Pay It Forward Judging Rubric

So what exactly is the *Pay It Forward Competition*?
- *Pay it Forward* provides an opportunity for individual students or teams of up to four students to identify, research, develop, and present a viable solution to a long-standing challenge facing rural South Carolina communities.
- The *Pay it Forward* website (www.ecsc.org/pif) includes a number of rural challenges, but participants are welcome to identify and propose solutions to other rural challenges.
- The competition requires entrants to write a short paper of 5 - 10 pages, create a video of 5 - 8 minutes, and take at least 5 high-quality still photographs that detail viable solutions to actual problems that exist in the state's rural communities.
- Some examples of topics:
  - the difficulty of attracting a well-educated workforce,
  - hunger, particularly among school-aged children,
  - food deserts,
  - shortage of first responders, and
  - insufficient public transportation and poorly maintained roads.
- Ideally, challenges should be selected because participants are passionate about solving them, and solutions should incorporate elements of participants' academic disciplines or college majors.

All *Pay It Forward* entries as suggested solutions must be grounded in an academic discipline: English, Fine Arts, History, Languages, Mathematics, Religion, Science, the Social Sciences, or Technology.

The ideal *Pay it Forward* submission includes a paper, video, and still photographs that are the obvious product of significant research, attention to details, demonstrates participants' mastery of academic disciplines and/or their college majors, and provides one or more rural communities in South Carolina with a well thought-out and adoptable solution they can implement to address a long-standing problem. Students are not required to implement their solutions fully, but simply suggest their solutions.

Judges will score written submissions on the following:
- Clarity of the thesis statement/proposed solution
- Number, relevance, and proper citation of primary and secondary sources (MLA - Modern Language Association)
- Evidence of research beyond basic sources
- Consistent evidence of subject knowledge
- A detailed description and defense of the proposed solution, including step-by-step guidance on community implementation
- Identification of potential funding sources, if any (e.g. public/private grants, etc.), and clear instructions on how to secure those funds
- Students who contributed to the work are identified and provide brief (one paragraph) write-ups including their year of study, college majors, home towns, personal interests, and other basic information

Judges will score photo/video submissions on the following:
- At least 5 high-quality still photos are submitted, with clear, well-framed, and well-lit representations of the participants' chosen challenge and/or proposed solution.
- Videos are of the appropriate length (5-8 minutes), detail the nature and history of an actual rural challenge in South Carolina, feature relevant and compelling interviews with local citizens, and clearly articulate the proposed solution.
- Videos are recorded and edited to a high standard, sound and images are clear, and content adequately and thoroughly represents the information covered in the paper.
- If a video is submitted by a team, written credits must verify that all team members had at least one role in its production (i.e. camera operator, lighting, sound, script, on-camera host, location scouting, editing/production).

Process
Pay it Forward participants should form a hypothesis worthy of in-depth research, interpret the research, draw reasonable conclusions, and support those conclusions with varied, valid, and well-documented evidence.

Two related pieces will be generated from the research process: 1) a well-written thesis statement and 2) an annotated bibliography.

These components provide evidence of scholarly research and aid the student in completing the *Pay It Forward* requirements. Scholarly research means the student reads **primary and secondary sources** including books by experts in the chosen field; specialized reference sources; articles in professional and technical journals; magazines; newspapers; films; and online resources such as virtual libraries, databases, archives, government, news and institutional sites, and other appropriate Internet sites.

The student may use additional research methods such as interviews, statistical analyses, and focus groups. The research should reflect <u>depth</u> in the chosen academic field, and the student should be able to explain how that research aided him/her in producing the work.

Research Paper
This is a "traditional" research paper **that must manifest scholarly research and demonstrate proficiency in research writing**. Each student must use questions based on a claim or a hypothesis to drive the research.

A Title Page as well as a "Works Cited" page must accompany all drafts and the final research paper. Figures, graphs, illustrations, charts, glossaries, and appendices may be included in the body of the paper as long as their purpose is to further the student's thesis. These items must be cited correctly and cannot be used to fulfill the minimum length requirement for the paper.

<u>**Scoring Rubric**</u>

<u>**Competent -**</u> *Committee assigns the most appropriate grade.*

THE RESEARCH PAPER
Thesis
   ❑ Thesis is clear.

   Content
   ❑ Minimum of seven appropriate sources cited.
   ❑ There is evidence of research beyond basic sources.
   ❑ Subject knowledge is evident in much of the work.
   ❑ Conclusions are logical and supported with evidence.
   ❑ Information is appropriate and coherent.
   ❑ The challenge is clearly identified and solutions offered.

   Style/Organization
   ❑ Few errors in spelling, English usage, and documentation may be present, but they do not detract from the reader's understanding of the paper.
   ❑ Sources are properly credited.

Video and Photographs
❏ Student video demonstrates personal command of subject matter commensurate with content of paper.

Competent / Honors - *Committee assigns the most appropriate grade.*

All criteria for Competent are met.
The final grade determination is dependent upon the number of criteria satisfied from the Honors designation.

Honors - *Committee assigns the most appropriate grade.*

THE RESEARCH PAPER
  Thesis
❏ Thesis is well-developed, supported by relevant information.

  Content
❏ The paper transcends the "book report." Presentation of information promotes the thesis and goes beyond mere reporting.
❏ Paper is a direct manifestation of a student's research.
❏ Subject knowledge/understanding is evident throughout the work.
❏ More than three major sources are used to develop the thesis.
❏ Various sources are synthesized to promote the thesis.
❏ Conclusions show evidence of personal analysis, reflection, and insight and are adequately supported by research findings.

  Style/Organization
❏ Paper exhibits structure appropriate to a research paper.
❏ Clear focus is maintained throughout the work.
❏ Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar are correct, minor errors notwithstanding.
❏ Writing is expressive and communicates ideas clearly (e.g., strong topic sentences, effective and varied transitions, variety of sentence structures, etc.).
❏ Appropriate citations are made and correctly formatted in the text, minor errors notwithstanding.
❏ Works Cited page is thorough and largely follows the MLA format (or acceptable alternate format).

  Video and Photographs
❏ Student video exhibits preparation and thoughtfulness (e.g. demonstrates command of the content of the paper, explains the value of the work, reflects on the process, speaks knowledgeably about the work, and answers questions based

on research rather than opinion).

Honors / Distinctive - *Committee assigns the most appropriate grade.*

All criteria for Honors are met.

Distinctive - *Committee assigns the most appropriate grade.*

All criteria for Honors are met.
In addition, **all** the following criteria are met.

THE RESEARCH PAPER is a model for future entries.
- ❏ Blending of ideas reflects deep subject knowledge grounded in scholarly research.
- ❏ Content is intellectually stimulating and may encourage new perspectives on the thesis or topic.
- ❏ Paper is virtually free of mechanical, grammatical, spelling, and usage errors.
- ❏ Virtually no documentation errors exist in the text or on the Works Cited page.
- ❏ Style of writing is exemplary (e.g., a variety of sentence patterns, precise and/or rich language, minimal evidence of paraphrasing, etc.).

Video and Photographs
- ❏ Student video and photographs exhibit convincing mastery of the subject, which includes identifying patterns and making connections.

A Note About Plagiarism
Documentation errors within the text and on the Works Cited page are considered major errors because of the risk of plagiarism. Whether intentional or inadvertent, plagiarism is a serious academic offense.

According to Diana Hacker, "Three different acts are considered plagiarism: (1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words" (331).

Non-textual items, such as photographs, charts, artwork, and music that are "borrowed" from sources also must be cited in the text and on the Works Cited page to avoid plagiarism. These items must be cited if they are used. There are Internet sites available to students and teachers that facilitate cross-referencing the Paper with a huge database to check for plagiarism. Students are encouraged to use that resource to avoid getting into difficulty.