A preview of FIRST Washington’s finances and footprint across Washington State

FIRST Washington's impact across our state is impressive for a young organization. Students are drawn to FIRST because of the sports competition model. It is our vision to bring FIRST programs into every school so that students have access to our programs regardless of family income. We are already in approximately 25% of all public school buildings. We have built a strong partnership with the State of Washington and OSPI with a $1M+ appropriation supporting 4th-12th grade public school FIRST teams annually. These funds go directly to schools that have FIRST teams.

While FIRST Washington is the largest afterschool STEM program in our state, we currently impact only 2% of the student population across the state. That is not enough. Private and public donors are committed to equity and access and ensuring that FIRST programs are scalable locally.

Understanding FIRST Washington’s Revenue

FIRST Washington is primarily funded by charitable contributions and has been successful in building a pipeline of contributors, mostly corporate and foundation donors. Corporate and foundation donors never want to be thought of as permanent funders; they change their priorities and focuses frequently, making it very difficult to forecast revenue for a non-profit organization such as FIRST Washington, which has to operate as a business.

Donations designated for specific teams are restricted and entered into that team’s booster account. While these funds are recognized as FIRST Washington revenue, they cannot be used to operate or deliver programs. Annually, FIRST Washington holds approximately $900,000 that is restricted to teams.

FIRST Washington Expenses

Like any business, FIRST Washington’s largest expense is people, followed by event expenses, and our fieldhouse, where event equipment is stored, and administrative offices. We are a staff of 10 working to support all teams, and over 5,500 coaches, mentors and volunteers. Fifty-percent of FIRST Washington’s staff manages the 150 annual competition and outreach events and supporting volunteers; the other 50% focuses on fundraising, advocacy, accounting and relationships with school districts to bring FIRST programs to more students.

As an independent 501c3 non-profit and program delivery partner for FIRST, FIRST Washington is required to cover all of our own operational expenses.