

Fact Sheet

STAFFING YOUR AGRITOURISM OPERATION

ARE YOU READY TO HIRE?

First evaluate your needs by asking yourself:

- What are the jobs you are hiring for? Clearly define the different roles & responsibilities within your agritourism venture to understand the types of jobs and number of staff required.
- Who can you afford? Determine what the fair compensation is for each role, considering both the job requirements and market rates. Ensure your budget aligns with your staffing wants and needs. Offering competitive wages and benefits is key to attracting and retaining quality staff.

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UNDERSTAND & ADHERE TO LABOR REGULATIONS

- Familiarize yourself with state and federal requirements to ensure fair compensation. There are legal differences between traditional farming jobs and agritourism jobs. Most agritourism jobs do not qualify for the same pay and overtime exemptions that might be allowable in your state for agricultural production workers.
- Be aware of specific regulations governing the employment of minors in your state. Exemptions for youth employment in agricultural production may not qualify for some agritourism jobs. For example, youth under 18 who are qualified to drive a tractor for farming would not automatically be eligible to drive a tractor pulling a hay-wagon ride.

WHAT SKILLS ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Agritourism staff require a unique set of skills to cater to guests effectively. You will need to develop a hiring process that can screen for these skills.

- Customer Service and Public Engagement: The ability to interact positively with guests is the most important skill for your customer-facing staff.
- Salesmanship: Employees should be persuasive and capable of promoting your offerings.
- Problem-Solving and Decision-Making: Staff must handle unexpected challenges gracefully to ensure a seamless guest experience.

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FINDING THE RIGHT CANDIDATES

There are two primary pools of candidates:

- Local Talent: Local youth and adults seeking part-time positions. Customers of your operation are a key resource for this pool of applicants.
- Non-Local Temporary Staff: A possible source is college students and J-1 visa holders to provide seasonal support. This pool of workers may need housing.

Both groups can be recruited by using social media, online job platforms, and community networks to broaden your reach. Some examples of innovative approaches are:

- TikTok videos of local high school youth that work at the farm describing what they do
- Giving “good apple” awards to local middle school and high school students (selected by the school). The awardees are a good pool to recruit workers from.

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ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

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A comprehensive training program is essential for equipping your agritourism staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide a great customer experience! Key to this are:

- Product and Service Familiarity: Ensure staff are well-versed in what you offer.
- Hands-on Experience: Pair new hires with experienced staff for practical learning.
- Customer Interaction: Simulate real-life scenarios to prepare staff for actual guest interactions.



PAYING YOUR EMPLOYEES

All employees must receive the following as part of their paycheck:

- Wages (include overtime)
- Social Security
- Medicare
- Paid sick leave
- Unemployment Insurance
- Workers Compensation
- Uniform and/or tools

Not sure where to start? Find a payroll company that your peers are using.

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CRAFTING A JOB DESCRIPTION

In creating a job description make sure you considered all the duties and responsibilities in your agritourism operation. This will be important as you recruit for workers. Agritourism is a retail operation and all employees should be trained in:

- Customer service
- Problem solving
- Crisis Management
- Being outside in the elements

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CONSIDER SHARING LABOR

Unless your agritourism operation operates year-round, consider sharing labor with a complimentary enterprise. This can offer not only a more year-round job opportunity, but also minimize time spent doing recruitment, training and orientation. An example might be a greenhouse partnering with an apple orchard and/or u-pick for labor.



Additional Resources:

- Wage Information by Occupation: <https://www.onetonline.org/>
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Ag Workforce Development: <https://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/about/>
- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets: Ag Districts Program: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/land-and-water/agricultural-districts>
- Cornell Cooperative Extension: <https://cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension/work-teams/agritourism>
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Agritourism YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@cceagritourism>
- National Agricultural Law Center: <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/research-by-topic/agritourism-2/>
- NY Safety in Agricultural Tourism Act: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/news/state-agriculture-commissioner-releases-guidance-safety-agricultural-tourism-act>