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