

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, 12 in Montana.

SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PARTICIPANTS*

	2019	2020	2021	Decrease from 2019
United States	108,303	4,952	39,647	63% ↓
Montana	1,954	48	704	64% ↓

*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 Montana, 8 businesses reported a total loss of \$880,000, averaging

\$110,000

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

"The Summer Work Travel students become lifelong friends with their American counterparts who often travel overseas to visit and continue cultural exchange long after the program is over. During the seasons when we have international students, the overall morale of the entire crew is always better because it's fun to work with someone who expands your horizons."

- Retail Store in West Glacier, MT

"Without the BridgeUSA Summer Work Travel Program during the summer 2021, our operation was limited in its services and offerings."

- Hotel in Bigfork, MT

"Can't rent rooms if we don't have staff to clean the rooms."

- Hotel in West Yellowstone, MT

"We had to cancel breakfast, close Mondays and reduce our hours."

- Restaurant & Hotel in Gardiner, MT

"We overworked our core team, lost team members due to burnout, and had to limit some of our services and occupancy."

- Hotel in Bigfork, MT

"We were able to open this summer, but we had to close earlier on some days or not open at all. We also had to reduce some of our services to be able to stay open on days that we were open. All of this translated to lost revenue for our company and employees and poor customer experience for our guests."

- Retail Store in West Glacier, MT