

# **71<sup>st</sup> Annual Colorado Science & Engineering Fair (CSEF)**

## **2026 Grand Awards Judging Guide**



**Lory Student Center  
Colorado State University - Fort Collins**

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## CSEF Divisions:

Projects may be from any field of science, engineering, mathematics, or computer science. The projects must represent the work of a single student or a team of 2-3 students. For competition, projects will be grouped into the following Divisions by grade level:

- **Junior Division** (Grades 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>)
- **Senior Division** (Grades 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>)

Only the **Senior Division** students are eligible to participate in the Regeneron International Science & Engineering Fair (ISEF).

## CSEF Categories:

Finalists from the 13 Colorado Regional Science Fairs are offered 12 categories to compete in at the CSEF. These categories are offered in both the Junior and Senior Divisions. The CSEF does not offer the same number of categories as the Regeneron ISEF (22), but the CSEF Board of Directors has determined that the CSEF will use only the following 12 categories for judging.

The category in which an exhibit is entered is primarily the choice of the student or team, with input from their sponsor or Regional Fair Director. Prior to the CSEF, the Grand Awards Judging Captains may suggest a project be re-categorized per the procedure outlined in the **CSEF Policy Regarding Category Changes** (see page 5). Students may enter a project into any one of the following 12 categories:

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The **Animal Sciences** category includes studies related to all aspects of non-human animals (including insects), animal life, animal lifecycles, animal health and medicine, animal behavior, and animal interactions with one another or their environment.

The **Behavioral & Social Sciences** category includes studies related to the thought processes and behavior of humans in their interactions with the environment as studied through observational and experimental methods.

The **Biomedical & Health Sciences** category includes studies that relate to human health, such as the diagnosis, treatment, prevention or epidemiology of diseases and other damage to the human body or mental systems as well as internal or external impacting factors (feedback mechanisms, stress, environment). It can also include studies that relate to the improvement of human health and longevity by translating novel discoveries in the biomedical sciences into effective activities and tools for clinical and public health use.

The **Chemistry** category includes studies that relate to the science of the composition, structure, properties and reactions of matter not involving biochemical systems. It can also include studies that relate to the integration of various material forms in systems, devices and components that rely on their unique and specific properties. This involves their synthesis and processing in the form of nanoparticles, nanofibers, and nanolayered structures or measurements of various properties and characteristics of the structure across length scales, in addition to multi-scale modeling and computations for process-structure and structure-property correlations.

The **Earth & Environmental Sciences** category includes studies that relate to Earth systems and their evolution along with the environment and its effect on organisms and/or systems.

The **Energy** category includes studies and processes that relate to the production and/or storage of energy.

The [Engineering](#) category includes studies that relate to the science and engineering involving the movement and stability of structures. It can also include studies that relate to the use of machine intelligence to reduce the reliance on human intervention. It can also include the studies that relate to electrical systems in which information is conveyed via signals and waveforms for purposes of enhancing communications, control and/or sensing.

The [Environmental Engineering](#) category includes studies that relate to the engineering or development of processes and infrastructure involved in solving environmental problems in the supply of water, the disposal of wastewater or the control of pollution.

The [Mathematics & Computer Sciences](#) category includes studies that relate to the measurement properties and relationship of quantities and sets, using numbers and symbols as well as the deductive study of numbers, geometry and various abstract constructs or structures. It also includes studies that relate to the discipline and techniques of computer science and mathematics as they relate to biological systems and those related to the development of software, information processes or methodologies to demonstrate, analyze or control a process or solution.

The [Micro & Molecular Biology](#) category includes studies that are related to micro-organisms, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, prokaryote, and simple eukaryotes as well as antimicrobial and antibiotic substances. It can also include studies related to the understanding of life and cellular processes at the molecular level, such as the structure, function, intracellular pathways and formation of cells.

The [Physics & Astronomy](#) category includes studies that relate to the science of matter and energy and the interactions between the two as well as the study of anything in the universe beyond the Earth.

The [Plant Sciences](#) category includes studies that relate to plants and how they live, including structure, physiology, development and classification.

[Team Projects:](#) Studies conducted by two or three students in any discipline.

## CSEF Procedure for Category Changes:

The purpose of this policy is to facilitate proper categorization of projects entered into the CSEF and to allow for a process to move projects between categories, if required.

1. The category descriptions used by the Regeneron ISEF will be used by the CSEF. If CSEF-designated categories do not coincide exactly with those of the Regeneron ISEF, the appropriate combined descriptions will apply.
2. The CSEF Director will review the Regeneron ISEF descriptions annually when the new *International Rules for Pre-college Science Research: Guidelines for Science and Engineering Fairs* is available to ensure the descriptions used by the CSEF are in alignment. The Category/Division Policy will be updated as needed to incorporate any changes made by the Society for Science & the Public to their categories.
3. The CSEF Director will communicate to the Regional Fair Directors any changes to the CSEF categories. This information will also be communicated to the Judging Team Captains/Assistant Captains via the Grand Awards Judging Coordinator.
4. All project abstracts will be posted on the CSEF website at <https://csef.natsci.colostate.edu/grand-award-judges/> by **March 9<sup>th</sup>**. Should the category of a project come into question by a **Judging Team Captain** or by referral from CSEF personnel, the appropriate **Judging Captains** (current Category Captain and proposed Category Captain) will confirm the proposed move by **March 16<sup>th</sup>**. **March 16<sup>th</sup> is the FINAL day to recommend project moves.** ONLY the **Judging Team Captains** may affect movement of a project to another category. Captains & Assistant Captains may discuss possible moves between each other. Discipline specific scientists may be consulted if deemed necessary by the **Judging Team Captains**. All potential changes in categorization will be communicated to the Grand Awards Judging Coordinator, and the CSEF Director.
5. Once a Judging Team Captain has identified a project for a possible move, they must contact the “move to” category judging captain via email. All correspondence related to project moves must have a cc to Erin Comstock (Grand Awards Judging Coordinator) at ([grandawards-coordinator@csef-colo.org](mailto:grandawards-coordinator@csef-colo.org)) and Courtney Gooding (CSEF Director) ([director@csef-colo.org](mailto:director@csef-colo.org)) to ensure all proposed project moves are coordinated effectively.
6. Once the “move to” category judging captain has approved the move, the CSEF Director will communicate the re-categorization to the appropriate Regional Fair Director, adult sponsor and student researcher for approval.
7. All category change recommendations must be approved by the student researcher and he/she has the right to decline the recommended move. In these cases, the project will stay in the original category.
8. Category placement is considered final on **March 20<sup>th</sup>**.

## **CSEF Student Project Rules**

**Pre-Judging Activities:** Each project entered into the CSEF must conform to the CSEF rules, which includes all the rules of the Regeneron ISEF as described in the *International Rules for Pre-college Science Research: Guidelines for Science and Engineering Fairs* with a few modifications. The most significant in terms of judging is that the CSEF does not offer as many Categories as the Regeneron ISEF, and more grades are eligible to participate. The CSEF accepts projects from participants in grades 6 - 12. All student finalists at the CSEF are top award winners from the 13 affiliated Regional Science Fairs in Colorado (<https://csef.natsci.colostate.edu/regional-science-fairs/>).

There are very stringent rules, documentation, and adult/scientific supervision requirements for **ALL** projects, but additional review is done of those projects using human subjects, non-human vertebrate animals, pathogenic agents, controlled substances, recombinant DNA, human and animal tissue and hazardous substances or devices.

As a CSEF Grand Awards Judge, it is **NOT** your responsibility to ensure that the students have met all of the Regeneron ISEF or CSEF rules and requirements. This is the role of the two CSEF committees that review the project paperwork prior to the CSEF and review the exhibits/displays once they have arrived onsite at the CSEF. If a project is being presented at the CSEF, the student has met ISEF and CSEF rules and requirements.

The information below is provided to give you a basic understanding of the roles of the Scientific Review Committee and the Display & Safety Committee:

**Scientific Review Committee (SRC):** The SRC at the regional or local/school science fair level will review projects that involve human subjects, vertebrate animals, pathogenic agents and/or tissues prior to experimentation. Then **all** projects are reviewed by the regional science fair SRC prior to competition to make sure they comply with all of the rules. Then those projects that move on to the CSEF are reviewed by the CSEF SRC prior to competition and any project without the required signatures and/or forms are not approved to be exhibited at the CSEF.

**Display & Safety Committee (D&S):** At the CSEF, the Display & Safety Inspectors along with the CSEF SRC (as needed) review **all** projects for compliance with the Regeneron ISEF rules regarding displays and safety. During the set-up time, students must stay with their project until the D&S review is completed. Exhibits not conforming must be corrected and not allowed items removed before judging begins.

All students sign the following ethics statement:

Student researchers are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Scientific fraud and misconduct are not condoned at any level of research or competition. Such practices include but are not limited to plagiarism, forgery, use or presentation of other researcher's work as one's own, and fabrication of data. Fraudulent projects will fail to qualify for competition in affiliated fairs and ISEF.

Decisions of the SRC and the D&S Inspectors and the CSEF Board of Directors are final. However, if during judging, you have any concerns or questions regarding a particular project's conformance to the Regeneron ISEF/CSEF rules or ethics statement, please notify the Grand Awards Judging Coordinator immediately.

**Students' Research Notebook & ISEF/CSEF Forms:** All projects will have on display for judging, a Research Notebook. This notebook may contain some or all of the following forms, depending on the type of project:

- Signed Original CSEF Abstract - required for all projects
- Checklist for Adult Sponsors Form (1) - required for all projects
- Student Checklist Form (1A) - required for all projects
- Research Plan Attachment - required for all projects
- Approval Form (1B) - required for all projects
- Regulated Research Institutional/Industrial Setting Form (1C) - required for projects done at a research institution or industrial setting
- Qualified Scientist/Mentor Form (2) - may be required for certain type of projects
- Risk Assessment Form (3) - required for all projects working with hazardous chemicals, devices or activities
- Human Subjects Form (4) - required for most projects using human subjects
- Informed Consent Form - required for most projects using human subjects, but at the discretion of the local/school IRB
- Non-Human Vertebrate Animal Form (5A/5B) - required for most projects using vertebrate animals
- Potentially Hazardous Biological Agents Form (6A) - required for most projects using hazardous biological agents
- Human & Vertebrate Animal Tissue Form (6B) - required for most projects using tissue
- Continuation Project Form (7) - required for all projects that are a continuation of previous student work

For more information on these forms and the review process, please visit the CSEF web site at [https://csef.natsci.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ISEF\\_Forms.pdf](https://csef.natsci.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ISEF_Forms.pdf). Because of the time constraints on the day of judging, knowing the information these forms can give you beforehand will assist you in the judging process of the projects in your category. Judges shall **NOT** write in or remove, for any reason, a student's research notebook or project display.

**CSEF Animal Research Guidelines:** The legitimate use of animals in science fair research projects presupposes two postulates: first, the use of animals for learning is morally acceptable; and second, that humans have a responsibility to grant the animals used with every humane consideration for their comfort and well-being. The proper care and use of animals is a primary concern of the CSEF and the ISEF.

The use of Protista and other invertebrates is strongly encouraged for most research that would normally involve animals. Their wide variety and the feasibility of using larger numbers than is usually possible with vertebrates make them especially suitable. This is not to say that the use of vertebrate animals should be prohibited. Certain forms of investigation can only be done with vertebrates. Under proper supervision (which the CSEF and ISEF rules require), students should be permitted to use vertebrates in research.

Research must be conducted with a respect for life and an appreciation of humane considerations that must be afforded all animals. Surgical procedures in vertebrate animals will only be done within academic, hospital, clinical or research facilities to ensure proper equipment and supervision. This is intended specifically, to prohibit such procedures at home.



To provide humane treatment of animals, an animal care supervisor who is knowledgeable in the proper care and handling of the animals in question must assume primary responsibility for the conditions under which the animals are maintained. Vertebrate Animal Forms must accompany the CSEF registration, verifying that these procedures have been followed.

**Parents and Adult Sponsors:** Parents, mentors and adult sponsors are coaches and supervisors for the duration of the students' project. They are to teach the "how-to" and provide safety supervision, but the student must do the work. The Regeneron ISEF and CSEF forms provide information on mentors or designated supervisors the student may have been working with. All students are required to have an Adult Sponsor for their project, but not all students will work with a mentor or designated supervisor. There are also times when they will consult with a professional, but that person does not provide ongoing mentorship.

If you are interested in more detailed information about the student rules, you may review or download copies of the student forms, rules and guidelines at the CSEF website: <https://csef.natsci.colostate.edu/students/>.

### **Grand Awards Judges' Conflict of Interest Policy:**

As a Grand Awards Judge, when you submit your registration, either online or by mail, you agree to the following policy:

I hereby acknowledge that by submitting this registration, I agree to serve as a Grand Awards Judge for the 2026 Colorado Science & Engineering Fair (CSEF). I agree to act in a positive and ethical manner in which each student encountered is treated fairly and respectfully. I agree to disclose all conflicts, potential conflicts and perceived conflicts of interest resulting from direct competitive, collaborative or any other relationships with any of the students and to recuse myself from judging in such circumstances. Some examples of a conflict of interest are (but not limited to):

- mentoring a student and then judging the student's project;
- judging a project at a school/district science fair or at one of the Colorado Regional Science Fairs (<https://csef.natsci.colostate.edu/regional-science-fairs/>) and judging the same project at the CSEF;
- being a captain/judge in the same category and division you were in at a school, district, or regional science fair; or
- being a sponsor, teacher, or relative to a student that you would be judging.

I agree to notify CSEF's Grand Awards Judging Coordinator **immediately**, if I become aware of any circumstances that would potentially compromise my ability to attend the event or evaluate finalists' projects. (If you have **any** question regarding this Conflict of Interest Policy, please contact Erin Comstock at [grandawards-coordinator@csef-colo.org](mailto:grandawards-coordinator@csef-colo.org)).



## Grand Awards Judging Guidelines/Criteria:

These guidelines and criteria align with the Regeneron ISEF. The guidelines use different criteria for science and engineering, mathematics and computer science projects. As shown below, both criteria have five sections as well as scoring for each section. Each section includes key items to consider for evaluation, both before and after the interview. Students are encouraged to design their posters in a clear and informative manner to allow pre-interview evaluation and to enable the interview to become an in-depth discussion. Judges should examine the student's research notebook and, if present, any special forms such as Form 1C (Regulated Research Institution/Industrial Setting), Form 2 (Qualified Scientist/Mentor) and/or Form 3 (Continuation/Research Progression Projects). ***Considerable emphasis is placed on two areas: Creativity and Presentation, especially the interview section and are discussed below:***

**Creativity:** A creative project demonstrates imagination and inventiveness. Such projects often offer a different perspective that opens up new possibilities or new alternatives. Judges should place emphasis on research outcomes in evaluating creativity.

**Presentation & Interview:** The interview provides the opportunity to interact with the finalists and evaluate their understanding of the project's basic science, interpretation, and the limitations of the results and conclusions.

- If the project was done at a research or industrial facility, the judge should determine the degree of independence of the finalist in conducting the project, which is documented on **Form 1C** and **Form 2**.
- If the project was completed at home or in a school, the judge should determine if the finalist received any mentoring or professional guidance.
- If the project is a multi-year effort, the interview should focus **ONLY** on the current year's work. Judges should review the project's abstract and **Form 7** to clarify what was completed for this year's science fair.
- Please note that both team and individual projects are judged together, and projects should be judged only on the basis of their quality. However, all team members should demonstrate significant contributions to the project and an understanding of the project.
- If for some reason, a team member is unable to attend the CSEF due to unforeseen circumstances, please do your best to take that into consideration and not penalize them for it.

## Judging Criteria for Science Projects:

1. **Research Question (10 points):** clear and focused purpose, identifies contribution to field of study, and testable using scientific methodology
2. **Design & Methodology (15 points):** well-designed plan and data collection methods and variables and controls defined, appropriate and complete
3. **Execution - Data Collection, Analysis & Interpretation (20 points):** systematic data collection and analysis, reproducibility of results, appropriate application of mathematical and statistical methods, sufficient data collected to support interpretation and conclusions
4. **Creativity (20 points):** project demonstrates significant creativity in one or more of the above criteria
5. **Presentation (35 total points):**
  - a. **Poster (10 points):** logical organization of material, clarity of graphics and legends, and supporting documentation displayed

- b. **Interview (25 points):** clear concise, thoughtful responses to questions, understanding of basic science relevant to project, understanding interpretation and limitations of results and conclusions, degree of independence in conducting project, recognition of potential impact in science, society and/or economics, quality of ideas for further research, and for team projects, contributions to the project and understanding of project by all members

#### **Judging Criteria for Engineering, Mathematics & Computer Science Projects:**

1. **Research Problem (10 points):** description of practical need or problem to be solved, definition of criteria for proposed solution, explanation of constraints
2. **Design & Methodology (15 points):** exploration of alternatives to answer need or problem, identification of a solution, development of a prototype/model
3. **Execution - Construction & Testing (20 points):** prototype demonstrates intended design criteria, prototype has been tested in multiple conditions/trials and prototype demonstrates skill and completeness
4. **Creativity (20 points):** project demonstrates significant creativity in one or more of the above criteria
5. **Presentation (35 total points):**
  - a. **Poster (10 points):** logical organization of material, clarity of graphics and legends, and supporting documentation displayed
  - b. **Interview (25 points):** clear concise, thoughtful responses to questions, understanding of basic science relevant to project, understanding interpretation and limitations of results and conclusions, degree of independence in conducting project, recognition of potential impact in science, society and/or economics, quality of ideas for further research, and for team projects, contributions to the project and understanding of project by all members

The above-mentioned criteria highlighted in blue shows the difference between the judging criteria for science projects and the engineering, mathematics and computer science projects.

**Rating Card:** Blank rating cards for each project will be provided to each judge. The same rating card will be used for individual and team projects and will have the correct weighting for each criteria pre-printed on the card. A sample rating card can be found on page 16 of this guidebook.

The “Judge’s Comment Card - STUDENT COPY” portion is reserved for Judge’s comments to the students. This portion of the form will provide judges with the additional mechanism beyond the interview to get their comments to the students. Each judge needs to take the time to give feedback to **every** project.

When you provide comments on the Judge’s Comment Card, please use the pre-printed name labels provided, or complete the student’s name, division, and exhibit number with your comments. Remember to keep your comments constructive and encouraging and do not give the students any information on the points or ratings you awarded. Also, please **DO NOT** give the comment cards directly to the students or leave them at the students’ displays. They will be distributed after judging has taken place. Please return **ALL** comment cards to the Grand Awards Judging Coordinator. The judging coordinator will separate and shred the rating cards from the comment cards and distribute them to the appropriate students and their projects.

## Judging Recommendations & Protocols:

- Students may have worked on a project for more than one year. However, for the purposes of judging, only research that has been conducted since the last CSEF is to be evaluated. Although previous work is important, it is not to be considered as part of this year's CSEF project. (Form 7 confirms and is used for continuation projects.)
- The detail and accuracy of their data and whether their procedures were used in the best possible manner is critical in judging of the project. Be careful not to include irrelevant and inappropriate criteria such as school size, access to well-equipped laboratories, student gender, race, physical disabilities, access to well-known mentors, etc. in your evaluation of the project. The project and individual or team's knowledge of the project must stand on its own merit.
- When research is conducted in an industrial or institutional setting, the student is required to include Form 1C with the project documentation. Judges should review in detail the supervisor's comments on this form when evaluating research conducted in such a setting.
- Look for evidence of laboratory, field, or theoretical work and not just the library research.
- Compare projects ONLY with those competing in the CSEF and not with projects seen in other competitions or scholastic events.
- Judges should keep in mind that the CSEF is not only a competition, but an educational and motivating experience for students. The high point of the CSEF for many students is the judging interviews. For this reason, judges should be encouraging when asking questions, offering suggestions, or giving constructive criticism. It is important for judges to consider all projects at the CSEF as important. Off-hand negative remarks or opinions about projects around the students at the CSEF may negatively affect students, so please keep all negative comments to the privacy of the judging room. All students competing at the CSEF have made it to this level through their Regional Science Fair competition and deserve encouragement for the effort they have made and the time they have spent on their projects.
- Please DO NOT use your cell phone (or any other electronic device) for a call or texting during judging interviews. If you are using a device to take notes, please let the student(s) know you are doing that. All phone calls/texts should be done outside of the judging area.
- **DO NOT** discuss the projects in hallways, restrooms, restaurants, CSU lobbies or elsewhere, as students or adult sponsors may overhear your comments. Please understand that all notes that are taken and discussions you have with fellow judges are considered confidential. All results of the judging process are considered confidential until they are announced at Friday night's Award Ceremony. If you have an opportunity to speak with any of the students you have judged after the judging has been completed, the conversations and notes of your team must still be considered confidential and not to be discussed with the students. However, it is totally acceptable for you to give your own personal encouragement and constructive feedback to a student or team, but not the information that was discussed with your category judging teams.
- No part of a student or team's display or notebook(s) may be removed by a judge from the project exhibit. In addition, judges are **NOT** to write on any display or in the notebooks.
- Judges shall NOT take pictures of any project exhibit or student.
- Even though the judging schedule is hectic, please make every effort to not rush a student or team through your interview.

## **CSEF Grand Awards Judging Process:**

As a Grand Awards Judge, you are expected to use the **Judging Evaluation Guidelines/Criteria**, specified herein in the selection process of awards.

A **Preliminary** Judging Team assignment list will be provided prior to the actual CSEF. You are assigned to a team based on the Judge's Information form you have submitted online at the CSEF web site. As more information is received regarding the number of projects in each category and division, and as judge cancellations, additions and/or substitutions occur, a **Final** Judging Team assignment list will be available during the Judge's Check-in.

Please make sure you have read and are familiar with all the materials on judging that are posted online on the Grand Awards Judging Information page. The judging of exhibits is the process of determining the merits of each exhibit as compared with other competitive exhibits in the respective category, or in the case of Best-of-CSEF, comparing all of the 1<sup>st</sup> place projects in their respective division. This process is suggested as it is not possible to set up specific, finite criteria for judging. Judging is done on a relative and not an absolute basis. In establishing a "frame of reference" for evaluating exhibits, bear in mind that these are middle and high school students and not PhD candidates, professional scientists or working as a professional. Consider the academic level of the student in math, science or other relevant subjects for the individual or team you are judging. Judges should not be concerned with minor errors in a project if the basic objectives and intent are clearly evident. While judging, the various elements and relative weights of the elements as shown on the rating card should be kept in mind. The **Judging Evaluation Guidelines/Criteria** are weights that have been adopted from the Regeneron ISEF.

**Judging Procedure:** The following procedure is a guide to assist you in judging. Each judge should make his/her judging appraisal first to establish the composite judgement of multiple judging teams in a category, some give and take of initial individual and team assessments must be expected. In discussing differences in selection, the basic merits of each exhibit must be the primary consideration.

The **Category Team Captain** is responsible for coordinating times for the team members to meet back for discussion; facilitating productive discussion and assuring that **ALL** judging team members' comments are considered equally in the decision making process; ensuring **ALL** judges understand the necessity for complete confidentiality of team discussions regarding all finalists' projects, both during and after the CSEF; making sure that **ALL** students' projects (individual and team) have been interviewed and evaluated at least three times; and that finalists' placements are provided to the Grand Awards Judging Coordinator by 5:00 p.m. If any unresolvable issues occur, please notify the judging coordinator immediately to assist with resolution.

**Judging Schedule:** Each judging team will be assigned a table for the Judges' Briefing, luncheon and judging process, which will afford opportunities to meet and establish and discuss general strategy and schedule for the team prior to entering the exhibit area. The LSC Theater is to be used for the judging teams to hold conferences throughout the day. To maintain confidentiality, do not use any other area in the LSC to discuss judging, including with CSEF officials.

After instructions from the Category Team Captain, you will place the pre-printed project ID labels provided for your assigned projects with the Student Name(s), Exhibit Number, and Exhibit Title on the Judges' Rating Cards. A supply of these cards will be available at Check-In at the LSC Theater.

At 12:00 noon, the students will be out of the exhibit area and judges will be allowed to enter and view the projects without the students present. Grand Award Judges are encouraged to view student's digital project materials in MySciFair PRIOR to arriving at the 2026 CSEF as there will only be 45 minutes for judges to view projects in the exhibit hall without students present.

The students will re-enter the exhibit area at 12:45 p.m. and will be at their exhibits for grand award interviews until 4:30 p.m. Interviews should be conducted by each judge individually, whenever possible.

**ALL** individuals and teams **MUST** be interviewed by at least three Grand Awards Judges (or all judges on the team if there are less than three total projects), and as many members of the judging team as possible should interview each individual or team project. Please give all projects equal time (10 minutes is recommended) and, in particular, do not abbreviate interviews for projects that seem less competitive. **Personal contact between students and judges is important, both for an objective and complete evaluation of the student or team's knowledge of the project and the student or team's learning experience.** This is an educational process as well as a competition. For each project interviewed, judges need to put a blue-dot sticker (provided by the judging coordinator) on the project's hang tag, located in front of the project.

The Judges' Rating Cards and method of rating are the personal and confidential information for each individual judge (see page 16 for an example of the Judges' Rating Card).

The Judges' Comment Card - STUDENT COPY (right side of Judges' Rating Card) is used to pass on constructive comments and suggestions to the students, and **MUST** be returned to the judging coordinator (not given directly to the student) for distribution to the students. For the students, feedback from the Judges is a **very important** part of the process of the CSEF competition. **ALL** Grand Awards Judges are responsible for making sure that each interview you have with a finalist receives comments from you. Your comments may provide a possible future direction of a project or areas of study that might be very helpful to the students.

As soon as individual judge's ratings are completed, exchange information with the team so that the order of placement of the exhibits can be established. The Category Team Captain is responsible for setting the judging and discussion schedule for the team members to meet the deadline of 5:00 p.m. for the selection of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places and Honorable Mention awards for each category and division.

- a. In the case of where multiple sub-teams (Teams A and B) exist for a category, the Category Team Captain and Assistant Captain need to coordinate the team's procedure and schedule to facilitate selection of the category winners. As soon as the top three or four exhibits are selected by multiple sub-teams, the information should be exchanged with the other sub-team in the category so that further comparison and interviews may be completed. The sub-teams should then meet for the final award selection.
- b. If **additional** interviews are required to facilitate team discussions, care shall be used to **avoid** making obvious which exhibits are being considered for the awards while students are in the exhibit area. Please be aware that students will only be available for interviews until 4:30 p.m.

The judging coordinator will provide the Grand Awards Judging Form to the Category Team Captain only. The captain of each category is **required** to sign off on the judging form before turning it in to the judging coordinator by **5:00 p.m.** Remember that no ties are allowed for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places and Honorable Mentions Awards may only be given if 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place awards have been given.

After submitting the category award results, the Category Team Captains or designated Best-of-CSEF judging team representative for each category and each division will assemble in the Grand Ballroom and await additional instructions from the Senior or Junior Division Best-of-CSEF Team Captain (depending on which division you are judging in). The 1<sup>st</sup> place project winners from all 12 categories in both divisions will then be submitted for the Best-of-CSEF judging, which starts at 5:30 p.m.

The Best-of-CSEF judging teams will determine the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place projects for the Junior Division and the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> (at the discretion of the Board of Directors) place projects for the Senior Division per the Best-of-CSEF judging instructions.

**Best-of-CSEF Judging Instructions:** In determining the Best-of-CSEF winners, only the 1<sup>st</sup> place project category winners are eligible. All of the categories are to be given equal consideration for the Best-of-CSEF Award.

Each Category Team captain shall be required to make a presentation to the rest of the Best-of-CSEF Judging Team members on the 1<sup>st</sup> place winner of their respective category and answer questions from the rest of the judging team (Animal Sciences, Behavioral & Social Sciences, Biomedical & Health Sciences, Chemistry, Earth & Environmental Sciences, Energy, Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Mathematics & Computer Sciences, Micro & Molecular Biology, Physics & Astronomy, Plant Sciences).

The Best-of-CSEF judging teams shall then examine the exhibits as a group in the exhibit area. Students should be out of the exhibit area by 5:30 p.m., but if they are not, please notify a CSEF official so that we can ensure the student(s)' departure from the exhibit area. The selection of the Best-of-CSEF winners shall be completed by 8:00 p.m. The Best-of-CSEF winners shall be recorded on the Grand Awards Judging Form and this, along with the category winners' lists, shall be turned in by the Best-of-CSEF Team Captains to the judging coordinator. The captain of each Best-of-CSEF judging team is **required** to sign off on the judging form before submittal to the judging coordinator.



**Grand (Place) Awards:** Individual and team projects will compete against each other in one of twelve categories for the following awards. Cash awards are given per project (team winners will split the award) and all non-cash awards are given per student (each team member will receive a medal, certificate, plaque or ribbon). A category judging team may decide not to award all 3 places or any honorable mentions in a category, but they must not skip over any award places (i.e.: if they want to give a 2<sup>nd</sup> place award, they must also award a 1<sup>st</sup> place; if they want to award any honorable mentions, they must award a 3<sup>rd</sup> place; etc.).

The awards are as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Junior & Senior Division Category Award winners will receive \$225, a blue-ribbon medal, certificate, and be eligible for the Best-of-CSEF Project Award.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Junior & Senior Division Category Award winners will receive \$125, a red-ribbon medal and certificate.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Junior & Senior Division Category Award winners will receive \$75, a white-ribbon medal and certificate.
- Honorable Mention Awards may be awarded to 0, 1, or 2 projects in each category. The number of honorable mention awards is left to the discretion of the grand awards judging teams. Honorable Mention Award winners will receive an honorable mention ribbon and certificate.

No ties are allowed for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place awards. If there are any questions on awards to be given, please see the Grand Awards Judging Coordinator for resolution.

**Best-of-CSEF (All Fair) Grand Awards:** The Best-of-CSEF (all Fair) Grand Awards are selected from the 1<sup>st</sup> place Grand Awards winners in each category for both junior and senior divisions. Best-of-CSEF 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> place projects are chosen for the Junior Division and Best-of-CSEF 1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> (at the discretion of the Board of Directors) place projects are selected for the Senior Division.

The awards are as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Junior Division Best-of-CSEF Project Award is \$225.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Junior Division Best-of-CSEF Project Award is \$125.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Junior Division Best-of-CSEF Project Award is \$75.
- All Senior Division Best-of-CSEF Project Awards are an expense paid trip to compete at the ISEF. (Expenses covered include: airfare, hotel, ground transportation as needed; meal per diem of \$200; registration; and trading pins.)

**Special Awards & Scholarships:** In this program, over 50 professional, scientific, engineering, and federal organizations send their own judges and use their own criteria to select special award winners. The awards range from college scholarships, cash awards, internships, equipment, plaques, books, medal and trophies to subscriptions and certificates. Some companies also give awards and recognition to the winners' teachers and schools.

The Special Awards judging occurs simultaneously with the Grand Awards judging. The Special Award judges will be asked to defer access to the projects and the students for interviews to the Grand Awards judges. However, **ALL** judges are asked to cooperate with one another to ensure that all judging is accomplished in the allotted time.



**Colorado Science and Engineering Fair**

**Judge's CONFIDENTIAL Rating Card**

(This portion will be destroyed after judging is complete.)

Exhibit Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Exhibit Title: \_\_\_\_\_

100 Maximum Total Possible Points

1. **Research Question/Research Problem** (10 points):
2. **Design & Methodology/Engineering, Math, Computer Sciences Goal** (15 points):
3. **Execution: Data Collection, Analysis, Interpretation/Construction, Testing** (20 points):
4. **Creativity:** (20 points)
5. **Poster Display** (10 points):
6. **Interview** (25 points):

Possible Contender: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_

**Colorado Science and Engineering Fair**

**Judge's Comment Card - STUDENT COPY**

(Return completed form to the Judging Coordinator.)

Student(s) Name(s):

Exhibit Number:

Exhibit Title:

.....  
General Comments:

Place Pre-Printed label w/Student Info

1. **The best elements of your project/research:**
2. **Recommendations for improvement of your project/research:**
3. **The best elements of your presentation/display:**
4. **Recommendations for improvement of your presentation/display:**