



How to run a public event

A successful event is typically the result of careful planning and preparation. This booklet will guide you through the 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 objective, but it will give you a foundation to a well-structured event.

INTRODUCTION

During National Science Week there are hundreds of events running concurrently across the country. Due to these numbers, the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) can't be intimately involved in each event, but we do want to provide as much assistance as possible. Hence, the following manual has been put together to assist you in devising and staging a successful event as part of National Science Week event.

If you have already run a National Science Week event in the past, you may find some of this material rather simplistic, but there may also be a range of useful suggestions and considerations to take into account.

If you have never run a National Science Week event before, then this guide will provide a great base to begin your planning.

The manual has been broken down into four sections:

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



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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 fulfill the National Science Week objectives to:

- 1) Promote and encourage interest in the areas of science, engineering, technology and/or innovation; and
- 2) Communicate the relevance of this area in everyday life.

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.

Outlined below you will find guidance to structuring your initial ideas and thoughts for your event.

Define who, what & why?

Once you've decided to hold an event during National Science Week, it can be a little overwhelming as to where to begin your planning. While you probably have these things in mind we suggest your initial thoughts should concentrate on clearly articulating the foundations:

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

There is no order in which you should determine each of these three foundations, but whichever comes first will dictate the others. For example, you may have a great idea for a basic but fun hands-on experiment, this would in turn dictate your audience as it would be most suitable for primary school aged children, and your objectives certainly wouldn't be to educate the adult audience about climate change.



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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. When defining your target audience and ensuring it is consistent with your event objectives and format, you may want to consider the following:

- Age;
- Location;
- Interests;
- Experience in the subject area of your event; and,
- Why they would want to attend your event.

Type & Format

Considering the subject matter, theme and format of your event will determine the type of event you host. If you already have a great idea, then this part will be easy for you. Even so, it may be worthwhile doing some research because an initial idea can always be expanded or improved.

When deciding what type of event you want to host, 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.

Science, engineering, technology and innovation 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;
- 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.

We suggest you generate several ideas, analyse their relative strengths and select the strongest combination of type 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 ideas on a sample of the target audience.



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Objectives

Along with defining your target audience and your event format and type, it is worthwhile considering your objectives. Over the period of planning, implementing and evaluating your event, the objectives will always be 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.

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. However, working in a team will always make the process and the success of an event more enjoyable, so we suggest you consider gathering a team no matter what the size of your event.

When bringing a team together, consider the following:

- 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 organisation might make a good partner for your event.



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Some organisations you might want to consider include:

- Schools;
- Universities;
- Museums/galleries; or
- Industry/business.

Prepare the budget

A budget for your event is imperative. 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.

To prepare your budget you will need to consider the income and expenses 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; and
- Insurance etc.

For a complete list of expenses to consider and to prepare your budget, please refer to the event implementation template included in the event kit, located at the National Science Week website, www.scienceweek.gov.au.

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;



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- 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);
- 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;



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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 simple event implementation excel template outlined in the event kit. This 'Event Implementation' template 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;



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- Who they are responsible to; and
- Any specific reporting dates.

Plan for regular updates

During the 'Planning & 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, 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 & 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 shopping centre). They can be held in small rooms, across whole buildings or outdoors, and can even take place in cyberspace. Many organisers feel that using cultural 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 2010, National Science Week will take place over nine days, 14-22 August. We encourage you to host your event during National Science Week as it maximises the impact of National Science Week.

In regard to timing of your event, your target audience may dictate your decision. 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. Consider who will be coming when you choose the day and time for your event.



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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, we encourage you to send out press releases, make flyers and posters or send out a mail out to attract participants. To get a head start on your publicity campaign check out our guide, "How to generate publicity for National Science Week events".

Acknowledgements

DIISR is very appreciative of all acknowledgement and references to National Science Week as it bolsters 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/or innovation.

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

Acknowledging could either be done by mentioning National Science Week eg "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 downloaded 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;
- Check that public liability insurance will be covered by the venue.



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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;
- 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;
- Consider 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;
- Select an MC who will be confident and work well with the format of your event;
- Consider whether you need to organise travel or lunch arrangements for your staff.

Anything else

We suggest you 'walk through' the event from the aspect 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;
- Audio malfunctions;
- Have a Plan B—if it rains, if the speaker doesn't arrive etc.



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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.

In the event kit, you will find an Event Run Sheet template 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.



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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. Complete any financial transactions resulting from the event.

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



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POST EVENT

The event is over and its 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 enjoy 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 you original objectives against the event outcomes.

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!



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