

In 2007, representatives of several faith communities came together to discuss ways to more effectively address the pressures facing families in our community. This group became convinced that institution-based organizing would provide congregations with the tools they need:

- *To better understand the pressures facing families*
- *To more consistently identify and train potential leaders within congregations*
 - *To make explicit the connection between faith, worship, and life*
- *To work with other institutions, including public schools and civic groups, to learn to use the democratic process more effectively so that families can have a voice in what happens to their neighborhoods, schools, and the greater community.*

They formed the

Oklahoma Sponsoring Committee

What the OSC is....

A practical way for congregations to put their social justice traditions into practice

A way for congregations to set their own agenda based on the needs of their own families

An ecumenical ministry

A mini university of public life

What the OSC is not....

A body that will violate any of our Catholic teachings. It has many safeguards built in to ensure this.

Carrying out the agenda of anyone outside of the member congregations

An exclusive Catholic organization

Another charity

The Oklahoma Sponsoring Committee has contracted with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the nation's largest institution-based organizing network, to provide teaching and training for local issues. It has built sustained, non-partisan organizing projects in 60 dioceses across the country. These projects have done exciting work in their cities that have made a difference for families in their communities. The IAF has been thoroughly vetted by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. In his letter to Catholics in the *Sooner Catholic* in September 2009, Archbishop Beltran wrote of the IAF: "They have withstood the test of time and proven to be solid and helpful for people, for the Church mission, and for the local societies. I have consulted with the bishops of these dioceses and they all attest that such interfaith coalitions are effective."

For more information, see

www.oksponsoring.org;

www.catholicsfororganizing.org;

or become a fan of the Oklahoma Sponsoring Committee on Facebook!

Strengthening Congregations and Creating Community Change:

Broad-Based IAF Organizing

What is Broad-Based Organizing?

Broad-based organizing brings together religious congregations of all faiths, together with non-profits (thus the *broad* base), to create an 'organization of organizations' with the power to effect community change by helping them act on their values and the issues affecting them and their communities.

Who helps congregations do this?

The IAF (Industrial Areas Foundation) is the country's oldest and largest leadership development and broad-based organizing network, investing in and working with thousands of congregations since the 1940's. Today the IAF has affiliates in over 60 metropolitan and rural areas across the country. IAF organizations are built on two value traditions: the values of each faith tradition and the values of our shared democratic society. Each IAF affiliate is autonomous in setting its own agenda, raising its own money, creating its own identity and hiring its own lead organizer. What all affiliates share is that they are non-partisan, multi-ethnic/racial and multi-faith. In many regions and states, affiliates have worked together around issues of common interest. The IAF is driven by the belief that congregations are essential to a vibrant democratic society and hold the key to mending and reweaving the social fabric essential for strong families, healthy communities and a just world.

What does the IAF do and how do they do it?

The IAF builds broad-based organizations committed to both strengthening their member institutions and creating positive community change. This is done through: institution-based leadership development; the building of relationships within and between institutions; the identification of and research on issues of mutual self interest; disciplined thoughtful public action; and reflection, evaluation and discernment on action taken. Through this organizing strategy two things happen: congregations develop a stronger relational culture, more fully embrace their own social traditions and engage their members in action around their shared values and interests while, together with others, they successfully act in the public arena in the creation of a more just society through the exercise of relational power.

Why do congregations join?

Some are seeking new and more collaborative ways to engage in outreach or to act on the root causes of inequality and injustice. Some want to make more explicit the connection between worship, faith and life. Others are looking for ways to deal with the pressures that their families or neighborhoods are experiencing. Many want to employ the tools of organizing to strengthen their own ministry and leadership structures, to engage in strategic planning, or to deal with the changes they are undergoing internally. Most feel compelled by their own traditions to be powerful public witnesses of transformation in the world, but realize they cannot do this alone.

Who decides what issues the organization takes on?

The organization's agenda is set by the institutions that make it up. Action issues can be: institutional (one institution acting on its own behalf); regional (institutions in a certain area decide to act together on an issue relevant to them all); or organizational (the whole organization decides to address an issue together). IAF organizations are multi-issue, working simultaneously on a diverse agenda of issues that come from hundreds of individual and small group conversations in member institutions. Since the relationship between and among member institutions is a primary value, no actions are taken that will create unnecessary divisions or tensions within or between member institutions.

What do organizers do?

The organizer's job is to build the organization through which congregations can act together and to look for and develop leaders. Organizers get to know each member institution, look for and invest in new and emerging leaders, teach the skills and practices necessary for living their public mission and help leaders within and across institutions to act together. Most important, the organizer is a teacher of public life and a talent scout, not an organizational consultant or a staffer who does the work for congregations. Organizers and all IAF leaders follow the 'Iron Rule' –“Never do for anyone what they can do for themselves.”

Where do organizations get their money and where does it go?

IAF broad-based organizations are primarily funded by dues from member institutions. This gives the member institutions ownership over the process and the independence to act freely on their interests. IAF organizations do not accept any government funds but they do accept grant money for particular projects. The majority of an IAF organization's budget goes for the salary and expenses of an organizer, an IAF contract, and leadership training with a small portion allocated for administration, sometimes in the form of office space or support staff.

What is required of members and what do they get in return?

Members pay dues, create an organizing team responsible for organizing within their own institution, and get to know and engage with other member institutions through trainings, decision making bodies of the organization and actions. Congregations receive the time and talent of a professional IAF organizer and membership in a larger power organization giving them the capacity to successfully act on their values and interests. Organizers work intensively with each member institution to develop and train leaders, help them listen for and discern the interests of their own members, and teach them how to act on those interests with others. Member institutions also have access to national and regional IAF trainings, conferences and seminars.

***For more information on the developing project in the metro Oklahoma City area,
contact***

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