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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 what unions do in workforce development and what is different about union-led initiatives as compared to community-based or other more traditional workforce development programs. To answer these 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 (HHCD) 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund, and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership based in Milwaukee.

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 they typically provide more advancement opportunities as well. Employment programs are often financed through collective bargaining agreements and involve a close collaboration with employers. Since employer 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. Employers’ demand for specific skills and their concerns about worker productivity play a lesser role in design.

New unionism, which rejects traditional 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 and vocational skills training drive the initiative; and in Wisconsin, industrial modernization and employer services form the engine that propels 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 promote multi-institutional partnerships and 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 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 offer a comparative analysis of the cases and expand on the findings and conclusions of the study.

WHAT DO UNIONS DO IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT?

Workforce development for the disadvantaged is more than simply job training. It consists of a constellation of activities, starting with orientation to the work world, recruiting, placement, and mentoring, and continuing through follow-up counseling and crisis intervention (Harrison and Weiss 1998, p. 5; Giloth 2000). Workforce development strategies must resolve issues regarding the acquisition of skills and the provision of supports for participants who often must overcome barriers like the need for child care and 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.¹ 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 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.²

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 mistrust the training provider or lack the belief that training leads to jobs. To overcome these obstacles, the participation of community-based organizations (CBOs) is often necessary. Because of their deep roots in the community, the trust they have established, their prior training experience and an understanding of the needs of the disadvantaged, CBOs are most suited to the task (Meléndez 1996). However, community-based organizations often require additional resources. According to Harrison and Weiss (1998), community-based programs that establish long-term relations with employers, government agencies, support services, and community colleges seem to be the most effective ones. Therefore, CBOs may form linkages with school-to-work and one-stop centers, foster closer relationships between training programs and industry, and strive for greater integration of community programs within the existing web of community colleges and postsecondary institutions serving the disadvantaged.

Regardless of what type of labor market intermediary sponsors training initiatives for the disadvantaged (given the complexity of is-

sues 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 in any successful collaboration, they require strong leadership, clear guidelines, a coherent strategy, institutional capacity, sufficient funding, and joint vision (Cordero-Guzmán 2002).

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 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.³

The labor movement has begun to commit to training the disadvantaged. 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 which provides a lot of the low-skilled, entry-level positions available to the disadvantaged. Labor is making efforts not only to increase union membership through organizing but to imbue the movement with a new fervor.⁴ As part of instilling 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.⁵ The labor movement is seeking to go beyond what has been known as "bread and butter" unionism by addressing issues that concern not only its own membership but regional economies and society as a whole.⁶

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 (2001) defines these as partnerships that "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."⁷ Union-sponsored training programs for the disadvantaged—some of whom are union members in need of career ladders or a job change because of physical disability or layoff—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 mod-

ernization or industrial reorganization, unionizing new sectors of the economy, or building partnerships to promote stable regional economies.⁸ New unionism is committed to actively shaping a future built on good jobs through the strong support of communities.⁹ 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.”¹⁰

Unions know a lot about the workplace and can assist management in creating training curricula that impart core skills; unions can also provide follow-up supervision and mentoring for new trainees.¹¹ Since unions share a common interest with management in making companies viable and competitive, not only can they assist in modernizing efforts, but they can also ally with management and communities to create public policy that is favorable to industries in need of modernization.¹² This can be done at the same time unions are serving the needs of incumbent and disadvantaged workers participating in training programs. When modernization or industrial reorganization occurs harmoniously, both employers and unions can benefit (Korshak 2000, p. 15).

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. These links help them to target occupational training that is in demand by employers and facilitate 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 their relative inexperience in recruiting and training populations with multiple barriers to employment, unions face a number of challenges in establishing employment and training programs or, more generally, workforce development initiatives. 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.

CASE STUDIES

This study provides an analysis of innovative, union-sponsored workforce development initiatives that provide training to the disad-

vantaged, and it 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 principal data for this paper were obtained by conducting a study of three union-sponsored workforce development initiatives. Because of the necessity of observing 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 many partnerships in existence throughout the nation, we chose the San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, and the Philadelphia Training and Upgrading Fund.¹³ After conducting a review of the literature on workforce development and holding discussions with a number of selected labor officials, we devised a set of research questions. These questions, included as Appendix 4A, provided the basis for a structured interview protocol that served both as a necessary benchmark for ensuring an in-depth analysis and as a framework for comparative inquiry. Afterwards, 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 that were 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.

The case studies reveal 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. In the following sections we summarize the defining elements of each case.

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 from factors like increased customer demand 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. Before 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. The friction depleted union resources and made it difficult to conduct organizing drives. Unionized hotels, for their part, were unable to make the changes that were necessary if they were to remain competitive with nonunion hotels.¹⁴

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 among a multi-employer group of 12 first-class hotels. This group represented many national hotel operators, including Hilton, Hyatt, Westin, Sheraton, Fairmont, and Holiday Inn, as well as two of the hotel industry's major unions: the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) Local 2 and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 14 (now merged with HERE Local 2). Because the needs of the hotels varied greatly, the bargaining agreement called for a "living contract," which 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 multilingual 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. To ensure the participation of this multilingual, diverse workforce, meetings and classroom training sessions are simultaneously interpreted in 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.¹⁵ Not only were there communication barriers to deal with, it was necessary to change attitudes, increase trust, and 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.

In 1998 the project, jointly funded by a state of California Employment Training Panel (ETP) grant and the local hotel and restaurant labor-management education fund, conducted a massive training program of more than 1,600 union 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project has helped to develop newly unionized hotel restaurants, revamped the hiring hall to improve the quality of the hotels' banquet service, and instituted a massive joint training program that improved communication, teamwork, and performance. English as a Second Language (ESL), high-school equivalency test preparation, and remedial math courses are among several training programs offered to union members and funded through employer contributions and grants. SAT test preparation courses are offered to union

members and their children. In addition, an 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 project has also implemented a novel sick-leave program and provided career ladders and job security for employees while enabling unionized establishments 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. As of mid-2004, the starting salary for room cleaners is \$15.36, while that of dishwashers is \$15.61. As nearly 80 percent of positions fall into the low-skilled category, unionized hotels, through their wage effects on nonunion hotels and in a tight labor market, have increased the incomes and improved the working conditions of low-skilled workers.

The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project's primary focus is the workplace. The 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. The initiative is largely self-contained, dependent for its survival on its capacity to improve workers' productivity and the competitiveness 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 partnership has received recognition in the hospitality industry nationally and serves as the model for other HERE locals seeking to replicate its success.¹⁸

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 by the Hospital and Health Care Workers Union 1199C, an affiliate of the American Fed-

eration of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and by major hospitals and health care employers in the Philadelphia region. Union membership was largely composed of African 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 equal opportunity.¹⁹ However, service personnel were poorly paid and for the most part were stuck in entry-level jobs that offered little chance of advancement. Yet hospitals 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 to those in need of it, the educational opportunities available to service workers were scarce.

The union, intent on establishing the training fund as part of the first bargaining agreement, was able to convince management that by contributing 1 percent (today that figure is 1.5 percent) of the amount paid out in gross salaries, their need for a more highly trained workforce would be at least partially met. The Philadelphia Hospital and Health Care District 1199C's Training and Upgrading Fund moved from site to site until 1990, when the training program established the Breslin Learning Center on South Broad Street to keep up with technological change in the health care industry and to provide workers with career upgrades and advanced education. Three educational benefits were provided for union members: 1) a full-time scholarship for members seeking advanced degrees in health care, 2) tuition reimbursement for members seeking certification, and 3) continuing education courses. Although 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 it to offer high school equivalency training and testing. The union also received funding through a Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) grant in 1977 to assist unemployed workers in obtaining health care positions through the use of the union hiring hall. The grant contained a 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 record keepers, or skilled craftspersons while the center simultaneously trained welfare recipients to qualify them for the positions vacated by upgraded union members.

In 1991, when mergers, industrial reengineering, and hospital restructuring led to massive layoffs of hospital workers, the center trained these displaced workers. A grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) 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 a third generation of union members, their families, and their friends, and had provided years of service to the community and the health care industry. Welfare reform posed both a threat and a challenge. Hospital workers, who had already witnessed massive layoffs because of 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, displacing incumbents. However, since hospitals were redeploying their workforce 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.²⁰

Training welfare recipients who face 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 (Creating Access, Readiness and Retention for Employment).²¹ The program is open to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (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 the center's deep roots in the community and the trust it has established, most applicants hear of the program 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 the work requirements. In addition, the program tries to replicate 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 child care needs and any other obstacle that might

arise. Upon completion, the participant is provided with job counseling and job placement services. Once 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 to any attendance problems so that early intervention can prevent firing. Trainees are also encouraged to begin thinking about attaining LPN certification.

The Training and Upgrading Fund's focus is on providing education for both union and non-union participants. The fund offers more than 40 courses, and provides credentialing to participants in a number of fields, as well as opportunities to obtain academic degrees.²² At the same time, the Philadelphia Training and Upgrading Fund, over its 20-year history, has acquired many of the characteristics of a community-based organization. Its community roots 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 child care and transportation needs.

The fund began as a response to a 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 the 30 percent of union members whose training is not provided for by collective bargaining agreements and to nonunion workers in need of educational assistance, it depends on funding from the government and from 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 this goal, the partnership utilizes the efforts of employers, workers, unions, community-based organizations, government agencies, and the Milwaukee Area Technical College. Several factors contributed to the development of the partnership. 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 Help in Reemployment (HIRE) with the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Area Technical College, and other partners. The HIRE center was opened to bring the services available to dislocated workers together under one roof. It provided the initial experience for the union's involvement in skills training programs.²³

Then, 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 State 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 in coordinating the efforts of government, community colleges, and community-based organizations while actively seeking to shape public policy.

In 1992, the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO formed the WRTP with its industrial union affiliates and their employers 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 exacerbated the need for skilled workers. The rate of worker turnover rose, and employers were forced to turn to temporary agencies to fill openings. One out of three manufacturers said 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 residents not having job skills and living far from most jobs, poor network-driven job 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 Aid to

Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) work full time even though some jobs paid sub-minimum wages. 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 Annie 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 mothers of young children. The Milwaukee Jobs Initiative enlisted the WRTP to develop workforce development programs in the manufacturing sector.²⁴ The WRTP leadership sought to change the traditional approach followed by employment services providers, which the leadership referred to as a "push" model, or more precisely, as a supply-push model.²⁵

The WRTP focuses on providing employer services while program participants 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 marketplace. The ultimate goal of these services is to create a working collaboration with employers in the creation and stability of good jobs. These services may include consultancies for technology improvements, cooperation on common industry problems with the recruitment and training of workers, and training for front line supervisors in a variety of topics for team building and improved productivity. In a "demand-pull" model, although 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. It was held in check in part by the requirement that trainees go through a customized curriculum developed in partnership with the Milwaukee Area Technical College, which was designed to meet the needs of a particular manufacturer and could last up to 16 weeks. 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 in supplying 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 oftentimes discouraged by the lengthy process.

To expedite the process, the WRTP designed a standardized curriculum that helped reduce 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 could train a far larger number of applicants. With the expansion of the program, the WRTP was able to carry out a series of agreements with a network of community-based recruitment agencies in the central city. However, because trainees are placed, for the most part, in surrounding suburbs in companies with around the clock shifts, it became necessary for the WRTP to enlist the cooperation of local government to provide around the clock child care and transportation. In some instances the WRTP was actually able to get the city to change bus routes.

The WRTP is, without doubt, one of the most successful union-sponsored workforce development programs. Perhaps the crucial factor in the program’s success is its focus on sustainable partnerships with employers for supporting high performance workplaces.²⁶ Clearly, such partnerships have thrived partly because of a tight labor market during the late 1990s. 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 turnover. Unions are able to structure mentoring programs to make sure that new workers have a smooth transition to the job, learn specific skills while on the job, and seek advancement opportunities over time. In addition to offering the core elements of a successful partnership and profiting from the benefits of a sustained economic expansion, the WRTP fits in with the overall strategy of state

government to expand technical education and increase the number of skilled workers. The University of Wisconsin and COWS 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.

The partnership is assisting or incubating new initiatives in the construction, data networking, health care, hospitality, and transportation sectors. In 2000, it established its first new partnership, the Milwaukee Hospitality Employment Partnership, in which four major hotels joined with HERE 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.²⁷

In sum, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership 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 Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership has operated as a labor market intermediary, coordinating the efforts of several key players. 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.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The cases studied indicate that, although they have common ground in serving union members in the workplace, union-led workforce development initiatives offer a variety of formats and experiences. The San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project's primary focus is on altering 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 contributions from employers for the union members, the fund offers more than 40 courses and provides credentialing in a number of fields, as well as opportunities to obtain academic degrees. At the same time, the Training and Upgrading Fund, over its 20-year history, has acquired many of the characteristics of a community-based organization. It received funding for training from traditional federal government-sponsored programs such as CETA, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), TANF, and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). In its effort to help retool small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership has brought together fundamentally interdependent players. The partnership has been sustained by 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 the mechanisms and strategies these unions employed to achieve their objectives, 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 to 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. HERE Local 2 and SEIU Local 14 were induced to join with management in a commitment to transform the workplace because of two major factors. The first was the loss of union density in the hotel industry. The second was the desire of union officials to obtain permission to organize through the streamlined process known as "card check" in the large number of hotels then 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. Wisconsin, historically, has been 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 labor side, union leadership had endured innumerable plant closings and years of declining membership and was anxious to arrest the downward slide. Another 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 a more than 20-year commitment to serving the educational needs of those least able to find 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 found themselves far removed from employment possibilities, and the demands of welfare reform on the system to provide jobs for recipients facing multiple barriers, all 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 connection came later, whereas 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 also offered on-site courses, learning labs, and apprenticeships.

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 ensured that course content was aligned with industrial standards and focused on the competencies most in demand by the local job market. In Philadelphia, although 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 hard to build trust between labor and management and a sense of community among employees. Philadelphia, although it made 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 the hotel industry deal 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 firsthand 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 child care 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 Welfare-to-Work monies, foundations, and government grants, whereas 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 are 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 Training and Upgrading Fund demonstrates, innovative unions have not only proven their commitment to communities, they often act in a manner that resembles a community-based organization.

In these cases, 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 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 political clout, or its ability to influence public policy.

In Wisconsin, innovative unions realized that expanding employment in existing union companies was a less expensive path towards increased union density than organizing non-union companies. In San Francisco, faced with industrial gridlock and the possible closure of several hotel restaurants, labor and management cooperated to improve 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 alike.

Employers profited from improved labor relations, increased efficiency and productivity, and from having a workforce with industry-related skills. Employers also benefited from the training initiatives being

linked to a rigorous assessment of the industrial and employment needs of the particular industry involved. Training increased trust between management and workers, lessening the number of grievances filed and strengthening 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 history of practicing exclusionary policies in the craft and building trades, unions have not been viewed as institutions that provide training for the disadvantaged. However, in recent years 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 and training the disadvantaged, and these goals are intricately linked to ensuring the survival and expansion of not just unions but unionized firms. It reaches out to women and minorities—including many that work in the low-wage service industry. By organizing in low-wage communities and setting employment standards in industries that employ low-skill workers, unions protect themselves and build alliances with communities.

Union-sponsored training programs for the disadvantaged—some of whom are union members in need of career ladders or a job change because of physical disability or layoff—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 a resemblance to more traditional labor market intermediaries. Our research indicates that effective initiatives share many similar characteristics with effective labor market intermediaries, including a knowledge of industrial needs, the

ability to make 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 leads to savings on billing rates, finder's fees and other costs associated with high turnover staffing arrangements—savings that often offset the cost of implementing the program.

Although the three union-sponsored workforce development initiatives presented in this study diverged in key aspects, together they imply that such 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 in workforce development. Unions have special knowledge of the workplace and of 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 in structuring training programs for the disadvantaged as compared to community-based programs, or even as compared to training programs sponsored by community colleges and other educational institutions. We have mentioned the unique position of unions as regards their connections to employers and that these connections offer an advantage when structuring industry-wide initiatives following a sectoral approach.²⁸ 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 of 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 occupy a unique position in structuring partnerships that involve a wide cast of stakeholders, including community organizations, educational institutions, and government and local foundations.

The effectiveness of the initiatives conclusively 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 devising core curricula and providing workers with appropriate skills. The projects we have looked at demonstrate to the workforce development industry that unions have the capacity and experience to serve significant numbers of the workers facing multiple barriers to employment.

Notes

1. A shortcoming of employment training programs is that many 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 either basic or vocational skills of program participants. For the role of connecting the disadvantaged to employer networks see Meléndez and Harrison (1998, p. 3).
2. According to a report by the General Accounting Office (USGAO 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
3. An example of a progressive union with a strong history of training the disadvantaged is the National Health and Human Service Employees International Union, whose SEIU Local 1199 runs the Employment, Training and Job Security Program in New York. For an example of a successful manufacturing collaboration in Chicago, see Swinney (2001).
4. At the beginning of John 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 to its core values see the AFL-CIO Web site, <http://www.aflcio.org>.
5. For a historical account on unions' stance on immigration and how the AFL-CIO has evolved to support a more pro immigration policy, see Briggs (2001).

6. Resolutions made regarding the American economy at the AFL-CIO's twenty-third biennial convention include attaining full employment, a federal fiscal policy that invests in America, equitable tax principles, a national manufacturing jobs policy, a 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 infrastructure, and rethinking deregulation. See <http://www.aflcio.org/convention99/res15.htm>.
7. On this topic, see also Herman (2001).
8. The use of workforce development initiatives and the formation of high-road partnerships to unionize new sectors of the economy, build strong regional partnerships, and shape public policy have been endorsed in several of the reports published by Working Partnerships USA under the joint leadership of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council in San Jose, California, and the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, DC. 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."
9. Dan Swinney, 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."
10. Taken from the AFL-CIO's Web page, "The Road to Union City: What is a Union City?" (accessed January 2004).
11. Taken from David Eberhardt and Phil Neuenfeldt, "Letter from WRTP Co-Chairs," included in the Wisconsin Regional Training Program's *Mentor Training Guide*.
12. 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 Mishel and Voos (1992) and Appelbaum and Batt (1994).
13. The AFL-CIO High Road Partnerships Report (2001) listed 14 partnerships, though there are many more in existence. These cases were selected because they met the following four criteria: 1) 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, 2) each initiative had at some point received Welfare-to-Work funds and had experience in dealing with disadvantaged workers who face multiple obstacles to employment and career development, 3) each was a union-sponsored initiative in an industry that employs large numbers of low-skilled employees with short-term training needs, and 4) each has served as a prototype for subsequent initiatives in the industry. Initiatives were also selected to offer geographic diversity.
14. 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 regu-

- lated by narrow job classification, seniority lines, and sometimes archaic work rules.
15. 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.’” This quote appeared in the information flyer provided by the San Francisco Hotels Partnership Project.
 16. 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 (Moy 1998).
 17. Although the partnership created a number of job opportunities for Welfare-to-Work recipients in a pilot project 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.
 18. HERE Local 11 in Los Angeles has affiliated with community colleges in the city and has begun to institute similar training activities.
 19. The Pharmacists Union, the precursor of 1199C, conducted a strike in 1936 to allow Blacks to work in Harlem pharmacies.
 20. Among a number of reasons for the high turnover were the following: 1) the population of nursing homes had become older and sicker than in years past and 80 percent of care was administered by nursing aides, most of whom were women, 2) the job is strenuous and back injuries are common, 3) homes must be staffed around the clock and new employees get the least desirable shifts, 4) most nursing homes are in the suburbs while many of the trainees live in the inner city, transportation is a major concern and the linkage between the inner city and suburbs during peak times is poor—during off hours it is sometimes nonexistent, and 5) the need for child care at unconventional hours presents yet another difficulty for women employees.
 21. Project CARRE is a work first program that offers 20 hours per week of paid work experience and requires participants to undergo 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, no 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, including evenings, weekends, and holidays. Those who do not meet educational requirements are placed in remedial classes and then retested.

22. Education and training programs 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 health care workers, and training for therapeutic support aides 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.
23. 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 left 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.
24. 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 sources, and a from a USDOL demonstration grant.
25. In a July 2000 interview, Eric Parker, executive director, Wisconsin Regional Training Program, asserts: "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."
26. Parker, the WRTP's executive director, summarizes the organization's partnership 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."
27. These include the YMCA, UMOG, HIRE Center, Milwaukee Community Service Corps, Northeast Development Corporation, Harambee Ombudsman Project, Community Justice Center, and Rapha Ministry Center, among others.
28. Sectoral initiatives have gained acceptance in the workforce development field as effective strategies providing career paths for disadvantaged populations. See for example Seigel and Kwass (1995).

Appendix 4A

Interview Protocol

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 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 to programs, and how are they financed?
- **Links to CBOs.** What are the connections between training programs and community-based organizations? What formal and informal mechanisms exist to establish and maintain these connections?
- **Training.** What combination of job readiness, basic skills, and soft skills is offered to participants? How are the types of skills and the 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 of 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 the initiatives increased union density? Have they increased political clout, or the ability to influence public policy?

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