Summary of Philadelphia Reentry Coalition Feedback on Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC) Initiative

This feedback was collected during the Reentry Coalition Quarterly Stakeholder Meeting on October 24th, 2018, where over 100 people representing more than 65 organizations and agencies heard about the Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC) initiative (formerly referred to as Community Resource Centers) and provided feedback, through facilitated discussion and surveys. The City and its criminal justice partners will need to consider operational needs and feasibility in the design and implementation of the NRCs, but stakeholder input is deeply valued and will be accommodated to the best of the City and partner agencies' ability.

General Feedback:

- **Excitement about Partnership Opportunities:** 68% of people indicated that they thought their agency or organization would be interested in partnering with the City on NRCs

- **Prioritization of Resources and Services**: People overwhelmingly indicated that they believe that access to employment, housing, behavioral health, education, mentoring/credible messengers, physical health, and food/clothing/necessities services or resources are all vital or important for NRCs.

Specific Inquiries:

- **How should Neighborhood Resource Centers look and feel to the entire community?**
  - The physical space should be open, bright, welcoming, approachable, and comforting. Food and coffee would help make the space welcoming, along with images of community icons and symbols. Practical features such as lockers should be considered.
  - The space should diverge as much as possible from prison-like features such as metal detectors, uniformed officers, and expansive security features.
  - The Centers should be designed to avoid having long lines or making people feel rushed out of the space.
  - The Centers should be staffed by people from the community.

- **How could we best engage families and community members to utilize NRCs?**
  - The planning and implementation process should engage informal and formal community leaders from faith-based organizations, block captains, community development corporations, and others. Transparency and outreach are critical. A wide range of support for the NRCs by political officials and faith-based leaders will also encourage people to trust the initiative.

- Each neighborhood community should be directly involved from the beginning stage and throughout the lifetime of the initiative, approving and informing decisions.
- NRCs could be available to families of people who are incarcerated prior to their release, such as having video visitation capacities, foster relationships and help with the adjustment.
- Having certain resources or events at the NRCs could create buy-in, such as computer/internet access, community events (including giveaways, free backpacks, haircuts, disability services, food pantry, networking opportunities for local businesses).
- NRCs need trusted service providers so people are more inclined to access services.

- **What is needed to make the NRCs welcoming specifically to service providers/community partners?**
  - Confidentiality and cultivating a safe space are integral.
  - Resource sharing agreements or other ways of avoiding competition or financial disputes.
  - Centralized intake/assessment and case management processes would help serve the community effectively.
  - Having strong performance measurements/outcomes and customer feedback mechanisms will help providers orient their services.
  - Flexibility in scheduling.
  - The establishment of an ambassador from the community, who works as a liaison to service providers.
  - Having knowledgeable, capable staff who genuinely want to be there.

- **What will enable the NRC initiative to achieve its intended goals 5 years from now?**
  - A thoughtful implementation process with authentic community and provider buy-in.
  - True economic opportunities and accurate understanding of individual and community needs.
  - Being able to see measurable results.
  - For those who are incarcerated, starting the reentry planning process pre-release.

- **What barriers do you envision in the implementation of NRCs and the initiative achieving their intended goals 5 years from now?**
  - "Not In My Backyard"/NIMBYism stigma of returning citizens.
  - The presence of parole and probation officers could create a punitive or authoritarian environment that prohibits people from accessing resources and

services. Potential difficulties establishing trust, which could stoke fears of re-arrest or just feeling overpoliced within your own community.

o Because people are required to go to NRCs for probation and parole they may resist.

o Competition between organizations and agencies, providers may not want to share power and be flexible in their approaches.

- **What opportunities do you believe will come out of the NRCs?**
  o Opportunities for economic and social empowerment, education improvement, employment, deeper understandings of needs of Philly communities, public safety, strengthened community ties by creating a neighborhood hub, decreased recidivism, coordinated case management system, and peer support.
  o Improvement of the county probation and parole system/services.
  o Because the center is local, people can learn more through word of mouth of their trusted and familiar neighbors.
  o The NRCs could help facilitate other community initiatives that promote leadership skills development and peer-to-peer engagement.

How do we build maximum public support for NRCs?
  o The local community needs to be heavily engaged in the process.
  o Hold city-wide events that are backed by elected officials, ensure high visibility through avenues like social media, bus ads and news outlets (could have community members design advertising), highlight service users' testimonies, and get buy-in from selected community leaders first.
  o Paying community members to design and operate them.
  o The culture of service delivery for probation/parole must be changed and be more humane. Help with and listen to client goals, priorities, and basic human needs first.
  o NRCs should also be a general space for community meetings.
  o Incorporating suggestions and feedback from community members.