



Cobra Biologics is an international contract development and manufacturing organisation that provides biologics and pharmaceuticals for pre-clinical, clinical and commercial supply. The company has been a partner in 4 BioProNET-funded projects, and staff from Cobra have attended several annual science meetings and workshops. Here we talk to Daniel Smith, Chief Scientific Officer of Cobra, about the benefits that BioProNET membership has brought to the company.

How has membership of BioProNET helped Cobra?

BioProNET membership has helped Cobra to expand its network of bioprocessing academics in both the UK and Europe. This has led to several research collaborations being set up and delivered across a wide range of areas specific to Cobra. These include bioprocessing for the production of plasmid DNA, viral vectors and mammalian proteins, and for microbial protein expression, together with analytical projects to support these.

How has BioProNET funding assisted Cobra?

We have successfully used the BioProNET BIV and PoC schemes to support engagement with academic groups in the areas of plasmid DNA analytics (Lorna Ashton, University of Lancaster), mammalian protein expression (Bob White, University of York) and viral vector bioprocessing (David Brockwell, University of Leeds). These areas are strategically important to Cobra's business and service offerings, and with the projects facilitating deep engagement with the academics, the schemes have allowed us the opportunity to evaluate a range of diverse approaches to supplement our internal R&D programmes.

How have BioProNET events helped Cobra staff?

Cobra scientists have presented their research outputs via poster and oral presentations. The meetings have also enabled them to establish their own networks with academic and company scientists, as well as interact with Cobra scientists from other sites. Through attendance at the meetings Cobra staff have developed a number of collaborations, as exemplified through Cobra's involvement from both its UK and Swedish sites, such as the Advanced Biologics Processing Competence Centre, which is funded by the Swedish innovation agency Vinnova and run by Véronique Chotteau (KTH, Stockholm). Cobra's UK-Sweden R&D has also been supported via a BBSRC FLiP award to Alan Dickson (University of Manchester), allowing focused academic engagement in the area of mammalian protein expression.

How important are industry-academia networks to Cobra?

BioProNET has been, and remains, an important mechanism by which Cobra scientists can engage with the UK and EU science base in the area of bioprocessing. The broad range of subject matter discussed at the meetings and the access to initial funding to facilitate academic engagement has led to long-term collaborations with academia (and Industry). This has allowed Cobra to grow its R&D activities, such that in 2018, 40% of the R&D activities are supported by innovation grant funding (up from 20% in 2016 and 30% in 2017); this increase has been driven in part by the expanded network of contacts made possible via BioProNET.