



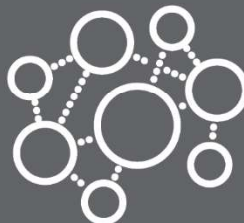
# COLLEGIATE

## Discussion Meet

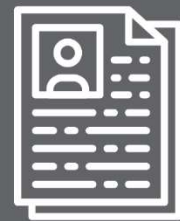
# 2025 COMPETITION GUIDE



**ADVOCATE**  
for agriculture



**NETWORK**  
with Farm Bureau



**BUILD**  
your resumé

## What is a Discussion Meet?

A Discussion Meet is a friendly, fast-paced group conversation — where ag students tackle real-world topics, share ideas, and work toward solutions together. It's designed to feel like a committee or brainstorming session — not a debate, not a presentation, and definitely not a lecture.

The **Collegiate Discussion Meet** is part of Michigan Farm Bureau's Young Farmer program and is held each fall alongside high school and Young Farmer competitions.

Here's what makes it unique:

- You'll **talk through a key ag issue** and explore possible solutions.
- It's **all about collaboration** — listening, responding, asking good questions, and building on each other's ideas.
- You don't need to "win" the conversation — your goal is to **help move the group forward** toward realistic solutions.

Successful participants are flexible thinkers, good listeners, and willing to learn from others — not just persuasive speakers with a single point to prove.

A strong discussion follows these steps:

1. State the problem.
2. Dig into what's causing it.
3. Explore multiple solutions.
4. Weigh the pros and cons.
5. Pick the best option — and figure out how to make it happen.

## Purpose of a Discussion Meet

This experience helps you grow as an ag communicator and leader — which is exactly what Farm Bureau is all about.

Why you should give it a shot:

- Build your discussion and problem-solving skills.
- Practice public speaking in a real (but low-pressure) setting.
- Get better at thinking on your feet and adapting to new ideas.
- Learn how to work with people who have different views.
- Gain tools you'll use in future interviews, leadership roles, and careers in ag.

## Parts of a Discussion Meet

Each competition has three parts:

### A. Opening Statement – 30 seconds

Kick off the convo. Keep it broad and relevant. Set the tone for a productive discussion.

### B. Body of the Discussion – 20 minutes

This is where the real conversation happens. Talk through:

- Why the topic matters
- What's causing the issue
- What can be done about it
- How Farm Bureau fits in

You can bring **one page of prepared notes** — front side only.

### C. Closing Statement – 1 minute

Wrap it up. You'll get a quiet minute to gather your thoughts. Your closing should reflect what was said during the discussion — not something pre-written or rehearsed.

## Who Can Compete?

### To be eligible:

- You must be a member of a Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter recognized by Michigan Farm Bureau.
- You must be between the ages of 18–35 as of February 28, 2026.
- You must be an undergraduate student at the time of the state competition.
- You must not be enrolled in a graduate-level program.
- You must have a genuine interest in agriculture.

### Additional rules:

- You may only compete in one national Young Farmer contest per year.
- If you win both the Collegiate and Young Farmer state Discussion Meet, you must choose which to compete in at the national level. The runner-up will represent Michigan in the other.

- Past state winners of the Collegiate or Young Farmer Discussion Meet are not eligible to compete again.
- State Young Farmer Committee members, MFB State Board Directors, and their spouses or spousal equivalents are not eligible.
- Employees of county, state, or American Farm Bureaus (and their affiliates) are not eligible to compete.
- Professional speakers — those who have received compensation (beyond expense reimbursement) for speaking within the past 24 months — are not eligible.

## When and Where is the State Competition Held?

The Collegiate State Discussion Meet is held in conjunction with the High School State Discussion Meet during the MFB State Annual Meeting on Wednesday, December 3, 2026, at the DeVos Center Place in Grand Rapids, MI.

Schedule:

- 7:45 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. Registration
- 8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. Competitor & Judge Briefing
- 9:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. Round One
- 10:00 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. Round Two
- 11:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Finalist Announcement
- 11:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Final Round
- 12:45 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. SAM Lunch Banquet (Winner Announcement)

## Who Can Attend?

- **Competitors:**
  - Each chapter can enter up to five students.
  - Every competitor receives one additional lunch ticket for a guest.
- **Guests** can be an advisor, family member, or friend.
- **Additional spectators/supporters** are welcome to attend. They will need to enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant and plan to return to the banquet hall by 1:30 p.m. to watch the announcement. Additional banquet lunch tickets are not available for purchase.

***All Competitors and guests must register by completing [this form](https://wkf.ms/3J58Llo) or by copying and pasting this link: <https://wkf.ms/3J58Llo>.***

## Chapter-Level Engagement: Make It Happen Locally

Your chapter doesn't have to wait for the state contest — start the conversation right on campus!

- Host a mini-Discussion Meet or an informal info session to get members engaged.
- It's a great way to prepare potential competitors and build awareness of the program.
- Bonus: Chapters that hold and verify a Discussion Meet-related event will receive a \$100 cash prize to use for:
  - Event supplies
  - Travel prep or materials for state competitors
  - Or anything else that supports your Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter
  - Funding is sent directly to the chapter — up to your Collegiate Advisor to decide how it's used!

## State-Level Prizes: Compete, Win, Represent Michigan

Top competitors walk away with more than bragging rights — check out these prizes:

- Third Place – \$200 cash + award plaque
- Runner-Up – \$300 cash + award plaque
- State Winner –
  - \$500 cash
  - Collegiate Farm Bureau polo
  - DTE/MFB logo'd carry-on suitcase
  - Award Plaque
  - All-expenses-paid trip for you + one guest to the 2026 American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmer and Rancher Conference, March 13-17 in Portland, Oregon
  - At the conference, you'll represent Michigan at the national AFBF Collegiate Discussion Meet!

*Prizes generously provided by DTE Energy and the Michigan Foundation for Agriculture.*

## Scoring: How It's Judged

Judges score you in six areas. Here's what they're looking for:

1. **Opening Statement (10 pts)**
  - Clear and engaging intro
  - Shows why the topic matters
2. **Topic Analysis (20 pts)**
  - Strong understanding of the issue
  - Builds off others' points
  - Asks good questions
  - Ties in Farm Bureau policy
3. **Problem Solving (25 pts)**
  - Leads the group toward real solutions
  - Has an action plan
  - Shows how FB plays a role
4. **Cooperative Attitude (15 pts)**
  - Listens actively
  - Builds on group ideas
  - Respectful and open-minded
5. **Delivery (15 pts)**
  - Confident and natural
  - Good eye contact, gestures, and voice
  - Easy to follow
6. **Closing Statement (15 pts)**
  - Recaps the key points from the discussion
  - Shares a realistic path forward
  - Inspiring and memorable

**Pro tip:** It's a conversation — not a debate or speech. Focus on *collaborating*, not convincing.

## Tips for Success: Know Before Competing

Set yourself up for a strong performance with these simple strategies:

- **Review the scorecard** to understand exactly what judges are looking for.
- **Learn the format** — know how the opening, discussion, and closing rounds flow.
- **Study the topics.** The more you know, the more you can contribute.
- **Not familiar with a topic?**
  - Talk to a farmer, industry expert, or local Farm Bureau member who can share real-world insights or examples.
  - Read reliable news sources or listen to ag-focused podcasts to build context and perspective.
- **Prepare your notes.** Bring one page (front side only) with key facts, examples, and possible solutions.
- **Practice casually.** Talk through the topic with family or friends — in the truck, at lunch, or around the barn. It doesn't have to feel like a formal debate; the more you talk it out, the better your ideas will flow during competition.

Keep these reminders in mind while you're competing:

- **Listen closely** to other participants' opening statements — they set the tone for the discussion.
- **Stick to your time limits** for both opening and closing statements.
- **Remember: It's a discussion, not a debate.** Be respectful, collaborative, and open-minded.
- **Ask thoughtful questions** and make clear, purposeful points that move the conversation forward.
- **Be cooperative.** You can disagree — just do it respectfully and explain your reasoning.
- **Speak up when it adds value,** but don't dominate the time.
- **Stay logical.** Passion matters, but strong ideas and solutions matter more.
- **Take notes** during the discussion to help you craft a strong closing.
- **Use the one-minute prep time** before closing wisely — organize your final thoughts.
- **Close confidently.** Stand tall, use strong speech techniques, and leave a lasting impression.

All competitors will participate in Opening Round One and Opening Round Two. The top six combined scores from the opening rounds will move on to the Final Round. All questions are based on questions provided by the American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmer and Rancher National Committee.

**Opening Round One:** Farmers and ranchers are at the forefront of environmental stewardship. From soil health to local ecosystems, producers are concerned about how to be both environmentally and financially sustainable. How can farmers and ranchers effectively advance environmental stewardship while balancing the needs of their farms?

**Opening Round Two:** Farm Bureau offers a wide range of member benefits, including discounts on ag-related products and services. What creative strategies can be used to help more members — especially young farmers — understand and take full advantage of these benefits? How might these partnerships be promoted locally to support farm businesses and build stronger connections between members and industry partners?

**Final Round:** What are some challenges facing farmers or agriculture in your community? Suppose your youth organization wanted to make a difference or create change. What strategies could you use to raise awareness, organize support, and connect with local, state, or national leaders?

Competitors are encouraged to review the following resources as they prepare:

- Michigan Farm Bureau: <https://new.michfb.com>
- American Farm Bureau Federation: [www.fb.org](http://www.fb.org)
- Past Discussion Meet Competitions: <https://bit.ly/MFBDMVideos>
- Michigan Farm News: [www.michiganfarmnews.com](http://www.michiganfarmnews.com)
- United States Department of Agriculture: <https://www.usda.gov/>
- Michigan Department of Agriculture: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/>
- Michigan State University Extension: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/>



**ROUND:** One Two Final

**ROOM:** \_\_\_\_\_

**JUDGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TOPIC:** Stewardship

Member Benefits

Advocacy

	COMPETITORS, LISTED LEFT TO RIGHT							
<b>COMPETITOR'S NAME:</b>								
<b>(1) OPENING STATEMENT: (10 points)</b> Defines problem; conveys importance and relevance; sets the stage for an interesting discussion; clear point of view; uses time wisely.								
<b>(2) ANALYSIS OR TOPIC OR PROBLEM: (20 points)</b> 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.								
<b>(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: (25 points)</b> Leader in guiding the conversation to specific and relevant solutions; has achievable plan of action; clearly defines how FB is part of the action plan.								
<b>(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: (15 points)</b> 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.								
<b>(5) DELIVERY: (15 points)</b> Interesting to listen to; animated; appropriate volume and tone; poised; uses gestures and eye contact; confident and clear.								
<b>(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: (15 points)</b> Shows that they have listened to the conversation; develops relevant and realistic plans; memorable; inspires confidence.								
<i>Total score for each competitor is to be tabulated by the judge. Any tie scores are to be broken by the judge.</i> <b>Total of 100 points possible.</b>	TOTAL							
<i>Rank competitors: highest score = 1; second highest = 2, etc.</i>	RANK							

**JUDGE'S NAME (PLEASE PRINT):** \_\_\_\_\_

(1) OPENING STATEMENT 10 PTS		
<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly defines the problem.</li> <li>Conveys the importance and relevancy of the problem.</li> <li>Makes an "open" statement that leaves room for further conversation.</li> <li>Sets the stage for an interesting conversation with a very clear point of view.</li> <li>Uses their time very wisely and stays in the given time.</li> </ul> <b>Award 7-10 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defines the problem.</li> <li>Sets the problem in context.</li> <li>Makes a statement that leaves some room for further conversation but could be more open.</li> <li>Has a general point of view.</li> <li>Stays in the given time.</li> </ul> <b>Award 4-6 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not address the problem – is off topic.</li> <li>Does not address the importance or relevancy of the problem.</li> <li>Makes a "closed" statement that does not allow room for further conversation.</li> <li>Does not seem to have a point of view.</li> <li>Does not finish in the allotted time.</li> </ul> <b>Award 0-3 points</b>
(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 20 PTS		
<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies and addresses the causes of the problem and remains on topic.</li> <li>Has thoroughly researched the topic.</li> <li>Confidently builds on the ideas of others to contribute to a coherent analysis</li> <li>Asks relevant questions to vet the ideas of others.</li> <li>Shares relevant personal examples that add to the conversation.</li> <li>Helps ensure thorough analysis before moving to problem solving.</li> <li>Is aware of current and relevant FB policy.</li> </ul> <b>Award 13-20 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies the causes of the problem, does not directly address them, but remains on topic.</li> <li>Has done research.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Asks some questions to help vet the ideas of others.</li> <li>Shares relevant personal examples – maybe slightly off topic.</li> <li>Demonstrates knowledge of this problem but not why it exists.</li> <li>Is aware of current FB policy.</li> </ul> <b>Award 6-12 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not address the problem or does not remain on topic/wanders/distracts.</li> <li>Hasn't done much research or lacks quality facts.</li> <li>Doesn't build on other's ideas, only pushes their own.</li> <li>Doesn't ask questions to clarify other's ideas.</li> <li>Doesn't share relevant personal examples.</li> <li>Misinterprets the issue or does not display competency and therefore does not help with problem solving.</li> <li>Is unaware of FB policy.</li> </ul> <b>Award 0-5 points</b>
(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION 25 PTS		
<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is a leader in guiding the group and the conversation to specific and relevant solutions.</li> <li>Generates ideas that contribute to an achievable and specific plan of action to resolve the issue.</li> <li>Clearly defines how Farm Bureau is part of the action plan.</li> </ul> <b>Award 17-25 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tries to help lead the conversation to address a solution but misses opportunities to collaborate with the group.</li> <li>Has a plan but is missing specificity.</li> <li>Farm Bureau is mentioned but is not a crucial piece of the solution.</li> </ul> <b>Award 7-16 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instead of helping to guide the conversation to a solution, just data drops.</li> <li>Offers no plan for a solution or a generic plan like "tell our story" or "educate consumers."</li> <li>Does not identify how Farm Bureau is involved.</li> </ul> <b>Award 0-6 points</b>

(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: 15 PTS		
<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is an active listener and comments on references or specific ideas mentioned by others tying them back to the bigger conversation?</li> <li>Clearly shows grace, courtesy and respect to other participants.</li> <li>Shows integrity especially when they do not agree with others.</li> </ul> <b>Award 10-15 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitor listens to others but does not comment specifically on their ideas or tie ideas back to the bigger conversation.</li> <li>Is respectful of others.</li> <li>Is not rude or defensive when they disagree with others.</li> </ul> <b>Award 5-9 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not listen to others – just waits for their turn to talk.</li> <li>Cuts others off or simply repeats what others have already said.</li> <li>Is rude, defensive or combative when they do not agree with others.</li> </ul> <b>Award 0-4 points</b>
(5) DELIVERY: 15 PTS		
<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is interesting to listen to, animated and lively, speaks at an appropriate volume and with a professional and courteous tone.</li> <li>Is poised and uses gestures and eye contact that emit respect and professionalism.</li> <li>Confidently conveys thoughts and viewpoints clearly.</li> </ul> <b>Award 10-15 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaks at an appropriate volume and pace with appropriate tone.</li> <li>Uses effective posture, gestures and eye contact.</li> <li>Conveys thoughts and viewpoints but could seem overly rehearsed.</li> </ul> <b>Award 5-9 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is boring/ mumbling/ monotoned.</li> <li>Slouches, does not use appropriate gestures or have eye contact</li> <li>Ideas are difficult to understand, or they are not confident in speaking.</li> </ul> <b>Award 0-4 points</b>
(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 PTS		
<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows that they have actively listened to the conversation in their summary.</li> <li>Uses take away points from the discussion to develop relevant, realistic and specific action items and plans for the future.</li> <li>Closing statement is memorable and inspires confidence in their ability to work toward a solution.</li> </ul> <b>Award 10-15 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarizes the conversation that happened.</li> <li>Uses take-away points from the discussion to help develop a plan.</li> <li>Closing statement is memorable.</li> </ul> <b>Award 5-9 points</b>	<b>Competitor...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not accurately summarize the conversation.</li> <li>Uses memorized speech that doesn't reflect the content of the conversation.</li> <li>Closing statement is forgettable.</li> </ul> <b>Award 0-4 points</b>

