2026–2027 AIR-FAIR Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where do I apply for the AIR-FAIR pilot program?

A link to the application form is found on DEQ's AIR-FAIR web page: https://www.deq.idaho.gov/about-us/outreach-and-education/

2. When is the deadline to apply for the AIR-FAIR pilot program?

Teams must apply for the AIR-FAIR pilot program by 10/1/2026. Submit an application form for each team competing within a school by that date. Each team should share the same adult advisor who acts as the main point of contact for DEQ staff and is responsible for the PurpleAir sensor (if requested).

3. How many members can be on a competing AIR-FAIR team?

Four-to-eight members can compete under a team name. Each school can have multiple teams that share the school's PurpleAir sensors and compete against each other. All the teams should share the same advisor who is responsible for the PurpleAir sensor.

4. Can multiple teams share one PurpleAir sensor?

Yes! We encourage multiple teams of 4–8 from the same school with the same AIR-FAIR advisor to apply and share the PurpleAir sensor data. This increases participation across the AIR-FAIR pilot program and does not limit the available PurpleAir sensor resources. A school can only receive two PurpleAir sensors so that data must be shared across teams within the same school.

5. Can teams from a school apply without requesting a PurpleAir sensor?

A PurpleAir sensor is not required for participation. Air quality data from DEQ's monitors and EPA's Fire and Smoke Map can be used to complete air-tivities.

6. What if my school only has one team applying to participate in the AIR-FAIR?

You can apply to participate with one team of 4–8 students! DEQ anticipates participation across a variety of school locations throughout the state. All schools regardless of size are encouraged to apply and participate in the pilot program.

7. Is my team required to do the research question air-tivity?

No. Teams can choose to do a few or all of the nine air-tivities! First place will be awarded for the best research project and best art project. However, these air-tivities are not required for team participation, and you can still score points and compete without submitting the research and art projects.

8. Why do I need to choose my team's research question in the application form?

Your research question helps DEQ understand what air quality data your team plans to use and whether your project requires multiple PurpleAir sensors. Teams may use existing air quality data provided by DEQ or EPA, or request 1–2 PurpleAir sensors, depending on project needs. Refer to the decision tree in the AIR-FAIR rules packet for more information.

9. What if my team wants to investigate a research question that is not on the research question list?

If your team has an idea for a new research question, contact DEQ staff with your question and the reason for researching the topic.

10. What if my team wants to change our research question later?

Your team may change its research question after submitting the application form if needed. Contact DEQ staff for approval of the research question change.

11. When will my team/school be notified that we were chosen for the AIR-FAIR pilot program?

DEQ will notify your school, and all of the teams that applied to participate from your school, by November 1, 2026. Following your school's confirmation of participating teams, DEQ will send the requested PurpleAir sensors to the address provided in the application

form in early November 2026. If you did not request a PurpleAir sensor in the application form, your team can begin collecting data and submitting air-tivities immediately.

12. How will my school receive the PurpleAir sensor if chosen for the AIR-FAIR?

PurpleAir sensors will be mailed directly to the address the school provided in the application form. DEQ provides instructions on setting up the sensor as well as resources from the PurpleAir website.

13. What if my school needs help setting up the PurpleAir sensor?

Although PurpleAir has great online resources, we provide internal contacts listed at the end of AIR-FAIR rules packet. These contacts can guide setup via phone call or video messaging. The PurpleAir setup instructions included with your sensor are found on the DEQ's AIR-FAIR web page.

14. When does the PurpleAir sensor need to be set up at my school by?

Schools will be notified if they were chosen for the AIR-FAIR pilot program by November 1, 2026. Upon confirmation of participating teams, schools will be mailed their PurpleAir sensors and setup instructions in early November. DEQ expects schools to receive and set up their PurpleAir sensors by December 1, 2026.

15. How do I access other air quality data to compare my PurpleAir sensor data to?

Air quality data from DEQ's monitors, EPA, and other PurpleAir sensors are found under the "Useful Air-tivity Resources & Links" in the AIR-FAIR rules packet.

16. If my school did not request a PurpleAir sensor, what air quality data should we use?

A purple air sensor is not required to participate in the AIR-FAIR. Data provided by DEQ's monitoring network can be used to look at air quality within Idaho, and data provided by EPA's Fire and Smoke Map can be used to look at air quality across the United States. This data is found under the "Useful Air-tivity Resources & Links" section in the AIR-FAIR rules packet.

17. How many air-tivities can be submitted by my team?

A team can submit as many air-tivities as they would like during the duration of the competition. A team can submit a single air-tivity for the AIR-FAIR or have a submission for all nine of the options included in the air-tivity rubric. Each team may submit only one project per air-tivity type for a maximum of nine submissions per team.

18. When is the air-tivity submission deadline?

The submission deadline for all air-tivity project files is by 5 P.M. on 4/15/2027.

19. How do I submit my air-tivity submissions (pdf, high-quality images, etc)?

A link to the submission form is found on DEQ's AIR-FAIR web page.

20. How will the air-tivity submissions be scored?

Each air-tivity is assigned a maximum point value. Every submission requirement has been assigned a point value based on its importance to the project. Teams will receive points for each completed requirement, allowing judges to score consistently and objectively based upon effort and completeness. Teams are encouraged to complete as many air-tivities as they wish to earn additional points throughout the competition.

21. When will the winners of the AIR-FAIR be announced?

The winners for Best Research Project; Best Art Project; and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Place Overall for the most air-tivity points will be announced on 5/1/2027! Winners will be announced as DEQ's air ambassadors of the year!

22. How will my school return our PurpleAir sensor at the end of the AIR-FAIR?

PurpleAir sensors delivered to schools by DEQ can sent back to DEQ's State Office, returned in person at a DEQ regional office, or requested to be kept for the 2027–2028 AIR-FAIR if a school plans to participate in the following year. The team's adult advisor should contact DEQ staff if the school wants to keep their sensor for the following year.

23. Why is it important to complete the end-of-year AIR-FAIR pilot program survey?

Since this is a small-scale pilot program, DEQ wants to know what participants liked the most and the least to evaluate how to improve the program. The survey results will allow us to alter the program to meet the participants' needs and scale up the program so participation statewide is increased! The survey is required for all participants.

24. What if I have a question that is not answered in this FAQ or the AIR-FAIR rules packet?

Since DEQ's AIR-FAIR is a pilot program, we encourage team members and advisors to contact DEQ staff with any questions throughout the competition. Whether you need help with the team application process, selecting or completing an air-tivity, downloading or interpreting air quality data, or using your PurpleAir sensor, don't hesitate to ask.