

SCIENCE IN A BAG

Megan Mayhew



Contents of the 2024 Science in a Bag kits.

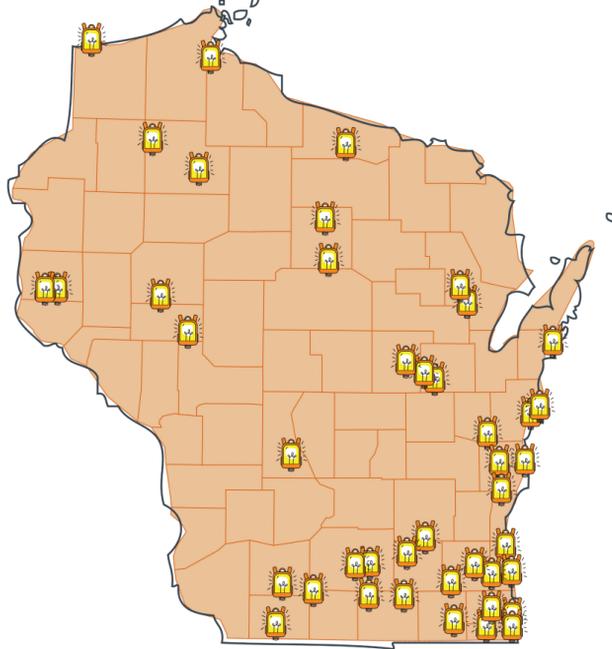
The Wisconsin Science Festival is a weeklong celebration of science, art, and technology for all ages, backgrounds and interests. This year's festival focus was agriculture and highlighted the interconnectedness of agriculture within our state's economy, society, well-being, and the overall future of humanity through the lens of science, art, and technology. Thanks in part to the success of the Science in a Bag program, the 2024 festival was able to reach 52 of the 72 counties in Wisconsin.

First started in 2021, this program provides free, hands-on science activities to libraries throughout Wisconsin to be distributed to families throughout the state. This year, 2,000 bags were distributed throughout the state, thanks to the support of the South Central Library System. Through the Science in a Bag program, 43 libraries throughout the state received bags from the Wisconsin Science Festival for patrons to take for free! Each bag contained 13 hands-on science activities appropriate for school-aged children and their families. This year's bags included kits contributed by Wisconsin Agriculture in the Classroom, the Ice Age Trail Alliance, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, Alliant Energy, Materials Research Science and Engineering Center UW Madison, Morgridge Institute for Research Community Engagement, WI Department of Natural Resources – Snapshot Wisconsin, and Code to Connect.



75 boxes full of hand-packed Science in a Bag kits are loaded up to be distributed throughout Wisconsin.

One of this year's agriculture-related activities was a pair of recipe cards for ice cream in a bag and homemade butter. Provided by Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, these cards showed instructions for participants to make homemade ice cream using just half and half, sugar, vanilla extract, ice, salt, and two plastic bags. That's some pretty cool science.



Map of all the 2024 Science in a Bag pick-up locations throughout Wisconsin.

Another activity in this year's bag was a strawberry DNA extraction. Using strawberries and some household items like dish soap, salt, and coffee filters, young scientists could separate DNA strands from the strawberries using chemical reactions, turning their homes into chemistry labs!



Two Science in a Bag recipients show off their drawstring bags filled with hands-on STEM kits.

Throughout the state, the bags were a huge hit with families. One library staffer recounted that, "the 50 bags were gone in a day and a half. Patrons were thankful for the materials." Similarly, another host site described how, "all patrons were delighted with the take home [Science] bags"



Science in a Bag recipients dig into hands-on STEM kits in addition to the ones included in their bags!

The bags also offer a great opportunity to connect homeschooled students and families. DOne librarian explained that, "the local homeschooling group took some kits and will be using them as a get together day for the families."

The Science in a Bag kits are just one of the ways the Wisconsin Science Festival sparks curiosity and spreads science throughout the state. For more information on statewide festival events and how to get involved with next year's festival, visit WiSciFest.org. If your organization is interested in contributing any kits to this program, please visit WiSciFest.org/sponsor to reach out to a member of our team. We are looking forward to more Science in a Bag fun in 2025!