

WHAT IS THE SPEAK OUT FOR AGRICULTURE (SOFA) CHALLENGE?

The Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) SOFA Challenge is a special contest that helps individuals and groups build the skills necessary to create action plans for the betterment of the agriculture industry, their organization, and/or their community. The contest itself involves a moderator and participants. The moderator's responsibility is to introduce the topic and the participants, start the discussion, keep it on track if necessary and stop the contest when time elapses. The participants discuss a pre-selected topic. The contestant's responsibility is to exchange ideas and information to solve the problem addressed in the topic and to develop action plans for the solution. The contestant should attempt to cooperatively shed further light on the problem/topic and tentatively retain a flexible position for building agreement on solutions and actions. A successful participant is a productive thinker rather than an emotional persuader, who is free to state beliefs and change positions whenever additional information and ideas make that a reasonable thing to do.

Finally, this is not a panel discussion where each participant, in turn, makes a presentation, with the moderator ending the session. Rather, it is an exercise in cooperative problem solving, with the questions, answers and statements coming from any person, at any time.

SOFA CHALLENGE PURPOSE

The strength of Texas Farm Bureau is largely in its ability to involve members in analyzing their agricultural problems and deciding on solutions which best fit their needs. Experience has proven the SOFA Challenge will provide an opportunity for greater participation on the part of young, active students interested in agriculture. It will help them develop a greater command of basic discussion skills. They will acquire a better understanding of how people can think in groups for the sake of better understanding solutions to problems.

SOFA CHALLENGE OBJECTIVES

As a leadership training and self-improvement event, the SOFA Challenge experience will:

1. Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
2. Develop a concise and convenient manner of speaking.
3. Further develop the ability to listen.
4. Help the participant overcome timidity or stage fright.
5. Assist the individual in learning to give and receive ideas in a positive and gainful manner.
6. Teach the value of compromise.
7. Develop leaders for effective problem-solving through group discussion.

ELIGIBILITY

- This event is open to students in grades 9-12.
- Students must be a dues paid Texas 4-H or Texas FFA member in good standing with their club/chapter.
- Students should be interested in agriculture, membership organization improvement and/or public policy.
- Past state SOFA Challenge winners are not eligible to compete in following years.
- All participants in the SOFA Challenge must attend a brief orientation meeting prior to the contest.
- Competitors should wear business casual attire (khakis/dress pants, polo shirts, button-up shirts, blouses, business dresses, etc.) Dress should NOT connect contestant to any youth organization such as 4-H, FFA, FCCLA, etc.

SPECIAL NEEDS REQUEST

To report any special needs or request special services for a student to compete in the SOFA Challenge, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide a detailed and specific request and explanation in writing. Requests should include written documentation from the school system verifying the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and need being requested. Written requests must be submitted to the SOFA Challenge Coordinator at the time of registration.

REGISTRATION

- Registration will be completed through the HOT registration process

- Registration will open August 2nd
- Please use the following link for registration
<https://www.judgingcard.com/Registration/Info.aspx?ID=12962>
- Deadline for entry is September 24, 2021

CONTEST FORMAT

1. All contest facilitators and contestants will meet in the pre-assigned contest room ten minutes prior to the start of the contest to receive last minute comments by the room chairman.
2. No contestant notes are allowed at the table prior to the moderator starting the meet.
3. The room chairman will call the meeting to order, announce the topic to be discussed, and introduce the timekeeper and moderator.
4. The moderator will introduce the contestants, in voluntary order, and contestants will have the opportunity to make a 30-second opening statement directed to the audience.
5. The timekeeper may stand or otherwise indicate when 30 seconds has elapsed. Judges may subtract points at their discretion for contestants who abuse the time limit.
6. The moderator will then indicate the opportunity for open discussion, which will continue for a total of 20 minutes in Sweet Sixteen Round and 25 minutes in the Final Four contest. The discussion should be directed to fellow contestants during open discussion.
7. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when five minutes of open discussion time remains in each contest. The moderator will indicate to contestants the time remaining by raising a table tent. He/She will ensure each contestant has seen the table tent before it is removed.
8. If the discussion is lagging, the moderator may close the discussion at this time.
9. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when 15 minutes in the Sweet Sixteen Round and 20 minutes in the Final Four contests have elapsed.
10. The moderator will call for open discussion to stop and for one minute of quiet time allowing the contestants to consider a closing statement.
11. The moderator will give each of the contestants, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a one-minute closing statement directed to the audience.
12. The moderator will recognize the judges and request them to leave the room with the room chairman to finalize the tabulation of their score sheets. Judges are not to confer with each other until the room chairman has collected their tabulated score sheets.
13. The next round topic to be discussed will be announced.
14. The moderator will thank the panel and ask the audience to recognize their efforts.
15. The open discussion time may be lengthened or shortened to fit the contest format.

CONTEST STRUCTURE

Rounds 1 & 2

- Must have at least 8 participants to make a contest
- Will be formatted after oral reasons. Participants will be asked a preselected question and students will have 90 seconds to answer the judges.
- Scores from Rounds 1 & 2 will be tallied and verified and those who advance to the Sweet Sixteen Round of the competition will be identified based on judges rankings and scores.
- Sweet Sixteen competitors who advance to the next round will be announced **later that day**.

SWEET SIXTEEN ROUND

- Four rooms of 4 contestants each
- The winner from each room will advance to the Final Four Round

FINAL FOUR ROUND

- Final round of SOFA
- Winner will be announced after tallying judges scores

SWEET SIXTEEN AND FINAL FOUR ROUND STRUCTURE

There are three main parts to the contest:

1) the opening statement, 2) the body of discussion and 3) the closing statement.

1. The opening statement is 30 seconds in length. The statement should be broad in scope, show relevancy and importance of the topic. Adding a personal connection is great!
2. The body of the discussion will typically last 10-15 minutes in length. During the body of the discussion, participants will background the topic, discuss why it is an issue, come up with solutions and develop actions that resolve the issue while being sure to add their involvement in their club/chapter and/or Texas Farm Bureau as a part of the solution.
3. The closing statement is given at the end of the discussion after participants are given one minute of quiet time to put their closing thoughts together. Closing statements should summarize the discussion and main solutions developed, then explain what actions will be taken to resolve the issue. The closing statement should not be "canned" or include pre-practiced statements and will be completed in one minute or less.

CONTEST FLOW

The discussion should follow these steps:

1. State the problem or need, including any personal connections you may have to the issue.
2. Explore, define, and understand the problem or need.
3. Identify causes or drivers of the problem or need.
4. Elaborate on viable solutions to the problem or need.
5. Evaluate and compare alternatives offered by the group.
6. Develop agreement or consensus (compromise) on what might be the best solution(s).
7. Arrive at ways to implement the solution into actions that resolve the problem or need.
8. Show leadership by summing up the high points of the discussion and the actions developed by the group.

CONTEST QUESTIONS

Rounds 1 & 2

1. What role will Agriscience and technology play in feeding a predicted 9 billion people in the year 2050?
2. How can value added agriculture and Agri-tourism be driving forces in local economic development?
3. Should companies that grow "cultured" meat be regulated by government agencies? Why or why not?
4. How can you promote urban agriculture and local foods without casting a negative light on conventional rural agriculture?
5. National Ag Day was launched in 1973 to increase public awareness of the vital role that agriculture plays in America. How can you as the next generation of agriculturists continue to advocate and promote American agriculture?

Day 2 Rounds (Sweet Sixteen and Final Four Rounds)

1. Ongoing trade uncertainty and low commodity prices are creating daily challenges for the American farmer. Discuss specific challenges that farmers are facing.
2. Discuss the possible implications (positive and negative) of the sustainable agriculture and local food movements on American agriculture.
3. Will meat producers remain sustainable with all the new plant-based proteins on the market? Why or why not?
4. Discuss ways that the American farmer can influence a predominantly urban Congress.
5. Discuss ways that farmers and ranchers can use marketing trends to create new markets to sell their products.

CONTEST SCORING

1. Judges will total the points for each participant and provide an individual rank of participants to be combined with the other judges in their room.
2. In addition to point values and an overall ranking, participants will also be ranked in the individual categories of Problem Solving & Implementation, Analysis of Topic or Problem, and Cooperative Attitude to aid in the event of an overall tie.

3. No participants' scores or rankings may be tied across the score sheet in any of the above categories or in the overall points and rankings row.
4. Each participant's rank from all judges in the room will be added to determine the results. The lowest combined ranking is the highest placing individual.
5. For exact scoring breakdown, see rubrics.

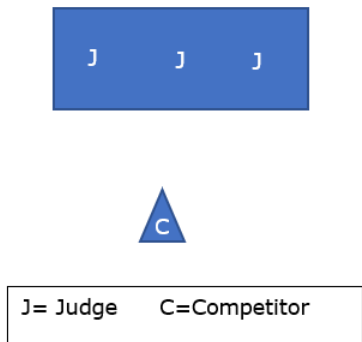
TIEBREAKERS

Should the combined ranking of any participants result in a tie, a series of tiebreakers is available.

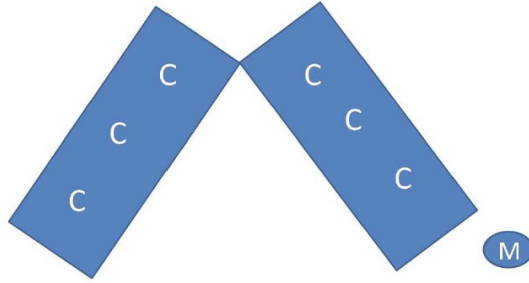
1. Tie Breaker #1: Individual judges' rankings of the Problem Solving & Implementation category for the tied participants will be combined. If one score is lower than the other, the lower score wins. If the score is tied again, move to the next tie breaker.
2. Tie Breaker #2: Individual judges' rankings of the Analysis of Topic category for the tied participants will be combined. If one score is lower than the other, the lower score wins. If the score is tied again, move to the next tie breaker.
3. Tie Breaker #3: Individual judges' rankings of the Cooperative Attitude category for the tied participants will be combined. If one score is lower than the other, the lower score wins. If the score is tied again, move to the next tie breaker.
4. Tie Breaker #4: Total points from the individual judges' score sheets will be combined for the tied participants. If one score is higher than the other, the higher score wins.

ROOM LAYOUT

Room Layout for Rounds 1 & 2



Room Layout for Sweet Sixteen and Final 4



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x J x x x x x x x T   x x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x x x   x x x x x x J x x x
x x x x x x x J x x   x x x x x x x x x

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M = Moderator C = Competitor J = Judge T = Timer X = Audience

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 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 loudly enough to be heard by the whole audience.
- Participate whenever your contribution will further the discussion. Do not monopolize the discussion.
- The discussion should not be “conversation “or aimless talk, nor should you take the role of a persuasive speaker. Try to cooperatively shed light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position.
- 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.
- Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds for use in your 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.

AWARD PACKAGE

- Winner
 - Jacket
 - \$2500 scholarship
 - Banner
- Runner-Up
 - Jacket
 - \$1500 scholarship
 - Banner
- Two Finalists
 - Jacket
 - \$750 scholarship
- Top 16
 - \$125 gift card

Participants will receive all scholarship information from HOT at the conclusion of the contest.

SOFA CHALLENGE SCHEDULE

Rounds 1&2- October 2nd

Sweet Sixteen- October 3rd

Final Four- October 3rd

October 2nd

Registration: 8-9 AM

Orientation: 9 AM

Contest Begins: 10:30 AM

October 3rd

Contest Begins: 9 AM

FOR MORE INFORMATION

HOTFR- contact info

livestock@hotfair.com

Texas Farm Bureau:

youthactivities@txfb.org

Judges Score Sheet for Rounds 1 & 2

In the first column, you will find the point values and descriptions. The total point value for each row is available for each contestant. You are not dividing the total points for each category between contestants.

Columns to the right each represent a different contestant. **Please fill in the first and last name** of each competitor.

Rank each competitor for the first three sections using the small box within each column. Provide overall rank using the bottom row of the chart. (1=First, 2=Second, etc.)

Room Name: _____ Round #: _____

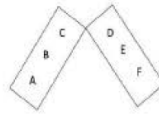
Judge's Name: _____

	Comp A Name:	Comp B Name:	Comp C Name:	Comp D Name:	Comp E Name:	Comp F Name:
(1) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: 45 pts. Contestant develops solutions (15 points) & plans actions to resolve the issue (15 points) while including Farm Bureau in the action plan. (15 points)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 30 pts. Contestant identifies cause of the problem (10 points), remains on topic (10 points), while sharing an accurate, working knowledge of the topic (10 points).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(3) DELIVERY: 15 pts. Contestant speaks at an audible volume and pace (5 points), forms clear sentences (5 points), and conveys thoughts and viewpoints clearly and confidently (5 points). *Deduct 5 points if presentation is over 90 second limit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(4) THESIS STATEMENT: 10 pts. Contestant clearly defines the problem (5 points) and relays the importance and relevancy of problem (5 points).						
TOTAL 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 Rank Contestants: 1 (highest) through 6 (lowest).						

Judges Score Sheet for Rounds Sweet 16 and Final Rounds

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.



Room Name: _____ Round #: _____

Judge's Name: _____

	Comp A Name:	Comp B Name:	Comp C Name:	Comp D Name:	Comp E Name:	Comp F Name:
(1) OPENING STATEMENT: 10 pts. Defines problem; conveys importance and relevance; sets the stage for an interesting discussion; clear point of view; uses time wisely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(5) DELIVERY: 15 pts. Interesting to listen to; animated; appropriate volume and tone; poised; uses gestures and eye contact; confident and clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 pts. Shows that they have listened to the conversation; develops relevant and realistic plans: memorable; inspires confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL 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 Rank Contestants: 1 (highest) through 6 lowest).						

Discussion Meet Scoring Rubric

<p>(1) OPENING STATEMENT 10 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address the problem – is off topic. • Does not address the importance or relevancy of the problem. • Makes a “closed” statement that does not allow room for further conversation. • Does not seem to have a point of view. • Does not finish in the allotted time. <p style="text-align: center;">AWARD 0-3 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the problem. • Sets the problem in context. • Makes a statement that leaves some room for further conversation but could be more open. • Has a general point of view. • Stays in the given time. <p style="text-align: center;">AWARD 4-6 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defines the problem. • Conveys the importance and relevancy of the problem. • Makes an "open" statement that leaves room for further conversation. • Sets the stage for an interesting conversation with a very clear point of view • Uses their time very wisely and stays in the given time. <p style="text-align: center;">AWARD 7-10 POINTS</p>
<p>(2) ANALYSIS OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 20 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address the problem or does not remain on topic/wanders/distracts. • Hasn't done much research or lacks quality facts. • Doesn't build. on other's ideas, only pushes their own. • Doesn't ask questions to clarify other's ideas. • Doesn't share. relevant personal examples. • Misinterprets the issue or does not display competency and therefore does not help with problem solving. • Is unaware of FB policy. <p style="text-align: center;">AWARD 0-5 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the causes of the problem, does not directly address them, but remains on topic. • Has done research. • Addresses the ideas of others but does not build upon them - or only drops in information they learned without connecting it to previous ideas and moving the conversation forward. • Asks some questions to help vet the ideas of others. • Shares relevant personal examples -may be slightly off topic. • Demonstrates knowledge of this problem but not why it exists. • Is aware of current FB policy. <p style="text-align: center;">AWARD 6-12 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and addresses the causes of the problem and remains on topic. • Has thoroughly researched the topic. • Confidently builds on the ideas of others to contribute to a coherent analysis • Asks relevant questions to vet the ideas of others. • Shares relevant personal examples that add to the conversation. • Helps ensure thorough analysis before moving to problem solving. • Is aware of current and relevant FB policy. <p style="text-align: center;">AWARD 13-20 POINTS</p>

<p>(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: 25 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of helping to guide the conversation to a solution, just data drops. • Offers no plan for a solution or a generic plan like “tell our story” or “educate consumers.” • Does not identify how Farm Bureau is involved. <p>AWARD 0-6 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries to help lead the conversation to address solution but misses opportunities to collaborate with the group. • Has a plan but is missing specificity • Farm Bureau is mentioned but is not a crucial piece of the solution. <p>AWARD 7-16 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a leader in guiding the group and the conversation to specific and relevant solutions. • Generates ideas that contribute to an achievable and specific plan of action to resolve the issue. • Clearly defines how Farm Bureau is part of the action plan. <p>AWARD 17-25 POINTS</p>
<p>(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not listen to others - just waits for their turn to talk. • Cuts others off or simply repeats what others have already said. • Is rude, defensive or combative when they do not agree with others. <p>AWARD 0-4 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contestant listens to others but does not comment specifically on their ideas or tie ideas back to the bigger conversation. • Is respectful of others. • Is not rude or defensive when they disagree with others. <p>AWARD 5-9 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contestant Is an active listener and comments on references or specific ideas mentioned by others tying them back to the bigger conversation. • Clearly shows grace, courtesy and respect to other participants. • Shows integrity especially when they do not agree with others. <p>AWARD 10-15 POINTS</p>
<p>(5) DELIVERY: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is boring/mumbling/monotoned. • Slouches, does not use appropriate gestures or have eye contact. • Ideas are difficult to understand, or they are not confident in speaking. <p>AWARD 0-4 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks at an appropriate volume and pace with appropriate tone. • Uses effective posture, gestures and eye contact. • Conveys thoughts and viewpoints but could seem overly rehearsed. <p>AWARD 5-9 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is interesting to listen to, animated and lively, speaks at an appropriate volume and with a professional and courteous tone. • Is poised and uses gestures and eye contact that • emit respect and professionalism. • Confidently conveys thoughts and viewpoints clearly. <p>AWARD 10-15 POINTS</p>
<p>(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 pts.</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not accurately summarize the conversation. • Uses memorized speech that doesn't reflect the content of the conversation. • Closing statement is forgettable. <p>AWARD 0+4 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizes the conversation that happened. • Uses take-away points from the discussion to help develop a plan. • Closing statement is memorable. <p>AWARD 5-9 POINTS</p>	<p>Contestant...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows that they have actively listened to the conversation in their summary. • Uses take away points from the discussion to develop relevant, realistic and specific action items and plans for the future. • Closing statement is memorable and inspires confidence in their ability to work toward a solution. <p>AWARD 10-15 POINTS</p>

