



RNA SOCIETY SPONSORSHIP OF LOCAL/REGIONAL 'RNA Salons'

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION 2024/25

Objectives:

In the fall of 2016, the **RNA SOCIETY** launched an initiative to financially support recurring local and/or regional RNA science-based gatherings - to be collectively referred to as "**RNA Salons**". Society support of RNA Salons serves as a mechanism to cultivate year-long interaction, engagement, and sharing of knowledge among RNA researchers. This program will continue for the 2024/2025 academic year.

For consideration of **RNA SOCIETY** support, a proposed RNA Salon must be broadly aimed at enhancing interaction between RNA researchers with diverse expertise and interest in RNA science, so as to facilitate communication and training opportunities in RNA research and/or to promote scientific professional development for RNA scientists. The RNA Society supports and encourages both in-person and virtual events, including collaborative events between RNA Salons, as long as these events are organized in a way to foster local and regional engagement and interaction, in particular for junior scientists.

Depending on the nature of RNA Salon activities and the amount of carry-forward funds from 2023/2024, applicants can request a maximum of \$1,500.00 USD in support for the 2024/2025 12-months cycle by the **RNA SOCIETY** for their proposed activities. This sponsorship includes \$1,000.00 USD from the RNA Society and \$500.00 USD from our corporate sponsor Lexogen.

Once again, high-quality applications by established and previously funded RNA Salons can request two years of funding. Successful applications requesting this two-year term will receive up to \$1,500.00 USD in each of the first and second year of the two-year term in two separate installments. RNA Salons granted a two-year agreement will not need to submit a separate application for the 2025/2026 cycle. Selection for two-year RNA Salon funding is expected to be competitive, and no more than 30 RNA Salons will be selected in 2024/2025.

In addition to the financial support, each successful RNA Salon application will be provided three (3) complementary one-year **RNA SOCIETY** memberships in the Student or Post-doctoral Fellow category for 2025 (valued at \$36.00 USD each). The RNA Society encourages Salon programs to use these complementary memberships as awards for trainee participation/research achievement. Successful two-year RNA Salon applications will also receive three (3) complementary Student/Post-doctoral Fellow **RNA SOCIETY** memberships for 2026.

Proposals will be reviewed solely by the **RNA SOCIETY** and selected based on the nature and perceived benefit of described activities to RNA scientists (and to junior researchers, in particular). Budgets may be modified based on the proposed activities,

the amount of carry-forward RNA Salon funds from previous years, and/or number of applications to be supported. Successful applicants must agree to the 'Terms of Sponsorship' to receive RNA Society support and may 'opt-out' of accepting funds provided by Lexogen (applications that 'opt-out' of Lexogen sponsorship will thus be eligible for a maximum of \$1,000.00 USD per year for their Salon events; see below for additional details). RNA Salons supported by the RNA SOCIETY will represent the international diversity of RNA SOCIETY membership and, thus, funding will be distributed in accordance with member demographics. RNA Salons funded previously can re-apply for funding in 2024/2025 but must do so through the formal application process; no preference will be given to RNA Salons funded previously.

Supported Activities:

All programs that involve recurring on-line or in-person activities falling into the broad mandate of RNA Salon sponsorship as outlined above are welcome to apply. These activities may include, but are certainly not limited to, one or more of the following examples:

- RNA Journal Clubs and RNA Seminar Series (including internal and/or external speakers) held multiple times throughout the academic year.
- Recurring workshops on, for example, Experimental or Computational Methods in RNA Research (excluding workshops offered by professional entities).
- Professional Development Activities such as Workshops on scientific writing or oral presentations, CV development, alternative careers, etc., targeted specifically to a community of RNA researchers.
- Women in Science or other events promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in the RNA research community. Broad activities aimed at educating under-represented researchers in RNA science.
- Discussion Rounds on trends in RNA research or other relevant RNA-related topics.
- Outreach activities by RNA researchers participating in the RNA Salon program aimed at promoting an understanding and appreciation of RNA research and applications in the wider public.

Application Guidelines:

- Requests for sponsorship of an RNA Salon must be submitted through the formal application (provided) which requests the following information:
 - a) a detailed description of the year-long activities (including speakers, if applicable) and how these activities will be organized and promoted. This description must include a justification whether events are planned to be virtually or in-person and how interaction will be promoted. If invited

speakers are proposed, please explain efforts to ensure diversity is achieved.

- b) a clear statement that addresses how the proposed RNA Salon activities align with RNA Society objectives for this program and how funding will benefit participants in the short- and long-term (also, see below for requirements for consideration of support).
 - c) a description of the anticipated RNA Salon participants, including a plan for ensuring/increasing diversity in researchers involved (i.e., number of participants; stage of training [i.e., student/post-doc, PIs, etc]; affiliation of participants, inclusion of under-represented scientists, etc.). The RNA Society expects that all RNA Salon events offer a welcoming and inclusive environment for all and strategies towards this goal should be explained in the application.
 - d) a brief statement on organizational and leadership experience of the applicant(s).
 - e) a budget proposal and justification how funds (a maximum of \$1,500.00 USD per year) will be utilized.
 - f) Existing RNA Salons must provide information on funds remaining from 2023/2024 which can be used in 2024/2025.
 - g) Information on any website and/or Social Media sites where RNA Salon activities are promoted – please provide URL and X usernames.
- The application deadline for requesting support of an RNA Salon is **August 30, 2024**.
 - Applications will be submitted through a webform provided on the RNA Society homepage.

Requirements for Consideration of Support:

- Applications must be submitted by a Principal Investigator (or equivalent) who is a Full and current member of the RNA SOCIETY. Involvement and leadership by students/post-doctoral fellows (together with the PI) in the organization of the RNA Salon is highly encouraged and will be considered favorably during evaluations. Students and post-doctoral fellows are not, however, eligible to apply as lead organizers.
- The RNA Salon organizer is required to name a contact person who is responsible for correspondence of the RNA Salon with the **RNA SOCIETY**. The contact person can be the RNA Salon organizer or other person involved in the administration of the RNA Salon activities and must respond within seven days of receipt to RNA Salon related inquiries.
- RNA Salons must hold no less than **three** qualifying events per year to successfully meet the requirements for support.

- RNA Salons should foster engaging relations among local/regional RNA researchers with diverse scientific backgrounds, experiences and/or interests, and must, therefore, include members from multiple laboratories/research units. Where applicable, this should include members from different departments and/or institutions. Accordingly, only a single RNA Salon proposal within an institution or geographical location is likely to be supported within a given program year.
- A maximum of \$1,500.00 USD can be requested by each applicant per year. It is also possible to request less funding as suitable for the proposed activities and the amount of carry-forward funding. A clear budget justification is expected for applications to justify the expenses.
- RNA Salons which have received past support from the RNA Society can request a two-year funding period. RNA Salons will be selected for the two-year funding based on the overall quality of the application (addressing all objectives of the RNA Salon program) as well as their track record as evident from past annual surveys. Up to 30 RNA Salons may be selected in 2024/2025 for a two-year funding period, whereas all other successful RNA Salon applications will receive one-year of funding. RNA Salons funded for two years will automatically be provided support for 2025/2026.
- All successful RNA Salons will be offered three (3) one-year Student or Postdoctor Fellow **RNA SOCIETY** memberships (including an on-line subscription to *RNA* journal) for 2025. **RNA SOCIETY** memberships must be distributed as merit-based awards and the criteria for the selection of trainees for these memberships must be described in the RNA Salon application. Memberships will be awarded by February 1st, 2025, and trainee information – including name, student or post-doc status, e-mail address and mailing address - must be provided by that date (a form to submit this information will be set up).
- RNA Salon funding may be used for promotional material, student recognition/awards, catering, and/or invited speakers. However, no more than 40% of the funding shall be used for speaker-related expenses (i.e., travel, reimbursements, and/or honorariums for outside speakers). In addition, no more than 20% of the funding is allowed to be used for the purchase of alcohol. Funds used inappropriately or outside the scope of these guidelines must be returned to the **RNA SOCIETY** and will negatively impact consideration for RNA Salon support in the future.
- The **RNA SOCIETY** promotes ethnic, gender and geographic diversity as well as equity and inclusion in the RNA community. It is expected that RNA Salon organizers make every effort to ensure that Salon participants and invited speakers reflect the diversity within the disciplines represented in the local/regional RNA community and that RNA Salons are inclusive towards under-represented scientists. Therefore, strategies to ensure or increase diversity, equity and inclusion in RNA Salon events as appropriate for your regional RNA

community must be outlined in the application. Efforts to expand the diversity of Salon participants will be viewed favourably during the evaluation process.

Exclusive Lexogen Sponsorship:

Each successful RNA Salon is eligible to receive up to \$1,500.00 USD per year to support their events (per year, \$1,000.00 USD from the **RNA SOCIETY** and \$500.00 USD, respectively, provided through Lexogen, the exclusive industry sponsor of the 2023/2024 RNA Salon series). To qualify for the full amount, RNA Salon applicants must, at the time of application, agree to the 'Terms of Sponsorship' which include terms provided by Lexogen that are outlined below. If applicants wish not to engage in this relationship with Lexogen, they can choose to 'opt-out' and their application would, therefore, be eligible only for up to \$1,000.00 USD per year of support from the **RNA SOCIETY**.

- RNA Salon proposals will be reviewed solely by the **RNA SOCIETY**. Successful applications that also agree (i.e., 'opt-in') to Lexogen co-sponsorship will then, and only then, be made available to Lexogen.
- Successful RNA Salons will receive a single payment per year from the **RNA SOCIETY** in the amount up to \$1,500 (or up to \$1,000.00 USD if applicants 'opt-out' of the Lexogen co-sponsorship).
- For those applicants that agree to the full Terms of Sponsorship (including those outlined by Lexogen; i.e. 'opt-in'), RNA Salon organizers agree to:
 - a) display the Lexogen corporate logo alongside the **RNA SOCIETY**'s logo (a joint logo provided by the **RNA SOCIETY**) on the Salon's website, other on-line and print material, and all advertising of RNA Salon events.
 - b) mention @lexogen alongside @RNASociety in any RNA Salon social media posting such as on X, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.
 - c) display a 20-min video by Lexogen at a minimum of one event (real life or virtual) per academic year. Such video will provide educational content related to Lexogen's products as well as a disclaimer that the **RNA SOCIETY** does NOT promote Lexogen's products. Lexogen will provide a range of videos on different transcriptome-analysis related topics to select from.
 - d) allow a representative from Lexogen to contact, via e-mail, the RNA Salon organizer three times during the academic year to discuss opportunities for Lexogen either to present a promotional seminar at an RNA Salon event or to organize (and pay for) an academic speaker to present at an RNA Salon event. These seminars and presentations can also have a virtual format. RNA Salon organizers retain the right to refuse a suggested topic or speaker, and agreement to these opportunities is not required to receive the supplemental funding provided by Lexogen. In addition, any arrangement will

be based on mutual agreement between Lexogen and the RNA Salon organizer will in no way involve the **RNA SOCIETY**.

- e) share product literature provided by Lexogen at two RNA Salon events. Material will be mailed at the expense of Lexogen or shared online. RNA Salon organizers agree to provide to Lexogen a shipping address and an approximate number of Salon participants to facilitate this process. Alternatively, Lexogen can also provide product literature digitally, in form of a PDF document, which is then forwarded by the RNA Salon organizer to the RNA Salon participants at two times during the Salon season.
- f) agree to announce and share (at a minimum of one event) entry forms for a prize drawing for Lexogen products (e.g. RNA sequencing products and services). Also here, a digital format can be chosen by Lexogen. In this case, a short description of the prize draw and a link to the respective entry form will be e-mailed to the RNA Salon organizers to be forwarded to the RNA Salon participants. Participation (i.e. completion of the entry form) by Salon participants is completely voluntary. RNA Salon organizers agree to send two reminders to RNA Salon participants to fill out the prize draw.
- g) Two-year RNA Salons must fulfill the requirements for Lexogen funding in both year 1 and year 2 in return for receiving \$ 500.00 each year from Lexogen.

Application Evaluation and Administration:

- RNA Salons supported by the **RNA SOCIETY** will represent the international diversity of **RNA SOCIETY** members. Therefore, membership demographics will be considered during funding decisions.
- Funding decisions will be made by the Membership Committee of the **RNA SOCIETY**. Proposals will be considered based perceived impact to RNA researchers according to the objectives and guidelines outlined above, in particular:
“RNA Salons must cultivate year-long interaction, engagement, and sharing of knowledge among RNA researchers. (...) RNA Salon must be broadly aimed at enhancing interaction between RNA researchers with diverse expertise and interest in RNA science, so as to facilitate communication and training opportunities in RNA research and/or to promote scientific professional development for RNA scientists.”
- The proposed budget will be evaluated independently of the merit of the application taking into consideration the nature of the proposed events and the remaining funding from 2023/2024 if applicable. Based on this budget evaluation, the offered funding might be adjusted and differ from the requested amount.

- Funding decisions will be announced by November 10th and funds disbursed by November 30th for activities during the 2024/2025 academic year.
- Funding for RNA Salons will be distributed by direct deposit, check, or wire transfer to the institution hosting the respective RNA Salon (note, funds will not be issued to individual payees). RNA Salons funded for two years will receive a first installment of up to \$1,500.00 USD in November 2024 and a second installment of up to \$1,500.00 USD in October 2025.
- Sponsorship funds in their entirety are to be used to support RNA science-based events. No administrative, overhead or indirect costs will be provided or allowed by the hosting institution of RNA Salon events.

Successful Applications:

- Successful applicants for funding of an RNA Salon by the **RNA SOCIETY** will be expected to sign a Sponsorship Contract outlining the terms of the RNA Salon funding and defining the roles and expectations of all parties involved (including the RNA Salon applicant/organizer, **RNA SOCIETY**, and Lexogen).
- At each event, support by the **RNA SOCIETY** must be acknowledged. The **RNA SOCIETY** requires that the organizers display the Society logo (provided upon signing the RNA Salon contract) on their website and in any virtual and print material provided to participants at the event. Additionally, any electronic promotion of RNA Salon events (i.e., Departmental/Institutional websites, X, LinkedIn, and/or Facebook, etc.) must include acknowledgement of **RNA SOCIETY** support for the event(s). In case of acceptance of co-sponsorship (i.e., opt-in), Lexogen must also be acknowledged in all cases mentioned above, alongside of the **RNA SOCIETY**.
- To enhance participation and inclusion at RNA Salon events, RNA Salon organizers must strive to promote RNA Salon activities on X and include the hashtag #RNASalon and @RNASociety (and @lexogen) in their content posts. In the event that the RNA Salon does not have a X account, Salon organizers can submit a short description (280 characters or less) and image promoting their Salon event to RNASalon@rnasociety.org one week prior to the event and the **RNA SOCIETY** will post their advertisement on its X account.
- RNA Salon activities should also be promoted on the RNA Salon local website which has been provided to the **RNA SOCIETY** during the application and which will be listed on the **RNA SOCIETY** website to encourage broad participation and inclusion at RNA Salon events.
- The **RNA SOCIETY** does not assume responsibility for activities supported by the RNA Salon. The organizers will be responsible for complying with the outlined regulations pertaining to the use of the funds.
- At the completion of the academic year, each successful RNA Salon applicant will be required to report their activities via an on-line survey. These data may be used by the **RNA SOCIETY** on their website and/or the **RNA SOCIETY** Newsletter

and will be provided to Lexogen. Failure to complete the survey will disqualify that RNA Salon program for funding in the subsequent academic year. RNA Salons that receive two years of funding must complete the year-end survey at the completion of **each** of the two years.

- By December 15th, 2024, the names and e-mail contacts of all participating RNA Salon members must be made available to the **RNA SOCIETY**. Participant information will be used for the sole purpose of communicating **RNA SOCIETY** membership information. At that time, RNA Salon participants will be offered an exclusive discount on a 2025 RNA Society membership. **Please note, participant information will not be used for any other purpose and will not be given to any third party (including Lexogen).**