PHILADELPHIA RETURNING CITIZENS DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM
Application to the Bureau of Justice Assistance
Second Chance Act Two-Phase Adult Reentry Demonstration Program: Implementation
AWARDED September 30, 2014

**Purpose:** The Philadelphia Reentry Coalition seeks to reduce recidivism among medium-and-high risk offenders in North Philadelphia to provide the biggest benefits in terms of public safety and cost savings. The project will enroll 105 medium- to high-risk male offenders, aged 18-40, returning from six facilities that comprise the Philadelphia Prison System (PPS) to North Philadelphia, the most crime-ridden, blighted area of the city.

**Applicant:** City of Philadelphia, lead by the Mayor’s Office of Reintegration Services (RISE).

**Partners:** The Philadelphia Reentry Coalition whose 70+ members include all relevant government and community based stakeholders including Philadelphia Prison System (PPS), Mayor’s Office of Public Safety, Mayor’s Commission on Literacy, First Judicial District Adult Probation and Parole Department, and nationally renowned Urban Institute as research partner.

**Project Description:** The demonstration project will serve 105 men, ages 18-40, released from the Philadelphia Prison System (PPS) to North Philadelphia (target area), which is one of the most crime-ridden and blighted areas of the city where the rate of poverty is nearly twice the citywide rate. The project will utilize a multi-discipline, multi-sector Reentry Task Force to guide a robust planning phase and implementation of pre- and post-release services designed to support seamless, coordinated, and successful reentry. The project’s case management approach will be built on the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework, and the project evaluation will include a fidelity assessment to ensure staff adhere to these critical principles.

Pre-release services will include an evidence-based cognitive skill-building program, an innovative online, mobile education component, and development of a comprehensive Reentry Plan. Post-release services will ensure a continuity of care through the continuation of online education, and intensive, customized, ‘wraparound’ case management services that rest on RNR principles. Participants will receive ‘triaged’ services and referrals for housing, employment readiness and placement, behavioral health care, legal services, and life skills training, among many others. The project addresses each of the Mandatory Project Components and Mandatory Second Chance Act Requirements, and addresses seven priority considerations.

**Planning Phase:** The Reentry Task Force, which is an ad hoc committee of the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition, will develop the Planning and Implementation Guide that will serve as the ‘blueprint’ for the proposed two-year demonstration project. The planning phase will account for 10% of the budget.

**Service Delivery Model:** The remaining 90% of the budget is for implementation activities including costs for the research partner, job readiness training and job matching, education, housing vouchers, tracking, training staff and providers, and implementing the proposed service delivery model.
Reducing the recidivism rate: The preliminary baseline recidivism rate for the target area is 45.13%, which is among the highest rates in the city. The rate is based on reincarcerations within a 12-month period following release, and includes all males released from PPS to the target area in calendar year 2012. The Research Partner will update the baseline rate during the planning phase. The project will utilize the actuarial-based Pennsylvania Risk Screen Tool (RST) to assess recidivism risk. The RST is evidence-based and validated. It was developed and tested by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, and has been in use since 2009.

Why Fund the Philadelphia Returning Citizens Demonstration Program?: The requested seed funding will demonstrate that the key strategies currently being implemented from the Philadelphia Re-entry Coalition’s strategic plan can, with more evidence based intensive case management and housing supports, work for medium to higher-risk offenders.

The key systemic issues that this program will address and have been outlined previously by the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition as priority issues are:

- **Continuity of Care:** Lack of structure and programming once individuals are released. PPS reports a lack of post-release coordination and prioritization of services among providers.
- **Weak Housing Component:** Individuals released without a residence or home to return to are placed in the City’s shelter system, which is overburdened and does not help prepare returning citizens for transition to more stable housing. This issue is particularly acute in North Philadelphia, which is home to 23% of the city’s vacant parcels.
• *Data Silos:* Impede the ability to share information and track client progress, performance, and outcomes in real-time.

• *Weak employment readiness services and a weak employer pipeline:* The project partners report the need for improved access to job readiness and placement services, staff and partner capacity to deliver skills training, and to better align the City’s workforce system with reentry employment efforts.

• A 10% reduction in the baseline recidivism rate among the target population would save approximately **$340,000** in averted incarceration costs annually just for the population served by this program.

**Alignment with City and Federal Programs:** Mayor Michael Nutter and his Administration have strategically and intentionally developed targeted place-based strategies for North Philadelphia. The City is working with federal, state, corporate, and philanthropic sectors to transform and revitalize North Philadelphia and specifically target programs that advocate for young adult males of color. For example, North Philadelphia is the target of a U.S. Department of Justice Youth Violence Prevention “National Forum” (2012) award, a Community Based Violence Prevention “Ceasefire” award (2012), U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods Planning (2013) award and most recently a $30M HUD Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant for North Central Philadelphia awarded to the City of Philadelphia. The demonstration project is also consistent with the President’s My Brother’s Keeper Initiative (MBK) of which Mayor Nutter is co-chair of the MBK Taskforce.

**Grant Request:** The City of Philadelphia was awarded a grant of $750,000 and has committed a $750,000 match.

**For further information about the Philadelphia Returning Citizens Demonstration Program contact:**

William Hart, Executive Director, RISE  
[William.Hart@Phila.gov](mailto:William.Hart@Phila.gov)

Gary Green, Deputy Executive Director, Managing Director’s Office & Executive Director, Fatherhood Enrichment Program  
[Gary.Green@Phila.gov](mailto:Gary.Green@Phila.gov)