

# 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. Below are responses from these businesses, 31 in Minnesota.

### SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PARTICIPANTS\*

	2019	2020	2021	Decrease from 2019
United States	108,303	4,952	39,647	63% ↓
Minnesota	1,794	38	373	79% ↓

\*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 Minnesota, 20 businesses reported a total loss of \$2,357,000, averaging

**\$117,850**

per business

## - PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IMPACT -

Lack of J-1 Visa Exchange Visitors hampers 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

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“BridgeUSA participants are a highlight for almost all visitors to our area. The students contribute positively to the entire area and are greatly appreciated by all.”

**- Grocery Store in Lutsen, MN**

“We lost a net revenue of \$250,000 due to reduced hours and days open.”

**- Restaurant in Grand Marais, MN**

“We are doing great business but we are overworked because we simply cannot find enough help no matter where that help originates from.”

**- Resort in Grand Marais, MN**

“Not having enough staff caused us to limit how many campers we took in, therefore decreased our revenue. The staff we had was asked to work harder.”

**- Summer Camp in Pine River, MN**

“The mental & physical burden exacerbated by seasonal staffing shortages on our business is almost more of a challenge than the financial losses we have incurred. As owners/operators, we pick up the slack and are absolutely exhausted and burned out. We risk having to close or sell our 4th generation, 24/7 business because there is only so long a person can sustain this level of intensity.”

**- Hotel in Grand Marais, MN**

“The Summer Work Travel program promotes an understanding of our global neighbors at a time when that is even more important. We have hosted many students from Jordan, Turkey, Serbia and other countries that came with preconceived notions of what the United States was like. Lifelong friendships were made between U.S. staff and exchange participants.”

**- Rental Management Company in Lutsen, MN**