

Some good questions to ask when you're starting good work...

The following are a set of questions the Rock Dove Collective first put together for a workshop we hosted at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit in 2010. We were hoping to help other people who are thinking about creating mutual aid-based projects (whether in health, like Rock Dove, or in another area, like education or housing) explore some of the central questions that we've thought about, learned from, and explored in our own work. We hope these questions are useful and would love to learn from your answers.

What part of life do you want to impact?

Health? Education? Technology? Housing? etc.

What are three basic guiding principles you could do this work from?

What is important to you in this work? Why do you do it? What brings you to it? What do you want to see become real? Why did you choose this part of life over any other? etc.

What kind of organizational structure do you envision?

Collectives, Networks, Non-profits, Coalitions....

Where are you at?

Map out the geographical area you want to impact - how local, how big, etc. you want your work to be? Are you in a neighborhood, a city, regional, national? Do you have a space or not? Are you a storefront or online or on the streets or what?

What community/ties do you want to benefit/impact?

Who is this work done by and for?

What is your connection to that community/ties?

Are you within that community, outside it, new to it, have a complex relationship to it, etc.? When you're working with multiple communities, how do those communities relate to each other?

What does your capacity look like?

What have you got? What kind of resources do you have? How much and what kind of time, space, labor, imagination?

What forms of oppression will you encounter in your work?

What are you hoping to transform?

What dynamics of power and privilege will exist among the people doing and benefiting from the work, etc.?

What's your relationship to money?

Do you have it? Want to raise it? Is it necessary to carry out your vision? How much? Do you want grants? Contributions from the community benefitting from your work? From rich folks? Do you want to sell things or get paid for services? What challenges does money pose for your work? How can you overcome those challenges?

How long do you want to work on this together?

Is this a short-term, medium-term, or long haul project? How will you pace yourself?