

VIRGINIA FFA

COMPETITIVE

EVENTS GUIDE



Virginia FFA does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, or political affiliation.

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Section I: Philosophy

The Virginia FFA Association is committed to providing high-quality Career and Leadership Development Events (CDEs/LDEs) that enhance student learning and leadership development. These events are designed to reflect and reinforce instruction delivered through agricultural education programs, including classroom instruction, laboratory experiences, supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs), and FFA leadership activities.

CDEs/LDEs serve to:

- Develop individual responsibility and accountability
- Foster teamwork and communication skills
- Promote critical thinking and problem solving
- Encourage leadership, citizenship, and personal growth
- Recognize individual and team achievement

These events align with Virginia's workforce readiness priorities, including Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, Creative Thinking, and Citizenship.

The Virginia FFA Association will maintain a leadership role in ensuring that all events remain relevant, equitable, and reflective of current and emerging agricultural industry needs, while upholding ethical standards that promote fairness, transparency, and the well-being of all participants.

For purposes of this guide, "competitive events" includes all Virginia FFA-sponsored or sanctioned Career Development Events, Leadership Development Events, middle school events, state-only events, written-entry events, and joint events unless a provision specifically states otherwise. Event-specific rules may establish additional requirements. When an event-specific rule conflicts with this guide, the event-specific rule will govern unless otherwise stated by Virginia FFA.

Section II: General Rules and Administration

The State FFA Advisor, Executive Director, and designated State Staff, in coordination with Event Superintendents, will organize and implement all CDEs/LDEs using published rules and procedures.

Events may be modified, postponed, or canceled due to:

- Lack of necessary materials or expertise
- Budgetary constraints
- Safety concerns
- Unforeseen circumstances (e.g., disease outbreaks, weather events)

Section III: Eligibility of Participants

A. General Membership Requirements

Each FFA participant must:

- Be a current, dues-paying FFA member in good standing with the local, state, and national organization
- Be listed on the official chapter roster

If a participant is not listed, a \$35 membership processing fee in addition to dues must be paid.

B. Program Enrollment and SAE Requirement (Applies to All Divisions)

While in school, participants must:

- Be enrolled in at least one agricultural education course **OR**
- Be following a planned course of study

In both cases, the participant must maintain a supervised agricultural experience (SAE).

Students must have been enrolled in agricultural education during the year they qualified for the event. Exceptions may be made for scheduling conflicts (e.g., Advanced Placement courses), provided the student maintains an SAE.

C. Division-Specific Eligibility

Eligibility Determination for National FFA Convention Events

Per National FFA Policy, eligibility is based on the National FFA membership year (August 1–July 31)—not a school’s academic calendar or “rising grade” designation.

To clarify, a student must be a 7th-grade member on the date of the qualifying event to compete or qualify at a state qualifying event. A student who is still a 6th-grade member on that date is not eligible to qualify and may compete for 7th-grade consideration only in qualifying events held on or after August 1.

Eligibility Determination for 4-H and FFA Joint Events

Some joint competitions use age instead of grade for eligibility. For example, the National Land Judging competition rules state, “All contestants must be at least 14 years old on the date of the contest and must not have graduated from high school prior to the current year.”

Refer to the handbook and rules for these joint events to determine eligibility.

Senior Division

Participants must:

- Be enrolled in grades 9–12
- A graduating senior remains eligible for the convention immediately following graduation

Junior Division

Participants must:

- Be enrolled in grades 6–9 at the time of the event
- Eligible (not 6th graders) Junior Division participants can compete in senior level CDE/LDEs if they already won the state level junior division or if there is no junior division level available

Middle School Division

Participants must:

- Be enrolled in grades 6–8 at the time of the event

Additional Eligibility Rules

- Individuals who have represented Virginia at the national level may not compete again in the same event
- Some national events do not offer separate junior and senior divisions. In those cases, junior division winners may advance to compete at the senior level. For example, the Marketing Plan CDE is open to all eligible members meaning, a middle school or junior division team could qualify for the national CDE/LDE. All members of the team must be eligible to qualify. This means a team with a 6th grade member would not be eligible for a National FFA Convention CDE/LDE.

Section IV: Team Structure and Participation

- A “team” structure is determined by the CDE/LDE specific rules
- For events not occurring at the State Convention, additional teams may participate but are not eligible for advancement unless permitted under joint event rules (e.g., 4-H events such as Meats Evaluation and Poultry Evaluation)

Section V: Declaration and National Representation

A. Declaration at State Convention Check-In

At check-in for State Convention, chapters with members competing in multiple National Convention qualifying CDEs/LDEs, must declare:

- The **one event** in which they will accept advancement to represent Virginia at the national convention in the event that they win multiple events with those common individuals.
- This declaration is **binding** and must be submitted prior to the start of competition.
- If a chapter wins a National FFA Convention qualifying, stand-alone event held independent from the State Convention, the members of that team will not be eligible to qualify for any other National FFA Convention competition.
- CDE/LDE results for state convention events that are traditionally announced before the final session, may be postponed if there are students participating in multiple events. If this were to happen, this decision will be communicated to advisors.

B. Advancement to National Representation

- Chapters may win multiple state events; however, individual members may only qualify for one national convention CDE/LDE per year
- If a chapter declared advancement for an event they do not win, they could still advance in the one they do win.
- If a team with declared individuals wins multiple events, only the declared event will advance those individuals. The eligible team or individual (without conflicting individual members) will be named state winner for purposes of national advancement in non-declared events
- Teams or individuals determined to be ineligible for advancement may receive an *eligibility adjustment* for purposes of official standings and advancement determination. Such adjustments shall not affect individual scores for team events or recognitions earned through competition
 - An “eligibility adjustment” adjusts the ineligible team or individual's score so the eligible team or individual will mathematically win the event and preserves the option for that individual to compete again at the state level

C. Additional Clarifications

- If a state winning team member is ineligible or unable to attend the National Convention, remaining members may compete for individual recognition only unless National FFA approves an extenuating circumstance waiver
- Extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical emergency, death, academic restrictions, military) may be reviewed by State Staff and if justified a waiver request will be submitted to National FFA for consideration

Section VI: Event Procedures and Conduct

A. General Conduct

Participants must:

- Follow all event rules and instructions
- Adhere to the National FFA Code of Ethics
- Refrain from unauthorized communication during events

B. Electronic Devices

- Use of personal electronic devices not approved by contest guidelines is prohibited unless approved by event officials. Violations will result in disqualification.
- Health monitoring devices or alarms are the exception to this rule as long as contest officials are aware before the competition begins (example: diabetic monitors)

C. Advisor Interaction

Advisors:

- May not communicate with participants during events
- May only be present if assigned an official role

D. Accessibility

Requests for accommodations must be submitted at least 14 days before the event. If there are substitutions at check-in, the Virginia FFA Association will make every reasonable effort to provide necessary accommodations; however, accommodations cannot be guaranteed after the close of registration. Advance notice is strongly encouraged to ensure appropriate arrangements can be made.

Section VII: Grounds for Disqualification

Participants or teams may be disqualified for:

- Unauthorized communication during competition
- Receiving outside assistance
- Use of unauthorized electronic devices
- Failure to complete an event without notifying officials
- Accessing restricted materials
- Unsafe conduct
- Late arrival
- Rule violations as determined by event officials

Event Superintendents have authority to enforce disqualification when necessary to maintain fairness and safety.

Section VIII: Written Entry Policies

- A 10% penalty will be applied to late submissions
- Entries more than 7 days late may result in disqualification
- State Staff will notify event officials and ensure penalties are applied consistently

Section IX: Awards and Recognition

- Awards will be presented following completion of events
- Rankings will be based on total scores
- Recognition will reflect both individual and team achievement where funding permits

Section X: Governance and Oversight

A. Advisory Council

Purpose: To advise the State Staff on issues impacting both FFA Career Development Events and Awards to ensure:

- All activities are consistent with industry needs
- All activities are available to all dues paying members
- All activities are conducted openly, fairly and in a quality manner
- Cooperation among various activities occurs, to the degree possible, to promote the interconnectedness of agriculture (i.e. forestry and agricultural mechanics or farm business management and dairy or livestock) and agricultural education (classroom, SAE, FFA)
- New and innovative activities are being put forward for consideration
- As many students as possible have the opportunity to participate
- A constant process of local advisor in-service on proper use of these activities as tools for learning is being championed
- All activities are operated consistently with Advisory Council policy
- Activities are conducted within available budgets approved by the FFA Advisory Council and, if appropriate, Virginia FFA Foundation Board

B. Governing Board/State Board of Directors

The governing body of the organization shall be the State Board of Directors/Governing Board, which shall consist of:

- the state FFA advisor, who shall serve as chairperson;
- one agricultural education instructor from each of the state FFA areas;
- one representative from the State FFA Advisory Council,
- one representative of the State FFA Foundation;
- and one representative of the State FFA Alumni Association.
- The state FFA executive secretary and designated staff shall serve as ex-officio members of the State FFA Board of Directors/Governing Board.

The terms of office of members, other than the ex-officio member, shall be prescribed in the bylaws.

The State FFA Board of Directors/Governing Board shall meet at least once each year at such time and place as may be prescribed by the board and shall present an annual report.

The duties of the State FFA Board of Directors/Governing Board shall include: interpret rules governing the activities of the state association, including the State FFA Convention; to have full power to prescribe new regulations that the board finds necessary in connection with the operation of the organization, including the State Convention; to interpret rules and regulations applicable to the convention; and to review recommendations from the State FFA Advisory Council and State FFA Governing Board/Board of Directors and take any action deemed appropriate.

C. Executive Committee

The chairperson and two members of the State FFA Board of Directors/Governing Board shall be designated by the board to serve as the Executive Committee and shall have the power to deal with items of business of the state organization. All official actions of the Executive Committee shall be reported to the State FFA Board of Directors/Governing Board.

D. Conflict of Interest

Any individual with a vested interest must recuse themselves from decisions.

Section XI: Scoring and Publication of Results

- Scoring and tabulation will be completed as efficiently and accurately as possible to allow for timely announcement of results and presentation of awards
- Scores entered will be verified by at least two separate individuals and reviewed before results are announced
- Scoring mechanisms will be checked for setup, correctness, and mathematical accuracy
- Tiebreakers outlined in the CDE/LDE handbook will be used as outlined. If a tie still exists, the scoring committee will use:
 - Written Exam - first missed question
 - Rubric - first lowest or highest score (if a low score wins event)
 - Coin flip as a last resort
- Announced results will be considered final unless an error is identified within 24 hours of their publication. The 24-hour review period begins when results are officially posted through JudgingCard or another communication method designated by Virginia FFA.
- Individual and team scores will be made available through JudgingCard or other official means following the event.

A. Access to Materials

To promote transparency:

- JudgingCard provides access to participant scorecards
- Advisors are encouraged to review materials promptly.

Section XII. Discovery and Correction of Errors

The tabulating committee will make every effort to verify the accuracy of all results prior to their official posting. However, errors may occasionally occur. Any potential errors must be reported within 24 hours of the official posting of results.

A. Error Identification

When a potential error is identified, State Staff and/or the Event Superintendent will conduct a thorough review of all relevant materials as appropriate, including scorecards, judging sheets, tabulation records, event rules, rubrics, and any supporting documentation.

Errors subject to review may include:

- Score tabulation or calculation errors
- Other errors not reasonably identifiable during the scoring or tabulation process

Subjective judging decisions, differences of opinion when event rules were correctly applied, and errors made by participants in completing event materials are not subject to review under this section.

B. Reporting a Potential Error

For 24 hours following the official posting of results, only an advisor of a participating team or individual who competed in the event may submit written notice of a potential error to Virginia FFA. The notice must clearly identify the suspected error and include any relevant supporting information.

This process is intended to identify and correct errors.

C. Correction of Errors

When an error is confirmed, all affected advisors will be notified. Errors that do not affect rankings, awards, or qualification status may be corrected administratively. If the correction has the potential to affect rankings, awards, or eligibility for subsequent competition, the Virginia FFA Governing Board will review the circumstances and determine a fair and equitable resolution.

When appropriate, duplicate awards and recognition may be issued. If the correction alters the official rankings, the amended results will be used to determine the advancing teams or individuals.

D. Finality of Results

At the conclusion of the 24-hour error-identification period, and after any reported errors have fully been fully reviewed and resolved; all results shall be considered final.

Virginia FFA Governing Board decisions regarding the correction of errors, including any resulting changes to rankings, awards, or qualification status, are final and binding.