

2025–2026 Competitive Events Guidelines

Financial Planning



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.

Event Overview

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

Educational Alignments

Career Cluster Framework Connection	Financial Services
NACE Competency Alignment	Career & Self-Development, Communication, Critical Thinking, Leadership, Professionalism, Technology

2025–2026 Topic Synopsis

Lorissa, a mid-thirties professional recently promoted to a higher-paying remote job, is looking to reassess her financial situation with goals of homeownership, travel, debt repayment, and retirement planning. While she has some savings and modest debt, she lacks a structured budget, has fragmented retirement accounts, and is hesitant about investing due to family influence. She seeks guidance on budgeting, managing student loans, balancing retirement and investment priorities, and determining whether additional insurance or financial planning support is right for her.

See page 7–9 for the full background and topic for use in the presentation.

District/Region/Section

Check with your District/Region/Section leadership for District/Region/Section-specific competition information and deadlines.

State

Check with your State Leader for state-specific competition information and deadlines.

National

Required Competition Items

	Items Competitor Must Provide	Items FBLA Provides
Preliminary Presentation	- Conference-provided nametag Photo identification - Attire that meets the FBLA Dress Code	Table

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	Technology and presentation items	
	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

Important FBLA Documents

- Competitors should be familiar with the Competitive Events [Policy & Procedures Manual](#), [Honor Code](#), [Code of Conduct](#), and [Dress Code](#).

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,

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it is no longer possible to compete. Five penalty points will be assessed for late arrivals in any competitive event.

- **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.

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

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- 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

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- **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.

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Scoring

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- 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.

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2025–2026 Topic & Details

Overview

You focus on providing clients with comprehensive financial planning from a fiduciary standpoint. Lorissa was referred to your firm by a current client who praised your ability to consider all available information and provide individuals with a number of options so that they may best meet their goals.

Use all the information provided to assist Lorissa in answering her financial questions, reaching her financial goals and improving her financial health.

Introduction

Lorissa has been in mid-level management for twelve years. She's worked in three different states and had roles in three different companies. She graduated from college with \$20,000 in credit card debt and \$30,000 in student loan debt. She worked throughout her twenties to pay off the credit card debt and part of her student loan debt. Her grandparents passed away and she received \$50,000 in inheritance. At her job, Lorissa was thrilled to learn that she received a promotion, and her salary would increase to \$85,000. She realizes that, since she's in her mid-thirties and with a new job and a new salary, she needs to re-evaluate her financial situation.

With her new job, there are several things that Lorissa is considering. She is working from home and currently lives in a one-bedroom apartment with \$1,300 monthly rent. She lives in Louisville, Kentucky and just visited her sister in the new, hip area of town. Lorissa would love to buy a 2-bedroom loft in a newly converted warehouse within walking distance of her sister. The units are listed for sale for \$400,000, with a monthly HOA of \$150. Interest rates are 7.1% for a 30-year fixed rate mortgage. Her apartment lease will be up in six months.

Lorissa is currently single, with no children, although she hopes to be married one day. She loves to meet up with friends for dinner out and is passionate about travel. She travels for vacation at least twice a year, with a goal of international travel every other year. She has two credit cards that she uses regularly and pays them off at the end of every month. Lorissa is not a huge fan of budgeting but knows that this is probably important to start thinking about for her financial health long term.

Lorissa's financial goals include continuing traveling at least twice a year, paying off her student loans and focusing on being prepared to retire by the age of 65.

Assets

Checking Account: \$3,400

Savings Account: \$53,000

2015 Kia Forte Sedan LX (paid off, in good shape with 135,000 miles)

Debts

Student Loan Debt: \$9,500 at 4.99% interest, \$79 monthly payment

Income

Lorissa will be paid monthly, with the following breakdown:

Gross Pay: \$7,083.33

Exemptions: \$1,154.17

Taxable Income: \$5,929.17

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Federal Income Tax: \$913.38

Kentucky State Income Tax: \$343.63

Social Security: \$439.17

Medicare Tax: \$102.71

Expenses

Because Lorissa knows budgeting is important, she decided to take the first step in writing down all her expenses from a recent month:

Expense	Amount	Expense	Amount
Rent	\$ 1,300.00	Counseling	\$ 120.00
Rideshare	\$ 22.92	Gifts	\$ 78.43
Dinner	\$ 17.65	Dinner	\$ 28.41
Cable/Internet	\$ 85.23	Coffee	\$ 6.09
Groceries	\$ 36.66	Groceries	\$ 14.48
Concert	\$ 117.00	Charity	\$ 82.20
Nails	\$ 77.00	Groceries	\$ 127.52
Groceries	\$ 15.85	Coffee	\$ 14.90
Charity	\$ 82.20	Movie	\$ 17.91
Big Box Retail	\$ 33.03	Airport Parking	\$ 48.88
Gas	\$ 27.33	Cell Phone	\$ 140.92
Entertainment	\$ 17.06	Charity	\$ 82.20
Dinner	\$ 19.74	Coffee	\$ 14.42
Big Box Retail	\$ 11.55	Dinner	\$ 48.72
Online Shopping	\$ 16.31	Basketball Game	\$ 35.00
Groceries	\$ 17.41	Big Box Retail	\$ 25.64
Dinner	\$ 9.20	Dinner	\$ 36.33
Charity	\$ 82.20	Dinner	\$ 59.57
Lunch	\$ 12.00	Groceries	\$ 25.82
Dinner	\$ 37.80	Electric	\$ 120.09
Flight	\$ 358.98	Auto Insurance	\$ 154.95
Dinner	\$ 115.62	Groceries	\$ 233.00
Coffee	\$ 9.06	Hotel	\$ 577.23

Investments

Lorissa has no investments, although she's always been interested in what that might look like for her. She's not quite sure if she's interested in paying a financial planner for their services in assisting her with investments. She is nervous about investing her money; growing up, her parents would always say that the stock market was just another casino.

Retirement

Lorissa has retirement accounts from several employers:

- With her Ohio employers a tax-deferred 401(k) plan, where she worked from 2011 to 2014: \$6,700.72 in contributions and a market value of \$6,810.12
- Her employer in Indiana, a post-tax Roth 401(k), where she worked from 2015 to 2019: \$16,076.40 in contributions and a current market value of \$27,950.

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- Her current Kentucky employer, for 4 years of service: \$18,162.99 in tax-deferred contributions, and \$3,894.34 in investment growth.

Lorissa knows retirement should have been a focus in her twenties, but she was busy paying off her credit card debts and paying down her student loans. Now that she is in her mid-thirties, she realizes she needs to make up for lost time, but she's not sure what to do with so many different retirement accounts.

Insurance Coverage

Lorissa is currently healthy and does have medical, dental and vision insurance. She does not have life insurance, and it is not an option through her current job. She hasn't decided if life insurance would be something that she should be spending her money on at this moment. She needs advice on the benefits or disadvantages of purchasing life or any additional insurance.

Lorissa has several financial questions:

- Budgeting: How important is budgeting/looking at her expenses? How can budgeting help her long term goals?
- Debt Management: What strategies should she use to pay off her student loans?
- Investments vs Retirement: Should she focus on one over the other? Is it possible to focus on both?

Overall, what would you advise Lorissa to do to meet her goals? What recommendations or alternatives would you suggest to Lorissa? What other professionals, if any, should Lorissa consult and why?

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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	

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Expectation Item	Not Demonstrated	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Points Earned
Professional Guidance: <i>Are there financial professionals or services the individual should consult? Explain the value they may provide.</i>	<i>No financial professionals or services are identified, or response is unrelated to professional guidance.</i>	<i>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.</i>	<i>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.</i>	<i>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</i>	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Substantiates and cites sources used while conducting research	<i>Sources are not cited</i>	<i>Sources/References are seldom cited to support statements</i>	<i>Professionally legitimate sources & resources that support statements are generally present</i>	<i>Compelling evidence from professionally legitimate sources & resources given to support statements</i>	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Presentation Delivery					
Statements are well-organized and clearly stated	<i>Competitor(s) did not appear prepared</i>	<i>Competitor(s) were prepared, but flow was not logical</i>	<i>Presentation flowed in logical sequence</i>	<i>Presentation flowed in a logical sequence; statements were well organized</i>	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Consistently displays confidence, poised body language, engaging eye contact, and effective voice projection.	<i>Did not demonstrate any of the listed skills</i>	<i>Demonstrated 1-2 of the listed skills (confidence, body language, eye contact, or voice projection)</i>	<i>Demonstrated 3 of the listed skills (confidence, body language, eye contact, or voice projection)</i>	<i>Demonstrated all skills, enhancing the overall presentation</i>	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Demonstrates the ability to effectively answer questions	<i>Does not respond to questions or responses are completely off-topic.</i>	<i>Provides incomplete or unclear answers that show limited understanding.</i>	<i>Responds accurately and clearly to most questions, showing adequate understanding.</i>	<i>Responds confidently with clear, accurate, and thoughtful answers that enhance the overall presentation.</i>	
	0 points	1-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points	
Presentation Protocols					
Adherence to Competitive Events Guidelines	<i>Competitor(s) Did Not Follow Guidelines</i>	<i>Execution Aligned with Guidelines: (All criteria must be met)</i> ✓ <i>Used only allowable technology devices (sizing specs followed; maximum of two, with only one facing judges at a time)</i> ✓ <i>Presentation aligned with the assigned topic</i> ✓ <i>Maintained professional boundaries during set-up time (no interaction with judges)</i> ✓ <i>Did not leave materials behind after the presentation</i> ✓ <i>Links or QR codes were displayed appropriately (not clicked or scanned by judges)</i> ✓ <i>Audio was presented without external speakers (preliminary round)</i> ✓ <i>Avoided use of food or live animals</i>			
		0 points	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: