



**Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leader
Achievement Award
*Rules for 2026 Competition***

The Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) annually conducts a Young Leader (YL) Achievement Award competition. Selection of the winning competitor is based on his/her efforts in production agriculture and leadership achievement. The IFB Young Leader Committee and IFB staff coordinate the program at the state level.

The ideal candidate(s) for the Achievement Award is an individual or couple involved in production agriculture with a majority of his/her net income subject to normal production risks.

The application must be submitted via the online portal by 4:00 PM CT on Monday, April 1, 2026.

The state winner(s) will receive an expense-paid trip to represent Illinois in the national contest at the 2027 AFBF Annual Convention held in Charlotte, North Carolina January 8-13, 2027 as part of their prize package. The state runner(s)-up will receive free registration and housing to the AFBF Annual Convention as part of their prize package.

ALL INFORMATION THAT THE APPLICANT(S) PROVIDES IN THE APPLICATION IS HANDLED IN STRICT CONFIDENCE AND IS DESTROYED AFTER JUDGING IS COMPLETED.

Eligibility

- An applicant can be either an individual or a couple that is married or has similar legal rights under the law applicable to the state Farm Bureau organization. Applicant may choose to apply individually, rather than as a couple.
- Applicant(s) shall be a Farm Bureau member(s) between the ages of 18 and 35 in good standing with his/her county Farm Bureau. The individual or spouse/spousal-equivalent shall have reached his/her 18th birthday at the time he/she qualifies for the state program and shall not have reached his/her 36th birthday by January 31, 2027.
- Applicant(s) must be actively engaged in farming and/or ranching, with the majority of his/her gross income coming from production agriculture. Applicant(s) must have at least three years of financial records showing that the majority of income came from production agriculture.
- Applicant(s) may compete in either the Achievement Award OR Excellence in Agriculture Award AND the Discussion Meet in the same year, however, if the applicant were to be named State Winner in multiple programs, they may only go on to represent one program in the national competition.
- Present members of the IFB State Young Leader Committee and past and present members of the AFBF Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee and/or their spouse are not eligible to compete.
- Previous state Young Leader Achievement Award winners are not eligible to compete.
- Current employees or agents of county, state and/or the American Farm Bureau organizations and their affiliates are not eligible to compete. An affiliate is defined as an entity owned or controlled in whole or in part by another entity through, for example, ownership (including partial ownership) or positions on the board of directors. Past employees and interns who were responsible for implementing any of the YF&R/YL Competitive Events at the state or national level since Jan. 1, 2022, are ineligible.

Entry Form & Application Guidelines

Disregard of the guidelines will result in disqualification of the application.

- Do not use applicant's name, the name of his/her state or county, or any names that may bring about the recognition or identification of the applicant's state or county beyond the entry form. Please review your answers for any identifiers prior to submission.
- The entry form and application must be completed in first person narrative (i.e. I, me, we, etc.) for sections 1-9 and 13. "A1"/"A2" may not be used for sections 1-9 and 13. Applicants must use "A1"/"A2" to denote each applicant for all of sections 10-12.
- The Financial Statement must be typed; handwritten financial forms will be disqualified.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms, unless it has been spelled out once with the abbreviation in parentheses behind it. For example, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). AFBF, FB, and YL are acceptable to use throughout the application.
- It will be up to the judges' discretion to deduct points if applicants include activities before they were 18.

Judging

- The entry form and application of each entry will be coded upon receipt by IFB. The applicant's name, state and county will not be revealed to the judges until judging is completed.
- A panel of up to three qualified judges will review all applications. The top two thirds of applicants based on application scores will be invited to be interviewed by the same judges who reviewed the written applications.
- Interviews will be up to 20 minutes in length and are intended to clear up any "gray areas" which may arise from the written application. The competitors interviewed should understand that their interview is for verification/clarification purposes and therefore may affect final rankings. The judges have discretion to change their rankings of the applications after the interviews are complete.
- During the interview process, only the named applicant(s) on the entry form is permitted into the interview, and the applicant(s) should refrain from using the name of his/her state or county, or any names that may bring about the recognition or identification of his/her county. Applicants can refer to each other by their first name throughout the interview.

Scoring breakdown is below:

- Personal Background: 10 points
- Scope of Farm/Ranch: 15 points
- Growth & Achievements: 25 points
- Management Decisions: 15 points
- Goals & Planning: 10 points
- Resiliency: 10 points
- Financial Statement: 50 points
- Leadership Experience: 60 points

APPLICATION TOTAL: 195 points

- Interview: 5 points

TOTAL POINTS: 200 points