

THE SURVIVAL KIT

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

We wanted to address the issue of difficulty in finding food and shelter in the homeless community and other people in need. To that end we have planned to design an application that will assist these underprivileged people in need. We have decided to target the following **research questions** that will help us better understand the needs of the homeless people while designing this application:

1. What are the needs and practical problems faced by the benton-county homeless people?
2. What problems do the underprivileged people face while searching for food and a temporary place to live?
3. What is the impact of environmental conditions like weather on the lives of the underprivileged people?

We conducted 2 semi-structured interviews and 2 structured interviews along with the use of observation methods to gain insights on understanding the above research questions. We interviewed a few homeless people and volunteers working at the shelters to get a better perspective of things.

PROCESS:

- **Tasks:**

To conduct the interview, we identified a few basic tasks in our application that we needed more information on. These tasks are mentioned below:

1. Finding the nearest available homeless shelter
2. Finding the nearest available food drives
3. Providing the transportation details (bus routes or maps) to that specific shelter or food drive.

With these tasks in mind, we decided to conduct interviews with the homeless people and some shelters associated with them.

- **Approach:**

To get a better idea of the current situation of different shelters in Corvallis and how the underprivileged people avail these facilities, we conducted 2 structured interviews one with the volunteer working at The Stone Soup Corvallis shelter and the other with an underprivileged person (not homeless) at the Basic Needs Center. We also conducted 2 semi-structured interviews with homeless people to understand what their needs were and how we can better address them with our application.

We formulated 2 separate interview question sets depending on whether we were talking to the volunteers or the homeless people themselves. We introduced ourselves as Oregon State University students and described our proposed application in short before proceeding towards the actual interviews.

Introduction:

Hi, I am _____. I am a graduate student at Oregon State University. I wanted to talk to you about a project that I am currently working on and get your opinions and

feedback on the same. So, we are planning on designing an application to assist individuals in finding nearby resources for food, clothing and temporary shelters. Do you mind answering a few questions and me recording your answers.

The interview question sets are included below:

- **Interview questions for Volunteers (Structured):**

1. Can you describe the current process for helping individuals in need to access food, clothing, and shelter at your shelter?
2. Can you tell us about the services that your homeless shelter currently offers to those in need?
3. How do individuals typically access these services?
4. Are there any specific resources or services that are in high demand among the homeless population you serve?
5. How do individuals in need come to know about your services?
6. How do you currently communicate information about available resources to individuals in need?
7. How do individuals become residents of the shelter?
8. How many individuals do you typically serve on a daily basis?
9. Are there any specific challenges or barriers that individuals in need face when trying to access resources in the community?
10. Can you recall the last time a homeless person approached you/ the shelter, and you were not able to assist them?
11. How do you currently handle referrals to other resources or organizations for those in need?
12. Have you or anyone at the shelter ever used a resource finder app or website for homeless individuals before? If so, what were your thoughts on it?
13. What are the outreach programs or initiatives in place to reach individuals experiencing homelessness who may not be aware of available resources?
14. Anything else you would like to add?

- **Interview questions of underprivileged people (Semi-Structured):**

1. How do you find shelters where you can get food and a place to stay?
2. How long does it take you to search such a place where you would find food, shelter, or clothing?
3. Can you tell me about your day-to-day life?
4. What problems have you faced while finding food or a place to stay at a shelter?
5. Would you feel comfortable using a kiosk?
6. Have you come across a food drive? What was your experience like?
7. Can you think of the last food drive you have been to? How did you come to know about when it was happening and when?
8. What things do you expect from an application that would cater to these basic needs?
9. What difficulties have you had in getting to the shelter in the past?
10. If there was an application to help find resources such as food, shelter, clothes. What would be the most useful feature you would like to see?

General Observations (Shelter: The Stone Soup Corvallis):

We conducted the interviews in pairs of 2 so that we could get a richer dataset and none of our primary questions were left unanswered. This along with our method of interviews (structured and semi-structured) and observations, we were able to establish a good triangulation to conduct the task at hand. We first conducted the interviews and then we proceeded to observe the workings of the homeless shelter or the people themselves.

The search for a shelter took us to the downtown area in Corvallis. The shelter was on the main street, making it easy to locate. After reaching the shelter around 11:00 am in the morning on Friday 27th January. As soon as we reached the location, we found a lot of people around the shelter coming in and out. We met one of the volunteers - Josh Willington who was doing his internship there. We explained to him our project and asked him for permission to be in the shelter and to interview a couple of people who use the facility.

After a brief discussion with him (the intern), he agreed to show us around but warned us to not engage with any of the people there because he wasn't sure how these people could react if asked questions or even approached. As they usually don't like to interact with anyone. Then he showed us around the whole building. He told us that they usually help people by providing them with food, clothes, and details of other places where they can find other resources.

In the facility, there were basically two stations. One was where people can get food and the other one was for clothing items. People were coming in and getting something to eat on a regular basis and there were a few who were just waiting for their turn to go inside.

They also provide basic hygiene to people in need. (Tampons, first-aid, clean washrooms)

There were some sitting areas as well where we interviewed the volunteer (Josh). As there were other people present in the sitting area, we asked for their consent as well to conduct the interview. While we were talking to him (Josh), there were a few people around us trying to figure out where to go. Then there were other people who helped in the facility (volunteers) who were trying to help them.

When we were about to end our interview, we saw a man come in and he was not doing well and looking under the weather. After asking about his condition, we were told that he might be under the influence of some kind of drug or illegal substance and were told to steer clear.

We also talked with the Director (Head) of the Stone Soup Corvallis Shelter. We explained our project to her and got positive feedback from her for trying to do something for these underprivileged people.

After the conversation, we saw them working on closing the facility and wrapping things up. They maintained an inventory of the items they have left and the items they need to operate.

Exhaustive Inventory of elements:

- **People in the space, what they are like, what they were doing:**
 - **Volunteer Interviews:** The Intern (volunteer), other volunteers, head of the shelter, homeless people, and the interviewer. The volunteers were either assisting the homeless people or going about their routine tasks. The homeless people were availing the services provided by the shelter and enjoying a quiet time. The volunteers were very friendly and open while the underprivileged people were not in good shape (under influence of some drugs) so we were advised against talking to them.
 - **Underprivileged people Interviews:** Just the homeless person/ underprivileged person (interviewee) and the Interviewer. Both the people seemed relatively decent and open compared to the other people that we observed at the shelter.
- **Emotions and reactions:**
 - The general reaction as mentioned in the above observation was that the volunteers were happy about our design idea as our application would solve many of their problems and help the homeless people better. They also warned us regarding the actual conditions of the homeless people (drugs) and how we should take care about that.
 - The underprivileged people that we interviewed were also happy with our proposed idea and suggested some additional changes which we would take under advisement.
- **Problems encountered with their activities:**
 - The volunteers openly agreed that they face difficulties serving the people in need due to their limited resources. They also face some difficulties keeping up with their daily chores emphasizing the need of more volunteers. They also find it challenging to find temporary accommodation for the people in need.

- The homeless people face difficulties in finding the appropriate shelter that will guarantee them food and temporary shelter. The uncertainty of how far they have to travel to get to a shelter and by what means of transport is also challenging for them.
- **The Environment:**
 - The shelters were spacious with accessible facilities and many volunteers to assist the people.
 - Our engagement with the volunteers was welcomed by them.
 - We observed some people who were under the weather at the shelter. But they too got the help they needed.
 - The environment was conducive to promote conversations and get the interviewee more comfortable with answering the questions.
 - The basic needs center was filled with people waiting to get food from the pantry. We had a place to sit and talk. It helped the interviewee open up more about their problems related to getting affordable food and how the basic needs center helped them.

DETAILED OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS:

Please view the pdf document attached in the appendix section of this document.

RESULTS/INSIGHTS:

1. The underprivileged people had limited access to resources such as food and clothing or clean water to drink.
2. The shelters were functional for a couple of hours a day which became inconvenient to the people in need.
3. Most of the shelters do not provide the underprivileged people with temporary accommodation or resources such as tents unless it is a life-threatening situation.
4. Only packaged food is provided at the facilities and that too is subjected to availability.
5. We observed that the problem of finding a decent temporary accommodation is more pressing than that of finding food and clothing.
6. People have issues in finding appropriate public transportation routes and navigating towards the nearest shelter.
7. During rainy seasons and winter, it gets difficult for the homeless people to stay without any additional resources and help.
8. Given the actual data and observations, it has now become clear that the underprivileged people are really in need of a centralized resource locator to satisfy their basic needs.
9. During the interviews it was also highlighted that the users would appreciate a community tab in the application to get real-time information about the availability of resources.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEAM MEMBERS:

Task	Team Members Involved	Contribution in %
Formulating Interview Questions	Avani Abhay Sathe Atharva Deshpande	50% each
Interviewing the Volunteer Josh	Atharva Deshpande Rishabh Srivastava	50% each - Interview and observations
Interviewing the Homeless person 1	Rishabh Srivastava Jagadeep Avula	50% each - Interview and observations
Interviewing the Underprivileged person at BNC	Mahesh Narpat Chand Avani Abhay Sathe	50% each - Interview and observations
Interviewing the Homeless person 2	Jagadeep Avula Mahesh Narpat Chand	50% each - Interview and observations
Final report creation	Avani Abhay Sathe	100%

APPENDIX:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13CmwFCgvMTh5E5HD9RbGfX7TRbSyOtWR/view?usp=sharing>