



SCIENCE FESTIVAL



PARTNER GUIDE 2026

WHY PARTICIPATE?



THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL HELPS BUILD A DIVERSE STEAM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ART, AND MATH) WORKFORCE and address Ohio's STEAM skills gap by exposing individuals to science and technology where they live, learn, and lounge. It is fueled by partnerships and built on collaboration. Together with businesses, community organizations, educational institutions, civic leaders, and industry joining forces, the COSI Science Festival features a unique, partner-based model that ensures the benefits of the festival reach a diverse audience across a wide geography, while also ensuring each festival event has its own distinct science flair.



BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

▶ **ENHANCE STEAM LEARNING AND CAREER READINESS**

Engage students with hands-on activities that build STEAM knowledge and career interest, while linking classroom knowledge with real world applications.

▶ **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY VISIBILITY**

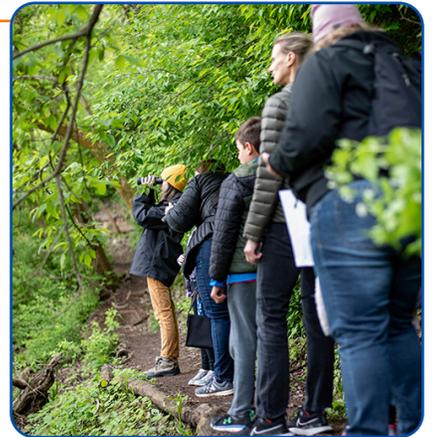
Collaborate with educational institutions and industry to expose students to STEAM professions, provide authentic STEAM experiences, and showcase your organization's STEAM innovations, contributions, and opportunities.

▶ **PROMOTE DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY, AND ACCESS TO NEW AUDIENCES**

Reach diverse students, addressing unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups, ensure cultural relevance in STEAM programs, and connect with tens of thousands of attendees to broaden career options and support lifelong learning.

▶ **CONNECT WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

Join a network of passionate individuals and organizations in STEAM, growing new ideas and opportunities while spreading the love of STEAM.



A scientist from Battelle, the Visionary Sponsor of the COSI Science Festival, interacts with guests at the Big Science Celebration.

While the promise of STEAM is clear, our society still struggles to fully benefit from its opportunities. By 2028, Ohio will need to fill over 350,000 STEM jobs, yet 68% of high school students aren't interested in STEM careers. With decades of experience sparking interest in STEAM education and careers, COSI is uniquely positioned to meet this challenge—and the COSI Science Festival is the signature event to do so. As Ohio's largest STEAM celebration, the Festival engages diverse learners, builds a more connected and STEAM-literate community, and supports a skilled, inclusive workforce. By participating, your organization joins a statewide collaboration that amplifies visibility, reaches new audiences, and drives lasting impact.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE



THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL IS BUILT ON PARTNERSHIP— and there are two main ways your organization can join in. Whether you're a returning partner or exploring participation for the first time, we're here to collaborate and help you make an impact.



OPTION 1 HOST A COMMUNITY STEAM EVENT:



From April 29 to May 1, organizations across Ohio host their own science-themed events. These are designed and led by you, with support from COSI.

Whether it's a hands-on workshop, a behind-the-scenes tour, or a neighborhood science celebration, your event helps connect your mission to STEAM in a way that's meaningful to your community.

KEY FEATURES:

- ▶ You choose the format, topic, and audience
- ▶ Events are held at your location—not at COSI
- ▶ COSI provides guidance and promotional support
- ▶ No fees to participate

OPTION 2 EXHIBIT AT THE BIG SCIENCE CELEBRATION:



On May 2, the festival culminates in an exciting, outdoor event in downtown Columbus. The Big Science Celebration brings together hundreds of partners and tens of thousands of attendees for a day of discovery and fun.

KEY FEATURES:

- ▶ Share interactive STEAM activities with the public
- ▶ Connect with families, students, and curious minds
- ▶ Exhibitor space available with discounted rates for nonprofits, schools, and government agencies
- ▶ COSI handles logistics and promotion—you bring the science!

FOUR DAYS OF HANDS-ON SCIENCE

Wednesday
**April
29**

**Community
STEAM
events**
all around Ohio

Thursday
**April
30**

**Community
STEAM
events**
all around Ohio

Friday
**May
1**

**Community
STEAM
events**
all around Ohio

Saturday
**May
2**



WANT TO DO BOTH?

Many organizations do! We'll work with you to find the best fit and make sure your participation is successful, visible, and aligned with your goals.

STEAM COMMUNITY EVENT HOSTS



JOIN THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL by hosting a STEAM Community Event, and share your organization's work and mission with your neighbors. These events provide shared experiences that spark curiosity about science, enabling attendees to envision themselves in STEAM careers while engaging with scientific research and opportunities within their community.

From April 29–May 1, partners across Ohio open their doors, share their expertise, and bring science to life in everyday places. In essence, Community Events celebrate and highlight the importance of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics in an engaging and enjoyable manner – emphasizing that science is everywhere and for everyone.

Events can be large or small, brand new or a proven favorite. What matters most is sparking curiosity and inviting your community to see themselves in STEAM.

THREE DAYS OF COMMUNITY EVENTS

- ▶ **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29**
- ▶ **THURSDAY, APRIL 30**
- ▶ **FRIDAY, MAY 1**



WHY HOST A COMMUNITY EVENT?

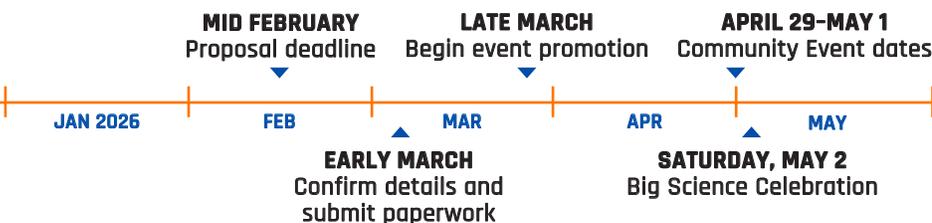
- ▶ **SHOWCASE YOUR MISSION:**
Connect your work directly to STEAM and inspire the next generation.
- ▶ **REACH NEW AUDIENCES:**
Engage families, schools, and neighbors.
- ▶ **BOOST ORGANIZATIONAL VISIBILITY:**
Be part of a statewide marketing effort.
- ▶ **MAKE AN IMPACT:**
Even small events can leave lasting impressions.

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF HOSTS

AS A HOST, YOU WILL:

- ▶ Choose a STEAM-focused topic that connects to your mission.
- ▶ Submit your event proposal with preliminary information.
- ▶ Upon acceptance, confirm final event details for the public (title, description, time, location, etc.).
- ▶ Promote your event using the festival toolkit and your own channels. COSI's marketing efforts will amplify your marketing efforts.

KEY DATES AT A GLANCE



ON THE NEXT PAGE, EXPLORE THE EVENT FORMATS TO INSPIRE YOUR PROGRAM ▶

HOSTING A COMMUNITY EVENT



COMMUNITY STEAM EVENTS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES.

Some are hands-on workshops or a tour, others are neighborhood celebrations – all are designed to spark curiosity and connect people with STEAM in meaningful ways. These categories often overlap, and your event might fit more than one. For example, a wine-and-painting night could be both part of the Adult Science Series and Creative Sparks. Use these formats as inspiration, not strict boxes.

▶ [CLICK HERE TO VIEW EXAMPLES OF PAST EVENTS](#)



BE A SCIENTIST:

Showcase the amazing STEAM work you do! These events offer behind-the-scenes access to labs, museums, nature centers, and more, inviting the public to see what STEAM professionals do daily. It's a fun and immersive way to engage the community and ignite curiosity about science.



ADULT SCIENCE SERIES:

Bring science to life for adults with engaging talks, hands-on experiments, and social fun. Whether 21+ or just for mature audiences, your event will prove it's never too late to enjoy science. Cocktails, mingling, and curiosity await—make science an adventure at any age!



CREATIVE SPARKS:

There's a commonality of creativity driving both arts and science—both solve problems and connect us to our world. Highlighting this connection makes science more accessible. Whether you have a performing scientist or an artist painting murals, we're excited to share their stories with the public. Let's inspire together!



CAREER LAB:

Be part of shaping the future of STEAM! With an emphasis on workforce development, these events invite students and young professionals to dive into hands-on workshops, career fairs, and expert panels, connecting them with industry leaders. It's a chance to equip the next generation with the skills and inspiration they need to fuel tomorrow's STEAM workforce!



SCIENCE BLOCK PARTY:

Invite the whole neighborhood for a science block party with music, food trucks, and hands-on science stations. These large-scale events are fun, engaging opportunities to bring science to everyone. Let's create a memorable community experience that celebrates the excitement of discovery!



OUTDOOR EXPLORATION:

Discover the science in nature through hands-on experiences in parks, trails, and green spaces. These events highlight ecology, wildlife, and environmental science, connecting communities with the natural world in fun and meaningful ways.

Bioblitz: A Bioblitz is a special kind of Outdoor Exploration event where participants identify and record species using tools like iNaturalist, contributing to real-world science and community learning.

HOW TO APPLY

1) PROPOSE AN EVENT

BY MID FEBRUARY, SUBMIT YOUR EVENT CONCEPT VIA THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL WEBSITE OR THE LINK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE.

- ▶ Include topic, rough date/ time, location, etc.

2) CONFIRM

COSI REVIEWS PROPOSALS TO ENSURE ALIGNMENT WITH FESTIVAL GOALS.

- ▶ You'll submit confirmed, public facing details such as title, description, logistical information and an event host agreement a few weeks later, in early March.

3) PROMOTE

APPROVED EVENTS WILL BE FEATURED ON THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL WEBSITE BY THE END OF MARCH.

- ▶ Use the festival marketing toolkit to amplify your event through your own channels.

Important! Think of COSI's marketing efforts as a megaphone. Our statewide event marketing campaign will amplify your organization's efforts. The more you do, the more we can do.

HOSTING GUIDELINES

PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

YOUR EVENT PROMOTION IS A SHARED EFFORT – COSI amplifies your event through festival-wide marketing, and your voice helps it reach even farther.

COSI PROVIDES:

- ▶ A marketing toolkit with logos, templates, signage, and social media tips. Event listings on the festival website, social media, and newsletters.
- ▶ Outreach through media, influencers, and pre-festival promotional events to build momentum.
- ▶ Connections with schools, libraries, and community partners. Festival swag to boost visibility.
- ▶ Access to STEAM experts, and when possible, a COSI team member at your event.

YOU PROVIDE:

- ▶ Active promotion through your own channels (social media, newsletters, websites, networks). Tagging @COSI and using #cosiscifest so we can amplify your posts.
- ▶ Clear communication of any costs – free events are encouraged, but fees or fundraising are welcome if aligned with the festival's mission. Together, we can reach a wide and diverse audience across Ohio.

[CLICK HERE TO HOST AN EVENT](#)

NEED HELP? HAVE A QUESTION OR IDEA?

Let's connect! cosiscifest@cosi.org

PLANNING & LOGISTICS

- ▶ Design an event that highlights your strengths.
- ▶ Keep STEAM at the center of the experience.
- ▶ Schedule between April 29-May 1 (contact COSI if you have an idea outside those dates).
- ▶ Consider accessibility: location, parking, transportation, and timing all matter. Virtual formats are welcome.

INTEGRITY & IMPACT

- ▶ Events must be grounded in accepted science.
- ▶ Keep them community-focused, not overly commercial. Branded elements are fine, but STEAM engagement should be the focus.
- ▶ After the festival, complete a short feedback survey to share outcomes and help shape future festivals.
- ▶ You'll also receive a festival Impact Report to support grant applications, internal reporting, and future planning.



BIG SCIENCE CELEBRATION



SATURDAY, MAY 2
11am - 5pm

“ THIS IS LIKE
TRICK OR TREAT
FOR SCIENCE!

Big Science Celebration guest ”

JOIN US FOR THE BIG SCIENCE CELEBRATION (BSC)— THE GRAND FINALE OF THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL AND OHIO'S LARGEST INTERACTIVE STEAM EVENT!

This high-energy, outdoor experience brings together hundreds of partner organizations and thousands of attendees for a full day of hands-on science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

As an exhibitor, you'll engage youth and adults through interactive displays, experiments, and activities that highlight your organization's STEAM work. Exhibits should be interactive, accessible, and designed for a wide range of ages and abilities. Static displays or purely promotional setups are discouraged.

This free public event is designed to reach families with school-aged children and those with limited access to science education. Your participation helps make the festival accessible, exciting, and impactful for all – while connecting your organization with new audiences and statewide visibility.

The Big Science Celebration takes place Saturday, **May 2, 11am-5pm**, in downtown Columbus.



Interested in performing at the Big Science Celebration or have a public art piece that ties in?

Reach out to cosiscifest@cosi.org to find out more about participating.

HOW DO I EXHIBIT AT THE BSC?

- ▶ **PROPOSE AN EXHIBIT SPACE**, (including vehicles) by early February through the button on the next page.
- ▶ **BECOME A COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL SPONSOR**, receiving numerous benefits, including an exhibitor space.

WHY IS THERE A FEE? From permitting costs to equipment rentals and security, there are many costs associated with organizing an event of this scale. The exhibitor fee allows us to recoup some of these costs so that the festival and its impact are sustained for years to come. Please check online at cosiscifest.org/get-involved/become-an-exhibitor/ for an updated fee schedule, including discounted pricing for non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and governmental offices.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXHIBITOR SPACE ▾

THE BIG SCIENCE CELEBRATION is a high-energy, six-hour event with thousands of attendees. Here are tips from past partners – along with lessons from STEAM workforce development research – to help your exhibitor space stand out and make a lasting impact.



INCORPORATE LESSONS FROM STEAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH

- ▶ **HANDS-ON LEARNING:** Provide real-world, practical experiences to build STEAM interest.
- ▶ **CAREER DEVELOPMENT:** Highlight pathways from classroom learning to STEAM jobs.
- ▶ **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION:** Design activities that welcome families from all backgrounds.
- ▶ **INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS:** Show how education and industry connect in STEAM fields.
- ▶ **EDUCATOR SUPPORT:** Share resources teachers and parents can take home to extend learning.
- ▶ By weaving in these lessons, your exhibitor space will not only engage and educate the public – it will help inspire the next generation of STEAM leaders.

BE PREPARED

- ▶ The BSC is a 6-hour event – plan 2-3 staff at all times, with one person able to answer in-depth questions. Schedule breaks so no one is left alone.
- ▶ Wear branded shirts so your team is easy to recognize.
- ▶ **ESTIMATE SUPPLIES:** how many people you can serve in an hour × 6, then bring extra.
- ▶ Model safety by using goggles, gloves, or lab coats when needed.
- ▶ **PACK SMART:** bring lunch, a refillable water bottle, and sunscreen.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- ▶ Expect a diverse crowd, mostly families with school-aged children, plus curious adults.
- ▶ Keep activities short (3-5 minutes), serving 3-5 participants at a time.
- ▶ Use simple, clear language – explain technical terms in everyday words.

GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

- ▶ Make your exhibitor space visually engaging with posters, signage, or tent walls.
- ▶ Offer hands-on, interactive activities that invite exploration and play.
- ▶ Be enthusiastic and approachable – smile, have fun, and share your passion for STEAM.

KEEP THEM ENGAGED

- ▶ Ask questions to spark curiosity.
- ▶ Messy activities are memorable – just keep clean-up supplies handy.
- ▶ Connect science to real-world applications and potential careers.



[CLICK HERE TO APPLY TO EXHIBIT](#)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DO I NEED TO SUBMIT MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS?

There are two separate applications: one for community events and one for Big Science Celebration exhibitors. If you're hosting the same event multiple times, you can submit one application and provide the dates and times. For different events, you need to submit a separate application for each to ensure we have all the necessary details. The Big Science Celebration has its own application. These applications are quick and help keep all the information organized.

WHAT'S YOUR EVENT SELECTION CRITERIA?

We prioritize a diverse range of event categories to achieve a well-balanced combination. In our evaluation, we consider various scientific subjects, different demographic targets, and event locations within the state. We are especially interested in events that expand access to science education and resources for underserved communities. Additionally, we value innovative and unconventional ideas, and we encourage you to bring fresh concepts to the table.

WHO CAN I ASK FOR HELP WITH MY EVENT OR EXHIBITOR SPACE IDEAS?

Our Science Festival, Scientific Content, and Education teams are here to help. Please reach out to cosiscifest@cosi.org and we will be happy to discuss more.

CAN WE HOST MULTIPLE EVENTS?

Absolutely. With event logistics determined by your organization, you are welcome to host as much as you feel you need and have capacity to run. To reach a strong audience base—sometimes less is more.

CAN WE BE A SPONSOR?

Yes. The COSI Science Festival is the perfect opportunity to align with COSI's important work to improve science literacy, foster a diverse STEAM workforce, and support accessible STEAM learning in our community – all while gaining region-wide marketing reach and impact. **Contact Keely Buckley at kbuckley@cosi.org for more information.**

I WANT TO HOST AN EVENT - WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS CAN YOU GIVE?

We want participants to easily attend your event, so please choose locations that are close to public transportation or offer free parking. Non-academic venues are recommended to attract a wider audience. Be mindful of the event timing to avoid inconvenient hours for the public. Consider the following when scheduling: desired audience, travel time, mealtime, and bedtime. For example, an event for adults on Thursday at 3 PM might be convenient for the hosts but may not attract your desired attendance numbers due to school or work obligations.

WHAT IF IT RAINS?

Individual community events will be decided on a case by case basis, but the Big Science Celebration will be held rain or shine (barring severe weather). We'll put in a request for sunny and 72, but we all know how Ohio weather is.

CAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES PARTICIPATE?

Absolutely. COSI regularly collaborates with local, state, and federal agencies and has team members dedicated to each level of government. The COSI Science Festival is an excellent opportunity for workforce development and for showcasing the valuable contributions government agencies make to society.

CAN WE REPEAT SOMETHING WE'VE DONE IN THE PAST?

We encourage you to think creatively, experiment, and try something new, but we know many organizations have put on incredible past programs that the public would love to see again. If you want to try something you've done before in order to improve it for this year, go ahead and submit.

HOW DO I VOLUNTEER?

We connect local STEAM experts with events and places they can assist and can always use volunteers for the Big Science Celebration. Find more information at cosiscifest.org.