

INCLUSIVE, ITERATIVE ENGAGEMENT IN PURSUIT OF RESILIENCE

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROJECT – RCP 33

About the Partner

Ramsey County, one of the original counties of the Minnesota Territory, was established on October 27, 1849. Located in the heart of the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, Ramsey County is predominantly urban in character. It is Minnesota's smallest and most densely populated county, spanning 170 square miles. More than 550,000 Minnesotans make their home in Ramsey, and it is the second-most populous county in the state, with about 10 percent of Minnesota's residents. It is also one of the most demographically diverse. Ramsey County communities are nationally known as attractive, livable places rich in history, culture, and opportunity.



Project Description

Climate change continues to impact the health, well-being, and resilience of Ramsey County residents, with greater severity in racially/ethnically diverse and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. A newly published County strategic priority states that Ramsey County is committed to leading in the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, elevating environmental justice, and fighting against the disparate impacts of climate change in Black, American Indian, and other underrepresented communities across the county. The County Manager's Office, in partnership with Saint Paul–Ramsey County Public Health, plans to facilitate community engagement sessions in fall 2022, focused on identifying needed and desired services to address health impacts of changing climate on Ramsey's most vulnerable residents.

Students working on this project in fall of 2022 will work with the County's project lead and a contracted professional consultant to assist the County in identifying potential participants and stakeholders, outlining goals for engagement, planning or designing inclusive community engagement methods, proposing performance metrics to evaluate engagement efforts (particularly with respect to County strategic priorities of promoting racial equity, partnering with community, and leading with transparency), and/or facilitating community engagement.

In spring of 2023, students will have access to data collected during preliminary engagement efforts from fall 2022, and will have the opportunity to assist the County in analyzing the results; identifying successes and lessons learned from the first round of community engagement; and developing a plan for ongoing engagement with residents, municipalities, and businesses that can inform development of programs and services that respond to the climate-related health needs of county residents, informed by an analysis of best practices in other county government agencies.



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Key Issues, Questions, and Ideas for Students to Explore

1. Residents most vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change include Black, American Indian, and other underrepresented communities; the elderly; youth; those who are immunocompromised; those without permanent housing; pregnant individuals; those experiencing poverty; outdoor workers; and people with varying physical abilities. What are the best practices to employ to effectively and inclusively engage with these residents and stakeholders? What barriers exist to engaging effectively with these communities?
2. What quantitative and qualitative indicators and performance metrics should be considered to guide and structure community engagement processes? Students will be expected to examine and build upon the successes and lessons learned from previous engagement experiences led by the County's Public Health, Social Services, and Corrections departments.
3. How can engagement processes be structured to ensure that Ramsey County continues to learn from the leaders taking action in this space to accelerate the success of future climate-related programs and services?
4. How can the County effectively share project findings with city officials within Ramsey County, as well as with other local government agencies that serve residents in the county?

How Student Work Will Build Community Resilience

This project is intended to engage community members who are representative of the broad range of Ramsey County residents to ensure that their experiences, perspectives, concerns, and desires inform County efforts to develop programs, services, and support networks that strengthen community resilience in the face of climate change and climate uncertainty.

RCP-UMN Contact

Mike Greco, RCP Director
University of Minnesota
mgreco@umn.edu
612.625.7501

Ramsey County Project Lead

Abigail Phillips, Climate and Health Planner
Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health
abigail.phillips@co.ramsey.mn.us
651.341.9604 (mobile)