

# An Investment in America

## How Department of State BridgeUSA Exchange Programs Advance U.S. Interests at Home and Abroad

### Camp Counselor Program, 2019-2023

The U.S. Department of State BridgeUSA Camp Counselor program allows international participants—including university students, youth workers, teachers, and individuals with specialized skills—to temporarily work as counselors at American summer camps, gaining hands-on experience while immersing themselves in American culture. As camp counselors, participants lead activities and ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for campers, while also exposing campers and camp staff to other cultures. In 2023, a total of 28,622 camp counselors participated in the program across the U.S.<sup>3</sup> Participants come to the U.S. on non-immigrant J-1 visas.

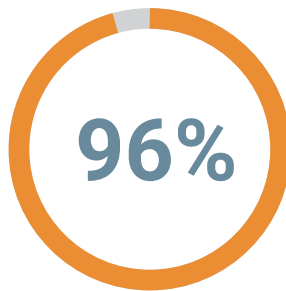
### The Camp Counselor Program Drives the U.S. Economy and Supports American Businesses



**\$50.1 MILLION**

Total amount Camp Counselor program participants spend in the U.S. per year

If host camps could not host international camp counselors...



96% would see their work and business negatively impacted through a reduction of services or activities and a decrease in the number of enrolled campers



<sup>3</sup>J-1 program national-level participation numbers are drawn from U.S. Department of State sources, upon which the economic impact calculations are also based. All other survey findings are based on a 2024 survey of 1,377 program alumni and 228 host camps.

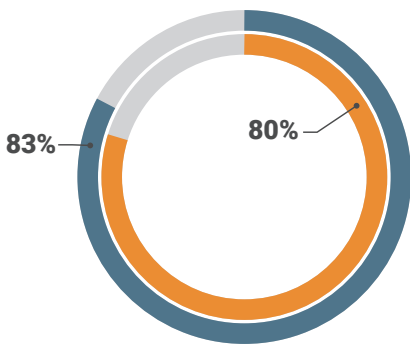
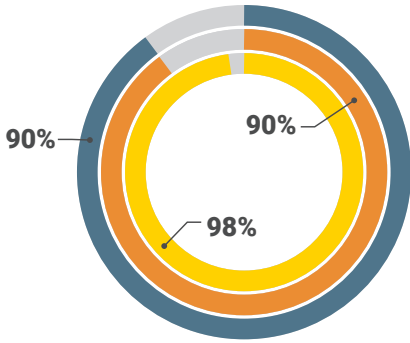
# The Camp Counselor Program **Advances American Interests**

## Program alumni actively...

- Recommend the program to friends and family
- Continue their engagement with the U.S. by returning or planning to return to the country
- Spread the word about the program and their experience in the U.S. with their networks via conversations, presentations, and social media

## U.S. camps report that the program...

- Helps their camp be more global in the long-term
- Enables international camp counselors to develop a better understanding of the U.S.



# The Camp Counselor Program **Increases Mutual Understanding**

## Camp counselors...

- Participate in a range of cultural activities with host employers that enable them to develop an understanding of American culture and society
- Develop more positive views of the U.S. as a result of the program, leading to stronger long-term ties with the U.S. and other countries

## Hosting camp counselor participants enables U.S. camps to...

- Expose American campers and counselors to new cultures and perspectives
- Increase the global and cultural awareness of American youth
- Promote mutual understanding and foster life-long friendships between American and international camp counselors

