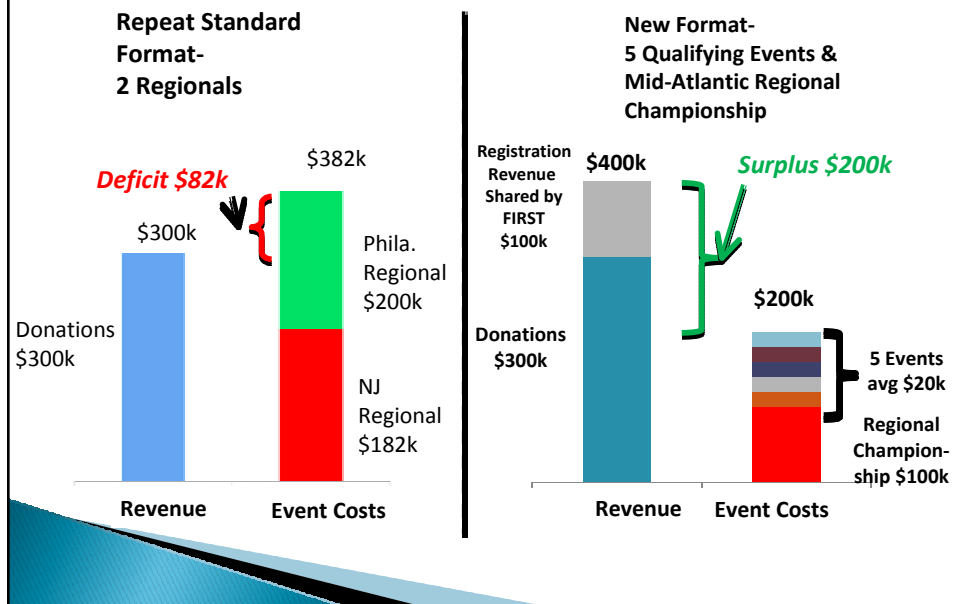
The New Reality

- ▶ Michigan District Model (since 2009)
 - Area under financial pressure but wanted to continue to support FIRST.
 - To lower costs, provide more playing time and attract new teams
 - FIRST's surveys showed students do not care about splash. They love the competition & meeting other students.
 - Michigan has been successful
 - In 2011 they have 31 more teams than in 2009 (140 to 171)
 - They run their District Events at a much lower cost.
 - Lower cost venues, bag and tag, local AV, less glitz, 12 matches per team
 - More money to help teams

What did FRC Events cost in 2011?



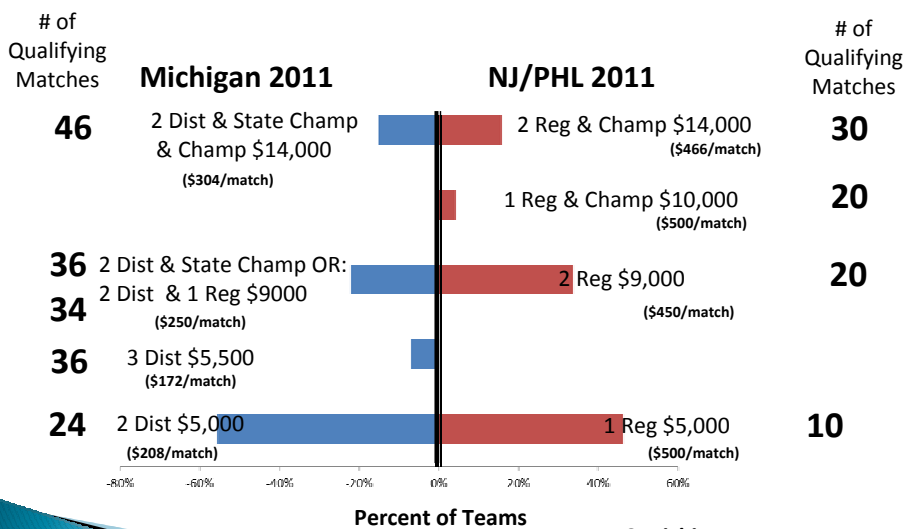
Two scenarios for 2012



The Case for Change

- ▶ The traditional format for FRC is unsustainable
 - Regionals cost more than donors are willing to pay
 - Many FRC teams find FRC to be too expensive for the value they receive
 - FRC cannot grow to accommodate new teams
- ▶ Overall the 3-year “Michigan pilot” has succeeded in solving these many of these problems
 - Lower event costs, local management of events and revenue sharing lead to a self-sustaining formula
 - Teams experienced lower costs and more playing time
 - Teams that ended up going to Nationals were better prepared.
- ▶ Yes, there are still a few problems

What did teams pay to play in 2011?



Note: 6 Michigan teams played in more than 4 events

Mid Atlantic Robotics (MAR)

- In 2010 FIRST asked local volunteers to establish a regional 501(c)(3) to manage FRC in this area
- MAR has...
 - recruited >200 members among 80% of DE, NJ, eastern PA teams
 - elected a Board of Directors (13) representing all of these areas
 - Been invited by FIRST to join in planning the 2012 FRC competition format in this area
(as far as we know we are the only region besides Michigan facing this opportunity)

Why can't we wait until next year?

- Insufficient funds to pay for a conventional season; FIRST will face a large deficit
- Michigan is renegotiating MOU
 - Memo of Understanding makes local non profit an affiliate of FIRST.
 - Recognized to represent FRC in this region.
- We are in close contact with Michigan
 - We are trying to agree on what we ask FIRST together.
- We too are negotiating our first MOU
 - We want to have some say in the terms vs. being told this is how it is.
 - We feel if we do not act now we will be pushed to the side lines.
- ▶ All of the operational problems to be solved will be the same next year

Why the apparent rush!

- We need to get Venues wrapped up by mid August
 - Working with high schools and universities
 - Possible district event locations:
 - Chestnut Hill Academy, PA (Fri. to Sun.)
 - Mount Olive High School, NJ (Fri. to Sun.)
 - Cherokee High School, NJ (Fri. to Sun.)
 - Montgomery County Community College, PA (Thu.–Sat.)
 - Rutgers, NJ (Thu.–Sat.)
 - West Chester University, PA (Thu.–Sat.)
 - Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA (Thu.–Sat.)

How it can work?

- ▶ Multiple “District” events allow teams to play more and earn qualifying points.
- ▶ Top point earning teams compete in “Regional Championship” event.
- ▶ Winners of RC qualifies for Nationals.
- ▶ Benefits....
 - Teams attend more events and play more matches with no increase in registration fees
 - Prospects for earning a slot in the St. Louis Championship are as good or better than before.
 - Teams are better prepared for Nationals

What qualifying events might look like

- ▶ Venue: High School or college/university
 - Bag and Tag to save money;
 - 30– 42 teams;
 - All judged FRC awards given
 - 12 qualifying matches per team
- ▶ Competition Schedule:
 - Day 0 4–10 PM: load in; pits open; inspection
 - Day 1 8AM–8PM: qualifying matches 11AM–7PM
 - Day 2 8AM–6:30PM: qualifying matches 9:30–12:30
 - finals 2PM; award ceremony 5PM

What regional championship might look like

- ▶ Venue: College/University
 - 42 – 54 teams;
 - all judged FRC awards given
 - 12 qualifying matches per team
- ▶ Schedule: dependent on # of teams
 - 42 Teams: Same as qualifying event schedule
 - 48 –54 Teams: Standard FRC regional event schedule

The Elephant in the Room

Open Issues

- ▶ Will MAR teams be able to attend other regionals? – most likely *YES*
 - ▶ Will MAR teams be able to “opt out”? – unknown
 - ▶ Will teams from outside MAR be able to participate? – unknown
 - ▶ Will qualifying events be Thu/Fri/Sat or Fri/Sat/Sun? – to be determined; possibly both
 - ▶ Will the regional championship be held on Week 6 (Easter conflict)? – to be determined
 - ▶ Can the presumed \$4000 Regional Championship fee be reduced or eliminated? – Perhaps, if a strong business case can be made
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