

Discovery Days

Philadelphia Science Festival, Bay Area Science Festival

In-depth:

Both the Bay Area Science Festival and Philadelphia Science Festival have had great success with the Discovery Day model. In Philadelphia, festival staff serves as the primary event organizers who oversee all aspects of event planning, program logistics, and day-of coordination. In the past, events have been organized by both location (neighborhood-specific celebrations) and topic (e.g., “Be the Detective!” a forensics discovery day and “Naturepalooza” a nature-based/Earth Day theme). Festival organizers host pre-event conference calls and walk-throughs for participating activity providers in an effort to minimize event day confusion and increase partner engagement. In order to ensure that each Discovery Day location has approximately 15-22 hands-on activities, all non-profit organizations who provide science content are offered an exhibit space at the larger Carnival on the Parkway in exchange for their participation.

In the Bay Area, representatives from community-based organizations and businesses have formed a Discovery Day Advisory Committee, made up of residents and representatives from organizations in the North Bay community. The group meets year round to plan the North Bay Discovery Day, a now annual event in Santa Rosa, an area that lacks STEM programs- there is no science museum, no 4-year university, and very few after school opportunities. The Latino community in this area is growing quickly, doubling to 30% of the population from 2000 to 2010, and event organizers market heavily to Spanish-language papers and radio stations. As a result of this targeted outreach, the audience at the 2012 event was 17% Latino.

Event organizers recruit activity providers from throughout the community and work to help the groups identify activities that showcase the science in what they do, regardless of whether the group is a restaurant, a car mechanic or high school robotics team. In order to market the event, organizers deliver fliers to schools throughout the area and target the local Spanish language radio stations.

What you'll need to host a successful event:

- Accessible venue-** Consider public parks, recreation centers, nature centers, etc.
- Hands-on activity providers**
- Tables and chairs**
- Way-finding and/or festival branded signage**
- Event volunteers** to assist with load-in, set-up, crowd management, evaluations, and cleanup

Additional recommendations:

- Consider providing breakfast and/or lunch for activity providers and volunteers-** You want your event to be sustainable year after year, and this can only happen if participants walk away feeling content with the day!

- **Hand-outs and giveaways** like stickers, buttons, and tote bags are exciting for attendees and provide many great photo ops for the festival.
- **Music** can really add to the celebratory feeling of a Discovery Day. Consider approaching a family friendly radio station about collaborating on the event, or create your own iPod playlist.
- **Know your audience.** Choose a venue that is convenient and welcoming to the people you are trying to reach.
- **Consider inviting food trucks** to set-up at your event. This ensures that attendees have food available, without it becoming an additional cost to the festival.