



International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Young Worker Group How-To Guide

Modeled after the AFL-CIO NextUp Toolkit

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“By providing opportunities for our young members to come together at the Young Workers events and activities, and creating their own young worker groups, they are able to gain knowledge about the history of the IATSE and gain a better understanding of our industry. They are skilled and sophisticated members who are able to build camaraderie and solidarity that helps to ensure they will carry us into the future with all our brothers and sisters in the labor movement.”

— International President Matthew D. Loeb

HISTORY OF THE IATSE

The National Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees was established in 1893 when ten cities with stagecraft workers that were affiliated with a labor union group called the Knights of Labor decided to join together and form a national union. The purpose of this affiliation was to achieve the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the workers in the entertainment industry by collectively organizing and bargaining with employers collectively to gain these improvements. In 1898, with the addition of two Canadian locals, the National Alliance became the International Alliance (IATSE), which has remained to this day. Over the years we have grown to become one of the largest unions in the entertainment industry with over 122,000 members in over 370 local unions.

As the decades progressed and technology changed, the crafts of the IATSE adapted as well. Theatrical events have grown to include more than just plays and musicals to other forms of amusement, and commercial and industrial tradeshows. Motion Pictures brought about not only the crafts that created the films themselves and the workers who showed them in movie theaters across North America, but the shows and movies we consume via the Internet and streaming as well. Television has adapted from small regional studios to globally televised events.

Through it all, the IATSE has been there to represent the workers in these various crafts: **the people who make the magic happen.**

STRUCTURE

The IATSE is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), and local unions are affiliated with the relevant state or provincial labor federations. The laws of the IATSE are found in the International Constitution and Bylaws, but each local also has its own Constitution and Bylaws.

All locals operate independently under a principle known as “Home Rule,” also known as “Local Autonomy.” This structure enables members to have a direct voice in their working lives. Members of each local determine their priorities and how they choose to operate through their own Executive Boards and general membership meetings.

The day-to-day administration of the IATSE affairs is in the hands of the International President, with an extended staff that spans the US and Canada to assist the local unions. The General Office is located in New York City with other offices in Los Angeles, Toronto, and Vancouver.

The IATSE is broken into 13 geographical districts. Most Districts meet at least once a year so members have another forum to raise and discuss issues that may affect members on a regional level. Each District has a secretary who coordinates and communicates information from the International, other regional IA locals, state/provincial federations, and worker groups.

The Supreme governing body of the IATSE is its Quadrennial Convention. Every four years, convention delegates – elected by their local unions – review the progress of the organization. It is at this time that the policies are changed or reasserted, that plans for the future are formulated, and the International Constitution and Bylaws are updated. It is also at this time the International Officers are elected by the membership.

Between Conventions, government of the IATSE is entrusted to its General Executive Board, which consists of the International President, the General Secretary-Treasurer, and thirteen International Vice Presidents. International Executive Board Meetings are held twice annually and are open to delegates from all IATSE local unions. The Union also provides a financial report to the Board and the members twice a year and has elected three Trustees to review the books every quarter.

The International also has a departmental structure within it. There are seven departments: Stagecraft, Motion Picture, Tradeshow, Television Broadcast, Education and Training, Communication, and Canadian Affairs.

The president also appoints International Representatives and Special Representatives to work and assist the Department Directors. There are 22 International Reps (full-time staff) and 6 Special Reps (part-time staff) located across the United States and Canada. The International President assigns representatives to various assignments.

In order to get the assistance of an IA Representative, the local must write to the International President requesting assistance, and he or she will then assign a Department Director or Representative to assist the local union. This can be assistance in organizing, contract negotiations, grievance arbitration, union administration, and other issues.

WHAT IS THE IATSE YOUNG WORKERS COMMITTEE?

To be an IATSE Young Worker, you should be committed to advancing the labor movement through any number of ways, whether it's participation in your local union's activities, activism within your community, or activism in the wider labor movement.

The International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees represents a wide variety of trades and crafts in the entertainment industry with a membership as wide and varied. Inspired by a growing push to engage young union members across North America, the IATSE Young Workers was formed January 2012 to give our young union members a greater understanding of the responsibilities of leadership and encourage their active participation in the IATSE.

Appointed by the IATSE International President and recruited through the membership, the Young Workers Committee is the core group of members behind the Young Workers initiatives, including the first-ever Young Worker Conferences in fall 2012 in Philadelphia, PA and the follow-up 2014 Conference in Portland, OR. The Conferences had rigorous education schedules aimed at empowering young members to best represent the IATSE in their local unions and on the jobsite or workplace.

The IATSE YWC will work with this mission and three goals always in mind:

1. Be part of something bigger.
2. Teach practical membership skills.
3. Identify young active members.

Our Young Workers run food drives, organize phone banks, volunteer their skills within their community, organize fellow entertainment workers, show solidarity with other unions, and bring education opportunities to their locals.

An effective young worker group is not a resource to just complain about issues that should be brought up directly with your local leadership. The goal is for younger members to be active participants in their local.

STARTING A YOUNG WORKER GROUP AT YOUR LOCAL UNION

If you'd like to form a committee within your local union, work with your local leadership and use your constitution and bylaws as guidelines. While all constitutions and bylaws are different, in many, the President of the local appoints committees. You should check your local constitution and bylaws to see how your local runs.

The IATSE does not have formal requirements for young workers groups. There are no Young Workers Committee rules and bylaws, and each group is free to function in a way that makes sense for the local and its members. You may refer to the IATSE International Young Worker Committee, but ultimately, decisions are up to your young worker group.

We encourage members to start out informally as a way to gauge interest. Reach out to young members of your local and organize a meet up. Using Google Groups can help streamline your communication (www.groups.google.com). Many IATSE young worker groups start a Facebook group – if you decide to do this, make sure that everyone is on board and that you're not excluding folks who may not have a Facebook profile.

GAUGING INTEREST AND RECRUITING

Before you've started your young worker group, you should talk to your local union leadership and fellow young workers and gauge interest. Has the idea been raised before? Are people interested, but concerned about time commitment? Having these conversations first will make the formation easier. We've outlined helpful strategies below to get you off the ground.

After you've established a group, you should continue thinking about how to expand and recruit. Even if you've established an informal group, recruiting members means you'll have more ideas and possibilities to push you in the right direction.

RECRUITMENT OBJECTIVES

- To start, build or develop a group
- Build membership in your YWG
- Create personal and working relationships with your members to instill motivation and stability

Before You Start

As a new or developing YWG, it is important to engage existing leadership about your young worker program. Having a good idea as to what the young worker program is all about and especially what it means to you can be very helpful. If you don't have your goals and objectives laid out yet, you can talk about why you think it's important for the labor movement and your local to engage young workers.

Recruiting New Members

Recruitment is a fundamental element of building and sustaining a strong YWG – and you should make sure that leadership is aware of any new members added to your group. When starting your YWG, you should consider establishing a strong leadership team. This team can be one or two people for small or new YWGs.

Regardless of who or how many people are associated with this development team, it is important they are dedicated and want to see your YWG grow and flourish.

Recruitment Strategies No One Can Refuse

- Establish YWG talking points – it is beneficial to have a clear, concise, and relevant pitch for your YWG. Make sure the rest of your group knows and can communicate this message. This will help you build recognition for the program and help with recruitment.
- Recruit for events. Meetings are important, but social events are great for sharing what the group is about and what you want to do. Start by hosting happy hours, potlucks, or game nights and get people out to local actions.
- Develop a listserv for your YWG through sign-ups and email blasts. You want to build a list that informs your members about activities and meetings (be conscious not to spam this list). As mentioned, a Google Group is a good way to get started.
- Use social media in a smart and effective way. Start a Young Worker Group page on Facebook and encourage members to like the page. Post relevant information and events.

Develop a Game Plan

- Determine strategic targets for recruiting and developing your YWG.

- Develop a target list of people who might be interested in supporting or joining your YWG.
- Determine a recruitment goal for regular meetings and overall membership.
- Talk to specific people in your workplace, within your union, apprentice program, or community.
- Have one-on-one conversations with others about your young worker group, invite them to a meeting/event and follow up with them. Have members of your leadership team meet and talk with every new member who joins the group.
- Do not limit yourself to just a single recruitment strategy. Always continue to evolve and find new and creative ways to engage young workers.
- Make sure you are available to people as a contact and provide multiple ways for people to get in touch with you.
- Have the local host a variety of events – not only should your meetings and events be worth coming to, they should be topically diverse to in turn diversify the interests of your members. Don't be afraid to embrace something different or new, or issues that fall outside of "union work."
- Develop an "ask" – a standardized pitch for getting people to try out your YWG.
- Have a consistent message and branding strategy. Think about what separates you from other groups or programs within your union. Use this to your advantage to draw union members into the importance of supporting the young worker program.
- Communicate success. People want to be a part of something that is actually getting things done.

Note: No matter how you decide to use these strategies, approaches and methods, just remember a person's initial interest must be matched by your ability to motivate them and establish a sense of personal camaraderie. But remember, this is a long-term project. Almost all young worker groups take some time to develop. Set realistic expectations and expect some frustration, but be patient and flexible.

Most importantly, have fun.

WRITING A MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is an incredibly important component of your young worker group. A mission statement describes what your group is about, what you do, and where you see yourselves going. This statement is a foundation of the plan that lays out how you will achieve your organization's objectives. We have attached a few examples of mission statements from other young worker groups across North America. Please feel free to adopt one as your own or work to write a new one that reflects your young worker group and members.

National AFL-CIO Next Up Young Worker Program

The mission of the young worker program within the AFL-CIO is to educate, empower and mobilize the next generation of labor leaders. Our goal is to educate all young people on the history and values of the labor movement, and to empower them to take an active role within their communities for the benefit of all workers. Furthermore, the Young Worker Program seeks to develop leaders, support youth initiatives, and foster solidarity and activism.

The Young Worker Program will lead a diverse and vibrant young labor movement that ensures that all people have the opportunity to secure a better future. By engaging rank-and-file union members, progressive allies, community groups and students, the Young Worker Program will advance social and economic justice.

Young Trade Unionists, Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO

The Young Trade Unionists works to promote, empower and unite members and non-members to participate in the labor movement through education, collaboration and active involvement to foster solidarity.

Canadian Labour Congress Young Workers

Young people undertake many forms of activism, and the labour movement is an effective venue for young people who want to engage with their workplaces, communities, country and world.

Oregon AFL-CIO Young Emerging Labor Leaders

The Oregon AFL-CIO Young Emerging Labor Leaders (YELL) mobilizes young union members to become leaders and activists for social change within their unions and communities at large. YELL provides networking opportunities and resources for young union members to engage in social gatherings, conferences and events. In doing so, YELL sisters and brothers work to build lasting labor solidarity, advance issues of social justice and find more inclusive ways to engage the current and future generations in the labor movement.

FORMING COMMITTEE GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

Now that you have a young worker group started and the support of your local leadership, what comes next? There is a wide range of activities your group can become engaged in.

First off, communicate success: we strongly recommend that each young worker group pick a specific action or event to start off with. This ensures that you will begin with an accomplishment, demonstrating to your local leadership that a young worker group is a positive, worthwhile endeavor.

Once you've successfully executed your initial action or event, brainstorm additional activities! Be sure to consider capacity – it is very likely that running one project at a time is the best way to ensure success.

It is critical the activities of your young worker group are inclusive of all members and of interest to young members. Some additional activities you may want to get involved in might already be taking place within your local labor movement, so try to communicate and collaborate when possible. One of the great things about your young worker group is that you bring new and creative ideas and perspectives.

Ideas for Activities:

Community Outreach and Involvement

Team up with a community or charity group or faith-based organizations to help out at an event or in a campaign. This will do well to build solidarity among your committee, give back to the community, and increase recognition and a positive perception of the labor movement and its members. Many IATSE young worker groups have organized food and clothing drives, and collected toys for children around the holidays.

Organize a Social Event

Organize a social event that reflects your interests, like a movie night or sporting event. Organize an informal gathering like “Labor Cheers” at a local restaurant once a month for members and nonmembers.

Training and Education

As a committee, figure out what areas of the labor movement or other issues you would like to know more about and work with local leadership to determine whether there already is training in place or how to get it. The labor movement and its allies have a wealth of resources, so ask what is available or request training you think is important. Young workers also should take the opportunity to develop and do peer training or presentations to leadership and other groups.

The IATSE Training Trust Fund offers many training and education opportunities for your local to take advantage of. Visit www.iatsetrainingtrust.org to learn more.

Consider bringing the Why Unions Still Matter Roadshow to your local, and invite members of the labor community in your area to attend. The Roadshow makes the case that strong unions are an essential component of a strong and stable economy, and it was developed at the Labor Education Program at the University of Arkansas Little Rock, in conjunction with the IATSE. iatse.net/roadshow-schedule-request.

Political Action

Getting involved in political action is very important in every aspect of our lives. Volunteer on political campaigns, and educate fellow members on campaign issues or encourage them to come

out and vote. Learn more about the labor movement and political action by having a presentation at your next meeting.

If you're a local in the United States, you can organize an IATSE Political Action Committee (PAC) drive at your local. The IATSE-PAC has been launched as a way for the IATSE to stand up to the recent attacks on our members from anti-worker politicians. The IATSE believes that we must stand up to these attacks and ramp up our voice in politics through waging this campaign. The mission of the PAC is to fight politicians and policies that do not benefit our members. Learn more about starting a PAC drive at your local here: iatse.net/start-a-pac-drive.

Organizing

Organizing starts at the local level, and could be one focus for a young worker committee. Peer-to-peer conversations when organizing often are more effective, giving young workers an advantage when trying to organize other young workers.

The International can send a representative to lead the Continuing Organizing Member Education Training (COMET). COMET teaches the principles of organizing, and it's a great way to get the conversation started. Contact Joe Hartnett in the International office for more information: 212-730-1770.

Your local can also request copies of the IATSE Organizing Resource Book from the International office: 212-730-1770.

Mentorship Program

Work with local union leadership to develop a Mentorship Program for young or new members with their peers or experienced members. The Mentorship Program could be as simple as assigning an experienced member to sit with a new member at a union meeting, or something more structured that exists over a longer period of time.

Some locals have held social events with retired members so all members – young and old – can better understand each other, and the history and future of the IATSE.

Develop/Update Communication Outlets

Create or update the local union's Facebook page, blog or website. Write an article for your local union newsletter or create a YouTube video that shows off what you do or an event you're hosting. Start a Flickr account where all your members can share photos. Remember to get permission from your local union officers before starting anything on behalf of the local.

Marketing

Develop materials to promote the benefits of joining the union and highlight the positive aspects of the labor movement. This could include demonstrating the money and lifestyle benefits, a list of the "Top Five Reasons to Join a Union," showing the types of work opportunities available or the coolest jobs worked on by your local union.

Develop materials to promote the work of your young worker group. Include highlights of events that already have taken place as well as upcoming events. Always include contact information so people know how to get more information.

YOUNG WORKER GROUP CHECKLIST

- Consult local leadership and Constitution and Bylaws.***
Most constitutions and bylaws include language about forming a committee. Talk with your local leadership and consult the bylaws if you wish to start a formal committee. The IATSE Young Workers Committee does not have formal requirements for young worker groups. Do what works best for your local.
- Gauge interest and recruit young members.***
Is the local leadership on board? Are the young members in your local interested in forming a group? Do you have capacity to organize and run the group? Refer to our recruitment strategies for helpful tips and methods.
- Write a mission statement.***
A mission statement describes what your young worker group is about, what you do, and where you see yourselves going. This statement is a foundation of the plan that lays out how you will achieve your group's objectives.
- Convene a meeting and discuss actions the group would want to take – select one to start!***
Whether your group has dozens of ideas or not, you should pick one activity to complete as your first project to demonstrate success to your local leadership and fellow members.
- Strategize and execute the action.***
- Prepare a report to read at the next local membership meeting.***
You should prepare reports after each activity your young worker group engages in, and read them at local membership meetings. This is a great way to keep everyone up-to-date and feeling positive about the young worker group.

Optional: reach out to the IATSE International Young Workers Committee to report on your success – we are always excited to hear about what our sisters and brothers are up to! Send us an email at ywc@iatse.net.

www.iatse.net | ywc@iatse.net

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