Science fair planning kit

A head start for your PTO or PTA board. Take what's useful and change the rest.

Timeline

12 weeks out

- [ ] Set the date and rules with teachers
  Grades, individual or group projects, and whether it's judged or a showcase.
- [ ] Reserve the gym or cafeteria
- [ ] Set the budget

10 to 8 weeks out

- [ ] Send the project guide and timeline home
  Example questions and a few key dates help families plan around busy weeks.
- [ ] Decide how students without supplies can take part
  Some groups keep spare display boards, or hold a project help session at school.

6 weeks out

- [ ] Agree on the score sheet and award categories
- [ ] Recruit judges
  Teachers from other schools, local professionals, and older students can all make good judges.

4 to 5 weeks out

- [ ] Share the volunteer signup link
- [ ] Collect project registrations

2 to 3 weeks out

- [ ] Send the family showcase invitation home
- [ ] Map the tables and number the projects
- [ ] Assign projects to judges
- [ ] Order ribbons and print participant certificates

The final week

- [ ] Send judges their projects, score sheets, and arrival time
- [ ] Buy everything on the shopping list
- [ ] Set up tables and number the spots

Fair day

- [ ] Welcome judges and walk them through scoring

After the fair

- [ ] Send projects home and thank judges
- [ ] Share results with teachers and families
- [ ] Record receipts and reimburse helpers
- [ ] Write down what to change next year
  A few quick notes while it's fresh can save next year's board a lot of time.

Volunteer spots

A sample to adapt, for a school of 300–600 students. The online version at pineboard.app/templates resizes it for yours. Add, cut, or rename spots to suit your school.

Spot	When	People
Setup Crew Set up tables and label each project's spot.	Day before 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM	5
Project Check-In Check projects in as students arrive and show them their spot.	7:45 AM to 9:00 AM	3
Judges Visit your assigned projects and fill in the score sheet.	3:30 PM to 5:30 PM	8
Score Runner Collect score sheets and add up the results.	3:30 PM to 5:30 PM	2
Showcase Greeters Welcome families and hand out maps of the projects.	5:15 PM to 7:30 PM	2
Cleanup Crew Stack tables and leave the room clean.	7:30 PM to 8:30 PM	5

Sample budget

Placeholder amounts to help you get started, not real prices. Swap in your own numbers.

Item	Example	Our budget
Spare display boards	$150	
Ribbons and participant awards	$120	
Judge snacks and coffee	$50	
Table covers	$40	
Printed score sheets, maps, and signs	$30	
Total	**$390**	

Shopping list

Office supply store

- [ ] Display boards
- [ ] Clipboards
- [ ] Pens
- [ ] Number labels for tables
- [ ] Certificate paper

Party store

- [ ] Plastic table covers
- [ ] Ribbons

Grocery store

- [ ] Coffee and snacks for judges

Easy things to overlook

Students without supplies
Spare display boards or a help session at school mean every student can take part.

Judges who know the rules
Sending score sheets ahead lets judges arrive ready, and keeps scoring fair across tables.

Kind feedback
A short written note from a judge often means more to a young scientist than a ribbon.

Projects with water or electricity
Knowing which projects need an outlet or a tray helps when you map the tables.

Getting projects home
A pickup time after the showcase keeps boards from piling up in the gym.

Want it all in one place?
PineBoard can hold your tasks, volunteers, shopping, and budget together, and copies the plan to next year. Try it free for 60 days at pineboard.app.