



## HOW TO RUN A NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK EVENT

This booklet will guide you through some elements to consider when planning an event for National Science Week.

It is by no means exhaustive, as a great deal will vary depending on your own ideas and objectives, but it will give you a foundation for a well-planned event.

### INTRODUCTION

During National Science Week, over a thousand public events run concurrently across the country. Due to the scale of the festival, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources can't be directly involved in each event. However, we do want to provide as much assistance to event holders as possible, so we've put this resource together to assist you in devising and staging a successful event as part of National Science Week.

The resource has been broken down into four sections:

- 1) [Initial Ideas](#)
- 2) [Planning & Implementing](#)
- 3) [On the Day](#)
- 4) [Post-event](#)



## INITIAL IDEAS

National Science Week encourages creativity and innovation when planning an event for the week's festivities. There are no restrictions in terms of topics, audience, venue or format; we only ask that your event seeks to promote and encourage interest in science, or STEM more broadly and share its relevance to everyday life.

Essentially, any event that's about sharing some element of science, and that is open to at least some people, and is held during Science Week (or during the month of August) can be considered a National Science Week event. In 2026, Science Week will run from 15-23 August.

The objectives of National Science Week are to:

- Celebrate Australian talents and achievements in science, innovation, mathematics, engineering and technology ('science' will be used as the generic term for these fields);
- Provide an opportunity for all Australians to participate in events and activities that showcase science;
- Demonstrate how science is interesting, challenging, important, and of direct relevance to our daily lives, the well-being of society and the environmentally sustainable growth of our economy;
- Encourage young people to continue science studies beyond the compulsory years of schooling and to pursue science-based careers; and
- Demonstrate the links between science subjects and science-based careers.

## Define who, what & why?

Once you've decided to hold a Science Week event, it's good to get your initial ideas down on paper and start by answering the following questions:

- Who is the event for? (Audience)
- What type of event will I host? (Type & Format)
- Why am I going to hold this event? (Objectives)

## Audience

Identifying your target audience is essential in developing your event. It will play a large part in the type of event you will host, and it will determine your publicity campaign. You can consider your target audience both in terms of demographics (quantifiable statistics that define who someone is- their age, gender etc.) and/or psychographics (descriptive information about a person's values, interests or attitudes... their 'why').

Your target audience (and their needs and interests) will help define the format and topic of your event. For example, people over 70 with low confidence in engaging with new technology and young people with a pre-existing interest in coding and using AI would likely have different needs to each other at an event about emerging cyber security issues.



When defining your target audience and ensuring it is consistent with your event objectives and format, you may want to consider some (or all) the following:

- age;
- location;
- interests;
- access needs
- pre-conceived ideas about science
- experience in the subject area of your event; and
- why they would want to attend your event.

It's not uncommon for people to say 'My event is for EVERYONE!'. This can come from a place of wanting science (and their event) to be inclusive. While Science Week as a whole should absolutely offer something-for-everyone, it's totally appropriate for individual events to have specific target audiences. Events that try to 'be for everyone' rarely succeed in this goal, as their content and format will invariably suit some audiences better than others.

Additionally, just because an event is technically accessible to a particular group doesn't mean it targets them. While a festival may be physically accessible to First Nations people, if it hasn't considered issues of cultural safety, included First Nations people in planning what content will be shared and how it will be shared, or been promoted through networks that are for or include many First Nations people, they should not specifically be considered a target audience for the event.

## Topic & Format

Considering the subject matter (topic), theme and format of your event will determine the type of event you host.

When considering the subject matter (or topic) you want to explore, you can start with your own interests or skillset, or consider the interests, concerns or needs of the community you'll be working with.

It's almost always easier to organise an event that includes content you are already familiar with. You should already have an idea of what's interesting/quirky/attention-grabbing about the topic, and it's less likely that you'll inadvertently mis-interpret the science behind it.

You don't need to consider yourself to be 'a scientist' to share scientific information. Many of us use science in our everyday lives in a way that is worth sharing with the wider community. For example, a Landcare group may have great knowledge of local weeds.

When deciding what type of event you want to host that's outside of your own area-of-expertise, inspiration can be found almost anywhere. Here are a few suggestions:

- consider topical issues in the media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet);
- research other international festivals and events; or



- brain-storm with your colleagues.

If you want to organise an event that's about an element of science you aren't familiar with, consider partnering with an expert. You could reach out to someone who works in that field of science at a University, Cooperative Research Centre, a lab, or your local council. You could also look for experts who have been featured in the media about your area of interest. Keep in mind that science is broad, so science practitioners can be found in lots of different places!

Many great Science Week events involve a double-act of someone sharing something they are passionate about, in partnership with a scientist who can 'interpret' it through science. Think of a skid-pan day, in which a defensive driving instructor teams up with a physicist! These sorts of events are great, because they showcase that different members of the community have different elements of science knowledge. Defensive driving instructors know lots about science, but they may not normally explain their knowledge through a science lens.

Before approaching an expert to ask them to get involved, make sure you have a clear pitch for your event (who, what, when, where, why) and clear information about exactly what you are hoping their commitment to the event would need to be. Do they just need to show up on Thursday at 9am and talk about their work for 15 minutes for a group of year 3 students, or do you need their help to plan the event more broadly? Do they need to bring a presentation? Do they need to provide information for the media? Also, consider ahead-of-time whether you will pay the expert for their time, and/or cover incidental costs like costs associated with travel. If you are an expert in the audience you are reaching (such as a teacher of year 3 students) consider how you might support them to connect with and make their science relevant to that audience ahead of time.

STEM can be explored through a vast array of formats, ranging from hands-on activities to tours of places of interest. Some popular event formats include:

- hands-on activities;
- workshops;
- displays or exhibitions;
- public discussions or debates;
- demonstrations;
- online activities; or
- talks and presentations.

Remember to consider what type of event your target audience would be interested in when deciding on the event format. The tone of the event is also useful to consider- is it serious, or silly? People are (hopefully!) choosing to attend Science Week events in their own time, so they should be entertaining and engaging (make a good day/night out) and or provide information that is clearly meaningful or useful to attendees.

We suggest you generate several ideas, analyse their relative strengths and select the strongest combination of topic and format, taking into consideration your aims and target audience. Remember to be realistic about your time, personnel, resources and budget. It may be useful to pilot your idea on a sample of the target audience.



## Objectives

Along with defining your target audience and your event format and topic, it's worthwhile considering your objectives (what you want the event to do/achieve, and what difference you want it to make). Over the period of planning, implementing and evaluating your event, the objectives will provide a strong reference point to keep you on track, and can be used as a guideline by others involved.

To determine your objectives, think about what you hope to achieve for:

- yourself;
- your organisation;
- the presenters; and
- the participants.

We suggest that you make the objectives clear and concise, and write them down so you can reference them whenever required.

## Consider risks

Once you start to paint a picture of what will happen at your event and who will be involved, it's important to stop and consider the risks that might be involved in the event. Considering risks early, and how to mitigate (address and minimise) them will help ensure you have a safe and successful event.

When people hear about 'risks', they often think about physical safety risks to individuals e.g. someone falling over an extension cord, or having an allergic reaction to bubble mix. These are important, but there are other types of risks you should consider too.

Depending on the type and scale of your event, some or all of these risks may apply:

- technical issues e.g. IT doesn't work as expected
- adverse weather e.g. storms or extreme heat
- larger than expected crowds (or smaller than expected crowds!)
- reputational risks e.g. poorly explained science, or a controversial guest-speaker
- cultural sensitivity risks e.g. exclusionary language in marketing materials, sharing cultural information without appropriate permission
- budget risks (the event costs more than planned)
- speaker/talent cancellations
- security risks e.g. unruly patrons, terrorism
- child safety risks
- thefts
- legal risks e.g. incorrect permits, or not following venue-hire agreements.

Considering these risks shouldn't make you scared to hold an event. If you have thought through the risks, what you could do to minimise the chance of them happening (e.g. doing a check of IT equipment before the event), and what you would do if they did happen, you will be much more likely to hold a successful event. Completing a risk assessment will help you



think through these issues. The scale and complexity of your event will determine the scale and complexity of your risk assessment. Your organisation may already have a risk assessment template you can use. Otherwise you can reach out to your local council, and/or check out [THIS](#) guide.

The venue you use may already have specific protocols about risks. Ask the venue owners if there are specific rules you need to follow.

It's important that everyone involved in running the event is on the same-page about safety. For events involving multiple people and/or organisations, it's a good idea to hold a 'toolbox talk' before the event in which all staff gather to talk through safety considerations, and who staff should escalate safety concerns to. Knowing WHO to tell is just as important as knowing WHAT to do.

It's a good idea to pre-determine someone who will make the final decision about an event in the case of something like an extreme weather forecast, and how they will make this decision (e.g. based on weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology).

It's also important to consider what insurance you'll need for your event. Check if your venue includes insurance, or if you'll need to seek it yourself.

## **Gather a team**

No matter the scale of your event, you will most probably need to work with others to see it become a reality. Consider how many people you will need to:

- plan the event;
- publicise the event; and
- set up and run the event on the day (presenting, chairing, helping, catering, and cleaning up).

The number of people required will largely depend on the size and scope of the event.

When bringing a team together, consider that each member of the event team should be a real contributor, either through their dedication to event management, skill, creativity and/or decision-making ability.

The structure and membership of an event team depends on the size, nature and complexity of the event.

For small-scale local events, an event team may be appointed from within an existing organisation and may have a very flat hierarchy. Larger and more complex events are likely to have event committee structures that include representatives from a number of organisations and require a number of hierarchical levels.

Working with a partner organisation may also allow you to share best practice, combine resources and optimise both your audiences. Consider what types of organisations might make a good partner for your event.

Some organisations you might want to consider partnering with include:





- schools;
- universities;
- museums/galleries; or
- industry/business.

## Prepare the budget

A budget for your event is essential. It will help define the scope and reach of your event. You may be given a budget to work within, or you may be required to present your costs for the budget to be allocated to you. Either way, it is important to plan carefully and be diligent with your budget. You can find a [budget template](#) on the website.

To prepare your budget you will need to consider the income (money you'll make) and expenses (money the event will cost) of the event. Income streams may include:

- admissions fees;
- sponsorship;
- grants; and/or
- donations.

Expenses to consider include:

- speakers fee;
- venue hire;
- equipment required;
- advertising & publicity;
- insurance; and
- first aid
- security



Whatever your maximum budget, we suggest you only allocate 90% and leave 10% for unseen incidental costs as these will inevitably occur.

When preparing your budget, be aware of the following:

- identify all items of expenditure early in the event planning e.g. administration, event delivery, marketing and communication;
- make sure the budget represents true costs. Hidden costs, such as hiring extra equipment that was originally under-estimated, can be significant. Even if it is known that some items will be free or subsidised, they should be included;
- most events will attract some income, whether it's direct (items such as gate takings, programs, catering, car parking) or indirect (items such as advertising, sponsorships, raffles, sales, donations); and



- show all sponsorships as income. It is best not to overestimate the amount.

Remember that it may cost money to obtain a sponsorship and this cost should also be included in expenditure.





## PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING

You should now have fleshed out the initial ideas and concepts of your event, that is:

- defined the who, what and why of the event;
- gathered a team; and
- prepared the budget.

You've made a solid foundation to the structure of your event and it's time to start implementing and planning. Outlined below are the tasks and activities we suggest you undertake in preparation for staging a National Science Week event.

### Identify tasks & responsibilities

To ensure every aspect of your event is considered and planned for accurately, we suggest you use the event budget template on the website. This will allow you to identify and track all the elements and tasks involved in staging an event, who's responsible for each and when they need to be completed by.

Elements identified in the template include:

- Venue;
- Equipment;
- Theming;
- Catering;
- Advertising & Publicity;
- Bookings & RSVPs;
- Venue Security;
- Competition, Prizes & Incentives;
- VIPs;
- Transport; and
- Volunteers.

You may want to decide on some of these elements as a team or leave it up to the individuals; this is all up to you and your team and how you work together. Also, please remember that this list is a guide and may need to be tailored to your event.

Once the Event Implementation template has been prepared for your event, set clear directions for the event team, including:

- Any specifics about the tasks;
- Who they are responsible to; and
- Any specific reporting dates.



## Plan for regular updates

During the Planning and Implementing stage it is important to keep regular communication between yourself and the members of your event team. This can take place in a variety of forms, whether it is in person, telephone conferencing/online meetings, face-to-face meetings or via emails. Whichever the preference of your group, we suggest you hold updates on a weekly or fortnightly basis, particularly as the event draws closer.

We suggest you also consider some sort of Meeting Agenda and Meeting Minutes. This will keep the communication of the group as effective and efficient as possible. To ensure this happens, it is best you appoint an individual to be responsible for these tasks.

## Event logistics

As identified in the Tasks and Responsibilities, when planning an event for National Science Week there are many elements to consider. Outlined to follow are some points to consider on just a few of key event elements.

### *Where to hold the event?*

Events can take place at a variety of venues including schools, workplaces, or in a public space (such as a library or shopping centre). They can be held in small rooms, across whole buildings or outdoors, or online. Many organisers feel that using cultural or social venues, such as a museum or bar, can help to make people feel more at ease and may also help to attract a different type of audience.

Choosing a venue suitable for your event will be contingent on both the event format and the target audience. Ensure you consider both of these when choosing your venue.

### *When to hold the event?*

In 2026, National Science Week will take place from 15-23 August. We encourage you to host your event during National Science Week as it maximises the impact of the Week and ensures your event is part of the period of peak promotional activity and media attention. However, events that occur any time in August can be registered on the National Science Week website.

Consider who will be coming when you choose the day and time for your event. For example, schools will come during weekdays, families will come at weekends, and working professionals will attend out of business hours or in their lunch hours.

### *How to attract your audience?*

Your publicity campaign will be crucial to the success of your event and how you market the event will depend on the event itself and who you wish to attract.

As well as including your event on the National Science Week [website](https://www.scienceweek.net.au), we encourage you to send out press releases, use social media for promotion, and/or make flyers and posters to attract participants.

Registering your event on the National Science Week website is one of the best ways to promote your event, as it's the central place members of the public go to find events in their local area.



## Acknowledgements

The department is very appreciative of all acknowledgement and references to National Science Week as they bolster the impact and reach of the festival. Acknowledgements of National Science Week also assist in achieving the festival's objective to promote and encourage interest in the areas of science, engineering, technology and innovation.

By promoting your event as a National Science Week activity, it also gives it immediate credibility and attaches it to one of Australia's largest festivals!

Acknowledging could either be done by mentioning National Science Week e.g. "National Science Week brings you (NAME OF EVENT)" or "(NAME OF EVENT) is brought to you as a part of National Science Week" or by using our logo. Logos and promotional material can be [Science Week graphics and logos](#) from our website, along with the [Branding and Style Guidelines](#).



## Specifics on the day

It is important to work through every aspect of the event from start to end. Specifics for the day are outlined below.

## Venue

Take some time to plan the setup of the room in advance. Build a good relationship with the venue staff and presenters.

Consider the following in your planning:

- book the venue for longer than the event, as you will need time to set up and to clean up;
- check access to the venue: will you need signs/door stops? Is there disabled access?
- how will you get staff and equipment to the venue? Do you need to arrange transport?
- check what equipment/facilities are needed and who will provide them: some scientific equipment may be covered by safety regulations, check electrical supplies are adequate;
- check the best arrangement for the layout: what type of seating arrangement would best suit the format of the event?
- learn the occupational health and safety procedures and fire regulations for the building; and
- check if public liability insurance will be covered by the venue.



## **Attendees**

Once you have an interested audience you need to make sure that you supply them with all the information and facilities they need to enjoy the event. Some things you might want to consider are:

- booking systems: do they need to book/pay, and if so how and when;
- check that everything is clear in the information sent out to confirm bookings;
- engaging an Auslan interpreter for the event;
- produce signs/maps and information on parking, public transport, walking distances and disabled access so your attendees know where to go;
- specify if children need to be accompanied by adults;
- ensure toilets are properly signed; and
- audience comfort, including furniture, refreshments, audio levels and room temperature.

## **Staff**

Your staff on the day will be pivotal to the experience your audience receives. You may want to think about:

- how the speaker/presenter will interact with your target audience;
- all staff should be equipped with session times, running times, venue details and an audience profile in advance;
- brief staff so that they are confident with their roles and responsibilities;
- whether Working With Vulnerable People permits will be required;
- select an MC who will be confident and work well with the format of your event; and
- whether you need to organise travel or lunch arrangements for your staff.

## **Minimise waste**

Try to minimise the waste generated by your event, particularly with respect to single use plastic items. If they are unavoidable be sure to have dedicated waste containers available so that they can be recycled appropriately. Remember that waste recycling can differ between council areas if you are holding your event away from where you are familiar with the rules.

## **Anything else**

We suggest you walk through the event from the point of view of every stakeholder involved (without any assumed knowledge) to ensure each group knows their roles, responsibilities and requirements with precision.

Could anything prevent the staff or the participants from getting to the venue and enjoying the event? e.g. strikes, inadequate directions.



It is also worth considering everything that could go wrong and planning what you would need should that mishap take place. Think about:

- risk assessments, first aid cover, fire regulations;
- emergency health orders;
- audio malfunctions; and
- having a Plan B, eg if it rains, if the speaker doesn't arrive etc.

## **Prepare a running sheet**

A running sheet outlines the event minute-to-minute, designating responsibilities and tasks for the day. Preparing a running sheet for your event will assist in its success as it makes it clear to all, what is to take place and when.

There's an [Event Run Sheet template](#) on the website that can be adapted to your National Science Week event.

An event running sheet should include:

- allocated time and location for every activity;
- names of those involved; and,
- people responsible.

Everyone involved in the event should have a copy of the running sheet and follow it carefully. Running sheets are also used for briefings of all involved.



## ON THE DAY

The day of the event is generally the most hectic part. But with careful planning your event can run smoothly. It is almost guaranteed that not everything will run to plan, there will be countless situations which will arise and will require immediate decisions. Don't stress if this occurs, expect it and just take it in your stride.

### Before the event

Arrive in plenty of time and with plenty of people. Have an action plan in your mind (or written down) with what needs to be done in priority order.

Ensure signs, furniture, equipment and facilities are correctly set up and working, especially audio visual equipment. Allow enough time for you to get everything ready and to be relaxed before people begin to arrive.

### During the event

Keep a tight hold of your running sheet, monitor the event and be ready to activate your Plan B if anything goes wrong.

If the event isn't ticketed, be sure to keep a track on the number of attendees.

### After the event

Ensure the clean-up operation is effective. Return furniture to its original location. Arrange for all equipment and materials to be returned to their proper places. Recycle waste materials. Complete any financial transactions resulting from the event.

And most importantly, be sure to sincerely thank all staff and presenters.



## POST EVENT

The event is over and it's certain there is a great deal of satisfaction and relief amongst your team, but don't forget the very important post-event activities.

### Event evaluation

It is essential that an evaluation process of the event be developed. Feedback after the event is always useful for future planning as well. When evaluating your event you may want to consider:

- who came?
- whether the audience was made up of the people you targeted?
- whether they enjoyed the event?
- how successful was your publicity campaign?
- whether the attendees found the venue easily?
- whether there was sufficient clear information sent out beforehand?
- whether the presenters were suitable and interesting?

Most importantly, you should consider your original objectives against the event outcomes.

There is an [Evaluation Kit](#) on the Science Week website with pre-drafted survey questions and tips on conducting in-person, online and other forms of audience research.

### Follow-up activities

After the euphoria of a successful event it is often difficult to remain focused, and easy to leave some tasks incomplete.

Remember to:

- send out results and media information;
- thank and recognise all volunteers, participants, media and sponsors;
- balance the accounts;
- hold a debriefing session with your event team;
- send out reports to the sponsors and key organisations (if necessary);
- ensure adequate records are kept for running the event in the future; and
- pay outstanding accounts.

Once all this is done, you can give yourself a big pat on the back and start planning for next year's National Science Week.