



The JCLO Monthly

JAMAICA

YOUR PARTNER FOR RELIABLE WORKERS

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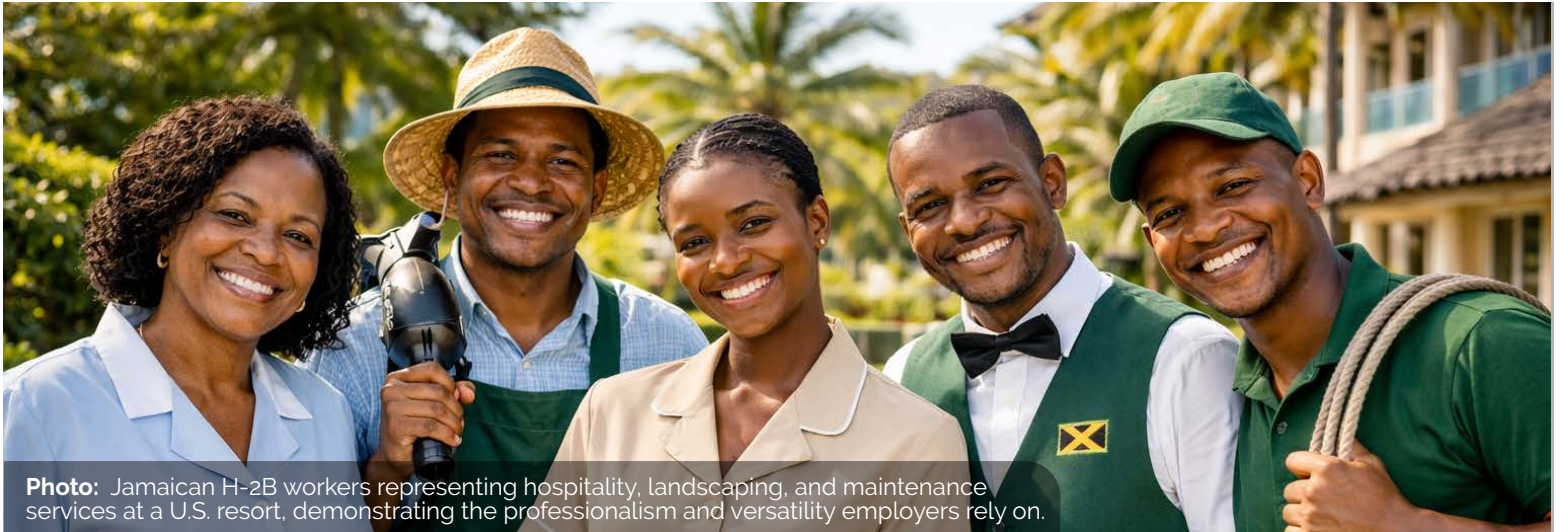


Photo: Jamaican H-2B workers representing hospitality, landscaping, and maintenance services at a U.S. resort, demonstrating the professionalism and versatility employers rely on.

Jamaicans the Top Choice for H-2B Workers

As Jamaica continues to expand its global labour footprint, attention must also turn to the H-2B Program—a programme that, while quieter than H-2A, rivals it in impact. Across hospitality, landscaping, and other non-agricultural sectors, Jamaican workers are a top choice for U.S. employers who demand reliability, adaptability, and high standard. Employers return to Jamaica because Jamaican workers deliver, consistently and professionally.

For many Jamaicans, the H-2B programme is a powerful gateway to opportunity. It opens doors to steady employment, transferable skills, and earnings that strengthen families at home. Just as important, it places Jamaican workers in environments where trust matters. Their performance has helped establish a reputation that travels ahead of them, making Jamaica not just a participant in the programme, but a preferred partner.

Through the Jamaica Central Labour Organisation, every H-2B engagement is carefully managed to ensure success. Liaison officers, and employers work together to maintain the standards that sustain confidence in the programme. The result is a system that works, for employers, for workers, and for Jamaica.



Colette Roberts Ridsen, CD
Permanent Secretary,
Jamaica Overseas Employment
Programmes

Did you know?

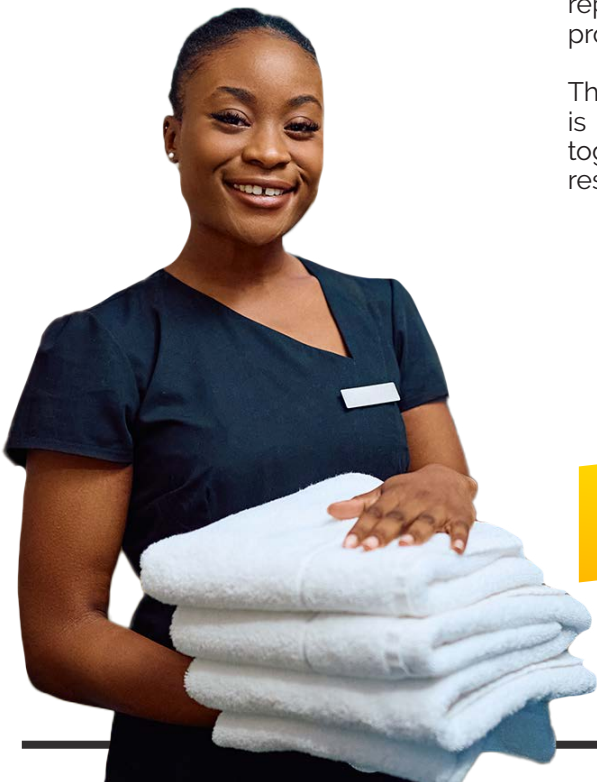
Did you know that the 2nd highest number of H-2B visas are issued to Jamaicans?

Over 12,000 H-2B visas are issued annually to Jamaicans to work in non-agricultural jobs such as hospitality, landscaping and food service.

DID YOU KNOW



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Patrick Green and the Discipline Behind Jamaica's H-2B Success

Patrick Green of St. Ann entered the H-2B programme with hospitality experience and left with sharper discipline, faster adaptation, and standards employers rely on. His story explains why Jamaican workers are consistently called back.

Patrick Green's work ethic was shaped long before he ever boarded a flight overseas. Raised in St. Ann, Jamaica, Green built his foundation in some of the country's most demanding hospitality environments, working at top hotels including Jamaica Grand and Breezes. The standards were high, the pace relentless, and precision non-negotiable. By the time he entered Jamaica's overseas employment system, hard work was already familiar territory. What the experience abroad added was refinement.

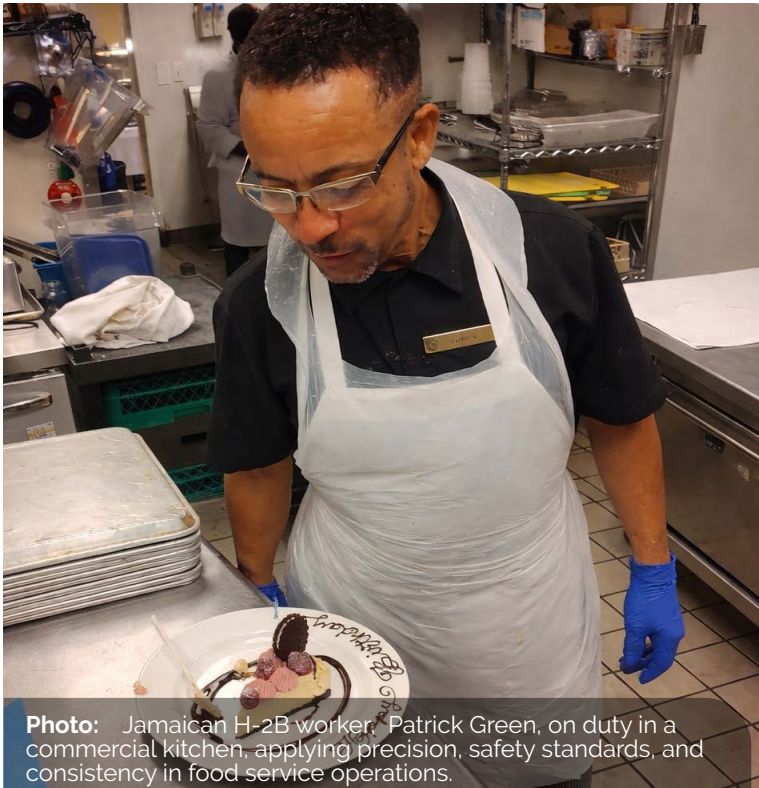


Photo: Jamaican H-2B worker, Patrick Green, on duty in a commercial kitchen, applying precision, safety standards, and consistency in food service operations.

Green is a participant in Jamaica's overseas employment arrangements under the H-2B Program, facilitated through the Government of Jamaica. Over several seasons, his journey through the programme has included different job sites, shifting labour demand, and a significant pause during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each phase, he says, taught him something new.

One of the earliest adjustments was language. The American work environment, with its faster pace and distinct workplace expressions, required him to adapt quickly. The learning curve was steep, but familiar. Years in Jamaica's hotel sector had already trained him to listen carefully, respond efficiently, and adjust without complaint.

"You learn fast," he explains. "You have to."

Beyond language, the programme introduced Green to new systems and expectations. Tasks were more structured. Accountability was immediate. What stood out most was the level of consistency required. "What some people find extreme, what we do extra for them, we find it normal," he says.

The skills he gained were not limited to technical tasks. He learned to navigate different departments, each with its own supervisors, personalities, and management styles. "Every department have different people," he notes. Adapting to those differences became part of the work itself.

Green speaks positively about how he was treated by employers and supervisors. Expectations were firm, but respect was present. Effort was recognised. Reliability mattered. That trust became especially evident during the Covid-19 disruption, when employers reached back out to workers they knew could deliver.

"They call some of the people because of Covid," he recalls. Those calls were based on performance, not familiarity.

Throughout his time on the programme, Green says he felt supported by Jamaica's overseas employment framework. He speaks with appreciation about the guidance, oversight, and follow-through provided, noting that the programme remained involved at every stage of the process. That support, he believes, is part of what allows Jamaican workers to perform confidently abroad.

For Green, the experience reshaped his work ethic in lasting ways. It reinforced discipline, attention to detail, and the importance of finishing every task properly. These habits now follow him wherever he works.

When asked what advice he would give to others considering the programme, his response is direct: come prepared to work, to learn, and to represent Jamaica well. "Do it clean. Do it proper," he says. "People are watching."

Patrick Green's story reflects a larger truth behind Jamaica's overseas employment success. The programme works not because of promises, but because of people who arrive ready, adapt quickly, and deliver consistently.

Quietly. Reliably. And the right way.



An H-2B Employer Trust, in Their Own Words

SavATree began hiring Jamaican workers more than two decades ago, starting with a small pilot group of roughly 12 workers in a single location. Today, Jamaican H-2B workers operate across approximately 30 company locations, with projections nearing 100 Jamaican workers across U.S. operations by 2026.

Kelly Gouge does not describe Jamaican H-2B workers in emotional terms. He describes them as a workforce solution that performs under commercial pressure.

Gouge is a senior leader at SavATree, a major North American arboriculture and landscape services company operating over 100 branches across roughly 30 U.S. states, with expansion into Canada. The company serves more than 100,000 residential and commercial customers, delivering tree care, lawn maintenance, and landscape management across rural, suburban, and urban



Photo: A Jamaican H-2B landscaping professional at work, maintaining resort grounds with skill, discipline, and pride.

markets. "This is a business built on trust," Gouge explains. "We work on private property. Our crews represent our brand in people's homes."

SavATree began hiring Jamaican workers more than two decades ago, starting with a small pilot group of roughly 12 workers in a single location. Today, Jamaican H-2B workers operate across approximately 30 company locations, with projections nearing 100 Jamaican workers across U.S. operations by 2026. That growth, Gouge says, followed measurable performance.

"We started utilizing workers from Jamaica well over 20 years ago, and we found they were a strong fit for our organization," he said.

In an industry where workers interact directly with homeowners and commercial clients, communication is not optional. Gouge says English proficiency was a decisive factor in choosing Jamaican workers over other labor markets.

"One of the reasons we originally sought workers from Jamaica rather than other countries is their English-speaking ability," he noted. "They communicate well with customers, and customers genuinely like having them on their property."

That trust extends to job performance.

"They are very respectful of being on other people's property," Gouge said. "They are trusted by both our teams and our clients."

Gouge describes Jamaican workers as high-output, service-oriented, and operationally dependable, particularly in physically demanding outdoor roles. "They are here to work and earn as much as they can for their families," he said. "They will pretty much work every hour you give them and are willing to go the extra mile."

Some Jamaican H-2B workers pursue U.S. driver's licenses, enabling them to work independently, operate equipment, and lead small crews. According to Gouge, this improves scheduling flexibility, reduces supervision costs, and allows faster deployment across job sites.

"They work independently once fully trained," he said. "They operate well in small teams, sometimes two or three workers managing jobs on their own."

SavATree integrates Jamaican workers into mixed crews alongside U.S. domestic employees. Gouge says Jamaican workers consistently strengthen team output rather than operate in isolation. "They fit well culturally and professionally," he said. "They bring strong teamwork and raise overall performance."

He also described a repeat-season pattern, with many Jamaican workers returning year after year, building client familiarity and reinforcing service continuity. "Customers get to know them," Gouge said. "And they want them back."

Gouge's conclusion is blunt. Jamaican workers are not hired as a symbolic diversity choice or temporary fix. They are hired because they perform, communicate, earn trust, and deliver measurable value in a customer-facing, property-sensitive industry.

"They take pride in the quality of their work," he said. "And their enthusiasm carries into our teams and our customers."

In a labor market where reliability, customer trust, and productivity directly affect revenue, Gouge frames Jamaican H-2B workers as a strategic business decision.

Earnings Abroad, Investments at Home

From savings turned into businesses to homes rebuilt one remittance at a time, Jamaica's H-2B workers are proving that the value of seasonal work lasts long after the season ends.



A Jamaican construction crew works on the frame of a two-storey home in St Elizabeth — built from savings earned abroad through the H-2B programme.

Photo Source: Jamaica Gleaner / Contributed photograph.

On a quiet street in St Elizabeth, a modest two-storey home stands half-painted — the top floor new, the bottom weathered by years of salt and sun. The owner, a returning H-2B worker named David, points to the unfinished balcony. "That's next season," he says with a smile. "Every trip adds a floor."

Across Jamaica, stories like David's tell the larger truth of the H-2B programme: its greatest returns are built at home. Each year, thousands of Jamaicans head to the United States to fill seasonal roles in hospitality, construction, and maintenance. They leave for six to nine months, earn steady wages, and come back with more than income. They bring perspective — on efficiency, on customer service, on saving for a purpose.

"In 2024, over 12,000 Jamaicans were employed through the H-2B programme," reported the JCLO. **"Many have been able to provide opportunities for their children because of the programme."**

Some open grocery shops, barbershops, or taxi services. Others expand family homes or pay for tertiary education. What links them is intention — a quiet decision to turn labour abroad into legacy at home.

At the Jamaica Central Labour Organisation, staff track these stories closely. They see them not as statistics, but as proof that the system works — that every contract signed overseas can echo in the Jamaican economy for years.

"These workers continue to shine in their roles," said one JCLO liaison. "But their real success begins when they return — when they use what they've earned to uplift the people around them."

Economists have long noted that remittances remain Jamaica's second-largest source of foreign exchange. Yet behind those figures are lives transformed. The same worker who cleaned hotel rooms in Florida might now employ two neighbours to help with his local guesthouse in Treasure Beach.

For communities across the island, that ripple matters. It means roofs repaired before hurricane season, small businesses hiring part-time staff, and children staying in school because tuition was paid on time.

In that sense, the H-2B programme is less a cycle of migration than a circuit of empowerment — capital leaving and returning, enriched by human experience.

When asked what keeps him signing up year after year, David shrugs. "It's not just about what I build abroad," he says. "It's what I build here that counts."

**We want to
hear from you!**

The Jamaica Central Labour Organisation (JCLO)

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