

INSIGHT FROM JUDGES

There's no perfect formula for an extraordinary entry. But these tips, based on judges' feedback from past editions, can help your team keep moving in the right direction.

START STRONG BY EXPLAINING THE IDEA SIMPLY AND CLEARLY

Explain your big idea within the first paragraph. Imagine sharing a short elevator ride with a judge. What can you say to provide a clear idea of your exhibit and make the judge want to learn more?

PROVIDE CLEAR STEM EDUCATION TAKEAWAYS

Your exhibit should communicate STEM principles that are relevant and well-supported. Visitors should leave your exhibit excited to learn more — and maybe even consider a career related to the topic.

CREATE AN EXPERIENCE THAT BUILDS ON CLASSROOM WORK

If your exhibit reproduces an experiment you run in the classroom or a workbook exercise, ask your team to take it a step further. The best exhibits provide visitors experiences they can't have elsewhere.

SOURCE BEYOND THE TEXTBOOK

Textbook research should only be the first step. Explore additional perspectives, seek out other sources and think about ways to position your STEM-focused exhibit that feel fresh and new.

MAKE SURE THE EXHIBIT IDEA APPEALS TO ALL AGE GROUPS

It can be difficult for kids to think beyond what interests them personally. Encourage elementary students to ask secondary students what they might find appealing — and vice versa.

DON'T GET HUNG UP ON CONSTRUCTABILITY AND BUDGET

We don't expect your kids to be experts on constructability and costs. This criterion is more of an exercise, so feel free to generalize. The budget expectation helps provide students the opportunity to ground their ideas, but we don't need to see a massive amount of detail.

SPELLING AND GRAMMAR COUNTS

Great ideas are diminished by multiple spelling and grammar errors. Encourage your students to save time for a thorough review and editing session before you submit.

FOR VISUAL PRESENTATION, EFFORT COUNTS

We don't expect fancy 3D visualization. But we do expect that the visuals support the big idea and demonstrate effort. If you feel your kids can best illustrate the concept with colored pencils, go for it.

OH, AND HAVE FUN!

Every team wants a winning proposal. But what is most meaningful to us as judges is knowing every proposal reflects a group of kids who are thinking big about STEM (and maybe considering a STEM career someday). Savor the experience!