



TOP TIPS CALL FOR IDEAS SUBMISSIONS

Each year there are a wonderfully high volume of submissions of events to the Festival which fills our team with a humbling pride that so many organisations and groups are keen to be part of our two week celebration of Science and Technology. As much as we would love to include everything, budgets, space, time and practicalities mean that inclusion in the Festival cannot be guaranteed and our in-house team have the tricky job of reviewing and selecting which events can be included in the programme.

To help ensure that our team are able to understand the full extent of your ideas, we have created these top tips which we hope will help when creating your submissions for the call for ideas.



WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

Preference is given to events that demonstrate:

- A commitment to best practice science communication
- A commitment to providing high-quality experiences
- They complement our existing programme and Festival theme
- They are likely to attract a good audience

We also use a number of detailed criteria that we aim for within all our events which fit the style and ethos of our Festival as well as our approach to effective public engagement in STEM. This is also used to help assist in the selection process.



STYLE AND FORMAT

Hands on/interactive

Allows the audience to get involved

Immersive

Context, storytelling, appropriate motivation for audience

Investigative

Either through activity or debate

Variety

Variable formats and methods to communicate and engage the audience

ETHOS

Novel and/or memorable

Innovative, imaginative, inspiring

Enjoyable/entertaining

Compliments the Festival theme

Provide accessible and inclusive experiences

STAFF/ DELIVERY TEAM

Practice excellent

communication skills

Are approachable, use their voice effectively, positive body language, speaks to a general level of intelligence (no jargon), are personal

Have sufficient knowledge (subject & technical) to deliver the event

Have an engaging and dynamic personality

Bring the event alive with their delivery style

Have an appropriate number of staff/presenters for the style/format of the event

Has a diverse panel of experts/speakers

PRACTICALITIES

Appropriate duration

For the audience and the content/suggested activities

Clear and well planned structure & logistics

All activities are safe

Support materials and kit are professionally designed, fit for purpose and tested

The proposed activity could be accommodated by a Festival venue

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT

New to planning and creating events for effective public engagement? No problem – we would recommend that you make sure you think and consider the following as you start to plan:

WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR AUDIENCE TO KNOW?

Pick out that one key message (or two!) but be clear with yourself or anyone else in your team, what this is. This will help you make decisions and streamline your event so that it is clear to an audience what it is all about.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

What age are they? Why would they come to this event? Why would they be interested in what your event is about? Answers to these questions will help you shape not only the content but also practicalities about your event as well (length, activities, capacity etc).

WHAT IS YOUR HOOK OR ENGAGEMENT?

What is it about your event that will keep people interested or maybe attract them in the first place? This might be the speaker, the topic, the activities, the format but it needs something to keep people interested.

WHAT IS YOUR FORMAT?

How will your event run? What are you going to need to make sure this happens smoothly? Not only kit or furniture but staff and people. How will people know what they should be doing when? What will you need – signage, instructions? Knowing the answers to the previous three questions will help you answer this one but make sure to run through it, test it, and try it yourself. Actually practising things often show us the areas we have not thought of!

YOUR SUBMISSION

When it comes to actually submitting your proposal or event make sure you are showing us you have thought of these things. Make sure that you are:

- Telling us really clearly what it will be (as much as you can) – paint us a picture!
- Please fill in as much information as you can at this stage and don't leave blanks
- Please let us know if your activity is scalable to different sizes of audience, venue, or delivery period and what – if any – cost implications for this scaling may be.

And remember, please always feel free to contact us and discuss your ideas or ask us any questions you are not sure of. You can find the contact details of the Creative Team [here](#).



WHAT DO WE KNOW THAT CAN HELP?

OUR AUDIENCE

Edinburgh Science Festival audiences are generally made up of interested members of the public who we assume have little or no specialist or technological knowledge.

They have varied motivations for attending:

- Favourite speaker
- Learn something new
- Debate moral, ethical, and societal implications and make their views heard
- Have a fun day or night out with family or friends

Some expect plenty of scientific detail and explanation, others are more interested in what the non-scientists have to say.

All our audiences share an expectation that their Edinburgh Science Festival experience will be a valuable one in terms of learning something new, feeling entertained, or ideally both. People are coming to these events in their leisure time so bear this in mind when planning your event!

We are especially keen to include events that appeal to members of the public who don't necessarily consider themselves to be interested in science.

There are many underrepresented audiences in STEM and we are committed to working across our event portfolio to create an inclusive and welcoming Festival for everyone. We welcome ideas for Festival events which help us reach underrepresented audiences and celebrate that STEM is something for everyone. Especially those audiences with a lower science capital and who may be underrepresented in STEM careers and industries.

We also welcome ideas for events that will help us engage harder-to-reach audiences and visitors with additional needs. Edinburgh Science has an organisational working group for accessibility across the Festival and in previous years we have been pleased to offer a series of relaxed performances and events as part of the Festival programme. If you would like to find out more about offering relaxed experiences or would be interested in delivering a bespoke Festival event for audiences with additional needs, please get in touch with us.

FORMATS

When planning your event, remember that people can absorb information in a wide range of different ways: through seeing, hearing, moving and touching. A good event will use a variety of styles to engage as many people as possible and will allow audiences to take part in the event somehow – through interaction, dialogue etc.

Below we have listed some popular formats from our previous festivals, but there's nothing to stop you combining several approaches to deliver a unique event. Just please remember that these formats are guidance. We would of course also encourage you to consider Scottish Government and NHS guidance when proposing Festival events and implementing controls and format adjustments to minimise risks due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

EVENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Good presenters are the key to a successful event. Before inviting a speaker, it is advisable to check that they have presented to a general audience before or, if possible, see them speak yourself.

Discussion events or talks should have a host whose role it is to:

- Welcome the audience
- Introduce the speaker(s)
- Steer the event and lead any Q&A session.

Do not underestimate the importance of a good host!

PRESENTATIONS/TALKS

Talented communicators with a passion for their subject matter can carry a single-presenter event. These events work best if your speaker is a well-known personality whose 'big name' can attract large, mixed audiences and/or the topic is particularly interesting and newsworthy.

Multi-presenter events can be an interesting way of delivering information and allowing for dialogue between participants and with the audience.

Text-heavy slides or complex graphs are not appropriate for public audiences and often do not make for the best experience. If possible, only use PowerPoint (or similar) for visuals – images, infographics, diagrams, video clips, etc. – not as a memory aid for speakers.

Hands-on activities aren't only for kids – consider getting your audience to DO something as part of your event. Making use of digital interactive tools such as Kahoot!, Mentimeter or Slido can be a great way for presenters to engage audiences.

IN CONVERSATION EVENTS

In this format, a skilled host interviews a well-known individual in a 'chat-show' style. The host should ideally be a personality themselves (broadcasters are often ideal in this role). This style of event can be useful if your speaker(s) have interesting things to say but are best suited to a conversational style rather than a presentation.

'In conversation' events should allow time for audience questions.

PANEL/DISCUSSION EVENTS

Discussions can work well for mixed audiences, especially for any subjects with complex moral, ethical or societal implications. It is important to offer a range of voices (ideally no more than three or four speakers) and viewpoints, especially if the issue is controversial or emotive. Don't restrict your choices to scientists – consider involving patients, clinicians, sociologists, economists, representatives of relevant NGOs, the media, artists or authors to encourage vibrant and varied discussion.

These events work particularly well when they are chaired by a skilled host and should allow time for audience questions.

We strive for gender parity across all Festival programming and are committed to delivering events reflecting the diverse identities of the scientific community.

ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

If you wish to present your work online it is important to consider the format, delivery mechanism and audience. Online audiences have a wealth of content available and standing out can be extremely difficult. If you wish to present your idea digitally it is best to keep it short (or to present longer form projects in a series). Avoid formats that have been impacted by digital fatigue, such as interactive zoom events.

EVENTS FOR ALL FAMILIES AND ADULTS

PERFORMANCES / SHOWS

Live performances – music, dance, drama, poetry, comedy etc. – may form part of an event or may BE the event, and can be a valuable way of reaching out to new audiences.

Performances can impart information, be useful catalysts for discussion or simply provide an interesting overall experience. The science doesn't always have to be explicit; sometimes it is enough to remind us that science is not separate to but rather is a part of broader culture.

WORKSHOPS

A focused and practical workshop can give visitors the chance to use professional equipment or gain specialist practical skills. Children and adults alike relish the opportunity to try something new and make something themselves, be that through computer programming, a virtual cookery class, a make-at-home workshop using simple office materials.

DROP-IN EVENTS

Drop-in events can take many forms – for example exhibitions, demonstrations or interactive activities – all of which are informal in nature and provide various opportunities to interact with scientists and their research, showcase technology innovation and knowledge and facilitate hands-on experiences. We can offer space in a high profile public venue and are interested in drop-in events that could run for anything from one afternoon to the whole of the Festival.

WALKING TOURS. TRAILS. EXCURSIONS. ETC.

Walking tours or science trails can be a novel way of engaging audiences. If you decide this is the format for you, remember that a lot will depend on having a knowledgeable, engaging host and that logistics can make or break an event of this sort (as can the weather!).

Do you have access to a special scientific place which is not normally open to the public? 'Behind the scenes' tours are very popular with audiences.

EVENT DURATION

Presentations, talks and discussions in the Edinburgh Science Festival programme usually run for 60–90 minutes, including time for audience questions

Performances and workshops vary in length depending on what is covered, they usually run between 45 minutes and 3 hours

Drop-in activities are flexible and have no set length; there should be enough material to entertain a visitor for at least 5–10 minutes with the opportunity for a longer visit and more activities if they wish.