

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Participants in the Agricultural Communications Career Development Event (CDE) work as a team of communication consultants to develop a written media plan, present the plan to a panel of judges, and, as individuals, apply what they have learned during practicums, a quiz and editing exercise.

This team CDE challenges students to communicate effectively while advocating to consumers about agriculture and telling the FFA story. Students will use a variety of media in their plans—social media, broadcast and print advertising, press releases, fliers, brochures, blogging, displays and more.

Communication, collaboration, creativity and presentation skills are important to event success. Students also learn a variety of technical skills such as journalistic and opinion writing, website design, video production, social media and more.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. Limit one team per FFA Chapter.
2. The event will consist of a four-member team.
3. Team members will work together to prepare a written media plan prior to the state CDE and submit it by the Friday prior to CDE Days. The team will also be responsible for presenting the plan at the state event and completing individual practicums and tests.
4. During the practicum portion of the event, one team member will be responsible for completing a web design activity, one team member will be responsible for completing a video production activity, one team member will be responsible for completing a journalistic writing activity, and one team member will be responsible for completing an opinion writing activity.
5. Recording devices are not allowed during the press conference.

EVENT FORMAT

A. Communications Media Plan and Presentation

Each team will prepare a communications media plan for their chapter. The team will play the role of communications consultant and will develop a media plan for an assigned scenario. The scenario will identify a client with a communications need and a budget. Scenarios are based on the ideas of agricultural advocacy. Teams will develop a media plan from the following rotating topics.

The focus could include one of the following:

- ❖ Tell a local FFA story
 - FFA Chapter (2019)
 - FFA Advisor (2021)
 - State FFA Association (2023)
 - FFA Alumni/Supporter (2025)
- ❖ Advocate the agricultural industry to consumers
 - Commodity (2020)
 - Farmers market (2022)
 - Community garden (2024)
 - Farm to table (2026)
 - Identify a local opportunity for public relations not tied to FFA

A media plan is a written document that describes the following:

- **Objectives:** What the group wants to accomplish with the media plan

- **Target Audiences:** Description of who the client is trying to reach, including demographic data.
- **Strategic plan and tactics:** Ways in which the objectives can be accomplished
 - Including social media plan
- **Timeline:** When the objectives will be accomplished
- **Evaluation:** How the results will be measured
- **Budget:** Teams may not go over a maximum of \$5,000
- **References**

A. Guidelines for Media Plan

The key to producing a good communications project proposal is to select a project that is specific enough that you will be able to do a good job with it.

- Must be submitted by 5pm on Friday prior to CDE Days
- The proposal should be eight to 10 double-spaced typed pages on 8.5"X11" white bond paper using 1" margins and 12-point Time New Roman or Times as the font (not including display text or headings).
- Paginated (numbered pages not including cover pages)
- Staple the proposal in upper left hand corner. DO NOT bind or place in folders, special binders, or covers.
- Formatted and edited according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) when citing sources
- A cover page should give the title of the communications proposal, state, chapter name, team member names, and date. May include creative design

The media plan must include the following sections (points will be deducted for missing or incomplete sections):

Cover page

- Must include the title of the media plan, CDE name, state, chapter name, team member names and year
- May include a creative design

Table of Contents

Introduction and Overview

- Two pages maximum
- Introduction
 - A brief background of the issue/topic and a statement of the problem establishing the need for this media plan
- Overview
 - A brief preview of what is contained in the plan and how it will benefit the client
 - Objective of the media plan

Audience

- One page maximum
- Who the client is trying to reach (target audience) with the media plan
- The demographic characteristics of the intended audience
- Note: teams may have a primary and a secondary audience

Strategic plan

- Three or four pages maximum
- Key messages or themes to communicate to the audience
- Explanation of how the objectives will be met
- Plan to attract media attention using social media
- Description of how the plan will be executed

Social Media Tactic of the Strategic Plan

A social media plan is required addressing the following:

- Social media platforms to be used
- Plan to gain followers
- Plan to engage followers
- General idea for the messages to be posted
- One page example post must be provided as an appendix (can include Facebook posts, tweets, Instagram photos and others)
- Contents of the “About” section of pages

Timeline

- One page maximum
- Explanation of the duration of the plan and the timing of the media tactics

Evaluation

- One page maximum
- Description of proposed methods to determine if the media plan objectives were met
- What are the key performances? (How will you measure that you are successful?)
- Examples may include number of participants, impressions, likes, shares, retweets, circulation of publications, number of video views.)

Budget and Justification

- One page maximum
- Table of all costs associated with implementing the media plan
- Explain why you have allocated this amount for each activity

Conclusion

- One page maximum
- A final summary of key points related to the strategic plan and a statement persuading the client that the plan is a good solution to the communication problem
- Not a restatement of the introduction and overview

References

- Formatted and edited according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)
- Appendices/Examples
- One page of social media posts

- Three of five other communication examples
- Suggestions include mock up or example of website, links to student created video, press releases, blogs, op-eds

Appendices

- ❖ Include three to five examples in the appendices
- ❖ Examples of tactics include but are not limited to
 - Broadcast advertising
 - Print advertising
 - Press releases
 - Fliers
 - Brochure
 - Web site
 - Blogging
 - Displays

B. Media Plan Presentation

The team will present their communications project to a panel of judges. The presentation should follow the segments of the proposal but also should include materials prepared during the execution of the proposal (i.e social media, broadcast advertising, print advertising, press releases, fliers, website blogging and displays). The team should present the media plan as if pitching it to the client identified in the scenario. Each team member must participate in the presentation.

Equipment:

The following equipment will be provided for the team presentations:

- Projector
- Table
- General Projector Hookup Equipment (HDMI Cord)

NOTE: A computer will NOT be provided.

If teams wish to bring additional equipment they may do so. However, they must be able to set up and tear down their equipment in the time allowed for the presentation.

5 minutes will be allowed for setup, 15 minutes for presentation, 5 minutes maximum for questions, and 5 minutes for tear down. If the setup time goes over, it will run into their presentation time, but at 15 minutes of presentation time, the timer will stand up and interrupt to end the presentation. Warnings will be given at 12 and 14 minutes. In the case of equipment failure, the team may be asked to move forward with the presentation. A back-up plan is recommended.

TESTS

A. Editing exercise

Because editing is a critical skill for all communicators, each team member will complete an editing

exercise. They will be given a printed document that contains 25 mistakes. If they mark the answer incorrect, they **MUST** write in the correction. In correcting the mistakes, team members will be required to use correct proofreader's marks (see Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual). Style, grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes will be included. Team members will **NOT** be able to use the style manual or dictionary during this exercise. No half points will be awarded on the editing quiz.

B. Communications quiz

Each team member will complete a quiz that covers basic elements important to the skill areas of journalistic writing and broadcasting, public relations writing, and graphic design. Five questions will be written for each segment, which includes broadcast, public relations, news, visuals, and ethics of communication. Team members will **NOT** be able to use the style manual or dictionary during this exercise.

The material for both tests will be from the past three years of the National FFA tests. When scoring the tests, the national key will be used. All scores will be checked by a second score reviewer.

Practicum's

The practicums will consist of four individual events. Each team member will be assigned to one of the following activities:

1. Web design
2. Video production
3. Journalistic writing
4. Opinion writing

Each team should assign a member to each of these activities before arriving at the state or national event.

All teams will meet in a central location for an orientation and press conference. Teams will be divided so that all broadcasters sit together, all news writers sit together, all press release writers sit together and all graphic designers sit together. All team members will be given an orientation at the beginning of the practicums to last no more than 10 minutes.

Following the orientation, the press conference will be held. Each team member will receive a press packet prior to the press conference with background information on the agricultural topic and expert to use during the event. An expert will speak on a timely agricultural topic for 20 minutes. Students will be provided with paper to take notes if they wish. Students should bring their own pens or pencils. After the 20-minute presentation, the non-writers will be dismissed to a different area to complete their assigned tasks. (See detailed descriptions of assignments later in rules.) The news writers and press release writers will then be involved in a 10-minute question and answer period with the expert (speaker). **Only news writers will be allowed to ask the questions.** Each news writer will stand to be recognized before asking a question. News writers may ask more than one question; however, the expert will attempt to address questions from as many different contestants as possible. All news writers and press release writers may take notes during the question and answer period, but only news writers will be allowed to ask questions of the expert. No electronic devices of any kinds including tape recorders and cell phones, will be allowed during this portion of the event.

Upon completion of the 10-minute question and answer session, the news writers and press release writers will be dismissed to a computer room to complete their assigned tasks.

In the event that technology malfunctions (i.e. documents, pictures and/or videos have trouble loading), students will have the extended time it takes to solve the technological issues to complete their

practicums.

Students will NOT be allowed to log into their personal accounts when using Wordpress, Adobe InDesign, Premiere Pro, or any other software when completing the practicums. The contest site/coordinator will provide blank accounts for the students to access and utilize. The free trials available to all chapters will have the same functions that will be used for the contest.

Equipment:

The following equipment will be provided for practicums:

- ❖ Programmed Computer (Containing InDesign, Wordpress, etc.)
- ❖ Printer
- ❖ Flashdrive
- ❖ Digital Photographs
- ❖ Dummy Text
- ❖ Logos
- ❖ Any other necessary materials

NOTE: Earbuds, writing utensils, clipboards, and other personal materials will NOT be provided for students.

Panels of judges:

Media, producers and other members of the agriculture communications community.

Detailed descriptions of each team member's assignment follows.

Journalistic writers

Writers are to write a journalistic piece based on the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference. It should be written for an appropriate audience, have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph) and include a headline. The story will then be word processed by the student on a computer and turned in to be scored. Participants will have 90 minutes to complete the practicum.

The activity will rotate annually from the following:

- ❖ Press release (2022, 2025)
- ❖ News story (2023, 2026)
- ❖ Feature story (2024)

* Students will be allowed to print two copies of their documents prior to turning them in for evaluation

Opinion writers

Writers are to write a piece that takes a position and support it with evidence based on the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference. It should be written for an appropriate audience, have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph) and include a headline. The story will then be word processed by the student on a computer and turned in to be scored. Participants will have 90 minutes to complete the practicum.

The activity will rotate annually from the following:

- ❖ A blog post (250-300 words) (2022, 2025)
- ❖ An op-ed (500-750 words) (2023, 2026)
- ❖ A letter to the editor (300-500 words) (2024)

* Students will be allowed to print two copies of their documents prior to turning them in for evaluation

Video producer

Students will be given a selection of video clips, photos, and music and will create a 60-90 second video that promote the client's product or service. Students will not be recording a voice track.

Participants will have 90 minutes to complete the practicum. Students may be provided a computer and will be working in Adobe Premiere Pro. Students will need to provide own headphones.

Web Designers

Each designer will use the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference to develop a WordPress site. The objective is to communicate the press conference speaker's organization through appropriate design, navigation and use of provided photos and graphics. The designer may use the provided WordPress templates or customize the template. Each participant will have 90 minutes to complete the practicum.

Students will save their file as schoolname_practicumname on the flashdrive provided for them. Save often during the practicum.

Scoring

Participants will be ranked in numerical order on the basis of the final score to be determined by each judge without consultation. The judge's ranking of each participant whose total ranking is the lowest. Other placings will be determined in the same manner (low point method of selection). Weighted rank scoring will be implemented to maintain point value emphasis between individual and team events. The criteria and points can be found on the scorecard.

Tie Breakers

A. Team tie breakers will be settled in the following order:

1. Combined individual practicum rank score
2. Proposal rank
3. Presentation score
4. Media plan

B. Individuals tie breakers will be settled in the following order:

1. Practicum score
2. Communications quiz score
3. Editing exercise score

Journalistic Writing Practicum Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

STATE _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	High 5-4 points	Middle 3-2 points	Low 1-0 points	Weight	Total Points
Lead/focus				x 3	
Accuracy of information and quotes				x 3	
Clarity and conciseness				X 2	
Correct style (AP)				X 2	
Depth of coverage				X 2	
Header/headline				X 2	
Grammar, spelling, punctuation and word choice				X 2	
Organization and format				X 2	
Accomplishment of purpose				X 2	
TOTAL POINTS (100 POINTS POSSIBLE)					

Opinion Writing Practicum Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

STATE _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	Possible Score	Member Score
Lead/focus	15	
Accuracy of information and quotes	15	
Clarity and conciseness	10	
Correct style (AP)	10	
Takes a position that is supported with evidence	10	
Header/headline	10	
Grammar, spelling, punctuation and word choice	10	
Organization and format	10	
Accomplishment of purpose	10	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

Web Page Design Practicum Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

STATE _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	Possible Score	Member Score
Overall attractiveness of site (color, font choice, readability, font size consistent)	20	
Technical skills specific to activity • Outlined in event specifications	20	
Use of design principles	15	
Neatness and creativity	15	
Choice and placement of photo(s) and graphic(s)	15	
Usability and navigation of site (links work, files named properly, links show up)	15	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

Electronic Media Practicum Promotional Video Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

STATE _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	Possible Score	Member Score
Solid promotional value	20	
Tells a story	20	
Use of provided materials (Used numerous clips, no repeated shots, chose appropriate clips)	15	
Quality of video editing (no black flashes, jump cuts or other erratic movements)	15	
Audio editing (correct volume, no clipping, correct use of natural sound)	15	
Creativity	10	
Stayed within time limit	5	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

Media Plan — Proposal Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

STATE _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

			Possible Score	Team Score
Plan Includes all Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover page, titles and names on cover page, table of contents, does not exceed page limit, double spaced, one inch margins, page numbers, required headings (-1 point per missing item) 			10	
Proposal is Relevant to Scenario <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entire narrative focuses on addressing client's specific public communication needs. 			10	
Overview (Executive Summary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequately explains the plan without reading the entire document. 			10	
Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides adequate background of the issue; clearly states the problem objectives and need for plan; describes how the plan will benefit the client. 			15	
Description of Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly describes (including demographics) who is targeted with the media plan. 			15	
Detailed Strategic Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly states objectives; explains how objectives will be met; explains why chosen mediums are appropriate to meet objectives; describes how plan will be executed. Clearly states and explains social media plan tactics. 			30	
Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains duration of plan and timing of media tactics. 			10	
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposes methods to determine if the objectives were met. 			15	
Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains all costs associated with implementing the media plan. 			20	
Conclusion			10	
Appendices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of communications documents. (Three required) 			30	
Quality of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure. 			25	
TOTAL POINTS			200	

Media Plan Pitch — Presentation Scorecard

175 points

CHAPTER _____

STATE _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3-2 points	Strong evidence of skill is not present 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples are vivid, precise and clearly explained. Examples are original, logical and relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples are usually concrete, sometimes needs clarification. Examples are effective, but need more originality or thought. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples are abstract or not clearly defined. Examples are sometimes confusing, leaving the listeners with questions. 		X 5	
Confidence in speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks very articulately. Never has the need for unnecessary pauses or hesitation when speaking. Speaks at the right pace to be clear. Pronunciation of words is very clear and intent is apparent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes speaks articulately. Occasionally has the need for a long pause or moderate hesitation when speaking. Speaks at the right pace most of the time, but shows some nervousness. Pronunciation of words is usually clear, sometimes vague. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rarely articulate. Frequently hesitates or has long, awkward pauses while speaking. Pace is too fast; nervous. Pronunciation of words is difficult to understand; unclear. 		X 3	
Being detail-oriented; provide details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is able to stay fully detail-oriented. Always provides details which support the issue to communicate the key concepts of the plan; is well organized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is mostly good at being detail-oriented. Usually provides details which are supportive of the issue to communicate the plan; displays good organizational skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has difficulty being detail-oriented. Sometimes overlooks details that could be very beneficial to the issue; Not enough detail provided lacks organization. 		X 3	
Speaking unrehearsed and natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks unrehearsed with comfort and ease. Is able to speak effectively without losing focus and with organized thoughts and concise answers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks unrehearsed mostly with comfort and ease, but sometimes seems nervous or unsure. Is able to speak effectively, has to stop and think and sometimes gets off focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows nervousness or seems unprepared when speaking unrehearsed. Seems to ramble or speaks before thinking. 		X 3	
All team members participated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All team members took an active role in the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two to three team members took an active role in the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One team member took an active role in the presentation. 		X 3	
Use of visual aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual aids add clarity and support what is being said during the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual aids add some clarity and support to what is being said during the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual aids add little to no clarity and support to what is being said during the presentation. 		X 3	
Media plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key elements of the media plan are clearly communicated. Strong understanding of chosen media is present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key elements of the media plan are vaguely communicated. Vague understanding of chosen media is present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key elements of the media plan are not communicated. Little to no understanding of chosen media is present. 		X 3	
Questions and answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is able to correctly respond to judges' questions. Answers show familiarity with subject matter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is somewhat able to correctly respond to judges' questions. Answers show vague familiarity with subject matter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is unable to correctly respond to judges' questions. Answers do not reflect any familiarity with subject matter. 		X 12	
TOTAL POINTS						

Team Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

STATE _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	Possible Score	Member Score
Practicum scores	400	
Media plan proposal	200	
Media plan presentation	175	
Test scores		
Communications quiz – 100 points (25 points/member)	200	
Editing exercise – 100 points (25 points/member)		
TOTAL POINTS	975	