ALICE & Collective Bargaining: Leveraging United Way's ALICE Data to Win Stronger Contracts



WHAT IS ALICE?

ALICE – an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – represents the growing number of working households in the United States that live above the poverty line but struggle to afford much beyond necessities. Households fall below the ALICE Threshold when their earnings do not keep up with the local cost of living.

An ALICE worker might have multiple jobs but still pay health insurance costs out of pocket. ALICE households may include a parent forced to work part-time because of high childcare costs in their community. These families live paycheck to paycheck and are unable to save for the future – let alone weather a financial setback.

> "A manager at an industrial laundry approached an organizer about issues with employee retention and asked for data that would convince corporate leadership to match competitors' wages. ALICE data was vital in helping the workers secure a salary increase.
>
> **CMRJB-WORKERS UNITED**

HOW IS ALICE DATA COLLECTED?

ALICE data is collected and reported by United for ALICE, which produces bi-annual reports for its 30 partner states, aggregates localized data, and offers useful interactive tools on its website. United for ALICE also calculates ALICE Household Survival Budgets, which reflect the minimum cost to live and work in a local economy. Elements considered include housing, childcare, food, transportation, technology, health care, and taxes, though savings and emergency expenses are NOT included.

United for ALICE sources data from federal and state government agencies, such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, along with United Way partner nonprofit organizations.

> "During a bargaining session for a large custodian contract, supplementing a worker's personal story of financial hardship with ALICE data helped lead to one of the union's best agreements, including a 15% wage increase.
>
> **SEIU LOCAL 1**

UNITED FOR ALICE

United Way of Metro Chicago

United Way

CHICAGO FEDERATION OF LABOR

> Using ALICE living wage data can help to persuade union organizing committees to seek higher wages rather than settling for offers from employers that may appear to be sufficient according to other data sources.
>
> **TEAMSTERS LOCAL 743**

HOW CAN LABOR UNIONS UTILIZE ALICE DATA?

Following the initial publication of the ALICE for Illinois report in 2020, the Chicago Federation of Labor introduced ALICE data to its affiliate unions to utilize in contract bargaining. Subsequent interviews with labor leaders revealed the following applications of ALICE data for labor unions.

- **Explore United for ALICE tools to identify local data applicable to the industry and company with whom you are bargaining.**
- **Present ALICE data directly to employers to advocate for competitive wages and benefits.**
- **Share ALICE data with union members and organizing committees to increase buy-in on contract bargaining.**
- **Pair data with personal stories from union members.**

WHAT ARE THE MOST USEFUL UNITED FOR ALICE RESOURCES FOR LABOR UNIONS?

The United for ALICE website features a variety of interactive tools that generate localized information. The following resources may be most useful for contract bargaining purposes:

- **ALICE Economic Viability Dashboard:** Illustrates the specific economic and community conditions of households below the ALICE Threshold using maps and charts.
- **ALICE Budget and Income Status Tool:** Calculates basic household expenses and compares the ALICE Household Survival Budget costs to income by state and county.
- **ALICE Wage Tool:** Identifies the hourly wage needed to support the average Household Survival Budget by county and family size.
- **National Reports & Special Topics reports:** ALICE periodically publishes special reports about groups, such as people with disabilities, veterans, Black families, and nonprofit workers.

unitedforalice.org

> ALICE data is helpful for level setting when an employer is willing to listen to new information, can paint a more realistic picture of economic realities than Bureau of Labor Statistics alone, and, when necessary, can make employers consider how livable their wages are.
>
> **USW SUBDISTRICT 7**

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like advice on how to use ALICE resources for your union, have experience using ALICE data in bargaining to share, or have any additional questions about this report, please reach out to **Gus Fuguitt** at **gus.fuguitt@liveunitedchicago.org**. This resource is made better by feedback and stories from real-life use of ALICE data.

United Way of Metro Chicago would like to extend our gratitude to SEIU Local 1, CMRJB-Workers United, USW Subdistrict 7, and Teamsters Local 743 for their time taken to share their experiences using ALICE resources.

Source: https://chicago.suntimes.com/work/2024/04/06/janitors-in-seiu-local-1-approve-new-three-year-contract

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