

Agricultural Issues Forum

Rule years 2024–2028 · Revision 1 · Published October 9, 2026

0. General Rules & Eligibility

Career Development Events are governed by the NAEA CDE Committee. All events follow [CDE General Rules and Eligibility](#).

Qualification for this event

District qualification	All schools (open enrollment)
Students per team	3–7
Grades	9–12
National qualifying event?	Yes
Timeframe	FFA Convention
Host	UNL ALEC Division
Event Superintendent	Dr. Becky Haddad

1. Overview

The Agricultural Issues Forum lets a team of students present a current issue to a public audience by developing a written portfolio that includes research and an understanding of an issue relevant to the local community, and then preparing an oral presentation that examines both sides of the issue. This event emphasizes professional ethics and standards.

Objectives

- Investigate a variety of local, state, national, and international issues facing agriculture.
- Select an issue of focus from the topic areas as listed in the Focus on National FFA Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials (www.FFA.org/resources/ag-issues):
 - Environmental Issues
 - Agricultural Technology Issues
 - Animal Issues
 - Agricultural Career Issues
 - Economy and Trade Issues
 - Agricultural Policy Issues
 - Food Safety Issues
 - Biotechnology
- Research an issue of focus, relevant to their local community, and develop talking points for both the pro and con side of the issue. **Research on the topic must be current, and students must be involved in all the research on the topic.
- Prepare an oral presentation that details both sides of the issue (see scoring for details about the presentation).
- Produce a written portfolio that presents an understanding of agricultural issue analysis (see scoring for detailed information about the portfolio).

- Connect with industry professionals as they research and present their forum.
- Increase awareness of the agricultural issue by presenting at least five high-quality forums within their community (see scoring for detailed information about the forum).

2. Eligibility & Team

Open to students in Grades 9–12. Teams are 3–7 students. All schools (open enrollment) advance. This event is national-qualifying.

3. What to Bring

Attire

Presentations may include official FFA dress, costumes, props, skits and other creative paraphernalia.

Supplies

- Tables, chairs, extension cords, and access to a smart cart (including a Windows computer with PowerPoint and internet access, a projector, and a screen) will be provided.
- All additional materials or equipment need to be supplied by the team.
 - If a team is bringing their own laptop or other device, it is recommended that they bring their own projector in case the provided projector is incompatible with the team's device.
 - If a team needs internet access on their device, follow the guest internet procedure on the Nebraska CDE webpage at least 30 minutes before the team's scheduled presentation time.

4. Event Format

Timing

- Submit portfolios using the link below or on the ALEC CDE Website under the Agricultural Issues Forum. (No hard copies will be accepted.) Submission Link for the Agricultural Issues Portfolio: <https://go.unl.edu/rtsx>
- Teachers must register their teams by the posted CDE registration deadline.
- Following registration, the order of team presentations will be posted. Email or call the CDE superintendent as soon as possible with changes or cancellations.
- Time Limits: Thirty (30) minutes in total will be allowed between presentations for the previous team to take down and the next team to set up. Only members of the Agricultural Issues team and/or 1 adult supervisor may set up at the state event.
- Presentations may be up to 15 minutes long. 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. A maximum of seven (7) minutes will be allotted for questions and answers. Questions and answers will end after seven (7) minutes.

Format

This Agricultural Issues Forum CDE has no theme or annual topic. Individual schools/teams may choose their own agricultural issue. However, the same school and/or teacher **may not use** the same general agricultural issue in the following three years.

Event Components

The Agricultural Issues CDE consists of three team components.

A. Portfolio Development

- I. Teams will develop a 10-page portfolio that summarizes the chosen issue and highlights it to public forums.
- II. Teams shall develop the portfolio locally and submit it via the submission link (<https://go.unl.edu/rtsx>) by the date identified on the [Agricultural Issues Forum page on the Nebraska CDEs website](#).
- III. Note: The National CDE portfolio has more stringent requirements; potential national qualifying teams must review the requirements before the National CDE.

B. Local Forums

- I. Teams will present and document five high-quality local forums.
- II. Forums must be completed before the state CDE to be considered for National FFA scoring.

C. Team Presentation

- I. Teams will develop a 15-minute presentation that presents the pros and cons of the issue.
- II. Teams will deliver this presentation at the state event.
- III. The public is welcome to watch Agricultural Issues Presentations at the State Contest. Doors are to remain closed during the presentation. No one may enter or exit once the presentation begins.
- IV. Flight Procedures: Presentation times will be assigned by random drawing. Thirty (30) minutes in total will be allowed between presentations for the previous team to take down and the next team to set up. Only competing students and 1 supervising adult may set up and tear down presentation materials. Two rooms will be available, and judges will move from room A to room B, etc.

Note: Flight assignments will be adjusted if more than 12 teams register for the Agricultural Issues contest. The contest will follow the method implemented at the National Contest level: two rooms of presentations for preliminaries, followed by a final round. Teams will be placed into rooms based on portfolio scores.

Video Recording

- Only teachers may video their own team during the state event.
- By participating in this event, you agree that videos of winning and runner-up teams may be used for future training purposes. Video recording for this purpose may only be done with approval from the CDE Superintendent before the scheduled presentation time.

Portfolio Development

- A. The portfolio shall consist of up to ten single-sided pages or five double-sided pages (four parts, 25 points total). It shall include:
 - I. Cover Page (not included in the 10-page limit).
 - The cover page will include the title "stated as a question" of the issue, the date of the state qualifying event, name, address, and phone number of the chapter.
 - A maximum of 10 points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum number of pages and/or not including a cover page containing required information.
 - II. Summary of the issue, maximum of two pages, that answers the questions most relevant to the chosen issue (5 points).
 - List course(s) in which instruction occurred, including the number of students involved in the instruction of the issue. (See Objective E)
 - 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?
- Is there strong disagreement on the issue?

III. Bibliography (5 points).

1. A bibliography of all resources and references cited, which may include personal interviews and any other supporting material.

IV. Documentation of local forums (15 points).

1. The final pages of the portfolio will be reserved for forum documentation. See the forums section below for documentation information.

- B. A maximum of ten (10) points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum number of pages and/or for not including the cover page containing required information.
- C. Proper grammar, correct spelling, and proper editing of text are important. Use the most current edition of The American Psychological Association (APA) style guide for all research citations. Adherence to these editorial guidelines is expected to receive maximum points for the portfolio score.
- D. Before the event, qualified individuals will judge and score the portfolios using the portfolio scorecard (see Appendix A, originally from the National FFA Agricultural Issues Handbook). Portfolio scores will be averaged and provided to the presentation judges after they score the presentation. Portfolio comment cards will be provided. Comments will be available after the event results have been announced.
 - I. Submit portfolios using the submission link below or on the ALEC CDE website under the Agricultural Issues Forum. (No hard copies will be accepted.) Submission Link for the Agricultural Issues Portfolio: <https://go.unl.edu/rtsx>. Late portfolios will not be accepted. Documentation of local forums may be submitted up until the team competes at the state event.
 - II. Consider professional ethics and standards. Ignoring truthful information, falsifying needed information, using unreliable sources, and plagiarism are examples of violations that could result in disqualification.

Local Forums

- A. Complete local forums before submitting portfolios, if possible. However, if you must schedule a forum after portfolios are submitted (but before the event), be sure you either email the additional forum pages to the superintendent (see the [Agricultural Issues Forum page on the Nebraska CDEs website](#) for the email address) ASAP, or bring FOUR copies of the forum summary page(s) with you the day of the event so that the judges can have access to those pages. There will be no point penalty in this case. It would also be advisable to include a note in each portfolio stating that one or more forums are scheduled and that you plan to submit that information by your event time so the judges can plan for the later submission.
 - I. Forums conducted by the state-winning team **after** the state event will **not** be eligible as part of the competition at the National FFA CDE.
- B. Each forum must be documented independently, meaning that teams must separate the forum documentation and times even if they are held on the same day.
- C. Multiple organizations attending the same forum will count as one forum. If more than one forum is held on the same day, teams must independently document the start time of each forum. Portfolio judges may consider the quality and quantity of presentations made to audiences outside the school. No points will be awarded for school presentations to teachers and students. In addition, no points shall be awarded for forums presented as any part of a local or state FFA competition.

- D. Provide documentation that local forum(s) occurred prior to the state qualifying event, such as:
 - I. Letters from organizations
 - II. News articles
 - III. Photos showing attendance at forums
- E. State when, where, and to whom the forum(s) were presented, and indicate how many community members were in attendance at each of the forum(s).
- F. A team must have at least five high-quality public forums before its state qualifying event to receive the maximum 15 points.
- G. High-quality forums include presentations to community groups that have an interest in the issue. High-quality forums can also be with smaller numbers of individuals who hold elected, appointed, or some other official position that will be making decisions on the issue.
- H. Examples of low-quality forums include dropping in at a local business and giving your presentation to the workers, or going to a parent's home to give a presentation. Low-quality forums will receive zero or minimal points.

Team Presentation

- A. Refer to Appendix B (taken from the National FFA Agricultural Issues Forum CDE Manual) for the rubric/scorecard.
 - I. Introduction, Pro, Con and Summary of Pro and Con (20 points each, 80 points total)
 - II. Effectiveness of Presentation (20 points)
 - III. Questions (25 points)
 - 1. Appropriate response and knowledge of the issue will be evaluated from team members' responses.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. The judges may ask questions of all individuals of the presenting team. Each individual is encouraged to respond to at least one question from the judges.
- B. The presentations will be designed to be viewed by the judges. The audience at-large should not be of concern to the presenters.

Ranking

- A. Participation of each team member
- B. 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)
- C. Quality and power of the presentations
- D. Speaks at the right pace to be clear
- E. Pronunciation of words is clear, and intent is apparent
- F. No distracting mannerisms that affect effectiveness
- G. Gestures are purposeful and effective
- H. Well poised with good stage presence
 - I. 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

Judges' ranking will be used to place teams. Teams will be ranked in numerical order on the basis of the final score to be determined by each judge without consultation. The judges' ranking of each team then shall be added, and

the winner will be that team whose total ranking is the lowest. (Low rank method of selection where a rank of “1” is assigned to the highest place team, “2” to the second place team, etc.)

5. Scoring & Tiebreakers

Team Scoring

Component	Detail	Points
Portfolio Score	Scored by scorecard (Appendix A: Portfolio Scorecard); maximum of two pages	25
Team Presentation	Scored by scorecard (Appendix B: Team Presentation Scorecard)	125
Grand total		150

Team Tiebreakers

Team tiebreakers are resolved in the order listed below.

- 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 teams' response to questions. The team with the greatest number of low ranks from the response to question 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.

6. Study Resources

Approved study resources

- [UNL CDE Study Materials Folder \(OneDrive\)](#) — Practice materials and examples for this CDE.
- [Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials](#) — National FFA instructional materials for the Agricultural Issues Forum CDE
- [Agricultural Issues Finals Hall Videos](#) — National FFA video center clips of Agricultural Issues Forum finals presentations
- [Helpful Hints](#) — National FFA PDF of helpful hints and tips for the Agricultural Issues Forum CDE
- [Past state champion video](#) — YouTube video of a past state champion Agricultural Issues Forum presentation
- [Agricultural Issues Forum CDE Teacher Guide](#) — Advisor guide: competition overview, pre-convention preparation, convention expectations, scoring, and a classroom incorporation outline and rubric.

7. After the Event

All rubrics with judges' comments from the competition will be provided to the team with convention medals/ribbons. There is not a planned in-person review of the portfolio by the Superintendent. The nature of the CDE does not allow a walk through.

List of Appendices

- [Appendix A: Portfolio Scorecard](#)
- [Appendix B: Team Presentation Scorecard](#)

Appendix A: Portfolio Scorecard

Portfolio Scorecard

25 POINTS

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 prior to the State FFA Convention at which the issue is to be presented.

School				Team Number		
	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 Forums				0	0	
Subtotal						
Deductions						
Late submission				-2.5 points		
For exceeding the maximum number of pages, excluding the 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 the 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		

Appendix B: Team Presentation Scorecard

Team Presentation Scorecard 150 POINTS							
School				Team Number			
	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 the issue is important	20	Not in Range					
Pro viewpoint Identification of positive points. Points addressed are relevant	20	Not in Range					
Con viewpoint Identification of negative points. Points addressed are relevant	20	Not in Range					
Summary of pro/con viewpoints	20	Not in Range					
Effectiveness of presentation Participation, creativity, quality and power, clear with right pace and word pronunciation, no distractions, appropriate gestures, poised	20	Not in Range					
Questions Appropriate responses; knowledge of issue	25						
<i>Subtotal (125 points possible)</i>							
Portfolio Score (25 points possible)							
Deduction for presenting a conclusion during the 15-minute presentation (-5 points)							
<i>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.</i>				TOTAL POINTS EARNED OUT OF 150 POSSIBLE			
Judge's Name				Judge's Signature			

Subcommittee

Standing subcommittee for this event

Name	School / Organization	Role
Maggie Louthan	Elwood	Chair
Dr. Becky Haddad	UNL — ALEC	Superintendent
Stacie Turnbull	UNL	Exec liaison
Emilia Brozek	Norris	Member
Dylan Huber	Emerson-Hubbard	Member

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