ALTO HR

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Panhandle Seasonal Workforce Report 2026

Florida Gulf Coast · generated November 9, 2026

Summary

The season at a glance

20	$14.00-$25.00	$15.00	Open
open Alto HR roles across 8 locations	hourly pay on our open listings	Florida minimum wage from September 30,	H-2B cap, first half of the fiscal year

Across the Pensacola, Fort Walton Beach-Destin and Panama City metro areas, federal median wages for core retail, grocery and facilities roles ranged from $13.00 to $23.04 an hour in May 2025. Florida's minimum wage is $15.00 an hour, above several of those medians. Employers who budget from last year's local rates will be posting below the market, and in a seasonal market that shows up as slower hiring.

International programs follow fixed calendars. J-1 students arrive on their university breaks, and H-2B depends on a capped number of visas and filing windows that open months before the season. The employers who staff fully are the ones who plan the mix early.

Wages

What core roles pay

Role	Pensacola area	Fort Walton Beach-Destin area	Panama City area
Cashiers (41-2011)	$14.38	$14.91	$13.98
Stockers and order fillers (53-7065)	$16.79	$17.20	$17.37
Retail salespersons (41-2031)	$15.32	$16.31	$15.53
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers (41-1011)	$22.50	$23.04	$21.97
Janitors and cleaners (37-2011)	$15.39	$16.84	$16.38
Hand packers and packagers (53-7064)	$13.15	$13.59	$13.00

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2025. Florida's minimum wage is $15 an hour from September 30, 2026. The federal figures are from before that increase.

Programs

The seasonal hiring calendar

	Local associates	J-1 Summer Work Travel	J-1 winter	H-2B seasonal
Who works	Local workers, all year	University students on their break	Southern Hemisphere university students	Seasonal workers from eligible countries
Typical season	All year	May to September	December to March	Spring to fall
How long	As long as you need	Up to four months	Up to four months	The approved petition period
Who selects	You and Alto	The sponsor	The sponsor	You, under the approved petition
Plan ahead	Days to weeks	Months	Months	Months, before filing windows

Typical windows only. Dates depend on each student's university break and each approved petition.

H-2B

H-2B: where the cap stands

Statutory cap, fiscal year 2027

66,000 visas: 33,000 for jobs starting October 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027, and 33,000 for jobs starting April 1, 2027 to September 30, 2027.

First half (winter starts)

See the USCIS cap count page for the current status.

Second half (summer starts)

See the USCIS cap count page for the current status.

When to file with the Department of Labor

75 to 90 calendar days before your date of need. For an April 1, 2027 start, that is January 1, 2027 to January 16, 2027.

Supplemental visas for fiscal year 2027

Announced by the Department of Homeland Security when available. Check USCIS before planning around them.

Carryover

Unused H-2B numbers do not carry over to the next fiscal year.

Demand

Live: Alto HR open roles by location

Alto HR's own listings on altohr.com, as of November 9, 2026.

Location	Open roles	Hourly pay on listings
Miramar Beach, FL	6	$15.00-$25.00
Panama City Beach, FL	6	$14.00-$25.00
Santa Rosa Beach, FL	6	$15.00-$25.00
Destin, FL	4	$15.00-$25.00
Fort Walton Beach, FL	2	$14.00-$20.00
Gulf Shores, AL	1	$16.00-$20.00

Location	Open roles	Hourly pay on listings
Panama City, FL	1	$15.00-$19.00
Pensacola, FL	1	$15.00-$19.00

Recommendations

Planning your season

Set pay against the local market

Compare your posted rates with the medians above and the current minimum wage. Posting below the market is the most common cause of slow seasonal hiring.

H-2B: 75 to 90 days before your start date

File your application with the Department of Labor 75 to 90 calendar days before your date of need, and track the cap before you plan around it.

J-1: plan months ahead

Sponsors recruit and select participants months before the season. Agree your roles, housing and transport early.

Local associates: days to weeks

Local teams can start in days to weeks and carry the year, with international programs covering the peaks.

About this report

Methodology and sources

Wages: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2025, hourly medians for the Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin and Panama City-Panama City Beach metro areas. Minimum wage: Florida Constitution, Article X, Section 24. H-2B: USCIS: Cap count for H-2B nonimmigrants; 20 CFR 655.15(b): timing of the Application for Temporary Employment Certification. Demand: Alto HR job listings on altohr.com at the time of generation.

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