

# 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, 18 in South Carolina.

### SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PARTICIPANTS\*

	2019	2020	2021	Decrease from 2019
United States	108,303	4,952	39,647	63% ↓
South Carolina	3,403	212	833	76% ↓

\*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 South Carolina, 15 businesses reported a total loss of \$3,963,000, averaging

**\$264,200**

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

"The staff we were able to employ were burned out and with good reason. Customer service suffered and so did our ability to get merchandise out to the customers leading to financial loss."

**- Retail Store in Myrtle Beach, SC**

"Exchange participants bring a cultural flare to our business. Customers hear their accents and it makes for an immediate ice breaker. Patrons enjoy their store experience and it builds customer loyalty!"

**- Retail Store in Myrtle Beach, SC**

"We have lost considerable business, time and financial strain due to the inability to staff our retail and restaurant locations. The stress of this impact could affect future business."

**- Retail Store in Charleston, SC**

"Our American employees get to experience different cultures, learn about the students' countries, and make friendships that last forever. The students also open the eyes of many of our customers about the world outside the U.S.A."

**- Amusement Park in Myrtle Beach, SC**

"We usually had to have one person work two hours by themselves in the morning and night. When only one person is on the floor, sales are impacted because you can't help everyone, ring the register and take in stock. The estimate of \$45,000 in lost sales may be low."

**- Retail Store in Myrtle Beach, SC**

"Closing outlets early or completely, reduction of services offered, complaints due to poor or lack of service."

**- Hotel in Myrtle Beach, SC**