

From Stagnation to Strategy: Revitalizing Oklahoma Team AGED

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

Needs assessments in agricultural education have been conducted since 1983 (Barrick et al., 1983) and have continued since then. Needs assessments have been deemed beneficial for agricultural education programs for identifying gaps between current conditions and desired competencies (DiBenedetto et al., 2018). As school-based agricultural education (SBAE) teachers progress in their careers, their needs evolve with changes in knowledge, resources, and experience (DiBenedetto et al., 2018). The highest in-demand needs of SBAE teachers must be identified accurately to enable development and improvement (Layfield & Dobbins, 2002).

Team AGED is a united effort of organizations and groups that promote local program success (National FFA Organization, 2026). Team AGED includes faculty from postsecondary teacher education institutions, teachers at SBAE programs, and state and national Career and Technical sectors (National Council for Agricultural Education, 2024). Team AGED is collectively committed to delivering the comprehensive, Three Circle Model, creating an inviting environment where all can flourish, working collaboratively, ethically, and professionally, and taking action, following through, and delivering results (National FFA Organization, 2026).

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) offers an effective structure for conducting a needs assessment by balancing stakeholder participation with systematic priority setting (Altschuld & Kumar, 2010; Witkin & Altschuld, 1999). The NGT is a highly structured group process that ensures all participants have equal opportunity to identify and rank perceived needs (Delbecq et al., 1975). By using NGT to surface and rank actionable needs, states can translate assessment findings into focused strategies that rebuild alignment with the mission of Team AGED and restore momentum through inclusive, stakeholder-informed planning (National Council for Agricultural Education, 2024).

How It Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

Team AGED members ($N = 30$) consisted of Oklahoma SBAE teachers ($n = 12$), Oklahoma Universities ($n = 11$), Oklahoma Office of Career and Technology Education ($n = 6$), and the Oklahoma FFA Association ($n = 1$). These 30 Team AGED members were invited to Oklahoma State University campus to participate in a Team AGED meeting in December of 2025. The meeting began with a welcome, introductions, and updates from each entity present. Due to the lack of Oklahoma Team AGED meetings in recent years, a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted to assess program evaluation needs, explicitly using the NGT. The NGT is a structured focus group process designed to identify and prioritize needs by collecting ideas from a small group of individuals (Delbecq et al., 1975). The NGT consists of four stages: Stage 1 – Individual Idea Generation; Stage 2 – Round-Robin Sharing; Stage 3 – Discussion; and Stage 4 – Voting (Delbecq et al., 1975; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

Initially, Team AGED members brainstormed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding Oklahoma agricultural education and posted them in designated areas for the group to analyze. Once completed, four small groups were formed, and each focused on one area

of the SWOT analysis. Within these small groups, ideas were discussed and ranked, and duplicates were removed. Each small group shared its top ideas and discussed them with the larger group. After the group discussion, members voted to determine which ideas to focus on improving in the coming year. In addition to the SWOT analysis, the team developed and disseminated a vision statement for Oklahoma AGED that outlined professional goals and tangible objectives.

Results to Date/Implications

The Team AGED meeting successfully facilitated a collaborative environment where the participants freely shared their thoughts and opinions with one another regarding Oklahoma agricultural education. The SBAE teachers expressed excitement at the revitalization of the group and were eager to help shape future meeting agendas as well as support the group's broader vision and goals. In addition, all entities represented demonstrated enthusiasm and a shared commitment to strengthening collaboration across their respective organizations.

The SWOT analysis recommended hosting two Team AGED meetings per year, with the meetings rotating locations. The analysis identified six primary strengths of Oklahoma SBAE programs, two of which were: (1) large program enrollment numbers, (2) high levels of FFA participation, and (3) professional unity. Four weaknesses also emerged, two of which included: (1) inconsistencies in curriculum implementation, (2) limited teacher content knowledge, and (3) limited communication between state and local programs. Eleven opportunities were identified. Examples included: (1) expanding programs, (2) establishing mentorship initiatives, and (3) bolstering teacher retention efforts. Finally, 14 threats were noted, which included: (1) inadequate teacher content knowledge, (2) declining rural populations, and (3) student retention issues. Based on these findings, five overarching goals were prioritized. These included: (1) advocate for targeted legislative initiatives, (2) develop centralized curriculum resources, (3) establish realistic expectations for agricultural education teachers, (4) strengthen professional relationships among Oklahoma agricultural educators, and (5) promote incentives for traditional teacher certification pathways.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Future plans include continuing Team AGED meetings twice per year, once in the spring and once in the fall. It was recommended that the next meeting focus on operationalizing the agreed-upon professional goals. In addition, the team will conduct a needs assessment at regular intervals to ensure the vision and goals remain relevant. Other states should consider holding Team AGED meetings to evaluate how best to serve their agricultural education communities.

Costs/Resources Needed

The resources needed for Team AGED meetings include relationships with universities and colleges that offer agricultural education teacher preparation programs, the state agricultural education teacher association, the state FFA association, and the state career and technology education office. In addition, a facility that is suitable for hosting large groups is needed. The host institution provided refreshments and lunch at a cost of approximately \$300.

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