



A free festival to have fun learning science!
www.stpetescifest.org

Public understanding of science and technology is one of the most important challenges of our times. For our nation and its many communities, science and technology are deeply tied to issues of economic competitiveness, industrial advancement, health, justice, environmental protection and social welfare. Acting as an informed consumer, preparing for the demands of the 21st century workforce and weighing decisions as an engaged citizen, all require individuals to grapple with the rapid pace of scientific discovery represent the cutting edge of what we know and can do, making their understanding a crucial component of full and meaningful participation in society.

Science festivals make science and technology a part of the cultural calendar in much the same way that art festivals and street fairs engage whole communities. The St. Petersburg Science Festival (SPSF) takes place over several days and in several venues, reaching students, families and adults where they live, work and play. The SPSF brings the public into direct contact with scientists and engineers, leading people to seek out more science experiences throughout the rest of the year. During the SPSF, events and programs can pop up anywhere, providing the opportunity to serve typically hard-to-reach audiences (including both science inattentive individuals and underserved communities) however and whatever it is most effective.

Distinct SPSF strengths include:

1. Overall positive impact on large audiences: Participants have high-quality informal science education experiences and report: becoming more interested in science and technology; learning something new about science and technology; and feeling more connected to the science and technology happening in our region.
2. Effective reach to underserved audiences: SPSF has great potential to support participation of under-represented groups. Last year, SPSF introduced a *Sneak Peek Day for Schools* and involved Title 1 Schools.
3. Direct involvement of STEM researchers and professional in outreach: The SPSF provides a major new opportunity for STEM researchers. As a result, STEM researchers and professionals report increase confidence with public engagement, and 100% plan to take part in next year's festival. Interaction between STEM researchers and professionals humanizes science, sometimes viewed upon by the public as information only a few select can understand.
4. Positive outcome for collaborating informal science education professionals and organizations: Participating collaborators have the opportunity to build community excitement about their programming as well as develop new partnerships with other organizations.

There is very little science festival data available since the science festival movement started to take foot in the United States in 2007. The SPSF is committed to contributing to a broader body of science festival knowledge base and therefore has conducted intercept surveys with festival participants starting in 2011, post-festival surveys with exhibitors and teachers and tracking festival participant engagement with exhibitor's interactive activities.