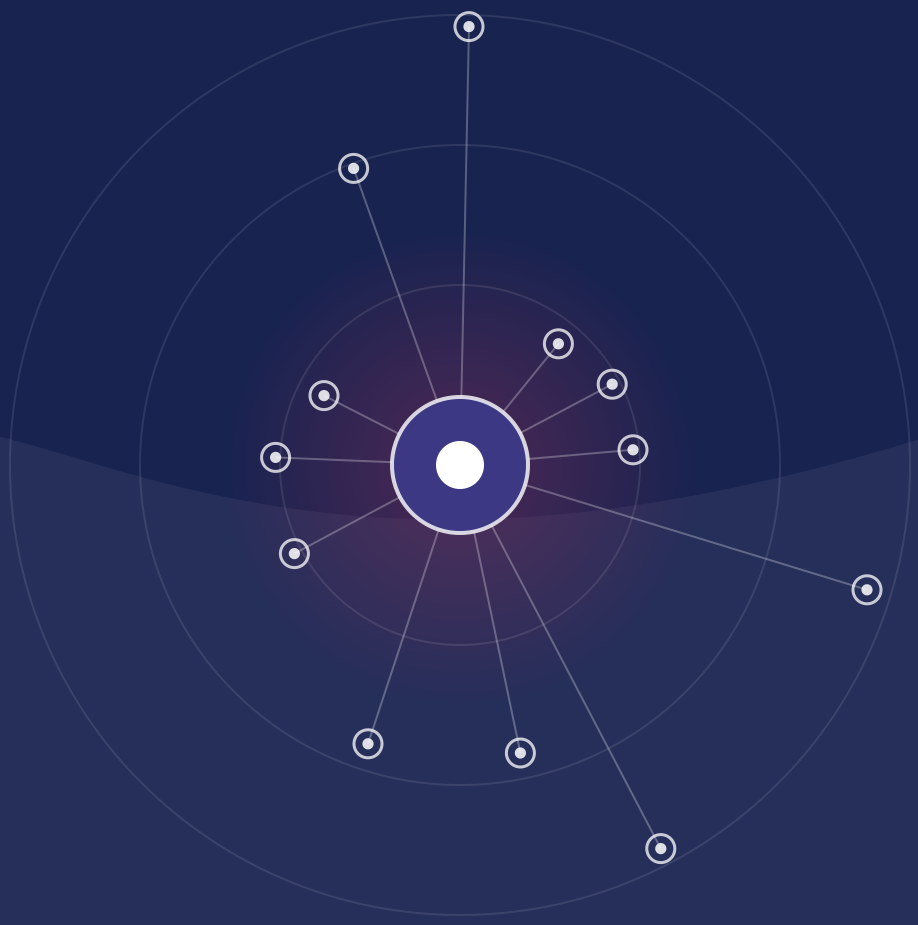
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CDMO Live Americas: 3 Themes We Are Watching

Network resilience, AI-ready data and sponsor–partner execution: three themes on the CDMO Live Americas 2026 agenda that will change how sponsors work with their CDMO partners.



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Boston hosts CDMO Live Americas on 20–21 October, and the agenda reads like a map of where external manufacturing is under pressure. Three themes stand out to us. Each one changes how sponsors work with their CDMO partners, and each is worth watching closely.

1. Network Resilience Under a New Policy Climate

The agenda pairs “Manufacturing Network Optimization + Resilience” with “D.C. Policy + The Impact on Biopharma External Supply”. Sponsors from Biogen, Eli Lilly, Astellas, Pfizer and Vertex are on the first panel, and the policy session brings in the Brookings Institution and PBOA.

The backdrop is clear. A June 2026 KBI Biopharma article reports that the BIOSECURE Act has been enacted and that new tariff frameworks have followed. Manufacturing location is now a core risk question. Its author argues that innovators can no longer rely on single-threaded supply chains anchored in high-risk regions, and that moving manufacturing partners for advanced therapeutics can take up to eight years.

At the same time, the CDMO landscape is consolidating, with larger deals and a shift toward specialists. Sponsors are choosing among fewer, more focused partners.

Three questions follow for any sponsor. Which products depend on a single site or region? How quickly could volume move to a second site, and what must already be in place, such as tech transfer packages, quality agreements and data connections? And who inside the sponsor owns that decision when it cuts across supply chain, quality and procurement?

> **What we are watching:** how sponsors turn geography into a structured, ongoing risk view across their CDMO partners, and whether they have the real-time visibility to act on it. A resilience plan that lives in a slide deck, rather than in live data from inventory, production and quality, will be slow to execute.

2. AI, and the Data It Depends On

AI has its own thread across the programme. “AI in Manufacturing: New Research + Case Studies” features Sanofi, Pfizer, Aizon and MasterControl. “Next-Generation Quality in The Age of AI” includes the FDA and Eli Lilly. A roundtable on AI in formulation rounds it out.

The question we expect to hear is shifting. It is less “what can AI do?” and more “is our data ready for it?” External manufacturing makes that hard. Much of the information that moves between a sponsor and its partners still travels by email, PDF and spreadsheet, with no standard message structure and uneven digital maturity across the partner network. Models trained on that data inherit those gaps.

There is a quality angle too. When an AI tool flags an anomaly in a batch record, someone still has to trace it back to a source, a partner and a time. That traceability is a data-structure problem before it is a modelling problem.

> **What we are watching:** how regulators and sponsors describe good practice for AI in quality, and how much of the discussion goes to the less glamorous groundwork of standardised, structured, AI-ready data.

3. Execution Between Sponsor and Partners

The roundtables are where the practical detail sits: tech transfers, managing investigations, capacity planning, innovative contract models, high potency manufacturing, “the perfect RFP” and regulatory CMC. The technical track adds scaling ADC development and CMC for small molecules, cell and gene therapy and sterile fill-finish.

These topics share a feature. Each depends on a clean handoff between sponsor and partner. Tech transfer and scale-up sit with CDMOs, which combine development and manufacturing. Capacity planning, investigations and contract models apply to CMOs and CDMOs alike. In every case, the quality of the handoff depends on the quality of the shared process.

That is why the roundtable format matters. Peer discussions on investigations and capacity planning tend to surface the small frictions, such as who is notified, in what format and how fast, that decide whether a plan holds under pressure.

This is the theme closest to our own work. As Sham Afzalpurkar, Co-founder and CEO of Collabrix, has put it:

> *“Custom integration one-offs are not scalable... the only way to scale is industry standards.”*
>
> **— Sham Afzalpurkar, Co-founder and CEO, Collabrix**

We will be listening for how many of these conversations come back to standards, not another bespoke integration.

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