

Wisconsin Farm Bureau  
**Young Farmer  
and Agriculturist  
Program**



# 2024 Discussion Meet Guide

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## **Competition Objectives**

As a leadership training and self-improvement activity, the Discussion Meet experience will:

- Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
- Develop a concise and direct manner of speaking.
- Improve the ability to listen.
- Aid the participant in overcoming timidity or stage fright.
- Assist the individual in the practice of giving and receiving criticism in a helpful manner.
- Teach the value of compromise.
- Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

## **Background Information**

- The Discussion Meet is a competition promoted by the American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Agriculturist (YFA) Committee.
- Farm Bureau's strength depends on its members' ability to analyze agricultural issues and decide on solutions that best meet their needs. The Discussion Meet is an activity designed to build these crucial skills in young farmers and agriculturists. By participating, members build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach consensus and solve problems.
- The Discussion Meet is designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each committee member.
- The competitors will discuss pre-selected topics.
- The four fundamental bases of general discussion:
  - Cooperation
  - Constructive Criticism
  - Problem Solving
  - Communication
- The discussion should not be "conversation" or aimless talk, nor should the participant take the role of a persuasive speaker. The participant should try to cooperatively shed light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position.
- A successful participant is a productive thinker rather than an emotional persuader. Sometimes it's reasonable to change positions whenever new information and ideas are presented.
- This is not a panel symposium wherein each participant, in turn, makes a presentation, with the moderator ending the session with a summary. Rather, it is an exercise in cooperative problem solving, with the questions, answers and statements coming from any person at any time. The moderator plays an inactive role during the discussion.

## Competitor Qualifications

- The WFBF District Discussion Meet contest is for county Farm Bureau members who have their county Farm Bureau membership in one of the counties which comprise that district.
- Competitors shall be a Farm Bureau member in good standing with their county Farm Bureau and be between the ages of 18 and 35. They shall not have reached their 36<sup>th</sup> birthday by January 31 of the year in which they will compete at the AFBF Annual Meeting.
- Individuals who have been a WFBF Discussion Meet state winner are ineligible.
- Members of the WFBF YFA Committee are ineligible to compete unless the committee member is in their last year of YFA program eligibility.
- Past and present AFBF YF&R committee members are ineligible.
- Competitors must be actively involved in agriculture to be eligible.
- Professional speakers are not eligible to compete. Professional speakers are those who have received a fee, royalty or honorarium for speaking (i.e., paid speaking appearances or speaking engagements) within 24 months prior to this annual competition. This excludes reimbursement for travel or expenses attendant to the appearance.
- County, state and American Farm Bureau employees are not eligible; this also includes affiliated companies.
- All District winners participating in the WFBF state Discussion Meet contest must attend the YFA Orientation Meeting, which will be held prior to the contest at the WFBF Annual Meeting and YFA Conference on Saturday, December 7, 2024, at 7:45 a.m. at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells.
- A member or couple, if applicable, may be a state winner of only one WFBF YFA contest in any given year. Participants may enter more than one contest; however, they may only be a state winner in one contest.

## Helpful Hints for Competitors

- Study as much material as possible relating to the overall topic. Sources: internet, library, newspapers, magazines, Farm Bureau policies, county, state, and American Farm Bureau publications and conversations with experts or knowledgeable people.
- **Remember this is a discussion, not a debate.**
- Be prepared to ask questions, state facts and opinions and urge others to be specific.
- Be aware of the audience, but generally address the panel. Speak loud enough to be heard by the whole audience.
- Participate whenever your contribution will further the discussion. Do not monopolize the discussion.
- Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds for use in summary statement.
- Use the one minute of quiet time to organize your closing statement.
- Stand and make your closing statement to the audience. Use accepted speech techniques and stay within the time limit.

## Keys for a Successful Discussion Meet Contestant

### 1. Know how to play the game:

- a. **Background:** Most businesses and organizations have a top-down organizational structure; with a national headquarters dictating to the state organization which dictates to the local organization. The opposite is true for Farm Bureau. Farm Bureau is a bottom-up organization. The power of our organization is held and wielded at the local (county) level. Annually, each county Farm Bureau establishes a policy development committee and holds a policy development session to discuss current agricultural topics and issues.

The Discussion Meet contest mirrors our counties' policy development committee sessions. Thus, the contest judges are looking for cooperative and constructive discussion of the topic which leads to workable and actionable solutions – not a debate of the topic. The judges are looking for the person or persons who stand out as the committee chair.

- b. **Be recognized as the committee chair:** A good committee chair is very cooperative. There are six criteria on the judge's score card: 1) Problem Solving and Implementation, 2) Analysis of Topic or Problem, 3) Cooperative Attitude, 4) Delivery, 5) Opening Statement, and 6) Closing Statement. Problem Solving and Implementation is worth 25 points followed by Analysis of the Topic or Problem at 20 points and Cooperative Attitude at 15 points. To be successful in this contest, you must score as the top one or two in Problem Solving and Implementation and Analysis of the Topic. An effective committee chair is the person who cooperatively leads the discussion. The person who endeavors to make sure all sides of the issue are explored, even a side they may not agree with, and all committee members (contestants) have their voices heard. A good committee chair will introduce a point to be discussed, make a strong statement concerning that point and then hand off the discussion to a fellow contestant by asking that person a question using that person's name. Remember, this is a cooperative and constructive discussion, so the questions you ask a fellow contestant should help move the discussion forward. A good committee chair works to get the best ideas out of his/her fellow committee members. A good committee chair makes sure each committee member shares their thoughts and opinions. If a fellow contestant is being quiet or has been left out of the conversation, a good committee chair asks that person a question and gets them involved in the conversation. A good committee chair keeps the discussion on topic. A good committee chair doesn't interrupt or talk over others while they are speaking. At the five-minute warning, when the yellow card is displayed by the timekeeper at 20 minutes of discussion, a good committee chair will attempt to bring the group to consensus on workable and actionable solutions to the topic being discussed. Do this by stating at least one action you will take to make a difference as it relates to the topic and then ask your fellow contestants what they are going to do to make a difference.

**NOTE:** It is very important to make strong points during the discussion; however, it is **also important** to be seen as the **Committee Chair!**

2. **Understand the contest structure:** The contest has an opening (30-second opening statement), a body (25 minutes of open discussion) and a closing (one-minute closing statement). A good model of logic to follow is: **In the opening, tell them what you are going to tell them. In the body, tell them. In the closing, tell them what you told them.**

- a. **Opening statement:** You have 30 seconds. It is critical you grab the attention of the judges in your opening statement. You may do that by using a quote from a famous person who relates to the topic being discussed or by telling a quick personal story that makes an emotional connection with the judges. After your strong opening sentence, tell us what you are going to tell us. Quickly outline the main points you would like to discuss during the 25-minute open discussion.
- b. **Discussion:** You have 25 minutes. It is critical to be seen as the committee chair. Lead the discussion using the sub-topics you have developed for each contest topic. Make your points and hand off the discussion by asking a question using your fellow contestant's name. Try to come at the topic from a unique point-of-view and make sure many points of view are discussed. At the five-minute warning, yellow card displayed by timekeeper, make sure you try to bring the group to consensus by developing workable and actionable solutions for the topic being discussed.
- c. **Closing statement:** You have one-minute. It is critical you finish strong. Do this by quickly summarizing one main point each of your fellow contestants made during the discussion. Don't use the closing statement to bring up a new point in the discussion that wasn't covered before. State what you believe are the solutions the discussion produced and the action you will take to make a difference. With your closing, you are figuratively putting a bow on the package, the one you began wrapping with your opening statement, for the judges. Make sure your final sentence is powerful and memorable - plant your flag!
- d. **Discussion Meet topics:** There are five contest topics. Only one topic will be used at the District Discussion Meet contest. Only four topics will be used at the state contest. One topic will not be used; however, you must prepare for all five topics. Create four to five sub-topics or sub-points you want to discuss for each main topic. Developing sub-topics will help you lead the discussion.

The topics used at the state contest will be drawn out of a hat during the competitor orientation at the Kalahari Resort on Saturday, December 2. The first two topics drawn will be used for Rounds 1 and 2. All contestants participate in Rounds 1 and 2. After Rounds 1 and 2, we do a sum of the judges' ranks and the top eight contestants make the Semi-Finals, which are composed of two groups of four contestants. The third topic drawn will be used for the Semi-Finals. The top two ranked contestants from each Semi-Final group make the Final 4. The Final is held at 9 am on Sunday morning, December 3, at the Kalahari Resort. The fourth topic drawn will be the topic for the state Final.



### 3. General pointers:

- a. **This is a Farm Bureau contest:** As a Farm Bureau member, **YOU are Farm Bureau!** So, when mentioning Farm Bureau, make sure you personalize your statements. “We as Farm Bureau members should...” or “As a Farm Bureau member, I suggest...” Make sure you know how the topic relates to Farm Bureau policy at the local (county), state (Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation) and national (American Farm Bureau Federation) levels. Visit the WFBF website at [www.wfbf.com](http://www.wfbf.com) and the AFBF website at [www.fb.org](http://www.fb.org). Check us out on facebook and twitter. How can you work within Farm Bureau to help solve the challenges arising from the topic being discussed?
- b. **Speaking style:** The opening and closing statements are given standing and directed to the audience. Make sure you stand up with confidence and move behind your chair, push your chair in under the table, pause a beat to prepare yourself and the audience and then start your statement. Make good eye contact with members of the audience. Finish your statement, pause a beat, pull out your chair and be seated. Do not talk yourself out of your chair as you begin to speak or talk yourself down into your chair as you finish.

Most people talk faster than they think they do. This is especially true when nerves kick in during a speaking contest. Concentrate on slowing down and speaking clearly. Use a strong, clear, confident voice. Be aware of your facial expressions and body language. Always keep a smile on your face and maintain a confident body posture.

During open discussion, sit confidently in your chair – not too stiff but not a relaxed slouch either, make good eye contact with your fellow contestants, actually listen to what they have to say – don’t get focused in on the next point you want to make, think “yes, and...” to build on their points and the discussion.

- c. **Opening and closing statement strategy:** The opening and closing statements are given in voluntary order determined by the contestants. Most people believe the judges best remember the first person to speak and the last person to speak. Those speaking in the middle may get lost in the shuffle.

Going first shows you are very confident. Just make sure you are mentally prepared to deliver a strong opening statement.

Sometimes there is gamesmanship among experienced contestants in an attempt to be the last person to speak. Remember, Cooperative Attitude is scored, so be careful not to be seen as uncooperative in an effort to secure the final speaking position. If you go last for the opening and/or closing statement, you better nail it because your statement will be remembered!

- d. **Use of personal stories and facts:** Everyone loves a story. Tell personal stories that relate to the topic and make an emotional connection to your audience (the judges). Tell us about your home farm or your career, a lesson learned from your grandfather, your greatest challenge working with family...etc. Make it personal and make sure it relates to the topic.

Do a good job of researching the topic. Find some facts and figures you can cite to bring credibility to your thoughts. Don’t go overboard on facts and figures – a few sprinkled into the discussion go a long way. Using too many facts and figures will bore your audience (the judges).

- e. **Stay on topic:** You will only have four to six opportunities to speak during open discussion. When you speak, you must make strong points directly related to the topic. Don't get off topic and don't allow another contestant to lead the group off topic. A good committee chair keeps the discussion on topic.
- f. **Think outside the box and propose unique solutions:** Research the topics from all points of view. Really think about all sides and perspectives of the topic. Can you tackle this challenge from a direction no one else will consider? Having a unique perspective on solving the challenge will serve you well. Don't just take the farmer or ag professional's point-of-view. How will this affect consumers, suppliers, senior citizens, young people, ag educators, land grant universities, those who don't understand farming and ag, those trying to vilify farming and ag...etc?

Avoid the "education" trap. Almost every topic lends itself to the solution of "We just need to educate..." Most judges roll their eyes when they hear, "more education" for the 99<sup>th</sup> time. If you are going to suggest, "We need to educate..." you better come up with a very unique way of delivering that education because the judges have heard all the usual ways, and they are not going to be excited to hear it again.

- g. **Be very careful about using acronyms or farm/ag terms your audience (the judges) may not know or understand:** If you mention HSUS and PETA, you must first say, "The Humane Society of the United States, known as HSUS." or "The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, known as PETA." Once you've said the complete name, then you may use the acronym from that point forward. Don't expect all judges will know what a gilt or a gelding is. If you use ag-terms such as those, you need to give a brief explanation of what you are talking about.
- h. **Use proper English:** Watch your use of "umm", "like", "you know", "ya", "nope", "cuz", "ta", "I think" (if you are speaking, we know you think that. Stating the obvious weakens what you are saying.)
- i. **Attire:** Women should wear business dress: a dress, a pant suit, or blouse, jacket and skirt. Wearing bright colors or, at a minimum, a bright colored top works best for women. Men should wear business dress: a suit and tie or sport jacket, business slacks and tie.

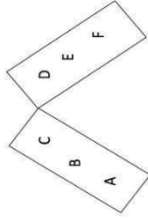
## **Scoring**

The room chair will supervise the final tabulation by the judges. Judges will use the point system indicated on the score sheet to assist in selecting their winners. Each judge will be instructed to total his/her score sheet and rank the competitors. Each judge is to break ties that occur on his/her own score sheet. The room chair will assist the judges in determining the final ranking of the competition.

- a) The winners will be determined by judges' ranking, and ties will be resolved before the judges are dismissed.
  1. Ties will be broken at the end of each round(s) by an automatic procedure using Problem Solving and Implementation as the first tiebreaker, followed by Analysis of the topic or problem, respectfully. In the event of an irresolvable tie between all three categories, total points from judges' score sheets will be used to resolve the tie. The room chair will assist with this process.
- b) When possible, the above procedure should be conducted in a private room, with only the judges, room chair, and Discussion Meet chair present.

# Discussion Meet Scoresheet

Room Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Round # \_\_\_\_\_



In the first column, you will find the point values and descriptions. See rubric for additional detail. The total point value for each row is available for each contestant. You are not dividing the total points among contestants. **No ties.**

Columns to the right each represent a different contestant. Please fill in the first and last name of each competitor according to their seat location. Refer to the diagram for help. Put scores in the larger spaces and rank in the smaller boxes.

Judge's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	Comp. A Name:	Comp. B Name:	Comp. C Name:	Comp. D Name:	Comp. E Name:	Comp. F Name:
(1) <b>OPENING STATEMENT:</b> 10 pts. Defines problem; conveys importance and relevance; sets the stage for an interesting discussion; clear point of view; uses time wisely						
(2) <b>ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM:</b> 20 pts. Has thoroughly researched topic; builds on the ideas of others to help achieve coherent analysis; asks relevant questions; helps ensure thorough analysis before problem solving; aware of relevant FB policy						
(3) <b>PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION:</b> 25 pts. Leader in guiding the conversation to specific and relevant solutions; has achievable and specific plan of action; clearly defines how FB is part of the action plan.						
(4) <b>COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE:</b> 15 pts. Active listener; comments on specific ideas mentioned by others and ties them back to the bigger conversation; shows grace, courtesy and respect to others; shows integrity especially when they do not agree						
(5) <b>DELIVERY:</b> 15 pts. Interesting to listen to; animated; appropriate volume and tone; poised; uses gestures and eye contact; confident and clear						
(6) <b>CLOSING STATEMENT:</b> 15 pts. Shows that they have listened to the conversation; develops relevant and realistic plans; memorable; inspires confidence						
Total score for each contestant is to be tabulated by Judge. Any tie scores are to be broken by Judge. Total of 100 points possible.						
Rank contestants: 1 (highest) through (6 lowest).						
<b>RANK</b>						

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Room Chair's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2024 Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation YFA Discussion Meet Questions/Topics

**Please Note: All 2024 District Discussion Meet contests will use and discuss Topic Question #1.** Young farmers and ranchers are finding they need to diversify their farm portfolio. What are some ways that young farmers and ranchers can utilize diversification to explore new revenue sources? How can Farm Bureau support YF&R members as they strengthen their farm and ranch businesses?

1. Young farmers and ranchers are finding they need to diversify their farm portfolio. What are some ways that young farmers and ranchers can utilize diversification to explore new revenue sources? How can Farm Bureau support YF&R members as they strengthen their farm and ranch businesses?
2. Increases in the price of agricultural land make access and ownership of land one of the biggest hurdles for young farmers and ranchers looking to start or expand farms and ranches. How can young farmers and ranchers position themselves to react to competition for agricultural land?
3. The landscape of American agriculture and the picture of the "typical" American farm continues to change. Meanwhile, Farm Bureau will need to continue to recruit and retain members in order to be a vibrant and effective organization into the future. How can Farm Bureau continue to provide value and opportunity to welcome members from across the broad diversity of modern agriculture and American farmers and ranchers?
4. Succession planning is often a tough subject not only for individual farms and ranches but also within county Farm Bureaus. Some younger members may find it challenging to become involved in their county Farm Bureau beyond the YF&R committee. What are some ways that county Farm Bureaus can encourage involvement from young members and how can actively engaged young board members help their county Farm Bureaus plan for the future?
5. Farmers and ranchers are reliant on multiple energy sources to run equipment, heat livestock barns and power storage and maintenance facilities. How can Farm Bureau work with energy companies, local governments and rural communities to increase domestic energy production, minimize loss of agricultural land and protect private property rights?

**2024 Discussion Meet District Winners  
Application and Information Sheet**

**Contestant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**County:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Married:** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**Spouse's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Farm Bureau Membership in the Name of:** \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that the above-named applicant is the \_\_\_\_\_ County representative in the Farm Bureau Discussion Meet and is eligible to enter and compete in the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Discussion Meet.

Should our applicant be one of the Washington D.C. trip participants, our county Farm Bureau agrees to pay \$350 per person to participate in the WFBF YFA Washington D.C. trip.

**County President:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

WFBF reserves the right to use your photos and/or any video footage for use in promoting Farm Bureau. The photos and/or video footage of undersigned competitor may also be available to sponsors of WFBF events.

**Competitor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to Melissa Jacobson by October 1, 2024.** Scan and email to [mjacobson@wfbf.com](mailto:mjacobson@wfbf.com) or mail to:

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation  
Attn: Melissa Jacobson  
P.O. Box 5550  
Madison, WI 53705