



Implementing the National Program Benchmarks for Agriculture Education

**Nebraska Career Education (NCE)
Conference, 2026**



<https://alec.unl.edu/>



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National Program Benchmarks... vs. Standards

They:

- support continuous improvement
- benchmarks
 - help set goals
 - measure progress
 - align with best practices across the nation



They are not:

- A judgement of you or your program

The NPB is organized into six key categories that reflect the foundational elements of Agricultural Education:



Classroom and Laboratory Instruction



Educator Success



Experiential, Project, and Work-Based Learning (SAE)



Facilities



Leadership and Personal Development (FFA)



Overall Program

Each category includes clear rubrics, suggested evidence, and planning tools that guide meaningful reflection and program development. Agricultural Educators can select one or two areas to focus on, up to all six, depending on their time and the support they receive during the process.

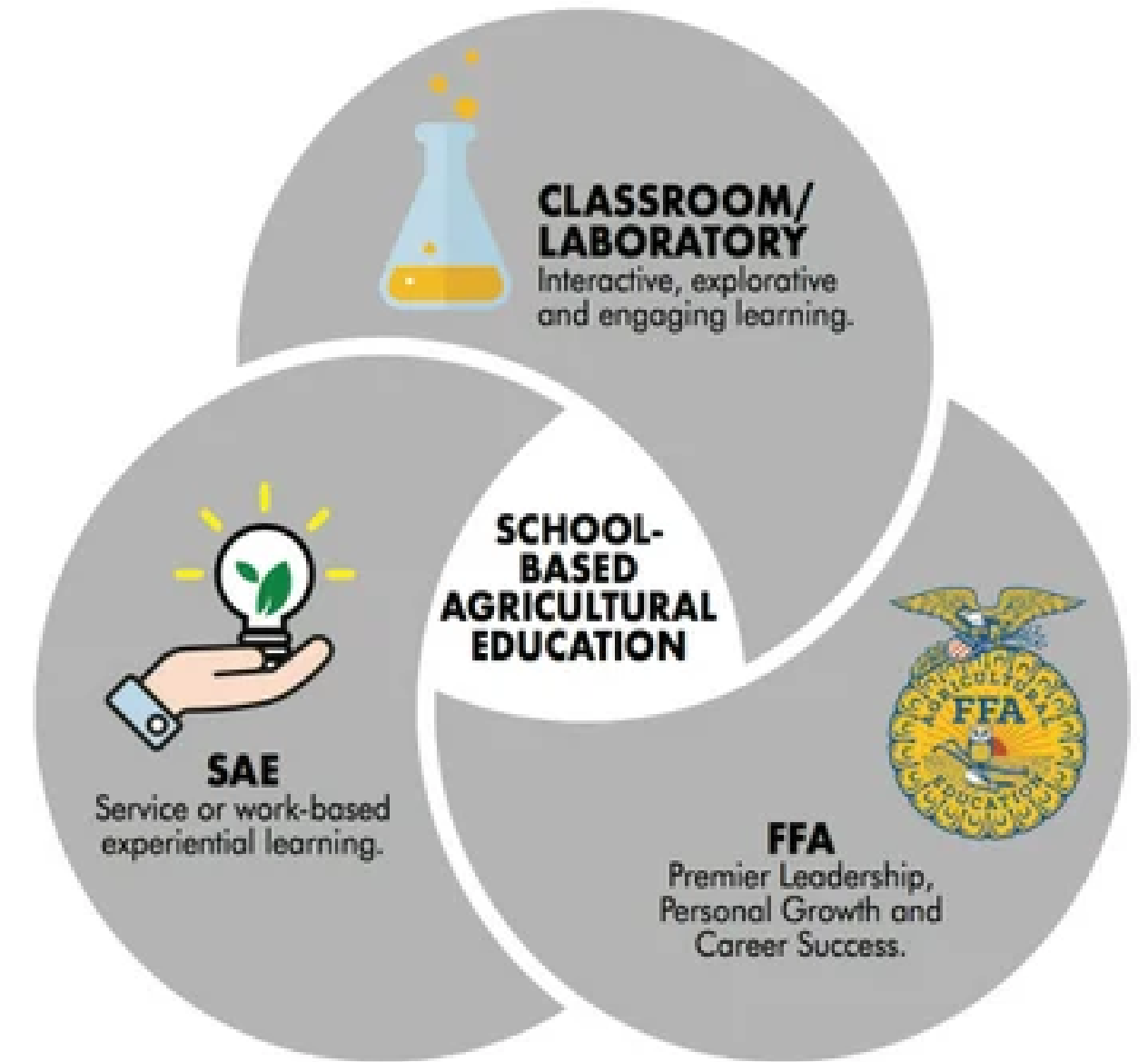


Who is it for?

Designed for

- educators
- administrators
- advisory committee
- community partners

Provides a **structured** approach for **evaluating** and **enhancing** all aspects of a school-based Agricultural Education program.





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National Program Benchmarks



How often do I do this?



- Yearly
- Every two years
- Every five years
- Once per teacher's lifetime



Section organization

Benchmark

- Expectations, with specific characteristics of a **high quality** program.

Rubric

- Tool to analyze the program progress.
 - 0 - limited or no **evidence**
 - 1 - progressing
 - 2 - meets
- **Additional evidence**

Results and Going Beyond

- Cumulative scores
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify areas for improvement
- Going beyond



Terms - and who needs to understand them?

- Consumable supplies
- Demographics
- Experiential learning
- Facility
- Safety
- Stakeholders
- Program of Activities
- Program of Study

ACRONYMS

ACTE	Association for Career and Technical Education
ADA	American with Disabilities Act
AET	Agricultural Experience Tracker
AFNR	Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
CASE	Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education; also known as
CDE	Career Development Event
CTE	Career and Technical Education
FFA	National FFA Organization
LDE	Leadership Development Event

Who completes this?

CLASSROOM

If there are multiple teachers in a single program, each teacher should complete this section.



BENCHMARK #1	SCORE Type your benchmark score in the box below (0, 1, or 2) ↓
Instruction integrates SAE and FFA.	

Put an "X" next to the evidence that supports the score you provided above.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE	
MEETS		PROGRESSING		LIMITED OR NO EVIDENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/>	All course instruction integrates SAE and FFA.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some course instruction is supplemented by SAE and FFA.	<input type="checkbox"/>	The inclusion of SAE and FFA into classroom instruction is non-existent.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Documentation of specific course units devoted to SAE and FFA.	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	No documentation of SAE and FFA within course units.
Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence	

Do I have to be honest?

BENCHMARK #2	SCORE Type your benchmark score in the box below (0, 1, or 2) ↓
Instruction integrates academic standards and employability skills.	

Put an "X" next to the evidence that supports the score you provided above.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE	
MEETS		PROGRESSING		LIMITED OR NO EVIDENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/>	All course instruction integrates the application of core academic standards, and that integration is documented.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some course instruction integrates core academic standards within the curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Course instruction does not integrate core academic standards.
<input type="checkbox"/>	All course instruction integrates the application of employability skills, and that integration is documented.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some course instruction integrates employability within the curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Course instruction does not integrate employability skills.
Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence	





BENCHMARK #5	SCORE Type your benchmark score in the box below (0, 1, or 2) ↓
Teacher(s) use effective instructional strategies (e.g., planning, teaching methods, and assessment).	

Put an "X" next to the evidence that supports the score you provided above.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE MEETS		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE PROGRESSING		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE LIMITED OR NO EVIDENCE	
	Lessons are organized and support learning objectives.		Instructional strategies are not always effective.		Lack of lesson plans.
	Uses assessments to gauge understanding, adjust instruction, and provide relevant feedback to students.		Lessons are uncoordinated.		Minimal or no evidence of instructional strategies.
	Students are engaged, and instructional strategies align with lesson goals.		Assessments are used sometimes but rarely inform instruction.		Minimal or no student feedback or engagement.
	Lesson plans with assessments; examples of student work with feedback; evidence of varied instructional strategies observed; assessment results informing instruction.		Students are not engaged in meaningful ways.		No evidence of assessments informing instruction.
Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence	



Does it always apply? No.

BENCHMARK #7	SCORE Type your benchmark score in the box below (0, 1, or 2) ↓
<i>Program of Study (POS) has been developed in accordance with state requirements.</i>	



Of course I have this one down.

BENCHMARK #13	SCORE Type your benchmark score in the box below (0, 1, or 2) ↓
Grading procedures incorporate the three-circle model in every course.	

Wait, every course??

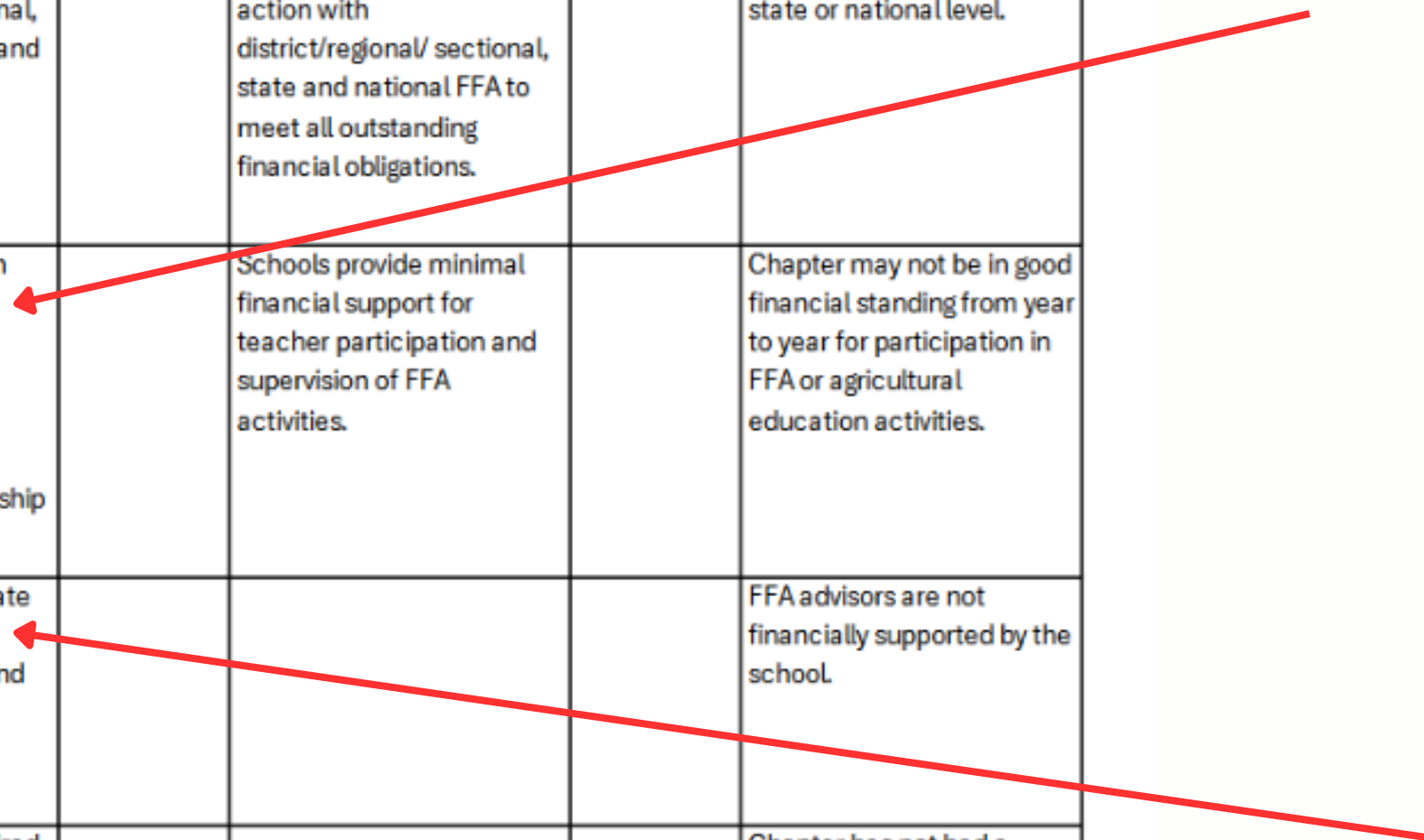
Put an "X" next to the evidence that supports the score you provided above.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE	
MEETS		PROGRESSING		LIMITED OR NO EVIDENCE	
Documentation of a grading procedure provides evidence that all three components make up each student's grade for all courses.		Grading procedure includes two of the three components of the three-circle model.		Grading includes only one component of the three-circle model.	
Classroom and laboratory components are graded within the components of the three-circle model.				Grading procedure is not in place.	
Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence	

Documented??



BENCHMARK #1				SCORE Type your benchmark score in the box below (0, 1, or 2) ↓	
The program operates an FFA chapter that is in good standing with state and national organizations.					
Put an "X" next to the evidence that supports the score you provided above.					
SUGGESTED EVIDENCE		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE	
MEETS		PROGRESSING		LIMITED OR NO EVIDENCE	
	Chapter has been chartered and annually submits membership roster data.		Chapter is in the process of being chartered.		FFA chapter has not yet been chartered.
	Chapter is in good financial standing with district/regional/ sectional, state and national FFA and agricultural education event fees.		Chapter has made contact and an amicable plan of action with district/regional/ sectional, state and national FFA to meet all outstanding financial obligations.		Chapter does not submit annual roster data to the state or national level.
	Chapter has a system in place to fund chapter membership fees that eliminates barriers for individual students. (Participation fees are different from membership fees).		Schools provide minimal financial support for teacher participation and supervision of FFA activities.		Chapter may not be in good financial standing from year to year for participation in FFA or agricultural education activities.
	Schools provide adequate financial support for teacher participation and supervision of FFA activities.				FFA advisors are not financially supported by the school.
	FFA roster with all required chapter profile data is complete in FFA.org.				Chapter has not had a chapter number assigned or does not submit a chapter roster and fees on an annual basis.

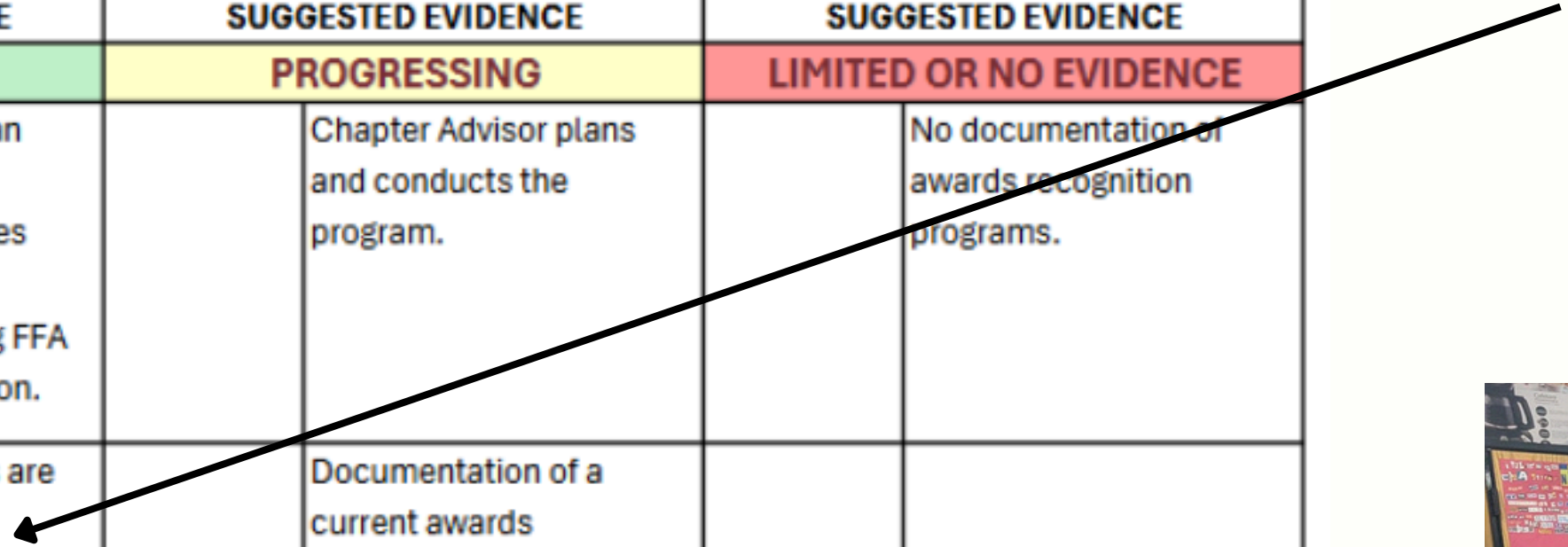


BENCHMARK #7	SCORE Type your benchmark score in the box below (0, 1, or 2) ↓
An awards recognition program planned and conducted by FFA members is in place.	

Put an "X" next to the evidence that supports the score you provided above.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE MEETS		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE PROGRESSING		SUGGESTED EVIDENCE LIMITED OR NO EVIDENCE	
Documentation of an awards recognition program and minutes from the planning meeting(s) detailing FFA member participation.		Chapter Advisor plans and conducts the program.		No documentation of awards recognition programs.	
Official ceremonies are utilized.		Documentation of a current awards recognition program.			
Planning and conducting of the program is student driven.		Minutes from a planning meeting(s) for the awards recognition program.			
Key school personnel and families are invited, at minimum.					
Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence		Additional Evidence	

Oops, I am a bad teacher?



BENCHMARK #7	SCORE Type your benchmark score in the box below (0, 1, or 2) ↓
Equipment, tools, and instructional technology are safe, adequately maintained and organized, and current to industry standards.	

Put an "X" next to the evidence that supports the score you provided above.

SUGGESTED EVIDENCE	SUGGESTED EVIDENCE	SUGGESTED EVIDENCE
MEETS	PROGRESSING	LIMITED OR NO EVIDENCE
Documented evidence of properly maintained tools and equipment as outlined by the owner's manual (e.g., record of equipment maintenance, etc.).	An inspection of the equipment, tools, and instructional technology is underway but not completed; therefore, some non-compliant items may be present.	Equipment, tools, and instructional technology are unsafe, poorly maintained, or not current to industry standards.
All broken and unsafe tools and equipment have been removed, repaired, or replaced.	Record of equipment maintenance along with documentation of equipment needing updating.	Documented evaluation of equipment detailing equipment in need of maintenance.
Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for all tools and equipment are regularly updated and enforced.		
All tools and equipment are outfitted with current safety technologies (e.g., sawstop, bladestop, etc.) when possible.		





Now what?

NEXT STEPS

BENCHMARK	Current Score	Evidence Needed to Meet Benchmark	Specific Steps for Meeting Benchmark	Owner of Action Item(s)	Priority
<p><i>EXAMPLE</i></p> <p><i>Educator Success Benchmark #4 Teacher(s) actively participates in state and national professional agriculture, food, and natural resource education associations.</i></p>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proof of NAAE and ACTE state-level association membership. - Record of attendance at state-level professional development functions. - School district provides funding for membership dues and participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Work with school leadership to obtain approval (funding, conference attendance and registration, etc.). 2) Obtain memberships. 3) Register for state-level professional development functions. 4) Report on learnings and reflect on how learnings can improve the local Ag program. 	<i>Teacher Name</i>	Important
1					
2					
3					



EDUCATOR SUCCESS

Benchmark #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems are designed to support ongoing student-led monitoring and regulation of workplace safety. Training and evaluation for safety procedures that mirror industry standards are developed and reviewed periodically with community partners.
Benchmark #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher leads professional development beyond the district level. Certificate of professional leadership. Examples include, but are not limited to, NAAE workshop, National FFA Ambassador, CASE Lead Teacher, SAE for All facilitator.
Benchmark #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for students to participate in community projects. Modify teaching strategies to integrate community insights better.
Benchmark #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture, food, and natural resource teacher(s) is a member of and holds a leadership position in a professional organization at and/or above the state level. Teacher is recognized by a professional organization at the state or national level.
Benchmark #5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher(s) works at the state and/or national level on agriculture, food, and natural resource education advocacy and career programs. Teacher(s) host and/or mentor pre-service teachers. Teacher(s) host AFNR professionals in their classrooms.
Benchmark #6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support and guidance to other school-based agricultural education programs beyond formal mentorship (e.g., shop inventories, supporting equipment and technology setup, expert advice, etc.).

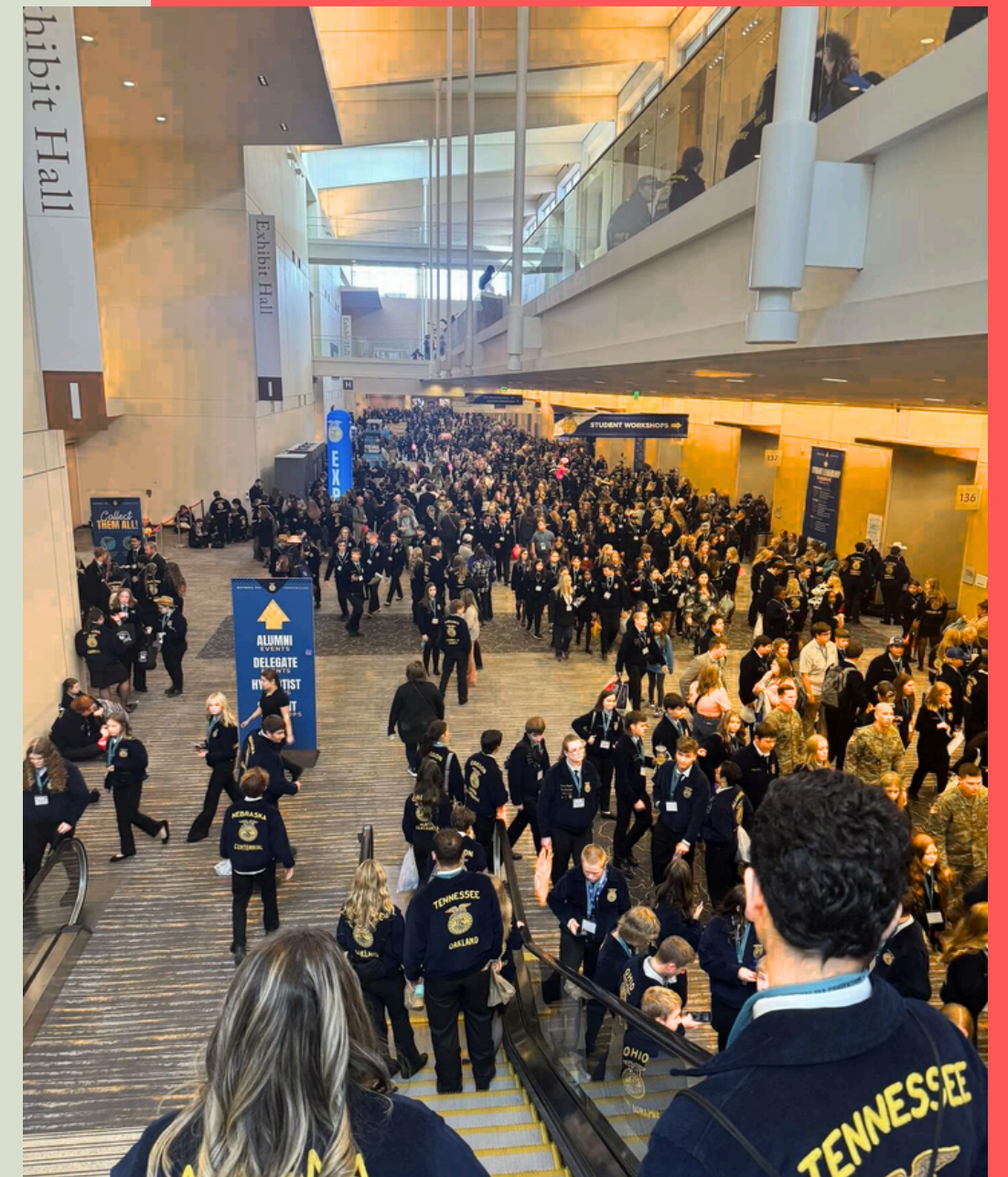


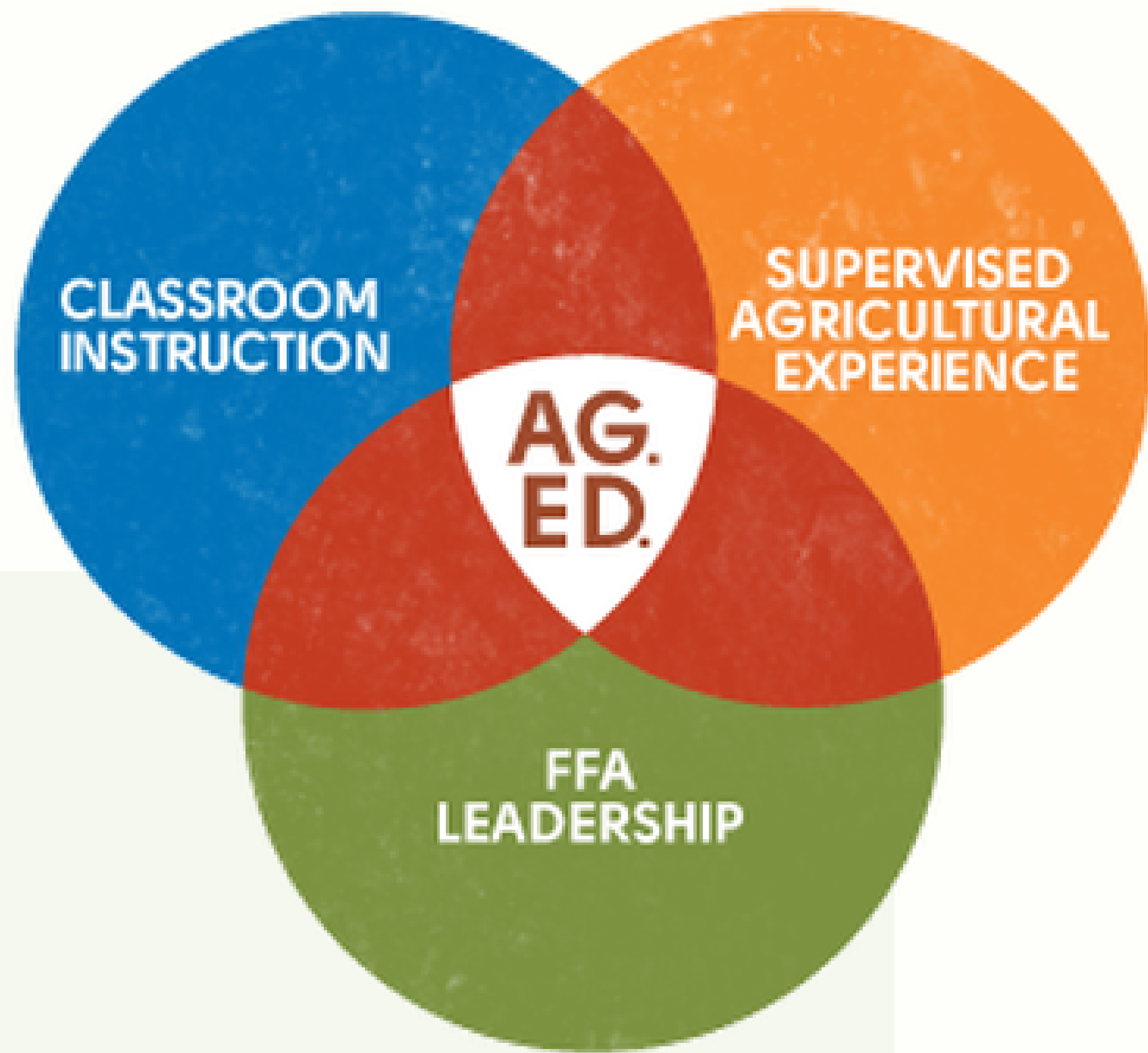
Going above and beyond

EXPERIENTIAL, PROJECT, & WORK-BASED LEARNING THROUGH SAE

Benchmark #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students have a documented Foundational SAE and one or more Immersion SAEs based on their Program of Study. Students are able to articulate their growth and development.
Benchmark #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented conversations with students regarding the alignment of their SAE and their career choice.
Benchmark #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAEs align with the agriculture, food, and natural resources curriculum standards, and students are able to articulate how the skills and competencies gained through participation relate to their career goals.
Benchmark #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data is analyzed annually to show student growth. Students can articulate the growth of skills and competencies through participation in their SAE at an appropriate level based on the student's years of involvement with the SAE.
Benchmark #5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students engage with multiple career mentors and can articulate their career planning relative to their goals. Each student chooses to pursue an Immersion SAE that supports their career goals. Students engage in opportunities where they share their career preparation progression. Annual review and updating of each student's Program of Study.
Benchmark #6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portfolio or record-keeping system that includes financial history, skills and knowledge gained, credentials or certifications earned, résumé, and a section on career planning with evidence of reflection.
Benchmark #7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAE program documentation includes an agreement showing a career readiness growth plan for the SAE and the role of the student and adult supervisor(s) in achieving the plan with appropriate safety certifications to perform job functions.

What is stopping you?





<https://alec.unl.edu/>

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National Program Benchmarks

A Framework for Excellence in Agricultural Education

The National Program Benchmarks (NPB) provide a comprehensive, user-friendly framework to support continuous improvement in secondary Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resource (AFNR) education programs.

Designed for educators, administrators, and community partners, the NPB offers a structured approach for evaluating and enhancing all aspects of a school-based Agricultural Education program. These benchmarks help programs set goals, measure progress, and align with best practices across the nation.

<https://www.thencae.org/national-program-benchmarks>