

TEXAS FARM BUREAU
2026
DISCUSSION MEET
COMPETITORS' MANUAL
RULES & PROCEDURES



DISCUSSION MEET OVERVIEW

The Discussion Meet is the presentation of well-thought-out opinions and ideas for the purpose of problem-solving. Five agricultural-related topics are selected before the contest.

Contestants are provided with information about the topics once their entry form is submitted.

- The contest is conducted in panels of four, five, or six contestants
- One of five topics is chosen for each panel, and a 25-minute roundtable discussion ensues.
- The discussion is not a debate or a prepared speech, but rather an exchange of ideas and opinions in a moderated format

CONTEST OBJECTIVES

Agriculture's strength depends on producers' 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 in young people. By participating, individuals build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach a 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.

ELIGIBILITY

- The Texas Farm Bureau Discussion Meet is for Texas Farm Bureau members who are interested in and/or engaged in production agriculture.
- Competitors shall be Farm Bureau members in good standing with their county Farm Bureau between the ages of 18 and 35. They shall not have reached their 36th birthday on or before January 12 of the year in which they will compete at the national AFBF Annual Meeting.
- Individuals who have competed in a previous AFBF Discussion Meet are ineligible.
- Past and present AFBF YF&R committee members are ineligible.
- Collegiate Discussion Meet participants may not compete in the YF&R Discussion Meet within the same calendar year.
- Previous YF&R Discussion Meet participants are not eligible to compete in the Collegiate Discussion Meet contest.
- Competitors must be actively involved in agriculture to be eligible.
- Professional speakers are ineligible to compete. Professional speakers are those who have received a fee, royalty, or honorarium for speaking (i.e., paid speaking appearances or speaking engagements) within 24 months prior to this annual competition. This excludes reimbursement for travel or expenses attendant to the appearance.
- County and Texas Farm Bureau employees are not eligible; this also includes affiliated companies.

CONTEST FORMAT

1. All competition facilitators and competitors will meet in the pre-assigned competition room 15 minutes before the start of the competition to receive last-minute comments from the room chair. At this time, competitors will also draw for order for the placement of their name tent/chair. Competitors not present at the time of the drawing will select from the remaining positions. The competition facilitators are TFB-designated room chairs and moderators.
2. Competitors may not take prepared notes in any form to the competition table. After all competitors have been introduced, notes may be written on the paper provided. If a note is brought to the table and is noticed by the competition facilitator, there will be a disqualification called at the end of the round by the Discussion Meet chair, the TFB YF&R Committee chair, and/or the TFB coordinator.
3. The room chair will call the meeting to order, announce the topic to be discussed, and introduce the timekeeper and moderator. Any competitor not present at this time will be disqualified.
4. The moderator will introduce the competitors and re-announce the topic to be discussed. He/she will give each of the competitors, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a 30-second opening statement directed to the audience.
5. The timekeeper will flash a red timecard indicating when 30 seconds have elapsed and announce "time". Judges may subtract points at their discretion for competitors who abuse the time limit.
6. The moderator will then indicate the opportunity for open discussion, which will continue for a total of 25 minutes during the opening rounds and Elite Eight round (if applicable), and 30 minutes during the Final Four round. The discussion should be directed to the fellow competitors.
7. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when five minutes of open discussion time remain. If the discussion is lagging, the moderator may close the discussion at this time.
8. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when 25 minutes in the opening rounds and Elite Eight rounds, and 30 minutes in the Final Four round have elapsed with a red timecard. The moderator will call for open discussion to stop for one minute of quiet time, allowing the competitors to compose a closing statement.
9. The moderator will give each of the competitors, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a one-minute closing statement directed to the audience. The timekeeper will flash a red timecard and announce "time" when the one minute has elapsed.
10. The moderator will recognize the judges and request them to leave the room with the room chair to finalize the tabulation of their score sheets. Judges are not to confer with each other until the room chair has collected their tabulated score sheets.
11. The next round topic to be discussed will be announced (except for the Final Four question). The Final Four question will be announced at the official Final Four Announcement.
12. The moderator will thank the panel and ask the audience to recognize their efforts. He/she will then ask the competitors to share their agricultural background with the audi

COMPETITION

- All participants will compete in the first two rounds of the competition. Each of the first two rounds will include rooms with four to six competitors. If needed, the top 8 competitors, based on judges' rankings and scores from the first two rounds, will be put into an Elite Eight round.
- The Elite Eight round will have two rooms with four competitors each, with the top four competitors based on judges' rankings and scores from both rounds, moving on to the final round. The four finalists will compete in the Final Four round to determine the winner.
- The physical arrangements of the Discussion Meet rooms should provide for two tables at the front of the room facing each other and the audience. Half the participants should be seated at each table with the moderator on the side. Name cards identifying competitors should be easily visible. Cards should show only the competitor's name, not his or her county. Placement of name cards will be determined by a drawing for order 15 minutes before the start of the round. Competitors not present at the time of the drawing will select from the remaining positions.

ROOM LAYOUT

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      C  C
      C  C
    C      C  M
x Jxxxxxxxxx T xxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxJxxx
xxxxxxxxxJxx xxxxxxxxxxxxx
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M = Moderator

C = Contestant

J = Judge

T = Timer

X = Audience

COMPETITION FLOW

Generally speaking, the discussion should follow these steps:

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



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

COMPETITION FACILITATORS

Discussion Meet

Chair Duties

- 1) Familiarize yourself with the TFB Discussion Meet Manual.
- 2) Before orientations, determine the sequence of topics to be used for the competition.
- 3) Conduct the Discussion Meet Competitor Orientation session.
 - a) Make introductions.
 - b) Give a brief explanation of the Discussion Meet competition procedures.
 - c) Distribute room assignments and locations.
 - d) Allow time for questions.
 - e) Announce the first-round topic during orientation.
- 4) Settle all disputes during the competition.

Room Chair Duties

- 1) TFB Discussion Meet Manual.
- 2) Ensure all judges are present and report any changes to the moderator.
- 3) Meet in the assigned room with competitors, judges, moderator, and timekeeper to answer any questions they may have.
- 4) Facilitate the drawing for order and placement of name tents, fifteen minutes before the start of the competition.
- 5) Call the competition to order at the appointed time. Introduce the moderator and announce the topic to be discussed.
- 6) Following the discussion, introduce and thank the judges.
- 7) Escort the judges to the judges' tabulating room at the end of the competition and allow them to finish tabulating and ranking the participants. Assist with the final ranking if necessary.
- 8) Ensure each competitor has been ranked in all sections of the rating sheet.
- 9) Supervise tiebreakers. (See **Scoring**)

Moderator Duties

- 1) Familiarize yourself with the TFB Discussion Meet Manual.
- 2) Become acquainted with the competitors.
- 3) Open the competition with the following to ensure that all understand the format:
 - a) Welcome the audience.
 - b) Announce the topic to be discussed.
 - c) Ask the competitors to make a 30-second opening statement, in voluntary order.
 - d) After the last opening statement, say, "You have heard the opening statements. You may proceed with the discussion."
 - e) End the discussion at the timekeeper's signal.
 - f) Call for one minute of quiet time for the competitors to prepare their closing statements.
 - g) Ask the competitors to make a one-minute closing statement, in a voluntary order.
 - h) Thank the competitors.
 - i) Dismiss the room chair and judges for tabulation.
 - j) Announce the topic for the next round (with the exception of the Final Four question).
 - k) Allow the competitors to introduce themselves and share their agricultural background.
 - l) Announce the time and location(s) for the next round.

Note: The moderator should not comment on the topic or encourage discussion. This is the responsibility of the competitors. However, if the discussion seems to stall, the moderator should use his/her best judgment to end the discussion when the timekeeper indicates five minutes remain in open discussion.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

COMPETITION FACILITATORS

Timekeeper's Duties

- 1) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- 2) Go to your assigned competition room 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time.
- 3) Meet with the room chair, moderator, and competitors for last-minute questions.
- 4) Make sure to be seated in the front row near the center.
- 5) Indicate the following timing points to the moderator and competitors.

Competitors: Two Opening Rounds and Elite Eight

- The end of each 30-second opening statement (Time Elapsed – Red Card) and announce “time”
- Warning at 20 minutes of open discussion, holding the card up until all competitors have noted the warning (Five Minutes Remaining – Yellow Card)
- The end of 25 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) and announce “time”

Final Four

- The end of each 30-second opening statement (Time Elapsed – Red Card) and announce “time”
- Warning at 25 minutes of open discussion, holding the card up until all competitors have noted the warning (Five Minutes Remaining – Yellow Card)
- The end of 30 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) and announce “time”
- The end of each competitor's one-minute closing statement. (Time elapsed – red card)



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

COMPETITION FACILITATORS

Judges' Duties

- 1) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- 2) Review the discussion topics.
- 3) Review the Judges Sheet.
- 4) Attend the Judge Orientation session.
- 5) Go to your assigned room 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time.
- 6) Final Four judges are not permitted to attend any preceding rounds.
- 7) Meet with the room chair and moderator to receive a list of competitors in your room.
- 8) Remain seated until your room chair calls for you to leave the room to do the final tabulating of your score sheet.

- 9) Select winners. (See Scoring)

Judges should:

- List competitors on your Judges Sheet from left to right for ease in identification.
- Score competitors using the Judges Sheet.
- Total the scores.
- Determine and record competitor ranking and ensure there are no ties in raw score or rank.
- Sign your Judges Sheet.
- Provide feedback to each competitor.

Judges should not:

- Sit near a fellow judge.
- Judge by applause.
- Confer with each other until all scores are tabulated.

SCORING

The room chair will supervise the final tabulation by the judges. Judges will use the point system indicated on the Judges Sheet to assist in selecting the winners. Each judge will be instructed to total his/her Judges Sheet and rank the competitors.

Each judge is to break ties that occur on his/her own score sheet. The room chair will assist the judges in determining the final ranking of each round and the final competition.

- The winner will be determined by judges' ranking, and ties will be resolved before the judges are dismissed.
- ☐ Ties will be broken at the end of each round by an automatic procedure using Problem Solving and Implementation as the first tiebreaker, followed by Analysis of Topic and Cooperative Attitude.
- ☐ In the event of an unresolvable tie between all three categories, total points from the judge's sheets will be used to resolve the tie. The room chair will assist with this process.
- When possible, the above procedure should be conducted in a private room, with only the judges, the room chair, and the Discussion Meet chair present.

Opening Rounds

The contestants will compete in round one as they have in the past. Before the competition, competitors will be randomly placed in rooms based on a drawing of competitors' names. After round one, competitors' scores will be tallied, and they will be given new room assignments and will be randomly placed in rooms based on a drawing of competitors' names. Contestants will compete in the second round, and their scores will be tallied again.

Elite Eight (if needed)

The top 8 competitors will compete in the Elite Eight round and will be placed into room assignments in the same manner as rounds one and two. The top 4 contestants based on judges scores and rankings will advance to the Final Four where the final topic will be discussed.

2026 Discussion Meet Questions

1. Growth in rural areas can strain rural energy infrastructure. How can Farm Bureau work with stakeholders to advocate for proactive planning at the local, state and national levels that safeguards affordable, reliable energy access for farmers and ranchers as well as their rural neighbors while protecting farmland from unnecessary eminent domain?
2. Rural and large animal veterinary practices and professionals continue to decrease in numbers across the country. How can Farm Bureau help attract and retain rural and large animal veterinarians for member communities?
3. With the continued ripple effect of supply chain challenges related to meat processing, how can Farm Bureau leverage its grassroots network to reduce barriers and create pathways for the development of local USDA certified meat processing?
4. How can Farm Bureau and its young leaders leverage relationships with agricultural youth organizations to attract more young leaders to the Young Farmers & Ranchers program?
5. Increased public concern over healthy diets and chronic childhood disease has raised questions, as well as criticism, about modern agriculture and the food system. How can Farm Bureau effectively engage in this discussion and advocate for the critical science-based tools and research farmers need to fulfill their commitment to grow healthy, sustainable food, fiber and fuel?

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 the whole audience.

- ☐ Participate whenever your contribution will further the discussion. Do not monopolize the discussion.

- ☐ 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.

- ☐ 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.

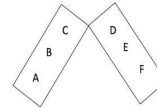
- ☐ Use the one minute of quiet time to organize your closing statement.

- ☐ Stand and make your closing statement to the audience. Use accepted speech techniques and stay within the time limit.

Discussion Meet Judges Sheet

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						
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						
(2) 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.						
(3) 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						
(4) DELIVERY: 15 pts. Interesting to listen to; animated; appropriate volume and tone; poised; uses gestures and eye contact; confident and clear						
(5) 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. TOTAL Any tie scores are to be broken by Judge. Total of 100 points possible.						
Rank contestants: 1 (highest) through (6 lowest). RANK						

Judges Signature: _____

Room Chair's Signature _____

Discussion Meet Scoring Rubric

(1) OPENING STATEMENT 10 pts.	Contestant... • 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. Award 0-3 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 4-6 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 7-10 points
(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 20 pts.	Contestant... • 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. Award 0-5 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 6-12 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 13-20 points

(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION 25 pts.	Contestant... • Instead of helping to guide the conversation to a solution, just datadrops. • 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. Award 0-6 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 7-16 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 17-25 points
(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: 15 pts.	Contestant... • 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. Award 0-4 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 5-9 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 10-15 points
(5) DELIVERY: 15 pts.	Contestant... • 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. Award 0-4 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 5-9 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 10-15 points
(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 pts.	Contestant... • Does not accurately summarize the conversation. • Uses memorized speech that doesn't reflect the content of the conversation. • Closing statement is forgettable. Award 0-4 points	Contestant... • Summarizes the conversation that happened. • Uses take-away points from the discussion to help develop a plan. • Closing statement is memorable. Award 5-9 points	Contestant... • 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. Award 10-15 points

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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REGISTRATION DEADLINE: **NOVEMBER 1, 2026**

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