2016 ANNUAL REPORT











About this report

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

This annual report provides information in two distinct categories:

- member activities—the accomplishments of the independently organized science festivals that comprise SFA membership; and
- network activities—SFA efforts that support the exchange of inspiration, advice, and resources among members.

Science festivals are the unique product of the communities in which they take place. Most science festivals feature scores of activities, many of which change substantially from year to year. This makes it a challenge to succinctly summarize even one science festival, let alone the operations of all of the SFA's many members. Nevertheless, this annual report provides a useful snapshot of SFA member activities in 2016 based on voluntary self-reporting.

Wow. After three consecutive awe-inspiring festivals I thought I had seen the best of things. Well that was clearly not the case. The programs... were phenomenal this year.

Tyler Henry, Beakerhead collaborator



San Diego Festival of Science and Engineering



MSU Science Festival



Mind Trekkers



Philadelphia Science Festival



North Carolina Science Festival

A Letter from the Manager

January 27, 2017

When the Science Festival Alliance began in 2009, the science festival concept was so unfamiliar that we had to keep reminding people we were talking about something different than middle school science fairs. Fast forward to 2016, and science festivals are now an established feature of our cultural and educational landscape. In many regions the local science festival has rapidly become one of the largest festivals of any kind, and the questions have changed from, "What is that?" to, "Whatever will they do next?"

In 2016 we wrapped up a major grant from the National Science Foundation that served as the foundation for this growth. Of course we are a long way from done! Nine new science festival initiatives were announced this past year, and we expect to learn from each of them. Like new experiments, new festivals are always interesting because each community presents its own unique pressures and opportunities. That said, I am struck by the boundless appetite experienced festival teams have for new ideas

and reinvention. It was a highlight of my year to listen along as festival veterans described what it felt like to leave their comfort zones behind for the Just Add Science project, venturing into places where the audience wasn't expecting science programming.

The cumulative numbers summarized in this report are astounding (more than 2.6 Million attendees!). But the numbers—and even the quotes and photographs—always seem to fall short of fully capturing the energetic spirit that these festivals embody. There is something about the rhythm of a festival that keeps returning the focus to the incredible and wildly creative new things that we can try next year. What will they do next?

Ben Wiehe Manager, Science Festival Alliance MIT Museum



Science Learning Tent at the Arlee Celebration



Atlanta Science Festival



Rogue Valley Mini Maker Faire



Wisconsin Science Festival

2016 Science Festival Alliance Members

Arizona SciTech Festival **

February 1 - March 31, 2016

Arkansas Science Festival **

October 7 - 14, 2016

Aspen Science Festival and Street Fair

August 7, 2016

Atlanta Science Festival **

March 19 - 27, 2016

Bay Area Science Festival **

October 27 - November 5, 2016

Beakerhead

September 14 - 19, 2016

Cambridge Science Festival **

April 15 - 25, 2016

Celebrate Science Indiana **

October 1, 2016

Charleston STEM Festival **

February 6, 2016

Chicago Science Festival

May 6 – 9, 2016

City of STEM

March 28 - May 1, 2016

Colorado Springs Science Festival **

October 8 - 17, 2016

Dayton Regional Science Festival

November 18 - 19, 2016

Eureka! Festival

June 10 - 12, 2016

Flagstaff Festival of Science

September 23 – October 2, 2016

i Explore STEM

February 28, 2016

iMAGINE Upstate

March 26 - April 9, 2016

Indian River Lagoon Science Festival

October 22 – 26, 2016

Jackson Hole WILD Science Festival

October 7 – 8, 2016

Jacksonville Science Festival **

February 25 - 27, 2016

Las Vegas Science and Technology Festival

May 1 - May 7, 2016

Maine Science Festival

March 18 - 20, 2016

Maryland STEM Festival

November 5 – 10, 2016

Mind Trekkers

Various

MSU Science Festival **

April 12 - 24, 2016

Nebraska Science Festival **

April 15 - 23, 2016

New Hampshire TechFest **

October 15, 2016

North Carolina Science Festival **

April 8 - 24, 2016

Philadelphia Science Festival **

April 22 - May 1, 2016

Randolph College Science Festival

March 31 - April 3, 2016

Rogue Valley Mini Maker Faire

(formerly Tinkerfest) November 19, 2016

St. Petersburg Science Festival **

October 18 - 22, 2016

San Diego Festival of Science

and Engineering **

March 5 – 13, 2016

Science Festival of the Capital Region **

November 9 - 13, 2016

SCOPE STEAM in 3D

September 17 – 18, 2016

Sitka WhaleFest

November 3 - 6, 2016

Science Learning Tent at the Arlee Celebration **

July 1 – 2, 2016

SUBMERGE!

September 24, 2016

Tallahassee Science Festival

September 10, 2016

Texas A&M Physics and

Engineering Festival **

April 8 - 9, 2016

USA Science & Engineering Festival

April 15 - 17, 2016

Virginia Tech Science Festival

September 30 – October 9, 2016

Waco Cultural Arts Fest ScienceFest

October 1 – 2, 2016

Wisconsin Science Festival **

October 20 - 23, 2016

Youngstown Regional Science and Technology Festival

September 18, 2016

**EvalFest participant

Celebrating in 2017 or later:

Fall in Love with Science

Goddard Davs

LISoundFest: Long Island Sound

Science Festival

Minnesota Science & Technology Festival

Mississippi Science Festival

National Math Festival

North Bay Science Festival

Pensacola Science Festival

SKySci Fest (Southern Kentucky

Science Festival)

Topeka Science & Tech Fest

Volcano!

2016 SFA Member Activity by the Numbers*

2,610,570 Total number of people who visited an SFA member festival

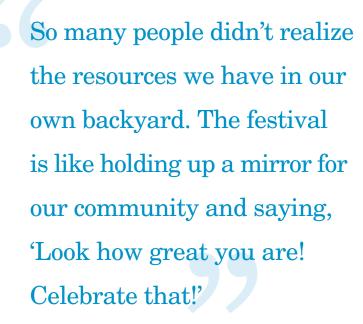
Total number of events and programs produced by SFA member festivals

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

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

4.118 Organizations collaborating with an SFA member festival

19,316 STEM practitioners taking an active role in an SFA member festival



Laura Diederick, co-founder, Indian River Lagoon Science Festival



11,233 Volunteers helping out SFA member festivals

\$12,928,170 Combined budgets for SFA member festivals

\$3,434,589 Combined value of in-kind marketing and PR for SFA member festivals

Number of SFA member festivals with a budget of \$250,000 or more

Number of SFA member festivals with a budget of \$50,000 or less

^{*} Figures reflect data reported by all 45 SFA member festivals celebrating in 2016.

EvalFest

EvalFest is a five-year project funded by the National Science Foundation and led by staff associated with the North Carolina Science Festival, Bay Area Science Festival, and Karen Peterman Consulting. An overarching goal of EvalFest is to understand the impact of science festivals by collecting and analyzing data from across 24 festivals in the United States.

Data have been collected from almost 22,000 festival attendees in the first two years of the project. Results from this work have been presented at four conferences thus far, including 2016 presentations at IPSEC and the annual meeting of the Visitor Studies Association.

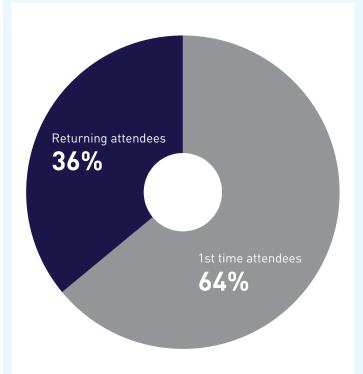
The collective findings will be submitted for publication in two journals in 2017. A sneak peek of results is provided here. Look for additional updates through SFA communications and through www.evalfest.org.

I loved seeing the smiles on kids' faces and hearing them say, 'Oh,
I can see myself doing that.'

Teacher participating in Atlanta Science Festival



Youngstown Regional Science and Technology Festival



The percentage of new and returning attendees has been consistent across the two years of data collection to date, indicating that festivals are reaching a core base of attendees, and expanding to new audiences each year.

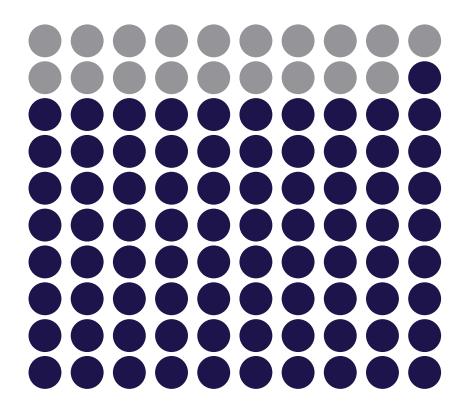


Charleston STEM Festival

Evalfest



Returning and 1st time attendees provided almost identically positive ratings of their festival (out of 5)



81%

of returning attendees extended their experience by looking for more information or doing another activity related to a Festival topic

Major SFA Activity in 2016

Just Add Science

With support from Science Sandbox, a Simons Foundation initiative, twelve SFA members experimented with new initiatives to reach people "where they are." These festival teams brought science experiences to open-air markets, sporting events, parades, and other cultural festivals. More than 25,000 people directly interacted with these science experiences, and an estimated 250,000 people were aware of them as passerbys. The SFA is highlighting the program's learning moments, from the practical to the profound, in a new series called Science Events Spotlights.

The Science Festival Accelerator

With funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the SFA launched the Science Festival Accelerator in 2016. In June, three lead festivals were selected from nominations of existing SFA members, and in December nine new start-up festivals were announced from a competitive application process. The Accelerator is specifically designed to support new science festivals in communities with a relatively small resource base, and includes both matching sponsorship funding and professional development resources. Start-up festivals will begin celebrating in the summer of 2017.



Bay Area Science Festival

SFA Networking

The 2016 International Public Science Events Conference brought together more than 150 science event professionals for two days at MIT's Media Lab. This was the fifth time the SFA convened IPSEC, which now meets dependably in June. The SFA also produced sessions and networking events at the 2016 conferences of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Association of Science-Technology Centers. In the fall of 2016 the SFA restarted a monthly webinar series for science event organizers. In 2015 the SFA launched a redesigned website, and in 2016 the number of resources uploaded by SFA members soared to more than 250.



Maine Science Festival



Virginia Tech Science Festival



Jacksonville Science Festival

NSF Broad Implementation Grant

In 2016 the SFA wrapped up nearly four years of work on a major grant from the National Science Foundation (grant No. DRL-1223256). In 2012 the original proposal promised that by the grant's end "science festival celebrations will be in reach of a substantial fraction of the American population." Since making that promise, SFA membership has grown to encompass 56 festival initiatives spread across 35 states and 3 Canadian provinces. From urban to rural, STEM-rich to underrepresented, blue state to solid red, these initiatives are taking place across the full range of the country's diverse cultural geography. Most of those members started within the context of the SFA network, and 100% of them stay in touch with at least one other member throughout each year.





I can't overstate how much
I've learned from other
festivals. They're among
my closest colleagues.

Science festival organizer responding to independent evaluation of the SFA



Jackson Hole WILD Science Festiva



City of STEM



Stitka WhaleFest



Dayton Regional Science Festival



MIT Museum 265 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA 02139

Online:

www.sciencefestivals.org

Fmail-

connect@science festivals.org

Phone: (617) 806-6369

Cover photos clockwise from top left:

Atlanta Science Festival

Texas A&M Physics and Engineering Festival

Beakerhead

PHOTO CREDIT: TREVOR LALONDE

Maine Science Festival

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Supported by:



Grant number DRL-1223256





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