

Rubbish:

Your views on how to beat the waste mountain



RECAP Partnership: Project communications and method

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Executive summary

RECAP has a high performance waste management strategy which requires maximum stakeholder support in its development. RECAP recognized that consultation and effective communication was vital to ensuring the continuing improvement in recycling performance and waste minimisation across the RECAP region.

There was a need for a clear and concise strategy to ensure that all target audiences have been consulted and their comments and feedback taken into account to inform the process of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS), due for revision in spring 2007. This and other ongoing initiatives collectively aim to continue improving performance against statutory targets whilst dealing with waste in a sustainable, affordable and responsible manner.

This document summarised the approach to encourage public and stakeholder group participation (community and voluntary sector, waste industry and private sector and local government and public sector) using methods that have been successfully applied around the UK and can be readily understood at all levels and by all sectors of the community, reflecting the RECAP region.

The core aim of this document was to set out a framework managing the consultation process within this project, in a way that attained a balanced and rational discussion. A process of positive engagement was necessary to support the drive for further improvements to public participation in recycling initiatives within the RECAP region, supported by the other stakeholder groups.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

A key focus of the government's strategy for tackling the waste problem in England is the need for a clear communication strategy, implemented both nationally and locally, which combats lack of public awareness of the seriousness of the waste problem.

Central government is responsible for disseminating information and the development of the national communication strategy, while local authorities are given the tasks of providing advice and implementing the strategy in the context of local needs and also promoting sustainable waste management practices. Part of RECAP's role is to: "Actively encourage our communities to reduce and recycle waste material, through a programme of ongoing education and engagement."

This project and communication plan built on the work previously done during the earlier "RECAP Rubbish: The problem on your doorstep"^{1,2} public consultation exercise, and sought to identify the areas where consultation could go further to achieve maximum impact on maintaining and improving performance. This project set out to achieve a balanced engagement not only with the public, but with equal emphasis on the other three stakeholder groups, namely:

- Community and voluntary sector
- Waste industry and private sector
- Local government and public sector

1.2 Role of the project communication plan

This Project Communication Plan was designed to support that aim and to encourage public and business support and positive action to improve waste minimisation, management and disposal. The Project Communication Plan explains how the community was involved in – and how they could influence – the development of the approach for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Understanding the key audiences was critical to overall success of the communications plan, and Section 5 summarizes the key stakeholder groups and subgroups. Different audiences have particular information needs which must be recognized. Similarly, the key messages of the communications plan were also of vital importance. These key messages gave coherence to the overall plan and helped to build on the recycling brands already being developed across the region, and are included in Section 3. Section 4 describes the process for the development of the actions plan which was consulted upon.

The communications plan comprises a number of key tasks, as described in Section 6 and shown in the programme in Appendix 1.

1 CRS, 2006. Rubbish the Problem on your doorstep. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership Public Consultation Report.

2 CRS, 2006. Rubbish the Problem on your doorstep. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership Questionnaire Report.

2 Communication in the waste industry

2.1 Importance of effective communication

Effective communication and education are widely acknowledged as central to delivering national waste minimisation and management targets.

A considerable amount of research has been carried out over the past few years into exactly what works in terms of communicating the waste message. Reports published by DEFRA, the National Waste Awareness Initiative, Waste Watch and MORI, among others, all stress that effective communication is essential and offer useful pointers about the approach to take, for instance the need for accessible language, clear and simple messages and 'gritty' images. Advice from regional agencies such as Government Office for the East of England (GOEAST) may also be helpful.

The experience of a range of established and successful regional and sub-regional waste partnerships has been particularly inspirational, demonstrating the clear benefits of working in partnership with a common strategy in delivering incremental improvements in public awareness and commitment. Pooling resources and ideas, creating a clear brand and focused ongoing communication and education initiatives are all proven cornerstones of a successful approach.

The RECAP area encompasses approximately 315,000 households³, which represents a very significant audience. Public participation is vital. If the public do not support this by what they do, not just what they say, despite the strategy, RECAP will be unable to continue improving their recycling and composting performance.

2.2 Waste industry exemplars

Perhaps the classic example is Hampshire's Project Integra – viewed as a good practice exemplar throughout the waste industry – and set up in 1993 by the 14 councils in the county, after consultation to see how residents wanted them to deal with the waste management problem. Successive joint campaigns and ongoing work to establish a network including Parish Councillors, community groups and education which has raised awareness, encouraged personal action and increased understanding about the need for unpopular facilities.

Another fruitful area of research that has highlighted many useful techniques is incentive or "carrot and stick" initiatives. Recent research carried out for DEFRA is inconclusive as very few schemes yet have quantifiable results, however it does seem that incentives do help to encourage participation, as long as they are supported by effective communication.

Interesting ideas include:

- London Borough of Barnet's 'compulsory recycling' scheme
- Blaby in Leicestershire charging for larger bins and side waste sacks, to schemes where recycling is rewarded with tree planting or money for schools, cash back and prize draws.
- East Staffordshire, for instance, a member of the Staffordshire Joint Waste Management Board, promotes the use of bring sites by paying wards and parishes £12 per ton of recycled material to be spent on the local community.

The carrot and stick approach may have a role to play in the RECAP region although consulting on examples such as bin charging schemes are likely to be politically sensitive.

3 As recorded in 2004 by the Cambridge County Council Research Group

2.3 Objectives for communication

Effective communication and education programme is essential to:

- Make sure the right messages reach the right target audiences
- Win hearts and minds by increasing awareness and understanding
- Persuade people to take positive action to manage their waste responsibly
- Raise funding and support for initiatives
- Overcome problems and adverse reaction
- Engage many types of organisation for future opportunities for collaboration

3 Key messages

3.1 Key RECAP message

The core message described the need for continued and expanded public participation, increasing diversion from landfill, meeting current and future statutory recycling targets and minimising the cost of waste management across the region sustainably. Collectively these efforts to maintain current high performance, and to increase recycling and recovery would further establish the RECAP partnership as an exemplar for waste management. It was therefore necessary to develop new and existing waste minimization campaigns. It was intended that maximum stakeholder engagement would inform and shape the reviewed JMWMS during 2007.

3.2 Key aspects of the RECAP message

In addition to the key message in paragraph 3.1, RECAP had 10 core values developed through this project, which should be accentuated through the consultation events and materials for this project. All of these key consultation messages focused on a given aspect of waste management designed to explore how it may be addressed to potentially improve recycling performance across RECAP, within the context of the following priorities:

- Continuing to promote waste minimisation and prevention
- Sustaining and increasing recycling, recovery and composting
- Achieving diversion of biodegradable waste from landfill

It was the potential to improve performance which was considered critical.

Principally these key aspects were:

- Using rewards and incentives for community projects
- Explain the benefits and explore means of waste prevention
- Range of materials collected/accepted and markets for recycle and recycled products
- Opportunities for collection of hazardous household wastes
- Potential for trade waste recycling including biodegradable wastes
- Common enforcement policy opportunities
- Increasing recycling capture rates through improved communication, improved access for hard-to-reach properties, improved support for composting and improved HWRC access
- How to optimise connection with high waste producing households and/or low recycling households including monitoring and data needs
- Options for performance feedback to communities
- Schools and recycling
- Developing partnerships with community, business and local government sector groups

The method, perspective and importance of each of these aspects varied according to which of the four key audience groups were being addressed. This tailoring of the key messages to each of the key groups is outlined in Section 4.

3.3 Branding, identity and message

The success of established regional and sub regional waste management partnerships and national organisations and initiatives that have strong identities and key messages, such as 'Sort it' and 'Slim Your Bin'. These examples show the importance of establishing a unique brand for RECAP. This approach was supported by the findings of research on the subject exploring what works in communicating the waste management and reduction messages.

The branding of consultation materials for this project should be developed by the communications officers at RECAP to ensure continuity with existing initiatives. A range of supporting information resources such as website, information sheets, posters and leaflets, was produced jointly between RECAP and Atkins which was made available to RECAP partners, its partner organisations and local networks.

4 Development of actions to be consulted upon

This consultation and other ongoing initiatives collectively aim to continue improving performance against statutory targets whilst dealing with waste in a sustainable, affordable and responsible manner. In developing the action plans this project continued to reinforce the RECAP recycling brand and contributed significantly to the further development of the partnership and to champion the identity of the region as a whole.

At the start of this project the RECAP partnership undertook an extensive exercise across all the districts to develop a full list of actions which centred on the aims of the waste management strategy. The list of actions had to undergo an evaluation exercise under the direction of Atkins with the council officers to result in a focused set of action plans which could be delivered in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Owing to their “excellent” status, a full SEA was not a statutory requirement for the RECAP partners; but the Partnership recognised that an approach which uses some of the principles of SEA was a valuable tool for ensuring good practice, enhancing consultation and formalising the processes that lead to effective strategy development.

Atkins devised an evaluation matrix based on standard criteria (environmental, social, economic, protects human health and cost benefits etc) with proposed weighting factors. The list of objectives and indicators from Cambridge and Peterborough’s SA of minerals and waste was combined with Atkins own list and was considered an appropriate starting point. Atkins undertook a scoping exercise to ensure development of a targeted, carefully defined and appropriate set of objectives that simplified the process while ensuring it was robust and transparent. A key consideration was that the outputs had to be capable of being understood by all decision makers and stakeholders and therefore most effective in informing such parties. This approach was approved by RECAP and undertook several stages of scoring, checking and approval by RECAP and the partnership officers.

A secondary screening exercise was necessary to assess the practical aspects of the actions now being proposed. This was undertaken by the RECAP and the officers under Atkins overall co-ordination and checking, assessing three components:

- Likelihood of being effective – does the action really achieve RECAP strategy objectives and targets?
- Resourcing – could the resources be available to support this action?
- Cost impact – would make it prohibitive or not?

This use of the secondary screen focused the partnership onto those options which had scored highest on this exercise resulting in the final agreed list which is attached in Appendix 2.

5 Key audiences

5.1 Context

It was necessary to recognise that some individuals and organisations within each of the four stakeholder groups would have the highest potential for influencing the overall positive or negative press coverage and wider public perception of the RECAP recycling project.

This meant that specific methods needed to be devised to appeal to the different tastes, interests, attitudes and needs of the different groups. How these different audience groups were managed within this project is described in this Section of the report. However further information in this regard was also collected through the stakeholder workshops, and RECAP's partners – both current and future – to inform the partnership as to how to cascade this information to their established networks. Their respective specialist expertise and what works for their target group was invaluable for future communication. Gaining insights into the best methods for communicating with each of these stakeholder groups was one of the key objectives of the workshops.

Successful implementation of the communication strategy depends on developing new partnerships to take full advantage of external funding, resources, expertise and existing networks available.

Contractors (drawing together both private and community sector organisations) as identified during the 2005 public consultation were invited to separate workshops.

5.2 Public consultation

Market Opinion and Research International (MORI) has carried out wide ranging research into how people perceive waste management and ways to influence public perception. Their findings showed that kerbside recycling collection has to be accompanied by an effective communication and education programme. The public is sceptical about the commitment of packaging manufacturers and central government to solving the waste problem. In general local councils are viewed as pulling their weight, although common complaints relate to efficiency of collection and management.

The best received concepts:

- Had very challenging images and language side by side
 - “Give a toss” with an image of a can being thrown into a bin;
 - “You might be surprised at the cost of convenience foods” with an image of a landfill site
- Were ‘enjoyed’ by the audience
- Used analogies
 - “Your town produces enough waste to fill Wembley Stadium”
- Used very simple, clear and concise statements, assuming absolutely no knowledge on the part of the reader
 - “1/3rd of your waste is recyclable paper; 1/3rd is compostable”

In addition:

- Messages need to be positive – we can – not accusatory and surprising good facts are important
- It is essential to tackle contagious apathy and doorstep syndrome – it doesn't affect us and we can't do anything anyway. There is a need to show how the individual will benefit from collective good.
- A series of localised, tailor-made campaigns that reflect the needs of individual regions, under the banner of a national umbrella campaign work best.

RECAP is firmly committed to equality and accessibility in all their work and the waste communication strategy is no exception. This will help build trust and understanding and form new, important partnerships in reaching all its target audiences.

5.3 Private sector and waste industry stakeholders

The waste industry by its nature has a need to communicate effectively with a wide range of audiences, from government of all kinds, through pressure groups and others in the industry to local communities. It is therefore potentially a very powerful and important ally for RECAP in disseminating the waste management message. The private sector is also a key target audience in its own right.

It was considered important to form partnerships or establish relationships with the different companies and organisations to explore opportunities for help or support for RECAP and to implement joint initiatives. RECAP intended that industry partners would play an active role in regular public education initiatives.

The regional business, community and voluntary sectors are best reached through existing networks. It was important to learn from the experience of these existing groups and organisations in reaching their members and target groups and to respond positively to offers of support and opportunities for proactive communication.

Within the private sector there is a high level of understanding of the technical and other issues, and people drawn from these groups can usually cope with very detailed information. It is important to develop a sense of rapport with the private sector by highlighting what opportunities there are and 'how things could be implemented'.

5.4 Voluntary sector and community stakeholders

As with the private sector, it was essential to form partnerships or establish relationships with the different voluntary and community organisations to explore opportunities for help or support for RECAP and to implement joint initiatives. RECAP's strategy was to engage these community partner groups for future initiatives. The community and voluntary sectors were best reached through existing networks, by forming strategic links to individuals who can act as portals into their various organisations. Identifying these individuals and keeping them informed as part of the ongoing community sector engagement needed to be resourced and coordinated.

Existing organisations specialising in spreading the waste management message, such as WRAP, Waste Watch, ENCAMS, the National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISIP) and Keep Britain Tidy Campaign were also potential partners to help reach RECAP's target audience.

Environmental national and international pressure groups such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and Earthscan all rank waste among the major global issues that need to be tackled and they campaign actively for solutions. In 1992, the City of Amsterdam created Afval Energie Bedrijf (AEB), a waste-to-energy enterprise that operates as a self-contained entity but is owned by the City. AEB's mission was to recover as much energy and materials as possible from municipal waste while protecting the environment. Earthscan endorsed AEB's work in Amsterdam through a case study for instance.

The most effective way to reach and influence them was to identify ways to persuade them to endorse areas of RECAP's work that are innovative or demonstrate best practice – in the way Earthscan endorsed AEB's work in Amsterdam through a case study for instance; devising and implementing an innovative and demonstrably effective incentive scheme could be another.

5.5 Public sector and local authority stakeholders

As with the private and community sectors, it was essential to form partnerships or establish relationships with different public sector organisations to explore opportunities for help or support for RECAP. RECAP sought to engage these public sector partner groups for future initiatives.

Relationships with regional and local government would mainly be managed through regular contact using established networks and fora, although it was important to develop new relationships as opportunities arise. As previously, the public sector was reached through existing networks, by forming strategic links to individuals who acted as portals into their various organisations. Identifying these individuals and keeping them informed as part of ongoing engagement which will require some resourcing and coordination.

Regionally there are a number of important fora and organisations which could be utilised in future, including:

- East of England Regional Assembly which functions as the regional Local Government Association (EERA)
- Government Office for the East of England (GOEAS)
- Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC)
- East of England Regional Technical Advisory Board on Waste (RTAB)
- East of England Regional Centre of Excellence

The Associate Parliamentary Sustainable Waste Group, which brings together members of parliament and key stakeholders in the waste industry, offers a useful route to influence Members of Parliament. Other national initiatives include the National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISIP) and DEFRA Waste Implementation Programme team.

Another way to reach regional and local government is through their trade publications. Future relationships could be developed with the key publications and items responding to their particular editorial criteria provided.

6 Tasks, methods and how to utilise the results

6.1 Overview

This project continued to establish the RECAP recycling brand and the further development of the partnership. Instead of focusing on each council's singular identity, RECAP continued to emphasise each partner's common goals and to champion the identity of the region as a whole. By acting as a group, sharing ideas and initiatives and building partnerships, networks and mutually beneficial relationships, RECAP's members sought to overcome the usual problems of limited publicity to ensure "real clout" and demonstrably effective outcomes.

The process of public consultation occurred before the other stakeholder consultations and was designed to raise awareness, inform and explain and to win consensus on the way forward. The public consultation element took place during February and March 2007. The aim of this phase of the communication strategy – was to invite and record feedback from all target audiences, for consideration during development of the JMWMS in spring 2007. Refer to Appendix 1 for the communication plan programme.

The other stakeholder group workshops were conducted after the public consultation, on 12th March 2007 and aimed to establish partnerships, networks and relationships with a wide variety of organisations. These links will form a basis for effective communication in the future.

The long term communication strategy following on from this project will continue to reinforce and build on the work already done to establish trust and credibility and deliver incremental improvements in public awareness and commitment. The aim will be to ensure a constant flow of initiatives and campaigns designed to reach, inform and engage the partnership's target audiences. The media will be an important channel of communication.

6.2 Public consultation seminars

A RECAP Seminar explaining the key issues and options visited each of the RECAP districts, with one evening session in each area during the period 26th February to 8th March 2007. The aim of the exercise was to collect feedback and reinforce the recycling and waste management messages, as included in the list of actions for public consultation which is included in Appendix 2.

On the day, there was a leaflet to hand out, and a display board with posters to act as a focal meeting point. The RECAP seminars were staffed by a mixture of RECAP staff, waste officers from the respective authorities and Atkins' project waste consultants. Copies of the public questionnaire were also available to the attendees.

The public consultation delegates were divided into approximately four groups of five people to gain maximum comment from each person. By having groups of odd numbers of people it helped the groups naturally reach consensus, as the unbalance forces discussions to reach a conclusion rather than have tied numbers in two schools of thought. This will also give consistency between events.

To maximize the potential number of public consultees who may engage during these seminars, a variety of methods were used to advertise the series of events including:

- Parish clerks where there is an email address/electronic access to disseminate using newsletters, magazines, and or notice boards as relevant
- Local media as identified
- The RECAP website, and the partners websites

- Distribution of posters and leaflets in appropriate council facilities and public places (schools, libraries etc) across the RECAP partnership
- Radio Star FM from 23rd February to 9th March.
- Newspaper adverts in the local weekly newspapers
- Press releases

To gain maximum benefit of producing these resources including the leaflets and posters, any unused materials can be used on a longer term basis, for display and distribution in the same set of public places used during the public consultation. This will avoid waste and continue to raise awareness of the key waste issues, RECAP partnership and how people can get involved in recycling.

6.3 Managing public questionnaire feedback

Questionnaires and poster were produced for distribution to the following:

- Sent in each district according to ACORN profile that was established during waste analysis (1,613 in City, 809 in ECDC, 564 in FDC, 680 HDC, 635 in PCC, 734 in SCDC). Total 5,035 were posted in RECAP Region.
- To all schools in the Green Bag mail out at the County Council
- All Libraries in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- Partnership Council Offices reception areas

The public questionnaire could be completed online by visiting www.recap.co.uk from 16th February to 16th March 2007. The home page of the RECAP website was substituted during this period by a holding page that will give the users an option to answer the questionnaire.

Electronic web hosted public consultation was a user friendly format, which compiled feedback in a database for simple data manipulation and provided user summary statistics by district.

6.4 Community and private sector stakeholder groups

RECAP engaged with the community and voluntary sector and waste industry and private sector stakeholder groups in the same overall way.

Both sets of identified stakeholders were principally contacted by post (but email where possible) and invited to attend a scheduled 90 minute session. Where necessary, follow up telephone contact was required. The letter invitations briefly described the project, the feedback required from the seminar and the structure of the seminar on the day. The overall format of these stakeholder seminars was similar for both of the groups. These events took place on 12th March.

A critical part of scheduling the stakeholder fora was determining suitable dates and venue(s). Similarly, identifying those individuals or target organisations who may wish to send a representative and securing a reasonable level of attendance was important.

At each of the fora, as a minimum, there were RECAP and Atkins representatives present. To be most time efficient, the fora were conducted at the same location, to allow consecutive morning and afternoon sessions. This allowed reuse of the same display board and equipment set up, although there were differences between the discussion areas covered in each session, as developed in the consultation actions spreadsheet.

Each of the sessions started with project introductions, and a short 15 minute PowerPoint presentation, introduced by RECAP and Atkins. A series of short exercises focusing on the relevant prioritized aspects of the 10 key aspects as listed in paragraph 3.3, relevant to the particular stakeholder group were run

to maximize focus on the specific areas of interest, where more detailed information and feedback was required. The aim of this was to achieve highly targeted comments which will be available for the RECAP partnership as a long term resource for strategic waste planning. Feedback on the day was recorded manually using flip charts during the discussions, with any other notes recorded on acetate sheets or similar, so that the stakeholders could see what records of the event are being made.

There were feedback forms for attendees to submit their comments on the day.

6.5 Public sector stakeholders

RECAP has not had time to approach this group and it has been noted as a future area of work that the RECAP Partnership will build into their work plans.

Appendix A

A.1 Communications plan programme

Task	A			B				C			D		
	1/1/07	1/8/07	1/15/07	1/22/07	1/29/07	2/5/07	2/12/07	2/19/07	2/26/07	3/5/07	3/12/07	3/19/07	3/26/07
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Project communications plan													
DRAFT REPORT													
Communication meeting													
Approval during senior officers Group meeting													
FINAL REPORT issued													
Preparation & co-ordination													
Briefing note to publicise public consultation													
Email briefing note to parish clerks for inclusion in as many newsletters/magazines/notice boards as possible													
Draft and arrange local media notices for public consultation													
Local media notices to go out													
Design and plan leaflets													
Design and plan posters													
Printing of leaflets and posters													
Distribution and display of materials													
Draft website information													
Display website information													
Briefing note to publicise stakeholder consultations													
Compile contacts for stakeholder groups													
Public consultation													
Approval of approach in PCP doc													
Book venues													
Preparation for public consultation series													
Huntingdonshire DC													
Peterborough CC													
Fenland DC													
Cambridge City C													
Cambridge CC													
South Cambridgeshire DC													
East Cambridgeshire DC													
Stakeholder consultation													
Private sector and waste industry stakeholders													
Voluntary sector and community stakeholders													
Public sector and local authority stakeholders													
PROJECT COMPLETION													

RECAP consultation stages

- A Setting out consultation approach for approval
- C Public consultation

- B Preparation & coordination
- D Stakeholder fora

Appendix B

B.1 List of actions for consultation

Full list of worded actions developed by RECAP working group for consideration for consultation

Option		Reworded Action
C	Incentives	2 Reward community projects to raise awareness to encourage recycling, waste reduction and increase participation.
		3 Incentives for community or local community groups for areas with an improvement in performance.
D	Increase materials collected for recycling	1 Collect more types of materials at kerbside or at bring sites for recycling subject to market availability and funding.
		2 Ensure markets are available for materials and that there is long term stability for recyclable materials.
		EXTRA The Partnership to explore joint contracts to encourage market stability and market creation.
		EXTRA Improve public awareness of recycled products. Authorities to have buy recycled policies.
		6 Collect household hazardous waste at kerbside or have designated collection points subject to markets (for example batteries and paint).
		7 Trade recycling made a requirement for WCAs.
F	Policy	2 The Partnership to strive to collect similar types of materials for recycling that are consistent with local needs.
		5 Develop common enforcement policies and investigate joint opportunities within the partnership to reduce fly tipping, littering, etc so that we have a cleaner and safer environment.
G	Increase participation and capture rates	1 Improve proportion of properties served (flats and hard to reach properties)
		2 Improve communication
		3 Target high waste producers to encourage lower waste arisings (these are determined through appropriate monitoring methods).
		4 Target residents or areas with low participation (these are determined through appropriate monitoring methods)
		8 Improve frequency of message
		10 Provide performance feedback to communities.
		11 If funding available, provide door knocking to help encourage householders to reduce waste and use infrastructure provided, targeting low performing areas.
		12 School recycling and education
H	Planning	14 Improve HWRC segregation, opening hours and number of sites.
		1 Develop a waste design guide that facilitates new waste infrastructure in new developments in order to maximise recycling and minimise waste.
I	Prevention schemes	1 Provide subsidised home compost bins and/or green cones
		2 Develop partnerships with community sector
		3 Develop formal partnership with community sectors for bulky waste collections
J	Business	2 Develop partnerships and links with commercial private sector to encourage more recycling.
		3 Develop partnerships and links with commercial and private sector to improve proximity principal and develop local recycling markets.

This document has been produced based on Atkins work for RECAP.

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