

# Pitch Contest for RNA Startups

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AReNA, Quebec's RNA hub, is dedicated to promoting all stakeholders in the RNA therapeutics sector at the provincial, national, and international levels. With this in mind, AReNA aims to specifically highlight the RNA startups in our ecosystem through a pitch competition.

## COMPETITION OBJECTIVES

AReNA aims to provide innovative companies in Quebec's RNA therapeutics sector with an opportunity to gain visibility both locally and internationally. Indeed, the finalist companies will be invited to pitch at AReNA's annual event on October 22, 2026, and the competition winner will be offered the opportunity to participate in the BIO International 2027 conference in Philadelphia (including access to the BIO Partnering™ platform) as well as strategic support from AReNA leading up to the event (business development assistance, positioning strategy, business case preparation, and optimization of targeted meetings).

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The competition is open to innovative startups with high growth potential that are active in Quebec's RNA therapeutics sector (therapy development, manufacturing processes, formulation and delivery technologies, etc.) and meet the following criteria:

- **Legal incorporation:** Be legally incorporated in accordance with applicable federal or Quebec laws and registered with the Quebec Enterprise Registry.
- **Quebec-based operations:** Have its head office in Quebec and have employees or subcontractors carrying out their activities primarily in Quebec.
- **R&D located in Quebec:** Conduct research and development primarily in Quebec.
- **Pre-commercialization stage:** Be in the development stage of a first product or process with a view to commercializing it.

## CONTEST PROCESS

The contest will take place in three successive phases:

### 1. Submission of a letter of interest: Deadline May 31, 2026

This first step aims to confirm the eligibility of companies and assess the strategic relevance of their participation in the BIO International Convention 2027.

Un short pre-selection form, available online starting **March 30, 2026**, will be used to collect concise information, including:

- Company identification (representative, contact information);
- Description of activities related to RNA therapies;

- Business initiatives already undertaken (sales, strategic partnerships, fundraising, etc.);
- Justification of the added value of participating in the BIO International Convention for the company's development trajectory.

## 2. Finalist selection phase: Summer 2026

A maximum of **10 companies** will be shortlisted and invited to present their project to a jury composed of professionals from Quebec's life sciences industry and RNA therapeutics sector, following this format:

- An **8-minute main pitch**, including a dedicated segment explaining the relevance of participating in the BIO International conference; **English is strongly recommended**
- A 7-minute Q&A session with the jury

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Content and structure of the message (value proposition, differentiation, strategic maturity);
- Quality of the presentation (clarity, coherence, narrative effectiveness);
- Speaker's ability (mastery, conviction, credibility);
- Strategic alignment with BIO International and demonstrated motivation.

At the end of this stage, a maximum of **5 companies** will be selected for the final, which will take place during ARENA's annual event. In preparation for this event, ARENA's partners will offer (optional) support to finalist companies that would like assistance in optimizing the positioning and performance of their pitch.

## 3. Finals: October 22, 2026

The finals will be held as part of the program for ARENA's annual event on October 22, 2026. This will provide the finalist companies with visibility within Quebec RNA community.

To ensure a dynamic format suited to this event, the duration of the pitches will be reduced:

- **3-minute pitch**
- **3-minute Q&A** session with the jury

The composition of the jury, however, is expected to be similar to that of the selection phase.

Following deliberations, the name of the winning company will be announced at the close of the event.



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**LinkedIn**



**YouTube**

