

2024
MINNESOTA FFA
FARM BUREAU
DISCUSSION MEET

Student Manual



Minnesota Farm Bureau®



info@fbmn.org

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2024 Contest Schedule

Regional Qualifier

2024 Region Contests

Two individual will move on

State Finals

State Leadership Conference

December 9-10, 2024

St. Cloud Tech. University

St. Cloud, MN

Overall Philosophy of the Event

The Discussion Meet, started in 1948, is designed to replicate a committee meeting where participants explore an agricultural topic and ways to address it. All participants have known the topics for months, so they have had ample opportunity to come to the conversation prepared with information and innovative ideas to address the issues. But this is also a situation that requires people to adapt on the fly as others share similar, or opposing, ideas to the ones they have prepared.

The same is true of a typical meeting – some things you come in prepared to say, other things are developed in response to the comments of others. Therefore, if someone is contributing only facts, only ideas or only questions, they are not fully prepared for a collaborative discussion.

The goal of the event is to recognize those who understand the issue AND actively contribute ideas and effective solutions to change the situation AND work well with others AND clearly communicate their thoughts.

At the end of the day, the winner of the round should be the individual you would want to serve on an actual committee or board with. Think about what that looks like and don't lose track of it. You might not agree with every point they make, but they are likely someone who adds value to the conversation, is willing to listen to others and appreciates differing perspectives, looks for consensus and tangible next steps, exudes professionalism and is generally pleasant to work with, even when you disagree.

About Discussion Meet

The Minnesota FFA and Minnesota Farm Bureau Foundation are pleased to announce the 2024 Farm Bureau FFA Discussion Meet Contest. This program allows FFA members throughout the state to participate in an educational and resume-building experience.

A grassroots organization's strength depends on its members' ability to analyze problems and decide on solutions that best meet their needs. The Discussion Meet is an activity designed to build these crucial skills. By participating, students build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues, and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach consensus and solve problems.

As a leadership training and self-improvement activity, the Discussion Meet experience will:

1. Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
2. Develop a concise and direct manner of speaking.
3. Improve the ability to listen.
4. Aid the participant in overcoming timidity or stage fright.
5. Assist the individual in the practice of giving and receiving criticism in a helpful manner.
6. Teach the value of compromise.
7. Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

The Discussion Meet is designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each committee member.

Orientation

An orientation of all judges, moderators, room chairmen and contestants will be conducted prior to the competition. Scripts and detailed information about organizing a competition can be found in the Discussion Meet Advisor's Guide.

Only those contestants attending the orientation at the appointed time will be eligible for participation in the Discussion Meet at the State Leadership Conference. This rule will continue to be enforced in 2024. Chapters are asked to have their contestant present at the correct time and to make necessary travel schedules to accommodate this.

Awards

The Minnesota Farm Bureau Foundation will sponsor scholarships for the top two FFA/Farm Bureau Discussion Meet contestants (\$750/person registration cost) to attend the National FFA Washington D.C. Leadership Conference or to use for their college education.

Winners will be determined at the Discussion Meet competition held at the 2024 State Leadership Conference.

All contestants who compete during the MN FFA State Convention will receive a complementary Minnesota Farm Bureau Membership for the upcoming year.

Eligibility of Contestants

1. Contestants must be current FFA members.
2. Past state Discussion Meet winners are not eligible to compete in following years unless they were unable to accept the award the year they won.
3. All participants in the Discussion Meet must attend a brief orientation meeting prior to the contest during the State Leadership Conference in 2024.
4. Each FFA Region may send two contestants to the state Farm Bureau FFA Discussion Meet Competition.
5. All participants in the state contest must have competed at a regional competition.
6. Contest organizers must submit the information sheets for the top two regional competitors by Wednesday, November 27, 2024. Information sheets received after that date may not be eligible for competition at the MN FFA State Convention.

Contestants will address the problems and concerns faced by the rural communities in Minnesota and throughout the country. Through a structured, well-disciplined evaluation and analysis, constructive thoughts and ideas can be surfaced, studied, and offered for implementation.

Participants are invited to study each area in depth, seeking factual, as well as personal answers and opinions to the topic area. Each topic area has great potential for constructive thinking while relating to each other. Identifying possible solutions and action plans for each topic area will help build the FFA's and Farm Bureau's efforts in the future.

Ideal Competitor

The rubric provides detailed information about a successful competitor, but in general, here's what we're looking for:

Knowledgeable: We're looking for someone who provides real facts, figures and context to the conversation. Polish is great, but we're looking for someone with real knowledge, innovative ideas and a cooperative mindset. We are looking for both the ability to analyze the problem and develop a specific plan to solve it. Just because someone talks a lot, doesn't mean they should win.

Collaborative: The Discussion Meet is a collaborative approach to problem-solving, not a panel discussion and not a debate. We are not looking for the person who can recite the most random facts from their research, but the person who can build on the ideas of others. Competitors don't have to agree; it's OK to take a different stance and respectfully agree to disagree. We're looking for folks who can help guide the conversation as it moves from analyzing the topic to identifying innovative solutions and action plans, ensuring that all voices and perspectives have been heard along the way.

Articulate: We're looking for someone who can convey their ideas clearly and confidently using appropriate vocal variety, stories, gestures and other presentation techniques to create a compelling message.

Competition Format

Topics: Each round of the Discussion Meet focuses on one agricultural topic. The topics are developed by the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation and are announced months before the competition.

Rounds: All participants compete in two opening rounds of the Discussion Meet. The top 16 move on to the Sweet 16 round, and the top four competitors advance to the Final Four round. Each judge will evaluate only one round.

- **Opening Rounds-** The contestants will compete in round one as they have in the past. Prior to the competition, competitors will be randomly placed in rooms using a software program. After round one, competitors' scores will be tallied, and they will be given new room assignments according to their rank. For round two, each room will have a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th ranked competitor (this number will vary based on available rooms and participation numbers). Contestants will compete in the second round, and their scores will be tallied again.
- **Sweet Sixteen-** The top 16 competitors will compete in the Sweet 16 round and will be placed into room assignments in the same manner as round two. The winning contestant in each of the four Sweet 16 rooms will advance to the Final Four where the final topic will be discussed.
- **Final Four-** The winners in each of the four Sweet 16 rooms will compete in this round. From here the winner of the contest will be awarded.

Moderator: A moderator will provide opening comments and facilitate the start and end of the competition. A timekeeper in the front row will help keep the event on track.

Opening Statement: Each contestant begins with a 30-second opening statement. This statement introduces the topic at hand, conveying why it's an important topic for agriculture to consider and expressing excitement for the conversation. This segment should be prepared and polished and should be addressed to the other competitors and the audience.

Discussion: The participants discuss the topic for a total of 15 minutes. Contestants should thoroughly analyze the topic, which might include why the issue is a concern, the historical and social context of the issue, any relevant Farm Bureau policy, and/or personal stories and examples. After a thorough analysis, the participants should transition into problem-solving mode, working together to identify and evaluate solutions and then develop action plans to achieve the solutions. Ideally, the group will reach innovative and specific solutions to address the topic. Hopefully Farm Bureau and/or FFA specifically, at the local, state, or national level, is a part of the solution. This should be a cooperative discussion always moving the group forward, connecting ideas and information into usable solutions. This is a discussion, not a debate.

Closing Statement: Each contestant has one minute to formulate their one-minute closing statement. This statement, addressed to the audience, summarizes the full discussion and talks about the next steps to implement these solutions. The closing statement isn't a time for new information. Rather, it's a synopsis of what just happened and what happens next. The statement should not be, or sound, rehearsed.

Scoring: Judges will be dismissed to a private room to tally their scores and compile feedback for each competitor.

Roles and Responsibilities

Contest Meet Chair Duties

- a. Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Contest Manual.
- b. Conduct Discussion Meet Orientation Session prior to the contest for contestants, judges and timekeepers.
- c. Make introductions.
- d. Give brief explanation of Discussion Meet contest procedures.
- e. Distribute contest room locations.
- f. Allow time for questions.
- g. Draw and announce topics to determine sequence to be used for the contest.
- h. Announce first round topic during Orientation.
- i. Settle any and all disputes during the competition.

Room Chair Duties

- a. Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Contest Manual.
- b. Review Tally Sheet.
- c. Ensure all judges are present.
- d. Meet in the contest room with contestants, judges, moderator and timekeeper to answer any questions they may have.
- e. Call the contest to order at the appointed time. Introduce the timekeeper and moderator. Announce topic to be discussed. (Script included in this guide.)
- f. Introduce and thank judges.
- g. Escort judges to the judges tabulating room at the end of the contest and allow them to finish tabulating and ranking the contestants. Assist judges in final ranking of contestants.
- h. Ensure each contestant has been ranked in all sections of the rating sheet.
- i. Supervise tiebreakers (See Scoring).

Timekeeper's Duties

- a) Familiarize yourself with the MFBF FFA Discussion Meet Manual
- b) Attend the Timekeeper Orientation session.
- c) Go to your assigned competition room 15 minutes prior to the scheduled starting time.
- d) Meet with the room chair, moderator and competitors for last-minute questions.
- e) Make sure to be seated in the front row near the center.
- f) Indicate the following timing notifications to the moderator and competitors

Two Opening Round and Sweet Sixteen

- The end of each 30-second opening statement (Time Elapsed- Red Card)
- Warning at 10 minutes of open discussion, holding the card up until all competitors have noted the warning (Dive Minutes Reading- Yellow Card)
- The end of 15 minutes of open discussion (Time Elapsed- Red Card)
- The end of one minute of quiet time (Time Elapsed-Red Card)
- The end of each competitor's one-minute closing statement (Time Elapsed- Red Card)

Final Four

- The end of each 30-second opening statement (Time Elapsed- Red Card)
- Warning at 10 minutes of open discussion, holding the card up until all competitors have noted the warning (Five Minutes Remaining- Yellow Card)
- The end of 15 minutes of open discussion (Time Elapsed- Red Card)
- The end of one minute of quiet time (Time Elapsed- Red Card)
- The end of each competitor's one-minute closing statement (Time Elapsed- Red Card)

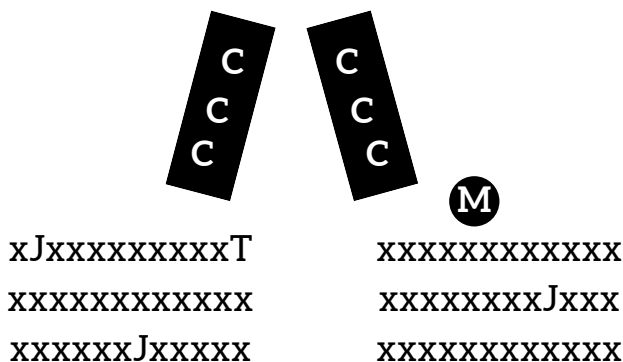
Helpful Hints for Competitors

Study as much material as possible relating to the overall topic. Sources: Internet; library; newspapers; magazines; Farm Bureau policies; county, state and American Farm Bureau publications; and conversations with experts or knowledgeable people.

- Remember this is a discussion, not a debate.
- Be prepared to ask questions, state facts and opinions, and urge others to be specific.
- Be aware of the audience, but generally address the panel. Speak loudly enough to be heard by all
- Participate whenever your contribution will further the discussion. Do not monopolize the discussion.
- Use the one minute of quiet time to organize your closing statement.
- This is not a panel symposium wherein each participant, in turn, makes a presentation, with the moderator ending the session with a summary. Rather, it is an exercise in cooperative problem solving, with the questions, answers and statements coming from any person at any time. The moderator plays an inactive role during the discussion.
- Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds for use in your summary statement.
- The discussion should not be “conversation” or aimless talk, nor should you take the role of a persuasive speaker. Try to cooperatively shed light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position.
- Stand and make your closing statement to the audience. Use accepted speech techniques and stay within the time limit.

Room Layout

M= Moderator C= Competitor
J= Judge T= Timer x= Audience



Competition Flow

Generally speaking, the discussion should follow these steps:

- State the problem or need.
- Explore, define, and understand the problem or need.
- Identify the causes of the problem or need.
- Elaborate on all possible alternative solutions.
- Evaluate and compare alternatives.
- Test and project what appears to be the best solution(s).
- Create ways to implement the solution(s) discussed and highlight the Farm Bureau’s involvement in those actions/steps.

2024 Farm Bureau Discussion Meet Questions

1. How can Farm Bureau and FFA work together to boost member engagement and increase participation across all age groups within their communities?
2. Minnesota agriculture is more than cows and corn. What can Farm Bureau and FFA do to encourage diversification of products and support producers entering specialized markets?
3. Agriculture is an ever-changing industry. How can FFA and Farm Bureau can work towards preparing students from all backgrounds for an occupation and future in agriculture?

Note: Each contestant may bring one, *one-sided 4x6 note card* into each round of the Discussion Meet. Blank paper and pencils will be provided for the purpose of making notes during the actual meeting. This will be checked and enforced.

These questions will be used for:

Regional Discussion Meets
Minnesota FFA State Discussion Meet

2024 DISCUSSION MEET REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION SHEET

Contestant's Name: _____
(As it should appear in a program)

Phonetic Pronunciation: _____

Address: _____
(Street or Rural Route) (City & State) (Zip Code)

Phone Number: (_____) _____ County: _____

E-mail: _____

Date of Birth: _____
Month Day Year

FFA Chapter: _____

Region: _____

Parent's Names: _____

Return this completed form to your FFA Advisor before your regional contest.

Contest organizers should send Information Sheets of first and second place winners to the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation at the address listed below.

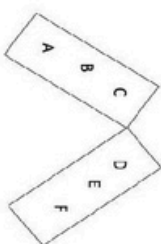
Information sheets must be received by Wednesday, November 27, 2024 for the applicant to be eligible for the competition at the MN FFA State Convention.

*Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
Attn: FFA Discussion Meet
P.O. Box 64370
St. Paul, MN 55164
Rachael.peterson@fbmn.org*

Discussion Meet Scoresheet

Room Name: _____ Round # _____

Judge's Name: _____



In the first column, you will find the point values and descriptions. See rubric for additional detail. The total point value for each row is available for each contestant. You are not dividing the total points among contestants. **No ties.**

Columns to the right each represent a different contestant. Please fill in the first and last name of each competitor according to their seat location. Refer to the diagram for help. Put scores in the larger spaces and rank in the smaller boxes.

	Comp A Name:	Comp B Name:	Comp C Name:	Comp D Name:	Comp E Name:	Comp F Name:
(1) OPENING STATEMENT: 10 pts. Defines problem; conveys importance and relevance; sets the stage for an interesting discussion; clear point of view; uses time wisely						
(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 20 pts. Has thoroughly researched topic; builds on the ideas of others to help achieve coherent analysis; asks relevant questions; helps ensure thorough analysis before problem solving; aware of relevant FB policy						
(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: 25 pts. Leader in guiding the conversation to specific and relevant solutions; has achievable and specific plan of action; clearly defines how FB is part of the action plan.						
(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: 15 pts. Active listener; comments on specific ideas mentioned by others and ties them back to the bigger conversation; shows grace, courtesy and respect to others; shows integrity especially when they do not agree						
(5) DELIVERY: 15 pts. Interesting to listen to; animated; appropriate volume and tone; poised; uses gestures and eye contact; confident and clear						
(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 pts. Shows that they have listened to the conversation; develops relevant and realistic plans; memorable; inspires confidence						
Total score for each contestant is to be tabulated by Judge. Any tie scores are to be broken by Judge. Total of 100 points possible.	TOTAL					
Rank contestants: 1 (highest) through (6 lowest).	RANK					

Judge's Signature: _____

Room Chair's Signature: _____

<p>(1) OPENING STATEMENT 10 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address the problem – is off topic. • Does not address the importance or relevancy of the problem. • Makes a “closed” statement that does not allow room for further conversation. • Does not seem to have a point of view. • Does not finish in the allotted time. <p>Award 0-3 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the problem. • Sets the problem in context. • Makes a statement that leaves some room for further conversation but could be more open. • Has a general point of view. • Stays in the given time. <p>Award 4-6 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defines the problem. • Conveys the importance and relevancy of the problem. • Makes an “open” statement that leaves room for further conversation. • Sets the stage for an interesting conversation with a very clear point of view. • Uses their time very wisely and stays in the given time. <p>Award 7-10 points</p>
<p>(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 20 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address the problem or does not remain on topic/wanders/distracts. • Hasn’t done much research or lacks quality facts. • Doesn’t build on other’s ideas, only pushes their own. • Doesn’t ask questions to clarify other’s ideas. • Doesn’t share relevant personal examples. • Misinterprets the issue or does not display competency and therefore does not help with problem solving. • Is unaware of FB policy. <p>Award 0-5 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the causes of the problem, does not directly address them, but remains on topic. • Has done research. • Addresses the ideas of others but does not build upon them – or only drops in information they learned without connecting it to previous ideas and moving the conversation forward. • Asks some questions to help vet the ideas of others. • Shares relevant personal examples – may be slightly off topic. • Demonstrates knowledge of this problem but not why it exists. • Is aware of current FB policy. <p>Award 6-12 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and addresses the causes of the problem and remains on topic. • Has thoroughly researched the topic. • Confidently builds on the ideas of others to contribute to a coherent analysis • Asks relevant questions to vet the ideas of others. • Shares relevant personal examples that add to the conversation. • Helps ensure thorough analysis before moving to problem solving. • Is aware of current and relevant FB policy. <p>Award 13-20 points</p>

Discussion Meet Scoring Rubric (continued)

<p>(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION 25 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of helping to guide the conversation to a solution, just data drops. • Offers no plan for a solution or a generic plan like “tell our story” or “educate consumers.” • Does not identify how Farm Bureau is involved. <p>Award 0-6 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries to help lead the conversation to address a solution but misses opportunities to collaborate with the group. • Has a plan but is missing specificity. • Farm Bureau is mentioned but is not a crucial piece of the solution. <p>Award 7-16 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a leader in guiding the group and the conversation to specific and relevant solutions. • Generates ideas that contribute to an achievable and specific plan of action to resolve the issue. • Clearly defines how Farm Bureau is part of the action plan. <p>Award 17-25 points</p>
<p>(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not listen to others – just waits for their turn to talk. • Cuts others off or simply repeats what others have already said. • Is rude, defensive or combative when they do not agree with others. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contestant listens to others but does not comment specifically on their ideas or tie ideas back to the bigger conversation. • Is respectful of others. • Is not rude or defensive when they disagree with others. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an active listener and comments on references or specific ideas mentioned by others tying them back to the bigger conversation. • Clearly shows grace, courtesy and respect to other participants. • Shows integrity especially when they do not agree with others. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>
<p>(5) DELIVERY: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is boring/ mumbling/ monotoned. • Slouches, does not use appropriate gestures or have eye contact • Ideas are difficult to understand, or they are not confident in speaking. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks at an appropriate volume and pace with appropriate tone. • Uses effective posture, gestures and eye contact. • Conveys thoughts and viewpoints but could seem overly rehearsed. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is interesting to listen to, animated and lively, speaks at an appropriate volume and with a professional and courteous tone. • Is poised and uses gestures and eye contact that emit respect and professionalism. • Confidently conveys thoughts and viewpoints clearly. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>
<p>(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not accurately summarize the conversation. • Uses memorized speech that doesn't reflect the content of the conversation. • Closing statement is forgettable. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizes the conversation that happened. • Uses take-away points from the discussion to help develop a plan. • Closing statement is memorable. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows that they have actively listened to the conversation in their summary. • Uses take away points from the discussion to develop relevant, realistic and specific action items and plans for the future. • Closing statement is memorable and inspires confidence in their ability to work toward a solution. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>