YEAR-ROUND CALENDARS: MUST HAVES & NICE-TO-HAVES

A list compiled by festival and event organizers from around the country. Note that there is also a list of must haves / nice to haves compiled by a web expert in the "Tips from a Web Expert" document.

MUST HAVES

- **Ownership.** Ultimately, who is the owner of the calendar and responsible for the work? Organizational commitment and clarity of purpose is key for long-term success. With collaborative calendars, it's important to make sure event entries are curated and posted on time and by the right people. Having said that, a number of great calendars are primarily volunteer driven. If that's a model you want to explore, check in with the Bay Area team and the Richmond team.

- **Manageable Platform.** Whether a site/CMS widget or another option. Please see our "Tips from a Web Expert" document for elaboration.

- **Mobile Presence.** In keeping with tech trends, your calendar really needs to work well on smartphones. A clean landing page with easy-to-navigate options is important.

- **Key Content**. The calendar needs to be updated with relevant event postings year-round to maintain momentum and track impact.

- **Editors.** The team needs to be on the same page regarding appropriate titling, tone of event postings, tagging of events, and what type of events are outside of the calendar's intended purpose. (Examples could include overly-commercial events or ones with tenuous STEM connections.)

- **Marketing & Promotion.** There are two levels of promoting your calendar. Both are important. One: to get buy-in from event partners so they get posts to you and refer their audiences to you. Two: to make the public aware of the calendar so they view it as a great resource.

- **Responsiveness.** How often can you reasonably update your calendar? Daily? Weekly? Ideally, submissions are coming to you a month in advance. However, that will not always be the case. Weekly may be the expectation. In which case, you'll need to turn around postings fairly quickly which requires regular site maintenance.

- **Submission & Curation.** There's no perfect way to do this but a number of good ways have been developed over time. Some calendars, like the Bay Area calendar, are designed so events are taken from other sites and posted fairly automatically. Others, like the NC STEM site, require partners to submit events. Odds are, what works well for your Festival calendar, may also work well for a year-round calendar. That's a model your staff knows and even could be slightly streamlined in a year-round model.

- **Feedback.** Make sure you have mechanisms in place to get feedback from your event partners and people using the website. A general email address should suffice along with regular communicated with partners.

- **Metrics.** Be ready to assess your calendar's reach and effectiveness. You can do this through your site's analytics, as well as through partner surveys and check-ins. Additionally, by collecting attendee information at public science events that have been listed – and ones that have not been listed – on your calendar, you may be able to gain insights on better practices.

NICE-TO-HAVES

Reciprocity with Partners
As your network of partners grows, having them post information about the calendar on their sites is a great way to drive traffic and build buy-in.

From the Bay Area Team: We host a quarterly meeting, and this helps build community, too, as we prompt use of our calendar and recruit. Our format is very informal meet-ups. Practitioners swap stories of events and socialize

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Sponsors & Advertisers
This is sort of a holy grail for this type of project. Finding a major underwriter, to sponsor a year-round calendar feels like the next logical step in a Festival group's maturation. It's important to remember that building these relationships takes a considerable amount of time and effort—perhaps best suited to the members of your team already working on stewardship for your Festival.

Promotion, Social Media
A regular promotional effort—particularly through social media—can be helpful. Finding other event calendars, like weekend newspaper publications, and promoting there could be a smart way to build buy-in. Remember to promote at your science events. Those are your people!

TIP: Some science festival and calendar organizations have developed great relationships with local radio stations who co-promote some events. Check with Atlanta and Richmond for more information.

Communications Plan & Delivery – e.g. A regular electronic newsletter
Regular updates about what's coming up in the regions is a really smart way to let users opt-in to your efforts and to build audiences and attendees. A weekly digest email of upcoming events is a standard way to go but, to stay relevant and novel, you may want to explore "Picks of the Week/Month" to really draw attention to special happenings.

Completely partner-driven submission process (or automated)
Around the country, a number of teams are interested in finding more automated ways to update a year-round calendar. While not completely vital, it does takes a lot of the burden off of the calendar team. Short of that, having your partners be able to submit and update might be a good way to go. It is possible to give key partners log in access to a calendaring site to where they can post as needed. However, you will be surrendering some control in doing so.

Please review the Tips from a Web Expert and Closer Look documents to find recommendations related to these points.