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# Building A Movement Together: Worker Centers and Labor Union Affiliations

**Prepared by the UCLA Labor Center**

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## About the UCLA Labor Center

The UCLA Labor Center creates innovative programs that offer a range of educational, research and public service activities within the university and in the broader community, especially among low-wage and immigrant workers. The Labor Center is a vital resource for research, education and policy development that helps create jobs that are good for workers and their communities. It also improves the quality of existing jobs in the low-wage economy, and strengthens the process of immigrant integration, especially among students and youth. Website: [www.labor.ucla.edu](http://www.labor.ucla.edu)



## About the LIFT Fund

The LIFT Fund is a first-of-its-kind partnership between labor unions, philanthropy and worker centers. Its goal is to strengthen and advance the movement for workers' rights, good jobs and a fair economy by funding collaborative projects between worker centers and traditional labor organizations. The LIFT Fund aims to explore, develop and test innovative strategies to improve labor market standards and build long-term economic and political power for workers.



# Preface

**IN 2006** the AFL-CIO Executive Council unanimously approved a statement recognizing the burgeoning worker center movement in the United States, and calling on the AFL-CIO to provide assistance to its affiliate unions and state and central labor bodies to help them build relationships with worker centers in their areas. The statement went on to permit formal affiliations of worker centers with AFL-CIO state federations and central labor councils where both parties determined they shared a mutual interest in establishing such a relationship.

Over the course of the following decade, approximately 20 worker centers have affiliated formally with organized labor's state or local bodies around the country, while many more are collaborating on a more informal, yet highly productive, basis—often teaming up to take on issues ranging from wage theft to immigrant rights training, workplace health and safety, and even to union organizing.

Meanwhile, in 2010 the AFL-CIO partnered with the Ford, Solidago and New World Foundations (since joined by Discount and General Service) to launch the LIFT (Labor Innovations for the 21st Century) Fund. The LIFT Fund, which in its first three years has awarded 38 grants to worker centers partnering with unions in innovative ways around issues of common interest, has now commissioned a report by UCLA Professor and longtime worker center scholar and activist Victor Narro, assessing the early results of the worker center-AFL-CIO central body affiliations.

While the report looks only at those that have formally affiliated, it nonetheless offers valuable and encouraging insights into how these two arms of the country's larger labor movement can and are beginning to collaborate productively, in ways that are combining the best of institution- and social movement-building.



# Executive Summary

**OVER THE LAST DECADE**, the labor movement has begun to transform, rebuilding and reinvigorating itself from the ground level. A decisive element of this transformation is organized labor's evolving partnership with worker centers. In 2006, the AFL-CIO institutionalized partnerships with worker centers through a process of affiliation. Today, 16 worker centers, 16 central labor councils and one state federation involved in 16 local affiliations are active throughout the country. These partnerships have led to significant accomplishments in local policy campaigns against wage theft and other forms of exploitation against workers, strong solidarity support for organizing efforts to win a union or address conditions in the workplace, and ongoing local joint initiatives that couple collaboration and innovation.

Through interviews and surveys with worker centers and union leadership, this report evaluates the affiliation process and establishes recommendations for the AFL-CIO on how to expand and strengthen them. The following are our key findings and recommendations:

**The national worker center network is playing a key role in local-level implementation of affiliations.**

The AFL-CIO should explore ways to continue to strengthen its relationship with national worker center networks. It should look at partnership agreements and determine whether they need to be amended or expanded. The AFL-CIO can develop tools to help members of the networks strengthen their local partnerships with central labor councils.

**There are many important worker centers that are not connected to national organizations, so specific strategies will be needed to develop affiliations with these “stand-alone” worker centers.**

The AFL-CIO needs to focus on major “stand-alone” worker centers and connect them with central labor councils, especially in regions where the labor movement lacks political strength. Local networks of these worker centers have newly emerged, and the National Worker Center Partnership could provide them with opportunities for establishing local partnerships with central labor councils.

**The state of the local labor movement varies depending on both industry and region, and is a factor in the success of the affiliation.**

Prior to creating an affiliation, all parties involved should complete a political analysis of the labor landscape to better prepare themselves for the unique challenges in their respective industries and regions. The AFL-CIO should develop and provide power analysis tools that will enable both the worker center and the central labor council to engage in the process of assessing the political landscape.

**Affiliation is a mutually beneficial process wherein both worker centers and central labor councils can strengthen one another.**

In order to encourage formal affiliations between worker centers and central labor councils, the AFL-CIO must clearly specify the benefits of affiliation and the ways in which it can empower each partner. It needs to emphasize how similar affiliations and partnerships have benefited worker centers and local labor movements elsewhere in the country.

**Worker centers' participation in local central labor council meetings is enabling useful exchange and learning among partners.**

The roles and expectations of both partners must be laid out clearly before the affiliation process begins. Both members and the staff of the worker center should have access to translation services to ensure meaningful participation. In addition to promoting participation and encouraging inclusivity, the AFL-CIO also can provide educational materials and orientation programs about how worker centers, central labor councils and national partnerships actually function. The AFL-CIO should work with central labor councils and state labor federations to determine ways the worker center's role as an affiliate member can be enhanced.

**Both before and after affiliation, working together on campaigns and organizing efforts is key to building the partnership.**

The AFL-CIO should be alert to emerging partnerships between worker centers and union partners that could formalize into an affiliation. In addition, it

should facilitate and support collaborations that foster relationship-building between new partners. It also should consider developing and supporting joint campaigns and initiatives that encourage worker centers and central labor councils to work together.

**Affiliation already has produced positive outcomes that have allowed partners to augment each other's work, collaborate on campaigns and develop joint strategies.**

The AFL-CIO must create and distribute templates for, and materials on, the best practices of successful affiliation models. Throughout our survey and in-depth interviews, respondents repeatedly expressed a need for information about affiliations taking place in other parts of the country, and a serious interest in the best practices and lessons learned elsewhere. In addition to AFL-CIO Worker Center Advisory Council meetings in Washington D.C., they called for regional meetings.

**The affiliation process enables worker centers and central labor councils to be innovative and to share ideas and best practice models.**

For worker centers and local labor movements, the affiliation process has become a focal point of transformative action. The process creates spaces for dialogue, reflection and the development of strategy. It becomes a mechanism for the sharing of best practice models and for creating solidarity support for organizing and policy campaigns. Toolkits and guides on how to facilitate the affiliation process are needed to maximize the opportunity for relationship building between worker centers and unions.

**When entering the affiliation process, a key priority is resources.**

Many worker centers today are struggling with financial, staffing and capacity issues, and the lack of resources to address staffing and capacity has become a major crisis. While the affiliation process offers them opportunities for key alliance building and solidarity support for their campaigns, most worker centers look to the partnerships with central labor councils as potentially generating much-needed resources. The AFL-CIO should build upon the success of the LIFT Fund to create more opportunities to generate funding for worker centers involved in the affiliation process.

**For some unions, discussions about immigration have been marked by misconceptions and misunderstandings.**

The AFL-CIO needs to create materials for central labor councils on issues relating to immigration and low-wage immigrant workers. It also needs to produce workshops dedicated to overcoming stereotypes and undoing misconceptions relating to undocumented workers, as well as information about worker centers and their history.

**Unions need to be more sensitive about issues relating to inclusivity and diversity.**

The AFL-CIO should provide a curriculum on diversity in the labor movement. It should partner with groups that are experienced in providing education on diversity and inclusivity to produce workshops for worker centers and unions that are about to engage in a process of relationship building.

**Many worker centers lack a clear understanding of unions, the AFL-CIO and the history of the labor movement.**

Worker centers and their members often carry serious misconceptions about unions when they enter into an affiliation process. The AFL-CIO needs to produce educational materials and a workshop curriculum that focuses on the structure and culture of unions, the history of the labor movement and the AFL-CIO.

**When one partner lacks a working knowledge of how the other's institution operates, miscommunication often follows.**

Both parties need to better understand how each other's structures work, and need to have a clear system of accountability in place. The AFL-CIO can play a key role in helping partners comprehend each other's structures and operations, and can develop tools that help groups identify and implement systems of accountability.

The worker center affiliation model has emerged as the next phase in the trajectory of the National Worker Center Partnership, and has led to local, cross-sector relationships that strengthen the labor movement. Because this phase of the partnership still is expanding and yet is so instrumental to the AFL-CIO's innovative strategy for growth and development, we need to better understand these affiliations. We need to identify their strengths as well as areas where improvement is vital, and then accelerate the dissemination of best practice models.

# Introduction: AFL-CIO Worker Center Partnerships

**ON THE OPENING NIGHT** of the 2013 AFL-CIO Convention in Los Angeles, domestic workers from around the world and the United States marched into the hall singing, “I am a unionist” before receiving a human rights award for their work in uplifting the working conditions of the often-invisible workforce. The next morning, during his keynote address, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka called to the stage day laborers, domestic workers, taxi workers, carwash workers and other groups of workers who historically have been excluded from the protections of labor laws. The election of Bhairavi Desai, executive director of the National Taxi Workers Alliance, to the AFL-CIO Executive Council was the first time a representative from a nontraditional labor organization became a member of the federation’s governing body. The convention marked a historic opening in the labor movement and signaled a commitment to diversity, new partnerships and new ideas to reinvigorate the labor movement. The beginnings of this solidarity and relationship building could be traced back to the AFL-CIO National Worker Center Partnership that began in 2006.

## Emergence of Worker Centers

Over the years as labor market restructuring accelerated, unionism declined and major changes in the demographics of the low-wage workforce occurred, a new type of civic organization emerged. Worker centers emerged to respond to the increasing exploitation of low-wage immigrant workers and to persistent racism and xenophobia in labor markets and society. These worker centers are community-based organizations that represent low-wage workers, helping them to address workplace issues and creating a constituency in labor markets, political

arenas and the larger society. Workers served by worker centers work primarily in building and construction, landscaping, hotels and restaurants, domestic work and other service-sector industries.

Worker centers do not focus exclusively on labor and employment—or on immigration issues. Many of these centers play an essential role in providing workers with a wide range of opportunities for collective and individual empowerment. They are about something much bigger, and much more visionary, in that they see themselves as a movement. Today there are approximately 250 worker centers throughout the country and five major worker center networks, a network of worker center networks and several solidarity networks and other key allies.<sup>1</sup>

## Unions and Worker Centers

Worker centers recognize organized labor’s long history of fighting for workers and often have sought guidance and resources from unions and central labor councils. Worker centers think organized labor brings a more established understanding of how workers can gain power in the workplace, what an organized shop looks like and what steps are necessary to win a campaign. Some worker centers view themselves as a precursor for workers seeking union representation. Central labor councils admire worker centers for their creativity in developing organizing campaigns, their commitment to worker justice and their ability to connect worker struggles with community issues to fight for victories beyond the workplace. They also recognize how worker centers are able to lead major policy campaigns for workers with little resources and win major victories.

<sup>1</sup> National networks include the National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON) ([www.ndlon.org](http://www.ndlon.org)), National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) ([www.domesticworkers.org](http://www.domesticworkers.org)), Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC) (<http://rocunited.org>), National Guestworker Alliance ([www.guestworkeralliance.org](http://www.guestworkeralliance.org)), Food Chain Workers Alliance (<http://foodchainworkers.org>), and National Taxi Workers Alliance ([www.nytw.org](http://www.nytw.org)). A few years ago, these worker center networks joined national worker advocacy groups like Jobs With Justice ([www.jwj.org](http://www.jwj.org)) to create the United Workers Congress ([www.excludedworkerscongress.org](http://www.excludedworkerscongress.org)). There also are solidarity networks of worker centers and other key allies like Enlace ([www.enlaceintl.org](http://www.enlaceintl.org)) and Interfaith Worker Justice (<https://www.facebook.com/InterfaithWorkerJustice>).

The mutual benefit, respect and synergy between the worker center and the labor movement are clear. Over time, many union and worker center activists have come to realize the labor movement's future depends not only on organizing prospective members, but also engaging all workers—union and nonunion, immigrant and nonimmigrant. These two trends in the labor movement—the institution of unions built over many decades of workers' struggles, and worker centers as an organic and fluid movement among vulnerable workers responding to shifting economic trends—quickly began to intersect.

### **Resolution to Create a National Worker Center Partnership**

In 2006, the AFL-CIO's Executive Council unanimously passed a resolution, "Creating a National Worker Center Partnership," that called on organized labor at all levels to build and strengthen ties with worker centers in their communities. The resolution acknowledged worker centers as "a vibrant and important part of today's labor movement." The AFL-CIO formalized this resolution by providing worker centers with the opportunity to formally affiliate with state labor federations, local labor councils and Working America, the community affiliate of the AFL-CIO. The resolution authorized the AFL-CIO to issue "Certificates of Affiliation" to individual worker centers, or worker center networks, at the request of a state federation or central labor council, where the entities decided on a voluntary basis to form a mutually beneficial partnership. When issued, the certificates authorize worker centers to affiliate with the state federation or local central labor council, giving them a role to strategize and develop programs, and participate in other labor matters, "to build ties between these organizations and enable them to work cooperatively on issues of mutual concerns."

### **Developing National Partnership Agreements**

After passage of the resolution, the AFL-CIO started forming partnerships with worker centers with the belief that all workers have the right to fair treatment, respect and a voice in the workplace, regardless of how they are regarded or classified by labor law or their employers. That year it entered into a historic partnership with the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON). The national partnership agreement signed by the AFL-CIO and NDLON was the first of its kind and heralded a new chapter in the workers' rights movement. The two organizations

pledged to work together on issues related to enforcement, workplace issues and immigrants' rights. Since then, the AFL-CIO has created partnerships with the other worker center networks. It also partnered with the United Steelworkers (USW) to launch the CLEAN Carwash Campaign in 2008, which has become a model of a union campaign that is driven by a strong labor community partnership, much in line with the goals of the Worker Center Partnership.

### **The LIFT Fund**

Since 2011, the AFL-CIO has partnered with philanthropic institutions through the Labor Innovations for the 21st Century (LIFT) Fund that supports "collaborative and innovative cross-sector learning between communities, the labor movement, and organizations working for fair economy. The Fund works to document and disseminate new strategies and promotes advocacy within labor, philanthropy and other sectors working to build worker power." The LIFT Fund has provided grant support to major organizing campaigns of worker centers like the CLEAN Carwash Campaign, National Day Laborer Organizing Network and the National Domestic Workers Alliance. The union partners benefiting from these initiatives include the Laborers (LIUNA) and USW, as well as central labor councils and state labor federations from various cities and states.

### **Worker Center Advisory Council**

In January 2012, the AFL-CIO convened the first Worker Center Advisory Council in Washington, D.C. Worker center and labor advocates shared local successes of the Worker Center Partnership, participated in workshops and brainstormed about how to strengthen the alliances between worker centers and unions. Since then, the Advisory Committee has become an important vehicle for sharing best practices, developing strategies and responding to such urgent issues as the attacks of worker centers by conservative groups.

### **Expanding Resolutions to Support Partnerships**

Preceding the 2013 convention, working committees developed resolutions that would chart a new course for the AFL-CIO. They focused on new opportunities for worker centers to affiliate into central labor councils, new organizing strategies—including a focus on the South and engaging young workers—labor law reform, immigration reform with a road map to citizenship and other innovative themes. One of the resolutions specifically called on the

AFL-CIO to expand its partnerships with worker centers, its Worker Center Advisory Council and its work with foundations to seed union-worker center collaboration. It also called for the AFL-CIO, in cooperation with worker centers and national associations of worker centers, to expand and update existing research describing in detail the operation of worker centers and documenting examples of union-worker center collaboration.

Today, 16 worker centers, 16 central labor councils and one state federation involved in the 16 local affiliations have emerged throughout the country (see the Appendix for a list of affiliations). These partnerships have led to significant outcomes in local policy campaigns against wage theft and other forms of exploitation against workers, strong solidarity support for worker organizing efforts to win a union or address exploitation in the workplace, and ongoing local joint initiatives that combine collaboration and innovation. This worker center affiliation model has emerged as the next phase in the trajectory of the National Worker Center Partnership. It is here where the work leads to cross-sector local relationships that will help strengthen the labor movement. This phase of the partnership is growing and, because it is so instrumental to the AFL-CIO's strategy for future innovative growth and development, we need to better understand these affiliations as well as their strengths and areas of improvement, and increase the dissemination of best practice models.

This report provides an assessment of the affiliations taking place between worker centers, and central labor councils and state labor federations. It analyzes the different models of affiliations between worker centers and central labor councils, survey results and in-depth interviews to produce an assessment of the strengths of this local partnership process and areas in need of improvement. This report will provide the AFL-CIO, LIFT Fund, worker centers, local AFL-CIO affiliates and other key stakeholders of the Worker Center Partnership with a detailed framework from which to evaluate local partnership models and create a strategy for moving forward to strengthen and expand them.

### Methodology

For this report, we analyzed the different models of affiliation between individual worker centers and central labor councils through in-depth interviews and online surveys with worker center and union leadership. One key staff member from six worker centers and four central labor councils participated in our 10 in-depth interviews. We conducted and recorded each interview over the phone, and later transcribed and analyzed the interviews using qualitative data analysis software. In addition to in-depth interviews, we administered an online survey to each affiliated worker center and central labor council. We received a completed survey from 12 worker centers and nine central labor councils, with six respondents who had participated in both the survey and interview. Information about survey and interview respondents is included in the Appendix.



# Affiliation Models

**UNDER THE NATIONAL WORKER CENTER PARTNERSHIP**, the president of the AFL-CIO is authorized to issue Certificates of Affiliation to individual worker centers, or to an association of worker centers, at the request of a state federation and/or central labor council where the worker center is located, provided that the state federation and/or central labor council has determined the partnership will be mutually beneficial and the organizations have shared goals.

Worker Centers Affiliated with:	N=12
Central Labor Council	9
National AFL-CIO	1
State Federation	1
Both State Fed and Central Labor Council	1
National Networks	N
Worker Center Connected to National Organization	10
National Organization has a Worker Center Partnership with AFL-CIO	6
Year of Affiliation	Year
Median Year	2009

Source: UCLA Labor Center Affiliate Survey 2014

In our survey, worker centers and unions have been developing affiliations since 2006, with half created in the last three years. The majority of worker center affiliations are with a local central labor council, though a few are with the national AFL-CIO or a state federation. State federations, unlike central labor councils, mainly focus on lobbying for state policies that benefit workers and, as a result, do not typically hold monthly meetings. Instead, they invite their affiliates to an annual convention.

### Role of National Networks

The national networks of worker centers have been developing partnerships with the AFL-CIO since 2006. These partnerships are playing an important role in moving local worker centers to engage in the affiliation process. For example, the members of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), such as *Casa Latina* in Seattle and Workers Defense

Project in Austin, Texas, initiated their formal affiliation process with the central labor council in their cities as a next step to the NDLON partnership agreement with the AFL-CIO. Similarly, *Mujeres Unidas y Activas* received guidance from the National Domestic Workers Alliance with its affiliation process with the San Francisco and Alameda, California, central labor councils. Moreover, more than half of the worker center networks are partnered with the AFL-CIO, which has resulted in solidarity charters leading to formal affiliations. As the above examples show, national networks have played an important role in facilitating worker center affiliation with central labor councils. Of the estimated 250 worker centers nationwide, however, at least one-half are what we call “stand-alone” worker centers—they are not members of any national worker center network. These centers potentially could be overlooked if the AFL-CIO primarily focuses on developing affiliation through national organization connections.

### Types of Affiliations

It is important to look at the commonalities of the different affiliations to identify effective tools that can be replicated throughout to create cohesion. It is as important, however, to allow for flexibility in the implementation of different models to address the unique local landscape relating to geography, local conditions, workforces, demographics, etc. Based on our analysis of affiliations, we categorized affiliations into a few distinct types:

**1. An effective model with the building trades and the local central labor council**—The local partnerships between local building trades councils and day laborer worker centers have been increasing, and an analysis of this type of relationship building is significant, because it represents an opportunity for growth and development of the National Worker Center Partnership.

**2. An affiliation where there is little labor movement presence**—The transformation of the labor movement will rely in large part on the AFL-CIO’s ability to create opportunities for strategic labor-community partnerships in parts of the country where there is

little or no presence of a strong local labor movement that can fight for the rights of workers. A model of affiliation of a worker center with a central labor council provides such an opportunity in these areas.

**3. Affiliation on the national level that supports the emergence of local organizing chapters**—While we are focusing on an assessment of the local affiliations between worker centers and central labor councils, it still is important to follow the development of the national affiliations that lead to the development of local chapters and organizing efforts.

**4. Affiliations in rural areas with different demographics**—It is in rural areas around the country where the labor movement needs to deepen its relationships with local communities and community organizations fighting for workers' rights. Worker centers exist in many of these rural areas, and the local labor movement needs to better understand them and move forward with strategies for relationship building.

## SECTION 1: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **The national worker center network is playing a key role in local level implementation of affiliations.**

The AFL-CIO should explore ways to continue to strengthen the relationship with the national worker center networks. It should look at the partnership agreements and determine whether they need to be amended or expanded. The AFL-CIO can develop tools to help the members of the networks strengthen their local partnerships with the central labor councils.

### **Many worker centers are not connected to national organizations and will need specific strategies to develop affiliations with “stand-alone” worker centers.**

The AFL-CIO needs to focus on major “stand-alone” worker centers and connect them with central labor councils, especially in areas where the labor movement lacks political strength. A new development with these worker centers is the emergence of their own local networks. The National Worker Center Partnership could provide these local networks with opportunities for establishing local partnerships with central labor councils.

### **The affiliation process varies based on the unique local landscape relating to geography, local conditions, workforces, demographics, etc.**

It is important to look at the commonalities of the different affiliations to identify effective tools that can be replicated throughout to create cohesion. Doing so will allow for flexibility in the implementation of different models to address the differences. The AFL-CIO's Worker Center Advisory Committee has played a key role in providing a space for information sharing and networking of worker centers and central labor councils.

# Strengthening the Labor Movement Together

# 2

**THE CONTEXT FOR ORGANIZED LABOR** varies depending on both industry and region and plays a role in the success of worker center-central labor council affiliations. Therefore, prior to creating an affiliation, all parties involved should complete a political analysis of the labor landscape to better prepare themselves for the unique challenges in their respective industries and regions. One interviewee suggests that “part of the longer-term work we need to do is to spend time and have that level of analysis of how it will affect the industry... How do we make sure there is an impact? What does that look like? And what’s the strategy to achieve it?”

## Reasons to Affiliate: ‘Win-Win’ for Everyone

Central Labor Council Reasons for Affiliation	N=8
Support for policy/organizing campaign	8
Labor/community relationship building	8
Bringing low-wage workers into the labor movement	7
New models of worker organizing/development	4

Source: UCLA Labor Center Affiliate Survey 2014

This research seeks to understand the perceptions of each partner before the affiliation and the impetus for the affiliation. Survey data found that prior to affiliation, central labor councils had varied knowledge of worker centers ranging from no knowledge at all to being well acquainted with these organizations. Central labor councils note in the interviews that despite any prior lack of knowledge or skepticism about worker centers, their perception improved as they realized worker centers were advocating for the same thing as unions: to help workers.

Central labor councils indicated they affiliated to support policy and organizing campaigns and for labor-community relationship building. Furthermore, many central labor councils affiliated to bring low-wage workers into the labor movement. Increasing political activity seemed to be the utmost importance for central labor councils looking to affiliate with

worker centers. Central labor councils consider worker centers as a spark for their union organizing. Often unions visit worker centers to recruit worker center members into the union. Ultimately, central labor councils saw that passing immigration reform “could open up opportunities for a lot of [their] unions to bring a lot of these workers out of the shadows” and become unionized. In other words, some central labor councils saw that by helping worker centers, it could one day be a “win-win for everybody.”

Worker Center Reasons for Affiliation	N=12
Funding resources	8
Electoral/political power	7
Organizing capacity	7
Communications support	5
Other resources such as equipment	4
Access to jobs/training programs for members	4
Research support	3

Source: UCLA Labor Center Affiliate Survey 2014

The reasons behind affiliation for worker centers are more numerous than the reasons for central labor councils. Instead of simply increasing membership and political activity, most worker centers are looking to improve their organizational capacity and base building. Funding resources, political power and organizing capacity were the three top reasons for affiliation. For one worker center that we interviewed, affiliating with the central labor council was important to launching a major policy campaign. This worker center, however, still is very intentional about using its relationships with the central labor council in a way that moves its vision and growth. In the short term, this worker center thought that affiliating then would give them more opportunity to ensure organized labor was not just on board, but vocally in support of its policy effort.

### Concerns About Affiliation

In addition to identifying reasons for affiliating with central labor councils, some worker centers provided the reasons they initially had for not formally affiliating. Some worker centers feared that affiliating with a central labor council would compromise them politically. On the other hand, good relations with each other also can disincentivize both worker centers and central labor councils from affiliating with them because they have become accustomed to a particular working relationship model. However,

after conversations with each other, both worker centers and central labor councils started to realize the benefits of affiliating and how their influence can help each other get what they need through the county and the city. Therefore, in order to encourage formal affiliations between worker centers and central labor councils, the AFL-CIO must specify clearly the benefits of affiliation. The industry that would become the basis of the partnership also factored into what type of affiliation process should be undertaken.

## SECTION 2: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **The state of the local labor movement varies depending on both industry and region, and plays a role in the success of the affiliation.**

Prior to creating an affiliation, all parties should complete a political analysis of the labor landscape to better prepare themselves for the unique challenges in their respective industries and regions. The AFL-CIO should develop and provide power analysis tools that will enable worker centers and central labor councils to engage in an assessment of the political landscape.

### **Affiliation is a mutually beneficially process where both worker centers and central labor councils can help strengthen one another.**

In order to encourage formal affiliations between worker centers and central labor councils, the AFL-CIO should specify clearly the benefits of affiliation and how it will help strengthen the partners. It should emphasize how similar affiliations have benefited worker centers and local labor movements in other areas of the country.

# Affiliation Roles and Structure 3

**THE NATIONAL WORKER CENTER PARTNERSHIP** does not mandate the affiliation process for worker centers. These local partnerships are voluntary, and they have benefited worker centers and central labor councils in two ways. Firstly, where there is already an established history of a worker center partnering with the local labor movement, the affiliation process becomes a joint commitment by both parties to deepen their partnership and solidarity support. Secondly, where there is little, if any, history of a working relationship between the worker center and the local labor movement, the affiliation process becomes the beginning of a relationship-building process. The affiliation process under the national partnership entitles the worker center to participate as a representative in the state federation and/or central labor council. The details of the affiliation are worked out between the worker center and the central labor council.

Most of the worker center and central labor council affiliations have used the solidarity charter approach, similar to that used by the AFL-CIO constituency groups. From a formal structure perspective, these worker centers have a charter, they pay a nominal fee, but they currently do not pay per capita to the central labor council. They may pay an annual fee to a constituency group such as the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement or the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. The worker center gets to appoint its delegate, who can be a worker leader or a staff member.

Worker Center Activities as Part of Affiliation	N=20
Attend meetings	17
Pay dues	10
Assigned delegates	9
Voting rights as a member	9
Nonvoting member	7
Attend delegate convention	6

Source: UCLA Labor Center Affiliate Survey 2014

Based on the survey, the majority of worker centers attend meetings as part of the affiliation and half pay dues. Less than half have assigned delegates or voting rights. Interviewees further described typical worker center activities in the context of their affiliations. Delegates from one worker center, for instance, attend monthly meetings at its state labor federation. At the meetings, they do not have voting rights, but attend meetings to report their work as well as learn about the work of others. On the other hand, another worker center is entitled to one vote as an organization and is allowed to bring along an interpreter to central labor council meetings.

## Define and Communicate Roles

Worker center activities vary, thus it is important for the terms of the affiliation to be specified and communicated to all parties. Often, worker center activities within the central labor council, however, are not specified nor communicated effectively to all affiliates of the central labor council. For example, as part of its affiliation, one of the worker centers that we interviewed has full voting rights, can participate in all of the committees and can put forth resolutions. However, the first time this particular worker center put forth a resolution on its own, another member of the central labor council's resolutions committee questioned this worker center's ability to put forth a resolution. Even though another member clarified that the worker center had been affiliated with the central labor council for several years, there remained confusion about the nature of the affiliation. Similarly, a central labor council executive director told another worker center staff person they did not have voting rights. Yet, this worker center received clarification at an AFL-CIO meeting in Washington, D.C., that it does have a vote. This shows the importance of ensuring all parties involved in the affiliation are well informed about worker center activities within the affiliation.

### Set Clear Expectations

Certain factors contribute significantly to the expectations that both sides have of each other during the affiliation process. The majority of central labor councils report that expectations were clear at the beginning, whereas only half of the worker centers said they had clear expectations.

This discrepancy is possibly due to differences in organizational culture; whereas worker centers tend to be more process oriented in their strategy discussions and decision making, central labor councils tend to debate and reach important decisions at one executive or delegates' meeting. Sometimes the process appeared to be vague and the central labor

council did not communicate about it to the affiliates. A few affiliates did not know the worker center was affiliated. One worker center remarked that there was little intentionality in establishing the goals and purpose of the affiliation and thus it was unable to determine whether the affiliation had met any standards. On the other hand, another worker center said the affiliation had exceeded its expectation.

Our findings suggest that central labor councils can be more communicative with worker centers in terms of the goals and expectations of the affiliation. Communication is key to keeping all parties involved satisfied with the affiliation's outcomes.

Affiliation Expectations		
	Worker Centers (N=10)	Central Labor Councils (N=7)
Clear expectations	5	6
	Worker Centers (N=10)	Central Labor Councils (N=6)
Shared expectations	6	6

Source: UCLA Labor Center Affiliate Survey 2014

## SECTION 3: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Worker centers' participation in central labor council meetings is allowing for useful exchange and learning among partners.

There needs to be clarity of roles and expectations before the affiliation process begins. The responsibilities of both sides must be laid out clearly. Members or staff of the worker center should have access to translation services to ensure meaningful participation while meeting diversity goals. In addition to promoting participation and diversity, the AFL-CIO also could provide educational materials about worker centers, central labor councils and the national partnership. The AFL-CIO should work with central labor councils and state labor federations to determine ways in which the role and participation of worker centers can increase as affiliate members.

### The terms of the affiliation process were sometimes vague and not communicated well, which led to misunderstandings and lack of clarity.

Throughout our surveys and in-depth interviews, worker centers and central labor councils emphasized the importance of a clear and transparent process in the beginning where there is sufficient clarity, and one that should allow for clear, agreed-upon goals and expectations. It is critical that the parties have clear expectations at the outset. The AFL-CIO can play an instrumental role in ensuring such a process with the help of facilitation, templates, guides and other related materials. Where necessary, the AFL-CIO could help facilitate this process of communication.

# Finding Common Ground Through Joint Campaigns and Organizing

# 4

**BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER** the affiliation, a key component to building the partnership is working together on campaigns and organizing efforts. In many cases, the worker center and central labor council had been working together in an organizing effort or policy campaign when they decided to enter into an affiliation process. They had common ground from which to affiliate. When they both were involved in a regional or local campaign, there was an opportunity to share capacity and resources to have joint meetings around organizing, strategy and solidarity building.

## Relationship Building Through Joint Work

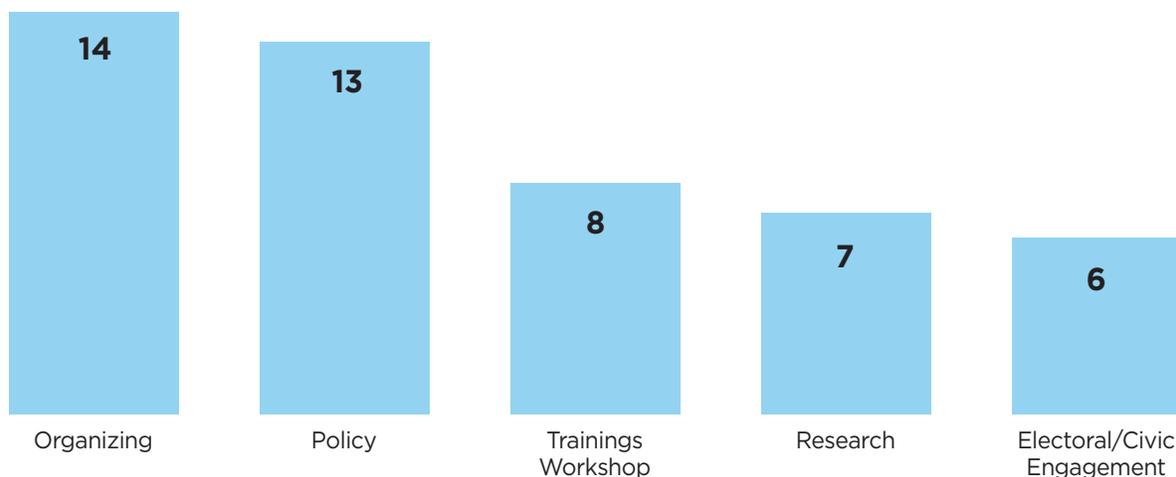
The affiliation processes of the worker center and central labor council differed from one another, depending on a variety of factors relating to the working relationships prior to affiliation and the local political landscape. For relationships where both parties shared common issues and where their interests converged, seeking a partnership appeared to be a logical step. For example, the issue of wage theft is common to both worker centers and unions

that are in the early stages of organizing campaigns with low-wage workers. They both have a vested interest in combating wage theft, and a partnership to engage in policy and organizing campaigns toward that goal can be a necessary and strategic next step.

Survey responses indicate worker centers and central labor councils had done some activities together. Most had collaborated on organizing or policy work, though they were less likely to have worked together on electoral and civic engagement work or research.

Working together on organizing campaigns and addressing labor issues paved the way for many conversations between worker centers and central labor councils that eventually led to affiliation. For example, there have been cases where the central labor council and the worker center were involved in rallies and major events where they were supporting one another's campaigns. They finally asked each other, "How do we work together even better?" They learned more about one another and reflected on their work together on their policy efforts. This

ACTIVITIES WORKED ON TOGETHER PRIOR TO AFFILIATION



dialogue laid the foundation for the worker center's affiliation with this central labor council in addition to the one they already established with another central labor council. From these experiences, it seems that affiliations are a natural progression from informal joint activities and alliances.

### Partnerships Strengthen Campaigns

Worker centers and central labor councils report that in many cases significant coalition work and solidarity support for organizing and policy campaigns already had existed prior to affiliation, but they went on to explain that formal affiliation has provided an opportunity to deepen and strengthen these efforts. The majority of worker centers and central labor councils currently work together on one to two campaigns a year. Moreover, the majority of these joint efforts have led to successful outcomes.

Additionally, formal affiliation provides unions that were not previously active on policy campaigns with the opportunity to become active due to increased communication with worker centers. In one city, the building trades have become increasingly politically active as a result of working with the local worker center. Efforts include wage theft campaigns that have successfully won unpaid wages as well as a campaign to increase the local minimum wage, which won a commitment from the local district attorney for more aggressive prosecution of wage theft.

<b>Joint Campaigns</b>	<b>N=20</b>
After the affiliation	18
<b>Number of Joint Campaigns Per Year</b>	<b>N=18</b>
1-2 campaigns	14
3-4 campaigns	4
<b>Outcome of Campaigns</b>	<b>N=17</b>
Led to successful outcome	13

Source: UCLA Labor Center Affiliate Survey 2014

In addition, the meeting process resulting from the affiliation could be a space for information sharing about different campaigns. Worker centers attend meetings to present reports on their current work as well as to learn about the work of others. One worker center, for instance, is encouraged to present to the central labor council and update unions on their current and future activities. When this happens, the central labor council relays the information to its affiliates and activists to promote solidarity and mobilization.

What makes some of these joint campaigns powerful is that by working together, central labor councils and worker centers have transcended conservative political climates to successfully pass pro-worker legislation. Our surveys and interviews revealed promising examples of how, working together in stronger partnership forged by formal affiliation, central labor councils and worker centers can fight against tough political odds on joint campaigns.

## SECTION 4: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Both before and after the affiliation, a key component to building the partnership is working together on campaigns and organizing efforts.

The AFL-CIO should keep an eye out for emerging partnerships between worker centers and union partners that can formalize into a central labor council affiliation. In addition, it should facilitate and support collaborations that foster relationship building between new partners, and consider developing and supporting joint campaigns and initiatives that encourage worker centers and central labor councils to work together.

### Affiliations already have shown positive outcomes that allow the partners to amplify each other's work, collaborate on campaigns and develop joint strategies.

The AFL-CIO should create and distribute templates and materials of the best practices of these successful affiliation models. Throughout our survey and in-depth interviews, respondents expressed the need for information about the affiliations taking place in other parts of the country and best practice approaches that could be adopted, as well as the lessons learned. In addition to the national AFL-CIO Worker Center Advisory Council meetings, they called for regional meetings.

# Benefits of Affiliation

# 5

**WITHIN THE SHORT TIME** the national worker center partnership has been in existence, there have been benefits to the worker centers and central labor councils that decided to engage in an affiliation process. From access to resources, to leadership development for workers, to solidarity support for campaigns, the affiliations have been beneficial for both partners.

We asked interviewees to indicate what they perceive to be the benefits of affiliation. Survey results remain mixed, without a specific option chosen by the majority when combining both worker center and central labor council responses. However, when responses are separated by organization type, the majority of central labor councils indicated that a benefit of affiliation is increased support for organizing campaigns, while worker centers are more apt to claim the benefits of increased electoral and political power and increased access to funding resources.

## Accessing Resources, Support and Training

Worker centers commonly identified access to resources and stronger coalitions with organized labor as benefits of affiliation. In addition, affiliations have given worker centers an opportunity to learn more about union structures as well as expand their organizing into new industries. One interviewee described the importance of union knowledge and infrastructure: “[I]nfrastructure, the resources and

the established knowledge of how you organize in a shop were important...that kind of infrastructure that is already there with the labor movement is really important and helps build a foundation for the organizers.”

In addition to funding, worker centers report that central labor councils provide valuable, nonmonetary resources such as equipment and general guidance. Some unions have, in effect, become strategic advisory councils. For example, one worker center states it has been invaluable to have the expertise of folks who came through the ranks of the construction industry, from the apprenticeship programs to becoming union staff. This expertise helps members and organizers from this worker center understand the process for any worker going through a union apprenticeship program and how to get access to the union. Another worker center states that even being invited to certain meetings that it would not have had access to prior to affiliation with the central labor council has been beneficial to its advocacy work around domestic work.

Worker center members also benefit from leadership trainings and workshops that central labor council affiliates implement for their members and organizers, and vice versa. For example, one worker center interviewee conducts a Solidarity School, which is a two-day workshop for emerging leaders. Union

**BENEFITS OF AFFILIATION**

	Worker Center (N=12)	Central Labor Council (N=8)	Total (N=20)
Increased electoral/political power	6	5	11
Increased support for organizing campaigns	3	7	10
Provided funding resources	5	0	5
Provided other nonfunding resources	4	0	4
Provided research support	1	2	3
None	1	0	1

Source: UCLA Labor Center Affiliate Survey 2014

members attend along with community members and students. It has become a great opportunity for people to get together with union members and build solidarity.

### **Expanding the Labor Movement and Culture**

A common theme that arose while interviewing central labor councils about the benefits of affiliation is the reinvigoration of the labor movement. This reinvigoration has taken form in increased union membership. For example, one worker center interviewee helped nurses organize a union with AFCSME at the state's largest hospital. Since then, this worker center and AFCSME have forged a strong partnership. Recently, they worked to pass a law for the right to organize for home care workers—the biggest union election victory in the history of the state. As a result, 7,500 home care workers are now part of AFSCME. Furthermore, in Los Angeles, the CLEAN Carwash campaign has increased union density in the carwash industry. Currently, there are about 150 union members who now are paying dues.

Almost all central labor councils report that worker center affiliation not only has improved the overall organizing capacity for labor, but worker centers also have started to change the culture of the AFL-CIO. As one central labor council leader said when talking about the president of the National Taxi Workers Alliance becoming a member of the AFL-CIO's Executive Council, "To have somebody sit on the national AFL-CIO Executive [Council] who isn't from an organization that represents people that are employees who have collective bargaining agreements, that helps change the culture. Because obviously it's pretty clear, considering the attacks on us. We certainly can't do it alone."

Affiliations with worker centers have allowed organized labor to become more open minded and forward thinking, as many central labor councils have realized that affiliating with worker centers only will strengthen the labor movement as a whole. Worker centers provide central labor councils with a new method of community-based organizing, which has paved the way for a more progressive and broader labor movement that includes labor unions, worker centers and community groups. For instance, a worker center from our interviews has brought the "community partnership approach" of organizing to the construction trades unions, which has greatly improved construction trades unions' relationship

with local communities. In another state, the state labor federation considers the worker center to be in touch with a wider array of the community compared with the labor organizations and has been integral in understanding the state's labor landscape. "So when you want to know who are the important people in such and such town, if you don't have a union, the worker center knows the lay of the land." These connections to the community have broadened the movement and have helped state labor council affiliates see they are connected to a larger movement and that "this is not just about their individual union and forcing the contract."

Affiliations with worker centers also have been key in changing union cultures around undocumented workers. One significant example has been between the Electrical Workers (IBEW) and a prominent worker center. During an action around wage theft and workplace safety for construction workers, building trades members from across the state walked hand in hand with 90 undocumented workers. When a city council member questioned why the IBEW was working with the worker center and undocumented workers, the IBEW responded by saying, "They represent construction workers just like we do. They help them like we do."

### **Funding and Resources**

Many worker centers mentioned access to financial resources as a benefit of affiliation. The central labor councils at times have donated to the worker centers—from \$2,500 to \$10,000 per year. They have their local affiliates approve the worker centers as an annual line item in their budgets. Some unions even have invested directly in the worker center. For example, the United Steelworkers Local 796 contributes annually to the CLEAN Carwash campaign and provides funding support for leadership programs, advocacy trips to Sacramento and the worker relief fund. Moreover, central labor councils have partnered with worker centers to apply for LIFT Fund grants to support partnership work. Still, many worker centers feel like more is needed, considering their small budgets and how much is being asked of them.

However, some worker centers do receive large amounts of funding through their affiliation, whether on an ad hoc or yearly basis. For the CLEAN Carwash campaign, United Steelworkers Local 396 worked with the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor

to raise \$54,000 at a delegates' conference for the CLEAN Brigade program. When the carwash workers requested support, affiliates lined up before the microphones to announce support. It was an overwhelming experience for the workers and a strong example of the type of solidarity and local level support that can exist between a central labor council and worker center. Another example is where AFT provides a worker center with \$50,000 per year—equivalent to 10% of the worker center's budget and enough to compensate one full-time staff member.

From our survey results, worker centers expressed a need for resources to address organizing capacity and funding issues. They see the partnerships as an

opportunity for access to leadership development workshops and training for their staff and worker leaders. They also expressed a need for more communications and research support, as most worker centers lack staffing in these two areas. The central labor councils we surveyed would like more funding for the worker centers to support their organizing and policy campaign efforts. Many mentioned the LIFT Fund as a funding source model. They also would like to see more funding to increase their own capacity and hire staff to focus on ways to deepen the partnerships. This would help ensure stability with the worker center partnership in case of staff turnover.

## **SECTION 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Affiliations enable worker centers and central labor councils to become innovative, and to share ideas and best practice models.**

The affiliation processes have become focal points of transformation for local labor movements and worker centers. They create spaces for dialogue, reflection and strategy development. They become mechanisms for information sharing of best practices and creating solidarity support for organizing and policy campaigns. What is needed are toolkits and guides on how to facilitate the affiliation process to maximize the opportunity for deep relationship building between worker centers and unions.

### **A key priority for worker centers when entering into the affiliation process is to generate resources.**

Many worker centers today are struggling with financial and capacity issues. While the affiliation process offers them opportunities for alliance building and solidarity support for their campaigns, most worker centers look to the partnerships with central labor councils as potential sources for generating much-needed resources. The AFL-CIO should build upon the success of the LIFT Fund to create more opportunities that would generate funding for worker centers' involvement in central labor councils.



# Inclusivity and Organizational Culture

# 6

## OUR SURVEYS AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

highlighted issues relating to misunderstandings and mistrusts, the origins of which evolve from lack of knowledge about worker centers and unions, as well as past experiences where they have worked together. Addressing these issues will only serve to strengthen the labor movement, because it will help unions become more inclusive while enabling worker centers to better understand union models, the AFL-CIO and the history of organized labor in the United States.

### Immigration and Building Trades

A major challenge that worker centers raised is the issue of immigration. Most worker centers organize undocumented workers, which makes it necessary for central labor councils to recognize how their stance on immigration can affect relationships with worker centers. A few worker centers reported tensions or push back because the issue of immigration came up. For example, if the affiliation process involved a day laborer worker center, then there might be vocal opposition from or tension with the local building and trades union leadership from the beginning.

We found a few examples where building trades unions were skeptical of worker centers. One central labor council described having to do some vetting with the construction trades when it was affiliating with a worker center organizing day laborers. In one state, a big challenge was the fact that the building trades were calling U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) on nonunion contractors if they suspected the contractors of having undocumented workers on the jobsite. The worker center reached out to the trades: “We tried to explain why we felt that it was a wrong position for them to take, and that we should raise the standards for all workers, instead of going after the most exploited workers.” They established anti-racism, cultural competency training for people in leadership positions. Though the worker center didn’t succeed in shifting the building trades’ perspective on the issue, they still are committed to working on it and to support the trades on shared issues such as maintaining prevailing wage rates.

However, in another city, the building trades’ perception of worker centers improved once they began to learn more about them. An interviewee mentioned that “going to central labor council meetings and watching [worker centers] give reports of what they were doing...piqued our interests, and the building trades did not balk on letting them become an associate member of the central labor council.” Issues such as wage theft, misclassification of independent contractors and workplace safety brought central labor councils and worker centers together. The fact that the perception of worker centers has improved with more education about worker center issues and activities shows this education should happen before formal affiliation occurs in order to build stronger relationships between worker centers and central labor councils.

### Workers Face Challenges of Inclusion

Another critical perception of organized labor involved the issue of inclusivity. Organized labor was described as consisting of “all white older men with little commitment to issues affecting low-income immigrant communities of color.” One person noticed a lack of diversity right away when first going to the central labor council meetings. That person realized the partnership would be important for taking steps toward making a space that tends to be predominately white and predominately male more inclusive. The majority of the worker centers currently organize women and undocumented workers. It is important to understand the gender dynamics that might come into play between the predominately male union representatives in central labor councils and the women that worker centers often organize.

Interestingly, many worker center staff previously had worked at or had been affiliated with organized labor organizations and as a result had very specific perceptions of organized labor. They mainly had an overall positive perception, but stressed that there are barriers for the inclusion of certain groups, such as black workers, in unions. Worker centers that focus on the construction industry expressed frustration

because their members have done all the right things—work hard, comply with their responsibilities, apply for jobs and get into apprenticeship programs—and they still face barriers. With black construction workers, the frustration is especially deep, because there still are barriers, especially within the construction industry. Most, if not all, worker centers have members who would like access to union membership, apprenticeship programs and good jobs.

### **Misunderstanding and Differing Views and Structures**

From our interviews and surveys, we found various misunderstanding and challenges experienced by both worker centers and central labor councils. A few central labor councils felt there was a bit of tokenism when it came to the worker center’s new role. They stated that the worker center would highlight the affiliation whenever it became convenient for it to do so. On the other side of the coin, worker centers often failed to consider the internal organizing challenges

of the central labor council to move the affiliation process forward. Worker centers did not have a full understanding of union cultures and the challenges that unions faced, especially when organizing low-wage workers. Many worker centers perceived unions as being primarily interested in a given bargaining unit.

In addition, there have been disagreements over the amount of accountability of either side, especially in cases where the central labor council is providing funding for the worker center. One central labor council perceived the level of accountability by the worker center to be based on how much funding it was receiving. Another central labor council perceived worker centers as partnering just for resources. From the standpoint of the worker centers, they had an expectation of a high level of support for their policy campaigns. What added to conflicts around accountability was when the affiliation process occurred quickly and terms sometimes were vague and not communicated well.

## **SECTION 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Immigration is the source of misconceptions and misunderstandings between unions and worker centers.**

The AFL-CIO should create materials and provide workshops for central labor councils on issues relating to immigration and low-wage immigrant workers. It should offer workshops on overcoming stereotypes and misconceptions relating to undocumented workers, as well as information about worker centers and their history.

### **Unions need to be more sensitive about issues relating to inclusivity and diversity.**

The AFL-CIO should develop a curriculum on diversity in the labor movement. It should partner with groups that are deeply rooted in providing education on issues relating to inclusivity and diversity to provide workshops for worker centers and unions that are preparing to engage in a process of relationship building.

### **Many worker centers lack a good understanding of unions, the AFL-CIO and the history of the labor movement.**

Worker centers and their members also bring strong misconceptions about unions when they first enter into an affiliation process. The AFL-CIO should produce educational materials and a workshop curriculum that focuses on the structure and culture of unions, the history of the labor movement and the AFL-CIO.

### **Lack of understanding of each other’s structure can lead to misunderstanding.**

Both parties need to better understand each other’s structures and clear systems of accountability need to be developed. The AFL-CIO can play a key role in helping partners understand each other’s structures and operations. It also can develop tools that help groups identify and implement accountability structures.

# Conclusion

**DURING THE PAST 10 YEARS,** a transformation has been taking place within the labor movement to rebuild it and make it stronger. The AFL-CIO understands the labor movement needs to become broader and more inclusive in order for it to offset declines in union membership. Over the past few years, the AFL-CIO has promoted a labor movement that consists of all workers who want to take collective action to improve wages, hours and working conditions. An important part of this transformation has been the partnerships with organizations focusing on workers' rights issues. The thriving worker center movement of the past 10 years has made worker centers and worker center networks important

partners. Beginning with the National Worker Center Partnership in 2006, AFL-CIO partnerships with worker centers have been taking place at the national, state and local levels. This report is an evaluation and assessment of local-level affiliations between worker centers and central labor councils. There are closer to 30 such affiliations throughout the country now, and this report has evaluated 16 of them and developed recommendations for expanding and strengthening them so they might have a more transformative impact on union-worker center relationships and the shared objectives of these vital sectors of the labor movement.



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## LIST OF AFFILIATIONS

*\*As of July 1, 2014*

Austin Area AFL-CIO Council	Workers Defense Project
Greater Boston Labor Council	Chelsea Collaborative
Greater Boston Labor Council	MassCOSH
Harris County AFL-CIO Council	Fe y Justicia Worker Center
Mid-State Central Labor Council	Tompkins County Workers Center
NOVA Area Labor Federation	Tenants & Workers United (merging with Virginia New Majority)
New York City Central Labor Council	New York Taxi Workers Alliance
Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO	Alliance to Develop Power
South Central Federation of Labor	Madison Interfaith Worker Justice
Washington State Labor Council and Martin Luther King County Labor Council	Casa Latina
Western North Carolina Central Labor Council	Western North Carolina Worker Center
North Bay Labor Council	Graton Day Labor Center
San Diego Labor Council	United Taxi Workers of San Diego
Northern New Mexico Central Labor Council	Somos Un Pueblo Unido
Greater Lansing Labor Council	Lansing Worker Center
San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO	Mujeres Unidas y Activas

### Description of Survey Participants

Our survey asked participants about the populations they currently organize. The survey asked both worker centers and central labor councils to indicate the industries they organize. In addition, worker centers were asked to indicate the communities they organize.

### Industries and Communities Currently Organizing

Worker centers and central labor councils had the option of selecting from a list of industries in which they are currently organizing. The majority of the central labor councils currently organize the construction (100%) and transportation (88%) industries, while the majority of the worker centers currently organize the service industry (66%). When worker center and central labor council responses are combined, the leading industries that are currently organized are construction (75%) and service (65%).

### WORKER CENTER CONSTITUENTS

	%
Undocumented	92
Documented	8
Women	83
Native born	58
Youth	50
LGBTQ	25
Other	25

Source: UCLA Labor Center Affiliate Survey 2014

### Worker Center Staff and Members

The survey asked worker centers to provide the year they were established as well as information on their staff and members. The oldest worker center was started in 1990, and the most recent worker center was started in 2012. The average year of establishment was 2003. On average, the older the worker center, the more staff members it currently employs. However, there is no correlation between when a worker center was started and the number of members and active members it currently enlists.

The survey distinguished between part-time and full-time staff members and found that worker centers employ more full-time staff (six) than part-time staff (three) on average. In terms of range, worker centers employ between zero to 18 full-time staff and between zero to six part-time staff. Both averages and ranges are significantly higher than those of the central labor councils.

The survey distinguished between the number of members involved overall and the number of active members in the worker center. The number of members involved in the worker centers overall ranged from 43 to 2,500 members, while the number of active members ranged from eight to 500 members. On average, 20% of overall members are currently active.

### WORKER CENTERS

	Mean	Median	Range
Full-time staff	6	2	0-18
Part-time staff	3	3	0-6
Number of members involved overall	745	564	43-2500
Number of leaders/ active members	156	63	8-500

### Central Labor Council Staff and Affiliates

The survey asked central labor councils to provide information on their staff and affiliates. On average, central labor councils employ two full-time staff members and one part-time staff member—a third of the number of staff members employed by worker centers. In terms of range, central labor councils employ between zero to six full-time staff members and between zero to two part-time staff members. Typically, central labor councils rely on volunteer-based work due to inadequate resources and a generally weak labor movement in most geographical areas.

Nevertheless, central labor councils are able to influence their affiliates for resources, which perhaps explains why, unlike worker center members, the majority of central labor council affiliates are active within their respective central labor council. Specifically, central labor councils reported having an average of 83 affiliates and an average of 58 active affiliates. The number of affiliates ranged from 21 to 161 and the number of active affiliates ranged from 11 to 161. On average, about 70% of central labor council affiliates are currently active.

### CENTRAL LABOR COUNCILS

	Mean	Median	Range
Full-time staff	2	1	0-6
Part-time staff	1	1	0-2
Number of affiliates	83	65	21-161
Number of active affiliates	58	50	11-161

### Project Participants

**List of Interviewees:** Cristina Tzintzún, Workers Defense Project; Michael Cunningham, Building Trades; Karina Muñiz, Mujeres Unidas y Activas; Tim Paulson, San Francisco Labor Council; James Haslam, Vermont Workers' Center; Ben Johnson, Vermont State Labor Council; Neidi Dominguez, CLEAN Carwash Campaign; Lanita Morris Young, L.A. Black Worker Center; Hilary Stern, Casa Latina; Josie Camacho, Alameda Labor Council.

**List of Surveyees:** Hilary Stern, Casa Latina; Laura Perez-Boston, Fe y Justicia Worker Center; Jesús Guzmán, Graton Day Labor Center; Mike Kolhoff, Lansing Workers Center; Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, MassCOSH; Karina Muñiz, Mujeres Unidas y Activas; Pete Meyers, Tompkins County Workers' Center; Mikaiil Hussein, United Taxi Workers of San Diego; Marcela Díaz, United Workers Center of New Mexico; James Haslam, Vermont Workers' Center; Cristina Tzintzún, Workers Defense Project; Patrick Hickey, Workers' Rights Center; Rich Rogers, Greater Boston Labor Council; Josie Camacho, Alameda Labor Council; Glenn Freeman III, Greater Lansing Labor Council; Richard C. Shaw, Harris County AFL-CIO Council; Bonnie Wilson, Mid-State Central Labor Council; Lisa Maldonado, North Bay Labor Council; Daniel Duncan, NOVA Area Labor Federation; Tim Paulson, San Francisco Labor Council; Kevin Gundlach, South Central Federation of Labor.

# Survey Instrument

## SURVEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AFL-CIO WORKER CENTER AFFILIATION STUDY

1. What year did your worker center start? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many staff do you currently have? Full time \_\_\_\_\_ Part time \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many members overall do you have at your center? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many worker leaders/active members are currently involved with your center? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What industry (or industries) do you currently organize in? *(check all that apply)*
  - a. Construction
  - b. Domestic work/home care
  - c. Service (carwash, restaurant, hotel, etc.)
  - d. Transportation
  - e. Manufacturing
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which of the following communities do you organize? Workers that are: *(check all that apply)*
  - a. Women
  - b. Native born
  - c. Documented
  - d. Undocumented
  - e. Youth
  - f. LGBTQ
  - g. Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. Is your worker center affiliation with:
  - a. Central labor council
  - b. State federation
  - c. National AFL-CIO
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. What year did you affiliate? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Which of the following benefits were the reason(s) your worker center decided to affiliate with the local labor movement? *(check all that apply)*
  - a. Electoral/political power
  - b. Organizing capacity
  - c. Funding resources
  - d. Other resources—not funding but other resources such as equipment
  - e. Access to jobs/training programs for members
  - f. Communications support
  - g. Research support
  - h. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Is your worker center connected to a national organization?**

- a. Yes
- b. No (*skip to question 11*)

**10 a. If Yes, does that national organization have a worker center partnership with the AFL-CIO?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**11. What type of relationship did you have with unions in the following activities BEFORE your affiliation process?**

	<b>Partnership—worked in collaboration over a period of time</b>	<b>Ad-hoc—Worked short term, one-offs, as needed</b>	<b>Did not work together on this</b>
Organizing Campaign			
Policy Work			
Electoral/Civic Engagement			
Training/Workshop			
Research			
Other ( <i>describe</i> )			

**12. Describe one to two perceptions you had of organized labor before affiliation?**

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**13. How would you describe the political climate of organized labor in your city?**

- a. Strong local labor movement and influential
- b. Not a strong labor movement but still influential
- c. Weak labor movement and not influential

**14. What is the role of organized labor within the industry you work in?**

- a. Strong local labor movement and influential
- b. Not a strong labor movement but still influential
- c. Weak labor movement and not influential

**15. Which of the following activities are a part of your affiliation?** *(check all that apply)*

- a. Attend meetings with labor partner
- b. Attend delegate convention
- c. Have assigned delegates
- d. Pay dues
- e. Voting rights as a member
- f. Nonvoting member
- g. Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

**16. What issues caused challenges in getting to the affiliation?** *(check all that apply)*

- a. Political misalignment
- b. Immigration status of members
- c. Lack of understanding among worker center and unions about what each does
- d. Lack of trust
- e. Lack of clarity about the affiliation process
- f. Union members that didn't support the affiliation
- g. Past bad experience between worker center and unions
- h. Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- i. None

**17. How has the affiliation been beneficial for your organization and/or your members?** *(check all that apply)*

- a. Increased electoral/political power
- b. Increased organizing capacity
- c. Provided funding resources
- d. Provided other, nonfunding resources, i.e., equipment
- e. Provided research support
- f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- g. None

**18. How has the affiliation supported your member development and leadership?** *(check all that apply)*

- a. Access to leadership development workshops
- b. Access to job trainings
- c. Access to jobs
- d. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- e. None

**19. Since the affiliation, have you worked on any campaigns together?**

- a. Yes
- b. No *(skip to question 20)*

**19a. If yes, approximately how many campaigns do you work on together annually?**

- a. 1-2 campaigns in a year
- b. 3-4 campaigns in a year
- c. More than four campaigns

**20. Did the affiliation lead to a success in a campaign?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**21. Please describe specifically the role of the affiliation in helping the campaign:**

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**22. Did the affiliation inhibit/impede a process in a campaign?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**23. Please describe specifically the role of the affiliation in impeding a campaign:**

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**24. Were the expectations of the affiliation clear to you at the beginning?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**25. Did both parties have shared expectations?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**26. What part of the affiliation has fallen short of those expectations?**

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**27. What type of resources would help in strengthening affiliations between worker centers and labor councils?**

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**28. What are recommendations you would make for the affiliation process moving forward? Please explain.**

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**29. Additional comments**

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# Interview Instrument

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Name**

**Organization**

**What industries do you currently organize in?**

**How many members do you have?**

**What year did you start?**

Area	Worker Centers	Central Labor Council
<p><b>How it Started</b></p>	<p>Please describe what initially led to your decision to seek out affiliation. Who approached whom to begin the affiliation process? What type of relationship did you have with unions before? What were your perceptions of organized labor before affiliation? How did you learn about the CLC?</p>	<p>What was the process you went through to create the affiliation? What was the participation of your members? Who approached whom to begin the affiliation process? What type of relationship did you have with worker centers before? What were your perceptions of worker centers before affiliation?</p>
<p><b>Role of Labor</b></p>	<p>How would you describe the political climate of organized labor in your city? How did that impact the affiliation relationship? What is the role of organized labor within the industry you work in?</p> <p>Does the worker center representative attend all state fed or CLC meetings? If not, which ones? Receive communications about state fed or CLC activities? Are there designated individuals who are points of contact between the worker center and the union body? What is the frequency of contact, etc.?</p> <p>Does the worker center interact with individual unions outside the state fed or CLC? Which ones? What is the nature of that interaction?</p>	<p>How would you describe the political climate of organized labor in your city? How did that impact the affiliation relationship? What is the role of organized labor within the industry you work in?</p>

<b>Describe Affiliation</b>	Please describe the affiliation—what's included, how it is set up, types of interactions, etc.	Please describe the affiliation—what's included, how it is set up, types of interactions, etc.
<b>Challenges</b>	What types of challenges did you experience in getting to the affiliation?	What types of challenges did you experience in getting to the affiliation?
<b>Benefit of Affiliation</b>	How has the affiliation supported your organization and/or benefited your members?	How has the affiliation supported your organization and/or benefited your members?
<b>Campaigns</b>	<p>What was an example where the affiliation led to a success in a campaign? What was an example where the affiliation inhibited the process in a campaign?</p> <p>What campaigns have you worked on together? What happened?</p>	<p>What was an example where the affiliation led to a success in a campaign? What was an example where the affiliation inhibited the process in a campaign?</p> <p>What campaigns have you worked on together? What happened?</p>
<b>Expectations</b>	<p>What were your expectations of the affiliation? How clear were the expectations? Did both parties have shared expectations? What part of the affiliation has fallen short of those expectations?</p>	<p>What were your expectations of the affiliation? How clear were the expectations? Did both parties have shared expectations? What part of the affiliation has fallen short of those expectations?</p>
<b>Vision</b>	How does affiliation fit into your vision for and growth of your worker center?	How does affiliation fit into your vision for and growth of the labor movement?
<b>Resources</b>	What resources did they provide? How did the need come up? What was the process of getting those resources?	What resources were you able to provide? How did the need come up? What was process of giving those resources?
<b>Membership</b>	How has the affiliation supported your member development and leadership? What role have members played in the affiliation?	How has the affiliation supported your member development and leadership? What role have members played in the affiliation?
<b>National</b>	Is your worker center connected to a national organization? How did that impact the affiliation process?	
<b>Race/Gender</b>	Has race or gender or immigration status of your membership come up during your affiliation?	Has race or gender or immigration status of your membership come up during your affiliation?
<b>Policy</b>	Where have you been aligned around policies? What have you misaligned?	Where have you been aligned around policies? What have you misaligned?

<b>Internal</b>	Did you think about other unions/were there internal union politics that impacted your affiliation?	Were there internal union politics that impacted your affiliation?
<b>Recommendations</b>	What recommendations would you make for the affiliation process moving forward? What does the ideal affiliation process and model look like?	What recommendations would you make for the affiliation process moving forward? What does the ideal affiliation process and model look like?







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