

Quick Reference Guide: Non-Immigrant Visas & BridgeUSA SWT Program

Understanding the BridgeUSA Summer Work Travel (SWT) Program

The BridgeUSA **Summer Work Travel (SWT)** program is **NOT** an immigration or labor program. It is an educational and cultural **exchange program** governed by the **U.S. Department of State**, not the Department of Labor or Workforce Development. The program:

- Operates under the **Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961** to foster global diplomacy and education.
- Allows full-time **university students** to work temporarily in the U.S. during summer breaks.
- Supports local economies while ensuring **American jobs are not displaced**.

Key Distinctions of BridgeUSA SWT

- 1. Administered by the U.S. Department of State**
 - Focuses on cultural exchange, not labor supply or immigration.
 - Participants return to their home country after the program.
- 2. J-1 Visa = Temporary, Non-Immigrant**
 - Participants are students, not workers seeking U.S. residency.
- 3. Work Component Supports Cultural Exchange**
 - Jobs (e.g., in resorts, national parks) help fund participants' experiences, but **cultural learning is the priority**.
- 4. Not a Workforce Development Program**
 - Employers must **prove seasonal labor shortages** to qualify for SWT participation.
 - Positions must be **temporary and not replace American workers**.
- 5. Cultural Engagement is Essential**
 - Participants attend local events, share traditions, and engage in U.S. cultural experiences.

Ensuring U.S. Jobs are Protected

- Employers **must demonstrate** a seasonal need and **cannot displace U.S. workers**.
- J-1 sponsors **vet employers** and ensure compliance with labor laws.
- Participation in **cultural activities is required**, reinforcing the non-work focus.

Comparison of Other Non-Immigrant Work Visas

Visa Type	Purpose	Who Qualifies?	Duration	Key Restrictions
J-1 (SWT)	Cultural Exchange	University students	Summer break only	Not a labor or immigration program
H-2A	Agricultural Work	Seasonal farmworkers	Up to 1 year (max 3)	Employer must provide housing & transport
H-2B	Seasonal, Non-Agricultural Work	Temporary workers for hospitality, landscaping, etc.	Up to 1 year (renewable)	No path to residency
F-1	Education	International students at U.S. schools	Length of study program	Limited work rights, must return home

Final Takeaway

- **BridgeUSA SWT = Education & Diplomacy**, NOT an immigration or labor program.
- **H-2A/H-2B = Temporary Work Visas** for specific industries.
- **F-1 = Student Visa** with strict work limitations.
- Advocacy and education are essential to **prevent misconceptions** and ensure these programs remain protected and accessible.

For more information:

[BridgeUSA & SWT Program](#)

[The Alliance for International Exchange](#)