



Festival History

2010

Morehead Planetarium and Science Center introduced the North Carolina Science Festival in September 2010. The inaugural Festival had 413 events, 78 event partners and 85,860 participants. The Festival's first ticketed signature event, "An Afternoon with Adam and Jamie" featuring the hosts of the popular TV series "MythBusters," drew more than 5,500 fans.

2012

After evaluating the Festival's inaugural year, Morehead presented the second annual North Carolina Science Festival in April 2012 with several important changes. The two-week annual Festival moved from September to April. School programming became an important part of the Festival, with the introduction of the Science Night (elementary schools) and Invite-a-Scientist (middle schools) programs. Kelvin, the Festival's popular "spokesbot", debuted. Time Warner Cable became the Festival's first "festival champion" (presenting sponsor). The second annual Festival had 566 events, 273 event partners and 233,750 participants. Adam and Jamie returned for one ticketed signature event and the Festival added a second ticketed signature event featuring Neil deGrasse Tyson.

2013

The Festival continued to grow introducing the first Statewide Star Party, skywatching sessions held simultaneously at more than 40 different sites across the state. Kitchen scientist Alton Brown (Food Network) headlined ticketed signature events in Durham and Charlotte. The North Carolina General Assembly celebrated the first-ever N.C. Science Festival Day on April 16, 2013. The N.C. State University Institute for Emerging Issues and the Festival united with state leaders to take action on STEM proficiency.

2014

The addition of several new initiatives expanded support for event hosts and other affiliates of the Festival. The Event Sponsorship Program was introduced to provide financial support for community organizations seeking to host Festival events. A series of webinars and a new marketing assistance program helped foster expanded media coverage in targeted locations. Sports scientist John Brenkus (ESPN) led the event "The Science of Sports" hosted by Morehead Planetarium and Science Center.



2015

As the Festival entered its fifth year in 2015, it announced major gifts from the Biogen Foundation (a three-year commitment as the Festival's presenting sponsor) and the Burroughs Wellcome Fund (a \$1,000,000 gift to create an endowment for the North Carolina Science Festival). The Festival also partnered with other science festivals and related organizations to develop two grant proposals that received funding from the National Science Foundation. The Festival recognized its one-millionth participant in April 2015.

2016

The North Carolina State Parks celebrated their 100th anniversary by hosting a Festival event in every park, supporting the 2016 Festival theme of "Science in the Great Outdoors". The Festival hosted events in 99 counties in North Carolina, a new record. The Traveling Science Roadshow, a new initiative designed to bring engaging science to the Inner Banks region of North Carolina, was launched.

2017

The Festival reached a milestone in 2017, hosting events in all 100 counties of North Carolina for the first time ever. IMPACTS, a new initiative to train scientists around the state in public communication, was launched thanks to the support of the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation. 150 Duke Energy Science Nights were held providing North Carolina elementary school students and their families the opportunity to engage in hands-on, free and fun STEM activities. On April 6, N.C. Governor Roy Cooper declared April STEM Education Month.

2018

In 2018, the Festival expanded for the first time ever to run the entire month of April, resulting in record attendance and growth of programs. The Festival welcomed its two-millionth participant on April 29 and hosted over 900 total events. Focusing on creating science for all, the Festival expanded its programmatic reach beyond the traditional calendar and into every corner of the state with programs such as Novozymes SciMatch, pairing scientists with middle school teachers around the state.

2019

The theme of the 2019 Festival "Made in North Carolina" celebrating homegrown science received record participation from the state's public schools. Festival programs reached rural populations, including many schools impacted by Hurricane Florence. Thanks to support from the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation, the Festival hosted the annual UNC Greensboro Science Everywhere expo with a new focus on expanding access for local latinx populations. Astronauts Charlie Duke and Mae Jemison visited North Carolina with support from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund and N.C. Space Grant.