

Agricultural Communications

Nebraska Career Development Event

Handbook and Rules for 2021-2025

1. PURPOSE

The Nebraska State Agricultural Communications CDE, is a simplified version of the national event. It includes these 4 elements:

- Team Media Plan (qualifier and counted in final team score)
- Media Plan Presentation
- Editing Exercise
- Communications Quiz

The purpose of the Agricultural Communications Career Development Event is to provide individuals with basic communications skills necessary to take advantage of career opportunities in agricultural communications. Public communications about agricultural products, practices and policies are essential to the future of agriculture. Students who are equipped with strong communication skills and who can use a variety of media to help the public understand issues related to the agricultural industry have a bright future in the job market.

This event draws from Ag Communication curricula that contain the following elements: Strategic Communications/Integrated Multimedia Communications, Science literacy, Public Issues and Policy, Presentation strategies, News writing/editing, APA style.

AFNR Courses this CDE Aligns with: Ag Sales & Marketing, Ag Businesses, Ag Communications, Entrepreneurship, Economics & Agribusiness Management, Leadership & Ethics in Agriculture.

2. OBJECTIVES

The Agricultural Communications CDE provides an opportunity for the participant to:

- In a team effort, develop and present an effective media plan for a client by creatively employing elements of media planning which are referenced in the media plan proposal scorecard.
- Demonstrate knowledge in areas of agricultural communications
- Apply correct Associated Press style conventions to the selected communication channels (Purdue OWL <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl>)

For information on best practices to meet these objectives please review the “Agricultural Communications in the Classroom Guidebook” available on the National CDE website or at <https://go.unl.edu/agcommcde>.

Media Plan Objectives:

- Properly select a client or situation that matches current year’s scenario.
- Properly identify client needs.
- Create strategic communications plan for a client using all the elements from the Media Plan - Scorecard to satisfy the client’s needs
- Deliver an effective presentation to communicate key points of the media plan
- Consider writing quality, clarity, grammar, punctuation and format

Journalistic Writing Objectives:

- Develop a news story that accurately reflects the campaign
- Examine different points of view/ depth of coverage
- Use accurate writing quality, clarity, grammar, punctuation and format
- Demonstrate knowledge of AP style writing (OWL Purdue)

Opinion Writing Objectives:

- Develop an opinion editorial (op-ed) piece that describes differing points of view as well as yours.
- Consider writing quality, clarity, grammar, punctuation and format
- Demonstrate knowledge of AP style writing (Owl Purdue)

Web Design Objectives:

- Develop a website using Wordpress.com, Wix.com, Weebly.com, etc.
- Demonstrate technical skills to develop a web site that is attractive.
- Use proper design principles for web - placement of photos, graphics and text
- Demonstrate your knowledge of usability and navigation considerations.

Video Objectives:

- Create a 60-90 second video that relates to the campaign
- Collect and organize available elements to tell a story
- Demonstrate video production and editing skills

Editing Exercise and Communications Quiz Objectives:

- Demonstrate proficiency in AP style
- Identify and correct grammatical errors
- Demonstrate knowledge related to basic elements of journalistic writing, broadcasting, public relations, graphic design, and communication ethics.

3. ELIGIBILITY

District Qualifier Guidelines - Media Plan

Districts may choose to host their own competitions to determine their two qualifying teams; however, those teams must also submit their Media Plan to the state superintendents. Any other teams who submitted plans from said districts will also be considered for the wildcard entries. If a district decides to host their own competition, the district chairperson must notify Matt Kreifels at matt.kreifels@unl.edu no later than January 15.

Schools must complete and submit a **Media Plan** by **February 15** in order to qualify to compete in the State CDE. The media plan must be submitted **electronically in PDF format** to the link provided (<https://go.unl.edu/agcomm>). A penalty of 10% will be assessed for documents received after the deadline.

The Media Plan must address the theme/scenario (see page 6) as described and meet the same criteria as the National FFA rules and will be judged using the same rubric. Refer to “Media Plan Guidelines & Requirements” in the reference section.

If Districts choose not to host their own competition, the state judging committee, organized by the CDE superintendents, will identify the top two teams per Agricultural Education District based on the Media Plan, which will qualify for the state competition. Additionally, wildcard teams will be selected to have up to 25 teams to compete at the state event.

State Eligibility Guidelines

- Teams consist of four members. Teams not having 4 members will not be allowed to participate.
- In order to compete in the Nebraska Agricultural Communications CDE teams must qualify at the district level and submit a Media Plan by February 15 (See district qualifier and media plan guidelines above).

4. RECOMMENDED ATTIRE

- FFA official dress or other professional dress is required to participate in this event.
- 10 points will be deducted from the individual score if official dress is not worn, per individual who does not wear official dress.

5. REQUIRED SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Teams must supply the following in order to compete:

- 4 pencil/pens for Editing Exercise and Communications Quiz
- Materials needed for Media Plan Presentations

The following equipment will be provided for the Media Plan Presentations:

- PC computer with PowerPoint
- Digital Projector
- Projector screen and table

Note. Teams may bring additional equipment for the media plan presentation as long as they are able to set up and tear down equipment in the time allowed for the presentation.

6. EVENT SCHEDULE

Dates to know

January 15 - email notification to Matt Kreifels of districts hosting their own CDE.

February 15 - Media Plans due to CDE Superintendent.

State CDE Schedule

Teams will have scheduled times the day of the event for their presentations.

The day of the event, teams will complete the Editing Exercise, Communications Quiz, and Media Plan Presentation.

7. ANNUAL THEME/SCENARIO

Each team will act as communication consultants and develop a media plan about the topic and from the assigned delivery client. The scenario will identify a client with a communications need and a budget.

Year	Topic	Who/What is being Promoted	Example of a Client
2021	Tell a local FFA story	FFA Advisor	Local chapter, State or National FFA association
2022	Tell a local FFA story	FFA Member	Local Chapter
2023	Advocate the agriculture industry to consumers	FFA Chapter	Farm Organization such as Farm Bureau
2024	Tell a local FFA story	FFA Chapter	Local School Board or Association
2025	Advocate the agriculture industry to consumers	Commodity	Commodity Board

8. EVENT FORMAT

AGRICULTURE-RELATED MEDIA PLAN

Teams will play the role of communications consultants and will develop a media plan for an assigned scenario. (See “Event Format” above for information about the scenario.) The scenario will identify a client with a communications need and a budget. Please reference the current event specifications in the term orientation packet. At the state event, the team will make an oral presentation of the media plan.

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

- Objectives - What the group wants to accomplish with the media plan.
- Target audience - Description of who the client is trying to reach, including demographic data.
- Strategic plan and tactics - Ways in which the objectives can be accomplished.
- Timeline - When the objectives will be accomplished.
- Evaluation - How the results will be measured.
- Budget - How much the plan will cost.

GUIDELINES FOR MEDIA PLAN

- A maximum of **15 typed pages** not including cover page, table of contents, references or appendices.
- Double-spaced with 1" margins.
- Paginated (numbered pages not including cover page).
- 12-point Times New Roman font (not including display text or headings).
- Formatted and edited according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) when citing sources.

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, chapter name, team member names and year in school.
 - May include a creative design.
- **Table of Contents**
- **Executive Summary - 1 page maximum**
 - Brief description of the contents of the media plan.
 - The executive summary previews the main points of the complete plan. It allows the reader to get the main points without reading the whole document.
 - Helpful tip: complete this after the plan has been written.
- **Introduction and Overview - 2 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.

- **Audience - 2 pages maximum**
 - Who the client is trying to reach with the media plan.
 - The demographic characteristics of the intended audience.
- **Strategic Plan - 4 pages maximum**
 - The heart of the plan, including the objectives.
 - Make sure to create SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely)
 - Key messages or themes to communicate to the audience.
 - Explanation of how the objectives will be met, including justification of chosen media tactics.
 - Plan should also discuss the examples in the appendix (journalistic writing, opinion writing, website design, and video)
 - Description of how the plan will be executed.
- **Social Media Tactic of Strategic Plan - 2 pages maximum**
 - A social media plan is required that addresses the following:
 - Social media platforms to be used
 - Plan to gain followers
 - Plan to engage followers
 - General idea of message to be posted
- **Timeline - 1 page maximum**
 - Explanation of the duration of the plan and the timing of the media tactics.
- **Evaluation - 1 page maximum**
 - Description of proposed methods to determine if the objectives were met.
- **Budget - 1 page maximum**
 - Table of all costs associated with implementing the media plan.
 - Narratives typically will not be included with the budget table.
- **Conclusion - 1 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**
 - **Web Design:** The objective under “web design” is effective communication or information sharing through an online website.
 - Note. Students should double-check the website has been

- published prior to submitting
- **Video:** The objective under “video” is the proper development and integration of electronic media. Please include the video URL in the appendix. The video example may include –but is not limited to – one of the following:
 - Digital news broadcast
 - Broadcast (TV) advertising
 - Broadcast (TV) story
 - **Journalistic Writing:** The objective under “journalistic writing” is effective and understandable objective writing, consistent with Associated Press (AP) Style, that conveys messages to targeted audiences. The journalistic writing example may include one of the following:
 - Press release
 - News story
 - Feature story
 - **Opinion Writing:** The objective under “opinion writing” is to share the opinion of the writer and to describe different points of view. Examples of opinion writing include the following:
 - Blog post
 - Op-Ed
 - Letter to the Editor
 - Web design, video, journalistic writing, and opinion writing are required in the appendix, but additional examples may also be included if appropriate.

MEDIA PLAN PRESENTATION

Teams will be asked to present their media plan as if pitching it to the client identified in the scenario they day of the event.

- The presentation should follow the structure of the written media plan.
- Teams are encouraged to bring examples of materials that would be used in the execution of the plan (e.g., social media, broadcast advertising, print advertising, press releases, fliers, brochures, website, blogging, and displays).
- Each team member must participate in the presentation.
- Each team will be allowed 12 minutes to present its media plan to a panel of judges, who will play the role of the client. Five points will be deducted for each major fraction of a minute over the 12 minutes allowed for the presentation. Following the presentation, judges will be allowed five minutes to ask questions.
- Teams will have a total of 10 minutes for setting-up and tearing-down equipment

- (e.g., 5 minutes to set up and 5 minutes to tear down).
- Provided equipment includes a PC computer with PowerPoint, digital projector, projector screen, and table.
 - Note: Teams may bring additional equipment for the presentation as long as they are able to set up and tear down equipment in the time allowed.
 - In the case of equipment failure, the team may be asked to move forward with the presentation. A back-up plan is recommended.

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. In correcting the mistakes, team members may be required to use correct proofreader's marks (see Associated Press Stylebook). Style, grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes will be included. Team members will NOT be able to use the style manual or a dictionary during this exercise. Participants will have 15 minutes to complete this practicum.

COMMUNICATIONS QUIZ

Each member will complete a quiz that covers basic elements important to journalistic writing, broadcasting, public relations, graphic design, and communication ethics. Much of the information for the quiz will be drawn from the National FFA's online resource: [Agricultural Communications in the Classroom: Preparing for a Future in the Agricultural Communications Industry](#) or from the Associated Press Stylebook. Team members will NOT be able to use the style manual or dictionary during this exercise. Participants will have 15 minutes to complete this practicum.

9. SCORING

NOTE: No electronic devices of any kind, including cell phones, laptop computers, tablets (e.g., iPad), and audio recorders will be allowed during the Editing Exercise or Communications Quiz. Use of these devices will result in an automatic disqualification of your team. The following represents how team and individual scores are calculated.

Team Score Calculation Score

Total Team Score Calculation

- Media Plan = 200 points
- Media Plan Presentation = 100 points
- Communications Quiz (25 points x 4) = 100 points
- Editing Exercise (25 points x 4) = 100 points
- **Total Points Possible = 500 points**

Individual Score Calculation Score

- Communications Quiz = 25 points
 - Editing Exercise = 25 points
 - **Total Individual Points Possible = 50 points**
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10. TIEBREAKER

Team ties will be decided, in the following order:

1. Media Plan Score
 2. Media Plan Presentation Score
 3. Combined Editing Exercise Score
 4. Combined Communications Quiz Score
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11. RESOURCE MATERIALS

- Agricultural Communications in the Classroom
<https://ffa.app.box.com/s/p0grr53pogn6lff1fuqffk96t2hi6o36/file/288007497829>
 - Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
 - Associated Press Style section (Writer Practicum writing style)
<https://go.unl.edu/owlap>
 - Formatted and edited according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) when citing sources
<https://go.unl.edu/owlapa>
 - Quick and Dirty Tips: Grammar" (Grammar Girl) <https://go.unl.edu/grammargirl>
 - Recommended: [Agricultural Communications in Action: A Hands on Approach](#) by Ricky Telg and Tracy Irani
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12. PAST EXAMS

For past examples of media plans, editing exercises, and communications quizzes, please click [here](#).

<https://go.unl.edu/pastexams>

13. POST-CDE DEBRIEFING OPPORTUNITY

There will be no debriefing however, all scorecards are returned to the teams at the conclusion of state convention.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Explanation of Journalistic Writing

The main difference between either a **news and feature story versus a press release** is WHO writes it. The difference between a **news and feature story** is the depth.

Press release is written by someone in the group or organization releasing the information. It could be announcing a new product, a new board member, growth in the releasing company. It's an advertisement without buying the ad. Basically they send it out to as many news outlets as possible hoping to get the info out quickly and cheaply. For example, we just got one from Conagra announcing a new CEO. Journalists don't write these, the releasing organization does. But it's not just facts. You need a headline to grab attention, you need a lead sentence to entice the reader, and, there are very specific rules using AP style for press releases. This includes notations, how to type numbers, how it's signed at the end. When I judge these it's VERY obvious which kids or chapters have done a little work ahead of time. If they do a halfway reasonable job of AP style I don't usually don't lower their score too much. The most important part of a press release is Who, What, Where, When and Why.

<http://wordeng.com/ap-style/press-release-format>

News story is written by a journalist on information they got either from interviews, eye witness accounts, or official statements. News stories are shorter for radio or TV use. They are time sensitive because they need to go out to the public as soon as possible. News stories also go straight to the point, deliver the facts within the first 1-2 paragraphs and are 300-500 words.

<https://osu.pb.unizin.org/stratcommwriting/chapter/types-of-news-stories/>

Feature story is oftentimes a human interest piece and might be a multi part series. Used a lot for TV. One example was about the homeless in Omaha. It's a story told from multiple perspectives.

<https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-a-feature-2316029>

Appendix 2. Explanation of Opinion Writing

Blog (ongoing)

A blog is a frequently updated online personal journal or diary. It is a place to express one's personal self to the world.

<http://blogbasics.com/what-is-a-blog/> /

Op-Ed (one-time)

The term “op-ed” means opposite the editorial. In newspapers, it describes the common placement of an op-ed piece being on the page opposite an editorial. Op-eds are designed to offer an alternate position, generally from an industry or subject- matter expert. They are offered to educate members of the public about an issue, beyond what the media outlet may have been covering independently.

<https://www.dirjournal.com/articles/what-is-an-op-ed/>

Letter to the Editor (one-time)

The purpose of a letter to the editor is to express individual views about a current issue. Anyone can write a letter to the editor, but generally, the composers are very passionate about particular issues.

http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-54_u-250_t-645_c-2407/letter-to-the-editor/nsw/letter-to-the-editor/skills-by-text-form/required-skills-and-knowledge-specific-text-forms

Appendix 3. Web Design Resources

Part of the Media Plan will be to create a website related to the proposal. Below are a list of free sites that are user-friendly to create a website:

- Wordpress.com
- Wix.com
- Weebly.com

You are not limited to using the websites above to creating the web design but these are recommended. Please be sure to share the **PUBLISHED** URL for the website you created.

Appendix 4. Video Editing Resources

Teams will have to create a video as part of their Media Plan. You may use any editing software you choose. Below is a list of recommended video editing software that are free/low cost and user-friendly:

- iMovie
- Adobe Spark
- Magisto

Please submit your video as a link. It may be easiest to upload **your video to YouTube**. You can find directions for how to post an unlisted video to YouTube [here](#).

<https://go.unl.edu/unlistedyoutubevideos>

Appendix 5. Media Plan Scorecard

	Possible Score	Team Score
Plan Includes all Requirements 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 Entire narrative focuses on addressing client's specific public communication needs.	10	
Overview (Executive Summary) Adequately explains the plan without reading the entire document	10	
Introduction Provides adequate background of the issue; clearly states the problem and need for plan; describes how the plan will benefit the client	15	
Description of Audience Clearly describes (including demographics) who is targeted with the media plan	15	
Detailed Strategic Plan Clearly states objectives; explains how objectives will be met; explains why chosen mediums are appropriate to meet objectives; describes how plan will be executed.	30	
Timeline Explains duration of plan and timing of media tactics	10	
Method of Evaluation Proposes methods to determine if the objectives were met	15	
Budget Explains all costs associated with implementing the media plan	10	

Conclusion	10	
Appendix		
Web Design	10	
Video	10	
Journalistic Writing	10	
Opinion Writing	10	
Quality of Writing Grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure	25	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

Appendix 6. Media Plan Presentation Scorecard

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 need 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. 		X3	
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. 		X3	

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, 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. 		X2	
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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. 		X3	
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. 		X1	
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. 		X3	

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. 		X3	
Questions and answers	<p>Is able to Correctly respond to judges' questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 		X2	
Total (100 possible points)						