

**District Task Force on Jails and Justice**  
**Phase I Report and Engagement Feedback Summary Memo**  
The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens  
January 31, 2020

Following the release of the Phase I report, *A Framework for Change*, the National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens solicited community feedback on both the report and on Phase I community engagement. Feedback was collected via in-person events and electronic submissions. Response rates were low in comparison to the total number of individuals engaged during Phase I (2,000 community members), yet the feedback indicated a continuing deep interest in the work of the Task Force. Written and oral feedback provided input on the content and delivery of the Phase I report, as well as the quality and extent of Phase I community engagement activities. Our findings demonstrate the mutual value of continued engagement.

### **Report Feedback**

During the in-person sessions participants were offered an overview of the report.

- Participants appreciated the data but found it difficult to digest.
- Significant time was spent clarifying technical elements of the data and addressing questions about terms and classifications.
- Participants requested greater Task Force Member participation in feedback events and participation from agencies and service providers such as CSOSA.

Participants wanted access to corrections data, including information on the prevalence and details of technical violations, statistics on DC DOC deaths in custody and grievances, and current correctional programming. Participants also wanted the report to include police data and information on current mental health crisis response.

Feedback also included a number of somewhat competing suggestions and observations. There were calls for prioritization of the recommendations and analysis of budget investments each would require. Others suggested a plan for divestment in policing and decarceration to fund the changes, or total abolition of incarceration. Participants were concerned about the magnitude of change required to achieve local control and the responsibilities and cost of this recommendation, emphasizing a need to reexamine the structure of the system and agencies rather than adopting federal agencies wholesale at the local level.

Participants noted the absence of policing in the recommendations and were also concerned about law enforcement buy-in for existing recommendations. Feedback included concern about government buy-in as well. Some wanted the recommendations to include a call for abolition of police and prisons, expressing a belief that the system is too broken and entrenched to fix. Others wanted a recommendation specifically addressing technical violations of parole and supervised release and their disposition.

Respondents clearly favored prioritization of the community investment recommendations (1-5), as well as the system examination described in Recommendation 7. Participants want to know what is possible in the short term, how the changes will be funded, and who will champion them to fruition. Other suggestions included sharing the report information more widely among the general public. Finally, there was a recognition that many local organizations had recently released complementary reports on system reform, and that there was potential to harness that information and energy toward mutual goals.

## **Engagement Feedback**

Feedback on Phase I community engagement was collected using questionnaires. Participants responded that events were accessible, and that they felt comfortable attending and sharing their opinions honestly. Many felt that their questions were adequately answered, though some were left wanting more information.

Respondents appreciated:

- The opportunity to participate.
- The open-ended nature of engagement.
- The presentation of information and data.
- The chance to hear from others.

Forms included questions about bias in response to some prior concerns about the community survey. Form respondents indicated that in general they felt questions and prompts were free from bias. Participants also responded that they felt heard and valued. Many wished to see greater participation of government officials, providers, experts, and Task Force members. Some suggested that events be held at core service agencies and youth organizations to increase buy-in and participation from those groups. Others wanted to see an explicit discussion of abolition.

Respondents suggested the following for the future:

- Similar events should be offered.
- More information is better.
- Events should be more bite-sized in scope.
- Include more surveys for greater reach.

According to participants, the primary takeaways from engagement events were that the issues at stake are complex and that we need to solve them as a community.

Overall, the public is hungry for information and appreciates understanding the data and history behind recommendations and decisions. They want to be able to ask experts their questions and they want decision makers to participate and bear witness. They see the value in continued conversation and engagement, and they recognize their role in the future of justice. The high level of interest in the issues and outcomes at stake makes for a critical opportunity for the Task Force. Continued community engagement will strengthen the work produced as well as the impact of recommendations.