

### Background

Ramsey County and its residents face increased physical, social, health, and financial risks due to climate change. In its 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Ramsey County said its “resiliency strategies will focus on mitigation and adaptation... Adaptation strategies will focus on how to change policies and practices to plan for and adjust to the effects of climate change.” However, Ramsey County currently lacks a strategic approach to adapt effectively to the risks posed by climate change.

This project offers recommendations to Ramsey County to build its internal capabilities to assess and proactively address climate-related risks and its impacts on residents’ health and well-being. These recommendations will help Ramsey County develop internal strategies and policies to be more adaptable to climate-related risks and incorporate resilience into its decision-making structures. Implementing these recommendations is particularly important given the inequitable impacts of climate change, which will disproportionately be felt by vulnerable populations that include people of color, those experiencing or near poverty, those who live without air conditioning, and those without access to a car.

### Project Scope + Methods

Our team focused primarily on Ramsey County’s internal structure and decision-making processes. We approached the project by trying to answer three questions:

- 1 What internal policies can Ramsey County implement to adapt to climate change?
- 2 What steps can Ramsey County take to build leadership capacity so that department directors and other leaders can effectively plan for, prioritize, and carry out climate adaptation strategies that will reduce risks for the county and its residents?
- 3 How can Ramsey County integrate climate change resilience strategies into the county’s budget, decision-making processes, and departmental operations?

Our research used a three-pronged approach: interviews with Ramsey County staff, research and interviews with other local governments who have adopted a climate adaptation strategy, and research into risk assessment and mitigation.

### Best Practices

We consolidated our research of other leading local governments’ strategies into ten best management practices for adopting a climate adaptation strategy:

	Federal and state policies provide direction and support		Forming teams to drive resilience practices		Leadership that emphasizes climate adaptation		Buy-in is important for county success
			Plan must be specific and use timelines		Reporting and follow-up are necessary		
	Risk assessment is critical for prioritization and financial planning		Recognize climate effects will complicate service provision		Recognize climate effects will increase demand for services		Asset management planning incorporates ongoing maintenance

### Recommendations

We tailored our best management practices, based on interviews with Ramsey County staff, to the needs and capacities of the county and came up with the following recommendations:

- 1 Reconstitute the Energy Governance Team as the Resilience Governance Team
- 2 Build a Digitized Asset Management System that Incorporates Risk Component
- 3 Create Awareness of Climate Resilience to Attract Talent and Facilitate Culture Change
- 4 Hire a Resilience Manager
- 5 Increase Reporting to Commissioners
- 6 Create a Plan for Participatory Community Engagement on Climate Adaptation Work