



NCF-ENVIROTHON
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Virtual Envirothon Competition Contingency Plans

Questions for Consideration

The Envirothon program has a long history of providing quality natural resource education to students by encouraging experiential learning through hands-on outdoor experiences. Unfortunately, due to local regulations, school mandates, and ongoing public health concerns, in-person regional and/or state/provincial/partner nation Envirothon competitions may not be possible during the 2020-2021 competition season. The health and safety of the students, advisors, staff, and volunteers involved in the Envirothon program is our top priority, and the continuing impacts of COVID-19 have necessitated a creative approach to how we plan for our 2021 competitions.

Local public health and school system regulations differ from state to state and province to province. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all contingency plan. Each state/province/partner nation planning committee is encouraged to develop their own contingency plans to meet their unique needs and phased reopening scenarios. The NCF-Envirothon recognizes that this may be a daunting task, and our staff are available for support and advice as we navigate this process together.

Each state/province/partner nation Envirothon planning committee will need to consider some important questions as we plan for upcoming competitions. As the public health situation changes day by day, it is impossible to predict what conditions will be like by the spring of 2021. For this reason, the NCF-Envirothon recommends that each state/province/partner nation develop a multi-scenario contingency plan to address potential phases of school openings/distance learning, limits to outdoor and indoor activities, social distancing guidelines, field trip restrictions, and many other variables. To aid your committee in drafting this multi-scenario contingency plan, the NCF-Envirothon has developed a list of questions to spark discussion as you prepare for your 2021 competition.

The questions included here may lead to new questions as you explore your competition options, so please do not limit yourselves to only the questions in this document. There are many factors to be considered, and your state/province/partner nation may have additional needs beyond those listed here.

Please also remember to review any plans for virtual competitions to verify that they align with your local state/provincial/partner nation policies and regulations for Envirothon events. Please also ensure that your contingency plans are in accordance with local health regulations, CDC guidelines, and school policies.

General Questions

1. How will you make the virtual Envirothon experience worthwhile for the students?
2. How can you capture some of the in-person excitement about the competition and translate that to an online environment?
3. How can you facilitate outdoor hands-on experiences when holding a virtual competition?
4. How can you continue to engage the volunteers that would normally be present at an in-person competition?
5. How can you continue to engage sponsors that would normally be present at an in-person competition or have more advertisement/recognition opportunities?
6. How will you ensure fairness, equity, and honesty during a virtual competition?

Competition Testing and Oral Presentation Logistics Questions

General Logistics

7. How will you structure the online competition? Similar in structure to the in-person competition (same number of days, et cetera)? Or spread the testing out over several days?
8. Are teams able to gather together as a small group at their school (or other location) or are teams unable to meet in person?
 - If teams are unable to meet in person, a virtual meeting platform for them to converse and complete the tests and oral presentation needs to be provided, or recommendations should be made for free or low-cost options.
9. Do your local Envirothon competition's Policies or Rules need to be revised to allow virtual competition?
10. Will you hold an Oral Presentation component as part of your official virtual competition?
 - While not required, each state/provincial/partner nation Envirothon program is highly encouraged to include an Oral Presentation component as part of your qualifying competition. At the minimum, local state/provincial/partner nation Envirothon competitions must include testing in the 5 core areas: Aquatic Ecology, Forestry, Soils and Land Use, Wildlife and a Current Environmental Issue.

Platforms

11. What platforms best suit your needs and how can you pay for them?
12. What platforms will all participants have access to? How easy is it to set up access for students and administrators?
13. How many accounts will you need (for administrators, students, or other roles)? Is there a cost associated with the number or type of accounts for your platform?

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14. Are you able to set up practice sessions so that students can become more familiar with the platform and online testing procedures before the official competition?

Training

15. Will you include a training portion for the students? Will this be pre-recorded or live?
16. Is it possible to include hands-on activities in the training sessions? Will students have the materials needed for these activities?
17. Since many field trips will likely be cancelled this school year, is there a way that you can offer virtual training for your students in the months leading up to the competition?
 - These training sessions could be posted to your state/provincial/partner nation website and could encourage more engagement and participation, while reaching new audiences.

Testing (including Test Writing)

18. Can online test questions be structured to mimic field experience or address the same skills and knowledge?
19. Is it possible to include hands-on activities in station tests? Will students have the materials needed for these activities?
20. Who will upload and format the online tests using the platform interface? The test writers, the Envirothon planning committee, a designated administrator, or someone else?
21. How will access to the tests be regulated?
22. How will the tests be timed?
23. Will test proctors be needed?
24. How will you give test writers and graders access to grade the students' online submissions? Will this require multiple administrative accounts on your platform?
25. How will you ensure scoring consistency for short answer questions?

Oral Presentation

26. Will the oral presentations be presented live over the internet, or recorded and submitted via email or uploaded to an online platform for judging?
27. Will all of your students have reliable internet and enough bandwidth for live oral presentations?
28. If live, will there be a Question and Answer section at the end of the oral presentations? How will this be structured?
29. Will the procedure for the students' preparation of the oral presentations need to be modified for the online environment?
30. Will preparation of the oral presentations be monitored? Will use of outside resources be allowed?

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Grading/Scoring

31. What types of questions and grading abilities are available on your platform (automatic grading of multiple choice and matching, but short answer must be manually graded, et cetera)? How will you communicate this information to your test writers?
32. How long will it take to grade the tests and/or oral presentations (if recorded and submitted)?
33. What changes will need to be made to the oral presentation judging criteria for the online format (recorded or live)?

Rules and Procedure

34. How will you monitor that the rules are being followed and that there is no cheating?
35. What is your backup/alternative plans for internet outages or other technological difficulties?
36. How will you structure your grievance procedure for the online environment?

Costs, Awards, and Sponsorships

37. What will be the participation/registration fee for an online competition?
38. What is your budget for online competition platforms, administration, and/or IT support?
39. Will you be able to garner the same amount of sponsorships and scholarship money to offer to the students?
40. How will you recognize sponsors?
 - You likely will not have the same opportunities for swag and advertising that you normally would at an in-person event.
41. Are there grants for technology or distance learning that your agency could apply for to aid in the development of training materials and administration of the competition?
42. How will awards be presented? (And mailed, for physical awards?)
43. Will you still offer Envirothon items for the students (T-shirts, water bottles, et cetera)? How will these items be delivered?