



CENTER *for*  
COMMUNITY CHANGE

# Organizing for Jobs

Lessons Learned from CCC's Sector Organizing Project





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# executive summary

 **In the mid 1990s**, in response to sweeping federal welfare and workforce policy changes, and consistent with its thirty-year record of helping low-income community groups tackle employment and economic issues, the Center for Community Change undertook extensive research into the effectiveness of various approaches to workforce and economic development. Based on this research (funded by HUD, Pew Charitable Trusts and the Annie E. Casey Foundation) the Center decided that sectoral strategies offered the most compelling opportunity for grassroots organizations to expand job opportunities in low income communities. Sectoral strategies focus on a specific industry and address a range of factors that affect employment in that industry.

In 1997 the Center received a multi-year grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to pursue a project which married the focus of sectoral development with community organizing. The emphasis of the project was not only to create new job opportunities in key sectors of the local economy, but also to reshape the workforce systems that create barriers to employment – thereby effecting long term change. The Center drew on its strong staff experience in community organizing and policy change as well as its expertise in economic and workforce development to identify appropriate community groups and launch the project.

In the first round, CCC chose Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART) and Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC); in subsequent rounds Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee (CSM) and Alameda Corridor Jobs Coalition were added. These four groups had a track record of organizing low-income constituencies; developing leadership; researching, planning and implementing issue campaigns; and successfully pursuing employment issues. In consultation with CCC, each site chose to focus on a sector of their local economy that is stable or growing, offers quality entry-level jobs and career ladders, and has surmountable barriers to entry

for disadvantaged job seekers. Each group received ongoing technical assistance from CCC and pass-through funding to increase their own capacity in the areas of organizing and sectoral workforce and economic development programming.

In three years HART, SVOC and CSM (Esperanza Unida replaced CSM late in the project) all achieved impressive goals within their chosen sectors. In Hartford, Sacramento, and Milwaukee, hundreds of low income residents obtained jobs in the construction, health and printing industries, respectively – jobs that previously were not accessible due to various barriers. The organizations overcame these barriers by building new relationships with employers, unions, training providers, government agencies, service providers and other

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stakeholders. From a solid base of organized constituents, these groups reshaped workforce systems so that job seekers could receive occupational training, knowing that at the end of that training a hiring commitment was in place to ensure access to a real job. Limited English proficient candidates and those with other barriers were given the supports and mentorship they needed to thrive on the job. Peer support networks were organized to help new workers adjust and to foster retention. These organizations proved the Center's hypothesis that community organizing and sectoral development are a powerful combination that can lead to both quality jobs and systemic change.

Over time, the Sector Organizing Project learned many valuable lessons that can inform future efforts undertaken along these lines. These lessons are concentrated in three areas: the power of organizing; the sector approach; and technical assistance and training.

Because the groups selected for this project were low-income community organizing groups with track records of achieving change on a range of issues, they brought to this effort solid reputations in their community and in the eyes of important decision-makers. This credibility and clout facilitated the brokering of new relationships, and the garnering of public and private resources. It also made outreach to job seekers easy. The groups' philosophy of empowerment and leadership

*Low-income participants were viewed as agents of change, not merely potential job placements. Peer support groups became a vehicle not just to aid retention, but to organize people for such additional work supports as transportation.*

development was an important counter to the traditional service delivery model often found in workforce development programs. Low-income participants were viewed as agents of change, not merely potential job placements. Peer support groups became a vehicle not just to aid retention, but to organize people for such additional work supports as transportation.

There is no question that focusing on key employment sectors posed new challenges for the local groups. Sectors are dynamic, requiring constant monitoring and communication with employers to understand how the sector's workforce needs are shifting. The groups found that it helped to have access to a resource person with a detailed knowledge of their chosen sector – whether an industry insider willing to help out or a paid consultant with industry expertise. Relating to employers was a new experience for some of the groups, and became all the more important as sectors underwent change.

One of the biggest issues the groups grappled with was how to balance their community organizing mission with the demands of a workforce program. Each chose a different path, from HART, which ran its own programs, to SVOC, which relied on partners to handle the actual program implementation. Each decision had its own consequences. HART had difficulty juggling the program pieces and maintaining vibrant community organizing at the same time. On the other hand, SVOC had to spend a lot of time looking over the shoulder of its program partners to ensure quality. For each group, this balancing act highlighted the importance of solid partnerships. The groups found that partnerships come down to sustaining individual, one-on-one relationships, and to demonstrating mutual accountability. Part of the balancing act also involved developing effective case management for program participants. Whether this was done in-house or by a partner organization, the groups' organizing philosophy and commitment to peer support were critical components of successful case management.

The project clearly benefited from CCC's holistic approach to technical assistance. The initiative paired Center staff with expertise in community organizing and sectoral development, thereby giving the groups the support they needed to try to balance these two aspects of the project. CCC staff also had organizational development expertise, to help groups troubleshoot any internal issues that would surface over the three-year life of the project. CCC's intensive and long-term approach to TA was essential to identifying groups for the project and ensuring mutual trust. The Center's commitment to peer learning, exhibited through the "cluster" model of TA, also added value as groups were able to learn from each other through joint convenings, and from interaction with other groups in the Center's sphere.

One thing CCC did not fully anticipate was the difficulty the groups would have in identifying competent staff for the project. It is a rarity to find an economic or workforce development expert who understands community organizing, and vice versa. This obstacle, as well as unanticipated events that threatened some groups' organizational stability, created unforeseen challenges for the groups and for CCC staff. To the credit of each, the Sector Organizing Project survived and thrived despite these challenges. In fact, in remarkable contrast to many "demonstration" projects, at the two sites where the Mott Foundation funding has run out, the sectoral work is continuing and expanding without that

special funding, a sure sign of the value which the community groups and local partners have placed upon the success of the sectoral interventions which have been begun with Mott support.

The Sector Organizing Project showed that powerful community organizations can change the systems that have historically excluded low-income people and people of color from quality jobs with career ladders. This model can be replicated by other powerful, stable grassroots organizations, provided that funding and technical assistance are available. The challenge of finding qualified staff that can bridge the organizing and sectoral program worlds must be overcome. Foundations and intermediaries can play a

role in filling this gap by fostering opportunities for both organizers and sector specialists to develop expertise in each other's fields and in the interrelated fields of workforce and economic development.

Another issue to consider is the effect of overall economic conditions. This project was initiated during a period of national economic growth. The challenges of doing sectoral work during a period of economic downturn should be explored as programs are designed for the future.

Finally, federal "work-first" welfare and workforce policies should be re-examined. Federal resources and policies should foster grassroots sectoral initiatives, emphasizing skills training and solid case management in order to achieve sustainable, living wage jobs.



Sectoral strategies focus on a specific industry or category of economic activity, such as manufacturing, health care, or construction, and address a range of interrelated factors that affect the future health of that sector.

# overview of the sector organizing project

 **For over three decades** the Center for Community Change has helped low income community organizations tackle issues of jobs and economic development. Through on-site technical assistance, research and public policy work the Center has advised and assisted grassroots groups as they have organized their communities and developed projects and campaigns which increase people's access to good jobs and economic opportunity.

There have been many victories and successes along the way. Nevertheless, many communities still face persistent unemployment and poverty. They also face a faltering economy and a political environment which gives little support to efforts to create jobs and stimulate the economic development of low income communities.

The Center's sense of urgency about these issues was increased when the federal government introduced a series of changes in public policy during the 1990s. First through waivers and then a radical shift in federal policy, states were given increasing flexibility to alter the delivery of welfare assistance to needy families. The ultimate welfare "reform" law Congress passed in 1996 placed heavy emphasis on work activities to the exclusion of skills training. On the heels of welfare reform came the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which streamlined federal job training systems and encouraged states to pursue work-first policies. These major federal policy shifts have put the onus on poor people to find jobs that pay a family-supporting wage, with little funding made available for real skills training.

With support from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Pew Charitable Trusts and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, CCC conducted a series of studies of different economic and workforce development strategies, with the goal of identifying one or more that could be replicated in low income communities. These strategies included industrial retention, employment linkage programs, job creation in the human services field, and sectoral

development. (The individual reports on each strategy, as well as a summary report entitled "Getting Ahead," are available from CCC's publications department.)

When it completed this research, the Center decided to focus on a particularly promising approach – sectoral development. Sectoral strategies focus on a specific industry or category of economic activity, such as manufacturing, health care, or construction, and address a range of interrelated factors that affect the future health of that sector. These approaches can employ both business assistance and workforce development strategies. They can include the creation of new programs and the revamping of public policies.

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Traditionally, even in the context of poor communities, the emphasis has been on growing the sector, with little attention paid to targeting jobs, involving the community, or achieving systemic change. According to CCC Executive Director Andy Mott, "The Center decided that its own sectoral approach must place the emphasis on creating and expanding opportunities for training, employment and advancement for very low income individuals within a sector." Achieving success in this regard ideally involves engaging in systemic change: altering the way that key players – such as employers, government agencies, educational institutions, and unions – operate, so that their mission incorporates the goals of good jobs and career ladders for poor people.

Adds Kris Palmer, former CCC economic development specialist, "The sector model is great because it allows a community to analyze the regional economy, and then develop a strategic focus. The sector model helps local groups look outside their neighborhoods and connect to businesses, institutions, and resources in the wider regional and global economy. Through this model, groups can address systemic problems in the market, in government, and in the community."

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Starting with the two central goals of (a) quality jobs and career ladders for very low-income residents and (b) long-term change in workforce systems, the Center hypothesized that community organizing groups would be particularly effective in pursuing sectoral strategies. Community organizing groups are committed to helping low income individuals achieve their goals through the use of collective power. The Center believed that an organized community would have the power necessary to bring partners to the table, target jobs to their low income constituents, and engage in systemic reform. It knew that organizing groups are particularly good at building the relationships, partnerships and alliances which are essential to sectoral work and that they have often demonstrated their ability to use their power to affect public policy and bring about systemic reforms.

While organizing groups use a variety of approaches and techniques, all follow certain basic organizing principles:

- ▶ **Leadership development** – affected people must be part of the solution, and their leadership abilities fostered, through democratic decision making;
- ▶ **People power** – people can be brought together and taught the skills of collective action to exercise power and achieve change;

- ▶ **Self interest** – organizations must understand and build from people's immediate and most important goals and needs;
- ▶ **Relationship building** – one-on-one ongoing engagement with members, partners and allies is critical to building power and success.

In 1997 the Center received a multi-year grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation which enabled it to pursue an approach marrying sectoral development and community organizing. The Center was uniquely poised to undertake this approach. Through CCC's long history of work in low-income communities, the Center has developed a rich network of community groups nationally and a deep knowledge of those groups and their capacity. CCC already had staff with community organizing experience who provided technical assistance to local groups around the country. As a result of the recent research efforts CCC now also had increased expertise in economic and workforce development.

The project was structured to build on this strength by pairing staff with organizing and development expertise to work with chosen groups on sectoral strategies. The Center believed it was important for the local organizations to have their own organizing and sectoral program capacity as well, so the project included pass-through funding for the community groups to dedicate staff to both these areas.

The Center developed the following criteria for group selection:

- ▶ accountability to low-income people and their interests;
- ▶ a substantial organized constituency;
- ▶ a commitment to leadership development and education;
- ▶ strong issue-research skills and a commitment to thorough analysis, planning, and follow-through;
- ▶ a record of negotiating from positions of strength and creating real partnerships and change; and
- ▶ a demonstrated priority concern with increasing the number and quality of jobs and a record of success on these issues.

The plan was to pick two sites initially, and then pick two more organizations for a subsequent round. In



In addition to the above criteria, regional diversity was a consideration. The first two groups selected in 1997 were Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART) and Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC). During the second go-round, Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee (CSM) was chosen in 1998. An attempt to find an appropriate candidate in the South was unsuccessful. The fourth group, which just entered the project in 2001, is Alameda Corridor Jobs Coalition (ACJC) in southern California.

During the planning phase of the project CCC staff worked with the staffs and boards of HART and SVOC to explore possible sectors for intervention. In selecting sectors the Center and the groups sought parts of the economy which –

- ▶ were growing or at least stable, and employed a significant number of people in entry-level and near entry-level positions;
- ▶ offered good quality jobs, with respect to wages, benefits, and working conditions;
- ▶ offered or could offer accessible job ladders;

- ▶ showed real but surmountable barriers to entry for disadvantaged people;
- ▶ had points of political leverage; and
- ▶ offered potential for short-term and longer-term interventions to increase employment opportunities and access to them.

Once CCC and each group jointly chose a sector, the Center worked with the organization to develop next steps for sectoral intervention and for building the local organization's capacity to take on this new approach.

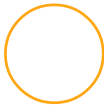
This report draws on the experiences of the four sites to share lessons from the CCC sector initiative that can benefit other organizations attempting such a strategy in their community. The report opens with very brief case studies of each site. More detailed case studies in the appendix include descriptions of the projects and their implementation, and sections on outcomes and systems change. The case studies set the context for the following discussion on lessons learned. The lessons are discussed in three groupings: community organizing, the sector approach, and the role of technical assistance and training.



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# case studies

 **This section contains** brief descriptions of the sectoral work undertaken at each of the four chosen sites. At the end of this report are more detailed case study narratives, with outcome data, descriptions of systems change, and participant profiles.

## Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART)

HART was established in 1975 in the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Hartford, and built a substantial track record of local improvements through its organizing and advocacy, as well as community revitalization programs in areas such as housing and youth. HART was already pursuing job development strategies when the Sector Organizing Project began. When a one-stop employment services center closed in HART's neighborhood, HART decided to open its own local job center. The building was donated and renovated by SINA (Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance), a coalition of major employers in the immediate area that includes several hospitals and Trinity College. After reviewing six alternative sectors, CCC and HART initially decided to concentrate on the health sector. A confluence of circumstances resulted in HART giving priority to a different sector first, and ramping up the health work later on.

In 1998 HART members became energized at the prospect of major construction happening throughout the city, including proposals for a convention center, hotel, football stadium, schools, theaters and a library. HART began organizing to capture jobs for community members. First HART won a 30 percent local hiring commitment for the Learning Corridor, a project to build four new schools near Trinity College. The city agreed to have a Project Labor Agreement (PLA), which meant union wages and career ladders for the workers on the job. The HART staff ran the program directly out of the HART Job Center, and their ability to screen applicants and deliver good candidates was critical in establishing

HART's credibility with employers. HART went on to win hiring agreements for six other construction projects, known as the "six pillars" of economic development.

In 1999, the Hartford Construction Jobs Initiative (HCJI), known as the 'Jobs Funnel,' was established and run by HART organizer Yolanda Rivera. The HCJI's goal was to fill 30 percent of construction jobs with local residents, with an emphasis on apprenticeships that lead to journeyman status. In order to do this, HCJI had to develop a reliable system of recruitment, assessment, placement and retention. HCJI contracted with a coalition of community organizations called the PROGRESS Collaborative to provide quality recruitment,



The HCJI's goal was to fill 30 percent of construction jobs with local residents.

*In order to succeed, HCJI built important relationships with unions, other community organizations, the regional workforce board, and city agencies.*

assessment, and referral to jobs. In two years the HCJI exceeded its target of 250 placements: 330 residents were placed in jobs with average starting wages of \$12 an hour. Retention rates average 70 percent.

In order to succeed, HCJI built important relationships with unions, other community organizations, the regional

workforce board, and city agencies. All of these partners have changed the way they think and act to support the hiring and retention efforts of HCJI. Nine unions are active in the effort. Community partners are working together instead of competing for resources. The regional workforce board has embraced the HCJI model, which the state wants to replicate in several other Connecticut cities.

Meanwhile, HART has undergone a reorganization to become a leaner operation that concentrates on organizing, rather than running programs. In the process, HART refocused its health sector work, which is now operating out of the Job Center under the auspices of SINA. The new health sector coordinator, LaTonya Garner, set about working with Hartford Hospital to implement the existing first source hiring agreement. Garner developed a first source hiring handbook and forms for hospital staff in order to clarify both the Job Center's and hospital's roles and expectations. By building relationships with the front line managers, Garner was able to bypass

the hierarchical roadblocks and start placing residents in jobs. She then built in systems for employer feedback to aid in retention and to have clear standards for promotion. The Job Center's initial goal was to place 75 residents in one year, and Garner exceeded that goal. Starting wages average \$8.50 an hour and retention rates are 55 percent.

naturalization. As CCC began discussions with SVOC about the sector initiative, SVOC leaders were formulating a response to welfare reform – to develop one-stop job centers in their churches. The churches would provide space for a mix of job readiness and child care programs. SVOC saw that the sector strategy would complement this concept well by providing more job opportunities for residents coming through the one-stops. The health sector was chosen – for many of the reasons it had been selected in Hartford. There were a number of major health care institutions in the region, and growth was projected in many entry-level health occupations.

According to lead organizer Larry Ferlazzo, SVOC was clear from the beginning that it wanted to build its long term power and constituency, not concentrate on running programs. This meant finding other agencies to run the programs, so that SVOC members could concentrate on developing new leaders among those coming into the job centers, building new relationships with public agencies and employers, and recruiting new member institutions. The organization identified eleven churches that wanted to host the job centers. SVOC then used its clout – and ability to hold mass assemblies – to win participation from several public agencies. The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency agreed to fund renovations for the child care/job center facilities at the churches. The Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) agreed to provide on-site assessment and job readiness classes, which were funded by the Department of Human Assistance (DHA). It was agreed that health skills training would be provided by employers, at the hospitals, and coordinated by SETA and SVOC. DHA agreed to refer welfare clients to the one-stop centers, and to provide on-site case managers.

CCC staff and SVOC staff and leaders met with health industry leaders to negotiate hiring commitments. Initially, Mercy, Sutter and Kaiser each committed to hire 75 graduates of the job readiness programs at the church centers. SVOC then worked with SETA to tailor the job readiness program to meet both the needs of the sector and SVOC's own organizing agenda. The boiler plate two-week soft-skills program was expanded to four weeks. SVOC created a two-day leadership development component, in which participants learn about one-on-one relationship building, negotiation and problem-solving skills, the power of collective action and workplace dynamics. SVOC leaders conduct these sessions. Once

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 ...get a good job in the healthcare field.  
 ...work for a growing construction company.  
 ...own your own business.

**And you can...**  
 ...get free child care while you're working or in school.

The Sacramento Valley Organizing Community is starting a new initiative for CalWORKs recipients that offers job training, placement services and career counseling along with free child care services.

**Interested? Attend an orientation at:**

<p><b>South Area</b>                  April 20, 1998 6:30-8:00 p.m.                  Century Chapel C.M.E. Church                  2801 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue                  Sacramento, CA 95820                  (916) 375-2345 - Diana O'Boyle-Ging</p>	<p><b>Or</b></p>	<p><b>North Area</b>                  April 21, 1998 6:30-8:00 p.m.                  North Sacramento A.B.S.E. Church                  4151 Don Julio Blvd                  North Highlands, CA 95860                  (916) 875-2240 - Tileen Miles</p>
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Child care will be provided.

Or call Sacramento Employment and Training Agency for more information  
 (916) 263-3755

A partnership of:  
 Sacramento Works Career Center  
 Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC)  
 Sacramento County CalWORKs

## Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC)

Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC) is a six-year old, broad-based organization representing 40 predominantly Latino, African American, and Asian religious congregations in Sacramento, Yolo, and Solano counties in Northern California. It is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a national network of organizing groups. In only a few short years, SVOC developed an impressive track record in housing development, job development, and immigrant

participants complete the four-week program, SVOC invites them to join an Alumni Association. The Alumni Association provides a system of mutual support for people who have been placed in jobs, and with the help of SVOC organizers, allows the new hires to organize for broader changes. So far the Alumni Association has organized to win the following reforms from the DHA: low-interest car loans; individual development accounts (IDAs), with a 2 to 1 match; and assistance in receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit.

More than half of residents completing the job readiness classes have been placed in jobs. Average entry wages are \$9 an hour, and retention rates are 85 percent. One of the most remarkable accomplishments of the SVOC sector initiative has been getting the county welfare department to allow welfare recipients to receive pre-employment training, despite the

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agency's work-first mandate. DHA also provides child care, car loans, IDAs, and EITC counseling. SVOC succeeded in getting the employment and training agency, SETA, to do some unique things, such as allowing for an expanded job readiness program at the church centers that includes an explicit organizing and leadership development component. SVOC also used their relationships with both organized labor and health care employers to "broker" an agreement with SETA to participate in the Caregivers Training Initiative. CTI is a \$2.6 million dollar state investment in pre-employment and incumbent health care training – another impressive accomplishment in a work-first state. The health care institutions now also think differently about their approach to workforce development. Sutter Hospital has embraced the SVOC approach and is taking it to new levels.



AFL-CIO Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson in Milwaukee endorsing CSM's jobs programs.

### Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee/Esperanza Unida

Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee (CSM) was chosen for the Sector Organizing Project during the second phase of the initiative. CSM was founded in 1993 as a coalition of 200 neighborhood, labor and religious organizations. Early on the organization identified its mission – to help low income people and people of color gain access to family-supporting jobs. Before CCC approached CSM about the sector initiative, CSM had already won minority hiring and prevailing wage requirements on two construction projects – the convention center and the new baseball stadium. CSM established a Central City Workers Center (CCWC) to recruit and prepare people for a successful career in the construction trades. For CSM the sector initiative was a logical next step. In 1999, working with CCC staff, the organization identified printing as the next promising sector in which to pursue family-supporting jobs. Milwaukee is the tenth largest printing center in the country – there are 500 printing firms in the Milwaukee area, with 14,000 jobs. CSM's goals for the Sector Organizing Project were (a) to increase access to printing jobs for women and people of color, especially Latinos; and (b) to build structures to ensure workers' retention and success on the job.

CSM developed relationships with several key training and placement organizations: the Milwaukee Graphic Arts Institute (MGAI), the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) and Esperanza Unida (EU). The CCWC increased its staff capacity in order to broaden its outreach to include the predominantly Latino Southside, and to place greater emphasis on retention and advancement. Although much of

the job placement took place through the above training organizations, CSM sought independent relationships with employers to address barriers to retention. Christine Neumann-Ortiz, the CSM sector coordinator, began talking to employers about how to help Limited English Proficient (LEP) workers, particularly Latinos, get hired and move up through the firms. Her efforts resulted in a core group of twelve employers committing to working together to remove language barriers. The firms agreed to recruit their employees to participate in a vocational English as a Second Language program. The current class includes 16 students from three different employers.

Another way CSM sought to improve retention was by forming a Printer Support Network, with the help of former machinist Joseph Oulahan. The PSN is a peer group of recent entrants to the printing sector, primarily women and people of color. They come together to discuss their concerns, offer each other support, and look for ways to improve workplace conditions, sometimes through collective action. Members of PSN learn about occupational health and safety, discrimination in the workplace, and workers' rights. PSN has already taken on one issue collectively – transportation barriers. PSN members convinced a firm and a bus company to extend bus service during weekends and peak summer hours.

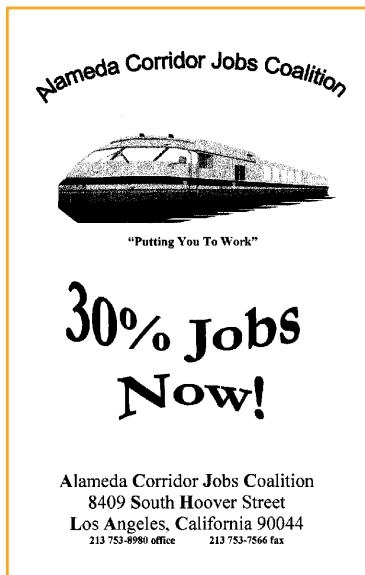
CSM also reached out to the Graphics and Communications International Union (GCIU) to work on retention issues. Only about 20 percent of the printing industry is unionized, but in these companies, sector project staff worked closely with the unions to help them relate to this more diverse entry-level workforce. Their relationships with union leaders have eased the transition for many workers who confront discrimination or face language challenges. The union has agreed to provide an additional steward that will be bilingual on one shop floor with many Latino workers.

In 2001 Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee experienced a funding crisis, and its board decided to dissolve the organization. The Central City Worker Center closed down in April. However, the work that CSM began in the printing sector had such a good reputation that Esperanza Unida offered to house the project. EU was founded in 1971, has strong roots in the Latino community, already does printing training, and has in-house case management and supportive services for participants in all of its programs.

In 2000 the project exceeded its placement goal of 32; 50 residents were placed in printing jobs, and 18 placements were Latino. Average wages range from \$8.50

to \$9.00 an hour depending on whether the new hire received customized training. Latino retention rates are an impressive 86 percent. CSM/EU has been highly effective at boosting the entry of women and minorities into a high-paying, skilled trade that has had a predominantly white male workforce until now. They have succeeded by changing the way both employers and unions think – overcoming prejudices, language barriers, and other obstacles to hiring, retaining, and advancing underrepresented workers in the printing industry. There is now a committed core of employers willing to invest in workplace language skills for their LEP workers. The training centers now approach their work differently as a result of the Sector Organizing Project, and are partnering much more with each other than they ever did in the past.

Since the summer of 2001 the Milwaukee area printing industry has been hard hit by the economic downturn, and is undergoing significant restructuring. EU sector staff are now focusing their attention almost exclusively on retention, as there is little opportunity for new hiring.



### **Alameda Corridor Jobs Coalition (ACJC)**

The Alameda Corridor Jobs Coalition, an umbrella group of forty low income community organizations, CDCs, and training providers, came together in 1997 to organize for jobs on a multi-billion dollar transportation construction project in and around Los Angeles. Mary Ochs on the Center's LA staff worked intensively to help form the coalition and develop its initial strategy. Local residents knew that they would be denied access to the many jobs the project would bring if they didn't act right away. ACJC built relationships with the construction trade unions and with the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (ACTA), as well as federal Department of Transportation

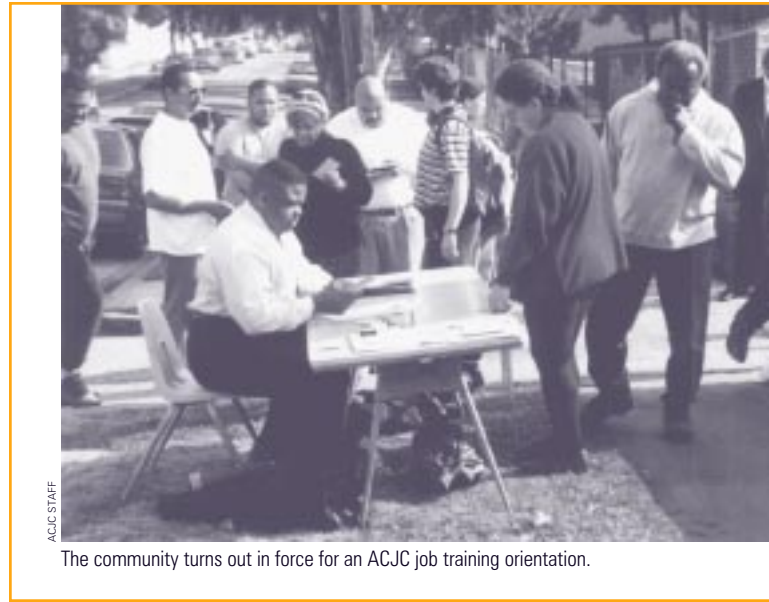


officials. In 1998 their organizing effort paid off with an unprecedented agreement – ACTA guaranteed that 30 percent of all construction and non-construction work-hours would be given to low-income residents living along the construction corridor. ACTA also guaranteed 1,000 job training slots: 650 for pre-apprentices to graduate and enroll in union apprenticeship programs, and 350 for non trades-related jobs, such as drafting assistants, office work, and site security.

Under the leadership of its executive director, Benetta Johnson, ACJC then undertook a massive outreach and recruitment effort to identify interested residents and prepare them for the pre-apprenticeship programs and non-construction jobs. The coalition created a spin-off organization, ACJC-TEC (Training and Employment Corporation) to oversee the implementation of the hiring agreement and provide the soft skills training and case management. Member organizations conducted intake services. The Carpenters Training and Education Institute (CETI) provided the hard skills training. Incredibly, the project met all of its training and placement goals and the construction finished on schedule.

The Sector Organizing Project was therefore a natural next step for ACJC. It built on ACJC's success in pursuing a sectoral approach to construction with assistance from CCC staffer Mary Ochs. It focused on a vital and growing sector – international trade and transportation (IT&T). The Port of L.A./Long Beach is the third largest in the world, and IT&T is the fastest growing industrial sector in LA County. In particular, logistics, which is the series of services associated with the movement and storage of goods across countries, is a growing sub-sector in the L.A. region. Logistics offers entry-level jobs starting at \$10 an hour with benefits that require little training, and career ladders. Training opportunities exist that offer short-term, inexpensive certification programs developed by the industry and educational institutions.

Tom Pendergast, hired by CCC for ACJC's sectoral exploration, has spent the past year building relationships with the employers, educational institutions, unions, and government entities that are concerned with logistics and international trade. This outreach is beginning to pay off. Cal State Long Beach is working with ACJC to design a



The community turns out in force for an ACJC job training orientation.

*Under the leadership of its executive director, Benetta Johnson, ACJC then undertook a massive outreach and recruitment effort to identify interested residents and prepare them for the pre-apprenticeship programs and non-construction jobs.*

brand new IT&T logistics curriculum. Banning High School is also developing a certification program in logistics. In addition, the coalition has launched a pilot class in logistics that will lead to certification in import/export documentation. Of 17 students that sought full certification, so far 12 have passed the requirements. ACJC will spend this year tapping its 10,000-resident database, with the goal of placing 100 people in the sector in the first year. ACJC will oversee the outreach, recruitment and assessment of potential candidates for entry-level positions in logistics.



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All the organizing groups in the project have tried to varying degrees to incorporate leadership development and participant organizing into their strategies.



# lessons learned



## **The Center for Community Change**

set out to test its belief that combining the strengths of a sectoral development approach with the power of community organizing would result in (a) increased access to quality jobs and career ladders for low income people, and (b) longer term systemic change that would remove barriers to sustained employment for low income residents. This theory was tested in different cities, each with its own economic and political context, and by different organizations, each with its own organizing model, abilities, and challenges. Each site struggled with different issues, and excelled in different areas. Yet, as the case studies show, for all the sites the outcomes are substantial and the progress toward systems change is real.

This section of the report will look across the sites to capture some of the learnings from this project, without losing the important nuances that make each situation unique. These lessons offer us guidance in thinking about how well the sectoral approach and community organizing work together, and how future efforts along such lines could be structured to build on the strengths of this initiative and resolve some of its challenges.

## **A. The Power of Organizing**

### **Credibility and Clout**

SVOC, CSM and HART (and ACJC) had already organized and won demands on a range of issues, including employment issues. By the time they undertook the sectoral work, they all had well-established credibility in their communities and among public and private institutions. This was critical value-added that each organization brought to the Center's Sector Organizing Project. It made it easier to get employers and other partners to make commitments and stick to them. These prior relationships and credibility also gave the groups a great advantage in their efforts to change systems over time.

SVOC was able to use its ability to turn out members in large numbers, and its track record of success on other projects, such as housing, to get the mayor, a union and the religious community to bring employers to the table to make hiring commitments. SVOC then used the power of a public session in front of thousands of its members to hold the hospitals accountable. "Public commitment is more valuable and enforceable than anything else" says lead organizer Larry Ferlazzo. One public meeting drew 3000 community members, sending a powerful signal to the CEOs of Kaiser, Sutter and Mercy, who attended the meeting along with key elected officials. Although the Sutter hiring agreement is being formalized into a written document now, SVOC so far has relied on Sutter's verbal commitment in front of members and the media to hire program graduates.

*CSM had held powerful public actions in order to secure hiring agreements in construction, and had a track record of working with employers and unions to place residents in jobs.*

CSM had held powerful public actions in order to secure hiring agreements in construction, and had a track record of working with employers and unions to place residents in jobs. This reputation allowed them to enter a new industry, printing, from a place of mutual respect, without the need to further exercise their organizing muscle to get the printing industry to the table. Yet some employers were leery at first until they understood the project better and saw its potential benefits to employers. CSM's strong connections to the labor community and to the Central Labor Council (CLC) made it easier for the organization to reach out to the printing unions.

HART's contrasting experiences with construction and health point to the value of public commitments, backed up by organizing strength. HART clinched a local construction job hiring commitment from the head of the CCEDA at the HART annual congress, in front of hundreds of members. The hiring commitment from Hartford Hospital, on the other hand, was made privately, based on the longstanding relationship and proximity of the hospital to HART and the HART Job Center. The hospital did not live up to the commitment at first, and HART members' organizing energy was focused on construction, so the health work stagnated. "The health work didn't come from the bottom up, like construction did, so it never really gelled," says LaTonya Garner. "From the beginning it was a program, not an organizing campaign."

Organizing is a powerful tool for sectoral work, but only when a group's leaders and members are driving the agenda. Yolanda Rivera of Hartford worries that – despite State government backing – the success of the construction Jobs Funnel will not be easily replicated in other Connecticut cities unless there is organizing energy behind it.

By the same token, "You can't just beat up on employers to get them to honor their commitments – it only makes them resentful," says CCC's Mary Ochs. Part of the challenge of sectoral work that sophisticated organizing groups handle well is knowing when to be aggressive and public, and when to negotiate privately. Both SVOC and HART staff point to the importance of ongoing one-on-one communication with employers. In the case of SVOC, this was a valuable lesson that explained in part why they moved forward with some hospitals more quickly than others. According to Ferlazzo, "Relationships are about knowing the other party's self-interest, and self-interests can change over time. For example, we weren't keeping in close enough relationship with Kaiser to discern how their self-interest had changed." CSM and now Esperanza Unida have been able to adjust their strategy in the printing sector as the economy changes by keeping in close relationship with employers.

One challenge of mounting a huge initiative is to continue to keep leaders engaged and energized as the work shifts to a more programmatic approach. SVOC involves the church leaders in the one-stop leadership development trainings. "Also," notes Kris Palmer, "leaders get involved in the graduations, and have parties and reunions. The graduations are very moving. Churches really bring a spiritual element that goes beyond programmatic support. And it is very motivational for the leaders to have

the payoff of helping people." Hartford community leaders have been energized by each new fight for a Project Labor Agreement on the next big construction project, and are gearing up for a citywide fight to get PLAs on all projects. ACJC members have been organizing for transportation and other supports to help the newly placed construction workers overcome their barriers.

*These lessons point to the advantages of having an organizer heading up the project, rather than a program operator.*

### **The Organizing Perspective**

These lessons point to the advantages of having an organizer heading up the project, rather than a program operator. As Rivera says, "I am an organizer, so even now that we are in program mode, I am constantly looking at everything from an organizing perspective." She sees this as a critical distinction between HART's construction and health work. "At the HART Job Center, there should have been a better connection between organizing and programs. There was a conflict between the service provider mentality of 'Do for others' versus the organizing mentality of 'Do for yourself'."

Others also note the significant difference between the organizer world view and a program or service delivery perspective. Says Neumann-Ortiz,

"The service aspect is about connecting people to a job. Organizing means understanding that there are political and economic factors that lead to people's place in society, so therefore we need to advocate individually and collectively. You empower people to help themselves. A lot of service agencies assume that if you can't keep a job there must be something wrong with you as an individual. We have a wider context to understand wider problems. We look at systemic barriers that a poor person doesn't necessarily understand, and we explain it to them."

This commitment to poor people's empowerment, the holistic approach that these groups share, and their direct roots in low-income communities, make all four groups highly effective at reaching out to potential job seekers. ACJC and SVOC were flooded with residents at their orientations, for the simple reason that churches or community groups with visibility and credibility in their neighborhoods conducted the outreach. Organizing groups are also best able to understand

the barriers that residents face, and to think systemically about how to address them. While all jobs programs face the pressure to cream, because they are directly accountable to their low income constituency grassroots groups resist that pressure and take the time needed to prepare the hardest-to-employ to succeed. CSM's Central City Worker Center used a holistic approach that measured success not just through job placements, but by barriers removed, such as obtaining a driver's license or completing a GED.

### **Organizing Participants**

The groups' emphasis on helping participants understand and impact broader systems is a key element of the Center's Sector Organizing Project. All the organizing groups in the project have tried to varying degrees to incorporate leadership development and participant organizing into their strategies. SVOC developed the two-day leadership development component of the month-long job readiness training at the church centers, and now is working on building up the Alumni Association. CSM/EU has formed the Printer Support Network, and also does a lot of labor education with workers one-on-one, as they encounter problems in the workplace. In the case of HART, Rivera conducts orientations to educate job seekers about how HART won the 30 percent hiring commitment, the history of organizing that allowed them to take advantage of these construction opportunities, and the longer term goal of making the industry and unions more open to low income and minority workers. Although there is no formal association of participants, Rivera envisions an organizing campaign soon around the demand for Project Labor Agreements on every construction project.

Both CSM/EU and SVOC admit that it has been challenging to organize a network of new workers who are struggling to adapt to their new jobs, while coping with a myriad of other issues. Yet this peer support infrastructure has been critical to the project's retention efforts. All of the groups in the Sector Organizing Project have been engaged in industries that have a mixture of union and non-union firms. These peer networks play a critical role as mediating worker institutions. They help workers navigate both the union and non-union work environments, which each pose their own challenges. These participant networks have also engaged in collective advocacy to win transportation demands and other supports. Outside of the labor movement, there are few comparable efforts around the country to support

workers' rights for low-income, minority, and undocumented immigrant workers.

Yet this kind of organizing must be done with delicacy, observes EU's Joseph Oulahan. "One challenge of organizing is that employers get suspicious and question your motives. You have to walk that fine line between gaining the respect of companies and managers, especially non-union ones, while still focusing on workers' rights and organizing."

### **B. The Sector Approach**

The organizing groups and CCC staff that participated in this project have learned some important lessons about both the opportunities and the challenges of undertaking a sectoral development strategy.

#### **Sectors are Dynamic**

One lesson that has become quite apparent in recent months is the fact that regional economies and sectors themselves are dynamic. As our country experiences uncertain times after the longest economic expansion in its history, all of the groups must examine the implications of this slowdown for their chosen sectors and for low-income people seeking jobs and advancement.

Even before the current national economic changes, each site experienced its own local fluctuations. SVOC and HART have had to react to changes in the health care sector in their regions. In each case they needed to keep in close touch with the health care institutions in order to understand how they were adjusting to the changes and what the impacts to the project would be. According to Kris Palmer, "Negotiation and research are ongoing. It's just as intense all the way through. When the Sacramento economy shifted, Mercy was downsizing and Sutter was growing. So even though Mercy was SVOC's first partner, Sutter has done more placements." In Hartford, LaTonya Garner and CCC's Neil Mayer had to update all the research that had been done initially, in order to understand how the health care sector had changed in recent years. They found that Hartford now had smaller hospitals and bigger outpatient clinics. "We also discovered that there had been a nursing shortage last fall, and we could have used that opportunity to create more mobility for CNAs" said Garner.

In Milwaukee, the printing industry experienced a slow down last summer, forcing Esperanza Unida to focus more on retention than placement. While the printing industry typically rebounds faster than other sectors because

companies rely more on print advertising during economic downturns, this has not been the case in Milwaukee. Despite having rode out recessions in the 1980s and 1990s, the printing industry this time around is undergoing major restructuring in response to the economic downturn, especially post 9/11. Several companies have gone bankrupt; others have initiated large scale lay-offs. In addition to focusing on retention, EU is exploring other ways to help residents find jobs, such as starting a non-profit temporary agency. It may be another year before the other sector sites learn to what extent their success depended on the economic boom, and whether that success has staying power through the current slowdown.

### **Sectoral Expertise**

The need for groups to respond to fluctuations in the economy highlights another lesson of this initiative, which is the importance of having someone on the ground who really knows the chosen sector well. CSM was fortunate to have found an early ally in the Milwaukee Graphic Arts Institute. According to Mayer, "Lauren Baker at MGAI knows everything, so she helps a lot. She knows what individual firms are going through. It helps to have a highly informed and well positioned partner." Now that the project is housed at Esperanza Unida, it is also benefiting from the experience EU has had within the sector, running its own printing business.

In Sacramento, Palmer expressed frustration about the lack of local knowledge about the health sector. "It is difficult for the people at DHA and SETA to develop specialized expertise within one sector of the economy. That's where a community-based organization, and community colleges that know the industry, can add value." The Center invested heavily in providing on-site research and technical help to SVOC, and also hired consultant specialists to help them assess and respond to changing industry needs. Because the HART health care work progressed by fits and starts, there was no one person developing an in-depth understanding of the sector over time. Consultants were brought in at different points to help out. In Garner's view, "It was more important to have an organizer than a health sector expert, but it would have helped to have someone like that on the team. We spent a lot of time doing our own research."

While it is impractical to expect grassroots staff and leaders to become the economists, they can nevertheless become very astute in knowing what the right questions are and to whom they should be asked. In Sacramento,

CCC and SVOC made an effort to engage the church leaders in the research process. Sectoral research and engagement with employers became an effective leadership development tool. According to Kris Palmer, "On the one hand, research can be boring and time-consuming. On the other hand, engaging leaders in research can make them better organizers, and more sophisticated in their political judgment. It helps them understand that not any job is a good job. Some sectors offer higher wages and career ladders."

### **Depth vs. Breadth**

Sectors are always changing and need to be watched closely. Developing expertise about a sector takes time. Overcoming barriers to job access and developing career ladders also is a long-term process. For these reasons, CCC strongly urged the sites to focus on just one sector at a time. For the most part, they did, with impressive results to show for it in each of their chosen sectors. Yet it was hard for the groups to stay so narrowly focused. They know that not every resident will want a job in the chosen sector or will be able to attain one. In the case of SVOC, the pastors saw all these welfare recipients coming through their church one-stops who couldn't get a job at Sutter or Mercy. So the pastors modeled what they learned from the Sector Organizing Project. They went straight to the CEO of a major grocery chain and brought him to their assemblies to secure a hiring commitment. SVOC now is also looking ahead to construction jobs and to new jobs at a former military base that will house businesses.

Mary Ochs sees this resourcefulness as a positive attribute. "The project wants them to focus on one sector, but organizing groups are really not oriented that way. Lots of people come into these programs with a variety of needs, and groups need to be flexible. This may seem that they aren't focused, but I think it's a given for any group that is about building power and meeting the needs of the community."

### **Balancing Program Work and Organizing**

One of the most critical issues that the groups have all grappled with is how to balance the programmatic work required by a sectoral initiative with the organizing that is central to their mission and key to achieving systemic change. Each organization has tried to strike its own balance, and has placed itself on different parts of the spectrum – ranging from running programs in-house to having all program elements handled by outside partners.

For each decision the groups have experienced trade-offs.

Larry Ferlazzo offered up his analysis of the options:

“When you are power-based, you are focused on leaders, holistic solutions, dynamism, partners, and systemic changes that lead to living wages. When you are program-based, you have to focus on services, clients, bureaucracy, infrastructure, and marginalized work-first goals. SVOC was very clear that we wanted to be power-based, not program-based.”

Thus SVOC limited its programmatic role to leadership development as part of the job readiness classes. They brought other partners to the table to handle intake, training, job placement, and case management. Yet SVOC's reliance on others to operate programs meant that the program quality sometimes suffered. SVOC has had to spend time monitoring and pressuring its partners to improve services. It had difficulty getting others to set up good systems for tracking placements and retention, so SVOC is now trying to use tracking as a leadership development strategy by having members of the Alumni Association reach out to other graduates and keep track of their progress.

HART's experience has been mixed. Historically HART has had many positive experiences winning demands and then running programs in areas such as youth development and crime prevention. In the case of health, given the relationship of the Job Center to SINA, it made sense for the center to be the vehicle for job placement at Hartford Hospital. The Job Center is well situated to recruit job seekers from the neighborhood. Yet the Job Center did not yet have the managerial depth and operational capacity to produce at the level needed. Says CCC's Dave Beckwith, “Making the Job Center work was overwhelming. We were trying to use it *and* build its capacity simultaneously. To be the service provider for the health sector was a critical decision that required the Job Center to be excellent, quickly.” The Job Center was also under contract to meet hiring needs for other programs, further overloading an already overloaded staff.

At the same time, there was a disconnect between the Job Center and the HART organizing staff, who were physically as well as ideologically separated. There had been precedent for pursuing an organizing agenda at the Job Center. At one of its job fairs, when a major employer failed to show up, HART quickly lined up several buses and took job seekers to the company's headquarters to demand jobs.

However, this kind of organizing was never sustained. The Job Center's health sector staff did not have organizing backgrounds. According to CCC's Roxanne Williams, “LaTonya has been building relationships at Hartford Hospital, doing case management for 350 people, and trying to enforce the first source agreement. You can't have one person doing it all. She needs an organizer and organized people who can be radical and out there when it's needed.”

Meanwhile, the HART organizing staff became energized around other issues, including downtown development. As described earlier, Yolanda Rivera was highly effective at balancing program management with organizing in the construction work. The HCJI farms out the different service delivery functions to non-profits, companies, and unions, leaving Rivera to look at the big picture and keep everyone accountable. As Williams wryly observed, “It was hard to hold the Job Center accountable, because it was connected to HART. The members would have had to do an action against their own organization.”

*At one of its job fairs, when a major employer failed to show up, HART quickly lined up several buses and took job seekers to the company's headquarters to demand jobs.*

CSM used a mixed approach that combined organizing and programmatic work, and experienced similar pitfalls. For example, the Central City Worker Center was designed as a holistic program that combined leadership development and job placement, yet it suffered from a breakdown between organizing staff at CSM and program staff at CCWC. According to Mary Ochs, “After a while CSM had an organizing department and a program department that never talked to each other. So some of the participants' barriers were not being addressed. Instead of trying to change things systemically, the program staff dealt with issues individually.” Once CSM joined the Sector Organizing Project, CCC worked with them to restore the holistic vision and reintegrate the two functions. “Now that the project has moved over to EU, the two are integrated and we're hopeful that there will be a very high level of synergy,” says Ochs.

For ACJC the decision to spin-off ACJC TEC was an important one. The spin-off conducted soft-skills training for the non-trades, such as office support for construction management, and oriented candidates to the industry. ACJC TEC helped residents learn how to market themselves to the available jobs. It also handled recruitment, assessment, and intake for the construction jobs. The fact that the contract funds went to ACJC TEC allowed ACJC to remain independent, and therefore able to continue its advocacy work. "This was a smart move," says Ochs. "It was confusing to people at first, but it was a critical step in order for ACJC to be an advocate."

The HART and CSM stories both point to the importance of an overarching unifying vision that is vigilantly maintained by staff and leadership. When executive directors and other senior managers are not able to focus on keeping program and organizing goals in sync, these parts may take off in different directions. On the other hand, the empowerment agenda that organizing groups bring to service delivery, as described by Neumann-Ortiz earlier, is a critical component of CCC's sectoral approach that has aided the groups in meeting their goals. Whether a group delivers services in-house or not, the challenge is to infuse the programs with an organizing agenda and philosophy, while making sure the services provided are high in quality. In Neil Mayer's words, "There is a range of models from SVOC to HART to the ACJC TEC spin-off. The bottom line is that it is important for the program side and the organizing side each to be competent. If the structure of trying to do both hinders that, then spinning off one part may make sense. In that case, you want a strong partner that knows what it's doing and gets the mission."

### **Relating to Employers**

Although relationship-building is a natural part of organizing, community groups have had to force themselves to overcome their fear of the private sector. Historically, low-income communities may have viewed corporations as working counter to their interests, or they may have asked or demanded jobs or resources from them. Employers may also have some reluctance to deal with community groups, but that reluctance must be overcome. In the sector model, groups have to think about what they can offer a company. Says Neil Mayer, "A big part of CCC's job with community organizations is helping them understand the importance of solidifying those connections with employers and giving them the

confidence that they can do it." Adds Kris Palmer, "The business world is a big monster for most community organizations. They have to learn how to deal with business leaders as equals. But through leadership training and negotiating experience, I saw leaders hold their own on a par with employers."

*Although relationship-building is a natural part of organizing, community groups have had to force themselves to overcome their fear of the private sector.*

Some organizations have had little prior experience relating to employers and learning how to understand their needs. For some sites, CCC staff helped the groups make the initial connections with key companies in the chosen sector. As Palmer observed, "The relationship with the employer is the golden thing that no one will share with you. The employer is hard to get; they are the payoff. There is no incentive for other agencies to share those contacts with you." In Sacramento, CCC staff first called and met with dozens of health care institutions and then SVOC got involved when they were ready to seek partnerships with specific employers.

At each site, once organizers and leaders began to build relationships directly with employers, and to understand each employer's self-interest, the community groups were able to gain their respect and put issues of mutual concern on the table. Yolanda Rivera recalls how little she understood about construction at the beginning. "I used to demand permanent jobs in construction for our residents. Then I realized the industry just doesn't work that way. It took a lot of one-on-ones to understand the industry's issues and needs. You have to have a dialogue to find a middle ground, to find those common issues. I had to overcome a lot of skepticism on the part of employers, and get them to see the opportunities."

CSM initially relied on MGAI to relate to employers, and then realized the value of building their own direct relationships. This outreach resulted in a group of twelve employers that now meet regularly with EU staff to work on language issues in the workplace. The staff also reached out to Printing Industries of Wisconsin (PIW), a statewide industry trade group. In the process, Oulahan and



Neumann-Ortiz have had to learn how to talk less about worker advocacy, and more about business assistance. “Employers respond when there is a definite or measurable benefit to them in terms of their productivity, efficiency, or worker retention,” says Oulahan. “Sometimes it’s just a matter of packaging what you say. We are trying this with vocational ESL. I tell the employers that English skills will make their workers more productive. We can test this out at our own printing shop, and then show them the results.” The fact that Esperanza Unida has its own printing business helps the sector staff, because they can relate to other employers from a managerial standpoint, and try out new initiatives in-house before marketing them to other printing companies.

### Case Management

The challenges of case management, tracking and follow-up are formidable for any organization. The question of how to deal effectively with case management is part of that larger question of how to balance programmatic work with organizing. Should a group do the case management itself, or seek partners qualified to handle it?

The HART Job Center had a steep learning curve in case management, which was difficult to overcome. “We spent too much time trying to figure out how to get the computers to work, when we should have been organizing to get the first source agreement implemented,” says CCC’s Dave Beckwith. In contrast, HCJL relied on local non-profits that already had a track record. Yet these agencies are multi-service, and therefore get over-extended. Rivera is vigilant and meets with the partners weekly to ensure the quality of services. She has recently identified some weaknesses in the case management services, and has arranged trainings for the caseworkers on issues such as substance abuse. CSM was lucky that, when the Central City Worker Center closed, the Sector Organizing Project could move to Esperanza Unida – which already had a long history of providing such services. SVOC has relied on the county welfare agency to do case management, and has had limited success at getting them to do a better job. Now the alumni association may help fill the gaps.

The holistic approach that organizing groups bring to the Sector Organizing Project, and their emphasis on leadership development and empowerment, have influenced the way they approach case management. Whenever possible, the groups look for systemic solutions to the barriers that participants experience,

whether it is transportation, language, or child care. For example, almost all the groups have struggled with the issue of limited English proficiency – an issue that may prevent someone from obtaining a job, or from moving up in a company once hired. Yet the groups have tried to go beyond just an individual solution, like sending each participant to a generic ESL class, to a more comprehensive approach that will have broader and more lasting impact.

SVOC has established an LEP program to help individuals find sustaining jobs. One area the program is exploring is how to meet the need of health care clinics to provide bilingual staff for the communities they serve. According to SVOC’s Delfina Vargas, “The idea is that we would match a new employee with limited English skills with a bilingual incumbent employee who would train them part of the day, initially in their native language. They would have on-site ESL classes. The goal is to gain language skills to move up the ladder to jobs that require English.” Sutter has already expressed interest in developing an ESL curriculum. As described earlier, Esperanza Unida also has an ambitious plan to develop the language skills of new entrants in the printing industry through a new vocational ESL program designed to employer specifications. In Hartford, the Jobs Funnel includes ESL classes for job seekers and workers, but also encourages supervisors to take Spanish classes so they can communicate with workers who are still learning English.

Another example of a systemic rather than individual approach to case management is the peer support network. SVOC’s Alumni Association and EU’s Printer Support Network are important models of post-employment support that aid significantly in retention. The participants seek systemic solutions to their barriers through collective action, but also help each other cope with the issues they face day-to-day. EU also plans to work with employers to set up internal mentoring programs within firms to complement the PSN.

While seeking systemic change, sector groups also find that they must take the time to help program participants individually. This is for the simple reason that often there is no one else who will be an advocate for the job seeker or new worker. Changing systems takes time; meanwhile participants often have situations that require immediate attention. In Milwaukee, Neumann-Ortiz and Oulahan track new workers through individual phone calls and house visits, helping them troubleshoot personal issues. Sometimes they will even negotiate with an employer to get a pay raise for

someone. In Hartford, Yolanda Rivera also takes an individual approach to case management. Recently she had an apprentice who was the only Puerto Rican worker on a job site, and he was experiencing discrimination. Realizing this was a problem that could not be solved overnight, she had him moved to a less difficult site.

### **Partnerships**

As the case studies have shown, partnerships are critical to the success of a sectoral initiative. The key to good partnerships is building and maintaining relationships with partner organizations, whether they are employers, other non-profits, unions, or public agencies. Organizers in this project have repeatedly stressed the importance of one-on-one meetings as the basis for gaining critical information and building essential relationships. The interests and needs of any partner can change over time, so ongoing, regular contact is important – both to understand how those interests change, and to better hold partners accountable for their role in the project.

An organization is made up of individuals, and effective partnerships depend on making connections with the right individuals in those partner agencies. SVOC spent many months trying to convince DHS to participate in their one-stop concept. Finally they found a leader in the welfare agency who was willing to make it happen. “SVOC looked for the bright spots in the big bureaucracies. They looked for people who have an appetite or desire to do something good,” recalls Mary Ochs.

HART's health sector initiative benefited from a change in leadership at Hartford Hospital. According to Neil Mayer, “A new personnel director at the hospital made a big difference. She wanted to make the first source hiring agreement work, so she sat down with LaTonya (Garner) and got into the nitty gritty details about how they would work together.” Garner then went a step further, building relationships with front line supervisors when she was stymied by the bureaucracy. Both HART and ACJC reached out to many construction unions until they found individuals in one or two willing to work with them. It is important to continue building new relationships though, because if you rely on one ally and that person leaves, you have to start from scratch again.

Part of making a partnership work is being able to offer something of use to a potential partner. Some unions know their members are heading for retirement and want to bring in new members, but don't know how to reach a more diverse labor pool. Michael Perri,

formerly on the SEIU International staff in Sacramento, urged community groups to target these kinds of unions. “These locals need help dealing with English language skills, leadership development, and workplace skills. Community groups also have expertise in dealing with the public sector. You can help unions in all these areas.” Often an employer experiencing a labor shortage needs help finding qualified candidates, but doesn't have the capacity to prepare job seekers for entry level jobs. Esperanza Unida has been able to appeal to printing industry employers because EU can help individuals with language and other barriers enter the industry. In Hartford, Yolanda Rivera targeted the most respected leaders among the trades to build bridges, and then sought common ground. “The unions needed community organizations to advocate for Project Labor Agreements in these big projects. They saw how powerful we could be going to the City together to fight for this.”

Often, once receptive individuals are identified, they will then play the critical role of bringing others from their world to the table. There are employer trade groups such as Printing Industries of Wisconsin, and union umbrella groups such as Central Labor Councils (CLCs), that can play that sort of networking function. Oulahan also stressed the importance of such constituency groups as LACLAA, whose members are unionized Latino workers. Mary Ochs cautions that each place is different, so the constellation of stakeholders has to be mapped out. “Look for folks on the inside to be bridge builders, people who can help you do a power analysis.” For example, the CLC in Milwaukee was very helpful to CSM, but in Sacramento SVOC made less headway through their local CLC, so they relied on individual union leaders instead. Lauren Baker at MGAI observed that “community-based sectoral strategies have helped bring community groups and unions together, because unions are indigenous sectoral organizations.” The same could be said for industry trade groups, and since most sectors have both union and non-union workers, relationships must be cultivated with both.

One of the most important parts of making partnerships succeed is to make sure the quality of your own contribution is high. Rivera stresses the need to follow through on all commitments you make, whether they are small or large. “And make sure that you've done your homework on whoever you refer to the employer.



That's why I go to the training classes myself to see who is on time and who arrives late."

## C. Technical Assistance and Training

### Holistic Approach to TA

Several aspects of the Center's sectoral approach were unique. One was the Center's holistic approach to technical assistance. The initiative paired Center staff that had expertise in organizing and sectoral development. The participating CCC staff also had organizational development expertise and could help groups troubleshoot internal issues that might arise along the way. The broad array of activities and networks that different parts of the Center participate in were value-added for the project as well.

*The Center's technical assistance approach is hands-on, intensive, and long-term in nature. This produced the level of knowledge about a group, as well as a degree of mutual trust, that was needed to undertake a joint effort of this magnitude.*

In many ways this approach resulted in high levels of synergy. The initial challenge of finding community groups with the interest and capacity to engage in the Sector Organizing Project was aided by the Center's ability to tap into its existing relationships with local organizations. The Center's technical assistance approach is hands-on, intensive, and long-term in nature. This produced the level of knowledge about a group, as well as a degree of mutual trust, that was needed to undertake a joint effort of this magnitude. All four of the participating groups had prior relationships with one or more Center staff, and had been involved in other activities facilitated by the Center, such as transportation organizing and efforts to respond to welfare reform.

In contrast, when CCC attempted to look for groups outside of its spheres, it was much harder to establish mutual trust. In an attempt to achieve regional diversity, the

Center looked for potential participants in the South where the infrastructure of community-based organizations is much smaller and weaker than in other regions. Although a group was identified, the exploratory process led both sides to conclude that the fit was not good. It was not possible for the small organization to take on such a big, long-term project involving systems change goals, without the time needed to build a relationship with CCC and beef up its capacity. Kris Palmer, who was part of the exploratory team, observed, "They either needed to make a big leap, or we had to move much more incrementally than the grant allowed." In the chosen sites, it was possible to move forward without having to lay that new groundwork.

### Peer Learning

The Center's holistic approach also added value in the opportunities it offered for peer-to-peer support and collaboration. For example, CSM, ACJC and HART were already in relationship with each other as part of the CCC-facilitated Transportation Equity Network, an alliance of grassroots groups organizing around transportation issues locally and nationally. In addition, ACJC and HART were part of a construction 'cluster' organized by the Center. The Center uses the cluster model of peer-learning to bring the same groups together repeatedly over time to explore a common topic and to learn from each other. As HART's Jackie Moldonado recalls, "We began to look at all the construction projects being planned in Hartford. But we got more curious after visiting with ACJC and seeing what they were accomplishing in LA."

CCC staff took SVOC staff and leaders as well as frontline staff from DHA and SETA to San Antonio to see Project QUEST, a well respected long-term training program established by COPS, another IAF affiliate. This trip helped create a vision of what was possible programmatically, solidify the sense of teamwork among the partners, and expose the public agency staff more to the world of community organizing. For SVOC the trip provided a yardstick against which to measure their own goals and outcomes. As part of the Sector Organizing Project there have been three cross-site convenings to share learnings from the groups' experience. CCC also created opportunities for participants to attend relevant conferences such as the National Network of Sector Partners (NNSP) and the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute. SVOC and ACJC attended a day long training in case management. However, the lack of one common sector across all sites inhibited sector specific training and peer learning opportunities.

The combination of sectoral development and organizing T.A. helped the local groups keep these two prongs of the strategy connected and in balance. Pass-through money for the local groups to hire both organizing and sectoral development program staff was another critical piece. These two elements especially promoted synergy in Sacramento and Milwaukee. SVOC staff and leaders received training in sectoral research, and attended economic and workforce development conferences, but also did trainings on how to do a power analysis of key stakeholders, and how to think about systemic change. CCC staff helped CSM begin to overcome the disconnect that had evolved between the organizing department and the Central City Worker Center. The pass-through funds allowed CSM to hire Neumann-Ortiz, someone with an organizing orientation who could foster that linkage.

*One lesson from this project is the difficulty of finding competent staff that can understand and approach sector work from both sides.*

In Hartford, on the other hand, it was harder to keep that balance as the Job Center struggled to meet the mounting demands of the health sector project. Observed Dave Beckwith, "In a complicated organization like HART, with a long pre-existing relationship to CCC, we needed to maintain a separate, free, independent TA relationship. I lost focus on other issues as I became 'the sector TA provider'. I spent most of my time with bureaucrats and service providers, not with organizers and leaders." Beckwith suggested there should be one person who continues to provide TA to the whole organization, while the sector-specific assistance is being given by other TA staff.

### **Finding Competent Staff**

As the case studies revealed, both CCC staff and local groups had to overcome the cultural barriers that often exist between the worlds of sectoral development and organizing. One lesson from this project is the difficulty of finding competent staff that can understand and approach sector work from both sides. HART, for example, struggled to find health sector staff with the right set of skills to

make sure the organizing and program work were effective and complemented each other.

Throughout this project participants have highlighted the difference in world views between organizers and program people. "There are very few people in this country trained to provide TA on sector, who can mix organizing and development. Staffing shortages for local groups and for TA providers is a serious problem." CCC Director Andy Mott observes, "We need to build an infrastructure to support the training of people who understand how organizing, workforce and economic development, and policy and systems change work can fit together." This obstacle was brought home by the fact that CCC had difficulty filling a sectoral development technical assistance position for the project. As discussed earlier, CCC and the groups also felt the need for more sector-specific expertise on the ground. For the most part, these gaps were filled one way or another, but lining up an expert early in the project would be preferable. Another specific form of technical support that all the groups wished they had had up front was with tracking of placements, retention, and other indices of success. They all struggled to do good tracking or get an agency to do it, but wanted more help identifying good tracking systems that others had developed, rather than re-inventing the wheel.

### **Organizational Stability**

Although CCC staff brought organizational development expertise to the project, there is clearly a lesson to be learned from the fact that both CSM and HART went through major turmoil, with CSM folding altogether, and HART spinning off all of its projects to become leaner and focus exclusively on organizing. The loss of funding in one case and of a long-time executive director in the other led to major setbacks, something no one planning the project could have predicted. CSM was forced to close its doors due to financial difficulties and would have benefited from a more diversified funding base. CCC's Dave Beckwith wonders if the project just placed too many demands on the HART staff at a time when the organization was working on many fronts and then undergoing a major leadership transition. "The sector project exacerbated management weaknesses. It put the weight of a program onto a structure that was designed to work on issues." Yet the role of CCC technical assistance was critical in helping the sector projects survive those crises (or move to a new organization) and still make impressive strides in their sectoral goals.


"When everyone else pulled out of CSM, CCC hung in there and helped them relocate to EU," says Mary Ochs.

### **Dual Role of TA Provider and Funder**

Center staff have grappled with the question of whether being a funder affects one's ability to provide technical assistance. Beckwith felt strongly that having to play hardball with HART around performance outcomes damaged CCC's TA relationship with the organization. "I'm uncomfortable with CCC as a funder. I hate coming to town with money; I want to come to town with support. We got stuck as the funder enforcing the rules, not as the helper." Other CCC staff disagree. "Very hands-on TA and taking time to build trust can overcome the wariness of groups to be honest with us," says Roxanne Williams. Kris Palmer is unsure, "It is difficult as a

TA provider to be sure that you are being held accountable by a group, and to know that the organization values your services, when you're also the funder."


Despite these mixed emotions, CCC staff did not see a preferable alternative structure for this type of project. More importantly, there is unanimous agreement that pass-through funds to the local groups were an essential component of the project and its success. Mary Ochs reflects, "Our groups are all about accountability. They are sophisticated, and can handle this kind of relationship, which is much broader than funding. We are providing other value-added technical assistance, so we engage in honest problem solving together. But if the T.A. suffers or the group is not performing, then it does get dicey."

A photograph of a person kneeling on a construction site, possibly reviewing plans or documents. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The person is wearing a patterned jacket and is looking down at a set of papers or a tablet on the ground. In the background, there are construction materials and structures, suggesting a building site.

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Organizing groups with a track record of work on these issues bring tremendous credibility in their community to the table. Their strong relationship with the job seekers themselves is key to their success.

# conclusion

 **The Center's sectoral** development initiative sought to prove that powerful community organizations can change the systems that have historically excluded low-income residents from quality jobs with career ladders. Indeed, every organization involved in the Sector Organizing Project succeeded in placing substantial numbers of people into decent employment opportunities. In order to do this, the organizing groups had to build relationships with employers, unions, educational institutions, public officials, and others. They had to challenge the status quo and steer their partners in new directions. HART worked with unions and other allies to win Project Labor Agreements, and got the regional Workforce Development Board to adopt their approach to training and placement. SVOC convinced a "work-first" county welfare agency to allow pre-employment training, and got hospitals to reorient their hiring practices. CSM/EU fostered an employer working group that is committed to the retention and advancement of workers with language barriers. ACJC is poised to apply their highly successful construction training and placement model to the cutting edge field of international trade.

This project has surfaced many important lessons. The power of an organizing approach, compared to a service delivery model, is evident. Organizing groups with a track record of work on these issues bring tremendous credibility in their community to the table. Their strong relationship with the job seekers themselves is key to their success. Through alumni associations and peer support networks, as well as one-on-one attention and case management, each organization is doing everything it can to make sure that, once hired, new workers will succeed in their jobs and someday move up the ladder to greater career opportunities. The workers themselves are a critical part of the effort to identify barriers to success, and pursue systemic change that will remove those barriers. Each of these groups is committed to changing policies and systems

so that they will have a major long-term impact, and each is diligent in building the collective power and knowledge needed to bring about that systemic change.

Yet to undertake an initiative of this magnitude, local organizations need many resources. Pass-through funding to the groups for sectoral and organizing staff was critical. CCC technical expertise in these areas was also essential, and yet the groups clearly would have benefited from even more sector-specific knowledge on the ground. This is especially true given the dynamic nature of each sector and the uncertainties of the broader economy. Juggling the demands of sector program work with the organizing imperative was an area that all the groups struggled with, each ultimately achieving a balance of sorts, whether internally or in partnership with others.

*As the case studies revealed, both CCC staff and local groups had to overcome the cultural barriers that often exist between the worlds of sectoral development and organizing.*

On the face of it, this model should be replicable. Yet there are some limiting factors to consider. One is the difficulty of finding community organizing groups with the capacity and interest to undertake such a long-term, comprehensive effort. CCC struggled to find a large pool of regionally diverse groups that fit this criteria. Yet as word has spread about the success of this project, more organizations have surfaced that understand the wisdom of a sectoral approach and are eager to pursue it. Based on the Center's experience, managerial and financial stability are issues worth exploring more deeply with a group before committing to such a project.

Another factor is the economy. This initiative was undertaken during a period of economic expansion – the longest in U.S. history. The labor market was generally tight and employers were open to new kinds of workers. In a recession the possibility of systemic change may be lessened. This remains to be seen and should be studied further by examining how long the impacts achieved in this project will last.

A last factor to consider is the ability of such an initiative to find qualified staff. Both CCC and the local groups struggled to find staff with experience in economic and workforce development who also understood the organizing philosophy at the core of the project. Foundations and intermediaries should explore this dilemma further, and foster opportunities for both organizers and practitioners to develop expertise in each other's fields and in the interrelated fields of workforce and economic development.

The success of this and other sector initiatives has strong implications for federal workforce policy. While the sector groups may not have explicitly sought to tackle welfare and workforce policy issues, in practice they often succeeded in changing the ways these systems

operated locally (as in the case of SVOC with welfare, and HART with workforce development). This year the 1996 welfare law (TANF, or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) is up for reauthorization in Congress. Next year the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) will be reauthorized. Foundations, intermediaries, and practitioners should share the success of the sector model with national policy makers.

Clearly, the sector model highlights the importance of skills training and intensive case management in achieving sustainable employment, and calls into question the validity of a strict "work-first" approach to attaining self-sufficiency. Federal welfare and workforce funds should be flexible and adequate to serve these objectives. The model also points to the need for state and local workforce and welfare agencies that really understand the economy in their region, and can identify and speak to the needs of key sectors.

Ultimately, this kind of initiative cannot be replicated without resources. Federal funds should be allocated for demonstration projects that support community-based sectoral strategies. After all, sectoral projects are a win-win proposition for workers and employers – sound investments that generate ample returns.

# appendix: expanded case studies

## A. Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART)

Hartford is an older American city with a declining population, now about 165,000, down from 189,000 in 1990. The city is roughly one-third each African American, Hispanic, and white. More than 50 percent of land in this capital city is tax exempt, thereby limiting its financial base. HART was established in 1975 in the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Hartford, and built a substantial track record of local improvements through its organizing and advocacy, as well as community revitalization programs in areas such as housing and youth.

Particular factors in Hartford and at HART made it a good candidate for the Sector Organizing Project. Welfare reform was proceeding at an accelerated rate in Connecticut, where the state was implementing a rigid two-year time limit for receipt of welfare benefits. Hartford was going to feel the impact severely, with its high number of residents on public assistance. To develop and catalyze a regional growth plan, business and government leaders had formed the Millennium Project of the Capital Regional Growth Council, a project with a genuine interest in workforce development and economic opportunity for the city's disadvantaged residents. Jim Boucher, HART's executive director at the time, was involved in the regional planning efforts and sought to expand HART's reach beyond the neighborhood level. HART was already pursuing job development strategies when the Sector Organizing Project began. When a one-stop employment services center closed in HART's neighborhood, HART decided to open its own local job center. The building was donated and renovated by SINA (Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance), a coalition of major employers in the immediate area that includes several hospitals and Trinity College.

After reviewing six alternative sectors, CCC and HART initially decided to concentrate on the health sector. The sector was very large, with some 57,000 employees in

the region; it included a number of expanding occupations with low entry-level requirements; it was showing net growth over time; it had good advancement opportunities; and it paid decent wages. Moreover, the HART Job Center was literally across the street from Hartford Hospital, a key member of SINA that committed to hire applicants referred by the HART Job Center.

*HART was established in 1975 in the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Hartford, and built a substantial track record of local improvements through its organizing and advocacy...*

A confluence of circumstances resulted in HART giving priority to a different sector first, and ramping up the health work later on. In 1998 HART members became energized and angry about the prospect of major construction happening throughout the city, with few jobs likely to go to residents in low-income neighborhoods. The city was planning at least two billion dollars worth of construction over the next five years, including a convention center, hotel, football stadium, schools, theaters and a library. The situation was brought home vividly when jobless residents started noticing construction workers coming from elsewhere to new jobs in the area.

HART began to use its organized constituency to convert this anger into jobs for community members. First HART got a 30 percent local hiring commitment for the Learning Corridor, a project to build four new schools near Trinity College. The agreement stipulated that the HART Job Center and the union hall would be the two sources for the local hires. The city agreed to

have a Project Labor Agreement (PLA), which meant union wages and career ladders for the workers on the job. The PLA also meant that HART very quickly had to begin building relationships with all the unions involved in construction. It took a lot of one-on-one relationship building to convince the unions that HART did not want to use them as “dumping grounds” for unemployed people with the most barriers to employment. The HART staff ran the program directly out of the HART Job Center, and their ability to screen applicants and deliver good candidates was critical in establishing HART’s credibility with employers.

HART wanted to take its success and new union alliances beyond the Learning Corridor. The next organizing effort was centered on the proposed football stadium for the New England Patriots. Just when HART had succeeded in pressuring the mayor for jobs from this proposed project, the stadium fell through and the Patriots stayed in Massachusetts. Undaunted, HART went after the Capital City Economic Development Authority (CCEDA), an agency created to oversee revitalization projects. CCEDA had its so-called “six pillars” or six construction projects in the pipeline. As HART organizer Yolanda Rivera recalled, HART had its biggest annual congress in five years – with 600 members attending – and the invited guest was Arthur Anderson, chairman of CCEDA. On the hot seat, Anderson agreed to 30 percent local hiring for the six pillars. HART then followed up with the state legislature to get the agreement written into law. Finally, HART worked in coalition with other labor and community organizations in the north end of Hartford to win a hiring commitment at Adriaen’s Landing, a new waterfront development.

Thus in 1999 the Hartford Construction Jobs Initiative (HCJI), known as the ‘Jobs Funnel,’ was born. The HCJI’s goal is to fill 30 percent of construction jobs with local residents – specifically 250 successful placements in the first two years – with an emphasis on apprenticeships that lead to journeyman status. In order to do this, HCJI had to develop a reliable system of recruitment, assessment, placement and retention. As Rivera says, “From the organizing drive we went into service delivery mode.”

Conveniently, an entity had already been formed in 1997 that could serve as the service delivery infrastructure. The PROGRESS Collaborative was born out of a frustration among various community-based organizations that wanted to find an alternative to the poorly functioning workforce development system in the city. So HART, the Puerto Rican Forum, the Urban League,

and South End Community Services came together. The HCJI was able to contract with PROGRESS Partners to provide quality recruitment, assessment, and referral to jobs. In addition, Connecticut Light and Power Company was hired to conduct a four-week course on general construction and safety training, as well as two-hour money management workshops.

In its first two years the HCJI has received more than \$1.7 million from the State, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Capitol Region Growth Council, Regional Workforce Development Board, and City of Hartford. The steering committee for HCJI represents a cross-section of stakeholders: neighborhood residents, the building trades, contractors (both union and non-union), CCEDA, city and state officials, the regional workforce board, Hartford Housing Authority, funders, and leaders from the business community.

### **Outcomes**

In two years the HCJI exceeded its target of 250 placements:

#### **The Jobs Funnel • 1999–2001**

Responded to outreach: *1634*

Completed application: *1460*

Took assessment tests: *1083*

Passed tests: *450*

Placed in jobs: *330*

Average starting wage: *\$12.00/hour*

Retention rates: *70%*

These 330 job placements occurred in 12 of 14 trades. More than half, 191 placements, are in union apprenticeships. The rest are jobs in non-union firms and non-construction related employment.

This success has not deterred the HCJI from making improvements to its program. Yolanda Rivera, who is now the coordinator for the Initiative, meets weekly with the subcontractors delivering services to see what each partner has accomplished and hold them accountable for their targets. Rivera sees weaknesses in the case management services and in retention. She has planned staff training on case management to be conducted by the Department of Labor and the Capital Region Workforce Development Board. She has also arranged day-long training by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to help case workers recognize and address substance abuse problems among



participants. The Hartford Foundation will allow \$50,000 of its latest \$400,000 grant to be earmarked for retention, with a match from a private funder, so that the Initiative can hire two retention specialists. The HCJI has been a program under the umbrella of PROGRESS, whose partners subcontract for the services provided by HCJI. To eliminate the conflict of interest this creates, HCJI is now going to become a project of the Regional Workforce Development Board while staying in the same office, with the same staff and governed by the same steering committee.

Many of the construction projects have PLAs, so the jobs are unionized. This means better wages and career paths. Furthermore, once a worker is finished on one construction site, he or she can go to the union hall to get another work assignment. For those who aren't working for union contractors, once the construction is completed they are referred back to the Jobs Funnel for another job. Rivera would like to end this revolving door by pushing for more PLAs in the future.

### **Examples of Systems Change**

Historically unions have not had a good reputation in Hartford. Winning Project Labor Agreements on some major construction projects was a big step forward for both unions and low-income residents seeking jobs. The 30 percent local hiring commitments were also groundbreaking. For the first time unions and community groups can approach the City and State together, increasing their clout enormously by being united. If they win PLAs for all construction projects in Hartford, as they hope to do under the new city administration, unions and community groups together will have effected permanent change, rather than having to fight for a PLA each time a new project is announced. In fact, the new mayor is the former director of SINA, which should help HART and its allies fortify their construction agenda.

The unions are operating differently now as a result of their positive experience with HART and the HCJI. They have agreed to become more involved by participating in pre-employment workshops, providing orientation videos about the different trades, and giving HCJI the names of all their apprentices so HCJI can conduct follow up with them. "It was unthinkable before that the unions would ever share information like apprentice lists," says Rivera. Union business managers who were completely opposed to the Initiative, like the Sprinkle Fitters local, are now participating. There are now nine trades active in the HCJI,

and only two others have refused to participate so far. The HCJI is also working with the trades to get them to relax requirements that create barriers to entry into the apprenticeship programs. For example, the Carpenters and Sheet Metal workers locals now allow HCJI apprentices a six-month probation period to complete their GED. When the Ironworkers local opened a brand new training center and offices in the North End of Hartford, HCJI was invited to set up its office there. HCJI benefits from its close proximity to the classrooms, which are used during the day for HCJI activities, and its office serves as a drop-in center for the workers in training.

*Winning Project Labor Agreements on some major construction projects was a big step forward for both unions and low-income residents seeking jobs.*

The community organizations are also changing their behavior as a result of this initiative. Prior to the Sector Organizing Project, HART's relationships with community groups in other parts of the city had waned. The prospect of jobs for city residents helped bring everyone to the table, but it still took effort to build trust among the groups, and convince them that it was better in the long run to cooperate rather than compete for jobs, contracts, and resources. Now there is a track record of being able to work together to deliver services and win demands citywide.

The workforce development system developed under the Hartford Construction Jobs Initiative is a model, based on community-based service delivery, that succeeded by going around the existing publicly financed workforce system. Yet the Workforce Development Board was quick to support the HCJI once its success became apparent. Now the WDB is becoming the host for the Jobs Funnel, with the stipulation that a separate steering committee continue to oversee its operations. This effort shows that it is possible to create alternative models and then get the existing systems to embrace them. The State is now rushing to replicate the Jobs Funnel model in New Haven, Waterbury, Bridgeport and New London.

## PARTICIPANT PROFILE

### Ernest McHenry

Mr. McHenry is an ironworker apprentice, and takes classes in the same building that houses the HCJI office. His starting wage was \$14.27 per hour. Now he makes \$16.17 per hour. He will get a \$2/hour or 5% raise per year until he is a journeyman.

I was affiliated with HART before now. I went through a plumbing training. Then I went through the Connecticut Light and Power program, which was two months, and I graduated. It was the first CL & P class and I was first in my class. I came back to talk about my experience with later classes. I spoke at City Hall, and on TV, about the fact that the program works.

Then I went to work at Titan Mechanical as a plumber apprentice. But I hurt my back; they didn't provide me with the proper gear. It just didn't click. I heard about the ironworkers apprenticeship. I really wanted to be in a union, to have a job with benefits, to work with my hands. I picked a trade that really suits me. It's very hard work, but it's very rewarding. I can show my kids that I helped build this or that building, I can point out my work around the city.

I go to classes two nights a week to learn welding and cutting. Right now I am working on a stadium in East Hartford. With the union, there is no favoritism, no nepotism. The steward is looking out for your interests. Everyone is treated the same, based on your ability. You start as an apprentice, so you learn to improve. This is a four-year program; I go to classes three hours a night, two nights a week, September to May. Every year I get a raise, and then I'll become a journeyman, which means I can work for any ironworkers local in North America.

My relationship with HART has been very rewarding. I recruit people, I transport people to the program, I give back to show my appreciation. It's nice to know you can come here to the HCJI office, to refer people to unions, to contractors. HCJI has the heads up on what's going on in the industry.

The HCJI has brought together stakeholders who were not previously working together. As a result, the City is thinking more holistically about solutions to its core problems. For example, the Department of Human Services, which is on the HCJI steering committee, wants to create better housing opportunities so that residents who move up the income ladder in the construction trades will want to stay in the city rather than move to the suburbs. The agency is exploring homeownership and other incentives to keep residents in Hartford. Another example relates to transportation. The city agencies were reluctant to look beyond mass transit solutions to transportation barriers. Yet, if resident workers are to get hired on construction projects throughout the state, they cannot rely only on buses. HCJI and the Commissioner for the CT Department of Labor, Shaun Cashman, have worked together to convince the Department of Transportation and members of the trades to fund a pilot program modeled on the Good News Garage in Vermont. HART learned about the Good News Garage through CCC's transportation organizing project. The Department of Labor got 20 cars donated from the Lung Association and \$100,000 from DOT to repair the cars. DOL, the association of contractors and the trades will also be involved in the pilot. HCJI and the Good News Garage will conduct workshops on car ownership. Good News Garage staff will provide on-site management. The repair work will be farmed out to contractors.

### Health Sector, Take Two

HART has attempted to refocus on the health care sector since 2000, aware that construction is not the right career for every resident and that the health care institutions in the community hold promise for decent jobs with career ladders. The new health sector coordinator, LaTonya Garner, spent her first several months updating the information available on the sector itself, which has undergone changes in the two years since HART and CCC first researched the health care field. The HART Job Center had obtained a first source hiring agreement with its next door neighbor, Hartford Hospital. However, without specific processes in place and an organized resident constituency focused on this issue, the agreement had not been implemented. Garner set about working with the hospital hierarchy to move from paper to practice. This involved examining the hospital's hiring needs, assessing the skills of residents coming through the Job Center, and tailoring the center's job readiness classes to

meet the employer's needs. In fact, the hospital now participates in the Job Center orientations. Garner developed a first source hiring handbook and forms for hospital staff in order to clarify both the Job Center's and hospital's roles and expectations.

Garner also spent a lot of time navigating the hospital bureaucracy. After Garner worked directly with human resources directors, their conversations led to slower progress than expected. Garner began working directly with the department supervisors to identify their hiring needs. By building relationships with the front line managers, Garner was able to bypass the hierarchical roadblocks and start placing residents in jobs. She then built in systems for employer feedback to aid in retention and to have clear standards for promotion. Garner's next steps are to further strengthen retention, and to work with the hospital and community college on developing incumbent worker training to move entry-level workers up career ladders. Once the kinks are worked out at Hartford Hospital, Garner plans to negotiate first source agreements with other area health institutions.

### Outcomes

The Job Center's initial goal was to place 75 residents in one year; and Garner exceeded that goal.

#### Hartford Hospital Hiring • April 2000–April 2001

Recruited by Job Center: 600

Expressed interest in Health: 355

Referred to Hospital: 215

Interviewed by Hospital: 127

Hired by Hospital: 77

Average starting wage: \$8.50/hour

Retention rates: 55%

The Job Center continued to place residents at comparable rates in the remainder of 2001. The residents hired by the hospital are working in environmental services, food services, and as patient care associates. At 70 days on the job, retention was 70 percent; at six months, retention was 55 percent.

At this early stage, Garner admits that the health sector project is still making the leap from placing residents in jobs to actually changing systems. At Hartford Hospital the progress has been slow. Garner has been able to get the human resources department to conduct group interviews for candidates, which never happened before. Garner has also gotten the hospital to look more closely

at the performance of the newly placed workers so that the Job Center can provide better case management and help improve retention. The Job Center came through with many hires at a time of organizational change at the hospital, proving that the Center can deliver qualified candidates. Thus the front line hiring staff are very receptive; yet the top bureaucrats remain resistant to innovation. For example, the hospital's education department was willing to participate in job readiness classes at the Job Center; but the human resources department prevented it from doing so.

*The Job Center came through with many hires at a time of organizational change at the hospital, proving that the Center can deliver qualified candidates.*

During the last two years HART has experienced some internal instability, having lost its long-term executive director and then his replacement after only six months. Amazingly, the sector work and the HART Job Center continued to function through all the upheaval. Now HART has decided to spin off all of its programs so that it can focus on its core mission, which is organizing low income residents in Hartford. The Job Center is now managed by SINA. The health sector work will continue there, and SINA has committed resources for the long term. In addition, the Job Center and SINA are seeking funding to develop improved tracking and retention systems. The construction sector work will continue through the HCJI, which has attracted enough funding to thrive past the life of this initiative.

Thus both sectoral initiatives will continue and expand long after the Mott Foundation grant period is over – a remarkable accomplishment in a field in which demonstration programs often die when the initial funding runs out.

### B. Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC)

Unlike the rust belt and northeastern cities, Sacramento's population has increased slightly since 1990 while the surrounding county has grown by 22 percent. The region

has become increasingly diverse, with growth in Hispanic and Asian populations. Sacramento Valley Organizing Community (SVOC) is an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a national community organizing network. It is a six-year old, broad-based organization representing 40 predominantly Latino, African American, and Asian religious congregations in Sacramento, Yolo, and Solano counties in Northern California. In only a few short years, SVOC developed an impressive track record in housing development, job development, and immigrant naturalization. In 1997, the organization was beginning to explore possible responses to welfare reform. SVOC's member churches were concerned about the impact of welfare changes on their constituents, especially given that the state of California instituted strict work requirements and time limits.

As CCC began discussions with SVOC about the sector initiative, SVOC leaders were formulating a response to welfare reform – to develop one-stop job centers in their churches. The churches would provide space for a mix of job readiness and child care programs. Participants could be funneled to job opportunities in SVOC's own housing construction projects, or join a micro-business loan program. SVOC saw that the sector strategy would complement this concept well by providing more job opportunities for residents coming through the one-stops. A survey of the regional economy and existing analyses narrowed down the possible sectors to four, and health was chosen for many of the reasons it had been selected in Hartford. There were a number of major health care institutions in the region, and growth was projected in many entry-level health occupations.

SVOC was clear from the beginning that it wanted to build power, not programs. This meant finding other agencies to run the programs, so that SVOC members could concentrate on building its long-term power base and potential for impact by developing new leaders among those coming into the job centers, building new relationships with public agencies and employers, and recruiting new member institutions. A key moment that helped the organization define its role was when CCC staff took SVOC staff and leaders to San Antonio to see Project QUEST, a well respected long-term training program established by COPS, another IAF affiliate.

The organization identified eleven churches that wanted to host the job centers. SVOC then used its clout – and ability to hold mass assemblies – to win participation from several public agencies. The Sacramento Housing and

Redevelopment Agency agreed to fund renovations for the child care/job center facilities at the churches. The Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) agreed to provide on-site assessment and job readiness classes, which were funded by the Department of Human Assistance (DHA). It was agreed that health skills training would be provided by employers, at the hospitals, and coordinated by SETA and SVOC. DHA agreed to refer welfare clients to the one-stop centers, and to provide on-site case managers.

On the sector front, CCC staff and SVOC staff and leaders met with health industry leaders to negotiate hiring commitments. SVOC first engaged Mercy Hospital, largely because of SVOC's faith-based connection to the nuns at Mercy. That hospital then helped bring along other employers. The mayor of Sacramento facilitated contact with Sutter Hospital. SEIU Local 250 brought Kaiser to the table and helped secure a hiring commitment. According to Kris Palmer, former CCC economic development specialist, "The carrot of having 40,000 people that have political weight is intriguing to a big business that has to show what it is doing for the community, that needs to polish its image. Most health care institutions are non-profits with a community mission – that is leverage you have, which factors into the equation of what sector you choose." Initially, each CEO committed to hire 75 graduates of the job readiness programs at the church centers.

SVOC then worked with SETA to tailor the job readiness program to meet both the needs of the sector and SVOC's own organizing agenda. The boiler plate two-week soft-skills program was expanded to four weeks. Hospital staff come and speak to the participants about health care careers and prepare them for interviews. Then participants are taken on a tour of a hospital. With CCC help, SVOC created a two-day leadership development component, in which participants learn about one-on-one relationship building, negotiation and problem-solving skills, the power of collective action and workplace dynamics. SVOC leaders conduct these sessions. Once participants complete the four-week program, SVOC invites them to join an Alumni Association. The Alumni Association provides a system of mutual support for people who have been placed in jobs, and with the help of SVOC organizers, allows the new hires to organize for broader changes. The association plans to develop a monthly newsletter to all graduates that will feature "hot topics" in the healthcare sector and a "success corner" with profiles of alumni members.

So far the Alumni Association has organized to win the following reforms from the DHA: low-interest car loans; individual development accounts (IDAs), with a 2 to 1 match of government funds to personal savings; and assistance in receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit. The welfare department also agreed to provide stipends for Alumni to track program graduates. In response to limited tracking by the welfare department itself, now six individuals are working part-time at about \$10 an hour to track the progress of graduates and also invite them to participate in the Alumni Association.

### Outcomes

#### Church One-Stops • 2000–2001

Enrolled in classes: *218*

Completed job readiness training: *123*

Directly entered health care employment: *56*

Entered living wage jobs w/health benefits in non-health fields: *14*

Enrolled in Caregivers Training Initiative: *19*

Additionally recruited into CTI (not through job readiness classes): *101*

Average starting wage: *\$9/hour*

Retention rates in health sector: *85%*

Two people who started in an entry-level position at Sutter Hospital in December 1998 have already been promoted to supervisor. Sutter has experienced 80 percent retention rates through the SVOC program, compared to average rates of 67 percent. Due to SVOC's successful outreach for the CTI, the organization has contributed 32% of the total enrolled participants. Still, SVOC is aware that their program's quality can be improved. SVOC would like to better tailor the job readiness program to changes in the health care sector over time. Toward that end, CCC provided SVOC with a consultant to evaluate the program and suggest modifications. The orientation was modified to provide more health-specific content, and it was opened up to those seeking advancement skills as well as welfare-to-work clients.

SVOC is also looking at creative ways to find jobs in the health care industry for immigrants with limited English proficiency. One component of this initiative is the Promotoras de Salud, or Community Health Educators, which seeks to train and place Latino immigrant men and women in Spanish-speaking communities to conduct health care education and outreach. The goal is to boost the number of families enrolled in the state's Healthy

## PARTICIPANT PROFILE

### Yolanda Santos

Before I found out about SVOC I was a person who was on public aid most of the time and couldn't keep jobs. I kept getting training for environmental services with Sutter, but the SVOC people kept getting all the jobs that should have been my job. So I finally went to the SVOC job readiness program and chose to be a CNA. I did an eight-week training at American River College. I was the first person to get a car loan. I left Sutter after a year to do registry, where an agency places me with clients. Now I work the night shift, which is my ideal shift. Everything SVOC told me I could do myself and they showed me the door, and I have done all this for myself. After the car loan I want to do the IDA program, so I can purchase myself a piece of dirt someday. Before SVOC I never had a job for very long.

Families insurance plan. In a second component, SVOC will partner with area health care providers and adult education programs to design and implement a vocational ESL training for health care jobs.

### Examples of Systems Change

One of the most remarkable accomplishments of the SVOC sector initiative has been getting the county welfare department to allow welfare recipients to receive pre-employment training, despite the agency's work-first mandate. According to Larry Ferlazzo of SVOC "We found a unique ally in Cheryl Davis, the Executive Director of DHA. She is by far one of the most progressive welfare department directors in the country." Graduates of the job readiness program who do not get hired right away have the option to receive up to two years of additional training in health occupations, while continuing to receive welfare benefits. DHA also provides child care, car loans, IDAs, and EITC counseling. A staff person, Rosalinda Stoffel, was assigned to work with SVOC two years ago, and there are now two DHA social workers dedicated full-time to helping participants in the job readiness program.

According to Stoffel, "Everything we've done has been within the regulations, but more creative and innovative



thanks to SVOC. Having both the technical knowledge and social work background of both me and my boss helps us to make it work. It takes work to come up with an agreement that fits within the regs, but we are willing to do it." This breakthrough took a lot of relationship-building on the part of SVOC, and looking for the right people who could make things happen within the bureaucracy. Stoffel's boss and the second in command at DHA, Jerry Plummer, was extremely impressed initially by SVOC's recruitment efforts and the huge turnout at orientations. (Three hundred people applied for the first 60 slots.) Plummer even attended an IAF ten-day organizing training so he could learn more about SVOC's philosophy.

SVOC also succeeded in getting the employment and training agency, SETA, to do some unique things, such as allowing for an expanded job readiness program at the church centers that includes an explicit organizing and leadership development component. SVOC also used their relationships with both organized labor and health care employers to "broker" an agreement with SETA to participate in the Caregivers Training Initiative. CTI is a \$2.6 million dollar state investment in pre-employment and incumbent health care training – another impressive accomplishment in a work-first state.

The health care institutions now think differently about their approach to workforce development. Sutter Hospital has embraced the SVOC approach and is taking it to new levels. Sutter is the third largest employer in the Sacramento area, with five acute care hospitals and 8000 employees. Sutter is looking not only at entry level hires, but at incumbent worker training and career ladders. Annette Smith Dhoring, Sutter's Workforce Development Manager, has been proactive in this regard. "When I was hired in 1998 we were getting people into entry-level jobs but that was it. Health care is a volatile field – what happens to hires if hospitals close? We only gave them on-the-job training in one specific area, rather than a broader set of skills."

So Dhoring and SVOC worked on identifying funding sources for new training programs. The result is the Caregivers Training Initiative – a regional partnership funded by the state to provide entry-level and upgrade training for welfare recipients, the un/underemployed up to 200 percent of poverty, and incumbent health care workers. The partners include three job training agencies, area hospitals, community colleges, SVOC, and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 250. The training encompasses Certified Nurse's Assistant (CNA), Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN), Registered Nurse (RN),

radiology, and technology. Trainees continue to receive welfare, transportation and child care; and their books, uniforms and other work-related expenses are covered.

In the words of CCC's Mary Ochs, "SVOC has put a huge premium on building relationships – it's their organizing m.o. [*modus operandi*]" This investment has paid off. The organization has been able to engage its partners in unique ways, such as being able to work with SEIU at unionized Kaiser Permanente, while also working with non-union hospitals. SVOC built a relationship with American River College and got the college to set up an acute care CNA program. This is the first acute care CNA program in the state, and a permanent addition to the ARC curriculum.

### *SVOC built a relationship with American River College and got the college to set up an acute care CNA program.*

As the welfare population dwindles and families with the most barriers to employment remain unemployed, SVOC is looking for more diverse opportunities in the health care sector. Toward that end, SVOC negotiated a unique arrangement with the County welfare agency, through a state-funded grant, to help more uninsured families receive health coverage, while providing training and employment for some SVOC graduates. At least 30 graduates will be employed as enrollment assistants, signing up low income families for the state's Healthy Families Insurance program. While the graduates are working as enrollment assistants, they will be enrolled in either GED or clerical training. Their welfare benefits will be paid as wages, allowing them to qualify for the EITC. These graduates will then be placed in jobs that pay a living wage with benefits in the billing departments of hospitals or with health insurance companies.

There is no doubt that the sector work will continue past the three-year program period. SVOC has attracted more than six hundred thousand dollars in support from health related and other foundations to continue the work, which is clearly an integral part of the organization. In addition, well over one and a half million dollars in public monies each year is committed by local and state governments to support the program.

## C. Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee/Esperanza Unida

Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee (CSM) was chosen for the Sector Organizing Project during the second phase of the initiative. Milwaukee is a rust belt city of 662,000, down from 722,000 in 1990. It has growing minority populations, and now the city is 34 percent black, 12 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Asian. Milwaukee is an important city from the perspective of welfare reform. Wisconsin Works, or W2, is one of the most work-first oriented welfare programs in the country. (W2's architect, then governor Tommy Thompson, is now Secretary of Health and Human Services for the federal government.) Under W2, people with many barriers to employment are pushed into low-wage, low-skill jobs, with no long term opportunities for training or advancement. Milwaukee's welfare program is implemented by private contractors who have a financial incentive to serve as few people as possible, because they can retain surplus funds as profits.

CSM was founded in 1993 as a coalition of 200 neighborhood, labor and religious organizations. Early on the organization identified its mission – to help low income people and people of color gain access to family-supporting jobs. Before CCC approached CSM about the sector initiative, CSM had already done economic and labor market research to identify construction as a growing industry in Milwaukee. Through creative organizing and a solid labor-community coalition, CSM won minority hiring and prevailing wage requirements both at the planned convention center and at the new baseball stadium. CSM established a Central City Workers Center (CCWC) to recruit and prepare people for a successful career in the construction trades.

CCWC viewed its mission holistically, with an emphasis on worker organizing, rather than just service delivery. The center was intended as a membership-based organization that empowered workers and job seekers with leadership development and advocacy skills, and helped them remove barriers to entering the trades. CCWC worked with the hardest-to-serve, many on welfare, with barriers such as limited education, limited English, substance abuse, criminal records, domestic abuse and immigration status issues.

For CSM participation in CCC's sector initiative was a logical next step. In 1999, working with CCC staff, the organization identified printing as the next promising sector in which to pursue family-supporting jobs. Unlike manufacturing, innovations in technology have created

more jobs in the printing sector, and they are high-skill, high-wage jobs. Milwaukee is the tenth largest printing center in the country – there are 500 printing firms in the Milwaukee area, with 14,000 jobs. The CCWC had done limited placements of its members into printing jobs, but CSM had not yet fully engaged employers and others in the industry in a comprehensive way.

CSM's goals for the Sector Organizing Project were (a) to increase access to printing jobs for women and people of color, especially Latinos; and (b) to build structures to ensure workers' retention and success on the job. Printing in Milwaukee historically has been a very white, male profession. Yet research and surveys of employers revealed an aging workforce, and – until recently – a very tight labor market, fostering employers' receptivity to bringing in a more diverse pool of workers. CSM's challenge was to make lasting systemic changes that would survive beyond the economic boom and labor shortage.

CSM developed relationships with several key training and placement organizations: the Milwaukee Graphic Arts Institute (MGAI), the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) and, to a lesser extent, Esperanza Unida (EU).

- ▶ MGAI had focused only on incumbent worker training, but in the 1990s it developed a six-week, full-time entry-level program called "Printing Connections," targeted primarily at women and minorities. Close to half of those completing the program are welfare-eligible. A job is guaranteed upon completion. Starting wages are \$9.10 an hour, and completion and placement rates are above 90 percent.
- ▶ MATC offers a one-year program that awards students a high school equivalency diploma (GED) that is also a printing diploma – equal to one year toward a two-year associate's degree in printing. MATC provides bilingual educational assistants for Spanish and Hmong/Lao speakers.
- ▶ Esperanza Unida is a community-based organization that is nationally known for its "training businesses" which combine occupational training with business development. It can accommodate Spanish speakers. EU offers a twelve-week, part-time training in printing and also runs a printing business where students work. This combination uniquely positions EU within the printing industry as both a trainer and a company.

The CCWC increased its staff capacity in order to broaden its outreach beyond the largely African American Northside to include the predominantly Latino Southside, and to place greater emphasis on retention and advancement. Although much of the job placement took place through the training organizations mentioned, CSM sought independent relationships with employers to begin to address barriers to retention. Christine Neumann-Ortiz, the CSM sector coordinator, began talking to employers about how to help Limited English Proficient (LEP) workers, particularly Latinos, get hired and move up through the firms. Her efforts resulted in a core group of twelve employers from small, medium and large firms committed to working together to remove language barriers.

*“I learned that it was not technical English but general workplace and health and safety language skills that are important to employers.”*

Neumann-Ortiz surveyed employers on the types of English needed on the job. “I learned that it was not technical English but general workplace and health and safety language skills that are important to employers.” The firms agreed to, and have helped, recruit their employees to participate in a vocational English as a Second Language program. The current class includes 16 students from three different employers. MATC, MGAI, and EU staffers Joseph Oulahan and Neumann-Ortiz visited with company officials, HR managers, and shop floor supervisors from the companies on the Vocational ESL Advisory Committee and collected materials from them for inclusion in that class. The materials were delivered to MATC, which agreed to develop the curriculum for the Technical ESL Training class. Implementation was stalled because the initial funding sources (state Workforce Advancement and Attachment Act and surplus TANF funds) had such restrictive eligibility requirements that very few candidates could enroll. Because of these obstacles, EU used the materials gathered for MATC to develop a curriculum for a simplified “ESL in Printing” version of the class, which is now being offered through EU. Eventually they would like this class to develop into a Technical ESL Training class as originally envisioned. Says Neumann-Ortiz, “Currently no

advancement track in printing for Spanish speakers exists anywhere in the country, so Milwaukee would be the first place to offer it.”

Another way CSM sought to improve retention is by forming a Printer Support Network. The PSN is a peer group of recent entrants to the printing sector, primarily women and people of color. They come together to discuss their concerns, offer each other support, and look for ways to improve workplace conditions, sometimes through collective action. According to Joseph Oulahan, a machinist hired by the project to help develop the PSN, “It’s important for these folks to build an identity as part of the printing industry and as workers. We help them understand where they fit into the economy and the industry. We try to counter the message they get that they are nothing – to say ‘No, the truth is that you may not have a degree, but you have life experience that you bring to your job everyday.’”

Members of PSN learn about occupational health and safety, discrimination in the workplace, and worker’s rights. PSN has already taken on one issue collectively – transportation barriers. A large printing company had job openings as well as weekend overtime for incumbent workers, but the bus line only had limited service to the company’s suburban location. PSN members met with the transit agency, the bus drivers union, and company officials. The firm and the bus company both then agreed to extend bus service during weekends and peak summer hours.

In addition to its direct work with both union and non-union employers, CSM reached out to the Graphics and Communications International Union (GCIU) to work on retention issues. Only about 20 percent of the printing industry is unionized, but in these companies, Neumann-Ortiz and Oulahan learned that unions, when advocated to, can help promote retention of new workers. They therefore worked closely with the unions to help them relate to this more diverse entry-level workforce. Their relationships with union leaders have eased the transition for many workers who confront discrimination or face language challenges. The union has agreed to provide an additional steward that will be bilingual on one shop floor with many Latino workers; as soon as a qualified candidate is found this change will be implemented.

Unfortunately, in 2001 Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee experienced a funding crisis, and its board decided to dissolve the organization. The Central City Worker Center closed down in April. However, the work that CSM had done thus far in the printing sector had such



a good reputation that several organizations offered to house the project. CCC decided that Esperanza Unida would be a good match, both with the holistic approach practiced by CSM and with the goals of the Sector Organizing Project. EU has been around since 1971, has strong roots in the Latino community, already does printing training, and has in-house case management and supportive services for participants in all of its programs. Furthermore, the organization also has a commitment to community organizing and to training and placing low income residents in jobs. Neumann-Ortiz and Oulahan successfully transitioned over to Esperanza Unida and continued the work of the Sector Organizing Project there.

### Outcomes

#### Program Years: 2000–2001

Goal for placement: 82

Number placed: 55

Number Latinos placed: 18

Average wage for direct hires: \$8.53/hour

Average wage for hires that completed customized training: \$9.02/hour

Retention rates overall: 58%

Latino retention rates: 86%

It is interesting to note that starting wages for Latinos have been lower than average but retention rates for Latinos have been much higher. These data have been helpful in demonstrating to employers that Latino workers are worth investing in, through bilingual education and other strategies. While CSM exceeded its 2000 placement goals by a wide margin (the goal was 32 and the placement rate was 50), meeting the target placement goals for 2001 was not possible as the printing industry contracted substantially due to the slowdown in the economy. For Neumann-Ortiz and Oulahan, this was all the more reason to focus on retention and advancement for those already hired into entry-level positions. As the printing industry responded to the recession with bankruptcies and massive lay-offs, the EU sector staff began exploring new ways to help those laid-off and other job seekers find employment. For example, EU is currently looking at starting a non-profit temporary agency.

### Examples of Systems Change

CSM/EU has been highly effective at boosting the entry of women and minorities into a high-paying, skilled trade

## PARTICIPANT PROFILE

### Shanelle Boyd

I was a welfare recipient. My goal is to obtain a GED, which is required to get into the apprenticeship program. But I was able to do my entry-level training at Milwaukee Graphic Arts Institute without a GED. Presently I am employed at one of the largest printing companies in Milwaukee. As a union member who is entry-level, I have an opportunity to go back to school to become like my boss. I have a counselor at MGAI, who introduced me to the Printer Support Network. Issues I face in the workplace are discrimination, sexual harassment, and transportation barriers. My supervisor was prejudiced against blacks and Latinos. I reached out to my counselor and she referred me to the Printer Support Network. We meet on Sundays. We have guest speakers come out. It's an ongoing process. We plan to expand, to get more people into the industry. I'm taking time out to find other people who need help, like this Latino and this Hmong worker I know.

that has had a predominantly white male workforce until now. Succeeding means changing the way both employers and unions think – overcoming prejudices, language barriers, and other obstacles to hiring, retaining, and advancing underrepresented workers in the printing industry. There is no question that the Sector Organizing Project has made real strides in this regard. As the outcomes show, the number of women and people of color in the industry is increasing. There is now a committed core of employers willing to invest in workplace language skills for their LEP workers. The Graphic Communications International Union has agreed to place a bilingual steward at one of their shops.

Recently, Printing Industries of Wisconsin (PIW), a statewide industry trade group, decided it wanted to start a group for employers on non-traditional workers. Rather than start from scratch, PIW asked Esperanza Unida if its employer advisory group on bilingual training in printing could serve this function. EU's relationship-building with the industry has paid off. PIW clearly sees the value of this collaborative effort and wants to expand it to work on

broader issues of mutual concern. Currently PIW is working with EU to create a job mentorship program.

Through the sector work, minority workers are getting the leadership skills to be able to move up through the ranks of the labor movement. The Printer Support Network helps new workers learn how to use the union structure even if it isn't serving their needs as it should. Oulahan is President of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LACLAA) in Milwaukee: "This kind of union constituency group has tremendous value, especially when we can connect them to community organizing. We now have four Latino union leaders who are learning how to deal with the union, who can run for office eventually."

Partly out of necessity, as the printing industry has entered a slump, the Sector Organizing Project in Milwaukee has focused on retention and advancement more than other sites. According to Neumann-Ortiz, "Retention is improving because workers see mechanisms to improve conditions rather than just quitting." These mechanisms were created through the relationships she and Oulahan have built with employers, unions, and training institutions. As a result, these entities now see the advantage of fostering the Printer Support Network. For example, PSN has done workshops on time management, career paths, and the history of the printing industry. Lauren Baker heads the Milwaukee Graphic Arts Institute, a joint labor-management sponsored training program: "People who go through our training see the benefits of the Printer Support Network to help them deal with workplace issues. And the union sees the benefits too." Moreover, union support of ongoing skills advancement creates a win-win situation for workers and employers.

The training centers now approach their work differently as a result of the sector project, and are partnering much more with each other than they ever did in the past. The Milwaukee Graphic Arts Institute is exploring an arrangement with Esperanza Unida whereby students at EU would spend some time in MGAI programs – which have better equipment but no language supports – so that EU students can get a partial or associate certification. This would position graduates to make higher entry-level wages. Milwaukee Area Technical College has begun partnering with Esperanza Unida to shape the curriculum for the vocational ESL training. Down the road, EU will partner with MGAI to add a bilingual technical skills component. Meanwhile, EU is talking with employers about possibly providing training for line supervisors on workforce diversity as well as bilingual safety training.

Neumann-Ortiz and Oulahan are also looking at larger systems change beyond the printing sector itself. Many current and potential workers have problems with their immigration status that either prevents them from getting hired or makes them vulnerable to the threat of firing. Neumann-Ortiz heads up a city-wide effort to secure legalization for undocumented workers, which is part of a nationwide community, labor, and faith-based amnesty effort.

Another issue that requires larger systems change is the lack of funding for skills training for low-income people. The Printer Support Network is reaching out to workers to participate in the People's Economic Summit, a city-wide collaboration to develop a broad-based community organizing effort around a handful of key issues. Oulahan hopes that vocational training will be one of them. "A big barrier is that the training is not paid for people who go to MGAI or EU. Without a stipend they cannot afford to take time out to train. There is a lot of federal money available for dislocated workers, but at the local level the money isn't being spent because the workforce board places heavy restrictions on how that money can be used."

Transportation is a third barrier that the sector project hopes to address systemically. Currently students in the Esperanza Unida training program can get a used car at a 50 percent discount through EU's vehicle donation and repair program. Oulahan would like to see the state provide funding to expand the program beyond EU students, and to provide a guarantee of one to two years of car maintenance. EU has made proposals to the state, and hopes that the power of the city-wide organizing effort can compel the state to implement them.

Now that this project has found a new home with another organization that is committed to training and empowerment of low income Milwaukee residents, and has the existing infrastructure and stability to manage the project, the staff are confident that the work will continue beyond the life of the grant period. One way to ensure that is by investing energy in strengthening Esperanza Unida's printing training and business.

## **D. Alameda Corridor Jobs Coalition (ACJC)**

Los Angeles County is a growing, increasingly diverse region. Its population increased through the 1990s and now tops 9.5 million people. Hispanic and Asian communities are growing, while the black population remains stable and, as in other cities, the white population shrinks. The Alameda

Corridor Jobs Coalition, an umbrella group of forty low-income community organizations, CDCs, and training providers, came together in 1997 to organize for jobs on a multi-billion dollar transportation construction project in and around Los Angeles. Mary Ochs on the Center's LA staff worked intensively to help form the coalition, develop its initial strategy and provide ongoing assistance. Local residents knew that their quality of life would suffer with traffic, noise and air pollution, yet they would be denied

*ACJC then undertook a massive outreach and recruitment effort to identify interested residents and prepare them for the pre-apprenticeship programs and non-construction jobs.*

access to the many jobs the project would bring if they didn't act right away. Therefore, ACJC approached and built relationships with the construction trade unions and with the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (ACTA), as well as federal Department of Transportation officials. In 1998 their organizing effort paid off with an unprecedented agreement – ACTA guaranteed that 30 percent of all construction and non-construction work-hours would be given to low-income residents living along the construction corridor. ACTA also guaranteed 1,000 job training slots: 650 for pre-apprentices to graduate and enroll in union apprenticeship programs, and 350 for non trades-related jobs, such as drafting assistants, office work, and site security.

ACJC then undertook a massive outreach and recruitment effort to identify interested residents and prepare them for the pre-apprenticeship programs and non-construction jobs. The coalition created a spin-off organization, ACJC-TEC (Training and Employment Corporation) to oversee the implementation of the hiring agreement and provide the soft skills training and case management. Member organizations conducted intake services. The Carpenters Training and Education Institute (CETI) provided the hard skills training. According to ACJC Director Benetta Johnson, "Through all this we continued to organize, both to ensure compliance with the agreement, and to push for policy changes to address barriers to employment, such as child care and transportation." The project placed 699 residents in

construction jobs. More than 1000 residents graduated from the training programs. The project trained 350 residents for the non-trade slots, and some of these were filled by qualified residents as openings arose.

The effort has been tremendously successful, yet there were ten thousand residents that came to the orientations – and only one-tenth could be hired on the corridor project. ACJC needed to look for other employment opportunities for these job seekers. The Sector Organizing Project was therefore a natural fit for ACJC. In 2001 CCC and ACJC staff engaged in an exploratory process to research possible sectors for a second targeted effort. That process resulted in selection of international trade and transportation (IT&T) as the vital sector in the region with the greatest potential for a sectoral intervention. The Port of L.A./Long Beach is the third largest in the world, and IT&T is the fastest growing industrial sector in LA County. In particular, logistics, which is the series of services associated with the movement and storage of goods across countries, is a growing sub-sector in the L.A. region. Logistics offers entry-level jobs starting at \$10 an hour with benefits that require little training. Logistics has career ladders that quickly move workers into higher paying jobs. Training opportunities exist that offer short-term, inexpensive certification programs developed by the industry and educational institutions.

Tom Pendergast, hired by CCC to help with ACJC's sectoral exploration, has spent the past year building relationships with the employers, educational institutions, unions, and government entities that are concerned with logistics and international trade. As he puts the pieces of the logistics puzzle together, he can already perceive gaps in training and education that, if addressed, would better prepare the existing workforce and create pathways for new workers in the sector. CCC and the ACJC board have decided to move from the exploration phase to implementation.

One immediate goal will be to identify or create short-term training programs for certification in logistics that can address the diverse educational backgrounds, language barriers, and other needs of corridor residents. ACJC has already made impressive strides in this area. Cal State Long Beach has asked for ACJC's help in designing a curriculum for a new IT&T logistics program. Banning High School is also developing a logistics certification program. And ACJC has launched its own pilot class for certification in import/export documentation. Many of the people who expressed interest in the class, which now has a waiting list,

had previously participated in the non-trades training for the Alameda Corridor construction project. In the first class, 22 of 25 adults passed the course. Of the 22 that passed, 17 pursued the certification. So far 12 of the 17 have achieved the certification requirements for import/export documentation.

ACJC also has lined up career counselors and case managers that can help residents determine where they may fit in this burgeoning sector. The coalition will tap its 10,000-

resident database, with the goal of placing 100 people in the sector in the first year. ACJC will oversee the outreach, recruitment and assessment of potential candidates for entry-level positions in logistics. The coalition will develop a trainer's manual to ensure that member organizations conducting job readiness classes implement a uniform, quality program. ACJC will also continue to build relationships with relevant partners in the areas of organized labor, business and industry, education, and government.

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