

FAQ YEU Local Organizer

What is a Local Organizer and how is it different from a Union Organizer?

Good question. We often hear about a “union organizing drive” like the one currently underway at Amazon. Unions will hire full-time union organizers to connect with workers who want to create a new union and to bargain a first contract. We sometimes refer to this work as *External Organizing*. But when workers get a job in a workplace that is already unionized, there is usually the need to connect members to the Union, to get them involved in stewarding, in standing up for their rights, and in mobilizing for job actions and broader social change like #Black Lives Matter and climate justice. We call active members who do this *Internal Organizing* work **Local Organizers**.

Do I have to be a Shop Steward to become a Local Organizer?

No, any member in good standing (make sure you sign your Union Application card!) can apply to become a Local Organizer. Mind you, you’ll be connecting with Shop Stewards as part of your work as an Organizer so it’s a good idea to know a lot about their work. Shop Stewards are of course very welcome to take on this role as well.

Is this a job?

No, a Local Organizer is an **appointment** by the Union. You will continue to get paid at your regular job but when undertaking some Local Organizer tasks, you’ll be able to take Union Leave and not lose any pay. Each Local will have its own budget. You can be “booked off for union work” for one, two or more days per month. It can be a regular monthly book-off or irregular, depending on the Local.

What exactly am I committing to?

To your co-worker; to building a stronger Union; to fairness at work; and more!

In concrete terms, you’ll need to commit to a year of dedicating some time for this role. Two days for the initial course in January then likely 1 to 3 days a month for your on-going activities. Each Local will determine how much time you dedicate to this work.

Who do I report to?

To your Local Executive who will have to approve your action plans and to the group of other Local Organizers who will want to know about (and learn from) your successes and failures! Monthly updates are expected.

What if my boss doesn’t like that I’m interested in this work?

Your boss doesn’t have to like it. They don’t even have to know what you are doing. They do have to approve *Union Leave* when you are taking time off from your regular job for Local Organizer work. Just make sure you apply for Leave in advance. Your Shop Steward and the YEU will intervene if necessary. In the 2-day Local Organizing course, you’ll learn communication skills that may even help you convince your boss that your organizing work may be good for the workplace too!

Still unsure of this role? Just get in touch with Lynne Pajot lpajot@yeu.ca