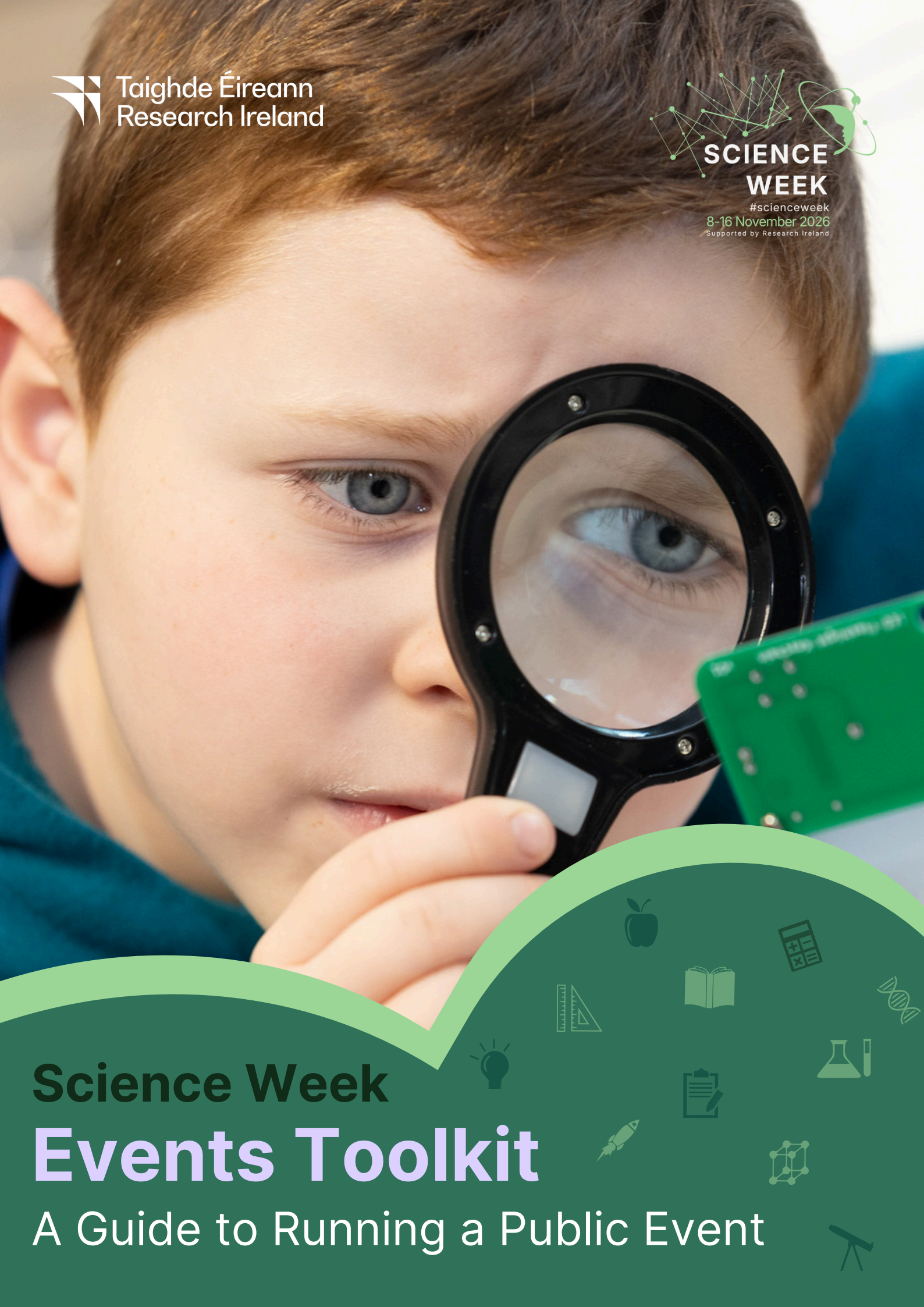




Science Week Events Toolkit

A Guide to Running a Public Event

Introduction

A successful event is usually the result of thoughtful planning and preparation. This toolkit is designed to guide you through key considerations when organising a Science Week event. While it can't cover every idea and objective you have, it offers a solid foundation for creating a well-structured and impactful experience.

Organisers should start by defining the purpose of the event, the audience it serves, and what success looks like. Aligning your event's goals with the overarching Science Week theme helps ensure consistency, relevance, and true impact. Establishing clear objectives early on will also inform decisions around programming, partnerships, and evaluation.

During Science Week, hundreds of public events take place across the country. While Research Ireland cannot be directly involved in each one, we are committed to supporting organisers where possible. This toolkit has been developed to help you plan and deliver a successful event. If you've run a Science Week event before, some of the material may be familiar, but we hope you'll still find useful suggestions and fresh perspectives.

Here are a few key pointers to consider as you get started.

Tasks	Key Questions/Actions
Purpose and theme	What theme(s) will your event/s engage with? How does it link to the annual Science Week theme? What is the one big takeaway for your audience/s?
Audience focus	Who are your primary audiences (students, families, general public, specialists, underserved communities)? Approximate numbers? Accessibility needs?
Outcomes / impact goals	What do you want people to think / feel /do at your event/s? What are your measures of success (attendance, feedback, media reach, change in perception, sustainability)?
Scope and format	How do you want to reach and interact with your audiences? In-person / virtual / hybrid; single event vs series; local vs regional festival; partner organisations involved.

Planning & Logistics

Below we outline a step-by-step process from early concept planning through to on-the-day operations and post-event wrap-up. Whether your event is a local workshop or a multi-venue science festival, these checklists can help you stay on track, reduce stress, and ensure a seamless experience for participants, volunteers and staff.

Phase	Key Tasks / Checklist
Early Stage	• Build your team; define roles (programming, logistics, finance, marketing, inclusion, volunteers, advisory group). • Plan your budget: estimates for venue(s), equipment, staffing, insurance, marketing. • Book venue(s), catering, equipment, transport if needed. • Start your risk assessment and health & safety plans. You should start these at the beginning and add to them as your project develops. • Start your evaluation plans – how will you practically gather data? Again, you should start this early and can adjust as your project develops. • Evaluate accessibility and inclusion (physical access, sensory, etc.). • Make a sustainability plan – how will you manage waste, materials, energy usage, travel). • Enquire about any required licences / permissions (public space, noise, etc.).
Mid Stage	• Confirm your programme and speakers / performers. • Make a marketing plan: timeline, channels, branding, collateral-how will you reach your audience? • Volunteer recruitment and training plan. • Insurance and legal compliance. • Technical production plan (AV, lighting, digital tools). • Accessibility supports: interpreters, captioning, assistive tech. • Partner and stakeholder coordination.
Final Preparation	• Final checks: site plan, flow of people, signage, emergency plan. • Confirm logistics: equipment delivery, set up, permits, transport. • Staff / volunteer briefings. • Materials & supplies ready. • Publicity push. • Digital platforms tested (if hybrid / virtual).
During Event	• On-site coordination: registration, welcome, guiding attendees, liaising with performers/presenters/ AV technician. • Health & safety monitoring. • Volunteer / staff support. • Accessibility monitoring. • Social media / live updates. • Gather evaluation data (see Section 6: Evaluation and Impact Measurement for more info).
After Event	• Tear down, clean up. • Thank you emails to speakers, volunteers, facilitators, partners. • Debrief meeting/s with team, key stakeholders and capture lessons learned. • Collate and analyse evaluation data. • Archive materials, photos, data.

Inclusion, Diversity & Accessibility

Science Week celebrates curiosity and discovery for everyone. To achieve this, organisers must design events that are inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to as wide a range of backgrounds and abilities as possible. This section provides examples for creating equitable experiences, addressing physical accessibility, sensory sensitivity, language diversity, and representation in facilitators/speakers and content. Prioritising inclusion not only broadens your reach but also enriches engagement and community trust.

Focus Area	Actions / Considerations
Physical Accessibility	Wheelchair access; seating; ramps; accessible toilets; clear signage, crowd control.
Cognitive / Sensory Accessibility	Quiet zones; sensory-friendly programming; interpretation; simple, clear signage; providing advance information about what to expect.
Diverse Audiences	Communicating directly with underrepresented groups; free ticketing or reduced rates; multilingual materials; culturally relevant content.
Inclusions in Content and Speakers	Diverse speakers and facilitators; make sure a variety of voices are represented; avoid jargon; ensure equitable participation.

Sustainability & Responsible Practices

Sustainability is highly encouraged, and integral to ethical event design. This section offers suggestions to reduce environmental impact while promoting responsible social and economic practices. It covers waste reduction, energy efficiency, sustainable catering, and responsible travel. Integrating these practices from the start can inspire participants, enhance your event's legacy, and align with Ireland's broader sustainability goals.

Area	Possible Actions / Checklist Items
Waste and Materials	Use reusable / recyclable materials; minimise single-use plastics; proper waste signage; composting where possible.
Venue / Energy / Travel	Choose venues with good public transport access; encourage walking / public transport; efficient heating / cooling; use LED lighting; minimise energy waste.
Catering	Local / seasonal food; reduce food waste; offer vegetarian / plant-based options.
Legacy / Environmental Impact	Plan for reuse of materials; document carbon / environmental footprint; communicate sustainability to attendees.

Marketing, Communications & Branding

Compelling communication is key to drawing audiences and sharing your science story. This section helps organisers create strong, consistent messaging and outlines how to plan, design, and deliver marketing that builds anticipation, connects with audiences, and sustains visibility before, during, and after the event.

Element	Key Tasks
Brand Consistency	Use the official Science Week branding; adapt signage templates; maintain a consistent visual identity.
Messaging	Clear, engaging messaging about what people will experience; align to wider Science Week theme; emphasise why it's relevant to your audience/s.
Channels	Social media; local media; schools; community groups; newsletters; flyers/posters. Consider partnerships & channels for audiences who don't engage via mainstream media, meet with trusted community champions to engage with underserved groups.
Digital Presence	Website or event page; registration where needed; inclusive and accessible design; ensure virtual platforms are user-friendly.

Evaluation & Impact Measurement

Evaluation allows you to measure what worked, what didn't, and how your event contributed to Science Week's national objectives. This section provides methods for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, from attendance counts to participant stories. Done well, evaluation transforms experiences into insights for future success.

Type	Tools / Metrics	When to Collect
Qualitative	Number of attendees; demographic breakdown; digital reach (website unique page views and dwell times, social media engagements, file downloads); ticket sales or registrations; number of sessions/workshops.	During / Immediately after event.
Quantitative	Attendee feedback (surveys, interviews, comment cards, quick polls); speaker & volunteer feedback; what worked / didn't; stories of change; barrier experiences.	Shortly after event, during debrief.
Outcomes	Did people learn something new? Change in perceptions (before and after surveys). Did you reach underserved audiences? Media impact. Sustainability improvements.	Report stage; several weeks after event.
Reporting	Use templates required by Science Week / Research Ireland submit outputs & outcomes; include photos, key findings; lessons for future.	

Resources & Templates (Examples)

Event planning is smoother when you have reliable reference materials at hand. This section lists toolkits, templates, and online resources, some developed by Science Week, Research Ireland, and others by public engagement/ events networks. They offer ready-made structures for sustainability planning, evaluation, partnership building, and inclusivity. Using these resources saves time, helps compliance, and enhances event delivery.

Resource	What it offers / Useful for
Science Week call documents / guidelines (Research Ireland)	The official rules, reporting templates, deadlines, branding, and participation obligations.
<u>Being Human Festival toolkits</u>	Advice on evaluation, inclusion, sustainability, finding venue, working with partners, formats.
Sustainable Materials & Waste Management Toolkit (Julie's Bicycle / Vision for Sustainable Events)	Practical steps, templates for waste policy, materials lists, checklists.
<u>EventIMPACTS Toolkit</u>	Guidance on measuring media impact, social impact, participations etc.
<u>Festival Academy / European Festivals Association Toolkits</u>	Programming, audience development, digital tech, sustainable business practices.
Association of Science and Discovery Centres	Relevant resources on public engagement with science.
National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement	Resources to support high-quality public engagement practice and policy.

Example Checklists

This section provides example checklists covering pre-event, on-the-day, and post-event. They're flexible lists you can adapt to your team's workflow, ensuring no key task is overlooked. These checklists promote clarity, accountability, and confidence throughout the event lifecycle.

Sample Pre-Event Checklist

- Objectives and audience defined
- Evaluation metrics and tools defined
- Budget approved and funding sources secured
- Venue booked and inspected
- Facilitator contracts confirmed
- Permits, insurance, licences in place
- Accessibility and inclusion features planned
- Marketing plan drafted and schedule set
- Volunteer recruitment / training arranged
- Technical / AV / digital platform logistics sorted
- Branding / signage materials ready
- Risk assessment and emergency plans drafted

Sample On-Day Checklist

- Registration desk / sign-in ready
- Welcome signage and guides posted
- Volunteer / staff briefing complete
- AV, lighting and internet set up and tested
- First aid / safety officer on site
- Accessibility support ready
- Catering / refreshments set up
- Social media coverage started
- Feedback collection points / tools ready

Sample Post-Event Checklist

- Thank you notes sent to volunteers, partners, speakers
- Feedback surveys / interviews collected
- Attendance and demographic data collated
- Evaluate outcomes vs. goals
- Lessons learned documented
- Final report submitted to Science Week/Research Ireland (with outputs and outcomes)
- Assets archived (photos, content, media coverage)
- Review sustainability impact (waste, energy, travel)

Key Principles to Keep in Mind

Beyond logistics and compliance, great events are built on strong values. This final section distils the guiding principles that underpin Science Week's spirit: curiosity, inclusivity and collaboration. Keeping these in focus ensures your event not only runs smoothly but also leaves a lasting legacy in your community.

- **Audience-centred design:** Always think from the audience's perspective: what will they find engaging, accessible, inspiring? What do they get out of it?
- **Inclusivity and equity:** Aim to reduce/remove barriers to access (cost, location, transport, knowledge, physical access, cultural).
- **Collaboration:** Work with partners, mix formats, allow for interactive and hands-on experiences.