



**SPEAK OUT
FOR AGRICULTURE**

Presented by Texas Farm Bureau
at the Heart O' Texas Fair & Rodeo

WHAT IS THE SPEAK OUT FOR AGRICULTURE (SOFA) CHALLENGE?

The Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) SOFA Challenge is a special contest that helps individuals and groups build the skills necessary to create action plans for the betterment of the agriculture industry, their organization, and/or their community. The contest itself involves a moderator and participants. The moderator's responsibility is to introduce the topic and the participants, start the discussion, keep it on track if necessary and stop the contest when time elapses. The participants discuss a pre-selected topic. The contestant's responsibility is to exchange ideas and information to solve the problem addressed in the topic and to develop action plans for the solution. The contestant should attempt to cooperatively shed further light on the problem/topic and tentatively retain a flexible position for building agreement on solutions and actions. A successful participant is a productive thinker rather than an emotional persuader, who is free to state beliefs and change positions whenever additional information and ideas make that a reasonable thing to do.

Finally, this is not a panel discussion where each participant, in turn, makes a presentation, with the moderator ending the session. Rather, it is an exercise in cooperative problem solving, with the questions, answers and statements coming from any person, at any time.

SOFA CHALLENGE PURPOSE

The strength of Texas Farm Bureau is largely in its ability to involve members in analyzing their agricultural problems and deciding on solutions which best fit their needs. Experience has proven the SOFA Challenge will provide an opportunity for greater participation on the part of young, active students interested in agriculture. 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 for the sake of better understanding solutions to problems.

SOFA CHALLENGE OBJECTIVES

As a leadership training and self-improvement event, the SOFA Challenge experience will:

1. Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
2. Develop a concise and convenient manner of speaking.
3. Further develop the ability to listen.
4. Help the participant overcome timidity or stage fright.
5. Assist the individual in learning to give and receive ideas in a positive and gainful manner.
6. Teach the value of compromise.
7. Develop leaders for effective problem-solving through group discussion.

ELIGIBILITY

- This event is open to students in grades 9-12.
- Students must be a dues paid Texas 4-H or Texas FFA member in good standing with their club/chapter.
- Students should be interested in agriculture, membership organization improvement and/or public policy.
- Past state SOFA Challenge winners are not eligible to compete in following years.
- All participants in the SOFA Challenge must attend a brief orientation meeting prior to the contest.
- Competitors should wear business casual attire (khakis/dress pants, polo shirts, button-up shirts, blouses, business dresses, etc.) Dress should NOT connect contestant to any youth organization such as 4-H, FFA, FCCLA, etc.

SPECIAL NEEDS REQUEST

To report any special needs or request special services for a student to compete in the SOFA Challenge, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide a detailed and specific request and explanation in writing. Requests should include written documentation from the school system verifying the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and need being requested. Written requests must be submitted to the SOFA Challenge Coordinator, Dr. Clarissa Darby (cdarby@txfb.org) at the time of registration.

REGISTRATION

- Registration will be completed through the HOT registration process
- Registration will open August 3rd
- Please use the following link for registration
<https://hot.fairwire.com/default.aspx>
- Deadline for entry is August 31st

CONTEST STRUCTURE

Rounds 1 & 2

- Must have at least 8 participants to make a contest
- Only the contestant, judges, and moderator are allowed in the competition room for Rounds 1 & 2
- Will be formatted after oral reasons. Participants will be asked a preselected question and students will have 90 seconds to answer the judges.
- Scores from Rounds 1 & 2 will be tallied and verified. The top sixteen contestants will advance to the Sweet Sixteen Round of the competition. They will be identified based on judges rankings and scores.
- Sweet Sixteen competitors who advance to the next round will be announced later that day.

Sweet Sixteen Round

- Four rooms of 4 contestants each
- The winner from each room will advance to the Final Four Round

Final Four Round

- Final round of SOFA
- Winner will be announced after tallying judges scores

SWEET SIXTEEN AND FINAL FOUR ROUND STRUCTURE

There are three main parts to the contest:

1) the opening statement, 2) the body of discussion and 3) the closing statement.

1. The opening statement is 30 seconds in length. The statement should be broad in scope, show relevancy and importance of the topic. Adding a personal connection is great!
2. The body of the discussion will typically last 20-25 minutes in length. During the body of the discussion, participants will background the topic, discuss why it is an issue, come up with solutions and develop actions that resolve the issue while being sure to add their involvement in their club/chapter and/or Texas Farm Bureau as a part of the solution.
3. The closing statement is given at the end of the discussion after participants are given one minute of quiet time to put their closing thoughts together. Closing statements should summarize the discussion and main solutions developed, then explain what actions will be taken to resolve the issue. The closing statement should not be "canned" or include pre-practiced statements and will be completed in one minute or less.

CONTEST FLOW

The discussion should follow these steps:

1. State the problem or need, including any personal connections you may have to the issue.
2. Explore, define, and understand the problem or need.
3. Identify causes or drivers of the problem or need.
4. Elaborate on viable solutions to the problem or need.
5. Evaluate and compare alternatives offered by the group.
6. Develop agreement or consensus (compromise) on what might be the best solution(s).
7. Arrive at ways to implement the solution into actions that resolve the problem or need.
8. Show leadership by summing up the high points of the discussion and the actions developed by the group.

CONTEST FORMAT- Sweet 16 and Final Four

1. All contest facilitators and contestants will meet outside the pre-assigned contest room prior to the start of the contest to receive last minute comments by the room chairman.
2. Parents, guardians, friends and eliminated contestants are allowed to observe the sweet 16 and final four meets.
3. Cell phones are to be put away and silenced.
4. No contestant notes are allowed at the table prior to the moderator starting the meet.
5. The room chairman will call the meeting to order, introduce the timekeeper and moderator and announce the topic to be discussed.
6. The moderator will announce when contestants can begin writing notes.
7. The moderator will introduce the contestants, in voluntary order. Contestants will have the opportunity to make a 30-second opening statement directed to the audience.
8. The timekeeper may stand or otherwise indicate when 30 seconds has elapsed. Judges may subtract points at their discretion for contestants who abuse the time limit.
9. The moderator will then indicate the opportunity for open discussion, which will continue for a total of 20 minutes in Sweet Sixteen Round and 25 minutes in the Final Four contest. The discussion should be directed to fellow contestants during open discussion.
10. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when five minutes of open discussion time remains in each contest. The moderator will indicate to contestants the time remaining by raising a table tent. He/She will ensure each contestant has seen the table tent before it is removed.
11. If the discussion is lagging, the moderator may close the discussion at this time.
12. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when 15 minutes in the Sweet Sixteen Round and 20 minutes in the Final Four contests have elapsed.
13. The moderator will call for open discussion to stop and for one minute of quiet time allowing the contestants to consider a closing statement.
14. The moderator will give each of the contestants, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a one-minute closing statement directed to the audience.
15. The moderator will thank the panel and ask the audience to recognize their efforts.
16. The moderator will recognize the judges and request them to leave the room with the room chairman to finalize the tabulation of their score sheets. Judges are not to confer with each other until the room chairman has collected their tabulated score sheets.
17. The open discussion time may be lengthened or shortened to fit the contest format.

CONTEST QUESTIONS

Rounds 1 & 2

1. As more people become concerned about healthy diets and childhood health issues, questions have been raised about modern farming practices. How can Farm Bureau help educate the public and support the science-based tools and research farmers use to produce safe, healthy, and sustainable food, fiber, and fuel?
2. As communities continue to grow, agricultural land is often converted to housing and commercial development. How can communities balance economic growth, housing needs, private property rights, and the long-term protection of farmland?
3. How can agriculture's water needs be balanced with the needs of growing communities, and what role should existing water rights play in those decisions?

Day 2 Rounds (Sweet 16 & Final Round)

1. How should government policies balance the need for a secure food supply with concerns about safety, environmental impacts, and pest control risks related to modern agricultural technologies? What role should farmers play in these discussions?
2. Agricultural technology can improve efficiency and productivity, but it also creates concerns about data privacy and ownership. What rights should farmers and ranchers have over the data collected from their operations, and how can those rights be protected?
3. Agriculture is affected by decisions made at the local, state, and national levels. What is the best way for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural organizations to build relationships with elected officials and influence policies that support agriculture?

CONTEST SCORING

1. Judges will total the points for each participant and provide an individual rank of participants to be combined with the other judges in their room.
2. In addition to point values and an overall ranking, participants will also be ranked in the individual categories of Problem Solving & Implementation, Analysis of Topic or Problem, and Cooperative Attitude to aid in the event of an overall tie.
3. No participants' scores or rankings may be tied across the score sheet in any of the above categories or in the overall points and rankings row.
4. Each participant's rank from all judges in the room will be added to determine the results. The lowest combined ranking is the highest placing individual.
5. For exact scoring breakdown, see rubrics.

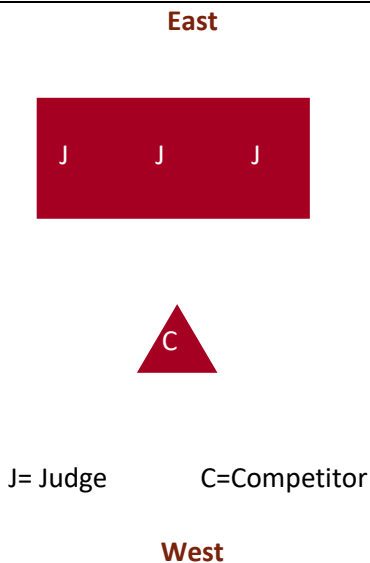
TIE BREAKERS

Should the combined ranking of any participants result in a tie, a series of tiebreakers is available.

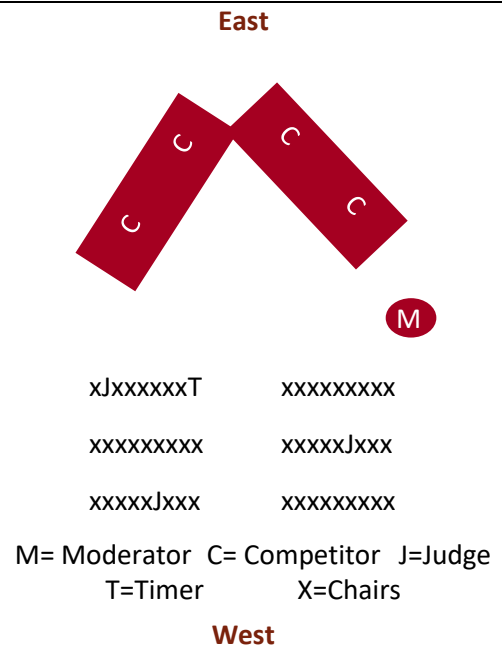
1. Tie Breaker #1: Individual judges' rankings of the Problem Solving & Implementation category for the tied participants will be combined. If one score is lower than the other, the lower score wins. If the score is tied again, move to the next tie breaker.
2. Tie Breaker #2: Individual judges' rankings of the Analysis of Topic category for the tied participants will be combined. If one score is lower than the other, the lower score wins. If the score is tied again, move to the next tie breaker.
3. Tie Breaker #3: Individual judges' rankings of the Cooperative Attitude category for the tied participants will be combined. If one score is lower than the other, the lower score wins. If the score is tied again, move to the next tie breaker.
4. Tie Breaker #4: Total points from the individual judges' score sheets will be combined for the tied participants. If one score is higher than the other, the higher score wins.

ROOM LAYOUT

Room Layout for Rounds 1 & 2



Room Layout for Sweet Sixteen and Final 4



HELPFUL HINTS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 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.

AWARD PACKAGES

Winner- Grand Champion

- Jacket
- \$2500 scholarship
- Banner

Runner-Up- Reserve Champion

- Jacket
- \$1500 scholarship
- Banner

Two Finalists

- Jacket
- \$750 scholarship

Top 16

- \$125 gift card

Participants will receive all scholarship information from HOT at the conclusion of the contest.

SOFA CHALLENGE SCHEDULE

Rounds 1 & 2- October 3rd

Sweet Sixteen- October 4th

Final Four- October 4th

Final Four Backdrop Photo – October 4th

OCTOBER 3rd

Registration: 8-9 am

Orientation: 9 am

Contest Begins: 10:30 am

OCTOBER 4th

Contest Begins: 9 am

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Registration & Showworks Questions:

Heart 'O Texas Fair & Rodeo:

Taylor Clark – taylor@hotfair.com

Lauren Todd – Lauren@hotfair.com

Contest Specific Questions:

Texas Farm Bureau:

youthactivities@txfb.org

Dr. Clarissa Darby – cdarby@txfb.org

Judges Score Sheet for SOFA Challenge Rounds 1 & 2

Room Name: _____ Round #: _____

Judge's Name: _____

- The First Column on the left represents each contestant.
Please fill in the first and last name of each competitor.
- To the right of each contestant, you will find the columns representing the point classifications and descriptions for each.
- Calculate the total point value for each contestant. **(Total score for each contestant will be tabulated by judge - Any ties to be broken by judge)**
- Provide overall rank using the last column on the right.
(1=First, 2=Second, etc.)

[illegible]

SOFA Challenge Scoring Rubric - Rounds 1 & 2

(1)-PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: (Total of 45 pts)	(2)-ANALYSIS OF TOPIC/PROBLEM: (Total of 30 pts)	(3)-DELIVERY: (Total of 15 pts) *Deduct 5 pts if over 90 second limit	(4)-THESIS STATEMENT: (Total of 10 pts)
Contestant... • Instead of helping to guide the conversation to a solution, just data drops. • 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 0-15 POINTS	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 Farm Bureau policy. AWARD 0-10 POINTS	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 0-5 POINTS	Contestant... • Does not accurately summarize the conversation. • Uses memorized speech that doesn't reflect the content of the conversation. • Closing statement is forgettable. AWARD 0-3 POINTS
Contestant... • Tries to help lead the conversation to address 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 16-30 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 Farm Bureau policy. AWARD 11-20 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 6-10 POINTS	Contestant... • Summarizes the conversation that happened. • Uses take-away points from the discussion to help develop a plan. • Closing statement is memorable. AWARD 4-7 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 31-45 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 Farm Bureau policy. AWARD 21-30 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 emits respect and professionalism. • Confidently conveys thoughts and viewpoints clearly. AWARD 11-15 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 8-10 POINTS

Judges Score Sheet for SOFA Challenge - Sweet 16 and Final Four Rounds

Room Name: _____ Round #: _____

Judge's Name: _____

	Contestant A Name:	Contestant B Name:	Contestant C Name:	Contestant D 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	☐	☐	☐	☐
(2) 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	☐	☐	☐	☐
(3) 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.	☐	☐	☐	☐
(4) 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.	☐	☐	☐	☐
(5) DELIVERY: 15 pts. Interesting to listen to; animated; appropriate volume and tone; poised; uses gestures and eye contact; confident and clear	☐	☐	☐	☐
(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 pts. Shows that they have listened to the conversation; develops relevant and realistic plans: memorable; inspires confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐
TOTAL Total score for each contestant is to be tabulated by judge. Any tie scores are to be broken by judge. Total of 100 points possible.				
RANK Rank Contestants: 1 (highest) through 4 (lowest).				

SOFA Challenge Scoring Rubric - Sweet 16 & Final Four

(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 Farm Bureau 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 Farm Bureau 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 Farm Bureau policy. AWARD 13-20 POINTS

(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: 25 pts.	Contestant... • Instead of helping to guide the conversation to a solution, just data drops. • 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 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... • 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

