



Alabama Farmers Federation State
Young Farmers Program

2024-2025 Discussion Meet

The 2024 Discussion Meet contest preliminary rounds will be held during the Alabama Farmers Federation Farm and Land Conference, August 1-3, in Montgomery, Alabama.

Discussion Meet Manual
ALABAMA FARMERS FEDERATION

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Awards

AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION CONVENTION

The Alabama Farmers Federation (AFF) Discussion Meet winner and spouse will be awarded transportation, lodging and registration costs necessary to compete in the American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers and Ranchers Discussion Meet competition and participating in the recognition and awards program at the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas Jan. 19-24, 2025.

Alabama Farmers Federation Final Four and Winner

AFF State Young Farmers Committee and The Alabama Farmers Agricultural Foundation will provide a Young Farmers Yeti Cooler 45 to the final Four Competitors. The final round winner will win, in addition to travel and registration to the AFBF National Convention, a 4-wheeler, valued at \$8,500, sponsored by First South Farm Credit.

NATIONAL COMPETITION PRIZES

To be announced by American Farm Bureau Federation fall, 2024.

Competition Objectives

Farm Bureau and the Alabama Farmers Federation's strength depends on its members' ability to analyze agricultural issues and decide on solutions that best meet their needs. The Discussion Meet is an activity designed to build these crucial skills in young, active farmers and ranchers. By participating, members build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach consensus and solve problems.

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

- Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
- Develop a concise and direct manner of speaking.
- Improve the ability to listen.
- Aid the participant in overcoming timidity or stage fright.
- Assist the individual in the practice of giving and receiving criticism in a helpful manner.
- Teach the value of compromise.
- Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

Background Information

- The Discussion Meet is a competition promoted by the Alabama Farmers Federation State Young Farmers Program Committee.
- The Discussion Meet is designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each committee member.
- The competitors will discuss pre-selected topics.
- The four fundamental bases of general discussion:
 - Cooperation
 - Constructive Criticism
 - Problem Solving
 - Communication
- The discussion should not be “conversation” or aimless talk, nor should the participant take the role of a persuasive speaker. **The participant should try to cooperatively shed light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position.**
- A successful participant is a productive thinker rather than an emotional persuader. Sometimes, it’s reasonable to change positions whenever new information and ideas are presented.
- 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.

Competitor Qualifications

- Competitors must be active members of the Alabama Farmers Federation to be eligible and between the ages of 18 and 35. They shall not have reached their 36th birthday by the date of the AFBF competition of the year in which they will compete at the AFBF Annual Meeting.
- Previous Alabama Farmers Federation State Discussion Meet winners are ineligible.
- Counties should screen competitors so that professional speakers do not 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, state and American Farm Bureau employees are not eligible. This also includes affiliated companies.
- Competitors may only compete in one state or national young farmer competitive event at once.

Helpful Hints for Competitors

- Study as much material as possible relating to the overall topic. Sources: internet, library, newspapers, magazines, AFF Policy Book, Farm Bureau policies, county, state and Federation publications and conversations with experts or knowledgeable people.
- Watch previous AFBF Final Four and other farm bureau discussion meets on YouTube
- The Discussion Meet should be a conflict of ideas, not personalities. **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 loud enough to be heard by the whole audience.
- Participate whenever your contribution will further the discussion. Do not monopolize the discussion.
- Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds for use in summary statement.
- Work to develop solutions to carry forward.
- 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.
- Stay within the time limit.

Competition Format

1. All competitive event facilitators and competitors will meet in the pre-assigned competition room 15 minutes prior to the start of the competition to receive last minute comments by the room chairman. The competition facilitators are chairmen, timekeepers and moderators, chosen by Alabama Farmers Federation State Young Farmer Committee.
2. Competitors may not take prepared notes of any form with them to the competition table. After all competitors have been seated, the room chair or moderator will indicate that notes may be written on the paper provided. At the point 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 Alabama Farmers Federation Committee Chair and/or the Alabama Farmers Federation YF Director.
3. Discussion Meet questions will not be provided at the competition table during state and national level rounds of competition.
4. The room chairman 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.
5. 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.
6. The timekeeper will flash a red timecard indicating when 30 seconds has elapsed. Judges may subtract points at their discretion for competitors who abuse the time limit.
7. The moderator will then indicate the opportunity for open discussion, which will continue for a total of 20 minutes in the preliminary competitions and 25 minutes in the Final Four competition. The discussion should be directed to the fellow competitors during open discussion.
8. The timekeeper will indicate to the competitors when five minutes of open discussion time remains in the round.
9. If the discussion is lagging, the moderator may close the discussion at this time.
10. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when time has elapsed with a red time card.
11. The moderator will call for open discussion to stop and for one minute of quiet time, allowing the competitors to consider a closing statement.
12. The moderator will give each of the competitors, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a one-minute closing statement directed to the audience.
13. 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.
14. **The next round topic to be discussed will be announced at the end of the round or at the Young Farmers Competitors luncheon, as directed by the YF Director.**
15. The moderator will thank the panel and ask the audience to recognize their efforts. The moderator may then request the competitors to each discuss their personal farming/ranching operations for the audience.

Competition Structure

Orientations

- Discussion Meet Orientation
 - a) Held prior to the 1st preliminary round. Time and location to be communicated before the start of the event.
 - b) All competitors are required to attend.
 - c) Roll call of competitors.
 - d) Release of Discussion Meet topic.
 - First Round topic will be announced during Orientation the morning before the 1st preliminary round.
 - Each subsequent round topic announced at close of prior round or at the competitor luncheon.
 - e) Competitors and room locations will be announced at Orientation and during the Competitor luncheon.

- Judges Orientation
 - a) Held prior to the 1st preliminary round.
 - b) Review judge's duties in along with any announcements.
 - c) Review timing sequences.
 - d) Allow time for questions.
 - e) Roll call of judges.
 - f) Distribute competition room locations.

- Volunteer Orientation (Moderator, Room Chair and Timekeeper)
 - a) Held before competition begins.
 - b) Roll call of all volunteers
 - c) Distribution of time schedule.
 - d) Distribution of timecards and scripts.
 - e) Distribute competition room locations and Round Robin bracket sheets.

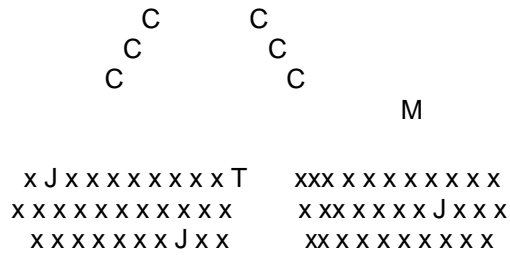
Competition

- All competitors will compete in the first two rounds of the competition, known as "preliminary rounds". These rounds will have four to six competitors and this competition will take place at the Alabama Farmers Federation "Farm and Land Expo" in August. The four finalists will compete in the "Final Four" round to determine the winner during the Alabama Farmers Federation Annual Business Meeting, held in December.

- Final Four Judges are not permitted to attend any rounds preceding those in which they judge.

- 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 in the center. Name cards identifying Competitors will be provided and should be visible to both the moderator and audience. Cards should show only the Competitor's name, not their county.

Room Layout



M = Moderator C = Competitor J = Judge T = Timer X = Audience

Flow of Competition

Generally speaking, the discussion should follow these steps:

1. State problem or need.
2. Explore, define and understand problem or need.
3. Identify causes of problem or need.
4. Elaborate all possible alternative solutions.
5. Evaluate and compare alternatives.
6. Test and project what appears to be the best solution.
7. Arrive at ways to implement the solution.

Facilitators Roles and Responsibilities

1. Room Chairman's/ Moderator's Duties

- a) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- b) Review Tally Sheet
- c) Ensure all judges are present and check their identities. Report any changes to the moderator.
- d) Become acquainted with competitors.
- e) Meet in the assigned room with competitors, judges, moderator and timekeeper to answer any questions they may have.
- f) Call the competition to order at the appointed time. Introduce the timekeeper and moderator. Announce topic to be discussed.
- g) Open the competition with the following to ensure that all understand the format:
 1. Welcome the audience.
 2. Introduce competitors from left to right by name.
 3. Announce topic to be discussed.
 4. Ask for competitors to make a 30-second opening statement in voluntary order.
 5. After the last opening statement, say "You have heard the opening statements. You may proceed with the discussion."
 6. End discussion at timekeeper's signal.
 7. Call for one-minute quiet time used to prepare closing statements.
 8. Call for one-minute closing statement, in a voluntary order.
 9. Thank competitors.
 10. Dismiss room chairman and judges for tabulation.
 11. Announce topic for next round.
 12. Give competitors the opportunity to introduce themselves and describe their farms.
 13. Announce time of next competition.
- h) Introduce and thank judges.
- i) Escort judges to the tabulating room at the end of the competition and allow them to finish tabulating and ranking the competitors. Assist judges in final ranking of competitors.
- j) Ensure each competitor has been ranked in all sections of the rating sheet.

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 be lagging, the moderator should use their best judgment to end the discussion early.

2. Timekeeper's Duties

- a) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- b) Go to assigned competition room 15 minutes prior to scheduled starting time.
- c) Meet with room chairman, moderator and competitors for last minute questions.
- d) Indicate following timing points to the moderator and competitors as follows:

Preliminary

1. The end of each 30 second opening statement. (Time elapsed - red card)
2. Warning at 15 minutes of open discussion. (Five minutes remaining - yellow card)
3. The end of 20 minutes of open discussion. (Time elapsed - red card)
4. The end of one-minute quiet time. (Time elapsed - red card)
5. The end of each competitor's one-minute closing statement. (Time elapsed - red card)

Final Four

1. The end of each 30-second opening statement. (Time elapsed - red card)
2. The end of 20 minutes of open discussion. (Five minutes remaining - yellow card)
3. The end of 25 minutes of open discussion. (Time elapsed - red card)
4. The end of one-minute quiet time. (Time elapsed - red card)
5. The end of each competitor's one-minute closing statement. (Time elapsed - red card)

5. Judge's Duties

- a) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- b) Review discussion topics.
- c) Review Rating Sheet.
- d) Attend the Discussion Meet Judges Orientation Session.
- e) Go to assigned room 10 minutes prior to scheduled starting time.
- f) Meet with room chairman/ moderator for last minute questions.
- g) Judges should:
 1. List competitors on Rating Sheet from left to right for ease in identification.
 2. Score competitors using the Rating Sheet.
 3. Total the scores.
 4. Determine and record ranking.
 5. Sign Rating Sheet.
- h) Judges should not:
 - a) Sit near a fellow judge.
 - b) Judge by applause.
 - c) Confer with each other until all scores are tabulated.
- i) Remain seated until your room chairman calls for you to leave the room to do the final tabulating of your score sheet.
- j) Select winners. (See **Scoring**)

Scoring

The room chairman will supervise the final tabulation by the judges. Judges will use the point system indicated on the score sheet to assist in selecting their winners. Each judge will be instructed to total his/her score sheet and rank the competitors. Each judge is to break ties that occur on his/her own score sheet. The room chairman will assist the judges in determining the final ranking of the competition.

1. The winner will be determined by judges' ranking, and ties will be resolved before the judges are dismissed.
 - a) Ties will be broken at the end of each of the preliminary competitions and the Final Four by an automatic procedure using Cooperative Attitude as the first tiebreaker, followed by Problem Solving and Delivery, respectfully. In the event of an irresolvable tie between all three categories, total points from judges' score sheets will be used to resolve the tie. The room chairman will assist with this process.
2. When possible, the above procedure should be conducted in a private room, with only the judges, room chairman and Discussion Meet chairman present.

Discussion Meet Scoring Rubric

<p>(1) OPENING STATEMENT 10 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 0-3 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 4-6 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 7-10 points</p>
<p>(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 20 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 0-5 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 6-12 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 13-20 points</p>

Discussion Meet Scoring Rubric (continued)

<p>(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION 25 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 0-6 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 7-16 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 17-25 points</p>
<p>(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>
<p>(5) DELIVERY: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>
<p>(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not accurately summarize the conversation. • Uses memorized speech that doesn’t reflect the content of the conversation. • Closing statement is forgettable. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizes the conversation that happened. • Uses take-away points from the discussion to help develop a plan. • Closing statement is memorable. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>

2024-2025 AFBF YF&R Discussion Meet Questions

1. Young farmers and ranchers are finding they need to diversify their farm portfolio. What are some ways that young farmers and ranchers can utilize diversification to explore new revenue sources? How can Farm Bureau support YF&R members as they strengthen their farm and ranch businesses?
2. Increases in the price of agricultural land make access and ownership of land one of the biggest hurdles for young farmers and ranchers looking to start or expand farms and ranches. How can young farmers and ranchers position themselves to react to competition for agricultural land?
3. The landscape of American agriculture and the picture of the “typical” American farm continues to change. Meanwhile, Farm Bureau will need to continue to recruit and retain members in order to be a vibrant and effective organization into the future. How can Farm Bureau continue to provide value and opportunity to welcome members from across the broad diversity of modern agriculture and American farmers and ranchers?
4. Succession planning is often a tough subject not only for individual farms and ranches but also within county Farm Bureaus. Some younger members may find it challenging to become involved in their county Farm Bureau beyond the YF&R committee. What are some ways that county Farm Bureaus can encourage involvement from young members and how can actively engaged young board members help their county Farm Bureaus plan for the future?
5. Farmers and ranchers are reliant on multiple energy sources to run equipment, heat livestock barns and power storage and maintenance facilities. How can Farm Bureau work with energy companies, local governments and rural communities to increase domestic energy production, minimize loss of agricultural land and protect private property rights?

These questions will be used for the 2024 Alabama Farmers Federation Discussion Meet held during the 2024 AFF Farm and Land Expo, the 2024 Collegiate Discussion Meet and AFBF National Convention in San Antonio, Texas, in January 2025.

Study Materials and Resources

General Sources

- [Alabama Farmers Federation](#)
 - [Neighbors Magazine](#)
 - [Alfa Cultivator](#)
- [American Farm Bureau Federation](#)

Government Entities and Organizations

- Government:
 - [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)
 - [National Institute of Food and Agriculture \(NIFA\)/](#)
 - [Alabama Cooperative Extension System](#)
 - [U.S. Department of Labor](#)
 - [U.S. Department of Education](#)
 - [Environmental Protection Agency – Agriculture](#)
 - [Alabama Department of Ag and Industries](#)
 - [U.S. Department of State- Climate and Environment](#)
 - [U.S. Forest Service](#)
- State and Federal Legislatures
 - [United States Congress](#)
 - [The Alabama Legislature](#)
- Others
 - [American Farmland Trust](#)
 - [American Lands Council](#)
 - [Animal Agriculture Alliance](#)
 - [Beginning Farmers](#)
 - [National Agriculture in the Classroom](#)
 - [Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education](#)
 - [U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance \(USFRA\)](#)