

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 Virginia.

SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PARTICIPANTS*

	2019	2020	2021	Decrease from 2019
United States	108,303	4,952	39,647	63% ↓
Virginia	4,621	141	1,251	73% ↓

*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 Virginia, 9 businesses reported a total loss of \$1,460,000, averaging

\$162,222

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

“Our staff are burned out and our guest experience has suffered mightily. Our managers have done the work of line associates just to keep our guests happy. Our core associates feel demoralized and have no work/life balance. Without this program our guests have a negative experience. This is not how our hotel wants to do business now or in the future.”

- *Hotel in Virginia Beach, VA*

“Less staff = less campers = less income.”

- *Summer Camp in Charlottesville, VA*

“Summer Work Travel participants help bring “life” to our property. We have very tenured associates (10-25 years) and hosting international students here makes them feel special as they introduce participants to American culture.”

- *Hotel in Virginia Beach, VA*

“The Summer Work Travel Program brings revenue into the VA Beach/Hampton Roads community. Participants spend money here and spread the word to their friends that this is a friendly, great place to have an internship or exchange program experience. Participants make friends here that last a lifetime.”

- *Hotel in Virginia Beach, VA*

“The hotel had a large number of guest satisfaction issues due to the staffing shortages, resulting in long wait times and late check-ins. This cost the hotel money by giving discounts to upset guests. We had to shorten hours of operation, condense the menu, and reduce seating capacity.”

- *Hotel in Virginia Beach, VA*

“Our international team members from around the world bring cultures and perspectives to share with our staff and campers. It's invaluable!”

- *Summer Camp in Palmyra, VA*