



Running an Einstein Year event

A step by step guide to running a public event

Preparation is the key to any event. This booklet will take you through some of the major points to consider when planning an event. It is by no means exhaustive and much will depend on your own ideas and resources.

The BA has coordinated National Science Week since it began 12 years ago. They provide a national context for every event and offer support and advice to event organisers across the UK.

The BA provides a series of free resources designed to help you organise your events—this booklet is adapted from *Running a National Science Week event*. All the resources can be found at www.the-ba.net/nsw

1. Why?

Before deciding what to do, it is a good idea to consider your aims.

What do you hope to achieve for:

- yourself?
- your organisation?
- the presenters?
- the participants?
- science?

This will also help you identify your target audience(s)-see below.

2. Who to target?

Identifying your target audience is an important step in developing your event and essential to your publicity campaign. Consider your aims. Which audiences fit the bill?

Are you looking for:

- new audiences?
- local audiences?
- specialist interest groups?
- schools?
- children?
- adults?
- families?

3. What to do?

You will need to consider the subject matter, theme and format of your event. What type of event would your target audience be interested in? Ideas and inspiration can be found almost anywhere.

Here are a few suggestions:

- the BA's online guide to science events www.the-ba.net.
- topical issues in the media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet).
- brain-storming with friends/colleagues.

Physics can be explored through formats ranging from hands-on activities to tours of places of interest—the only limit is your imagination. Some popular event formats include the following elements:

- hands-on activities.
- public discussions.
- demonstrations.
- exhibitions/displays.
- talks/presentations.

Generate several ideas, analyse their relative strengths and select the strongest combination of subject, theme and format, taking into consideration your aims and target audience. Remember to be realistic about your time, personnel, resources and budget. It may be useful to pilot your ideas on a sample of the target audience.

4. Who to work with?

Whatever the event, you will need to work with others to see it become a reality. Consider how many people you will need to:

- plan the event.
- publicise the event.
- set up and run the event on the day (presenting, chairing, helping, catering, and clearing up).

A good place to look for presenters is www.sciencelive.net an online directory of science presenters.

The number of people required will largely depend on the size and scope of the event. Working with a partner organisation can allow you to share best practice, combine resources and optimise both your audiences.

Consider what types of organisation might make a good partner for your event:

- schools.
- universities.
- museums/galleries.
- industry/business.

Whoever you work with, ensure everyone is clear about their responsibilities.

5. How much will it cost?

It is important to produce a detailed cost plan for your event. Try to minimise costs and make sure you know your maximum budget. The budget sheet at the back of this booklet may help with your initial planning.

6. How to pay for it?

Income can be generated through admission fees, sponsorship, grants and donations. Information on many schemes and organisations that may be relevant to your event can be found on the National Science Week website www.the-ba.net/nsw. Agree any costs and sponsorship/funding prior to the event with a signed contract. The grant body/sponsor will have guidelines about how and when to use their logo/organisation name. If you decide to charge an admission fee, will tickets be sold in advance, on the door or both? What equipment will you need to process payments—credit card/cheque/cash? If you will be handling cash don't forget to ensure there is adequate security for you and the money.

7. Where to hold the event?

Events can take place at home, school, and work, in a public place (such as a shopping centre), in small rooms, whole buildings or outdoors. They can even take place in cyberspace. Choose a venue suitable for both the event format and the expected audience. How much space do you need? What shape space do you need – lots of small areas or one large open area? For instance a theatre allows a great many people to see and hear what is presented but restricts their direct participation, while a mobile demonstration (e.g. to people in a queue) only allows a few people at a time to view the event, but they can join in or even carry out the activity themselves.

8. When to hold the event?

You could hold your event at any time throughout the year, but here are some diary dates that may help you in your plans.

National Science Week 11-20 March
the BA Festival of Science in Exeter 5-9 September

Your target audience may dictate the timing of your event—schools will come during weekdays, families will come at weekends. Consider who will be coming when you choose the day and time for your event.

9. How to attract your audience?

Your publicity campaign will be crucial to the success of your event. How you market the event will depend on the event itself and who you wish to attract. You will need to begin the campaign in good time. Information on publicity methods and timing of campaigns can be found in *Generating publicity for your event* also available from the BA. Including an event in the BA's online event guide is a good first step in any campaign.

10. What to prepare in advance?

Venue

Take some time to plan the setup of the room in advance. Build a good relationship with the venue staff and presenters.

- Book the venue for longer than the event—you will need time to set up and to clean up.
- Check accessibility—will you need signs/door stops? Is there disabled access?
- How will you get staff and equipment to the venue? Do you need to arrange transport?
- Check what equipment/facilities are needed and who will provide them—some scientific equipment may be covered by safety regulations. Check electrical supplies are adequate.
- Check layout—are you using the best arrangement for your event? What type of seating arrangement would best suit the format of the event?
- Learn the occupational health and safety procedures and fire regulations for the building.
- Will public liability insurance be covered by the venue or do you need to arrange it?

Attendees

Once you have an interested audience you need to make sure that you supply them with all the information and facilities they need to enjoy the event. Some things you might want to consider are:

- Booking systems –do they need to book/pay. If so how and when?
- Check the information sent out to confirm bookings. Is everything clear?
- How will they know where to go? Produce signs/maps and information on parking, public transport, walking distances and disabled access.
- If children are coming do they need to be accompanied?
- How long is the event? Will they need access to toilet facilities?
- Consider audience comfort—furniture, refreshments, room temperature.

Staff

- Consider how presenters will interact with your target audience.
- Book presenters in advance and liaise with them in the venue and schedule arrangements.
- Provide all staff (including presenters) with session times and audience profile in advance.
- Brief staff so that they are confident with their roles and responsibilities (e.g. a crib sheet).
- A good chairperson can make an event. Who would work well with the format of your event?
- Staff comfort—if it's a large event would a staff common room be useful?

Anything else

Could anything prevent the staff or the participants from getting to the venue and enjoying the event? e.g. strikes, Foot & Mouth outbreak, inadequate directions.

- Think about risk assessments, public liability insurance, first aid cover, fire regulations.
- What is your margin of error? Some events will be more flexible than others.
- Do you have adequate support—practical, technical and psychological?
- Have a Plan B—if it rains, if the speaker doesn't arrive etc.
- Above all EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED.

11. What to do on the day

Before the event

Arrive in plenty of time and with plenty of people. Ensure signs, furniture, equipment and facilities are correctly set up and working. Allow enough time for you to get everything ready and to be relaxed before people begin to arrive.

During the event

Monitor the event and be ready to activate your Plan B if anything goes wrong.

After the event

Ensure the clean-up operation is effective. Return furniture to its original location. Arrange for all equipment and materials to be returned to their proper places. Thank all staff and presenters. Complete any financial transactions resulting from the event.

12. How to assess what you have done?

Feedback after the event is useful for evaluation purposes and for future planning. What do you want to find out from your audience?

- Who came?
- Are they the people you targeted?
- Did they enjoy the event?
- How successful was your publicity campaign?
- Did they find the venue easily?
- Was there sufficient clear information sent out beforehand?
- What about the presenters? Were they appropriate for the audience?

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Checklist

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| | Identify target audience |
| | Determine event format and content |
| | Identify partners |
| | Produce budget |
| | Apply for funding |
| | Decide timing |
| | Choose and book venue |
| | Formulate a contingency plan |
| | Publicity campaign |
| | Prepare venue |
| | Brief staff |
| | Clear up |
| | Evaluate |