

Frequently Asked Questions for Prospective SPI Summer Camp Instructors

1. I have a fun idea for a summer camp session that I'd like to facilitate or co-facilitate. How do I share this proposal?

Fill out our Summer Camp Session Proposal Form here:

<https://tinyurl.com/camppitch2020>

2. Who is eligible to apply?

Proposals are welcome from:

- a. Currently certified preK-12 classroom teachers;
- b. Pre-service teachers (enrolled in a teacher education program) with a university faculty reference;
- c. Retired teachers with a reference from a current school district administrator, and/or;
- d. informal educators with relevant youth development or camp facilitation experience.

3. I am a subject matter expert in my field but don't meet your above criteria - can I apply?

We'd love to have you involved! You'd need to serve as a co-facilitator of a camp session, working with a Lead Instructor who does meet our specified eligibility criteria. You can share your skills in a **volunteer capacity** (if, for example, your help would only be needed sporadically during the session or if doing the work enables you to fulfill your professional goals for outreach). Or, you can serve in a paid **co-facilitator capacity** for the week. If you don't already have a co-facilitator in mind who meets our eligibility criteria and can serve as Lead Instructor, you can still pitch your idea using the form and we'll attempt to matchmake if we agree it's a good fit for this year's roster.

4. What kind of sessions are you looking for?

Fun and hands-on! Beyond that, there is lots of room for you to be creative. Sessions can: immerse kids in nature, expose them to local industry and commerce, allow them to make scientific observations and submit their data to working researchers, equip them with the skills to pursue environmental justice goals, encourage new levels of expertise about a specialized topic they enjoy, or simply show them the beauty of our community through the lens of STEAM.

Sessions should present some opportunities for kids to practice teamwork or other pro-social skills, but also leave space for them to explore ideas on their own.

Feel free to propose sessions that are organized as more of a "speciality" or deep-dive camp, perhaps with a culminating project they can share with parents or visitors to SPI. Or they can be more general, exposing kids to varied content each day and involving them in different processes and topics and allowing ample time for free play.

We especially like sessions that bring science to life through storytelling or the integration of the arts (how about "Minecraft IRL" or "SPI Sci-Fi"?)

Typical camp fun like silly songs, water play (sprayers and sponge frisbees or a cool dip in a shallow creek) and campfire storytelling are encouraged. As is downtime for kids to share trading cards or play kickball...wherever their whims lead them. It's summer and time for fun!

5. Do you have a preference for half day or full day session proposals? Or a.m. versus p.m.?

We would like to have a variety of options to serve the needs of different families in our community. And we like to schedule with an eye to other organizations' camp offerings. Please be as flexible as possible when stating your availability.

6. How many kids will participate in each session? What are the target adult to kid ratios?

We will cap enrollment for most camps at 25 kids per session. Generally, SPI summer camp sessions with enrollment of 7 to 12 kids will be facilitated by one lead instructor, with help from volunteers (grades 9 and up) that SPI and/or the instructor are able to recruit. SPI summer camp sessions with enrollment of 13 to 25 will be facilitated by one lead instructor and a co-facilitator meeting the same eligibility criteria. If you don't have a co-facilitator in mind, SPI will attempt to recruit and assign one to work with you if your proposal is accepted. Sessions with six or fewer registrants are subject to cancellation.

7. How do I decide what ages to specify in my proposal?

It really depends on what kind of prior knowledge is required, if any, or what goals you have for the kids that week. This is where your educator experience is key.

Sessions allowing a broader age range tend to fill up quickly. Many parents appreciate that they can have a single drop-off and pick-up location on the same schedule for more than one child. Some like the idea of their different-aged children having camp fun together. There are benefits to narrower age ranges as well. Older kids often appreciate the opportunity to spend time with peers closer to their own age or to pursue more ambitious goals for projects.

With that in mind, you could consider pitching a session that specifies a broader age range with the assumption that there could be some whole group activities as well as daily breakouts or clubs for more differentiation according to ages and interests.

8. How long is a session?

Sessions are one week long, operating daily M-F of the selected week at the scheduled times. If you are proposing something for older students (rising 7th and 8th graders) or for a target population with atypical developmental needs who would not be served well in that configuration, you can make note of that on the form and suggest an alternate plan. For example, you could suggest a camp session that spans 2 weeks and that meets just twice per week instead of every day for one week and explain why this may work well.

9. Why does your proposal form have an asterisk next to the option for sessions serving students who have completed 6th and 7th grade?

In our experience, there is generally less demand for camp options for kids in that age range. It is difficult to support the budget for instructors and supplies (or to appropriate volunteer and administrative time effectively) when enrollment is low. There have been/can be exceptions to this so we've still included the option for you to pitch your idea for middle schoolers on the form.

10. Can you give me examples of what qualifies as a “Different” session and what does not so that I can pitch my session idea clearly?

The instructions on the proposal form ask that instructors complete the form for each DIFFERENT session they'd like to facilitate. It is a “different session” if **the ages served, the daily duration, and/or the content focus/activities are different from another session you are proposing to facilitate.**

For example: "Half day wilderness play for rising k-2" and "Full day wilderness play for rising k-2" are different sessions because the duration is not the same.

Another example: “Full Day Farm to Table Chemistry for rising 5th and 6th graders” and “Full Day Farm to Table Chemistry for rising 3rd and 4th graders” is different because it is open to different ages.

However, it is a NOT a different session if you are proposing to deliver multiple units of an identical session. You'd like to offer “Half day wilderness play for grades K-2” three times, welcoming **different K-2 graders** to each session. You are repeating the SAME session, using the same approaches and activities, so that SPI can serve more, different kids in those age groups. There is a space to indicate this on the form.

11. Can my friend work with me as a co-instructor?

That's possible! Most of our sessions in the past have reached max enrollment and have required two facilitators. We included a space on the proposal form for you to name a prospective co-instructor.

12. What's the difference between a Lead Instructor and a “co-instructor” or “co-facilitator”?

It doesn't matter to us how you ultimately divide the work between colleagues when developing and facilitating a camp session, and there is no differentiation in pay based on one's designation as Lead Instructor. It is also not necessarily an indicator of seniority or more advanced credentials. One person needs to serve as the primary point of contact for making the proposal and for camp communications with SPI. We have created the label Lead Instructor for this purpose.

13. If I am a camp instructor, can my kids participate for free?

No, but SPI will offer you a 30% discount to enroll them in a session you are leading, as long as they meet the age eligibility criteria for that session. We are also pleased to offer a 20% discount for instructors' kids to enroll in other SPI camp sessions, even if their parent is not the facilitator. Please note that children of instructors may not accompany the instructor in a “volunteer” capacity. Volunteers for summer camps will be near-peers (teenagers who've completed grades 9-12), college students, and/or other adults recruited by SPI or the instructors.

14. Will I have access to supplies?

Yes. We expect that most camps (especially those based outside) do not require the use of very expensive materials. However, we do have a budget for camp supplies and we know that some specialty camps will require specialty items. If we like your session proposal and opt to hire you as a contractor this year, we'll work out those details. We encourage all instructors to schedule a visit to SPI Spot to peruse our basement and make use of the large supply of items we already own.

15. Can we come to SPI Spot as part of our camp week?

Our summer camps operate outside of our regular program space - aka SPI Spot - which is located at Wright Center on Main Street in Mount Vernon. We arrange camp locations (area parks, nature centers, and schools) with assistance from partner organizations.

If it is an important element of your camp week that you have access to particular tools or exhibits found at SPI Spot for a portion of your session programming, this can be discussed/arranged in advance.

Any anticipated visits to SPI Spot should relate clearly to the goals of your session and must be discussed and arranged in advance to ensure that our space is not unexpectedly inundated with a large number of campers. Instructors should expect to help with arranging the logistics of such a visit.