



RNA Salons 2025/2026

Report to the RNA SOCIETY Board of Directors

by Dr. Minna-Liisa Änkö

The RNA Salon program aims to foster and enhance interactions between RNA researchers within local/regional research communities. The RNA Salons bring together RNA researchers with diverse expertise and interests and provide training and professional development opportunities for junior scientists.

The RNA Salon program has brought RNA researchers together for a decade!

The 2025/2026 season marks the 10th anniversary of the RNA Salon program. Since its inauguration in 2016, the RNA Salon program has seen a sustained growth. There are now 68 RNA Salons spread across >25 countries on all continents. Thank you for all the RNA Salon Organisers over the years for their hard work to support their local RNA communities!

RNA Salons 2025/2026:

- 68 RNA Salons reaching >7,000 RNA researchers globally
- 43 RNA Salons on two-year funding
- 14 new RNA Salons
- Continued support by Lexogen

The past funding cycle did not introduce major changes in the program. We have continued to streamline the application process and management of the RNA Salons to minimize the administrative burden of the organisers. This includes providing various templates and the selection of established high-quality RNA Salons for two-year funding. Our aim is to save the energy of the RNA Salon organisers to running appealing programs that best serve the needs of their RNA communities.

For the 2025/2026 application round, we received a record number of applications (close to 80). After careful consideration, we were able to fund 68 RNA Salons of which 14 were new. The new RNA Salons extended the reach of the program to India, Slovenia and Brazil. Currently, 43 RNA Salons are on the first or second year of their two-year funding cycle. Since we were not able to fund all high quality applications due to the high demand, we wish to increase the number of RNA Salons to 70 in the next funding cycle. We also aim to continue offering a limited number of two-year awards that will be selected based on the merit of the application. We are also grateful for the continued support by Lexogen and hope to continue this partnership.

RNA Salons run diverse programs that foster and enhance interactions between RNA researchers within the local or regional science community. The seminar formats vary from large symposiums with invited speakers to local chalk talk sessions in-person, hybrid and online. Some RNA Salons also run outreach activities to increase the visibility of RNA

science and attract students to RNA research. When reading the RNA Salon survey responses, I am always amazed by the range of programs taking place under the RNA Salon umbrella.

I was pleased to read the positive responses from the RNA Salon organisers in the annual RNA Salon survey. Based on the feedback, the program is effective in fostering interactions between RNA researchers in local communities and providing training for junior scientists - the main goals of the program!

The program continues to have a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion and based on the reports the minor groups are well presented and welcomed in the RNA Salon events. Many RNA Salon organisers have wished for more interactions between the RNA Salons and some Salons hold joint online events either regularly or on *ad hoc* basis. The exchange of invited speakers between the RNA Salons is extensive. In February, the inaugural RNA Confluence meeting brought together multiple RNA Salons to EMBL Heidelberg for the first time in-person. I was excited to be invited to participate in what turned out to be a real treat of RNA science presented by trainees across the participating RNA Salons. You can read more about the RNA Confluence in the RNA Salon feature at the RNA Society webpage. I encourage this type of grassroot activity utilizing the global RNA network that the RNA Salon program has established!

For us, the main benefit is the increased internal interaction in our community. This seminar series has made a really positive difference. **Peter Ebert Andersen, RNAarhus**

We recently hosted a one-day meeting called 'RNA Confluence' bringing together different RNA Salons in our region, which received a lot of interest from the participants, particularly from ECRs. Such regional meetups may enhance the interaction and networking among members of various Salons. **Venkatraman Ravi, EMBL RNA Club.**

The RNA Salon program has been extremely valuable for building local RNA communities, especially in regions that are not major RNA hubs. **June Bryan I. de la Peña, New Mexico RNA Club**

Strategic promotion through the RNA Society can also be highly effective. Featuring a local RNA Club, like the HKRNAClub, on the Society's website previously generated a notable increase in exposure. **Chun Kit Kwok, Hong Kong RNA Club**

To facilitate networking and share good practises between RNA Salons, we are holding again the RNA Salon organiser luncheon in the RNA Society meeting in Montreal. I will also host two online get-togethers in June. I welcome all organisers to join the in-person and virtual catchups. In addition to the interactions between RNA Salons, the organisers would like to improve the visibility of the program within and outside the RNA Society. RNA Salon features are a great way of enhancing the visibility of individual RNA Salons.

We continue looking for a platform that would enable RNA Salon participants to directly connect with each other globally.

In conclusion, the RNA Salon program effectively strengthens RNA research globally and is a major program of the **RNA SOCIETY**. I feel privileged to be part of this program. During the past year, it has been again wonderful to interact with RNA enthusiasts around the world, for first time also in-person, to learn about various RNA-focused programs and support RNA research communities. I look forward to the next RNA Salon season 2026/2027.



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