

2017 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:

- 1) **member activities**—the accomplishments of the independently organized science festivals that comprise SFA membership; and
- 2) **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 2017 based on voluntary self-reporting.

“It’s science events like these that help us appreciate what’s happening around us.”

Penny Patterson, Promega Corporation
(Wisconsin Science Festival sponsor)



Arkansas Science Festival

JT. MACMILLAN



North Carolina Science Festival

JOE GARDNER/THE UNIVERSITY OF NC AT CHAPEL HILL



MSU Science Festival



Cambridge Science Festival

Letter from the manager

February 5, 2018

I took a break from the activity tables to roam the Boston Common and get a sense of the March for Science crowd. Over the patter of rain on my jacket's hood, I heard an old friend yell my name. He was fired up by the size of the rally: "I can't believe this many came out just for science!" I nodded slightly, and he called me out. "You don't think this is crazy?" Looking around at the throngs of people, I only said, "This happens from time to time."

Several months later, I was sweltering in Western Kentucky State's stadium. With about ten minutes to go until totality, I was starting to second guess my choices. Witnessing the eclipse was a lifelong dream for me, but I was surrounded by thousands of school children that seemed unfazed by the idea. "I should be on a mountaintop with just a few loved ones," I thought. Then darkness washed over us, and the reaction of the kids—the collective cry of primal wonder as they rushed the field, followed by a reverent silence—brought tears to my eyes.

As I think back over 2017, why do these two moments pop out at me? What seem like opposite reactions are actually two sides of the same coin. I'm sure witnessing the eclipse on my own would have been memorable, but I can't imagine it would have been more powerful than experiencing it with those kids in that stadium. Similarly, I was thrilled to see the Common jammed with people for the March, so my nonchalant response to my friend was actually coming from an incredible place. Years ago some of us daydreamed that science festivals might bring about a new normal, one in which it's common for tens of thousands to show up for science. Well, we're starting to get there: for some of us, overwhelming public response is now normal, not crazy. And it's emotionally overwhelming every time.

Ben Wiehe
Manager, Science Festival Alliance
MIT Museum



Wisconsin Science Festival



Nebraska Science Festival



Los Alamos ScienceFest



Flagstaff Festival of Science

SCOTT DOBRN PICTURES, INC

2017 Science Festival Alliance Members

Arizona SciTech Festival **
February 1 – March 31, 2017

Arkansas Science Festival **
October 19 – 21, 2017

Atlanta Science Festival **
March 15 – 26, 2017

Bay Area Science Festival **
October 26 – November 11, 2017

Beakerhead
September 13 – 17, 2017

Cambridge Science Festival **
April 14 – 22, 2017

Celebrate Science Indiana **
October 7, 2017

Charleston STEM Festival **
February 6, 2017

Chicago Science Festival
May 18 – 19, 2017

City of STEM
March 30 – May 8, 2017

Colorado Springs Science Festival **
October 14 – 21, 2017

Dayton Regional Science Festival
November 17 – 18, 2017

Eureka! Festival
June 9 – 11, 2017

Flagstaff Festival of Science
September 22 – October 1, 2017

iMAGINE Upstate
April 1 2017

Indian River Lagoon Science Festival
October 1 – 14, 2017

Jackson Hole WILD Science Festival
October 1 – 2 2017

Jacksonville Science Festival **
February 23 – 25, 2017

Las Vegas Science and Technology Festival
April 28 – May 6, 2017

Los Alamos ScienceFest
July 12 – 16, 2017

Maine Science Festival
March 16 – 19, 2017

Maryland STEM Festival
October 31 – November 12, 2017

Mind Trekkers
Various

Mississippi Science Festival
September 21 – 23, 2017

MSU Science Festival **
April 7 – 23, 2017

Nebraska Science Festival **
April 20 – 29, 2017

North Bay Science Festival
November 14 – 18, 2017

North Carolina Science Festival **
April 7 – 24, 2017

Philadelphia Science Festival **
April 21 – 30, 2017

Randolph College Science Festival
March 23 – 27, 2017

Rogue Valley Mini Maker Faire
September 23, 2017

St. Petersburg Science Festival **
October 16 – 21, 2017

San Diego Festival of Science and Engineering **
March 3 – 12, 2017

Science Festival of the Capital Region **
November 11 – 16, 2017

SCOPE STEAM in 3D
Various

Sitka WhaleFest
November 3 – 5, 2017

Science Learning Tent at the Arlee Celebration **
June 30 – July 1, 2017

SKySci Fest (Southern Kentucky Science Festival)
August 20, 2017

SUBMERGE!
September 16, 2017

Tallahassee Science Festival
October 22, 2017

Tennessee STEAM Fest
October 12 – October 22, 2017

Texas A&M Physics and Engineering Festival **
March 31 – April 1, 2017

Topeka Science & Tech Fest
October 14, 2017

Virginia Tech Science Festival
November 4, 2017

Waco Cultural Arts Fest ScienceFest
October 7 – 8 , 2017

Wisconsin Science Festival **
November 2 – 5, 2017

Youngstown Regional Science and Technology Festival
September 17 - 23, 2017

**EvalFest participant

Celebrating in 2018 or later:

Goddard Days

HiSci Festival

LISoundFest: Long Island Sound Science Festival

Minnesota Science & Technology Festival

NH TechFest

Gulf Coast Science Festival

Siskiyou Science Festival

USA Science and Engineering Festival

2017 SFA Member Activity by the Numbers *

47 Number of SFA member festivals celebrating in 2017

2,009,449 Total number of people who visited an SFA member festival

4,671 Total number of events and programs produced by SFA member festivals

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

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

4,048 Organizations collaborating with an SFA member festival

“I liked seeing the first African American guy to pilot a plane around the world solo. I love seeing minorities breaking barriers because [kids] will sometimes tell you: ‘Everything’s been done.’ No it hasn’t... so I like the fact that **HERE** we have role models.”

Attendee, Atlanta Science Festival

19,892 STEM practitioners taking an active role in an SFA member festival

11,520 Volunteers helping out SFA member festivals

\$9,053,991 Combined budgets for SFA member festivals

\$2,360,916 Combined value of in-kind marketing and PR for SFA member festivals

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

** Figures reflect self-reported data*



Philadelphia Science Festival

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 more than 30,000 festival attendees in the first three years of the project using a common survey. Science festivals often have many events in their schedule, most EvalFest survey data is collected at family-friendly festival main events. The results shown year reflect data collected in 2017. A new common measure will be launched in 2018 to learn about potential festival-goers and the things they do to have fun in their free time (including going to a science festival).

Look for additional updates through SFA communications and through www.evalfest.org.



North Bay Science Festival



North Carolina Science Festival

JOHN GARDNER
THE UNIVERSITY OF NC CHAPEL HILL

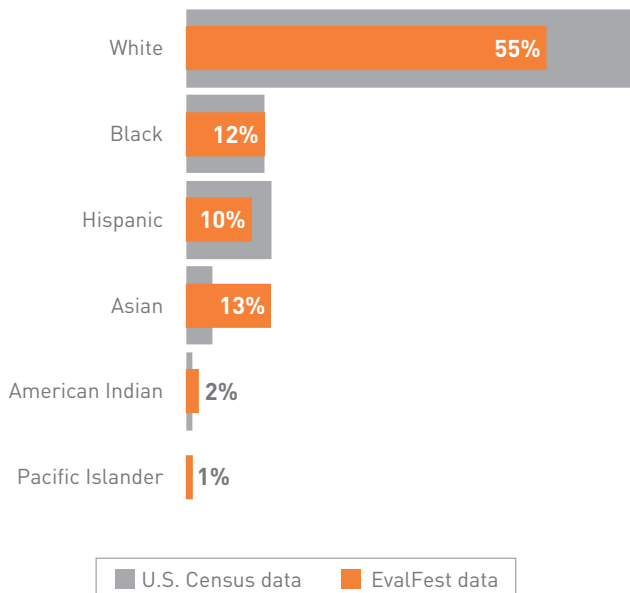


Bay Area Science Festival

JESSICA BERNSTEIN-WAX
JUSEF BENOFF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



Generally speaking, EvalFest festivals serve attendees of similar racial/ethnic backgrounds to those documented in the U.S. census.

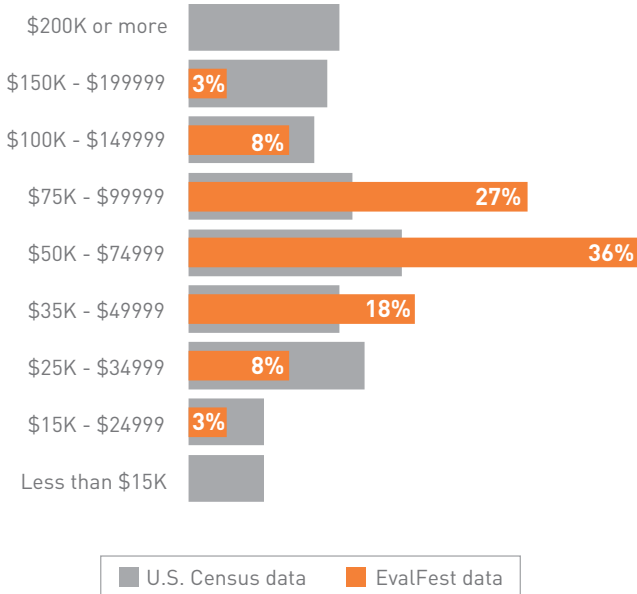


Indian River Lagoon Science Festival

DAMIEN SPOTTS



A larger portion of EvalFest festival attendees report household income in the middle brackets compared to those in the population overall.

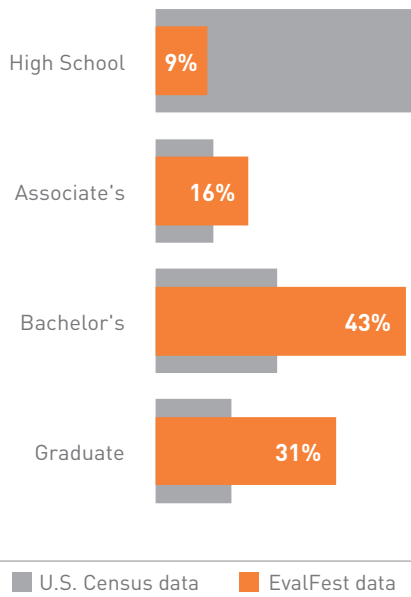


TREBOR LALONDE PHOTOGRAPHY

Beakerhead Festival

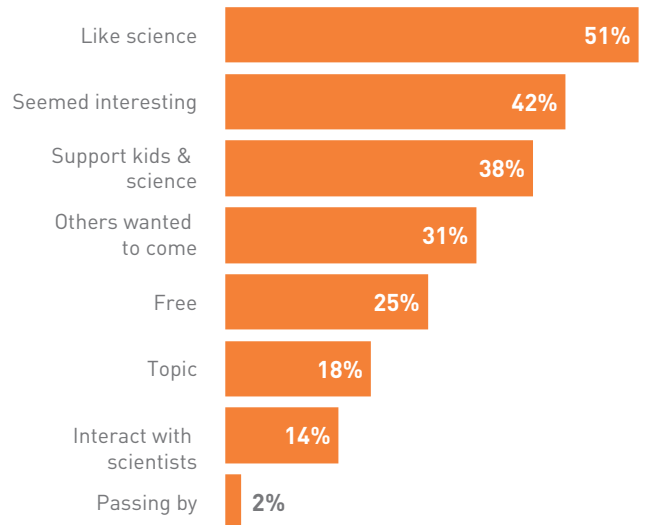


As with British festival-goers, attendees in the United States tend to be more educated than the population overall.



Why are you here?

The ordering of reasons for attending has been consistent across the three years of EvalFest to date. Options total over 100% because people often attend for more than one reason.



Major SFA Activity in 2017

The Science Festival Accelerator

Thanks to funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, nine new start-up science festivals fired up in 2017. During the first half of the year, these festivals participated in a professional development program led by Science Festival Alliance staff and three veteran festival teams. Six months of conference calls and webinars culminated with an in-person meeting at the International Public Science Events Conference. Four start-ups celebrated their new or significantly expanded celebrations in 2017 (located in Bowling Green, KY; Jackson, MS; North Bay, Ont; and Topeka, KS), and the other five have dates for 2018 (located in Downey, CA; Honolulu, HI; Mt. Shasta, CA; Pensacola, FL; and Roswell, NM).

Science In Vivo

Thanks to funding from Science Sandbox, a Simons Foundation initiative, the second half of 2017 saw preparations for Science In Vivo, a multi-year project focusing on science experiences that “go where the people are.” In 2018 and 2019 the project will select and work with teams across the US for experimental efforts that integrate in-person science experiences into people’s daily lives.

SFA Networking

Science Festival Alliance (SFA) membership grew to 55 active festival initiatives in 2017, all of which participated in SFA networking activity of some kind. 64% of SFA member festivals attended the 2017 International Public Science Events Conference in Madison, WI, and many represented the SFA at other professional meetings. SFA staff attended conferences throughout 2017, including the AAAS Annual Meeting, DragonCon, SciComm Camp, the Alliance for the Arts at Research Universities Annual Meeting, and the inaugural conference of the UK Science Festival Network. The SFA’s monthly webinars kept conversations going online throughout 2017, and the SFA premiered its first edited audio interviews: Science Events Spotlights.



TRENTOR LAUNDE PHOTOGRAPHY

Beakerhead Festival



Texas A&M Physics and Engineering Festival



Bay Area Science Festival



Cambridge Science Festival

Conference Flies the Coop

For its first three meetings, the International Public Science Events Conference—IPSEC for short—was set up as a pre-conference to either the AAAS or ASTC Annual Meetings. The generous help of these much larger conferences got IPSEC off the ground, but there were several compelling reasons to see if the conference could stand on its own. In 2015 and 2016 we set our own dates and played it safe by convening IPSEC twice near the Science Festival Alliance office at the MIT Museum.

IPSEC 2017, in Madison, WI, marked a milestone as the first time the conference hit the road as a travelling, annual professional meeting. And it worked! Attendance was robust, the financials evened out, and that special IPSEC energy was definitely still there. The staff of the Wisconsin Science Festival set the bar high as hosts, so the pressure's on for future meetings. Join us in St. Petersburg, FL, in 2018, and San Diego, CA, in 2019, and let the bidding begin for a 2020 location!



DAMIEN SPOTTS



MSU Science Festival

“The administrators of the SFA and the talented coordinators of other festivals are always available to answer questions and share resources. The SFA community is the most invaluable resource we have.”

Science Festival of the Capital Region



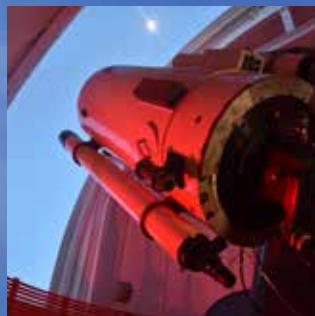
Charlston STEM Festival



Philadelphia Science Festival



Arkansas Science Festival



MSU Science Festival



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Cover photos clockwise from top left:
Indian River Lagoon Science Festival
PHOTO CREDIT: DAMIEN SPOTTS

Beakerhead
PHOTO CREDIT: TREVOR LALONDE PHOTOGRAPHY

North Carolina Science Festival

Nebraska Science Festival

PHOTO CREDIT: SCOTT DOBRY PICTURES, INC.

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