2026-2027 Competitive Events Guidelines

Financial Planning

Colorado FBLA

Financial Planning challenges members to apply personal finance knowledge by analyzing a family scenario and developing a plan to help them meet their financial goals. Members present their strategies in areas such as budgeting, saving, investing, and debt management through a live presentation.

Educational Alignments

Event Overview	
Division	High School
Event Type	Team of 1, 2, or 3 members
Event Category	Presentation
Event Elements	Presentation with a Topic

Event Information:

National Leadership Conference:

Timing Structure:

- **Equipment Set-Up:** 3 minutes
  - *No interaction allowed with judges during this time.*
- **Presentation:** 7 minutes
  - *A one-minute warning will be provided*
- **Question & Answer (Q&A):** 3 minutes

Important: *Time allocations are exclusive. The presentation must begin immediately after the 3-minute set-up time concludes. Time may not be shifted between segments. Competitors will not interact with judges during the set-up period.*

Important Notes:

- **Internet Access:** Not provided
- **Event Schedule Notes**:
  - Some events may begin before the Opening Session.
  - All schedules are posted in local time for the NLC host city.
  - Schedule changes are not permitted.

District Leadership Conference:

Check your DLC Call to Conference and Policies & Procedures for the timing structure, prejudge deadlines (if applicable) and other information.

State Leadership Conference:

Timing Structure:

- **Equipment Set-Up:** 1 minute
  - *No interaction allowed with judges during this time.*
- **Presentation:** 7 minutes
  - *A one-minute warning will be provided*
- **Question & Answer (Q&A):** 3 minutes

Important Notes:

- Time allocations are exclusive.
- Colorado FBLA follows the NLC model for Event Administration unless noted otherwise.
- Check the SLC Call to Conference for additional information and prejudge deadlines (if applicable).

***** Event specifics are continued below. Review the document in its entirety.**

2026-2027 Topic Synopsis

Rebuilding Financial Security: The Smith Family's Future

The Smith family is working to rebuild financial security after a period of unemployment, reduced household income, unexpected expenses, and increased credit card debt. With one child preparing to attend college, aging-parent care responsibilities, limited emergency savings, and retirement and insurance concerns, the family must balance several competing financial priorities. They are seeking guidance on improving cash flow, rebuilding savings, reducing debt, preparing for college and future caregiving expenses, increasing retirement contributions, and strengthening their overall financial protection.

Refer to pages 9-11 for the full topic and information.

National Leadership Conference

Required Competition Items

	Items Competitor Must Provide	**Items FBLA Provides**
Preliminary Presentation	• Conference-provided nametag • Photo identification • Attire that meets the FBLA Dress Code • Technology and presentation items	• Table
	Items Competitor Must Provide	**Items FBLA Provides**
Final Presentation	• Conference-provided nametag • Photo identification • Attire that meets the FBLA Dress Code • Technology and presentation items, including any adapter or cord needed beyond an HDMI connection	• Table • Power • Projector with HDMI cord • Projector screen

Eligibility Requirements

To participate in FBLA competitive events at the National Leadership Conference (NLC), the following criteria must be met:

- **Membership Deadline**: FBLA national membership dues must be paid to the specific division by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 1 of the current school year.
- **Repeat Competitors**: Members may only compete in an event at the NLC more than once if they have not previously placed in the top 10 of that event at the NLC. If a member places in the top 10 of an event at the NLC, they are no longer eligible to compete in that event at future NLCs, unless the event has been modified beyond a name change. Chapter events are exempt from this procedure.
- **Conference Registration**: Members must be officially registered for the NLC and must pay the national conference registration fee to participate.
- **Official Hotel Requirement**: To be eligible to compete, competitors must stay within the official FBLA housing block.
- **State Entry Limits**: Each state may submit up to four entries per event.
- **Event Participation Limits**: Each member may participate in:
    - One individual or team event, and
    - One chapter event (e.g., *Community Service Project* or *Local Chapter Annual Business Report*).
- **Competitor Responsibility**: Only registered competitors are permitted to plan, research, prepare, and set up their presentations. Advisers and others may not assist.
- **Participation Requirement**: To be eligible for an award, each competitor must complete all components of the event at the National Leadership Conference.
- **Team Composition**: All members of a team must be from the same local chapter.
- **Identification at Check-in**: Competitors must present valid photo identification (physical or digital) that matches the name on their conference name badge. Acceptable forms include a driver's license, passport, state-issued ID, or school ID.

- **Late Arrivals**: Competitors will be allowed to compete until such time that the results are finalized, or participation would impact the fairness and integrity of the event, as determined by Competitive Events staff. If judges have left the competitive event area, it is no longer possible to compete. Five penalty points will be assessed for late arrivals in any competitive event.

Event Administration

This event consists of two phases: a preliminary presentation and a final presentation.

Preliminary Presentation Details

Timing Structure

- **Equipment Set-Up:** 3 minutes
- **Presentation:** 7 minutes (a one-minute warning will be provided)
- **Question & Answer (Q&A):** 3 minutes
- **Important:** Time allocations are exclusive. The presentation must begin immediately after the 3-minute set-up time concludes. Time may not be shifted between segments. Competitors will not interact with judges during the set-up period.

Venue & Format

- Presentations occur in-person at the National Leadership Conference (NLC).
- Competitors/teams are randomly assigned to presentation sections.
- Presentations will take place in a large, open area with a designated space of approximately 10' x 10', which includes a table and chairs for the judges.
- The preliminary round is closed to conference attendees and audience.

Technology Guidelines

- **Internet Access:** Not Provided
- Presentations must be delivered using one or two personal devices (laptop, tablet, mobile phone, or monitor approximately laptop-sized).
- If using two devices, one must face the judges and the other must face the presenters.
- Projectors and projector screens are not permitted, and competitors may not bring their own.
- Wireless slide advancers (e.g., presentation clickers or mice) are allowed.
- External speakers are not allowed; audio must come directly from the presenting device(s).
- Electricity will not be available.

Non-Technology Items

- Visual aids, samples, notes, and other physical materials related to the project may be used.
- Items may be placed on the provided table or on the judges table, if space allows.
- No items may be left with the judges following the presentation.

Restricted Items

- Animals, except for authorized service animals.
- Food, which may be used for display only and may not be consumed by judges.
- Links and QR codes, which may be shown but may not be scanned or clicked by judges at any time.

Research

- Information must be supported by credible, well-documented sources.
- Any use of copyrighted material, images, logos, or trademarks must be properly documented.

Team Expectations

- In team presentations, all members must actively participate in the delivery of the presentation.

Event Specific Information: Competitors should incorporate the following aspects in response to the topic

- **Budgeting:** Explain the importance of tracking income and expenses. How can effective budgeting contribute to achieving long-term financial goals?
- **Debt Management:** What strategies can be used to responsibly manage and reduce debt? Consider both short-term and long-term approaches.
- **Investments & Retirement:** Should one prioritize investing or saving for retirement, or is it feasible to do both? Justify your reasoning based on the client's financial situation and goals.
- **Goal Attainment:** Based on the financial goals provided, what steps or strategies would you recommend to help achieve them?
- **Recommendations:** What specific financial recommendations or alternative approaches would you suggest to improve the individual's financial outlook?
- **Professional Guidance:** Are there financial professionals or services the individual should consult? Explain the value they may provide.

Final Presentation Details

Timing Structure

- **Equipment Set-Up**: 3 minutes
- **Presentation**: 7 minutes (a one-minute warning will be provided)
- **Question & Answer (Q&A)**: 3 minutes
- **Note**: Each time segment is exclusive. Once the 3-minute set-up period ends, the 7-minute presentation time begins automatically. Competitors may not shift time between segments. Competitors will not interact with judges during the set-up period.

Advancement to Finals

- The top-scoring competitors or teams from each preliminary section will advance to the final round in equal numbers.
- The number of competitors or teams advancing to the final round depends on the number of preliminary sections:
  - 2 sections: Top 6 from each section advance
  - 3 sections: Top 4 from each section advance
  - 4 sections: Top 3 from each section advance
  - 5 sections: Top 3 from each section advance
  - More than 5 sections: Top 2 from each section advance

Audience & Viewing Rules

- Final presentations may be open to conference attendees, depending on space availability.
- Finalists may not view other presentations in their own event.

Technology Guidelines

- **Internet Access:** Not Provided
- Presentations must be delivered using one or two personal devices (laptop, tablet, mobile phone, or monitor approximately laptop-sized).
- If using two devices, one must face the judges and the other must face the presenters.

- If the final round takes place in a conference room, the following equipment will be provided: a projector, projector screen, power access, and a table.
- Competitors using laptops or devices without an HDMI port must bring their own compatible adapters.
- It is the responsibility of final-round competitors to decide whether or not to use the provided technology.
- Wireless slide advancers (e.g., presentation clickers or mice) are allowed.
- Electricity will not be available.

Non-Technology Items

- Visual aids, samples, notes, and other physical materials related to the project may be used.
- Items may be placed on the provided table or on the judges table, if space allows.
- No items may be left with the judges following the presentation.

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- **Recommendations:** What specific financial recommendations or alternative approaches would you suggest to improve the individual's financial outlook?
- **Professional Guidance:** Are there financial professionals or services the individual should consult? Explain the value they may provide.

Scoring

- Preliminary round scores are used to determine which competitors or teams advance to the final round from each section.
- Final round scores determine the final rankings and top award winners.
- Judges are responsible for breaking all ties in both preliminary and final rounds.

- All judging decisions are final. Results announced at the National Leadership Conference are considered official and will not be changed after the conclusion of the National Leadership Conference.

Penalty Points
- Competitors may be disqualified if they violate the Code of Conduct or the Honor Code.
- Five points are deducted if competitors do not follow the Dress Code or are late to their assigned presentation time.

Recognition
- A maximum of 10 entries (individuals or teams) may be recognized per event.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- FBLA complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing reasonable accommodations for competitors. Accommodation requests must be submitted through the conference registration system by the official registration deadline. All requests will be reviewed, and additional documentation may be required to determine eligibility and appropriate support.

Recording of Presentations
- Unauthorized audio or video recording is strictly prohibited in all competitive events.
- FBLA reserves the right to record presentations for educational, training, or archival purposes. Competitors should be aware that their presentations may be recorded by FBLA-authorized personnel.

Important FBLA Documents
- *Competitors should be familiar with the Competitive Events Operations Manual, Honor Code, Code of Conduct, and Dress Code.*

2026-2027 Topic & Details

Background

The Smith family has recently experienced several major life changes that have significantly affected their finances. They have asked your financial planning team to review their financial situation and develop a comprehensive financial plan that will help them achieve both their short-term and long-term goals.

The family wants realistic recommendations that improve their financial security while preparing for future expenses.

Family Profile

Family Member	Age	Occupation/Status	Annual Gross Salary	Key Notes
John Smith	45	Manufacturing Supervisor	$71,842	Recently accepted a new position after his previous employer closed a local facility; new job offers slightly lower pay but better retirement benefits.
Jane Smith	43	Registered Nurse (Part-Time)	$38,617	Reduced work hours to help care for her aging mother.
Emily Smith	17	High school senior	N/A	Planning to attend a four-year university next year.
Matthew Smith	13	Middle school student	N/A	Middle school student.

Financial Goals

1. Build a stronger emergency fund.
2. Pay off high-interest debt.
3. Save for Emily's college expenses.
4. Increase retirement savings.
5. Determine if the family has adequate insurance coverage.
6. Develop a realistic monthly budget.
7. Prepare financially for Jane’s mother potentially moving into their home within the next three years.

Annual Income

Source	Amount
John's Salary	$71,842
Jane's Salary	$38,617
Interest Income	$286
Dividend Income	$547
Total Gross Income	**$111,292**

Estimated Taxes

Tax	Annual Amount
Federal Income Tax	$9,143
State Income Tax	$2,581
Social Security & Medicare	$8,514
Total Taxes	**$20,238**

Estimated Net Annual Income: $91,054
Estimated Monthly Net Income: $7,587.83

Assets

Asset	Value
Checking Account	$2,743
Savings Account	$5,687
Emergency Fund	$3,928
Home Market Value	$318,450
John' 401(k)	$87,362
Jane's IRA	$29,184
529 College Savings Plan	$13,247
Brokerage Investment Account	$15,876
Two Vehicles	$31,425
Household Furnishings	$17,840
Total Assets	**$525,742**

Debts

Debt	Balance	Interest Rate
Mortgage	$226,784	5.6%
Auto Loan	$14,238	4.48%
Credit Card #1	$7,482	22.94%
Credit Card #2	$3,618	19.76%
Student Loan	$17,863	4.92%
Total Debt	**$269,985**	

Monthly Expenses

Category	Monthly Cost
Mortgage	$1,687.42
Utilities	$338.76
Groceries	$872.53
Transportation	$541.89
Gasoline	$247.38
Auto Insurance	$218.64
Health Insurance Premiums	$433.17
Medical Expenses	$192.45
Cell Phones	$146.82
Internet	$87.99
Streaming Services	$68.43
Dining Out	$364.25
Entertainment	$281.76
Clothing	$169.58
Child Activities	$233.91
Credit Card Payments	$462.37
Student Loan Payment	$228.14
Auto Loan Payment	$389.63
Miscellaneous	$267.84
Total Monthly Expenses	**$7,232.96**

Current Monthly Surplus
Monthly Net Income: $7,587.83
Monthly Expenses: $7,232.96
Current Monthly Surplus: $354.87

Current Investments:

Retirement:
1. John contributes 6.2% to his employer's 401(k).
   a. Employer matches 50% of the first 6%.
2. Jane contributes 3.4% to her IRA annually.

Education Savings
1. 529 Plan currently contains $13,247.
2. Family contributes $100 per month.

Investment mix:
1. 68% Stock Index Funds
2. 22% Bond Funds
3. 10% Cash

Insurance Coverage
1. Health Insurance

2. Employer-sponsored family plan
3. $3,500 deductible
4. 20% coinsurance after deductible

Homeowners Insurance
1. Dwelling Coverage: $275,000
2. Personal Property: $150,000
3. Liability: $300,000

Auto Insurance
1. Liability: 100/300/100
2. Collision and Comprehensive
3. $1,000 deductible

Life Insurance
1. John: Employer Group Policy: $150,000
2. Jane: Employer Group Policy: $50,000
3. No additional individual life insurance policies.

Disability Insurance
John: Employer short-term disability only
Jane: None

Umbrella Liability Policy
None

Retirement Planning

Desired Retirement Ages
1. John: 65
2. Jane: 65

Estimated Retirement Income Goal: Approximately 80% of current household income

Current Retirement Savings Rate: Approximately 8% of household income

Financial planners generally recommend saving 15% or more of annual income for retirement, depending on age and financial goals.

Additional Information

During the past year:
1. John experienced a three-month period of unemployment.
2. The family used most of their emergency savings to cover living expenses.
3. Credit card balances increased due to unexpected home and medical repairs.
4. Jane reduced her work schedule to provide care for her mother.
5. Interest rates on one credit card increased after a promotional rate expired.

The family is financially stable today but is concerned about unexpected expenses and wants to improve their long-term financial outlook.

Deliverables:
Your financial planning team has been hired to prepare recommendations for the Smith family.

Develop a financial plan that addresses the following:

- Analyze the family's current financial health using the information provided.
- Prepare a revised monthly budget that improves cash flow.
- Recommend strategies for rebuilding an emergency fund.
- Develop a debt repayment plan, including prioritization of high-interest debt.
- Evaluate current investments and recommend any changes.
- Recommend strategies for increasing retirement savings while balancing other financial goals.
- Evaluate the family's insurance coverage and identify any gaps or risks.
- Recommend strategies to help pay for Emily's college education.
- Identify tax planning opportunities that could improve the family's financial position.
- Prioritize the family's financial goals and justify the order of implementation.
- Identify potential financial risks over the next five years and recommend strategies to reduce those risks.

Financial Planning Presentation Rating Sheet

Expectation Item	Not Demonstrated	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Points Earned
Demonstrates understanding of the topic and defines problem(s) to be solved	*No topic description or synopsis provided; no problems defined*	*Describes and provides topic synopsis OR defines the problem(s)*	*Describes and provides topic synopsis AND defines the problem(s)*	*Demonstrates expertise of topic synopsis AND definition of the problem(s)*	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Budgeting: *Explain the importance of tracking income and expenses. How can effective budgeting contribute to achieving long-term financial goals?*	*No explanation is provided, or the response is unrelated to budgeting, income/expense tracking, or long-term financial goals.*	*Explanation is vague, incomplete, or demonstrates limited understanding. Mentions tracking or long-term goals but does not clearly connect them or explain their importance.*	*Provides a clear explanation of why tracking income and expenses is important and how budgeting supports long-term financial goals. Shows a foundational understanding of personal finance.*	*Provides a detailed and insightful explanation of the relationship between tracking income/expenses and achieving financial goals. Demonstrates strong financial literacy and includes real-world applications or examples to support key points.*	
	0 points	1-9 points	10-16 points	17-20 points	
Debt Management: *What strategies can be used to responsibly manage and reduce debt? Consider both short-term and long-term approaches.*	*No strategies are provided, or the response is unrelated to debt management.*	*Provides a limited or overly general explanation. May mention basic strategies but lacks clarity, detail, or distinction between short-term and long-term approaches.*	*Clearly identifies responsible strategies for managing and reducing debt. Includes both short-term and long-term approaches with appropriate explanations*	*Provides a thorough and well-structured explanation of multiple debt management strategies, clearly distinguishing between short-term and long-term methods. Demonstrates strong financial understanding and includes real-world examples or rationale for selecting specific strategies.*	
	0 points	1-8 points	9-12 points	13-15 points	
Investments & Retirement: *Should one prioritize investing or saving for retirement, or is it feasible to do both? Justify your reasoning based on the client's financial situation and goals.*	*No position or reasoning is provided, or response does not address investments, retirement, or the client's financial situation.*	*Provides a vague or unsupported opinion. Minimal consideration of the client's financial situation or goals. Limited understanding of the balance between investing and saving for retirement.*	*Presents a clear and logical recommendation to prioritize investing, saving for retirement, or both. Provides reasonable justification based on the client's financial situation and goals.*	*Offers a well-reasoned and personalized recommendation grounded in financial principles. Thoroughly analyzes the client's situation and long-term goals and clearly explains how the proposed balance of investing and retirement saving supports their financial success.*	
	0 points	1-8 points	9-12 points	13-15 points	
Goal Attainment: *Based on the financial goals provided, what steps or strategies would you recommend to help achieve them?*	*No strategies or steps are provided, or response does not address the client's financial goals.*	*Provides general or vague recommendations that lack alignment with the specific financial goals. Minimal explanation or rationale is given.*	*Recommend appropriate and realistic steps or strategies that align with the client's financial goals. Explanation demonstrates a solid understanding of goal-based financial planning.*	*Provides well-structured, actionable, and personalized strategies tailored to the client's financial goals. Demonstrates clear understanding of the planning process with strong rationale and possible contingencies. May include timelines, prioritization, or measurement methods.*	
	0 points	1-8 points	9-12 points	13-15 points	
Recommendations: *What specific financial recommendations or alternative approaches would you suggest to improve the individual's financial outlook?*	*No financial recommendations are provided, or the response is irrelevant or off-topic*	*Provides vague, overly general, or unrealistic recommendations. Suggestions may not be clearly tied to the individual's financial situation or may lack actionable detail.*	*Offers relevant and specific financial recommendations or alternative approaches that align with the individual's financial circumstances. Suggestions are practical and clearly explained.*	*Provides insightful, well-supported, and tailored financial recommendations. Demonstrates strong financial reasoning, with alternative approaches and justification for each recommendation that clearly supports an improved financial outlook.*	
	0 points	1-8 points	9-12 points	13-15 points	
Expectation Item	**Not Demonstrated**	**Below Expectations**	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**	**Points Earned**

Professional Guidance: *Are there financial professionals or services the individual should consult? Explain the value they may provide.*	*No financial professionals or services are identified, or response is unrelated to professional guidance.*	*Mentions a financial professional or service but provides limited explanation of their role or value. Lacks clarity or relevance to the individual's financial needs.*	*Identifies appropriate financial professionals or services (e.g., financial advisor, tax preparer, credit counselor) and explains how they can support the individual's financial goals.*	*Provides a well-reasoned explanation of multiple relevant financial professionals or services. Clearly articulates the unique value each can provide based on the individual's financial situation and goals. Demonstrates strong understanding of when and why to seek expert guidance*	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Substantiates and cites sources used while conducting research	*Sources are not cited*	*Sources/References are seldom cited to support statements*	*Professionally legitimate sources & resources that support statements are generally present*	*Compelling evidence from professionally legitimate sources & resources given to support statements*	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Presentation Delivery					
Statements are well-organized and clearly stated	*Competitor(s) did not appear prepared*	*Competitor(s) were prepared, but flow was not logical*	*Presentation flowed in logical sequence*	*Presentation flowed in a logical sequence; statements were well organized*	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Consistently displays confidence, poised body language, engaging eye contact, and effective voice projection.	*Did not demonstrate any of the listed skills*	*Demonstrated 1-2 of the listed skills (confidence, body language, eye contact, or voice projection)*	*Demonstrated 3 of the listed skills (confidence, body language, eye contact, or voice projection)*	*Demonstrated all skills, enhancing the overall presentation*	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Demonstrates the ability to effectively answer questions	*Does not respond to questions or responses are completely off-topic.*	*Provides incomplete or unclear answers that show limited understanding.*	*Responds accurately and clearly to most questions, showing adequate understanding.*	*Responds confidently with clear, accurate, and thoughtful answers that enhance the overall presentation.*	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Presentation Protocols					
Adherence to Competitive Events Guidelines	***Competitor(s) Did Not Follow Guidelines***	***Execution Aligned with Guidelines:*** ✓ *Used only allowable technology devices (sizing specs followed; maximum of two, with only one facing judges at a time)* ✓ *Presentation aligned with the assigned topic* ✓ *Maintained professional boundaries during set-up time (no interaction with judges)* ✓ *Did not leave materials behind after the presentation* ✓ *Links or QR codes were displayed appropriately (not clicked or scanned by judges)* ✓ *Audio was presented without external speakers (preliminary round)* ✓ *Avoided use of food or live animals*			
	0 points	1-10 points			
Staff Only: Penalty Points (5 points for dress code penalty and/or 5 points for late arrival penalty)					
Presentation Total (150 points)					

Name(s):			
School:		Section:	
Judge Signature:		Date:	

Comments: