

Part II: 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.

You may learn some revealing things about yourself as you complete the series of questions, columns and tables. You will also gain confidence and self-esteem as you realize the number of skills you have gained through your SAE.

This experience will prepare you for the future!

Tips for Completing Your 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, it will be “DISQUALIFIED”. This includes copying the application into a word document, altering the space given for responses for any questions or changing the font size below 10 points. For fairness, all applicants must respond to questions in the space provided.
3. Complete the application by 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 forms. Verify that you have the right application by checking the dates listed on the document’s upper left-hand corner.
5. Confirm your state’s deadline for submitting completed applications because each state has different rules.
6. Obtain the required signatures on the application in the proper places. Your placement application needs an employer’s signature, even for volunteer, unpaid, directed lab and research programs. The person supervising your progress should sign the application, even if he or she is a parent or an advisor.
7. Review your application one more time for spelling, grammar or mathematical errors. Your application should be typed. To assist you in that task and to reduce the chances of mathematical errors, the FFA encourages you to use the computerized version of the application.
8. If you need to spellcheck your electronic application, it is recommended you copy the text and paste it into word and spellcheck your text there. Since the Microsoft Excel template applications are protected due to all of the calculations, you are unable to spellcheck in Excel. You can download the applications from the FFA website on the Proficiency home page, or from the current Chapter Resource Guide CD ROM.
9. Place your application in an FFA award binder available through the FFA Supply Service at 888-332-2668. 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 files 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 which have mathematical errors, are subject to rejection.
13. If you put decimal points or accidental spaces in the cells, the new applications will give you a warning to only enter WHOLE NUMBERS and will not allow you to enter decimal points.
14. Use the information and examples in this handbook’s appendices to clarify and assist you in completing your application.

A Step by Step Approach

The two applications discussed earlier in Part One, placement and entrepreneurship, include sections that are the same and others that are different.

- Areas that apply to each will be covered first.
- Sections that pertain only to the Entrepreneurship application will then be covered, followed by those of the Placement application.

Common Areas of the Entrepreneurship and Placement Application

(Go to the cover page of either application.)

1. **Name**—Write your name exactly as you want it to appear on a plaque and in press releases. Confirm that the typist has spelled it correctly.
 - 1b: Name on chapter roster (if different)
2. **Date of birth**—Give the month, day and year of your birth. Program officials determine your eligibility, at least 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. **Social Security number**—Applications received without a Social Security number will **not** be disqualified from competition, however, a Social Security number must be provided before receipt of any national award checks. This SSN is required for audit purposes only.
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. **Parent/guardian occupations**—List their current job or career area.
10. **Complete FFA chapter name**—Give the complete official chapter name because it is often different from the school name. (for example: **Western FFA**)
11. **Name of 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 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.

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- 19. 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.
- 20. State/national dues paid**—Verify your membership status by reviewing the chapter and state membership rosters for each year covered by the application.
- 21. 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 parents.

I. Performance Review

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.

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 your SAE program as it relates to this proficiency area. Describe how you started your program in this proficiency area. What interested and motivated you to begin?**

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 enterprise and what happened? Did any particular person or event spur your interest to begin a program?

- 2. When you were planning your SAE in this proficiency area, what two or three goals and objectives did you plan to achieve by this point in your development?**

Setting goals is very important in successful SAE programs. Did you have a goal when you first started? What did you want to accomplish by this point in your program?

B. Progress

- 1. Describe any special advantages 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 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.

- 2. (For Entrepreneurship applicants only) Explain how resources such as livestock, land, buildings, equipment, machinery, supplies and labor are obtained and utilized by you in this proficiency area.**

There are many ways to obtain assets: working other jobs, securing loans, inheriting, exchanging labor or materials and even bartering.

- 2. (For Placement applicants only) Briefly describe your placement in this proficiency area. (Include a description of the business/farm/facility, physical environment, size, number of employees, etc.)**

Describe your position, your responsibilities, the number of hours worked and other important information that explains your placement position.

3. *(For Entrepreneurship applicants only)* Describe your marketing and merchandising plans for this proficiency award area.

Explain how you promoted, sold and distributed your products.

3. *(For Placement applicants only)* How has your position description and/or responsibilities changed during the time of your placement?

Describe your responsibilities and note any changes that have occurred throughout your time in this position. Your entire position could have changed.

C. Analysis and Evaluation of Program:

1. Describe your level of achievement and progress towards your goals (such as skills, scope, etc.) in this award area, as related to your goals and objectives described on page two, question two.

You should have learned many skills at this point in your SAE. In this section, clarify how the skills developed relate to your stated goals and objectives.

2. Describe the personal, educational and career goals you would like to achieve in the next 10 years.

Where do you want to be in the future? Be as specific as you can in describing each goal.

The following instructions are found in Section XII, page 9 on the Entrepreneurship application or Section V, page 9 on the Placement application under the heading "Supporting Documentation."

V. or XII. Supporting Documentation

A. 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. Sooner or later, if you want a job, you will need to develop a résumé.

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

Include your name, current address, telephone number and the name of your FFA chapter.

b. Career objective

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

c. Education

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



Examples:

- 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

A. Résumé (continued)

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 or president of chapter
- **Major committee assignments**—chairperson of fundraising or spring banquet
- **State, national conventions**—courtesy corps member, 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 percent 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 (track, basketball, etc.), school audio visual/TV production staff, school librarian staff, school newspaper, yearbook staff, band, chorus, drama and class plays

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

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.

Three sample résumés follow on pages 16-20. However, there are other acceptable formats also.

B. Employer Statement

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.

C. Supporting Pictures

Every picture tells a story, but it won't do your FFA award application much good 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.

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 not making them 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 III, "General Photography Tips and Evaluation," in this handbook.

D. The 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. Information such as newspaper clippings, additional support statements or recommendations, additional photographs, copies of licenses or certifications, charts and/or graphs and advertisements are appropriate. However, your space is limited to one 8 1/2" 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. **IDEA: If you received numerous awards, you could even include a picture showing all of the awards in one photo.**