



## **Case Study 2.1: Center for Frontline Retail and CDP Report: Pathways to Success: The Need for Accessible, Appropriate Trainings for Retail Workers, 2017**

### **Background on the Organization and Issue**

The Center for Frontline Retail (CFR) is a worker-led organization committed to improving the lives of retail workers through community organizing, industry analysis, and leadership development. CFR works to simultaneously elevate workers' voices and raise standards in the retail sector. CFR's prior research has shown that retail workers face discrimination and harassment in the workplace, along with unfair scheduling practices.

Through discussions with their members, CFR identified a lack of training opportunities for workers, impacting their ability to advance in the sector. CFR also noticed that women and people of color are disproportionately affected by the lack of training from employers and as a result lack opportunities for career advancement.

In order to document the lack of training and advancement opportunities for retail workers, and the disproportionate effect of this on women and people of color, CFR partnered with the Community Development Project on a participatory action research project in order to voice the concerns of retail workers and highlight CFR's training model as a pathway for advancement. This project ultimately resulted in a report that describes workers' desire for, and barriers to, training and advancement opportunities in the retail industry, outlines policies that would set aside money to train retail workers, and puts the CFR training model forward to train and educate entry level workers, as well as higher level training to grow within the retail industry.

**Below is a description of the Center for Frontline Retail Research Project, based on the Participatory Action Research guiding framework (see Tools [2.1](#) and [2.2](#)).**

### **WHAT...**

#### **Were the Organizing Goals connected to this research?**

- To generate data on the training needs of retail workers in NYC.
- To document and generate data on the extent to which retail workers are offered training and education programs by their employers, and distinguish whether workers of color and women are able to access such programs.
- To document the experiences of people of color and women working in the retail industry in accessing appropriate trainings and education programs.
- To explore and document the existing training and education programs that are available to retail workers and their associated costs.

#### **Overall questions did CFR want to answer through their research?**

- What is the current training and education landscape for retail workers in NYC?
- What are the training and education needs of retail workers (with focus on women and people of color)?
- What are the experiences of women and people of color working in retail in accessing training and other career advancement opportunities?

### **WHY...**

#### **Is this research useful or important for CFR?**

- INTERNALLY: to base build and educate retail workers; to develop member leaders and their outreach skills.



- **EXTERNALLY:** to inform a curriculum developed for retail workers that would provide crucial training for career advancement; put together the landscape of barriers that retail workers face in accessing education and training; put forward recommendations for retailers to adopt high road retail strategies.

## **WHO...**

### **Are the Stakeholders in this Issue?**

- Retail workers in New York City

### **Was CFR trying to influence?**

- New York City Council Members, Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, retail employers and brands, developers of commercial retail spaces

## **HOW...**

### **Did CFR gather information (what methods did they use)?**

- **SHORT SURVEY:** CFR members administered a survey to 300 retail workers in order to understand the training needs and existing training opportunities of retail workers working in general merchandise stores in New York City, specifically discount, fast fashion and high end stores. Retail workers were targeted during classes at the Center for Frontline Retail and when retail workers were on breaks throughout the work day.
- **FOCUS GROUPS:** In order to build and expand on the quantitative data gathered from surveys, CFR also conducted three focus groups with their members in order to collect qualitative data about the experiences and stories of retail workers accessing trainings in the workplace, and to show the barriers and discrimination faced by women and people of color.
- **SECONDARY RESEARCH:** CDP conducted an analysis of current literature and data to support findings from research, and to document the current landscape of trainings, curriculum and education programs in retail.

### **Did Research support CFR's organizing efforts?**

- The survey project provided opportunities to base build and educate community members. The focus groups provided member leaders with the opportunity to learn facilitation skills and a deepened understanding of the landscape of barriers facing workers.
- The data collected through the research was written into a report and presented to key stakeholders in the retail sector, such as retail employers, the New York City Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, and developers of commercial work spaces who could partner with CFR to provide training to potential retail workers.

Read the report [here](#). Read coverage of the report release in [Crains NY](#) and the [Associated Press](#).