Quick Start Guide to the FFA Proficiency Award Application

Following these steps will make the process easier, and the finished product better.

1. **Get the application in the CORRECT AREA!**
   - Figure out what the student actually does and read the attached Proficiency Descriptions to be sure that the SAE fits the category. Some of the award areas are very “cut and dried” but others are convoluted and confusing. If the student’s SAE overlaps into more than one area, that is OK – just select the area that best fits the bulk of the SAE. Then make sure that 100% of all the narrative, skills and financials discussed in the application are related to the selected area.

2. **READ the Rubric!**
   - Before beginning the narrative portion or selecting skills or outcomes, READ the Rubric and use it as a guide to answering the questions. Write to the Rubric! After each section is finished, go over that section with the Rubric and make sure the question has been answered completely enough to garner full points.

3. **ANSWER the QUESTIONS!**
   - Answer the questions completely but don’t duplicate answers that are better suited in other parts of the application just to fill up white space. Try to make the answers “different” from others – for example, avoid phrases like “ever since I was little...” or “my grandpa gave me my first (insert animal here)...” After reading 250 applications, this gets old. Additionally, Judges are from all over the country, so explain in detail EVERYTHING. Don’t assume that the judges will know anything about common production practices.

4. **NEVER create Questions that go UNANSWERED!**
   - For example, if narrative says “I exchange labor for my feed”, then that should be reflected in the financial section. Don’t leave out information that makes them speculate on the validity of the narrative.

5. **Financial information needs to be ACCURATE!**
   - Check and recheck the numbers. The judges have calculators and aren’t afraid to use them! Income and expenses should be reasonable to the SAE. If they look out of balance, there should be a reasonable explanation somewhere in the application. IF an item is depreciable, then there should be some depreciation taken.

6. **Photographs are important and should support the application!**
   - The FFA member should be identifiable in each photo. The photos should depict things that prove the student’s active involvement in the SAE. Gather as many photos as you can in order to have the ability to choose the best ones for the application.

7. **Who can Apply?**
   - Members must have at least one full calendar year of records. 8th grade members cannot apply.
   - Freshman can only apply if they were members as an 8th grader. Remember to include members that may appropriate SAE programs that have recently (less than a year ago) graduated high school.

8. **The FFA member/applicant needs to be involved in the application process!**
   - In order to understand the application and all of the information that is included, the student MUST be involved in the whole application process. Ultimately, the student needs to be prepared for an interview before a panel of judges to discuss this application and their SAE in great detail.

9. **Skills and competencies are weighted heavily!**
   - What has this student learned through the SAE? Learning outcomes are generally used for placement and Agriscience applicants. Entrepreneur applicants should make an effort to use efficiency factors.

10. **Review, update, and complete all AET records now!**