



Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leader Excellence in Agriculture Award *Rules for 2026 Competition*

The Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) annually conducts a Young Leader (YL) Excellence in Agriculture Award competition. Selection of the winning competitor is based on his/her involvement in agriculture, leadership ability, and participation/involvement in Farm Bureau and other organizations (i.e. civic, service, and community). The IFB Young Leader Committee and IFB staff coordinate the program at the state level.

The ideal candidate(s) for the Excellence in Agriculture Award is an individual or couple who does not have the majority of his/ her net income subject to normal production risk.

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

The 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 in Illinois. 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 applies for the state program and shall not have reached his/her 36th birthday by the completion of the national competition (January 31, 2027).
- Applicant(s) must not have derived a majority of his/her net income from an owned production agriculture enterprise in any of the past three years.
- 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 Excellence in Ag 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 or 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 questions 1-5. "A1"/"A2" may not be used for questions 1-5. Applicants must use "A1"/"A2" to denote each applicant for all of question 6.
- 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.

Presentation Guidelines

The top two thirds of applicants based on application score will be invited to present to the same panel of judges that reviewed the applications.

- The presentation will be an interactive, 25-minute presentation, in which the applicant(s) has an opportunity to share the contents of his/her/their entire application in narrative form with a panel of up to three judges.
 - Applicant(s) will have 25 minutes to present on the topics addressed in the application and address questions from the judges. Applicants will be notified by the timekeeper when ten (10) minutes are remaining and again when five (5) minutes are remaining. Each judge will be prepared to ask one question. Time will be called and conclude the applicant's time in front of the judges at 25 minutes even if judges have not been able to ask their questions. It will be up to the applicant(s) to determine how they use this time.
- The only visual means in which to deliver the information is through a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation. The applicant(s) needs to submit their presentation on a USB flash drive the day of the presentation. A computer, LCD projector, screen and one slide advancer remote will be provided. All presentations must be formatted to work on a PC. Contestants will not be allowed to use their own computer.
- Verbal and presentation references to applicant(s) name, state and county will be allowed during the presentation.
- No props (including notes), sound or video of any kind will be allowed during the presentation.



Judging

All applications will be judged by three representatives from the industry. The top two thirds of applicants based on application scores will present to the same set of judges.

Application		Approx. %
Questions 2-4 <i>*Ag Involvement, Impact on Ag and Issues Facing Ag</i>	180 points	45.0%
Goals	40 points	10.0%
Farm Bureau Experience	90 points	22.5%
Other Leadership Experience	80 points	20.0%
Application Form	10 points	2.5%
MAXIMUM POINTS	400 Points	100% <i>(80% of Total Score for Top 2/3 of Applicants)</i>

** Writing should be clear, descriptive, and free of grammatical errors.*

Presentation		Approx. %
Delivery of Presentation	30 points	30%
Content of Presentation	40 points	40%
Responses to Questions	30 points	30%
MAXIMUM POINTS	100 points	100% <i>(20% of Total Score for Top 2/3 of Applicants)</i>