



2023-24 AGRICULTURAL PROFICIENCY AWARD AREA DESCRIPTIONS

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What Agricultural Proficiency Awards Are

Agricultural Proficiency awards are based on a member's Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE). They recognize individual skills and career-based competencies developed through multiple years of participation in Immersion type SAE projects. To be eligible to compete for an agricultural proficiency award SAEs must be agricultural in nature, fit into at least one nationally recognized [agriculture, food and natural resource \(AFNR\) pathway](#) and meet the description of the award area in which they apply (See the *Agricultural Proficiency Award Handbook* for all rules and procedures.).

Proficiency Award area descriptions are not meant to define SAE, they are areas in which members exploring and/or becoming established in specific agricultural career pathways can receive recognition. Not all SAEs will have an award area available.

Agricultural Proficiency Award Resources

The agricultural proficiency award handbooks, rules, FAQs and tips to help complete a competitive application can all be found on the National FFA Organization website at: <https://www.FFA.org/participate/awards/proficiencies>

Agricultural Proficiency Award Application Types

Entrepreneurship: For members who own an enterprise through which he/she plans, implements, operates and assumes financial risks to produce products or provide services in one or more agriculture, food and natural resource (AFNR) pathways. Members who have Immersion SAEs that are Ownership/Entrepreneurship should use this application type. Members who own a share/portion/percentage of a School-Based Enterprise should use this application type. A member with a Service-Learning SAE type may use this application type if ownership is involved.

Placement: For members who are employed by or serving an internship with an agriculture, food or natural resources (AFNR) related business, individual, or non-profit organization. These experiences may be paid or un-paid. Members with Immersion SAEs that are Placement/Internship should use this application type. Members who are employees of School-Based Enterprises should use this application type. Members with Service-Learning SAE types which are not owned by themselves should use this application type.

Combined: For the proficiency award areas that are not split into separate entrepreneurship and placement areas (example: *Agricultural Communications-Entrepreneurship/Placement*) applicants may enter both placement and entrepreneurship records using the Combined application if the qualifying SAE includes both entrepreneurship and placement activities. If the SAE is in a combined (*un-split*) area but includes only entrepreneurship or only placement activities, apply using the

entrepreneurship or placement application type, not a combined application type. Check this award area list to see combined (*un-split*) areas (*this list changes annually*).

Research: Members with agriculture, food or natural resource (AFNR) related Experimental, Analytical and/or Invention Research SAE types (*see SAE for All Guide for full definitions*) who are testing an AFNR related hypothesis, analyzing an AFNR related real-world problem or inventing an AFNR related new product or service.

Assistance with award area determinations

When choosing the appropriate proficiency award area to apply in, review ALL of the proficiency area descriptions. If you are in doubt or have questions regarding the correct area, please contact your state staff and/or the National FFA Organization SAE Education Specialist. Please email a detailed description of the SAE to: proficiency@ffa.org to request a determination.

Many members engage in SAE enterprises or activities of multiple types, which may qualify in different proficiency award areas. When a member's SAE qualifies in multiple proficiency areas only the activities, goals, descriptions, earnings/hours, duties and accomplishments that qualify in the proficiency area in which they are applying can be included in the application. For example: A member with an SAE which includes raising fish to sell to pet stores and employment by a landscape installation company has one enterprise that will qualify in the Specialty Animal Production award area and one that qualifies in the Landscape Management award area. When applying for an agricultural proficiency award in the Landscape Management area nothing about the fish raising enterprise should be included in the application. Do not discuss the fish raising enterprise in answers to questions, do not include inventory, earnings, skills, etc., from the fish enterprise in the landscape management application.

Agricultural Proficiency Award Area Descriptions

Agricultural Communications – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Includes programs in which a member is placed at a newspaper or other agricultural print (*such as magazines*) facilities to obtain training and practical experience in writing and publicizing in preparation for a writing communications career. Programs may also be at radio and TV stations, fair media rooms, or other businesses requiring speaking skills and knowledge of agriculture. The student may also own and produce an agricultural-related broadcast or show. This area also includes any use of, or development of social media or new technology aimed at communicating the story of agriculture. **NOTE:** *Projects working with media for the primary purpose of marketing or advertising for others belong in the Agricultural Services proficiency award area.*

Agricultural Education – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Relates to education and extension, including, but not limited to, youth mentoring, agricultural education departmental assistants, PALS mentors and student coordinators, developing and conducting informational materials and presentations for civic organizations and school-aged youth, and students who are involved in SAEs surrounding educating the public about the broad topics of agriculture, agriculture education and FFA. **NOTE:** *Creation or use of media for use other than educating the public about the stated topics belongs in either the Agricultural Communications or Agricultural Services proficiency award areas, depending on its intended use.*

Agricultural Mechanics Design and Fabrication – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Involves the design and construction of agricultural/natural resource equipment and/or structures for use in or related to any existing agricultural proficiency award area. Materials may include wood, metal, plastic, leather, concrete, electrical, plumbing, data communication components, etc. Excavation, heating, ventilation and/or air conditioning for agricultural/natural resource structures or equipment fits this area. May also include the development of new and emerging agricultural technologies such as engineering, remote sensing, precision agriculture, ag-robotics and other new technologies not covered by another proficiency award area. **NOTES:** *Items such as toys, jewelry, furniture, t-shirts, banners, plaques, art and all facets of residential construction are considered non-agricultural and not eligible.*

Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance – Entrepreneurship – Member owns an enterprise or business involving the repair and maintenance of **agricultural** equipment (*including lawn and landscape equipment*) and/or structures, including agricultural power systems such as mechanical, electrical, chemical, wind, solar and/or waterpower. This includes agricultural equipment restoration where a student owns the piece of equipment. **Note:** *Personal and non-agricultural vehicles/equipment are considered non-agricultural (i.e.: racing or classic cars) and are not eligible.*

Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance – Placement – Member works for an employer involved in the repair and maintenance of **agricultural** equipment (including lawn and landscape equipment) and/or structures, including agricultural power systems such as mechanical, electrical, chemical, wind, solar and/or waterpower. This area includes agricultural equipment restoration where the member does not own the piece of equipment. **Note:** *Personal and non-agricultural vehicles/equipment are considered non-agricultural (i.e.: racing or classic cars) and are not eligible.*

Agricultural Processing – Entrepreneurship/Placement – A member owns an enterprise or works for a business of assembling, transporting, processing, fabricating, mixing, packaging and storing food and nonfood agricultural products. Programs could include processing meat, milk, honey, cheese, raisins and other dried fruits, maple syrup and/or other food processing. Nonfood products could include by-products processing such as meat, bone, fish and blood meal, tallow, hides; processing of wool and cotton, making compost, cubing and pelleting of forages, producing bird seed and other pet foods. Project may include, but not solely be, the sale of the processed product. **NOTE:** *This area does not include any production of raw products (animals and plants) only processing them. Processing of non-food forest products is not included in the agricultural processing area, see the Forest Management and Products area.*

Agricultural Sales-Entrepreneurship – A member owns an enterprise focused on the acquiring, marketing, and re-selling of FINISHED agricultural/natural resource products **not covered in a more appropriate proficiency award category**. This includes sales of feed, seed, fertilizer, agricultural chemicals, agricultural equipment, landscaping materials, horticulture products, agricultural machinery, agricultural structures, etc. This area does not include the production or processing of products.

- **FLORICULTURE NOTE:** A member owned retail floral design and/or sales business, which does not raise its own flowers, qualifies in this area. (*See the Diversified Horticulture and Specialty Crop descriptions for floriculture projects that include raising flowers.*)
- **WILD GROWN/FORAGED NOTE:** Foraging, marketing, and selling raw plant products that are not in any way grown or cultivated by human assistance qualifies in this area. (*Examples include but are not limited to: wild berries, fruit, nuts, mushrooms, truffles, ramps, dandelion greens, etc.*) Application should focus on marketing and selling the products.

Agricultural Sales-Placement – A member works for an enterprise or business focused on acquiring, marketing, and selling agricultural/natural resource products **not covered in a more appropriate proficiency award category**. This includes sales of feed, seed, fertilizer, agricultural chemicals, agricultural equipment, landscaping materials, horticulture products, agricultural machinery, agricultural structures, etc. This area does not include the production or processing of products.

- **Floriculture NOTE:** A member who works for a retail floral design and/or sales business, which does not raise its own flowers, qualifies in this area. (*See the Diversified Horticulture and Specialty Crop descriptions for members who work for a floral enterprise which includes raising flowers.*)
- **WILD GROWN/FORAGED NOTE:** Working for an organization foraging, marketing, and selling raw plant products that are not in any way grown or cultivated by human assistance qualifies in this area. (*Examples include but are not limited to: wild berries, fruit, nuts, mushrooms, truffles, ramps, dandelion greens, etc.*) Application should focus on marketing and selling the products.

Agricultural Services – Entrepreneurship/Placement –Member owns or works for an agricultural business whose primary activity is to provide agricultural services that are **not covered in any other proficiency award area**. This includes agricultural enterprises such as custom equipment operation, agricultural management and financial services, animal breeding services, custom baling, crop scouting, implementing integrated pest management programs, horseshoeing, taxidermy services, auction services (working at or owning the auction business), commercial agricultural well drilling, residential tree removal service, custom and contract feeding services, marketing/advertising of agricultural products through social media, print, radio and TV, soil/crop testing, animal feed ration testing or development and other agricultural services. **NOTE: Activities related to lawn care, landscaping, mowing or other landscape and yard care activities are not included in this area. See Landscape Management, Turf Grass Management, Nursery Operations, etc.**

Agriscience Research Proficiency Awards are designed for those students actively engaged in agriscience research and experimentation. This includes members who are actively engaged in doing their own research individually or who may be cooperating on research projects with others including but not limited to teams in school, experiment stations or colleges/universities. The applicant must be actively involved in all of the following: development of the experimental design, formulation of the hypothesis, collection of data, interpretation of the data and publicizing the results to be considered for an Agriscience Research Proficiency Award.

- **Agriscience Research - Animal Systems** - Research in the life processes, health, nutrition, genetics, management, and processing of animal systems related to small animals, aquaculture, livestock, dairy, horses and/or poultry.
- **Agriscience Research - Integrated Systems** - Must fit one of the following descriptions:
 - **Diversified Research** – Research in two or more of the agriscience research areas.
 - **Environmental Service Systems/Natural Resource Systems Research** - Research in the systems, instruments and technology used in environmental service and/or natural resources and their influence on the environment.
 - **Food Products and Processing Systems Research** - Research in the product development, quality assurance, food safety, production, sales and service, regulation and compliance, and food service practices within the food industry.
 - **Power, Structural and Technical Systems Research** - Research in the agricultural equipment, power systems, alternative fuel sources and precision technology, as well as woodworking, metalworking, welding, and project planning for agricultural structures.
 - **Social Sciences Research** - Research of leadership, personal growth, and career success skills necessary for a chosen profession that effectively contributes to society.
- **Agriscience Research - Plant Systems** - Research in the life cycles, classifications, functions, practices of plant systems related to crops, turf grass, trees, and shrubs and/or ornamental plants.

Beef Production- Entrepreneurship – Member owns the enterprise or business that uses the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market beef. This award area is for any animals raised mainly to produce beef and all beef breed animals, including miniature Herefords, Zebu, etc.

Beef Production- Placement – Member works for a livestock producer applying the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market beef. This award area is for any animals raised mainly to produce beef and all beef breed animals, including miniature Herefords, Zebu, etc.

Dairy Production- Entrepreneurship – Member owns an enterprise or business and applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market dairy cattle, including the raising of breeding animals for dairy purposes (i.e., bulls and heifers) and raw dairy cattle products. This award area also includes enterprises in which a member leases cattle for dairy production.

Dairy Production- Placement – Member works in an enterprise or business applying the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market dairy cattle, including the raising of breeding animals for dairy purposes (i.e., bulls and heifers) and raw dairy cattle products.

Diversified Agricultural Production - Entrepreneurship/Placement- Involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market a combination of livestock and crops in **two or more** proficiency areas. These areas include at least one species included in Diversified Livestock and at least one species included in Diversified Crop proficiency area.

Diversified Crop Production – Entrepreneurship – Member owns an enterprise or business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops from **two or more** of the following proficiency areas: grain production, fiber & oil crop production, forage production, specialty crop production (*excluding floriculture production*), vegetable production or fruit production.

Diversified Crop Production – Placement – Member works for a business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops from **two or more** of the following proficiency areas: grain production, fiber & oil crop production, forage production, specialty crop production (*excluding floriculture production*), vegetable production or fruit production.

Diversified Horticulture – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns or works for an enterprise or business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market plants/arrangements from **two or more** of the following proficiency areas: landscape management, nursery operations, turf grass management, floricultural production accepted in specialty crop production, and floral design/marketing accepted in agricultural sales.

Diversified Livestock Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Involves the use of the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market a combination of animals for **two or more** of the livestock-related proficiency award areas. These areas include beef, dairy, sheep, swine, equine, goat, specialty animal, poultry or small animal production and care.

Environmental Science and Natural Resources Management – Entrepreneurship /Placement – Students receive practical experience concerned with the principles and practices of managing and/or improving the environment and natural resources. Activities may include the areas of management of agriculture waste (excluding common compliance with EPA regulations) recycling of agriculture products, environmental cleanup, land/wetland reclamation, serving in the conservation corps; managing agricultural energy usage (*not for building or maintaining*), multiple uses of resources, land use regulations pertaining to soil, water and air quality, preservation of wetlands, shorelines, and grasslands, erosion prevention practices; installing subsurface drainage, public relations and education concerning pollution. **NOTES:** 1. *Projects that solely install/maintain drainage tiling systems belong in agricultural services.* 2. *Activities primarily for the purpose of creating or improving wildlife habitat or producing and managing wildlife are not eligible in this area, see Wildlife Production and Management.*

Equine Science - Entrepreneurship – Student owns an enterprise or business that provides experiences in horse production, breeding, marketing, showing and other aspects of the equine industry. Programs may also include the training and/or management of horses for activities such as but not only roping, racing, rodeo, show, riding lessons and therapeutic horseback riding if horses are owned and/or managed by the member. Miniature horses are included in this proficiency area. **NOTE:** *Participation in events in which equine are used but where activities do not involve the above may belong in other areas.*

Equine Science- Placement – Student works for an employer providing experiences in horse production, breeding, marketing, showing and other aspects of the equine industry. Programs may also include the training and/or management of horses for activities such as but not only roping, racing, rodeo, show, riding lessons and therapeutic horseback riding if horses are not owned but are managed by the member. Miniature horses are included in this proficiency area. **Note:** *Participation in events in which equine are used but where activities do not involve the above may belong in other areas.*

Fiber and Oil Crop Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for fiber and/or oil such as cotton, sisal, hemp, soybeans, sesame seed, flax, mustard, canola, castor beans, sunflower, peanuts, dill, spearmint, and safflower. The harvesting, baling, marketing, and selling of straw and/or corn stalks for all purposes other than forage fits in this area. *(Projects which include producing grain include the straw as a portion of the grain production project and apply in Grain Production.)*

Forage Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for forage such as alfalfa, clover, brome grass, orchard grass, grain forages, corn and grass silages, all pastures and sorghum (not used for grain). **NOTE:** *Custom baling activities more appropriately fit in the Agricultural Services award area.*

Forest Management and Products – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to conserve or increase the economic value of a forest and/or forest products through such practices as thinning, pruning, weeding, stand improvement, reforestation, insect and disease control, planting, harvesting, Christmas tree farming, making and selling cedar shakes, firewood, wood chips/mulch and working for local, state or federal forest management agencies. **NOTE:** *This area does not include food items harvested from the forest, residential tree removal services or processing/use of lumber beyond processing at the lumber mill.*

Fruit & Nut Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for fruit and nuts such as stone fruits, pome fruits, citrus fruits, pineapples, coconuts, berries, cranberries, melons, grapes, olives, nuts (*not peanuts*) and all common fruits. (Pome fruits include apples, mayhaws, and pears. Stone fruits include peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, and cherries). **NOTE:** *SAEs involving processing fruits/nuts beyond the raw product are better suited to the Agricultural Processing award area.*

Goat Production - Entrepreneurship/Placement - Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that involves the use of the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market goats and all raw goat products. **NOTE:** *Processed products are better suited to the Agricultural Processing award area.*

Grain Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a crop producer or grain production related business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for grain production such as corn, barley (including the malting types), millet, buckwheat, oats, grain sorghum, milo, wheat, rice and rye. Production of certified grain seed is included in this area. Straw/stalks, as a by-product of these crops, is included. **NOTES:** Grain Production does not include any of the mentioned crops if intended for forage (*See Forage Production*). For projects ONLY harvesting straw/stalks see Fiber &/or Oil Crop Production.

Landscape Management – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes experiences with planting and maintaining plants and shrubs, landscaping and outdoor beautification, grounds keeping, sprinkler installations and lawn mowing/care services, portions of the project can include hardscaping and the installation of decorative rock, etc. **NOTE:** *Projects including only the installation of hardscaping and building of landscape structures belong in the Agricultural Mechanics Design and Fabrication proficiency area.*

Nursery Operations – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that provides experience in growing, marketing, and selling ornamental plants, vegetable starter plants, shrubs and/or tree production for the purpose of transplanting or propagation. This could include water garden plants if produced for sale.

Outdoor Recreation – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that develops or provides outdoor recreational activities for public or family use as experiential or income-producing enterprises. These enterprises could include agritourism, vacation cabins and cottages, camping and/or picnic areas, recreational fishing, and/or hunting areas, winter sports, shooting preserves, guide services, riding stables, trail rides (*ATV, horseback, etc.*), vacation farms and guest ranches, natural scenic or historic areas, and running petting zoos and rodeo events where the member does not own or manage animals. **NOTE:** *Personal participation in outdoor recreation activities is not an SAE. Working as a lifeguard of any type does not qualify as an SAE.*

Poultry Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market chickens, turkeys, domestic fowl such as ducks, geese and guinea, and their raw products.

Service-Learning – Entrepreneurship/Placement

Member researches an agriculturally related community need(s), develops a written plan which defines the identified need and the proposed service solution. Member submits the plan or plans to a local review committee of stake holders and the FFA advisor, completes the project and provides a summary report of the project's impact to the same review committee. Service must benefit a school, public entity, or a substantial portion of the community. Service provided to the member's own FFA Chapter is not eligible. Service project(s) must require the member to use agricultural skills and knowledge gained in the agriculture classroom to complete and must be of sufficient scope for the member to apply skills and abilities from the nationally accepted agriculture, food, and natural resource standards. Projects must be member initiated, planned, lead and reported and may not appear within the member's chapter Program of Activities in the current or a prior year unless it has been significantly expanded or changed. Projects initiated, planned, and conducted by a chapter are not eligible though chapter members may provide labor or resources to a member's service-learning SAE project. A member may not personally profit financially from the project(s). A small team of members may work together to complete a project(s) the member applying will report only their own hours, skills, and growth. A continuous project must have new local review committee approval for added activities not included in the original plan.

Sheep Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market sheep, raw sheep products and wool.

Small Animal Production and Care – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market small animals such as all rabbits, cats, dogs, mice, hedgehogs, guinea pigs, lizards, snakes, small birds (*such as canaries, cockatiels, cockatoos, parakeets, parrots, etc.*) and programs that typically provide a service in caring for the well-being of pets. Programs could include working at a pet shop, as a groomer, as a dog trainer, providing pet sitting services, working at a kennel, or preparing guide and assistance animals. **NOTE:** *Employment at a veterinary clinic or similar veterinary care enterprise assisting veterinarians in performing duties related to the health and welfare of animals belongs in the Veterinary Science proficiency area.*

Specialty Animal Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market specialty animals and their raw products within the agriculture industry. Members in this area must demonstrate that they are producing and marketing specialty animals not covered in any of the existing award areas. Specialty animals can include but are not limited to the following: alligators, aquaculture, bees, mules, donkeys, bison, oxen, mink, worms, insects, ostriches, pigeons, emus, alpacas, or llamas. Placement experiences could include roles as a zoo worker or placement at any specialty animal facility. In their supervised work experience, students must participate in hands-on activities including feeding, inoculating, performing basic animal care, weighing, measuring, showing, and possibly marketing animals in an entrepreneurial or work placement environment. **NOTE:** *This award area does not include further processing of specialty animal products (i.e., honey, llama wool, etc.), processing of these products belongs in the Agricultural Processing Proficiency area.*

Specialty Crop Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise, or works for a business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market raw crops not covered in any of the existing award categories such as: native prairie plants, sugar beets, dry edible beans, green peanuts, gourds, tobacco, specialty corns (*popcorn, white corn, Indian corn*), all grass seed production, herbs and spices, mushrooms, sugar cane, hops, sorghum cane, confectionary sunflowers, production of crop seed and floriculture production. (such as chrysanthemums, daylilies, etc.) **NOTE:** *This award area does not include further processing of these products, processing belongs in the Agricultural Processing Proficiency area.*

Swine Production – Entrepreneurship – Member owns an enterprise that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market swine and their raw products.

Swine Production – Placement – Member works for an employer that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market swine and their raw products.

Turf Grass Management – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that involves the planting and maintaining of turf for outdoor beautification, providing a lawn mowing service that does not include installation or maintenance of additional landscaping, sod produced for sale and sport field or golf course management. **NOTE:** *Landscape maintenance that includes lawn mowing as only a portion generally belongs in the Landscape Management area except as noted above.*

Vegetable Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market unprocessed crops such as asparagus, beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, pumpkins, sweet corn, tomatoes, onions, zucchini, hot peppers and all common garden vegetables.

Veterinary Science – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that includes working with veterinarians in clinical practice, research facilities, colleges of veterinary medicine, animal health industry, or any other environment in which they assist veterinarians in performing duties related to the health of people and/or the health and welfare of large and small animals. This experience must be under the **supervision of a veterinarian** and may include wage earning, entrepreneurial or exploratory activities not limited to hands-on care of animals, management of business aspects of a veterinary practice, or working on legislation or regulations relating to animals.

Wildlife Production and Management – Entrepreneurship/Placement – Member owns the enterprise or works for a business that includes the improvement and the availability of fish and wildlife through practices such as land and water habitat improvement or development, wildlife surveys, trapping or the stocking of fish and wild game. This area includes activities conducted with local, state or federal fish & wildlife or natural resource agencies managing wildlife and habitat specifically for wildlife. The legal production of wild species for stocking such as ducks, geese, quail, pheasants, etc. are eligible if used as an income enterprise. Legal harvest of wildlife or fish for resale as an income enterprise is included in this category. **NOTE:** *Personal participation in recreational or subsistence hunting or fishing is not eligible.*