
Access & Ownership

The Worker Center Prepaid Debit Card Pilot



Tam Doan | Project Manager | tdoan@communitychange.org



CENTER *for*
COMMUNITY CHANGE

How we got into this business...

- **Goals**

- **Access:** To provide convenient, reliable, robust and affordable financial services to low wage workers, mostly immigrants
- **Ownership:** To strengthen community organizations through increased membership and financial sustainability (e.g. with membership dues collection system).

- **Model**

- Community orgs like worker centers have relationships of trust and expertise in education — hence, more effective distribution networks

- **Research**

- **Need:** Half unbanked, half used check-cashers, most remitted
- **Interest:** Strong interest in savings accts, home loans, fin education
- **Affinity:** Close connection to worker centers & community



Pilot Take 1, Outcomes & Benefits

- Full-ish launch (300+ cards each) at 2 worker centers (PWC, NL)
- Test groups (10-50 cards issued) at 4 other worker centers
- Response to NYT article and Spanish language press — high demand!

Individuals

- Access to other marketplaces (e.g. online)
- Cost savings
- Domestic money share

Worker Centers

- Additional perspective on day to day life of workers
- Opportunities to engage workers in discussion on politics of money and decisions made with money
- Organizational development — information systems, membership programs



Pilot Take 1, Lessons Learned

- Quickly shifting industry
- Cash loading networks — costly, complicated
- Check cashing — not entirely solved
- Card to card transfers — uncertain remittance tool
- Authorization holds — prepaid debit, not credit card
- Lots of education needed



Pilot Take 2, Opportunities and Challenges

Prepaid Debit Card Feature Highlights

- Low cost cash loading at worker center
- Bill pay (to non-merchants)
- Alternative credit building

In the Works or Exploring

- Integrate with remittance company for card to cash solution
- Text message interactivity
- Check loading

Open Questions

- What impact will this product/service have on the economic security and mobility of low wage workers?
- What are the resource demands for community organizations?
- How might this product/service link or offer transition into other financial services and asset-building?



Project Partners

National Organizations

Center for Community Change
Enlace
Interfaith Worker Justice

Worker Centers in Pilot

Alliance to Develop Power, Springfield, MA
El Centro Humanitario, Denver, CO
IDEPSCA, Los Angeles, CA
La Raza Centro Legal, San Francisco, CA
New Labor, New Brunswick, NJ
Pilipino Worker Center, Los Angeles, CA
Voces de la Frontera, Milwaukee, WI
Workplace Project, Hempstead/Long Island, NY

For more information:

Tam Doan
Center for Community Change
1536 U St NW
Washington, DC 20009
tdoan@communitychange.org
202-339-9364

