



# Building **BRIDGES** Building **POWER:**

*Developments in Institution-Based  
Community Organizing*



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# *Building Bridges, Building Power:* *Developments in Institution-Based Community Organizing*

*Richard L. Wood (University of New Mexico), Brad Fulton (Duke University), and Kathryn Partridge (Interfaith Funders)*

Community organizing in America is alive and well and being vigorously practiced in the version we call “institution-based community organizing.” This national study shows that in the last decade institution-based community organizing has significantly increased its power base as it continues to bridge divides that deeply bedevil American politics—divides of racial and ethnic identity, religion, socio-economic status, geography, and immigrant-native background. This executive summary details the dynamic expansion of the field over the last decade, outlines the impressive “bridging social capital” it generates, discusses ways it has overcome the strategic limitations that previously undermined the field, and identifies some of the ongoing challenges that remain. We argue throughout that institution-based community organizing is poised to be an important strategic partner in the democratic renewal of America.

## *Building a Bigger and Wider Bridge: Dynamic Expansion in Scope, Scale, and Collaboration*

The dynamic expansion of institution-based community organizing (IBCO) over the last decade has taken place in three ways. First, the field has made impressive gains in sheer geographic reach: The number of local IBCO organizations has grown by 42% since 1999, today reaching into 40 states. Second, many IBCO organizations have expanded beyond core urban areas and now organize entire metropolitan and regional areas. Third, many IBCOs are partnering with other organizations (either within their own

network or via collaborations) to directly influence state and national policy-making. Taken together, these three forms of expansion create a new power within the field that, at its best, links vigorous local community organizing to a strong presence in higher-level political arenas in ways that strengthen both.

### *Reaching More People: The Impact of Critical Organizational Capacity*

Two results of this dynamic expansion are especially powerful.





“Democracy is not something that happens to us, like the weather. It’s something that we create. We create the opportunity for democracy to happen.”

- Doran Schrantz, ISAIAH

First, the institutions that form the base of the IBCO field (approximately 3,500 congregations and 1,000 public schools, labor unions, neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, and others) collectively represent over 5 million Americans. Rarely in American history have voluntary associations incorporated such a high proportion of citizens; those that have done so have profoundly shaped American society in challenging times. Second, historically the most successful associations have been built on a “federated structure” of local organizations nested within state and national organizations. The IBCO field today has begun to build such a federated structure—only partially and unevenly, but nonetheless substantially. As a result, institution-based community organizing has the organizational capacity to make a powerful impact on democratic life, especially if best practices spread across the field.

### ***Bridging the Divides of American Society: Race, Class and Religion***

For America to undertake the joint action required to confront our challenges, we must bridge the social fissures that divide us as a nation. Among these are the divides of race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, and immigration status that

separate people and undermine efforts to confront our challenges.

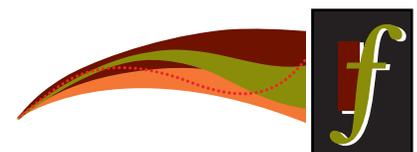
Institution-based community organizing has historically brought people of different races together to pursue their shared interest in building better communities. But questions by critics regarding how consistently the field has cultivated cross-racial social capital deserve to be tested rigorously, and the State of the Field project has done this both nationally and at the local level. Our results show that the IBCO field is actively engaging a broad representation of America. Predominantly Hispanic institutions (13%) are represented at about Hispanics’ percentage of the total U.S. population,<sup>1</sup> and predominantly African American institutions (30%) are represented at more than twice their percentage of the U.S. population. In addition, “other” non-white or mixed institutions make up over 10% of IBCO members. At the individual level, more than 50% of IBCO organizing

1. Hispanic participation may in fact be higher. It is difficult to reliably measure the racial/ethnic identities of individuals participating in IBCO, and the State of the Field study did not attempt to do so. However, such a measure would likely show larger Hispanic involvement than the figure cited above: in many IBCOs, large Hispanic congregations produce a disproportionate share of turnout at public actions. But a ten-year relative decrease in the proportion of Hispanic-led member institutions deserves attention; it might reflect immigrant insecurity regarding public engagement as a result of recent anti-immigrant discourse and legislation.

staff and board members (together the crucial decision-makers in these organizations) are non-white.

These organizations also incorporate significant numbers of predominantly white institutions. This matters for political efficacy because substantial economic resources, political power, and cultural influence reside in this sector, which still constitutes two-thirds of the American population. To be viable, any national political movement needs alliances with such institutions. Their involvement has actually risen in the last decade, apparently a result of the strategic choice to expand into suburban areas nationwide and into secondary cities of the upper Midwest and Northeast.

Expanding into these predominantly white settings reduces the field’s overall racial/ethnic diversity, but also likely increases its strategic capacity: By creating more fully multiracial/multiethnic organizations that bridge urban and suburban boundaries and represent new geographic areas, the field expands its own base and external alliances in useful ways. Simultaneously, much of the field has gained a more reflex





“We want to change the political terrain of the country in a way that creates opportunity and advances racial and economic justice. What do we need to do to do that?” - George Goehl, National People’s Action

tive and critical understanding of the role of race in American society. As a result, the IBCO field is better positioned to play a central strategic role in the public arena of our multi-racial nation. Finally, we note that, on average, IBCO boards of directors are dramatically more diverse than boards in the corporate and non-profit sectors.

The IBCO field not only incorporates impressive racial/ethnic diversity on a national level, but more importantly at the local level as well: IBCOs are actually getting people to collaborate across racial and ethnic lines. To estimate cross-racial interaction within IBCOs, we used a diversity index to measure the probability that two members of the same IBCO would be of a different race/ethnicity. This analysis shows that the average “diversity score” for IBCOs (0.49) is substantially higher than the average diversity score for congregations (0.12), counties (0.28), and even public schools (0.33).

The census study and our interviews with strategic leaders show that most local IBCOs actively engage in discussions about racial and ethnic identity, racial inequity in America, and the impact of race on organizing itself. This was not part of

the organizing ethos a decade ago and thus represents an important shift in the culture of organizing. By cultivating strong cross-racial ties and by explicitly discussing racial/ethnic differences, institution-based organizing is now able to address questions of inequality in American life more authentically and effectively than in the past.

These organizations generate social capital by bridging other social divides in America as well. For example, instead of allowing faith to be a divisive factor, IBCOs draw on the unifying components of faith to span a diverse array of religious congregations. While mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Black Protestant churches continue to make up the core of the field, Jewish, Unitarian-Universalist, and Evangelical/Pentecostal congregations have each doubled their representation from a decade ago, and 20% of IBCOs have at least one Muslim congregation. In addition, secular institutions (mostly public schools, unions, and neighborhood associations) represent approximately one-fifth of all member institutions. IBCO boards and staff organizers also reflect these high levels of religious diversity. Finally, spiritual practices remain salient in

the IBCO world: IBCO directors tend to be more religious than the overall American population (i.e., they pray, read sacred texts, and attend religious services more often than the average U.S. adult) and a large majority of IBCOs report that they often incorporate prayer, religious teachings, and discussions about faith into their organizing activities.

Institution-based community organizing also bridges the divide between socio-economic groups, incorporating a significant proportion of low-income people within its top leadership structures. Nearly one quarter of IBCO board members have a household income of less than \$25,000 per year, and 58% have a household income of less than \$50,000 per year (about the same as the U.S. population as a whole—but rare for a board of directors). About 37% have household incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year, and less than 5% have household incomes over \$100,000 per year (compared to the U.S. figure of over ten percent). Thus, the IBCO field also bridges economic class structures to a significant degree.



## *Designing the State of the Field Study*

Finally, the IBCO field reaches across the chasm that too often lies between immigrants and the native-born, while building power to change immigration policy at the national level. Fourteen percent of all IBCO member institutions are predominantly made up of immigrants. Over two-thirds of those institutions (mostly congregations, but also secular organizations) are predominantly Hispanic, while smaller proportions of immigrant member institutions are Black, Asian, or other/multiracial. Furthermore, more than half of IBCOs are addressing immigration issues, and, among those, two-thirds are addressing them at the national level.

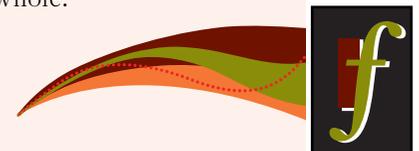
Overall, institution-based community organizations are today generating valuable social capital by bridging some of the major divides in American communities. This bridging social capital offers a vital resource in the ongoing struggle to deepen democracy in America and confront our shared challenges—a resource for both the IBCO field and its partners, and for American society as a whole.

The State of the Field study provides an up-to-date picture of the field of institution-based community organizing and draws on data from Interfaith Funders' 1999 study to show how the field has changed over the last decade. Interfaith Funders coordinated and funded the study, which was conducted primarily by lead researcher Brad Fulton (Duke University) and overseen by research director Richard L. Wood (University of New Mexico) and Interfaith Funders members and director Kathy Partridge. The study drew on insight from local organizers, national organizing staff, foundation program officers, denominational funders, and scholars of the field.

The core of the study is a national census of every local organization practicing institution-based community organizing (IBCO), supplemented by a dozen in-depth interviews with key strategic thought leaders in the national networks, independent IBCOs, and foundations that fund this work. For the census, a total universe of 189 active local IBCOs was identified. During the second half of 2011, a two-part survey was distributed electronically to the director of each. Part one was an online survey that gathered extensive data on each IBCO's history, constituents, collaborators, activities, finances, and issue work. Part two consisted of

customized spreadsheets that collected demographic information about each organization's member institutions, board members, and paid staff. The survey achieved a response rate of 94%, gathering data on 178 IBCOs and demographic information on approximately 4,100 member institutions, plus 2,900 board members and 600 paid staff involved in the IBCO field.

Strengths of the State of the Field project: The study's extraordinarily high response rate allows us to characterize the field of institution-based community organizing with great confidence. The structure of the study enables the data to be analyzed at two levels—the field level, to demonstrate patterns in the field as a whole, and the organization level, to assess similarities and differences among individual IBCOs. In addition, because we replicated items from the 1999 study and included the IBCOs surveyed in 1999, we can assess changes in the field (and in individual IBCOs) over the last decade. This offers a more dynamic view than is possible with only a one-time snapshot. Together, these strengths make the State of the Field project the most comprehensive and rigorous assessment of the field as a whole.



## *Moving Beyond Limitations, Finding New Strengths: Strategic Capacity for Democratic Renewal*

Over the last decade, several institution-based community organizations, and, to a large extent, the field as a whole have made significant progress in overcoming critical challenges that had previously limited the field's democratic impact.

**First**, the organizing field now incorporates women and people of color in top leadership positions. Whereas professional staff organizers (especially at the higher levels) once tended to be white and male, today they are substantially more diverse than the U.S. population. In one decade, the gender composition has shifted, with 55% of organizers now being women. The percentage of African American and Hispanic organizers is each 50% higher than their representation in the general U.S. population.<sup>1</sup>

**Second**, many IBCOs now widely and routinely collaborate, rather than work in the relative isolation of the past. Two-thirds of IBCOs now engage in a variety of new forms of collaboration at the local, regional, state, or national levels, and among these IBCOs, 95% coordinate their efforts with organizations outside their formal organizing networks.

**Third**, IBCOs are projecting power into higher-level political arenas while staying rooted in local organizing. Today, half of all IBCOs engage

1. In 2011, 21% of professional IBCO organizers were African American (vs. 13% of the U.S. population in 2010), and 24% of organizers were Hispanic (vs. 16% of U.S. population). The percentage of African American organizers had fallen somewhat (from 29% in 1999), yet fewer than half of professional organizers were white (vs. 64% of the U.S. population). Forty-three percent of organizers were women in 1999.

in state-level collaborations, whereas a decade ago only a fifth did so. Ten years ago, virtually no IBCO work focused on the national political arena, where many decisions are made that shape the quality of life of all Americans. Today, a quarter of all IBCOs are engaged in national-level work. The issues most commonly addressed at the state or national level are immigration, health care, banking/foreclosures, public finances, employment/wages, poverty, racism, and public transportation.

**Fourth**, the active dialogues around race, ethnicity, and racial inequity create new strategic possibilities. Whereas an earlier generation of organizers built IBCOs that linked people across racial categories, they largely avoided discussing race due to a fear that this could prove divisive. These days, issues of race, ethnicity, and racial inequity—including racial tensions—are now “on the table.” Where those discussions are handled well, they generate new internal trust and give IBCOs greater strategic capacity and a new willingness to address the “new Jim Crow” era of structural racism.

**Fifth**, there has been a substantial shift in the culture of organizing toward innovation and strategic coordination. New thinking, opportunities, and leadership have driven parts of the field to pursue new collaborative ventures, experiment with different organizing practices, and leverage social media and other communications technologies.

Interviewees noted that much of this innovation has occurred because they came to realize that traditional practices and isolated efforts were not producing real democratic influence on big policy decisions. In response, they envisioned new coordinating structures and gradually developed both greater vertical integration within existing networks and greater strategic coordination across different kinds of associations.

**Finally**, the field's most adept practitioners have developed a wider array of tactics for IBCOs to exert influence. IBCOs continue to organize large public actions to exert organizational power via direct democratic pressure. Indeed, the field's capacity in this regard has grown, with directors reporting over 200,000 people attending at least one event in the last year. To complement this “hard power” approach, many IBCOs have begun to make sophisticated use of “soft power” tactics: negotiating with representatives of political and economic elites; shifting public opinion via the mass media; simultaneously educating local, state, and national representatives regarding the same issue; and intentionally cultivating strategic relationships with political officials, institutional leaders, and policy experts. Linking these hard and soft forms of power appears to have bolstered IBCOs' public influence as they now turn out people for more events, coordinate organizing efforts at several levels simultaneously, and cultivate strategic relationships with political officials and institutional leaders.



## *Facing the Future: Ongoing Challenges in the Field*

American society needs new sources of democratic vigor to successfully confront the challenges it faces. There are no easy solutions to our economic, political, or cultural problems, and no political superhero will rescue us from them. A movement embodying the democratic will and political courage of the American people must come together with dedicated leaders from every institutional sector to craft the reforms and support the hard choices through which we will address our challenges. That is how real change has happened before in American history—and that is how it will happen again.

Institution-based community organizing plays a key role in reinvigorating democratic zeal. Decades of

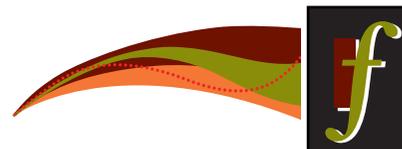


investing talent, funding, and sheer hard organizing work have built a field with impressive strengths. The number of individuals represented by IBCO member institutions exceeds the historic threshold for wielding powerful democratic influence. The field's dynamic expansion in the last ten years has produced a solid organizational base and strengthened its multi-level federated structures. Furthermore, IBCOs bridge extraordinarily well many of the social divides that fracture American society, divides that constantly stymied previous efforts to address our challenges. The field's deep ties to America's diverse faith traditions, along with its active incorporation of spiritual practices into organizing efforts, allow IBCOs to offer the moral vision and prophetic voice to guide democratic reform efforts. The most effective IBCO practitioners combine strategic organizing practice with the political imagination required to build effective democratic capacity at the scale required for national reform.

But to take advantage of this moment and build a stronger sense of democratic renewal, institution-based community organizing faces ongoing challenges. At present, many of the innovative changes identified here are unevenly distributed, making some parts of the field far less

capable than others. To realize its full democratic potential, the savvy, discipline, and imagination of IBCO's most effective practitioners must be multiplied throughout the field. Funding and talent are needed to build strong local organizations, and these must be embedded in strong state- and national-level organizing structures. Traditional organizing practices must be linked to sophisticated use of social media and innovative organizing practices, and more IBCOs need to collaborate with other kinds of organizations.

Important progress has been made in the last decade, with significant new initiatives and the launching of experimental forays. Given the current state of the field, institution-based community organizing is poised to be a strategic partner in catalyzing democratic renewal. By mobilizing the shared aspirations and hopes of the American people in all their diversity, our economics and politics will be reshaped, and the American democratic promise can be extended to all.



# Building Bridges, Building Power: Developments in Institution-Based Community Organizing

Richard L. Wood (University of New Mexico), Brad Fulton (Duke University), and Kathryn Partridge (Interfaith Funders)

I think that this is a defining moment, I think that this is a defining moment on whether we can build the kind of power that will put America back to work, really protect our public education system, and actually create a government that is engaged in the common good of the citizens' lives.

— Ana Garcia-Ashley, Gamaliel Foundation

The dreams of the American people and the hopes of American democracy, undermined by a host of challenges, are at risk today. If we are to confront those challenges more courageously, we must generate the broad democratic will to mobilize new ideas and new resources. The political arena is one venue where resources and ideas are mobilized—and it is the crucial venue for generating democratic will.

Yet recent legal and political changes threaten to shift, perhaps permanently, the delicate equilibrium that has guided American democracy for more than 200 years: between the interests of elites, mostly exerted via money, and the interests of the non-elite majority, mostly advanced via the influence of mobilized citizens in the democratic process. Citizens United and other recent legal decisions vastly shift that equilibrium in favor of those with money. They represent an unfair and elitist thumb on the scales of American democracy that must be countered by new forms of citizen empowerment if the balance of justice is to be restored.

This is hardly the first time American society has confronted such challenges. In the past, when

people had to overcome similar obstacles to democratic progress, mass membership organizations, built on a federated structure of local, state, and national bodies, played a key role. No one organization today is well-situated to play this role by itself, but in this report we argue that institution-based community organizing<sup>1</sup> may be well-positioned to do so as a field.

Community organizing efforts today, built on a foundation of congregations plus other member institutions, collectively represent over 5 million people. Associations incorporating such a high proportion of citizens are rare in American history; those that have done so have profoundly shaped society challenging times.<sup>2</sup> The fact that

1. For reasons detailed later in this report, we think the term “institution-based” now better reflects the reality in the field than “congregation-based,” “faith-based,” or “broad-based” community organizing, though those terms are still preferred by some participants in the field.

2. The key historical threshold for such influential mass organizations is mobilizing 1% of Americans. The 5 million people represented by the field's member institutions easily exceed this figure (~1.5 percent). Note, however, that in this form of organizing, membership is composed of institutions rather than individuals, so the parallel is inexact. See Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson (2000) for the crucial study and its key finding: Most history-changing voluntary associations that exceeded the on1% threshold were built on a “federated structure” of local, state, and national units.

Photo: Dominique James



“We began to imagine how our voice could be projected into the national debates about our future as a country—and do that in ways that really connected back into local communities. That creates opportunities for people to engage their own liberation, to really articulate their own interests and values in the public domain.”

— Scott Reed, PICO National Network



institution-based community organizing exceeds this historic threshold reflects the field’s political significance, its communal reach, and its potential for the monumental task of moving America to confront its challenges. We argue that the field’s organizing infrastructure and emerging strategic capacity now position it to actually deliver on that potential.

This report draws on results from a national survey of all local institution-based community organizations active in the United States in 2011 to document the significance of the field.<sup>3</sup> It highlights the field’s emergence as a strategic partner in nationwide efforts to build democratic power, reverse rising inequality, and strengthen public life while bridging divisions throughout the United States. In particular, the report:

- documents the dramatic expansion of the field over the last decade;
- provides a comprehensive profile of the field’s member institutions, board members, and staff;
- outlines links to faith communities and how IBCOs incorporate spiritual practices into their work;

- examines the changing racial and ethnic diversity within the field and discusses the dynamics behind those changes;
- identifies the issues IBCOs are actively addressing;
- documents the field’s ability to project power into higher-level political arenas;
- describes how institution-based community organizing is shaping policy in key issue areas including education, health care, comprehensive immigration, affordable housing, criminal justice, employment and workers’ rights, financial reform and foreclosure policy, and transportation policy;
- outlines the strategic challenges and opportunities facing the field

#### **CONTEXT AND KEY FINDINGS<sup>4</sup>**

In 1999, Interfaith Funders conducted a national census of institution-based community organizations that provided a baseline for understanding the scope and scale of this community organizing model.<sup>5</sup> The

4. See “References for Further Reading” for key sources.

5. See “Faith-Based Community Organizing: The State of the Field 1999,” as well as later reports from a major study of the impact of this kind of organizing upon congregational development, published by Interfaith Funders and available at <http://repository.unm.edu/handle/1928/10664> and 10678.

1999 study offered a portrait of the field that informed practitioners and simultaneously gave credibility to the work of institution-based community organizing to a broad circle of funders, researchers, advocates, and potential collaborators.

Over the last decade, however, both the national context and the IBCO field have changed substantially. Economic inequality has risen, money now flows into electoral campaigns virtually uncontrolled, and our political institutions are more polarized. The three religious sectors that comprised the membership core of the field in 1999—urban Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and historic African American churches—have each dealt with declining memberships.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, the IBCO field has evolved by extending its geographic reach, both beyond the urban core and into new states and cities. The field has also developed a broader base of member institutions and has increased its collaborative work with

6. We use the term “Mainline Protestant” in deference to its wide usage to refer to those liberal and moderate Protestant denominations once considered the “mainline” of American religions. It includes those denominations of historic Protestantism usually listed as theologically liberal or moderate, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Episcopal Church, American Baptist Churches, United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, and the Disciples of Christ.

3. The 2011 survey was sponsored by Interfaith Funders and carried out by researchers at Duke University and the University of New Mexico.

## What is Community Organizing?

Contemporary community organizing in the United States draws from a variety of figures in the history of grassroots American democracy, including Jane Addams, Saul Alinsky, Cesar Chavez, and Martin Luther King, Jr., and from union organizing and the movements for civil rights for African Americans, women, and Hispanics. Ed Chambers of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) pioneered early elements of organizing based explicitly in community institutions, which were primarily, but not exclusively, religious congregations.<sup>1</sup>

The typical IBCO is a non-profit organization set up under section 501(c)3 or 501(c)4 of the IRS tax code with the goal of empowering residents of low-income and middle-income communities to get government and private enterprise to serve the common good rather than only the interests of well-off elites. In a typical city, the membership of the IBCO is composed of a dozen to sometimes several dozen local institutions, including religious congregations, public schools, parent-teacher associations, faith-based organizations, labor unions, and neighborhood associations. The IBCO hires staff organizers to work with member institutions to develop leadership within, teaching them how to educate political officials and other community elites about their needs and how to hold them accountable

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1. See Warren (2001), Swarts (2008), and Bretherton (forthcoming 2013) for a fuller history of institution-based community organizing. Note that the institution-based model is one among a variety of approaches to community organizing that emerge from overlapping roots. See <http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/tcn/valocchi.htm> and Kling and Fischer (1993) on this wider community organizing tradition.

to their commitments. This often occurs through large “public actions” or “accountability sessions” in which several hundred or more constituents ask officials to address specific issues, but it can also occur via public negotiations in smaller settings.

Today, most institution-based community organizing efforts are affiliated with a sponsoring network. Nationally, these include the IAF, the PICO National Network, the Gamaliel Foundation, and National People’s Action (which does both institution-based and individual-based organizing). Important regional networks include Direct Action Research Training (DART) in the southeast and Midwest and the Inter-Valley Project (IVP) in New England. A smaller number of organizations doing institution-based work also exist independent of the networks.<sup>2</sup> Although each effort, whether network-affiliated or independent, has developed its own organizing model, they remain sufficiently similar to justify treating them as a field. All are built with institutions as their foundation, and their “tool kits” of organizing practices overlap considerably.

Institution-based community organizations (IBCOs) show a growing capacity to produce outcomes that deviate from major social trends. Amid evidence that American society is becoming increasingly fragmented, IBCOs bring people together across racial, class, religious, and ideological lines. As rising inequality and

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2. Some additional organizing structures have recently emerged alongside the networks and independent organizations; among these, the Ohio Organizing Collaborative has played a prominent and innovative role.

deteriorating quality of life continue to diminish the power of disadvantaged people, IBCOs reduce inequality by consolidating power among these people. As elites and lobbyists dominate the political arena, IBCOs generate substantial political power among under-represented communities. Finally, even though the media often highlight controversies surrounding religion, IBCOs demonstrate the positive outcomes achieved by religious congregations working together to address common concerns in the public arena.<sup>3</sup>

Collectively, IBCOs represent a social movement dedicated to building democratic power, strengthening public life, and improving social conditions in low income and working class communities. As documented in this report, they contribute to American democracy by grounding democratic action in the social institutions that structure the daily lives of individuals, families, and communities. They bolster public life by identifying leaders and developing them into effective advocates for their communities. In doing so, they help communities organize and generate power that can be channeled toward shaping public policy to meet needs at the local level and, increasingly, at the state and national level as well.<sup>4</sup>

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3. On major contemporary social trends, see especially Putnam (2000); on particular trends, see Fischer and Mattson (2009) on increasing fragmentation; see Neckerman and Torche (2007) on rising inequality. On the work of the IBCO field to counter some of those trends, see Warren (2001), Wood (2002), Smock (2004), Fine (2006), Swarts (2008), Ganz (2009), and Bretherton (2010).

4. On the democratic power and public role of the IBCO field, see Wood and Warren (2002), Hart (2001), Gecan (2009), Osterman (2010), and Putnam (2010).

“We need to be respectful of the universals of organizing and the core tradition that we’ve inherited, but not overly reverent of them.”

-Judy Donovan, Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation



other kinds of organizing efforts. Finally, over the last decade a greater proportion of the field has begun leveraging its power beyond the local level and is addressing issues at state and national levels.

In analyzing these trends, we document important changes in the IBCO field: A new willingness to address frankly issues of race and ethnicity has emerged, and women now occupy fully half of both volunteer and professional leadership positions at all levels of these organizations. While the racial/ethnic profile of IBCOs has shifted in complex ways (documented here), IBCOs remain far more diverse than comparable organizational fields and more diverse than American society as a whole. They connect people across racial, religious, and economic class lines. Many IBCOs have left behind their past tendency to work in relative isolation and now collaborate with other organizations to project greater political influence at the city, state, and/or national levels. Half of all IBCOs now engage in state-level work; such work has more than doubled in the last decade. A quarter of IBCOs are engaged in national-level policy work, barely an aspiration a decade ago. Less measurable, but equally important--ambitious strategic thinking grounded in creative moral vision now pervades at least some sectors of the field.

Together, we argue that these shifts position the field of institution-based community organizing will be key to reinvigorating the democratic infrastructure of American society.

In recognition of the ongoing accomplishments, current challenges, and future promise of institution-based community organizing, Interfaith Funders committed significant resources to conduct a follow-up of its 1999 census study of the field. We sought to provide a thorough assessment of the field by mapping its development and identifying the critical issues it faces.

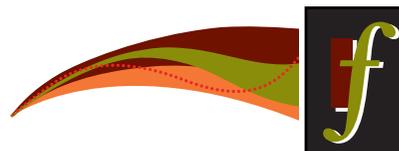
Through this project, we offer organizers, funders, and relevant stakeholders a national lens through which to view organizing activity and supply a tool for refining its practices. More broadly, we aspire to promote public understanding of institution-based community organizing and its contributions to American society. In an effort to foster further discussion and analysis, the results of this study will be widely disseminated via funder networks, faith-based consortiums, organizing events, academic associations, and media outlets. This report constitutes an invitation to joint strategizing about how to help this burgeoning field achieve its full democratic potential. It is also an opportunity for critical and strategic reflection among all participants and a

preview of data that will be explored further in additional publications.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was designed to replicate and build upon the 1999 study by surveying the entire field of IBCOs. In formulating the goals and content of the study, the research team drew on the counsel of local organizers, national organizing staff, foundation program officers, denominational funders, and scholars of the field. In addition to asking identical questions from the 1999 study, several new items were added to better assess the work on specific issues, collaborative relations, and religious practices within the field. The survey instrument was composed of two parts. Part one was an online survey that gathered extensive data on each IBCO’s history, constituents, collaborators, activities, finances, and issue work. Part two consisted of customized spreadsheets that respondents used to provide detailed demographic information about their organization’s member institutions, board members, and paid staff.<sup>7</sup>

7. See appendix for the core survey instrument; full survey instruments can be accessed via: <http://www.soc.duke.edu/~brf6/ibcosurvey.pdf>.



The study defines an IBCO as a local organization that practices the institution-based model of organizing (i.e., has institutional members), has an office address, and has at least one paid organizer on staff. Based on these criteria, 189 active organizations were identified using databases from organizing networks, IBCO funders, and denominational bodies as well as IRS 990 Forms. The survey was distributed electronically to the director of every local IBCO during the second half of 2011. The directors were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and that nothing would be published that identifies specific characteristics of their organization unless they provided consent.<sup>8</sup> The survey achieved a response rate of 94%, gathering data on 178 IBCOs and demographic information on approximately 4,100 member institutions plus 2,900 board members and 600 paid staff involved in the IBCO field.<sup>9</sup>

8. Each director who completed the study received an honorarium that ranged between \$25 and \$100 based on the size of their organization.

9. Our assessment of the key characteristics of those IBCOs that did not respond to the survey suggests that no systematic patterns of non-responses are likely to have produced a biased profile of the field.

The structure of the study allows the data to be analyzed at two levels. The field level demonstrates patterns as a whole; the organization level assesses similarities and dis. In addition, the fact that we replicated items from the 1999 study and included the IBCOs surveyed in 1999 means we can assess changes in the field (and in individual IBCOs) over the last decade. This offers a more dynamic view than possible with only a one-time snapshot.<sup>10</sup>

### OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD

Comparing the 1999 snapshot with the current state of the field reveals dramatic growth over the last decade, both in terms of geographic reach and strategic depth. At the organization level, the field experienced an overall growth rate of 42% with 102 new IBCOs established

So when providing total numbers for the entire field, we multiply values by a factor that accounts for information not provided by the non-responsive IBCOs (i.e., we project figures from the 94% of respondents to the entire field).

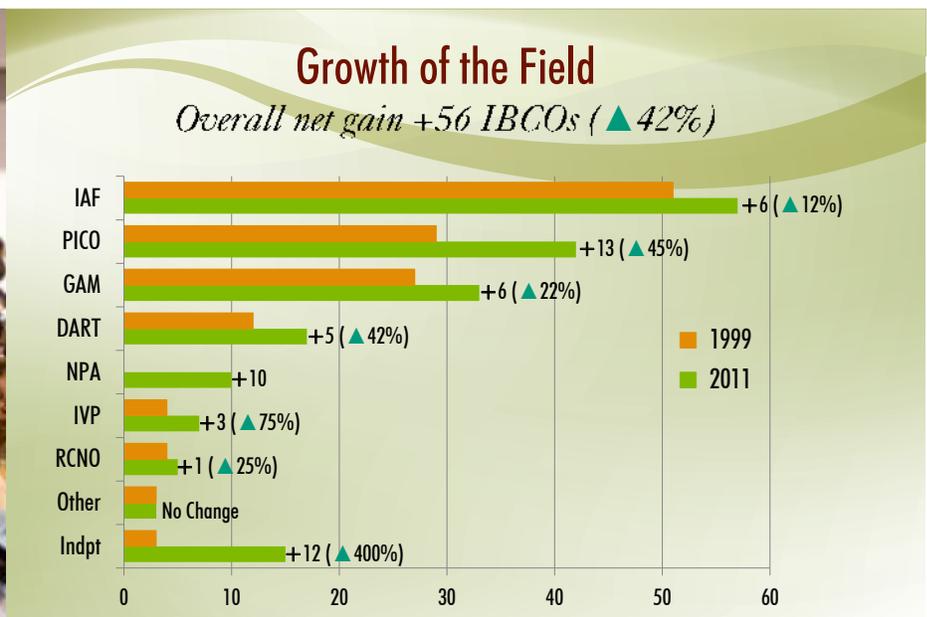
10. However, in some instances technical limitations in the 1999 study make fully rigorous comparison impossible; we flag such instances below.

and 46 that had become inactive.<sup>11</sup> In most areas where an IBCO had become inactive, another IBCO still exists.<sup>12</sup> Among the inactive organizations, 23 had dissolved, eight are rebuilding, 14 had merged into another IBCO, and one had stopped using the institution-based organizing model.

The overall growth of the field corresponds with an increase in its geographic spread. In 1999, 33 states had active IBCOs; today, IBCOs are active in 39 states. IBCOs have been established in nine new states (Alaska, Alabama, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, Nevada, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Vermont), all states characterized by dramatically different dynamics within the partisan political system. The number of IBCOs at least doubled in Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Mexico, and Wisconsin. While the field has

11. Some of the “new IBCOs” existed in 1999, but did not meet the criteria for being included in the 1999 study.

12. The exception is Tennessee, which had three active IBCOs in 1999, but no longer had any active IBCOs as of 2011.

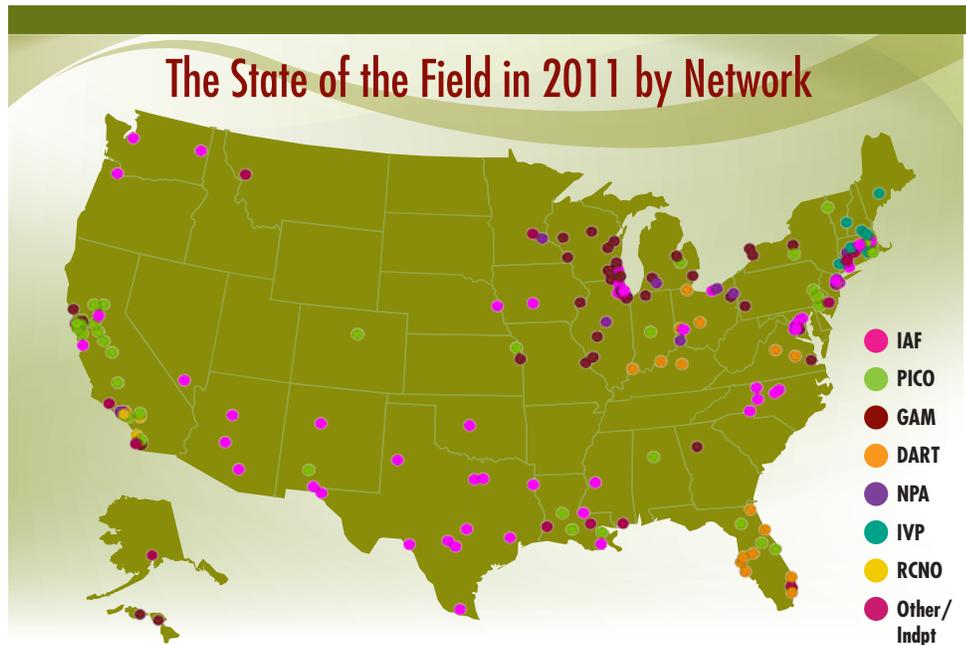
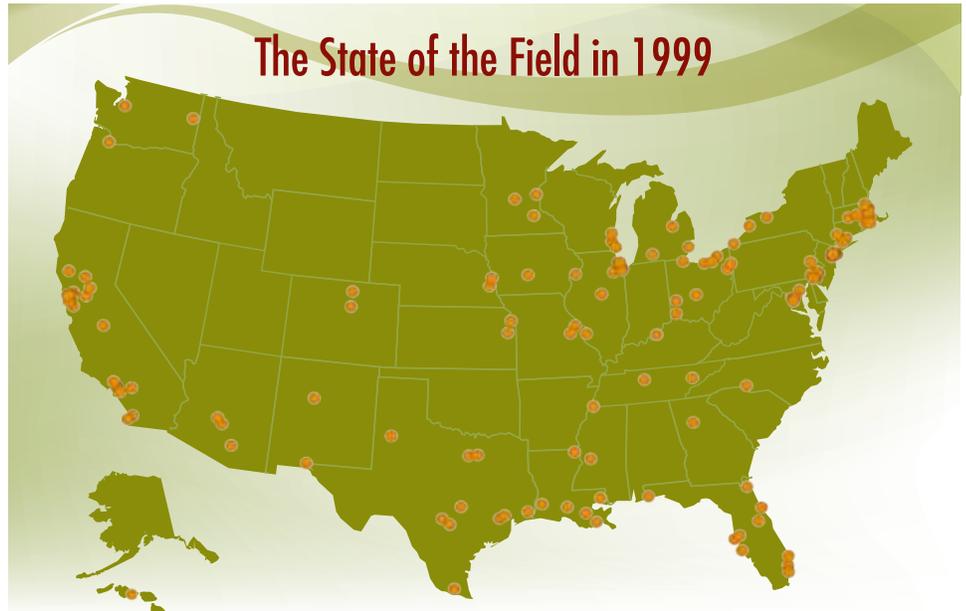


spread, it remains concentrated in urban areas and in populous states with a long history of this kind of work: Half of the organizations reside in California, Illinois, Florida, New York, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Most IBCOs are formally affiliated with a national or regional organizing network, and over the last decade each of these networks increased the number of IBCOs they serve. The largest relative growth occurred among three networks that were comparatively smaller in 1999, making the field more evenly distributed among the various organizing networks. The number of organizations not affiliated with any formal organizing network also increased during the same period.

The base of the IBCO field is its member institutions. That base has shifted in important ways. In 1999, the field was comprised of roughly 4,000 formal member institutions—88% were religious congregations, 12% were non-congregational. Even though the number of IBCOs increased by 42% over the last decade, the total number of member institutions increased by only 12.5% (to approximately 4,500).<sup>13</sup> As a result, the median number of member institutions per IBCO declined from 23 to 21. The composition of member institutions shifted as well. Since 1999, the number of member congregations has remained the same (approximately 3,500), while the number of non-congregational members has doubled (increasing from approximately 500 to 1000).

13. The 1999 data include one IBCO that reported having 230 member institutions, by far the largest reported membership base (ten times larger than the median IBCO). This IBCO now has 40 institutions. Because the 1999 study did not properly account for this outlier, it likely over-estimated the total number of member institutions in the field. A more accurate estimate accounting for this outlier suggests that the field had approximately 3,900 member institutions in 1999, meaning the field has increased by 15% since then.



Non-congregational community institutions, which include schools, faith-based nonprofits, unions, and neighborhood associations, now make up over 20% of all member institutions, and 70% of IBCOs have at least one non-congregational member institution. This represents a significant shift, and appears to be at least partly the result of former IBCO allies becoming full members. Schools represent 18% of these non-congregational institutions, and faith-based non-profits represent 16%. Unions comprise 15%, and neighborhood associations 13%.

A wide variety of other community-based organizations make up the remaining 38%, including community and economic development corporations, immigrant associations, social service programs, civic organizations, etc. In 1999, 40% of IBCOs indicated having collaborative ties with unions, and 13% had at least one union as a member institution. Today, 23% of IBCOs have at least one union as a member institution, and roughly one quarter have a school,

faith-based organization, or neighborhood association as a member institution.

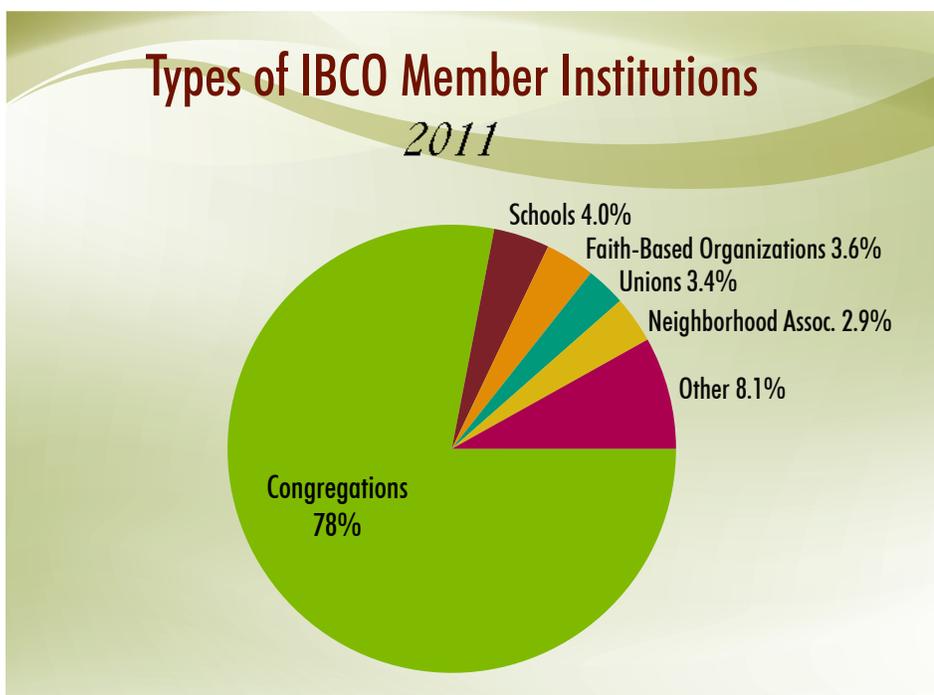
This shift in the composition of members suggests that the term congregation-based community organizing no longer represents the field as a whole. Given that 20% of member institutions are not congregations, the term institution-based community organizing provides a more accurate representation. In adopting this shift of terminology, however, it is important to recognize that congregations remain the large majority of member institutions and 30% of IBCOs have a member base comprised exclusively of congregations (down from 45% in 1999). Furthermore, the networks have launched significant work specifically dedicated to using the practices of organizing to strengthen member congregations under the auspices of the Interfaith Organizing Initiative, local and national clergy caucuses, and/or training programs for future clergy and organizers.<sup>14</sup>

## **Governing and Leading IBCO's: Board members, leaders, organizers, and directors**

As the field changed at the organization level, it also changed at the individual level. Four groups of individuals are critical to the field: Boards of Directors, typically made up of representatives of the member institutions; clergy and lay leaders, who participate actively in the organizing; staff organizers, who provide training to leaders; and directors, who head up each IBCO. We first consider broad changes within each group, turning later to questions of racial/ethnic and religious diversity:

**Board members:** The total number of board members increased 18.5% (from approximately 2,700 to 3,200). Among IBCO board members, the average age increased from 51 in 1999 to 54 in 2011. This indicates that board members were likely to remain in place as they aged or be replaced by people only slightly younger than themselves, rather than be replaced by a significantly younger cohort. In terms of gender composition, male and female board members remain equally represented. According to the 2011 data, 14% of board members are immigrants (56% of whom are Hispanic); 23% have less than a bachelor's degree; 23% have a household income of less than \$25,000 per year, and 35% have annual household incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

14. See *Renewing Congregations and Faith and Public Life* (Interfaith Funders 2003, 2004). See especially the work within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and the Union for Reform Judaism to strengthen congregations using tools from community organizing at <http://urj.org/socialaction/training/justcongregations>, <http://www.interfaith-funders.org/Inter-ReligiousOrganizingInitiative.html>, and [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org). On similar work in the wider Jewish community, see <http://bendthearc.us>.



The household income figures are particularly revealing:

We suspect IBCO boards are extraordinarily less well-off than the typical board of directors in an American non-profit, but the present study does not provide comparative data.

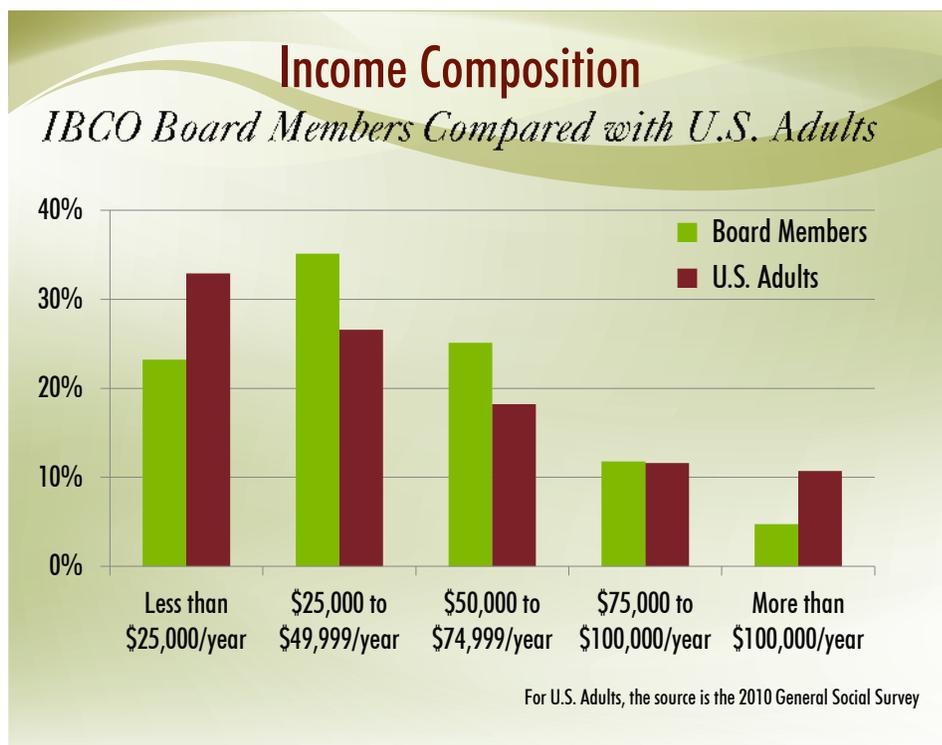
**Leaders:** A primary objective of community organizing is to develop leaders from within member institutions who can organize their institutions to build better quality of life in American communities. The IBCO field currently reports having over 20,000 core leaders playing active voluntary roles within local organizations. Among these leaders, over 5,000 had attended a multi-day training event in the last year.<sup>15</sup> This represents a 70% increase in the number of leaders receiving intensive training since 1999, illustrating the field's commitment to develop a strong leadership base among its constituents.

**Organizers:** The number of paid organizing staff across the IBCO field increased 70% (from approximately 320 to 545).<sup>16</sup> Approximately 80 percent of organizers work full-time. However, the majority of IBCOs still have only one or two organizers on staff. The total number of staff increased partly because there are more organizations that need to be staffed. But five percent of IBCOs have more than eight paid organizers; these organizations account for the bulk of the increase in organizing staff.<sup>17</sup> Importantly, the ratio of

15. In addition, most IBCOs indicated that they also provide smaller training events throughout the year at which even more leaders are trained.

16. The figures reported here for 1999 differ slightly from those reported at the time; during reanalysis we discovered an error in the prior calculations and are publishing a separate correction.

17. These nine organizations employ approximately 20% of all IBCO organizers. In 1999, no IBCO had more than eight paid organizers.



member institutions per organizer for the average IBCO decreased from 15:1 to 12:1. These changes may reflect two important developments: the effort to increase organizing at the state and national levels and the effort to use the tools of organizing to contribute to congregational and institutional development. Both developments likely require greater numbers of organizers on staff.

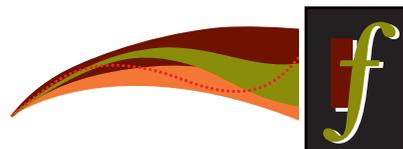
A generational and gender shift is occurring among professionals in the field. The average age of the organizing staff decreased. In 1999, a majority of the organizers were between 30 and 50 years old. Today, the majority are between 20 and 40. The gender composition of the organizing staff also flipped. In 1999, 57% were male; now 55% are female. Also, according to the 2011 data, 14% of organizers are immigrants (76% of these are Hispanic), and 17% have less than a bachelor's degree.

**Directors:** Similar significant shifts have occurred among the organizing staff directors. In 1999, the gender composition of directors was roughly

75% men and 25% women; today, it is 54% men and 46% women. Ten percent of the IBCO directors have been in their current position for more than ten years, while 38% have been leading their organizations for fewer than two years. In 2011, 7% of directors were immigrants (83% of whom were Hispanic).

The field has achieved this level of engagement and leadership development with fairly modest financial resources. Since 1999, the median annual budget for IBCOs increased from \$150,000 to \$175,000, but adjusted for inflation, this represents a net decline of 12.5% in effective revenue for the average IBCO.<sup>18</sup> On average, 60% of an IBCO's budget goes toward staff expenses.

18. In 1999, \$150,000 had the purchasing power equivalent of about \$202,000 in 2011 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Note that the reported decline pertains only to local IBCOs and does not reflect revenues to national-level organizing efforts, nor does it reflect what budgets may have been just prior to the 2008 recession.

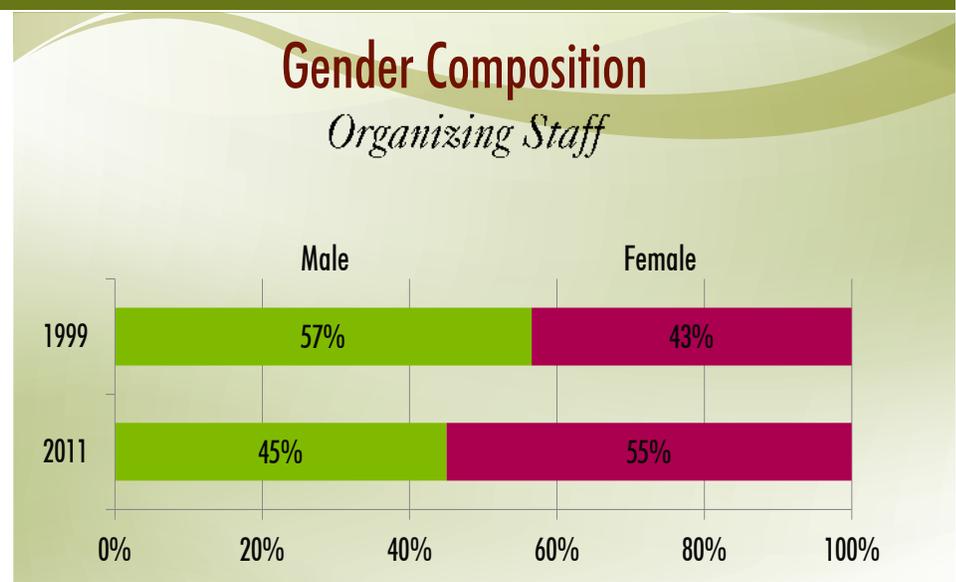
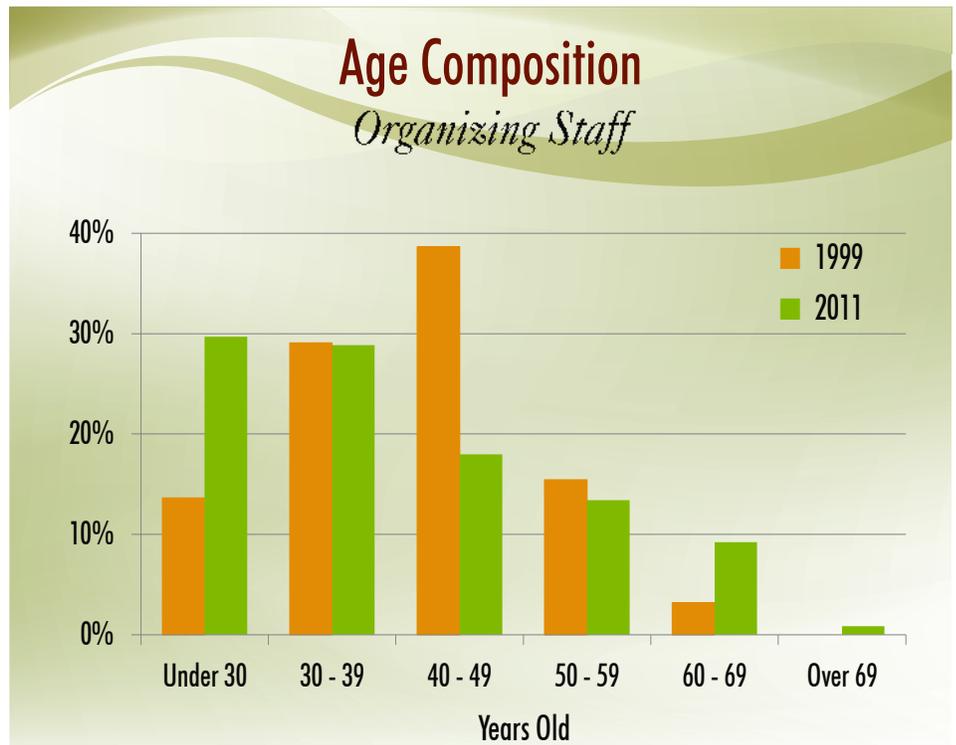


## Organizing Money

Funding sources have shifted significantly. Even though IBCOs prioritize raising funds from their member institutions in order to protect their autonomy, the percentage of funding that comes from member dues decreased from 22% to 15%. The percentage provided by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development decreased from 19 to 15%, and the percentage provided by other faith-based funders decreased from 12 to 7%. Meanwhile, the percentage provided by secular foundations and corporations increased from 30% to 39%. The 1999 data does not allow us to separate out donations from corporations and donations from secular foundations. In 2011, however, donations from corporations constituted 4.5% of total reported IBCO revenues.

The above financial patterns reflect several dynamics:

- non-faith-based institutions' expanding interest in the field, even as its membership base remains primarily in faith communities
- increasing recognition of the field's current impact and future potential
- declining contributions to the Catholic and Mainline Protestant denominational units that previously provided much of the field's faith-based funding



## ORGANIZING AND RELIGION *Religious Composition of the Field*

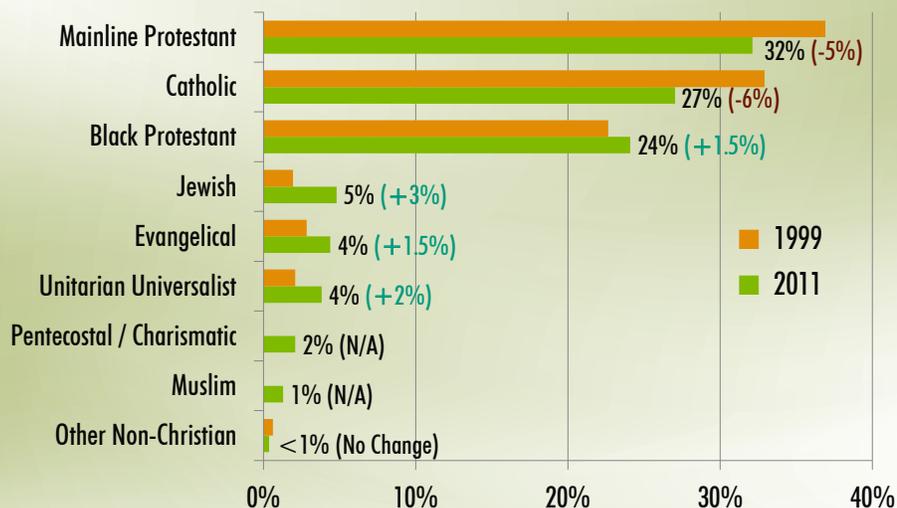
In the early days of institution-based organizing, religious congregations were the primary constituencies that organizers recruited. While the proportion of non-congregational member institutions has since increased, religious congregations still make up the large majority. One

percent of all U.S. congregations are involved in institution-based community organizing.

Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and Black Protestant congregations are the core members, while Evangelical, Jewish, Muslim, Pentecostal, and Unitarian Universalist congregations represent a much smaller constituency.

## IBCO Member Congregations

Percentage that are...



In the last decade, however, the religious composition of the IBCO field shifted to become more evenly distributed among the various religious traditions. The proportion of Mainline Protestant and Catholic congregations decreased,<sup>19</sup> reflecting the overall decrease in the number of Mainline Protestant and Catholic congregations in the United States. Because fewer exist, fewer are available to participate in community organizing. Meanwhile, Evangelical, Jewish, Muslim, Pentecostal, and Unitarian Universalist congregations have all increased their representation within the field, and a growing number of IBCOs have at least one member congregation from these traditions.<sup>20</sup>

Even though congregations from every major religious tradition are involved in IBCO, they do not represent the religious composition of congregations in the United States. Mainline Protestant and Catholic

19. The proportion of Black Protestant member congregations has remained basically the same.

20. In the 1999 study, when directors mentioned reaching out to new religious constituencies, these are the religious groups they referenced most often.

congregations represent a majority in the IBCO field, though they represent a minority among congregations in the United States. On the other hand, almost half the U.S. congregations are Evangelical and Pentecostal, but these faith communities represent a small minority in the IBCO field. Black Protestantism is the only religious tradition in which the proportion of congregations in

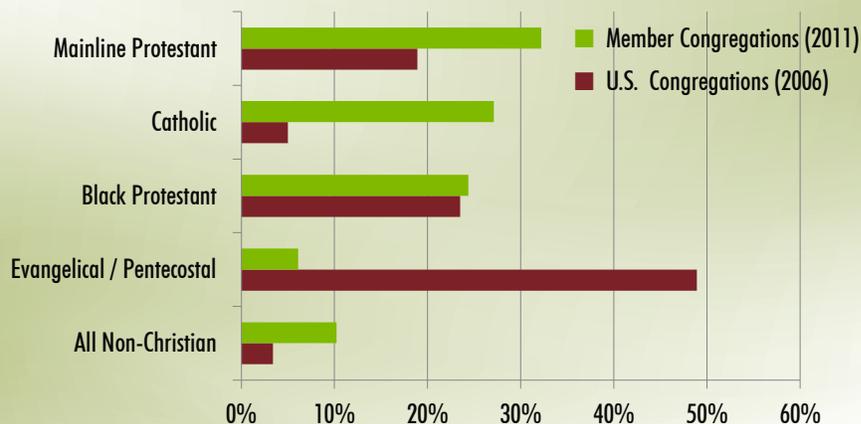
the IBCO field matches its proportion of U.S. congregations.

With regard to minority religious traditions, Jewish, Muslim, and Unitarian Universalist congregations are relatively well represented in the IBCO field. Jewish synagogues, for example, make up roughly 2% of U.S. congregations, but make up 5% of all IBCO member congregations; Unitarian Universalist congregations make up less than 1% of U.S. congregations but 4% of all IBCO member congregations. Thus, congregations from the Mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Unitarian-Universalist traditions are strongly represented in the IBCO field, while Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are highly under-represented.

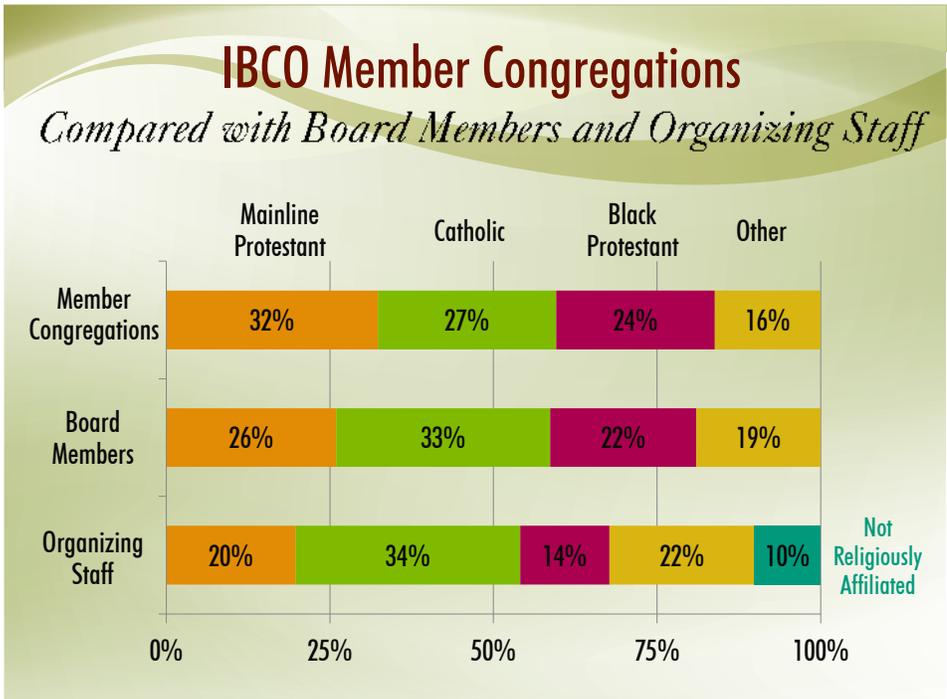
The religious affiliation of board members and organizing staff shifted similarly.<sup>21</sup> Among staff, the proportion of Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, and Catholic organizers decreased, while the proportion of organizers from other faith communities increased. In particular, the percentage of Evangelical and

## IBCO Member Congregations

Compared with All Congregations in the U.S.



For U.S. Congregations, the source is the 2006-7 National Congregations Study



Pentecostal organizers doubled, and the percentage of Jewish and Unitarian Universalist organizers increased slightly. In 1999, the entire field had only one Muslim organizer--now there are nine. Furthermore, the percentage of organizers identifying as being not religiously affiliated increased from 2% to 10% (still less than the U.S. population as a whole, which has risen sharply to 18%). The religious composition of the IBCO directors shifted in almost the exact same ways, except that the number of Muslim directors decreased from one to zero and only 3% of IBCOs are led by a person who is not religiously affiliated.<sup>22</sup>

Overall, the IBCO field has become more religiously diverse, still sustained by its historic core in Mainline Protestantism, Catholicism, and the historic African American churches but also growing among Evangelical and Pentecostal

22. Religious professionals continue to be active in the IBCO field. Roughly 30% of board members, 20% of directors, and 10% of organizing staff are clergy/ordained ministers.

Protestants, Jews, Unitarian Universalists, Muslims, and the religiously unaffiliated.

### *Religious Diversity among IBCOs*

The growing religious diversity of the field, however, does not necessarily mean that each individual IBCO reflects this diversity. Four percent of IBCOs are mono-religious (i.e., all of their member institutions are affiliated with the same religious tradition). Among the mono-religious IBCOs, two have only Catholic congregations, four have only Black Protestant congregations, and one has only Mainline Protestant congregations. The percentage of IBCOs that have only Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and/or Black Protestant congregations--the traditional religious core of IBCOs-- decreased from 25% to 15%.

Unlike many voluntary associations in America, most IBCOs are religiously diverse. Almost half have at least one congregation from the Evangelical, Jewish, or Unitarian

Universalist traditions, 20% have at least one Muslim congregation, and 15% have at least one Jewish and one Muslim congregation. Furthermore, over 50% of IBCOs have at least one secular member institution, and 20% of the members of a typical IBCO are non-congregations. Organizing builds bridges among faith communities and between faith communities and secular institutions, and across lines of race and class, even when these institutions are typically divided in American culture. They do so not only nationally in the aggregate, but locally in the communities where people actually live. As participants build local relationships with members of other groups, their perception of these groups can be enriched and informed.

### *The Effects of Religious Diversity on Organizing Activities*

Even though many IBCOs are religiously diverse and leaders are often encouraged to draw on their specific faith traditions, participants seldom focus on religious differences. Most IBCOs reported discussing religious differences only "rarely" to "sometimes," and most indicated that religious differences had a minimal effect on their planning meetings.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, IBCOs that frequently discuss religious differences were more likely to report that their differences affected their planning meetings. Yet an IBCO's propensity to discuss religious differences is unrelated to its degree of religious diversity. Furthermore, the directors

23. Likewise, more religiously diverse IBCOs were no more likely than less diverse IBCOs to indicate that religious differences complicated, prolonged, or hindered their planning meetings. One exception: IBCOs that had at least one Jewish or Muslim member congregation were more likely to report that religious differences complicated their planning meetings.

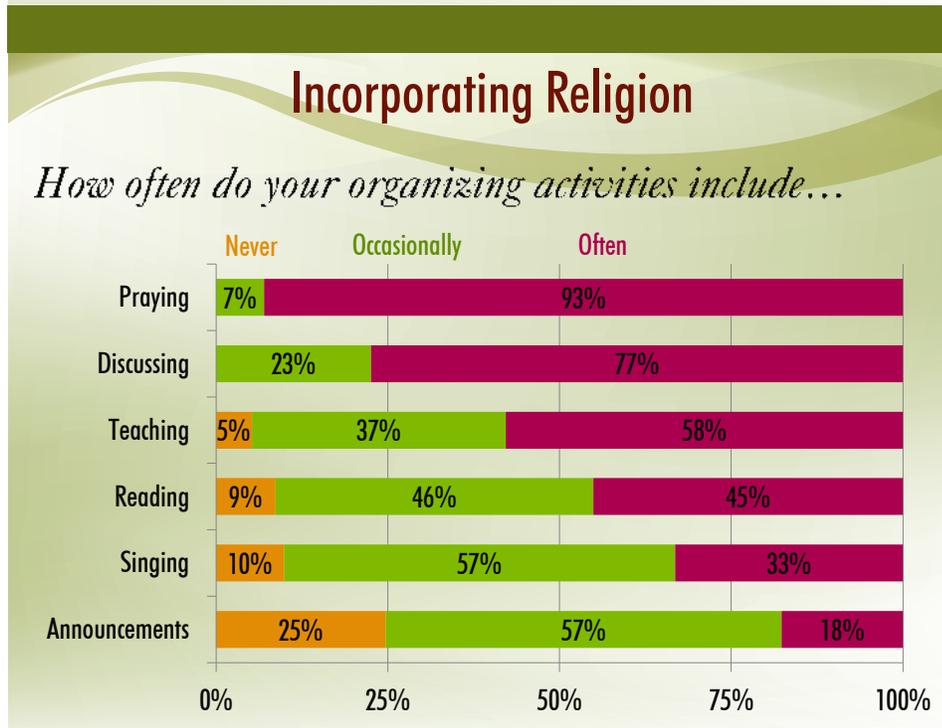
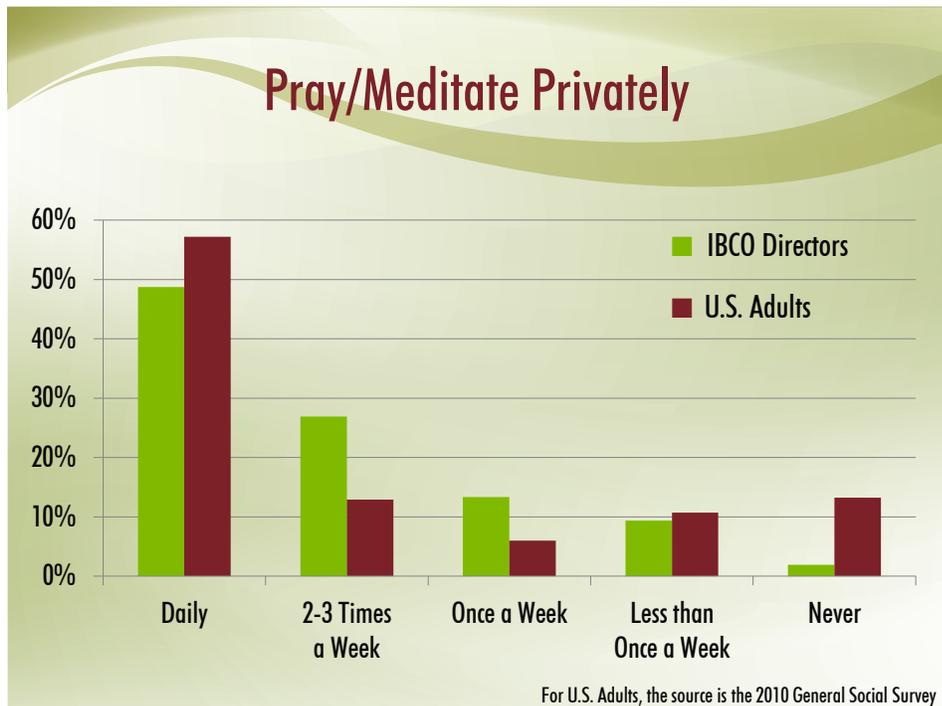
of religiously diverse IBCOs did not report it to be any more difficult to accommodate different faith traditions in their organizing work than did directors of less diverse IBCOs.

As IBCO members from diverse faith traditions work together to improve their communities, they appear to navigate religious differences by downplaying them. Rather than using differences to pit faith communities against each other (or to antagonize divergent strands within a particular tradition), IBCO culture seeks to transcend this diversity by focusing on shared values and pursuing common goals. In an increasingly polarized political culture, in which religious differences are often used to amplify political disagreements, IBCOs are thus strikingly counter-cultural.

### Religious Practices of IBCOs and Their Directors

Despite the field’s tendency to de-emphasize religious differences and the growing proportion of member institutions and organizers that are secular, religious faith continues to be an integral part of the IBCOs’ organizing ethos. Sixty percent of IBCO offices contain objects with religious references, and 80% of IBCOs reported that their promotional material contains religious content. Furthermore, the directors of IBCOs are, on average, more religious than the general U.S. population (i.e., they pray, read sacred texts, and attend religious services more often than the average U.S. adult).

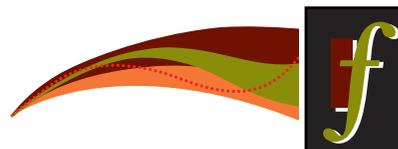
Most IBCOs actively integrate religious practices into their organizing activities. Over 90% of IBCOs report that they often open and close their meetings with a prayer, and over 75% often have discussions about the connection between faith and organizing. Most incorporate



some form of religious teaching into their organizing activities, though it is less common for IBCO activities to include people singing or reading religious-based content together. The least common practice is for people to make announcements about upcoming religious events.<sup>24</sup>

Increasing the religious diversity of an IBCO does not seem to dampen the influence of religious faith in the organization. In fact, religiously diverse IBCOs are more likely to incorporate religious practices into their organizing activities, and the

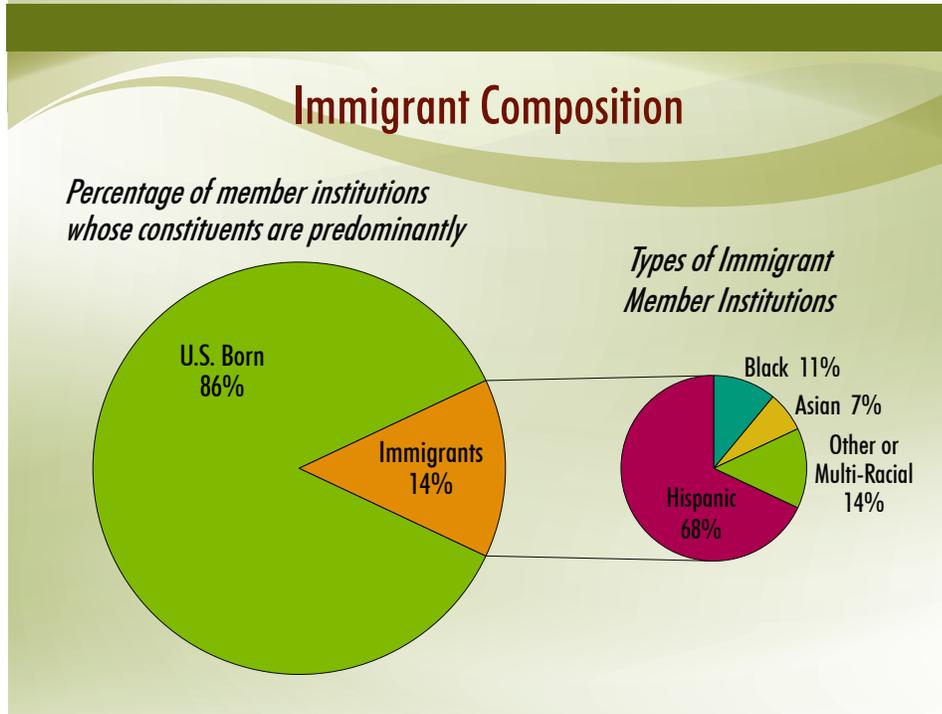
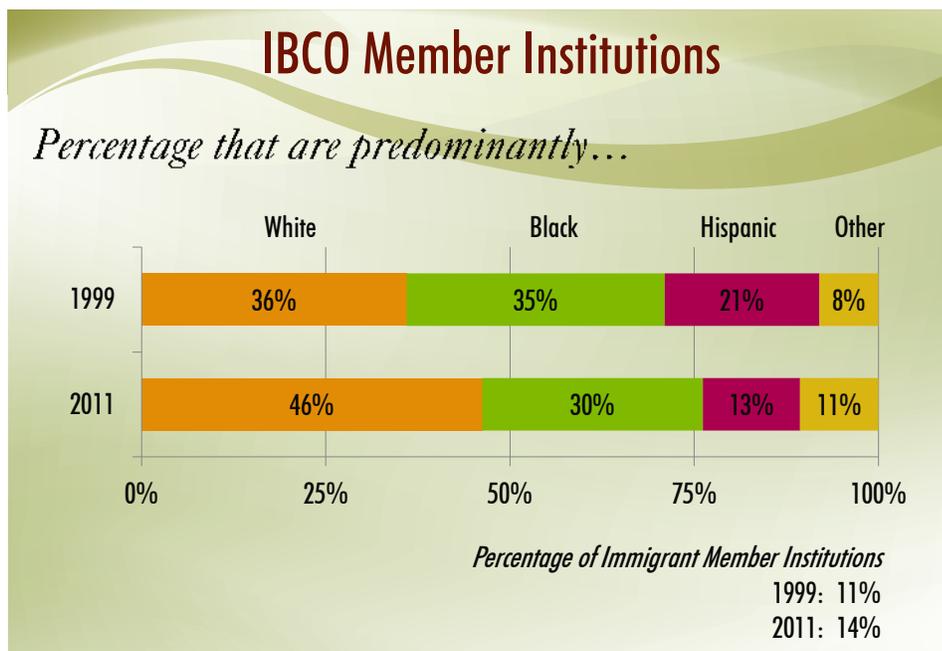
24. This reflects the tendency in IBCO culture to focus on shared beliefs and avoid giving preference to or promoting specific faith traditions.



directors of diverse IBCOs reported feeling more comfortable doing so.

IBCOs led by people who engage in the spiritual practices of their tradition tend to incorporate religion into their organizing activities more often. Religiously active directors were also more likely to report that religious differences enhanced their organization's planning meetings. There are two possible explanations: Religiously active directors help to cultivate an environment in which people are at ease with religious differences and comfortable with incorporating religion into their activities, or perhaps IBCOs more grounded in religion tend to recruit directors who reflect that orientation.

Overall, while many IBCOs tend to ignore religious differences, that is not to say that they ignore religion. Indeed, they often draw on religion richly as they build an organizational culture for political engagement. For example, most public actions include stories, music, examples, and symbols rooted in faith communities, and many local organizing meetings begin and end with prayer. But rather than being venues for interfaith dialogue, IBCOs are vehicles for interfaith action. Instead of discussing potentially divisive differences, organizing harnesses their shared beliefs to motivate and mobilize members around issues of common concern and prompting relationships between leaders of differing faiths. Moreover, incorporation of these kinds of religious elements is strongest among IBCOs that are religiously diverse and led by religiously active directors.



### **ORGANIZING AND RACE** *Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Field*

An enduring characteristic of the IBCO field has been its capacity to bridge racial/ethnic divides. Consistent with the 1999 study, we defined the racial/ethnic identity of a member institution to be the racial/ethnic group that represents a majority in that institution. If no group

represents more than 50%, then the institution is identified as being multiracial. The figure above shows the racial/ethnic composition in 1999 and 2011.

The racial/ethnic diversity of the IBCO field has shifted over the last decade in ways that reflect the changes of member institutions. The percentage of majority-white

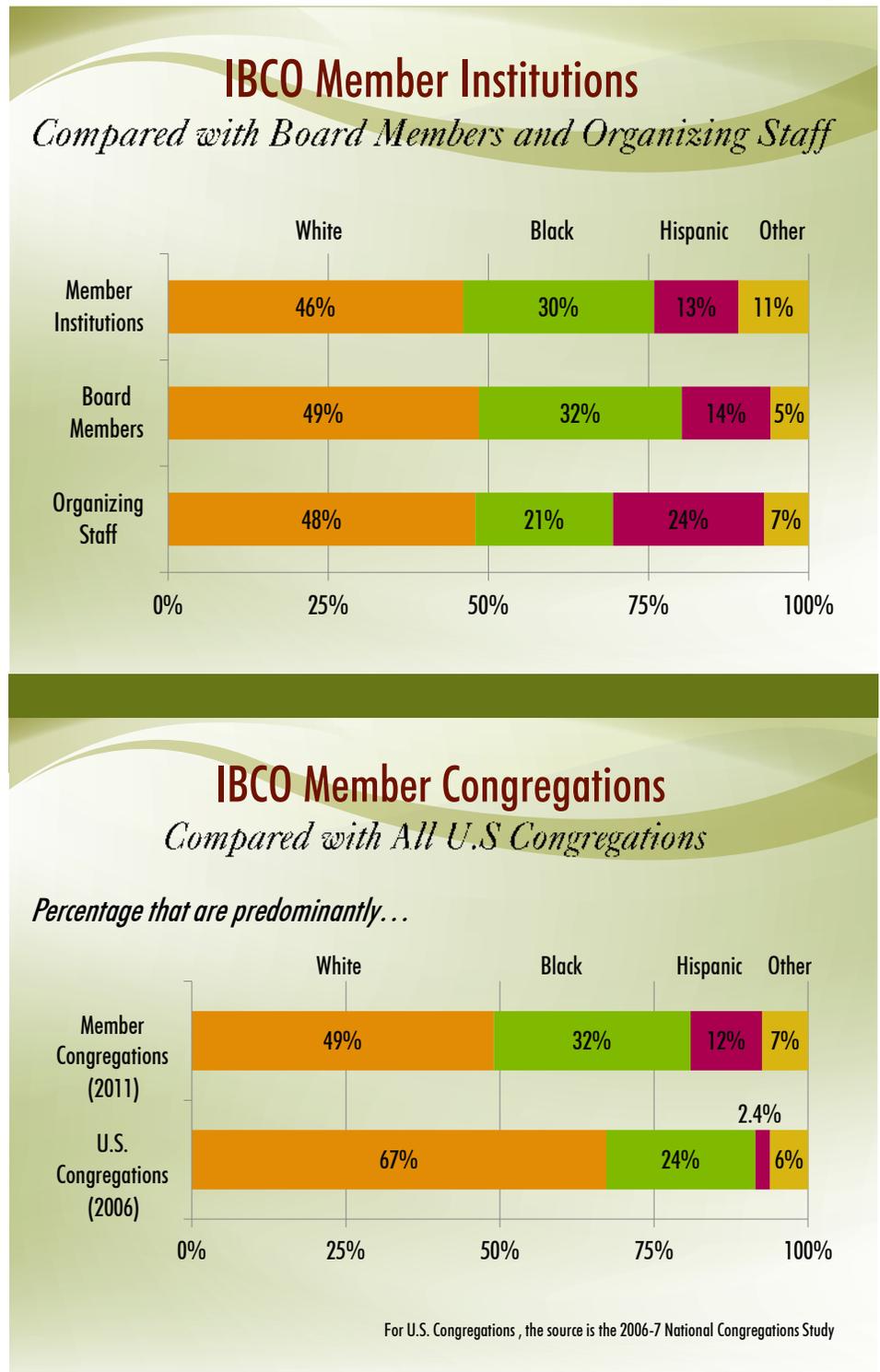
member institutions increased, and the percentage of black and Hispanic member institutions decreased. Meanwhile, the percentage of member institutions comprised primarily of immigrants increased from 11% to 14%. The proceeding chart shows the racial/ethnic diversity of the immigrant institutions, about two-thirds of which are mostly Hispanic.

The racial/ethnic composition of IBCO governing boards shifted similarly. The percentage of white board members increased, the percentage of Hispanic board members decreased, and the percentage of black board members remained the same. However, among IBCO organizing staff, the percentage of Hispanic organizers increased, and the percentage of white and black organizers decreased.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, while IBCO professional staffing became more diverse over the last decade, the IBCO institutional base and boards of directors became less racially/ethnically diverse (by this measure; see below for different results from a more sophisticated measure of diversity). However, the IBCO field remains substantially more diverse than its institutional equivalents. IBCO member congregations represent greater diversity than the field of congregations in the United States, and IBCO boards represent greater diversity than the boards of the non-profit sector.<sup>26</sup> The IBCO field is also substantially more diverse than the

25. The figures reported here for 1999 differ slightly from those reported at the time; during re-analysis we discovered an error in the prior calculations and are publishing a separate correction.

26. See Mark Chaves and Shawna Anderson, *National Congregations Study: Cumulative Data File and Codebook* (Durham, NC: Duke University, Department of Sociology, 2008); and Francie Ostrower, "Nonprofit Governance in the United States: Findings on Performance and Accountability," from the *First National Representative Study* (The Urban Institute: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, 2007).



U.S. population as a whole.

Why has the field become less diverse in the last decade, and why has white representation increased? We believe this at least partially reflects a key strategic dynamic in the field over the last decade: Networks have made a widespread effort to better serve the interests of low-income communities by projecting power across broader

geographic areas and into higher-level political arenas. This strategy has led many IBCOs to seek new members beyond core urban districts by expanding into inner- and sometimes outer-ring suburbs. Though these suburbs today often include significant minority populations, they still typically have a larger white percentage than do core cities.

## IBCO Board Members

*Compared with All Nonprofit Boards*



For non-profit boards, the sources is The Urban Institute: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy (2007)

## IBCO Organizing Staff

*Compared with U.S. Adults*



For U.S. Adults, the source is the 2010 General Social Survey

The field has also expanded into secondary cities of the upper Midwest (Wisconsin, Michigan) and Northeast (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, upstate New York). Both dynamics likely lower the field's racial/ethnic diversity, albeit while potentially increasing its strategic

capacity. More speculatively, the drop in membership by Hispanic institutions might reflect insecurity Hispanic immigrants feel regarding public engagement, perhaps the result of recent anti-immigrant discourse and legislation. Likewise, the fall in membership in black and

Hispanic institutions might reflect the ongoing financial struggles of historic African American churches and (often Hispanic) Catholic parishes in core urban areas.

### *Racial/Ethnic Diversity among IBCOs*

Even though the IBCO field as a whole has become somewhat less racially/ethnically diverse, the percentage of IBCOs that are mono-racial (i.e., all of their member institutions had the same racial/ethnic identity), has decreased. In 1999, 11% were mono-racial; by 2011 only 8% of IBCOs were mono-racial. Furthermore, "mono-racial" looks different in different settings: Three of the 14 mono-racial institutions in 2011 were all black and practiced a model of organizing that focused explicitly on organizing in African American congregations. Two of the 14 were Hispanic and located in the south valley of Texas, an overwhelmingly Hispanic region. The remaining nine had only majority-white institutions and organized in Maine, Vermont, small-town Wisconsin, Oregon, upstate New York, eastern Washington, and suburban California, some but not all of which have populations with little racial diversity. Thus, while problematic questions can legitimately be raised about mono-racial organizing in an increasingly diverse America, many of these cases can readily be attributed to local demographics.

While a small percentage of IBCOs remain racially/ethnically homogenous, most IBCOs are becoming more diverse. Ninety-three percent of IBCOs have at least one white member institution, 77% have at least one black member institution, and 68% have at least one Hispanic member institution. Compared

to 1999, the percentage of IBCOs represented by only two racial/ethnic groups decreased from 41% to 35%, while the percentage of IBCOs represented by three or more racial groups increased from 48% to 57%.<sup>27</sup>

## Measuring Diversity

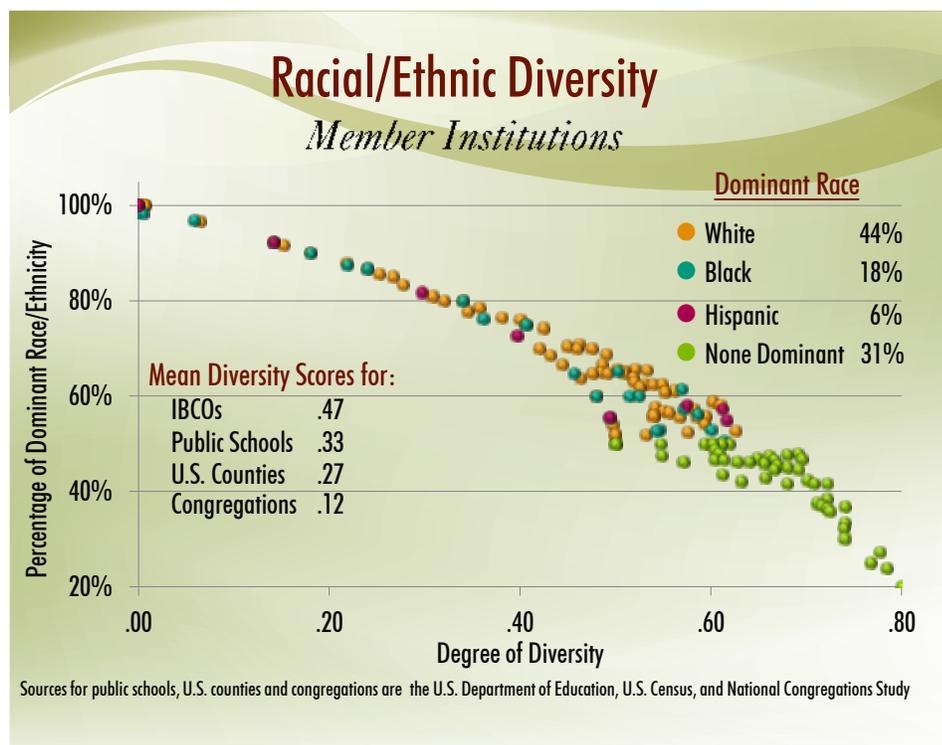
The description above does not fully capture the complex dynamics of racial/ethnic diversity in the IBCO field. For example, consider two IBCOs--each comprised of three different racial/ethnic groups, but with different percentages. The first IBCO is 70% white, 15% black, and 15% Hispanic, while the second IBCO has 33% from each of the racial/ethnic groups. Both IBCOs would be categorized as “multi-racial,” but in fact they are quite different: The membership of the second IBCO is significantly more diverse.

To capture this complexity we also used a more comprehensive measure of diversity that takes into account both the number of racial/ethnic groups and the proportion of each group. This diversity scale can be used to measure and compare the diversity of IBCOs that have different group configurations.<sup>28</sup> It generates a diversity score that ranges from 0 to 1, and the score can be interpreted as the probability that two randomly selected member institutions within an IBCO will be of a different race/ethnicity. Based on this scale, a mono-racial IBCO has a diversity score of 0 (i.e., the probability that two randomly selected member institutions will be of a different race/ethnicity is 0%). As the number of different racial/ethnic groups increases and as the proportion of each group becomes more evenly distributed, the IBCO’s diversity score approaches 1 (i.e., the probability of selecting two member institutions from different races/ethnicities approaches 100%). The figure below shows the 2011 distribution of IBCOs based on their diversity score, the percentage of the dominant race/ethnicity, and the identity of the dominant race/ethnicity.<sup>29</sup>

28. Diversity =  $1 - \sum_k \left(\frac{n_k}{N}\right)^2$  where N = total number of member institutions and  $n_k$  = number of member institutions in group k.

is 0%). As the number of different racial/ethnic groups increases and as the proportion of each group becomes more evenly distributed, the IBCO’s diversity score approaches 1 (i.e., the probability of selecting two member institutions from different races/ethnicities approaches 100%). The figure below shows the 2011 distribution of IBCOs based on their diversity score, the percentage of the dominant race/ethnicity, and the identity of the dominant race/ethnicity.<sup>29</sup>

counties is .28 and for congregations is .12.<sup>30</sup> IBCOs thus tend to be more diverse than public schools and U.S. counties, and much more diverse than congregations. In an era of declining social capital, it appears that the IBCO field plays a crucial role in bolstering “bridging capital” by linking Americans across the divides that otherwise separate them.



By using the diversity scale, the racial/ethnic diversity of IBCOs today can be compared with IBCOs a decade ago and the diversity of other community institutions today. The average diversity score for IBCOs was .47 in both 1999 and 2011. Thus, by this measure, IBCOs are equally diverse in 2011 as in 1999. In comparison, today the average diversity score for public schools is .33, for U.S.

29. The effects of diversity can also be influenced if one particular racial/ethnic group has a dominating presence (i.e., represents more than 50% of the members). An IBCO that is majority-white but has the same “diversity index” as a majority-black IBCO is likely to operate quite differently.

## The Effects of Racial/Ethnic Diversity on Organizing Activities

Even though historically this form of organizing typically downplayed racial differences, in 2011 most IBCOs reported discussing racial/ethnic differences either “sometimes” or “often.” Diverse IBCOs, as well as IBCOs with at least one black member institution, are likely to discuss

30. The mean diversity score for public schools is based on the 2009-10 NCES Common Core of Data Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey, the score for counties is based on the 2010 Census Demographic Profile, and the score for congregations is based on the 2006-7 National Congregations Study.

racial/ethnic differences more often. Diverse IBCOs were more likely to indicate that racial/ethnic differences complicated, prolonged, hindered, and enhanced their planning meetings.<sup>31</sup> This suggests that diverse IBCOs do not attempt to be “color blind” in their operations. Rather they appear to be cognizant of racial/ethnic differences, they focus on addressing those differences, and these differences influence their organizing activity.

Based on these results, it appears that IBCOs respond to religious and racial/ethnic differences in contrasting ways. IBCOs tend to talk less about religious differences, and religious differences tend to have little impact on their planning meetings. Conversely, IBCOs tend to talk more about racial/ethnic differences, and these differences tend to have a greater impact their planning meetings. Moreover, these opposite ways of responding to differences become amplified as the diversity of the IBCO increases.<sup>32</sup>

No simple summary can fully capture the complex patterns of racial/ethnic diversity within the IBCO field. By some measures, the field has grown somewhat less diverse in the last decade; by other measures, it has held its own or gained in diversity. The picture also changes if one con-

31. Even when controlling for the effects of language differences, racial/ethnic differences continue to affect planning meetings. Language differences have the strongest effect on IBCOs that have at least one Hispanic or Asian member institution.

32. Further research might delve into these dynamics more fully—including the fact that roughly 70% of IBCOs have a policy in place for dealing with religious differences, and 50% for dealing with racial/ethnic differences. Meanwhile, religiously diverse IBCOs are more likely, and racially/ethnically diverse IBCOs no more likely, to have the corresponding type of policy.

siders the field as a whole versus individual IBCOs. But by all measures, the field is more racially/ethnically diverse than America generally—and much more diverse than corporate and non-profit boards, congregations, neighborhoods, etc. In this way, the field’s ability to bring Americans together across racial and ethnic divides is extraordinary within American political culture and institutions.

## ORGANIZING ACTIVITY AND OUTCOMES

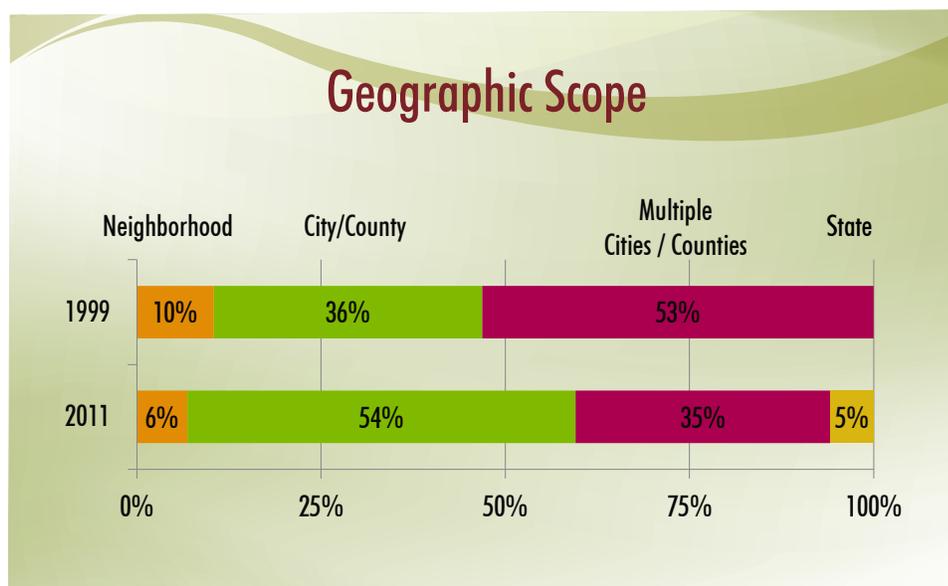
### Levels of Involvement

Member institutions and their constituents vary widely in their level of involvement. We measured their involvement along three dimensions—overall level of participation, proportion of meetings attended, and involvement in the most recent public action. In terms of their overall participation, 60% of member institutions were characterized as being active participants, 32% partially active, and 8% not active. The typical IBCO held 12 organization-wide member institution meetings in the last year, and 65% of member institutions attended at least half of their IBCO’s member meetings, while 8% attended none of the meetings. Fifty percent

of member institutions both helped to plan and attended their IBCO’s most recent public action, 30% only attended, and 20% neither helped to plan nor attended. IBCO board members also vary in their level of involvement: The typical IBCO board met 12 times in the last year, and 75% of board members attended at least half of their IBCO’s board meetings, while 6% attended none.

## Geographic Scope

The vast majority of IBCOs focus their primary organizing work within a particular city/county or cluster of cities/counties. Six percent restrict their organizing area to a particular neighborhood, and another 5% define their organizing area to be an entire state. This does not include more locally-focused IBCOs that also organize at the state level via network affiliations or other collaborations (see below). IBCOs that limit their organizing area to a neighborhood tend to be in large metropolitan areas. IBCOs that organize an entire state tend to be located in smaller states or are independent organizations that have adopted an explicit statewide organizing model.





“It is easy in a time of polarization to just get angry, to see the other side as monolithic and having much more power than they really have. Part of the beauty of our approach to organizing is that we have always been good at going into diverse situations and drawing people out around their stories.”

– Ken Galdston, InterValley Project

### ***Collaborative Work: Coalitions and Networks***

Beyond their primary organizing base, most IBCOs collaborate far more broadly and strategically than they did in 1999. These collaborative efforts take a variety of forms: IBCOs within a single network pursuing work on state- and national-level issues; those network-based efforts coordinating with other national organizations; or a single IBCO joining a coalition with other local community organizations. These collaborations may focus on single issue campaigns or may constitute long-term strategic alliances, and they can help IBCOs broaden their base, consolidate power, and extend their reach. Sixty-six percent of IBCOs participate in multi-organizational collaborations of some kind, and among these, over 95% collaborate with organizations outside their formal organizing network (either locally or through their network’s higher-level work).

Perhaps most importantly, participating in multi-organizational collaborations helps IBCOs address issues at higher levels of government. Even though most IBCOs limit their primary organizing to cities/counties, 50% are affiliated with statewide collaborations, and 25% are affiliated with nationwide collaborations. In

1999, only 20% of IBCOs participated in statewide collaborations, and even fewer participated in nationwide efforts. These are profound changes in a field of organizing once criticized as narrowly local, parochial, and non-strategic. Today, large sectors of the IBCO field transcend localized concerns while remaining deeply embedded in local communities and operate with a strategic vision that carries them into regional-, state-, and national-level work.

All this collaborative work may have contributed to another development in organizing culture: IBCOs sharing credit for victories. In answering the survey, several IBCO directors made unsolicited statements such as, “We would like to reiterate that many organizations and factors have contributed to these victories, but we believe that we played a substantial role in contributing to these important changes.” Long-time observers of the field will recognize just what a cultural shift this represents.

Some IBCOs, however, avoid participating in multi-organizational coalitions and addressing issues at higher levels of government, arguing that doing so would undermine their local organizing work or lead their member institutions to become less engaged. Nonetheless, the trend

among IBCOs seems to be toward building collaborative ties “upward” through the national networks, “outward” through local coalitions, and/or “upward and outward” through national coalitions seeking to influence public policy at higher political levels.<sup>33</sup>

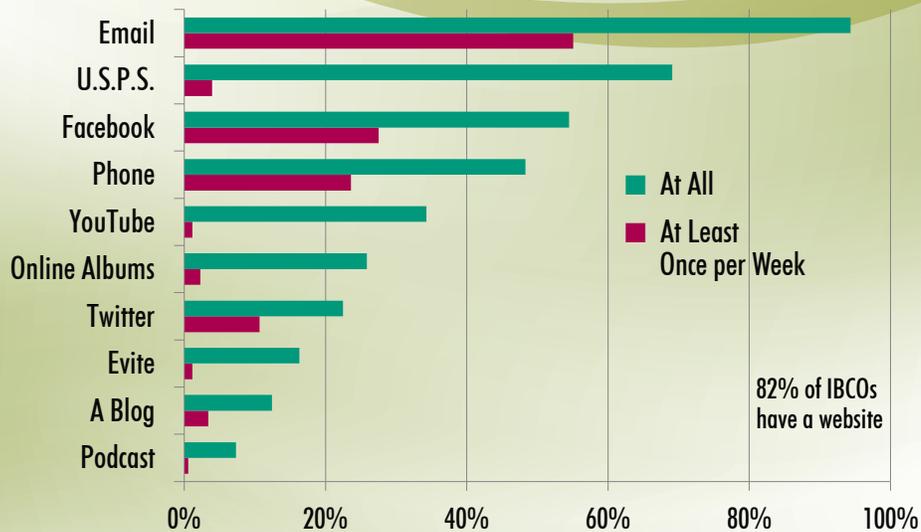
### ***Communicating with Constituents***

The ways IBCOs communicate with their constituents has shifted dramatically in the last decade. Technological developments alone have created several new modes of communication. Email, for example, has become the most prevalent form of mass communication among IBCOs, with 94% indicating that they correspond with their constituents via email.<sup>34</sup> Eighty-two percent of IBCOs have a website, though the sophistication levels of those sites and how regularly they are updated vary greatly.

33. Further analysis could assess how collaboration affects IBCOs by comparing IBCOs from the 1999 study that participated in multi-organizational coalitions and addressed issues at higher levels with those that did not. Further research is also needed on the emergent national issue work by the networks and the strategic alliances that have developed from that work.

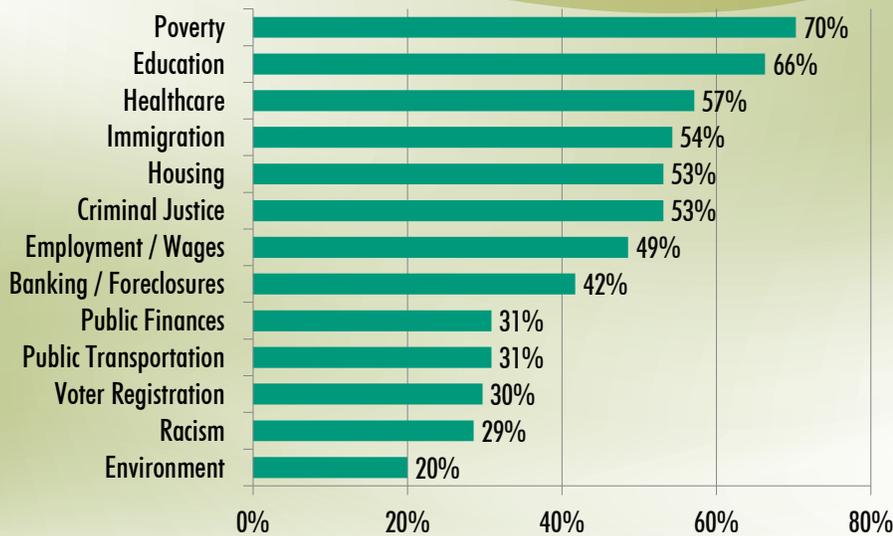
34. A handful of IBCOs indicated that they do not “mass communicate” with their constituents because it violates their organizing philosophy which emphasizes corresponding with constituents exclusively face-to-face via one-to-ones. This stance was virtual dogma within organizing at one time.

## Modes of Mass Communication



## Primary Issues

*Percentage of IBCOs Actively Addressing the Following Issues*



The most notable communication difference among active IBCOs is the extent to which they use social media to facilitate organizing efforts. Half of the IBCOs use Facebook, and a quarter update their pages at least weekly. Less than one third of IBCOs use YouTube, Twitter, blogs or podcasts, and fewer than 10% use

these communication tools on a weekly basis. Our communication with IBCOs during this study suggests that constituents' lack of access or familiarity with more advanced modes of communication may limit some IBCOs from using even more common technologies, such as email.

IBCOs use a variety of languages when conducting their organizing activities. Every IBCO uses English; however, 60% now also report conducting some organizing activities in Spanish. Various IBCOs use other languages (including Creole, Hmong, Arabic, French, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Chinese), yet none of those languages is used by more than 5% of IBCOs.

Over the last decade, IBCOs have also increased their communications outreach to specific constituencies, including immigrants and youth: The percentage of IBCOs who reported engaging in outreach to immigrants rose from half to two-thirds, and the percentage who reported engaging in outreach to youth rose from about a third to over half of all IBCOs.

### Issue Work

IBCOs are addressing a wide variety of social issues. Generally speaking, most IBCOs are working to reduce poverty and economic inequality. On average, each IBCO is addressing six issues, and the maximum number of issues any one IBCO is addressing is 14.<sup>35</sup> Over 50% of IBCOs reported at least one of the following issues as part of their work: education, health care, immigration, affordable housing, and the criminal justice system.<sup>36</sup> Between 30% and 50% of IBCOs reported addressing

35. On the survey, directors could indicate their level of involvement in addressing an issue over the last two years. We coded an issue as being "addressed" by the IBCO if the IBCO selected one of the two highest levels of involvement for that issue.

36. With the exception of health care and immigration, these were also the issues most commonly addressed by IBCOs in 1999. This reflects the dramatic expansion of state- and national-level work by some networks, which has focused partly on health reform (PICO) and immigration (PICO and Gamaliel).

the following issues: employment/wages, banking/foreclosures, public finances, public transportation, voter registration, or racism. Twenty percent reported addressing environmental issues. Less than 5% of IBCOs reported addressing issues related to farming, women’s rights, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS.<sup>37</sup>

37. As a collective, IBCOs are addressing most social issues; however, only one IBCO is actively

Historically, IBCOs have employed a relatively limited range of tactics. In recent years, however, many appear to have broadened their tactical repertoires. When the IBCO directors were asked to identify the concrete actions they have taken

addressing issues related to same-sex marriage. The lack of activity in this arena reflects the field’s strategy to focus on addressing issues of common concern and to avoid potentially divisive issues.

to address issues, their responses included a long list of diverse actions. We group those tactics into a few categories and offer an example of how that issue was addressed by organizing in local and higher-level political arenas:

<i>Tactic/practice:</i>	<i>Example from local work</i>	<i>Example from higher arena work</i>
Explore policy options	“Research Meeting” with city administrator or department head	Met with academic experts on the history of immigration reform
Gain budgetary expertise	Briefing by city council budget staff on revenues/outlays and city budgetary process	Met with Center on Budget Priorities to learn about federal budget priorities and options
Build relationships with key political actors	Cultivated ties to a politician over many years as he rose to increasing influence, eventually becoming mayor (key ally, sometimes opponent)	Met with hometown aides to congressional representative, gaining sufficient respect to meet with D.C. aides and eventually with Representative on specific issues (repeatedly).
Understand backroom political dynamics behind an issue	Met with allies on school board and asked what interests are in play on a specific upcoming decision	Met with congressional aides from both parties to discuss how to get financial reform legislation passed
Public actions and accountability sessions	Got mayor to commit to support specific appropriation in front of several thousand people (with press and TV coverage); showed school board president’s refusal to commit to teacher home visit, in front of 300 parents	Multiple actions through the Reform Immigration for America campaign for comprehensive immigration reform, including “March for America/Change takes Courage” and collaboration with statewide student organizations. National actions to hold Congress and Administration accountable to protect most vulnerable populations under health care reform (poor and immigrants)
Active civic engagement	Ran petition campaign to get referendum on ballot; ran pro-referendum campaign	Ran “Get Out the Vote” effort with several dozen faith communities simultaneously; registered several thousand new voters, drove them to polls on election day (one race was won by a few hundred votes).
Negotiation	Before public action, negotiated with mayor’s aides the outlines of what she could agree to in budget	Renegotiated the outlines of major national healthcare reform legislation as it moved through congressional approval (also state-level examples)
Direct action	Occupied office of local “shady employer”	Simultaneous multi-site occupation of bank offices involved in unfair foreclosure practices
Moral/ethical framing of issues	Sponsored local prayer vigil for vulnerable immigrants and victims of gang violence; linked to immigration reform	Provided key “faith voices” in Congressional testimony regarding national health care reform, including need for increased access for poor and vulnerable

## Outcomes Achieved

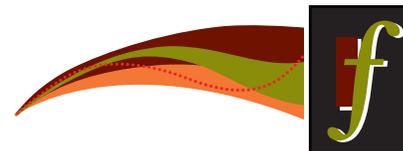
Through these organizing efforts, IBCOs strive to bring about concrete changes that improve the quality of life in poor, working class, and middle-income communities. As in the past, sometimes these are small changes that make a difference to a local community, such as better after-school programs in working class neighborhoods or better community policing in a town. But

today these are sometimes changes in major policy arenas at the state or national level, the most dramatic recent examples being passage of the Affordable Care Act and reauthorization of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, both of which narrowly passed with key involvement by the PICO National Network. But stories of policy impact at the regional, state, or national levels could be multiplied many times over. That IBCOs have achieved these

outcomes during a period of widespread reduction of public services makes them all the more significant.

When the directors were asked to identify their organization’s accomplishments, their responses included the following (grouped under the most common issue areas reported):

Issue Area	EXAMPLES FROM:		
	Local Level	State/Regional Level	National Level
Healthcare	Passage of new funding for health clinics in targeted poor communities where there was overuse of emergency rooms	Gained new money for HIV and diabetes care for uninsured patients; created more accessible and lower-cost health insurance and medical care alternatives	Amendment of federal Affordable Care Act to provide better access for low-income families; Signing of SCHIP (children’s program) after two presidential vetoes
Poverty Employment and Wages	Passage of living wage ordinance and increased minimum wages; agreement for use of unionized labor on all county capital construction	Restored some state budget cuts (housing, health care, education, youth development)	Helped to strengthen financial reform legislation; gained U.S. Dept. of Labor commitment to address “wage theft” issues; some wages recovered
Education	Built parent-union compromise on teacher evaluations; new charter schools; teacher-home visitation program; capital and operational funds for charter schools; major new funding for local public schools	Saved funding for pre-K and after-school programs; restored state funding cuts and/or prevented deeper cuts	Some IBCOs involved in policy discussions related to flexibility of standards under “No Child Left Behind;” reports in this issue area all focused on local and state levels
Immigration	Stopped police impoundment of vehicles driven by undocumented immigrants	Eliminated barriers to immigrant access to healthcare; California and Illinois DREAM Acts passed	Supported network effort to pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform law (unsuccessful so far)
Housing and Foreclosure	New affordable rental units constructed or renovated; new mixed-use/mixed-income owner-occupied housing development	Passed state laws limiting predatory lending and reforming foreclosure	\$4 billion for public housing nationally; annual funding of Affordable Housing Trust Fund
Criminal Justice	Anti-crime strategy meetings that reduced crime; anti-racial profiling laws and changes in process for selecting police recruits; new police accountability via dashboard and body camera requirements	Implementation of “Ceasefire” and “Lifelines to Healing” (violence-reduction and reintegration) projects	Advanced community policing in local jurisdictions nationally



Putting reliable dollar figures on these achievements in a variety of political arenas is extraordinarily difficult, and we do not attempt to do so in this brief report. (See our subsequent reports and the recent studies by the National Center for Responsive Philanthropy for efforts to estimate the dollar impact of the IBCO field).

The most important recent change has been that the number of IBCOs engaged in policy change at the higher levels of government has grown dramatically. The range extends from the neighborhood level to the national level, and many IBCOs are simultaneously addressing issues at multiple levels. In 1999, it was rare for IBCOs to address issues beyond the city level. Since then, however, this organizing strategy has become much more common. Over 87% of IBCOs report addressing at least one issue at the state or national level.<sup>38, 39</sup> The issues most commonly addressed at the state or national level are immigration, health care, banking/foreclosures, public finances, employment/wages, poverty, racism, and public transportation.

Examples of specific accomplishments at the state and national levels reported by IBCO directors give some sense of the kinds of gains that have been made (see Appendix for further reports):

**On healthcare reform:**

*Our [IBCO] leaders worked tirelessly in support of health care reform and played a key role along with the [national network] in getting strong affordability standards. Our leaders played a key role in bringing health care reform home (i.e. bringing money and policy changes flowing from healthcare reform down to the local level), and were successful in securing a site and full funding for a new clinic. It will provide health access to critically underserved [part of our county].*

*We advocated for quality, affordable, accessible, health care for all people. National health care reforms were passed, and state wide mental health care reform legislation passed.*

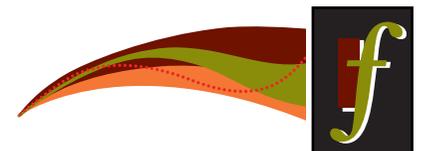
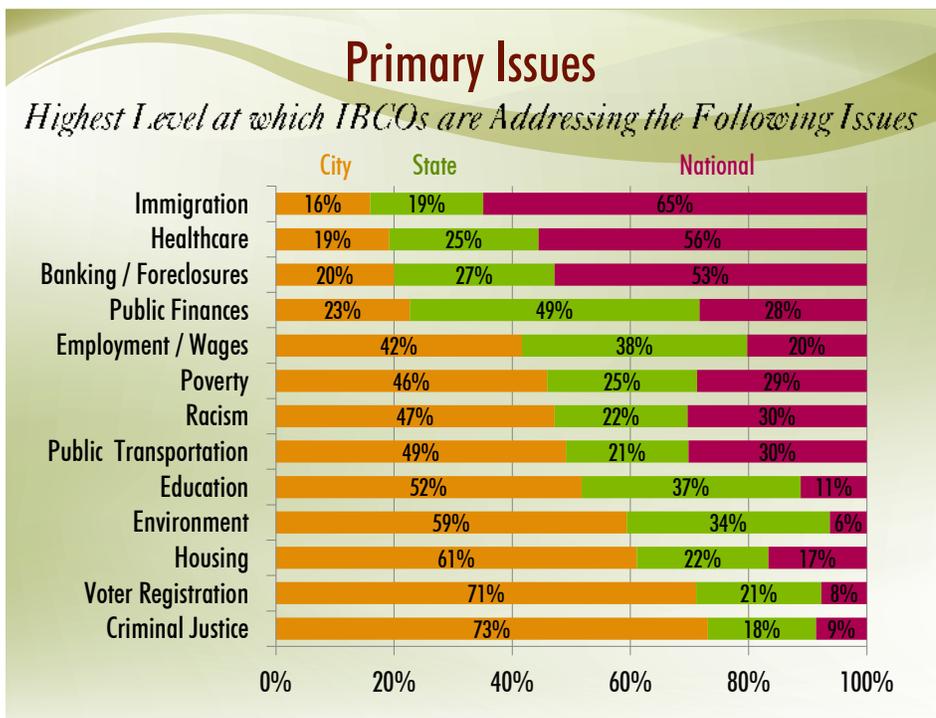
**On banking reform:**

*Our campaign played a key role in demonstrating public outrage at the role of large banks in the collapse of the economy during the debate over financial reform. We helped to initiate and orchestrate some of the largest actions around the country from April to June 2010 that helped to shape media coverage that emphasized the public outcry for stronger reform. This had a direct impact on strengthening financial reform legislation as it moved through the Senate and also contributed to our ability to win the new federal policy to provide assistance for unemployed homeowners.*

*From San Francisco to New York, Chicago to Charlotte, Kansas City to Washington, D.C., we let Congress know that a broad cross-section of Americans would hold them accountable for passing real financial reform. We shut down the financial district in San Francisco, Kansas City, and Wall Street. We shut down K Street at the height of the process and told a new public narrative that declared decisively that the American people were angry at the abuses of Wall Street and were demanding change.*

**On foreclosure reform:**

*We played a strong role in pressing for the creation of a national loan modification program and were credited in the White House's online rollout of the "Making Home Affordable" program in April 2009... Many of our members and their stories were featured in a series of local and national media coverage and served to generate pressure on the Department*



of Treasury to launch an audit and investigation which preceded the Attorneys General lawsuit.

[A particular] meeting generated national media coverage and our recommendations have been circulated to key Administration officials, including Peter Rouse, the current White House chief of staff. Our meeting was also referenced by a group of U.S. Senators in a letter to the Treasury Secretary where they supported the key points of our recommendations. The Treasury Department has made a series of policy changes in response to our recommendations.

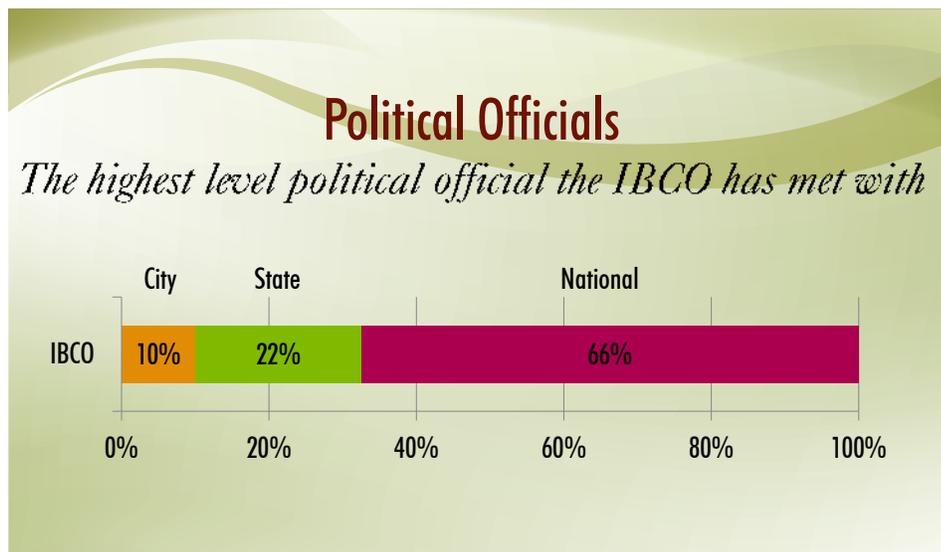
### On employment & public transportation:

We maintained state funding [for public transit] through a designated transportation fund. We won collective bargaining for transit workers. We won a commitment from two Congressmen to solve a federal funding issue.... On the national level, we have been to Washington, D.C. four times to speak with congressional leaders or their staff about the need for the reauthorization of transportation legislation and our interests around jobs and flexible funds.

### On immigration reform:

We fought successfully to stop Arizona-style legislation from coming to our state; that fight will continue next year.

We won passage of [state-level] Dream Act.



### On electoral influence:

[Local Congressman] came under heavy assault by the coal industry for his position against mountaintop removal mining. We have two large chapters in his district that registered, informed, and mobilized thousands of voters. He won by 647 votes.

Researchers who have recently sought to substantiate similar claims have found them quite credible.<sup>40</sup> In these higher-level arenas, such victories almost always involve broad coalitions of organizations and officials and are rarely the work of single organizations or even networks. But these IBCO organizations have been among the crucial actors in a variety of important high-level policy outcomes.

### Engaging Political Officials

A strategic component of IBCOs' work is to engage political officials. In the last year, 92% of IBCOs had met with a city-level political official about a particular issue. Although

40. See the recent reports of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (Ranghelli 2012).

some IBCOs restrict their organizing area to a city, most are also engaging political officials beyond the city level. Eighty-four percent had met with a state-level official within the last year and 66% had met with a national-level official. However, not all IBCOs have embraced this trend toward higher level engagement. Twelve percent of IBCOs had not engaged any political official beyond the city level, and 34% had not engaged any official beyond the state level.

Most IBCOs interact with political officials in order to be more effective at influencing decisions in public life. Thus, their meetings with officials do not always focus exclusively on winning a particular issue. Rather, they can also be used to lay the relational groundwork for future negotiations or to gain political knowledge, etc. IBCO directors reported several different kinds of outcomes from their meetings with political officials.

Through these meetings, IBCOs:

- built relationships useful for their future political work;
- increased their understanding of the political dynamics underlying a particular issue;
- educated the official about their organization's position on an issue;
- informed the official about the organization's power base in the local community (or statewide, or nationally in some cases);
- held the official accountable for community needs and for the commitments he or she made during elections;
- promoted bipartisan cooperation for good of the community;
- extracted specific commitments to support concrete policy proposals;
- articulated the moral issues behind particular public policies;
- provided opportunities for leaders to tell their own stories to powerful people;
- helped their leaders develop a better understanding of how power works in public life

### ***Projecting Power in Public Life:***

Developing community leaders, identifying issues, and engaging political officials are means to an overall goal of projecting influence in public life to achieve change in the issue areas listed above. One way IBCOs achieve influence is by turning people out for public actions. This study assesses this dimension of power projection via two measures: each IBCO's largest turnout

and its total turnout over the last year. While the attendance figures reported for the largest public action decreased since 1999, the data suggests that total number of people mobilized by IBCO increased.<sup>41</sup> In 2011, IBCO directors reported over 200,000 people attended at least one event in the course of a year. The typical organization-wide public action drew roughly 600 people, and the average IBCO reported having 1,000 different people participate in their events during the past year.<sup>42</sup> Any organization that reliably turns out 600 people for focused meetings on substantive political issues is likely to gain attention in most American cities. Furthermore, IBCOs have the potential to generate even larger turnouts and impact at the polls, considering that their member institutions collectively represent over 5 million people.

Overall, the picture of higher-level issue work and extensive meetings with state and federal officials, along with specific issue victories in those higher arenas, provide evidence of intensified power projection in the IBCO field over the last ten years. That power has been achieved despite a decline in attendance at the largest public actions, previously the

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41. Because of differences in the wording of questions between the two surveys, the data regarding the total number of people mobilized in a year is not strictly comparable.

42. IBCOs vary in the number of people they can mobilize for their events, and their capacity often corresponds with the number of member institutions they have. While the average number of member institutions per IBCO has declined, the ability of member institutions to mobilize their constituents has remained the same. On average, each member institution tends to mobilize approximately 30 participants to public events. When considering an IBCO's overall ability to mobilize participants, it can expect, on average, approximately 60 different people per member institution to attend at least one of their events per year. However, the mobilizing ability of a member institution varies greatly and depends on several factors, including its size and level of involvement with the IBCO.

field's primary tactic for enhancing its influence. Instead, IBCOs have developed a wider array of tactics. They now turn out people for more events, coordinate organizing efforts at several levels simultaneously, and cultivate strategic relationships with political officials and institutional leaders. Beyond this, they now systematically use electronic communication technologies, actively cultivate media coverage, and draw on policy expertise more broadly and systematically than in the past.

One way to see these developments in the field over the last decade is to compare the ideas of hard power<sup>43</sup> and soft power. The older model focused primarily on creating a "power organization" through what might be called hard power,<sup>43</sup> "organized people" holding political officials accountable via the sheer weight of their numbers. This involved building power through internal relational work and then projecting that power into the political sphere.

Today, the IBCO field has learned to extend that relational power externally in more systematic ways via a wider set of organizing practices more oriented toward what might be called soft power, which involves cultivating relationships with political officials and other institutional leaders, negotiating policies, building long-term strategic alliances, and drawing on specialized policy expertise. Linking these hard and soft forms of power appears to have bolstered IBCOs' public influence.

Political reality is harsh, however. Severe and rising economic inequality continues to be the defining

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43. The soft power/hard power distinction as used here is adapted from the international relations literature; see Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. 1998 "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age." *Foreign Affairs* 77:81-94.

reality of American life, and in a post-Citizens United context, money flows virtually unrestricted into the political arena. If IBCOs and their “organized people” want to lower economic inequality and counter the anti-democratic influence of

“organized money,” they will have to project still greater influence in the public arena. To do so, IBCOs must continue cultivating a sophisticated mix of soft and hard power. Even as they embrace more relational, cultural, and negotiation-based

mechanisms for exerting power, nothing can replace their ability to turn people out for public action and contested elections. If they sustain that balance, they can make a crucial contribution to renewing American democracy in the years ahead.

## CONCLUSION

As American society confronts the challenges it faces in 2012 and beyond, new sources of democratic vigor will be required. No easy solutions to our economic, political, or cultural problems are available, and no political superhero will rescue us from them. A movement embodying the democratic will and political courage of the American people must come together with dedicated leaders in politics, business, labor, philanthropy, the law, and cultural and academic institutions. This movement must craft the reforms and lead the hard choices that will address our challenges. That is how real change has happened before in American history—and how it will happen again.

Such movements have typically been built via “federated structures” linking local, state, and national-level organizing capacities: for example, gaining benefits for military veterans after the Civil War. No single organization fully provides such a mobilizing structure today, but as a field, institution-based community organizing offers a substantial base around which such a movement might coalesce. As documented in this report, the number of individuals represented by IBCO member institutions exceeds the historic threshold for wielding such influence, and in the last ten years the field has

moved a long way towards creating the federated structure needed for national change.

IBCOs bridge many of the racial/ethnic and religious divides that fracture American society, divides that constantly stymie serious efforts to address our challenges. Indeed, IBCOs bridge those divides extraordinarily well in comparison to other organizations. The field’s deep ties to America’s diverse faith traditions, along with its active incorporation of spiritual practices into organizing efforts, allow IBCOs to offer the moral vision and prophetic voice to guide democratic reform efforts. The most effective IBCO practitioners combine strategic savvy, disciplined organizing practice, and political imagination to build effective democratic capacity at the scale required for national reform. For the IBCO field to reach its full potential, this savvy, discipline, and imagination must be multiplied throughout the IBCO sector.

A key challenge facing the field lies in consistently maximizing its political leverage. Practitioners can do so by coordinating local level organizing with work at higher political levels, by judiciously and strategically expanding into new geographic settings, through sophisticated use of new and “old” media, and through

effective collaboration with other kinds of organizations. Important progress has been made in these areas in the last decade, and significant new initiatives and experimental forays are occurring in 2012. All these efforts will require new funding, new organizing talent, and creative responses to emerging challenges. If these efforts create foundations for future coordination—within this sector and beyond—democracy in America will benefit.

Although the strategic capacity of the IBCO field today significantly transcends the state of the field we analyzed a decade ago, institution-based community organizing will not reform American society alone. Today, no single sector can provide the mass movement or strategic capacity necessary for deep societal reform. Collaborators from other sectors will be crucial co-leaders in this effort, learning from and teaching the IBCO sector the arts and skills of effective democratic reform. Given the promising current state of the field, institution-based community organizing is poised to be a strategic partner in the coming democratic renewal of America. Only via such renewal will our economics and politics better reflect the shared aspirations and hopes of the American people in all their diversity.

## **Appendix A: Research Opportunities**

Link to the Full Survey Instrument <http://www.soc.duke.edu/~brf6/ibcosurvey.pdf>

Further Research from the IBCO State of the Field Project

“Building Bridges, Building Power” represents only the initial report on the rich data collected during the IBCO State of the Field Project. Further research will be published in articles, a book, and short reports on key findings. We intend to write in the following areas (depending on unfolding priorities and funding availability):

- Racial justice work within the culture of organizing, the shifting racial/ethnic profile of the field, and changes in how IBCOs approach issues of racial/ethnic identity
- Immigrants working in or with IBCOs, how IBCOs engage immigrants and bridge the immigrant-native divide, and how this intersects with changing dynamics around race/ethnicity in IBCO work
- New developments in state-level and national-level organizing (within IBCO models and/or in collaboration with other kinds of organizations): new tactics, new collaborations, new strategic visions and kinds of influence
- Religion in the culture of IBCO work: In facing a variety of internal and external challenges, how do these organizations draw on the cultural resources of the diverse faith communities that are key institutional members? What role do spiritual practices (public and private) play in this work?
- Denominational profiles of IBCO work: Analyses of the extent and character of involvement in institution-based community organizing by particular denominations or religious traditions
- Impact of varying organizational profiles on the efficacy of different IBCOs
- Comparative analysis with other organizing models, including that of National People’s Action
- Fundraising in IBCO work: Challenges to adequate resource provision for IBCOs’ strategic ambitions; the implications of the field’s changing funding profile; the impact of national-level strategic funding on the field; and the impact on IBCO work of member-generated versus foundation and corporate funding
- Geographical profiles: Statistical profiles linked to case studies of IBCO work in particular states, regions, or metropolitan areas (to be done with collaborating researchers)
- Network effects: Analyses of the effects on organizational efficacy of organizational ties within a given IBCO; organizational ties from an IBCO to its local environment; and organizational ties from an IBCO to a larger national, regional, or state network of any kind
- Others to be determined as time, priorities, and funding develop

For further conversation on these or other research ideas, contact Richard Wood at [rlwood@unm.edu](mailto:rlwood@unm.edu), Brad Fulton at [Brad.Fulton@duke.edu](mailto:Brad.Fulton@duke.edu), or Kathryn Partridge at [interfaithfunders@gmail.com](mailto:interfaithfunders@gmail.com).

## **Appendix B: Publications**

Interfaith Funders Publications:

Warren, Mark R. and Richard L. Wood. “Faith-Based Community Organizing: The State of the Field.” Interfaith Funders, 2001.

“FBCO: Building Democracy for the Next Millennium.” Interfaith Funders, 2001.

“FBCO: Five Stories of Community Change.” Interfaith Funders, 2001.

“Renewing Congregations: The Contribution of Faith-Based Community Organizing.” Interfaith Funders, 2004.

“Good for the Soul, Good for the Whole.” Interfaith Funders, 2004.

Mary Ann Ford Flaherty and Richard L. Wood. "Faith and Public Life: Faith-Based Community Organizing and the Development of Congregations." Interfaith Funders, 2004.

Coming in 2013:

Richard L. Wood's new book, *Faith and the Fire of Public Life*, on the contributions of institution-based community organizing to strengthening diverse faith communities from a wide variety of religious traditions. Publisher to be announced.

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Warren, Mark. *Dry Bones Rattling*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Wood, Richard L. "Higher Power: Strategic Capacity for State and National Organizing", in *Transforming the City: Community Organizing and the Challenge of Political Change*, edited by Marion Orr, 164-92. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2007.

Wood, Richard L. and Mark R. Warren. "A Different Face of Faith-Based Politics: Social Capital and Community Organizing in the Public Arena." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 22, no. 9/10 (2002): 6-54.

Wood, Richard L. *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America*, in the "Morality and Society Series" edited by Alan Wolfe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

## ***Appendix C: Partial List of Issues Addressed and Gains Made***

### Partial List of Issues Addressed and Gains Made:

#### Health Care:

- Amendment of the federal Affordable Care Act to provide better access for low-income families;
- passage and signing of State Children's Health Insurance Program after two presidential vetoes by previous Administration;
- passage of new funding for health clinics in poor communities and increased incentives for health providers to serve underserved populations;
- gained new money for HIV and diabetes care for uninsured patients;
- created more accessible and lower-cost health insurance and medical care alternatives

#### Poverty/Employment/Wages:

- Living wage ordinance and increased minimum wages;
- agreement for use of unionized labor on all county capital construction;
- dedicated ARRA funding for transitional jobs;
- U.S. Dept. of Labor commitment to address "wage theft" issues, some wages recovered;
- money for long-term job training; training initiatives for jobs paying at least \$15/hour;
- local hiring/minority contractor preference and prevailing wage ordinances;
- legislation to reduce discrimination toward ex-offenders;
- congressional redistricting along pro-working family lines;
- organizing workers with unions; strike support;
- partial restoration of Earned Income Tax Credit;
- restored some federal and state budget cuts (housing, health care, education, youth development); prevented worse state budget cuts;

#### Education:

- Teacher-home visitation program;
- capital and operational funds for charter schools; founded new charter schools;
- major new funding for local public schools; small schools initiative;
- saved funding for pre-K and after-school programs;
- restored state funding cuts/prevented deeper cuts;
- reduced truancy; asserted parental involvement in public school decisions;
- new programs to value diversity in schools;
- new discipline programs; anti-bullying resources;
- improved test scores; new school accountability state-wide; etc.
- built parent-union compromise on teacher evaluations;
- school transportation overhaul for better school choice;
- eliminated teacher lay-offs;

### Immigration:

- Eliminated barriers to immigrant access to state health care;
- stopped local police enforcement of immigration laws;
- got sympathetic legislators to “bottle up” anti-immigrant legislation in committee;
- temporary protected status for Haitians;
- California and Illinois DREAM Acts passed; some DREAM provisions adopted locally (e.g. in-state tuition);
- Spanish 911 services and public transit materials;
- worked unsuccessfully for Comprehensive Immigration Reform law;
- stopped “Arizona-like proposals;”
- supported national network Comprehensive Immigration Reform effort;
- got state to withdraw from the Secure Communities Program;
- changed how business leaders, religious leaders, and people of faith think about immigration;
- promoted collaboration between African American and Mexican immigrant communities

### Housing/Foreclosures/Banking:

- Flipped U.S. Senator’s vote on finance reform;
- creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau;
- new local fees on banks for each foreclosure;
- creation of local/state housing trust funds; annual funding of Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- forced big banks to provide principle reductions on subprime mortgages;
- passed “replacement value” legislation;
- new affordable rental units constructed/renovated; new mixed-use/mixed-income owner-occupied housing development;
- \$4 billion for public housing nationally;
- passed state laws limiting predatory lending and reforming foreclosure;
- helped Bank of America improve practices toward military families;
- saved homes from foreclosure; won foreclosure mediation at county and state levels; lifted up moral and economic issues with foreclosures
- \$1 billion for unemployed homeowners facing foreclosure;
- built cooperative housing;
- forced new enforcement of existing slumlord legislation;
- helped congregations renegotiate mortgages;

### Criminal Justice:

- Advanced community policing in local jurisdictions nationally;
- new money for drug treatment and rehabilitation;
- immigrant-sheriff/police liaison programs;
- held “New Jim Crow” sessions with mayors, police chiefs, school board members;
- promoted better police investigations in high crime areas;
- decreased drug activity in local areas;
- implementation of “Ceasefire” and “Lifelines to Healing” (violence-reduction and re-integration) projects;
- new procedures for reporting police misconduct; new training in police academy; new police accountability via dashboard and body camera requirements; etc.
- “restorative justice” projects at local and state levels;
- roll-back of planned jail construction;
- new partnerships with law enforcement; anti-crime strategy meetings that reduced crime;
- anti-racial profiling laws and changes in process for selecting police recruits

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We dedicate this report to all those committed to the challenging work of community organizing. Your work to build justice and deepen democracy in America inspires us.

## ***WHO ARE INTERFAITH FUNDERS?***

Interfaith Funders (IF) is a network of faith-based and secular grant makers committed to social change and economic justice. IF works to advance the field of institution-based community organizing and to educate and activate IF members' constituencies. Membership is open to entities that share our mission and make a significant commitment to our joint work, including:

Bend the Arc: Jewish Partnership for Justice  
Catholic Campaign for Human Development  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Division  
for Church in Society  
Maine Initiatives  
The McKnight Foundation  
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

C.S. Mott Foundation  
The Needmor Fund  
New York Foundation  
One Great Hour of Sharing Fund of the Presbyterian  
Church (USA)  
Sister Fund  
Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock

Each IF member also supports a broad range of community organizing groups in low- and moderate-income communities around the country, including faith-based groups and those using other organizing models.

## ***What does Interfaith Funders do?***

- Collaborative grant-making, 1998-2005: IF awarded over \$1.8 million in grants to congregation-based community organizing groups and networks to promote living wages, school and welfare reform, economic development for impoverished communities, and organizer recruitment in the field.
- Collaborative research: IF conducted the first ever field-wide, national study of IBCO, the findings of which are documented in "Faith-Based Community Organizing: The State of the Field" (2001), and updated the findings with this IBCO State of the Field study in 2011. Through our 2004 published study on congregational development, IF seeks to increase support for and engagement in CBCO among congregations and faith traditions.
- Strategic convening: IF brings together organizers, leaders in faith traditions, funders, and scholars to discuss the current state and future of the field and other topics of mutual interest, such as the role of IBCO in strengthening congregations.
- Education and outreach sessions: IF provides workshops on IBCO at funder conferences and briefings, gatherings of faith communities, and individual meetings. IF also offers members valuable networking and internal education



*Rich Wood*

Rich Wood (Associate Professor of Sociology, University of New Mexico) served as Research Director for the Interfaith Funders' State of the Field Project, as part of his focus on the cultural and institutional bases of democratic life. Wood's *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America* (University of Chicago Press, 2002) won the 2003 ASA award for outstanding book in the sociology of religion. Wood has led major funded research on religion and politics in the United States, the Middle East, and Central America. He is currently writing *Faith and the Fire of Public Life*, on the impact of democratic engagement on faith communities. He co-edits the *Cambridge Studies of Social Theory, Religion, and Politics*.



*Kathy Partridge*

Kathy Partridge (Executive Director, Interfaith Funders) served as the administrative director for the State of the Field Project, coordinating publications and communications as well as co-authoring the report. She has been an organizer in Mississippi, Europe, and Colorado, and has led non-profit organizations in management, development, communications, and volunteer coordination, from the local to the international level. Partridge was Program Officer with the Needmor Fund for ten years, where her grantmaking focused on community organizing nationwide and in the US South. Active in philanthropic reform, she co-authored the National Network of Grantmakers Common Grant Application. Partridge holds an M.A. from Regis University in Social Justice Philanthropy and Community Organizing.



*Brad Fulton*

Brad Fulton (Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology, Duke University) served as the lead researcher for the State of the Field Project. His research focuses on social movement organizations and the intersections of race, religion and social inequality. Fulton has recently completed two projects related to congregations and social service provision. One study demonstrates how congregations' collaborator networks shape their social service activity and the other study analyzes the factors influencing black churches' responsiveness to people living with HIV/AIDS. Fulton also has a forthcoming article (co-authored with Richard Wood) on the benefits and challenges of interfaith organizing, and another (co-authored with Lisa Keister) on religion and social stratification.



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