



# Using Rebates to Protect Our Waters: Increasing Equitable Utilization of the RainWise Rebate Program for Disadvantaged Communities

Matthew Mason\*, Program on the Environment, University of Washington

Site Supervisor: Jenny Heins, Sustainable Ballard

Faculty Advisor: Sergey Rabotyagov, School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, University of Washington



## Background

- Seattle's combined sewers allow stormwater and sewage to overflow into our waterways, harming marine life and public health.
- RainWise provides rebates to install green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), specifically rain gardens and cisterns, to reduce stormwater overflow.
- Rebates are predominantly utilized by affluent and white homeowners, leaving disadvantaged communities behind.
- This study aims to identify community-driven solutions to promote equitable participation and access.

## Research Question

**What are the opportunities to increase equity within the RainWise Rebate Program?**

## Internship & Methods

- Interned with Sustainable Ballard, doing outreach for RainWise.
  - Doorbelling in eligible areas within Seattle and tabling at events (see Figure 1).
- Independent research on the equity issues regarding the rebate program.
  - Qualitative interviews with 12 customers and four community organizers.
  - Review of RainWise Racial Equity Tool Kit (RET).

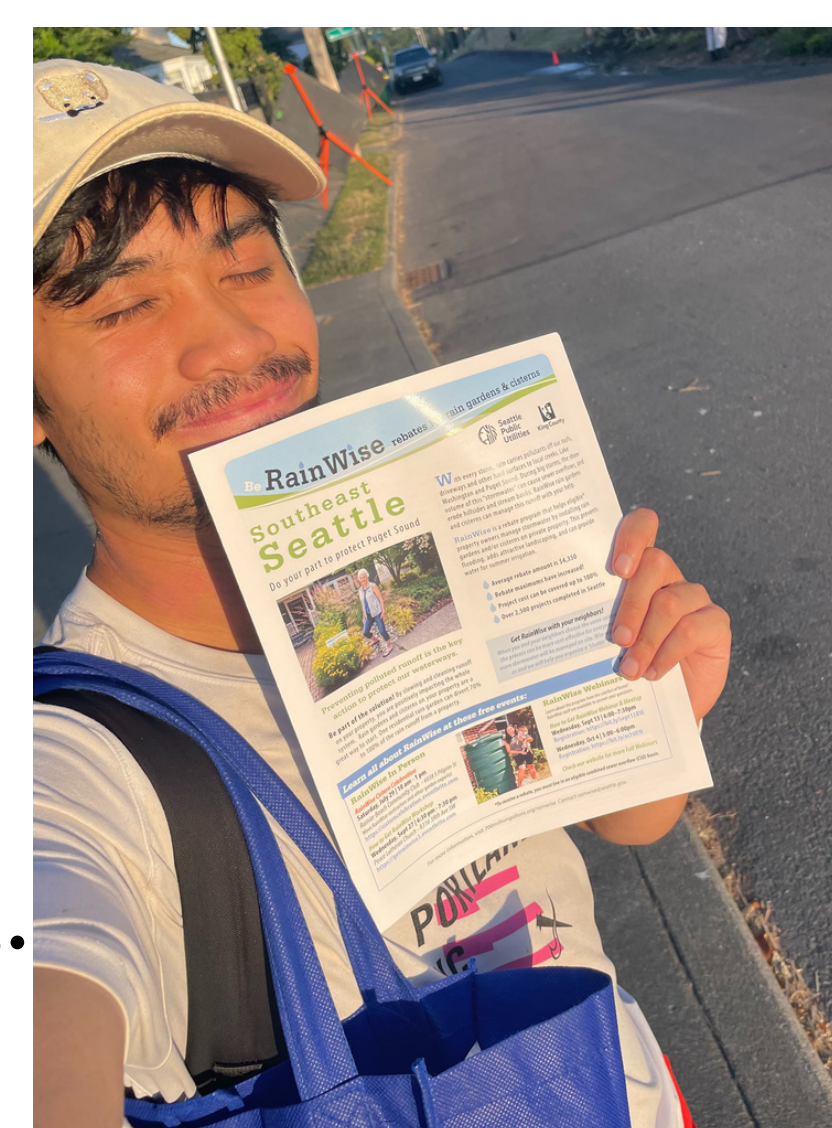
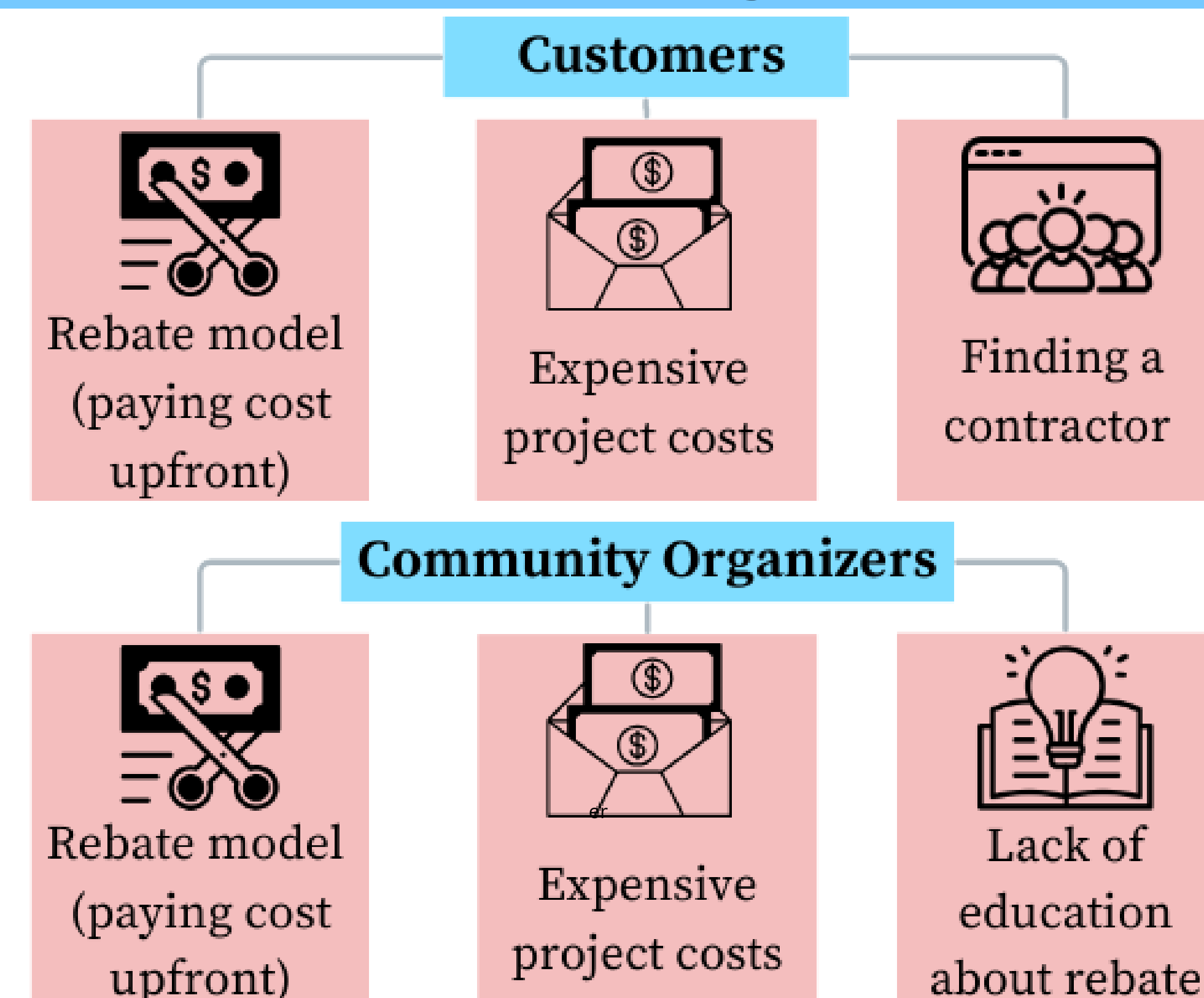


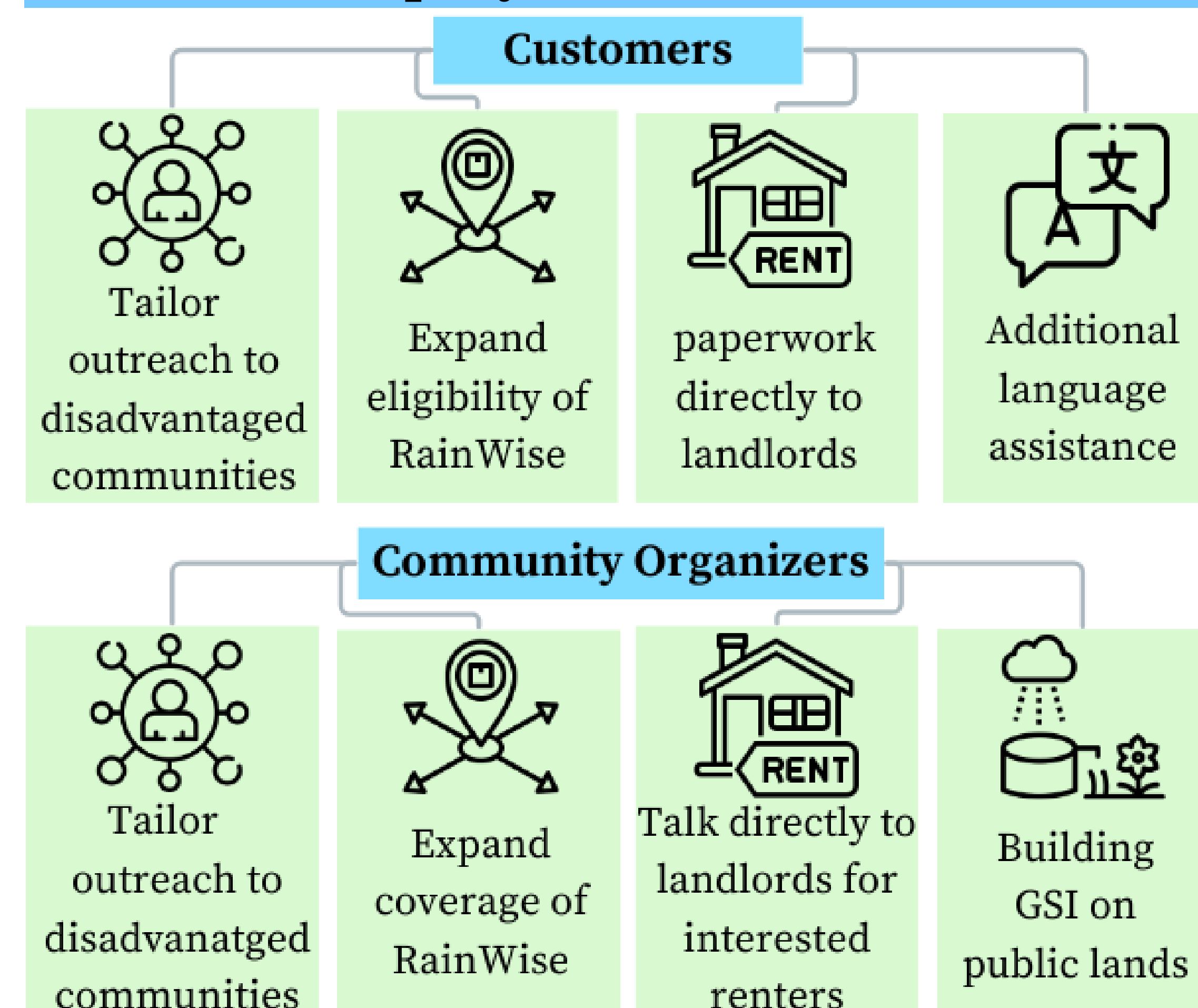
Figure 1: Myself after finishing doorbelling and showing the brochure I hand out to homeowners

## Results

### Top barriers in using the RainWise Rebate Program

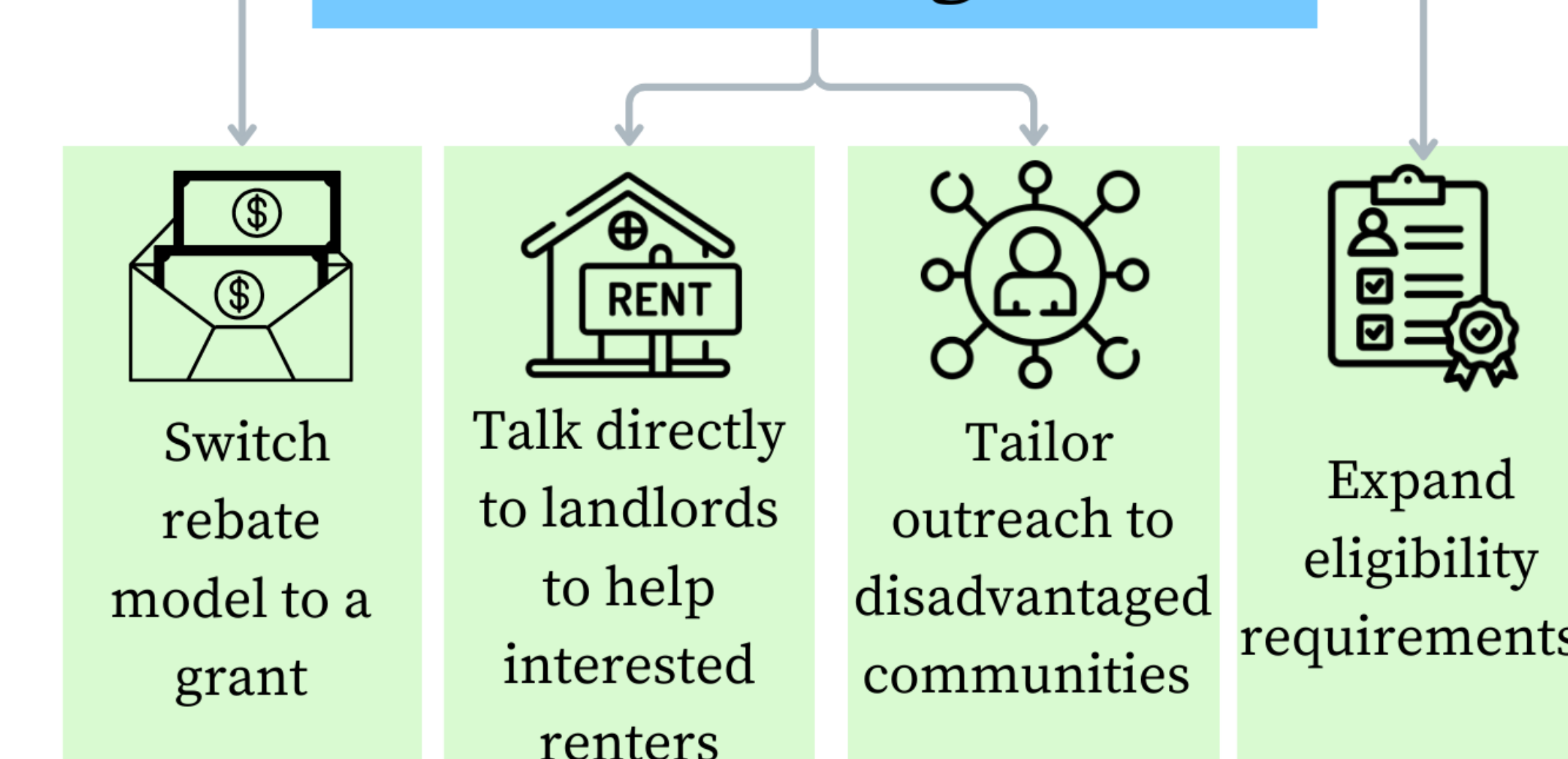


### Top suggested solutions to increase equity of RainWise



## Takeaways

### Solutions to Increase Equity in the RainWise Rebate Program



## Significance

- ACTION**
- The next steps are to implement these solutions to study their effectiveness in increasing equity, which can include:
    - Connect with grassroots organizations connected to disadvantaged communities to expand outreach.
    - Have SPU and King County start the process to switch to a grant and expand the eligibility.
  - These solutions increase equity of other GSI incentive programs to promote their usage, increasing our marine and human health by reducing water pollution.

## Acknowledgments

Special thanks to my site supervisor, Jenny Heins, and the RainWise staff, who guided me throughout my internship and research, and my faculty advisor for helping me focus my research to where it is now.