

Mission & History

Durham CAN (Congregations Associations and Neighborhoods) is a broad-based, non-profit organization that works to **coalesce, train, and organize communities in Durham across religious, racial, ethnic, class, and geographic lines for the public good**. Our primary goal is to develop local leadership and organized power to change the conditions that prevent low- and moderate-income families from improving their circumstances.

Durham CAN was founded by a group of 24 clergy and community leaders who began meeting in 1997 with a common desire to transcend the historic divisions that existed among communities in Durham, particularly around race and class issues. These founders aimed to build a new organization that could help form relationships across these divides and provide a new vehicle for different constituencies to act together on common interests in ways which would be powerful and effective. The founding group raised seed money from ten different religious denominations, and the first staff organizer was hired in August 1999. In 2000, CAN held its founding assembly with over 500 community members representing the diversity of Durham.

CAN is affiliated with the [Industrial Areas Foundation](#) (IAF), the nation's first and largest network of multi-faith citizen organizations. Today, the IAF is made up of 65 organizations working in cities and metropolitan areas across the country on issues ranging from health care to education to housing. CAN works most closely with the 20 IAF organizations operating in the East, Midwest, and Southeast that have joined together to form [Metro-IAF](#). Those organizations have accounted for the construction of thousands of units of affordable housing, pioneering work on health care reform, living wages, the transformation of dilapidated and underperforming urban area schools and a whole host of other victories.