SS-AAEA Guidelines for the 2025
Earl O. Heady Decision Sciences Spreadsheet Competition

Instructions for entering the *Earl O. Heady Decision Sciences Spreadsheet Competition*:

1. Advisors submit the Statement of Intent for a team to jweister@aaea.org by **May 16, 2025**.
2. Submit the Competition Entry form to jweister@aaea.org by **June 13, 2025**. All team members should be listed along with contact information.
3. Once you receive notification that the team is confirmed, prepare to participate in a 4-hour event on Sunday, July 27, 2025, between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. You must bring at least one functioning computer with the Microsoft Office Suite (specifically Excel) and a USB (thumb) drive to the competition as no computers or drives will be provided.
4. *Awards*: The team with the highest overall score will be recognized at the AAEA Awards Ceremony (Monday, July 28, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.). Cash awards will be given to the students in first, second, and third place.

Earl O. Heady Decision Sciences Spreadsheet Competition Rules

Each team of up to three students entering the Earl O. Heady Decision Sciences Spreadsheet Competition is required to develop a spreadsheet from a provided dataset and qualitative information, answer questions related to the dataset, and present findings from the case study. The spreadsheet analysis comprises 60 percent of the total score, and the remaining 40 percent consists of the oral presentation (100-point scale).

Qualifications for Spreadsheet Competition

Students entering the competition must register for the AAEA Annual Meeting. Students who graduate in Spring 2025 or Summer 2025 are eligible to compete. Students who graduated earlier than Spring 2025 are not eligible to compete. Students competing in quiz bowl may participate in the spreadsheet competition; however, **students competing in the student paper competition may not participate in the spreadsheet competition as it occurs at the same time**.

Competition Environment

Each team of up to three students must arrive at the designated location at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, July 27, 2025 with a laptop with a functioning version of Microsoft Office (specifically Excel) and a USB (thumb) drive. All teams will be provided information about the dataset, qualitative supplementary material, and computational requirements (such as the Data Analysis ToolPak, Mapping Tool, etc.). After outlining the task, all teams will be assigned to rooms monitored by judges and are expected to complete tasks with the use of Excel[1]. Students will be provided a dataset, qualitative information (such as news articles), and a set of questions/requirements that should be answerable with rudimentary data analysis techniques learned in a sophomore- or junior-level agricultural statistics or introductory econometrics class. There will be many ways to address the questions/requirements, and it is up to each team how to best address the criteria provided. However, students will only have two hours to develop their spreadsheet and presentation for delivery. As such, students should document their analytical approach thoroughly and communicate key results clearly.

Judging Criteria

Spreadsheet Analysis (60 percent of total score)

Each team must submit an Excel file (.xlsx) to the judges (via USB drive). The judges (professional agricultural and applied economists) will complete an evaluation of each spreadsheet and will provide a quantitative score related to the criteria below:

Criteria	Full Marks	Partial Credit
Questions answered correctly	(30 points) All questions/requirements posed were answered in the Excel file achieving the expected results of the questions/requirements.	(1 – 29 points) Some of the questions may have been unanswered and/or the results do not match the expected results of the questions/requirements.
Functionality of the Excel File	(10 points) It is easy to interpret key findings throughout the spreadsheet, follow the analytical approach taken, and Excel was used optimally to answer all questions.	(1 – 9 points) While an Excel spreadsheet was provided, there may be issues related to navigating it (lack of labels, calculations were made outside of the spreadsheet, or some key calculations were omitted).
Readability and organization	(10 points) Through the use of labeled tabs and other organizational tools	(1 – 9 points) Attempts at organizing the results did not result in complete

[1] While it may be possible to compete the tasks with alternative software, such as R, we want everyone to use the same software to ensure objective comparability across projects.

	within Excel, it is easy to find and read results.	readability of the Excel file, frustrating the judges.
Creativity	(10 points) The spreadsheet shows a mastery of Excel and presents results in a way that is creative and communicative. The use of color, labels, and lines improves the ease of interpretation of the reader.	(1 – 9 points) Results may be present but may not be visually appealing or easily interpreted due to design choices of the team.

Oral Presentation (40 percent of total score)

After submitting the Excel file, each team will be tasked with presenting the results of their analysis to professional agricultural and applied economists on Sunday, July 27, 2025, between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. in a designated 10-minute timeslot. Students are expected to present their results in five minutes and answer questions that judges post over the remaining five minutes. These judges may *not* be the same judges who perform the initial evaluation of the spreadsheet projects. All team members must be present for the presentation although the team may choose only one speaker if they wish. The judges will provide a quantitative score based on the following judging criteria:

Criteria	Full Marks	Partial Credit
Communication of results	(10 points) All questions/requirements were addressed fully. Students were able to clearly interpret all results of the analysis and the implications of those results.	(1 – 9 points) Some questions may have been missed or there may be some minor errors in interpretation of the results/data.
Organization	(10 points) The information was presented in an organized way that made sense given the prompt. It was easy to follow the presentation.	(1 – 9 points) There may have been some error in the way that the presentation was organized that caused confusion about the results.
Answering of questions	(10 points) Students were able to coherently answer all questions asked by the judges and show a mastery of the required analytical skills.	(1 – 9 points) Students may not have been able to answer all questions asked or showed only a basic understanding of the required analytical skills.
Time	(10 points) Students presented their work in the five minutes allotted and were able to efficiently answer questions.	(1 – 9 points) Students took more than five minutes or less than three minutes to present the results of their analysis or they did not answer questions in a timely fashion.

SS-AAEA Poster Formatting Instructions for the 2025 Earl O. Heady Decision Sciences Spreadsheet Competition

File format. Students must submit an Excel file (.xlsx) at the end of the analytical portion of the competition. They may also elect to submit a presentation either as a PowerPoint (.pptx) or pdf.

Software for the competition. Most colleges and universities provide free versions of the Microsoft Office Suite to students. It is critical that students have a laptop with a fully functional version of Excel at the time of the competition. Students may *not* use Google Sheets or web-based versions of Microsoft Excel for this competition as there may not be access to the internet or these versions may not have the analytical capabilities required to perform the task.

Author identification. For spreadsheet judging, each team will be provided a team name. The spreadsheet (and presentation, if submitted) must include the team name in the file title. You should also include a sheet in your workbook that includes the team name, the University you are representing, and the team members' names.

Preparation. There is a sample activity and Excel file provided as a means to prepare for the competition. The actual competition will feature a different set of a data, different questions, and (possibly) different analytical expectations. It is expected that students bring to the competition a knowledge of descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, market analysis, and a strong background in economic decision-making. Most students at a junior level or higher will have sufficient coursework to be prepared for the assigned tasks.