

The RCSA Team Science Accelerator: Informational Webinar

Tuesday August 18, 2026 | 9 a.m. (Pacific Time)

Presenters: Eric Isaacs, President & CEO

Andrew Feig, Senior Program Director

Webinar Agenda

Introduction to RCSA

What is team science and why does RCSA care?

The Team Science Accelerator – a pilot program

- **Goals**
- **Eligibility**
- **Program Elements**
- **LOI Materials**
- **Timelines**

Q&A

How Does RCSA Define Team Science?

2025 NASEM Report Defined Team Science as:

“...collaborative, interdependent research conducted by more than one individual, ...often involve[ing] integrating scientific approaches to solve problems that are multifaceted, multidimensional, interdependent, and do not have a single answer.”

RCSA would add that, to be effective, it must also involve the adoption of critical team behaviors

- establishing “North Star” goals
- setting norms for communication and decision-making
- adopting mechanisms to ensure psychological safety
- shared accountability for outcomes

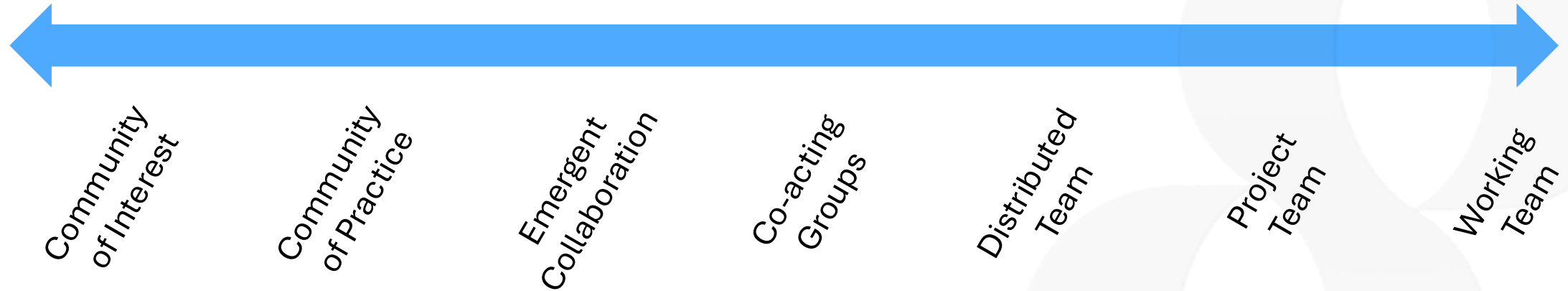
Team Science is Not New

- **National Academies reports from 2015 and 2025 describe at length both the strengths and difficulties of team science**
- **Grew out of the calls for interdisciplinary research and the recognition that real interdisciplinarity requires effective team practices**
- **Most Federal agencies have team science initiatives...**
 - **NIH – CTSA and RM1 Awards (and formerly P01 and P50 programs)**
 - **NSF – CCI, MRSEC, I-CORPS Teams, NSF Engines, Quantum Virtual Lab**
 - **DOE – EFRCs, ARPA-E, Genesis Mission Awards**

The Need for Team Science

- **21st century scientific challenges center on hard-to-solve problems:**
 - Climate resilience and the transition to sustainable energy
 - Advanced materials and next-generation semiconductors
 - Novel materials for quantum information science and quantum sensing
 - Physical foundations of biological processes and systems
 - Nature of dark matter and dark energy
 - Many others
- **Solutions often originate from small, agile, multidisciplinary teams.**
- **RCSA's Team Science Accelerator will provide early- to mid-career faculty with the know-how and experience to form and lead effective teams.**

A Continuum of Collaborative Structures



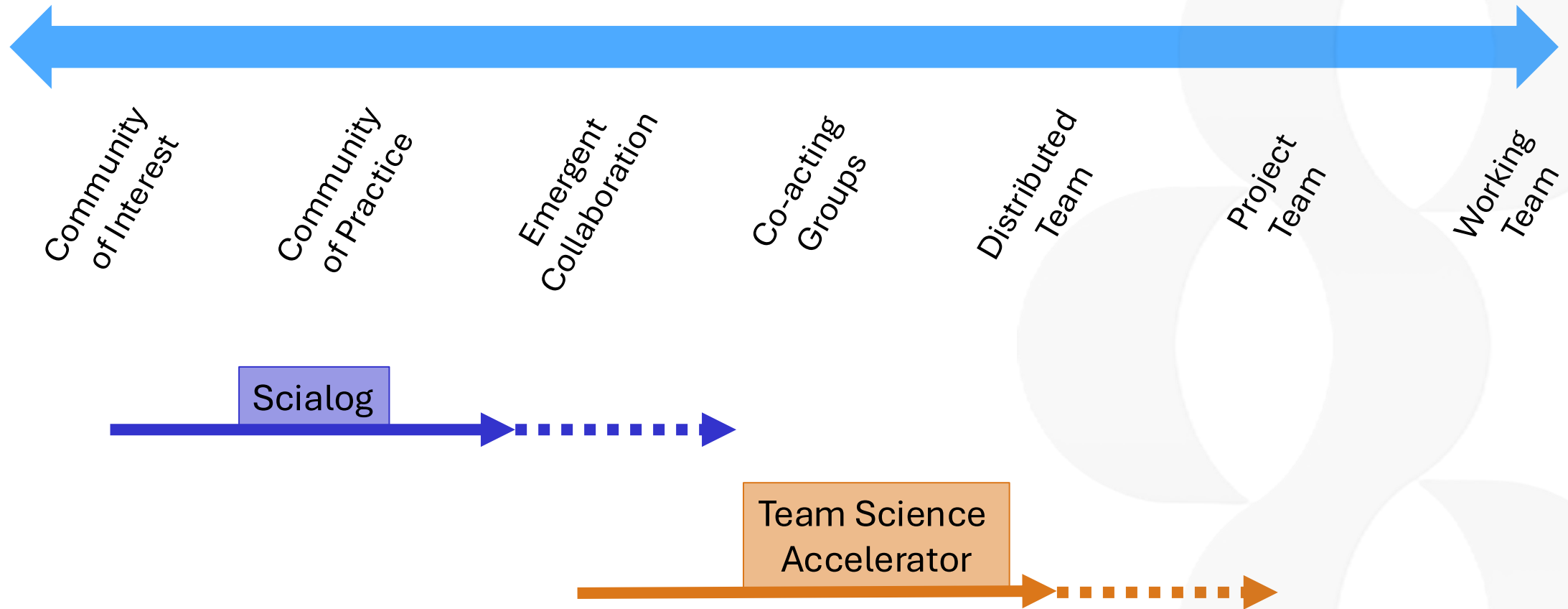
Most academic collaborations (and Scialog Projects we have funded) function as co-acting groups at best

Co-acting Groups: set of people who work in parallel but do not exhibit collective accountability for the work product

Project Teams: formed to accomplish a specific task; share some accountability; typically time- or scope-limited and disband at the end of a discrete project or work product

Working Teams: have defined tasks and retain responsibility for work product over time to continuously monitor activities

Accelerator Will Provide Team Supports



What support structures and mindset shifts are required to accelerate the adoption of effective teaming practices?

RCSA's Overarching Hypothesis

Small, interdisciplinary teams will produce breakthrough science and compete successfully for federal awards at rates exceeding those of solo investigators if provided the support structures that allow greater adoption of strong team-oriented leadership.

Setting up Teams for Success

What we expect teams need to succeed:

- Motivation to pursue a break-through scientific project with an interdisciplinary team of their choosing.
- Willingness to adopt disciplined goal-setting and team-leadership practices with shared accountability and decision-making.
- Understanding of necessary skills and tools: free to deploy AI and computational tools as the science demands to accelerate their work.

Why now?

What it takes to succeed in the physical sciences is changing rapidly, due to political, funding, and technological changes.

Why is RCSA doing this Now?

1. Decades of grantmaking experience targeted at advancing science and the careers of early-career researchers
2. Builds on and enhances the strengths of our existing programs
3. RCSA's size and agility will allow us to adapt in real-time as we experiment with the support structures that will make our grantees successful in the pursuit of their scientific goals
4. Willingness to share our findings to achieve scalable results

Metrics for Success

Overarching measures for RCSA's pilot.

1. National interest and participation
2. Team and leadership development
3. Early hallmarks and leading indicators of scientific impact
4. Model validations through external evaluations of the program

Measures for the teams themselves.

1. Research impact
2. Adherence to team practices
3. Publications, datasets and follow-on support
4. Community building - teams influencing peers and sharing effective practices

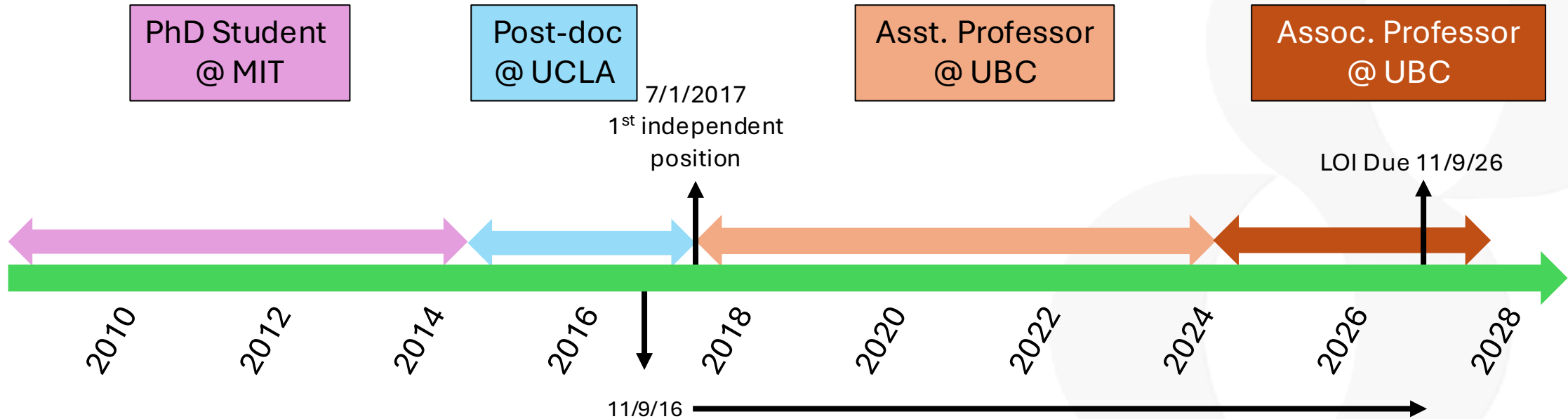
Program Elements for Finalists and Grantees

- Pre-work for the 8-10 teams designated as finalists.
- 2.5-Day Workshop
 - social science on traits of highly effective teams and team coaching to develop team charters
 - further development of the scientific aims
 - Pitch presentations on the science and how the team structure will enhance or reinforce the teams inherent strengths
- Access to disciplinary specialists who have led successful scientific teams
- Professional team coaching during the first year of the project
- Accountability check-ins

Eligibility Criteria for All PIs and Co-PIs

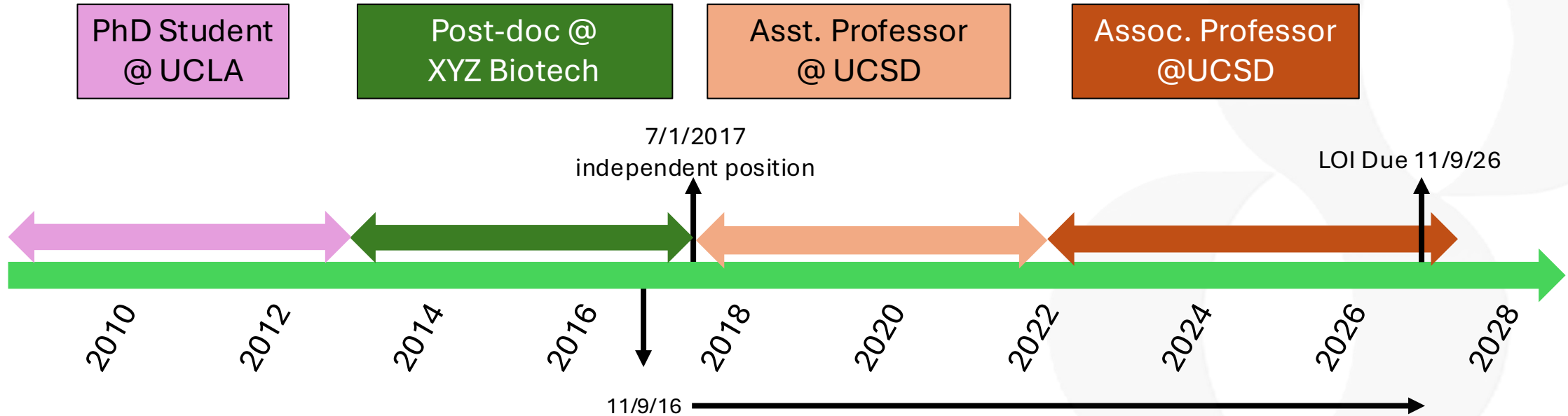
1. Full-time, independent position at a university, national lab, or non-academic research institute in the US or Canada with access to the resources and facilities necessary for the project
2. All team members <10 years of starting their first full-time independent position on the date of LOI submission (e.g., started no later than 11/9/2016)
3. Individuals may only apply as part of a single team
4. Track record of excellence and a clear contribution to the diverse skillset essential for team success
5. Willingness to share openly and learn from peers

Eligibility Case Study 1



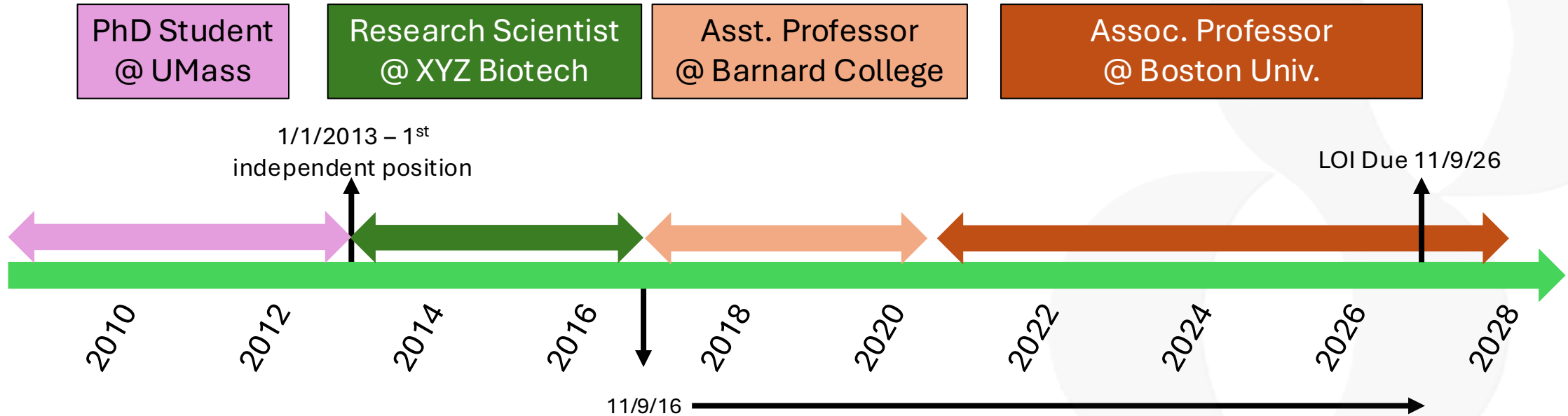
**This individual IS eligible
<10 years since hired into their first independent position**

Eligibility Case Study 2



**This individual IS eligible
<10 years since hired into their first independent position**

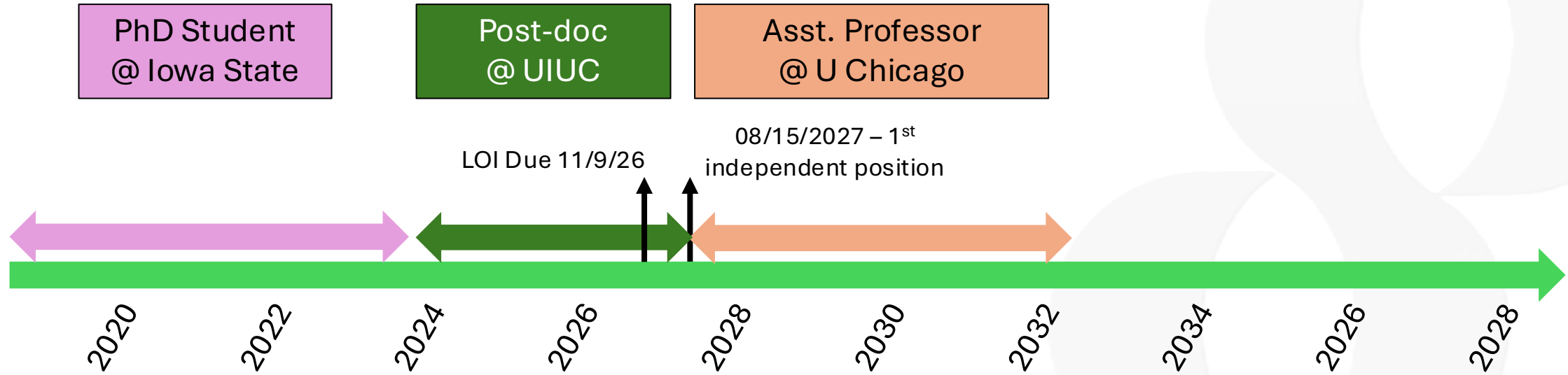
Eligibility Case Study 3



**This individual IS NOT eligible:
>10 years since hired into their first independent position**

Could substitute – Research Scientist @ LBNL or ANL, yielding the same eligibility outcome

Eligibility Case Study 4



This individual IS eligible:

0th-year faculty member who has already accepted a full-time position at time of LOI submission; has not yet started, but will before the grant start date

While the individual is eligible, this may or may not be a great fit for this program as establishing a new laboratory may make it hard to completely fulfill requirements for team integration and success

Eligibility Criteria - Teams

1. All PIs and co-PIs must meet individual eligibility requirements
2. Complementary interdisciplinary team of 3-5 investigators
3. Investigators can be at one institution or different institutions
4. There are no limits on the number of teams or team members from any given institution
5. Proposing work toward a problem in basic physical sciences and their adjacent fields or subdisciplines, including but not limited to: chemistry (including biochemistry and chemical biology); physics (including biophysics and astrophysics); materials science (including quantum materials, magnetic materials and materials required for advanced energy solutions); Earth and planetary science; and astronomy
6. Set bold but achievable scientific milestones
7. Communicate your proposed governance structure
8. Strong orientation toward the cohort, willingness to share and learn from peers

Required LOI Materials

1. Science Impact Statement – 200 words max.
2. AI use statement – 200 words max.
3. LOI in PDF Format – 2 pages maximum – PDF format
4. Team governance statement – 1 page maximum – PDF format
5. Biosketches in NIH/NSF/CCV format – Merge individual documents into single PDF
6. Current and Pending Support in NSF format – merge into single PDF for PI and co-PIs
7. Clock extension statement (optional) – if requesting extension of “<10-year requirement”

Science Impact Statement

- This statement needs to WOW the readers!
- What are the implications for the successful completion of this project?
- Think Big – Be Bold
- Remember that this award is catalytic. You are not meant to complete your big vision in 2 years with \$1M, but you will need to show hallmarks of a successful idea
- Do not include any identifiable information regarding the team or the institutions at which team members work

Letter of Intent – Please Address 4 Questions

1. What is the scientific challenge the team will address and why is it important?
2. What will it take to solve the scientific challenge?
3. Why is it critical to overcome this challenge now?
4. Why does this team represent the right collection of interdisciplinary people and skills to meet the challenge?

Review Process and Timeline

1. LOI Submission Nov. 9
 - First pass at LOIs will be done blind to individuals and institutions – Is the problem sufficiently important?
 - Full LOI review to yield 8-10 finalist teams
2. Finalists named – Early February
3. Convening for finalists in Tucson - June 21-23, 2027
4. Finalists submit grant materials ~ July 1, 2027
5. Grantees Notified ~ Aug. 1, 2027
6. Start of Work – Sept. 15, 2027

Future Events and LOI Office Hours

1. Webinar - noon -1 pm Pacific Friday 9/11
 - Will largely repeat what we just discussed
 - Feel free to refer colleagues to attend who missed today's event
2. LOI Office Hours
 - Sessions on 9/25 and 10/19
 - Designed to answer questions for teams who have already self-assembled and are actively working on LOI documents

Use QR Code for more information and to register for events:



Additional questions may be directed to afeig@rescorp.org

Questions and Discussion?



If we did not get to your question, reach out to me at: afeig@rescorp.org