

1 CHAPTER

NATIONAL FFA

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENT

A Special Project of the National FFA Foundation

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please thoroughly read the Introduction Section at the beginning of this handbook for complete rules and procedures that are relevant to all National FFA Career Development Events.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Agricultural Communications Career Development Event is to provide individuals with basic communications skills necessary to take advantage of career opportunities in agricultural communications. Public communications about agricultural products, practices and policies are essential to the future of agriculture. Students who are equipped with strong communication skills and who can use a variety of media to help the public understand issues related to the agricultural industry have a bright future in the job market.

II. EVENT FORMAT

A. Team Make-up

1. The event will consist of a five-member team.
2. Eligible participants in the National FFA Agricultural Communications Career Development Event will be students who are regularly enrolled in agricultural education during the calendar year, have a planned course of study, or who are still in high school but have completed all the agricultural education offered. When selected, participants must be active members of a chartered FFA chapter and the National FFA Organization. Members representing a state association may participate in the National FFA Agricultural Communications Event only once.

3. Ten copies of the communications project proposal must be sent to the Career Development Event Program Manager, National FFA Center postmarked on or before September 15th.
4. It is highly recommended that participants be in official FFA dress in each event.
5. The National FFA Agricultural Communications Career Development Event will be limited to one team per state.
6. All material will be student produced and verified by the state FFA executive secretary and/or the state FFA advisor in each state.
7. The event will include both written as well as oral communications presentations.
8. The National FFA Officers and National Board of Directors will be in charge of this event.
9. The judges will be selected from print and broadcast media, agriculture producers and other members of the agriculture communications community.

B. Equipment

1. Needed: Students must provide pens and pencils.
2. Provided: Specialized equipment
 - a. For team presentation- Easel, VCR/ TV monitor and projector screen.
 - b. For practicums- PC computer, tape recorder, cassettes, black and white or color photographs (5 × 7 prints), wax pencils, colored pencils, rulers, colored paper and 11 × 17 blue-line grid paper. **Note:** Teams may bring additional equipment for project presentation as

long as they are able to set up and tear down equipment in the time allowed for the presentation.

C. Team Activities

Communications Project Proposal and Presentation (150 points/team)

Each team will prepare a communications project proposal for their chapter. The proposal will explain the communications activities planned to publicize an event/issue. Guidance on the event/issue is presented below. **Ten copies of the communications project proposal must be sent to the Career Development Event Program Manager, National FFA Center postmarked on or before September 15th.** A penalty of 10% will be assessed for documents received after the postmark deadline. If document is not received seven days after postmark deadline, the team may be subject to disqualification. States qualifying after the September 15th deadline will have seven days from state qualifying event date to submit their communications project proposal. At the National FFA Career Development Event, the team will make an oral presentation of the proposal.

1. Guidelines for Proposal

- The key to producing a good communications project proposal is to select a project that is specific enough that you will be able to do a good job with it.
 - a. The proposal should be a maximum of 12 double-spaced typed pages (not including references or appendices) on 8.5 × 11 white bond paper using 1" margins and 12-point Times New Roman or Times as the font.
 - b. Staple the proposal in upper-left hand corner. **DO NOT** bind or place in folders, special binders or covers.

- c. Follow style established in the *Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*.
- d. A cover page, which is not included in the 12 page limit, should give the title of the communications proposal, state, chapter name, team member names and date.
- e. The communications project proposal should include the following sections:
 - 1. rationale for selecting the project, including background information that helps provide judges with an understanding of the project and the situation or locale where it will be implemented.
 - 2. objectives of the project (What is the project to accomplish?).
 - 3. audiences to be targeted with this project.
 - 4. key messages or themes to communicate to the audiences.
 - 5. media (brochures, newspapers, signage, radio, etc.) selected to accomplish the project.
 - 6. budget to produce and place communications materials.
 - 7. criteria upon which project will be evaluated (these criteria should result in some indication of how well the project accomplishes the stated objectives).

2. Topic for communications project proposal and presentation

The communications project proposal and presentation will be based on the same topic. The topic will be chosen by the team from a theme of possible topics provided by national FFA. The themes of topics will rotate from year to year (see table).

YEAR	PROJECT THEME	POTENTIAL TOPICS
2006 2010	LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Responsible production practices; environmentally-friendly lawn, landscape and gardening practices; hazardous household waste management; use of pesticides and fertilizers; soil testing by homeowners and producers.
2007	FFA RECRUITING AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES	Chapter recruitment campaigns; promotion of community or school-sponsored activities; promotion of chapter educational activities; alumni recruitment.
2008	SAFETY ISSUES	Tractor safety; pesticide/fertilizer applicator safety; livestock handling safety; ag mechanics safety; hunter safety; controlling noxious plants; ATV safety.
2009	FFA COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	Building local community support; publicizing community service projects; publicizing community and educational value of SAE's; FFA-sponsored community events.

**3. Communications project presentation
(150 points/team)**

Each team will be allowed 15 minutes to present their communications project to a panel of judges. Five points will be deducted for each major fraction of a minute, over the 15 minutes allowed for the presentation. Following the presentation, judges will be allowed five minutes to ask questions. When making the presentation to the judges, the team should present based on the following:

- The presentation should follow and cover all of the items listed in section A-5 of the Guidelines for Proposal.
- Include examples of materials that were (or would be) used in the execution of the proposal (ex. brochures, newsletters, news releases, photos, graphics, videos, radio tapes, etc.)
- Team members should not rely solely on equipment. Each team member must participate in the presentation.
- Teams will have a total of 10 minutes for setting-up and tearing-down equipment. (e.g., 5 minutes to set up and 5 minutes to tear down)

4. Presentation rounds

The communication presentation will be conducted in two rounds - preliminary (3–5 flights) and finals (1 flight). The top team from each preliminary flight will advance to the final round. Preliminary rounds will be seeded by proposal scores.

D. Individual Activities

1. Tests

**a. Editing exercise
(25 points/individual; 125 points/team)**

Because editing is a critical skill for all communicators, each team member

will complete an editing exercise. They will be given a printed document that contains 25 mistakes. In correcting the mistakes, team members will be required to use correct proofreader's marks (see Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual). Style, grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes will be included. Team members will NOT be able to use the style manual or a dictionary during this exercise.

**b. Communications quiz
(25 points/individual; 125 points/team)**

Each team member will complete a quiz that covers basic elements important to the skill areas of journalistic writing and broadcasting, public relations writing and graphic design. Five questions will be written for each segment, which includes broadcast, public relations, news, visuals and ethics of communication. Team members will NOT be able to use the style manual or a dictionary during this exercise.

2. Practicums

(100 points individual/500 points per team)

The practicums will consist of five individual events. Each team should assign a member to one of the following activities **PRIOR** to arriving at the national event:

- a. Organizing and writing news story.
- b. Organizing and writing a press release.
- c. Developing and carrying out a broadcast.
- d. Preparing a graphic and photo editing for a news story.
- e. Developing a website.

All teams will meet in a central location for an orientation and press conference. Teams will be seated by practicum group (i.e., broadcasters, news writers, press release writers, graphic designers and web designers). All team members will be given an orientation at the beginning of the practicums to last no more than 10 minutes.

The press conference will be held following the orientation meeting. Each team member will receive a press packet with background information on the agricultural topic and expert to use during the event. An expert will speak on a timely agricultural topic for 20 minutes. Students will be provided with paper to take notes if they wish. After the 20-minute presentation, the broadcasters and graphic designers will be dismissed to a different area to complete their assigned tasks. (See detailed descriptions of assignments below.)

The news writers and press release writers will then be involved in a 10-minute question and answer period with the expert (speaker). Only the news writers will be allowed to ask the questions. Each news writer will stand to be recognized before asking a question. News writers may ask more than one question; however, the expert will attempt to address questions from as many different participants as possible. All news writers and press release writers may take notes during the question and answer period, but only news writers will be allowed to ask questions of the expert. Tape recorders will not be allowed during this portion of the event.

Upon completion of the 10-minute question and answer session, the news writers and press release writers will be dismissed to a computer room to complete their assigned tasks.

DESCRIPTION OF EACH TEAM MEMBER'S ASSIGNMENT

News Writers

Students are to write a news story based on information gathered at the news conference. It should be written for an agricultural publication (agriculture producer) audience. The story should be 250–350 words (12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced) and follow news or inverted pyramid style. It should have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph). The story should provide answers to who, what, when, where and why. Students also should write a headline for their story. Each writer can use notes from the press conference, the Q&A session and from information in the press packet. After writers arrive in their designated area, they will have 60 minutes to compose their story. The story will then be word processed by the student on a computer, printed out and turned in to be scored. Judging will be based on written communication skills, accuracy, organization, style, creativity and grammar.

Press Release Writers

Each press release writer will use the press packet and the information gathered in the press conference to write a 200- to 300-word press release (12 point Times New Roman, double-spaced) excluding the words in the header. The release should be written as if the expert's company or organization was distributing it. After writers arrive in their designated area, they will have 60 minutes to compose their story. The story will then be word processed by the student on a computer, printed out and turned in to be scored. Judging will be based on written communication skills, accuracy, organization, style, creativity and grammar.

Broadcasters

Each broadcaster will use the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference to write and carry out a two-minute radio broadcast. The message should be suitable to be aired on a radio station or radio network. After the participant has developed the story, he or she will use a standard cassette and tape recorder to broadcast the story. The cassette with the recorded broadcast will be turned in to be evaluated. Students will be able to listen to their recording prior to turning in the cassette if time allows. All tape recorders will be the same; therefore, recording quality will not be a factor in the evaluation process. Broadcasters will also develop and turn in five written questions that he or she would have asked the expert if they were given the opportunity to interview the expert after the press conference. These written questions will be turned in along with the cassette once the student has completed the tasks. After the broadcasters arrive in their designated room, they will have 60 minutes to complete their tasks.

Graphic Designers

Each graphic designer will complete exercises in graphic art, photo editing, photo caption writing and page layout. The objective is effective communication or information sharing through visual tools. After graphic designers arrive in their designated room, they will have 60 minutes to complete their four tasks. Each of these tasks is described below.

1. *Page layout exercise* - Each of the products from the following exercises will be combined into a layout format using a computer program that will be identified and shared with state staff annually. The layout should be a two-page feature story design for an agricultural magazine (e.g., *Successful Farming*,

FFA New Horizons) and should be appropriate for the topic. The layout will include a headline, reporter byline, photo(s) with captions, pull quote, graphic and text placeholders. Participants will be provided with dummy text, digital photos and other appropriate electronic materials for completing this exercise.

2. *Graphic art exercise* - Each student creates a chart or table on a computer that illustrates numeric data from the press packet. A press packet (including news release and data) is provided for each artist. Students are judged on their graphic art skill, understanding and use of statistics and creativity. The computer programs that will be available will be identified and shared with state staff annually. In the event that a different program is used, the changes will be announced. The final table or chart must be incorporated into the complete page layout described below.
3. *Photo editing exercise* - Students will receive a variety of digital black and white photos or color photos and will select photos to use in the layout based on information in the press packet. Each student should place the photos in the layout and make any appropriate adjustments (e.g., cropping or resizing). Each student is to choose one photo and provide three written reasons on why they selected it for the layout. These should include the photo's best qualities, its visual appeal to readers and how it helps communicate the story's message.
4. *Photo caption writing exercise* - Students are to write and place a two-line caption (approximately 25 words) for one of the photos they have selected into the layout. Students will be judged on accuracy of information, grammar, brevity, clarity, style and creativity of captions.

Web Designer

Each Web designer will use the press packet to design and develop a two-page Web site publicizing the issue presented at the press conference. Participants will use computer programs that will be identified and shared with state staff annually to develop their Web site. The Web site should be designed for the speaker’s organization based on supplied specifications. These specifications may include but are not limited to external hyperlinks, internal hyperlinks, banners, background colors, logos, e-mail links, photographs and contact lists. Participants will be provided with appropriate electronic materials for completing this exercise. After Web designers arrive in their designated room, they will have 60 minutes to complete their tasks.

III. SCORING

Participants shall be ranked in numerical order on the basis of the final score to be determined by each judge without consultation. The judge’s ranking of each participant then shall be added, and the winner will be that participant whose total ranking is the lowest. Other placings will be determined in the same manner (low point method of selection). Weighted rank scoring will be implemented to maintain emphasis between individual activities, practicums and team events. The following rubrics will guide judges’ evaluations:

COMMUNICATION PROJECT PROPOSAL: 14% OF TEAMS’ FINAL WEIGHTED RANK

Rationale 25
 Objectives of Project 25
 Target Audiences to Address 20
 Key Messages 15
 Media Selection 20
 Budget 10
 Evaluation Criteria 15
 Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling, Style 20

COMMUNICATION PROJECT PRESENTATION PRESENTATION: 14% OF TEAMS’ FINAL WEIGHTED RANK

Professionalism 10
 appearance (official dress), poise and posture, attitude/confidence, demeanor, ethical concerns
 Knowledge of Subject 15
 Power of Expression/Verbal Skills 30
 directness, sincerity, emphasis verbal communication with judges grammar and voice (quality, pitch, articulation, pronunciation, force)
 Presentation Skills 25
 effectiveness of visual aids, use of visual aids, stage presence and organization of presentation following a logical order and flow
 Questions and Answers 50
 ability to answer questions on the presentations which are asked by indicating originality, familiarity with subject and ability to think quickly
 Supporting Evidence 10
 examples that document the materials used to develop the project
 Creativity and innovation 10

Tests

Communications Quiz 125
 Equals 17% of individuals’ and 11% of teams’ final weighted rank
 (25 points per team member)
 Editing Exercise 125
 Equals 17% of individuals’ and 11% of teams’ final weighted rank
 (25 points per team member)

Practicums

News writer story: *Equals 66% of individual's and 10% of teams' final weighted rank*

Lead/Focus 20

Organization, Clarity, Brevity,
 Conciseness and Clarity 15

Correct Style (AP) 10

Accuracy of Information and Quotes 20

Depth of Coverage/Creativity 10

Headline 10

Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, and
 Word Choice 15

Press release writer: *Equals 66% of individual's and 10% of teams' final weighted rank*

Lead/Focus 20

Organization, Brevity, Concise and Clarity . . . 15

Correct Style (AP) 10

Accuracy of Information and Quotes 15

Creativity 10

Header/Headline 10

Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation and
 Word Choice 10

Company or Product Information 10

Broadcaster's recording: *Equals 66% of individual's and 10% of teams' final weighted rank*

Voice Quality 10

Power of Expression 10

Lead/Focus 15

Clarity of Communication 10

Organization, Concise and Brevity 10

Creativity 10

Accuracy of Information and Quotes 15

Quality of Five Written Follow-up
 Questions 20

Graphic Designer: *Equals 66% of individual's and 10% of teams' final weighted rank*

Overall Aesthetics of Layout 25

Use of Graphic Design Principles 15

Understanding and Use of Statistics in
 Informational Graphic 15

 Neatness and Creativity 15

Choice, Justification, Placement and
 Cropping of Photo 15

Photo Caption Writing 15

Web Design: *Equals 66% of individual's and 10% of teams' final weighted rank*

Appropriate Design (related to audience
 and topic) 15

Use of Web Design Principles 25

Adherence to Site Specifications 20

Neatness and Creativity 15

Functionality of Site
 (includes working hyperlinks) 15

Editing/Proofreading (grammar,
 spelling, punctuation, etc) 10

IV. TIEBREAKERS

1. Team tiebreakers will be settled in the following order:
 - a. Proposal rank
 - b. Practicum rank
 - c. Presentation rank
2. Individuals tiebreakers will be settled in the following order:
 - a. Practicum rank
 - b. Quiz rank
 - c. Editing exercise score

If tie exists after tiebreakers have been applied, ties will be broken on raw scores.

V. AWARDS

Awards will be presented at an awards ceremony. Awards are presented to teams as well as individuals based upon their rankings. Awards are sponsored by a cooperating industry sponsor(s) as a special project and/or by the general fund of the National FFA Foundation.

VI. REFERENCES

This list of references is not intended to be inclusive. Other sources may be utilized and teachers are encouraged to make use of the very best

instructional materials available. The following list contains references that may prove helpful during event preparation.

Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual

Microsoft ® Office computer program

Bivins, T. *Public Relations Writings: The Essentials of Style and Format*, 4th edition. McGraw-Hill Higher Education, ISBN 0-844-20351-3

Calver, P. (editor). *The Communicator's Handbook*.. 4th edition. Maupin House, Gainesville, FL 32607 <http://www.maupinhouse.com>

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

Agriculture Communications in the Classroom; Shannon Hartenstein, advised by Tracy A. Rutherford, Ph.D. *Agricultural Communications and Journalism*, Kansas State University on behalf of the National FFA Organization Copyright 2002, National FFA Organization. This guide can be found on the Local Program Success Resource CD-ROM or at http://www.ffa.org/dcd/National_FFA_Programs/Career_Development_Events/Ag_Communications/

Agricultural Communications

Name: _____ Chapter: _____

State: _____ Team No.: _____

COMMUNICATION PROJECT PROPOSAL SCORECARD

	POSSIBLE SCORE	TEAM SCORE
Rationale	25	
Objectives of project	25	
Target audiences to address	20	
Key Messages	15	
Media Selection	20	
Budget	10	
Evaluation	15	
Grammar, punctuation, spelling, style	20	
Total Possible:	150	
Deduction for materials received after postmark deadline 10% or 15 points maximum		
Total		

Team Score:

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date

Agricultural Communications

Name: _____ Chapter: _____

State: _____ Team No.: _____

COMMUNICATION PROJECT PRESENTATION SCORECARD

	POSSIBLE SCORE	TEAM SCORE
Professionalism Appearance, poise, posture, attitude/confidence, demeanor, ethical concerns.	10	
Knowledge of Subject	15	
Power of Expression/Verbal Skills Directness, sincerity, emphasis, grammar, voice (quality, pitch, articulation, pronunciation, force).	30	
Presentation Skills Effectiveness of visual aids. Use of visual aids, stage presence and organization; presentation follows a logical order and flow.	25	
Questions and Answers Ability to answer judges' questions on the presentation. Responses indicate originality, familiarity with subject and ability to think quickly.	50	
Supporting Evidence Examples that document the materials used to develop the project.	10	
Creativity and Innovation	10	
Gross Total Possible:	150	
Less 5 points per each major fraction of a minute over the 15 minute time limit ()		

Team Score:

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date

Agricultural Communications

Name: _____ Chapter: _____

State: _____ Team No.: _____

Member No.: _____

NEWS WRITER STORY PRACTICUM

	POSSIBLE SCORE	MEMBER SCORE
Lead/Focus	20	
Organization, Clarity and Conciseness	15	
Correct Style (AP)	10	
Accuracy of Information and Quotes	20	
Depth of Coverage/Creativity	10	
Headline	10	
Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation and Word Choice	15	
Total Possible:	100	

Total Score:

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date

Agricultural Communications

Name: _____ Chapter: _____

State: _____ Team No.: _____

Member No.: _____

PRESS RELEASE WRITER PRACTICUM

	POSSIBLE SCORE	MEMBER SCORE
Lead/Focus	20	
Organization, Brevity, Clarity and Conciseness	15	
Correct Style (AP)	10	
Accuracy of Information and Quotes	15	
Creativity	10	
Header/Headline	10	
Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation and Word Choice	10	
Company, Organization or Product Information	10	
Total Possible:	100	

Total Score:

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date

Agricultural Communications

Name: _____ Chapter: _____

State: _____ Team No.: _____

Member No.: _____

BROADCASTER'S RECORDING PRACTICUM

	POSSIBLE SCORE	MEMBER SCORE
Voice Quality	10	
Power of Expression	10	
Lead/Focus	15	
Clarity of Communication	10	
Organization, Concise and Brevity	10	
Creativity	10	
Accuracy of Information and Quotes	15	
Quality of Five Written Follow-up Questions	20	
Total Possible:	100	

Total Score:

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date

Agricultural Communications

Name: _____ Chapter: _____

State: _____ Team No.: _____

Member No.: _____

GRAPHIC DESIGNER PRACTICUM

	POSSIBLE SCORE	MEMBER SCORE
Overall aesthetics of layout	25	
Use of graphic design principles	15	
Understanding and use of statistics in informational graphics	15	
Neatness and creativity	15	
Choice, justification and placement/cropping of photo	15	
Photo caption writing	15	
Total Possible:	100	

Total Score:

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date

Agricultural Communications

Name: _____ Chapter: _____

State: _____ Team No.: _____

Member No.: _____

WEB DESIGN PRACTICUM

	POSSIBLE SCORE	MEMBER SCORE
Appropriate design - (related to audience and topic)	15	
Use of Web design principles	25	
Adherence to site specifications	20	
Neatness and creativity	15	
Functionality of site (includes working hyperlink)	15	
Editing/Proofreading - (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.)	10	
Total Possible:	100	

Total Score:

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date

Agricultural Communications

Name: _____ Chapter: _____

State: _____ Team No.: _____

TEAM SCORECARD

	POSSIBLE SCORE	TEAM SCORE
Practicum Scores	500	
Communications Project Proposal	150	
Communications Project Presentation	150	
Test Scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Quiz - 125 pts. (25pts/member) • Editing Exercise - 125 pts. (25pts/member) 	250	
Total Possible:	1050	

Team Score:

Judge's Name

Judge's Signature

Date