



COLUMBIA **YOUTH** COMMISSION

# ABOUT

The **Columbia Youth Commission** is a program for local students to **provide leadership** and **improve services for youth in Columbia**. The group of young leaders works to **bridge the gap between adults and youth**, fostering a greater sense of **unity, communication and partnership throughout the city**. The program is for students ages **14-18**.

# WHY

To better leverage the **energy, ideas** and **voices** of **young people** in our community, programs like a Youth Commission are not only beneficial but are imperative for cities that want to more **intentionally engage with youth** and **understand their needs as a demographic.**

**TL;DR - Gen Z is dope, so we must engage with them.**

# WHAT THE YC'ers DO

- Comment on **legislation** and **policies** that impact youth
- Create **public service programs** that improve the lives of youth
- **Monitor and measure** the effectiveness of youth programs and policies by coming up with **program evaluation measures** that consider aspects of a program that **matter most** to youth.
- Partner with other youth organizations on shared issues
- Prepare their peers for **leadership roles, postsecondary education and career.**

# WHY OURS IS DIFFERENT

This year, we re-established the Columbia Youth Commission by infusing a **youth election** into the program.

# ELECTION 2019

**1 YOUTH COMMISSION**

**9 MEMBERS:**

**4 CITY OF COLUMBIA**

**3 AT-LARGE RICHLAND COUNTY**

**2 AT-LARGE LEXINGTON COUNTY**

# WHY ELECTION?

- Increase **accountability** of students involved
- Familiarize students with **voting**, importance of **civic engagement**
- More **knowledge** of the program + its benefits among all students in the region

# HOW WE DID IT

- Introduced idea to local superintendents
- Obtained school email addresses for (some) students
- Shared information about program with students & principals
  - Step 1 - Apply
  - Step 2 - Vote
- Election Day(s) - May 7 & 8
- Announced winners



# NUTS & BOLTS

- Initially intended to use blockchain technology for the election
- Paper version of application
- Visits to schools
- Involve city and even councilmembers in the process
- Have a way of ensuring voters are students
- Swearing-in ceremony

# WHAT TO DO DIFFERENTLY

- Pump more money into the overall process - consider paid volunteer for “field work” + paid social media marketing
- Involve a teacher at each school
- Make sure expectations of youth commissioners are very clear
- Vet the winners

# WHERE WE ARE NOW

- Youth Commissioners are convening this month
- First meeting will include:
  - Personality assessment
  - Bylaws
  - Subcommittee designation
  - Goals + major projects, policies