

1. Creating and Maintaining Partnerships

This toolkit provides guidance for creating a partnership among different organizations to address a common goal.

Outline

1. **Describe the multiple organizations that have come together in common purpose.** Who are you and why is a coalition needed to accomplish your purpose?
 - a. Name the problems or goals that have brought together multiple organizations in common purpose.
 - b. Describe who you are or what groups you represent. Include:
 - i. Who is represented in your group, including those most affected by the issue
 - ii. Why and how is the group in a position to make a difference
 - c. Describe why creating a partnership is needed to accomplish your goal. Some possibilities include:
 - i. Your organization's efforts cannot effectively accomplish your goal
 - ii. The problem or goal is complex and is influenced by multiple factors
 - iii. Related agencies are duplicating efforts and thus resources are not being used to their potential
 - iv. Your goal is significant improvement in community-level outcomes and multiple sectors of the community will need to be engaged for success

- d. Why is a partnership needed to accomplish your goal?

Related resources:

[Analyzing Community Problems](#)

[Defining and Analyzing the Problem](#)

[Involving People Most Affected by the Problem](#)

[Identifying Targets and Agents of Change: Who Can Benefit and Who Can Help](#)

[Coalition Building II: Maintaining a Coalition](#)

2. **Assemble the coalition's (group's) membership**, keeping your broad goals in mind:
- a. Identify those who need to be involved in order to accomplish your anticipated goals:
 - i. Who in the community that you are serving can be effective in bringing about change in areas affecting or being affected by the issue or problem?
 - ii. Who is already involved in the formation of the collaborative partnership and what roles are they playing? What roles need to be filled or created and who might best fill them?
 - iii. Where would these members be found?
 - iv. Why would you choose one or another individual or organization? What resources would they bring to the table?
 - v. Is this the right time for them to be recruited to join the coalition?
 - vi. How could they be involved in the collaborative partnership's planning and activities?
 - vii. What potential barriers exist to recruiting these partners, and what strategies can help overcome those barriers?
 - b. Compile a list of candidate individuals or organizations to be involved and review it to check for completeness.
 - c. Recruit emerging leaders in the community as a rich source of perspectives, knowledge, and clout. Go beyond often-tapped formal leaders, to "informal" ones, leaders among volunteers, leaders from both the organized and "developing" sectors of the community, and leaders among youth, elders, the poor, and people with disabilities who bring often overlooked capabilities to the common work.
 - d. Indicate how you would connect with potential partners and approach them regarding membership.

Related resources:

[Coalition Building I: Starting a Coalition](#)

[Developing a Plan for Increasing Participation in Community Action](#)

[Promoting Participation Among Diverse Groups](#)

[Involving Key Influentials in the Initiative](#)

[People Most Affected by the Problem](#)

3. **Outline your partnership's vision and mission** with the assistance of your newly assembled partners and community members affected by the issue or problem.
- a. Vision - summarize your coalition's dream for the future. The vision should be:
 - i. Easy to communicate to potential new members.
 - ii. Uplifting and inspiring, clearly communicating your hopes for your community.

- iii. A reflection of the perspective of the community it represents.
- b. Mission - state your collaborative partnership's mission. It should include:
 - i. A statement of what it is going to do and why.
 - ii. Widely inclusive language to avoid limiting potential new members and strategies with which to bring about the vision.

Related resources:

[An Overview of Strategic Planning or "VMOSA" \(Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans\)](#)

[Proclaiming Your Dream: Developing Vision and Mission Statements](#)

4. State the objectives or goals, needed resources and relationships to accomplish your objectives, and key agents of change in the partnership.

- a. Summarize the anticipated results of the group's activities. What would be different in your community when you have reached your goals? Who will have what done by when?
- b. Review evidence that the problems or goals that the coalition has chosen to address are important to the community.
 - i. Describe community-level indicators you will utilize. Indicate the levels (incidence or prevalence) of behaviors or outcomes that relate to your goal or area of concern.
 - ii. Explain how often it occurs in the community.
 - iii. Illustrate how many people are affected by it and to what severity.
 - iv. Describe other past or current attempts to bring about change.
 - v. Explain the possible impact and/or consequences of achieving your goal.
- c. Identify available resources and relationships that will be needed to bring about change.
 - i. Predict what financial and personnel resources will be needed to accomplish the goal. What resources are already available and which will need to be obtained?
 - ii. Name leaders in the community. Who is influential in the community and how can your collaborative partnership build a relationship with them?
 - iii. Describe how networks are organized within the community and how you plan on utilizing them to intervene in the community.
 - iv. Research the community projects currently in progress. What does this tell you about what the community sees as valuable and what clues does this provide that might help you be successful?
- d. Determine who the target populations are you most want to affect and those in your community whose actions can influence them, either directly or indirectly.

Related resources:

[An Overview of Strategic Planning or "VMOSA" \(Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans\)](#)

[Creating Objectives](#)

[Understanding and Describing the Community](#)

[Collecting Information About the Problem](#)

[Obtaining Feedback from Constituents: What Changes are Important and Feasible](#)

[Gathering and Using Community-Level Indicators](#)

[Identifying Community Assets and Resources](#)

[Creating a Business Plan](#)

[Involving Key Influentials in the Initiative](#)

[Identifying Targets and Agents of Change: Who Can Benefit and Who Can Help](#)

5. **Re-examine the group's membership in light of your vision, mission, and objectives.** Who else needs to be at the table? How can they contribute to the collaborative partnership's success and help it reach its goals? Reconsider the questions for number 2 above.

Related resources:

[Coalition Building I: Building a Coalition](#)

6. **Describe potential barriers to your partnership's success and how you would overcome them.**

Some common barriers include:

- a. Competition or turf issues - Who can you include that would ease turf issues among potential partners and within the community? How might you build greater trust and respect among partners? How might you ensure mutual benefit?
- b. Bad history between local agencies or with the community - What has happened in the community previously (or in prior collaborative efforts) that makes it harder for partners to work together successfully in a new effort? How can bad feelings and mistrust be resolved?
- c. Dominance by "professionals" within the coalition and in relationships with the community - How do you encourage "non-professional" partners, including those most affected by the issues, to see their unique contribution and agree to participate in planning and decision making
- d. Poor links to the community - How could the group's members increase their connectedness to the community most affected by the issue? Who and in what activities can they engage to improve local ties?
- e. Minimal organizational capacity - How will the collaborative partnership's organizational capacity be increased? What skills and time do members need to create a more efficient and effective partnership?
- f. Funding (too much or too little) - What strategies are being used to financially sustain the effort and are there more effective ones? How can we avoid having the opportunity for funding, such as a new grant, tear apart working relationships?
- g. Failure to provide and create leadership within the group - How can new members be encouraged to step up as leaders within the collaborative partnership? How can leadership skills and opportunities be cultivated among unconventional or overlooked candidates?
- h. The perceived costs of working together outweigh the benefits - How can we reduce the costs or increase the benefits of participation in the project by partners and community members? What barriers can be eliminated or overcome?

Which of these barriers exist for you? How might they be resolved?

Related resources:

[Understanding and Describing the Community](#)

[Coalition Building II: Maintaining a Coalition](#)
[Promoting Participation Among Diverse Groups](#)
[Involving People Most Affected by the Problem](#)
[Organizational Structure: An Overview](#)
[Developing a Management Plan](#)
[Developing Facilitation Skills](#)
[Developing a Plan for Financial Sustainability](#)
[Developing a Plan for Building Leadership](#)

7. Identify what financial resources will be needed to support the group's activities and infrastructure.

- a. Create a budget to determine what immediate and future resources will be needed. Include:
 - i. All projected expenses (e.g., salaries, office expenses, rent, utilities and phone expenses, equipment).
 - ii. All projected income - based on current sources of funding and incorporating known changes.
 - iii. Projected gap between expenses and income (e.g., what shortfalls are predicted).
- b. Use the anticipated budget to:
 - i. Evaluate the financial resources needed to sustain the programs and services of the initiative.
 - ii. Stimulate creative ways in which resources other than money could be generated and from whom in order to meet some of the anticipated expenses.
 - iii. Prioritize which programs and services the initiative wishes to address are the most important and/or cost-effective ways to meet the group's goals.
- c. Identify potential sources of funding and support, including in-kind support from members' organizations.
- d. Form a committee to acquire appropriate resources. What members would you include?

Related resources:

[Developing a Plan for Financial Sustainability](#)
[Planning and Writing an Annual Budget](#)
[Developing a Committee to Help with Financial Sustainability](#)

8. Describe how the coalition will function as an organization and how responsibilities will be shared among partner organizations.

- a. Formation of your collaborative partnership may result in the partner organizations interacting with each other in new ways and with different levels of shared resources and responsibilities. Possible relationships include:
 - i. Networking - In networking relationships, organizations exchange information in order to help each other do a better job.
 - ii. Coordination - In coordinating relationships, organizations modify their activities so that they can provide better services to their constituents, in addition to sharing information.
 - iii. Cooperation - When organizations cooperate, they share resources to help each other do

- a better job, in addition to coordinating their efforts.
- iv. Collaboration - In a true collaboration, organizations help enhance each other's capacity to do their jobs, above and beyond just cooperating. Collaborating organizations transition into seeing each other as partners, versus competitors. They share the risks, resources, and responsibilities of doing the work.
 - v. Multisector collaboration - Multisector collaborations are made up of private, public, and nonprofit organizations (and "ordinary" citizens) from different parts of the community who form a partnership to address problems and goals in their community. Organizations engaging in this kind of collaborative relationship must put aside the narrower interests of their own organization and focus on the common good of the larger community

What form of relationship or level of interaction do you anticipate the organizations involved in your effort will share?

- b. Prepare your organizations to successfully work together by:
 - i. Clearly defining the purpose and scope of the project - How can you do this better?
 - ii. Clarifying how working together will benefit each partner/organization and advance its own interests and constituents - What will each gain?
 - iii. Describe the roles and responsibilities of each participant and make sure mechanisms for communication and joint accountability are in place.
 - iv. Anticipated roles and responsibilities
 - v. Planned mechanisms for communication and accountability
 - vi. Foster respect and trust among key players to support the level of risk and interdependence involved in the project and to promote a healthy working relationship among partners. What steps can you take to promote healthy working relationships within your organization?

Related resources:

[Promoting Coordination, Cooperative Agreements, and Collaborative Agreements Among Agencies](#)
[Developing Multisector Collaborations](#)

9. **Describe the structure the collaborative partnership will use to do its work.** Structure will allow your partnership to function more efficiently and effectively.
- a. Three elements are necessary to designate, regardless of the organizational structure
 - i. Some form of governing structure for decision making
 - ii. Rules by which the organization will operate
 - iii. A planned distribution of work
 - b. Consider the characteristics of your group and its membership in determining the formality of its structure. Questions to take into account:
 - i. What is the current stage of the organization's development?
 - ii. Are there are prior relationships among the members?
 - iii. Is there prior membership experience in working together on other projects?

- iv. What is the motivation level of members to be part of the organization?
 - v. How many tasks or issues does the coalition want to address? How broad or focused is the purpose?
 - vi. What is the organization's size?
 - vii. What is the organization leadership's level of experience?
 - viii. How urgent is the need for action?
- c. Describe the organizational structure which best serves your collaborative partnership's needs and operating strengths. Several common structures and their characteristics include:
- i. Steering Committee (i.e., group of people who get things started)
 - Generally formed to steer an organization or committee at its inception
 - May be responsible for developing the organization's vision and mission statements, action plans, later organizational structure, and funding base.
 - Should dissolve once the initial work/planning is complete. If it is still in existence six or more months after the formation of the organization, it becomes a coordinating council.
 - ii. Coordinating Council (i.e., Executive Committee)
 - Fulfills many of the same responsibilities as a steering committee in addition to coordinating the coalition's activities.
 - Acts as a director or program coordinator by modifying broad organization-wide objectives and strategies in response to input from individuals or committees.
 - iii. Advisory or Supporting Committee (i.e., ensure necessary guidance, support, and resources)
 - Primarily acts as a guide for the organization through its members knowledge of the community and the issue - it may or may not have any actual power.
 - Oftentimes it will lend its prestige and influence in the community to the cause when necessary.
 - More common in an initiative that is primarily the work of one charismatic or visionary individual who may need resources and support, but wants little guidance.
 - iv. Board of Directors (i.e., provide overall support, advice, and resources)
 - Functions as a governing body of the organization, but does little coordination.
 - Generally elects a president or chair, vice-president or vice-chair, secretary/clerk, and treasurer. Committee chairs and others may also be part of a larger executive committee.
 - Works with staff to set policy for and oversee general functioning of the coalition, including:
 - Managing financial operations through the treasurer.
 - Hiring, firing, and supervising the director (if there is one) and supervising operations of the organization.
 - Making sure the mission and philosophy of the coalition are maintained.
 - Being legally responsible for all actions of the organization.
 - If there is no paid staff or the organization is a volunteer one, it may do some or all of the implementation work of the coalition.
 - v. Task Forces (i.e., those who work together around broad objectives)

- Consists of members who work together around broad objectives, such as child immunization or reducing youth violence.
 - Members are chosen based on their interest in a particular issue.
 - Although a coalition may have multiple task forces to address different objectives, all objectives relate back to the original vision and mission.
- vi. Action Committees (i.e., those who take action to bring about changes sought by the organization)
- Formed to do the actual work of task forces and bring about specific changes in programs, policies and practices.
 - Action committees are often formed around the sectors in which members will be working (e.g., health, schools, business, government/law enforcement, faith community) .
 - Members carry out the action steps to achieve the collaborative partnership's objectives and get feedback from community members

Which of these forms of operating structures will best meet your organization's needs and goals?

Remember, choosing an organizational structure now does not mean it will remain in that form forever. As the coalition grows and changes with time, the partners may want to revisit the organization's structure and modify it to increase its current effectiveness.

Related resources:

[Organizational Structure: An Overview](#)

[Choosing a Group to Create and Run Your Initiative](#)

[Developing an Ongoing Board of Directors](#)

[Developing Multisector Task Forces or Action Committees for the Initiative](#)

10. Describe how the group will maintain momentum and foster renewal.

- a. Indicate how the group will assure the 6 R's for maintaining engagement of all participants:
 - i. Recognition - People want to be recognized for their contributions.
 - ii. Respect - People want their values, culture, ideas, and time to be respected and considered in the organization's activities.
 - iii. Role - People want a clearly defined role in the coalition that makes them feel valuable and in which they can make a contribution.
 - iv. Relationships - People want the opportunity to establish and build networks both professionally and personally for greater influence and support.
 - v. Reward - People expect the rewards of participating in a collaborative partnership to outweigh the costs and to benefit from the relationships established.
 - vi. Results - People respond to visible results that are clearly linked to outcomes that are important to them and that they can clearly link to their participation in the coalition.
- b. Promote the importance of "regular maintenance" - regular evaluations of the coalition's vision and progress in addition to emerging issues or problems

- i. Develop the awareness among partners that maintenance is necessary.
- ii. Make a decision to engage in it on a regular basis - perhaps yearly, with more frequent assessments when particular problems arise.
- iii. Design a maintenance plan.
 - Conduct reviews of the collaborative partnership's progress and difficulties, using external consultants or an internal team of selected members.
 - Examine multiple aspects of the coalition, including:
 - Leadership
 - Operating rules and governance
 - Division of labor
 - Plans, short- and long-term
 - Actions
 - Funding, current and planned
 - Visibility and public support
- iv. Increase opportunities for communication among partners or members about their accomplishments and concerns by:
 - Encouraging feedback at regularly scheduled meetings.
 - Conducting retreats of staff or teams.
 - Creating a space in daily communication for personal difficulties or dissent.
 - Asking about performance or suggestions for improvement via mail, e-mail, or telephone.

Related resources:

[Building and Sustaining Commitment](#)

[Providing Incentives for Staff and Volunteers](#)

[Day-to-Day Maintenance of an Organization](#)

11. If your coalition is beginning to lose momentum in achieving its goals or member numbers are diminishing, **review current barriers to your success.**
- a. Describe potential barriers or opposition to your partnership's success and strategies to overcome them (#6 from above)

Which of these barriers exist for you? How could they be resolved?

- b. Determine if your current membership is hampering your success, either because the right people are not involved or your numbers are not large enough.
 - i. Describe how your current membership maybe hampering your success, such as:
 - ii. Not enough current members to do the necessary work of the coalition.
 - iii. Certain sectors of the community with crucial knowledge and history of the issue or problem are not currently involved (e.g., representatives from local government, schools, businesses, youth organizations, elders).
 - iv. More connections with other organizations trying to accomplish similar goals are needed to strengthen your base of support and resources.

Are any of these statements descriptive of your current coalition or partnership? Which ones?

Related resources:

[Developing a Plan for Increasing Participation in Community Action](#)

[Involving Key Influentials in the Initiative](#)

[Involving People Most Affected by the Problem](#)

12. If necessary, **revisit your plan to identify and recruit new or additional members.**

- a. Now that you are actively engaged in the effort, identify those you want to partner with to help broaden or strengthen your coalition's impact:
 - i. Who else in the community that you are serving can be effective in bringing about the vision and mission of the coalition?
 - ii. What roles are currently unfilled or need to be created and who might best fill them?
 - iii. Where would these new members be found?
 - iv. Why would you choose one or another individual or organization? What additional resources would they bring to the table?
 - v. When is the right time for them to be recruited or to join the coalition?
 - vi. How should they be involved in the coalition's planning and activities?
 - What potential barriers exist to recruiting these new partners, and what strategies can help overcome those barriers?
 - Compile a list of potential candidate individuals or organizations to be involved and review them with the current membership to check for its completeness.
 - Nominate those within current membership who may have connections with potential new partners and ask them to approach them regarding membership.
 - Increase the level of commitment and motivation among current partners and community.
- b. Re-examining who has not been asked to participate
 - i. Engage those who are most affected by the problem - Who else needs to be engaged in order for you to be effective?
 - ii. Consider whether your organizational structure and meetings discourage participation from those you wish to involve (e.g., meeting hours and venues are easily accessible to those who work or use public transportation). What characteristics of your organization may be discouraging participation and how might they be modified?
- c. Outline different ways that individuals or organizations can be involved. For example:
 - i. Involvement in the planning processes - creating goals or defining the problem.
 - ii. Donating financial resources or time to conduct fundraising activities.
 - iii. Volunteering for office work, phone calling, mass mailings.
 - iv. Doing research and/or writing grant proposals.
 - v. Attending public events like rallies, community hearings, fundraising events.
 - vi. Serving on committees focused on specific problems or activities of interest.
 - vii. Taking leadership roles in a community partnership with like-minded organizations.

What members or organizations might become more involved if engaged in one or more

of these tasks?

- d. Identify potential obstacles to participating. What affects participation?
- i. Inadequate communication - people may not be aware of opportunities to be involved
 - ii. Limited experience with collective action - individuals may not know what will be expected of them.
 - iii. Preconceptions and attitudes - organizations may already have had experiences that lead them to doubt the efficacy of participating.
 - iv. A history of being ignored - subsequently, people are less likely to try to change things.
 - v. Resistant leaders - community members may doubt that they will be listened to or that influential leaders already have their minds made up about the issue.
 - vi. Sense of powerlessness - the complexity of politics and the problem is intimidating and seems beyond the capacity of members to change.
 - vii. Lack of time, transportation, and child care makes participation difficult.
 - viii. Over-committed or overbearing leaders or members - if certain participants try to do most of the work, others will feel undervalued and unneeded.
 - ix. Committees are too large for efficient decision making - break into smaller groups.
 - x. Poor organization of existing action groups in the community - those who are interested in the issue your coalition wants to address are already working on it elsewhere, need to coordinate with already existing organizations.
 - xi. History of unproductive meetings - people are skeptical from past experience with efforts that did not produce results.

*Which of these obstacles might be affecting participation levels in your organization?
What steps can you take to remove them?*

- e. Motivate current and potential partners to become and remain involved:
- i. Remove as many obstacles as you can identify from the list in 12)c.
 - ii. Get to know each person in the collaborative partnership - their uniqueness and the talents they bring to the table.
 - iii. Utilize each participant's and organizations' strengths and make them aware of how their participation is helpful and important to the coalition's success.
 - iv. Recognize why community members became involved in the first place - for self-esteem and friendship, to have a genuine influence on the issue, to take control of their community environment, to be recognized.
 - v. Promote self-confidence - recognizing and appreciating each person's individuality and contribution to the collaborative partnership's efforts.
 - vi. Match each person's talents, skills, knowledge, and experience to appropriate projects and efforts to enable their success.
 - vii. Get or remain organized with well-defined plans, goals, and purposes so the members of the coalition feel like they are heading toward an achievable goal.
 - viii. Keep a positive attitude and promote good communication with and among partners and their organizations.

What actions will you and other members take to ensure partners become involved and stay motivated?

- f. Characterize the current level of collaboration among partner organizations and explore if modifying it will bring about greater success - Review #8 above, considering past history of working relationships among members and organizations within your coalition and community.

Does your effort's current form of partnering maximize the organization's effectiveness, based on current resources and divisions of responsibility among collaborating partners? If not, how might you change to increase your success?

- g. Consider the possibility that, since beginning your coalition, your efforts have created opposition. Determine who is opposing your efforts, what their tactics are, and how to respond.
- i. Ask who will lose if your intervention succeeds or your objectives are met. Who will lose money, power, influence, or time and resources?
 - ii. Project how much power anticipated or identified opponents have in the community. What do they have power over? Resources? Support from others? Political decision-making?
 - iii. Identify what tactics they are using to oppose your efforts. These may include:
 - Deflecting - opponents could divert the issue to a lesser side issue or pass off the responsibility to someone with no real power.
 - Delaying - they could say they are addressing the problem and then do nothing.
 - Denying - opponents maintain your claims and proposed solutions are invalid.
 - Discounting - your opponent may minimize the importance of the problem and/or your legitimacy as a change agent.
 - Deceiving - they may deliberately mislead your group about their taking meaningful action when in fact they have no intention to do so.
 - Dividing - opponents may promote dissent within the group's members.
 - Dulcifying - your opponent may try to appease your group or those affected by the problem through offers of jobs, services, and other benefits.
 - Discrediting - they may try to cast doubt on your motives and methods.
 - Destroying - opponents may try to destabilize or eliminate the collaborative through legal, economic, or scare tactics.
 - Dealing - they may offer a deal or a mutually acceptable solution.
 - Surrender - the opposition may agree to the coalition's demands.

What tactics are being used by your opponents or detractors?

- iv. Choose how you will deal with the opposition. Useful techniques include:
 - When planning your actions, anticipate potential opponents and meet with them to convince them either to join you or not actively oppose you.
 - Meet with opponents to discuss your differences and clarify possible

- misunderstandings which could be the basis of their opposition.
- Create a solution that meets both organizations' needs and shared interests.
- If attacked, turn negatives into positives by putting them on the defensive or using their attacks to gain sympathy from the community.
- Openly label your opponent's tactics and use them to rally your member's and community's support.
- Clearly frame the debate around how your group views the issue, not your opponent's point of view.
- Use multiple response strategies to keep them off-balance.
- If your opponents honestly seek solutions to the problem also, you may decide it benefits you both to work together.
- Know when to negotiate and how to read your opponent's willingness to do so.

How will your organization respond to opponents' tactics?

Related resources:

[Developing a Plan for Increasing Participation in Community Action](#)
[Methods of Contacting Potential Participants](#)
[Involving Key Influentials in the Initiative](#)
[Involving People Most Affected by the Problem](#)
[Involving People Most Affected by the Problem](#)
[Overview of Tactics for Modifying Access, Barriers, and Opportunities](#)
[Participatory Approaches to Planning Community Interventions](#)
[Recruiting Volunteers](#)
[Developing a Plan for Increasing Participation in Community Action](#)
[Developing a Plan for Communication](#)
[Learning From and Contributing to Constituents](#)
[Overview of Tactics for Modifying Access, Barriers, and Opportunities](#)
[Conducting Effective Meetings](#)
[Building and Sustaining Relationships](#)
[Promoting Coordination, Cooperative Agreements, and Collaborative Agreements Among Agencies](#)
[Developing Multisector Collaborations](#)
[Identifying Opponents](#)
[Overview of Opposition Tactics: Recognizing the Ten D's](#)
[How to Respond to Opposition Tactics](#)
[Establishing Formal Communication and Requesting Participation](#)
[Reframing the Issue](#)

13. **When maintaining the coalition at its current level is no longer appropriate or feasible, consider other alternatives.**
 - a. Growing
 - b. Spin off another coalition
 - c. Change focus

- d. Merge with another, like-minded organization
- e. Cut back
- f. Simply dissolve the coalition.

Is your coalition functioning most effectively at its current level or do you anticipate need for change? What kinds of change would be appropriate?

Related resources:

[Coalition Building II: Maintaining a Coalition](#)

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