

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, 36 in North Carolina.

SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PARTICIPANTS*

	2019	2020	2021	Decrease from 2019
United States	108,303	4,952	39,647	63% ↓
North Carolina	2,852	344	995	65% ↓

*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 North Carolina, 25 businesses reported a total loss of \$4,073,000, averaging

\$162,920

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

“Learning about other cultures and becoming lifelong friends with many of the participants has enriched our lives immeasurably.”

- Restaurant in Kill Devil Hills, NC

“The lack of international exchange program participants and seasonal worker shortage resulted in product quality reduction, full time staff burnout, longer queue times, and lack of company cultural experience opportunities for full time staff.”

- Vacation Rentals in Nags Head, NC

“BridgeUSA programs bring cultural aspects to North Carolina that some employees would not otherwise encounter.”

- Restaurant in Bryson, NC

“We lost revenue because people thought our stores were trashy due to merchandise being in disarray all over the stores and longer wait lines. Customers just couldn't understand. Bad reviews on social media so next year's revenue will be impacted as well.”

- Retail Store in Nags Head, NC

“We were unable to provide the same service we are known for. Staff is exhausted and some are leaving.”

- Grocery Store in Buxton, NC

“Reduced hours means reduced income. We've run thin just like everyone else.”

- Restaurant in Kill Devil Hills, NC