



# **National FFA Agriscience Research Proficiency Awards**

*A Special Project of the  
National FFA Foundation*

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# National FFA Agriscience Research Proficiency Awards

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## **Part One: Introduction**

# **The Agriscience Research Proficiency Award Program**

### **The FFA motto**

**Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve.**

The Agricultural Proficiency Awards program is similar to the FFA motto in that it helps you set goals and learn practical skills. The program rewards FFA members, such as yourself, at the local, state and national levels for exceptional accomplishments and excellence in a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program.

Your reasons for submitting a proficiency award application may vary: to compete against others, to achieve a sense of satisfaction, to reach a goal or maybe just to have fun!

To determine which SAE you have, consider the following: placement is for paid work or unpaid/volunteer work. Examples include working at a nursery, grooming at a horse stable or volunteering at a local park. The second type of SAE is called entrepreneurship. It is for SAE programs that involve ownership of an agricultural production or an agribusiness enterprise. Examples include owning/operating a lawn care service, holiday poinsettia production and sales or a pay-to-fish operation. The third type of SAE is agriscience research and experimentation. It is for SAE programs that involve planning and conducting a scientific experiment based on a hypothesis and the use of the scientific method of investigation on the hypothesis. This may include qualitative research, quantitative research, experimental research, descriptive research or quasi experimental research. The fourth type of SAE is exploratory. It is for the SAE program that explores various parts of agriculture and agricultural careers. Examples include attending an agricultural career fair or creating a report on the work of a veterinarian.

### **SAE programs**

SAE programs form the basis of proficiency and degree award programs. They are planned, practical activities conducted outside of regularly scheduled class time that help students develop and apply agricultural knowledge and skills learned inside the classroom. These activities can include entrepreneurship, placement (paid or unpaid) or agriscience research. Developing an SAE into a successful program takes time and planning. SAE programs also involve goal setting because they take time to grow and develop.

You should apply in an area in which you are strongest. For instance, if you have worked for a turf grass contractor for several years but have started your own enterprise with a couple of customers during the last year of your SAE, you should apply in the placement area to take advantage of the longer history and development. You can include information on your goals, a résumé, and a personal page about your entrepreneurship. While that will show the progress into your career goal, you are only confusing the judges by mixing the information from both placement and entrepreneurship on one application.

**SAE info**  
More information on SAE programs is available from your  
agriculture instructor, at [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org).

### Who can apply?

Agricultural proficiency awards are available to all FFA members enrolled in high school agriculture including special needs students. You can apply for specific proficiency areas while you are in high school or after you are out of high school, as long as you have been out for less than one year. If you have graduated from high school, you must have completed at least three full years of instruction in agricultural education or the program of agricultural education offered in the school last attended. At the minimum, you must have kept one full calendar year's worth of records as an FFA member to apply for a national level proficiency award. Realistically, you are more competitive at the national level with more years of records. Some states have specific requirements; your state FFA advisors can provide more information.

Proficiency applicants do not need to live on a farm or ranch to participate in the awards program. The agricultural industry needs qualified employees in over 300 career areas, including processing, sales and service, conservation, forest management, horticulture, landscaping, nursery operation, turf management and floriculture.

The agriscience research proficiency is new beginning in the 2012 award year. Many agriculture teachers have expressed a need for agriscience award programs that would mirror the career development events and proficiency award areas. The Agriscience Student of the Year program is now being transitioned to and promoted as a proficiency award program in the areas listed in the next section. This has the potential for seven new proficiency award areas to the existing areas.

### Agriscience Research Proficiency Award Areas

- **Animal Systems Research** - Research into the study of animal systems, including life processes, health, nutrition, genetics, management and processing through the study of small animals, aquaculture, livestock, dairy, horses and/or poultry.
- **Diversified Research** - Research studies into two or more of the other research areas.
- **Environmental Service Systems/Natural Resource Systems Research** - Research into the study of systems, instruments and technology used in waste management and their influence on the environment.
- **Food Products and Processing Systems Research** - Research into the study of product development, quality assurance, food safety, production, sales and service, regulation and compliance and food service within the food science industry.
- **Plant Systems Research** - Research into the study of plant life cycles, classifications, functions, practices, through the study of crops, turf grass, trees and shrubs and/or ornamental plants.
- **Power, Structural and Technical Systems Research** - Research into the study of agricultural equipment, power systems, alternative fuel sources and precision technology, as well as woodworking, metalworking, welding and project planning for agricultural structures.

- **Social Sciences Research - Research of leadership, personal growth and career success skills necessary for a chosen profession while effectively contributing to society.**

#### **Guidelines for state winners**

- You will be considered for national awards only during the same calendar year in which you place first in state competition.
- You will receive reimbursement from the National FFA Foundation only if your application wins at the state level and is submitted for national consideration.
- You will be expected to attend the national FFA convention to receive your award *if you are selected as a national finalist*.

#### **Judging for national finalists**

Local or state level winners are selected based on their location. For example, Jim Jones from Anytown, Iowa, can win the Iowa FFA Agriscience Research-Animal Systems Proficiency Award, but he cannot win the Indiana FFA Agriscience Research-Animal Systems Proficiency Award.

#### **Judging the applications**

Proficiency awards will be judged by the following criteria:

- Skills and competencies learned that relate to an agricultural career field.
- Growth in scope.
- Personal growth and development through FFA activities.
- Evidence of student accomplishments based on available resources and opportunities.
- Communication skills as demonstrated in the written portions of applications and clear, concise answers given during interviews.

#### **Common mistakes on applications**

Applications should honestly, accurately and neatly reflect members' SAE programs and other achievements. Judges do not want to see mysterious accounting and other inconsistencies. You are responsible for communicating clearly and completely to the evaluators in your application, answering questions completely and providing the information requested. Some trouble spots to avoid are highlighted here.

##### **1. Pictures that show unrelated activities or unsafe practices**

There is no better way to ruin your chances of winning an agricultural mechanics proficiency award than by showing a picture of someone welding without proper safety equipment. And there is no sense in showing a picture of a dairy cow if you are applying for recognition in forest management.

##### **2. Applying in the wrong award area**

Judges have disqualified applicants for submitting applications in the incorrect area. For example, an applicant who owned only horses and applied in the diversified livestock production award area, will be disqualified because the application should have been submitted in the equine science area. Pages 6-11 contain descriptions of the various award areas.

##### **3. Sloppy work**

To succeed in the proficiency awards program, you must produce a neat, concise application for the judges. Write your first draft by hand, then use a computer to complete your application. Check grammar, spelling and sentence structure. You may be able to recruit your local English teacher or school secretary to proofread your application on a volunteer basis.

**Make a copy**

Make sure you make a copy of your application because the judges will not return it. However, scanned copies of all national finalist applications are kept in the archives at the National FFA Center.

**Recognition****Awards available from National FFA Organization**

- Chapter level
  - Medal and certificate
- State level
  - Each state winner receives a framed certificate and a \$250 cash award.
- National level
  - Each national finalist receives a plaque and a \$500 cash award.
  - National winner receives an additional plaque and an additional \$500 cash award.
  - Each national finalist can apply for and compete to participate in an international travel experience.

**NOTE:** Local and state associations may have additional awards. Your local and state FFA advisors can provide more information.

## Part Two: Completing the Application

### Information, please

The application is a series of questions about you and your supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program. Some of these questions are easy; others require thoughtful consideration on your part. Still other sections of the application ask for figures based on the records you kept on your SAE.

This section of the handbook will serve as your map in navigating through the proficiency award application. Throughout this section you will find definitions, examples and helpful hints to answer questions.

### Tips for completing the application

1. Read all instructions before you begin. Review the glossary to gain a better understanding of the terminology used throughout the application.
2. Do not alter the application in any way, if you do, it will be subject to disqualification. This includes copying the application into a Word document, altering the space given for responses for any text box questions or changing the font size below Arial 10 point and photo captions below Arial 14. For fairness, all applicants must respond to questions in the space provided.
3. Complete the application as of January 1 of the year in which you are applying for the award. After the first year, report your records on a calendar-year basis.
4. Use the latest revised application form. Verify that you have the correct application by checking the dates listed on the documents upper left-hand corner.
5. Confirm your state's deadline for submitting the completed application because each state has different rules.
6. Obtain the required signatures on the application in the proper places. The person supervising your progress should sign the application, even if s/he is a parent or an advisor.
7. Review your application one more time for spelling, grammar or mathematical errors. Your application should be typed in the computerized version of the application (Excel template).
8. If you need to spell-check your electronic application, it is recommended you copy the text and paste it into Word and spell-check your text there. Since the Microsoft® Excel template applications are protected due to all of the calculations, you are unable to spell-check in Excel. You can download the applications from the FFA website on the Proficiency home page.
9. Place your application in an FFA award binder available through Shop FFA at 1-888-332-2668 or [www.ffa.org/shop](http://www.ffa.org/shop). Doing so makes processing the application much easier.

10. Prepare two copies of the application. Send one to the next level of competition and place the other in your chapter's file as a permanent record. You will find it difficult to obtain a copy of your application once you mail it to the next level because program officials will not return it.
11. Include only your share of inventory, income and net worth in your proficiency award application if your SAE program involves other family members.
12. Verify that the figures used are true. You may round them to the nearest dollar. Applications which are incomplete or have mathematical errors are subject to rejection.
13. Use information and examples in the handbook's appendices and on the proficiency homepage on [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org) to clarify and assist you in completing your application.

## A step-by-step approach

### I. Cover page:

1. **Name** – Write your name exactly as you want it to appear on a plaque and in press releases. Confirm that it is spelled correctly.  
**1b: Name on chapter roster (if different).**
2. **Date of birth** – Give the month, day and year of your birth. Be absolutely accurate as program officials determine your eligibility, in part, by this information.
3. **Age** – Provide your age as of your last birthday.
4. **Gender** – Select the appropriate response of either male or female.
5. **E-mail address** – Provide your e-mail address for notification purposes. We will not sell your e-mail address.
6. **Address** – You will be sent mail at this address. Include the appropriate post office box number and/or street name and number, town, state and zip code.
7. **Telephone number** – Include the area code and confirm the number.
8. **Name of parents/guardians** – This information is used for news media purposes.
9. **Parents/Guardian occupation** - This information is used for news media purposes.
10. **Complete FFA chapter name** – Give the official name of the school because it is often different from the chapter name (for example: Western FFA).
11. **Name of Jr. high or high school** – Give the complete official name of the school because it is often different from the chapter name.
12. **School address** – FFA advisor(s) and/or other school officials will be sent mail at this address. Include the appropriate post office box number and/or street name and number, town, state and zip code.
13. **School telephone number** – Include the area code and number where program officials can reach your FFA advisor and/or other school officials.
14. **Chapter advisor(s)** – Include the complete name of each current FFA advisor.
15. **Year FFA membership began** – Please indicate the calendar year your membership began. One of the requirements for proficiency recognition is that you paid your FFA membership dues for each year covered by the application.

16. Years of agricultural education completed – If you are out of high school, you must have completed at least three full years of agriculture or all of the agriculture offered in the last school (grades 9-12) you attended.
17. Years of agricultural education offered in the school last attended in grades 7-12 – Indicate the years, not semesters, your school offers. All schools do not offer the same years of instruction. Most schools offer four years of instruction in grades 9-12, but there are a wide variety of programs that offer instruction from grades 7-12 or only grades 10-12.
18. Year my first SAE record book ended – This information transfers to other parts of the application.
19. Year my last SAE record book ended – This information transfers to other parts of the application.
20. Year in school at time of applying for award – FFA members are eligible to participate during any year that they are enrolled in agricultural education classes.
21. If you have graduated from high school, year graduated – FFA members are eligible to participate through the end of the calendar year in which they graduate.
22. State/national dues paid – Verify your membership status by reviewing the chapter and state membership rosters for each year covered by the application.
23. Make sure you obtain all pertinent signatures for your application – If you are using the placement application, you will need your employer's signature, even if your employer is your parent.

## II. Performance review:

The following instructions cover Pages 2 and 3 of the application.

SAE programs vary widely. To accurately compare your accomplishments with other applicants, judges need to know how your program began, the help you received along the way and your future plans. Font style and size must be Arial 10 and fit in the box.

The performance review section must be supported by details provided in the remainder of the application.

### A. Getting started in this activity:

1. Briefly describe how you got started in this proficiency area.  
This is the first impression the judges have of your program and application. Make your write-up interesting and informative. Think about when you first started this SAE, what happened? Did any particular person or event spur your interest to begin a program?
2. Briefly describe how your roles and responsibilities related to this proficiency award area have changed.  
In every position you increase your knowledge of your job duties. How have your responsibilities changed related to this proficiency award area?
3. Briefly describe the single greatest challenge you faced in this proficiency award area and how you overcome that challenge.  
Describe any special advantage or disadvantages that had a major impact on your achievements in your SAE program.  
There are circumstances – such as where you live, facilities at school or community and

your parents' occupation – that can be considered challenges, advantages or disadvantages. Natural disasters such as floods or drought can be considered disadvantages. Make certain that you explain any unique or questionable situations that impact your SAE. Describe how these circumstances impacted your achievements.

#### B. Progress:

4. Briefly explain your three greatest accomplishments/findings in this proficiency award area?

Have you been recognized as an employee for doing a great job on anything? As an entrepreneur have you increased or expanded your enterprise? Did a research experiment lead to a new patent or method? State the three greatest accomplishments here.

Goal Accomplishment/Finding #1

Goal Accomplishment/Finding #2

Goal Accomplishment/Finding #3

5. What are three ways your experiences or opportunities in this proficiency award area will impact your future?

What are three ways your experiences or opportunities in this proficiency award area will impact your future? Provide three impacts.

Impact #1

Impact #2

Impact #3

- i.e., (Research) I had an opportunity to present my research to college researchers that prompted a position as an undergrad researcher.

#### III. Scope related to this proficiency area—Page 4a and/or 4b Year

This section is for the calendar year in which you conducted your program. For new students, the first record year can be less or more than 12 months. If you are enrolled in agricultural education and start your SAE program by September 1, you can conclude your records on December 31 of the same year (short year) or continue through December 31 of the following year (long year). The application makes allowances for this option.

*Special Tip: The application automatically transfers the year from what you entered on the Cover Page, year SAE began, 18.*

#### Career pathway

Select the appropriate career pathway in regards to your research project.

The nine career pathways are:

##### 1. Agribusiness Systems

The study of business principles, including management, marketing and finance, and their application to enterprises agriculture, food and natural resources

2. **Animal Systems**  
The study of animal systems, including life processes, health, nutrition, genetics, management and processing, through the study of small animals, aquaculture, livestock, dairy, horses and/or poultry.
3. **Biotechnology Systems**  
The study of data and techniques of applied science for the solution of problems concerning living organisms.
4. **Cluster Skills - LifeKnowledge ®**  
The student will demonstrate competence in the application of leadership, personal growth and career success skills necessary for a chosen profession while effectively contributing to society.
5. **Environmental Service Systems**  
The study of systems, instruments and technology used in waste management and their influence on the environment.
6. **Food Products and Processing Systems**  
The study of product development, quality assurance, food safety, production, sales and service, regulation and compliance and food service within the food science industry.
7. **Natural Resource Systems**  
The study of the management of soil, water, wildlife, forests and air as natural resources.
8. **Plant Systems**  
The study of plant life cycles, classifications, functions, practices, through the study of crops, turf grass, trees and shrubs and/or ornamental plants.
9. **Power, Structure and Technical Systems**  
The study of agricultural equipment, power systems, alternative fuel sources and precision technology, as well as woodworking, metalworking, welding and project planning for agricultural structures.

**Research title**

Provide the title of your research project.

**Hours**

This area is for the number of total hours worked on all aspects of your research project.

**Income**

Provide the amount of income you have received from working on this research project.

**Expenses**

Provide the amount of expenses you have incurred by completing this research project.

**Net earnings**

This area auto-calculates your net earnings from your research project. It is very possible this will be a negative amount.

#### IV. Research expenses page

This sheet needs to be copied so that there is a sheet for each research project listed on Page 4a and 4b. If no expenses are incurred, explain how the project materials were obtained.

**Year**

This is the calendar year in which the expense was incurred.

**Item**

The name and/or description of the item.

**Quantity**

The specific number of items that were used.

**Price per unit**

The dollar amount/cost of each unit item.

**Total**

This section auto-calculates the total spent for the items.

**Amount funded by the student**

Enter the dollar amount that you funded for the items.

**Amount funded by others**

Enter the dollar amount that was funded by other sources for the items.

**Name of funding source**

Enter the name of the source that provided funding for the items.

**No Expenses**

For those students claiming no expenses for their research projects, please give a detailed explanation of where your project materials came from.

#### V. All applicants complete the skill competencies and knowledge section.

Candidate will identify 10 major skills, competencies and knowledge that best describes what was technically gained from the SAE in the primary pathway related to this award area. The candidate will also identify 5 additional skills, competencies and knowledge that were gained in one of the other related pathways.

1. Identify a major skill, competency or knowledge that was gained as a result of this SAE program related to the award area you are applying for. Skills, competencies and knowledge should be higher level skills or level II or level III skills as defined by the national Agriculture, Food and Natural Resource content standards.
2. Identify the number of hours that it took the candidate to master the skill, competency, or knowledge identified.
3. Contribution to Success: Simply state the how the skill, competency, or knowledge gained and its specific contribution that it made to your programs success.
4. Career Cluster Indicator: Identify the corresponding pathway cluster indicator that pertains to the skill, competency or knowledge gained through the SAE program.

## VI. Supporting documentation

The following instructions are for the items found on the Supporting documentation tab.

### A. Abstract

Attach an one page abstract for each research project listed on pages 4a and/or 4b. An abstract is a brief summary of your paper, which concisely describes your purpose, methods, results and conclusions. Do not include the title in the abstract. Your abstract may include potential research applications or future research. The abstract should be in paragraph form and no longer than one page.

### B. Procedure

Attach an one page documentation of the procedure use for each research project listed on pages 4a and/or 4b. A well-written procedure will enable others to reproduce your results by duplicating your study. Explain the technical and experimental procedures employed. Use good judgment with details. Note easily understood tests or procedures, but do not describe them in detail.

### C. Conclusion

Attach an one page conclusion for each research project listed on pages 4a and/or 4b. Draw conclusions from the results of your study and relate them to the original hypothesis. If results were not what you expected, take this opportunity to explain why.

Format for this documentation must meet the following guidelines.

- Printed on 8 1/2" x 11" white bond paper
- 1" margins
- Font size must be 12 using Arial, Courier or Times New Roman
- APA style recognized citation system

### D. Résumé

A résumé is a written account of your experiences and accomplishments that you use to explain to potential employers why you are the most qualified person for a specific position.

Your involvement in agricultural education and FFA has provided you with numerous noteworthy employment and career-related opportunities. Recording these accomplishments, as they happen, is one of many steps you can do to prepare yourself for one of the many challenging and rewarding agricultural careers.

#### a. Name/address/phone/FFA chapter/e-mail

Include your name, current address, telephone number, name of your FFA chapter and e-mail address.

#### b. Career objective

Indicate specific short-term and long-term career goals.

#### c. Education

List specific courses, seminars or other educational experiences that helped to prepare you for your stated career objective.

- Attended seminars on specific topics of interest
- Earned state-level certification for pesticide and herbicide applications
- Toured three commercial greenhouse operations

- Completed a plant science short course
- Participated in a one-week ecology camp
- Attended a garden seed seminar

**d. FFA leadership activities/awards**

Leadership development opportunities come in many different forms. Some activities are the direct result of FFA membership, while others are offered by the school and community and are available to all students.

**Examples:**

- FFA offices held - junior officer, secretary, president of chapter
- Major committee assignments - chairperson of fundraising, chairperson of spring banquet
- State, national conventions - member of courtesy corps, chapter or state delegate
- Recognition received - Star Greenhand, Chapter Star Farmer, Chapter Star in Agribusiness, Chapter Star in Agricultural Placement, Chapter Star in Agriscience, State Star Farmer, State Star in Agribusiness, State Star in Agricultural Placement, State Star in Agriscience, chapter member of the year, 100% attendance at chapter functions

**e. School leadership activities/awards**

Include major school leadership activities and accomplishments that were available to all students.

**Examples:**

class officer; member of various clubs (Spanish, VICA, DECA, etc.); homecoming events; National Honor Society; Who's Who Among American High School Students; organized sports such as track, basketball, etc.; school audio visual/TV production staff; school librarian staff; school newspaper; yearbook staff; band; chorus; drama

**f. Community leadership activities/awards**

Include major community related activities.

**Examples:**

fire department volunteer; superintendent of beef department at the county fair; junior scout leader; scouting program member; hospital, nursing home or child care center volunteer; church youth group member; officer or usher and volunteer naturalist at county park

These hours may not be duplicated from your research hours (unpaid hours).

**g. Professional associations**

**Examples:**

Subscriptions to agricultural-related publications; vice president of county hunting club; member of local, state and/or national nursery associations; member of state honey producers association, Ducks Unlimited, Hops Growers of America, livestock breed association, FFA alumni affiliate or other associations.

#### h. Other accomplishments

Include all other accomplishments that have been achieved during the years covered by your application.

Examples:

Exhibited cheese at the State Cheese Manufacturers Association meeting; winner of DAR essay writing award

#### i. References

References are a normal part of a business résumé. It is best to have references from individuals who are not related to you. List the names, addresses and phone numbers of three people who can serve as good references for you. Do not send/attach letters for this item.

### E. Reference

This statement gives a different perspective of your SAE. Judges find this section very helpful in evaluating your application. Be sure that the person you request to write the statement understands that he or she should emphasize your SAE accomplishments. A name and title must appear with the statement. NOTE: The recommendation can be no more than one page in length. If both your employer and advisor want to make a recommendation, they can either put both recommendations on one page, or use a separate recommendation as your personal page. (See [D] for further information on the personal page).

### F. Supporting pictures

Every picture tells a story, but it won't do much good for your FFA award application if it's dark, out of focus or doesn't have anything to do with your application.

Good quality, well planned photos set your application apart from the competition. They tie the entire application together and add impact, provided they are good pictures with informative captions. Photos need to relate to the proficiency area in which you are applying. Photos with corresponding captions must be kept one per page. Photo collages are not allowed.

*Special Tip: Digital photos are acceptable as long as they have not been electronically altered.*

Photos are used as supporting evidence. They must help tell the story of your program and need to show activity, size and your involvement in the proficiency area. Pictures of sheep in your horticulture application will only raise questions, rather than clarify your SAE. Taking pictures to tell the complete story takes planning.

Consider:

- An SAE program normally covers a period from three to four years.
- Every program has important phases that can only be captured on film when they happen.
- It is best to take pictures over a period of time to reflect your program's growth. (Sometimes staged photos are needed, but work at making them not look staged by changing hats, shirts, etc.)
- The background and what you are doing should fit the photo. (Mowing grass with snow on the ground is not believable.)

To learn more about how to use photography to your advantage, turn to Appendix A, “General photography tips and evaluation.”

### **G. Personal page**

The Personal page section is the place to add anything you feel will support and set apart your application, including information that maybe doesn't fit into any other category.

- If you are an entrepreneurship candidate and possess a large inventory, you may wish to use this area to list completely the inventory items that you own.
- If you received numerous awards, you could even include a picture showing all of the awards in one photo.
- Information such as newspaper clippings, additional support statements or recommendations, additional photographs, copies of licenses or certifications, charts, graphs and advertisements are appropriate.
- Your space is limited to one side of an 8 ½” x 11” single-side page. Information for this section may not include such items as videotapes, computer discs, CD-ROMS, DVD-ROM and other multi-media presentations.

## Congratulations! You have completed the application!

### A final checklist

Have you ever seen a football player run for a sure touchdown to win the game in the final seconds, only to learn that the play had been whistled dead because of a rules infraction back at the 50 yard line?

To prevent a similar situation from happening to your award application, you should make certain that the minimum requirements are met. No judge wants to disqualify an application on any level. However, it does happen. Just because your application passed local or state judging evaluations doesn't mean it will pass national competition.

Can you answer "YES" or "MET" to these 15 statements?

Review your application with your chapter advisor. Your advisor must be able to provide a positive response to the following 15 statements.

1. Applicant has been an active FFA member for each year covered by this application, Cover Page, Line 22. (Consult state copy of membership roster for each year.)
2. Applicant has included his/her e-mail address, Cover Page Line 5.
3. Applicant has been out of high school for no more than one year, Cover Page, Line 21, or is still enrolled in high school.
4. Applicant has graduated and has completed at least three full years of agriculture, or all of the agriculture offered in the school last attended, Cover Page, Line 16 and 17.
5. Applicant has completed at least one research project relating to an agriculture career pathway. Pages 4a and 4b.
6. Applicant has included a research expense page for each research project listed on pages 4a and 4b.
7. Applicant has included an abstract limited to one page for each research project listed on pages 4a and 4b.
8. Applicant has included a procedure limited to one page for each research project listed on pages 4a and 4b.
9. Applicant has included a conclusion limited to one page for each research project listed on pages 4a and 4b.
10. Applicant has included a résumé limited to two pages.
11. Applicant has included a written evaluation limited to one page by the most recent employer or agriculture instructor describing the progress that the applicant has made in developing the skills and competencies necessary for success within the award area in which they are applying. One page total.
12. Applicant has included a maximum of six photographs with captions. Captions must be in Arial 14 and a maximum of 8 lines.
13. Applicant has included a maximum of one page (maximum size 8 1/2" X 11") of additional information. This may NOT include the following: Video tapes; computer disk; CD Roms; DVD's; etc.
14. The application is properly signed by applicant, parent or guardian, chapter advisor, school superintendent or principal and State FFA Advisor.
15. I hereby confirm there are no exaggerated, misleading, deceptive or false statements or claims about the applicant's experience, or performance in this application. Additionally, I confirm this supervised agricultural program has been conducted with the highest possible regard for the quality and human production practices as the products and/or services impact public safety and consumer confidence.

# Glossary

**AFNR:** agriculture, food and natural resources.

**Agriscience research:** planning and conducting a scientific experiment relating to agriculture based on a hypothesis and the use of the scientific method of investigation on the hypothesis, including qualitative research, quantitative research, experimental research, descriptive research or quasi-experimental research.

**Career clusters:** groups of similar occupations and industries developed by the U.S. Department of Education as a way to organize career planning.

**Career pathways:** broad groupings of careers that share similar characteristics and whose employment requirements call for many common interests, strengths and competencies.

**Community service:** donated service or activity that is performed by someone or a group of people for the benefit of the public or its institutions – outside of classroom time.

**Competencies:** measures of abilities, knowledge or skills.

**Eligibility:** qualifications that must be met to attain something.

**Employee:** a person who works for another person for wages or salary.

**Entrepreneurship:** the act of organizing, managing and assuming the risk of a business or enterprise.

**Expense:** cost involved with producing a product or service.

**National FFA Center:** the headquarters for the National FFA Organization.

**National FFA Foundation:** the branch of the National FFA Organization charged with soliciting and collecting donations for FFA programs and services.

**Placement:** an agricultural education program where students work for wages or experience.

**Proficiency:** advancement in knowledge or skill; receiving competencies through training and practice.

**Recordkeeping:** keeping accurate facts and information pertaining to your SAE.

**Regularly scheduled class time:** time during the regular scheduled school day that a student is officially enrolled in an agricultural education course.

**Research/experimentation:** an extensive activity where the student plans and conducts a major agriculture experiment using the scientific process.

**Scope:** size and growth of an operation or enterprise.

**Shop FFA:** the online merchandising division of the National FFA Organization, 6060 FFA Drive, PO Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960.

**Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) program:** planned practical activities conducted outside of class time in which students develop and apply knowledge and skills. These activities may be either entrepreneurship, placement (paid or unpaid) or research/experimentation.

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):** the branch of the federal government governing the industry of agriculture.

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## Appendix A: General photography tips and evaluation

Even if you own an automatic camera, you still need to possess a thorough knowledge of film, equipment and techniques to take good pictures. Consider these tips:

- Use the appropriate film to obtain the best pictures. In general, a film with a lower ASA/ISO rating – for example 100 ASA – is used when there is plenty of light available. A film with a higher rating – say 400 or 1,000 ASA – is used when there is not enough light available. The best all-around choice is 200 ASA.
- Hold your camera steady. Gently squeeze the shutter release. Suddenly moving your camera can cause fuzzy, out-of-focus pictures.
- Understand how your camera's flash works. Verify that your flash unit is properly "synchronized" with your camera. Stand close enough to your subject, so that light from the flash will reach it. Base this distance on the film speed and flash setting you select.
- Clean your camera's lens because lint on it can cause misty looking pictures.
- Be sure that your pictures are properly exposed – not too light, nor too dark.
- For dramatic pictures, choose a camera angle carefully. Move around your subject to determine which perspective is best. You may find that the subject looks better at a high- or low-viewing angle.
- Be careful of cluttered backgrounds. Maintain only one center of interest in each picture. Eliminate all distracting elements by moving closer to your subject or by keeping simple items in the foreground and background.
- Move closer to your subject whenever possible because close-up photos have more impact than distant shots.
- Always focus your camera's lens on your subject's eyes or face.
- Take a number of shots of the same activity, so as to avoid being "stranded" with only one photo of a crucial scene during which your subject had his or her eyes closed! Take various exposures, especially if you are using slide film. (A film processor can "correct" an under- or overexposed color print, but not a slide).
- Take pictures during early morning or late afternoon because those taken around noon can appear "washed out."
- Verify that your light source is behind you and not your subject.
- If your subject is wearing a hat with a brim, you may need to use a flash to avoid a shadow across his or her face. If needed, ask your subject to tilt the hat back a bit or remove it altogether.
- Dress your subject in reasonably clean clothing. Avoid wild hats and shirts. Whenever possible, identify your subject with FFA.
- Make your picture realistic. Don't wear a FFA jacket if you're washing livestock or cleaning a greasy engine. If you need photos of a work scene, have your subject wear a FFA cap or T-shirt, rather than an official FFA jacket.

### Selecting the "best" photos

Remember that you can include only six pictures with your proficiency application. So, it's important to make each picture count. Before selecting a specific photograph and writing a caption, answer the following questions:

- What are the strengths of your completed application? For example, if you show livestock, include a photo of the plaques, trophies and ribbons you earned while exhibiting cattle.
- What are the weaknesses of your completed application? If your equipment inventory is limited, but you recently purchased one new item, include a photo of this specific piece of equipment and write a caption explaining how it was financed.

- Can you improve your application by using photos to enhance its weaker aspects or to compliment its strengths?
- Avoid posed “mug” shots that don’t add anything to your application and appear dull.

Here’s an idea that can make your decision easier. Ask a person who is unfamiliar with your program to review your photos and captions to determine the type of message they convey. By doing so, you’ll obtain an unbiased idea of the strengths of the application.

### Mounting the pictures

Now that you have clear, sharp pictures of your SAE program, the next step is to mount them in a professional manner that enhances your application. Here are some hints:

- Place only one photograph on each page.
- Use photo mounting cement that is moisture-resistant and will not stain your prints. Rubber cement, pastes that contain water or penetrating solvents, can stain your prints or cause them to wrinkle. If you are unsure of what to use, try mounting a picture on material similar to your application and observe the results.

### Writing captions

Captions are a short description of the activity in your photos. Informative captions can indicate your personal involvement and demonstrate the quality and size of your program.

Use captions to show your program knowledge or provide additional information that is not already stated in the application. Use them to explain something important about the photo that is not easily recognized by someone who is unfamiliar with your program.

The font must be Arial 14 and a maximum of 8 lines.

### Tips on writing captions

- Avoid starting each captions with “Here I am ...” or “I am ...” or “This is me doing ...”
- Use the entire space allotted to present additional knowledge about your program.
- Be sure the caption relates to the photo.
- Check the spelling and grammar of your captions.
- Don’t repeat yourself in the same caption, saying the same thing over and over again. Example: “I am installing a GPS sensor. I must install a variety of sensors. There are sensors that need to be installed.”
- Write as if you are talking about yourself to someone else. For example: “David is shown here planting corn,” sounds strange if you are David.

Here are a few examples of common photos and captions found in typical proficiency applications. Read the critiques for ways on how to improve these photos and captions.

### Example one: get close

Photos: (1-Test Plot, student, sign;2- equipment in distance)

Caption: "Promoting this laboratories test plot was important to me. People were interested in what I was testing, the progress and the outcome of this project. The plot was located next to the road to help generate interest in the project."

Critique: This caption for Photo #1 is not bad, but more details on the steps needed to maintain the plot or its results would make it better. The main problem is the distance. Move closer when taking photos, so the face and sign can be seen. The second picture needs to be closer; it is difficult to determine what is important in the photo.

**Example two: use captions to your advantage**

Photo: *(Log house being built)*

Caption: Use entire space allotted for your caption.

Example: “We are putting up a roof system using A-trusses.”

Critique: The caption is too short (9 words) and adds no new information to enhance the application. Show your knowledge; tell something about your project that you haven’t said in the application.

**Example three: safety**

Photos: *(1- welding without gloves or jacket, 2-getting ready to weld with all proper safety equipment)*

Critique: One of these photos (photo #4) shows obvious safety violations: no welding gloves or jacket. Verify that your photo show safety in practice.

**Example four: show your knowledge and action**

Photos: *(1-Student with carcass, 2-Student with poinsettias)*

Captions: Photo #6—“E-Coli causes widespread and severe diseases in susceptible people. This pathogen comes from ingestion of undercooked meat from a contaminated carcass. The USDA started a generic E-Coli program which I have performed (and am shown doing) at W Slaughterhouse and the school lab.”

Photo #7 – “I am pulling poinsettias to fill orders for deliveries. The plants are tagged with "sold" tickets and placed in the work area for processing. The plants are dressed with baskets and bows, Spanish moss and care cards. They are then placed at the delivery station according to service area.”

Critique: The photos and captions are great. The photos show both students performing tasks and the captions provide additional knowledge not covered in the application.

**Appendix B:****AGRICULTURAL PROFICIENCY  
CERTIFICATION**

Having applications disqualified during national finalist competition after the applicant has received state recognition and the publicity that accompanies such recognition is a disappointment to the student, an embarrassment to the state and national organizations, a very undesirable task for a panel of judges and most of all very difficult to explain to the sponsor of the activity. To improve the quality of applications submitted, and to eliminate the need to disqualify an application at the national finalist level of competition each agricultural proficiency award application submitted should be certified by the state advisor. The state advisor should appoint a team to review each application and only send those on to national competition that have a positive response to each of the statements listed on the Agriscience Research Review forms.

## Appendix C:

Revised April 2011

## AGRISCIENCE RESEARCH PROFICIENCY REVIEW

NAME OF APPLICANT: \_\_\_\_\_

AWARD AREA: \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWED BY : \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Applicants using the National FFA Template already have a review which is part of the application. You DO NOT have to complete this review also, it is identical. If you do not use the template please attach a completed copy of this review to each Entrepreneurship Agricultural Proficiency application that is sent on for national consideration.

YES NO

- |  |     |  |
|--|-----|--|
| ___  | ___ | 1. Applicant has been an active FFA member for each year covered by this application, Cover Page, Line 22. (Consult state copy of membership roster for each year.)  |
| ___  | ___ | 2. Applicant has included his/her e-mail address, Cover Page Line 5.   |
| ___  | ___ | 3. Applicant has been out of high school for no more than one year, Cover Page, Line 21, or is still enrolled in high school.  |
| ___  | ___ | 4. Applicant has graduated and has completed at least three full years of agriculture, or all of the agriculture offered in the school last attended, Cover Page, Line 16 and 17.  |
| <i>NOTE: Applicants that are still in high school at the time of applying are eligible to participate at all grade levels. Applicants need to have a minimum of one full calendar year of records to apply for a national level proficiency award.</i> |     |  |
| ___  | ___ | 5. Applicant has completed at least one research project relating to an agriculture career pathway. Pages 4a and 4b.   |
| ___  | ___ | 6. Applicant has included a research expense page for each research project listed on pages 4a and 4b.   |
| ___  | ___ | 7. Applicant has included an abstract limited to one page for each research project listed on pages 4a and 4b.   |
| ___  | ___ | 8. Applicant has included a procedure limited to one page for each research project listed on pages 4a and 4b  |
| ___  | ___ | 9. Applicant has included a conclusion limited to one page for each research project listed on pages 4a and 4b.  |
| ___  | ___ | 10. Applicant has included a résumé limited to two pages.  |
| ___  | ___ | 11. Applicant has included a written evaluation limited to one page by the most recent employer or agriculture instructor describing the progress that the applicant has made in developing the skills and competencies necessary for success within the award area in which they are applying. One page total.  |
| ___  | ___ | 12. Applicant has included a maximum of six photographs with captions. Captions must be in Arial 14 and a maximum of 8 lines.  |
| ___  | ___ | 13. Applicant has included a maximum of one page (maximum size 8 1/2" X 11") of additional information. This may NOT include the following: Video tapes; computer disk; CD Roms; DVD's; etc.   |
| ___  | ___ | 14. The application is properly signed by applicant, parent or guardian, chapter advisor, school superintendent or principal and State FFA Advisor.  |
| ___  | ___ | 15. I hereby confirm there are no exaggerated, misleading, deceptive or false statements or claims about the applicant's experience, or performance in this application. Additionally, I confirm this supervised agricultural program has been conducted with the highest possible regard for the quality and human production practices as the products and/or services impact public safety and consumer confidence. |

## Appendix D:

## Proficiency Agriscience Research Rubric

Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 3	Mid Points 2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Getting Started Question	Page 2, question 1	3 points	Response demonstrates a clear understanding of how the SAE enterprises related to this area were selected and established.	Response demonstrates a vague understanding of how the SAE enterprises related to this area were selected and established.	Response demonstrates an unclear understanding of how the SAE enterprises related to this area were selected and established.	
Roles and Responsibilities	Page 2, question 2	3 points	Response demonstrates a clear description of roles and responsibilities related to their enterprises or activities.	Response demonstrates a vague description of roles and responsibilities related to their enterprises or activities.	Response demonstrates little or no description of roles and responsibilities related to their enterprises or activities.	
			Response demonstrates change or progression of roles and responsibilities over time period represented.	Response demonstrates limited change or progression of roles and responsibilities over time period represented.	Response demonstrates no change or progression of roles and responsibilities over time period represented.	
Challenges	Page 2, question 3	3 points	Response demonstrates a clear explanation of the challenge and steps utilized to address the challenge.	Response demonstrates a vague explanation of the challenge and steps utilized to address the challenge.	Response demonstrates little to no explanation of the challenge and steps utilized to address the challenge.	
			The challenge identified was clearly in the scope of the candidates role to address and manage the outcome.	The challenge identified was beyond the scope of the candidate's role to address and manage the outcome.	The challenge identified was clearly out of scope of the candidate's role to address and manage the outcome.	
			Response demonstrated candidate's involvement in addressing the challenge.	Response demonstrated candidate's limited involvement in addressing the challenge.	Response demonstrated no personal involvement in addressing the challenge.	
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 3	Mid Points 2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Progress - Accomplishments	Page 3, Section B1.1. to B1.3	3 points	Responses clearly identify three accomplishments related to their enterprises or activities.	Responses vaguely identify three accomplishments related to their enterprises or activities.	Responses do not identify three accomplishments related to their enterprises or activities.	
			Responses illustrate specific impacts the accomplishments have had on the overall SAE program.	Responses illustrate minimal impacts the accomplishments have had on the overall SAE program.	Responses illustrate no impacts the accomplishments have had on the overall SAE program.	
Impact	Page 3, Section B2.1 to B2.3	3 points	Responses clearly describe three experiences from their SAE enterprises or activities that will impact the candidate's future.	Responses vaguely describe three experiences from their SAE enterprises or activities that will impact the candidate's future.	Responses do not describe three experiences from their SAE enterprises or activities that will impact the candidate's future.	

## Proficiency Agriscience Research Rubric (cont.)

Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 3	Mid Points 2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Summary of Research	Pages 4a and 4b	6 points Weighted Area	Responses demonstrate growth or diversification of research over time period represented.	Responses demonstrate a limited growth or diversification of research over time period represented.	Responses demonstrate that research remained constant, with no growth or diversification over time period represented.	$\frac{\quad}{2} \times$ = $\frac{\quad}{\quad}$
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 5-4	Mid Points 3-2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Research project expenses	One per project reported.	5 Points	Candidate has provided expense records for each of the research projects reported over the time period represented.	Candidate has provided expense records for some of the research projects reported over the time period represented.	Candidate has provided minimal expense records for the research projects reported over the time period represented.	
			Expense records or justification for no expenses are reasonable for the agriculturally related research projects.	Expense records or justification for no expenses are somewhat reasonable for the agriculturally related research projects.	Expense records are not reasonable or no expense justification was provided for the agriculturally related research projects.	
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 5-4	Mid Points 3-2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Skill Development and Contribution to Success	Page 6 and 7	30 Points Weighted Area	Candidate has identified 15 skills that are appropriate for this award area (10 skills in related pathway and 5 additional skills for another pathway).	Candidate has identified 10 -15 skills that are appropriate for this award area.	Candidate has identified less than 10 skills that are appropriate for this award area.	$\frac{\quad}{6} \times$ = $\frac{\quad}{\quad}$
			Response demonstrates application of skill attainment with significant impact on the overall success of the program.	Response demonstrates application of skill attainment with limited impact on the overall success of the program.	Response demonstrates application of skill attainment with little impact on the overall success of the program.	
			Response demonstrates application of skill attainment with significant impact on the overall success of the research program.	Response demonstrates application of skill attainment with limited impact on the overall success of the research program.	Response demonstrates application of skill attainment with little impact on the overall success of the research program.	
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 5-4	Mid Points 3-2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Abstract	One per project reported.	10 Points Weighted Area	Candidate has provided an abstract for each of the research projects reported over the time period represented.	Candidate has provided an abstract for some of research projects reported over the time period represented.	Candidate has provided a few abstracts for the research projects reported over the time period represented.	$\frac{\quad}{2} \times$ = $\frac{\quad}{\quad}$
			Abstracts clearly describe the purpose of each research project.	Abstracts partially describe the purpose of each research project.	Abstracts vaguely describe the purpose of each research project.	

## Proficiency Agriscience Research Rubric (cont.)

Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 4-3	Mid Points 3-2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Procedure	One per project reported.	8 points <i>Weighted Area</i>	Candidate clearly identifies the procedure used to conduct each research project reported.	Candidate partially identifies the procedure used to conduct each research project reported.	Candidate vaguely identifies the procedure used to conduct each research project reported.	$\frac{\quad}{2} = X$ —
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 4-3	Mid Points 3-2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Conclusion	One per project reported.	8 points <i>Weighted Area</i>	Candidate clearly reports outcomes in the conclusion for each research project reported.	Candidate partially reports outcomes in the conclusion section for each research project reported.	Candidate vaguely reports outcomes in the conclusion for each research project reported.	$\frac{\quad}{2} = X$ —
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 4	Mid Points 3-2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Résumé	Attachment	4 points	Resume is no more than two pages in length.	Resume is no more than two pages in length.	Resume is more than two pages in length.	
			Resume provides relevant information to support the growth and overall achievement of the candidate.	Resume provides somewhat relevant information to support the growth and overall achievement of the candidate.	Resume provides irrelevant information to support the growth and overall achievement of the candidate.	
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 2	Mid Points 1	Low Points 0	Points Earned
Reference	Attachment	2 points	Statement submitted is no more than one page and supports the information reported in the application.	Statement submitted is no more than one page and vaguely supports the information reported in the application.	Statement is more than one page or was not submitted.	
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 6-5	Mid Points 4-3	Low Points 2-0	Points Earned
Photos with captions	Photo Pages 1-6	6 points	Candidate submitted six high quality photos with clearly descriptive captions that demonstrate the overall growth and success of the enterprise.	Candidate submitted six quality photos with slightly descriptive captions that demonstrate the overall growth and success of the SAE enterprise.	Candidate submitted six poor quality photos with not very descriptive captions that demonstrate the overall growth and success of the SAE enterprise.	

## Proficiency Agriscience Research Rubric (cont.)

Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 2	Mid Points 1	Low Points 0	Points Earned
Personal Page	Attachment	2 points	Candidate submitted no more than one additional page of personal information that added value to the application.	Candidate submitted no more than one additional page of personal information that added some value to the application.	Candidate submitted no personal page or more than one additional page of personal information that added little value to the application.	
Area	Page Number	Total Points Possible	High Points 4	Mid Points 3-2	Low Points 1-0	Points Earned
Spelling and Grammar		4 points	Candidate makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distracts the reader from the content.	Candidate makes minimal errors in grammar or spelling that distracts the reader from the content.	Candidate makes excessive errors in grammar or spelling that distracts the reader from the content.	
Total Points = 100						

## Appendix E:

### Proficiency - Agriscience Research Scorecard

Name/State/ID -->		Contestant #1	Contestant #2	Contestant #3	Contestant #4
Performance Review- Star Battery (Sub Section Points for Performance Re- view Below)		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
	Page 2, Section A1	3			
	Page 2, Section A2	3			
	Page 2, Section A3	3			
	Page 3, Section B1	3			
	Page 3, Section B2	3			
Total Performance Review Score	15	0	0	0	0
Summary of Research	6				
Research Project Expenses	5				
Skill Development and Contribution to success	30				
Abstract - One per project reported	10				
Procedure - One per project reported	8				
Conclusion - One per project reported	8				
Résumé	4				
Reference	2				
6 Photos with captions	6				
Personal Page	2				
Spelling & Grammar	4				
Total Section 1	15				
Total Section 2	85				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 pts.</b>				

Rank

Judge Name
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