

BridgeUSA Program Survey

Absence of Crucial International Exchange Visitors Devastates Seasonal Businesses Across the United States

From September 13 to October 15, 2021, the Alliance for International Exchange surveyed 665 seasonal businesses and summer camps nationwide, of which 72% are small businesses.

SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PARTICIPANTS*

	2019	2020	2021	Decrease from 2019
United States	108,303	4,952	39,647	63% ↓
Illinois	1,566	5	111	93% ↓

*Data source the U.S. Department of State, J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program.

- ECONOMIC IMPACT -

60%

Of Businesses
Lost Revenue

20%

Of Seasonal
Positions Unfilled

3 in 5

Shortened their
season/hours or closed
business locations



Did not meet peak
staffing needs without J-1
Visa Exchange Visitors



Reported staff burnout



Reported lower quality of
customer service or longer
customer wait times

In Illinois, 4 businesses reported a total loss of \$1,100,000, averaging

\$275,000

per business

- PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IMPACT -

Lack of J-1 Visa Exchange Visitors hamstrings U.S. public diplomacy goals by taking away a key positive U.S. experience from tomorrow's international leaders, and preventing them from engaging with their American host communities.

Host employers across America agree or strongly agree that Summer Work Travel and Camp Counselor participants:



Enable U.S. based staff to gain a better understanding of other cultures



Contribute to a positive culture in the workplace



Make the community more sensitive to other cultures

“Seasonal staffing issues almost destroyed our business. We had to reduce hours of operation and the stress it put on the handful of employees we had was tremendous.”

- Restaurant in Kitty Hawk, NC

“Owner and wife working 90 hour weeks for 4 months with no days off. Staff is working 55 hours per week. Forced to cut hours of operation. Forced to reduce the variety of products. Everyone is burned out.”

- Candy Store in Rehoboth Beach, DE

“Exchange participants provide fantastic cultural exposure to the local community and also support the local economy by renting accommodations, purchasing goods and gifts for their families.”

- Restaurant in Dennis, MA

“What happened in 2021 cannot happen again; my business will not survive another season like 2021, and our current survival "success" was as much luck as it was blood, sweat, and tears.”

-Summer Camp in Thompson, CT

“Participants enrich our resort year after year with a combination of enthusiasm and culture. They introduce our chefs to international cuisine, which in turn is shared with our guests and staff.”

- Ski Resort in Park City, UT

“With staff from a wide variety of locations our campers get a broader view of the world, gaining a better understanding of the differences, but even more importantly the similarities we share with others. Without our international staff several recreational areas were not offered and we lost attendance due to not being able to offer some of our most popular activities.”

- Summer Camp in Lake Zurich, IL