

FALL 2025

Referral Program: Final Recommendations

Team 4: Impact Squad Final



Prepared by:

Chaney Chang, Karishma Kumar, Mia Liepert, Ethan Peperkorn, Sofia Maria Pinto, and Viransh Yadav

Students enrolled in BA 3062: Impact Lab in Action
Instructor: Meghan Stiling
Carlson School of Management



Resilient Communities Project

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Prepared in Collaboration with:

Michelle Palm
Joint Activities Program Coordinator
Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/.

Any reproduction, distribution, or derivative use of this work under this license must be accompanied by the following attribution: “Produced by the Resilient Communities Project (www.rcp.umn.edu) at the University of Minnesota. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License.”

This publication may be available in alternate formats upon request.

Resilient Communities Project

University of Minnesota
330 HHHSPA
301—19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Phone: (612) 625-7501

E-mail: rcp@umn.edu

Web site: www.rcp.umn.edu

The project on which this presentation is based was completed in collaboration with Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy as part of a 2025–2026 Resilient Communities Project (RCP) partnership. RCP is a program at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) that connects University faculty and students with Minnesota communities to address strategic projects that advance local resilience, equity, and sustainability.

The contents of this report represent the views of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of RCP, CURA, the Regents of the University of Minnesota, or Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy.

Resilient Communities Project

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to DiscoverSM

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

Referral Program

Final Recommendations

By Impact Squad: Ethan P, Viransh Y, Chaney C,
Karishma K, Mia L and Sofia P



Our Team

Our Mentor: Nikita Basandra



Karishma Kumar
Communication Coordinator



Sofia Pinto
Coursework coordinator



Viransh Yadav
Team Lead



Mia Liepert
Workflow Manager



Chaney Chang
Session Coordinator



Ethan Peperkorn
Research Coordinator



AGENDA

01

Our Team

02

Our Direction

03

Our New Model

04

Research Insights

05

SWOT Analysis

06

Next Steps



Our Direction – Referral Model

Problem Statement:

- How might we increase participation and credibility in Ramsey/Washington R&E's Deconstruction Grant Program by developing a trusted partner referral system that expands outreach, builds community trust, and simplifies the applicant experience?

Why we choose a Referral Program

- Builds trust through credible partners instead of direct government outreach
- Expands awareness by using networks of contractors
- Creates a scalable structure that rewards collaboration with R&E



Our New Model: Incentivized Partner Network



Summary of Plan:

- R&E would build structured partnerships with a small group of contractors, realtors, and community organizations.
- Partners would be first point of contact, identifying homes that qualify for deconstruction.
- Partners get a small reward for each referral that becomes a project.
 - Rewards would be a small payment or a share of grant.
- The system keeps partners active and interested in promoting the program.



Our New Model: Incentivized Partner Network



What We Would Provide:

- Referral Program Executive Proposal:
 - A pitch deck for proposing the program to upper level management.
- Partner Expectations Rubric:
 - How often they share the program
 - How they report referrals
 - Mission alignment
 - **Keeps everything clear and easy to follow.**



Why We Chose Referrals: Research Insights 1

Referral Program Development Enhances Awareness

- Referral programs increase customer acquisition by up to 60% and boost contribution margins through trust-based conversions.
- Applying this to R&E, a structured referral initiative could transform word-of-mouth interest into significant engagement with the program.
 - This is perfect since the barrier isn't funding, but awareness. Future research should compare different referral models such as word of mouth, digital outreach, and cause-based programs to find which works best for R&E's public mission.



Why We Chose Referrals: Research Insights 2

Collaboration Strengthens Implementation Success

- Partnerships with community-based organizations improve long-term participation and satisfaction rates by up to 25%.
- Collaborating with trusted community partners ensures that information is shared more widely and more credibly.
- For R&E, integrating partner engagement strategies into the communication plan can help increase participation and build trust among harder-to-reach groups.
- In the long term, exploring best practices for cross-sector collaboration in public programs could strengthen overall program impact.



SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leverages existing partner credibility• Offers clear partner incentivization• Payment only upon successful referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires additional financial resources• 3rd party client communication
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vastly increased P2P connections• Higher conversion rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner Incentive Misalignment



Next Steps & Deliverables

- Our team shapes the core concept of the referral program
- We create the full pitch deck for leadership approval
- We define structure, rules, incentives, and workflow
- The next group handles logistics and implementation planning
- They set up tracking, staffing processes, and long term management



Pre-Approval

Clarify the referral concept, outline goals, and shape the core structure so leadership can understand the vision



Approval

Present the pitch deck, refine messaging, and secure the green light to move the referral program forward



Implementation

Build tracking methods, define staff processes, and set up systems that bring the approved program into daily use



Questions

Do you have any concerns with our current model?

What improvements would you like to see?



Thank You For Your Time!

Citations:

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. (2024, December 12). *Model forms and disclosures: Fair Credit Reporting Act*. <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/compliance/compliance-resources/other-applicable-requirements/fair-credit-reporting-act/model-forms-and-disclosures/>

Dubey, N. (2025, January 25). *Why business process standardization is a must for remote organizations*. eLearning Industry. <https://elearningindustry.com/why-business-process-standardization-is-a-must-for-remote-organizations>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *Open Government for Stronger Democracies: A Global Assessment*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5478db5b-en>

Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy. (n.d.). *Home*. <https://www.recyclingandenergy.org>

Reworld. (2025). *Where we are: Sustainable waste facilities*. <https://www.reworldwaste.com/where-we-are>

Schmitt, P., Skiera, B., & Van den Bulte, C. (2011). *Referral programs and customer value*. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(1), 46-59. <https://faculty.wharton.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Schmitt-Skiera-vandenBulte-2011-Referral-Programs-Customer-Value.pdf>


Our team used Open AI to help format APA citations and improve wording clarity. All ideas, analysis, and final work are our team's own.



RCP.UMN.EDU



330 HHHSPA, 301 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455 | 612-625-1551

 The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
This publication/material is available in alternative formats upon request. Direct requests to cura@umn.edu or 612-625-1551.

Printed on recycled and recyclable paper with at least 10 percent postconsumer waste material.