

March for Science

Outreach Event Planning Guide

Planning Outreach Events

Taking the discussion of science beyond scientific conferences and into the wider community is key to breaking down barriers and engaging people in science and science advocacy.

- Science outreach events are an opportunity for informal conversations between scientists and their communities. Participants talk about science, their work, and its role in society and policy.
- You can be a leader in bringing together a diverse community to talk about science -- these events should not be lectures but rather an open dialogue.
- What format this takes is up to you.
 - Is there an exciting new scientific discovery you want to share with your community? Organize a science talk anywhere from a cafe to a community center.
 - Want to host a no-holds-barred science Q&A? Consider a pub crawl format, with scientists covering different topics in various restaurants and bars.
 - Want to focus on policy, explaining how evidence-based policies can protect and improve our present and future? Maybe a town hall is the right format for you.
- Be creative -- it doesn't matter where these conversations are happening. What matters is that we have them!
- Browse our science outreach event guide to learn more about how to host a science event that works for your community— whether it's a science cafe , a science town hall, or a pub crawl.

Choosing a Topic

Did you hear about (or make!) an exciting new discovery? Is there a science subject you've always wanted to know more about? Something interesting in the news? Is there a new policy being proposed in your area you want to understand? Want to offer a general overview of the policy decisions facing your community? Think about what your community would be interested in (or, better yet, ask them directly!)

Pick the best format for your topic

Science Cafe

A Science Cafe is an ideal setup for one or two scientists to talk about their work and open a dialogue with their community. It should start with a 5-10 minute introduction of the topic and then open to the crowd for questions. Scientists can discuss their specific projects or peg the topic to current stories in the news -- the important thing is to engage people in science.

Town Hall

A Science Town Hall is a great opportunity for the public to get their questions about science answered, particularly around how science intersects with policy. You can host an open Q&A or choose one broad topic (climate change, medical research, etc) to focus on. These events are best served by having multiple scientists on a panel to ensure that the public gets accurate information from experts in the field. Come prepared with details of policy decisions facing your area for discussion. The goal of these events is to help inform the public on the science and policy issues in their community and encourage them to become advocates for evidence based policy.

Pub Crawl

A Science Pub Crawl is best for an “everything you wanted to know about science but were afraid to ask” event. Contact bars and restaurants in the same geographical area and station one or two scientists in each location -- each covering a different topic.

Choose a location

One of the main goals of these events is to break down barriers between scientists and the community -- expanding where and how we talk about science. That means choosing locations that favor casual conversations, where community members naturally gather. Think outside the box. Instead of lecture halls and classrooms, reach out to coffee shops and community centers.

Keep in mind any limitations of the locations you choose. Is the site accessible to people of all abilities? Are there age restrictions on who can enter? Is there any drink minimum or cover charge for participating? Is it easily reached by public transportation?

If possible, consider recording your event and making it publicly available. Not all communities will have the resources to host science outreach events, but people all over the world can share in the experience.

Accessibility

An accessible venue is key to fully engaging the diverse community of science supporters and ensuring that science is accessible to all. For a detailed guide to choosing physically accessible

event spaces, addressing communication access, and other accessibility needs, please consult the American Bar Association's Commission on Disability Rights toolkit on [Planning Accessible Meetings and Events](#) (PDF).

When promoting your event, include details on accessibility so that those attending can make their plans in advance. If you must host your meeting in an inaccessible location or one in which access is not easily achievable, communicate this clearly in your pre-event publicity. Include a contact number for anyone with questions about venue accessibility.

Given that science outreach events will often involve specialized vocabulary and names, prepare an advanced copy of the speech or a glossary of specialized terms to ensure that any interpreters are prepared for the science issues covered in your event. American Sign Language interpreters can be found through local organizations or the directory at the [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf](#).

Reaching Out to Hosts

Science affects every community so the key in finding a host for these outreach events is detailing why this event is important to the venue and the community they serve. A sample email is below but never underestimate the impact of picking up the phone or stopping by a venue in person.

Dear XXX,

I'm writing to you about an opportunity to collaborate on a science outreach event in our community. The March for Science is a non-partisan, global movement focused on advancing the role of science in society and policy. As a community organizer, I am planning a science (cafe/town hall/pub crawl) in (your city) to highlight (your topic of interest). The event will be interactive, bringing scientists into (your location) and starting a conversation about their work and how it can benefit us all. Too many people think of science as a boring topic best discussed in laboratories -- we hope to challenge that image by hosting an (event) at (location)!

(A few sentences on proposed topic with as much detail as possible or, alternatively, a general pitch offering to narrow down the focus based on their interests)

(Why their location is a good fit for this. What community do they serve that will be particularly interested in this event/topic? Is this the kind of event they frequently host or are you helping them break new ground?)

It has never been more important to ensure that people are invested in supporting science in (our community/policy). We hope holding an (event) at (location) will help encourage that dialogue in our community.

I'd be grateful for the opportunity to discuss this with you further, if you think it would be of interest to your (members/customers/community).

*Thank you for your time,
(your name)*

Find a Speaker

Once you've settled on a subject, look into scientists in your area who might be interested in participating in an outreach event. Local research centers and science departments at colleges and universities are always a good start. Also check out credible national organizations and see whether any organization would be a good match for your topic.

Ensuring that all of our programs address the need for diverse voices in the scientific community is vital to our organization and science outreach events are no exception. The March for Science holds our commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility in science and science policy as a fundamental feature of our goal to promote science for the common good. A scientific community that does not embrace people of all backgrounds will neither benefit nor learn from all people; a science that is not inclusive of all people cannot possibly adequately or fairly inform policies that shape a diversity of communities. Each event offers an important opportunity to take steps towards a more diverse and inclusive scientific community.

Partners can help you promote the event, contribute funds or in-kind donations as needed, or help with the planning stages. Many of the March for Science partners have local chapters that would be excellent resources in planning these events, as are science clubs and science departments at your local universities and high schools. Science affects everyone so don't get hung up on only reaching out to organizations and clubs with "science" in the name!

With a little luck, science outreach events can be hosted at little to no cost, but sometimes you will need to seek out sponsorship for specific parts of the event. When asking for donations, approach potential sponsors with a fixed budget in mind rather than a vague ask.