

Brandeis

ENACT: THE ABRAHAM FEINBERG
EDUCATIONAL NETWORK FOR
ACTIVE CIVIC TRANSFORMATION



ENACT Corps Internship Program

Summer 2025

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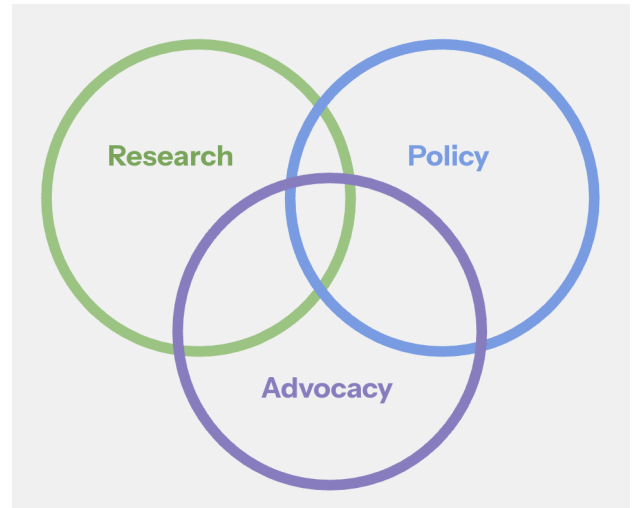
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What is the ENACT Corp Summer Internship Program?

The ENACT Corps is a summer internship-based program that offers Brandeis undergraduate students an opportunity to gain hands-on work experience in the following areas: 1) research, 2) advocacy, and 3) policy.

ENACT rebuilds trust in our government institutions by training our young people to create and advocate for data driven policies and engage in civil discourse.



ENACT faculty/staff and a site supervisor

mentor students throughout the summer long internships. Internship sites include community organizations and state government offices. The internship positions are designed to support students as they become politically active and engaged community members.

The internship provides a \$4500 stipend to allow students to access this experience in place of other summer employment.

Who are the Summer 2025 ENACT Corps Members & Employers?

Eight Brandeis undergraduate students were selected as the inaugural cohort for the ENACT Corps Summer Internship Program: 1) Yasamine Brown Kocaman (Class of 2026), 2) Wilfred Chilangwa (Class of 2027), 3) Alyssa Golden (Class of 2026), 4) Mariana Ortega Martinez (Class of 2027), 5) Anh-Thu Pham (Class of 2026), 6) Grace Toscano (Class of 2027), 7) Neema Kitonga (Class of 2027), and 8) Ava Ferrigno (Class of 2027).

Summer 2025 employers included 1) the Office of Massachusetts State Representative Sam Montano, 2) the Office of Massachusetts State Senator Barry Finegold, 3) the Massachusetts State Auditor's Office, 4) the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, 5) the Office of Massachusetts State Representative Steven Owens, 6) Our Bodies Ourselves (hosted two students), and 7) Partners in Justice (Ramirez & Sunnerberg LLC).

ENACT Corps Process & Timeline

ENACT Corps Intern

The inaugural ENACT Corps members were selected in the Spring of 2025. The application process consisted of a written application and an approximately 30 minute interview. There were a total of 16 applications for eight positions. ENACT Corps members were informed of their selection late April and they were invited to attend a mid May orientation event.

Internships officially began on Monday June 2nd, 2025 and ended on Thursday, July 24th, 2025. ENACT Corps interns conducted work at their host sites Monday through Thursday (with the option of one remote day, at the discretion of their employer) and a regular Friday workshop with the Assistant Director of Research from ENACT, Charlotte Powley (see list of Friday ENACT workshops below). Interns were asked to complete weekly journal entries (a total of six) and log their weekly work hours. The final ENACT Friday workshop was held on Friday July 25th, 2025. ENACT Corps interns were asked to complete a survey at the start of their internship experience as well as at the end of their internship in order to provide feedback on their experience overall and their level of satisfaction with the internship experience (see results below).



The poster is for the Brandeis ENACT Corps internship. It features a black background with white and blue text. At the top left is the Brandeis logo and the text 'ENACT: THE ABRAHAM FEINBERG EDUCATIONAL NETWORK FOR ACTIVE CIVIC TRANSFORMATION'. The main headline reads 'LOOKING FOR A SUMMER INTERNSHIP? INTERESTED IN POLICY, ADVOCACY & GOVERNMENT?'. Below this, it says 'APPLY FOR THE BRANDEIS ENACT CORPS!'. A list of benefits includes: 30 hours per week for 8 weeks during the summer, a \$4500 stipend, four days per week at the ENACT selected internship site AND one day of professional mentorship with ENACT staff member, and that it is an in-person opportunity including internships in the Boston area. It also states that applications are due April 15th at 11:59pm and to see a QR code for application. A blue box on the right says 'Applications Opening 4/1!'. At the bottom, it provides contact information for Charlotte Powley: cpowley@brandeis.edu.

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**LOOKING FOR A
SUMMER
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INTERESTED IN
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- 30 hours per week for 8 weeks during the summer
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Applications Opening 4/1!

For questions, please contact: Charlotte Powley: cpowley@brandeis.edu

ENACT Corps Employers

The ENACT team held preliminary meetings with prospective employers in the Spring of 2025. ENACT internships emphasize that students are given the opportunity to grow in areas of research, advocacy, and policy. The ENACT Corps Internship Program also seeks to prioritize the cultivation of student and supervisor mentoring relationships and in person work placement. These factors informed the selection of the Summer 2025 ENACT Corps employers. Those selected were provided with an official invitation letter late April, which included the name of their matched intern and a short biography of the intern (Note: the ENACT team was responsible for the intern-employer matching process).

Employers were also invited to attend the mid May orientation event, which was attended by both employers and interns. The orientation event provided an opportunity for employers to 1) get to know their interns, 2) get to know each other and 3) prepare for their interns' first day of work and the summer ahead. Together, employers and interns completed a "Who Do I Call If?" handout as well as a "Goals and Job Descriptions" document during the orientation event in order to align expectations and solidify goals for the summer as well as establish duties, responsibilities, and deliverables. The orientation event provided a unique opportunity for ENACT Corps employers to connect with one another to get acquainted and discuss strategies for working with and mentoring interns. This experience intentionally fostered a networking opportunity amongst ENACT Corps employers.

Throughout the eight week experience ENACT employers were invited to meet with the ENACT team on an as needed basis. They received email updates from the ENACT team with resources and updates regarding what ENACT Corps interns were exploring in their Friday workshops. An end of summer concluding meeting was also held to allow employers to reconnect and debrief on their experiences, ultimately providing feedback to the ENACT team on what went well and what challenges they faced. ENACT Corps employers were asked to complete a mid summer survey as well as an end of summer survey to provide their feedback on their experiences and on the performance of their interns (see results below).

ENACT Corps Highlights

Friday Workshops

Throughout the eight week internship experience, the ENACT Corps members attended regular two hour workshops on Friday afternoons. These sessions provided students with an opportunity to 1) connect with each other as a cohort, 2) debrief on their experiences from that week, 3) troubleshoot any challenges or concerns they may have had, and 4) explore critical career development subjects. For example, Friday's workshops included:

- A workshop on "SMART goals" (goals that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-bound)
- A SWOT analysis (a reflection of their Skills, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)
- A discussion of dominant culture in the workplace based on a reading by sociologist Becky Thompson

- A workshop that provided students an opportunity to visually map their host organization's structure
- An opportunity to present about a state bill related to their work
- A workshop exploring techniques and strategies to both effectively deliver and receive feedback in the workplace
- A workshop on financial literacy
- A visit from Massachusetts State Representative Tara Hong, one of the youngest state representatives in the Commonwealth



ENACT Corps Summer Interns and ENACT Assistant Director of Research, Charlotte Powley, with Representative Tara Hong.

Employer Feedback & Evaluation of Interns' Growth

As mentioned above, ENACT Corps employers completed both a mid summer survey and an end of summer survey. All employers (seven employers for eight students) completed the Mid Summer Survey. Six employers (on behalf of seven students) completed the final End of Summer Survey. At both time points, employers were asked to provide feedback on their experiences working with ENACT Corps interns. The surveys asked employers to rate the intern's performance on indicators such as: 1) Quality of work produced, 2) Attendance and punctuality, 3) Communication skills, 4) Interpersonal skills, 5) Problem solving ability, 6) Ability to work independently, 7) Teamwork and collaboration, 8) Adaptability and willingness to learn, 9) Ability to follow instructions, 10) Work ethic and attitude, 11) Motivation and initiative and 12) Overall work performance. Employers could select from the following responses: "In need of intervention," "in need of slight improvement," "meets standards," "exceptional" and "not applicable or not yet demonstrated."

Quality of Work

At the midway point of the summer, supervisors reported that 25% of interns were "Exceptional" with respect to "quality of work produced," while the remaining 50% "Met Standards" and 12.5% were "In Slight Need of Improvement." This "Exceptional" rating jumped to 71% by the end of the summer (with the remaining 29% "Meeting Standards"), ultimately demonstrating ENACT interns' ability to adapt and improve the quality of their work. One employer shared:

We are so grateful to have been a part of the ENACT internship program. We

*loved working with our students and are **very happy with the work they produced**. I think our work environment can be unique for students coming from an academic setting. We challenged our interns to be independently driven and work **WITH** us in developing their tasks and products. Both our interns from ENACT did a great job in growing through that transition.*

In addition to being pleased with the quality of work, this ENACT Corps employer also highlights the intern's ability to take initiative and work independently to shape their own experience. Another employer noted at the midpoint that their ENACT intern "has been one of our best performing interns thus far." As many ENACT Corps interns joined teams of interns from beyond Brandeis, this ENACT employer, and others, noted that their ENACT Corps intern's performance was notably impressive.

Furthermore, one ENACT employer noted their appreciation of the ENACT intern's work, particularly as they embarked upon new and meaningful projects for the organization: "These are real projects without precedent in our organization... The [ENACT Corps intern] has been really great." Ultimately, by the end of the summer, 100% of ENACT Corps employers rated their interns' "Overall work performance" as "Exceptional".

Dependability & Trustworthiness

Dependability and trustworthiness are crucial determinants of engagement in the workplace, according to an [MIT Sloan Management Review article](#) published in 2023. Two particular features of dependability include attendance and punctuality. 100% of interns were rated "Exceptional" pertaining to "attendance and punctuality" at the end of the summer; up from 75% rated as "Exceptional" at the mid way point. ENACT Corps interns clearly demonstrated their dependability through their consistent attendance and

timeliness at their internships.

Trust between ENACT interns and employers developed over time with one employer noting the growth: “I saw [ENACT Corps member] grow a lot this summer. At first she was pretty quiet, but as we worked together more I found **I was very much able to trust her**. I think she gained confidence in her work and that she learned a lot.” While research points to the ways in which “Gen Z” employees are not always aligned with their employers surrounding professional expectations and workplace norms (See “Redefining Professionalism” and “Decoding Generation Z: Navigating Workplace Expectations and Cultivating Retention Strategies in the Non-Profit Sector”), the ENACT Corps Program revealed multiple examples of interns and employers building trust and support *in both directions*. For example, one intern shared: “I could not have asked for a better supervisor. She was extremely communicative and clear while keeping me challenged with new work. I do not have enough good things to say about my placement. It catered directly towards all my interests and I had a lot of freedom in what bills I got to work on.” (See below for more on Intern Feedback). Clear communication, in both directions, was clearly valued and it is a feature the ENACT Corps as a program can continue to emphasize and invest in as the program seeks to support trustworthiness for the betterment of both employers and interns.

Looking Forward

Six out of seven of the employers who completed the End of Summer Survey said “Yes, definitely!” when asked if they would participate in the ENACT Corps Internship Program again (with available response options ranging from “Yes, definitely!” “Maybe”

and “No”). The remaining employer indicated “maybe”. Two of the ENACT employers have noted their desire to continue working with their ENACT Corps intern. For example, one employer shared: “I have very much enjoyed working with [the ENACT Corps intern] and we have discussed ways to keep her involved with [our] work moving forward. I am looking forward to seeing where her passion takes her.” Another ENACT intern continued working with her host site for the remainder of the summer even after the ENACT internship ended late July (compensated by the host site).

Intern Feedback & Growth

ENACT Corps interns completed a “pre” survey at the start of their summer experience (eight out of eight students completed). The survey collected information about students’ civic engagement practices as well as their political attitudes, knowledge, behaviors and political efficacy. At the end of their summer internship experience, ENACT Corps members completed a nearly identical “post” survey, which also included questions about their summer experience overall and their satisfaction with their host site (eight out of eight students completed the post survey). The following section details the results of the “pre” and “post” survey.

Political Attitudes, Leadership & Knowledge

Interest in Politics

Interns were asked both pre and post about their interest level in participating in politics (as a voter or otherwise). Prior to the start of the ENACT Corps Summer Internship Program, 100% of ENACT Corps interns expressed some level of interest in participating in politics (either “Strongly Interested” (six out of eight) or “Interested” (two

out of eight)). By the end of the summer, three out of eight students expressed that they were “Strongly Interested,” another three out of eight students said they were “Interested,” while one was “neutral,” and another “disinterested.” The political climate and students’ first hand exposure to the challenges and delays in the policymaking process, may account for these changes. With that said, it is noteworthy that 75% of interns continued to express some level of interest in being involved politically by the end of their summer experience.

Political Leadership

Interns were also asked about their level of self-confidence as it pertains to potential political leadership. For example, on the pre and post survey, interns were presented with the statement: “I could do as good a job in public office as most other people”. The available responses included: “Strongly agree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Neither agree nor disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Strongly disagree,” and “Don’t know.” In the pre survey, approximately 38% said “Somewhat agree,” 50% said “Neither agree nor disagree,” and 12.5% said “Don’t know.” At the end of their internship experience, nearly 88% said “Neither agree nor disagree,” and the remaining stated “Somewhat disagree.” As nearly half of students had placements at the Massachusetts State House, this decrease may be due to first hand observations of the challenges of occupying positions of political leadership. Interns who may have entered the program considering policy solutions to simply be “right” or “wrong” may likely have noted the nuances and complexities that come with policy making once given a front row seat to the process. This discussion of nuance and moving away from binary thinking often came up in the Friday workshops.

This reckoning may account for the decreased sense of being able to “do as good a job in public office as most other people” (though continued research would be helpful to explore). Beyond public office, students consistently expressed interest in becoming involved as *community* leaders. For example, on the post survey, 100% of interns shared that “Becoming a community leader” held at least some level of importance (ranging from “Essential,” (37.5%) to “Very Important” (50%) to “Somewhat Important” (12.5%)). These results are similar to the pre survey responses.

Knowledge of Government & Politics

Interns were also asked to reflect upon their knowledge of government and politics. For example, they were presented with the statement: “I am better informed about politics and government than most people” (again, with the potential responses of “Strongly agree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Neither agree nor disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Strongly disagree,” and “Don’t know”). On the pre survey, one intern said “Strongly Agree,” three said “Somewhat agree,” while another three said “Neither agree nor disagree,” and the last expressed “Somewhat disagree.” By the end of their summer experience, five out of eight articulated some level of agreement and no students disagreed. This increase reveals the level of confidence that interns developed in their knowledge of government and politics. That knowledge also translated to interns’ sense that they know enough to *participate*. For example, interns were presented with the statement: “I know enough to participate in politics.” On the pre survey, only one student noted that they “Strongly agreed” with the statement. By the post survey, there were three students who expressed that they “Strongly agree” that they know enough to participate in politics (with the four

remaining interns noting “Somewhat agree” and one “Neither agree nor disagree”). This aligns with literature suggesting that [political knowledge is a predictor of political participation](#), directly linking to ENACT’s overarching goal of increasing undergraduate students’ civic engagement. Furthermore, on the pre survey, only 25% of students reported some level of agreement with the statement “I have a good understanding of the important political issues facing the state of Massachusetts.” By the end of the summer, this grew to approximately 88%. With the focus on political issues facing the state, this growth point also links to ENACT’s goal to teach college students about democracy specifically through engagement with the state legislative process.

Workplace Satisfaction, Support and Mentorship

Both the quantitative and qualitative data from the interns’ surveys demonstrates a level of overall satisfaction with the support and mentorship throughout the program. Approximately 88% of interns expressed some degree of satisfaction with their host site overall (potential response options included: “Very satisfied”, “Satisfied,” “Somewhat satisfied,” and “Not at all satisfied”). One intern shared: **This experience is unforgettable** in the things I have learned and the people I have met. I will carry the **wisdom imparted on me from my supervisors** and fellow interns as I take the next steps towards my future.”

Another intern commented:

*Having these different people around me allowed me to ask for advice and learn. I had the **opportunity to shadow** the legislative aide and the communications director. At the end of the shadowing, they gave me the **opportunity to ask questions**. I asked about their career path and plans as well as if they had any advice, and I took away some very **important lessons** that I will keep in mind for the future.*

While levels of satisfaction are high, there continue to be areas for growth as it pertains to the intern-employer relationship, including but not limited to optimizing communication and check-in's and strengthening project planning (see the section below entitled Lessons Learned & Next Steps).

Essential Lessons Beyond the Classroom

A primary objective of the ENACT Corps Internship Program is to offer undergraduate students an opportunity to gain hands-on work experience, supporting students in adapting to and establishing mutually agreed upon expectations beyond the classroom. Navigating the transition from the classroom to the workworld can be challenging for many students as systems and norms can significantly vary across settings. One intern described her experience learning about the difference between internship work and classwork: "In a class, the instructor assigns you something and expects a certain deliverable. Here, we are assigned something but our supervisors don't necessarily know what the outcome will look like. **There is no "right answer", and directions can change at any time, reflecting the world of politics...**".

In addition to navigating the unknown and changing expectations, another student noted the resilience needed to engage in advocacy work: "I witnessed how powerful and **resilient** advocates can be in continuing vital work even in today's challenging political climate." Lessons of evolving expectations and resilience were key takeaways for ENACT interns this summer along with networking, self-advocacy, and the independence and empowerment that came from real world work experience. For example, one student shared:

*I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity and funding that ENACT afforded me this past summer as it allowed me to learn the importance of **self-discipline**. I have had numerous internships, but **this was probably the most I have really had to “adult.”** I am an **independent** person, but **this experience pushed me to grow both personally and professionally**. From living in an apartment, to budgeting, to a long commute, my experience this summer was incredibly eye-opening.*

The Benefits of the Cohort Experience & The ENACT Weekly Workshops

While ENACT Corps interns gained experience in the complexities of traversing the workworld, they did not do so individually. In their feedback, interns noted the benefits of the cohort experience. Being a part of a group while trying something new can ease both the challenges of the transitional period as well as increase retention (as demonstrated in numerous [cohort models in higher education](#)). 100% of interns noted in the post survey that they found the Friday workshops useful to some extent (with available responses ranging from “Very useful,” “Useful,” “Somewhat useful,” or “Not at all useful”). These quantitative results were affirmed by the qualitative responses from the survey. One ENACT Corps member shared the following regarding the ability to connect with her peers throughout the summer:

*I am grateful I was also able to **learn from my peers in the ENACT Corps** about their experiences and how they navigate different power dynamics, responsibilities and finding self-advocacy in a professional setting. **Being a part of a space where we can all be vulnerable and honest helped me reflect on my own experiences** and allowed me to learn how to handle moments of uncertainty.*

Having a weekly opportunity to confer with their peers proved helpful for interns as they processed their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges in the workplace.

Another intern echoed this sentiment in the post survey: “I am also grateful for the chance to learn from my peers in the ENACT Corps about navigating power dynamics, building self-advocacy skills, and handling moments of uncertainty in professional settings.” The

weekly ENACT sessions, as outlined above, included workshops such as how to set “SMART goals” (goals that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-bound), a SWOT analysis (a reflection of their Skills, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), a discussion of dominant culture in the workplace based on an [article](#) by sociologist Becky Thompson, and a workshop delving into the techniques and strategies to both deliver and receive feedback in the workplace effectively. (Note: the feedback workshop slides and the Thompson reading were shared with employers; ENACT might also consider offering these two workshops to employers as well). An ENACT intern highlighted: “These sessions offered valuable mentorship and practical guidance on navigating the professional world, from handling **feedback** and **taking initiative in the workplace** to building **essential life and career skills**. As someone entering their first in-person internship, I found these workshops incredibly impactful.”

Lessons Learned & Next Steps

The 2025 ENACT Corps interns comprised the inaugural cohort of the ENACT Corps Internship Program. As the Internship Program grows and evolves, there are numerous lessons to reflect upon and action items to be explored. The ENACT Corps intern and employer feedback forms and discussions informed the following lessons and next steps:

1. Provide Additional Time During Orientation for supervisors and interns to co-create and discuss the Goals and Job Descriptions document, ensure clear examples of task types and project scopes are shared up front to ease the early-stage ambiguity. Future orientation events may also provide an opportunity for previous employers to showcase

how different offices approach supervision in a panel style event. Similarly, ENACT Corps interns from the first cohort might be invited to attend to share their experiences and what types of tasks, deliverables, and supervision styles worked best for them.

2. Strengthen Project Planning and Flexibility by encouraging both supervisors and interns to plan one to two flexible longer term assignments that interns can start if they finish shorter tasks or assignments ahead of schedule. In addition to the orientation event, ENACT may also facilitate employer and interns meeting together prior to the beginning of the summer to strengthen project planning and to go over job descriptions.

3. Support Interns' Self Advocacy Skills during Friday workshops. For example, ENACT may devote workshop time to further supporting students as they navigate conversations in the workplace. For example, ENACT could provide sample prompts to help interns initiate conversations about project scope or ask for more work (e.g., "I completed this more quickly than anticipated, is there anything else we can work on?" or "I have completed a draft of this deliverable but I would love some feedback on my work so far if you have a moment"). ENACT mentorship alongside supervisor mentorship can together help guide interns as they navigate the complexities of completing work both individually and as part of a team.

4. Optimize Communication and Check-Ins. Employers expressed their satisfaction and gratitude that the communication from ENACT throughout the summer was not overwhelming but still present and supportive. ENACT can seek to continue to engage in moderate by thoughtful touch points throughout the summer experience. On behalf of

interns, ENACT can encourage supervisors to provide regular feedback during the weekly one on ones, establishing a pattern and precedent of delivering feedback (and not just communicating when something “goes wrong”). Supervisors complete a mid summer feedback form that is visible to ENACT; however, it is important to remind supervisors to deliver this feedback directly to the interns themselves. ENACT can also remind interns that weekly check-ins with their supervisors are a time for *them* (the interns) to come prepared with an agenda, questions, and/or ideas for future work. In an effort to improve interns’ verbal communication and presentation skills, ENACT will offer a brief oral presentation workshop mid-program, which can focus on supporting students in the following areas: a) how to highlight key points for impact, b) how to select what to include versus exclude in oral presentations/communications, and c) how to make clear asks and frame messaging in terms of action items and key takeaways. This is particularly important for work with legislators and in advocacy work.

5. Add Networking & Professional Development Opportunities. Some employers noted that filling the 30 hours per week with substantive work was at times challenging. ENACT can work to supplement these hours with meaningful tasks for interns that can be completed at any time throughout the summer. For example, ENACT can introduce a required networking assignment (ex: conduct two informational interviews or coffee chats). ENACT will ask interns to attend one or two additional meetings or public events to build their network and grow



their understanding of broader organizational contexts. For example, two summer 2025 ENACT Corps interns opted to attend a community event in Boston during a Juneteenth event where they met Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (see photo right). These additional experiences may not only help interns and employers meet the hours requirement but they may also provide substantive and meaningful networking opportunities.

6. Celebrate Community. ENACT should continue to foster ENACT Corps bonding moments for interns, including group lunches, additional opportunities for connection, and cross-site interaction. It is critical to acknowledge and support placements where students are well-matched (or not), which will improve retention and open future pathways.



ENACT Corps Summer Interns with supervisors from host sites Our Bodies Ourselves and the Office of Representative Steven Owens.

Appendix

A. Report Slide Deck: Slide Deck