



SCIENCE FESTIVAL

APRIL 25 - MAY 1, 2027



PARTNER GUIDE 2027

WHY PARTICIPATE?

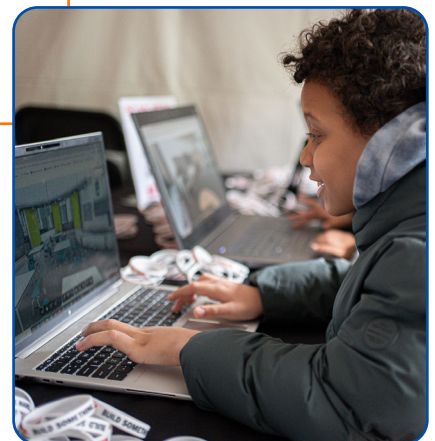


IMAGINE YOUR ORGANIZATION JOINING HUNDREDS OF OTHERS ACROSS OHIO TO SHARE THE IMPORTANCE OF SCIENCE.

Together, our voices can spark curiosity, connect science with everyday life, and show people of all ages that STEAM is everywhere and for everyone. That is the power of the COSI Science Festival. Fueled by partnership and built on collaboration, the festival amplifies each organization's voice while extending the reach of STEAM across Ohio.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

- ▶ **ENHANCE STEAM LEARNING AND CAREER AWARENESS**
Engage people of all ages in hands-on experiences that build STEAM knowledge, connect learning with real-world applications, and broaden awareness of educational and career pathways.
- ▶ **PROMOTE DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY, AND ACCESS TO NEW AUDIENCES**
Reach people from a wide range of backgrounds, reduce barriers to STEAM participation, support culturally relevant experiences, and connect new audiences with opportunities for learning, discovery, and career exploration.
- ▶ **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY VISIBILITY**
Collaborate with community, educational, and industry partners to help people of all ages explore STEAM, participate in authentic learning experiences, and discover your organization's innovations, contributions, and career opportunities.
- ▶ **CONNECT WITH THE STEAM COMMUNITY**
Join a statewide network of people and organizations committed to STEAM, developing new ideas, creating opportunities, and sharing the excitement of discovery.



BUILDING OHIO'S STEAM FUTURE

Ohio needs a skilled and inclusive workforce prepared for a growing range of STEAM careers. The COSI Science Festival helps people explore those opportunities while strengthening science literacy and lifelong engagement with STEAM. As Ohio's largest STEAM celebration, the festival engages people of all ages and builds a more connected, STEAM-literate community. By participating, your organization can reach new audiences, showcase the role of STEAM in its work, and contribute to meaningful opportunities for learning and discovery across Ohio.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL IS BUILT ON PARTNERSHIP—

and there are two main ways your organization can participate. Whether you're a returning partner or joining for the first time, we're here to help you make an impact.



OPTION 1

HOST A COMMUNITY STEAM EVENT:

From April 25–30, organizations across Ohio host science-themed events in their communities. You design and lead the experience, with support from COSI.

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

KEY FEATURES:

- ▶ You choose the format, topic, location, and audience.
- ▶ Events are held in your community, not at COSI.
- ▶ COSI provides guidance and promotional support.
- ▶ There is no fee to host a Community STEAM Event.

WANT TO DO BOTH? Many organizations do! We'll help you plan complementary experiences that are visible, successful, and aligned with your goals.

OPTION 2

EXHIBIT AT THE BIG SCIENCE CELEBRATION:

On May 1, the festival culminates in the Big Science Celebration, an exciting, free, outdoor event in downtown Columbus. Hundreds of partners engage tens of thousands of attendees in a day of discovery and fun.

KEY FEATURES:

- ▶ Share interactive STEAM activities with the public.
- ▶ Connect with curious people of all ages.
- ▶ Exhibitor space is available, with discounted rates for nonprofits, educational institutions, and government agencies.
- ▶ COSI handles event-wide logistics and promotion. You bring the science!

SEVEN DAYS OF STEAM EXPERIENCES

Sunday
April 25

Monday
April 26

Tuesday
April 27

Wednesday
April 28

Thursday
April 29

Friday
April 30

Saturday
May 1



Community STEAM Events across Ohio

RECOGNIZE A STEAM STAR

Know someone doing extraordinary work in STEAM? Nominate a COSI STEAM Star and help celebrate the people using STEAM to strengthen our communities.

**NOMINATE A
STEAM STAR**

COMMUNITY STEAM EVENT HOSTS

JOIN THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL by hosting a Community STEAM Event and sharing your organization's work and mission with the public. These experiences spark curiosity, connect people of all ages with local research and resources, and broaden awareness of STEAM learning and career pathways.

From April 25-30, partners across Ohio share their expertise and bring STEAM to life in everyday places. Events can be large or small, new or well established. What matters most is creating an engaging experience that sparks curiosity and demonstrates that science is everywhere and for everyone.

WHY HOST A COMMUNITY STEAM EVENT?

- ▶ **SHOWCASE YOUR MISSION:** Connect your work with STEAM and show its relevance to people's lives.
- ▶ **REACH NEW AUDIENCES:** Engage new audiences and curious learners of all ages.
- ▶ **INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL VISIBILITY:** Be part of a statewide marketing effort.
- ▶ **MAKE AN IMPACT:** Create a meaningful experience that can influence how participants understand and engage with STEAM.

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF HOSTS

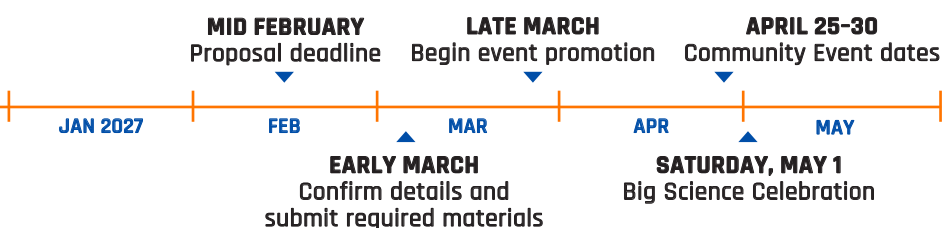
- ▶ Choose a STEAM-focused topic that connects with your mission.
- ▶ Submit your event proposal with preliminary information.
- ▶ If accepted, confirm the event title, description, date, time, location, accessibility information, registration requirements, and other public-facing details.

- ▶ Promote your event using the festival toolkit and your own channels. COSI's festival-wide marketing will help extend your reach.

COSI SUPPORT

- ▶ Planning guidance and a festival marketing toolkit
- ▶ Festival-wide promotion of approved events
- ▶ Festival signage and promotional materials to use before and during your event

KEY DATES AT A GLANCE



NEXT, EXPLORE EVENT FORMATS TO INSPIRE YOUR PROGRAM.

SIX DAYS OF COMMUNITY STEAM EVENTS

- ▶ **SUNDAY, APRIL 25**
- ▶ **MONDAY, APRIL 26**
- ▶ **TUESDAY, APRIL 27**
- ▶ **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28**
- ▶ **THURSDAY, APRIL 29**
- ▶ **FRIDAY, APRIL 30**

2026 COMMUNITY EVENT HOST FEEDBACK

- ▶ **92%** (49 of 53) had a positive overall experience participating in the COSI Science Festival.
- ▶ **87%** (45 of 52) said their participation helped the public experience wonder, awe, or delight about science.
- ▶ **85%** (44 of 52) said their participation helped the public recognize real-world applications of science.

Source: 2026 COSI Science Festival partner survey. Response totals vary by question.



HOSTING A COMMUNITY EVENT



COMMUNITY STEAM EVENTS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES.

Some are hands-on workshops or tours; 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 event could fit both the Adult Science Series and Creative Sparks categories. Use these formats as inspiration, not strict requirements.

► VIEW EXAMPLES OF PAST COMMUNITY STEAM EVENTS



BE A SCIENTIST:

Showcase the amazing STEAM work your organization does. Invite the public to experience how STEAM professionals investigate questions, use specialized tools, and solve problems through hands-on activities or behind-the-scenes access to laboratories, museums, nature centers, workplaces, and more.



ADULT SCIENCE SERIES:

Invite adults to explore science through engaging talks, hands-on experiments, demonstrations, workshops, and social experiences. From casual conversations to in-depth programs, these events show that curiosity and discovery are lifelong pursuits.



CREATIVE SPARKS:

Creativity drives both art and science. Both help us solve problems and better understand the world. Explore these connections through performances, demonstrations, installations, workshops, collaborative art, or conversations with artists and STEAM professionals.



CAREER LAB:

Be part of shaping the future of STEAM! Help people explore STEAM career pathways through hands-on workshops, career fairs, workplace tours, and conversations with professionals. Show participants how their interests, experiences, and skills can connect with STEAM opportunities.



SCIENCE BLOCK PARTY:

Invite the community to a science block party with hands-on STEAM stations, demonstrations, and shared activities. Music, food trucks, performances, and partner organizations can help create a memorable experience that celebrates curiosity and discovery.



OUTDOOR EXPLORATION:

Explore science in nature through hands-on experiences in parks, on trails, and in other outdoor spaces. These events may highlight ecology, wildlife, geology, weather, conservation, or environmental science while connecting people with the natural world in meaningful ways.

BioBlitz: A BioBlitz is an Outdoor Exploration event in which participants identify and document species within a defined area and period of time. Participants may use tools such as iNaturalist, and their observations can contribute to biodiversity research and community learning.

HOW TO APPLY

1) PROPOSE AN EVENT

BY MID-FEBRUARY, SUBMIT YOUR EVENT CONCEPT THROUGH THE COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL WEBSITE OR THE LINK BELOW.

- ▶ Include the topic, approximate date and time, location, and event format.

2) CONFIRM

COSI REVIEWS PROPOSALS TO ENSURE ALIGNMENT WITH FESTIVAL GOALS.

- ▶ If accepted, you'll submit final public-facing details and an Event Host Agreement 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 promote your event through your own channels.

Important! Think of COSI's marketing efforts as a megaphone. Our statewide campaign amplifies your organization's promotion and helps your event reach a broader audience.

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, plus 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, plus 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, including social media, newsletters, websites, and networks. Tag COSI so we can amplify your posts.
- ▶ Clear communication of any costs. Free events are encouraged, but fees or fundraising may be permitted when aligned with the festival's mission. Together, we can reach a wide and diverse audience across Ohio.

SUBMIT A COMMUNITY STEAM EVENT PROPOSAL

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 25-30 (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 events community-focused, not primarily promotional. Branded elements are fine, but STEAM engagement should remain 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

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 tens of thousands of attendees for a full day of hands-on discovery.

As an exhibitor, you'll engage people of all ages through interactive displays, experiments, and activities that highlight your organization's STEAM work. Exhibits should be accessible and designed for a wide range of ages and abilities. Exhibits must include an interactive STEAM experience; static or primarily promotional setups may not meet the selection criteria.

This free public event welcomes people of all ages, with a focus on families with school-aged children and communities with limited access to STEAM learning opportunities. Your participation helps make the festival accessible and engaging while connecting your organization with new audiences across Ohio.

The Big Science Celebration takes place **Saturday, May 1, from 11am-5pm** in downtown Columbus.



SATURDAY, MAY 1
11am - 5pm

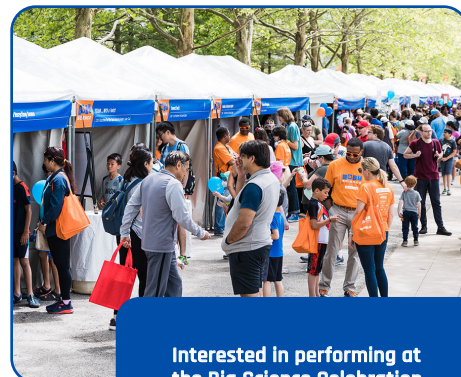
**“ THIS IS LIKE
TRICK OR TREAT
FOR SCIENCE! ”**

Big Science Celebration guest ”

2026 BSC VISITOR FEEDBACK

- ▶ **93%** of visitors said their experience was excellent or outstanding
- ▶ **38%** said they learned about a career they never knew existed
- ▶ **52%** said they interacted with a professional they never would have met outside of the Big Science Celebration
- ▶ **90%** said they experienced wonder, awe, or delight about science
- ▶ **92%** wanted to continue learning about ways to engage with science “a lot” or “a huge amount” after attending the Big Science Celebration.

Source: 2026 Big Science Celebration visitor survey.



Interested in performing at the Big Science Celebration or presenting STEAM-related public art?

Contact cosiscifest@cosi.org to learn more.

HOW DO I EXHIBIT AT THE BSC?

- ▶ **SUBMIT AN EXHIBIT PROPOSAL**, including any vehicle display, by early February using this link or the button on the next page.
- ▶ **BECOME A COSI SCIENCE FESTIVAL SPONSOR**, and receive benefits that include exhibitor space.

WHY IS THERE A FEE? Permits, equipment rentals, security, and other needs make an event of this scale possible. Exhibitor fees help offset these costs and sustain the festival for years to come. Visit cosiscifest.org/get-involved/become-an-exhibitor/ for current fees, including discounted rates for nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies.

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, informed by STEM workforce education 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:** Connect STEAM learning with education and career pathways.
- ▶ **SHARE YOUR STORY:** Encourage your team to share what they do, how they got there, and why it matters. Personal stories help visitors connect their interests with STEAM education and careers.
- ▶ **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION:** Design activities that welcome people of all backgrounds and abilities.
- ▶ **INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS:** Show how STEAM learning connects with real people, workplaces, and careers.
- ▶ **EDUCATOR SUPPORT:** Share resources teachers and parents can take home to extend learning.
- ▶ By weaving in these lessons, your exhibitor space can engage and educate the public while inspiring the next generation of STEAM leaders.

BE PREPARED

- ▶ The BSC is a six-hour event. Plan for two to three staff members whenever possible, including someone who can answer in-depth questions. Schedule breaks so the exhibit is never unattended.
- ▶ Wear branded shirts so your team is easy to recognize.
- ▶ **ESTIMATE SUPPLIES:** Multiply the number of participants you can serve each hour by six, then bring extra.
- ▶ Model safety by using goggles, gloves, or lab coats when needed.
- ▶ **PACK SMART:** Bring lunch, a refillable water bottle, sunscreen, and weather-appropriate clothing.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- ▶ Expect people of all ages, including many families with school-aged children.
- ▶ Keep activities short (3-5 minutes), serving 3-5 participants at a time.
- ▶ Use clear, everyday language and explain technical terms.

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 welcoming and approachable. Invite participation and share your enthusiasm for STEAM.

KEEP THEM ENGAGED

- ▶ Ask questions to spark curiosity.
- ▶ Messy activities are memorable, so keep cleanup supplies handy.
- ▶ Connect STEAM to real-world applications and career pathways.

**APPLY TO EXHIBIT
AT THE BIG SCIENCE
CELEBRATION**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DO I NEED TO SUBMIT MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS?

Community STEAM Events and Big Science Celebration exhibits use separate applications. If you plan to offer the same Community STEAM Event multiple times, submit one application and list each date and time. Submit a separate application for each different event so COSI has all the necessary details. The applications are brief and help keep information organized.

WHAT ARE YOUR EVENT SELECTION CRITERIA?

We consider several factors to create a diverse and well-balanced festival program, including STEAM subject areas, intended audiences, event formats, and locations across Ohio. We are especially interested in events that expand access to science learning and resources for underserved communities. We also value creative and unconventional ideas, so we encourage you to bring fresh concepts to the festival.

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

COSI's Science Festival, Scientific Content, and Education teams are here to help. Contact cosiscifest@cosi.org to discuss your event or exhibit idea.

CAN WE HOST MULTIPLE EVENTS?

Absolutely. You may host multiple events if your organization has the capacity to run each one successfully. Keep in mind that fewer, well-promoted events may attract stronger attendance.

CAN WE BE A SPONSOR?

Yes. Sponsorship supports science literacy, a diverse STEAM workforce, and accessible STEAM learning while providing regional visibility. **Contact Maria Jones at mjones@cosi.org for more information.**

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

Choose a location and time that work for your intended audience. Consider public transportation, free parking, accessibility, travel time, work and school schedules, mealtimes, and bedtimes. Community venues may also attract people who do not regularly visit academic institutions. For example, a Thursday event for adults may attract more attendees in the evening than at 3 p.m.

WHAT IF IT RAINS?

Community STEAM Event hosts will determine their own weather plans. The Big Science Celebration will take place rain or shine unless severe weather makes conditions unsafe. We'll put in a request for sunshine and 72 degrees, but we all know Ohio weather.

CAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES PARTICIPATE?

Absolutely. COSI regularly collaborates with local, state, and federal agencies. The festival offers agencies an opportunity to support workforce development, highlight STEAM careers, and showcase how their scientific work and public services benefit communities.

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

Yes. We encourage partners to experiment and try something new, but successful past programs are also welcome. Build on what worked, incorporate feedback, and consider adding something new for returning participants.

HOW DO I VOLUNTEER?

Volunteer opportunities are available for the Big Science Celebration and may also be available with Community STEAM Event hosts. Visit cosiscifest.org/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/ for current opportunities and registration information.