

## **What is a Town Hall Event?**

The Town Hall event is a community open house that provides information about the FIRST robotics programs and opportunities to register offered through Novi Community School District. At this event, we give a presentation detailing every FIRST program, pricing, level of student/parent involvement and more. In addition to this, we do our best to demonstrate as many programs as possible, with active Novi FIRST teams in attendance at the event to demo their robots and share their season. The event is held when FIRST registration is open for students in grades K-8 in our school district. The town hall does not go in-depth for the two repopulating Novi High School FRC teams in Novi, Frog Force and Automated Amphibians, as they have a separate information night hosted in June. The event is set up, run, and tore down by the student and mentor volunteers on NBot.

## **How to Plan a Town Hall Event**

### ***Date and Location***

NBot begins its work during the FRC competition season. Towards the end of January, the team sits down and finalizes the registration open period, the event date, logistics, and location. Once the dates are finalized, mentors will call and reserve the location for the town hall.

Frog Force always hosts the town hall within the first three weeks of May at the Novi Middle School cafeteria from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. By reserving the location ~5 months in advance, we minimize potential schedule conflicts. This date is also chosen with district events in mind. We do our best to avoid conflicts with band/orchestra/choir, school banquets, and other club activities. May is also AP testing season, so do keep in mind the availability of the students who can help with setup, teardown, and event organization. Please also choose a venue that can handle the maximum number of people you anticipate will attend the event.

The 2024 – 2025 Novi Robotics registration is open from April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, to May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The town hall is hosted within this time frame.

### ***Promotion***

NBot promotes the event through multiple channels during open registration and beforehand (a month to 2 weeks prior to the event). The most important way is through the district principals. NBot members will send emails to every principal (and their administrative assistants/secretaries) asking to publicize the event in their weekly newsletters.

Email Template:

Dear Principal [Principal Name],  
I trust this message finds you well.

My name is [Full Name] and I am reaching out to you on behalf of the [Associated School/Organization] robotics team, [Team Name & Number]. As a member of the [Event Organizing Team/Group], we are excited to announce our upcoming event aimed at promoting our robotics program.

Our annual robotics informational night serves as a platform to introduce the range of pre-K through high school FIRST robotics programs available in [City] and provide instruction for registration.

The robotics town hall is scheduled to take place on [Date] at [Location] from [Start Time] to [End Time].

To ensure the students at [School] receive information about the Novi Robotics programs, we kindly request your assistance in spreading the word.

We would like you to include information about the informational night in your [Principal-Student Correspondence] for students and parents. Additionally, the event flier is available on [Digital Flyer Location] if you would like to include the link. Sharing this information before [Specific Date Before Town Hall] would be greatly appreciated.

[This section is *optional*]

*We're also looking for opportunities to engage directly with students and parents. If possible, we hope to:*

- *Distribute flyers at a designated table during parent-teacher conferences.*
- *Host a brief after-school robot demonstration with a booth for inquiries.*

*If you are interested in any of these events, we are flexible in coordinating dates that align with your school's schedule. Please feel free to reach out to us at [Email Contact] for further details or to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.*

Thank you for considering our request. Your support means a lot to our robotics team!

Sincerely,

[sender]

We also create a flyer which is posted on the digital information board our district uses known as "Peach Jar". Following this, we contact the library and city office to post our flyer. We also promote it through word of mouth. Students on Frog Force are encouraged to go out and talk to parents and students in the district about registering for robotics.

In the offseason (previous summer-fall), the team works to advertise the robotics program through robot demos, STEM outreach events, a girls FTC summer camp, and a "Robot in 1 Week" event. By continuously putting the robot and team out in the community, we garner a community awareness of the robotics program – which is key to getting students into FIRST.

Other channels include:

- Local News
- Social Media
- Team Website

## ***Event Preparation***

NBot's Town Hall has grown in complexity since its creation. The event is two hours long, with lots of things to see. In recent years, we've added:

- Novi FTC and FLL teams with tables to present their season work and fields to demonstrate/display their robots.
- Team 6006, Tech Warriors
- A Q&A session
- Paper Handouts at every table
  - FIRST Progression of Programs
  - Parent roles
  - FAQs
  - Registration information
- Activities to keep younger children occupied – like colouring sheets

To pull all of this together, you need a strong core team of 3+ student members and at least one mentor.

There are three sections to event preparation.

1. Collect equipment, handouts, and student volunteers.
2. Prepare presentation & presenters.
3. Contact teams & media.

The first is the most straightforward. This is a general equipment list, but it may change according to the location you choose to host the event. The Novi Middle School cafeteria is equipped with a sound system, projector screen, and seating, so we don't bring those items.

### Equipment list

- Projector
- Screen
- Microphone
- Speakers
- Amplifier
- Sound mixer
- Laptop for presentation
- PowerPoint and video links
- Tables
- Chairs
- Tablecloths
- Extension cords, power strips, cables
- Program specific equipment/props (fields, robots, team posters, team documentation)
- Tape, Scissors, and writing utensils
- Signage

- Table printouts
- Decorations, robots from past years

After setting aside the necessary equipment, we highly recommend doing a sound check at the event location any time before you host. This will allow you to gauge how much time is needed for set up, find the locations of outlets, determine sound quality, and reduce pre-event anxiety.

No event can be run without its volunteers, so Frog Force requests 15 students from our team to be present for set up and tear down. This is in addition to our current three NBot members (this number does not fluctuate much), who will run the presentation and answer questions from parents and students in addition to event set up and tear down. This allows us to come in at 5:00 pm, set up the event, and help FTC and FLL teams get ready before 6:30 pm, when attendees start to roll in.

Part two involves prepping a presentation and the presenters.

### The Presentation

This is our presentation from 2023. The presentation outline is below:

1. Welcome the community.
2. Introduce presenters.
3. Break down “What is FIRST?”
4. Show the “More than Robots” video.
5. Explain what Frog Force is and what it does.
6. Make the role of NBot and the Novi Educational Foundation clear.
7. Show last year’s season and sub-themes.
8. Go through the FIRST progression of programs (update season, pictures, and pricing information as needed)
9. Show examples of Novi team’s robots and Innovation Projects
10. Show clips of matches and up to date pictures of robots from each level from the previous season
11. Overview of Novi FRC teams, Frog Force and Automated Amphibians – direct parents interested in FRC to the high school robotics informational night.
12. Discuss coach and mentor roles.
13. Outline coach and team resources available through NBot.
14. Advertise All Girls FTC Robotics camp hosted in July.
15. Conclude with next steps for registration and methods of contact.
16. Open the floor for Q&A and viewing FLL and FTC booths.

You can shift and tailor this presentation to your team’s requirements, however, the essence of a Town Hall informational night lies in points 3, 7-10, and 12-16.

Once the presentation is ready to go, work with your designated student or mentor presenters to form a script, and conduct a full practice run at least three times before the event. Students can print the script, keep bullet points, or have it on their phone as they present to the crowd. One member should be by the projector laptop, prepared to move to the next slide on time with the

script. If students feel confident and knowledgeable about the material they are presenting, the slideshow will be much easier to present.

The final component of preparing for the event is gathering any teams or presenters you would like to have at your event as well as media coverage.

### More presenters!

To bring Novi teams to the event, the NBot group emails all the coaches and assistant coaches registered for the most recent season to bring their robot and season materials to the event. We then collect responses and send an info-letter to teams, detailing the space they will receive, when they should come in, what they should bring, what they can expect, and other event day logistics. After sending the info-letter, NBot requests final confirmation that teams will be present at the event.

Here is the email template we use to request coaches to bring their teams and get media to use in our presentation:

Hello Coaches,

I hope you are all doing well.

Novi Robotics is preparing for the Annual FIRST Robotics informational night on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Novi Middle School Cafeteria.

We have a couple of requests for our Novi FLL Explore, FLL Challenge, and FTC Teams this year:

1. Please let us know if your team is interested in presenting their robot and/or project to other parents and students who will attend the event.
2. Please send us a video of your robot running or some recent photographs of your team and their robot. We would like to use this media in our presentation.

Let us know if you are available by responding to this email.

We can't wait to see you all there!

Best Regards,

[Sender]

Other presenters are contacted separately and requested. You should document the event internally with pictures and videos, but you can also contact your local news outlet and request them to cover the event, which will bring in much more publicity for robotics registration.

### **Event Day Logistics**

Alright! Now you're all set and ready to run a Town Hall event. A week prior to the event, NBot will send a runbook letter to all the Frog Force members who have signed up to volunteer at the event.

The document will contain the list of volunteers, event tasks and assignments, what to wear and bring, and event lead contacts. This is what Frog Force does when we get there for set-up.

1. Clean and set up the tables! - Oftentimes the cafeteria isn't perfect when we get there, especially since the event is during a school night. We start by clorox-ing the tables and then setting them up in an orderly manner by clearing space for presenters, designating tables for teams, and organizing space for attendees and volunteers.
2. Audio-Visual – This is where doing a sound check before the event really helps. Having a clear idea of the sound system will allow clear direction of set up. Make sure to tape down cords so no-one will trip on them.
3. Jazz up the place – Tablecloths and handouts go on all the tables, signs are put up, and old robots are transported into the Middle School from the High School.
4. Get teams set up – Set up the FTC field and assist teams with load in and their table set up.
5. Warm up for the presentation - Presenters should be ready to go, doing any final rehearsing as people start to come into the cafeteria.

Once the event gets started, we run the presentation, then open the floor to Q&A and encourage attendees to look around.

After the event ends and stragglers leave, students get to work resetting tables to their original positions and packing up all the equipment the team brought to the venue. Tearing down is often faster than setting up, and you may conclude earlier than anticipated.

### **What now?**

Well, that's a wrap on the Town Hall! But NBot's work doesn't end there. The key to ensuring every student in Novi, who wants to, gets the opportunity to join a FIRST team is NBot's team formation method.

After registration closes, NBot gets to work forming teams using the information that registrants have provided. Students can pre-form a group and register together by listing the team members' names, which is how teams are re-populated and how returning teams are formed together again.

A week or so after registration closes, NBot hosts a team formation meeting at the high school. Each team is assigned a table to meet, receives a worksheet with the meeting goals and has veteran coaches on hand to answer questions. This gives teams the opportunity to get organized, choose coaches, assign mentor roles, and discuss meeting options. At this point, the offseason has officially started. In the offseason we:

- Assign student mentors to teams who request them
- Host multiple advanced to basic programming and build workshops for FTC and FLL

- Open NBot to support any teams who need help

The offseason ends when we host the Novi FLL kickoff, then Novi and Detroit FTC kickoffs. This is when NBot becomes much more active. We track student mentors, teams, and ensure no team feels left behind in the fast-paced season.

Our best tip to help build a network for your coaches is to use a shared community channel on a platform like Discord or Slack. This way, coaches stay in the loop and whoever is overseeing the teams can keep close tabs on teams' progress through the season.

### **Questions?**

If you have any questions about the Town Hall, NBot, or would like a guide for any of the other events we run during the season, please contact us at [nbot@frogforce503.org](mailto:nbot@frogforce503.org). We will do our best to answer all your questions!