

Ag Discussion Meet Event

(for postsecondary Iowa FFA Members)

A. OVERVIEW

The Discussion Meet is a FFA event initiated only for “out-of-school” active FFA members. Although the participants participate in groups of about three to eight, similar to a panel, they are not judged collectively, but are judged on an individual basis. The participants are seated similar to a panel, but they do not operate as a panel with the moderator starting and stopping each participant. Rather, they function in freewheeling style with no order of participation and with freedom of discussion as if a few people were sitting around a table discussing an agricultural topic.

The event involves a moderator and from three to eight participants. The moderator’s responsibility is to introduce the topic and participants, to start the discussion, keep it on the track, and see that no one monopolizes the time.

The participants’ responsibilities are to exchange ideas and information in an effort to solve the problems inherent in the topic. The discussion should not be “conversation” or aimless talk nor should the participants look upon their role as that of persuasive speakers. They should attempt to cooperatively provide further information on the topic and tentatively retain a flexible position. Participants should regard themselves as productive thinkers rather than as emotional persuaders. Thus, they are free to say what they believe and to change their minds whenever new information and ideas become the reasonable thing to do.

Finally, this is not a symposium wherein each participant makes a presentation in his/her proper turn with the moderator ending the session with a summary. Rather, it is the technique of letting the participants talk freely with the questions, answers, and statements coming from any person at any time. Furthermore, this event is not a debate.

Generally speaking, the discussion should follow these steps:

1. Statement of problem or need.
2. Explore, define, understand problem or need
3. Discover all possible alternative solutions
4. Evaluate and compare alternatives
5. Test and project what appears to be the best solutions
6. Indicate ways to implement (course of action)

B. PURPOSE

The strength of the FFA is largely in its ability to involve members in analyzing agricultural problems and deciding on appropriate solutions. The Discussion Meet will provide an opportunity for out-of-school FFA members to participate in a FFA leadership event. It will help them develop a greater command of basic discussion skills. They will acquire a better understanding of how people can think in groups, resulting in a greater understanding and better solutions to problems. In addition, this event will encourage “out-of-school” FFA members to keep involved in the FFA and to keep up-to-date on current agricultural issues.

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

- Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information
- Develop a concise and convenient manner of speaking

- Develop the ability to listen
- Help the participant to overcome timidity or stage fright
- Assist the individual in learning to give constructive criticism and to take criticism without becoming emotionally upset.
- Teach the value of compromise
- Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

C. GENERAL RULES

1. The Ag Discussion Meet will be held during the Iowa FFA Leadership Conference.
2. Previous first, second or third place FFA Discussion Meet state winners shall not be eligible to participate in this event.
3. A briefing session for judges, moderator and participants will precede the discussion meet event. Attendance at this briefing session is mandatory and is a requirement for participation.
4. The minimum number of participants in order to hold a state FFA Discussion Meet will be three (3). If fewer participants are participating, the meet will be canceled. The maximum number of participants is limited to 24 on a first come, first served basis. No more than two members per Chapter will be permitted to participate in the Discussion Meet in any given year.
5. Entry for the event must be included in a chapter's online convention registration due by March 15. A registration fee will be billed to the FFA Chapter.
6. The number of participants in any discussion group may vary from a minimum of three (3) to a maximum of eight (8) at the discretion of the contest chairperson.
7. When there are more than 8 participants, it will be necessary to have preliminary rounds. Participants will be drawn for assignment to a discussion group for the preliminary rounds.
8. If more than one discussion group (over 8 participants) is needed, a finals round will be necessary. It will be composed of the two (2) participants scoring highest in each of the discussion groups from the preliminary round.
9. Each discussion group, irrespective of number, will be limited to the following sequences and time allotment:
 - Introduce of participants and judges and announcement of the topic by the event moderator.
 - An opening 30 seconds (maximum) statement given in voluntary order by each participant.
 - A maximum of 30 minutes for the discussion group's discussion.
 - Contest chair will provide a visual warning at 20 minutes.
 - One minute of silence for preparation of closing statements.
 - A closing statement of 60 seconds (maximum) by each participant, also in voluntary order of speaking.
10. Participants may not bring notes or other information into the event. They will be provided blank paper for taking notes during the event.
11. The topic to be discussed will be drawn from a list of four previously specified topics by the contest chair in full view of the participants just prior to turning the panel over to the moderator. The same topic

is drawn for all preliminary round groups. One of the three remaining topics will be drawn for the finals round.

D. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS—(IMPORTANT)

1. Before the Discussion Meet:
 - Become familiar with the discussion questions posted by the Iowa FFA Association.
 - Learn as much as possible about the procedure for the FFA's Ag Discussion Meet.
 - Study material relating to the four topics. Sources: Library, newspapers, magazines, farm organization policies, county, state and agricultural publications and conversations with those having knowledge of the subject.
 - At the time of the orientation/instruction meeting:
 - Become acquainted with the other participants and moderator.
 - Ask questions to clarify any instructions that are not clear.
 - Listen carefully as the moderator outlines the procedure you will follow.
2. During the event:
 - Listen carefully as the moderator clarifies the topic and indicates opening statements are to begin. Stay seated to make opening statement.
 - Listen carefully to other participants as they make their opening statements.
 - Keep within time limit on your opening statement.
 - There should be a conflict of ideas, but not of personalities. Remember, this is a discussion, not a debate.
 - Be aware of audience, but not to the exclusion of the discussion group. (Talk loudly enough to be heard by all of the audience.)
 - Be prepared to ask questions, state facts and opinions, and urge others to be specific.
 - Participate whenever it will contribute to furthering the discussion without monopolizing the time. Be enthusiastic and, in general, use logic rather than emotion.
 - Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds for use in summary statement.
 - Use the one-minute time to organize your summary statement.
 - Stand and make your closing statement to the audience—use accepted speech techniques—stay within time limit.

E. AWARDS

Awards will be provided through the Iowa FFA Foundation if sponsorship is secured.

Participants' Names (Left of Moderator)				DISCUSSION MEET JUDGES SCORE FORM				Participants' Names (Right of Moderator)					
				Topic _____ _____ _____ _____ _____					Superior = 10 Excellent = 8 Good = 6 Fair = 4 Poor = 2				
				10 Points available per category - total of 60 points.									
				(1) DEFINITION OR TOPIC OR PROBLEM: Importance, causes, effects, relevancy or problem									
				(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: (Tie breaker No. 3) Does participant attempt to identify problem causes and remain on topic? Knowledge, extent, and accuracy of facts.									
				(3) PROBLEM-SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: (Tie breaker No. 5) Ability and judgment in seeking answers and solutions, planning and organizational understanding in implementing action programs.									
				(4) FFA IMPACT: Possible impact FFA could have on the resolution of the topic, effect of various points on FFA, etc. How is FFA affected by this issue?									
				(5) DELIVERY: (Tie breaker No. 4) Voice quality, loudness, clear enunciation, communicativeness, desirable sentence structure, and interesting choice of words.									
				(6) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: (Tie breaker No. 2) Listening, asking pertinent questions, airing all points of view, securing major agreement, minimizing major differences, courtesy to other participants.									
				TOTAL (Tie Breaker No. 1 - Total score for each participant is to be tabulated by Judge. Any tie scores are to be broken by Judge.)									
				RANK (Rank participants: Highest score = 1; second highest =2, etc.)									
Room Chairperson's Signature: _____ Judge's Signature: _____													