Starting an Agricultural Education Program and FFA Chapter

# Program Overview

Agricultural Education is a systematic program of instruction available to students desiring to learn about the science, business, and technology of plant and animal production and/or about the environmental and natural resources systems. Agricultural education first became a part of the public education system in 1917 when the U.S. Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act. Today, over 800,000 students participate in formal agricultural education instructional programs offered in grades seven-adult throughout the 50 states and three U.S. territories.

Agricultural Education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems. Getting a food product from farm to fork requires many different people with many different specialties and skill sets. Students in agricultural education explore a variety of career fields, from biology to business management. Students receive the knowledge and leadership skills they need to succeed in any career path they choose after high school.

# Three Components

When you put on an FFA jacket, you become part of a total agricultural education program that will connect you to exciting careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture. FFA is only one of three essential components of this system, all of which work together to provide you with the personal, academic and career experiences essential for your success. Get to know the "three circles" that make this possible.

Classroom/Laboratory Instruction

Agriculture is rooted in science, math, business and technology. The time you spend in the classroom and school lab with your teacher will help you explore and master the information necessary to move forward with your career development. Get ready for exciting hands-on opportunities that make textbooks come alive!

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE)

Nothing takes your skills to the highest level faster than putting them into practice. Through an SAE, you can create your own landscaping business, conduct a scientific research project that could change the world, grow crops or raise livestock, secure a meaningful job that provides insider experience related to your career choice, or learn how to make a difference in your community through civic engagement. Best of all, you can earn while you learn!

FFA

As an FFA member, you'll work on developing your potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. By participating in competitions, degree programs, state and national conventions, community service projects, summer camps and chapter committees, you'll grow in ways that take advantage of your talents and help you become the leader you were meant to be. The key to success in FFA is to get involved!

# FFA Background

"Future Farmers of America" was founded by a group of young farmers back in 1928. Their mission was to prepare future generations for the challenges of feeding a growing population. They taught us that agriculture is more than planting and harvesting-- it's a science, it's a business and it's an art.

FFA continues to help the next generation rise up to meet those challenges by helping its members to develop their own unique talents and explore their interests in a broad range of career pathways.

So today, we are still the Future Farmers of America. But, we are the Future Biologists, Future Chemists, Future Veterinarians, Future Engineers and Future Entrepreneurs of America, too.

# Characteristics of the Successful FFA Chapter

An effective FFA Chapter is characterized by the following:

* Interested members
* Capable officers
* A fun and challenging plan of activities
* Equally distributed responsibility among all members
* Proper equipment and record keeping
* Knowledge of the FFA among all members

# Steps to Organizing an Agricultural Education Program

Step 1: Clarify what you want and why you need it.

Every community is different. Start by clarifying your goals and assessing your community's needs.

Step 2: Determine what opportunities are available.

Each community will be able to offer different educational opportunities based on the region in which they are located. Research to find the number and types of agricultural jobs and post-secondary education opportunities that are available in your area.

Step 3: Develop community support.

Gather information, facts and statistics that will help you make a case for agricultural education in your community.

Step 4: Analyze the local political climate.

Find out who the key decision makers are in your community. Then, determine how best to approach them.

Step 5: Clarify state-specific processes and procedures.

Talk to your state's agricultural education leaders.

Step 6: Develop a task list and timeline.

Outline your plan of action. Keep in mind establishing an agricultural education program can be a lengthy process.

Step 7: Involve key people.

Approach key community leaders and present your case for an agricultural education program.

Step 8: Meet with local officials and set up a steering committee.

Once you have your key community leaders on board, ask them to become part of your local steering committee.

Step 9: Develop a community campaign.

Once you have support from community leaders, it is time to get the entire community involved. Develop presentations for your key audiences. Include facts about agricultural education and FFA, and share information you gathered in "Step 2: Determine what opportunities are available."

Step 10: Determine the type of curriculum needed.

Once you have completed the surveys and assessments in steps 2 and 3, you will know what types of career opportunities your community has to offer to an agriculture student. Use this knowledge to determine your agricultural education program's curriculum.

Step 11: Present your proposal to the school board.

Once you have determined your community's need for an agricultural education program, gathered a group of supporters, and developed a curriculum, it is time to present your proposal to your local school board for final approval.

For more detailed information including action items for each step, visit: <https://www.ffa.org/FFAResources/Chapter/Pages/StartanAgProgram.aspx>

# Steps to Organizing an FFA Chapter

Step 1 Establishment of an agricultural education program.

Step 2 Hiring of a certified agriculture teacher.

Step 3 Secure the background material on the FFA’s programs and services.

Step 4 Notify and secure the support of school administration and make sure they are aware that you plan to start an FFA Chapter.

Step 5 Contact the Regional Agricultural Education Coordinator or the State FFA Coordinator and solicit advice on starting an FFA Chapter.

Step 6 Apply for a temporary FFA Chapter Charter Number. This will allow the chapter to order supplies from the National FFA Organization. This number must be requested through the State FFA Coordinator’s office.

Step 7 Discuss the FFA Organization with students and their parents. Develop marketing materials/handouts to share with students.

Step 8 Establish a student committee that’s purpose is to organize and start the FFA Chapter (Chapter start-up committee).

Step 9 Take members of the start-up committee to visit other FFA chapters to learn how they operate.

Step 10 Show videos and photographs of FFA activities and programs to potential FFA members.

Step 11 Ask a neighboring FFA chapter to share with you their local program of activities (i.e. what they do each year).

Step 12 Contact the county and inform them that the Agricultural Education Program is creating an FFA chapter.

Step 13 Call an organization meeting of all agricultural education students and have them vote on whether or not they wish to apply for a state and national chapter (i.e. establish the chapter).

Step 14 If the majority of students wish to start the chapter then appoint committees to elect officers, write the chapter constitution, and develop the program of activities.

Step 15 Inform the news/media regarding establishment of the FFA chapter.

Step 16 Collect and submit state and national dues from every FFA member to the State Association Office.

Step 17 Submit a list of chapter officers and one copy of the chapter constitution to the State FFA Association Office.

Step 18 Schedule a charter signing ceremony with the State FFA Coordinator.

# Selecting Chapter Leaders

The chapter leaders are an integral part in founding a successful FFA chapter. These members will serve as role models for the chapter and school, and should take an active role in chapter activities and management. Some attributes of officers are:

* Use Parliamentary Procedure effectively.
* Use opening and closing ceremonies in formal meetings.
* Work with other students effectively.
* Familiarization with the chapter constitutions and Program of Activities.
* Willing to adapt in order to fill their respective office.
* Should practice good judgment.
* Neat and organized personally and professionally.

# Duties of the FFA Advisor

The teacher is the key to the success of any agricultural education program and FFA chapter. Some of the duties of the advisor are:

* Lead youth with good ethics and morals.
* Provide leadership in organizing the FFA chapter.
* Train the student leaders.
* Teach students in the use of parliamentary procedure.
* Foster creativity in planning chapter activities.
* Advise the FFA members in all FFA activities.
* Secure 100% membership in the FFA chapter.
* Develop a system for chapter management (financial and business, etc.).
* Coach students on FFA competitive events.
* Teach students how to complete award applications.
* Help students transfer SAE records onto award-winning proficiency and degree applications.
* Cooperate with other advisors in local, region, state and national activities.

# FFA Membership Dues

The FFA relies on membership dues to finance many of its activities. A recent study by the National FFA Organization shows that every FFA member receives approximately $63.00 in services for their $12.00 dues investment. National dues at the high school and middle school are $7.00 and state dues are $5.00 for high school members and $1.00 for those in middle school.

# Leadership Programs and Other Special Programs

As is evident from the FFA mission statement, premier leadership is a primary focus for our organization. In order to encourage this, a number of programs have been created at all levels, from local to national. Washington Leadership Conference is one such notable program on the national level, in which students travel to the Washington DC for an in-depth look at themselves and their leadership potential. MEGA and State Leadership Conferences are state-level programs, designed specifically for the improvement of officer teams and individuals in a small group atmosphere. Even at the local level, students have the opportunity to attend such events as the Regional Leadership Workshops offering an opportunity to meet members form their own area, while gaining exposure to the qualities of leadership.

# Resources

North Carolina FFA Website: <http://www.ncffa.org>

National FFA Website: <http://www.ffa.org>

# Local Program Success Guide: <https://www.ffa.org/Documents/lps_guide.pdf>

Teacher Handbook: <https://www.ffa.org/Documents/edr_teachnbk.pdf>

Official FFA Manual

Official FFA Handbook

# Contact

Contact the State FFA Office if you have questions about developing an FFA chapter.

North Carolina FFA Association

North Carolina State University

520 Brickhaven Drive

Campus Box 7654

Raleigh, NC 27695-7654

Phone: 919-515-4206

Fax: 919-513-3201