



Utah Agritourism: Strategic Initiatives and Recommendations

September 2026

Prepared for:

Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
Utah Office of Tourism

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**Department of
Agriculture and Food**



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Acknowledgments

This study was conducted in partnership with and made possible through funding from the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) and the Utah Office of Tourism (UOT). Special thanks are extended to the agritourism providers, elected officials, and organizations supporting agriculture and tourism who contributed their time, perspectives, and expertise to the strategy development process.

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Executive Summary

Utah is well positioned to grow and strengthen agritourism across the state. The [*Economic Impacts and Benefits of the Agritourism Industry in Utah*](#) report demonstrated that agritourism not only generates revenue for agricultural producers and their local economies but also represents an opportunity for growth at the intersection of Utah’s agriculture and tourism industries. At the same time, the report’s survey of agritourism providers identified a need for additional support and resources to establish, sustain, and promote agritourism activities and bolster visits.

This work aligns with broader statewide priorities, including Utah Department of Agriculture and Food’s [*Strategic Plan*](#) and [*Utah Food Systems Study*](#), which emphasize stronger supply chains, expanded market opportunities, collaboration, and support for Utah producers. It also supports the Governor’s Office of Economic Development’s [*Utah Elevated*](#) strategic plan with its focus on strengthening Utah’s experience and creative economies and building a strong, sustainable visitor economy. This alignment provides a foundation for the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) and the Utah Office of Tourism (UOT) to carry the work forward through their complementary roles and can help guide future investment and resource decisions.

“...most of us are trying to keep our family farms alive, and this agritourism is what's saving it...”
—Utah agritourism operator

Further engagement conducted for this companion recommendations report reinforced those findings. For many participating producers, agritourism is more than supplemental income—it is an important source of revenue that helps keep farms and ranches economically viable and agricultural land in production. By strengthening the viability of local agricultural businesses, agritourism can also help sustain local food production and contribute to local food security. Providers also identified challenges to developing and operating agritourism businesses, including navigating zoning and regulatory requirements, marketing their operations, and accessing technical assistance and financing.

Utah has significant assets on which to build. Its natural landscapes, agricultural traditions, cultural and heritage resources, and strong tourism economy create opportunities to connect both local residents and out-of-state visitors with farms, ranches, orchards, vineyards, and other working agricultural operations. Agritourism visitor spending in Utah generates an estimated \$44.8 million in annual economic activity, supporting approximately 310 jobs, \$11.2 million in earnings, and \$26.5 million in value added. The potential market is estimated at approximately 150,000 to 300,000 agritourism visitors annually, with Utah residents representing a significant share.

Currently, agritourism serves a strong local and in-state market. Survey respondents estimated that, on average, 48 percent of their visitors come from within their county and another 33 percent come from elsewhere in Utah. This suggests an opportunity to build on agritourism's strong resident base while reaching more of the out-of-state visitors already traveling to Utah, helping bring visitors to farms and rural communities across the state, encouraging longer stays, and capturing additional visitor spending in those areas.

This follow-up report, developed in partnership with UDAF and UOT, builds on these findings through additional engagement with agritourism providers, elected officials, agricultural and tourism organizations, and UDAF and UOT staff. Engagement included two workshops with key stakeholders, five interviews with established agritourism providers, and a statewide survey that gathered input from nearly 100 agritourism providers. This process helped identify potential strategies to strengthen and support agritourism in Utah, which were then further researched and refined by drawing on relevant models and approaches from other states. The recommended strategies build on the existing collaboration between UDAF and UOT and the resources the two agencies have already developed to support agritourism, as highlighted in the State Agency Roles and Resources for Agritourism section.

Four strategic areas emerged where focused support can help strengthen and grow agritourism in Utah: business development support services; marketing and promotion; investment and funding; and policy and regulations. The ten recommended strategies are focused on the needs and priorities identified through stakeholder engagement and research, rather than recommending an exhaustive list of all potential approaches (see table 1). A key consideration across the recommendations is staff capacity. The ability to implement strategies 1–6 at the scale and level of coordination envisioned depends on having dedicated agritourism staffing at UDAF. Strategy 7, therefore, serves as an important enabling investment for carrying out and sustaining many of the preceding strategies. A return-on-public-investment analysis finds that this annual staffing investment would reach fiscal breakeven if it helped enable approximately \$1.5 million in additional agritourism visitor spending—about 5.6 percent growth over current levels—for new state and local tax revenue to offset its cost. This is a breakeven threshold, not a projection of expected growth.

The recommended strategies provide a framework for creating stronger conditions for Utah agritourism businesses to start, operate, and grow. More coordinated support can help producers diversify and strengthen farm and ranch income, connect more residents and visitors with agricultural experiences, reduce regulatory uncertainty, and build the capacity of state and local partners to support the sector. In doing so, Utah can strengthen the connection between two of its defining industries—agriculture and tourism—while supporting the continued viability of working farms, ranches, and rural communities.

Table 1: Recommended strategies		
Business Development Support Services	#1	Expand access to individualized technical assistance for agritourism operators.
	#2	Increase awareness of and access to resources on liability protections.
	#3	Create ongoing networking and mentoring opportunities for agritourism operators.
	#4	Strengthen partnerships to coordinate, expand, and deliver business development support for agritourism operators.
Marketing and Promotion	#5	Enhance features and accessibility of the state agritourism registry.
	#6	Support operator-led marketing and cross-promotion.
Investment and Funding	#7	Secure funding for one full-time UDAF employee dedicated to agritourism support and resource development.
	#8	Increase awareness of grants available to agritourism operators or supporting organizations to leverage funding support.
Policies and Regulations	#9	Review and clarify Utah's statutory definition of agritourism to reflect the range of qualifying activities.
	#10	Strengthen local land-use and zoning frameworks to support agritourism development.

Key Findings Informing the Strategies

Stakeholder engagement reinforced the importance of agritourism to Utah's agricultural economy while identifying several opportunities to strengthen the conditions in which agritourism businesses operate. Operators, legislators, and other stakeholders highlighted both the value agritourism creates for farms and communities and the challenges that can limit businesses' ability to grow and sustain their operations.

The key learnings below capture the primary needs, challenges, and opportunities identified by agritourism operators and other stakeholders and helped shape the strategies presented in this report. For each of the six key learnings, strategies are identified to show how the recommendations respond to the study findings. Together, these strategies are intended to address key barriers, strengthen agritourism businesses, and support a more sustainable agritourism industry in Utah.

Key learning: Agritourism is a critical revenue source.

Agritourism provides operators a way to earn additional income while offering an opportunity to build support in the community by educating the public about the need for agriculture.

This extra revenue generation can help operators cover rising costs of infrastructure, sustainably support employees, and continue operating during challenging economies and extreme weather events. Agritourism can also encourage both locals and visitors to explore a new area of the state, increasing visitor capacity and creating more opportunities to sell products and build long term business. Stakeholders emphasize that activities such as on-farm tours, seasonal events, and other visitor experiences can provide important supplemental revenue while also helping visitors better understand agriculture and generating support for farms and their products.

Related strategies: *all strategies*

Key learning: Operators need accessible, agritourism-specific business support.

Agritourism operators identified a need for more accessible resources and support tailored to the unique challenges of running both an agricultural operation and a visitor-facing business. Participants pointed to opportunities to strengthen partnerships with universities, local governments, and other organizations to expand business development support, networking, and peer mentoring. They also identified a need for practical resources that bring together information and guidance to help operators navigate state and local requirements. Better

coordination of existing resources and expertise could make it easier for operators to find the support they need while identifying gaps where additional tools, training, or technical assistance may be beneficial.

Related strategies: *strategies 1, 4, 7, and 8*

Key learning: Operators have a collaboration-over-competition mentality.

Operators identified that most agritourism businesses see the industry itself as a collaborative space. Rather than seeing nearby farms or attractions as competitors, they view them as potential partners who can help strengthen the industry, region, and community. By sharing resources like skilled labor pools, coordinating events or tours, and promoting the area as a destination, they can work together to drive traffic. Operators also identified opportunities to cross-promote nearby non-agricultural destinations and collaborate on local and national brand promotion. This collaboration and coordination among producers and businesses reaches more customers, reduces costs, and generates stronger agritourism benefits for everyone involved.

“I don't see us really as competitors, but we can really balance each other out.” —Utah agritourism operator

Related strategies: *strategies 3 and 6*

Key learning: Insurance costs and uncertainty about liability protections create challenges for operators.

During listening sessions, issues with liability and insurance emerged as a key constraint to the success of the agritourism industry. Producers emphasized that visitor safety is a priority but expressed concern that visitor expectations about safety and liability do not always align with the realities of a working farm. Discussions also indicated that some producers may not be aware of the liability protections already available to agritourism operators under Utah law, suggesting a need for greater awareness and clearer guidance on how those protections apply. Insurance policies can be expensive, and it is not always clear what types of activities, events, or visitors are covered. Clearer guidance, more affordable options, and dedicated support resources could help operators better understand their risks and protect both their businesses and their visitors.

Related strategies: *strategies 2, 4, and 9*

Key learning: Operators experience challenges understanding and navigating state and local requirements.

"I wish I would have had [support] when I was first starting out, especially, ... clearer guidance."

—Utah agritourism operator

Both operators and legislators identified that it is difficult for agritourism businesses to navigate between state and local requirements. Confusion with zoning, permitting, parking, land use, differences between agritourism and agritainment, and acreage regulations may be

handled differently depending on where the farm is located. This can create challenges for operators to understand where their business fits within requirements and who to contact for guidance. Better coordination and consistency between state and local authorities could help operators understand requirements, reduce confusion, and make it easier for operators to expand agritourism activities.

Related strategies: *strategies 1, 4, 7, 9, and 10*

Key learning: Operators face limitations in marketing their businesses and experiences.

"Our operation isn't as big as some of these other ones. And so like for us, there's so many different places that I have to go to put information in. "

—Utah agritourism operator

Many farmers operate agritourism programming with limited budgets and dedicated staff. Farms with established programming still struggle to reach new audiences and build awareness beyond their local area. Operators seek more support with advertising, social media promotion, and regional marketing to attract more visitors and increase revenue. Coordinated promotion among farms, tourism groups, and both statewide and national organizations could help showcase agritourism to a larger audience.

Related strategies: *strategies 5 and 6*

State Agency Roles and Resources for Agritourism

Utah's agritourism sector is supported by both agricultural and tourism programs, resources, and networks. UDAF and UOT bring complementary roles, currently providing resource support ranging from business development to marketing and promotion.

UDAF, in collaboration with UOT, maintains the Utah Agritourism website (agritourism.utah.gov) as a centralized resource for both agritourism operators and visitors. The website includes information to help visitors discover and plan agritourism experiences across the state, as well as an Agritourism Operator Resources section featuring UDAF and UOT resources and a collection of additional tools and guidance for agritourism businesses.

Utah Office of Tourism — Agritourism Resources



Business Development ~ *Tourism product and visitor-experience development*

- **Tourism Experience Development Workshop** — access presentation slide decks and session recordings covering tourism business strategies for both the [2025](#) and [2026](#) events
- **Additional Funding and Resources** — explore grants, financial aid, and industry support programs on UOT's industry-facing website ([Resources webpage](#))
- **ELEV8 Utah Product Development Program** — receive expert experience design and product development support for emerging operations ([ELEV8 Utah webpage](#)). Future rounds to be announced.

Operator Connections ~ *Tourism businesses, DMOs, and destination partners*

- **Partner Directory** — connect with local tourism businesses, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), and statewide stakeholders via UOT's network hub ([Directory webpage](#))
- **Annual Industry Events** — network at key statewide gatherings, including Tourism Day on the Hill (winter), the Tourism Experience Development Workshop (spring), and the Utah Tourism Conference (fall) ([Events page](#))

Marketing ~ *Destination marketing and visitor promotion*

- **Familiarization (Fam) Tours** — partner with UOT and local DMOs to host national and international journalists and influencers at your agritourism operation ([Collaborations webpage](#))
- **Story Collaboration** — pitch agritourism story concepts directly to UOT's PR team for earned media coverage ([Collaborations webpage](#))
- **Annual Consumer Event Calendar** — list public agritourism events on [visitutah.com](#) to drive visitor traffic ([Annual Festivals and Events webpage](#))
- **Social Media Amplification** — tag @visitutah in promotional posts to boost digital reach through state channels
- **Stewardship and Messaging Toolkit** — utilize "Always Adventure Safe" assets to promote responsible visitor behavior ([Partner toolkit](#))

Technical Resources ~ *Tourism research, marketing tools, and industry expertise*

- **Agritourism Economic Impact Study** — review sector growth data compiled with the UDAF ([Study](#))
- **Niche Audience Profile Research** — target key traveler demographics using market data for agritourism and culinary travelers ([Profiles webpage](#))
- **Tourism Exchange** — connect live product inventory to global distribution networks and online travel channels ([Tourism Exchange webpage](#))
- **Research Dashboard and County Profiles** — analyze regional visitor spending, job creation, and tax impacts via Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute datasets ([Dashboard](#))

Utah Department of Agriculture and Food — Agritourism Resources



**Department of
Agriculture and Food**

Business development ~ *agricultural markets, production, and business resources*

- [Utah's Own Program](#) — promotes local agricultural businesses through state brand recognition, direct market access, and promotional tools
- Programs like the [Utah Food Security Grant](#) and [Specialty Crop Block Grant](#) offer funding to help operators build farm infrastructure, develop value-added products, and scale visitor-facing sales.

- Ag land preservation resources such as the [LeRay McAllister Working Farm and Ranch Fund](#), [Land Conservation Program](#) and [succession planning resources](#), and [agricultural loan programs](#)
- In partnership with Utah State University (USU):
 - [Farm and Food Tourism Workshop Materials](#) — provides educational presentations, risk management guides, and business planning resources
 - [Fundamental Resources for Agriculture Micro-Entrepreneurs](#) — provides business-readiness checklists and guidebooks for launching farm-based product, service, and home-food enterprises
 - [E-Commerce Accelerator](#) — provides specialized technical assistance for farm businesses launching online sales platforms
- In partnership with UOT:
 - [Operator PDF — Direct Sales](#)
 - [Operator PDF — Lodging](#)
 - [Operator PDF - Outdoor Rec](#)
 - [Operator PDF — Education](#)
 - [Operator PDF — Agritourism Opportunities](#)
 - [Operator PDF — Entertainment](#)

Operator connections ~ Agricultural producer and food-business networks

- Agritourism [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages are actively used to share state resources, grant opportunities, and insights directly with member operators.
- [Farm to Fork](#) connects Utah agricultural producers with schools and institutional buyers, helping producers navigate school procurement opportunities, sell local food to schools, and host educational farm field trips.
- [Utah's Own Program](#) is a statewide marketing and member network connecting Utah farmers, ranchers, and food businesses with consumers, retailers, market opportunities, and resources to grow their businesses.

Marketing ~ Agricultural identity and local-product promotion

- [Agritourism Directory](#) — connects public consumers directly with registered agritourism businesses across Utah through an online searchable database
- [Agritourism Map](#) — allows travelers to discover nearby farm stands, U-picks, farm stays, and agricultural experiences through an interactive geographic tool
- [Agritourism Newsletter](#) — highlights upcoming farm events, seasonal member activities, and available producer resources through a monthly publication

- [Utah's Own Program](#) — uses statewide seasonal campaigns designed to drive direct-to-consumer farm sales

Technical resources ~ Agricultural programs, regulations, and partner expertise

- [Agritourism Resource Hive](#) — serves as a central hub created in partnership with UOT for zoning, liability guidelines, insurance standards, and risk management templates
- [Farm to School](#) — provides procurement guidelines and assistance for selling produce directly to local school districts
- [UDAF County Liaison](#) — offers personalized regulatory, permitting, and land-use support through dedicated local staff
- *Partner* — [Utah Farm Bureau Federation](#) — provides agritourism operators with practical resources, including liability signage available at cost, and offers expertise on agricultural policy and land-use issues. Farm Bureau can also serve as a resource to counties seeking examples of agriculture-friendly policies and regulatory approaches used successfully in other communities.

Recommended Strategies for Strengthening Agritourism in Utah

The recommended strategies were developed through a combination of research, stakeholder engagement, and analysis. This process included a review of the *Economic Impacts and Benefits of the Agritourism Industry in Utah* report and its survey of agritourism operators, as well as input from agritourism providers, elected officials, local organizations supporting agriculture and tourism, and staff from the UDAF and UOT.

Two virtual workshops were held with these stakeholders to identify potential strategies and establish priorities for strengthening agritourism in Utah. The resulting strategies were then further researched to identify relevant models and approaches used in other states.

The ten recommended strategies are intentionally focused on the needs and priorities identified through stakeholder engagement and research, rather than providing a comprehensive set of all potential approaches. They emphasize practical opportunities that build on existing state efforts and consider the capacity and resources needed for implementation. The final ten recommendations are organized into four areas:

- **Agritourism operator support services:** develop and expand access to programs, training, and individualized technical assistance that help producers establish and strengthen their agritourism operations, navigate regulations, understand liability and insurance requirements, and manage visitor health and safety
- **Marketing and promotion support:** increase awareness of individual agritourism operations through statewide directories, promotional platforms, and coordinated outreach, while also supporting local and regional tourism initiatives and campaigns that feature agritourism as part of a broader destination experience, reaching both in-state and out-of-state visitors
- **Investment and funding:** provide the staffing, funding, and other resources needed to ensure operator support services, marketing initiatives, and locally led agritourism development efforts
- **Policy and regulations:** clarify agritourism definitions and requirements, address regulatory barriers, and improve operator understanding of zoning, permitting, and liability protections

The strategies are organized by focus area rather than by order of priority. The Next Steps section identifies strategies that may be feasible to pursue in the near term, as well as those that will require greater coordination, resources, or longer-term action.

Implementation of strategies 1–6 is constrained by current staff capacity. While some individual actions may be possible through existing programs and partnerships, strategy 7—establishing dedicated agritourism staffing at UDAF—provides the capacity needed to implement these strategies more fully, consistently, and over time.

The following sections describe each recommended strategy and highlight examples of relevant approaches implemented in other states.

Strategy area: Agritourism operator support services

Strong partnerships with local universities and extension programs will be important for helping businesses grow and building the region’s agritourism industry. In addition to offering dedicated business programming, operators want opportunities to network, find mentors, and learn from one another. These connections can help foster a sense of cooperation. One-on-one technical assistance can also help operators better understand how to navigate regulations, solve business challenges, and strengthen their operations.

Strategy 1: Expand access to individualized technical assistance for agritourism operators.

One-on-one technical assistance can provide another important layer of support to the local system. By working directly with operators, technical assistance can help businesses navigate available resources, understand regulatory and business requirements, and address needs specific to their operation. Support could include assistance with business planning, marketing, zoning and permitting, liability protections, insurance requirements, financing, risk management, visitor safety, and connections to specialized agricultural, tourism, legal, or regulatory expertise.

Peer states pair individualized operator assistance through dedicated agritourism staff or programs that help coordinate resources, referrals, and broader industry support. *Strategy 7 addresses the dedicated staffing capacity that could help coordinate this type of statewide approach in Utah. See table 4.*

Over time, improved access to individualized support can help operators more easily navigate the resources available to them, address barriers to growth, and build stronger and more sustainable agritourism businesses.

State role:

- UDAF: Coordinate technical assistance across relevant UDAF programs and resources from partners, connecting agritourism operators with resources and expertise related

to business development, regulatory and permitting requirements, financing and grants, market development, liability and risk management, and agricultural business planning (e.g., Utah's Own, Farm to School, UDAF County Liaison, agricultural loan and grant programs, and succession-planning resources). Assess opportunities to better connect agritourism operators with relevant programs, technical assistance, and expertise across other UDAF divisions as needs are identified.

- UOT: Continue to lead, coordinate, fund and support the annual Tourism Experience Development Workshop and its associated collaboration committees.

Strategy 2: Increase awareness of and access to resources on Utah's agritourism liability protections.

Utah law provides liability protections for agritourism operators for injuries or damages resulting from the inherent risks of agritourism activities when certain requirements are met. Input from agritourism providers suggests there is an opportunity to further increase awareness of these protections and the resources available to help operators understand them. Because the law is still relatively new and the number and range of agritourism operations continue to grow, ongoing outreach can help ensure that both new and established operators are aware of the protections and understand how they apply to their businesses.

UDAF and partners could build on existing outreach by sharing and elevating resources that explain the state's liability protections, eligibility requirements, and required warning signage. Information could be reinforced through websites, producer networks, trainings, newsletters, and other existing communication channels. Increasing the visibility and reach of these resources could help more operators understand the protections available to them and the steps required to qualify.

State role:

- UDAF: Lead operator-facing education and outreach on Utah's agritourism liability protections, including eligibility requirements and required warning signage; connect operators with existing resources and partner expertise, including Utah Farm Bureau.

Strategy 3: Create ongoing networking and mentoring opportunities for agritourism operators.

Operators are also looking for more opportunities to connect with one another. Networking and mentorship can give them a chance to share ideas, learn from one another, and build stronger relationships within their community and across the state. Establish communication

channels—such as an email listserve, online community, or social media group—that allow operators to share resources, ask questions, promote partnership opportunities, and learn from one another. Complement these platforms with peer mentoring, farm tours, regional gatherings and dedicated agritourism at existing agriculture and tourism events, including the annual Utah Tourism Conference, the state’s primary tourism-industry gathering for networking and professional development hosted by UOT.

State role:

- UDAF: Expand communication channels for agritourism operators through social media or a dedicated listserv or forum. Dedicate a Local Ag Listening Session each year to agritourism to provide an informal opportunity for operators to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another.
- UOT: Continue to lead, coordinate, fund, and support the annual Tourism Experience Development Workshop. Continue to sponsor and provide content recommendations for the annual Utah Tourism Conference.

Strategy 4: Strengthen partnerships to coordinate, expand, and deliver business development support for agritourism operators.

Agritourism operators draw on a range of agricultural, tourism, business development, and educational resources, making coordination across support organizations especially important. The state can strengthen partnerships among these organizations to better connect operators with existing services, identify gaps in available support, and coordinate development and sharing of new or existing resources where needed.

Partners could collaborate on training, resource development and sharing, referrals, and technical expertise related to business planning, marketing, risk management, liability protections, insurance requirements, permitting, visitor safety, and visitor experience development. Minnesota provides one model, where a [university-led statewide workgroup](#) supports ongoing resource development and collaboration among university, state agency, nonprofit, and industry partners. South Dakota offers another model through an [agritourism work group](#) led by the Department of Tourism, which was established in 2017 to bring partners together around agritourism resource development. Potential partners include USU and Extension, Southern Utah University (SUU) Hospitality Program, and Utah Small Business Development Center (SBDC), DMOs, industry associations, and other organizations supporting agricultural and tourism businesses.

State role:

- UDAF: Lead a semi-annual industry workgroup to coordinate agritourism support, identify resource and training gaps, develop and share resources, and strengthen referrals among agricultural, tourism, business development, and educational partners.
- UOT: Help connect agritourism producers with their designated local DMO.

Strategy area: Marketing and promotion support

There is ample opportunity to expand promotion of Utah's agritourism industry to make it easier for visitors to find local businesses. Improving the state's agritourism online registry, creating engaging ways for visitors to explore, and supporting businesses in marketing together can help increase visibility across the industry as well as building broader community. These efforts can encourage visitors to stay longer, spend more money locally, and connect with a wider range of local farms and small businesses.

Strategy 5: Enhance features and accessibility of the state agritourism registry.

The state agritourism registry can become a stronger tool for helping visitors find and explore local agritourism businesses. Adding features such as searchable databases and maps and easy-to-use directories can make it easier for people to plan trips rooted in agritourism experiences. A digital passport or check-in program could also encourage visitors to seek out new places by offering rewards, discounts, or special promotions to incentivize both new and returning travelers.

The registry could also promote special events that bring local businesses and community partners together. Branded weekend or month-long events focused on themes such as local food, farm experiences, or regional attractions could encourage visitors to explore several businesses in one trip. Curated trails based on a certain food item, location, or type of experience allow a visitor a self-guided experience that results in a low lift from operators.

Table 2 below provides an overview of other states's agritourism registry features that could be considered. The scope and timing of these enhancements would depend on securing funding for technology improvements and dedicated staff capacity, as recommended in strategy 7.

Because effective technology and registry enhancements would require both upfront investment and ongoing staff capacity, these costs were evaluated together with the dedicated staffing recommendation in strategy 7. The return-on-public-investment (ROPI)

analysis estimates the additional agritourism visitor spending needed for these investments to reach fiscal breakeven in both the first year and subsequent years.

State role:

- UDAF: Maintain and enhance the state agritourism registry and directory, including improved search, mapping, and visitor-facing features; coordinate operator participation and registry updates; and pursue funding and partnerships to support future technology enhancements and promotional features.
- UOT: Continue to direct DMOs and agritourism providers to the directory and highlight it on the [Visit Utah](#) and [Travel Utah](#) websites.

Table 2: State agritourism registries

State	Marketing and promotion features	Key features	Operating details	Strength	Weakness
Utah	• Interactive map • Searchable directory	Agritourism directory and interactive map feature with filters; social media and newsletter promotion; access to Agritourism Resource Hive	• Consumer-facing • Operated by Utah Department of Agriculture and Food	Statewide visibility, accessible to small and emerging operations	Primarily a discovery tool (no passport, no check-ins, no rewards), limited visitor data
Iowa	• Event calendar • Curated experiences • Digital passport (includes Trails)	Coordinated marketing and promotional campaigns; connections to other farms, businesses, and supply chain; digital passport and rewards	• Consumer-facing • Operated by Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship	Integrates agritourism with larger statewide brand, provides marketing benefits, connects farmers with larger supply chain, incentivizes return customers	Broader local-food focus may limit exposure of agritourism, operator fee may limit early stage or small businesses
Kansas	• Interactive map/searchable directory	Directory is linked to annual registration that autopopulates onto site; education and networking; program resources; eligibility for limited liability protections	• Consumer-facing • Operated by Kansas Tourism	Provides legal and risk management support in addition to promotion, free participation, registration provides site with an official state designation	Less focused on digital engagement/rewards/ trip itineraries, compliance with regulator requirements may limit enrollment
Maryland	• County digital passport • Curated	Inclusion in Maryland's local-food platform; destination and	• Consumer-facing, visitor engagement • Operated by Maryland	Packages farms into complete visitor experiences, encourages	Participation can depend on location or business type, more complex and costly for

Table 2: State agritourism registries

State	Marketing and promotion features	Key features	Operating details	Strength	Weakness
	experiences • Interactive map/searchable directory • Trails	experiences marketing; potential placement along themed trails; digital engagement with rewards	Department of Agriculture	longer trips among variety of nearby businesses, connects agritourism with outdoor recreation and regional tourism, promotion and marketing events	the state to maintain
South Carolina	• Interactive map/searchable directory • Member directory • Curated experiences • Digital passport • Printable directory	Association membership and network; collective promotion; inclusion in coordinated visitor campaigns; farm check-ins or stamps to earn prizes	• Visitor engagement • Nonprofit through membership dues, conference fees, and sponsorships and support from South Carolina Department of Agriculture	Encourages repeat visitors and travel between multiple sites, provides customer loyalty features	Operator fee creates participation barrier
South Dakota	• Event calendar • Two directories • Digital passport • Operator resource calendar • Curated experiences	Offers two directories: Travel South Dakota , which is primarily tourism or visitor-facing; South Dakota Specialty Producers Association Local Food Directory , more focused toward local food overall, with an 'Agritourism' filter	• Consumer information, visitor engagement • Jointly supported by Department of Tourism and South Dakota State University Extension	Curated events rooted in the passport program driving foot traffic to new sites	Multiple directory tools is cumbersome to users, lack of geographic map to see what is nearby

Strategy 6: Support operator-led marketing and cross-promotion.

Agritourism businesses would benefit from practical tools and guidance resources that make collaborating with other local businesses easier. Partnerships with nearby farmers, restaurants, hotels, retail shops, and attractions can help create a stronger visitor experience while bringing more customers to each business by creating curated businesses and opportunities to cross-promote. Providing templates, examples, and technical assistance could make these partnerships easier to start and manage, especially for small operators with limited budgets, staff, and time.

Collaborations might include shared referral programs, joint promotional materials, coordinated digital campaigns or joint events or packages. Communities could also develop local itineraries or agritourism trails that encourage visitors to explore other local businesses. Additionally, cross promotion between complimentary businesses could look like offering reciprocal discounts to customers. These efforts would support a collaborative over competitive approach to help agritourism businesses grow together.

State role:

- UDAF: Support operator-led marketing and cross-promotion by connecting agritourism businesses with other agricultural producers and local food businesses, sharing tools and best practices, and facilitating opportunities for joint promotion, referrals, and collaboration. Where appropriate, connect eligible operators with additional opportunities available through Utah's Own, a separate opt-in, fee-based membership program, or Farm to Fork, a farm-to-school initiative that connects producers with schools for local food procurement and agricultural education opportunities, including farm field trips.
- UOT: Continue connecting agritourism operators with local DMOs, incorporating agritourism opportunities into familiarization tours as appropriate, and providing marketing training and cross-collaboration opportunities through the TXD Workshop and Utah Tourism Conference.

Strategy area: Investment and funding

Sustained growth of Utah's agritourism sector will require dedicated capacity and investment at both the state and local levels. Many of the recommended strategies cannot be implemented effectively through existing staff capacity or resources. Targeted investments are needed to coordinate statewide resources, provide consistent assistance to operators, and help communities pursue agritourism as an economic development opportunity. The following two strategies focus on establishing dedicated state-level capacity and better connecting rural communities with existing funding resources.

Strategy 7: Secure funding for one full-time UDAF employee dedicated to agritourism support and resource development.

Secure ongoing funding for one full-time equivalent position within the UDAF dedicated to supporting the state's agritourism sector. This position would serve as a central point of contact for operators, local governments, tourism organizations, and partner agencies and would coordinate the development and delivery of agritourism resources.

Several states provide useful models for dedicated agritourism positions within state departments of agriculture (see table 4). Similar or complementary roles are also housed within universities, extension programs, and statewide agritourism associations. As illustrated in the accompanying table, these positions may provide individualized technical assistance, develop guidance and educational resources, connect operators with regulatory and business-development support, coordinate partnerships, and lead statewide directories, marketing, and promotional efforts.

UDAF currently does not have dedicated agritourism staff, limiting its capacity to provide individualized operator support, maintain and enhance statewide resources, coordinate with partners, and proactively advance agritourism development. A dedicated position would provide capacity to implement and sustain strategies outlined in this report, particularly those related to business development and operator support, marketing and promotion, and statewide coordination. One full-time position is estimated to require approximately \$125,000 for salary and fringe benefits in annual funding.

A ROPI analysis was conducted for this strategy and strategy 5, which recommends enhancements to the state's agritourism technology and registry system. These investments have identifiable costs and support implementation of several other recommendations that depend on sustained staff capacity and statewide infrastructure.

The analysis estimates that an annual investment of \$125,000 in dedicated staff capacity would reach fiscal breakeven if it helped enable \$1.5 million in additional agritourism visitor spending, equivalent to about 5.6 percent of current baseline spending (table 3). This does not assume that a staff position alone would generate that growth; rather, it provides a benchmark for assessing the scale of additional economic activity required for the investment to generate an equivalent amount of state and local tax revenue.

If the recommended technology and registry enhancements in strategy 5 are implemented alongside the dedicated position, the fiscal breakeven threshold would increase to approximately 8.1 percent of current baseline visitor spending in the first year, reflecting the one-time technology investment. In subsequent years, as costs decline due to ongoing maintenance and staffing, the threshold would fall to approximately 6.1 percent, only slightly above the FTE-only scenario.

These breakeven thresholds remain modest relative to the projected growth in Utah's agritourism market. The [Economic Impacts and Benefits of the Agritourism Industry in Utah](#) projects the household-based agritourism participant base to increase from approximately 144,000 in 2025 to 233,000 by 2030, a more than 60 percent increase under the baseline projection. Dedicated staff capacity could help Utah support and capture a greater share of that anticipated growth by strengthening operator assistance, marketing, partnerships, and statewide coordination.

Table 3: Return-on-public-investment (ROPI) analysis of strategies 5 and 7			
Scenario	Annual cost	Spending growth needed to break even (tax revenue only)	Share of current baseline spending
FTE only (strategy 7)	\$125,000	\$1,515,735	5.6%
FTE + technology, year 1, incl. one-time build (strategies 7 + 5)	\$185,000	\$2,182,658	8.1%
FTE + technology, year 2+ (strategies 7 + 5)	\$1,350,000	\$1,636,994	6.1%

State role:

- UDAF: Seek and administer ongoing funding for a dedicated agritourism position and, if funded, house and oversee the position within UDAF. The position would serve as the state's primary agritourism point of contact and lead implementation and coordination of the operator support, resource development, partnerships, registry enhancements, and promotional efforts identified throughout this plan.
- UOT: Continue to provide existing staffing hours to support previously mentioned project efforts with agritourism.

Table 4: Cross comparison of states with dedicated agritourism staff

State and lead entity	Staffing model	Primary responsibilities	Operator services and technical assistance	Marketing and visitor-facing resources
Utah: Utah Department of Agriculture and Food	No dedicated staff	Maintains a voluntary agritourism registry that serves as a public notice of locations where individuals may participate in an agritourism activity	- Online Resource Hive where operators can access aggregate lists of agritourism resources. - Statewide Agritourism Tourism Business Development Workshops hosted with support from the Utah Office of Tourism	- Online Agritourism Directory - Support from the Utah Office of Tourism
California: University of California — UCANR/UC SAREP	1 FTE UC SAREP statewide agritourism coordinator	Manages a comprehensive resource hub for operators and regulators + consumer tourism directory , e-newsletter, workshop, training webinars and peer-to-peer opportunities, and industry research	- Business planning tools - Workshops and webinars - Tools on insurance/ financing/ cashflow - Permitting and regulatory guidance - Peer-to-peer learning network	- Statewide directory - Passport and curated events - Event calendar
Colorado: Colorado Agritourism Association	1 paid director	Provides industry business development resources (employee training, funding information, visitor engagement support) and peer-to-peer connections between producers and supply chain	- Education and networking - Insurance and zoning support - Liability law resources - Business development support - Sustainability resources	- Statewide directory - Social media and newsletter promotion - Statewide branding
Georgia: Department of Agriculture	1 FTE agritourism manager	Oversees directory of farmers markets (community and state run), directory of state and county fairs, and Georgia Grown programming	- Business development - Funding referrals - Agritourism webinars and networking - County-level agritourism consultation and trainings	- Statewide directory - Statewide maps and visitor promotion - Highway signage - Fee-based agritourism membership tied to statewide brand and integration into supply chain - Marketing and brand assistance

Table 4: Cross comparison of states with dedicated agritourism staff

State and lead entity	Staffing model	Primary responsibilities	Operator services and technical assistance	Marketing and visitor-facing resources
Michigan: Michigan Agritourism Association	5 paid employees	Provides searchable directory, promotion, education, advocacy, problem resolution and peer-to-peer networking opportunities	• Business resources • Education and training • Networking and peer-to-peer learning	• Searchable farm directory • Operator promotion • Events calendar • Farm tours • Consumer trip planning
Oklahoma: Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry	3 FTE agritourism coordinators	Provides business development and marketing services, educational workshops and statewide promotion opportunities	• Funding referrals • 1:1 business guidance • Liability law assistance • Peer-to-peer networking • On-farm consultations	• Free promotional exposure • Statewide directory • Maps and visitor promotions • Parking/signage, merchandising support
Pennsylvania: Penn State University	6 dedicated Penn State Extension staff	Provides research based support and resources	• Workshops and webinars • Business planning and product diversification tools • Risk management education • Legal and liability education	• Marketing support • Event support resources • On-farm project support
South Carolina: Department of Agriculture	1 FTE agritourism director	Runs South Carolina Agritourism Association (association dedicated to promoting and marketing of agritourism farms). Agritourism programming is also supported by Clemson University Extension staff.	• Conferences and education • Peer-to-peer networking	• Statewide directory • Statewide branding program • Agritourism passport promotion • Coordinated visitor experiences (farm hiking and camping program) • Highway signage

Strategy 8: Increase awareness of grants available to agritourism operators or supporting organizations to leverage funding support.

Agritourism operators and the organizations that support them may be eligible for a range of federal, state, and local funding programs that can support business development, marketing, infrastructure, conservation, and other agritourism-related activities. Increasing awareness of these opportunities can help producers and partners identify and leverage resources that align with their needs and planned investments.

Potential funding sources include the Farmers Market Promotion Program, Value-Added Producer Grant Program, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, and Natural Resources Conservation Service grants. Local destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and economic development offices may also be able to connect operators with funding opportunities, partnerships, or resources available within their communities and regions.

The examples in table 5 illustrate how public agencies and partner organizations can invest in agritourism through approaches ranging from planning and coordination to marketing, infrastructure, technical assistance, and direct grants. These examples can help Utah operators and supporting organizations identify funding approaches that fit their needs, capacity, and project goals.

State role:

- UDAF: Identify and share relevant agriculture, business development, conservation, and other grant opportunities with agritourism operators and supporting organizations; provide technical assistance as capacity allows; and connect operators with partner organizations that can provide additional support in identifying, pursuing, and applying for funding opportunities.
- UOT: Share relevant tourism-related funding opportunities and encourage operators to connect with local destination marketing organizations and economic development partners to identify additional resources.

Table 5: Examples of rural areas making agritourism investments

Location	Project	Level and type of investment
Butte County, California	Coordinated partnership between county tourism, Cooperative Extension, and regional farm businesses to develop Sierra Oro Farm Trail (passport model)	The \$50,000 annual revenue is primarily member-, sponsor-, and event-supported rather than funded through a dedicated county appropriation. Strong example of using a farm trail and shared branding approach to turn dispersed agritourism businesses into a destination.
Grant County, Washington	Completed a county-wide Tourism Master Plan in December 2025 that emphasizes agriculture as a major tourism asset. Grant County's 2026 adopted budget includes \$1.242 million for its Lodging Tax Fund that could support agritourism.	The county funded development of the plan and intends to implement its recommendations through county lodging-tax revenues, grants, and public, nonprofit, and private investment. Recommended investments include agritourism routes, interpretive signage, visitor information, and coordinator branding to generate connections between businesses across sectors.
Queen Anne's County, Maryland	Queen Anne's County Economic and Tourism Development in partnership with the Upper Shore Regional Council administers the Upper Shore Micro Agricultural Grant Program . It is not exclusively an agritourism grant; agritourism businesses and projects are one eligible category within a broader agricultural business grant program.	Approximately \$69,000 was available in FY2026, with individual cost-reimbursable grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000. The grant program provides an example of county/regional areas that can invest in supporting agritourism providers. Queen Anne's County has also conducted an Agritourism Economic and Land Use Analysis to identify how zoning, permitting, land-use, and county initiatives support agritourism development.
Montana	Passed in 2023, Senate Bill 409 restructures the allocation of lodging facility use tax to support agritourism promotion and grants to establish the Agritourism Grant Program managed by the Department of Commerce.	More than \$445,000 awarded to 25 farms, ranches, businesses, and organizations in 2026, with individual awards ranging from \$4,100 to \$50,000. The program is funded through the state lodging facility use tax.

Strategy area: Policy and regulations

Zoning, permitting, and liability requirements are among the top regulatory challenges identified by Utah agritourism providers through the previous survey and strategy development workshops. Challenges include understanding which requirements apply, navigating local approval processes (or “red tape”), and determining which activities are permitted on agricultural land.

Agritourism regulation is particularly complex because there is no uniform national definition or regulatory framework. At the state level, agritourism is commonly addressed through civil liability, agricultural, and land-use laws, while local governments may establish additional requirements related to zoning, permitting, and public health and safety. As a result, requirements can vary significantly by jurisdiction and by the type and scale of agritourism activity.

As highlighted in the Key Learnings section, local requirements can impact the type and extent of agritourism operations. Local authorities can regulate which activities are permitted as agritourism or accessory agricultural uses; parking, access, and traffic requirements; noise standards; minimum acreage requirements; and limits on the number or frequency of events and operating days.

Utah state law establishes key agritourism provisions, including operator liability protections, while counties and municipalities generally determine how agritourism activities are regulated through zoning, permitting, and related land-use requirements. This division of authority can result in different requirements across jurisdictions. The following strategies focus on clarifying how agritourism is defined at the state level and addressing regulatory challenges affecting agritourism operations.

Strategy 9: Review and clarify Utah’s statutory definition of agritourism to reflect the range of qualifying activities.

As the agritourism industry continues to grow and diversify, states have adopted and amended statutory definitions to clarify the types of operations and activities that qualify as agritourism. Although definitions vary, states generally consider whether an activity occurs on agricultural land and whether it has a connection to agriculture. Many states use broad definitions that encompass activities associated with farming, ranching, aquaculture, forestry, and horticulture, as well as related educational, recreational, cultural, historical, or natural experiences.

Adopted in 2024, Utah Code 78B-4-512 defines agritourism as “the combination of agricultural production with tourism to attract participants from the general public to an agricultural enterprise for the entertainment, recreation, or education of the participants.” The statute further defines an agritourism enterprise as a “farm, ranch, or other agricultural, aquacultural, horticultural, or forestry operation.” These provisions establish a broad framework for the types of operations that may qualify as agritourism enterprises.

The statute does not identify specific activities that fall within this framework. Reviewing the definition and considering whether to add a list of qualifying activities could provide greater clarity for producers, local governments, insurers, and visitors. In particular, clearer identification of covered activities could help operators understand which activities fall within the state’s agritourism framework and qualify for associated liability protections.

State role:

- UDAF: Provide technical and subject-matter input on Utah’s statutory definition of agritourism and potential clarifications, engaging relevant UDAF regulatory, policy, legislative, and government affairs staff as appropriate. Convene opportunities for producer and stakeholder input to help identify areas where additional clarity may be needed, and continue raising awareness of existing agritourism liability protections and requirements.

Strategy 10: Strengthen local land-use and zoning frameworks to support agritourism development.

Zoning and land-use requirements can create uncertainty for agritourism operators, particularly when allowable activities, permitting requirements, and definitions vary across jurisdictions. The state can help create a more predictable environment for agritourism development while recognizing the role of local governments in making land-use decisions.

Two approaches used by other states provide options for Utah to consider. Table 6 below provides examples of six states that have implemented one of the approaches.

Approach A: Develop statewide agritourism zoning guidance and model approaches for local governments.

The state could develop voluntary guidance to help counties and municipalities consistently define and address agritourism in local ordinances. Guidance could include recommended definitions, examples of allowable agritourism activities, model zoning language, and considerations for issues such as parking, access, setbacks,

event size, and health and safety. This approach would provide local governments with practical tools while retaining local zoning authority.

Approach B: Evaluate and enact state legislation establishing consistent zoning protections for agritourism.

Agritourism industry representatives could work with state and local partners to evaluate whether clearer statewide parameters are needed for how agritourism activities on agricultural land are regulated. This could include identifying priority activities for protection, areas where local regulation remains appropriate, and zoning requirements that may unnecessarily restrict compatible agritourism uses. Based on this evaluation, industry partners could develop and advance potential legislative changes that support agricultural businesses while considering local authority over land use, infrastructure, and public health and safety.

State role:

- UDAF: Convene producers, local governments, agricultural organizations, and other partners to identify common land-use and zoning challenges affecting agritourism. Support development and dissemination of voluntary guidance, model approaches, and examples of agritourism-friendly local policies, and provide technical and subject-matter input on potential policy or statutory changes as appropriate.

Table 6: States with agritourism statewide zoning or guidance

State	Approach	Details
Florida	Statewide zoning statute: Florida Statutes §570.85	State law generally prohibits local governments from prohibiting, restricting, regulating, or otherwise limiting qualifying agritourism activities on land classified as agricultural. Local authority is largely limited to substantial off-site impacts, emergencies, and certain health and safety matters authorized by state law.
Indiana	State guidance provided	The Indiana State Department of Agriculture, through the Indiana Land Resources Council, developed Planning for Agritourism: A Guide for Local Governments and Indiana Farmers . The guide is broader than a model ordinance: it is a planning resource for agritourism operators, local officials, planners, extension staff, and rural economic-development and tourism professionals. It emphasizes that agritourism should be incorporated into local comprehensive planning and developed through collaboration with farmers and other community stakeholders.
Michigan	State guidance provided	The Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission developed the Agricultural Tourism Local Zoning Guidebook and Model Zoning Ordinance Provisions in 2007. The commission was created within the Michigan Department of Agriculture in 2005 in part to study how local zoning affects agritourism businesses. Its guidebook was intended to promote greater consistency among local ordinances while retaining local control.
North Carolina	Statewide zoning statute: N.C. Gen. Stat. §160D-903	Agritourism buildings and structures may qualify as a bona fide farm purpose and therefore be exempt from county zoning and, in some circumstances, municipal extraterritorial zoning. Local zoning may still apply when the property cannot document bona fide farm status or the activity does not meet statutory requirements.
Ohio	Statewide zoning statute: Ohio Revised Code §§303.21 and 519.21	State law prohibits counties and townships from excluding agritourism from agricultural, residential, commercial, or industrial districts and sets limitations on parking requirements. Local governments may regulate only the size of agritourism structures and parking areas, setbacks, and ingress and egress when necessary to protect public health and safety.
Virginia	Statewide zoning statute: Virginia Code §15.2-2288.6	Localities generally may not require a special-use permit, special exception, or additional administrative permit for qualifying agritourism at an agricultural operation unless the activity has a substantial impact on public health, safety, or general welfare. Any local restriction must be reasonable and consider its economic effect on the agricultural operation.

Next Steps

Moving these recommendations into action will require continued partnership and coordination between UDAF and UOT, with an initial focus on steps that can be undertaken through existing resources and staff capacity. Alignment with broader state priorities can also help guide implementation decisions, including where to focus partnerships, staffing, and future investment.

Near-term priorities and activities:

- Strategy 2: sharing information on Utah's agritourism liability protections through existing communication channels
- Strategies 3 and 6: UOT convening annual tourism exchange to support operator networking, partnerships, and cross-promotion
- Strategy 4: UDAF hosting semi-annual agritourism partner meetings to strengthen coordination and shared resource development
- Strategy 5: exploring opportunities to strengthen the state agritourism registry within existing resources while identifying additional needs and resources for future enhancements
- Strategy 8: sharing relevant funding opportunities with producers and partners through existing communication channels

Securing funding for dedicated agritourism staffing under strategy 7 represents a longer-term priority and an important step toward expanding the scale, coordination, and consistency of this work. Initial efforts can focus on identifying and pursuing funding opportunities for the position. Dedicated staff capacity would help UDAF and UOT more fully implement and sustain many of the recommendations outlined in this report. Together, these near- and longer-term actions provide a path for building the capacity, partnerships, and resources needed to strengthen agritourism across Utah.

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