

Union-Sponsored Workforce Development Initiatives

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Summary: In this paper we examined the general questions of what unions do in workforce development and what is different about union-led initiatives when compared to community-based or other more traditional workforce development programs. We examined three union-sponsored initiatives within the framework of what is known about workforce development projects that target the disadvantaged. In general, we found that innovative union-sponsored workforce development initiatives are capable of serving the training and employment needs of low-wage workers, unions and industry. Unions can intervene at critical junctures of workforce development: they have special knowledge of the workplace and job opportunities; they are connected to the recruiting networks of employers; and they are able to provide training and mentoring in the workplace after employment has been achieved. Since employers' demand for skills is the entry point for design and development, union-led training programs are best described as a "demand pull" models. In these models, training is often part of a more comprehensive package of services offered to employers. However, the cases examined in this study illustrate that innovative unions have the capacity to deal with workers who face multiple barriers to employment by developing ties to community-based organizations that serve the disadvantaged. However, in comparison to community-based training programs, union-led initiatives have the distinct advantage of benefiting from formal and informal ties to employers and to their recruitment networks. Unions' ties to employers facilitate access to better employment opportunities than those usually opened to disadvantaged populations through neighborhood-based social networks, and typically provide more advancement opportunities as well. Union-led workforce development initiatives focus on an industrial sector and target the sector as a whole. Employment programs are often financed through collective bargaining agreements and involve a close collaboration with employers. Because of these advantages over other organizations, union-led initiatives are promoting broad-based collaborations and receiving the financial support of local governments and foundations.

Introduction

In recent years, unions have sponsored an increasing number of workforce development initiatives that target the disadvantaged. Thus far, however, union initiatives have received less attention in the literature than initiatives sponsored by government, industry, community based organizations or community colleges. Therefore, while knowledge of workforce development strategies for the disadvantaged has increased, the lack of scrutiny of union initiatives leaves important questions regarding these initiatives unanswered. In particular, we are interested in ascertaining the general questions of what unions do in workforce development and what is different about union-led initiatives when compared to community-based or other more traditional workforce development programs. To answer these general questions about union participation in workforce development initiatives, we examined three union-sponsored initiatives within the framework of what is known about workforce development projects that target the disadvantaged (and what is known about unions). The initiatives are the San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project, the Philadelphia Hospital and Health Care District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund, and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership based in Milwaukee.

We found that innovative union-sponsored workforce development initiatives are capable of serving the training and employment needs of low-wage workers, unions and industry. In the case of the San Francisco Hotels Partnership, training has imparted skills and attitudes to both labor and management that are essential to running a successful hotel while at the same time helping to forge a community amongst unionized employees of diverse races and ethnicities. In Philadelphia, the Hospital and Health Care District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund offers over 40 courses and provides career ladders and certification for disadvantaged workers, many of whom are the friends and relatives of union members. It also serves the ever-changing needs of employers in the health care industry by providing workers with appropriate skills and credentialing. The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership has helped to modernize many of the small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms in the metalworking industry (and other industries, as well) while providing training and well-paying careers to workers who often face multiple obstacles to employment. Unions can intervene at critical junctures of workforce development:

they have special knowledge of the workplace and job opportunities; they are connected to the recruiting networks of employers; and they are able to provide training and mentoring in the workplace after employment has been attained. Innovative unions have the capacity to deal with workers who face multiple barriers to employment by utilizing their strong ties to communities and community-based organizations that serve the disadvantaged.

In comparison to community-based training programs, union-led initiatives have the distinct advantage of benefiting from formal and informal ties to employers and to their recruitment networks. Unions' ties to employers facilitate access to better employment opportunities than those usually open to disadvantaged populations through neighborhood-based social networks, and typically provide more advancement opportunities as well. Union-led workforce development initiatives focus on an industrial sector and target the sector as a whole. Employment programs are often financed through collective bargaining agreements and involve a close collaboration with employers. Since employers' demand for skills is the entry point for design and development, union-led training programs are best described as "demand pull" models. In these models training is often part of a more comprehensive package of services offered to employers. In contrast, the vast majority of training programs are designed with a focus on helping job seekers—and employers' demand for specific skills and workers' productivity concerns play a lesser role in design. Because of these advantages over other institutional contexts, union-led initiatives are promoting broad-based collaborations and receiving the financial support of local governments and foundations.

New Unionism, which rejects "bread and butter" unionism's exclusionary policies and limited training programs, is the driving force behind union-sponsored workforce development. At the same time, factors such as industry, region, government policy, union leadership and prior experience influence the structure of these training initiatives. The results of this study reveal that each initiative follows a distinct pattern that can be characterized by its dominant focus – in San Francisco, the focus is on the workplace; in Philadelphia, education drives the initiative; and in Wisconsin, industrial modernization is the engine that

impels the initiative. In any case, the success of the initiatives studied suggests that it would be beneficial to ensure that these and other successful initiatives attain broad recognition among unions. Business, government, community colleges, and community-based organizations should become familiar with “demand pull” workforce development models to ensure that their lessons and successes can be duplicated whenever and wherever feasible.

In the following sections of the paper, we provide a more detailed discussion of the problem and a framework based on workforce development literature to assess the elements that contribute to the success of union-led workforce development initiatives. The next sections present a general overview of the cases studied and the criteria for their selection. The final sections present a comparative analysis of the cases and expand on the findings and conclusions of the study.

What do unions do in workforce development?

Because the literature is extensive, much is known about workforce development strategies. Workforce development for the disadvantaged is more than simply job training. It consists of a constellation of activities from orientation to the work world, recruiting, placement, and mentoring to follow-up counseling and crisis intervention.¹ Workforce development strategies are obliged to resolve issues regarding the acquisition of skills and the provision of supports for participants who often must overcome barriers like the need for childcare, transportation, unfamiliarity with English, limited work experience, and a lack of credentials. Most crucially, successful workforce development strategies must provide the skills demanded by industry and the links to the recruiting networks of employers.² However, if the disadvantaged are placed in low-paying marginal positions it increases the odds that either they will be looking for another job in the near future or that they will lose motivation and drop out of the labor market. In short, successful workforce development strategies targeting the disadvantaged must develop a dual focus on both the population served and local industry.³

However, even if good jobs are available, disadvantaged workers are not always aware of opportunities for training and placement. Also, because of prior negative experiences, they may even lack trust in the training provider or the belief that training leads to jobs. To overcome these obstacles, the participation of community-based organizations is often necessary. Because of deep roots in the community, the trust they have established, prior training experience and an understanding of the needs of the disadvantaged, they are most suited to the task.⁴ However, community-based organizations often require additional resources. According to Harrison and Weiss,⁵ community-based programs that establish long-term relations with employers, government agencies, support services, and community colleges seem to be more effective. Therefore, CBOs might form linkages with school-to-work and one-stop centers, closer relationships between training programs and industry, and greater integration of community programs within the existing web of community colleges and postsecondary institutions servicing the disadvantaged.

Regardless of whether CBOs, government, industry, community colleges or unions sponsor training initiatives for the disadvantaged (given the complexity of issues involved in workforce development and the high costs involved in implementing programs), initiatives are most successful when they are collaborative efforts that draw on the resources of several institutions. And as is the case of any successful collaboration, they require strong leadership, clear guidelines, a coherent strategy, institutional capacity, sufficient funding, and joint vision.⁶

Although the number of union-sponsored initiatives has increased recently, unions have been involved in training for a long time. Unions do not have a reputation as institutions that provide training for the disadvantaged. This is due to labor's past history of practicing exclusionary policies in the craft and building trades, where unions fiercely controlled the entry of new members, and, in the process, excluded minorities and women from some of the best paying jobs. Nevertheless, several progressive unions have been involved in training initiatives for many years.⁷

Today the face and commitment of the labor movement have changed. Both union membership and union leadership include growing numbers of minorities and women, many of whom have jobs in or represent the unionized low-paying service sector that provides a lot of the low-skilled entry-level positions available to the disadvantaged. Since the election of John Sweeney to the presidency of the AFL-CIO, labor is making efforts to not only increase union membership through organizing but to imbue the movement with a new fervor.⁸ As part of this new fervor, labor seeks to redefine itself as a “social movement” with deep roots in communities, and especially in communities of immigrants and minorities. Presently, the labor movement is seeking to go beyond what has been known as “bread and butter” unionism by addressing the issues that concern not only their own membership but regional economies and society as a whole.⁹

By becoming the champions of low-wage communities and setting performance standards in industries that employ low-skill workers, unions can protect themselves from wage shocks and build alliances with communities and other progressive forces. These progressive forces believe that the “low road” – a term used to describe the creation of jobs with low skills, low pay and few or no benefits – is not good enough for their communities, their industries, their neighbors, their families, and their children. The AFL-CIO has responded to these deep-seated challenges in the labor market and in the economy by organizing “high-road” partnerships. The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute defines these partnerships as follows:

High road partnerships go beyond this traditional union role. They not only address today’s demands for skills development and worker recruitment, but they also actively engage business with unions in the process of trying to increase skill demands and improve the quality of today’s and tomorrow’s jobs. As such, they offer a substantially more effective approach to the labor market than traditional “supply side” education programs, which simply tried to provide workers with skills, hoping for a good fit with available jobs. Unions work with employers to shape what the jobs will be and what skills will be required to do them— usually pushing for the more skilled, more value-added options. Through alliances with community-based organizations, unions make sure that community members are recruited, trained for, and placed in quality family-sustaining jobs. Thus high road partnerships join active demand-side strategies – shaping what the demand for jobs will be – with targeted supply-side strategies – providing workers with the education and skills they need to do the jobs. After all, if a key problem in the labor market is quality of jobs, then communities must find a way to increase local job quality. High road partnerships do just that.¹⁰

These partnerships often include programs to provide training for the disadvantaged. Union-sponsored training programs for the disadvantaged — some of whom are union members in need of career ladders or a job change due to physical disability or lay-off—have become an integral part of a strategy to revitalize the labor movement and to reposition it in the New Economy. This can entail promoting the revitalization of industries with a strong union presence through modernization or industrial reorganization, unionizing new sectors of the economy, and building stable regional economies that can expand opportunity and provide for a broadly shared, equitable distribution of wealth.¹¹ New unionism is committed to actively shaping a future built on good jobs through the strong support of communities.¹² According to the AFL-CIO, “Just as regions serve as the building blocks to the economic borders of the new economy, communities are the structural centerpieces to the new labor movement.”¹³

As with any reform effort, tensions ensue between entrenched interests and those advocating change. Some unions embrace reform; others resist or ignore these efforts. However, as the case studies bear witness, innovative unions have much to offer to the disadvantaged in need of training. According to Richard Freeman, union jobs are almost always better than non-union jobs in the same industry. They pay more and are more likely to provide medical benefits and job security.¹⁴ Also, when unions have a significant market share in an industry they increase wages of the non-unionized establishment.¹⁵ This is especially important in the low-wage service sector that provides the bulk of low-skill entry-level positions. Unions do more than influence wage setting. Unions know a lot about the workplace and can assist management in creating training curriculums that impart core skills; unions can also provide follow-up supervision and mentoring for new trainees.¹⁶ Since unions share a common interest with management to make companies viable and competitive, they cannot only assist in modernizing efforts,¹⁷ they can ally with management and communities to create public policy that is favorable to industries in need of modernization. This can be done at the same time unions are serving the needs of incumbent workers and the disadvantaged participating in training programs. When modernization or industrial reorganization occurs harmoniously, both employers and unions can benefit. Unions, instead of

spending resources on strikes, can use their resources for organizing and worker education; and management can make necessary changes without disruptions in supply schedules.¹⁸

In forming links with progressive forces, many union-sponsored training initiatives have received the benefit of strategic research provided by leading institutes and universities.¹⁹ Many have attracted funding from government and foundations. Many have received assistance from community-based organizations and community colleges. Still others are supported by contributions from employers.

By campaigning for immigrant rights, unions have gained the support of social activists and increased their credibility in disadvantaged communities.²⁰ In some instances, innovative unions with deep roots in communities even perform some of the same roles that community-based organizations do. Thus, in industries like health care that employ large numbers of workers with limited skills, innovative unions through the social networks of their membership can provide an important link between disadvantaged communities and employers. Without these social connections, the relatives, friends and acquaintances of union members are often limited to traditional networks,²¹ connections that may lead to low paying non-union jobs and dead-end careers.

The case studies indicate that the manner in which unions perform as labor market intermediaries varies greatly. In one case they perform a role more usually associated with that of a community college by formulating and conducting training courses for both management and employees. In another case, unions perform the role of community-based organizations by establishing the high levels of trust necessary to recruit the disadvantaged and provide them with appropriate supports. Finally, unions aided by a strong partnership with industry, functioned as an intermediary by orchestrating and coordinating the efforts of government, community colleges, and community-based organizations.

However, whatever role unions perform as labor market intermediaries they remain intent on building worker solidarity and on having a strong voice in the workplace. For unions, job training entails more than imparting technical skills and soft skills such as punctuality, it includes training that helps workers build a commitment to their fellow workers, their union and to those workers who remain to be organized. It also entails offering management a well-trained workforce, low rates of turnover, high retention, more harmonious labor relations, and increased productivity.²²

It is apparent from the above discussion that unions have a relative advantage over more traditional, community-based labor market intermediaries in that they already have strong links to employers and industry that facilitate targeting occupational training in demand by employers and the placement of trainees. They also enjoy the potential benefits of collective bargaining for the financing of programs and for the establishment of support systems in the workplace. However, given the relative inexperience in recruiting and training populations with multiple barriers to employment, unions face a number of challenges when establishing employment and training programs or workforce development initiatives more generally. Our examination of the selected cases presents a more detailed picture of the interplay of these different forces shaping the participation of unions in community-oriented workforce development initiatives.

Method and Data

This study provides an analysis of innovative union-sponsored workforce development initiatives that provide training to the disadvantaged and delineates factors that circumscribe the development of effective initiatives. We also provide a preliminary framework in order to assess how these initiatives perform as labor market intermediaries. The principle data for this paper was obtained by conducting a study of three union-sponsored workforce development initiatives. Because of the necessity to observe initiatives in as broad a context as possible, so that the interactions of all relevant groups of stakeholders are accounted for, we adopted a comparative case studies method.

Of the 14 partnerships studied in the AFL-CIO High Road Partnerships Report, we chose the San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, and the Philadelphia Training and Upgrading Fund. These cases were selected because they met the following criteria. Each had sufficient longevity and was of sufficient scale for the initiative to have reached full stride so that judgment could be rendered regarding the program's success. Each initiative had at some point received Welfare to Work funds and had experience dealing with disadvantaged workers who face multiple obstacles to employment and career development. Each was a union-sponsored initiative in an industry that employs large numbers of low-skilled employees with short-term training needs. Each has served as a prototype for subsequent initiatives in the industry. Initiatives were also selected to offer geographic diversity.

After conducting a review of the literature on workforce development and holding discussions with a number of selected labor officials, we devised the following set of research questions. These questions provided the basis for a structured interview protocol that served as the benchmark needed to ensure an in-depth analysis and as a framework for the comparative inquiry.

Motivation and Context. What motivates labor unions to engage in training programs that target the disadvantaged? How do factors such as industry, region, government policy, union leadership and prior experience influence the structure of these training initiatives?

Links to Employers. What is the role of employers in determining the content of skills training? What are the connections of training programs to employers and industry? What formal and informal mechanisms exist to establish and maintain these connections?

Program Design:

- **Recruitment and Case Management.** How are workers recruited to participate in the programs? What are the criteria for selection? How is the participant progress monitored? How effective are these programs in targeting the disadvantaged? Are they examples of innovative outreach practices?
- **Support Services.** What kind of support services are provided or facilitated to overcome barriers to employability? How are these services integrated into programs and how are they financed?
- **Links to CBOs.** What are the connections of training programs to community-based organizations? What formal and informal mechanisms exist to establish and maintain these connections?
- **Training.** What combination of job readiness, basic, and soft skills is offered to participants? How are the types of skills and curriculum determined?
- **Certifications and Career Ladders.** Are training programs connected to credential-granting institutions and do they offer transferable skill competencies, certification, or more advanced degrees? Is the potential for career ladders an explicit consideration for program design and development?

Retention and Other Employer Services. What kind of post-program participation follow-up is provided? To what extent do programs deal with supervisor attitudes and expectations in the workplace? To what extent do programs deal with the attitudes of incumbent workers? Is changing the culture of the workplace a priority and if so how is this accomplished?

Impact on Unions. Have unions benefited from participation in these initiatives? Have they increased union density? Have they increased political clout and the ability to influence public policy?

After formulating these questions, we visited each site and interviewed program directors, program staff, and representatives of collaborating agencies. We also interviewed representatives of community colleges, government agencies, community-based organizations and employer associations able to provide additional information regarding the initiatives' performance and effectiveness. In some cases, supplementary interviews were conducted by telephone following the on-site visits. In the following sections we summarize and provide the defining elements of each of the cases.

The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project

The hospitality industry is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the San Francisco Bay Area. However, it is also an industry that is changing rapidly due to increased customer demands for new services, technological advances and the changing nature of the workforce. Because the hotel business is highly competitive, hotels must be able to provide increasingly high levels of guest service. This, in turn, increases the need for more highly trained flexible managers and workers who can communicate with guests and perform numerous duties in a friendly manner.

Entry-level positions in unionized hotels in San Francisco provide some of the best jobs for low-skilled workers—the wages are high and 95 percent of workers have medical insurance. Prior to the 1994 contract agreement that established the San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project, labor relations between the hotels and unions were, to put it mildly, strained. This depleted union resources and made it difficult to conduct organizing drives. Unionized hotels, on the other hand, were unable to make the changes that were necessary if they were to remain competitive with nonunion hotels.²³

Labor and Management conducted a joint study to analyze the problems facing the hotels in the San Francisco market. The study concluded that many things needed to be fixed, including training, communication, the grievance mechanism, the sick-leave system, and the way the hotels' kitchens and restaurants operated. As a result of these efforts, The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project emerged in 1994 as part of a collective bargaining agreement between the multi-employer group of 12 first-class hotels. This group represented many national hotel operators including Hilton, Hyatt, Westin, Sheraton, Fairmont, Holiday Inn, and two of the hotel industry's major unions, Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) Local 2 and Service Employees International Union Local 14 (now merged in HERE Local 2). Because the needs of the hotels varied greatly, the bargaining agreement called for a "living contract" that allowed the parties to meet during the contract's five-year term to address unforeseen problems and forge a true working partnership between labor and management.

The Partnership recognized that the workforce was multi-lingual, and extremely diverse and that management often was unfamiliar with the special needs of their employees or the difficulties they encountered in performing their jobs. However, not only were there communication problems to deal with, it was necessary to change attitudes, increase trust, improve workers' language skills, as well as help workers cope with the difficulties that low-wage, largely female, workers face. Problem-solving teams have emerged as the Project's basic tool. To increase the level of trust, neutral third-party facilitators lead teams and representation on project teams is staffed at a ratio of two-thirds workers, one-third managers (matching the actual composition of the hotels). The goal is to develop innovative, hotel-specific solutions to issues such as training, job design, workload, job security, hotel operations, and grievance resolution.

To realize the participation of the multi-lingual, extremely diverse workforce, meetings and classroom training sessions are simultaneously interpreted into Spanish and Chinese. Written Project and training materials are also available in English, Spanish and Chinese, and in some cases classes are taught in Spanish or Chinese. One facilitator described the impact of interpretation: "Over and over again, people

would come up to me and thank me from the bottom of their hearts. Native English speakers would say, 'I can't believe how much I have missed by not being able to communicate with a person in their native language. I never had an opportunity to find out what (the person) thought. This really has enriched me.' Non-native English speakers would say (through the interpreter), 'I never expected to have translators... Thank you for giving me a voice.'²⁴

In 1998 the Project, jointly funded by a State of California Employment Training Panel (ETP) grant and the local hotel/restaurant, labor/management Education Fund, conducted a massive training program of more than 1,600 line and managerial employees. The goals were to improve job retention, make transfers easier, provide career ladders and delineate baseline skills. The initial program provided the project with a baseline for all future job retention, transfer, and promotional training programs. It provided the average employee with more than 100 hours of classroom and on-the-job training. In addition, since the union and the multi-employer group recognized that some workers viewed training as a disguised way to get rid of old employees by holding them to increasingly high standards, the core skills taught were those identified by the employees themselves. They were skills that are easily transferable, including communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork.²⁵ The Project has also conducted a successful pilot to train room cleaners, bussers, and other hotel employees to become hiring hall banquet servers during the busy Holiday season. More than 200 entry-level workers learned new job skills in a higher job classification, laying the basis for follow-up career ladders and training programs.

Although the Partnership created a number of job opportunities for welfare to work recipients in a pilot project²⁶ funded by the San Francisco Department of Human Services, the lion's share of training is offered to incumbent workers. Thus, the project begins where many training initiatives end— in the workplace after a job has been secured. This indicates that even after employment is achieved, there remains a continuing need for training.

Training is necessary to transform the workplace (making establishments more competitive and viable), to increase trust and teamwork among management and workers (lessening the number of grievances filed) and to increase flexibility. Training is necessary to build worker solidarity, the feeling of community, and a sense of shared identity. This is especially necessary when workers speak several languages and differ in race and ethnicity. The ability of unions to address diversity in the workplace and build a community is informative of the types of soft skills and attitudes necessary to serve both the needs of union and management. It speaks to the continuous need to make a conscious effort to encourage workers to participate in training and to seek further education. The project therefore remains a work in progress for many goals are yet to be fulfilled.

Currently, training programs are funded through employer contributions and grants. ESL, high-school equivalency test preparation, and remedial math courses are offered to union members. SAT test preparation courses are offered to union members and their children. In addition, the affiliation with the City College of San Francisco serves to facilitate the expansion of educational opportunities for hotel employees. The college offers a one-year certificate program in Hospitality Services as well as avenues to pursue associate and bachelor degrees.

The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project has helped to develop new unionized hotel restaurants, revamped the hiring hall to improve the quality of the hotels' banquet service, instituted a massive new joint training program that improved communication, teamwork, and performance. The Project has also implemented a novel sick-leave program and provided career ladders and job security to employees while enabling unionized establishment to remain competitive with nonunion hotels. Union jobs in the hotel industry remain the best entry-level positions available to low-skilled workers in San Francisco. Currently, the starting salary for room cleaners is \$13.60 while that of dishwashers is \$13.50. As nearly 80 percent of positions fall into the low-skilled category, unionized hotels, through their wage effects on nonunion hotels and a tight labor market, have increased the incomes and improved the working conditions of low-skilled workers.

The Partnership has received recognition in the hospitality industry across the country and serves as the model for other H.E.R.E. locals seeking to replicate the Partnership's success. Currently, H.E.R.E. Local 11 in Los Angeles has affiliated with Community Colleges in Los Angeles and begun to institute similar training activities.

The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project's primary focus is the workplace. The tenor of trust exhibited between labor and management, the effort to build a worker's community by breaking down barriers posed by ethnic and linguistic differences, and the commitment to provide low-skilled predominantly minority workers with career ladders is a notable departure from the activities associated with traditional unionism. The Partnership, a response to the needs of industry, low-skilled workers and unions, seeks to alter the culture of the workplace by changing the attitudes of all stakeholders in the project. Although community-based organizations assisted in the recruitment of participants in the welfare to work pilot program and continue to inform low-skilled workers about the possibility for hiring hall assignments or hotel employment, the Partnership recruits incumbent workers and management for its training courses.

While grants have been received that have enabled the Partnership to expand its scope of training, the Partnership's existence, largely financed through a contractual commitment by employers, is not dependent on obtaining outside support. And although the initiative is associated with City College, a credential- and degree-granting institution, the Partnership performs the role of educator and is not dependent on the services of the college to conduct training courses. Moreover, since the low-skilled workers involved in the project are employed, there is less of a need to interact with government agencies to obtain funding and support services for participants. The initiative is largely self-contained, dependent for its survival on its capacity to improve workers' productivity and the viability of unionized hotels, provide employer services that support the expansion of the market share of unionized hotels, and increase the density of union membership while serving the career needs of union members.

The Philadelphia Hospital and Health Care District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund

The Training and Upgrading Fund was established in 1974 as part of the first collective bargaining agreement signed between the Hospital and Health Care Workers Union 1199C, an affiliate of the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and major hospitals and healthcare employers in the Philadelphia region. Union membership was largely comprised of Afro-Americans employed as service workers— the non-professional, non-technical hospital staff that worked as nurse aides, housekeepers and laundry workers. The union, rooted in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, had a strong commitment to affirmative action.²⁷ However, service personnel were poorly paid and for the most part were stuck in entry-level jobs that offered little chance of advancement. Hospitals, on the other hand, had, as a result of technological innovations in the medical industry, an increased need for staff with specialized training and professional degrees. Since most nursing and technical programs were full-time programs and few programs existed that offered remedial education for those in need of it, there were few educational opportunities available to service workers.

The union, intent on establishing the training fund as part of the first bargaining agreement, was able to convince management that by contributing one percent (today that figure is 1 1/2 percent) of the amount paid out for gross salaries, their need for a more highly trained workforce would be, at least, partially met.

To keep up with technological change in the healthcare industry and to provide workers with career upgrades and advanced education, the Breslin Learning Center was established. Three educational benefits were provided for union members: a full-time scholarship for members seeking advanced degrees in health care; tuition reimbursement for members seeking certification; and continuing education courses. While the training fund could only be used for educating union members, the need for adult public education (especially in disadvantaged communities) was great. Almost immediately,

additional monies were made available by government agencies to provide educational programs to the public. In fact, the training center was designated a Local Education Agency which allowed the center to offer high school equivalency training and testing. The union also received funding, a Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) grant in 1977, to assist unemployed workers obtain health care positions through the use of the union hiring hall. The grant also contained an upgrading provision that allowed the Fund to design upgrading ladders for union members in entry-level positions. These workers trained for positions as registered nurses, practical nurses, respiratory technicians, medical records or skilled craft positions while the Center simultaneously trained welfare recipients to qualify them for the positions vacated by upgraded union members.

When mergers, industrial reengineering, and hospital restructuring led to massive lay-offs of hospital workers, the center trained these displaced workers. A grant from the Department of Labor allowed hospital workers to select one of the following full-time, 16-week training programs offered by the learning center – nurse aide, home health aide, mental health/mental retardation technician, or claims processor.

By the time welfare reform legislation was passed in 1996, the center was training a second or even third generation of union members, their families and their friends, and had provided years of service to the community and healthcare industry. Welfare reform posed both a threat and a challenge. Hospital workers who had already witnessed massive layoffs due to industry consolidation were fearful that welfare reform would take people off the welfare roles only to push them into hospital jobs on a lower wage scale. However, since hospitals were redeploying their work force and were not in a position to hire, the jobs that were available were largely those of nursing home aides, an occupation with high turnover for a number of very good reasons. The population of nursing homes had become older and sicker than in years past and eighty percent of care was administered by nursing aides, most of who were women. The job is strenuous and back injuries are common. In addition, homes must be staffed

around the clock and new employees get the least desirable shifts. Since most nursing homes are in the suburbs while many of the trainees live in the inner city, transportation is a major concern. The linkage between the inner city and suburbs during peak times is poor; it is sometimes non-existent during off-hours. Another difficulty for women employees is the need for childcare at unconventional hours.

Training welfare recipients facing multiple barriers for positions in nursing homes is arduous for all concerned. Few programs have been able to achieve the success of the Learning Center's Project CARRE. Project CARRE, is a work first program that offers 20 hours per week of paid work experience and requires a clinical experience in a nursing home for an additional 20 hours. It is a full-time, 40 hour per week, 16-week program. Requirements are a sixth grade reading and math level, a criminal history without felony conviction, testing drug free and free of communicable diseases, the ability to lift 50 pounds, the willingness to travel one hour to work, and the ability to work all shifts, evening, weekends, and holidays. Those who do not meet educational requirements are placed in remedial classes and then re-tested. The program is open to TANF recipients and non-custodial parents who reside in the region but recruitment is performed by the Center itself, since few participants are referred to the program by welfare agencies. Because of its deep roots in the community and the trust it has established, most applicants arrive through word-of-mouth and many are friends or relatives of union members.

The success of the program can be attributed to several factors. Applicants are carefully assessed, pre-screened for drug use and informed about the nature of the job and work requirements. In addition, the program tries to duplicate during the training period as much of the real work experience as possible. Once in the program, participants are provided with a case manager who assists with transportation and childcare needs and any other obstacle that might occur. Upon completion, the participant is provided with job counseling and job placement services. When a position has been secured, a retention case manager continues to assist with support services and a one-year tracking system is put in place. If the graduate is placed in a union nursing home, a workplace coordinator keeps alert of any attendance

problems so that early intervention can prevent firings. Trainees are also encouraged to begin thinking about attaining LPN certification.

The Fund has also developed a Workforce Projection in Healthcare Model²⁸ to provide more accurate forecasts of where the jobs will be in healthcare to assist the Center to effectively plan and seek funds for continuing education programs, their seminars and workshops, and their full-time training programs.²⁹

The Training and Upgrading Fund's major focus is on providing education for both union and non-union participants. The Fund offers over 40 courses, provides credentialing to participants in a number of fields, as well as opportunities to obtain academic degrees. At the same time, the Philadelphia Upgrading and Training Fund (over its twenty-year history) has acquired many of the characteristics of a community-based organization. The community trusts it; it advocates for the community; and its deep roots in the community allow the Fund to recruit by word of mouth and by networking informally with other community-based organizations. The fund also provides case management assistance to every client and helps clients with childcare and transportation needs.

The fund began as response to the need in the health care industry for technically trained and credentialed employees and is financed in part through the contractual commitment of employer members. At the same time, the Fund has only limited involvement in restructuring the workplace because the forces shaping the industry are most often beyond the initiative's control. In order for the Fund to meet its commitment to provide career ladders to union members (largely supported by employer contributions) and non-union workers in need of educational assistance, the Fund depends on funding by the government and foundations involved in training workers who face multiple barriers to employment.

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) is a multi-employer, multi-union undertaking whose goal is to promote industrial revitalization through workplace education, modernization, and workforce development. To accomplish the goal, the Partnership utilizes the efforts of employers, workers, unions, community-based organizations, government agencies and the Milwaukee Area Technical College. Like many other major manufacturing cities during the 1980s, Milwaukee lost a sizable portion of its industrial base to the surrounding suburbs, right-to-work states, and overseas companies. With plant closings, the number of dislocated workers swelled. Aided by federal legislation, the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO received the sole source contract to handle dislocated worker projects throughout the state.

In 1986, the State AFL-CIO formed HIRE (Help in Reemployment) with the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Technical College, and other partners. The HIRE Center was opened to bring the services available to dislocated workers together under one roof. These services included helping dislocated workers cope with financial and emotional stress, career counseling, re-training services, and job placement. However, technological change and industrial reorganization made many laid-off workers unprepared for new industrial job responsibilities such as working in teams and using statistics in quality control. At the same time, local unions were discovering that many of their remaining members had similar shortcomings and were inadequately prepared to operate new computer-controlled machinery and equipment.

In 1991, the Governor's Commission on Workforce Quality warned of an impending shortfall of skilled workers. To reverse this trend and to prevent further erosion of union membership, the Wisconsin AFL-CIO enlisted the assistance of the University of Wisconsin's Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) to develop a broad-based strategy. The strategy advocated by COWS recognized that by cooperating with employers to modernize and increase industrial capacity in unionized shops, unions could increase their membership without having to resort to costly organizing campaigns. Then, unions aided by a strong

partnership with industry could serve as intermediaries coordinating the efforts of government, community colleges, and community-based organizations while actively seeking to shape public policy.

In 1992, the WRTP was founded as a jointly governed labor-management organization whose mission was to support the development of high performance workplaces and family-supporting jobs. As the economy began to improve and unemployment rates dipped, the tight labor market only exasperated the need for skilled workers. The rate of worker turnover rose and employers were forced to turn to temp agencies to fill openings. One out of three manufacturers claimed they lost business because they could not find enough qualified workers.

However, while employers were scrambling to find workers, the unemployment rate in Milwaukee's central city neighborhoods was over 20 percent. The high level of unemployment was attributed to skill mismatch, spatial mismatches, poor network-driven access systems and inefficient training programs. At the same time, Wisconsin's welfare reform program, Wisconsin Works, further depressed wages by requiring that all former recipients of AFDC work full-time even though some jobs paid sub-minimum wages. As fate would have it, as welfare rolls cleared, more money became available for training programs that served the needs of the most difficult to place welfare recipients— those facing multiple barriers to employment.

Milwaukee's problems attracted a generous grant from the Anne E. Casey Foundation, as well. After obtaining the required matching funds, the Milwaukee Jobs Initiative (MJJI) established an employment and training program in several industries that linked inner city residents to industrial jobs. Participants in the program are primarily unemployed and low-income residents of central city neighborhoods. Nine out of ten are people of color, half receive TANF, Medicaid, or food stamps. Half also lack high school diplomas. Many have criminal records or lack work experience or are the mothers of young children.

The MJI enlisted the WRTP to develop workforce development programs in the manufacturing sector. Currently much of the WRTP's \$1.5 million budget comes from the Milwaukee Jobs Initiative, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and other funders, and a U.S. Department of Labor demonstration grant. The WRTP leadership sought to change the traditional approach followed by employment services providers, which they referred to as a "push" model, or more precisely, as a supply-push model. According to Eric Parker, WRTP Executive Director:

"The traditional service delivery model (push system) begins with the in-take of individuals, assessment, counseling, maybe training, and a (typically disappointing) job search. The participants are being pushed back out into the low-wage labor market. By contrast, our model (pull system) begins with the market demand. We identify family-supporting jobs, then we identify viable candidates (through our network of community partners), then we get them eligible for funding purposes, and then we subcontract the just-in-time delivery of training. The employer commits to employing the participants on the front end so long as they successfully complete the necessary training."³⁰

The WRTP focuses on providing employer services while they work more like a broker of employment training than a traditional services provider. Employer services include a variety of services intended to modernize operations and make employers more competitive in the market place. The ultimate goal of these services is to create a working collaborate with employers in the creation and stability of good jobs. These services may include consultancies for technology improvements, cooperation in common industry problems for the recruitment and training of workers, training to front line supervisors on a variety of topics for team building and improved productivity, etc. In a demand-pull model, though training becomes part of a more comprehensive package of employer services, the question of designing training and responding to employers' demand for skilled workers is crucial.

In the early years, the WRTP's program was small and was held in check in part by requiring trainees to go through a standard curriculum developed in partnership with the Milwaukee Area Technical College. They started with a customized training program, which could last up to 16 weeks, in order to meet the needs of a particular manufacturer. Once the curriculum was established, recruitment assistance was sought from community-based organizations. Next the participants were assessed and training funding for each applicant was sought from the appropriate government agency. Upon completion of the program, trainees were placed in the jobs specifically designed for them. While this process gave the WRTP the opportunity to gain experience regarding the supports workers needed during training and once they were placed, the program was so customized that the scale the WRTP was seeking could not be attained. Perhaps as important, employers were often times discouraged by the lengthy process.

To expedite the process, the WRTP designed a standardized curriculum that helped reduced the lead-time for training courses. In this "on-time" training model, a core set of skills that could be useful across the industry was identified and a four-week training program was instituted. Upon completion, trainees were placed in positions that had not been customized for them. While this called for increased training and mentoring in the workplace, the WRTP was able to train a far larger number of applicants.

With the expansion of the program, the WRTP was able to carry out a series of agreements and understandings with a network of community-based recruitment agencies in the central city. However, because trainees are placed, for the most part, in companies located in surrounding suburbs where shifts are worked around the clock, it became necessary for the WRTP to enlist the cooperation of local government to provide around the clock childcare and transportation. In some instances the WRTP was actually able to obtain changes in bus routes.

The WRTP is, without doubt, one of the most successful union-sponsored workforce development programs. Perhaps the crucial factor that contributes to the program's success is its win-win formula for a sustainable partnership with employers for supporting high performance workplaces. The WRTP Executive Director summarizes this formula in the following statement:

“The partnership helps employers find qualified workers, unions increase their members, and communities access better jobs; and the partnership develops leadership in the business community and labor movement to advocate changes in public policy.”

Clearly, the success of the partnerships is partly attributed to a tight labor market during the late 1990's. But the WRTP offers a cost-effective alternative to the use of temporary agencies with clear long term benefits such as a better-prepared workforce and lower turnovers. Unions are able to structure mentoring programs to make sure that new workers have a smooth transition to the new job, learn specific skills while on the job, and that new workers seek advancement opportunities over time. In addition to the core elements of a successful partnership and the benefits from a sustained economic expansion, the WRTP fits in with overall strategy of state government to expand technical education and increase the number of skilled workers. To begin with, COWS and the University of Wisconsin provided assessment of technical needs and strategic planning in the early days, and continue to be an excellent resource. Disadvantaged job seekers benefited from complementary support services provided by community-based organizations through state-financed programs.

Milwaukee is now on the verge of having an entirely renovated workforce development system. The WRTP, with the aid of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, U.S. Department of Labor, and other partners, has paved the way for expansion in the manufacturing sector and replication in other sectors as well. The Partnership is assisting or incubating new initiatives in the construction, data networking, health care, hospitality, and transportation sectors. The first new partnership established is the Milwaukee Hospitality Employment Partnership. Four major hotels have recently joined with H.E.R.E. Local 122 to institute a joint labor-management training initiative whose goals include improving customer service, training the current workforce for higher-level jobs, and finding qualified workers for entry-level jobs. The WRTP is

also working closely with community groups, immigrant rights groups and neighborhood associations—including the YMCA, UMOS, Hire Center, Milwaukee Community Service Corps, Northeast Development Corp., Harambee Ombudsman Project, Community Justice Center, Rapha Ministry Center, etc.

In sum, the major focus of the Wisconsin Regional Training Fund began as an effort to assist in the modernization of small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms in Wisconsin’s metalworking industry by facilitating industrial retooling and providing a sufficiently skilled workforce. Since most of the firms involved were relatively small and lacked the resources necessary to modernize and upgrade their workforce, they needed assistance to obtain loans and help in developing appropriate industrial and workforce development strategies. The WRTP with the aid of COWS and government participation was able to assist employers to retool and obtain the skilled workforce modernization demanded. The Partnership, with the cooperation of the Milwaukee Area Technical College, demarcated core skills with the least common denominator and the greatest transferability. This shortened the training time needed and ensured that the project could achieve the scale necessary for its success. Collaborations with community-based organizations were essential so that the initiative could have a steady supply of new recruits who received the support services necessary to maintain them in the program. Mentors and peer advisors provided support for new employees while both unions and employers attempted to improve the culture of the workplace. The Partnership’s ability to attract funding has also been crucial to its success. Fundamentally interdependent because of the cost of and need for expertise in retooling and the multiple provisions necessary to transform the workplace and expand the size and skills of the workforce, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership has operated as a labor market intermediary coordinating the efforts of several key players.

Comparative Analysis

The cases studied indicate that, although they have the workplace and servicing union members as a departing point, union-led workforce development initiatives offer a variety of formats and experiences. The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project’s primary focus is to alter the culture of the workplace by

changing the attitudes of all stakeholders in the project. Although the initiative is associated with City College, a credential- and degree-granting institution, the partnership performs the role of educator itself and is not dependent on the services of the college to conduct training courses. The Philadelphia Training and Upgrading Fund's major focus is on providing education for both union and non-union participants. With contribution from employers for the union members, the Fund offers over 40 courses, provides credentialing in a number of fields, as well as opportunities to obtain academic degrees. At the same time, the Upgrading and Training Fund, over its twenty-year history, has acquired many of the characteristics of a community-based organization. They received funding for training from traditional federal government-sponsored programs such as CETA, JTPA, TANF, and the WIA. The major focus of the Wisconsin Regional Training Fund began as an effort to assist in the modernization of small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms by facilitating industrial retooling and providing a sufficiently skilled workforce. The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership has operated as a labor market intermediary coordinating the efforts of several key players that are fundamentally interdependent. The partnership has been sustained because of the common need for expertise in retooling, and the multiple provisions necessary to transform the workplace and expand the size and skills of the workforce.

Despite obvious differences in goals, mechanisms and strategies deployed to achieve their objectives, and contexts, we were able to discern common lessons from the case studies. As regards the research questions posed at the outset, a comparative analysis of the case studies resulted in the following findings.

Successful union-led initiatives responded to specific industry needs

Each initiative responded to and was structured by industrial requisites. However, in each case, the effectiveness of the initiative was enhanced when union leadership, government policy and the regional environment were supportive of and worked in tandem with industrial needs.

In San Francisco, the initiative was informed by the participating hotels' need to upgrade service and improve efficiency in order to offset the vulnerability of unionized hotels from competition posed by non-unionized hotels. A booming regional economy and a tight labor market provided further incentive for management to participate in the initiative to ensure worker retention and a workforce with appropriate skills and commitment. H.E.R.E. Local 2 and SEIU Local 11 were encouraged to join with management in a commitment to transform the workplace, because of two major factors. The first factor was the loss of union density in the hotel industry. The second factor was the desire of union officials to attain permission to organize through the streamlined process known as "card check" in the large number of hotels under construction. This process involves the employer's agreement to recognize the union if a majority of workers sign an authorization card (which is far easier than holding elections). The initiative was also structured by an industry-wide need for additional workers during peak times of the year. This allowed for an enlarged role for the hiring hall, which in turn provided career ladders to incumbent workers and job outreach to the community.

In Wisconsin, many small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms required modernization and reorganization in order to expand and, in some cases, to survive. At the same time, Wisconsin, historically, was a state with a strong commitment to the manufacturing sector, making it more likely that the governor and key officials would support the modernization effort. On the other hand, union leadership had endured innumerable plant closings and years of declining membership and was anxious to arrest the downward slide. Also a contributing factor was the state's welfare reform policies, which had resulted in reduced caseloads and the availability of funds that could be used to assist with the more difficult cases that remained.

In Philadelphia, changing industrial technology had increased the need for credentialing, technical training and academic degrees while hospital "reengineering" and downsizing had increased the need for career ladders for the lowest-income workers. Union leadership had over a 20-year commitment to servicing the educational needs of those least able to find educational opportunities. A number of factors

created an incentive for government and foundations to provide the Breslin Center with sufficient resources to meet its commitment to the community. The decline in manufacturing in the region and the loss of well-paying jobs for low-skilled workers, the ghettoization of minority workers in the inner city who had been removed from employment possibilities, and the demands of welfare reform to provide jobs for recipients facing multiple barriers contributed to increased support.

Skills training in union-led programs targeted occupations in high demand by local employers and provided opportunities for career advancement for low-wage workers.

Union training of low-wage workers goes beyond training for job skills. It includes training necessary to transform the workplace, making establishments more competitive and more gratifying and rewarding for workers. In Wisconsin, a core curriculum was devised in conjunction with the Milwaukee Area Technical College. In San Francisco, joint labor-management committees formulated the curriculum. In Philadelphia, the Breslin Center, guided by state credentialing and licensing requirements, determined the curriculum.

In all cases, the initiatives were connected to credential-granting institutions. In San Francisco that occurred more recently while in Philadelphia and Wisconsin it existed from the project's inception. In both Philadelphia and San Francisco, developing career ladders was an essential component of program design. In Wisconsin, although manufacturing jobs were relatively well paying, career development assistance was provided by all companies each of which had, at a minimum, tuition assistance programs. Most, however, offered on-site courses, learning labs, apprenticeships, etc.

In all the cases studied, continuous and extensive relations with employers and industry provided numerous benefits to disadvantaged workers. In Wisconsin and San Francisco, labor and management relationships resulted in a joint partnership. Employers' participation in curriculum design insured that course content was aligned with industrial standards and focused on the competencies most in demand

by the local job market. In Philadelphia, while unions served as the first source of employment, labor/management relations were more circumscribed and less formalized.

Employers' participation in the program also facilitated the retention of incumbent workers and new hires. All the initiatives attempted to change the culture of the workplace and the attitudes of incumbent workers to new trainees. Wisconsin did much in this regard adding both mentoring and peer advisors to the workplace. San Francisco worked very hard to build trust between labor and management and a sense of community among employees. Philadelphia, in an attempt to improve the reception of new employees by incumbent workers, had less capacity to control the climate of the workplace because of the greater number of worksites and more limited employer involvement.

Union-sponsored training programs were able to incorporate effective practices and partnerships for supporting the participation of disadvantaged populations in their programs.

The recruiting practices of the initiatives were divergent. In San Francisco incumbent workers were recruited; in Philadelphia recruitment occurred by word of mouth (the Training and Upgrading Fund received as many as 200 calls a week) and informal contacts with community-based organizations; and in Wisconsin recruitment was performed by community-based organizations formally affiliated with the project. Because employees in both the health care industry and hotel industry dealt with the public, participants were screened for past criminal behavior. All the initiatives accepted individuals in need of remedial education and all provided some degree of follow-up supervision.

Unions often have first-hand experience in dealing with the problems of workers who face multiple barriers to employment. In both Philadelphia and Wisconsin, each program participant was assigned a case manager who assisted trainees in obtaining childcare and transportation, as well as providing job preparedness, job placement, and job retention services. All initiatives provided education to improve cognitive skills and English language skills and helped participants prepare for high school equivalency

exams, in addition to providing training in core industrial skills. In Philadelphia, educational opportunities were the most extensive.

In San Francisco, employer contributions and grants provided funding. In Wisconsin funding was received from welfare to work monies, foundations, and government and employer contributions. In Philadelphia funding was received from foundations, government grants, and welfare to work monies, while employer contributions were used to support training for union members.

Finally, the programs selected for review maintained working arrangements and connections with community-based organizations. In Wisconsin, several community-based organizations formally participate in the initiative. In fact, in some instances, they were housed in the same building complex. The connections to CBOs facilitated recruitment and outreach, the provision of support services, and integration to the workplace. In San Francisco and Philadelphia the relationship is less formalized. However, as the case of the Philadelphia Upgrading and Training Fund demonstrates, innovative unions have not only proven their commitment to communities, they often act in a manner that bears resemblance to a community-based organization.

Successful union-led workforce development initiatives structured win-win arrangements that benefited employers, union members, and the community.

Innovative unions are motivated by the need to increase union density, provide career ladders to union members, ensure the viability of firms, prevent wage shocks, and to honor their commitment to those workers who, without the benefits of collective action, would be deprived of a living wage. As part of the effort to prevent further erosion in union membership and to preserve and expand industries that provide good jobs, unions have increased their participation in training programs for the disadvantaged. Training the disadvantaged also allows unions to take advantage of funding that is available from government and foundations while at the same time solidifying relationships with union members, community-based

organizations, and employers. This in turn increases labor's ability to affect public policy and increases their political clout and ability to influence public policy.

In Wisconsin, innovative unions realized that expanding employment in existing companies was a less expensive path towards increased union density than organizing non-union companies. In San Francisco, faced with industrial gridlock and the closure of several hotel restaurants, labor and management cooperation resulted in increased union density, job security, and career ladders for incumbent workers. In Philadelphia, training initiatives satisfied a long-standing union commitment to social and economic justice and provided career ladders and training to union and non-union members.

Employers profited from improved labor relations, increased efficiency and productivity, and from having a workforce with industry-related skills. Employers also benefited from the fact that the training initiatives were linked to a rigorous assessment of the industrial and employment needs of the particular industry involved. Training also increased trust between management and workers, lessening the number of grievances filed and increasing teamwork and flexibility.

Conclusion

Although the number of union-sponsored initiatives has increased in recent years, our case study research indicates that unions have been involved in training for a long time. Because of labor's past history of practicing exclusionary policies in the craft and building trades (where unions fiercely controlled the entry of new members and excluded minorities and women from some of the best paying jobs), unions have not been viewed as institutions that provide training for the disadvantaged. Today, the faces and commitment of the labor movement have changed. The New Economy, new demographics, and a new social commitment on the part of unions have fashioned a "new unionism." New Unionism is involved in building career ladders for union members, training the disadvantaged, and these goals are intricately linked to ensuring the survival and expansion of unionized firms. It reaches out to women and

minorities— including many that work in the low-wage service industry. By becoming the champions of low-wage communities and setting performance standards in industries that employ low-skill workers, unions protect themselves from wage shocks and build alliances with communities and other progressive forces.

Union-sponsored training programs for the disadvantaged— some of whom are union members in need of career ladders or a job change due to physical disability or lay-off— have become an integral part of a strategy to revitalize the labor movement and to reposition it in the New Economy. This can entail promoting the revitalization of industries with a strong union presence through modernization and industrial reorganization, unionizing new sectors of the economy, and building stable regional economies that can expand opportunity and provide for a broadly shared, equitable distribution of wealth. To accomplish this end, labor is committed to actively shaping a future built on good jobs through the strong support of communities.

Union-sponsored initiatives have borne resemblance to more traditional labor market intermediaries. Our research indicates that effective initiatives share many similar characteristics of effective labor market intermediaries, including a knowledge of industrial needs, the ability to make future job projections, an awareness of the needs of disadvantaged employees, the capacity to provide support-services, strong ties to communities, adequate resources, and effective administration.

The cases also suggest that innovative unions recognize that in order to insure a firm's viability it may be necessary to participate in modernization and reorganization efforts that increase efficiency and productivity. In industries experiencing high turnover rates and labor shortages, where employers often utilize the services of temporary agencies, innovative unions intent on increasing density and preventing wage deterioration realize that training disadvantaged workers is a cost effective alternative. Increasing workers' productivity as a result of skills training— savings on billing rates, finder fees and other costs

associated with high turnover staffing arrangements— often offset the cost of a union wage and benefit package.

Although the three union-sponsored workforce development initiatives presented in this study diverged in key aspects, together they imply that these initiatives can provide good jobs for low-income workers, training to those who face multiple obstacles, and career ladders to both incumbent workers and new hires. The data from the case studies indicate that unions can intervene at critical junctures of workforce development. Unions have special knowledge of the workplace and job opportunities, they are connected to the recruiting networks of employers, and they are able to provide training and mentoring in the workplace after employment has been achieved.

Union initiatives have some advantages when structuring training programs for the disadvantaged when compared to community-based programs, or even when compared to training programs sponsored by community colleges and other educational institutions. We have mentioned the unique position of unions regarding their connections to employers and that this connection offers an advantage when structuring industry-wide initiatives following a sectoral approach.³² Unions are well positioned to focus on workplace issues that are of critical concern to both employers and incumbent workers. In some instances, as in the case of the HHCD 1199C in Philadelphia and the Hotels Partnership Project in San Francisco, unions benefit from collective agreements for financing of training for incumbent workers. These programs use their financial support to structure career ladders and opportunities within the same company and industry. In addition, unions have demonstrated that they have a unique position in structuring partnerships that involve a wide cast of stakeholders including community organizations, educational institutions, and government and local foundations.

Conclusively, the effectiveness of the initiatives demonstrates that unions are capable of playing a major role in training programs that target the disadvantaged and that their participation in such programs should be encouraged. They have been able to show employers that they are reliable partners in

providing and devising core curriculums and providing workers with appropriate skills. They demonstrate to the workforce development industry that they have the capacity and experience to serve significant numbers of the workers facing multiple barriers to employment.

¹ Bennett Harrion and Marcus Weiss, *Workforce Development Networks: Community Based Organizations and Regional Alliances*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1998, p.5. See also Robert P. Giloth, "Learning from the field: Economic growth and workforce development in the 1990s," *Economic Development Quarterly* 14 (4), 2000.

² The shortcomings of employment training programs are that many training programs offer little or no training at all. In addition, classroom training is often disconnected from the needs of employers in a particular industry and has no significant impact on both basic and vocational skills of program participants. For the role of connecting the disadvantaged to employer networks see Edwin Meléndez and Bennett Harrison, "Matching the Disadvantaged to Job Opportunities: Structural Explanations for the Past Successes of the Center for Employment Training", *Economic Development Quarterly*, 12 (1), February 1998, p.3.

³ According to a recent report by the General Accounting Office (GAO 1996), effective second-chance training programs require four key features:

1. Ensuring that clients are committed to training and getting jobs
2. Removing barriers, such as lack of child care and transportation, that might limit the clients' ability to finish training and get and keep a job
3. Improving clients' employability skills, such as getting to a job regularly and on time, working well with others while there, and dressing and behaving appropriately
4. Linking occupational skills training with the local labor market.

⁴ Edwin Meléndez, "Working on Jobs: the Center for Employment Training." Boston: Mauricio Gaston Institute, 1996.

⁵ Bennett Harrison and Marcus Weiss, *Ibid.* p.2.

⁶ Hector R. Cordero-Guzman, "Interorganizational Networks Among Community-Based Organizations," Community Development Research Center, Robert J. Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy, New School University, May, 2000, pp. 19-24.

⁷ An example of a progressive union with a strong history of training the disadvantaged is the National Health and Human Service Employees Union, SEIU 1199's Employment, Training and Job Security Program, New York. For an example of a successful manufacturing collaboration in Chicago, see also Dan Swinney, "A labor-led workforce training and education system: Practical opportunities and strategic challenges," *Social Policy*, 31 (3) (Spring), 2001.

⁸ At the beginning of Sweeney's tenure as president of the AFL-CIO, he promised to adopt more militant tactics, pledged to spend millions of dollars on bringing new members into the fold, and launched "Union Summer," a program meant to recall the civil rights movement's "Freedom Summer" of 1964. For more information regarding labor's renewed commitment see the AFL-CIO website <http://www.aflcio.org/>

⁹ Resolutions made regarding the American economy at the AFL-CIO 23rd Biennial Convention include attaining full employment, a federal fiscal policy that invests in America, equitable tax principles, a national manufacturing jobs policy, service-sector where jobs must be "good jobs," an industrial policy that confronts economic change and fosters economic development and technological innovation, helping cities help themselves, building a transportation and infrastructure, and rethinking deregulation. See <http://www.aflcio.org/convention99/res15.htm>

¹⁰ AFL-CIO Working for America Institute, "High Road Partnership Report," unpublished Interim Copy. I thank Brian Turner, Research Director of the AFL-CIO Working for America, for sharing this material with me and for permission to make this citation.

¹¹ The use of workforce development initiatives and the formation of high-road partnerships in order to unionize new sectors of the economy, build strong regional partnerships, and shape public policy have been widely endorsed in several of the reports published jointly by Working Partnerships USA under the leadership of Amy Dean, Executive Officer of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council and the Economic Policy Institute. These publications include "Walking the Lifelong Tightrope: Negotiating Work in the New Economy" and "Growing Together or Drifting Apart? Working Families and Business in the New Economy."

¹² Dan Swinney, the director of the Midwest Center for Labor Research, states that labor and communities "must take responsibility for the creation of jobs, welcoming the responsibility for good management, productivity, and efficiency as well as justice."

¹³ AFL-CIO: "The Road to Union City: What is a Union City?" <http://www.aflcio.org/unioncity/whatisa.htm>

¹⁴ Richard Freeman, *What Do Unions Do?* Basic Books, 1984, p.20.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ David Eberhardt and Phil Neuenfeldt, "Letter from WRTP Co-Chairs" included in Wisconsin Regional Training Program's *Mentor Training Guide*.

¹⁷ For a discussion of research that indicates that new work systems and labor-management cooperation efforts are most enduring and effective when implemented in unionized settings, see Lawrence Mishel and Paula Voos, eds. *Unions and Economic Competitiveness*. Armonk, N.Y., M. E. Sharpe, 1992 and Eileen Appelbaum and Rosemary Batt, *The New American Workplace: Transforming Worksystems in the United States*, ILR Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1994.

¹⁸ Stuart R. Korshak, "A Labor-Management Partnership: San Francisco's Hotels and the Employees' Union Try a New Approach" *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, April 2000, p.15.

¹⁹ The University of Wisconsin's Center on Wisconsin Strategy and UCLA's Center For Labor Research and Education are examples of labor "think tanks" that provide information to unions not only in the centers' home states but throughout the country.

²⁰ No place is this more evident than in California. See: Harold Meyerson, "California's Progressive Mosaic," in *The American Prospect*, 12 (11). June 18, 2001.

²¹ Edwin Meléndez and Luis Falcón, "Closing the Social Mismatch: Lessons from the Latino Experience." p.1.

²² Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, The WRTP Mentor Training Guide.

²³ Nonunion hotels were able to institute innovations, such as placing coffee pots and fax machines in guest rooms. By contrast, the unionized hotels would have to negotiate such changes, because virtually every employee function is regulated by narrow job classification, seniority lines, and sometimes archaic work rules.

²⁴ The quote appeared in the information flyer provided by the San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project.

²⁵ Debbie Moy, "Labor and Management Build Skills in the Hospitality Industry," *Workforce Investment Quarterly*, Volume 5, Issue 1, 1998, pp 27-34.

²⁶ Although there may be similar projects in the future, at the present time no further funding has been made available.

²⁷ The Pharmacist Union, the precursor of 1199C, conducted a strike in 1936 to allow Blacks to work in Harlem Pharmacies.

²⁸ Chris Gingrich, (Technical Paper) Economic Policy Institute "The Workforce Projection Project Final Report," December 1999, No. 240.

²⁹ The Learning Center offers up to 40 different education and training programs. These include offerings in computer skills, pre-nursing courses, GED test preparation, medical claims processing training, child care worker training, a practical nursing program, Spanish for Healthcare workers, training for therapeutic support aide in addition to remedial education in math and English. In 1997 the Adult Education Labor Consortium was formed for the purpose of offering basic refresher courses, GED reviews, and ESL classes to union members and community residents.

³⁰ Interview with Eric Parker, Exec. Director, Wisconsin Regional Training Program -- July 2000.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sectoral initiatives have gained acceptance in the workforce development field as effective strategies providing career paths for disadvantaged populations. See for example Seigel, B. and P. Kwass. *Jobs and the Urban Poor: Publicly Initiated Sectoral Strategies*. (Boston: Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc., 1998), pp. 1-47.