

WINNING WITH NACAA AWARDS

The Strategist's Guide to Communications
and Search for Excellence Entries



Why This Matters: The Value of Recognition

Applying for awards is not just about a plaque; it is a component of career ladder advancements



Career Ladder

Service as a validated metric of professional excellence, mirroring university promotion programs



Financial Reward

Cash awards for National Winners (up to \$500) and Finalists (up to \$250). Dependent on sponsor funding



Professional Visibility

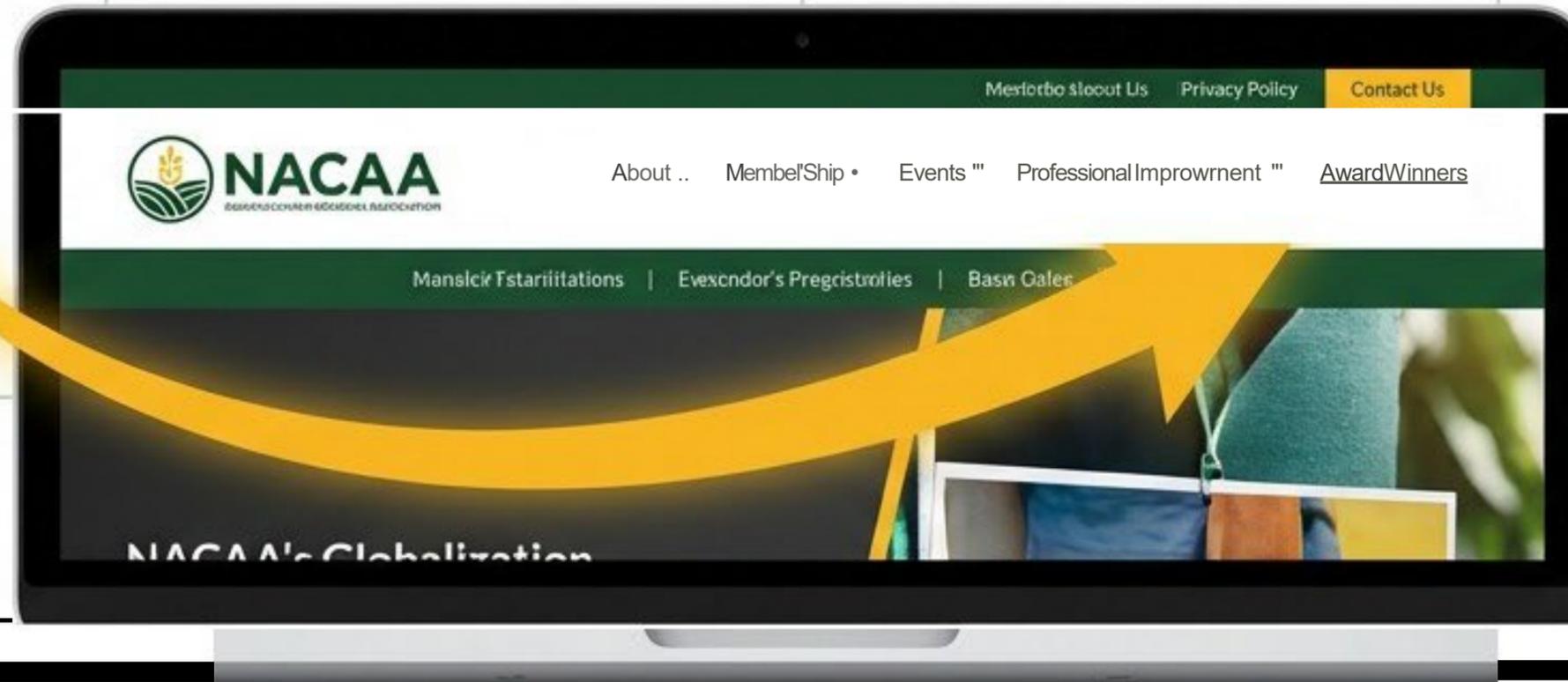
Winners present their work at the AM/PIC (Annual Meeting/Professional Improvement Conference).



Feedback Loop

The "Search for Excellence" scoring rubric provides a roadmap for better program design, regardless of the result.

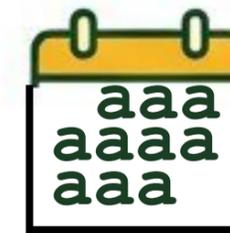
DON'T GUESS. RESEARCH PAST SUCCESS.



View abstracts
for structure.



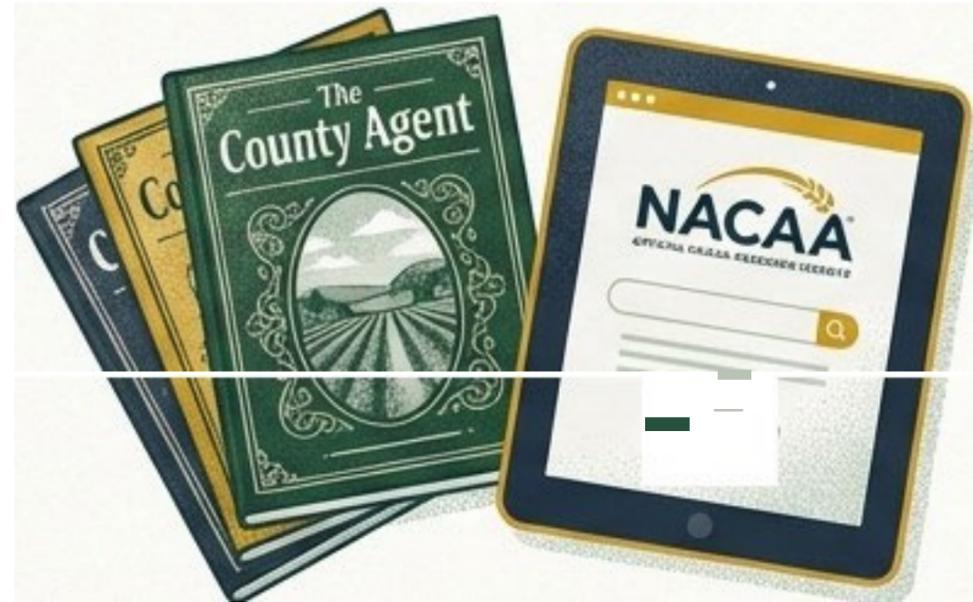
Download
winning entries.



Check 2021-2023
for trends.

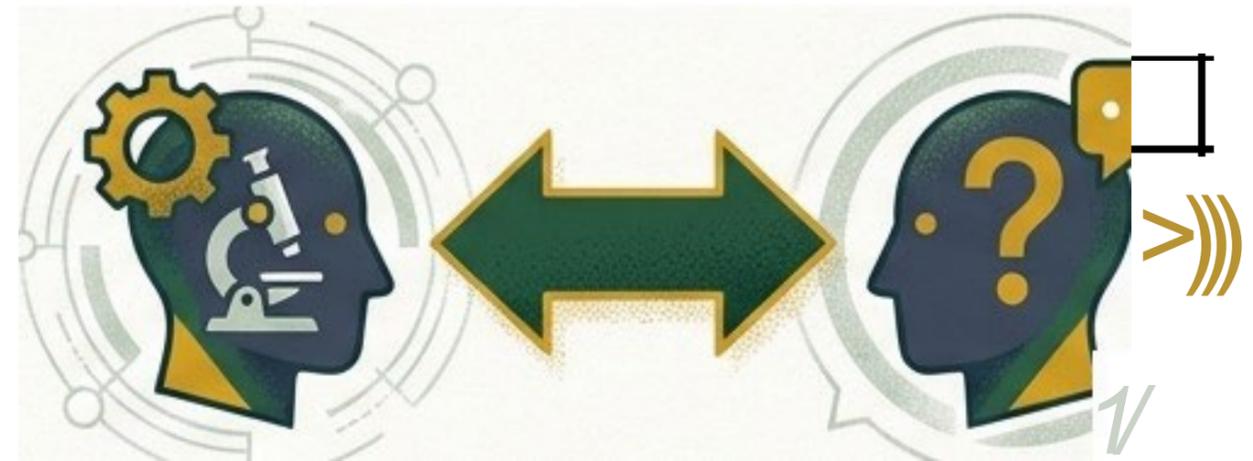
Don't Guess. Research Past Success.

The Archive Strategy



- **Source:** The County Agent magazine & NACAA archives.
- **Action:** Review winning abstracts from the past 3 years.
- **Goal:** Mimic the structure and tone of proven winners.

The Two-Pronged Peer Review



Reviewer 1:
Inside Program Area.
Checks for technical
accuracy, industry
relevance, and depth.

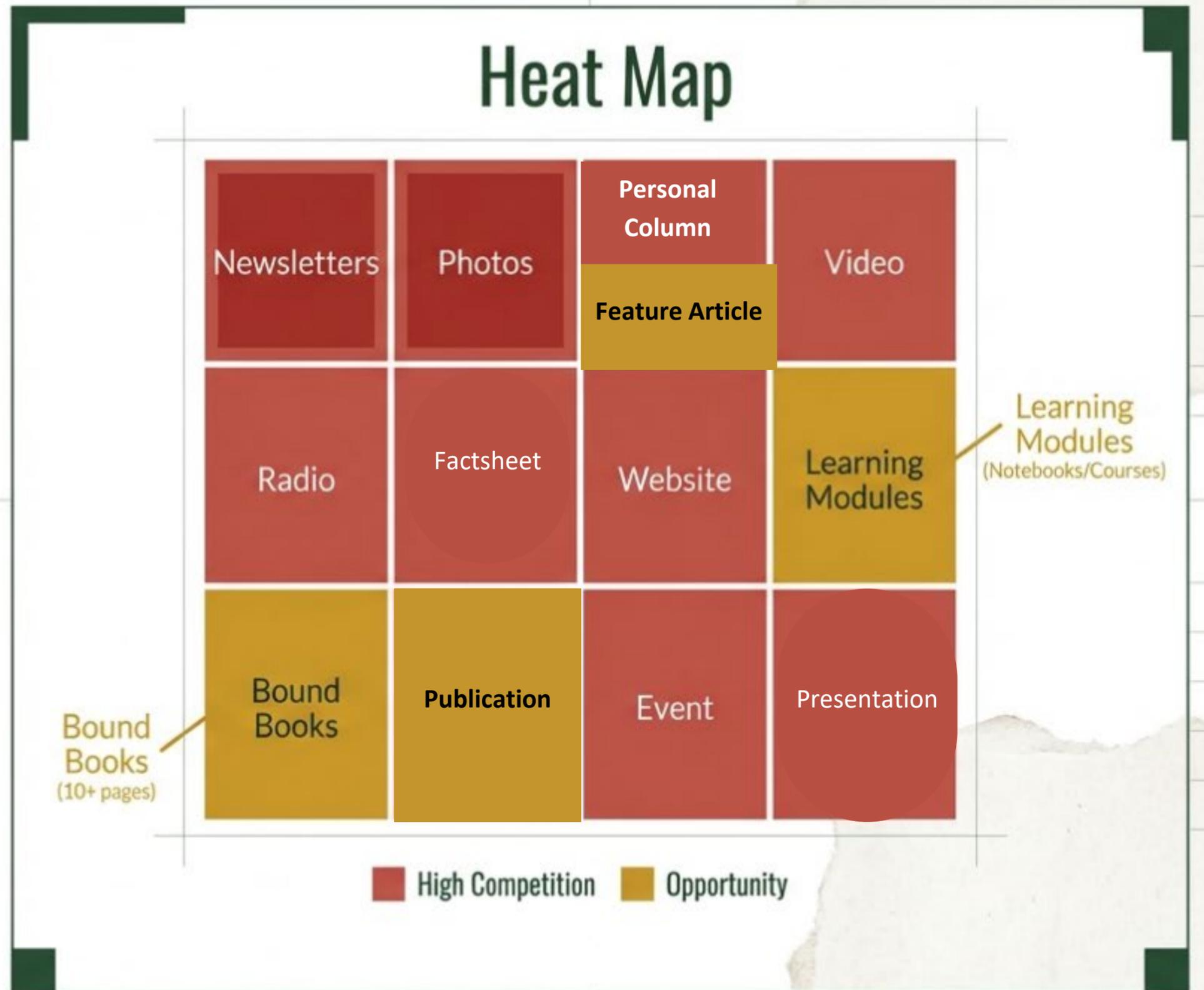
Reviewer 2:
Outside Program Area.
The 'Grandmother Test.'
Checks for jargon, clarity,
and broad appeal.



Strategic Note: If an outsider cannot understand the impact in the first paragraph, the judges likely won't either.

STRATEGY: PICK YOUR BATTLES

- The Landscape: 13 Categories.
- The Trap: Crowded categories like Photos & Newsletters.
- The Opportunity: Low-competition categories.



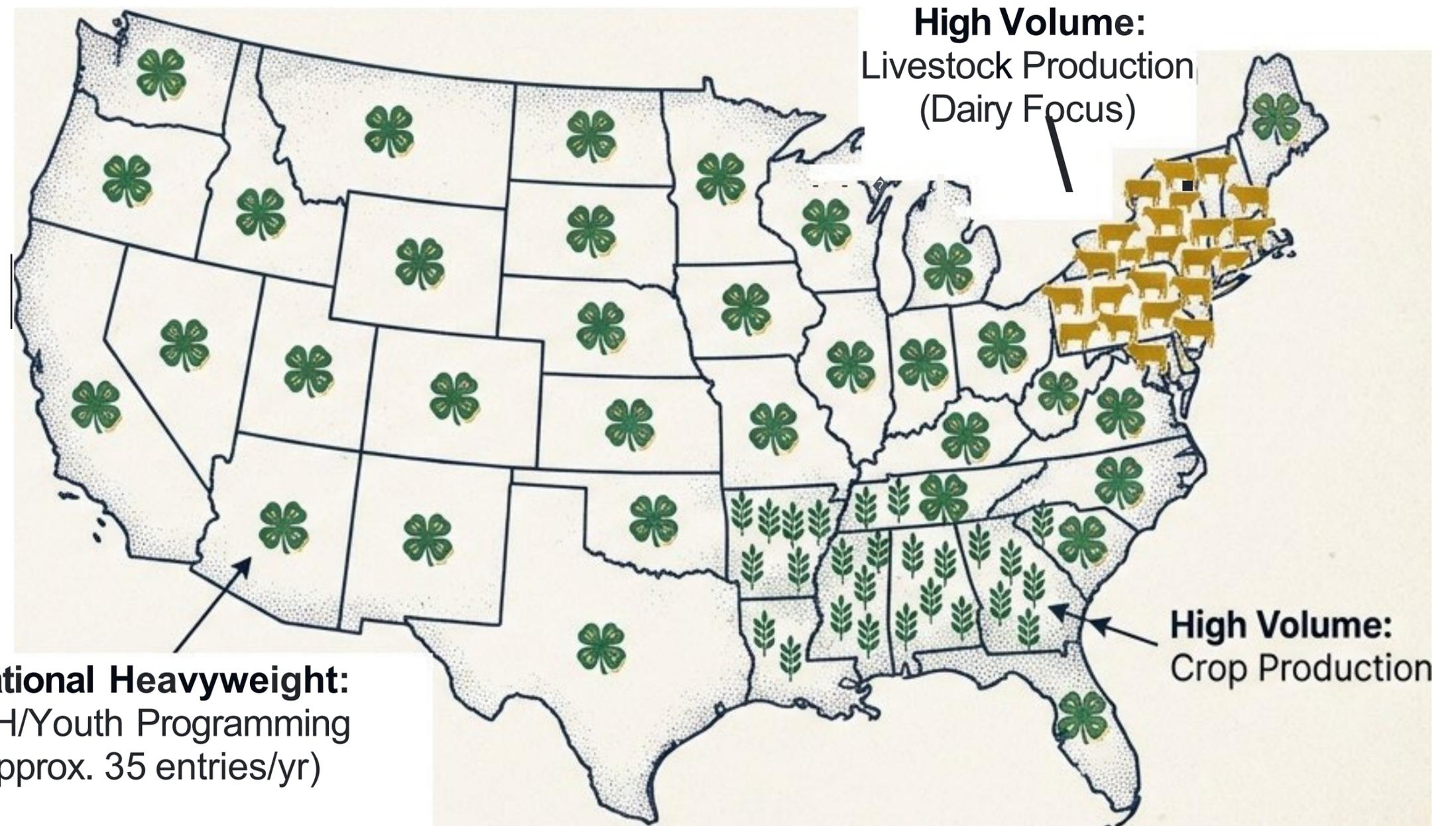
Analyze the Field: Regional Density vs. National Opportunity

Geography dictates volume, not victory. Excellence wins in every category.

Category Volume Snapshot

- Horticulture:
~16-20 entries
- Forestry:
~13-14 entries
- Farm & Ranch:
~11-12 entries
- Sustainable Ag:
Variable

National Heavyweight:
4-H/Youth Programming
(Approx. 35 entries/yr)



Strategic Insight: Don't let regional trends deter submission. If you have a strong program, the rubric favors results over region

Search for Excellence: It's a Program, Not a Workshop

A "Search for Excellence" entry must demonstrate a sustained educational effort, not a one-time event.



The Workshop (Don't Submit This)

- Single day event
- Single delivery method
- Limited follow-up
- "Butt in seat" metrics



The Program (Submit This)

- Multiple sessions
- Spans multiple years {up to 3}
- Comprehensive evaluation data

The 100-Point Formula: Write for the Rubric

80% of your score depends on the results, not the activity.



High Value Section (The Big 80)

Educational Objectives (20 pts):

The Why.

Results (20 pts):

The Data (Participants, acres, conversions).

Impact Statement (20 pts):

The So What (Behavior change, economic value).

Evaluation (20 pts):

The Proof (Surveys, follow-up data).

Supporting Section (The Final 20)

Program Activities (10 pts):

The Action.

Teaching Methods (10 pts):

The Delivery.



Allocate majority of 1200-word limit here.

FOCUS ON IMPACT

Results + Impact Statement = 40% of Total Score

Search for Excellence Metrics

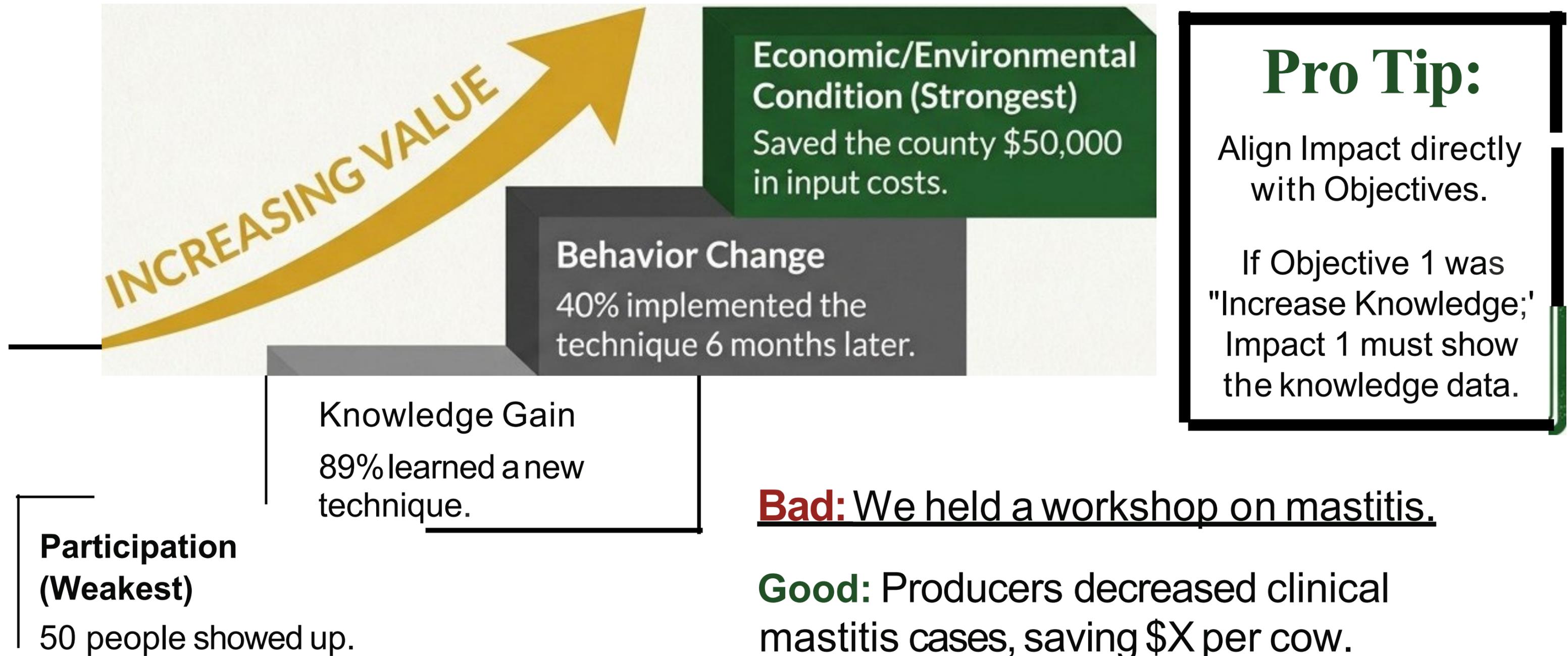
- Acres Converted
- Dollars Saved
- Production Practices Changed

Communications Metrics

- Viewers/ Clicks/ Opens
- Distribution Counts
- Earned Social or Media Value

Writing Winning Objectives & Impact

The "So What?" Test: Moving from Output to Outcome.



Evaluation: Proving Your Worth

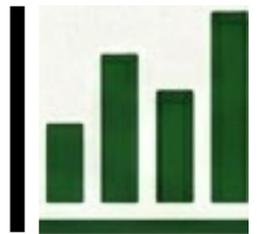
Data Sources



Immediate: Pre/Post surveys (Knowledge gain).



Intermediate: 6-month follow-up calls/emails (Implementation).



Hard Data: \$ made or saved due to practice change, crop yields, sales figures.

Handling Weak Data

Low response rates on long-term surveys are common (e.g., 10 responses out of 140).

Strategy: Supplement survey data with anecdotal evidence or hard production records.

Conversation: Call or visit with participants, many times you will gain good evaluation data in a conversation that you may not capture on paper

The Evidence: Supporting Documents & Limits

Search for Excellence (SFE)



- Narrative: Max 1200 words.
- Attachments: Max 3 supporting documents.
- Best Uses: Evaluation summaries (graphs/charts), brochures, links to recordings.

Communications



- File Size: Max 25MB per upload. May need to compress file
- Large Files: Upload abstract electronically; mail physical material (books/notebooks) to State Chair.



Warren County Holiday Gift Guide

- 2025 IMPACT SNAPSHOT -

Supporting Local Farms, Makers & Ag Based Businesses

TOTAL EARNED MEDIA VALUE: \$41,727

Breakdown:

- **\$36,300** – Farm & Home Show TV Segments (11 x \$3,300)
- **\$2,886** – Facebook Promotions (37 x \$78)
- **\$2,541** – Instagram Promotions (33 x \$77)

PROGRAM REACH

20 LOCAL FARMS & BUSINESSES FEATURED

In the Holiday Gift Guide (Print & Digital)



FACEBOOK (Warren Co. Ag Page)



Gift Guide Videos

WHAT BUSINESSES SAID:

“Our Instagram following increased by 8%... the Holiday Gift Guide definitely contributed to that.”

— The Butcher, The Baker & The Coffemaker

“We saw increased social media engagement and new customers... Keep doing what you're doing!”

— 3H Farms Market

17 of 20 businesses experienced measurable social media follower growth during the Holiday Gift Guide promotion.

- ✓ Increased visibility for ag businesses
- ✓ Higher engagement across platforms
- ✓ New customers & brand recognition
- ✓ Expanded Kentucky Proud awareness



College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

HARVEST

Festival Highlights

- Sponsored by Warren County Extension Council.
- 14 community partners set up educational booths or health screenings.
- Keynote Speaker Dr. Kristie Guffey discussed mental health awareness.
- Sixty people attended the event.
- Participants' post-session evaluations showed that 75% increased their knowledge of the importance of health and 75% would attend events like this one in the future.
- Vendor post-session evaluations showed an increase in knowledge and monetary value to the event.

Harvest Festival Testimony:

“I had such a wonderful time tonight. It lifted my spirits, and I was able to see some great friends. I can't thank you and your staff enough. This really did help heal my heart.”

HARVEST | HEALTH | COMMUNITY

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Weekdays

5:15am WBKO- 13 ABC

7:15am WBKO- 13-2 Fox



Talk 104.1 FM WKCT
Tuesday's at 8:30am CST

MASTER CATTLEMAN PROGRAM

2025 IMPACT REPORT

28 PRODUCERS | 5 COUNTIES | 100% KNOWLEDGE GAIN



28 Beef Producers
Participated



5 Counties
Collaborated



<30 to 200+
Head Represented

FROM UNDERSTANDING TO CONFIDENCE

Genetics & EPDs

2 → 4-5

Reproduction & Calving

100% Knowledge & Implementation

Nutrition & Herd Health

Mineral Programs & Vaccine Timing

100%
INCREASED
KNOWLEDGE

ACTION TAKEN



Adjusted
Calving Seasons



Crossbreeding
Systems



Breeding
Soundness Exams



Facility
Improvements



Strategic
Marketing



Health
Protocol Upgrades

\$294,000

PROJECTED ANNUAL
REGIONAL IMPACT

Estimated Gains of \$1,000-\$20,000 Per Producer



Increased Herd Efficiency



Reduced Health Losses



Improved Market Returns

100% REPORTED INCREASED KNOWLEDGE

Top Sessions : Facility Design • Reproductive Strategy • Marketing Systems

Future Interest: On-Farm Tours & Hands-On Learning



Cooperative
Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Compressing Files

Methods for Compressing Files

- **Convert to PDF:** For computer-generated presentations, converting the file to PDF format is recommended to help reduce file size.

-

- **Use URLs:** If a file (such as a video or audio recording) is too large, you can provide a link (URL) to where the content is hosted online.

Operating System Methods:

- **Windows (Method A):** Right-click the file/folder > Send to > Compressed (zipped) folder.

- **Windows (Method B):** In File Explorer, select the file > Top menu > More menu > Compress to ZIP file.

- **Windows (Method C):** Right-click > Properties > General > Advanced > Check "Compress contents to save disk space."

- **macOS:** Right-click or Control-click the file/folder > Compress.

The Abstract: Your First (and Last) Impression

The abstract is the first thing judges read and often the deciding factor.

Writing Strategy

1. Draft in Word first.

(Do not type directly into web form-no spell check).

2. The Formula:



State the problem-> Describe the intervention-> Quantify the result.

3. Team Credit:

Ensure all team members are listed exactly as they appear on the application.

Communications Abstract:

Max 350 words.

Single Paragraph.

Must cover: Objective, Purpose, Methods, Distribution, Results.

SFE Abstract: Max 350 words.

Single Paragraph.

(Program Description is separate)



NACAA

@NACAA2011keynote · 136 subscribers · 133 videos

National Association of County Agricultural Agents ...more

Subscribed

View channel stats

vidIQ Quick channel stats

Home Videos Live Podcasts Playlists

Channelytics

For You

Business Components

- LABOR...the physical work involved
- INCOME...minus expenses equals profit
- MANAGEMENT...decision making authority
- ASSETS and OWNERSHIP...own, rent or control and the liabilities associated with them

59:04

NACAA 365 - Farm Succession Planning (Part 1 of 2)

7 views · 3 weeks ago

Writing a Winning Horticulture Abstract

Not sure where to begin? How to create a draft abstract from the rubric

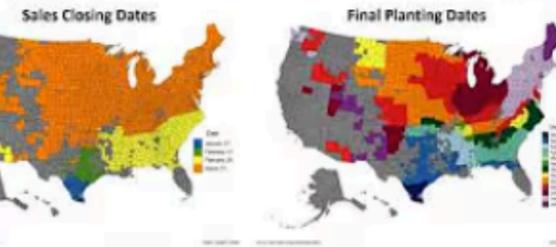
- Don't stress.
- Keep it simple.
- Deconstruct the rubric
- Answer questions in short sentences or bullet points
- Connect the dots to form the framework of your draft.
- Review

37:46

NACAA 365 - From Roots to Results: Writing a 'Winning' Horticulture Abstract

3 views · 8 days ago

Important Dates - Corn



58:52

NACAA 365 - November 19, 2025 - Current State of the U.S. Crop Insurance Industry

11 views · 3 months ago

Accessibility Features - all ver

- Let Office check for accessibility issues
- Reports back with Errors, Warnings, Tips
- Alt Text for images (all versions)
- Inspect without Color for color blind
- Select Review tab, then Check Accessibility

Maximize PowerPoint for Present

25 views · 1 year ago

MEMBER INFO



Scholarship Info



Website



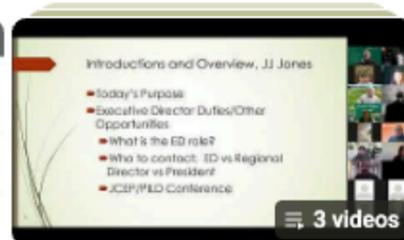
Technology



First Timer Info



Award Info



State Officer Workshops

Logistics: You Have to Be There to Win



Submission Portal

Submit Early. Allow State Chair time to catch incomplete data.

MARCH 15 DEADLINE

Hard Stop. Electronic submission only.

AM/PIC Attendance

Mandatory.

The "Early Bird" Advantage

State Chairs can save your application by spotting missing sections, but only if you submit before the final day.

The Golden Rule of Winning

Winners must register for and attend the AM/PIC (minimum 1 day) to receive awards. No proxies allowed. Cash and plaques are forfeited if you are not physically present.

You Are Already Doing the Work. Get the Recognition.



Categorize Correctly



Focus on Impact



Follow the Rules

Start your application today at nacaa.com

Contact your State Chair for questions.