



NATIONAL
FFA ORGANIZATION

Career and Leadership Development Events

Agricultural Issues Forum Leadership Development Event

Revised: September 20, 2019

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.

- Identify specific things you as a teacher and the students will do to accomplish each objective stated in the National FFA Agricultural Issues Forum CDE guidelines.
- Include the Focusing on Agricultural Issues instructional materials as part of your regular classroom instruction. To avoid a reduction in points, the portfolio summary must include the courses(s) in which instruction occurred and the number of students involved in the instruction on agricultural issues.
- Some teachers use Agricultural Issues as a joint project with the English and/or speech teacher. They can be small group class projects, with selection of the most interesting issues to be developed further.

CHOOSING A TOPIC

- Your agricultural issues topic could come from one of the eight topic areas which are listed in both the Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials and in the "Event Format" section of the National FFA Career and Leadership Development Events Handbook for Agricultural Issues Forum 2017-2021.
- The topic presented as part of the Career Development Event needs to be relevant to your local community. It may be a local, state, national, or international issue. The students will be more excited with a topic that has meaning, and you will have a better chance of getting media coverage.
- If you make it to the state and/or national level, the topic needs to be different from what your students presented the previous year. (In the national guidelines, this also applies to the advisor if the advisor changes schools.) All of the research needs to be done by the students during the current year.

CONDUCTING AND DOCUMENTING COMMUNITY FORUMS

- Forum presentations provide many benefits. First, high quality forums are the largest portion of the portfolio score. You can receive the maximum points in this section if your team has a minimum of five high quality forums that are properly documented. Second, you should present to organizations and individuals who will have an interest in your topic. They can help you refine the content of your

presentation. More specifically, use the forum feedback to refine and/or add relevant content. Third, the stated objective is to inform members of the community about the pros and cons of a specific issue. Do as many high quality forums as you can. (At National, only forums conducted prior to the State qualification count in your score.)

- Forums are given the most points in the portfolio. Portfolio judges score forums on “quantity and quality.” Portfolio scores are added to the oral presentation score at each level of the competition.
- Note in the CDE Handbook guidelines that forums presented at the school to teachers and/or students will NOT count as documented forums. Yes, the school is a good place to practice, but one of the objectives is to have the forums presented in the community. It is your choice whether or not you list in-school presentations in the portfolio. The portfolio judges will not count in-school presentations in their scoring. Listing them may have a positive influence on the oral presentation judges who read your portfolio prior to seeing your oral presentation.
- Document Forums Completely and Properly! You should provide dated letters from the organizations or groups you presented to, not copies of the letters you have sent to them. Photos may be included, but for the forum to count, you also need to provide independent documentation of the date of the forum presentation. In the portfolio, provide a summary of the organizations you presented to along with the number of people in attendance. Do what you can to show that you had a positive impact in your community with these presentations/discussions. Forums not properly documented will not count in the score.
- If it is a state, national or international issue, consider having presentations to state level governing organizations. Let the local newspaper know about it before it happens so you help them give you positive press.
- Arrange for your community forum documentation soon after the presentation is held.

THE PORTFOLIO

- Avoid Penalty Points by Including Required Items On The Portfolio Cover Page
 - Title of your issue must be stated as a question.
 - Include the date of the state qualifying event.
 - Include chapter name, address, state, and phone number.
- Summary — A maximum of two pages with no preference to layout. The Summary may also include, but is not limited to, responses to the relevant questions stated in the Portfolio Summary section of the 2017-2021 National FFA Career and Leadership Development Events Handbook.
- To avoid a reduction in points, the Portfolio Summary must include the courses(s) in which instruction occurred and the number of students involved in the instruction on agricultural issues.

- Since the portfolio is limited to 10 pages total (not including the cover page), you can reduce documentation letters so multiple letters can fit on the same page.
- Scoring of Forums in the Portfolio — The intent is to have students engaged and giving presentations in the community. It is also permitted to present to individuals who hold elected, appointed or some other official position that will be making decisions on the issue.
- For the forum to count there must be independent documentation stating when, where, and to whom the forum was presented.
- “Independent” means that verification needs to be provided by someone to whom the presentation was made.
- If a verification letter is used, it should include the sender’s signature.
- If electronic verification is used, a signature may or may not be included.
- Can also have forums that are not face-to-face. It is possible to view “community” as individuals that have an interest in the topic.
- For research citations, use the most current edition of The American Psychological Association (APA) style guide. Request the assistance of an English teacher. Proper grammar, correct spelling, and proper editing of text are important.
- Seeding of teams in the preliminary round will be determined based on portfolio scores. Tie scores are broken by using number of properly documented forums. Advantages of conducting as many forums as possible, prior to the state qualifying event, include getting audience feedback on ways to improve the presentation, team members gaining more confidence, and positive impressions by community members of your agricultural education program. Teams will be given 3 points for each high quality forum, up to a maximum of 15 points. Having more than 5 forums will help ensure that teams receive the full 15 points for the forum section of the portfolio scores.
- Submit your portfolio by the stated deadline date or the stated time to avoid penalty points.

THE PRESENTATION

- Comments on the meaning of the new “technology” statement included National FFA Career and Leadership Development Events Handbook for 2017-2021:
 - “... Teams are cautioned that the use or over use 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.”
 - The use of technology is encouraged.
 - In the team presentation, use of technology can “supplement,” but not “replace.”

- An example of using technology to “supplement” is during the presentation Introduction, showing a very short video clip from a local TV news program which includes comments relevant to the issue.
 - An example of using technology to “replace” a portion of the oral presentation is using video of experts to make pro and / or con points.
 - Another example of “replacing” is using video of one or more of the ag issues team members as part of the oral presentation.
- Your Agricultural Issue, which will be your presentation title, should be stated as a question.
 - It makes no difference for the “creativity” score if the team is in costume or official FFA dress. There are some states that require team members to be in official FFA dress.
 - If you have a hand-out, realize you are making the judges choose between listening to what you are saying in the presentation or reading your hand-out.
 - The “Introduction” must clearly provide an overview of the issue.
 - During the presentation, it must be clear if the speaker is “pro” or “con.” You can use the moderator to introduce them as a pro or con or have them state which side they are on during the first part of their comments.
 - Showcase Respect of all Cultures
 - The agricultural Issues CDE respects and promotes the practice of one's first amendment rights, however respect should always be demonstrated to cultures different from the speaker. In no manner should a team provide a forum that could be considered offensive to a culture different from themselves. Answers to questions should be answered with facts rather 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.

QUESTIONING:

- Make sure you understand the question. If you don't, ask for clarification.
- Be clear, be complete, and be short with your response to the questions.
- Follow-up answers (second student answering the same question) are ok with-in limits. Do not use it as a stall tactic to limit the number a questions the judges can ask. If the judges feel like the question has been answered satisfactorily, they have been told that they can interrupt.
- Responding to questions is a way to demonstrate that all team members are engaged in and have knowledge of the topic. Each individual is encouraged to

respond to at least one question from the judges.

- Points given for answering questions is typically what separates the top teams.
- In summary, the highest placed team will have both strong content and presentation. A relatively high portfolio score is necessary and the students must demonstrate their understanding of the issue during the question and answer period. Of the many different FFA career development events, the agricultural issues forum has the potential to be one of the most positive learning experiences available. It requires a lot of work, but you will receive a lot of positives.
- Finally, take time to attend the preliminary or semi-final rounds at the National FFA Convention Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning. The final four teams on Thursday afternoon can also be helpful, but good and bad ways of doing things can be learned by watching the earlier rounds.