



Developing Goals and Strategies for Target Areas



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1. Introduction

As traditional funding sources become more and more limited and needs increase, many grantees have looked to place-based planning to focus their investment efforts and to do more with less.

Place-based planning focuses on the revitalization of an area through building on its assets and leveraging complementary investments to generate a larger overall impact. Working with community partners to define and coordinate strategies as well as leverage other funding resources creates a critical mass of investment to propel revitalization forward.

Place-based planning is more than just targeting funds to a particular area. It requires thinking about the specific needs of a place and how best to address them. Grantees may identify community-wide priority needs in their Con Plan. How they address these needs in different areas depends on the specifics of the place.

Often grantees feel pressure to spend HUD funds in the areas with the greatest needs, whether they are the neighborhoods with the most poverty, the most disinvestment, or often both. While grantees may feel compelled to invest in areas where others will not, they are hard-pressed to maximize the impacts of HUD funds in areas where several million dollars of investment may be only a drop in the bucket.

Consistent with emerging community development best practices, industry leaders are encouraging grantees and planners to invest in areas that have assets to build on so that the federal investment can be a catalyst for change.

That is not to say that grantees should turn away from the neighborhoods with the highest level of housing and community development needs. Rather, this approach suggests that other types of investment—such as building the capacity of community organizations, business owners, and institutions to work together—may make more sense and lay the groundwork for future investment.

Many grantees feel compelled to spread their Con Plan funds around the community to ensure each neighborhood gets its fair share. Grantees may take this approach because they have spent their money this way in the past, because political forces demand it, or because they think it is the fairest way to allocate funds.

No doubt HUD funds have greatly affected and improved peoples' lives. But when HUD funds are combined with other resources and invested in areas chosen through focused, disciplined strategies, they can benefit people AND transform neighborhoods. Intervening at a scale that is commensurate with the magnitude of the challenge is often critical to success. The smaller the geographical area targeted by a grantee, the easier it is to intervene at the right scale to generate a transformative impact.

Examples of HUD place-based planning efforts:

Con Plan Geographic Priorities

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs)

Promise Zones

Choice Neighborhoods

Sustainable Communities

Grantees do not need to commit to long-term investment in only a few neighborhoods. Instead, grantees should focus on a three- to five-year timeline that corresponds with their consolidated planning cycle. With each Consolidated Plan, a grantee may reevaluate whether continued investment in existing target areas is merited or whether other areas are now suitable for investment.

Deciding where to target funds can be challenging for grantees. Ideally, place-based planning occurs where there is a convergence of need, opportunity, and capacity. The consolidated planning process can facilitate this assessment by providing a forum for analysis and discussion about where to invest funds. The grantee will need to determine the appropriate number and size of target areas in accordance with the available funds, the needs of the neighborhoods, other investment taking place in these neighborhoods, and the potential for investments to have a transformative impact.

Data analysis is often the first step when selecting target areas. The eCon Planning Suite and CPD Maps offer grantees tools for analyzing data in different geographic areas within their jurisdictions. In addition, the Reinvestment Fund has developed a Market Valuation Analysis tool for HUD that is designed to help grantees evaluate market data for potential areas to determine whether sufficient opportunities exist to support targeted investment.

Grantees should establish evaluation criteria for potential target areas that include data points as well as other factors. For example, these criteria may include upper or lower thresholds for the percentage of low- and moderate-income persons or the percentage of units in substandard condition in the area. The grantee may want to focus on areas that are undergoing changes, such as areas that have outpaced overall population growth or are along a new transit line. The grantee should include criteria

Impacts of Place-Based Investment

The impacts of strategic, place-based investment can be illustrated by the following example. Imagine that a grantee allocates \$250,000 in homeowner housing rehabilitation funds that can be used anywhere within the jurisdiction boundaries. That investment will benefit the 40 or so people living in the 12 units receiving assistance, and maybe the effects will spill over to the neighboring properties, inducing a modest amount of neighborhood pride on each block where the work was done.

Now imagine that the grantee took the same \$250,000 and invested it in a homeowner housing rehabilitation program in a small downtown neighborhood with deteriorating housing conditions. In the same neighborhood, the sidewalks were recently reconstructed as a result of a neighborhood petition led by one of the active community organizations. The grantee rehabilitates four houses on the same block and others on streets that intersect the block on which the first four houses are located. At the same time, the grantee and a community organization coordinate to turn a vacant lot near the rehabilitated houses into a small park and community garden. The grantee also uses its relationships with local lenders to help the fledgling business association secure funds to support commercial façade improvements in the neighborhood. As a result of these combined investments, the whole neighborhood benefits. On an individual level, homeowner wealth increases with property values and economic opportunity grows. The quality of life improves for all neighborhood residents.

that indicate the level of need in the area, opportunities to leverage other investments, and partner capacity. The results of data analysis should be further informed by community observations and perceptions.

When planning for a place, community involvement and input is essential from beginning to end. The community must be engaged at the outset to encourage people to join the discussion while ideas are being formulated rather than after decisions have been made. If a grantee engages the community only after it has worked out a plan, it runs the risk of appearing disingenuous and alienating the community. By engaging the community early in the process, grantees have a better chance of creating community-level support and ownership of the plan—as well as essential input to help ensure the plan responds to community needs—increasing the likelihood of success.

Questions to Ask



Identifying Potential Target Areas

- What criteria do we want to establish to identify potential target areas?
- Are there thresholds that every target area should meet?
- Are these criteria firm or will we make exceptions?
- Given the amount of funding available, how many target areas can we afford to invest in?

Selecting a Target Area

- What are the principal housing and community development needs in each of the neighborhoods in our community?
- Do the needs in the community line up with the priority needs identified in the Consolidated Plan?
- Where are other investments taking place (private and public)?
- What community organizations are working in these areas and which one(s) would be a strong partner(s)?
- What target area is needed to ensure that our investments have a transformative impact?

Shifting to Targeted Investment

- How do we engage the community in a conversation about why it makes sense to target funds?
- How and when will we approach the communities that we are considering as target areas?
- Who should we speak to before approaching the community?
- What types of investment are appropriate for their areas?
- Who would be left out if we focus spending in target areas?
- What would be the target community's likely concerns?

Tools to Use

[CPD Maps and Housing and Economic Development Widgets](#)

["Market Valuation Analysis" tool developed by The Reinvestment Fund](#)

[Matching Priority Needs with Activities*](#)

[Using Data for Consolidated Planning*](#)

[Using Stakeholder Input in Consolidated Planning*](#)

[Citizen Participation and Consultation Toolkit](#)

*These tools are part of the Maximizing Investments Toolkit.



2. Creating a Vision

Creating a vision for the target area, while not specifically required in the Consolidated Plan, is an important first step in place-based planning. A vision can help a grantee imagine the target area as a healthy vibrant place and then assess what it would take to get it there.

Establishing a vision provides a framework for an investment strategy by organizing the efforts of multiple players toward a common goal. This helps with decision-making as well as the coordination of complementary activities by multiple actors. The vision can serve as a guidepost for selecting and aligning goals, strategies, and activities. A vision can also help guide the activities of partners.

What Informs a Vision for an Area?

A vision should be informed by what makes a community function well. It should consider dimensions such as the socioeconomic conditions, the built environment, local services, and community vibrancy and values. When developing a vision, people should consider what makes the area unique or special today and how to sustain those characteristics in the future. A vision for the future should build on current assets but also be forward-looking. What type of community do residents want to see in three to five years and how can this vision build on and deepen the strengths of the community?

The Community's Role in Developing a Vision

Engaging the public and community groups is essential to creating a vision. After all, it should be their vision.

Gaining a deep understanding of existing community conditions is essential for identifying assets to build on and challenges the community wants to address. Grantees can learn about the current state of the community through many sources (e.g., data analysis, surveys, and interviews with key

stakeholders, including community organizations, business owners, and school and government officials). Focus groups are a good way to collect anecdotal information about the primary needs and concerns of community residents as the grantee can collect several perspectives at once and the format encourages the cross-fertilization of ideas.

Developing a vision involves engaging in a discussion with the general community. Entering into this discussion after spending the time to learn about the community gives the grantee a springboard for asking residents what they most value about their community and what they would like to change. This information helps the grantee determine assets to build on and where to focus efforts to create change.

A visioning process can be designed in several ways and what works in one community may not work in another. When considering whom to involve to lead the process, the grantee should prioritize organizations with credibility in the community because they can generate enthusiasm and help sustain momentum.

Elements of a Vision

A vision can be a paragraph or two or an illustration that depicts what the stakeholders see as elements of a healthy, vibrant community. Typically, communities develop multifaceted visions that consider key aspects that contribute to the quality of life, including the built environment, employment, services, recreational opportunities, social and economic characteristics, and community cohesion. These visions usually correspond with long-term goals (10 to 20 years).

For example, the city of Chicopee, Massachusetts, developed the following vision statement to guide the redevelopment of the RiverMills site:

“The City of Chicopee envisions the creation of a mixed-use, energy conscious, walkable community integrated within the historic framework of Chicopee Falls. With expanded business and job opportunities and new living options for residents, redevelopment will reconnect the neighborhood to its rich environmental context while re-forging links between Chicopee Falls and Chicopee Center...”¹

However, a community may want to create a vision focused on one particular aspect of community life illustrated by the following hypothetical vision statement:

The community of OurNeighborhood envisions a pedestrian-friendly business district where people can move easily along sidewalks and feel safe crossing the street.

By developing a vision that has a singular focus, the community can focus on achieving one manageable goal within the near term (one to three years). (The hypothetical example above will be used throughout this guide to illustrate the relationship between vision, goals, strategies, and activities.)

1 City of Chicopee, Vision Statement, <https://www.chicopeema.gov/page.php?id=2046>.

Questions to Ask



Imagining a Healthy Vibrant Community in the Future

- Who will live there?
- What will people be doing?
- Where will people work?
- What will the surroundings look like?
- What will make the area unique?
- What will the community value?

Tools to Use



eCon Plan Template

[CPD Maps and Housing and Economic Development Widgets](#)

Field visits

[Matching Priority Needs with Activities*](#)

[Using Stakeholder Input in Consolidated Planning*](#)

[Citizen Participation and Consultation Toolkit](#)

*These tools are part of the Maximizing Investments Toolkit.

3. Establishing Goals

After the community creates its vision, the grantee should work with the community to formulate goals that clarify the outputs and outcomes the community hopes to achieve in working toward its vision for the Consolidated Plan, it is important to create goals that are achievable within the term of the plan (i.e., within a three- to five-year time frame).

Outputs are specific products or deliverables, such as the number of housing units rehabilitated or the miles of roadway repaved and widened. Outcomes are the effects of those products or deliverables, such as reductions in exposure to lead paint or a reduction in traffic congestion in the downtown corridor.

If a community's vision is for a pedestrian-friendly business district, but the community's roads and sidewalks are in poor condition and impede mobility, the grantee and community might set a goal to reconstruct all of the sidewalks in the business district (an output) or increase pedestrian traffic by 25 percent (an outcome).

By involving the community in formulating its goals, the grantee will have a better sense of the community's priorities and will gain support for the action plan it develops to achieve these goals. If a community supports the action plan, it will be easier for the grantee to implement.

Goals should be clear, well written, and include specific milestones that make it easy for the grantee to measure progress and determine whether the goal has been achieved. Grantees may want to consider using the SMART method to formulate their goals. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Time-based. For example, a SMART outcome-based goal for improving pedestrian traffic in the business district might read:

Within five years, the city will increase pedestrian traffic in the OurNeighborhood business district by 25 percent through the improvement of multi-modal transportation infrastructure.

At regular intervals, grantees should monitor progress toward the goals and note any factors that impede progress. If ongoing issues occur, the grantee should re-evaluate whether the goals are realistic and make any necessary adjustments.

Questions to Ask



Formulating Goals

- What changes are necessary for the community vision to become a reality?
- What specific outcomes do we want our investments to achieve?
- What identified community needs do we want to address?
- What can we learn from our past investments about what is feasible to accomplish?
- Who will our investments benefit?
- How will their lives improve?
- How and when will we measure progress?
- How will we know when we've achieved our goals?
- What will we do if we are unable to achieve our goals?

Tools to Use



[Matching Priority Needs with Activities*](#)

[Writing Measurable Goals*](#)

[Using Stakeholder Input in Consolidated Planning*](#)

[Using Reports to Assess Progress and Inform Planning*](#)

[Citizen Participation and Consultation Toolkit](#)

*These tools are part of the Maximizing Investments Toolkit.

4. Moving from Goals to Strategies

The next step is for the grantee to determine what it will do (i.e., its strategies) to achieve its goals. Often, available funds are insufficient to achieve what the grantee and the community might want to accomplish. The grantee should develop strategies that reflect its programming priorities and work toward the achievement of its goals. A grantee should think about how its strategies will result in outcomes or outputs that will support the community's vision.

Grantees should consider linking strategies to create a comprehensive approach to revitalization, focusing on multiple approaches that operate together to generate a transformative impact. Consider the “domino effect.” If a grantee invests in one area, it should consider how that investment may have ripple effects. For example, if the grantee is successful in increasing pedestrian traffic in the business district, then the businesses will have more customers. Furthermore, if the grantee were to work in concert with the local chamber of commerce or business community to establish a “shop local” campaign, this could further improve the health and vibrancy of the business district and stimulate private investment that would further increase pedestrian traffic.

Figuring out the necessary level of community and political support and how to get it is critical to the implementation of any place-based strategy. In this respect, the process of developing and vetting strategies is as important as the final strategies adopted. Strategies can be developed by grantee staff, but they should be vetted with community partners, including elected officials and the public, to assess feasibility. Not only is community support important, but often the community may identify issues or challenges that affect how a strategy may be implemented.

Linked together, strategies create a roadmap for achieving the grantee's goals. For example, some strategies that our hypothetical grantee might develop to increase pedestrian traffic in the OurNeighborhood business district by 25 percent in five years may include the following:

- Reconstruct sidewalks along Main Street in the OurNeighborhood business district.
- Construct bike lanes along Main Street in the OurNeighborhood business district.
- Work with business owners and community organizations to develop a “shop local” campaign.

Some grantee strategies may support the achievement of more than one goal. For example, by structuring projects to include community partners, the grantee may not only achieve the project goal but also build the partner's organizational capacity.

Place-Based Strategies Help Communities Achieve Their Goals



Scenario 1

\$250,000 housing rehabilitation program assists 12 units jurisdiction wide



Scenario 2

\$250,000 housing rehabilitation program assists 12 units in target area where there are other complementary investments



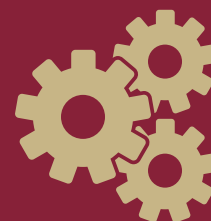
Questions to Ask



Developing Strategies

- What will we do to achieve our goals?
 - What is our capacity to do these things?
 - How will the community benefit from our doing this? How can we expand the benefits?
 - What negative consequences might result from our action? How might we mitigate them?
- What strategies will leverage other initiatives in the area?
- What investment choices will we need to make to support our strategies?
- What will we do to tie our strategies into an overall investment approach?
- What will we do to spur other investment?
- What are the critical ingredients for success?
- How will we measure the effectiveness of our strategies?
- What will we do if our strategies are not as effective as we thought they would be?

Tools to Use



[CPD Maps](#)

[Deciding Which Activities to Fund*](#)

[Using Stakeholder Input in Consolidated Planning*](#)

[Citizen Participation and Consultation Toolkit](#)

*These tools are part of the Maximizing Investments Toolkit.

5. Implementing Strategies

When developing strategies, a grantee should consider the specific programs or activities that will help it implement them. These might be existing programs, funding sources, partner relationships, regulatory tools, community assets, or public awareness. Typically, grantees use several programs or activities to implement a strategy. Some are described below.

Existing Programs

Grantees often spend a lot of time and effort designing activities or programs to meet the needs of community residents. These may range from development projects to service provision. However, as time passes, some programs may become less effective or outdated and need rethinking. Furthermore, in the case of place-based planning, a general program design may need to be customized to the target area. Refining existing programs in light of a grantee's goals is a useful approach for implementing a grantee's strategy.

Funding and Partnerships

As a funder, grantees may use a request for proposals (RFP) process to select activities that support its goals and strategies. For example, grantees may award bonus points to activities that are located within the target area.

As a partner, a grantee may be able to leverage funds from other sources, such as other government sources, foundations, and corporations. The grantee should communicate any strategy changes with partners and collaborate on how to work together in the future. Grantees should always be looking for new partners as well. The Consolidated Plan Consultation Process is a helpful way for grantees to connect with new partners. Grantees should consult with existing and potential partners as part of the strategy development process whether it takes place during the consolidated planning process or outside of it.

Regulatory Tools

Place-based investment gives grantees an opportunity to focus on a neighborhood, business district, or similar geography holistically instead of viewing a community solely through the lens of human need. That means observing the built environment, economy, housing, schools, employment, transportation, recreation, services, and identity.

Given the holistic nature of place-based planning, grantees should consider whether regulatory tools are available that could support or influence the grantee's goals and strategies. These tools may include inclusionary and general zoning provisions, such as home-based businesses and accessory apartments; Complete Streets initiatives; code enforcement; affordable housing incentives (such as property tax abatements or credits); and anti-discrimination laws.

Grantees should consider other planning efforts and initiatives under way in the target area and seek to connect to them. For example, if a neighborhood plan was recently developed by the municipality's planning department, the grantee's target area strategies and activities should complement the plan and vice versa.

Community Assets

Just as the community should identify assets it would like to build on when creating a vision, the grantee should consider the community assets it can leverage when developing and implementing strategies. Ideally, grantees should invest in areas where other public and private investment is taking place. This is one way grantees can maximize the positive impacts of HUD funds.

Grantees should consider community assets, such as transit lines; retail activity; schools; services; employers; government and private institutions; community character; and strong community organizations, including churches. For example, when reconstructing sidewalks, a grantee may want to target a neighborhood close to transit lines. This would ensure that residents have a safe and accessible path of travel to buses or trains that may be improving the property values and personal wealth in the area. Another example may be grantee investment in a grocery store in a struggling but active retail district, thereby increasing foot and automobile traffic in the district and benefiting existing businesses.

Public Awareness and Support

Grantees should look for opportunities to invest in projects and activities that resonate with residents. This is not to suggest that grantees should not invest in viable and important projects that do not have broad community support, but rather that grantees should leverage public momentum when it is appropriate to do so.

For example, grantees could build on public attention directed at supporting local businesses through a “shop local” campaign by creating a commercial improvement program or business loan program that is designed to assist businesses in the area.

Questions to Ask



Implementing Strategies

- What existing program designs are effective? Which do we need to adjust?
- How will we target funds to support our strategies?
- Who are our high-capacity partners?
- Which organizations and potential funders share our values and goals?
- What individuals and organizations have influence in the target area?
- How will we use the local government tools, such as zoning and coordination between municipal departments, to support our strategies?
- How will we leverage community assets?
- What other planning efforts and initiatives are under way in the target area? How will we connect to them?
- What other local or regional efforts or initiatives will we be able to use to create public awareness and support for our strategies?
- What makes this community and target area special? How will we take advantage of community traits and assets?
- How will we obtain the input of community residents and partners?
- How will we present our strategies to the public to encourage their support?

Tools to Use



[CPD Maps](#)

[Weighing the Value of Projects and Activities*](#)

[Using Reports to Assess Progress and Inform Planning*](#)

[Evaluating Subrecipients to Optimize Performance*](#)

[Deciding Which Activities to Fund*](#)

[Using Stakeholder Input in Consolidated Planning*](#)

[Citizen Participation and Consultation Toolkit](#)

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6. Identifying Activities

When developing strategies, grantees should carefully consider how they will implement them. Grantees will need to identify specific activities to undertake to help them implement each strategy and achieve their goals.

A grantee outlines its activities in the Annual Action Plans that accompany the Five Year Consolidated Plan. Each Annual Plan identifies the projects and activities the grantee will undertake during the program year to carry out its strategies.

When planning activities, a grantee should consider both its internal and external capacity to implement them. Internal capacity comes from within the grantee agency or department

Vision	A bustling business district
Goal	Increase pedestrian traffic by 25%
Strategy	Reconstruct sidewalks
Activity	Work with DPW to design new sidewalks and issue RFP to hire contractor

and includes the staff's ability to manage projects and programs, leverage and manage funds, and oversee partners. External capacity is the ability of grantee partners, including subrecipients as well as other actors (i.e., other municipal agencies or nonprofits), to do the same. If a grantee finds that it does not have sufficient internal or external capacity, it should find ways to build capacity through technical assistance, such as trainings, webinars, peer-to-peer learning, manuals, and other technical assistance products that may assist the grantee and its partners.

When designing activities, the grantee should determine who will undertake them, when they will be completed, and what results are expected. In addition, the grantee should identify any supports the implementer will need to carry out the activities successfully. Supports may include other funds, in-kind contributions, technical assistance, and policy changes.

Responsible entity	Department of Public Works
Action to undertake	Reconstruct sidewalks on Main Street
Expected outputs	2,300 linear feet of new sidewalk and ADA compliant curb cuts
Timeline	8 months beginning April 2015
Supports needed	\$400,000 CDBG Funds \$1.2 million local funds Parks Department to donate and plant trees in new tree wells Commitment from local business improvement district to clean and maintain sidewalks post-construction

Grantees should intentionally link activities within the target area and foster coordination across groups responsible for implementation. Regular meetings of municipal staff overseeing the activities and regular check-in meetings with stakeholders are two basic ways that grantees can ensure that activities are coordinated. Peer-to-peer progress reports and collaborative problem-solving is essential for creating ownership and accountability across the participating organizations. The grantee should aim ultimately to create a cohesive team of target area investors working in concert.

Questions to Ask



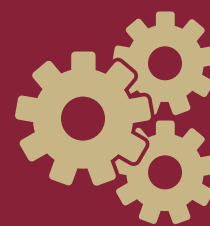
Assessing Capacity

- What has worked well when we have implemented similar activities in the past? What were some of the challenges?
- Who will implement the activities?
- What institutional support will we need?
- What political support will we need?
- Do we have enough staff to implement and oversee activities?
- Will our staff or partners need training?
- How can we use technical assistance and peer-to-peer networking to strengthen the capacity of target area community organizations?

Identifying and Implementing Activities

- How will we decide which activities to implement?
- How will we leverage other funds and resources?
- How will we solicit partners?
- How will we create an organizational infrastructure to effectively implement our programs?
- How will we work with other municipal departments?
- Which community organizations will we collaborate or consult with when implementing activities?

Tools to Use



[Using Stakeholder Input in Consolidated Planning*](#)

[Deciding Which Activities to Fund*](#)

[Weighing the Value of Projects and Activities*](#)

[Using Reports to Assess Progress and Inform Planning*](#)

[Evaluating Subrecipients to Optimize Performance*](#)

[Thinking About Implementation When Planning*](#)

[Improving Performance with Process Mapping*](#)

[Assessing Capacity with SWOT Analysis*](#)

*These tools are part of the Maximizing Investments Toolkit.

7. Assessing Progress

Once a grantee's projects and activities are up and running, the grantee must monitor interim results, troubleshoot issues that arise, and refine strategies as needed.

The grantee will need to establish systems for project and activity evaluation and measurement. Grantees, as well as subrecipients, should prepare quarterly reports that track progress and identify any barriers or obstacles to achieving target outputs. When thinking about what data to collect, grantees should consider what different measures will tell them.

Grantees should consider the administrative costs of tracking and analyzing information and be strategic about their use of measures. Data that are exceptionally difficult to collect may not be worth tracking. It is unlikely the grantee will receive timely, reliable, and informative data if collecting it is too burdensome.

Collecting and analyzing data alone is not sufficient oversight. Grantees will need to create a feedback loop to ensure that evaluation results are delivered to the appropriate staff. Grantees also will need to determine and communicate any necessary activity or strategic adjustments. Information gathered from evaluations should inform future goal-setting and strategy development.

Questions to Ask

Measuring Progress

- What are the critical milestones we must achieve for this project or activity to succeed?
- What measures will we use to assess our productivity?
- How frequently will we review our progress?
- What outputs will come from implementing our strategies?
- What positive and negative outcomes do we expect will result from the implementation of our strategies?
- Who should the information go to once we have completed our evaluation?
- How should this information be used when soliciting partners for future projects and activities?
- What changes should we consider to our strategies and activities based on the results of the assessment?



Tools to Use



[Weighing the Value of Projects and Activities*](#)

[Using Reports to Assess Progress and Inform Planning*](#)

[Evaluating Subrecipients to Optimize Performance*](#)

[Using Stakeholder Input in Consolidated Planning*](#)

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