

# 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, 8 in Rhode Island.

### SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PARTICIPANTS\*

	2019	2020	2021	Decrease from 2019
United States	108,303	4,952	39,647	63% ↓
Rhode Island	946	28	268	72% ↓

\*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 Rhode Island, 6 businesses reported a total loss of \$897,000, averaging

**\$149,500**

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

“Our business is located on a small resort island. All island businesses depend on the Summer Work Travel students. We experienced a lack of sales due to shortage of help.”

**- Restaurant on Block Island, RI**

“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**

“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**

“Watching our local college students make friends and lifelong connections with our BridgeUSA participants is one of the best benefits of the Summer Work Travel program. With social media, they are able to keep in touch and watch each others' success over the years.”

**- Hotel in Newport, RI**

“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**

“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**