

## EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

### Individual Event

---

#### IMPORTANT NOTE

*Please thoroughly read the General CDE Rules Section at the beginning of this handbook for complete rules and procedures that are relevant to State FFA Career Development Events.*

#### I. PURPOSE

The Employment Skills Leadership Development Event is designed for FFA members to develop, practice and demonstrate skills needed for seeking employment in the industry of agriculture. Each part of the event simulates, as closely as possible, real-world activities that will be used by real-world employers.

#### II. OBJECTIVES

This contest was developed to give students an opportunity to develop and enhance their job search skills. Each part of the contest simulates “real world” activities that will be used by “real world” employers and job seekers. The contest is developed to help the student in their current agriculturally-related job search (for SAE projects, part-time jobs, etc.).

#### III. EVENT RULES

- A. The Employment Skills Leadership Development Event is an individual event and will be limited to one competing participant per chapter.
- B. The FFA Employment Skills Leadership Development Event will only be for students who are regularly enrolled in agricultural education during the calendar year, have a planned course of study, or who are still in high school but have completed all the agricultural education offered.
- C. Participants shall be in official FFA dress throughout each Employment Skills LDE contest phase on the day of the LDE event, and official FFA dress is required for the awards presentation and recognition. Please reference the latest edition of the Official FFA Manual for a definition of official FFA dress.
- D. The cover letter, résumé and three (3) reference letters submitted by the student must reflect their current skills and abilities and must be targeted to an agriculturally-related job for which he/she is currently qualified (i.e. a job that is realistic for a high school student). ***Contestants who submit cover letters, résumés and reference letters for positions for which they are not reasonably qualified or whose materials do not realistically reflect their knowledge, skills and experiences will be disqualified.***
- E. Each participant’s cover letter, résumé and application will be the result of his or her own efforts. If a contestant’s materials are found to not be their own original work, that contestant will be disqualified from the Employment Skills LDE.
- F. The event will include both written portions as well as oral presentations. **Students must provide their own writing utensil (ink pen only).**
- G. Participants shall be evaluated/scored by multiple separate judges without consultation for each segment of the contest (i.e., résumé, cover letter, application, two personal panel interviews, follow-up letter). Points awarded to each contestant for each contest phase will equal the average of the total points awarded by each independent judge. The winner will be that participant whose summative total point value among all contest phases is the highest. Other placings will also be determined using the high point score method of selection.

#### IV. EVENT FORMAT

##### A. Team Make-Up

The Employment Skills Leadership Development Event is an individual event and will be limited to one competing participant per chapter.

##### B. Early submission of job description, cover letter, résumé and reference letters

1. Participants must **register** for the Oklahoma Employment Skills LDE on [www.judgingcard.com](http://www.judgingcard.com).
2. **DO NOT SUBMIT EARLY SUBMISSION MATERIALS TO JUDGINGCARD.COM.** Registration through [judgingcard.com](http://judgingcard.com) is solely for the benefit of tracking overall participation in OSU Career Development Events. Registration alone through [judgingcard.com](http://judgingcard.com) **DOES NOT** enter a contestant in the Employment Skills LDE.
3. Participants must **also electronically submit** a single PDF file consisting of a job description, cover letter, résumé, and three reference letters, via email to [fergusoninfo@okstate.edu](mailto:fergusoninfo@okstate.edu). File sizes must be limited to 10MB and are **due no later than April 10 at 5:00 pm**.
4. Those who do not both register *and* submit required contest documents are not eligible to participate in the Employment Skills LDE. ***Early submission of materials (job description, resumes, cover letters, and letters of reference) will NOT be accepted via mail, fax, hand-delivery, OR uploading to judgingcard.com.***
5. Incomplete submission materials (i.e., materials with job descriptions, missing reference letters, etc.) will not be accepted for competition; contestants will be disqualified. Contestants are encouraged to contact the contest superintendent after submitting materials, to verify that their job description, cover letter, résumé, and letters of reference have been received **prior to the early submission deadline**.
6. Early submission materials (job description, cover letter, résumé, and three reference letters) must be submitted as **a single PDF file of less than 10MB**. **Name the single PDF attachment of early submission materials with the contestant's last name and chapter name (ex: Smith\_SomewhereFFA.pdf)**. Materials not submitted as a single PDF file will receive a 10-point deduction for inability to follow directions.
7. **Job Description**
  - a. The job description is required to assist judges in best evaluating and scoring early submission cover letters, résumés, and letters of reference in the context of the position for which the contestant has chosen to apply. The job description will not be scored but is required as a part of early submission materials.
  - b. The job description should include a description of the position for which the student is applying a contestant in the Employment Skills LDE. The description should include desired qualifications and experience as well as typical duties or responsibilities. The chosen position should be an agriculturally-related job for which a high school student may be realistically qualified.
  - c. Job descriptions submitted as a part of early submission materials should be saved as a part of the single PDF attachment of early submission materials.

- d. Participants who fail to submit a job description will be subject to disqualification from the Employment Skills LDE.
- e. A variety of sources can be helpful in identifying job descriptions relevant to the Employment Skills LDE, including newspapers, online job search sites, and specific organization, business, or company websites.

**8. Cover Letter (100 Points)**

- a. Cover letters submitted as a part of early submission materials should be saved as a part of the single PDF attachment of early submission materials.
- b. Hard copy cover letters brought on the day of the contest should be printed on 8 1/2" x 11" white bond paper.
- c. The paper is to be single-sided only, left-justified, and typed using no less than a 11-point font size. Times, Times New Roman, or Arial font style should be used.
- d. Letter is to be dated for the day of the Oklahoma State FFA Employment Skills LDE and addressed to the Superintendent of the event:

Mr. Herb Lengel  
Employment Skills LDE Superintendent  
103 Agriculture Hall  
Stillwater, OK 74078-6017

Each contestant should pretend that the superintendent is the person in charge of hiring at the organization to which he/she is applying. In other words, don't use the name of the "real" person in charge of hiring.

- e. Cover letters will be evaluated/scored by three separate judges based upon the scorecard provided at the end of these guidelines. Points awarded to each contestant for the cover letter portion of the contest will equal the average of the total points awarded by each judge.

**9. Résumé (200 Points)**

- a. The résumé should be generated from the FFA Résumé Generator accessible through FFA.org.
- b. Résumé must be non-fictitious and based upon student's work, education, volunteer and career-related history.
- c. Résumé should be targeted to the position for which the student wishes to apply.
- d. Upon using the FFA Résumé Generator to inventory a contestant's experiences and skills, the student's résumé may be downloaded as an editable MS Word document for customization. Final versions of the contestant's résumé for the Employment Skills LDE competition must be saved as a part of the single PDF attachment of early submission materials and submitted by the early submission deadline.
- e. Hard copy résumés brought on the day of the contest should be printed on 8 1/2" x 11" white bond paper.
- f. The résumé should be single-sided only, typed using no less than a 11 point font, and should not exceed two pages total. Career counselors and job search coaches recommend one page résumés for candidates of this level.
- g. Résumés will be evaluated/scored by three separate judges based upon the scorecard provided at the end of these guidelines. Points awarded to each contestant for the résumé portion of the contest will equal the average of the total points awarded by each judge.

**10. Reference Letters (5 Points)**

- a. Students should obtain three letters of reference that are written to describe the students' skills and abilities as related to the position for which they are applying.
- b. Students will not be penalized for the spelling, sentence structure or content of the reference letters. However, the letters may be used to obtain questions for use during the interview portion of the contest.
- c. Scores assigned to this component of the contest will be based on the logic the student used in selecting his or her references (i.e., Did the student choose a person who knew them and could describe his/her skills as they relate to the position for which he/she is applying?).
- d. Reference letters should be addressed to the Superintendent of the Leadership Development Event. Contestants should ask their references to pretend that the superintendent is the person in charge of hiring at the organization to which he/she is applying. In other words, ask references not to use the name of the "real" person in charge of hiring.
- e. References will be evaluated/scored as a part of the résumé evaluation process as detailed within the scorecard provided at the end of these guidelines.

#### **11. Selection of Contest Finalists**

- a. Based upon the early submission of contestants' job descriptions, cover letters, résumés, and reference letters, preliminary scores will be tabulated and the ten (10) contestants earning the greatest number of points will be identified as finalists to continue with the state contest during the OSU FFA Interscholastics.
- b. Ties for finalist positions will be broken based on the greatest number of low ranks of the cover letter and résumé phases. Participants' rankings on the cover letter and résumé will be added and the participant with the lowest sum of the rank scores will be declared the finalist. If a tie still exists, then the event superintendent will review the participants' ranks in the résumé phase of the contest, and the participant with the lowest rank from the résumé phase will be declared the finalist.
- c. Finalists will be notified via a reply to the email used for their early submission of materials. Ag teachers of the selected finalists will be copied on the email notification.
- d. Contestants not selected as contest finalists and their respective ag teachers will also be notified via a reply to the email used for their early submission of materials. Ag teachers of those students not selected as finalists will be copied on the email notification. Non-finalist contestants will be invited to an Employment Skills LDE Workshop to be held in conjunction with the Employment Skills LDE in the Classroom Building on the OSU-Stillwater campus. This workshop will provide valuable insight to contestants about how to improve their job search skills.
- e. **Finalists will be notified by email on April 24.**

#### **C. Equipment for the Day of the Contest**

1. Participants may bring the following items to the event:
  - a. Copies of résumé
  - b. Copies of cover letter
  - c. List of references
  - d. Blank letterhead to print follow-up letter (Optional, and must be printed on 8 1/2" x 11" white bond paper.)

- f. Appropriate writing utensil
  - g. List of questions to ask judges
  - h. Business cards
  - i. Professional folder or padfolio to carry supplies listed above.
2. The following items are NOT permitted during the event:
    - a. Cell phone
    - b. USB drive / flash drive
    - c. Samples of work, portfolio, or pictures
    - d. Letters of reference

#### **D. Event Schedule**

1. **Each contestant shall complete the event in the time allotted:**
  - a. Application (20 minutes)
  - b. 2 Personal Panel Interviews (20 minutes each)
  - c. Follow Up Letter (30 minutes)
2. **Contest Timing**
  - a. Considering the allotted time for each contest phase, including the time necessary for panel interview judges to both rotate through contestants and complete their evaluations, the estimated contest end time is 12:00 p.m.

#### **E. Contest activities on the day of the Employment Skills LDE**

1. No materials other than those listed in section IV-C-1 of the Employment Skills LDE guidelines will be permitted in the contest area.
2. **Electronic Application (100 Points)**
  - a. Students will complete a computer-based fillable PDF job application on-site, prior to the personal interviews.
  - b. Students will assume the application is for the job for which they provided their job description, cover letter, résumé and accompanying references.
  - c. A time limit of 20 minutes will be allotted for contestants to complete and print their applications.
  - d. Applications will be evaluated/scored by three separate judges based upon the scorecard provided at the end of these guidelines. Points awarded to each contestant for the application portion of the contest will equal the average of the total points awarded by each judge.
3. **Personal Interview (500 Points)**
  - a. The interview will consist of two 20-minute panel interviews with no less than three separate judges on each panel.
  - b. As with the National Employment Skills Leadership Development Event, contestants may not be interviewed by the same interview judges or panels. All interview judges complete a judges' training workshop prior to their interaction with the Employment Skills LDE contestants to provide a level of standardization in their evaluation of the contestants' interview skills. This training is equivalent to the training provided to the national contest judges.
  - c. Points awarded to each contestant for the personal interview portion of the contest will equal the average of the total points awarded by each panel interview judge.
4. **Follow Up Correspondence (100 Points)**
  - a. Participants will develop, print or email, and submit or send follow up correspondence after their final personal panel interview.
  - b. Contestants will be provided with necessary information and a computer with both Internet access and the Microsoft Word application at the conclusion of

their final personal panel interview in order to develop their follow-up correspondence.

- c. 30 minutes will be provided, and test prints will be allowed.
- d. Follow up correspondence will be evaluated/scored by three separate judges based upon the scorecard provided at the end of these guidelines. Points awarded to each contestant for the follow up letter portion of the contest will equal the average of the total points awarded by each judge.

## V. SCORING

Cover Letter .....	100
Résumé.....	175
Reference Letters .....	25
Application.....	100
Personal Interview .....	500
Follow Up Letter.....	100
<b>Total Points .....</b>	<b>1000</b>

## VI. TIEBREAKERS

Ties will be broken based on the greatest number of low ranks among each contest phase. Participants' rankings in each contest phase will be added, and the participant with the lowest sum of the rank scores will be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, then the event superintendent will review the participants' ranks in the personal panel interview phase of the contest, and the participant with the lowest rank from the personal panel interview phase will be declared the winner.

## VII. AWARDS

Awards will be presented to individuals based upon their rankings at the awards ceremony during the Oklahoma FFA Convention. Awards are sponsored by the Oklahoma State University Ferguson College of Agriculture, and by cooperating industry sponsor(s) as a special project, and/or by the general fund of the Oklahoma FFA Foundation.

## VIII. REFERENCES

- Bortz, D. (2016.) What your resume should look like in 2016. *Money: Career Guide 2016*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/money/4171054/resume-tips-advice/>.
- Gallo, A. (2014). How to write a cover letter. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2014/02/how-to-write-a-cover-letter>
- Giang, V. & Stanger, M. (2012). How to write the perfect resume. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-write-the-perfect-resume-2012-11?op=1>.
- Green, A. (2011). How to prepare for a job interview. *U.S. News & World Report: Money*. Retrieved from <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/02/07/how-to-prepare-for-a-job-interview>.
- Green, A. (2013). 5 Interview Questions You Should Always Prepare to Answer. *U.S. News & World Report: Money*. Retrieved from <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2013/03/06/5-interview-questions-you-should-always-prepare-to-answer>
- Martin, C. & Troutman, K. Tactics for handling a panel interview. *Monster*. Retrieved from <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/interview-preparation/handling-panel-interviews/article.aspx>
- OSU Ferguson College of Agriculture Career Services “How-To” Resources. Retrieved from <http://casnr.okstate.edu/career-services/how-to-resources>.

- Potter, C.M. Practice makes perfect: How to rehearse for your next job interview. *Monster*. Retrieved from <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/interview-preparation/practice-makes-perfect-how-to-rehearse-for-your-next-job-interview-hot-jobs/article.aspx>.
- Strunk, Jr., W. & White, E.B. (1999). *The Elements of Style* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). London, England: Longman Publishing.
- Vaas, L. (2009). How to write a great cover letter. *The Ladders*. Retrieved from <http://www.theladders.com/career-advice/how-to-write-cover-letter>

## IX. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION, MATERIALS AND FORMS

### A. Application for Employment

### B. Employment Skills Resources

### C. 10 Tips for Contest Participation

1. Start early in preparing materials. This is not a contest that a student can decide to enter the week of state LDE's. This contest requires prior preparation and early submission of materials.
2. Have at least three people proofread and critique your student's work. Are there any grammatical or spelling errors? Is the student doing his/her best job of marketing skills relevant to his/her job objective?
3. Name the single PDF attachment of early submission materials with the contestant's last name and chapter name (ex: Smith\_SomewhereFFA.pdf).
4. Submit materials early. Materials must be submitted via email to [casnr@okstate.edu](mailto:casnr@okstate.edu) **No exceptions are made**, and materials are not accepted via postal mail, fax, hand delivery, or [judgingcard.com](http://judgingcard.com).
5. Use white bond paper as indicated in the contest guidelines for hard copy résumés and cover letters brought on the day of the contest. No colored paper, résumé paper or cardstock should be used.
6. Ensure that your student has addressed all areas within his/her résumé and cover letter that are evaluated and scored, as detailed on the scorecards in the contest guidelines.
7. Don't forget to have your student bring a writing utensil to the contest for taking notes.
8. Be prepared to patiently wait during the contest. All contestants rotate through two panel interviews; therefore, there is a significant amount of waiting time in between interviews and contest phases.
9. Students should pick up critiqued contest materials at the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources booth within the Career Show during the State FFA Convention in Oklahoma City.