



2026 Survey of Seasonal Employers:

More than Half of employers expect their H2B seasonal workers to arrive one month late One-in-four will need to cut back their operations due to shortage of available workers

Unleash Prosperity Now (UPN) partnered with the Seasonal Employment Alliance to conduct a comprehensive survey of the economic impact of the various H-2B processing delays for the 2026 season. H-2B visas are awarded to businesses that rely on seasonal workers - typically on three-to-six-month visas - for short-term employment. The impacted industries typically include: landscaping/gardening, golf course maintenance, resort staffing, hotel and restaurant services, amusement park operations, construction, forestry and seafood processing.

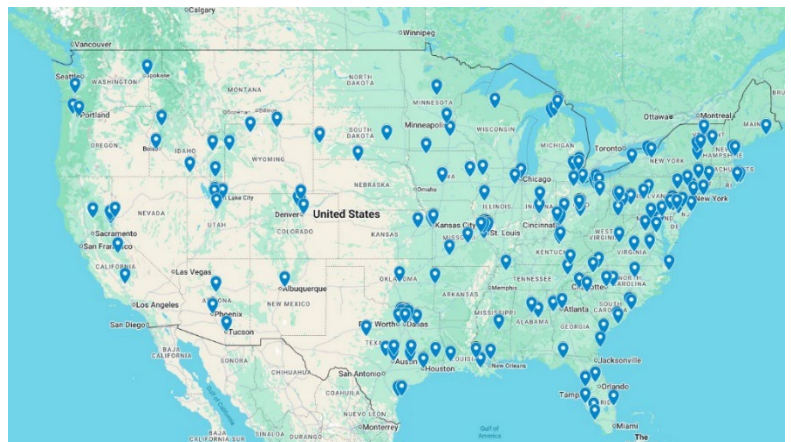
The findings reveal the severe economic impact of the various delays in the H-2B process on seasonal employers. Respondent businesses collectively requested over 12,500 H-2B workers for the 2026 season and employ more than 32,400 total workers (American and guest workers combined) during their peak seasons. This shows that the H-2B program is a supplementary labor force and that it supports and creates jobs for American workers.

An overwhelming 138 of 239 respondents (58%) expect their workers to arrive one month late or more, with 29% expecting delays of two months or longer. The severity of the impact is rated 4.31 out of 5 on average, with 59% of respondents rating the impact at the maximum severity level of 5 and 84% rating it at 4 or higher.

Respondent Profile

Respondents span more than 30 states, with the highest concentrations in Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Missouri, Michigan, New York, Utah, California, and Florida.

The survey captured responses from nine industry categories. Landscaping businesses represent the largest share at 56.9% of respondents, followed by golf course maintenance (18.8%), hospitality and resorts (8.4%), outdoor amusement (7.5%), construction (3.8%), and other industries including forestry, mining, and seafood processing (4.6%).



Key Findings

- Revenue losses ranging from under \$50,000 to over \$1,000,000 per business, with 55% of those reporting losses exceeding \$100,000.
- 40% of affected businesses report they will not be profitable this season.
- 27% anticipate having to permanently reduce the size of their business.
- 57 respondents report having turned away customers; 38 have lost contracts. 10% of affected businesses anticipate having to lay off American workers as a direct result of H-2B delays.



- Businesses that do receive workers plan significant reinvestment: hiring additional American managers, purchasing equipment, pursuing new contracts, and taking on capital projects.

Conclusions

- H-2B delays are not an inconvenience; rather, they are a direct threat to American businesses, American jobs, and local economies.
- H-2B visa delays cause direct, measurable economic harm to American businesses, with revenue losses ranging from tens of thousands to over \$1 million per employer and collectively representing hundreds of millions in lost economic activity.
- The current lottery-based allocation system creates uncertainty that prevents businesses from planning, investing, and growing—harming not only the businesses themselves but the American workers they employ and the communities they serve.
- H-2B workers complement rather than displace American workers. When H-2B workers are delayed or denied, American workers lose hours, lose jobs, and face unsustainable working conditions.
- 40% of affected businesses expect to be unprofitable this season, and more than one in four anticipate permanently reducing their operations—representing lasting structural damage to the American economy.
- The impacts are felt across nine industries (landscaping, golf course maintenance, hospitality, outdoor amusement, construction, forestry, mining, seafood processing, and others) and across more than 30 states, making this a national economic issue.
- The overwhelming majority of affected employers (71%) are Trump voters and Republican supporters, making H-2B reform a politically aligned priority.

Policy Recommendations

The H-2B visa program should be expedited and streamlined so that seasonal employers with a long-standing record of compliant program participation do not face severe economic repercussions due to the insufficient number of visas and systemic processing delays.

Increase H-2B Cap or Establish a Certified Seasonal Employer Designation. The CSE Designation would create a streamlined pathway for employers with a proven track record of H-2B participation, eliminating the uncertainty of the annual lottery for established seasonal employers.

Accelerate Processing Timelines. Reduce the gap between application and worker arrival. Every week of delay costs American businesses revenue, contracts, and customer relationships that may never be recovered. USCIS should institute an online filing and payment system for H-2B, like it has done for H-2A.

Restore Interview Waivers for Returning Workers. The State Department should reinstitute interview waivers for beneficiaries who have held an H-2 visa in the last 12 months or, if it wishes to be stricter, if the worker has held a visa in each of the last three years. This would free up more appointments at the consulates for workers who truly must be interviewed, saving resources at the consulates and improving processing times.

Provide Multi-Year Visa Certainty. Allow qualified employers to plan multiple seasons ahead with assured access to their returning workforce, enabling long-term capital investment and business growth.