



Planning Guide

Incentive Funding Grant for Programs in Grades 5-12

Quality indicators published each year serve as a tool for reflection on past accomplishments, but they can also serve as a guide for planning the next program year at the local level. Administrators, teachers, students, and community stakeholders should work together to annually review, plan, and promote the improvement of their respective local AFNR program. This is a tool to aid in **planning for the future** of your local program.

Who should be involved in program planning?

The local agricultural and/or Career and Technical Education (CTE) advisory council would be a great group to involve in AFNR program planning. Members of such a committee should include some combination of school administrators, related teachers (such as career and technical education, science, math, etc.), your department chair, parents, community leaders, and student leaders.

What should be discussed?

The first priority of the group should be to define **local needs**. The quality indicators can serve as a tool to identify local strengths as well as opportunities to grow. The following methods may be helpful:

1. **High and Low Strategy -- Which of the goals do we score the highest and lowest?**

Each identified goal of the incentive program has a different number of “points possible.” To compare each of the goals, determine the percentage of local quality indicators achieved by dividing the local points by the points possible for each goal. See example below.

Figure 1. Strengths of an Example AFNR Program

Goal #	Local Points	Possible Points	Relative Strength
1	13	25	52%
2	5	8	63%
3	20	24	83% Highest
4	10	24	42%
5	15	22	68%
6	7	9	78%
7	3	9	33% Lowest
8	12	21	57%

Based on the example shown in **Figure 1**, this program is most proficient in Goal 3. It is least proficient in Goal 7. What about the local program is creating a relatively high level of achievement in Goal 3? Who is involved in the support of items found in Goal 3? What is done in Goal 3 that could be replicated in other goals to increase achievement? Why is Goal 7 the lowest relative score for this program? Can quality indicators for this goal be improved? Are there stakeholders who can help address the quality indicators in Goal 7? These are the types of questions that should drive the conversation if using this first planning strategy to review your quality indicator application.

2. **Cost v. Benefit Strategy -- Which quality indicators are the most efficient to attain?**

Each quality indicator has an associated “cost” of time, money, resources, community support, etc. It may prove beneficial to examine the associated costs of all quality indicators to determine if there are any aspects of the program that are being unintentionally neglected or forgotten. For example,

indicators relating to agricultural advisory councils (as seen in Goal 7) are relatively “low cost” when compared to the resources required to add facilities or equipment (as seen in Goal 6). See most recent local program quality indicator application for more information. All quality indicators (those achieved and those not achieved) should be annually reviewed to measure the cost of each against the benefit to the local students, school, and community. Another important aspect to consider is that increased participation does not always mean more quality indicator points; each section has a “maximum points” allowed. Increasing quality indicator points scored should not be the only factor when considering whether or not to pursue a specific achievement; point maximums are in place to provide an incentive to seek the balanced improvement of a program rather than focus on achievement in one goal. For example, while there are 25 unique Career Development Events available within the quality indicators, a maximum of 7 points is allowed for this section. Rather than striving to compete in all 25 events, a program is encouraged to consider putting time and resources toward improving other quality indicators like participation in Supervised Agricultural Experiences, incorporation of college-level courses, or implementation of agricultural literacy activities.

3. Local Strengths Strategy -- Which indicators align best with the strengths of my local community?

In many instances, the agricultural education teacher is left to work with committed students and limited resources when trying to improve a program. However, successful AFNR programs work closely with a variety of local stakeholders to achieve proficiency in each recognized goal. This strategy requires teachers, students, and stakeholders to examine each indicator and identify those individuals who are equipped, passionate, or available to help or take the lead. A variety of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, local businesses, school administrators, community college partners, parents, alumni, student leaders, and other teachers, should be considered and approached for help.

When should planning take place?

It's recommended that an annual planning session occur sometime during the spring semester. This is for a variety of reasons. Seniors graduating from the program will still be available and have key insight for future needs, and teachers, administrators, and other school staff will likely be more readily available as school is still in session. Many program decisions for the impending school year would not have yet been made, allowing planning to have an immediate impact as needed and appropriate. However, the time of year is not what is most important. Consistency is the most important thing to allow for timely check-in on previous programming planning goals. One meeting per year will suffice, but two planning meetings per year is highly encouraged.

Where should this meeting be held?

Facilities are a key component of the quality indicators, so the best place to meet is often in the agricultural education classroom or lab space, as appropriate. However, who is there is more important and a call-in or virtual method of participation should be available, as needed.

How should planning be conducted?

If planning is conducted using a local agricultural advisory council (formal or informal), an agenda may be helpful to focus on specific questions. Regardless of which strategy is used to analyze the AFNR program, specific goals for improvement should be identified. Those goals can be organized as Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) goals. A person or group of people should be tasked with each goal. The goal should have specific action(s), a measurable standard to determine success, and a timeline for completion. Here's some examples of quality SMART goals that could result from a program planning meeting:

1. Ms. Johnson (AFNR teacher) will meet at least once with Dr. Rodriguez (local principal) to discuss offering AFNR courses as dual credit and/or credit toward graduation requirements before May 31.
2. Dominique (AFNR student) will recruit and coach at least two FFA members to participate in a Prepared Public Speaking Leadership Development Event during the upcoming year.
3. Dr. Shaffer (local veterinarian) will work with Ms. Johnson to coordinate at least three job-shadowing experiences for AFNR seniors before the end of the fall semester.

More Information on Agricultural Advisory Councils

To learn more about local advisory councils, check out our “Community” menu on the [AFNR webpage](#). For a brief introduction to local agricultural advisory councils, [click here](#).