

2012 ANNUAL REPORT



About the Science Festival Alliance

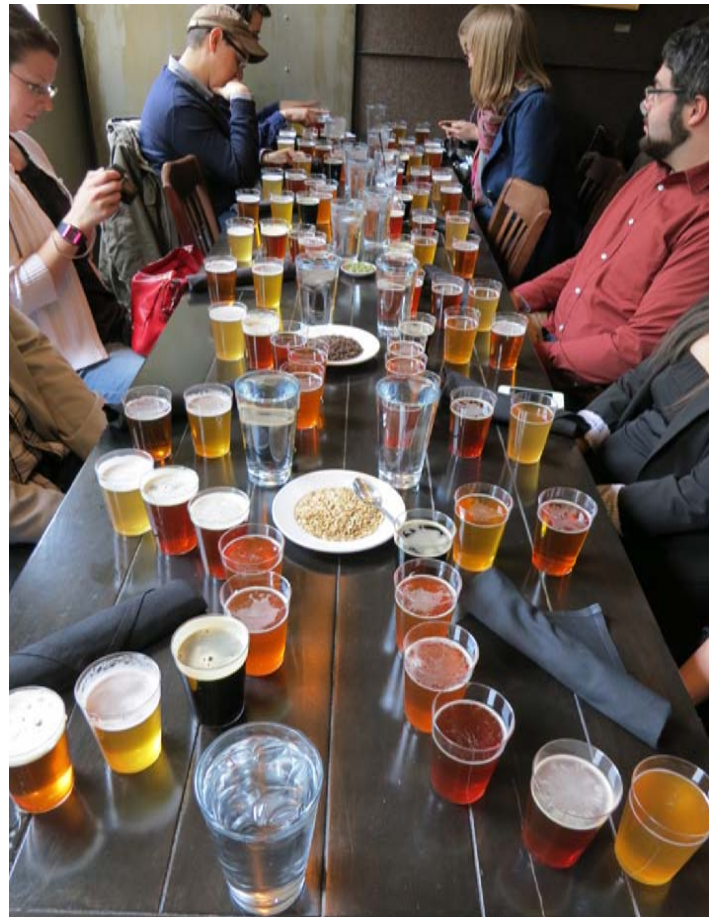
The Science Festival Alliance (SFA) is a professional association of independent science and technology festivals. We are dedicated to encouraging and supporting both new and existing festivals, and to fostering an international conversation about how to make public science events more meaningful, entertaining, and instructive.

The SFA was established in 2009 through the cooperative efforts of four founding organizations: MIT Museum, Franklin Institute, University of California–San Francisco, and University of California–San Diego. A grant that year from the National Science Foundation (NSF) provided three years of funding to support and evaluate four major science festivals in different regions of the United States and to establish the SFA as a national network. Since that time, the SFA has grown to encompass well over a dozen member festivals, and funding from multiple sources has ensured that the SFA will continue to promote and support science festivals for years to come.

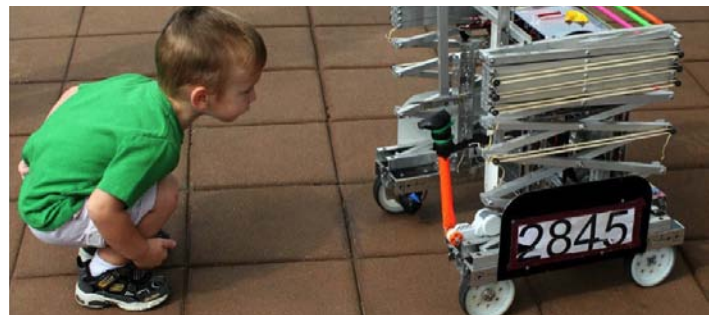
This first annual report provides an overview of the Science Festival Alliance’s networking and member festival activity in 2012. A separate report summarizing the best practices learned over the three years spanning the SFA’s original NSF grant is also available.

“The whole idea is to make science accessible, engaging, and fun for everyone.”

P.A. d’Arbeloff, Cambridge Science Festival Director



Philadelphia Science Festival



St. Petersburg Science Festival



Texas A&M Physics and Engineering Festival

SFA Membership: The Benefits of Networking

Each SFA member science festival celebrated in 2012 was independently organized and therefore the unique product of the community in which the event took place. With most lasting between 4 and 10 days, these festivals brought together broad cross-sections of their respective communities to explore diverse topics in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

SFA members produce recurring (often annual) celebrations that rally many stakeholders to provide a wide range of activities, events, and programs serving a defined region. Most SFA members run multi-day, multi-venue, massively collaborative festivals that directly involve STEM practitioners in public outreach.

SFA member festivals draw on the collective wisdom, collegial support, and friendly competition of a community of festival organizers to continuously improve the quality of their offerings. SFA membership is available free to any festival willing to commit to active participation in the SFA network.

Since all SFA member festivals are independently operated, each has complete flexibility in creating programs and promotional campaigns. Each festival features scores of events every year, and these activities sometimes change dramatically from year to year. It can therefore be a challenge to summarize even one science festival, let alone provide specific data about what benefits festivals provide collectively. Nevertheless, this exercise does have merit—revealing, for example, that hundreds of thousands of people all across the country participated in an SFA member festival in 2012, and that SFA member festivals mobilized more than 4,000 STEM practitioners to take part in this public outreach.

For more information, explore this snapshot of the SFA in 2012—membership, impact, network activities, and more. Note that for the purposes of this document, all aggregated information has been drawn from voluntary self-reports submitted by our members.



Philadelphia Science Festival



St. Petersburg Science Festival



North Carolina Science Festival

“Being connected to the SFA enables us to be connected to a nationwide movement and helps put the festival in context of a larger initiative, thus reinforcing credibility and strength.”

Arizona SciTech Festival Organizers

2012 Science Festival Alliance Members

Arizona SciTech Festival*

January 25–March 14, 2012

San Diego Festival of Science & Engineering

March 17–24, 2012

Texas A&M Physics and Engineering Festival

March 30–31, 2012

North Carolina Science Festival

April 13–29, 2012

Philadelphia Science Festival

April 20–29, 2012

Cambridge Science Festival

April 21–29, 2012

Seattle Science Festival*

June 1–10, 2012

iExploreSTEM Iowa

September 18, 2012

Wisconsin Science Festival

September 27–30, 2012

Celebrate Science Indiana

October 6, 2012

New Hampshire TechFest

October 13, 2012

Colorado Springs Science Festival

October 13–21, 2012

Bay Area Science Festival

October 25–November 4, 2012

St. Petersburg Science Festival

October 23–27, 2012

Nebraska Science Festival**

MSU Science Festival**

Atlanta Science Festival**

* First celebration in 2012

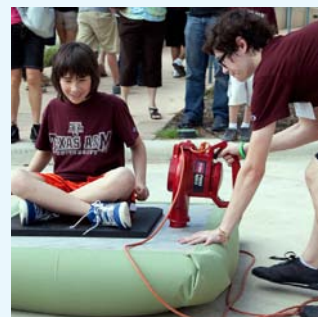
** First celebration in 2013 or later



Wisconsin Science Festival



Bay Area Science Festival



Texas A&M Physics and Engineering Festival

“Opening the door, you were just about bowled over by the noise and excitement of all the little kids doing science at the hands-on labs in the town center street fair.”

Julie Underwood, Dean of Education for the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Chair of the Wisconsin Science Festival Steering Committee

2012 SFA Member Activity by the Numbers*

756,145 Total number of people who visited an SFA member festival

1,671 Total number of events and programs produced by SFA member festivals

72 SFA member festival events that drew more than **1,000 visitors**

15 SFA member festival events that drew more than **10,000 visitors**

\$3,500 Lowest festival budget among SFA members

\$618,434 Highest festival budget among SFA members

We, along with parents and teachers, must inspire today's students to become tomorrow's science, technology, engineering, and mathematical innovators. It's essential to our regional quality of life—both socially and economically.

Paul Negulescu, Vice President, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, 2012 San Diego Festival of Science & Engineering Steering Committee Chairperson

\$3,862,765 Total funding raised to support SFA member festivals in 2012

4,220 STEM practitioners taking an active role in an SFA festival
(10 members reporting)

2,985 Volunteers helping out SFA member festivals in 2012
(12 members reporting)

1,375 Organizations collaborating with an SFA member festival in 2012

* Unless otherwise specified, figures reflect data reported by 13 SFA member organizations that held festivals in 2012



Bay Area Science Festival

The Impact of Science Festivals on the Public

In 2012, Goodman Research Group conducted an independent evaluation of four SFA member festivals—Cambridge Science Festival, San Diego Festival of Science & Engineering, Philadelphia Science Festival, and Bay Area Science Festival. Goodman's survey of more than 4,000 responding festival attendees at dozens of events found:

97% of festival attendees gave the event a **POSITIVE** rating

94% of attendees reported the festival event made STEM learning **FUN**

93% of festival attendees reported **LEARNING** something new about STEM topics

91% of festival attendees reported an increased interest in **STEM** topics



San Diego Festival of Science & Engineering

Bay Area Science Festival



Science Made Relevant

One goal of science festivals is to make the public more aware of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research and educational opportunities in each festival region. Goodman's research found:

86% of festival attendees reported feeling better connected to STEM activities in their region

80% of attendees heard one or more STEM professionals talk about their work

50% participated in a hands-on activity led by a STEM professional

43% joined in a discussion with a STEM professional

Festivals Make the News

A CELEBRATION OF SCIENCE WITH A POPULAR TOUCH

The New York Times, April 9, 2012

CIRCUS, CONTESTS MAKE SCIENCE FEST FUN

San Francisco Chronicle, October 19, 2012

SUMO ROBOTS HELP STUDENTS

Mountain Times, May 3, 2012

SCIENCE TAKES TO THE STREETS AT THE PHILADELPHIA SCIENCE FESTIVAL

Philadelphia Inquirer, April 22, 2012 (Philly.com)

CURIOSITY ABOUNDS AT CAMBRIDGE SCIENCE FESTIVAL

Boston Globe, April 8, 2012

TICKLE YOUR BRAIN AT SEATTLE SCIENCE FESTIVAL

Seattle Times, May 30, 2012

LEARN HOW MAKING BEER IS RELATED TO BAKING BREAD

Tampa Bay Times, October 18, 2012

INSPIRING AND PREPARING SAN DIEGO'S FUTURE INNOVATORS

San Diego Union-Tribune, March 15, 2012

FOOTBALL PHYSICS AND DANCING SCIENTISTS? IT'S THE WISCONSIN SCIENCE FESTIVAL

Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel Online, August 29, 2012

HUGE FEST SALUTES SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY

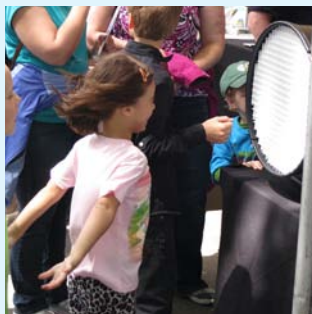
The Arizona Republic, January 30, 2012

“It’s important that we don’t only celebrate science where
it’s already flourishing,”

John Durant, Director, MIT Museum



St. Petersburg Science Festival



Seattle Science Festival



Cambridge Science Festival



Bay Area Science Festival



Philadelphia Science Festival

SFA Network Activity in 2012

Major funding

In September, the **National Science Foundation** awarded **\$1,999,904** to a collaboration of four institutions (MIT Museum, Franklin Institute, University of California–San Francisco, and University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill) to support further work developing the Science Festival Alliance and its network activities.

The grant is designed to help SFA's current and future members make the most of the festival format with an emphasis on four distinct goals:

- To expand the capacity of science festivals to have a positive impact on large public audiences;
- To serve traditionally hard-to-reach audiences, including underserved communities and the science inattentive;
- To involve STEM practitioners directly in public outreach; and
- To leverage the collaboration inherent in a festival into even greater regional campaigns.

In December, the **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Public Understanding of Science and Technology Program** awarded **\$399,545** to the SFA over two years to foster festivals in communities with relatively limited resources. This award provides mentoring and travel support as well as challenge grants for 12 new festivals. Along with SFA staff at the MIT Museum, lead collaborators include the Wisconsin Science Festival, St. Petersburg Science Festival, Colorado Springs Science Festival, and SCOPE Science & Technology Days.

Science Festival Alliance Activities

The Science Festival Alliance organized the *International Public Science Events Conference: Pushing the Boundaries*, held October 11–12, in Columbus, Ohio. This major event brought together professionals from around the world and across disciplines for conference sessions and workshops focused on new audiences, new venues, new collaborations, new formats, and new conceptions of success in science outreach.

Other key SFA activities in 2012 included presentations or workshops at the following events:

- Association of Science Museum Directors' annual meeting, February 9–12, New Orleans, LA
- American Association for the Advancement of Science's annual meeting, February 16–20, Vancouver, BC
- American Physical Society's annual meeting, February 27–March 2, Boston, MA
- American Chemical Society's annual meeting, March 25–29, San Diego, CA
- Association of Science-Technology Centers' annual meeting, October 13–16, Columbus, OH

The SFA also extended its reach internationally, providing guidance to professionals interested in developing science festivals in the Middle East and North Africa. In January, the SFA held a workshop in Cairo for stakeholders throughout Egypt. In May, during the Cairo Science Festival's third celebration, the SFA held a second workshop for professionals interested in public science outreach throughout the region. This work was supported through a supplemental NSF award.

“The wealth of ideas presented [at IPSEC] was incredibly impressive, and I feel the connections made and information exchanged during the conference will be of great benefit.”

Jordan Adams, Seattle Science Festival Event Manager

SFA Impact by the Numbers

90 Attendees at the International Public Science Events Conference (IPSEC) in October

26 Independent festival initiatives represented at IPSEC 2012

75 Attendees at the SFA-organized workshop in Cairo in January

60 Attendees at the SFA-organized workshop in Cairo in May

47 Percent of SFA members who hosted visits from other festival professionals during their home festival

“As a new festival director it’s nice to know there are colleagues out there who have done this before and are willing to help others. I only hope that in a year’s time, I’ll be able to do the same thing!”

Craig Rosen, Las Vegas Science Festival Executive Director

SFA Conference Feedback

An independent evaluation of the SFA’s professional conference, the 2012 *International Public Science Events Conference: Pushing the Boundaries*, conducted by Goodman Research Group found:

96% said the conference had either *quite a bit* or a *great deal* of impact on their forming new connections and relationships

93% said the conference had either *quite a bit* or a *great deal* of impact on their understanding of how to impact target audiences through public science events

83% said the conference had either *quite a bit* or a *great deal* of impact on their understanding of how their work fits into a larger field

76% said the conference had either *quite a bit* or a *great deal* of impact on their information and resources to start a new public science event



Cairo Science Festival



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77 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

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Phone:
(617) 806-6369

Cover photos clockwise from top left:
Philadelphia Science Festival
Cambridge Science Festival
Bay Area Science Festival
North Carolina Science Festival

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