

AFBF Discussion Meet Manual



DISCUSSION MEET MANUAL
AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION
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Competition Objectives

Farm Bureau'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 American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers & Ranchers 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

- The AFBF Discussion Meet is for a winner or an alternate winner of a State Farm Bureau Discussion Meet competition. The competitors must come from a state with a recognized YF&R program.
- Competitors shall be a Farm Bureau member in good standing with their county Farm Bureau between the ages of 18 and 35. They shall not have reached their 36th birthday by January 31st of the year in which they will compete at the 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.
- Competitors must be actively involved in agriculture to be eligible.
- States 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.

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.
- 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.
- 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 fifteen minutes prior to the start of the competition to receive last minute comments by the room chairman. The competition facilitators are AFBF designated room chairmen and AFBF designated moderators.
2. Competitors may not take prepared notes of any form with them to the competition table. After all competitors have been introduced, 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 AFBF Committee Chair and/or the AFBF Coordinator.
3. Discussion Meet questions will not be provided at the competition table during 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 time card 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 25 minutes in the Round Robins and Sweet Sixteen competitions and 30 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 moderator when five minutes of open discussion time remains in the Round Robins, Sweet Sixteen and in the Final Four. The moderator will indicate to competitors the time remaining by raising a yellow table tent.
9. If the discussion is lagging, the moderator may close the discussion at this time.
10. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when 25 min. in the Round Robin and Sweet Sixteen competitions and 30 min. in the Final Four competition have 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.
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 Round Robin.
 - b) All competitors are required to attend.
 - c) Roll call of competitors.
 - d) Release of Discussion Meet topic time schedule.
 - First Round topic will be announced during the Competitor Orientation and again in competition room by Room Chair 10 minutes prior to start of First Round
 - Each subsequent round topic announced at close of prior round
 - e) Distribute room locations.

- Judges' Orientation
 - a) Held prior to the 1st Round Robin.
 - b) Review judge's duties in **Roles and Responsibilities of Competition Facilitators** 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 (Timekeeper)
 - a) Held prior to the first round robin.
 - b) Roll call of timekeepers.
 - c) Distribution of time schedule.
 - d) Distribution of time cards.
 - e) Distribute competition room locations and Round Robin bracket sheets.

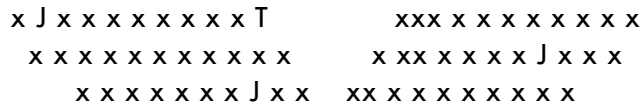
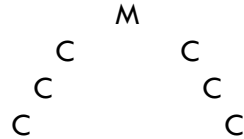
Competition

- All competitors will compete in the first two rounds of the competition, known as "Round Robins." Round Robins will have four to six competitors. The top sixteen competitors from the Round Robins will be put into a "Sweet Sixteen" round. The Sweet Sixteen rounds will have four groups of four competitors from which the winner of each group will be selected to move on to the final round. The four finalists will compete in the "Final Four" round to determine the winner.

- 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 should be visible to both the moderator and audience. Cards should show only the Competitor's name, not their state.

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. Duties of the Competition Chairman

- a) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- b) Conduct Discussion Meet Orientation Session at the Annual Meeting for Competitors and judges.
 1. Make introductions.
 2. Give brief explanation of Discussion Meet competition procedures.
 3. Distribute room locations.
 4. Allow time for questions.
 5. Draw and announce topics to determine sequence to be used for the competition.
 6. Announce First Round topic during Orientation.
- c) Settle any and all disputes during the competition.

2. Room Chairman's Duties

- a) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- b) Review Tally Sheet (**Appendix A & B**).
- c) Ensure all judges are present and check their identities. Report any changes to the moderator.
- d) Meet in the assigned room with competitors, judges, moderator and timekeeper to answer any questions they may have.
- e) Call the competition to order at the appointed time. Introduce the timekeeper and moderator. Announce topic to be discussed.
- f) Introduce and thank judges.
- g) Escort judges to the judges 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.
- h) Ensure each competitor has been ranked in all sections of the rating sheet.
- i) Supervise tiebreakers (See **Scoring**).

3. Moderator's Duties

- a) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- b) Become acquainted with competitors.
- c) 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. When alerted by timekeeper, set up five minute yellow table tent and ensure each competitor has seen it before taking it down.
 7. End discussion at timekeeper's signal.
 8. Call for one-minute quiet time used to prepare closing statements.
 9. Call for one-minute closing statement, in a voluntary order.
 10. Thank competitors.
 11. Dismiss room chairman and judges for tabulation.
 12. Announce topic for next round.
 13. Give competitors the opportunity to introduce themselves and describe their operations.
 14. Announce time of next competition.

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

4. Timekeeper's Duties

- a) Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Meet Manual.
- b) Go to assigned Competition room fifteen 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:

Round Robins and Sweet Sixteen

1. The end of each 30 second opening statement. (Time elapsed - red card)
2. Warning at 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)

Final Four

1. The end of each 30-second opening statement. (Time elapsed - red card)
2. The end of 25 minutes of open discussion. (Five minutes remaining - yellow card)
3. The end of 30 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. Judges' 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 ten minutes prior to scheduled starting time.
- f) Meet with room chairman and 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. **Note: There are 700 points available: 200 points for Cooperative Attitude and 100 points each for the other categories.**
 5. Determine and record ranking.
 6. 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 Round Robin competitions, the Sweet Sixteen and the Final Four by an automatic procedure using Cooperative Attitude as the first tiebreaker, followed by Problem Solving and Delivery, respectfully. (See **Appendix A**). In the event of an unresolvable 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.

Round Robins

Sample rankings for the two Round Robin competitions follow. (see **Appendix A & B**).

Sweet Sixteen

- a) After competing in two Round Robin competitions, each competitor will be ranked according to his/her scores. From this final determination, the Sweet Sixteen competitors will be chosen.
- b) These competitors will then be broken down into four groups of four competitors. This will be done using the following bracketing process:

Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
1	2	3	4
8	7	6	5
9	10	11	12
16	15	14	13

- c) After the bracketing process is complete, the scores from the previous Round Robins will be discarded and the competitors will compete in the Sweet Sixteen round using a third topic. Competitors will be judged in the same manner using the same process as the Round Robin competitions.
- d) The winner from each room will advance to the Final Four where a fourth and final topic will be discussed.

Discussion Meet Rating Sheet

Participants' Names
(Left of Moderator)

Participants' Names
(Right of Moderator)

			Total of 700 points possible.	Superior - 100 Excellent - 80 Good - 60 Fair - 40 Poor - 20			
□	□	□	(1) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: (200 points) Listening, asking pertinent questions, airing all points of view, securing major agreement, minimizing major differences. Courtesy to other participants, encourage discussion from other participants.		□	□	□
□	□	□	(2) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: (100 points) Ability and judgement in seeking answers and solutions, planning and organizational understanding including Farm Bureau in implementing action programs.		□	□	□
□	□	□	(3) DELIVERY: (100 points) Voice quality, loudness, clear enunciation, communication skills, desirable sentence structure and interesting choice of words.		□	□	□
□	□	□	(4) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: (100 points) Does contestant attempt to identify problem causes and remain on topic? Knowledge, extent and accuracy of facts.		□	□	□
□	□	□	(5) OPENING STATEMENT: (100 points) Definition of problem, importance, causes, effects, relevancy of problem.		□	□	□
□	□	□	(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: (100 points) Ability to summarize discussion and formulate direction for the future.		□	□	□
			Total score for each contestant is to be tabulated by Judge.				
			← TOTAL Any tie scores are to be broken by Judge.	TOTAL →			
			← RANK Rank contestants: 1(highest) – 4(lowest)	RANK →			

Signed: _____
Room Chairman

Signed: _____
Judge

