



# **Research funding & delivering cross-sector collaborations**

Dr Peter Simpson

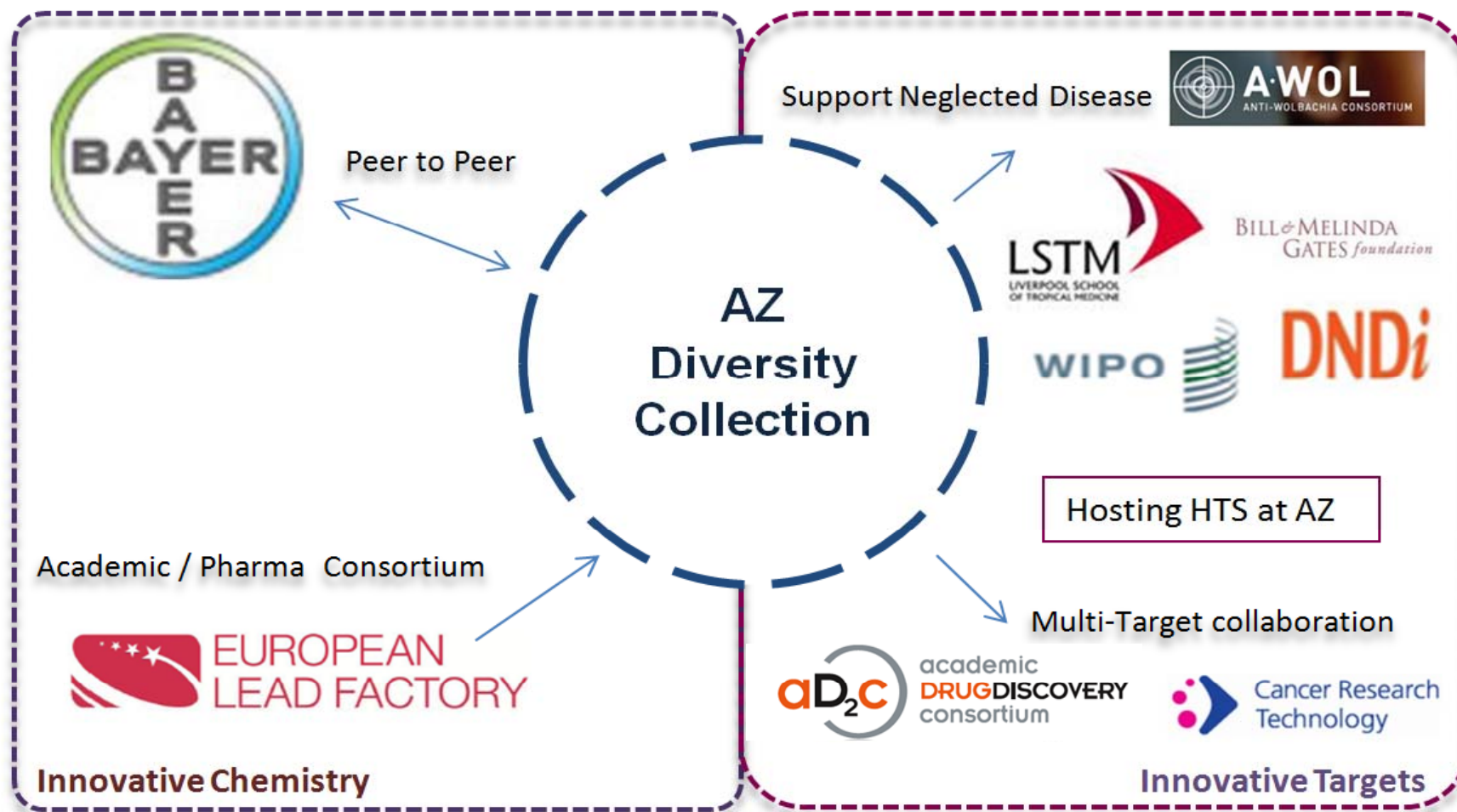
Director, N8 Research Partnership



# **Industry-Academia Collaborations**

## **– examples & context**

# AstraZeneca Partnerships using their Compound Screening Collection



# Building Long term Partnerships



## Why and How?

- It is never the first project that pans out
- Complementarity of approach and understanding of the partners needs
- Openness & trust grows over time
- Relationships at operational level

• F2F

### MRC Technology and AstraZeneca renew collaboration to identify novel targets for discovery research

*Initiative brings together global expertise to share compound libraries and streamline drug discovery*

**London, UK, 3rd July 2014:** MRC Technology, a technology transfer organisation, and AstraZeneca, a global biopharmaceutical company, announced today the renewal of their strategic collaboration which focuses on the identification and selection of novel drug targets with the potential to become potent and selective therapeutics for the treatment of serious disease in the areas of oncology, inflammation and diabetes. The strategic collaboration enables MRC Technology scientists to access compounds from the AstraZeneca compound library, for screening against nominated drug targets at MRC Technology. The renewal builds on the success of the alliance to date, with multiple projects being initiated with the aim of leading to development of innovative medicines.

Under the terms of the agreement, the companies will combine selected compounds from AstraZeneca's compound collection with MRC Technology's compound collection, resulting in a library of over 200,000 compounds available for screening against novel targets. MRC Technology will be responsible for screening the libraries, hit validation and optimization of selected compounds, as agreed by a joint steering committee. The initiative provides an ideal opportunity to combine the strengths in drug discovery and development of AstraZeneca with the rich knowledge of targets and disease biology available in academia provided by MRC Technology's Centre for Therapeutics Discovery.

Justin Bryans, MRC Technology's Director of Drug Discovery, said: "The collaboration with AstraZeneca this far has been very promising. By continuing to work together we will generate more opportunities to translate early stage academic research into potential new therapies."

Peter Simpson, Director of Screening Sciences, AstraZeneca, said: "Supporting innovative science with leading external partners is at the heart of AstraZeneca's Open Innovation Strategy. We look forward to continuing our strong collaboration with MRCT with a view to further building our portfolio of early target ideas and external drug discovery capabilities. Dr Simpson added "This collaboration complements our recently announced strategic alliance with the Medical Research Council to create the AstraZeneca MRC centre for Lead Discovery within the new AstraZeneca research campus in Cambridge in 2016."

### AstraZeneca extends drug discovery collaboration with Bayer

Wednesday, 3 April 2013

AstraZeneca and Bayer HealthCare (Bayer) have signed a three-year extension of their compound library sharing collaboration. Under the agreement the partners provide mutual access to their compound libraries and screening technologies for selected projects. The collaboration enables each party to identify promising new starting points for their respective drug discovery research.

AstraZeneca and Bayer were the first two peer pharmaceutical companies to share their respective early research know-how and chemistry assets for selected drug targets proposed on each other's behalf. The collaboration, which was initiated in 2010, has already identified promising starting points for early drug discovery programs for both companies.

[www.n8research.org.uk](http://www.n8research.org.uk)

# N8 Research Partnership



- A track record of innovative collaboration
- A unique single entry point opportunity to excellence in research
- Not-for-profit organisational structure – an honest broker
- Formed by the eight most research-intensive universities in the North
- Covers a population x4 of Scotland



# Contextual Changes

- Universities as anchor institutions for their regional economies
- “Interdisciplinary research is the future”
- Will cross-sectoral & interdisciplinary research funding become more readily achievable
- Need for academic impact and real-world engagement continues to increase

The collaborative body established by the 8 research intensive Universities of the North of England.

Working with academics, industry and society, N8 Research Partnership aims to:

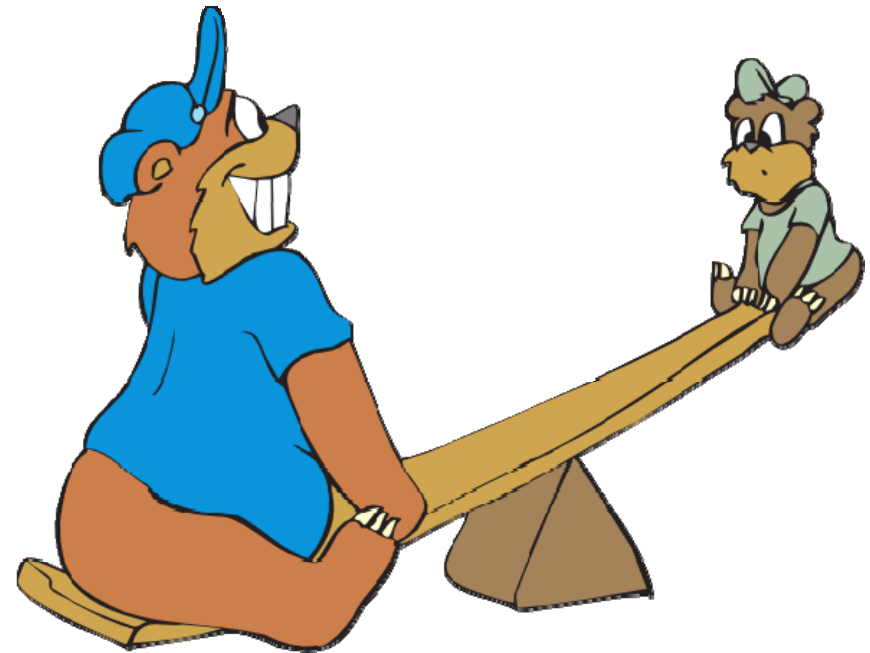
- Promote collaboration
- Establish innovative research programmes
- Drive economic growth



# What have I learned from successful academia - industry partnering?



- Research on the cheap?
- “Are they playing fair?”
- Blowing hot and cold
- Culture clashes
- Unrealistic expectations
- Personnel changes and project closures
- Transparency – what does the company already know?
- **Trust**





# Challenges and Opportunities

# Challenges for Academic in cross-sector collaborations



- An opportunity of sufficient scale to be worthwhile
- Finding a good match – beyond just your ex-postdoc colleagues in industry
- Compromise vs shared goals
- Team behaviour
- Expectations of time and quality
- Funding for researcher continuity
- Acting as a research partner not CRO

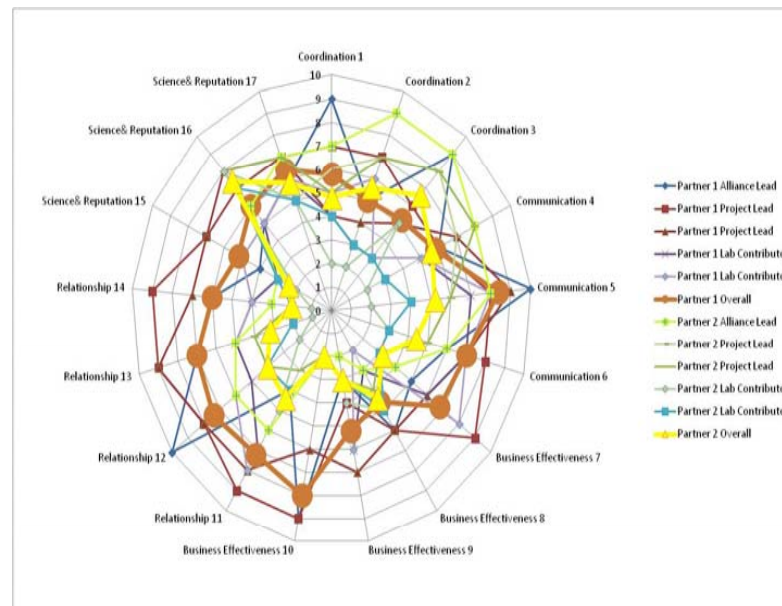
# Making a career in collaborative research

- Make an impact early in the collaboration
- Balance personal goals and programme needs
- Ensure external visibility
- Team behaviour but personal awareness
- Do a limited number of things well
- Look after your own needs – no one else's job to do so
- Long-term thinking on short-term contracts
- Being that trusted person to do the key work

# How can research funding better support interdisciplinary & cross-sectoral research?



- Being heard – collaboration health checks
  - are they included in project costs
- Continuity of lab-based and project leaders
  - trust is easier to lose than to gain



# How can research funding better support interdisciplinary & cross-sectoral research?

- Broader skill set needed in cross-sectoral & interdisciplinary collaborations
  - commercial awareness & IP
  - relationship management
  - rapidly change research direction
  - Multiple experimental approaches
- Need to ensure this is part of ECR training
- Time working in partner institution to develop commercial understanding – is this paid for
- F2F visits for junior staff to meet



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