



**RHODE
ISLAND**

Ladders to Licensure Pre-Application Conference

September 9, 2024

Overview

Purpose of today's meeting

- Ladders to Licensure background & objectives
- Review application and respond to questions

A recording of this session will be posted on the EOHHS website and additional questions may be submitted by email through September 27

Legislation

Title 42, Chapter 166 of RIGL directs EOHHS, in collaboration with DLT and OPC, to establish the Ladders to Licensure grant program to fund multi-employer, public-private partnerships that provide opportunities for healthcare paraprofessionals to pursue higher education degrees and health professional licensure.

FY2025 State Allocation: \$750,000

Ladders to Licensure Objectives (Page 2)

- Increase the number of licensed health professionals
- Increase racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of health professionals
- Provide academic, financial, and wraparound supports
- Leverage employer support for career ladders
- Align with existing state workforce and higher education initiatives
- Develop career ladders with tiered training and education and wage increases
- Develop academic policies that recognize prior learning, credentials, and experience
- Counter systemic racism and other institutional barriers to participation and advancement
- Provide flexible scheduling (work and academic)
- Address State policy barriers to entry and advancement in health careers

Intro and Background (Page 4)

This grant program seeks to incentivize multiple employers to come together with other partners to rethink pathways and identify ways that their organizations and the overall state system can change policy and practices to work better for workers and employers.

The grant monies will support this work by:

- Providing seed money to build needed partnerships to design a sector or system-based career ladder with multiple employers (3 or more).
- Paying for tuition and related expenses that cannot be funded with other public or private funding streams.
- Paying for programmatic expenses needed for career ladder implementation that are not funded by other public or private funding streams.
- Helping to scale and standardize existing career ladders across multiple employers.
- Identify necessary changes to the health and human workforce development system in Rhode Island.

Definitions

A Career Ladder is a sequence of training, education, and on-the-job learning that leads to progression from entry level positions to licensed occupations associated with higher levels of pay, skill, responsibility, or authority.

Career Ladder Planning is the process of working with partners to define and develop all of the components of the career ladder.

Career Ladder Implementation means that employees are participating in the sequence of training, education, and on-the-job learning that leads to progression from entry level positions to licensed occupations associated with higher levels of pay, skill, responsibility, or authority – and grant funds are being used to offset certain costs of that activity.

“RI ReconnectPlus” reflects the addition of tuition support funds to the **RI Reconnect program** operated by the Office of the Post-Secondary Commissioner.

- The RI Reconnect program helps make it possible for adults to return to college by providing non-tuition supports such as case management, educational coaching and support, and supportive services.
- RI ReconnectPlus adds tuition assistance to the RI Reconnect program.

Categories of Funding - Year 1 (Pages 2-3)

Career Ladder Planning/Design Funds and Learning Collaborative (Required)

Partnerships work on designing a career ladder independently and during learning collaborative meetings.

RI ReconnectPlus Tuition Supports (Required)

Partners collectively request tuition support for a cohort of incumbent eligible employees (across all of the employer partners) to immediately engage in higher education leading to licensure.

Career Ladders Implementation (Optional)

Partnerships that expect to have a fully designed career ladder within 3 months OR already have a fully developed career ladder design that meet the requirements of this grant may also apply for funds to begin implementing their career ladder.

Anticipated Categories of Funding in Subsequent Years

RI ReconnectPlus

RI ReconnectPlus tuition support program continues.

Career Ladders Implementation

Partnerships begin or continue to implement and grow the career ladders.

Eligible Partners (Page 5)

- Multiple Rhode Island employers (at least three are required) - can be for-profit or non-profit and each must have a unique employer ID number.
- Business or Industry Association
- Labor-management organization or labor organization
- Higher education (both 2- and 4- year)
- CTE programs
- Other community-based or nonprofit organizations
- Other training providers
- Philanthropic organizations
- *Government agencies*

Collectively, partnerships must have the necessary experience, capacity and expertise to successfully design and implement the proposed career ladder, and achieve and document outcomes.

Required Partner Roles (Page 5-6)

Lead Applicant	Implements/oversees the career ladder design (Year 1) and implementation (future years). They handle paperwork and performance reporting, including collecting and reporting all required data and participating in the overall evaluation of the project.	Industry or trade association Labor-management organization Labor organization Rhode Island employer Institution of higher education Community-based nonprofit organization
Convener	Facilitates the work of partners to achieve the overall project goals, including, but not limited to, coordinating the design of the project, developing an appropriate budget, negotiating agreement of the project performance management measures, developing the work plan, and coordinating all activities of the project while balancing the interests of all parties. The convener should have workforce development knowledge and expertise.	May or may not be the same as the Lead Applicant. It is strongly advised that the convener be an entity with credibility with employers.
Fiscal Agent	Responsible for the partnership's expense reporting and the receipt and disbursement of funds.	May or may not be the same as the lead applicant.
Employer Partners	Required to contribute a twenty-five percent (25%) in-kind match and ten percent (10%) cash match.	At least three employers and at least 250 total employees (combined across the employer partners)
Education Partner	Role to be defined by the partnership	At least one higher education partner is required.

Eligible Participants and Occupations (Page 6-7)

RI ReconnectPlus Tuition Support

Individuals who are employed in a health and human service setting for at least one (1) year and who are:

- Employed in paraprofessional and/or an unlicensed occupation
- Enrolled in or have a desire to pursue enrollment in a health professional academic pathway starting in spring semester 2025 or the first or second summer session 2025.
- Committed to a continued career in health and human services in Rhode Island upon completion of the program.

Participants can be out of state residents as long as they are employed by one of the employer partners.

Career Ladders Planning

Must be focused on paths that lead to high-demand health and human service licensed occupations requiring a higher education degree (a diploma, associates degree or higher).

Occupations such as nursing assistants, personal care assistants, medical assistants, community health workers, peer recovery specialists, navigators, case managers, doulas, and direct support professionals, can be considered a starting point or a rung on a career ladder leading to a further license, or degree, but may not be considered an endpoint on the career ladder.

Targeted Occupations (Page 27)

Starting Occupations (Examples)	Target Higher Education Programs (Examples)	Target Endpoint Licenses
Nursing		
Nursing Assistant, Personal Care Assistant, Medical Assistant	Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, other related programs	Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse
Behavioral Health and Human Services		
Peer Recovery Specialist, Community Health Worker, Navigators, Direct Support Professionals, Certified Chemical Dependency Professional, Case Manager (and equivalent occupations)	<u>Associate degree:</u> Human Services, Social Work <u>Bachelor's degree:</u> Social Work, Healthcare Administration, Professional Studies, Chemical Dependency Addiction Studies <u>Master's degree:</u> Social Work, Mental Health Counseling, Marriage & Family Counseling, Psychology, other related programs	Licensed Clinical Social Worker Licensed Mental Health Counselor Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
Other		
Applicants may apply to design a career ladder with other <u>higher education</u> pathways leading to licensure, certification, or healthcare career advancement provided they sufficiently demonstrate the need and occupational demand.		

Year 1 Grant Requirements:

- RI ReconnectPlus Tuition Support (Required)
- Career Ladders Planning (Required)
- Career Ladders Implementation (Optional)

RI ReconnectPlus Tuition Supports (Required)



RI ReconnectPlus Tuition Support (Page 10)

Partnerships are required to request tuition support for a minimum cohort of incumbent eligible employees (across all the employer partners) to immediately engage in higher education leading to licensure.

Tuition assistance will be based on an average of \$5,000 per semester per employee. The minimum request for the RI ReconnectPlus component of this grant will depend on the number of employees across the employer partners.

Employer Partnership Employee Population	Minimum RI Reconnect Plus Tuition Support Participants
250- 500 employees	5 minimum
500-1000 employees	10 minimum
1000+ employees	15 minimum

RI ReconnectPlus (Cont'd) - Page 10

Partnerships must demonstrate sufficient employee interest in pursuing higher education while working.

Eligible participants may start receiving tuition assistance as early as Jan 2025 for those already enrolled in higher education and/or the 1st or 2nd summer session 2025 for participants who are not ready to enroll in higher education until later in the year.

Participants in the RI ReconnectPlus program are eligible for non-tuition support provided through RI Reconnect - applicants do NOT need to request these services as part of their grant application. Applicants will work with an OPC navigator to access wrap around supports as needed. These supports may continue to be available after the grant period.

How Tuition Support Will Be Calculated (Page 11)

1) OPC will first determine each participant's eligibility for a **Pell grant or scholarships, grants or merit-based aid** provided by the higher education institution. It will also consider tuition discounts offered by the institutions of higher education, if applicable.

2) OPC will determine the **employer tuition benefit** contribution. Employers must contribute an amount equal to the maximum allowed benefit outlined in their employer tuition assistance policy - not to exceed the total cost of tuition, fees, books and supplies. Employer tuition assistance policies that are contingent on participant completion or performance shall not apply to Ladders to Licensure participants.

If an employer does NOT already have an established tuition assistance policy, the employer can choose to develop and implement a policy during the spring semester (to start for the first summer session) or they may elect to offer paid release time for education equal to ½ hour for every credit hour per week.

3) Finally, OPC will determine the amount of **RI ReconnectPlus funds** that will be applied to cover the remaining amount of tuition, fees, books and supplies.

How Tuition Support Will Be Paid (Page 11)

Tuition funds will be paid by the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) to educational providers directly on behalf of participants.

The amount contributed by the employer will be paid directly to OPC based on a mutually agreed upon schedule.

The partnerships should seek to maximize tuition dollars by prioritizing enrollment in programs at public higher education institutions to the extent it is possible and in the best interest of the student.

Examples of Non-Tuition Support Provided by RI Reconnect (Page 11)

Case management: Participants will have frequent contact and follow up with a Navigator to ensure program progression, assess arising needs, and mitigate barriers.

Educational coaching and support including:

- Educational/professional pre-assessment
- One to one coaching and mentorship
- Access to peer support network

Supportive services: OPC will conduct a needs assessment to determine needed supports such as childcare or transportation. The allocation for non-tuition supports averages \$2,000 per participant per semester. Individual non-tuition expenditures that exceed \$2,000 will be reviewed and revised by OPC in collaboration with EOHHS prior to final approval. These supports may continue beyond the grant period.



Career Ladders Planning

Career Ladders Planning Application Requirements (Required) - Page 7

Identify three or more employers and other partners that formally agree (via an MOA) to collaborate on a career ladder design to address common workforce needs. (see MOA checklist on page 41)

Demonstrate that collectively, the partnership has the necessary experience, capacity and expertise to successfully design and implement the proposed career ladder and achieve and document outcomes.

Demonstrate the need for the occupational focus on the career ladder with both quantitative and qualitative data.

Agree to participate in a learning collaborative and work together to design a common career ladder that helps incumbent workers advance to one of the target endpoint licenses outlined in the application.

Career Ladders Planning Application Requirements (Cont'd) - Page 7

Obtain MOAs from each partner that formally confirms the goals of the partnership, the career ladder that partners intend to design, the commitment of each partner to enter into a collaborative planning process and participate in the learning collaborative, and partner agreements related to cash matching funds and in-kind commitments.

Provide a budget and budget narrative for the grant period of performance (Jan - Jun 2025)

Provide a work plan for the grant period of performance (Jan - Jun 2025)

Note: If you are funded, **the outcome of the 3-6 month planning process** will be a detailed career ladder design that meets the requirements on the following slides. (Page 14) This design will be the basis for subsequent funding requests.

Specify the common core competencies and expectations for each rung.

Specify the interconnected educational increments and micro- and/or macro-credentials for each rung of the ladder.

Utilize education and training partners (e.g., colleges, universities, CTE program, community-based training programs) to provide training and education using flexible scheduling and delivery methods.

Offer academic credit for completion of some or all of the education attached to the ladder.

Career Ladders Design Requirements - Employers (Page 8)

Provide an incremental, standardized wage increase for each level attained when the career ladder is implemented (partnerships are not expected to establish a common wage scale but each employer in the partnership is expected to provide a wage increase of their own determination for attainment of each rung of the ladder).

Provide flexible and/or reduced work schedules that allows the employee to participate and complete required training and education during regular working hours, as needed.

Meet the requirements around tuition assistance.

Identify long-term strategies to sustain support for education and training and all related costs (e.g., books and fees) to ensure that lower-income workers with pressing financial barriers can participate.

Ensure that achievement relative to the ladder is portable so that a new employee's level of achievement on the ladder (in a prior work setting) is acknowledged among employers within the funded partnership and that the new hire wage rate corresponds to level attained.

Modify human resources practices to align with the operations of the career ladder.

Career Ladders Design Requirements - Higher Education (Page 9)

- Build career ladders with employer partners that lead to industry-recognized credentials.
- Modify existing program offerings to mirror competency models for the career ladder and meet industry recognized and/or postsecondary credentials.
- Apply integrated, accelerated, and contextualized strategies to build skills that are recognized by employer partners.
- Offer academic credit for completion of some or all of the education attached to the ladder.
- Allow participants to progress at their own pace along a career pathways program.
- Provide career advising and academic supports such as tutoring appropriate to the participant's needs.
- Offer education and training programming during non-traditional hours and/or at a worksite.

Enhanced Consideration (Optional) - Page 9

Applicants that commit (via the MOA) to incorporate one or more of the elements below into their career ladder design concept and partnership agreements will be given enhanced consideration:

- Design a ladder with more than one occupational tier in the ladder.
- Implement apprenticeship models or similar “earn and learn” models.
- Implement strategies or policies to provide upfront tuition assistance in lieu of reimbursement.
- Demonstrate a plan to braid other public or philanthropic funding streams or in-kind support.
- Demonstrate a plan for sustainability in the absence of continued grant funding.
- Engage a higher education partner who will provide credit for prior learning, credentials, and/or work experience.
- Obtain direct financial or in-kind contributions from non-employer partners (e.g. tuition discounts).
- Demonstrate clear plans for adding additional occupations to the career ladders.
- Are an existing Real JobsRI partnership.



Career Ladders
Implementation

Career Ladder Implementation - Page 9

Partnerships that will have a fully designed career ladder within 3 months OR already have a fully developed career ladder design **that meet the requirements of this grant** may also apply for implementation funds to be used before the end of the grant period (June 30, 2025).

Please note that the RI Reconnect tuition support and career ladder implementation funds can be braided together for career ladder implementation provided that the number of incumbent employees participating in the career ladder (across all of the employer partners) meets the minimum requirements.

EXAMPLE A

Application A is submitted by a group of 6 small employers with 250 employees collectively who want to invest in a career ladder for their entry level medical assistants to become LPNs but they do not have the capacity to do so on their own.

They organize and ask their industry association to serve as the fiscal agent and partner with an institution of higher education to serve as a convener for the planning work.

They conduct an employee interest survey and identify 5 incumbent paraprofessionals or unlicensed workers who meet the criteria for RI ReconnectPlus tuition support.

Two people are already enrolled in a nursing program and are currently pursuing their RN license; and 3 people are not yet enrolled in higher education - 2 are interested in pursuing an LPN license and 1 would like to earn an Associate degree to become a case manager.

During the first grant period (Jan - June 2025), they apply for 6 months of planning funds (\$30,000 because they have just started their planning), and tuition support for 5 people (\$25,000) for a total request of \$55,000.

EXAMPLE B

Application B is from a large health system with over 1,000 employees composed of multiple employers across multiple settings that would like to design a career ladder that advances entry-level medical assistants and nursing assistants through three nursing assistant and medical assistant tiers, to become a Licensed Practical Nurse.

They anticipate that participants will receive leave time for the education and training and pay increases after completion of each level of training.

Eventually, they want the career ladder to include training for radiology and surgical technician positions, as well as training to become Registered Nurses.

They have the beginning of a career ladder design but it needs a lot more work.

They conduct an employee interest survey and identify 39 who meet the criteria for RI ReconnectPlus tuition support.

During the first grant period (Jan - June 2025), they apply for 6 months of planning funds (\$30,000), and \$195,000 in tuition support for their cohort of 39 people for a total request of \$225,000.

EXAMPLE C

Application C is submitted by a group of 3 larger employers with a total of 750 employees collectively.

One employer in this group already has an apprenticeship model (Associate degree level Case Manager to LCSW/LICSW or LMHC) that has been designed but not yet implemented.

The group is looking to adapt the apprenticeship model so that it works for all members of the partnership and possibly find other employers who would be interested in implementing the model.

They also would like to start implementing the apprenticeship model right away and believe they can enroll their first cohort before the end of the grant period.

They conduct an employee interest survey and identify 10 employees who meet the criteria for RI ReconnectPlus tuition support.

During the first grant period (Jan - June 2025), they apply for 3 months of planning funds (\$15,000), and \$215,000 to implement the apprenticeship program including \$50,000 in tuition support for their cohort of 10 people.

FUNDING FOR AWARDS - Page 13

- This application is an initial request for Year 1 (Jan 2025 - June 2025) of the grant program. Award funds are dispersed on a mutually agreed upon schedule.
- The number of grants awarded will be determined by a competitive process and available funding. We anticipate funding at least two partnerships in Year 1.
- Partnerships may be formally established without an immediate funding award. Partnerships that do not get an immediate funding award may elect to work closely with EOHHS to refine their applications and participate in a grantee learning collaborative. These partnerships may be eligible for grant funds in subsequent years.

AWARDEES - Page 13

Awardees will enter into an agreement with EOHHS and OPC and will be recognized as a partnership for a period of three years, with the option to renew for an additional two years.

During the contract period, the Partnership may request additional funds each year to sustain implementation of or expand the career ladder. Requests for funds will be reviewed and approved at the sole discretion of EOHHS, based on a set of criteria, including but not limited to:

- The partnership's performance against stated clear and measurable objectives.
- The availability of funds.
- The extent to which the implementation of the career ladder meets the design requirements.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES - CAREER LADDERS PLANNING -

Page 20

Budget Component	Eligible Expenses	Ineligible Expenses
Planning and Project Management	Costs for consultant or staff time to <u>lead and facilitate</u> planning Convening expenses Reasonable project management costs Program Design Consultants Grant Writer	Cost for other staff who are participating but not leading or facilitating.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES - RI ReconnectPlus - Page 21

Budget Component	Eligible Expenses
Tuition and Fees	Last dollar RI ReconnectPlus tuition and fees up to an average of \$5K per person per semester or summer session.***

***Tuition funds will be paid by the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) to educational providers directly on behalf of participants.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES - CAREER LADDERS IMPLEMENTATION -

Page 21

Budget Component	Eligible Expenses	Ineligible Expenses
Implementation Management	Costs for consultant or staff time to <u>lead</u> and facilitate: -Planning/facilitation -Policy development	Cost for other staff who are participating but not leading or facilitating.
Implementation Expenses that cannot be funded with other public or private funding streams	Curriculum development (for new curriculum or necessary curriculum adaptations to meet the needs of working adults). Up to 50% of the cost of providing paid time off for education and training for participants (up to ½ hour for each credit hour per week or, for non-credit programs, one hour for every two hours of training time) Up to 50% of the cost of providing stipends for participants, if applicable. Up to 50% of the cost of the precepting clinical training or other work-based learning opportunities.	Wage increases for participants

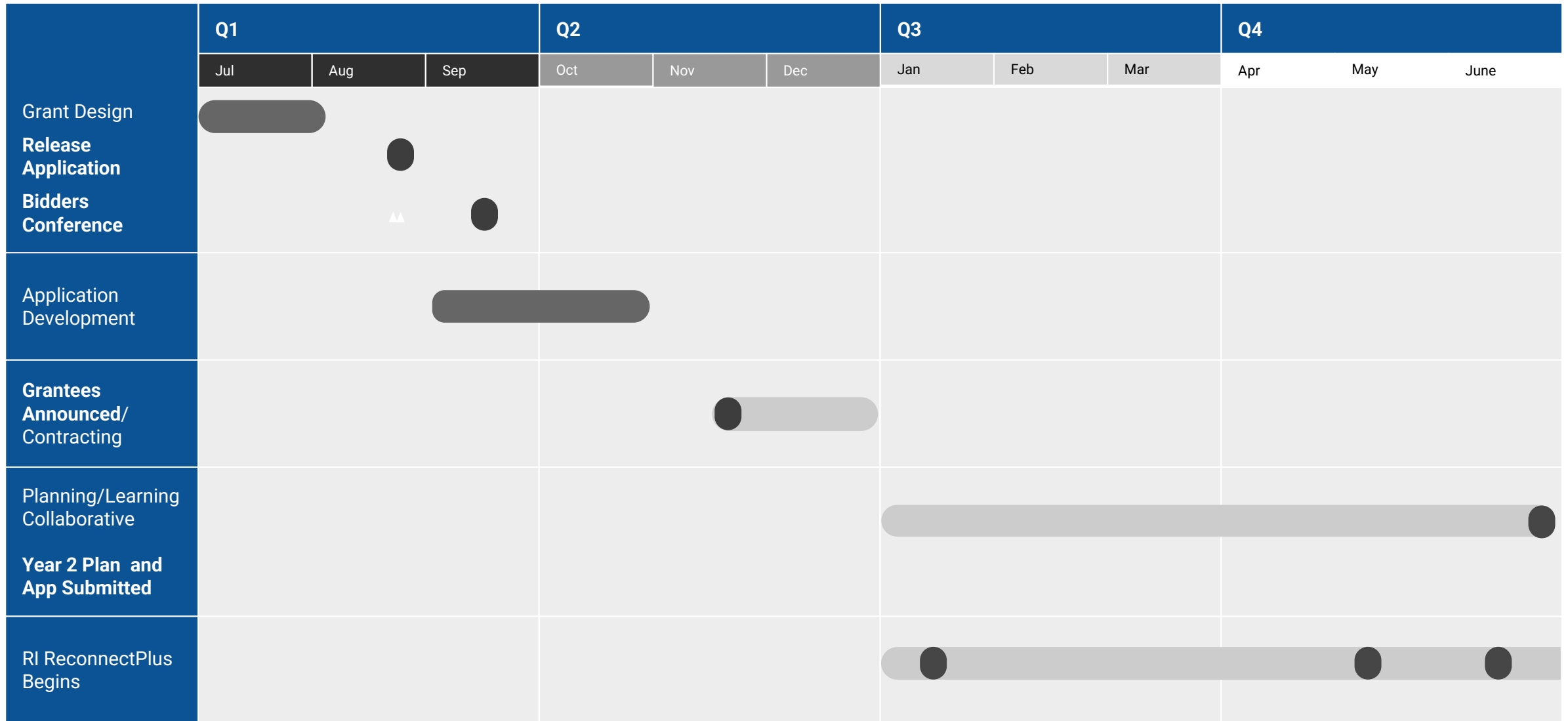
ELIGIBLE EXPENSES - EMPLOYER CASH MATCH - Page 21

Budget Component	Eligible Expenses	Ineligible Expenses
<p>Employer Match - Cash (10%)</p>	<p>Costs for consultants to lead and facilitate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planning/facilitation -Project mgt -Grant writing <p>Curriculum development (for new curriculum or necessary curriculum adaptations to meet the needs of working adults).</p> <p>Cost of providing paid time off for education and training for participants (up to ½ hour for each credit hour per week or, for non-credit programs, one hour for every two hours of training time)</p> <p>Up to 50% of the cost of providing stipends for participants, if applicable.</p> <p>Up to 50% of the cost of the precepting clinical training or other work-based learning opportunities.</p> <p>Employer-paid tuition reimbursement benefits, non-tuition supports, or employer sponsored scholarships amount.</p> <p>Books and educational supplies</p>	<p>Wage increases for participants</p>

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES - EMPLOYER IN-KIND MATCH (Page 22)

Budget Component	Eligible Expenses
Employer - In-Kind (25%)	<p>Cost for other staff who are participating but not leading or facilitating.</p> <p>Subject matter expertise</p> <p>If applying for career ladder implementation funds, the following <u>additional</u> expenses are eligible for in-kind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Equipment and facilities for training and education● Up to 50% of the cost of the precepting clinical training or other work-based learning opportunities.

YEAR 1 TIMELINE



QUESTIONS?