

INTERNAL CAPACITY BUILDING AT THE INTERSECTION OF HEALTH, RESILIENCE, AND RACIAL EQUITY

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROJECT – RCP 34

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

The County's 2040 Comprehensive Plan clearly articulates that all County work shall be examined through the lenses of "health in all policies, resilience and racial equity." Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Paul–Ramsey County Public Health hosted training sessions for employees focused on building understanding of and capacity to address the impacts of climate change in public health work. This training highlighted the interconnected nature of health, resilience, and racial equity through the lens of environmental justice, and served to identify areas in which County employees required further training or other support. Unfortunately, the County's pandemic response efforts resulted in a nearly three-year pause in this work. We now have an opportunity to reexamine county employee training needs, as well as develop training and other resources that empower them to reframe or refine their approach to work in order to better promote health, resilience, and racial equity in County efforts to prepare for and address climate change impacts.

Students working on this project will collaborate closely with the County's project lead and representatives of each County department to examine department goals, and identify related training topic areas intended to build employee capacity to plan for and address the impacts of climate change. Students will be asked to review training programs and tools created by other public and private entities, with attention focused on effectiveness, and ultimately recommend a path forward for training county employees. Students will also work with the County's project lead and colleagues to identify performance metrics that can be used to measure the success of proposed internal training efforts.



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Key Issues, Questions, and Ideas for Students to Explore

1. Some chapters of the Ramsey County 2040 Comprehensive Plan do a better job than others of articulating how specific county departments and services relate to health, resilience, and racial equity. How can the County best articulate these relationships between environmental justice and County services and practices where they are not already clearly stated (e.g., land acquisition, water quality, transportation, park design, and others identified by students through a gap analysis)? What research is available to demonstrate that these relationships exist? What research could be done (by the County, the University, or other entities) to fill in the gaps?
2. What successful training programs and tools have been created by other public and private entities in Minnesota and around the country, to build employee capacity to plan for and address the impacts of climate change in their work?
3. County employees are busy with the daily work they are assigned, and some may be resistant to changes in processes that could improve their ability to address health outcomes, community and resident resilience, or racial inequities. How can Ramsey County effectively motivate employees who are eager to pursue environmental justice, as well as employees who feel this is a burdensome request? What modalities of training could be prepared for employees with varying perspectives and needs?
4. What performance metrics can be used to measure the success of employee trainings at a department, division, unit, or individual employee level?

How Student Work Will Build Community Resilience

One of Ramsey County's strategic priorities is focused on Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power. Disparities in racial and health equity are exacerbated by climate change. Empowering employees to understand the interconnected nature of these issues, and address the impacts of climate change across County departments, will result in County programs and services that are thoughtfully tailored to reduce disparities and support vulnerable populations.

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