



Questions & Answers: IVVN-STAR IDAZ Webinar (14 May 2025)

Question 1:

Could you explain and elaborate on the funding opportunities available through STAR IDAZ?

Answer by Maddy Newman (STAR IDAZ Secretariat):

STAR IDAZ IRC does not directly fund research. It is a global network of funders and programme owners who have agreed to coordinate their research funding strategies, including through joint calls. By contributing to STAR IDAZ gap analysis activities and providing details of your projects via the STAR IDAZ website, researchers can help funders better understand the research landscape and guide future funding strategies, which will then lead to future funding opportunities.

Question 2:

Can academic researchers from India with long-standing collaborations with UK universities act as co-applicants in the BBSRC-Defra funding call?

Answer by Maddy Newman (STAR IDAZ Secretariat):

This refers to the joint BBSRC-Defra programme: *Engineer Next Generation Veterinary Vaccine Technology Platforms*. Interested parties are encouraged to review the details shared in the pre-announcement: www.ukri.org/opportunity/engineer-next-generation-veterinary-vaccine-technology-platforms/

Question 3:

Despite the roadmaps and STAR IDAZ involvement, it seems industry partners often expect a fully developed vaccine (at least up to proof-of-concept) before engaging. This can be challenging for universities. How can this be improved?

Answer by Dr Armando Heriazon (IDRC):

Yes, many industry partners want a fully developed product. While some companies manage research from discovery to commercialisation, others begin at the process development phase. One issue is the lack of quality systems in academic environments. Additionally, some products are not of interest due to low profitability or fragmented markets. For instance, the African market is highly fragmented, and the value chain from manufacturing to the end user can be inefficient and costly.

Academics may need to better showcase their innovations to industry. Incubators could be useful platforms for this. Some companies have dedicated teams scouting for products to add

to their R&D pipelines. It may be worthwhile to reach out to these teams. A significant issue is intellectual property - many scientists are unsure how to protect their inventions. Without IP protection, industry often loses interest.

Answer by Prof. Isabel Santos (University of São Paulo):

Based on my experience, industry is primarily interested in financial return and invests accordingly. If an experimental vaccine has a large market, companies will invest in earlier stages of R&D, particularly if there are solid proofs of principle or proof-of-concept data.

Ideally, given their profits, industry should also invest in advancing scientific knowledge and public good, assuming there are well-argued hypotheses and solid experimental design. But assessing this requires a strong scientific background, which isn't always present in industry or among reviewers.

History shows the value of persistence and leadership. Offering tax incentives for R&D investment might help - this approach has had some success in Brazil.

Answer by Prof. Gary Entrican (The Roslin Institute)

This is unfortunately a reflection of funding strategies - industry will usually only financially support vaccine development projects that are at later stages of research on the roadmap, as the perceived risk is lower. That said, it is still worth engaging with industry at early stages to gain an understanding of what they see as a deployable product. They can offer letters of support under a Memorandum of Understanding (to protect intellectual property), which can strengthen a funding application during review.

Question 4:

We have a platform for oral vaccine development against microbial and viral diseases in animals. We're looking for funding and collaborators to help explore this technology for fish in the Philippines and other countries in the network. Any suggestions?

Answer by Dr Armando Heriazon (IDRC):

IDRC is currently funding vaccine research for fish in Southeast Asia. However, our funding is only available through competitive calls - not direct funding - to ensure fairness and transparency.

Answer by Maddy Newman (STAR IDAZ Secretariat):

STAR IDAZ supports some activities for networking and matchmaking between research and industry and helps researchers understand industrial innovation processes to speed up animal health innovations. These opportunities will be advertised on the STAR IDAZ website.

Question 5:

How are industry partners positioned within STAR IDAZ? Are they involved in roadmaps and research, or mainly in later-stage collaborative projects?

Answer by Maddy Newman (STAR IDAZ Secretariat):

Industry members can join STAR IDAZ as IRC Partners, which means they sit on the Executive Committee. At this level, industry and other partners help shape strategic decisions and coordinate activities in line with STAR IDAZ recommendations (e.g. collaborative projects, aligned strategies). They may also participate in roadmap development and gap analysis activities if they wish.

Question 6:

Does AU-PANVAC conduct vaccine research, or does it only assess vaccines developed elsewhere?

Answer by Dr Charles Bodjo (AU-PANVAC):

All veterinary vaccines produced locally in Africa or imported must be certified by AU-PANVAC before use, as per African Union Member States' decisions. This requirement was implemented after an audit in the 1980s found that only 20% of Rinderpest vaccines were of good quality.

Question 7:

Does AU-PANVAC engage with academia? Can researchers conduct vaccine research there?

Answer by Dr Charles Bodjo (AU-PANVAC):

AU-PANVAC supports student research at both the Master's and PhD levels.

Question 8:

If a vaccine has already been validated in countries like India or Germany, does it still need to go through the AU-PANVAC process before being used in Africa?

Answer by Dr Charles Bodjo (AU-PANVAC):

Yes. According to African Union Member States' decisions, any veterinary vaccine must be certified by AU-PANVAC before being used in Africa.
