

Recommendations generated by conference participants -- strategies to overcome common obstacles

- 1) Solidarity of all the trades in supporting comprehensive immigration reform.
 - Mobilize the rank and file to have open discussions.
 - Outreach to bring contractors on board, chamber of commerce etc.
 - Need more visas offered and plans to promote family reunification.
 - Unions take affirmative stand to not check social security numbers.
 - Employers should not sponsor workers under H2B visas or guest worker programs that create a dependency on that particular employer.

- 2) Create an education program for unions to educate members about the issues related to immigration.
 - Explain the effects of health plans, pension and annuity plans, convince them of the benefits of market share recovery.
 - Focus on the cultural differences among the various groups of workers.

- 3) Address jurisdiction issues and explore ways for trades to work together on this issue.

- 4) Improve educational programs, including English language courses.
 - Use of trade mentors for trade ESL classes at entry level and to educate membership and leaders.
 - Offer incentive programs, like credit for ESL course or GED completion.
 - Need to provide education in math skills.
 - Examine standards/testing procedures -- not to lower standards but perhaps explore different criteria that work better, like a hands-on test.
 - Mentoring programs -- for apprentices, to address issues in members' lives, including language and others.
 - Sed de Saber - vocational ESL program

- 5) Develop effective ways to educate and inform immigrants about the benefits of union membership.
 - Implement a special orientation and safety class -- to inform the new member about union benefits and the apprenticeship program.
 - Evaluate the systems in place to join unions, and whether there needs to be flexibility or creativity to address obstacles immigrant workers would face in this process.

- 6) Support union leadership that promotes good policies toward immigrants.
 - Encourage leaders and work with them to initiate change and support their efforts -- give them incentives to be involved in this. Support alternative leaders when necessary.
 - Ask: are we about building unions or helping workers? Need to help workers whether they're in the union or not, organizing takes time. Let go of union rigid rules, instead look for potential.

- 7) Partner with community based organizations.

Action Plans

At the conference, participants were asked to fill out action plans that outline what steps or activities their union could take on, and what actions unions can work on collaboratively. Below are the recommendations for next steps that were found on the action plans. The most frequently mentioned recommendations were:

- 1) Continue to meet to discuss issues in conferences like this one.
- 2) Educate membership about immigrant workers and the value they can bring to the union.
- 3) Develop leadership among Latino members, including hiring more Latino organizers.
- 4) Collaborate across the trades in support of organizing efforts and policy reform.

Summary of steps or activities individual unions could take on:

A. Training

1. Provide training materials in other languages to schools/apprentices.
2. Update curriculum from English to Spanish.
3. Use CD from Peter Phillips in immigration/labor history classes.

B. Educate members about importance of including immigrant workers, both documented and undocumented

1. Inform members of AFL-CIO's immigration policy.
2. Educate everyone on the do's and don'ts of I-9s and immigration
3. Use the COMET model to educate members about immigrants, "come to grips with it, don't ignore it." (Also integrate with COMET and harassment classes.)
4. Motivate members to become involved politically in support of immigrants.
5. Integrate education of immigrants in shop steward training.
6. Pass on information from this conference to locals that didn't have opportunity to attend.

C. Organizing

1. Hire more Hispanic organizers.
2. Increase membership.
3. Sensitize "top down" organizing to workers' needs.
4. Encourage organizing department to work with immigrants.
5. Within locals, set up specific organizing committee with input from members.

D. Union benefits

1. Use Pension identification numbers instead of social security numbers for the pension fund (re. issues with valid or changing social security numbers).

E. Union structure -- need to start at the top

1. Involve the international offices in these discussions. Need buy-in of international.
2. Work more closely with business agents and international organizers.
3. International should keep us informed of changes in immigration law.
4. Encourage discussion of immigrants at executive level to develop a plan.
5. Educate leadership of locals.

F. Reach out to and support immigrant workers

1. Get to know immigrant workers on personal level.
2. Work with the media.
3. Build immigrant leadership
4. Encourage bilingual and immigrant members to run for office.
5. Learn the language of the immigrant workforce.
6. Get involved in support of non-labor immigrant issues.
7. Broader outreach through community organizations.
8. Get ahead of anticipated immigrant trends by developing outreach programs for Russians, Bosnians and other groups.

G. New partnerships

1. Work with Mexican Consulates.
2. Work more closely with contractors.
3. Put together a conference at the local level bringing together worker centers and union organizers.
4. Work with other building trade unions
5. Work with churches, day laborer groups

H. Resources

1. Identify funding to get this going.

I. Develop ESL program for apprentices and others.

1. focus on vocational ESL
2. focus on health and safety

Summary of steps or activities that unions can work on collectively:

A. Sharing resources and information

1. Provide these conferences throughout the U.S. and hold them on a regular basis.
2. Communicate success stories and learn from our own failures.
3. Communicate with other union organizations and share resources.
4. Develop materials that all trades can use.
5. Meet with worker centers.
6. Develop a materials/curriculum bank.
7. Support efforts to translate curriculum of JATCs into Spanish.
8. Create a list-serve for questions/problems of organizing immigrant workers

B. Collaborate across the trades

1. Joint union participation in communities (picnics, parades, etc.) and share costs and resources of outreach to immigrant construction workers.
2. Joint outreach and media presentations
3. "United we bargain, divided we pay." -- work collectively not against each other.
4. Form coalitions across trades.
5. Work with building trades to hold seminars to inform immigrant workers of their rights.
6. Develop trade preparation class addressing ESL and trade preparation issues, supported by all trades.
7. Work with other unions to educate workers on benefits of collective bargaining

C. Outreach to community about opportunities within unions

1. Develop a marketing plan showing that unions are accessible to immigrants and they're wanted.
2. Develop a public relations plan that will be implemented in Spanish.
3. Attend immigrant worker job fairs.

D. Develop new partnerships

1. Work with interfaith organizations.
2. Interface with community groups.
3. Create subcommittee within CPWR to continue this work.
4. Work with Mexican consulates.

E. Political campaigns

1. Work towards real immigration reform to allow undocumented workers to become documented quickly.
2. Develop small campaigns to address bigger picture issues -- immigration and minimum wage.
3. Work collectively against guest worker legislation

F. Conduct research

More research is needed, on the needs of contractors and of labor unions.

H. Educate membership

1. Educate membership to destroy perception and division between immigrant and non-immigrant workers.

Summary of steps or activities that CPWR could take on:

1. Create a website for the exchange of ideas and information.
 - Provide DVD with information from this conference.
 - Information on workers' rights in languages other than Spanish.
2. Provide summaries of best practices and have a database of materials, projects and policy statements related to immigration and immigrant workers.
 - provide information from states that may have more experience with immigration, to places that are just starting to see immigrant workers.
 - Locals need information that can help move their members in the right direction (like Peter Phillips's presentation)
3. Provide SMART MARK programs in other languages, and have these be easily downloadable.
4. Provide contacts with organizations that the building trades could work with or partner with in these efforts.
5. Set up regional sessions to continue progress and discussion.
6. Develop easy-to-read documents and flyers on immigration issues.
7. Provide training for trustees regarding immigration law, and legal issues unions need to know about.
8. Provide information on funding (how to fund ESL, translations, etc.).