

A Message to the Arizona Robotics Community

Dear Robotics Community,

This summer, Arizona's robotics community has faced a divide between two organizational paths: RECF (Robotics Education & Competition Foundation) and VEX/Global. This split has left many teams, coaches, and family's unsure which structure their competition season, including state championships, would ultimately follow.

Throughout the summer, 18x18az worked to facilitate conversations between AIA (Arizona Interscholastic Association) and the community, held two community forums, and listened carefully to feedback from educators, coaches, students, and families. Your voices were heard and were taken into consideration throughout this process — and we are committed to keeping that same level of transparency and open communication as this transition moves forward.

After many discussions, AIA approached Global to explore ways to support the needs of AIA member schools. Unfortunately, Global chose not to establish a conference structure or work with the specific needs of its schools. As a result, the AIA state championship, and the competition season leading up to it, will be held through the RECF.

We recognize that many private schools and independent club teams operate under different rules and often have access to different funding sources. Those teams may determine that Global is the best fit for their programs, and we respect that decision.

As 18x18az, our goal is to support the entire robotics community. We will continue to provide clear, timely information and assistance to teams throughout the season regardless of the path they choose — including but not limited to registration guidance, grant opportunities, and event scheduling as they become available.

For teams concerned about purchasing field elements and parts, RECF has announced grant opportunities to help offset those costs. Information about those grants is attached for your reference. We have also included the event sign-up spreadsheet so tournaments can begin to be scheduled and published for this season.

Because RECF is implementing a conference model in Arizona, there are now four pathways through the competition season to the RECF World Championship:

- AIA State Championship — for registered AIA Activity member schools only. Limited World qualifying spots.

- Non-AIA School Championship — for non-AIA member schools only. Limited World qualifying spots.
- RECF Championship — open to everyone: AIA member schools, non-AIA schools, and private teams. This pathway carries the most World qualifying spots.
- RECF Signature Events — multi-region, multi-state, high-level competitions, similar to last year's Diamond in the Desert.

When a team earns a qualifying award, it will receive an invitation to every state championship it is eligible for. For example, an AIA member school that qualifies would receive invitations to both the AIA State Championship and the RECF State Championship. Because teams may be invited to more than one championship event, a scholarship will be available to help offset the cost of attending multiple events, and skills challenges will help fill out each state-level event, giving more students the opportunity to compete at an elevated level.

Altogether, these additional state-level competitions are creating more opportunities than ever for Arizona teams to qualify for the RECF World Championship.

Regarding Global's championship structure, we are still waiting to hear back from a representative despite reaching out in the beginning of July. As soon as we receive official information, we will share it with the community.

Additional dates and information will be posted soon.

Thank you again for your patience, your support, and most importantly, for continuing to put students first.

18x18az

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does AIA do for member schools with Robotics?

AIA (Arizona Interscholastic Association) recognizes robotics as a sanctioned activity for member schools. AIA provides insurance coverage for events held under its umbrella. Beyond that, benefits vary school-to-school — some districts include transportation support, and many provide access to gym facilities for AIA events (the same spaces normally reserved for athletics) at no cost. Because these benefits differ by school, teams should check with their own district for what is specifically available to them.

2. How many state championships are there now? How does qualifying work?

Regular season events are open to every team all season long, regardless of whether that team is an AIA member school, a non-AIA school, or a private team as long as the team are registered with RECF. That designation only comes into play when it's time to determine which state championship pathway(s) a team qualifies for. There are four pathways to the RECF World Championship:

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3. Is this for VEX Worlds or RECF Worlds?

RECF Worlds. This structure runs through the Robotics Education & Competition Foundation, not VEX/Global, so it is advertised as leading to RECF World Championship qualification only.