

Date: Wed, April 4 **Duration:** 0.5h

Interviewer: Gabi

Interviewee: Cassie, former staff of *The Empowerment Plan*. She is currently working in OpenIDEO with Naman.

Method: Phone call

1. Can you give me a general description of *The Empowerment Plan*?

The Empowerment Plan is a non-profit organization based in Detroit.

2. What is the business model of *The Empowerment Plan*?

The Empowerment Plan receives donations from both individuals and organizations. All coats are made in-house by the local homeless. More than just the coat, it is the job opportunity that is more important to the homeless.

3. Can you briefly explain the materials you are using now?

The only recycled material being used is the filling, which is made of recycled plastic water bottles. The majority of materials are from donation.

4. What are the sources of the current materials *EMPWR Coat* is using now?

GE and Carhartt provide us first hand materials. The quality is as good as their profitable product lines.

5. The \$100 sponsor fee for an *EMPWR Coat* is what is really costs to make it?

The actual cost of manufacture for a single coat is greater than \$100. However, people are unwilling to pay more than that to sponsor a coat.

6. Do you think there's a potential collaboration opportunity between *the Empowerment Plan* and Nike Grind?

Since the coat is manufactured in-house and the several limitations of the factory, the new material provided must be ready-to-use right out of the box.

Date: Sat, April 9 **Duration:** 1h

Interviewer: Gabi

Interviewee: Ye, a social worker. She studied Social Work at Columbia University and is currently located in a small village in China, working with a Non-Profit Organization dealing with local poverty issues.

Method: Phone call

1. Can you name a previous program you've been involved with related to the homeless people in NYC?

I've worked in a soup kitchen and a shelter to provide the homeless SNAP, a food stamp for homeless. Basically, to help prepare and distribute SNAP to the homeless.

2. Can you describe in general what the current living situation of homeless in NYC now?

Even with help of many shelters and organizations, most of the homeless continue living in the street with very basic supplies.

3. What's the process of bring in the homeless to a shelter?

A lot of homeless do not want to go to shelter for very valid reasons. Some of them are already used to living on their own and not being watched/helped/looked over by anyone. To them going to a shelter is like being held in custody. Some are simply not aware of such an offering, so that's where a lot of social worker in shelters come to help. They do a lot of outreach work in the street to talk with homeless people and tell them about different programs and offerings.

There are different programs.

Short term, overnight program. Is like a hotel, every afternoon homeless start to get in the line and wait for today's available bed opening. It is first come first serve, so if the shelter is full they cannot get in. With this type of shelter, the location is very important - downtown, midtown, and Brooklyn are very popular. This is so that the homeless don't need to walk a long way to the shelter.

Long term, target group program. This type of program provided by shelters focuses on a certain group of homeless, for e.g., intense, young people below 21.

1. What's the homeless attitude towards shelter?

They don't think shelters are safe.

2. Do homeless prefer to stay alone or they gather together?

Most of them stay alone.

3. Do they sleep in the same place overtime or they are constantly moving?

It depends, but subway, bus stations, and storefronts are most common places. In summer, parks as well.

4. What key factors can you name regarding the survival of homeless in a big city?

Both safety and health issues.

5. How to motivate homeless people to try this sleeping bag?

You should try to go to kitchen soup one day and talk with the homeless there. The homeless employed here are very welcome to communicating with people. Moreover, there are also social workers on location to talk to as well.

6. Is there any relevant information you can share with me? Any key characters of homeless?

One of the concerns homeless have is the loss of their belongings, like their coat, bags, or other things are lost/stolen constantly. This is one of the reason why they always wear all the clothes they possess, even in the summer.

Due to severe living conditions, if they are being in the street for very long, some of they are just lose an accurate perception of temperature. That's another reason why you see many are wearing the same clothes in the winter and summer.

Date: Wed, April 11

Interviewer: Gabi

· **Interviewee:** Sam, NYU DFA student. Her team is working on a project targeting to help homeless woman.

Method: In-Person

Sam helped on presenting the first prototype picture to one of the homeless women her group is working with. We prepared several questions beforehand, so she could help us getting these answered by the homeless.

1. Does it seem comfortable?

It looks pretty comfortable, especially with the pillow at the head area

It's good to have the zipper at the front (compared with some sleeping bags with Zippers on the side, which make it hard to zip up)

2. What features do you desire in your ideal sleeping bag?

It should have some thickness/cushioned/padding, since she always sleeps on the cardboard, and it's very hard and uncomfortable.

3. Can you tell me about the reaction when you present the homeless with a picture of our sleeping bag?

The woman told us that she really likes the idea of a sleeping bag. When I asked about the idea of having a pocket (in case things got stolen), she mentioned it's important, mentioning that she always keep her important stuff really close to her body inside her backpack.

I also asked about what might be the possible weight of a sleeping bag that they are willing to carry. She told us that one of her male friend usually carries a yoga mat in his backpack, which they sometimes use as a mat. Maybe the size and weight similar to that of a yoga mat would be ideal.

She also talks about the weather, since it's getting warmer soon, and they might not need a sleeping bag as warm as one for the winter. Another interesting point she raised is that cleaning is a big issue. She said that her clothes easily get dirty/smelly, because she would put a lot of stuff (like food) in her backpack.

Date: Sat, April 9 **Duration:** 0.5h

Interviewer: Gabi

Interviewee: Lu, a social worker. She studied Social Work at Columbia University. She's completed a one-year internship in a shelter working with the homeless.

Method: In-Person

1. Can you explain me your internship experience in the shelter?

First, let me give a brief introduction of the shelters. There are two types of shelters:

- Crisis shelter:
 - Provide one-night sleep, food, bed, shower
 - Compared with residential shelters, crisis shelter is more unsafe, unstable
 - For all homeless come to crisis shelter, they give an intake interview to help find a certain program later

- Residential shelter, this is the one that I worked for, and the program was:
 - Program: targeting to help 16-21-year-old youth
 - The duration is 6-8 months
 - The purpose is to help them to find jobs or place to study
 - They are all referred by Crisis Shelter
 - Some of issues we faced were: young people don't want to stay because there are too many limitations, and they go back to street after couple of weeks
 - The program requires them to dedicate certain amount of time to go out and find a job

- In the shelter there's 24-hour staff. Security check each hour, staffs will search for drug or other unsafe products they might hide.
- The residential shelter provides Comprehensive Assessment every month.
- Physical test results needed after two weeks of admission.
- Social workers will have weekly talk with the youth to help them determine their long-term goals.

2. Why they don't want to go to shelter?

Too many people; Bad environment; No freedom

3. Is there any suggested place you can think of in term of collaboration of our idea?

You can try reach out to churches, they often give donations to help homeless. And the biggest NGO in NYC is Covenant House.