Nebraska FFA Program Changes Summary 2026-2027

This document summarizes program changes for the 2026-2027 Nebraska FFA year. Each section outlines what is changing, why the change is being made, what teachers need to do, what remains the same, and where to find support and resources.

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Affiliation

What's Changing?

Chapters who are currently affiliated or are newly affiliated for the 2026-2027 school year, will not have chapter membership fees for the 2026-27 or the 2027-28 school year. Chapter fees will resume for the 2028-2029 school year.

Why Are We Making This Change?

Generous funding is available through the Nebraska FFA Foundation and the Growing a Brighter Future for Nebraska Grant.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- Review affiliation program philosophy and implement that locally.
- Plan for resuming the chapter fees for the 2028-2029 school year.

What stays the same for teachers:

- The affiliation fee schedule is the same as previous year. Chapters can choose to be affiliated or pay traditional dues. The affiliation count is determined by the number of nonduplicated 9-12 AFNR enrollment. Grades 7-8 and 13+ are added on a per member basis and contribute to the overall tier level.

Support and Resources

Resources:

- Affiliation Fee Schedule
- Affiliation Membership Description, Philosophy, Benefits, Policy and Procedures

Questions?
Contact: Sarah Heideman sarah.heideman@nebraska.gov

Leadership Development Events

What's Changing?

All changes and rationale were discussed and voted on by the FFA Board of Directors.

Rules: Speaking Events with Manuscripts

- A bibliography in APA or MLA style must be included as part of the speaker's manuscript and direct quotes from any other source of information must be in quotes on the manuscript and identified with the bibliography.
- Starting Fall of 2026, a rolling submission deadline for all state qualifying manuscripts will be implemented as follows:
    - District LDEs held in November, manuscripts due December 15
    - District LDEs held in December, manuscripts due January 15
    - District LDEs held in January, manuscripts due February 12
- State manuscripts may only be submitted once.
- All state-qualifying manuscripts will be scored PRIOR to the State Convention.
- Judges will not judge the speech on accuracy of the speech based on the manuscript.
- All state-qualifying manuscripts will be screened by an AI and plagiarism checker. If more than 30% is reported plagiarized, it will be manually reviewed. If it is still reported as plagiarized, the manuscript will lose 67 points on the rubric and be reported to the judges.

Rules: Conduct of Chapter Meetings and Parliamentary Procedures

- Study material shall not be present at any time during the district level and state level competition.
- The sentinel (or any other officer) may not enter the room to check the set up. The room will be set up according to the rules.

State LDE Order of Appearance

- An LDE scheduling conflict form will open in February. Teachers can complete an optional form to share conflicts, or potential conflicts, based on State CDEs schedule. It is used for planning only and requests can't be guaranteed. The LDE Order of Appearance will be posted by March 1. There will be a 2 day window of time for changes, with the final Order of Appearance posted on March 4. There will be no changes to the LDE Order of Appearance after this date.

State Convention Judges

- It is strongly recommended that all chapters who have LDE qualifiers provide a judge(s) for State LDEs. It is difficult to find enough quality judges each year. Judges can be chaperones, advisors, bus drivers, people from your community, folks that live around the Lincoln area, etc. We work to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest by asking judges to note chapter connections/affiliations on their judging form.

Why Are We Making This Change?

Rules: Speaking Events with Manuscripts

State Convention LDE judges have expressed needing more time to evaluate manuscripts to provide better feedback. The manuscripts being submitted before State Convention on a rolling deadline allows time for evaluators to score and check manuscripts for AI and plagiarism. The specific AI and plagiarism detection tool has not yet been selected. Any submission flagged by the system will be reviewed by a person before any action is taken. We recognize that common phrases, properly cited quotations, and standard terminology may be flagged and will be considered during manual review. Manuscripts can only be submitted one time. The manuscript will not be used to score the speech delivery on a word-by-word basis, so it is ok to update statistics, data, etc. for the delivery of the speech at convention. It is not advised to drastically change the content of the speech from the manuscript.

Rules: Conduct of Chapter Meetings and Parliamentary Procedures

Having study material in the testing and holding rooms has been difficult to manage and monitor. The sentinel, or other officer, checking the room set up adds time and makes it difficult to stay on schedule. The judges and event coordinator will set the room according to the rules and will not “trick” or change the set up.

State LDE Order of Appearance

Posting the Order of Appearance in February led to a lot of changes and swaps. Collecting potential conflicts and waiting for more CDEs to be completed will give a better picture of student schedules. Having the final LDE Order of Appearance posted on March 4 allows teachers to know the schedule, helps determine CDE teams (if district CDEs are still happening) and if CDE alternates need to be identified, and allows time for staff to prepare materials for the State LDEs.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- Review the LDE rules.
- Submit manuscripts with the new deadline.
- Be proactive with State Convention student schedules.

What stays the same for teachers:

- Manuscripts will be submitted online on the neaged.org website.
- Employment Skills Application, Resume, and Letter of Application will be due February 12.

Support and Resources

Resources:

- LDE Rules and LDE Landing Page https://neaged.org/leadership-development-events/
- Referencing AI In Speech Manuscripts

Referencing AI assistance in your speech depends on whether you are directly quoting/paraphrasing AI-generated text or simply using it for brainstorming, outlining, or editing.

Acknowledging General Assistance (Brainstorming & Outlining)
If you used an AI tool (like ChatGPT, Claude, or Microsoft Copilot) to help outline ideas or brainstorm concepts rather than generating text, formal academic citation is usually not required. Instead, use an acknowledgment statement:

- In an author's note on the cover page or as an appendix: Add a brief note such as, *"Drafting and structural support for this speech were assisted by [AI Tool Name, e.g., ChatGPT].* Or something like *" Author Note: I used ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2026) to assist in organizing the structural outline and refining the transitional phrasing of this speech transcript. The final content and delivery arguments are entirely my own*.

Citing Direct AI Content (Quotes or Paraphrased Text)
If you directly quote or closely paraphrase sentences or paragraphs generated by an AI chatbot, you should provide a formal citation following standard style guidelines.

- MLA Style:
  - Works Cited Format:
    "Description or text of your prompt." AI Tool (e.g., *ChatGPT*), model/version (e.g., GPT-4o), Company (e.g., OpenAI), Date Month Year, Shareable URL.
  - In-Text Citation: Use a shortened version of the prompt in parentheses, e.g., *("Explain the concept")*.
  - Review guidelines online with an MLA style reference site.

- APA Style:
  - Reference List Format:
    Company Name. (Year, Month Day). *Title of chat* [Generative AI chat]. Tool name and model. URL.
  - In-Text Citation: (Company Name, Year)—for example, *(OpenAI, 2026)*.
  - Review guidelines online with an APA style reference site.

Questions?

Contact: Sarah Heideman sarah.heideman@nebraska.gov

State FFA Convention Schedule Summary

What's Changing?

Note- this section does not encompass all changes to State Convention. At the time this document is published, there are events, locations, and schedules yet to be determined. Be sure to read updates and email when the Convention Schedule shared.

Location Changes

- Hall of Chapters: The Cornhusker Atrium
- SAE Award Interviews: The Cornhusker
- Agriscience Fair Interviews: The Cornhusker
- All Middle School Events will be on East Campus on Friday. That includes Ag Literacy Speaking, Discovery Speaking, People in Ag Poster Event, Quiz Bowl, Campus Tours/Workshops.

Schedule Changes

- Preliminary Round for all LDEs will be on Wednesday
- State Degree Ceremony will remain on Wednesday night (same as 2026)
- SAE Award Interviews will be split between Wednesday and Thursday
- LDE Team Award Ceremony Breakfast will be on Thursday
- LDE Individual Award Ceremony Breakfast will be on Friday
- All final round for LDEs (except Ag Demo) will be on Friday morning. Ag Demo prelims and finals will be on Wednesday.
- The closing session of Convention will be on Friday at 2 pm.
- A more detailed convention schedule will be shared in mid-December 2026.

It is strongly recommended that all chapters who have LDE qualifiers provide a judge for State LDEs. It is difficult to find enough quality judges each year. Judges can be chaperones, advisors, bus drivers, people from your community, folks that live around the Lincoln area, etc. We work to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest by asking judges to note chapter connections/affiliations on their judging form.

Why Are We Making This Change?

The expanded SAE Awards will recognize more students which is awesome, it also creates a need for more space for interviews and splitting recognition across more than one convention session. We are also trying to balance the number of volunteers and judges needed per day.

We need quality judges to evaluate competitive events at the state level.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- If your chapter has a student participating in competitive events at convention, we would **strongly encourage your chapter** to provide a judges. This includes LDEs, SAE Awards, and Agriscience Fair.
- Read communication released on convention and proactively plan your chapter's convention schedule.

What stays the same for teachers:

- Guidance and Schedules Documents. We will continue to utilize the NE CTE app through Sched and post the A to Z guide.
- Several events, tours, and locations will remain the same as previous years. A more detailed schedule will be released in mid-December.

Support and Resources

Resources

- https://neaged.org/state-convention/

Questions?
Contact: Sarah Heideman sarah.heideman@nebraska.gov

State Officer Interviews

What's Changing?

State Officer candidates who advance to the Finals round process in Lincoln will now interview on Monday evening and all day Tuesday prior to the start of Convention activities on Wednesday.

Schedule:

- Candidates will need to arrive in Lincoln by late afternoon (specific time will be provided closer to Convention) on Monday, March 29, 2027 and report to The Cornhusker Marriott hotel where all interviews will be held.
- Interviews will be held on Monday night and all day Tuesday, March 30, 2027.

Why Are We Making This Change?

All Leadership Development Event preliminary rounds, some areas of the SAE Award interviews, Agriscience Fair interviews, as well as many CDEs, will be held on Wednesday. Having State Officer candidates interview prior to the start of convention allows those individuals to be fully present, focused on interviews and available for the committee to interview as needed. This eliminates conflicting events on Wednesday, and candidates potentially missing out on interview rounds due to an LDE, CDE, or other interview conflict.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- Plan for supervision, transportation, and travel for any candidate who advances to the Finals interview round for Monday and Tuesday of convention week.
- Review information with state FFA officer candidates prior to the preliminary process in March.

What stays the same for teachers:

- Preliminary Interviews remain in Kearney, with the same basic schedule and logistics, including:
    - Arrive on Wednesday, March 10, 2027, late morning. Interviews completed on Friday, March 12, 2027 no later than 3 PM.
    - Candidates are responsible for their own transportation to and from interviews. Please check with your school for travel guidance.

    - Candidates need to make their own hotel reservations for Wednesday and Thursday nights.
    - No supervision will be provided by Nebraska FFA Association.
    - Breakfast will not be provided for candidates. All other meals will be provided.
- Finals Interviews in Lincoln:
    - Candidates are responsible for their own transportation to and from interviews. Please check with your school for travel guidance.
    - Candidates need to make their own hotel reservations for Monday and Tuesday nights as needed.
    - No supervision will be provided by Nebraska FFA Association.

Support and Resources

Resources:
Nebraska FFA Association State Officer Candidate Preparation Guide and other resources found on the Applications Page https://neaged.org/applications/ under State Officer Application of neaged.org.

Questions?
Contact: Sarah Heideman sarah.heideman@nebraska.gov

Degrees, Applications and Record Books (DAR) Committee

What's Changing?

All changes and rationale were discussed and voted on by the FFA Board of Directors.

The DAR Committee is a way for advisors to get information, support, and answers to questions surrounding Degrees, Applications, and Record Books.

The DAR Committee:

- Is designed to provide centralized support and quality-assurance for Degrees, Applications, and Record Books.
- Will provide teacher support, evaluation of programs and processes, training (as needed), and process consistency.
- Has a variety of people serving on the committee. Blake Gutz is team leader. Each DAR area has teachers, subject matter experts and/or retired teachers to serve as resources to teachers.
- Will operate within a new process for all teachers to submit questions, clarifications, etc. and provide consistent answers and direction in a timely manner.

Why Are We Making This Change?

As we move into expanded SAE Award areas, changes within Agriscience Fair, and updates to the State FFA Degree, it is anticipated there will be many questions and requests as advisors and students navigate the changes and additions. We want to make sure teachers and advisors have the support they need to help students be successful to complete their degrees, applications, and records. This process will help ensure a more timely and consistent response to questions.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- Instead of emailing a question to a specific person or to the list serv, teachers will submit a question or request through a ticketing/queue system. There is a link on the Degrees, Applications and Record Books page https://neaged.org/degrees-applications-record-books/ of neaged.org. The ticket system will go live the week of October 26, 2026. An email announcement will be shared that week.
- Teachers will need to provide specifics for the question or request. DAR team members will not have access to AET or applications. If a teacher has a question on

the State FFA Degree, they will need to upload a pdf of the application (or part of the application) that relates to the topic/question.

- The same process will be used for area determination for both SAE Awards and Agriscience Fair. Specific descriptions and supporting information will need to be uploaded for DAR members to review. Area determination links can be found on SAE Awards page https://neaged.org/sae-awards/ and Agriscience Fair page https://neaged.org/agriscience-fair/ of neaged.org.
- Read all emails that will be coming out with additional information regarding DAR and the updates and resources.
- Spend time now reading the information before degree and application season.

What stays the same for teachers:

- Resources and information are provided and updated on neaged.org.

Support and Resources

Resources:

Resources will be posted the week of October 26, 2026, after National FFA Convention.

- Degrees, Applications and Record Books https://neaged.org/degrees-applications-record-books/ page of neaged.org.
- Found on the State Degree Landing Page https://neaged.org/state-ffa-degree/
    - State Degree Qualifying Review Guide
    - State Degree Requirements
- Found on the SAE Awards Landing Page https://neaged.org/sae-awards/
    - Nebraska Only SAE Award Area Descriptions
    - SAE Award Handbook
    - SAE Award Rubrics
    - SAE Award Scoresheets
- Found on the Agriscience Fair Landing Page https://neaged.org/agriscience-fair/
    - Agriscience Fair Handbook
    - Agriscience Fair Rubrics
    - Agriscience Fair Scoresheets

Questions?
Contact: Blake Gutz, DAR Committee Team Lead blakecgutz@gmail.com

Judges and Processes for State Reviews – SAE Awards and Agriscience Fair

What's Changing?

All changes and rationale were discussed and voted on by the FFA Board of Directors.

The State Review Process for SAE Awards and Agriscience Fair (ASF) will expand and will have changes for 2027. The changes will allow more advisors/other volunteers to participate in the process, which means judges can either evaluate applications virtually OR in-person review. There are also some slight differences in SAE Awards and ASF. See details below:

- Option 1: SAE Awards Review: In Person Process
  This will remain the same. Advisors will be assigned to team with 1-2 other people. Advisors will get access to applications the week of February 8, 2027. They are encouraged to look through applications, but they **do not need to score them until** the on-site meeting in Kearney on Saturday, February 20, 2027.
- Option 2: SAE Awards Review: Virtual Process
  Advisors will be assigned to a team with 1-2 other people. A "lead" teacher will be identified to provide accountability and organize the committee. All teachers will get access to the applications the week of February 8, 2027. There will need to be at least one (or more if the team needs) virtual meeting to finalize scoring. The lead teacher will organize meeting time with the team. All scoring must be done and completed in AET by Thursday, February 18 at Midnight CST. This will provide time for the SAE Awards Review Team to look over results prior to the in-person process.
- Option 1: ASF Review: In Person Process
  This will remain the same. Advisors will be assigned to a team with 1-2 other people. Reviewers will get access to applications the week of February 8, 2027. All applications **must be scored prior to arriving in Kearney** for in-person meeting on Friday, February 19, 2027.
- Option 2: ASF Review: Virtual Process
  Advisors will be assigned to a team with 1-2 other people. A "lead" teacher will be identified to provide accountability and organize the committee. All teachers will get access to the applications the week of February 8, 2027. There will need to be at least one (or more if the team needs) virtual meeting to finalize scoring. The lead teacher will organize meeting time with the team. All scoring must be done and completed in AET by Thursday, February 18 at Midnight CST. This will provide time for the ASF Review Team to look over results prior to the in-person process.

- Timeline for Judging Sign Up
  Advisors may begin signing up for judging on January 15 and sign ups must be complete by February 5. There will be a link on the DAR landing page https://neaged.org/degrees-applications-record-books/ of neaged.org. Advisors may sign up for both SAE Awards and ASF. Judges will be assigned to teams and evaluate areas in which all judges do not have an application.
- SAE Awards Requirements for Judges Needed
  Each district must have an FFA Board of Representative present at the review and have four additional qualified representatives. The FFA Board **STRONGLY suggests** that all schools that have a SAE Award Application advance to the state review, have a representative from their school serve as a reviewer (virtual or in-person).
- ASF Requirements for Judges Needed
  Each district must have two qualified judges evaluate either virtual or in-person.

Why Are We Making This Change?

In the past, advisors have signed up/let their FFA board representative know if they were able to come to the in-person review in Kearney in February, and we have typically still needed more judges. Adding the virtual component will allow more people to evaluate applications without traveling to Kearney. We anticipate this will reduce the number of applications a team needs to review, which will provide an opportunity for better feedback to students.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- Decide if you want to evaluate on a virtual or in-person team.
- Communicate with your FFA District Board Representative to make sure they know how many from their district have signed up.
- We expect more teachers to sign up to evaluate beyond the required numbers.
- Put a reminder in your calendar to sign up for virtual or in-person judging on January 15, 2027.
- Read information that is sent out in emails and/or posted on the DAR landing page https://neaged.org/degrees-applications-record-books/ of neaged.org.

What stays the same for teachers:

- Advisors score, review, and provide detailed feedback on applications.
- A review team (comprised of teachers from the FFA Board of Representatives) will review all results for consistency.
- The replicated text review process.

Support and Resources

Resources: SAE Awards and Agriscience Fair found on the DAR landing page https://neaged.org/degrees-applications-record-books/ of neaged.org.

Questions?

Contact: Donnie Wolters donniewolters@gmail.com

Agriscience Fair

What's Changing?

All changes and rationale were discussed and voted on by the FFA Board of Directors.

Agriscience Fair (ASF) will have a different format and requirements:

- Research will begin on August 1st of a member's first year; all other years of research may begin at the conclusion of Nebraska State FFA Convention
- There are six pathways (same as previous years) and THREE grade levels. Grade Levels will be: 7 & 8 Grade, 9 & 10 Grade and 11 & 12 Grade. Award areas have been reduced from 36 to 18.
- Individuals and team divisions are merged and will compete in the same pathway/grade level. Teams may have 2 or 3 students.
- **Displays will no longer be part of the State Convention interview.** There will be no score for display in the rubric. Students may bring a hard copy of their research report to use as a reference during the interview. No other display documents, additional charts, graphs, etc. may be used/brought outside of what is in the submitted research report.
- Qualifications
  After the 2026 National Convention, all Agriscience Fair Award results will be "reset" and all students, no matter of previous placings, will be eligible to reapply and place within that Agriscience Fair award area, depending on the members grade level.

  Starting in 2027, if the student wins at the state level and does NOT place in the top 6 nationally, they CAN reapply in the same Agriscience Fair Award area at the state level, ***if they remain in the same grade level***. If they DO place in the top 6 nationally, they are NOT eligible to reapply in the same Agriscience Fair Award area at the state level. This must be NEW research or an extension of an existing project.
- Application submission
  The deadline for all ASF applications to be on the submission list in AET is February 5, 2027. In 2028 and beyond, the deadline will be February 1.
- Application Screening/Review
  - **District Level:** Each FFA district will be responsible for screening/reviewing Agriscience Fair projects prior to the final submission deadline set by the state association. The screening /review process will consist of (at minimum) making sure all components of the application are complete and are of quality to proceed onto the state review. A checklist will be provided.

    - **State Level:** ALL Agriscience Fair (and SAE Award) state level judges form opens January 15. Names of judges for state review are due February 5. There will be a virtual and in-person option. See *Judges and Processes for State Reviews – SAE Awards and Agriscience Fair* for specific details.
- Recognition
  Each Agriscience Fair pathway/grade level can send up to five qualifiers to interview at the Nebraska State FFA Convention. There will be a maximum of 90 state finalists (18 Pathways/Grade Levels times five per Pathway/Grade Level). All state finalists will receive a gold medal and be recognized on stage. The state winner in each pathway/grade level will advance to national level competition. Additional gold, silver, and bronze ratings will be assigned to applications that do not advance to the State Convention (mirroring the SAE awards rating process).
- Scoring
  All Agriscience Fair applications must receive a minimum score of 65 at the state level review to be considered to advance as a state finalist.
- Students with multi-year research projects should submit a Research SAE Award application.
- All Grade Levels will use the same written report format.
- Rubrics Update
  One application rubric/scoresheet for all Grade Levels and Pathways. One interview rubric/scoresheet for all Grade Levels and Pathways.

Why Are We Making This Change?

The changes to pathway/grade level, written reports, rubrics, no display component and qualifications are being implemented to align with changes within the National FFA Agriscience Fair.

Changes in review and judging, scoring and State Convention recognition are being made to streamline the process and to recognize students on stage at state FFA convention.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- Earlier application deadline – February 5, 2027
- District level review and submission means some ASF applications will not make it to the state review process if the application is not complete. Teachers need to double check that all components are met and included.
- Read all information provided on changes and share with students.

- Utilize DAR Committee for assistance in area determination, application questions and record book information. See *Degrees, Applications and Record Books (DAR) Committee* in this document for more specific information.

What stays the same for teachers:

- Overall structure of the application remains the same.
- State Convention will still include opportunities for individuals/teams to interview
- State winners in each of the pathways/grade levels will be forwarded for national competition.

Support and Resources

Resources:

Resources will be posted the week of October 26, 2026, after National FFA Convention.

- Found on the Agriscience Fair Landing Page https://neaged.org/agriscience-fair/
    - Agriscience Fair Handbook
    - Agriscience Fair Rubrics
    - Agriscience Fair Scoresheets
    - Agriscience Fair Area Determination Assistance Form

Questions?

Contact: Blake Gutz, DAR Committee Team Lead blakecgutz@gmail.com

SAE Awards

What's Changing?

All changes and rationale were discussed and voted on by the FFA Board of Directors.

The Proficiency Award program is changing to **SAE Award Program**. The traditional areas are still included but now split into entrepreneurship and placement. Expanded areas include service learning, research, and school-based enterprises. The following is a summary of additional changes, including deadlines and processes.

- SAE Awards by Type and Area
  - **Entrepreneurship**: 34 areas (Ag Comm through Wildlife Management)
  - **Placement**: 34 areas (Ag Comm through Wildlife Management)
  - **Research**: 3 Categories (Analytical, Experimental and Invention) each with 7 areas (Animal Systems, Environmental Service/Natural Resource Systems, Food, Products, and Processing Systems, Plant Systems, Power, Structure and Technical Systems, Social Science, and Integrated Systems)
  - **School Based Enterprise**: 8 areas (Agribusiness Systems, Animal Systems, Biotechnology Systems, Environmental Service Systems, Food Products and Processing Systems, Natural Resource Systems, Plant Systems, and Power, Structural and Technical Systems)
  - **Service-Learning:** 4 areas (Community Engagement, Community Safety, Environmental Responsibility, and Hunger, Health and Nutrition)
  - **Nebraska Only Areas**:
    - Entrepreneurship- 6 areas (Automotive Technology, Health and Human Services, Home and/or Occupational Safety Programming, Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management, Residential Construction/Technology, and Sales and Services Nebraska Only)
    - Placement- 6 areas (Automotive Technology, Health and Human Services, Home and/or Occupational Safety Programming, Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management, Residential Construction/Technology, and Sales and Services Nebraska Only)
- Qualifications

  After the 2026 National Convention, all SAE Award results will be “reset” and all students, no matter of previous placings, will be eligible to reapply and place within that SAE Award area.

  Starting in 2027, if the student wins at the state level and does NOT place in the top 6 nationally, they CAN reapply in the same SAE Award area at the state level. If they

DO place in the top 6 nationally, they are NOT eligible to reapply in the same SAE Award area at the state level.

- Application submission
  The deadline for all SAE Award applications to be on the submission list in AET is February 5, 2027. In 2028 and beyond, the deadline will be February 1.
- Application Screening/Review
  - **District Level: (no change)** Each FFA district will continue to have a district review process and identify the top three gold applications to forward to the preliminary state review. Applications being forwarded to the state for state level reviews should be of gold quality.
  - **State Level:** ALL SAE Awards (and ASF) state level judges form opens January 15. Names of judges for state review are due February 5. There will be a virtual and in-person option. See *Judges and Processes for State Reviews – SAE Awards and Agriscience Fair* for specific details.
- **There will no longer be a no-win/do not want to win** policy at the state review. All applications forwarded to the State Convention process will be eligible to win and move to national competition.
- Nebraska-Only Areas
  If a student wins in a Nebraska Only SAE Award Area, they **cannot reapply the following year in the same category.**
- Rubrics
  The rubrics will align with National FFA and will be available on the SAE Awards landing page https://neaged.org/sae-awards/ of neaged.org.

Why Are We Making This Change?

The expansion of SAE award areas align with National FFA changes and processes. Other changes above are needed to accommodate the expanded number of areas.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- Earlier application deadline – February 5, 2027
- Read and review all information on expanded areas to share with students and design a plan for them for SAE Awards involvement.
- Utilize DAR Committee for assistance in area determination, application questions and record book information. See *Degrees, Applications and Record Books (DAR) Committee* in this document for more specific information.

What stays the same for teachers:

- Nebraska-only areas are still available- but are split into entrepreneurship and placement
- Top 3 applications in an area will be sent to state FFA convention and students will interview with a team of judges
- State winning application will move to national competition
- A student may be a finalist in a maximum of three areas and may only win ONE state SAE Area.

Support and Resources

Resources will be posted the week of October 26, 2026, after National FFA Convention.

- Found on the SAE Awards Landing Page https://neaged.org/sae-awards/
    - Nebraska Only SAE Award Area Descriptions
    - SAE Award Handbook
    - SAE Award Rubrics
    - SAE Award Scoresheets
    - SAE Award Area Determination Assistance Form

Questions?
Contact: Blake Gutz, DAR Committee Team Lead blakecgutz@gmail.com

State FFA Degree

What's Changing?

All changes and rationale were discussed and voted on by the FFA Board of Directors.

- The State FFA Degree application looks different. It is still generated in AET, but the application includes more record book items rather than a summary page.
- FFA Activities Journal Entries: Candidate must have participated in 10 distinctly different FFA activities, with 5 activities above the chapter level, throughout the course of their FFA membership.
- The deadline for all State Degree applications to be submitted to the state office is February 5, 2027. In 2028 and beyond, the deadline will be February 1.

Why Are We Making This Change?

- AET is moving toward a universal State Degree application for the entire country versus custom built applications by state. The application will include a more complete and comprehensive picture of the student's SAE needed to review for State Degree Requirements.
- There has been discussion over leadership points and the need for changing the requirements for several years. The 10 distinctly different activities with 5 above the chapter level is a way to gauge active FFA membership in a more concise and clear way for evaluators.
- As each program area grows, there needs to be more time for applications and degrees to be evaluated and processed at the state level.

New expectations and action items for teachers:

- Review the State Degree requirements with your members.
- Generate a new State Degree application and become familiar with the new layout.
- Understand the guidelines around the FFA activities change for 10 distinctly different activities with 5 above the chapter level.
- Check on your district's deadline for State Degree submission and the district review process. It will be earlier than February 5.

What stays the same for teachers:

- Applications will be reviewed at the district level using AET.
- The interview and questions will remain the same.

Support and Resources

Resources will be posted the week of October 26, 2026, after National FFA ***Convention*****.**

- Found on the State Degree Landing Page https://neaged.org/state-ffa-degree/
    - State Degree Qualifying Review Guide
    - State Degree Requirements
    - DAR Ticketing System for State Degree Support Requests

Questions?

Contact: Blake Gutz, DAR Committee Team Lead blakecgutz@gmail.com