



MICHIGAN FFA

To view additional contest details, see the **Contest Clarification sheet** on michiganffa.org

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Career Development Event

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Agricultural Communications CDE is to provide individuals with practical communications skills necessary to pursue career opportunities in agricultural communications.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

For educational standards, please refer to the Agricultural Communications Handbook located at <https://www.ffa.org/participate/cdes/ag-communications/>

TEAM MAKE-UP/ELIGIBILITY

Number of students

Agriculture Communications teams must be comprised of 3 or 4 members. Teams will split into three practicums. A minimum of one member must be in each practicum area. From the list below three practicums will be selected each year and the information will be shared through the Michigan FFA website in February or March.

Writing

Design

Electronic Media

Broadcast/Video Media

On a team of four, the highest scores in each practicum will be counted. The

same individual's scores will be used for the writing mechanics quiz.

All participants must be members in good standing with the Michigan FFA Association and on the official roster.

Equipment

Students are to **bring their own** pens and pencils and headphones with a microphone (if broadcast/video media practicum is selected).

Students will be **provided** with the following:

- Loose-leafed paper
- Access to the web to look up spelling or style information (during practicum only)
- Dummy text
- Graphics/logos/photos
- Audio/video clips (if necessary based on practicums)
- Any other necessary content materials

Students will have access to computers provided at the contest location that will have the following software/applications available:

- Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator
- Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel
- Access to Word Press
- Access to Adobe Express
- Access to Canva
- Access to Camtasia
- Access to Spotify, Canva Video, iMovie, Moviemaker

Students are also welcome to bring their own device and have the flexibility to use the software/cloud platform(s) of their choice on their own device, provided they can demonstrate there are no pre-prepared templates or resources on the device or in the program. Computers will be reviewed before the start of the contest. Possible software/cloud platforms include, but are not limited to:

- Adobe Express
- Canva/Canva Video
- Camtasia
- Spotify, Canva Video, iMovie, Moviemaker
- Adobe Premier
- Rush
- Audition
- iMovie
- Movie Maker

- Anchor
- BounceCast
- PodCastle

The following items will **not** be allowed:

- Smartwatches
- Add-on editing software, such as Grammarly
- Graphics, photos, audio, or video files that were not supplied by the contest officials or created by the student within the contest time frame

OFFICIAL DRESS

Official dress is required for this contest.

Official dress for an FFA member includes:

1. An official FFA jacket zipped to the top
2. Black slacks and black socks/nylons or black skirt and black nylons
 - a. *Skirt should be a minimum of knee length*
 - b. *Slacks should be full length*
3. White collared blouse or white collared shirt
4. Official FFA tie or official FFA scarf
5. Black dress shoes with closed heel and toe

*Note: Medical or cultural adjustments to required official dress may be made with prior approval of contest/event chair. Also, appropriate personal protective equipment may be used with Official Dress. **Junior high FFA members are allowed to wear FFA jackets, but it is optional. Participants in junior high contests should not be judged differently for wearing or not wearing a jacket.***

CONTEST PERSONNEL

Judges

Judges will be selected by the contest superintendent.

Superintendent

The superintendent will monitor the contest room and assist the judges as they complete their scoring.

The superintendent will adequately prepare the judges before the event

competition.

PROCEDURE

Contest Procedures

All teams will meet in a central location for an orientation and press conference.

All team members will be given an orientation at the beginning of the press conference that will last no more than ten minutes.

After the orientation, students will go to the computer lab to take the writing mechanics quiz.

Following the quiz, the press conference will be held.

Each team member will receive a press packet with background information on the agricultural topic and is expected to use this information during the event.

An expert will speak on a timely agricultural or environmental topic for about 20 minutes.

Students will be provided with paper to take notes if they wish.

After the presentation, a maximum ten-minute question and answer period with the expert (speaker) will be held.

Writers will receive preference when asking questions.

Upon completion of the ten-minute question and answer session, all participants will be released to their practicum locations.

The following activities will **not** be allowed:

- Outside assistance during the contest from any person or company
- Text messages, phone calls, emails, or other communication with anyone outside the contest while the event is in progress
- Leaving the contest area for any other reason than a restroom break
- Judge identified plagiarism will be cause for disqualification.

WRITING MECHANICS QUIZ

50 points per individuals/150 points per team

Completed by all members.

Members will complete a quiz that covers basic elements important to the skill areas of:

- Journalistic writing
- Broadcasting
- Public relations
- Graphic design
- News
- Communications ethics
- Spelling
- AP Style Editing
- General agricultural communications knowledge
- Grammar and punctuation

PRACTICUMS

Each member will have **60 minutes** to complete their selected practicum.

Writing: Feature Story

Completed by writing member(s) only.

Writers will write a news story for FFA New Horizons magazine using the provided materials and press conference information. It should be written for the magazine's target audience, have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph), and include a headline.

Although the news writer will provide their copy to the magazine designer for placement in their layout, news writers must also submit a PDF of their story for judging. News stories should be 350-500 words in length.

WRITING: FEATURE STORY CRITERIA	
Lead/Focus	15 points
Accuracy of Information and Quotes	15 points
Clarity and Conciseness	10 points
Correct Style (AP)	10 points
Depth of Coverage	10 points
Header/Headline	10 points
Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, and Word Choice	10 points
Organization and Format	10 points

Accomplishment and Purpose	10 points
TOTAL	100 points

Design: Magazine Layout

Completed by design member(s) only.

Designers will use the press packet and information gathered in the press conference to develop a magazine layout for FFA New Horizons using the feature story text written by the news writer.

Various photos, graphics, and logos will be provided for use in these layouts.

Designers may use any page layout software available (i.e., Canva, Adobe Express, InDesign, etc.) if it appropriately tells the story and represents a design in FFA New Horizons. The magazine designer must use the text written by the feature writer.

Layouts will be saved and submitted in a PDF for judging.

DESIGN: MAGAZINE LAYOUT CRITERIA	
Overall Aesthetics of Design	20 points
Technical Skills Specific to Activity	20 points
Use of Graphic Design Principles	20 points
Neatness and Creativity	20 points
Choice and Placement/Cropping of Photo(s) and Graphic(s)	20 points
TOTAL	100 points

Electronic Media: Social Media Plan

Completed by electronic media member(s) only.

Social media planners will develop posts to accompany and promote their team's magazine story. The strategy should be for a one-week flight, involve at least three social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat, or others), and contain a minimum of seven posts.

Students may use any design software to create the posts (Canva, Adobe Express, Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign). These are all acceptable software for this practicum but are not the only software options available.

The plan must be submitted in PDF format, including screenshots, links and/or embedded images of each created post. Downloaded posts and videos may be included in the social media package.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA: SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN CRITERIA	
Purpose and Goals of Plan	15 points
Clarity and Conciseness	15 points
Scope of Plan	15 points
Posts Contained within Plan	15 points
Timeline for Plan	10 points
Organization and Format	15 points
Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, and Word Choice	15 points
TOTAL	100 points

Broadcast or Video Media: Broadcast Production

Broadcasters will receive video and/or audio clips, photos, and/or music to create a 60 to 90-second story for the FFA New Horizons website. This can be a television story, online video, radio story, podcast, or slide show. This broadcast product can be used to promote readership of the story created by their team, or it can supplement what is in the feature story – it is up to the team to decide the best use of these resources.

Students will need to provide their own headphones and software. Spotify for Podcasters, Adobe Premiere, Express, Rush, or Audition; Canva Video; iMovie; Movie Maker; Anchor; BounceCast; or PodCastle are all acceptable software for this practicum but are not the only available software options.

To be submitted for judging, broadcast productions must be exported to the student's device in a standard format, such as .mp4 or .mov.

BROADCAST OR VIDEO MEDIA: BROADCAST PRODUCTION CRITERIA	
Use of Provided Materials	15 points
Visual editing/continuity quality	15 points
Audio editing/continuity quality	15 points
Length	5 points
Promotional Value	20 points

Clear, Creative Storytelling	30 points
TOTAL	100 points

SCORING

Team scores will be an aggregate of all members' quizzes and individual practicum scores.

On a team of four, the highest scores in each practicum will be counted. The same individual's scores will be used for the writing mechanics quiz.

Determining Awards

The top 1/3 of teams and/or contestants will be awarded Gold or Silver ratings. Gold and Silver awards will be determined by the Michigan FFA Office.

Tie Breaker

Tiebreakers will be settled in the following order:

1. Combined individual practicum rank score
2. Combined writing mechanics quiz score

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

In addition to these rules, please review the following documents:

- General rules governing Michigan FFA Agriculture Skills CDEs
- Agricultural Communications CDE Practicums, for the current year
- 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 0844-20351-3
- 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 0-07-013688-2
- Telg, R. and T. Irani. Agricultural Communication in Action: A Hands-On Approach, 1st edition. Cengage/Delmar Publishing, ISBN 1111317143
- [National FFA Agricultural Communications CDE, past Writing Mechanics Exams](#)