



# SEPTEMBER 19 Q&A

## NON-TRADITIONAL CAREERS PANEL

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*Q. At what point in your academic life you choose these diverse careers.*

- A. The decision to move away from academics can be made during PhD, during post doc, or even after few years in industry
- A. Agree completely with Amitavo. It doesn't need pre-planning

*Q. What is the scene of outreach opportunities in India? Are there active programs which bring in school/undergrad students to science institutes in India for internships/field trip days/get to know about current research in India/get in touch with researchers in India? (asked by Milind Singh)*

- A. it is a growing field. look at IISER Pune website as we have a vibrant outreach team

*Q. Is it compulsory to have PhD in any science stream to be a science journalist/ communicator or masters degree or bachelor's degree will serve the purpose?*

- A. A masters degree would also serve the purpose for many roles.
- A. Depending on the role, a bachelor's degree may be enough. For example, many good science journalists do not have a background in science, but in journalism.

*Q. What are the specific funding opportunities for the startups and independent biology researchers in India? (asked by Shri Vishalini Rajaram)*

- A. look for funders slides, they covered research funding. Birac grants and incubators in Indian institutions have start up funds

*Q. '@Vandana: Isn't it work overload to manage grants for the whole of IISER Pune or you have several sub-ordinates for each department? (asked by Greeshma Thrivikraman)*

- A. it has been 5 years, so i slowly scaled up. I have a team of 5 to support me.

*Q. Are all the jobs advertised or should we directly reach out to the potential employer? (asked by Karthik Chandiran)*

A. some advertised. some through network

*Q. How good are the chances of getting for a position of grant advisers, if one is advertised, for a person with several years of postdoc? Does someone need any other experience for seeking such kind of jobs or they are trained once they are offered a job*

A. science background is must. other requirements are more interpersonal and management experience.

A. A lot of learning happens on the job as well.

*Q. Can someone work as a freelance science writer for Indian science communication companies while they are doing PhD/postdoc in the US?*

A. Yes--it is possible to be freelance science writers and communicators while doing PhD/Postdoc in the US. Specifically for CACTUS, you could look at <https://cactusglobal.com/careers/>

*Q. In terms of writing career, did you undergo additional training or participate in writing programs/fellowships to prepare for your transition? any advice in terms of preparation for these transitions? (asked by Ayushi Oberoi)*

A. Hi Aayushi, while I was doing my PhD, I parallelly did go for several learning opportunities, including a two-week long science journalism workshop, a year-long journalism internship, online journalism courses and books, and a science networking workshop. I also tried to practice what I learned through blogging and freelancing. This experience gave me a huge boost when I finally made the transition to a full-time role.

*Q. '@Dr. Ghosh when you transitioned from academia to your current role did you receive any on the job training? (asked by Suman Majumdar)*

A. Hi Suman, most of my training was indeed on the job. I had only a few years of science communication experience, working on a solo or freelance basis, before I entered my current role. I ended up learning a lot from the projects I took on, from my colleagues, and from the writers I work with.

*Q. Are there any training opportunities that you provide for Sci-Comm?*

A. Yes, CACTUS does provide training for editors/writers/science communicators who join us. Occasionally, there are outside programs we organize. You could find some training available on [www.editage.com/insights](http://www.editage.com/insights)

- A. IndiaBioscience conducts an annual remote science journalism internship and occasionally partners with other organisations to conduct workshops on science journalism/writing. Also, since many of the authors on our website are first-time writers, they have the opportunity to learn “on the job” during the editing process.

*Q. I have been a science writer and editor with NIH for a couple of years now (after completing my postdoc here). For the last one year, I'm on a fulltime job with NIH. I am also a communications project manager. I'm now transitioning into science policy as a health/science policy analyst at NIH. This is also a writing-heavy job, with a lot of communications and planning. I want to make a transition back home, for personal reasons, and that can be as early as next summer/fall. However, I don't know anyone with whom I can start a conversation about jobs in India. My interest is project management, writing and policy. I am looking for full-time or remote jobs. Thanks Shreya, Abhishek and Chagun for the upcoming discussion. I would love connecting with you! (asked by Mohor Sengupta)*

- A. It would be good to connect. If you join the breakout rooms, there will be some more folks from CACTUS who would be able to guide you.

- A. Hi Mohor, it would be good to connect. You can write to me at [shreya@indiabioscience.org](mailto:shreya@indiabioscience.org) after the conference.

- A. Missed including my email. You could also write to me [abhishekg@cactusglobal.com](mailto:abhishekg@cactusglobal.com)

*Q. Who are the consumers for science communication? Does cactus directly work with science journal? If so, could you name some?*

- A. Consumers are wide and varied--the primary consumer for editing are researchers/authors, universities and some journals. For broader science communication, customers are academic societies and journals like the Royal Society of Chemistry, Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery, Neurology. We also work with University press and research commercialization departments. The actual consumers would be policy makers, journalists, general public etc.

*Q. What is the responsibility of a scientific writer in Cactus? (asked by Suman Majumdar)*

- A. Scientific writers at CACTUS work with life science organizations and help in writing manuscripts, posters, slide decks etc.

*Q. How a CV should be designed while approaching a science communication jobs? (asked by Aditya Parekh)*

A. As I mentioned previously, go for a Visual CV format for any background work or experience

A. Hi Aditya, also focus on highlighting communication/outreach experience rather than your academic background. A portfolio of clips (previously published writing) helps.

*Q. '@Vandana Gambhir two question: 1) How does industry and academics work for funding and your role in facilitating it. 2) Is there a way wherein the startups can get benefit from your expertise. I am aware of several incubators that do have special team for such services. (asked by Swapnil Bawage)*

A. see my talk on irmi website for facilitating industry-academia partnership. IISER has started incubator, so I am key to sharing funding opportunities and how to go for it.

A. Vandana's talk can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-lLczznLr8>

*Q. Does one need any other kind of experience for science policy jobs? like I have only postdoc experience, do i need to do any kind of course which can make me more suitable for such kind of jobs*

A. Not really. Right now, directly you could apply for a policy fellowship in India and get transitioned into this area.

*Q. Where are jobs regarding science policy advertised (for government organizations)*

A. DST-STI-PFP is the program I was mentioning about on call. In addition, there are also policy positions/ fellowships from in other agencies like NITI, NEST, MEA and DBT + State Govts

*Q. can one do a course on patent lawyer online?*

A. there are various courses online on patent law which give a certification, diploma etc., which can help with gaining an understanding.

*Q. '@Dr. Savita Ayyar: Do you directly work with professors in public/private academic institutes?*

A. I work with researchers through their institutions

*Q. Research management: Are you involved in the decision making for which projects are funded? Was this a challenge to deal with when moving from benchwork research to a more managerial role? (especially budgets and managing resources) (asked by Jyothi Kumar)*

- A. Funding decisions are taken by agencies. Research managers work both at funders and at institutions, to facilitate science. If one is at the institution, your role is to support the PI with putting in a strong proposal that is in line with agency guidelines, priorities. At the same time, your role is about ensuring that the outgoing proposals align with institutional norms
- A. It was a major transition moving away from my own bench research to facilitating someone else's research. I moved to a role at the Wellcome Trust, a major funder of biomedical research. Hence, my transition was guided by my mentors, which really helped.

*Q. '@Dr.Gambhir - could you please what kind of management experience- a Masters degree in a specific area or certification, and what kind?*

- A. masters in research management would be useful or attending courses covering these aspects.

*Q. Question for Vandana and Chagun Basha: For someone coming back to India after a 4-5 years, one may not have an idea of how grants and policies work in the Indian scenario. How will that affect someone's job prospects in grants management and science policy? (asked by Himanshi Bhatia)*

- A. use the learnings and network built through this platform, if serious in pursuing this area.

*Q. Question for Dr. Ghosh: Does IndiaBiosciences.org provide a SciComm internship/fellowship? Can you please also name other such SciComm internship/fellowships opportunities? Thanks. (asked by Pragya Chaube)*

- A. Hi Pragya, we periodically conduct science journalism/editing internships - these opportunities are usually advertised on our website. The #SciComm hashtag on Twitter is also a good source of information. In the US, there are many science journalism internships, e.g. those offered by AAAS, Springer-Nature etc. The NASW website is a good source for such opportunities in the USA.

*Q. Hi everyone,  
Is it possible to do such or take small projects without getting paid just to see if that interests you (science communications) (asked by Deepti Chaturvedi)*

A. Hi Deepti, you can definitely do that to begin with. However, while you are planning such a project, it might be a good idea to pitch it to a few organisations/publications at the same time to see if it can lead to paid work :) You can always have the option of doing it on your own if it doesn't work out.

*Q. Do Indian universities have a patent law office to facilitate conversion academic research into patents? Or is it a part of the grants management office? (asked by Anshika Gupta)*

A. yes, many of them have a separate IP cell

A. a grant may have money earmarked for patent purposes. in fact, in India, more and more grants are being tied with IP generation

*Q. What kind of pay scales are generally available in the science communication as well as policy fields? (asked by Rohit Vaidya)*

A. it can vary quite a bit. what is more important is that there should be an interest in the field and to learn and evolve. the money will come as opportunities open up

*Q. '@ Chagun: Does science policy fellowship still have age cut off of 35 yrs for a post-doc fellow. The 2016 document mentions this. But not sure if it is true now. Thanks! (asked by Arun Krishnan)*

A. DST is trying to remove the age criteria this year. However, there are also senior positions (Senior Fellows) for people with more experience. Look out for this year's call :)

*Q. '@Vandana Gambhir @Savita Ayyar Thank you for the answer and information. Is it Venture Center (VC) that you are refereeing to or IISER has its own. I would love to know more about it, could please share your email or phone number. (asked by Swapnil Bawage)*

A. IISER has its own. started this year. [vandana@iiserpune.ac.in](mailto:vandana@iiserpune.ac.in)

*Q. Is there an upper limit for age to transition into research management or science communication in India?*

A. No upper age limit for transitioning into science communication.

*Q. Where do we see science communication and policy career opportunities in the next 5 years? Are other smaller institutes planning on open such grant management dept? (asked by Anant Jain)*

A. The DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance now offers funding schemes for supporting the creation and development of research offices at Indian institutions. See <https://www.indiaalliance.org/india-research-management-initiative> for more details

A. I believe that there would be many more such opportunities in India over the next 5 years. India is still in its early stages of both science communication and policy career.

*Q. What made you excited about your job?*

A. An opportunity to see good science getting funded

*Q. What would be the top 5 skills that you would look to hire in research management/science policy/scicomm career?*

A. A good science background, strong interpersonal skills, a problem solving ability and a passion to make a difference. Skills directly related to the job are of course always desirable.

*Q. '@ Dr. Chagun, would you share your email/contact details (asked by Shankar Pidishety)*

A. b.chagun@gov.in or @ChagunBasha in Twitter

*Q. '@Dr. vandana gambhir: could you please provide details about the project management workshop to be conducted by IISER. When that is going to happen and how can one register for it?*

A. it will be announced on IISER home page. you may contact me at [vandana@iiserpune.ac.in](mailto:vandana@iiserpune.ac.in)