

# STEM CONFERENCE

## Guidebook

From bench to stage: a step-by-step organizer's guide for first-time student teams

By NU iGEM

# INTRODUCTION

Organizing a student STEM conference creates visibility for student research, builds transferable skills, and connects academic and industry stakeholders. This guide covers planning timelines, team roles, budgeting, program design, biosafety for public demos, and operations. Focused on biology-related content, it emphasizes safe, ethical, and inclusive public activities while offering repeatable templates for CFPs, budgets, and run-of-show materials.

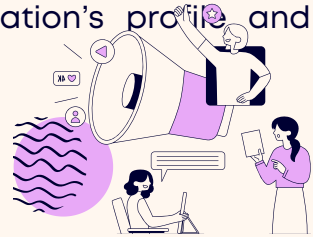


Defining

# PURPOSE, VISION & SUCCESS METRICS

Why run a conference?

- Give students a low-stakes environment to present research and practice scientific communication.
- Build cross-disciplinary connections (bio ↔ CS, engineering, physics).
- Strengthen the student organization's profile and fundraising capacity.



## Vision

Of Developing a Strong Vision

Vision statement (example):

“To create an annual student-led forum that showcases undergraduate and master’s research in life sciences and adjacent STEM fields, emphasizing reproducibility, ethics, and career pathways.”

Do this now:

Draft a one-paragraph vision for your conference and share it with 2 faculty advisors.

Pick 3 SMART objectives your team agrees on and add them to your planning doc.



# PURPOSE, VISION & SUCCESS METRICS

## SMART objectives (pick 3–5):

- Host 150 attendees from at least 4 departments.
- Accept 40 poster submissions and 20 oral presentations.
- Secure \$4,000 in sponsorship or in-kind support.
- Publish slides/abstracts online within 14 days post-event.



## Key performance indicators (KPIs):

- Registration vs. actual attendance ratio.
- Number of unique institutions represented.
- Sponsor fulfillment score (deliverables met ÷ promised).
- Attendee satisfaction (survey average on 1–5 scale).



# CONFERENCE FORMATS & SCOPE

Choose a format based on capacity & resources:

## Single-day (8–10 hours):

Lower logistics overhead; good for one main keynote, parallel student talks, and posters. Ideal for 100–200 attendees.



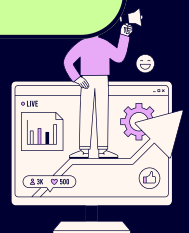
## Two-day (Friday evening + Saturday full day):

Allows evening mixers, workshops, and in-depth training sessions (e.g., hands-on bioinformatics lab). Best for 200+ participants.



## Hybrid:

Combine in-person tracks with livestreamed keynotes. Requires an AV/IT lead and at least one dedicated tech volunteer per streaming room.



# PROGRAM PLANNING

## Program elements (mix & match):

- Keynote lecture(s) (35–45 min)
- Short student talks (10–12 min + 3 min Q&A)
- Poster sessions (60–90 min; two rounds reduce crowding)
- Workshops (hands-on: sequencing analysis, Python for bio, microscopy demos – ensure BSL-appropriate materials)
- Panels (careers, publishing, reproducibility)
- Demos/expo booths (equipment suppliers, campus core facilities)
- Lab tours (pre-approved; strict PPE & routing rules)



## Biology-specific constraints:

- Only BSL-1 demos allowed in public spaces unless pre-cleared with campus biosafety.
- No human clinical samples or live pathogenic organisms.
- All wet-lab activities must be supervised and include disposal plans.

## Capacity planning (quick guide):

- Main lecture hall: seats for 60–150
- Two breakout rooms: 30–80 seats each
- Poster hall: one poster per 4–6 attendees at peak
- Catering: plan for 10% more than registered due to on-site guests and staff



# MASTER TIMELINE — 16 WEEKS OUT TO EVENT

This timeline assumes a single-day conference but maps to a two-day event with minor adjustments. Treat times as a minimum — start earlier if you plan international speakers or complex vendor needs.

## W-16 to W-12 (Foundation & Approvals)

- Confirm event date with university calendar; check for academic conflicts (exam weeks, major student events).
- Reserve venue holds for main hall and breakouts; request tentative AV/tech hold.
- Draft initial budget (estimate costs for AV, catering, printing, badges, honoraria).
- Recruit core committee; schedule weekly 60-min planning meetings.
- Draft theme & visual identity; reserve domain or subpage on student org site.
- Identify advisory faculty and invite them to be mentors.

**Deliverables at W-12:** venue holds, draft budget, core committee established, website/landing page live (save-the-date).



# MASTER TIMELINE — 16 WEEKS OUT TO EVENT



## W-11 to W-8 (Launch & Outreach)

- Publish CFP with clear submission fields and deadlines (allow 4–6 weeks for submissions).
- Launch registration page with early-bird option and categories (student, faculty, external).
- Begin sponsor outreach (send prospectus, follow-up calls).
- Invite keynote(s) and panelists; include honoraria/travel policy.
- Order initial branded assets (logo, social media banners, slide template).

## Deliverables at W-8:

- CFP published, registration open, at least one keynote accepted, sponsor pipeline started.

## W-7 to W-5 (Program Build & Logistics Lock-down)

- Close CFP (or send reminders if low submissions).
- Assemble reviewers (2 per abstract); use the rubric (see Appendix D).
- Confirm poster board counts & room assignments; decide odd/even poster rotations.
- Lock catering menu based on preliminary headcount; collect dietary restrictions.
- Start volunteer recruitment and set training dates.
- Run AV test with the main hall and one breakout room.



# MASTER TIMELINE — 16 WEEKS OUT TO EVENT



## W-4 to W-2 (Finalize & Confirm)

- Send acceptance/rejection emails with speaker instructions, template slides, and upload deadlines.
- Collect final slides/poster PDFs; confirm resolution & aspect ratios.
- Order/print badges, signage, and any printed programs.
- Conduct safety walkthrough with EHS/biosafety for workshops and demos.
- Confirm delivery windows with caterers and AV vendors; secure parking permits for speakers if needed.

## W-1 (Event Week: Execute Readiness)

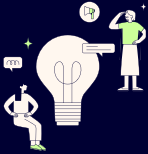
- Produce badge CSV and print badges; assemble welcome packets (map, schedule, sponsor sheet, code of conduct).
- Distribute run-of-show to all volunteers and leads (include radio channels/WhatsApp contact list).
- Hold volunteer briefing (role cards, contingency instructions).
- Conduct final AV check in each room; place printed directional signage.



# EVENT DAY AND POST EVENT TASKS

## Event day (high-level):

- 07:00–08:30: Venue opens, registration desk staffed, AV final check.
- 09:00: Opening remarks & safety briefing.
- 09:15–12:30: Morning sessions & keynote.
- 12:30–13:30: Lunch & exhibitors.
- 13:30–16:30: Posters & workshops.
- 16:45–17:30: Awards, closing remarks, group photo.
- 17:45–19:00: Tear-down and inventory.



## Post-event (W+1 to W+3):

Send thank-you emails to attendees, volunteers, speakers, and sponsors.

Publish slides/recordings (confirm consent first) and send feedback survey.

Reconcile budget; prepare sponsor report and a 10–15 page post-mortem with lessons learned.



# PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

## Budgeting & Fundraising

- **Core costs:** Venue/AV, catering, printing, speaker honoraria/travel, materials, and a 10–15% contingency fund.
- **Funding sources:** University departments, student government, corporate sponsors, minimal registration fees, and optional crowdfunding.
- **Action:** Draft a simple budget and list three funding sources early.



## Call for Abstracts & Program Design

- **CFP basics:** Title, authors, affiliations, 250–300-word abstract.
- **Timeline:** Announce 8–10 weeks before; notify accepted authors 4–5 weeks before.
- **Program tips:** Mix disciplines, include networking breaks, ensure diversity, and add workshops or panels for skills and careers.

## Marketing & Outreach

- **Branding:** Consistent logo/colors, biology-themed visuals.
- **Channels:** Website (CFP, registration, schedule, code of conduct), Instagram/LinkedIn/university groups, email lists, physical posters, and university press office.
- **Engagement:** Countdown posts, speaker spotlights, behind-the-scenes photos, pre-event trivia nights.



**WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT IT WILL HELP  
YOU TO ORGANIZE YOUR OWN STEM  
CONFERENCE**

**GOOD LUCK!**

