*FIRST* Robotics Competition Team 3044 0xBE4 Business Plan

**Mission Statement**:

On March 26th, 2020, Sarah Darmanjian published an article about our team. In it, a quote was published; “We believe that no matter who you are or where you come from, everyone should have a chance to create their own future and strive to be the best you can be”. This idea is our team’s “driving engine”. We make sure to accept anyone into our team, requiring no entry fee and even fundraising for all of our FLL and FTC teams too. We promote diversity on our team, having members with many different personalities and backgrounds, each with their own individual interests. 0xBE4’s mentors are there to help and guide each of these individual interests taking care for each student beyond the team and their high-school career, helping them come out of their shell, build up life skills and leadership qualities,

**Team History and Growth:**

0xBE4 is from Ballston Spa NY, and we were founded in 2009. Since then, we have grown tremendously into the loud-and-proud team we are today. During 2019, our team had expanded into 40 members- most of them juniors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, our meetings became sparser and word of any clubs and activities- much less FRC- was taken with a grain of salt. By 2021, most of our backbone had graduated and moved on to various fields of work or study, and very few new members joined compared to what we were used to. By the end of 2021, our team had some of the lowest numbers of members ever.

Luckily, during the following school year, those in their younger years by the beginning of the pandemic had remembered and maintained their connections made with the people at 0xBE4 before the pandemic. We used our school announcements and posters to passively let people know about our team- as well as verbal communication by those who hold it close to them and yearly opportunities such as orientation days and homecoming street fairs. The pandemic took its toll on us, as it did everyone, but we were able to bounce back. We now have 20 members, 12 returning from the 2021 season, and many others returning from the 2020 season and many other new members, eager to join after our six-week introductory course for our FTC members at the end of the previous season.

**Organizational Structure:**

Over the past years, our team has always had a specific structure. We would elect two team captains in addition to subdividing our team into different departments, each with a sub-team leader. Going forward, however, we have implemented changes aimed at increasing individual opinion throughout the team, as we hope to put more emphasis on each specific member and their path going forward beyond 0xBE4. Our executive portion of our team is composed of our mentors only, used as a vehicle for the team. We no longer have team captains, nor do we have sub-team leaders. This eliminates the middle-men from the equation, allowing individual members to directly voice themselves to the team and the mentors. It also encourages more student-mentor interaction, which naturally brings forth more learning- a vital part of 0xBE4 which always needs to be improved upon. In the informal interaction, it also prompts conversation about the individual’s future. Possibly helping them find their path via any experience of the mentors, especially if it is found within the realm of engineering or the sciences. Overall, over time, this structure should get each individual to have a stronger sense of self and see themselves more as their own leaders.

**Risk Analysis:**

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| SWOT | Positive | Negative |
| Internal | (Strengths)  Our team’s greatest strength is most likely our sense of unity. Each member is proud to be a part of Ballston Spa’s FRC program and is happy to spend their time with the other members of the team. The upperclassmen of the team are incredibly open to the new members and they quickly develop a new sense of friendship with the various members of the team. We naturally create a positive and welcoming environment, with lots of time for team bonding, including our “family dinners”, where the team shares a meal through donated home-made food, and our “fun time” where the team can take a break with each other and play a friendly round of hide-and-seek or dodgeball. | (Weaknesses)  With such a high sense of comfortability with peers, students are more likely to interact more with them, and less with mentors. To combat this, our new team format should increase student-mentor communication going forward over time  Additionally, we are hoping to accumulate more mentors to the team, in addition to growing our student body. The COVID-19 pandemic left us with only our core mentors to the team, leaving us without many of our specialized mentors that would work directly with students of specific subteams. |
| External | (Opportunities)  Over the years, 0xBE4 has played a vital role in the development of our district’s FLL teams. It had been overall teacher-run, with 0xBE4 student’s mentoring the younger FLL members. Recently, many of the teachers had been unable to play their previous role in the management of their respective team. Instead of seeing this as a problem, however, 0xBE4 saw this as an opportunity to become more involved in our community and its eager students. Multiple team members took up that newly vacant role in order to secure the continuing education and involvement of our community’s youth. | (Threats)  Our team has experienced threats both ongoing and relatively short-term. The biggest example of our external short-term challenges has been recruitment. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a decrease of possible members, as the population of involvement in extracurricular activities have decreased. However, as times and policies have changed, students are feeling more and more safe to re-enter the extracurricular world. We have been able to utilize our school’s atmosphere to put forth information on who we are, what we do via posters, decorations, and announcements  Besides that, we’ve also been vulnerable financially, as our fundraising is necessary to the team’s budget. Every year we undergo many different events to raise money for our team, however every year we have reliable turnout. Our community presence and family-like sense of unity has allowed the community to hear about and want to partake in our events. |

**Marketing:**

0xBE4 both has many ways to be seen and ways to get people to see us. We make great use of social media, posting on Facebook and Twitter. We also run and manage our own website and have information posted on our school’s sites. 0xBE4 is also physically out in the community via various events, such as our FLL tournaments that we host, and the Robot Rumble, an off-season competition for FRC teams. We also have an open workshop with team 7651 and have sent various STEAM-themed packages to countries such as Ireland and Afghanistan. Additionally, most of our team’s members have individually performed acts of community service while promoting our team, such as participating in our district's “Super Science Saturdays”, where we don our team’s shirts and volunteer to run some stations to teach elementary students in many different areas of science, such as “How fish breathe” and “How whales stay warm”. We also teach older students in our FTC “Intro to robotics” course that can be taken at the high school for half a credit.

**Financials:**

Our team is regularly funded through our sponsors and team fundraising. Most of our income comes from our sponsors, our biggest ones being Ballston Spa National Bank and Ballston Spa High School, however every sponsor is vitally important. We have to keep our spending on a tight budget compared to most other teams, and we fundraise a necessary portion of it ourselves. We do this to continue to ensure that there are no costs for joining the team, maintaining an equal opportunity for everyone. We also make sure to let our sponsors know how much we appreciate their contributions through meetings and visits, call-outs on Twitter and Facebook, thank-you cards, and our sponsor board we include on our robot every year. We make sure to include them in our partnership in creating such an impactful team.