

## **S4A6 | Systems for Action: Systems and Services Research to Build a Culture of Health**

### **Development Studies Narrative**

#### **Identifying Information**

**Project Title:** Hope Harbor Project

**Proposal I.D.:** ID: 118941

**Applicant Name:** Kenneth A. Capron

**Legal Name of Applicant Organization:** Southern Maine Research Institute

#### **Full Proposal Narrative:**

Let's keep this simple. This project is about evaluating the social, therapeutic and financial feasibility of an as yet untried tool in the homelessness toolbox. The challenges of homelessness are much bigger than they appear from the outside. Big problems need big solutions. So the proposal put forth is to use a large structure, a decommissioned cruise ship, to provide housing while implementing a tried but seldom used model, the Individualized Plan for Improvement, to give victims of homelessness the best possible path to recovery.

This project is about a theoretical prototype. It is not the be-all end-all analysis of efficiency and measurements of individual improvements. That would require a lot more resources - not to mention a model ship on which to test the theories. But we can look at financial pros and cons - would it be feasible financially on its own if managed properly. Using the IPI model, would professionals warm up to the concept? Would the community, the general population, give it enough of a trial to realize the value of a 15 story, pre-built steel framed building that just looks like a ship on the outside. Can function and cost savings override NIMBYism?

Step-by-step, we need to identify motivated team members. First is Ken Capron, who is motivated by solving big problems. As a CPA and systems analyst, he comes to this project much as he has solved big systemic problems throughout his career in many industries. Ken has already done some early financial feasibility analysis. He is already confident about the benefit/cost analysis of doing this. He is certain of the danger of not testing this concept.

Next on the team, Pat LaMarche, has been invited to do much of the legwork, interviews, surveys, polls. Pat has already written two books on homelessness. She currently works at a shelter and has followed the homeless issue for years. Pat has a political side, having been at

times candidate for Governor of Maine. She was even nominated as the national V.P. candidate for the Green Party. Add to that her many media experiences as journalist, and radio host. She will be the perfect author of this study. The money needs to be right and so I have proposed that she could have book rights as a follow-on from the development study.

In 2018 a fundraising professional from the West Coast reached out to me about helping to raise funds to make the cruise ship concept come to fruition. She was given 2019 Rotary People of Action Award. She has remained interested in fundraising for the cruise ship concept ever since. She could be critical in determining long-term feasibility on the West Coast.

Another professional who showed interest in the concept was Florida State interior design professor Jill Pable. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DFIxXIRQBA>) In an email, Jill commented about the cruise ship concept "*That's an interesting premise that strikes me as needing a thorough investigation.*" She will be invited to share perspective on the feasibility of the cruise ship design. Also, as an author, she can contribute snippets from her professional experiences.

I would recommend adding a part-time associate to keep us organized; type; answer phones; arrange travel and a little bookkeeping. And help us meet our deadlines. There are possibilities to get interns from three local universities to collate pieces of the puzzle as we find them. We will involve the State Homeless Council, the MCOOC, the ESAC plus numerous others since we are already members of those entities.

We will start with an organizing meeting with invitations to all the interested parties from 2018 forward both public and professional including government actors. The Team must have a clear understanding of the objectives and boundaries of this project. We will need to put together some visuals and a web presence which includes polling opportunities for visitors to the site.

The Team needs to identify what questions to ask of whom. Pat should be on the road with the visuals, meeting and interviewing people who have raised the concept elsewhere in North America. And seeking feedback from Government officials in places like San Francisco and Los Angeles and Vancouver. I would like a thorough study of the N.A. region because of travel concerns. However we should consider the perception of the concept in other nations if funding allows. They all are so different from us, and often more creative. Germany reached out in 2018.

With outlines in hand, questionnaires loaded and ready, interviews scripted, Pat will call, zoom and visit stakeholders who we have targeted far and near looking for acceptance of the concept in coastal communities. By way of community meetings, we can begin to understand what is appealing and what is not to stakeholders. Would they be open to a homeless ship, or not, and why? How bad does the homeless situation in their community have to be to at least try this or other outside-the-box solutions to this or other critical social issues? As a suggestion for a follow through study it may be valuable to involve experts in social change to evaluate ways to change opinions. The status quo tells us that most people want homelessness solved - just NIMBY.

Meanwhile, Ken will be pursuing hard data to compare the cost of the phantom cruise ship to the brand new shelter under construction in Portland. Each would cost about \$25 million. But the new shelter is designed only for 208 patrons while the ship could hold over 1000 patrons. Public opinion suddenly becomes VERY expensive.

In a meaningful analysis it is essential that all the benefits and deficits of these options be identified in the light of day and fairly valued. USDOT has recently adopted a benefit/cost analysis which includes the value of not doing something.

Approaching the end of available fund, we need to pull together a "lessons learned" report. It needs to recommend additional factors to study. Or maybe the result is to pilot the concept with a leased cruise ship assuming we can find an amenable berthing spot. Maybe public opinion makes such an effort futile. It is fascinating how some people are so enthused that they reached around the world to see what the 2018 newspaper story was all about. In fact, I got an email from Nova Scotia last week seeking information on the idea.