



2025

Agricultural Issues Forum

Refer to the National FFA Career and Leadership Events webpage on [FFA.org](https://ffa.org) for the most up-to-date career and leadership development handbook edition.

CONTACT

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FFA VISION

Growing the next generation of leaders who will change the world.

FFA MISSION

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

FFA CODE OF CONDUCT

FFA members participating in National FFA programs understand and agree to abide by the National FFA Code of Conduct at:
<https://ffa.app.box.com/s/x6l2lkovv4x9tgiegy73mei30zvliip5i>

Guiding Principles

National FFA believes that awards and competitive events should:

1. Be inclusive and engaging for all students and FFA members.
2. Provide awards and recognition opportunities for students at all levels.
3. Inspire members to explore, learn, and be prepared for future careers related to the AFNR career pathways and FFA AFNR Value Chain.
4. Recognize achievements in skill development and knowledge, including:
 - a. leveraging relevant technologies
 - b. utilizing creative problem-solving
 - c. meeting developmentally appropriate learning objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)
 - d. utilizing employability skills (teamwork, communication, collaboration)
5. Work with other groups to utilize or partner with existing experiences.
6. Provide feedback that promotes personal and professional growth.

Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR)

Career Cluster Content Standards

The National Council for Agricultural Education has provided permission to the National FFA Organization to use the National AFNR Career Cluster Content Standards in the development of their educational resource materials. The National Council for Agricultural Education is the owner and developer of the National AFNR Career Cluster Content Standards ©2016 and reserves all rights to the original material used here with permission. In addition, The National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education/National Career Technical Education Foundation (NASDCTE/NCTEF) has provided permission to use the Common Career and Technical Core (CCTC) Standards in support of this project. NASDCTE/NCTEF are the owners and developers of the Common Career and Technical Core (CCTC) Standards © 2012 and reserve all rights to the original material used here with permission.

The National FFA Organization has adopted the AFNR Career Cluster Content Standards and integrated them into the national award and recognition programs for the benefit of members, school administration, and agriculture as a whole. For a complete set of the standards, please visit the [2016 AFNR Career Cluster Content Standards](https://ffa.bbox.com/s/hrxlqvw7g6zo54xfi5x5ktylyusqjhy0). You may access the standards alignments for this event at <https://ffa.bbox.com/s/hrxlqvw7g6zo54xfi5x5ktylyusqjhy0>.

Professional Integrity

FFA members participating in national FFA programs and events understand and agree that all work must result from their own effort and ability, created, and completed alone (except for partner or chapter applications). When outside sources (direct quotes or phrases, specific dates, figures, or other materials) are used for a project, document, or application, the required reference citation must be completed according to the rules specified by the applicable handbook.

While participating in National FFA programs, FFA members are prohibited from:

- Plagiarizing
- Violating copyright
- Cheating
- Falsifying information
- Using another person's results or thoughts as their own, even with this person's permission. This includes work done by a family member or a mentor.
- Using information or data obtained from the internet without proper citation.

Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage will not be tolerated. Non-compliance represents plagiarism and will automatically disqualify a member.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for National Programs and Events

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems capable of performing complex tasks that historically only a human could do, such as reasoning, making decisions, or solving problems. As AI continues to evolve, it can be a tremendous tool to help companies, organizations and individuals enhance their productivity and work. Therefore, the National FFA Organization allows the use of AI tools. FFA members may use AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and CoPilot, to assist them in their learning.

Appropriate uses of AI may include:

- generating ideas for any FFA-related assignments, projects, contests and award applications
- checking facts of a phenomenon
- checking for and correcting grammatical errors in a paper written by a member

For more information, please see the [Standard Operating Procedures on the Use of Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) for National Programs and Events document](#).

Code of Conduct

FFA members participating in National FFA programs understand and agree to abide by the [National FFA Code of Conduct](#).

2025 CAREER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT EVENTS GUIDELINES

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

I. Eligibility of Students

- a. Each student must be a student FFA member on the current roster in good standing with the local chapter, state FFA association, and the National FFA Organization during the school year in which the student qualified to participate at the national level.
- b. If a student's name is not on the chapter's official roster, please work with the National FFA membership team to update the membership before the national event.
- c. The student, at the national event, must be:
 - i. A secondary education (grades 7-12) FFA member during the school year in which the participant qualified to participate at the national level as determined by the roster at the time of qualifying.
 - ii. A graduating senior is eligible to compete in state and national career and leadership development events up to and including their first national convention following graduation.)
 - iii. Participants in the Creed Speaking and Conduct of Chapter Meetings LDEs must qualify as a 7th, 8th, or 9th grade member.
- d. If a student moves to a different chapter or a different state once the student has qualified as a state representative in an event, that student may be allowed to compete in the national event with the school they qualified with during the qualifying year.
- e. A student may only participate in the same official CDE/LDE once. No student may participate in more than one National FFA event each year.
- f. Each student participating in a national event must complete an online Waiver and release of Liability through the convention registration system.

II. Selection/Certification of State Teams

- a. Each state will submit a team declaration form by July 1, before the national FFA convention. Participation in each declared event will incur an entry processing fee. State Staff Declaration Instructions
- b. Each team will be composed of the number of members determined by the specific event rules and formats. The members of a state team must be from the same chapter.
- c. All students must be certified online by the designated deadline of Sept. 1 or within 10 days of the qualifying date if after the deadline. Advisors or state staff must certify members in each event by the certification deadline How to certify a team or member Instructions
- d. Once the original certification has been completed, no member may be added without first deleting a member. (See III. Drop/Add Process).
- e. State staff shall approve students are eligible (See I. Eligibility of Students). State Staff Certification Approval Instructions If an ineligible student participates in any career or leadership development event, the member will be disqualified, which may also impact the team's ranking.
- f. States may approve teams comprised of fewer members than the required members.
- g. Substitutions of any student or team are subject to the determination and approval of the state association.
- h. If reputable international competitions invite teams to competition the national organization will certify National FFA Career and Leadership Development Event winners for international competition when states request. This is with the understanding that the state team will provide their travel expenses.

III. Drop/Add Process

- a. If a student needs to be substituted or dropped, the online drop/add process must be used to substitute or drop the team member. A team member must be dropped before another team member may be substituted. How to Drop/Add a team member Instructions
- b. The Drop/Add must be submitted one hour before the first event component or official activity of an event as listed in the schedule of events. Changes will not be permitted after this time.
- c. Members added to any team must meet all the eligibility and membership requirements described in this Guide's other sections.
- d. Substitutions may be allowed after the online document submission date (See individual Event Handbooks for details).

IV. Disqualification

- a. FFA members participating in national FFA programs and events understand and agree that all work must result from their effort and ability, created and completed alone (except for partner or chapter applications). Details about Professional Integrity, the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for National Programs and Events, and the National FFA Code of Conduct are included in event handbooks.
- b. Any verbal or non-verbal communication between students during an event that is not part of the event will be sufficient cause to eliminate the team member involved from the career development event.
- c. Teams or students arriving after the career development event has begun may be disqualified or penalized. This includes a zero or lower score for that team or student for the missed section of the career or leadership development event.
- d. Any assistance given to a student from any source other than the career development event officials or assistants will be sufficient to disqualify that student from the career and leadership development event.
- e. Event superintendents may stop any student if they deem their manner hazardous to themselves or others. Such action may result in a zero or lower score for that student for that section of the career or leadership development event.
- f. Students who start an event and do not complete it without notifying event officials at the time of departure may be disqualified. This can affect the overall team rank and position; in some events, it could also disqualify the entire team.
- g. Students will not be allowed to utilize personal electronic communication devices other than those approved by the event officials during the entire event. Students who access personal electronic communication devices without prior approval from the event officials may be disqualified from the national event.
- h. Any CDE/LDE student, team, advisor, or coach who is proven to have gained access to event materials intended for or utilized by the event committee during the competition will be disqualified from the national event.

Purpose

The agricultural issues forum aims to present a current issue to a public audience; therefore, professional ethics and standards are to be considered. Ignoring truthful information, falsifying needed information, using unreliable sources, and plagiarism are examples of violations that could result in disqualification.

Objectives

This event will provide the participant with the ability to

- Investigate a variety of local, state, national and international issues facing agriculture through classroom instruction.
- Engage students in selecting, researching, planning, and presenting a local, state, national, or international agricultural issue relevant to the local community.
- Demonstrate through the portfolio, presentation and questioning an understanding of the principles and fundamentals of agricultural issue analysis.
- Connect agriculture students with professionals in the industry as they research and present their forum.
- Increase awareness of local, state, and national agricultural issues through forum presentations.
- Apply teamwork, leadership and communication skills for career success.

Event Rules

Review the [Career and Leadership Development Event Policy and Guidelines](#) for information on eligibility, selection, certification, team member changes, disqualification and more. [General Information for National Competition](#) can provide general guidance on preparing for national competition.

A team should be composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of seven actively participating students, orally presenting and available to answer the judges' questions. Each student must actively participate in the presentation to be eligible for awards. This includes active participation in the presentation and making themselves available for questions from the judges in all rounds of competition. Only the certified team members can take an active role in the presentation of materials and technology during the presentation.

Presentations may include official FFA dress, costumes, props, skits and other creative paraphernalia. Costumes, props, skits and other paraphernalia must be professional in nature and used to showcase respect for all cultures. The event committee reserves the right to remove any team whose presentation, props, skits, or other actions disrespect others or show a lack of good judgment.

If there is not a state qualifying event, the date on which the state appoints the team to be the representative to the National FFA Agricultural Issues Forum will be considered as the state qualifying date. This must be substantiated by the state FFA advisor or other authorized individual from the state FFA association.

Materials submitted by the team must reflect their skills and efforts. Any sources used must be cited appropriately.

Once the team presentation begins, no non-team member can assist in the delivery. If a non-team member were to interject in assisting the team, the team would not advance to the next round.

A minimum of three competent and unbiased judges will be provided. They will be instructed not to take sides on the issue(s). Professors and industry representatives are recommended. The superintendent of this event will adequately prepare the judges before the event. Teams should refrain from having contact with the judges throughout the competition, i.e., no samples may be left with the judges.

Seeding of teams in the preliminary rounds will be determined based on portfolio scores.

Use of Technology and Props

Teams are encouraged to be creative in developing their team presentations, including technology and other props. Teams are cautioned that the use or overuse of any technology or prop that reduces the focus on the content provided by the team and the team's presentation of the content can result in a lower presentation score.

Showcase Respect of all Cultures

The agricultural issues leadership development event respects and promotes the practice of one's First Amendment rights; however, respect should always be demonstrated to cultures different from the speaker's. A team should not provide a forum that could be considered offensive to a culture different from their own. Questions should be answered with facts rather than opinions or stereotypes. The definition of culture is broadly defined; therefore, it is recommended to consider all cultures as professionals. It is further recommended that teams present their forums to diverse audiences, including the dynamic of cultures represented in the presentation. By completing this task, written and verbal feedback should provide a quality measure on the cultural sensitivity of the forum.

Event Format

Each team will conduct a presentation on the issue developed and presented locally.

A front projection screen will be provided. Other equipment is allowed, but the presenting team must provide any other equipment.

The agricultural issue could come from one of the eight topics listed in the [Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials, https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~peters/HTML/ag-issues-forum/ag-issues-forum.html](https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~peters/HTML/ag-issues-forum/ag-issues-forum.html). These are:

- Environmental Issues
- Agricultural Technology Issues
- Animal Issues
- Agricultural Career Issues
- Economy and Trade Issues
- Agricultural Policy Issues
- Food Safety Issues
- Biotechnology Issues

Based on the categories listed above, the same general agricultural issue topic will not be used by the same chapter and/or advisor in the following three years.

Research on the topic must be current, and students must be involved in studying the topic and developing the portfolio.

Portfolio

The portfolio will be limited to 10 single-sided pages or five double-sided 8 ½ x 11-inch pages maximum, not including the cover page. Margins are to be set at a minimum of 1 inch on top and bottom.

A maximum of 10 points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum amount of pages and/or for not including the cover page containing the required information.

Agricultural issues portfolios must be uploaded to the certification page on or before the annual designated deadline. For specific instructions, see the [How To Upload a PDF for a CDE/LDE Guide](#).

Cover

Required information on the cover to avoid score deductions:

- The title of the issue is stated as a question.
- Date of the state qualifying event.
- Name, address, state and phone number of the chapter.

Summary

A maximum of two pages of the portfolio will include a summary of the issue.

- The summary pages should be written using a font no smaller than Times New Roman 10.
- The purposes of the summary are to provide an overview of the issue and to demonstrate an understanding of the principles and fundamentals of agricultural issue analysis.
- The summary needs to include the course(s) in which instruction occurred and the number of students involved in the instruction on agricultural issues.
- The summary must include in-text citations where appropriate.
- Citations must conform to the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual.

The summary may also include, but is not limited to, responses to the following questions:

- Why is this issue important now?
- What is the nature of the issue?
- Who is involved in the issue?
- How can the issue be defined?
- What is the historical background of the issue?
- What caused the issue?
- What are the risks?
- What are the benefits?
- A bibliography of all resources and references cited should include personal interviews, when appropriate, and any other supporting material. The bibliography must conform to the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual.

For additional background on these questions, refer to the resource “Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials” and review the PowerPoint “Agricultural Issues Analysis” in the Teaching Materials section at FFA.org/resources/ag-issues.

Documentation

For a forum to be awarded points, it must have occurred before the state qualifying event, and the forum presentation date must be independently verified. “Independent” means that verification needs to be provided by someone in the organization or the group to whom the presentation was made. The independent documentation must state when, where and to whom the forum was presented.

Documentation can include the following:

- Letters from organizations.
- News articles that include the date of the presentation and/or the date the article is printed.
- Photos showing attendance at forums are needed, but independent documentation of the date of the forum presentation is required.
- If more than one forum is held on the same day, the starting times of the multiple forums on the same day must also be independently documented.

Forum Presentations

A chapter must have a minimum of five high-quality public forum presentations before their state qualifying event to receive the maximum of 15 points. In most cases, the date of the state competition is the date of the qualifying event.

- Multiple organizations attending the same forum will count as one forum.
- Portfolio judges may consider the quality and quantity of presentations made to audiences outside the school. No points will be awarded for presenting to other classes or teachers at the schools or neighboring schools. In addition, no points will be awarded for forums presented as part of a local or state FFA competition.
- High-quality forums are those presentations made to community groups that would have an interest in the issue. High-quality forums can also be with smaller numbers of individuals who hold elected, appointed, or other official positions that will make decisions or impact the issue. Suggested procedures for setting up these presentations and examples of community groups have been provided in the Agricultural Issues Forum Presenter’s Guide

For example, presenting a water quality issue to a water district board of 6 is still high-quality, and presenting your presentation to the governor of 1 is still high-quality as long as they play a role in the issue.

- Examples of low-quality forums would be quickly visiting a local business and giving a presentation to the workers, going to the home of one of the parents to deliver the information, presenting the forum at the chapter’s FFA banquet, and presenting the forum to a class in the school. Low-quality forums will receive zero or minimal points.
- A team may submit up to two live virtual forums as part of their five community forums. Documentation will remain the same for the forums. If a team were to utilize virtual forums, they must adhere to the existing forum rules for documentation as well as the following: a) clearly identify a section in the portfolio for virtual forums conducted; b) the virtual forum is mentioned in the independent verification and c) virtual forums must include a live interactive audience where live participation is included.
- The team should seek to provide numerous angles for documenting a high-quality forum. Examples of high-quality forum documentation with a variety of angles would be the display of photos, letters, narratives, timestamps, and attendance numbers/sheets.

Time Limits

- Five minutes will be allowed for setup.
- The presentation will be a maximum of 15 minutes in length.
- The presenters will receive a signal at 10 minutes and 14 minutes.
- At 15 minutes, the timekeeper will announce that time is up, and the presentation will end.
- Seven minutes will be allotted to questions and answers in the preliminary and semifinal rounds.
- Eight minutes will be allotted for questions and answers in the final round. Questions and answers will terminate at the end of the allotted time.
- Three minutes will be allowed for take-down.
- The presentations will be designed to be viewed by the judges.
- The audience at large will not be of concern to the presenters.
- The judges may ask questions of all individuals on the presenting team.
- Each individual is encouraged to respond to at least one question from the judges.

Scoring

Portfolio

Ten single-sided pages or five double-sided pages maximum (Three parts, 25 points total)

1. Summary of the issue, two pages maximum (5 points)
2. Bibliography (5 points)
3. Documentation of local forums (15 points)
 - All forums require independent verification of when, where and to whom forums were presented and independent verification of presentation times if more than one forum is held on the same day.

A maximum of 10 points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum number of pages and/or not including a cover page containing the required information.

Before the event, the portfolios will be judged and scored by qualified individuals using the portfolio scorecard. Portfolio scores will be averaged and supplied to the presentation judges after they have scored the presentation. Portfolio comment cards will be provided. Comments will be available after the event results have been announced.

Proper grammar, correct spelling and proper editing of text are important. The most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide should be used for all research citations. Adherence to these editorial guidelines is expected to receive maximum points for the portfolio score.

4. Statement of Authenticity: Participants shall submit a signed Statement of Authenticity at the time of portfolio submission, verifying that the portfolio results from the participants' work. A sample statement is provided:

"I certify that all materials presented here are of my creation and that any work adopted from other sources is duly cited and referenced as such." — signature

Team Presentation

Introduction, Pro, Con, and Summary of Pro and Con (20 points each, 80 points total)

Effectiveness of Presentation (20 points)

- Participation of each team member
- Creative in how main points are made (It makes no difference for the “creativity” score if the team is in costume or official FFA dress.)
- Quality and power of the presentations
- Speaks at the right pace to be clear
- Pronunciation of words is clear and intent apparent
- No distracting mannerisms that affect effectiveness
- Gestures are purposeful and effective
- Well-poised with a good stage presence
- Use or overuse of any technology or prop that reduces the focus on the content provided by the team and the team’s presentation of the content can result in a lower presentation score.

Questions (25 points)

- Appropriate response and knowledge of the issue will be evaluated from team members’ responses.
- There will be a five-point deduction from the scorecard of any team that draws a conclusion supporting a pro or con viewpoint during the formal presentation. During the question period, students may draw a conclusion supporting a pro or con viewpoint if asked to do so by a judge.
- Presentation comment cards will be completed by presentation judges and presented to the teams at the awards function.

Ranking

Judges’ rankings will be used to place teams. Teams will be ranked in numerical order based on the final score, which will be determined by each judge without consultation. The judges’ rankings of each team shall then be added, and the winner will be the team whose total ranking is the lowest. (Use the low-rank method of selection where a rank of 1 is assigned to the highest place team, 2 to the second place team, etc.)

Tiebreakers

Ties will be broken based on the greatest number of low ranks. Teams’ low ranks will be counted, and the team with the greatest number of low ranks will be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, then the event superintendent will rank the team’s response to questions. The team with the greatest number of low ranks from the response to questions will be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, then the team’s raw scores will be totaled. The team with the greatest total of raw points will be declared the winner.

Awards

Awards will be presented to teams based on their rankings at the awards ceremony.

Advisors of cash award recipients will receive information about claiming their award following the convention. Guidelines for amounts and recipients of cash awards can be found [here](#).

References

This list of references is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Other sources may be utilized, and teachers are encouraged to use the best instructional materials available. The following list contains references that may prove helpful during event preparation.

- Past CDE Material – Past top portfolios and videos
- Updated [Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials](https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~peters/HTML/ag-issues-forum/ag-issues-forum.html), <https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~peters/HTML/ag-issues-forum/ag-issues-forum.html>
- “Helpful hints to give your students the best opportunity to do well in the Agricultural Issues Forum Career Development Event at the State and National FFA Conventions” can be found on the Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials website listed above and the National FFA website ([FFA.org/documents/cde_agissues_resources.pdf](https://www.ffa.org/documents/cde_agissues_resources.pdf))

Portfolio Scorecard

25 POINTS

Chapter

State

Team Number

The portfolio should include items described in the event format guidelines and is limited to 10 single-sided pages or five double-sided pages maximum.

The agricultural issues portfolio must be uploaded to the declaration/certification site by the designated deadline before the National FFA Convention & Expo at which the issue will be presented.

	Very Strong evidence of skills is present 5-4 Points	Moderate evidence of skills is present 3-2 Points	Very Strong evidence of skills is not present 1-0 Point	x factor	Possible Points	Total Score
Summary of the issue (two pages maximum)				1	5	
Bibliography				1	5	
Documentation of local forums				3	15	
# of High-Quality				0	0	
# of Low-Quality				0	0	
Subtotal						
Deductions						
Late submission to the National FFA Organization			-2.5 points		()	
For exceeding maximum number of pages, excluding cover page (-1 pt./page for each page exceeding 10 pages)					()	
Summary pages exceed 2 pages (-1 pt./page for each page exceeding 2 pages)					()	
Cover page not stating title in form of a question			-1 point		()	
Cover page — missing date of state qualifying event			-1 point		()	
Cover page — missing Name of chapter			-1 point		()	
Cover page — missing Address of chapter			-1 point		()	
Cover page — missing State of chapter			-1 point		()	
Cover page — missing Phone number of chapter			-1 point		()	
TOTAL POINTS EARNED OUT OF 25 POSSIBLE						

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date

Team Presentation Scorecard

150 POINTS

Chapter	State				Team Number		
<i>Circle One:</i> Preliminaries Semifinals Finals							
	Possible Points	25-21 points	20-15 points	14-10 points	9-5 points	4-0 points	Total Score
Introduction Statement of the issue Why issue is important	20						
Pro viewpoint Identification of positive points Points addressed are relevant	20						
Con viewpoint Identification of negative points Points addressed are relevant	20						
Summary of pro/con viewpoints	20						
Effectiveness of presentation Participation, creativity, quality and power, clear with right pace and word pronunciation, no distractions, appropriate gestures, poised	20						
Questions Appropriate responses Knowledge of issue	25						
<i>Subtotal</i>							
Portfolio Score							
Deduction for presenting a conclusion during the 15-minute presentation (-5 points)							()
TOTAL POINTS EARNED OUT OF 150 POSSIBLE							

Use or overuse of any technology or prop that reduces the focus on the content provided by the team and team's presentation of the content can result in a lower presentation score.

Judge's Name	Judge's Signature	Date
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