

American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers & Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture Award

Rules for 2026 AFBF Annual Convention Competition

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Background

The Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Excellence in Agriculture Award competition is designed as an opportunity for young farmers and ranchers to earn recognition, while actively contributing and growing through their involvement in Farm Bureau and agriculture. Participants will be judged on their involvement in agriculture, leadership ability and participation/involvement in Farm Bureau and other organizations (i.e., civic, service and community). **The ideal candidate(s) for the Excellence in Agriculture Award is an individual or couple who does not have the majority of their gross income subject to normal production risk.** It is recommended that the state Farm Bureaus provide, as part of the state recognition and award, an expense-paid trip to the 2026 AFBF Convention held in Anaheim, California, Jan. 9-14, 2026. Appropriate recognition will be given to all national competitors in attendance at the AFBF Convention. The AFBF YF&R Committee and the AFBF Leadership, Education & Engagement Department will coordinate the national program.

Information about the Excellence in Agriculture applicant is requested on the entry form. ALL INFORMATION IS HANDLED IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

Eligibility

- An applicant can be either an individual or a couple that is married or has similar legal rights under the law applicable to the state Farm Bureau organization. An applicant may choose to apply individually, rather than as a couple.
- The applicant must be a Farm Bureau member in good standing with their county Farm Bureau.
- The applicant(s) must be at least 18 years old at the time the national application is submitted and must be no more than 35 years of age as of January 31, 2026.
- Applicant(s) must be in attendance on-site at the AFBF Annual Convention to compete nationally.
- Applicant(s) must not have derived a majority of their gross income from an owned production agriculture enterprise in any of the past three years.
- Applicant(s) may only compete in one national YF&R competition per year.
- Past and present members of the AFBF Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee and/or their spouse are not eligible to compete.
- Past state YF&R Achievement Award winners and/or previous AFBF Achievement Award competitors are not eligible to compete.
- Previous AFBF Excellence in Agriculture Award competitors are not eligible to compete. Past state YF&R Excellence in Agriculture winners are eligible if they have not previously competed at the national level.
- Current employees or agents of county, state and/or the American Farm Bureau organizations and their affiliates are not eligible to compete. An affiliate is defined as an entity controlled by another Farm Bureau entity through, for example, ownership (including partial ownership) or the ability to elect the board of directors. Past employees and interns who were responsible for implementing any of the YF&R Competitive Events at the state or national level since January 1, 2021, are ineligible.
- Each state Farm Bureau may submit one entry to be considered for national recognition and must use the AFBF entry form and application.

Entry Form & Application Guidelines

- Do not use the applicant's name, the name of their state or county, or any names that may bring about the recognition or identification of the applicant's state beyond the entry form. The written versions of the application have a search feature to locate any identifiers. Verbal and presentation reference to applicant's name, state and county will be allowed during your presentation for personalization of presentation.
- The entry form and application should be completed in first person narrative (i.e. I, me, we, us), but proper names of the applicant(s) may not be used. Couple applications should follow these instructions: For personal statements, put (A1) or (A2) at the beginning of the paragraph/sentence to denote which applicant is "speaking," and for joint statements, simply use the word "we." Applicants must use (A1)/(A2) to denote each applicant's involvement for all of question 6.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms unless it has been spelled out once with the abbreviation in parentheses behind it. For example, the United States Department of Education (USDE). AFBF, FB and YF&R are acceptable to use throughout the application.
- The attached entry form and application are examples of the information needed for the official online application. Authorized state Farm Bureau representatives will have access to the online portal for official state submission. No emailed or mailed entry forms will be accepted.

- State Farm Bureaus have permission to reproduce the attached entry form for state-level competition or for recruitment.
- It will be up to the judges' discretion to deduct points if applicants include activities before they were 18.

Note: Disregarding the guidelines will result in disqualification of the application.

VIRTUAL CONVENTION: If AFBF is unable to hold the 2026 Convention in-person for any reason, the competitive events will be held virtually, and all applicants should be made aware of this possibility prior to their application. If the competition will be virtual, all contestants will be given the opportunity to withdraw their application for 2026 to ensure future eligibility.

Presentation Guidelines

- The presentation will be an interactive, 25-minute presentation in which the applicant(s) has an opportunity to share the contents of their entire application in narrative form with a panel of three judges and the audience.
 - Applicant(s) will have 25 minutes to present on the topics addressed in the application and address questions from the judges. Applicants will be notified by the timekeeper when 10 minutes are remaining and again when five minutes are remaining. Each judge will be prepared to ask one question. At 25 minutes, time will be called and the applicant's time in front of the judges will conclude even if the judges have not been able to ask their questions. It will be up to the applicant(s) to determine how to use this time. If the answers to the judges' questions are complete before time is called, the room moderator will call time.
- The only visual means in which to deliver the information is through a PowerPoint presentation. The applicant(s) needs to submit their presentation on a USB flash drive during the Excellence in Agriculture Competitor Orientation as a .ppt file. Once the presentation has been downloaded onto the laptop, it cannot be changed. If downloading from Google slides or a similar application, be sure the formatting translates after downloading or exporting to PowerPoint prior to arriving at the orientation. A computer, LCD projector, screen and one slide advancer remote will be provided. All presentations must be formatted to work on a PC. Contestants will not be allowed to use their own computer.
- Verbal and presentation references to applicant(s) name, state and county will be allowed during the presentation.
- No props (including notes/note cards), sound or video of any kind will be allowed during the presentation.
- Applicants and their state coordinators are not allowed to view other presentations until after completing their own.

Application Judging

- All applications will be judged prior to the AFBF Convention by three representatives from the industry. These are the only judges that will be reviewing and scoring the applications.
- All judges will use the application rubric to score the applications. (The rubric is a separate document)
- The following breakdown of points will be used for the application:

<u>Application</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Approx. %</u>
Questions 2-4: Ag Involvement, Impact on Ag and Issues Facing Ag Goals	180 points	45.0%
Farm Bureau Experience	40 points	10.0%
Other Leadership Experience	90 points	22.5%
Application Form: Writing should be clear, descriptive and free of grammatical errors.	80 points	20.0%
	10 points	2.5%
MAXIMUM POINTS	400 points	100% (80% of Total Score)

Presentation Judging – Round One

- All competitors will present during the first round of competition during the AFBF Convention.
- Competitors will be randomly divided into different rooms to present to a panel of three judges who represent the industry. Each room will have a different set of judges who will complete a judge's orientation prior to the first presentation.
- All judges will use the same presentation rubric to score the presentations.
- The following breakdown of points will be used for the presentation:

<u>Presentation</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Approx. %</u>
Delivery of Presentation	30 points	30%
Content of Presentation	40 points	40%
Responses to Questions	30 points	30%
MAXIMUM POINTS	100 points	100% (20% of Total Score)

****The above breakdowns are not the rubric. Please refer to the separate rubric documents for all scoring criteria.**

Presentation Judging – Top Ten Round

- After the completion of the first round of presentations, the Top Ten competitors, determined by the competitors' application scores and their round one presentation scores, will be announced and the Top Ten will advance to the next round of competition.
- Those advancing to the Top Ten will give their presentation again to a new set of three judges. All competitors will present to the same set of judges during the Top Ten round.
- The same presentation scoring system, rubric and format will be used during the Top Ten round of competition.
- The winner and finalists of the competition will be determined based on the combined application and Top Ten presentation scores.

Please note: Presentation scores from the first round of competition will NOT be used in this round of judging.

State Promotion of National Awards

State Farm Bureaus are required to advertise the national prizes **one** time during the year through a print advertisement, an article in the state's publication(s), or on social media. These promotions will qualify the state entries to receive the national prizes, should they be the winner or finalist of one of the national competitions. **Promotion must be specific to promoting the AFBF YF&R competitions and must recognize the national sponsors.**

PowerPoint Competitor Template

PowerPoint competitor templates that highlight the state entry must be completed using the template provided by AFBF. This template is available from the state YF&R coordinator. It should include the applicant's bio, written in third person, and 2-3 pictures of the applicant and their agricultural operation or involvement. *All pictures and presentations become the property of AFBF.*

Deadline

States are encouraged to select their entries in time for recognition at their state annual meeting. The state's entry form and application must be submitted via the online portal **on or before 5:00 p.m. EST Dec. 9th, 2025. The state's signed verification form, signature page, national awards advertisement and competitor PowerPoints are also due at this time** to be considered for national recognition and awards.

*Please refer to the Handbook made available to AFBF competitors for all competition details.

**American Farm Bureau Federation
Young Farmers & Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture Award**

2026 Entry Form

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Please submit this form via the online application process. No emailed or mailed entry forms or applications will be accepted.

The state's entry form and application must be submitted via the online portal **on or before 5:00 p.m. EST Dec. 9, 2025.**

The data below and throughout the application applies to you and your spouse/spousal-equivalent, if married. Please indicate "Applicant 1" (A1) and "Applicant 2" (A2) when responding to question 6.

Applicant(s)*: A1 _____ A2 _____
* Will be used in the program and for recognition

Phonetic Pronunciation: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: A1 _____ A2 _____

Date of Birth: A1 _____ A2 _____

Age on January 31, 2026: A1 _____ A2 _____

Education/Degree: A1 _____ A2 _____

Please provide one of the following for verification purposes – **upload to the application site:**

Copy of Form 1099 or Form W-2

A letter of verification from your employer or company on letterhead that includes length of employment and a brief description of your job responsibilities

Are you an alumnus of any of the following youth organizations? (Check all that apply)

☐ 4-H ☐ AFA ☐ FFA ☐ MANRRS

Do you have any ADA special requirements we should be aware of?

☐ Yes No If yes, please list: _____

I (we) hereby certify the information on this entry form and attached application to be accurate and true statements. **AFBF DOES NOT ACCEPT LIABILITY FOR APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED INCORRECTLY BY A STATE FARM BUREAU OFFICE.**

AFBF reserves the right to use my (our) photos and/or any video footage for use in promoting Farm Bureau. The photos and/or video footage of the undersigned contestant(s) may also be available to Farm Bureau sponsors. I (we) have not derived a majority of my (our) income from an owned production agricultural enterprise in any of the past three years. By participating in the Event, I (we) warrant that I (we) fully and unconditionally agree to and accept the YF&R official contest rules and the decisions of the AFBF YF&R Committee, which are final and binding.

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Applicant(s) Signature(s): A1 _____ A2 _____

I hereby certify that the above-named applicant(s) is the official state entry and is therefore eligible to be entered in and considered for AFBF's Young Farmers & Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture Award for 2026.

State President/Administrator: _____ Date: _____

State: _____

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2026 Application

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Note: Remember to write in first person narrative (i.e. I, me, we, us) for questions 1-5. Remember not to use any state-specific identifiers.

1. PERSONAL BACKGROUND (family, education and personal interests) – *Approximately 2,000 characters*

2. AGRICULTURAL INVOLVEMENT – *Approximately 2,500 characters*

A. Please explain the applicant's (applicants') occupation.

2. AGRICULTURAL INVOLVEMENT (continued) - *Approximately 2,500 characters*

B. Please explain the applicant's (applicants') personal involvement in agriculture/agribusiness.

3. IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE - *Approximately 5,000 characters*

Clearly describe the efforts the applicant(s) has taken to positively promote and impact the agriculture industry. Examples may include things such as hosting farm tours, legislative visits, writing a blog, etc.

4. ISSUES FACING AGRICULTURE - *Approximately 5,000 characters*

- A. Agriculture faces important issues at the local, state, national and international levels. Explain three important issues that the industry needs to address in the next five years. Choose one issue from three of the four levels mentioned above. For example, an applicant might select ag literacy as a local issue, mental health as a state issue and rural broadband as a national issue.

4. ISSUES FACING AGRICULTURE (continued) – *Approximately 5,000 characters*

- B. Choose one of the issues in your response to 4A and discuss how you personally have addressed, or can address, that issue and work towards a resolution.

5. **GOALS - *Approximately 5,000 characters***

What goals does the applicant(s) have for the next five years related to their career, Farm Bureau involvement and involvement with other organizations? What steps have been made to reach these goals?

6. **LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE (from age 18 to current)- Approximately 2,500 characters**

Note: This applies to both applicants, if applying together. Please indicate A1 and A2 when applicable.

- A. List Farm Bureau leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers. Please include years of involvement. *Example: A1 – Elected President of the County Farm Bureau Board of Directors (2023-2024)*

County Farm Bureau

State/American Farm Bureau

6. LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE (continued)- Approximately 2,500 characters

- B. List other agricultural leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers. (i.e. Farm Credit, Soil Conservation, Farm Service Agency, farm cooperatives, 4-H, etc.). Please include organization, description and years of involvement.

Example: A1 & A2 – 4-H, Serves as a 4-H Livestock Club Leader (2021 – present)

- C. List other community and non-agricultural leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers (i.e. civic/service clubs, church, school, volunteer leadership, etc.) Please include organization, description and years of involvement.

Example: A1 – Elementary School, Served as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) President (2018-2024)

If you had any situations or circumstances that may have affected your leadership experience, please use this space to explain. ***Approximately 250 characters***

*Note: There are **no** points associated to this section and can be left blank.*