

## FARM STAY USA – Strategic Planning

<https://farmstayus.com/>

Farm Stay USA will reach its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary promoting U.S. farm and ranch stays in June 2020. In these first 10 years, the organization's focus has been to familiarize consumers (travelers), operators (farmers and ranchers), and the media with this nascent travel niche for the U.S. Based on its popularity as a tourism and rural economic generator, Europe has supported this form of agritourism formally since the 1980s. While the job is not done, Farm Stay USA must design the next level of implementation for operational support and sustainability if its mission is to be truly successful.

### BENEFITS to Farm Stay USA Members:

1. We are champions for agriculture, highlighting the importance of local food production, the need for sustainability of small family farms in the USA, and the importance of rural economic development.
2. Currently we offer tools for farmers and ranchers who want to diversify their operations with hospitality
3. We offer a trusted platform with targeted marketing to connect interested visitors with authentic farm and ranch hosts.

### LOOKING FORWARD: Next Steps

1. Looking forward, Board Members will be networking, making calls, knocking on doors, and thinking-outside-the-box. Then we will bring ideas for "next steps" for discussion at the next meeting and/or retreat.
2. How do we promote the value of Farm Stay USA and thus increase our membership? Can we become sustainable on our own or do we need to build affiliations/partnerships? Where do affiliate fees come in?
3. Looking to building associate memberships, sponsorships, affiliates:
  - a. If we decide to collaborate with others, who do we reach out to? We want to stay true to our mission and vision of education ... promoting agri-tourism by educating travelers and supporting host families.

### CONSIDERATIONS:

1. NOTE: **we are a referral platform tailored to agri-tourism** ... not a booking site. The board has regional representation across the nation. Our new logo (in 2017) along with our new and improved website refreshed the branding. There is much to be proud of as we position ourselves for the future.
2. FARM STAY USA has been making great strides developing awareness of farm and ranch stays. Our new website took a tremendous effort in time, money, and all-hands-on-deck resources. It has been operational for 6 months now. Before only a limited audience accessed our website, now it is compatible with mobile-friendly devices and we see that sector growing in our Google Analytics. But, the message is not getting to everyone.
3. After 10 years, Executive Director Scottie Jones believes we need to be innovative more now than ever... and maybe some new blood. She thinks perhaps a younger person could take marketing to the next level building.
4. Grant writing is a lot of work ... the \$147,000 USDA grant (in 2018 collaborating with farmer's markets) was a shot in the arm when we needed it. Should we be looking for more grant money ... who can help us with that?
5. With our 501(c)6 designation ... are we at a disadvantage with grantor institutions who are more familiar with the 501(c)3 model? Do we set up a 501c3 as a companion organization and if so how do the two organizations work to benefit each other?
6. Webinars with timely topics have been well received but could appeal to a larger audience if we could get the word out. Do we share (free), do we monetize, or do we do something in between?
7. Other platforms such as AirBnB and Yonder take a 10% booking commission and that is how they make money ... our goal is to work cooperatively, to become sustainable, and ultimately to help the farmers/ranchers diversify their income without having to pay money off the top to a third party.