

# 2014 ANNUAL REPORT



## About This Report

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.

This annual report provides information in two distinct categories:

1) **member activities**—the accomplishments of the independently organized science festivals that comprise the membership of the SFA; and

2) **network activities**—SFA efforts that support the exchange of inspiration, advice, and resources among member festivals.

Each SFA member science festival in 2014 was the unique product of the community in which the event took place. Most of these festivals featured scores of activities, many of which may 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 member activities in 2014 based on voluntary self-reporting.

In addition, this report provides a glimpse into the kinds of SFA network activities members have found useful within the past year—including sharing advice and inspiration with fellow members, trading festival planning documents, and participating in the SFA's meetings over the phone and in person.



Bay Area Science Festival



San Diego Festival of Science and Engineering



Colorado Springs Science Festival

“The Science Festival Alliance is an invaluable resource to festival organizers like myself. The connections I made, the resources I gained, and the enthusiasm and passion for science outreach I reveled in as a result of my membership in SFA provided the support my committee and I needed to organize a successful event.”

Laura Diederick, Co-director, Indian River Lagoon Science Festival

## A Letter from the Manager

January 16, 2015

Last year, the United States witnessed an unprecedented level of science festival activity. New festivals launched all over the country, with 11 SFA members celebrating for the first time. Some of these new festivals zeroed in on relatively small communities, while others burst out of the gates with attendance numbers as high as 30,000. Meanwhile, huge established festivals pushed their celebrations to even greater heights: Three Science Festival Alliance (SFA) member festivals reached more than 300,000 attendees each in 2014.

The SFA's 2014 Annual Report uses facts and figures to highlight this exciting growth, but it is somewhat harder to capture the degree to which 2014 marked an embrace of the professional network the Science Festival Alliance fosters. One indicator is the success of our major network initiatives. We began 2014 with a well-attended and energetic International Public Science Events Conference, and by fall we were planning the first-ever stand-alone version of this meeting, which will take place in June 2015. Another example is the way 16 festival teams worked together to successfully complete a project funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Throughout the year we enjoyed many exuberant meetings and discussions as four groups of four festivals each supported the launch of new festivals in communities with relatively small resource bases. (For more on this project, see Page 5.)

In addition, new fundraising successes for multi-site projects continue to validate the SFA's collaborative work ethic. A gift at the end of 2014 from the Simons Foundation to support festival activity that "reaches people where they are" will soon involve 12 festivals. A grant awarded in 2014 through the Science Learning+ initiative will bring together public science events professionals of all stripes from the United States and United Kingdom. Finally, the EvalFest project began its five-year journey toward a collaborative approach to festival evaluation with a National Science Foundation grant that supports the participation of two dozen science festivals.

These many successes are sure signs of progress, but perhaps nothing is more satisfying than the feeling that the Science Festival Alliance matured in 2014 into a true community. There are now scores of people at dozens of sites involved in some way in SFA activity. There is a palpable sense among both staff and volunteers that we are all dedicated to transforming the regions in which we work. And, above all, when we connect with each other there is a genuine spirit of common cause and collegial friendship.

Ben Wiehe  
Manager, Science Festival Alliance  
MIT Museum



Arkansas Science Festival



North Carolina Science Festival



Bay Area Science Festival

“Through programs like the San Diego Festival of Science & Engineering, we can inspire tomorrow’s leaders to pursue educational opportunities that will further San Diego’s legacy of innovation, grow our economy, and ultimately, create products that change the world.”

Jay Flatley, CEO, Illumina

## 2014 Science Festival Alliance Members

### Arizona SciTech Festival

February–March 2014

### Arkansas Science Festival\*

October 3–11, 2014

### Atlanta Science Festival\*

March 22–29, 2014

### Bay Area Science Festival

October 23–November 1, 2014

### Beakerhead

September 10–14, 2014

### Cambridge Science Festival

April 18–27, 2014

### Celebrate Science Indiana

October 4, 2014

### Charleston STEM Fest\*\*

February 8–22, 2014

### Colorado Springs Science Festival

October 11–19, 2014

### Connecticut Science and Engineering Festival\*

October 2014

### Dayton Regional Science Festival

October 23–26, 2014

### Eureka! Festival

June 13–15, 2014

### Global Finals Innovation Expo

May 19–24, 2014

### iexplore STEM Iowa

February 7–March 22, 2014

### Indian River Lagoon Science Festival\*

September 27, 2014

### Jacksonville Science Festival

March 6–8, 2014

### Las Vegas Science & Technology Festival

April 25–May 3, 2014

### Long Island Sound Science Festival

September 29–October 5, 2014

### Mind Trekkers

November 7–8, 2014

### MSU Science Festival

April 1–6, 2014

### Nebraska Science Festival

April 24–27, 2014

### New Hampshire TechFest

November 1, 2014

### North Carolina Science Festival

March 28–April 13, 2014

### Philadelphia Science Festival

April 25–May 3, 2014

### Randolph College Science Festival

March 27–30, 2014

### Rio Grande Science and Arts Festival (RiSA)

November 6–9, 2014

### San Diego Festival of Science & Engineering

March 15–22, 2014

### Science Festival of the Capital Region\*

November 7–9, 2014

### ScienceWorks TinkerFest\*

May 24–25, 2014

### St. Petersburg Science Festival

October 14–18, 2014

### St. Louis Spirit Air Show and STEM Expo\*\*

May 3–4, 2014

### Sitka WhaleFest

November 6–9, 2014

### spectrUM Science Learning Tent at the Arlee Powwow\*

July 3–5, 2014

### SUBMERGE!\*

October 5, 2014

### Texas A&M Physics and Engineering Festival

March 21–22, 2014

### USA Science & Engineering Festival

April 24–27, 2014

### Virginia Science Festival\*

October 4–11, 2014

### Waco Cultural Arts Fest – SCIENCEFEST

September 26–28, 2014

### WILD Science Jackson Hole\*

October 3–5, 2014

### Wisconsin Science Festival

October 16–19, 2014

### Youngstown Regional Science and Technology Festival

September 15–21, 2014

\* First celebration in 2014

\*\* Previously known as SCOPE Science and Technology Days

### SFA Members Celebrating in 2015 or Later

Louisiana STEM Festival

Maine Science Festival

Seattle Science Festival

Southern Kentucky Science Festival (SKy Sci Fest)

For a map and calendar of upcoming science festival activity, visit [www.sciencefestivals.org](http://www.sciencefestivals.org)

“The Science Festival of the Capital Region at miSci promotes public engagement in science, increases people’s motivation to explore science, and improves problem-solving skills through participation in the festival’s hands-on activities.”

Dr. Mac Sudduth, Executive Director, Museum of Innovation and Science (miSci)

## 2014 SFA Member Activity by the Numbers\*

**1,772,120** Total number of people who visited an SFA member festival

**2,978** Total number of events and programs produced by SFA member festivals

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

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

**over \$1,000,000** Highest festival budget among SFA member festivals in 2014

**under \$10,000** Lowest festival budget among SFA member festivals in 2014

“A larger [festival] goal is to help everyone be comfortable and a little more conversant about the sciences ... because our society, our innovative future, our economy—so much is based on technology.”

Jim Rollings, Executive Director,  
Science Museum of Western Virginia

**10** Number of 2014 SFA member festivals with a budget over \$250,000

**\$13,098,782** Total funding raised to support SFA member festivals in 2014\*\*

**14,107** STEM practitioners taking an active role in an SFA member festival

**9,554** Volunteers helping out SFA member festivals in 2014

**3,748** Organizations collaborating with an SFA member festival in 2014

\*\* Unless otherwise noted, figures reflect data reported by all 41 SFA member festivals celebrating in 2014

\*\* Figure reflects data reported by all 45 SFA member festivals, including those who did not hold celebrations in 2014



ScienceWorks TinkerFest

## Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Project Review

The close of 2014 marks the conclusion of a two-year project funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to launch 12 science festivals in communities with relatively small resource bases. Key components of this project included: mentorship from four lead festivals that each launched on a budget of less than \$60,000; matching funds for 12 new festivals; travel funds so that teams from all 16 festivals could see each others' celebrations in action and join the larger festival community at the International Public Science Events Conference; and support from staff at the MIT Museum.

Together the 16 festivals participating in this project generated enormous activity in 2013 and 2014. They cumulatively reached more than 230,000 attendees and raised twice as much funding from their local communities as was provided by the Sloan Foundation's initial grant. Crucially, all 12 new festivals are now planning 2015 celebrations without the support of the Sloan Foundation.

The project got under way in early 2013, and by the middle of that year the 12 new initiatives were identified. Nascent festivals were then split into four "partner pods," each of which was led by a mentoring festival. SFA staff facilitated regular conference calls among pod members to address festival planning issues, with close to four dozen such calls taking place. These partner pods were such a success that they are expected to continue into 2015 without further funding or SFA coordination.

With each new independent festival, a larger overall audience is reached, and more diverse communities and collaborators become involved. Each new festival also provides lessons for the broader field of science communication. The Sloan Foundation's support for this project significantly elevated the science festival sector in the United States.



### ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

The 16 participating festivals:

- Colorado Springs Science Festival (Colorado, lead festival)
- SCOPE Science and Technology Days (Missouri, lead festival)\*
- St. Petersburg Science Festival (Florida, lead festival)
- Wisconsin Science Festival (based in Madison, lead festival)
- Arkansas Science Festival (based in Jonesboro)
- spectrUM Science Learning Tent at the Arlee Powwow (Montana)
- Charleston STEM Fest (South Carolina)
- Dayton Regional Science Festival (Ohio)
- Indian River Lagoon Science Festival (Fort Pierce, Florida)
- Rio Grande Science and Arts Festival (Brownsville, Texas)
- Science Festival of the Capital Region (Schenectady, New York)
- ScienceWorks TinkerFest (Ashland, Oregon)
- Virginia Science Festival (based in Roanoke)
- Waco Cultural Arts Fest – SCIENCEFEST (Texas)
- WILD Science Jackson Hole (Wyoming)
- Youngstown Regional Science and Technology Festival (Ohio)

\* This festival has since changed its name to St. Louis Spirit Air Show and STEM Expo

**“The Youngstown Regional Science and Technology Festival would not have happened without the support of the Sloan Foundation. For us the greatest reward was that the festival brought community awareness to all of the STEM learning opportunities that exist in our area.”**

**Katie Seminara, Assistant Manager, OH WOW! The Roger & Gloria Jones Children's Center for Science & Technology**

## Festivals Make the News: A Sampling of SFA Members in the Media



### President Obama's Science Advisor Kicks-Off USA Science & Engineering Festival

*White House Website*, April 24, 2014



### STEM Festival Shows How Science and Math Can Be Fun

*ABC News 4 Charleston*, February 10, 2014

## The Gazette

### Hazmat Science Draws a Crowd at Annual Colorado Springs Event

*Colorado Springs Gazette*, October 12, 2014



### City to host first Atlanta Science Festival

*Atlanta Business Chronicle*, Dec 20, 2013

## The Philadelphia Inquirer

### Not Your 8th Grade Chemistry Class: Philadelphia Science Festival Events to Make Your Chemicals React

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 22, 2014

## The Dallas Morning News

### New Science Festival Offers Hands-on Experience

*The Dallas Morning News*, September 12, 2014



### Science Celebration: Event at Schenectady's miSci to Focus on Fun Side of Knowledge

*Albany Times Union*, November 5, 2014



### Virginia Science Festival: "A Party Where Science Is the Guest of Honor"

*WVTF/Radio IQ*



### The Science of Rockets, Robots, and Rubik's Cubes: Super STEM Saturday at San Marcos Kicks off a Week of Science and Engineering Events

*The San Diego Union-Tribune*, March 15, 2014

## The Boston Globe

### Cambridge Science Festival Stops at Fenway Park

*The Boston Globe*, April 22, 2014



### WhaleFest Explores the Gizmos and Gadgets of Cetacean Science

*Capital City Weekly*, November 13, 2014

“The AZ SciTech Festival continues to engage more communities and institutions, generating significant awareness and support for STEM education. In my view, AZ SciTech is a remarkable—and much needed—catalyst for strategic change in Arizona.”

Paul J. Luna, President and CEO, Helios Education Foundation

## SFA Activity in 2014

The Science Festival Alliance is a collaborative network of individuals and organizations committed to working together to serve communities through the festival format. Over the years, the SFA has grown to encompass both a free membership system and multiple funded projects.

### Major Funded Projects

For the second full year in a row, National Science Foundation grant No. DRL-1223256 served as the foundation of support for Science Festival Alliance activity. Crucially, this grant supported staff at the MIT Museum, the Franklin Institute, the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, and the University of California-San Francisco.

Also in 2014, the SFA marked the second year of Alfred P. Sloan Foundation funding for festivals in communities with smaller resource bases. The remarkable success of this project is detailed on Page 5.

In addition, the National Science Foundation awarded UNC's Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, the University of California-San Francisco, and Karen Peterman Consulting with a five-year grant to support the EvalFest project. EvalFest aims to help festivals by building evaluation capacity, exploring new evaluation methods, and creating a queryable database of information drawn from evaluation surveys of 90,000 festival attendees.

### SFA Network Roundup

Membership in the Science Festival Alliance is free and open to any independently organized science festival initiative willing to commit to participation in SFA activities. SFA membership grew to a total of 45 in 2014, generating an enormous amount of network activity that is highlighted on the next page.

The 2014 International Public Science Events Conference (IPSEC) was the single most important activity of the year for the SFA network. This meeting drew more than 175 attendees from 36 states and several foreign countries (10 percent of participants hailed from abroad). More than 80 science festival organizers were at the meeting, and almost as many attendees reported organizing public science events other than festivals. IPSEC 2014 met in Chicago and served as a preconference to the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Other notable activities in 2014 included the SFA's launch of a new series of webinars, which covered topics ranging from fundraising to community organizing, and an SFA staff contribution to an issue of the *Journal of Science Communication* dedicated to science festivals.

SFA activity in 2014 included a significant presence at the following:

- AAAS Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL
- European Science Events Association (EUSEA) Annual Meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark
- European Science Open Forum (ESOF), Copenhagen, Denmark
- North Africa and Middle East Science Centers Network (NAMES) Annual Meeting, Bursa, Turkey
- Coalition for the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS) Unconference, Seville, NM
- Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) Annual Conference, Raleigh, NC



USA Science & Engineering Festival



## SFA Impact by the Numbers\*

**137%** number of SFA members celebrating in 2014 compared to 2013

**100%** communicated with fellow SFA members

**82%** participated in a conference call or webinar on a specific topic

**53%** hosted a visit from another SFA festival

**71%** plan to visit another SFA festival in the coming year

**83%** plan to attend 2015 International Public Science Events Conference

**56%** plan to refer nonmembers interested in starting a festival to SFA staff

*\* Figures are drawn from a 2014 survey of 43 SFA members.*



Waco Cultural Arts Fest - SCIENCEFEST

“Having the support and guidance of the SFA during the short planning window of the inaugural Charleston STEM Festival was invaluable. We plan to continue to be involved in the SFA, our pod group, EvalFest and any other initiatives/activities where we can not only gain support as we continue to grow but also provide any help we can to those new festivals starting out.”

Darren Prevost, Director, Lowcountry STEM Collaborative



Charleston STEM Fest



Eureka! Festival

ROLAND LORENTE



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Cover photos clockwise from top left:  
El Pulpo Mecanico featured at Beakerhead  
PHOTO BY: DENISE KITAGAWA  
ScienceWorks TinkerFest  
Philadelphia Science Festival  
Nebraska Science Festival  
PHOTO BY: SCOTT DOBRY PICTURES



spectrUM Science Learning Tent  
at the Arlee Powwow



Virginia Science Festival

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ALFRED P. SLOAN  
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