

IAAPA PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

BridgeUSA J-1 Summer Work Travel Program Update

For hosts that participate in the BridgeUSA J-1 Summer Work Travel Program, recent visa processing developments highlight the importance of proactive planning to advance workforce readiness and meaningful cultural exchange. U.S. embassies and consulates have largely resumed scheduling J-1 visa interviews under revised procedures; however, enhanced background and social media screening requirements may result in longer interview wait times and extended processing timelines for some participants.

In addition, increased global visa demand related to travel associated with the 2026 FIFA World Cup is placing added pressure on consular resources at certain posts. While this demand is concentrated primarily in visitor visa categories, broader capacity constraints may indirectly affect J-1 processing.

Hosts and sponsors should plan for potential delays in interview scheduling and visa issuance, particularly in high-demand locations, and continue to prioritize early recruitment and timely submission of program materials.

IAAPA is working in coalition with other organizations to engage Congress, the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), and Consular Affairs to ensure the needs of both hosts and J-1 students are clearly communicated and considered.

Supplemental H-2B Visa Update

Good news for operators that utilize the H-2B visa program—recent federal action strengthens an important component of the industry's overall seasonal workforce strategy.

On January 30, the Administration published a rule establishing the framework for releasing supplemental H-2B visas, allowing for up to nearly 65,000 additional visas above the statutory cap, subject to demonstrated labor need and existing compliance, worker protection, and U.S. worker non-displacement requirements. While the rule itself does not immediately release visas, it creates a clear pathway for availability through implementation by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

A partial federal government shutdown is currently underway but is expected to be brief. Under a temporary funding arrangement, DHS is anticipated to resume limited operations for approximately two weeks while Congress works toward a longer-term FY 2026 funding agreement. DHS actions during this window will play an important role in determining the timing and scope of supplemental H-2B visa releases.

Sincerely,



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