Farm to Stay Grant Program

Eligibility and Application Guidelines

The Farm to Stay Grant Program supports agritourism revenue development for working farms and ranches through farm stays, tours, U-pick, and farm-to-table dining, while increasing rural tourism and economic activity. Funded by Airbnb, the program is administered by American Farmland Trust (AFT) through its Brighter Future Fund.

Overview

Grant amount	Up to $10,000 per farm or ranch (minimum request of $5,000). A total of $250,000 is available, and AFT anticipates making 25 to 30 awards.
Intended applicants	Owners and operators of for-profit working farms and ranches in the 50 states seeking to establish, expand, or improve farm stays or on-farm visitor experiences that generate additional farm income.
Eligible uses	Construction, renovation, equipment, furnishings, and materials required to create or enhance overnight accommodations or visitor experiences connected to the working farm or ranch.
Timeline	Applications will be accepted Nov. 30 through Dec. 4, 2026. Approximately 350 applications will be reviewed in the order received. Funding is limited, and not all eligible applications can be funded. Award status notifications will be sent to the email address provided in the application by Feb. 1, 2027. Awards are paid by direct deposit approximately 90 days after the award agreement is finalized. The grant period is one year (365 days), beginning on the date of award notification.
How to apply	The application link will be available at farmland.org/farm-to-stay when the application period opens. Applications must be submitted through the online portal.

Eligibility at a Glance

Who can apply	The owner, operator, or primary decision-maker of a for-profit farm or ranch located in one of the 50 states. The operation must be intentionally engaged in terrestrial, soil-based agricultural production, such as crops or livestock (including agroforestry and silvopasture), and must have sold, bartered, or exchanged at least $1,000 in agricultural products during the most recent growing season. Applicants must devote the majority of their working time to farming or ranching.
Project types	Establishment, expansion, or improvement of a farm stay or visitor experience with a substantive connection to the agricultural operation and intended to generate or strengthen farm income.
Airbnb listing	Not required. Awardees may select the platform or approach best suited to their operation.
Ineligible applicants	Nonprofit farms; operations outside the 50 states, including U.S. territories; operations that are not soil-based; and operations producing primarily for personal or household use. Applicants who received AFT grant funds on or after Jan. 1, 2026; AFT staff, board members, and substantial contributors (those who have contributed $5,000 or more); and their immediate family members are also ineligible.
Award limit	One application will be reviewed and one grant awarded per farm, farm family, or operation.

Program Priorities

Reviewers will prioritize projects that:

- Clearly describe the visitor experience and its connection to the working farm or ranch.
- Demonstrate how the project will generate or strengthen farm income and how the operation will sustain it beyond the grant period.
- Benefit surrounding communities through local partnerships, increased patronage of nearby businesses, or expanded lodging where options are limited.
- Establish the current need for funding, including recent operational challenges.
- Present a realistic budget and timeline and demonstrate readiness to receive and manage grant funds.
- Demonstrate that required zoning approvals, permits, and licenses have been secured and that other legal requirements have been satisfied.

Among eligible applicants, priority will be given to those who have not previously received AFT grant funding. AFT will make awards based on project strength and alignment with program goals, while seeking a diverse mix of operations, locations, and project types.

Project Completion Requirement

All components of the proposed project, including those financed through other sources, must be completed within the grant period, which ends 365 days after the date of award notification. Award status notifications will be sent to applicants by Feb. 1, 2027. The farm stay or visitor experience must be marketable and ready to receive guests by the end of that period. Completion of the grant-funded portion alone does not satisfy this requirement.

Eligible Uses of Funds

Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to, construction, renovation, equipment, furnishings, and materials to establish or improve farm stays or visitor experiences. Projects may include guest lodging, tours, classes, U-pick, and farm-to-table meals, provided they are connected to the working farm or ranch.

Ineligible expenses include livestock, payroll, ongoing operating costs, personal or household expenses, costs incurred before submission of the signed award agreement, and projects unrelated to a qualifying farm or ranch.

For detailed examples of eligible and ineligible projects and expenses, see the Farm to Stay FAQ at farmland.org/farm-to-stay. AFT makes final determinations of eligible and ineligible expenses.

Ineligible Applicants

The following applicants are **not** eligible:

- Nonprofit organizations and farms operated or managed by nonprofit organizations.
- Operations located outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia, including U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico.
- Operations producing agricultural products primarily for personal or household use.
- Operations not intentionally engaged in terrestrial, soil-based agricultural production, including operations based solely on aquaponics, hydroponics, aquaculture, or fisheries.
- Most equine operations, such as those focused on boarding, training, racing, or recreational uses.
- Operations that did not sell, barter, or exchange at least $1,000 in agricultural products during the most recent growing season.
- Operations engaged solely in lodging or visitor activities. A farm stay or visitor experience does not establish eligibility for an otherwise ineligible operation.
- AFT staff, board members, and substantial contributors to AFT (those who havegiven a total of $5,000 or more over time), and their immediate family members (sibling, spouse, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, or great-grandchild).
- Applicants who received AFT grant funds on or after Jan. 1, 2026.

Application and Award Process

Timeline

Nov. 30, 2026	Applications open at 8 a.m. ET
Dec. 4, 2026	Applications close at 11:59 p.m. ET
December – January	Applications under review
Feb. 1, 2027	Applicants notified by email
Spring 2027	Grant funds paid to awardees

Applications are accepted only during the designated application period.

Applications will be accepted through the online grant portal from 8 a.m. ET on Monday, Nov. 30, through 11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, Dec. 4, 2026. Applicants are encouraged to prepare in advance.

- Approximately 350 applications will be reviewed in the order received; this figure is an estimate, not a firm cap. AFT may review additional applications to account for incomplete, ineligible, or fraudulent submissions and to support a diverse mix of locations and farm types.
- Awards are determined by scoring against program priorities, not submission order. Early submission does not guarantee funding.
- Award status notifications will be sent to the email address provided in the application, anticipated by Feb. 1, 2027.
- Grant funds are disbursed in full by ACH direct deposit approximately 90 days after the award agreement is finalized. Payment timing is subject to change.
- Awardees will have 365 days from the award date to complete their projects. The award date is the date of notification and the request for a signed award agreement, not the payment date.

Email Communications

All program communications, including award status notifications, will be sent to the email address provided in the application. Applicants should use the same email address for their SurveyMonkey Apply account to ensure consistency. **Applicants are responsible for monitoring this address, including reviewing junk and spam folders and adjusting email settings or filters as needed to receive messages from AFT and SurveyMonkey Apply.** To help ensure delivery, applicants should add brighterfuture@farmland.org and noreply@mail.smapply.net to their contacts or safe senders list. Failure to respond to AFT communications may result in forfeiture of the award.

How to Apply

1. Review these guidelines and the FAQ to assess eligibility and alignment with program objectives.
2. Review the application questions and prepare an operation and project description, budget, and timeline. Quotes, estimates, and pricing screenshots are optional but encouraged.
3. Submit your application through the AFT grant portal (SurveyMonkey Apply).
    a. The application link will be available at farmland.org/farm-to-stay beginning Nov. 30.

   b. Create an account using an email address you monitor regularly, and enter the same address in the application. All program communications will be sent to this address.
   c. Progress can be saved and resumed; however, applications cannot be edited once submitted.
   d. Applications submitted after 11:59 p.m. ET on Dec. 4, or by email or mail, will **not** be accepted.
4. Monitor the email address provided in the application, including junk and spam folders, for submission confirmation and award status notifications, and respond promptly to all AFT communications.

Applicant Checklist

- Review these guidelines, the FAQ, and the application questions in advance.
- Create a SurveyMonkey Apply user account using an email address you monitor regularly, and enter the same address in the application.
- Monitor the email address provided in the application, including junk and spam folders, and add AFT and SurveyMonkey Apply to your safe senders list.
- Meet the requirements of the application's brief eligibility screening.
- Describe the farm or ranch, the proposed stay or visitor experience, and its connection to agricultural production.
- Explain how the project will generate or strengthen farm income.
- Prepare a project budget and timeline demonstrating that the full project will be completed within the grant period.
- If project costs exceed the grant request, identify additional funding or resources and their anticipated availability.
- For leased land or construction projects, be prepared to describe land tenure and document landowner authorization.
- Be prepared to identify applicable zoning approvals, permits, licenses, and other legal requirements, including those already satisfied.
- Optional supporting budget documentation includes quotes, estimates, and pricing screenshots. Handwritten budgets based on applicant research are acceptable and receive equal consideration.
- Optional 30-second video in which you tell us in your own words why your farm/ranch and proposed project are a strong fit for this funding opportunity.
- If awarded, be prepared to share your story and project updates and to provide or permit photographs and/or video within the grant period (365 days after award notification).

Tips for a Strong Application

The following tips, organized to follow the program priorities, can help strengthen an application.

Demonstrate agricultural relevance
Describe visitor activities and learning opportunities and their connection to agricultural production. A rural location alone is insufficient.

Connect expenses to project objectives
Explain how each budget item supports establishment or improvement of the farm stay or visitor experience.

Describe a clear scope, milestones, and timeline
Define project activities, responsible parties, and completion dates, including anticipated purchase or contract dates. Account for weather and seasonal construction constraints.

Assess regulatory requirements early
Demonstrate research into applicable zoning, permitting, septic, fire safety, accessibility, and insurance requirements.

Application Language

Grammar and writing style are not evaluation criteria. AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) are permitted; however, applicants are strongly encouraged to describe their goals, challenges, and plans in their own words. Provide concise operational context to establish project goals and timeliness, but focus primarily on proposed activities, use of funds, and expected outcomes.

Award Process and Terms

- Selected applicants will be notified at the email address provided in the application and receive an award agreement outlining the approved budget, timeline, payment details, and reporting and publicity requirements. You must sign the award agreement to receive grant funds. Failure to respond to AFT communications may result in the forfeiture of the award.
- Grant funds are paid directly to the awardee. AFT does not pay vendors on an awardee's behalf.
- Awardees may incur approved project expenses after submitting the signed award agreement and all required information, including before disbursement, as long as this does not create undue financial strain. Spending funds before receipt is not required.
- Before making an award, AFT may request documentation verifying that the operation meets the $1,000 sales, barter, or exchange requirement.
- Awardees must submit banking and tax documentation (IRS Form W-9) through the secure online portal. Awardees must also submit a photo for identity verification.
- Funds may be used only for approved expenses and in a manner consistent with the awardee's application. AFT cannot fund costs exceeding the approved award amount.
- Awardees must refund to AFT any funds that are misused, used illegally, or used in a manner inconsistent with their application. AFT may terminate a grant if the awardee breaches the award agreement or fails to fulfill any grant obligation.
- Awardees must explain any variance from the approved budget in their progress and final reports. Changes to project scope, location, timeline, or expense categories require prior written approval from the Brighter Future Fund team; approval is not guaranteed. If awardees are unsure whether a change requires approval, they should contact brighterfuture@farmland.org before proceeding.
- Awardees will submit a short progress report six months after award notification and a final report no later than the end of the grant period (365 days after award notification). AFT will also conduct a check-in two years after award notification to learn how the farm stay or visitor experience is performing. Reports will address project progress, completion, expenditures, and outcomes, including agritourism income, visitor numbers, local partnerships, and workshops or activities. Awardees must maintain, and make available to AFT on request, receipts, expenditure records, documents, and other records pertaining to the project.
- As a condition of receiving an award, awardees will be required, within the grant period (365 days after award notification), to share their story and project updates and to provide or permit photographs and/or video for use by AFT and its partners to evaluate and demonstrate impact, raise awareness of agritourism opportunities to support farm viability, and promote future funding. Publicity may also include media interviews and information on outcomes such as income or visitor changes. The award agreement will specify required activities and permitted uses of names, images, property information, and stories.

Permits, Insurance, and Regulatory Compliance

Awardees must comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws governing short-term rentals, visitor experiences, and agritourism. They are responsible for zoning compliance, permits, building and health requirements, insurance, visitor safety, and landowner approvals. A grant award does not constitute local regulatory approval. Applications with required approvals in place will receive priority; however, priority does not guarantee funding. Applicants should carefully weigh the time and expense of securing approvals solely for the purpose of applying.

Confidentiality

AFT maintains the confidentiality of individual applicant information and does not disclose it to third parties, except as specified in an award agreement or when publishing an awardee's farm name and business location on AFT's website. AFT may share aggregated, anonymized information about grant programs, outcomes, applicants, and beneficiaries. AFT may also share awardee stories, project updates, photographs, and video provided under the award agreement with partners to evaluate and demonstrate impact, raise awareness of agritourism opportunities, and promote future funding. These partners include Airbnb, which funds the program.

Questions and Support

Consult the Farm to Stay FAQ at farmland.org/farm-to-stay for common questions. For eligibility questions not addressed in these guidelines, contact brighterfuture@farmland.org with a brief operation and project description.

High inquiry volume may limit individual responses. Staff can clarify eligibility and program requirements but cannot review drafts or assess proposal competitiveness.

For technical issues with the application portal, use the SurveyMonkey Apply help feature: select the information (i) icon in the top-right corner and choose "Contact support." Technical issues do not extend the application deadline.