



Innovation Ecosystem 2025 Year-End Update

Vaccines, Diagnostics, and Immunotherapeutics

With the critical support of the Iowa Legislature – and in partnership with [BioConnect Iowa](#) – Iowa State University of Science and Technology continues to forge new frontiers in innovation supporting the growth of Iowa's biobased economy.

KEY AREAS OF EMPHASIS

Key areas of emphasis for the Vaccines, Diagnostics, and Immunotherapeutics (VDI) platform for 2025 were:

- **Seed grants** – Ten have been funded for 2025/26, utilizing \$500,000 in funds. A second round of funding is planned for the second quarter of 2026. In total the VDI platform has supported more than 40 grants to accelerate technological development.
- **CSIRO matching funds** – Iowa State has formed a strategic partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation ([CSIRO](#)) – an Australian government agency responsible for scientific research and its commercial and industrial applications – focused on global biosecurity topics that include advanced vaccines and diagnostics. Iowa State has contributed \$50,000 in funding toward approved projects and CSIRO has provided additional funds in the range of \$250,000 to \$300,000 to expand the Vax, Dx, and Immuno portfolio.

- **CYVAX and workforce development** – [CYVAX](#) is a commercial development lab focused on early-stage scale-up and manufacture. CYVAX serves as a transition space for startup companies to bring product development to regulatory standards and as a wet lab training site. Responding to the recent TEconomy report, the facility has hosted five workforce development wet labs, with more than 130 participants representing 12 Iowa-based companies.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Following the recommendation of the TEconomy report, VDI platform made a concerted effort to increase workforce development activities. ISU launched a graduate level class focused on biotechnology and competency, and the CYVAX space was used for formal micro-credentialed trainings focused on commercially relevant topics: potency assay development; filtration and purification; bioreactors and fermentation; advanced cell

culture techniques; and mRNA production.

- CYVAX continues to support startup companies with Genvax, Hermes Biomaterials, Elanco, and Atheris currently using the space. This program is keeping jobs in Iowa and accelerating commercial development of Iowa State- and faculty-led technology.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES FOR 2026

- Numerous companies are considering Iowa as a U.S. location, with emphasis on animal health. In partnership with the ISU Research Park, the VDI platform hopes to secure commitments from at least two firms that will enable ISURP to build a dedicated biotechnology facility with associated good manufacturing practices (GMP) manufacturing suites.
- Two international companies that fit within the Bioscience platform are considering establishing U.S. operations with manufacturing in Ames.

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