



Agricultural Communications CDE

Purpose

The purpose of the Agricultural Communications Career Development Event is to provide individuals with communication skills necessary to pursue career opportunities. Representing agriculturalists across the world, these individuals possess the skills to effectively communicate agricultural messages to the public, both involved and not involved in agriculture. Because a large percentage of the population lacks agricultural understanding, it is important for agricultural communicators to provide timely, accurate information on current issues and events.

Superintendent

The superintendent for this event is designated by the State FFA Coordinator and will be identified at the State FFA Convention.

Comments and questions may also be directed to Mrs. Shelby Robertson, State FFA Coordinator, NCSU, Campus Box 7654, Raleigh, NC 27695-7654. Phone: 919.513.0216 Fax: 919.513.3201

Eligibility and General Guidelines

This event is open to all FFA chapters and FFA members in good standing. FFA members may not participate in a Career Development Event that leads to a state level event after July 1, following their high school/early college graduation. Previous state winners are ineligible. Members that have participated in a previous national event in this area are ineligible. This event will be held during the North Carolina State FFA Convention.

No alternates are allowed in state events. Any alternate found participating in a state event will result in team disqualification.

The use or possession of cellular phones or any other mobile electronic communication device is prohibited during any state-level career development event. Any violation of this rule by any team member will result in total team disqualification.

Any member found cheating in any state-level career development event will result in total team disqualification for that event.

At the North Carolina FFA State Convention, participation in more than one FFA career development event is permitted if events are not being held concurrently and no special provisions are required to facilitate participation. Members may participate in only one career development event with the exceptions of Creed Speaking and Parliamentary Procedure or Prepared Public Speaking and Parliamentary Procedure, which are held concurrently will allow dual participation and special provisions for flighting.



Official FFA dress consist of: Black slacks and black socks or black skirt and black nylons, white collared blouse or white collared shirt, official FFA tie or official FFA scarf, black dress shoes with closed heel and toe, and an official FFA jacket zipped to the top.

The North Carolina FFA Association strives to promote a positive image at all Official FFA Events. The dress code policy was established to address the issue of appropriate attire at all Official FFA Events. Members should adhere to this policy for all events. A ten percent reduction will be applied to all individual scores from a chapter if a participant from that chapter violates the dress code during that career event.

The North Carolina FFA Association, in keeping with the FFA mission and purposes, does not permit the use of tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or Juuls at any FFA facility or at any FFA activity.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, North Carolina FFA will honor requests for reasonable accommodations made by individuals with disabilities. Please direct accommodation requests through the CDE/LDE Accommodation Request [Form](#). If the accommodation can be made for all and/or doesn't provide an unfair advantage, then every effort will be made to provide the accommodation. Requests can be accommodated more effectively if notice is provided at least 10 days before the event.

Middle School Participation

Middle school students and teams may participate in any Career Development Event or Leadership Development Event. The top three middle school participants will be recognized at the state FFA convention. Middle school participants should designate during registration.

Event Format

Part I: Communications Quiz - 100 points

Team members will individually complete a 25-question multiple choice quiz (1 point per question). The test questions will focus on general knowledge of the agricultural communications industry. Questions will come from the bolded reference to this guide (excluding sports guidelines). Team members may not use a style guide or dictionary.

Part II: Writing Practicum - 100 Points

Team members will receive a written scenario and complete a journalistic or opinion writing practicum. Practicums will rotate annually between journalistic and opinion writing styles. Practicums will be hand-written and will be completed individually by each team member.

Journalistic Writing Practicum: Team members will write a journalistic piece based on the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference. It should be written for an appropriate audience, have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph) and include a headline. The story will then be word processed by the student on a computer and turned in to be scored. Participants will have ninety (90) minutes to complete the practicum.

- Press release
- News story
- Feature story



Opinion Writing Practicum: Writers are to write a piece that takes a position and support it with evidence based on the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference. It should be written for an appropriate audience, have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph) and include a headline. The story will then be word processed by the student on a computer and turned in to be scored. Participants will have ninety (90) minutes to complete the practicum.

- A blog post (250–300 words)
- An op-ed (500–750 words)
- A letter to the editor (300–500 words)

The following practicums will be completed during the assigned years:

2024 – Press release

2025 – A blog post

2026 – News story

2027 – An op-ed

2028 – Feature story

2029 – A letter to the editor

At the conclusion of the practicum activity and the written test, the top 8 teams in total score will move on to Round 2.

Part III: Press Conference & Presentation - 175 Points

A press conference on an agricultural topic will be conducted by an 'expert'. All team members will receive a press packet with background information on the agricultural topic and the expert to use during the event. The expert will speak on the agricultural topic for twenty (20) minutes which will be followed by a ten (10) minute question-and-answer period. Students will be provided with paper to take notes if they wish. Students will stand to be recognized before asking a question. They may ask more than one question; however, the expert will attempt to address questions from as many different participants as possible. No electronic devices of any kind, including tape recorders and cell phones, will be allowed during this portion of the event.

Upon completion of the press conference, the team will be dismissed to a team working area to collaborate on their message, communications plan and the component parts. Students will be allowed up two (2) hours to determine their message, determine responsibilities, complete components and prepare to present their ideas, plan and components to the judges. Teams should allow ninety (90) minutes to complete the practicums. Teams will be provided with flipcharts and markers to prepare their presentations.

Team will be split into two flights for the preliminary round of presentation. After all eight teams have presented, the top two scoring teams from each flight will move on to the final presentation round. During each round, the team will present their message, plan, and selection of components as if presenting it to a client. All team members should participate in the presentation. Each team will be allowed up to ten (10) minutes to present to the judge(s). Following the presentation, the judge(s) will be allowed five (5) minutes to ask questions. This presentation should be a quick overview summary presentation of the message, reasoning, and objective of each component.



Scoring

<i>Communications Quiz</i>	100
<i>Writing Practicum</i>	100
<i>Press Conference & Presentation</i>	175

Procedure for Determining the State Event Winner when Scores are Tied

In the event a tie score exists, apply the following methods in sequential order until the tie is broken:

1. Compare the writing practicum scores.
2. Compare the presentation scores.

State Awards

The awards for the state event will be presented annually at the state FFA convention to include a team 1st, 2nd and 3rd place plaque and a travel monetary award if sponsorship is available. The high scoring individual will receive a plaque.

National Career Development Event Participation

State winning teams advancing to the national career development event will be automatically registered for the national event. It is the responsibility of the FFA Chapter Advisor to complete all necessary national certification and waiver forms and return them to the state FFA coordinator by the assigned due date.

State winning CDE teams that choose not to participate at the national level should contact the state office by Sept. 1 prior to national convention. Teams that fail to inform the state office prior to Sept. 1 will be ineligible to participate in that same CDE for the next year (chapters may appeal to the State FFA Board of Directors). Teams that do not compete at the National Convention will be required to pay back the travel award.

References

National FFA CDE Page — Past CDE Material ([FFA.org/Ag Communications/Event Resources/Past Test & Practicums](https://www.ffa.org/Ag/Communications/EventResources/PastTest&Practicums))

- Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual
- Bivins, T. Public Relations Writings: The Essentials of Style and Format, 4th edition. McGraw- Hill Higher Education, ISBN 0-844-20351-3
- Harrower, T. Newspaper Designer's Handbook, 5th edition. McGraw-Hill Higher Education ISBN 0-07-249291-0
- Kalbfeld, B. Associated Press Broadcast News Handbook. McGraw-Hill Higher Education, ISBN 0-07-136388-2
- Telg, R. and T. Irani. Agricultural Communication in Action: A Hands-On Approach, 1st edition Cengage/Delmar Publishing, ISBN 1111317143 (Online versions available)



Media Plan Pitch – Presentation Scorecard

175 POINTS

Chapter	State			Team Number		
INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples are vivid, precise and clearly explained Examples are original, logical and relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples are usually concrete, sometimes need clarification Examples are effective, but need more originality or thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples are abstract or not clearly defined Examples are sometimes confusing, leaving the listeners with questions 		X 5	
Confidence in speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks very articulately Never has the need for unnecessary pauses or hesitation when speaking Speaks at the right pace to be clear Pronunciation of words is very clear and intent is apparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes speaks articulately Occasionally has the need for a long pause or moderate hesitation when speaking Speaks at the right pace most of the time, but shows some nervousness Pronunciation of words is usually clear, sometimes vague 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rarely articulate Frequently hesitates or has long, awkward pauses while speaking Pace is too fast; nervous Pronunciation of words is difficult to understand; unclear 		X 3	
Being detail-oriented; provide details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is able to stay fully detail-oriented Always provides details that support the issue to communicate the key concepts of the plan; is well organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is mostly good at being detail-oriented Usually provides details that are supportive of the issue to communicate the plan; displays good organizational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has difficulty being detail-oriented Sometimes overlooks details that could be very beneficial to the issue; not enough detail provided; lacks organization 		X 3	
Speaking unrehearsed and naturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks unrehearsed with comfort and ease Speaks effectively without losing focus and with organized thoughts and concise answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks unrehearsed mostly with comfort and ease, but sometimes seems nervous or unsure Speaks effectively, but has to stop and think and sometimes gets off focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows nervousness or seems unprepared when speaking unrehearsed Seems to ramble or speaks before thinking 		X 3	
All team members participated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All team members took an active role in the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two to three team members took an active role in the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One team member took an active role in the presentation. 		X 3	



INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3-2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Use of visual aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual aids add clarity and support what is being said during the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual aids add some clarity and support to what is being said during the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual aids add little to no clarity and support to what is being said during the presentation. 		X 3	
Media plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key elements of the media plan are clearly communicated Strong understanding of chosen media is present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key elements of the media plan are vaguely communicated Vague understanding of chosen media is present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key elements of the media plan are not communicated Little to no understanding of chosen media is present 		X 3	
Questions and answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly responds to judges' questions Answers show familiarity with subject matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is somewhat able to correctly respond to judges' questions Answers show vague familiarity with subject matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is unable to correctly respond to judges' questions Answers do not reflect any familiarity with subject matter 		X 12	
TOTAL POINTS EARNED OUT OF 175 POSSIBLE						175



Journalistic Writing Practicum Scorecard

100 POINTS

Chapter		State		Team Number		
INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3-2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Lead/focus	Lead is accurate, draws in audience, engaging, catchy, original	Lead has 1 or 2 strong elements but fails in others, shows some signs of originality	Misses point of story, buries lead, neither original or catchy, too long, inaccurate		x 3	
Accuracy of information and quotes	Adequately uses multiple sources, ideas, and facts, tells complete story, information is properly attributed	Minor inaccuracies or sources improperly used, info or opinion given without attribution, missing key sources, quotes used with weak connection	Missing information, holes, no or weak quotes, unfounded opinions, inaccuracies		x 3	
Clarity and conciseness	Focus of story is clear, makes use of effective words, descriptive, nothing detracts from focus of story, everything contributes to angle of story	Clear writing with some poor word choice, passive voice, slightly wordy or confusing, lacks sense of unity, some areas detract from angle	No clear angle, story rambles, is awkward, poor word choice, unclear statements, dull writing		X 2	
Correct style (AP)	0-2 errors in AP style, attributions done correctly	3-5 errors in AP style, 1 attribution error	6 or more errors in AP style, 2 or more attribution errors		X 2	
Depth of coverage	Strong evidence of good research, adequately presents all sides, all in story are identified, info is accurate and thorough, overall fairness to subjects and sources, bias free	Quotes are interesting and storytelling, presents sides mostly equal, quotes lead to question of bias, minor insertions of opinions	Quotes are short, absent, or weak, ineffective use of quotes, displays unjustifiable bias, relies on stereotype, involves unwarranted opinion		X 2	
Header/ headline	Headline is catchy, is positive and specific, contains strong, active verbs and short, simple words	Headline is slightly mechanical, slightly longer or slightly shorter than needed, headline is slightly vague	Headline is mechanical, too long or too short, has no connection to the story at all, left out or forgotten		X 2	
Grammar, spelling, punctuation and word choice	Largely error-free, well edited, no spelling errors, includes proper spelling of all names	Minor errors but still readable, story is spell checked but contains several grammatical errors	Errors interfere with comprehension, names are misspelled, spelling errors, contains many grammatical errors		X 2	
Organization and format	Information flows seamlessly from one point to next, effective transitions, appropriate length of story, inverted pyramid order with information descending in order of importance	Information generally well ordered with a few confusing jumps, weaker transitions, readable with inconsistent flow, somewhat abrupt or not using inverted pyramid fully	Structure does not move logically from one point to another, no or poor transitions, choppy or confusing, not in inverted pyramid		X 2	
Accomplishment of purpose	Story conveys the full intended message to audience, no doubt about any information	Story has a few confusing parts but mostly leaves readers with a feeling of full information and understanding	Creates confusion among readers, has information missing and is overall unclear		X 2	
TOTAL POINTS OUT OF 100 POSSIBLE						



Opinion Writing Practicum Scorecard

100 POINTS

Chapter		State		Team Number		
INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3-2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Lead/focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong lead that draws in audience Lead is engaging, catchy, and original Leads shows strong focus to topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead has 1 or 2 strong elements but loses some focus to topic Shows some signs of originality, but lacks hook to audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead is buried in the writing Lead lacks clear focus of topic Lead is neither original or catchy, too long, etc. 	x 3		
Accuracy of information and quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinion pieces adequately uses multiple sources, ideas, and facts Sources/quotes used are appropriate and have good connection to topic Piece tells a complete story Information is properly attributed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor inaccuracies or sources improperly used in opinion piece One or two pieces of information or opinion given without attribution Missing one or two key sources Sources/quotes used have a weak connection to topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinion piece is missing information or has major holes Weak or no sources/quotes used Sources/quotes used have no connection to topic Piece contains multiple unfounded opinions or inaccuracies 	x 3		
Clarity and conciseness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus of opinion piece is clear Piece makes use of effective words and is descriptive Nothing detracts from focus of the piece Everything contributes to angle/opinion of the piece and its topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus of opinion piece is only somewhat clear Some poor word choice found in piece, passive voice used, slightly wordy or confusing Piece lacks sense of unity throughout Some areas detract from angle/opinion of the piece and its topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clear angle/opinion of the piece and its topic Piece rambles, portrays awkward wording or poor word choice Piece contains multiple unclear statements Writing is dull and unfocused 	x 2		
Correct style (AP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-2 errors in AP style All attributions/citations use correct AP style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-5 errors in AP style 1-2 attributions/citations errors in AP style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 or more errors in AP style 3 or more attributions/citations errors in AP style 	x 2		
Takes a position that is supported with evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinion piece takes a strong, clear position on the topic Position is well supported with facts/statistics from press materials to back it up Opinion of writer is well supported by accurate, thorough information connected to the topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinion piece takes a mild, sometimes unclear position on the topic Position is only partially supported with facts/statistics from press materials Opinion of writer is only sometimes supported by accurate information or information is only somewhat connected to the topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinion piece has no clear position on the topic and position is weakly argued Position is not supported with any facts/statistics from press materials Opinion of writer is does not support position with accurate information or information used is not connected to the topic 	x 2		
Header/headline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headline is catchy, original, and unique Headline shows clear connection/tie to position and topic discussed in opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headline is slightly mechanical and does not show much originality Headline is weakly tied to position and topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headline is dull and not original Headline makes no connection to position, and topic discussed in opinion piece 	x 2		



INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3-2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
	piece – Headline is specific, contains strong, active verbs and uses short, simple words	discussed in opinion piece – Headline is not specific enough, is slightly longer or shorter than needed, or does not contain strong active verbs	– Headline is missing			
Grammar, spelling, punctuation and word choice	– Opinion piece is largely error-free and is well edited – Piece contains no spelling/grammatical errors – Piece includes proper spelling of all names	– Opinion piece contains minor errors but is still readable – Piece contains several (3-5) spelling/grammatical errors – Piece contains 1-2 misspelled names	– Opinion piece contains major errors that interfere with comprehension, – Piece contains several (6 or more) spelling/grammatical errors – Piece contains 3 or more misspelled names	X 2		
Organization and format	– Opinion piece is well organized – Information flows seamlessly from one point to the next and makes use of effective transitions – Makes use of inverted pyramid with information descending in order of importance – Piece is an appropriate length (within word count limit)	– Opinion piece is mostly organized – Information flows somewhat well with a few confusing or weak transitions, – Piece is somewhat abrupt or does not use inverted pyramid fully – Piece is slightly shorter/longer than designated length	– Opinion piece is not organized – Information does not move logically from one point to the next and has no or poor transitions – Piece is choppy or confusing and does not use inverted pyramid – Piece is much shorter/longer than designated length	X 2		
Accomplishment of purpose/ Impact/Effectiveness	– Opinion piece is effective and conveys a well-supported message to readers – Reader is left with a strong call to action and has no doubt about any information	– Opinion piece is somewhat effective but may leave readers with some questions – Piece has a weak call to action or ending	– Opinion piece is not effective but may leave create confusion among readers – Piece has no call to action or not clear ending	X 2		
TOTAL POINTS OUT OF 100 POSSIBLE						

