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**NYC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMMISSION LAUNCHES “IT’S OUR MONEY,” A PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT DESIGNED BY AND CREATED FOR NYC YOUTH**

*NYC will become the first municipality in the U.S. to host a participatory budgeting process on Decidim, an open-source civic tech platform used in cities worldwide to promote direct democracy.*

**NEW YORK**—The NYC Civic Engagement Commission, in partnership with the Coro New York Leadership Center’s PB Youth Fellowship, today launched “It’s our Money,” a participatory budgeting project aiming to engage and empower NYC Youth in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and guide them to decide how to spend \$100,000 on projects designed to meet their communities’ needs and interests.

New York City will become the first municipality in the country to host a participatory budgeting process on Decidim, an open-source civic tech platform used in cities worldwide to promote direct democracy through participatory budgeting, resident consultations for municipal strategic planning, and community-driven policy proposals.

“This innovative program will put NYC youth at the center of our city’s participatory process in a way that is safe and interactive,” said **Dr. Sarah Sayeed, Chair and Executive Director for Civic Engagement Commission**. “The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for youth, but we are determined to leverage this moment with a platform that connects youth with government, and where youth can submit ideas and proposals, respond to surveys, share information about meetings and events, create groups to hold discussions and debates, and vote on proposed projects.”

**It’s Our Money** will provide an opportunity for youth and youth organizations to present proposals and interact to develop ideas and solutions in a participatory and dynamic platform. Participants will be able to submit and comment on proposals and closely follow the process through all its phases. The Commission’s vision is to use Decidim to foster spaces for civic engagement that build trust in the City’s democratic process.

The project will be conducted in 4 phases. Phase 1 will call on NYC Youth ages 9-24 throughout the city to participate in identifying core needs and to generate ideas to address them. Participation can take place via sessions virtually facilitated by Coro PB Youth Fellows, through partner youth organizations and schools using a virtual facilitator tool kit, or through the platform [www.participate.nyc.gov](http://www.participate.nyc.gov). Given that nearly a third of New Yorkers lack a home broadband connection, youth can also participate via text.

In phase 2, youth organizations will be invited to submit proposals in response to youth needs and project ideas. Youth will vote on these proposals in phase 3, where a total of five projects will be awarded funding of up to \$20,000 each.

In the final phase (phase 4), the awarded youth organizations will invite youth to participate in the implementation of the project.

Registration is now open for youth organizations interested in participating. To learn more about “It’s Our Money” and how to participate please visit [www.participate.nyc.gov](http://www.participate.nyc.gov).

“Coro is proud to support the Civic Engagement Commission in centering the voices of young New Yorkers, especially in this moment,” said **Gregg Bishop, Interim Executive Director of the Coro New York Leadership Center**. “Participatory budgeting is not only a gateway to lifelong civic engagement for youth, it’s a meaningful mechanism for anyone in New York City to affect what goes on in their neighborhoods. Our Youth Fellows have designed an opportunity for everyday teens to exercise their leadership in partnership with government and nonprofits. That’s exactly the type of cross-sector collaboration we need right now.”

“We’re asking questions about equity; we’re asking questions about access,” said **Darlene Uzoigwe, Coro PB Youth Fellow** and current member of the Civic Engagement Commission’s PB Advisory Committee. “Where have we failed youth? It’s important to ask these questions right now because there are so many different perspectives across the city. I’m realizing that there’s a distinct power in coming together to solve issues and it gives me hope for what we can accomplish in this moment.” Darlene is currently a senior at Brooklyn Technical High School.

“The health of our City and Democracy depends on engaging and empowering people to have a say in how their government operates and how their money is spent. The Civic Engagement Commission’s “It’s Our Money” participatory budgeting project does just that. By showing our youth the power of economic democracy we are planting the seeds for a more just and inclusive New York,” said **Phil Thompson, NYC Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives**.

“It is exciting that despite the challenges they are facing during the pandemic, our young people will have opportunities to engage through this new virtual participatory budgeting initiative. We want as many young people as possible to be a part of City government and It’s Our Money will give them a voice in how public dollars are spent. At DYCD we believe that one way to build

our future is to encourage young people to participate. DYCD is proud to team up with the NYC Civic Engagement Commission and the Coro New York Leadership Center PB Youth Fellowship to continue to build stronger communities by empowering our youth through the It's Our Money initiative," said **Commissioner Bill Chong, New York City Department of Youth & Community Development**.

"Engaging communities is absolutely essential and digital technology platforms enable the City to understand the needs of New Yorkers better than ever before," said **John Paul Farmer, Chief Technology Officer of New York City**. "The Civic Engagement Commission's adoption of the Decidem platform is a noteworthy use of technology to improve the flow of information to and from government, generally, and to include youth voices in the participatory budgeting process, specifically. Trust is the bedrock of democratic government. The Civic Engagement Commission's efforts promise to make New York City more transparent, more responsive, and more trusted, and we applaud the Commission for its work."

"As of this year, Decidim has been used for digital democracy processes in more than 20 countries and 120 cities around the world, but this project with the CEC represents the first official use of Decidim and an open source and free software for participatory democracy in the US. We truly believe that it is important for cities to be critical of the technologies they use when it comes to public consultations that do have an impact on citizens' lives. Needless to say that we are excited to be part of a project of this scale and are looking forward to seeing how successful it will become," said **Eloïse Gabadou & Valentin Chaput, Open Source Politics**.

"Digidem Lab has been following the impressive work that NYC has been building around participatory budgeting. At its core is the community and we are at a time in history where the need for collective decision-making is greater than ever. In a year filled with the pandemics of Covid-19 and of racial injustice, we are so happy to be part of creating a process where young people's ideas are at the front and center," said **Pierre Mesure, Digidem Lab**.

"As a minority-owned firm that's been partnering with New York City for more than a decade on a variety of technology-rooted initiatives, it is so fulfilling to be a part of NYC bringing the public further into the democratic decision-making process," said **Srini Penumella, CEO of Spruce Technology**.

### **About The New York City Civic Engagement Commission**

The New York City Civic Engagement Commission's mission is to enhance civic participation, promote civic trust, and strengthen democracy in New York City. The Civic Engagement Commission (CEC) was established by the voters of New York City as part of an amendment to the City Charter adopted in 2018. For more information about The Commission and its programs, [click here](#).

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