



DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION CLUBS OF ILLINOIS

**Illinois
Association of DECA**

**STATE
HANDBOOK**

**Revised
August 2025**

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ILLINOIS DECA

MISSION STATEMENT

DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in marketing, finance, hospitality and management.

OBJECTIVES

To further develop a respect for education in marketing and management, which will contribute to occupational competence.

To promote an understanding and appreciation for the responsibilities of citizenship in our free, competitive enterprise system.

VISION STATEMENT

To provide the DECA experience for every student who seeks it throughout Illinois, especially for those students interested in all aspects of business.

INTRODUCTION

The Illinois Association of DECA (commonly known as Illinois DECA or DECI) is a statewide organization that evolved from the establishment of local chapters initiated by students enrolled in Marketing Education programs.

Any student enrolled in a business or marketing-related course is eligible to participate in DECA. The activities of local chapters are an essential component of the Marketing Education program and are designed to reflect the unique needs, interests, and opportunities of each school community.

This handbook has evolved through many years of contributions from dedicated educators and leaders. It was originally prepared in 1951 by Robert F. Kozelka, Supervisor of Business Marketing Education. Revisions were made in 1962 by Mrs. Patricia Rath, Supervisor and member of the Business and Marketing Education Advisory Board; in 1987 by Mr. Philip Scheel, Executive Director of the Distributive Education Clubs of Illinois; and again in 1992 by Mr. Terry Hurst, Lake Park Advisor, and Mr. Scheel. Mrs. Joan Varanauski revised the handbook in 2006, followed by an update from Mr. Mark Lyons. Most recently, in 2025, the handbook was revised by Mrs. Kendra Lee and Ms. Karen Bear.

The Illinois DECA Board of Directors now makes annual updates to ensure the content remains current and useful.

The purpose of this handbook is to:

- Enrich Marketing Education programs through engaging youth-led activities.
- Support local chapters in effective organization and operations.
- Provide an up-to-date annual overview of the Illinois DECA program.
- Offer guidance, tools, and resources for both new and veteran advisors.

IHSA REQUIREMENTS FOR CTSO PARTICIPATION

The information below can be found on the IHSA.org website in the [Constitution, Bylaws, and Policy](#). Illinois DECA is a member of the Illinois Coordinating Council for Career and

Technical Organizations.

2.060 MULTIPLE SCHOOL INTERSCHOLASTIC ACTIVITIES

Member schools must adhere to the following conditions when participating in any interscholastic multiple school (four or more schools) contest or other activity:

(c) multiple school conference activities may begin as early as 8:00 a.m. on a school day;
(d) multiple school activities sponsored by a statewide organization such as the Illinois Coordinating Council for Career and Technical Student Organizations, the Illinois Association of Student Councils, etc. may begin as early as 8:00 a.m. on a school day.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The calendar changes every year. The current calendar and list of due dates for various conferences and activities can be found at <http://www.ildeca.org> website. Please check the web calendar for the latest up-to-date information for all activities and due dates. Advisors should check with their own Region for specific related dates.

PURPOSES OF THE ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF DECA

- To inspire lasting interest in marketing and management as career pathways
- To build appreciation for the role of marketing in supporting a high standard of living
- To promote respect for career and technical education and a commitment to lifelong learning
- To offer opportunities to explore careers in marketing and related fields
- To develop leadership skills in the areas of marketing and management

- To encourage high ethical standards in business practices
- To support students' mental and physical well-being through meaningful social and recreational activities
- To promote understanding of the intersection between business, the arts, and the sciences.

CONTACT INFORMATION

ILLINOIS DECA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Karen Bear	Executive Director	bearkaren005@gmail.com
Kendra Lee	Deputy Executive Director	lee@timothychristian.com
Michael Rast	Treasurer/Director	mrast@glenbrook225.com
Jean Attig	Secretary/Director	jeaatt@d219.org
Jim Duffy	Director	jduffy@d230.org
Chad Froeschle	Director	chad.froeschle@d214.org
Steve Haderlein	Director	shaderlein@elmhurst205.org
Jenny Jacoby	Director	jacobyj@eths202.org
Kevin Jones	Director	kjones@lphs.org
Laura Lopez	Director	llopez@dupage88.net

STATE OFFICER ADVISOR

Karen Bear	bearkaren005@gmail.com
Anna Brandenberger	annasull0105@gmail.com

REGIONAL CONTACTS

South Suburban DECA	Jim Duffy	jduffy@d230.org
North Suburban DECA	Chad Froeschle	chad.froeschle@d214.org
West Suburban DECA	Beth Knuth	beth_knuth@ipsd.org

ADVISOR COMMITMENT LETTER

Every chapter MUST complete the [Advisor Commitment Letter](#). This form must be completed, scanned & emailed back to admin@ildeca.org by September 30th of the current year.

MEMBERSHIP

DUES INFORMATION

National DECA Registration

November 15th is the Target Date for initial registration

1. The easiest way to get to this site is to click on the “National Membership Registration” “button” on the Home web page under the Extended Menu at ildeca.org or enter <https://membership.decaregistration.com/deca#>
2. Update advisor information if it has changed. Primary advisor is to be listed first.
3. There are two optional membership categories: 1) T-shirt size and 2) Officer status. While not required on the national membership system, please complete them, as they are mandatory for Illinois DECA's State Career Development Conference registration.
4. Click on returning DECA students and enter new students. **Double check the student name for spelling before submitting** – the way you submit a student's name is the way it will be used for all conferences (i.e. Bill instead of William)
5. The current national and state dues are \$17 per person (includes advisors). Print your invoice and submit it to your Business Office for membership dues payment.
6. Make a check payable to DECA, Inc. and send it directly to DECA, Attn: Membership, 1908 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1594 or you may use a credit card. (DECA does not have a credit card fee.)
7. Any questions regarding the national membership site should be directed membership@deca.org

The membership campaign theme for this year is “Go the Extra” Membership is open to all students, especially those interested in any area of business, finance, marketing and entrepreneurship. Online membership can be processed at any time throughout the school year.

Illinois DECA Registration - Two parts

Due September 30th

1. Complete the [Annual State Summary Registration Form](#)

- a. \$10 Charter Fee
- b. \$10 IFME Advisor dues for each advisor (goes toward student scholarships)
- c. Download the State Summary form as a PDF file.
- d. Print copies. The State Summary form can be submitted to your Business Office for your Charter Fee & IFME dues for all advisors.
- e. Mail form(s) and check payable to Illinois DECA to Illinois DECA at address on the form

November 15th is the Target Date for Initial registration. Students entered prior to Area Sectionals each year are eligible to compete at IL DECA CDC.

1. Use the [Business Class Roster](#) file to enter any business class being taken during the **CURRENT school year**, if applicable.
 - a. Computer Programming classes **DO NOT** count as a business class per ISBE.
 - b. If students are not taking a business class this 2025-2026 school year, then leave the space blank.
 - c. Do not change or delete any of the columns on the file.
2. Each time you add students for membership on the DECA Inc. website, you will need to:
 - a. Update your spreadsheet list.
 - b. Print the Student Membership & have your administrator sign & date it
 - c. Email the signed form as a PDF to admin@ildeca.org
3. This form (along with the State Summary form) is required for our state grant from the Illinois State Board of Education.
4. **Active chapters not submitting initial registration by November 30th will incur a \$100 chapter penalty fee.**

If your school doesn't have a DECA program, please contact Steve Haderlein (shaderlein@elmhurst205.org) for further information. If you have any questions regarding membership forms, dues, conference forms/registration, please feel free to email Kendra Lee at admin@ildeca.org.

ILLINOIS FOUNDATION FOR MARKETING EDUCATION (IFME)

All Chapter Advisors are required to join IFME.

All senior DECA students will be eligible to apply for Foundation scholarships. The number and value of these scholarships depend on the funds raised through IFME-sponsored Marketing Events and other fundraising activities.

Advisors are encouraged to actively support IFME initiatives. Each of the three (3) regions is asked to designate a representative to attend IFME meetings—typically held three times per year—to stay informed about upcoming activities and opportunities.

The IFME membership dues are paid through the Annual State Summary form.

REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Regional dues vary by area: North Suburban DECA (NSD), South Suburban DECA (SSD), and West Suburban DECA (WSD). Check with your Regional President (listed on page 6) for the current rate.

Most chapters fall into one of these three Regions based on location. If you're unsure where your chapter belongs, contact Steve Haderlein at shaderlein@elmhurst205.org.

ISBE GRANT ACTIVITY FORM REQUIREMENT

All chapter advisors are required to complete the [Chapter Activity Report](#) found on the ildeca.org website under the Resources Heading tab. Make sure you read the directions at the top of the form.

Please complete the information, including a brief description of the activity, and click the Submit button.

You can complete the activity form at any time throughout the school year. For group conferences, one advisor can submit for everyone, but all schools in their region must be listed. You need to include an activity/activities more than just attending conferences/competitions.

Each chapter must submit at least two activities, with full details and appropriate components selected. Reports are due by January 31, 2026. Incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

AWARDS

SUPERSTAR CHAPTERS

Chapters that meet this goal receive a certificate and a star on their name badge at our IL DECA CDC Conference.

The criteria for SUPERSTAR CHAPTER status is based on the previous year's membership. Chapters would need to meet a minimum of one criteria stated below:

- 1) a 10% membership increase over last year*
- 2) Membership over 50 adding 3 members
- 3) Membership over 75 adding 2 members
- 4) Chapters with membership of 100 or more are automatically superstars.

*Membership to be counted must be received by January 17, 2026.

OUTSTANDING ADVISOR & NEW ADVISOR AWARD

Advisors can begin earning points for this award starting with the IL DECA CDC Conference from the previous school year. All advisors who complete the requirements are eligible.

Full details and the submission form are available at ildeca.org under the Resources tab. Submit to admin@ildeca.org.

This award is sponsored by DECA Inc. and is subject to change or cancellation at their discretion. New advisors are eligible with adjusted point requirements.

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

- IFME scholarships are available for graduating members whose advisors are IFME members. This year, IFME will offer several scholarships, with the number and amounts based on funds raised through their marketing events. Graduating DECA members may apply, provided their Advisor is an IFME member.
- In addition to scholarships, two non-monetary awards are available: the Frank Vignola Award (typically one recipient) and the Honor Award (multiple recipients).
- Applications for IFME scholarships and both awards are available at: www.teachmarketing.org

- All graduating members are eligible for the scholarships awarded by the Central Region Board and National DECA. Information regarding all these scholarships can be found on the National DECA website, deca.org/scholarships, and all the scholarship information will be available in October 2025.

CONFERENCES

IL DECA Fall Leadership Conference (FLC)

General Information & Registration Deadline – September 16, 2025

Be part of the excitement as we elect the 2025–2026 Illinois DECA State Officer Team! Don't miss keynote speaker Dr. CarolLynn Knute as she inspires us to "Rock the Role Play," along with eight dynamic breakout sessions led by business professionals on topics like professionalism, career readiness, marketing, and entrepreneurship.

Illinois DECA's Fall Leadership Conference will be held on Thursday, September 25, 2025 at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 N. River Rd., Rosemont, IL.

Registration for all attending is due by Tuesday, September 16, 2025. When space and time permit, a Professional Development session is held for advisors to update everyone on new procedures and changes in competitive events, along with other pertinent information.

State Officer Application Information Packet that can be found on the website must be completed by **September 11, 2025**.

Election of State Officer Action Team

If your chapter plans to run a student for state office, please carefully review the State Officer Candidate Packet available at ildeca.org.

This year's State Officer Test will be held at **9:00 AM on September 13, 2025, at the Woodridge Library**.

Each chapter may submit up to two (2) candidates. While much of the packet remains the same, it has been updated for the 2025–2026 school year. Please read it thoroughly with your student(s), ensuring they understand the time commitment and are dedicated to strengthening Illinois DECA.

Advisors must also be fully aware of their responsibilities throughout the year. Encourage only those students who are truly committed to the role. Candidates must be willing to serve as President, if elected, and must attend the Mandatory Officer Training Conference on October 5–6, 2025.

All officer candidates must be registered DECA/Illinois DECA members by the application deadline.

Please note that campaigning is strictly prohibited at any time before or during the election. This includes in-person conversations, materials, and all social media activity, whether by the candidate or on their behalf.

DECA Ultimate Power Trip

General Information

DECA is recommending chapters to attend the Ultimate DECA Power Trip in Arlington, VA November 21-23, 2025. Check the DECA site for details. deca.org/power

DECA's Ultimate Power Trip empowers students through hands-on workshops, motivational speakers, and competitive experiences. It focuses on leadership, communication, and career readiness in marketing, management, finance, and entrepreneurship. Students network with peers and professionals, while advisors gain professional development. The conference strengthens chapter engagement and prepares students for success.

ILLINOIS CAREER DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE (IL DECA CDC)

Conference Overview

The Illinois DECA CDC will take place March 5–7, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel in Rosemont, IL. This event follows all three Regional CDCs and is expected to host approximately 1,900 DECA students who will compete across various events.

All attendees are required to stay at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare due to contractual obligations for meeting space. No exceptions are made, regardless of proximity to the venue.

Registration & Hotel Information

- **Deadline:** Hotel reservation forms must be submitted by **January 29, 2026**.
- **Format:** Hotel registration forms must be submitted in **Excel** format (Google Sheets or other formats will delay processing).
- **Registration Fee:**
 - \$175 per person (on-site)
 - \$550 per person (off-site)
- **Hotel Rate:** \$175.56 per night (taxes included)
- **Payment:**
 - Hotel payments made payable to **Hyatt Regency Hotel**
 - Registration fees made payable to **Distributive Education Clubs of Illinois**
 - All payments must be **received prior to check-in** or a 50% late penalty fee will be assessed. Have a credit card ready for payment at registration.

Chaperone Policy

- One advisor/chaperone is required for every 15 students.
- If sharing chaperones across schools, a letter from the other school's principal must be submitted to admin@ildeca.org by February 20, 2026.

Event Registration

- Registration will be completed online via the DLG system, with instructions included in the IL CDC Registration Packet and linked on the DECA Doc.
- Make sure you have the following ready before registering:
 - Event
 - T-shirt Size
 - Specific Member Allergies
 - Meal Choices
 - IEP Accommodations Needed
 - Phonetic Pronunciation

Should you wish to use it, a Google Form to obtain that information from your members is available on the DECA Doc.

Late Arrival/Early Dismissal

- Late Arrival/Early Dismissal form must be submitted by February 20, 2026.
- Late arrivals must arrive by Friday at 7:45 am for testing.
- Departure must occur between 5:00 PM and 6:00 PM on Friday.
- Check-out must be supervised by an advisor and an Illinois Board Member.

Competition Guidelines

- All students must be members in good standing by **February 14, 2026**.
- Each chapter may bring up to 65 students with 1 adult (min. 21-years-old) to each 15 members
- Students may participate in:
 - One (1) competency-based event
 - One (1) prepared event
- Principles events are limited to first-year DECA members. **No exceptions**.
- Attendance at all awards sessions is mandatory for recognition.

Chapter Entry Limits by Event Type - Updated for 2026

- **Prepared Events (20-page):** Maximum of 2 teams per event per chapter
- **Pitch Deck Events (20-slide):** 1 team per event via December online qualifier
- **Sales & Consulting Events:** Up to 3 members per event
- **Series Events (Role Plays):** Up to 3 entries per event
- **Principles Events:** Maximum of 4 members; must be first-year DECA members – no exceptions

Preliminary Qualification for 20-slide Pitch Decks - New for 2025-2026

Each chapter may register one team per event in the five 20-slide Pitch Deck categories:

- Integrated Marketing Campaign (Event, Product, Service)
- Innovation Plan
- Start-up Business Plan

Competition components to be uploaded include:

- Statement of Assurances
- Slide deck
- Video presentation

Note: No test component in this round.

Timeline:

- **Dec 12-13:** Register teams in DLG
- **Dec 15-16:** Upload materials
- **Dec 18-Jan 10:** Judges will score events through DLG system
- **By Jan 12th:** Jean will review slide decks for penalty points and provide sheets to advisors
- **Jan 14, 2026:** Up to 18 qualifying teams per event announced via email

Note: Teams may revise slide decks and address penalty points before state submission.

Judge Procurement - New for 2026

- **Each chapter is responsible for securing at least two judges** for the conference. Larger chapters are encouraged to recruit additional judges.
- Sample email templates and a registration link will be provided to assist with outreach. Please ask the judges to enter your school when asked.
- A list of confirmed judges will be available to help you track and follow up as needed.

Special Needs & Meal Requests

- Please indicate any special accommodations or vegetarian meal requests during registration. These meals come at a significantly higher cost, so only request them if truly necessary.
- Meal requests must be submitted with the registration through DLG.
- Although IL DECA CDC often falls during Lent, a special dispensation allows meat to be served at the Friday banquet.
- A meal ticket for the alternative meal will be included in the registration packet and must be presented at the banquet.

Advisors' Meetings

- **Thursday, 3:45 PM (Midway Room):** Mandatory meeting for all advisors. Plan to complete your registration on time so that you are ready to attend the meeting. This meeting will cover any program changes and other important information you will need for the conference.
- **Post-Grand Awards:** An advisor from each chapter must attend this meeting—especially if students placed in the Top 10. Students who qualify in multiple events must choose one for ICDC. Advisors must know their students' choices before the Grand Awards Session to determine if 5th–12th place finishers can advance.
- **After the meeting,** advisors may pick up their chapter's envelope(s), which will include judges' role-play evaluation sheets, as well as placement and score sheets for both competency-based and prepared events. Chapters wishing to use chapter medallions can also pick them up at this time.

Substitutions & Changes

- After online registration is submitted, changes must be emailed to admin@ildeca.org
- Changes are not guaranteed, but should be submitted as soon as possible.

Important Links

- Explore these exciting online competitive events! You'll find full guidelines, including start and end dates, on the websites below. Students may enter one or more online events. Top-performing teams in both events may qualify to compete at the International Career Development Conference (ICDC).
 - Stock Market Game: deca.org/smg
 - Virtual Business Challenge:
<https://www.knowledgematters.com/high-school/competitions/deca/>
- National DECA Scholarships: deca.org/scholarships

ICDC Pre-Planning:

- Get a firm commitment from students planning to attend ICDC before State.
- ICDC registration and hotel forms are due by March 10, 2026 (3 days after IL CDC)
- If a student qualifies in multiple events, advisors must know which event the student will compete in at ICDC **before the March 7 Advisor Meeting**. Failure to provide this information at the meeting may jeopardize the student's eligibility to attend ICDC.

ICDC Eligibility and Preparation

- Illinois DECA will send:
 - **Five (5)** top students per competency-based event
 - Four (4) top students per prepared event
- ICDC will be held **April 25–28, 2026, in Atlanta, GA**.
- Final commitment decisions must be made by **March 10, 2026**.
- Event preference for multi-event qualifiers and confirmation of attendance must be established during the Advisor Meeting following the Grand Awards session.

International Conference (ICDC) Attendance

- Students qualify through state events or online competition.
- Event participation limits apply at the international level.
- While students may compete in multiple events at the state level, they may only enter one individual or team event at the international level. If a student qualifies in more than one event at state, they must choose one for ICDC.

Additional Options to attend ICDC

If you have a student who did not win an event but you believe is deserving of attending ICDC as a Voting Delegate or Academy attendee, you must request special permission in

writing by emailing Kendra Lee at admin@ildeca.org. Please note that attendance is extremely limited this year.

Be sure the student understands this is a **two-day commitment**, and they are expected to attend **all required sessions**. Voting Delegates, in particular, must be available for all interview sessions and the final voting session.

Voting Delegates - Serving as a Voting Delegate at DECA ICDC is an important responsibility. Delegates help shape the future of DECA by electing the next team of student leaders. They will attend speeches, participate in candidate interviews, and vote during the final session. Voting Delegates are expected to represent Illinois DECA with professionalism throughout all business and election activities.

The academies include:

- **Ignite** - [Ultimate Chapter Member](#) - Ignite your DECA journey! Discover how to unlock your leadership potential and take your DECA experience to the next level. Now's your time to shine!
- **Elevate** - [Ultimate Chapter Leader](#) - Elevate your DECA experience by becoming a chapter leader. Discover your leadership style and learn how to lead your chapter to new heights. Now's your time to step up!
- **Aspire** - [Ultimate Graduate](#) - As you prepare to graduate, learn how to use your DECA experience to stand out in college, interviews, and internships. Get on the fast track to success!
- **Thrive** - [Ultimate Chapter](#) - Now it's time to thrive with other high-performing chapters and continue to develop your toolbox of collaboration, communications, critical thinking and creativity skills. Eligibility to attend Thrive is based on achievement in DECA's Chapter Campaigns.

Final Reminders

- Read and follow all directions provided in registration emails.
- Submit all required forms and payments by posted deadlines.
- Early and accurate registration ensures an optimal conference experience and eligibility.

Additional Notes:

- Students with a career goal or training experience related to a specific Individual Series Event (ISE) or Management Team Decision Making Event (MTDM) may compete in that event.
- If a team member drops from a MTDM event after registration, the remaining student may compete individually in another event within the same cluster only.

State & International Events & Special Projects Acronyms

COMPETENCY BASED SERIES EVENTS - COMPOSED OF INDIVIDUALS ONLY			
Accounting Application Series	ACT	Hotel & Lodging Management Series	HLM
Apparel & Accessories Marketing Series	AAM	Human Resources Management	HRM
Automotive Services Marketing Series	ASM	Marketing Communication Series	MCS
Business Finance Services	BFS	Quick Serve Restaurant Series	QSRM
Business Services Marketing Series	BSM	Restaurant & Food Service Mgmt. Series	RFSM
Entrepreneurship Series	ENT	Retail Merchandising Series	RMS
Food Marketing Series	FMS	Sports & Entertainment Mktg. Series	SEM
PRINCIPLES OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION - FIRST YEAR DECA MEMBERS ONLY			
Principles of Business Mgmt. & Administration	PBM	Principles of Hospitality & Tourism	PHT
Principles of Finance	PFN	Principles of Marketing	PMK
Principles of Entrepreneurship	PEN		
PERSONAL FINANCIAL LITERACY - CONSISTS OF INDIVIDUALS ONLY			
			PFL
TEAM DECISION MAKING EVENTS - COMPRISED OF 2 TEAM MEMBERS			
Business Law & Ethics Team Decision	BLTDM	Hospitality Services Team Decision	HTDM
Buying & Merchandising Team Decision	BTDM	Marketing Management Team Decision	MTDM
Entrepreneurship Team Decision	ETDM	Sports & Entertainment Team Decision	STDM
Financial Services Team Decision	FTDM	Travel & Tourism Team Decision	TTDM
BUSINESS OPERATIONS RESEARCH - PREPARED - COMPRISED OF 1 TO 3 TEAM MEMBERS			
Business Services Operations	BOR		
Buying & Merchandising Operations Research	BMOR	Hospitality & Tourism Operations	HTOR
Finance Operations Research	FOR	Sports & Entertainment Marketing Operation	SEOR
PROJECT MANAGEMENT EVENTS - PREPARED - COMPRISED OF 1 TO 3 CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES			
Business Solutions Project	PMBS	Community Giving Project	PMCG
Career Development Project	PMCD	Financial Literacy Project	PMFL
Community Awareness Project	PMCA	Sales Project	PMSP
INTEGRATED MARKETING CAMPAIGN EVENTS - PREPARED - COMPRISED OF 1 - 3 MEMBERS			
Integrated Marketing Campaign - Event	IMCE		
Integrated Marketing Campaign - Product	IMCP	Integrated Marketing Campaign - Service	IMCS
ENTREPRENEURSHIP EVENTS - PREPARED - COMPRISED OF 1 - 3 MEMBERS			
Innovation Plan	EIP	International Business Plan	IBP
Start-up Business Plan	ESB	Business Growth Plan	EBG
Independent Business Plan	EIB	Franchise Business Plan	EFB
PROFESSIONAL SELLING AND CONSULTING EVENTS - CONSISTS OF INDIVIDUALS ONLY			
Financial Consulting	FCE		
Hospitality & Tourism Professional Selling	HTPS	Professional Selling	PSE
ONLINE EVENTS - COMPRISED OF 1 - 3 MEMBERS			
Stock Market Game	SMG	Virtual Business Challenge Personal Finance	VBCPF

Virtual Business Challenge Accounting	VBCAC	Virtual Business Challenge Restaurant	VBCRS
Virtual Business Challenge Fashion	VBCFA	Virtual Business Challenge Retail	VBCRT
Virtual Business Challenge Hotel Mgmt..	VBCHM	Virtual Business Challenge Sports	VBCSP

INTERNATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE (ICDC)

ICDC 2026 – Important Details

This year, the International Career Development Conference (ICDC) will be held **Saturday, April 25 – Tuesday, April 28, 2026**, in **Atlanta, Georgia**. Please note that the conference concludes at **11:00 PM on Tuesday**, so **travel home will take place on Wednesday, April 29, 2026**. Everyone must stay at least 4 nights.

More than **22,000 DECA members** from around the world are expected to attend this premier leadership and competition event.

Eligibility Requirements for Student Attendance

Students may attend ICDC if they meet one of the following criteria:

- **Qualified by placing as a top winner** in their competitive event at the Illinois DECA State CDC.
- **Invited by National DECA** as a top 20 finalist in an online event (e.g., Virtual Business Challenge or Stock Market Game).
- **Selected as a Voting Delegate** with special permission.
- **Approved to attend** one of DECA's special academies, such as the School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Academy or Aspire.

Registration, Meetings & Hotel Information

- As soon as DECA provides official notification of the registration fee and hotel assignment, the information will be posted on the Illinois DECA website. It will also be included in the **ICDC Fact Sheet**, distributed at the Advisor meeting held immediately following the Grand Awards Ceremony at the Illinois DECA CDC and in the **ICDC Conference Packet for Illinois DECA**, available on the DECA Doc.
- All ICDC conference registration for Illinois Advisors will take place online via the Illinois DECA website.
- If a student's name is misspelled on the membership roster, please contact membership@deca.org .

- Payment Instructions
 - a. Both the conference registration fee and hotel payment should be combined into one check made payable to: Distributive Education Clubs of Illinois.
 - b. Please send the check directly to Illinois DECA 2460 Dundee Road, Box 1001, Northbrook, IL 60065
 - c. Note: The hotel will not accept individual school payments. All payments must be processed through Illinois DECA.
- Room Sharing
 - Schools wishing to share rooms with another chapter must submit a signed approval form from their school administration. Room sharing will not be permitted without this documentation.

REGIONAL DECA ADVISOR MEETINGS

Regional Meetings

Each Region typically holds meetings throughout the school year, often on a monthly basis. Regular attendance at these meetings is expected, especially for new Advisors, as they provide valuable support, information, and opportunities for collaboration.

A key focus of these meetings is the planning and coordination of the Regional Competition, usually held in late January or early February. These gatherings also serve as an excellent opportunity for networking and for Advisors—particularly those with fewer than three years of experience—to ask questions, share ideas, and address any concerns.

Please note: **Students are not permitted to attend Regional meetings** unless they have received explicit permission from the Regional President.

CODE OF CONDUCT, DRESS FORM, AND EMERGENCY FORM

This form can be found at <http://www.ildeca.org>. Once you complete the form, keep the form for the other conferences related to Illinois DECA. If you attend CRLC and ICDC a separate form is required. These forms are kept by the Advisor and brought to each conference. Consider having your members fill it out at the beginning of the year.

VERIFICATION OF FORMS

You will sign a verification form during all competitive events registrations confirming that you have all the required paperwork for each of the students you bring to any conference.

ILLINOIS FOUNDATION OF MARKETING EDUCATION (IFME)

Mission Statement

Business and marketing professionals and educators supporting Illinois DECA through scholarships, leadership, and educational opportunities to enhance and promote marketing education across the state.

About the Illinois Foundation for Marketing Education (IFME)

Established in 1959, the Illinois Foundation for Marketing Education (IFME) is a non-profit organization created by business professionals, educators, and state staff dedicated to advancing marketing education in Illinois. The Foundation works closely with Illinois DECA to provide meaningful support for students and educators through scholarships, leadership development, and real-world learning experiences.

If you know of a business professional in your community who may be interested in supporting the Foundation, please direct them to the IFME link on our website: ildeca.org.

Advisor Involvement

Each DECA area is encouraged to send one Advisor representative to attend IFME meetings as a non-voting member. This representative is responsible for sharing important updates, deadlines, and opportunities with their area, including upcoming events and scholarship information.

IFME conducts at least two major fundraising initiatives annually. The funds raised directly impact the number of scholarships awarded to deserving DECA members each year. Advisors are encouraged to engage their students in supporting these initiatives and to promote IFME-sponsored activities.

IFME Partnership and Activities

The Foundation is composed of business professionals and partners who work in collaboration with Illinois DECA to support students and elevate the quality of marketing education throughout the state.

Key IFME Activities Include:

- Interviewing state officer candidates for the Fall Leadership Conference
- Judging at the Illinois DECA Chartered Career Development Conference (CDC) in March
- Organizing and promoting the Sports Marketing Seminar in partnership with the Chicago Bulls
- Hosting fundraising events to support IFME initiatives
- Awarding scholarships and recognition to outstanding Illinois DECA members
- Supporting Illinois DECA events, including participation at the CDC
- Providing educational experiences through business partnerships
- Offering a **Speaker's Bureau** to connect students with real-world industry insights in the classroom

By partnering with IFME, educators, students, and business leaders work together to ensure Illinois DECA continues to thrive as a leader in career and technical student organization excellence.

FINANCING CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

The amount of funding needed by any Illinois DECA (DECI) chapter will vary based on the planned activities for the year. This amount is influenced by member interests, the number and type of conferences attended, and the overall participation and cooperation of students in planning and executing chapter projects.

A best practice is for Advisors to have students contribute toward the cost of conferences and activities. When students are financially invested, they are more likely to value the experience and commit fully—it's not just a "free ride." To reinforce this responsibility, it is highly recommended that Advisors have a signed agreement from both the student and their parent/guardian. This agreement should state that if the student withdraws after

committing to an event, they are still responsible for their share of the costs. Most conferences have a no-refund policy after a certain date, and chapters are still required to pay for all registered participants.

Chapters typically raise funds through a combination of the following methods:

1. Dues

Chapter Dues

Local dues should be set at a level that covers basic chapter operating costs while remaining accessible to all interested students. Be sure to follow your school's policy regarding club dues.

Regional Dues

Each region sets its own dues to help cover the costs of regional competitions and activities.

State & National Dues

State DECA dues are \$9 per member, and National DECA dues are \$8 per member.

2. Savings Plans (Fundraising Accounts)

Fundraising can act as a savings plan, allowing students to apply earned funds toward their costs for conferences or chapter events. Requiring financial contribution—through payment or fundraising—reduces last-minute cancellations and boosts accountability.

3. Special Activities

Certain events may require additional funding beyond what dues or fundraisers cover. Examples include sending delegates to the State Career Development Conference or hosting special events like employer-employee banquets. In these cases, chapters may organize special projects such as:

- Fashion shows
- Post-game dances
- Car washes
- Operating the school store
- Providing services (e.g., checkroom or concession stand)

These projects can also serve as valuable, real-world learning experiences when aligned with the Marketing Education curriculum. For example:

- **Economics of Distribution:** Plan and analyze profits from a sales activity.
- **Marketing:** Identify potential markets and select appropriate sales projects.
- **Sales & Promotion:** Organize sales teams and promotional strategies as classroom applications.

NEW CHAPTER ADVISOR RECRUITMENT

If you know of a business teacher who might be interested in starting a new DECA chapter—or restarting an inactive one—please contact Karen Bear. We're here to help them through the process.

Growing and maintaining our membership is critical. The number of Illinois competitors who advance to ICDC is based on the previous year's membership totals, as determined by National DECA.

Membership also affects how many spots Illinois receives for Voting Delegates and the Academies. Your help in identifying potential new chapters helps ensure these opportunities remain available to our students.

COMPETITIVE EVENTS TIPS

Advisor Resources and Tips for DECA Preparation

Each year during the **Professional Development** session at the **Fall Leadership Conference (FLC)**, valuable tips are shared, and advisors often exchange helpful insights—time and space permitting.

Key Resources:

- [DECA Guide 2025–2026](#) (by DECA Inc.):
 - Also available on the national DECA website and the DECA Doc.

- Turn to **page 39** for detailed information about **Performance Indicators** (criteria used by judges).
- On **page 62**, you'll find information about **penalty points** for prepared events.
- The guide includes **samples of competency-based and prepared events**, making it an essential resource for both new and experienced advisors.
- **Sample Exam Questions & Role Plays:**
 Visit:
<https://www.deca.org/high-school-programs/high-school-competitive-events/>
 - Includes **sample multiple-choice exam questions** and a **sample event role play**.

Prepared Events Guidelines

Students interested in the prepared events must carefully follow all event-specific guidelines outlined in the DECA Guide.

Important: Students may not compete in only a prepared event at IL DECA CDC—they must also participate in a competency-based event.

Additional Support for New Advisors:

- Training and support will be provided monthly in DECA University virtual meetings. Contact Steve Haderlein (shaderlein@elmhurst205.org) for additional information.
- Consider purchasing **past exams, role plays, and prepared event winners** to better understand what successful student work looks like. DECA+ is also very useful. These materials are available at: www.shopdeca.org
- Practice is key—encourage your students to **role-play with you, their parents, or local business professionals** to improve performance and build confidence.
- Explore deca.org/classroom for more training and resources.
- The **Illinois Foundation for Marketing Education (IFME)** is also a great resource. You're welcome to invite a **Foundation member to help judge student presentations** during classroom sessions or DECA meetings.

Presentation Tips for Prepared and Role-Play Events

To help students succeed in their events, please encourage the following best practices:

- **Prepared Events:** Have your student(s) rehearse their presentation in front of parents, family members, and peers to build confidence and receive feedback.
- **Team Events:** Ensure that **each team member actively participates** and presents a portion of the content.
- **All Events:** Students should **introduce themselves to the judge with a firm handshake** and maintain a professional demeanor throughout the presentation.

When speaking to the judge, students should present themselves with **confidence and assurance**, clearly aligning their responses with the expectations of the role-play scenario.

At the conclusion of the presentation, when the judge asks follow-up questions, students should **pause briefly to consider their response** and deliver a thoughtful, well-reasoned answer.

HOW TO START AND ORGANIZE A NEW CHAPTER

The most important factor in successfully organizing a DECA chapter is your commitment as an Advisor. Your dedication is key to creating a meaningful and lasting experience for students. DECA's national organization ensures that all competitive events align with National Curriculum Standards, providing a strong academic foundation.

An essential next step is to help your school administrators understand that DECA is more than a club—it is a powerful learning experience. Each year, following the International Career Development Conference (ICDC), Illinois DECA receives national survey results detailing how our students performed in each event category compared to the national average. In recent years, Illinois students have consistently met or exceeded national performance benchmarks.

Through DECA, students gain valuable knowledge in business, marketing, distribution, entrepreneurship, advertising, sales, and more. Beyond academics, they develop critical teamwork and leadership skills. DECA members also benefit from unique opportunities for travel and social engagement.

To build support for your chapter, consider involving administrators and school counselors by inviting them to serve as judges at your Area Competition or at the Illinois DECA Career Development Conference (CDC) in Rosemont, IL. This firsthand experience is one of the most effective ways to demonstrate DECA's impact on student learning and its alignment with academic standards. You can also strengthen community ties by inviting local business leaders to judge at area or state-level events.

New DECA chapters typically begin with as few as 10 members, including the Advisor. However, National DECA does allow new chapters to start with fewer than 10 members. After the second year, chapters with fewer than 10 members must request special permission to remain active.

Students are more likely to engage with DECA if they are interested in business careers and/or are enrolled in a business course during the current school year. If your chapter operates as a school club, membership can be open to any interested student, regardless of course enrollment.

For more information on starting a new chapter, visit deca.org/start

Contacts

Karen Bear	bearkaren@gmail.com
Kendra Lee	lee@timothychristian.org
Alternative	admin@ildeca.org

Please let us know if you have a problem or just a question. The Chapter Advisors in your specific Region will also be willing to help answer your questions; you'll find them a great support group. Make a point to attend your Regional meetings to learn what's happening and to meet your fellow Advisors.