



Department of

**Finance**

An Roinn

**Airgeadais**

[www.finance-ni.gov.uk](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk)

# Business Plan

## April 2022 - March 2023







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## Ministerial Foreword

We all hoped that as we approached 2022 we would be moving on from Covid and its detrimental impact on society, our health service and the economy. The cost of living crisis is placing enormous strain on our citizens, families and businesses all of whom are trying to recover from Covid and its impact.

During the last year my department has continued to provide critical assistance to businesses. This includes delivering another 12 months rates holiday, providing £224m of support to retail, tourism, hospitality, leisure, childcare and manufacturing businesses across the North, as well as providing £222m in grants for businesses impacted by the pandemic.

While businesses have been able to reopen and trade there is no doubt their recovery is being impacted by the higher cost of doing business with increased fuel and energy costs. Recognising the challenges facing our business community I have maintained the 18% reduction in the regional rate for the second year running, delivered a further £50m rates support package in 2022/23 to give all businesses a one month rates holiday (with the exception of utilities and larger food stores) while retail, hospitality, tourism, leisure, childcare, newspapers and airports will receive a three months rates holiday. I have also extended the Small Business Rates Relief for another year and have reintroduced a more generous Back in Business Scheme to encourage new businesses onto the high street and to support the regeneration of our town centres.

Unfortunately, the continued absence of an Executive means there is vital funding which cannot be allocated to help families, workers and businesses with the cost of living and to support public services, particularly our health service. The draft multi-year budget which I announced in December, prioritised health and social care. £21bn would have been provided over the course of three years to provide crucial funding for waiting lists, as well as the cancer and mental health rebuild strategies. I hope that an Executive will be reformed as soon as possible to allow us to allocate available funding to deliver for those we have been elected to serve.

Delivery of this 2022/23 plan will not be possible without my colleagues in the department. I thank them all for their continued support, professionalism and public service. I will continue to do everything I can to ensure people, communities and businesses are supported as far as possible. I will continue to press Treasury for further measures to support citizens and businesses including calling for a reduction on VAT on energy bills.

Through genuine collaboration between the voluntary, community and private sectors we will be better placed to meet the needs of the people we are here to serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Conor Murphy." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Conor Murphy  
**Minister of Finance**



## Permanent Secretary Introduction

I am proud as Permanent Secretary to introduce my first Department of Finance Business Plan.

I have met and listened to colleagues from across the department, Civil Service and wider society in recent months. Their insight and experience has helped inform and shape this Business Plan which includes four distinct priorities;

- Sustainable funding for public services;
- A well led, high performing Civil Service;
- A modernised and innovative service; and
- Excellent public services.

I will work collaboratively and constructively with colleagues to make these priorities a reality. I accept the financial challenges and am focused on what we can do and how we can sustainably and strategically use the available resources to support people. I will work collegiately with the Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary colleagues in NICS Board to deliver on common missions and drive standards and service delivery. I will encourage and support staff at all levels to operate in a similarly collaborative way.

It is about how we do things as well as what we do. We must through our actions, day and daily, demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour, governance and ethics. This plan sets out the key departmental priorities and how we will measure our performance and progress.

I want to acknowledge the very positive response of everyone in the department. In these unprecedented times, they have quickly adapted to new ways of working to ensure the continuous provision of excellent public services.

The months ahead will see the implementation of the Hybrid Working Policy and the opening of the Connect2 Hubs which will offer staff from across all departments, a local, well-equipped and flexible working environment which also supports business needs. This will mark a new era in how we, as a Civil Service, work and embrace new technologies to deliver high quality, citizen centred services.

With the economic backdrop projected to become more challenging as the year progresses new ways of working, thinking and delivering will be necessary to meet the challenges, minimise economic and societal damage and seize the opportunities to deliver better services in a more effective and efficient way.

I am hugely proud of all my colleagues and the immense contribution they have made and continue to make for the people of Northern Ireland through their public service.

Neil Gibson  
**Permanent Secretary**



# Our Purpose



**The Department of Finance (DoF) provides the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and other public bodies with money, staff, professional services and business support systems, helping them to deliver excellent, value for money public services.**

## **We do this by:**

- **Managing public money** – effectively allocating resources to where they are most needed to support the delivery of public services;
- **Supporting our people** – recruiting, developing and supporting the best people for the NICS and providing opportunities for individuals to reach their full potential;
- **Transforming and innovating** – improving effectiveness across the public sector by transforming the way we work;
- **Providing evidence and insights** – support evidence-based policy and inform public debate, through high quality, trusted, meaningful data, evidence and research; and
- **Delivering public services** – collect rates revenue to provide funding towards public services such as health, education and infrastructure, as well as council services.





# What we do

**The Department of Finance is responsible for the delivery of a wide range of public services.**

Our overall aim is to help the Executive make the most appropriate and effective use of resources and services for the benefit of everyone in the community. The department is committed to deliver effective and efficient public services. The Department of Finance:

Promotes proper governance and financial management	Provides HR, finance and IT services to government departments
Maximises value for money	Provides Civil Service Pensions services
Supports strategic finance and local taxation policy	Supports Public Sector Reform
Provides official statistics and research	Responds to Assembly Questions, Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Requests
Operates nidirect - the official government website for citizens	Communicates and engages with stakeholders to promote the work of the Department
Registers births, deaths and marriages	Maintains the Stormont Estate
Delivers Land Registry services	Collects, processes and manages land and property information
Provides procurement, property and project assurance services	Produces geographic mapping data
Delivers legal services to departments	Reforms and develops Civil Law
Develops and implements Building Regulations policy	Delivers financial accounting and budgeting services
Provides advice and guidance to ensure compliance and best practice in areas such as equality, security, health and safety and public appointments	Complies with data protection and records management legislation, policy and best practice

# Achievements

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

## MANAGING PUBLIC MONEY



Enabled

**£21bn**

of cash to be issued to fund government services

▷ **£220.1m** rate relief provided to businesses most affected by the pandemic

▷ Belfast Region City Deal valued at more than **£850m** signed in December 2021



**£1.171bn**

collected in rates to fund vital public services

▷ Distributed **£37.2m** in PEACE and INTERREG funding

▷ Delivered **£6.1m** of grants to third sector from Dormant Accounts Fund with National Lottery Community Fund



**£222m**

grants paid to businesses affected by Covid restrictions

▷ Delivered Airport Support Scheme into 2021-22



**613** supplies and services contracts awarded at a value of almost

**£967m**

to help departments and bodies deliver public services

▷ Public Sector pay policy for 2021-22 agreed and delivered

- 
- ▷ 2021/22 pay awards to industrial and non-industrial civil service staff
  - ▷ 50 construction contracts awarded at a value of over **£190m**
  - ▷ Awarded circa **£84m** of healthcare construction contracts
  - ▷ Designed, procured and contract managed the delivery of 400 minor works projects at a value of **£25m**
  - ▷ Construction and procurement advice to departments including **£150m** social housing programme, **£150m** schools programme and **£250m** grant funded programme
  - ▷ Supported work of Fiscal Council and Fiscal Commission

# SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE



Developed and delivered NICS Hybrid Working Policy and New Ways of Working guidance across the Civil Service.



New Civil Service Connect2 Hubs created in Ballykelly, Downpatrick, Craigavon and Ballymena.

- ▷ **NICS Menopause Policy** launched
- ▷ Civil Service **Domestic and Sexual Abuse Policy** delivered
- ▷ **57** apprentices recruited through new Operational Delivery Apprentice Scheme
- ▷ **119** student placement opportunities provided in 2021. **160** placements made available in 2022
- ▷ **Guaranteed Interview Scheme** introduced as part of our commitment to the employment of people with disabilities
- ▷ **5,824** trainees received training via **559** webinars and classroom sessions
- ▷ **107,805** e-learning courses completed by public sector staff
- ▷ **3,036** colleagues accessed internal Welfare Support Service
- ▷ **30** NICS Live online events delivered, attended by over **10,000** colleagues

# SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE

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## nidirect Contact Centre supported:

- Department of Health's COVIDCareNI Symptom Checker and Test Booking;
  - StopCOVID NI (Proximity app);
  - COVIDCare NI Vaccination Booking Service;
  - Rollout of Covid Certification Service including the non-digital applications;
  - Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme;
  - JobStart;
  - Signposting for business grants; and
  - Support schemes assisting those impacted for example, MOT/driver testing; and new DVA Booking and Rostering service.
  - Ensuring we have a digitally enabled workforce.
- 



**£258m**

COVID support payments  
processed by AccountNI

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- ▷ **Over 1.6 million** calls handled through the nidirect Contact Centre
- ▷ **Over 55 million** visits to the nidirect website resulting in over **103 million** page views
- ▷ Enabled government to issue **more than 1.1 million** Shop Local cards and **over 1.5 million** COVID certificates
- ▷ **Over 500** virtual training sessions delivered to members of the public to assist in digital inclusion
- ▷ Registered and processed over **5,000** pieces of Ministerial Correspondence

# TRANSFORMING AND INNOVATING



Implemented new Executive approved procurement policies - Scoring Social Value, Procurement of Social and Other Specific Services, Supply Chain Resilience, Procurement Control Limits and Human Rights in Public Procurement



Developed a Sourcing Toolkit to achieve better commercial outcomes from government procurement

- ▷ Introduced Irish and bi-lingual Irish/English registration certificates for births, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths
- ▷ Amended Building Regulations guidance for Changing Places Toilets - coming into effect on 30 June 2022
- ▷ Amended Building Regulations guidance to include provision of new radon maps which came into effect on 1 April 2022
- ▷ Amended Building Regulations to introduce an effective 'ban on combustible materials' on certain high-rise buildings which came into effect on 1 April 2022
- ▷ Amended prescribed fees for Building Regulations and reduced fees for lodging data onto the NI Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) registers which came into effect on 1 April 2022
- ▷ Amended Building Regulations to increase energy efficiency in buildings - first step towards seeking ultra-efficient 'net zero ready' standards for new buildings with low carbon heating by 2026/27
- ▷ Led DoF response to New Decade, New Approach commitments including Social Inclusion Strategies, Green Growth and Review of Arm's Length Bodies

# PROVIDING EVIDENCE AND INSIGHTS



Produced and delivered weekly death statistics in relation to COVID-19

## census 2021

Census 2021 had the highest level of engagement since Census 1991 with a return rate of

**97.2%**

- ▶ Sampled **85,000** addresses and conducted interviews with **35,000** households on key NI and UK social surveys
- ▶ Conducted interviews with **9,000** households on COVID Opinion Survey to understand societal impact of the pandemic
- ▶ **85,000** business surveys issued informing economic response to the pandemic
- ▶ Delivered Business Consultancy Services and Innovation Lab support to all NICS Departments, achieving **90%+** customer satisfaction. This included work on Covid Adherence Taskforce, Social Value in procurement and End to End Review of Recruitment process

# DELIVERING PUBLIC SERVICES



Provided financial support to **95,950** ratepayers through rate related benefits and reliefs



Processed **86,852** Land Registry applications

- ▶ **99%** of priority land registry searches completed within **10** working days
- ▶ Progressed **15** statutory rules, including primary legislation, to support business and domestic ratepayers
- ▶ **8,230** new properties added to the Valuation List
- ▶ Spatial NI, the OSNI data sharing website, facilitated:
  - **321,221** visits from over **50,780** users to the public map viewer
  - **Over 192 million** interactions (every click, search, interaction with web services across all platforms and apps)
  - **1,726** individual NICS staff accessed mapping





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# Our Resources

## Money

In the absence of an Executive, the Department does not currently have a Budget allocation to plan within. However, to assist in decision making all departments were notified of a contingency planning envelope which reflected the funding for which there can be a strong degree of certainty. For DoF this means £205.2m of resource funding and £33.7m capital funding. Delivery of the Department's services will prove challenging within this spending envelope given pressures arising across a number of areas. Recognising the pressures across the public sector we will work creatively and innovatively to work within the financial envelope and agreed budget.



### 2021-22

Net Resource



Net Capital



### 2022-23

Net Resource



Net Capital



# People

As at 31 March 2022, the department employed 3,852 staff.

This is made up of **3,601 permanent staff** and **251 agency workers**.



- 14 Business Support Grant Scheme
- 14 Integr8 Programme
- 39 Communications and Engagement Division
- 381 Construction & Procurement Delivery
- 177 Departmental Solicitors Office
- 817 Enterprise Shared Services
- 77 Finance and Corporate Services
- 73 Internal Audit and Fraud Investigation Services
- 1210 Land & Property Services
- 415 NICS HR
- 473 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
- 8 Other Group\*
- 58 Public Spending Directorate
- 96 Strategic Policy and Reform Directorate

\*Those in the Other Group above relate to 7 Staff in the International Fund for Ireland, and 1 member of staff in the Legal Review Team. All 8 are permanent members of staff.

# Our people and culture

**Our central asset remains our people. The work of DoF colleagues is critical to what we do and our ability to deliver our corporate objectives.**



The latest NICS People Survey results for DoF show some impressive figures in relation to how people view their manager, their team and their purpose. We have witnessed improvements in how people view leadership within the department and training and development.

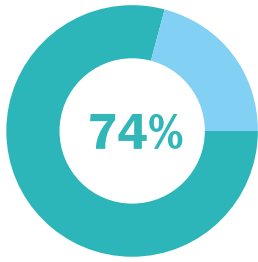
The Department of Finance is committed to the NICS People Survey, the Head of Communications and Engagement chairs the NICS People Survey Steering group and colleagues in NISRA design and deliver the survey. The Department of Finance Board will track results and look to implement and progress the areas identified.

However, some of the metrics show clear areas for development. The survey has provided the evidence and material to illustrate how we can do better, find better ways and show leadership through responding to what colleagues have said.

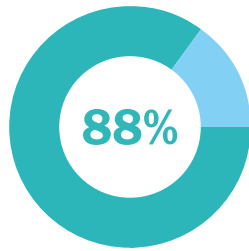
With a common purpose and collegiate responsibility across the department, we will be better placed to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.



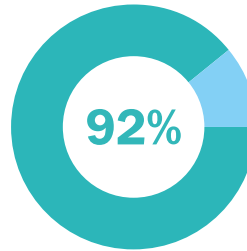
## NICS People Survey 2021



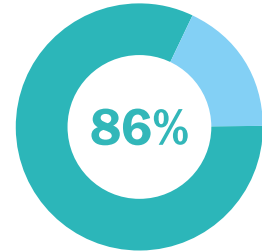
I understand how my work contributes to my departments objectives



I am treated with respect by the people I work with



I am trusted to carry out my job effectively



My manager recognises when I have done my job well

## Prioritising health and well-being support

With the introduction of the New Ways of Working Programme the work landscape has changed but we must provide the best possible support to our people. We will provide health and wellbeing support to staff through the Welfare Support Service. This will include promoting support available from INSPIRE, the WELL Programme and the Charity for Civil Servants. We will lead the NICS Diversity Action Plan for 2022-2023 and support the NICS diversity champions and their associated staff networks. We understand views and experiences will change so to ensure we are progressing in an informed way we will conduct another People Survey in Autumn 2022.

# Our Priorities and Targets

The priorities and targets below represent our aims for the year ahead, they do not reflect all that we do and are underpinnings but the respective divisional plans will contain a suite of operational targets pertaining to standards, efficiency and effectiveness. Each division within the Department will have its own business plan which will be carefully monitored and performance reviewed by the divisional lead.

The delivery of the DoF Business Plan, responsibility for leadership standards will be led by Neil Gibson, Permanent Secretary. This will include agreement of the strategic aims by the Departmental Board, clearance by Minister and a series of check points and quality review of progress at DoF Board.

## PRIORITY 1: SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

NO.	TARGET	MEASUREMENT	TIMESCALE	OWNER
1	Compile three year budget for consideration by the Executive.	Present recommendations for Executive consideration.	As soon as possible once an Executive is restored.	Joanne McBurney
2	Collect £1.37bn in rates revenue.	This will be assessed against the total value of the net rates revenue collected.	March 2023	Ian Snowden
3	Produce comprehensive response to Fiscal Commission report for consideration by the Executive.	Publicise and maintain momentum on key Fiscal Commission recommendations.	March 2023	Emer Morelli
4	Enabling EU funding opportunities.	Meet all PEACE IV and Interreg VA targets.	December 2022	Emer Morelli
		Open PEACE PLUS.	November 2022	Emer Morelli
5	Draft Fiscal Council Legislation for consideration by the Executive.	Draft prepared for consideration by the Executive.	Before end Autumn 2022	Emer Morelli



<b>6</b>	Devise 2022/23 NI Public Sector Pay Policy for consideration by Ministers.	Prepare Public Sector Pay policy for Minister.	October 2022	Emer Morelli
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## PRIORITY 2: A WELL-LED, HIGH PERFORMING CIVIL SERVICE

NO.	TARGET	MEASUREMENT	TIMESCALE	OWNER
<b>7</b>	Complete the strategic design phase of the NICS Workforce Model and Strategic Workforce Plan.	Initiate a project to develop and implement a modern, fit for purpose NICS workforce model and strategic workforce plan, to include career frameworks for all disciplines/professions.	October 2022	Jill Minne
		Develop and agree the strategic design principles, roles and responsibilities and governance for developing and managing the NICS workforce plan.	January 2023	Jill Minne
		Expand NICS traineeships, to include the introduction of new apprenticeship schemes and employability programmes for those furthest removed from the labour market.	March 2023	Jill Minne
<b>8</b>	Produce a structured plan for streamlined recruitment across the NICS for all grades and disciplines.	Implement agreed service improvements arising from the review of the NICS recruitment and vacancy management process.	March 2023	Jill Minne
<b>9</b>	Develop 2022 People Survey Action Plan.	Conduct the 2022 Civil Service People Survey, report key findings and develop action plan including a programme of DoF staff engagement activities and events.	March 2023	All DoF Directors

<b>10</b>	Develop and commence implementation of the Estate Strategy (2022-2025).	Publish Estate Strategy.	August 2022	Sharon Smyth
		Develop an Estate Renewal Action Plan and Communication Strategy.	October 2022	Sharon Smyth
		Commence enabling work for the initial Estate Strategy accommodation moves.	December 2022	Sharon Smyth
		Opening of Connect 2 Hubs.	First phase completed August 2022 Second Phase completed March 2023	Sharon Smyth
		Transfer functions from Reform of Property Management to DoF Business Areas.	November 2022	Sharon Smyth
<b>11</b>	Drive the implementation of the Civil Service Diversity Action Plan.	Develop new Diversity Action Plan with Diversity Champions and staff networks.	September 2022	Jill Minne
<b>12</b>	Produce NICS Mental Health Strategy.	Consult on and agree Mental Health Strategy with a range of key stakeholders and develop associated action plan.	December 2022	Jill Minne
<b>13</b>	Develop NICS policies to enable the highest standards of ethics and transparency.	Develop a holistic Raising a Concern policy for the NICS drawing upon the NIAO Good Practice Guide and GIAFIS review of whistleblowing.	March 2023	Emer Morelli
		Launch and promote the revised NICS Code of Ethics.	March 2023	Emer Morelli
		Review discipline policy.	December 2022	Jill Minne

### PRIORITY 3: A MODERNISED AND INNOVATIVE SERVICE

NO.	TARGET	MEASUREMENT	TIMESCALE	OWNER
14	Develop Civil Service Renewal Plan.	Develop a Renewal Plan to enable wider transformation and reform.	March 2023	Neil Gibson / Emer Morelli
15	Improve the visibility of the Performance of Major Projects carried out across NICS and their Non-Departmental Public Bodies.	Deliver a Major Projects Status Report to NICS Board using data collated from Departmental Programme Offices (P3Os).	June 2022	Sharon Smyth
		Deliver an updated status report to show progress against the baseline data.	January 2023	Sharon Smyth
16	Drive forward Building Safety Reform.	Support the Building Safety Programme Expert Panel to provide recommendations on the roles / structures and legislative basis for building safety.	March 2023	Sharon Smyth
17	Improve commercial and professional project delivery capability across the NICS.	Form a network of commercially skilled personnel across NICS and sponsored bodies to carry out case peer reviews.	October 2022	Sharon Smyth
		Create a network of programme management offices to ensure cross departmental collaboration and coordination of NICS Projects/Programmes.	June 2022	Sharon Smyth
		Commence the dialogue phase of the procurement of a new Land Registration digital solution.	September 2022	Ian Snowden
		Commence the procurement of a new digital solution for property Valuation.	March 2023	Ian Snowden

18	Deliver service transformation projects.	Develop options for an integrated Target Operating Model (TOM) for Finance and HR.	May 2022	Paul Duffy
		Develop an Outline Business Case (OBC2) to identify and assess options for the integrated TOM, including an assessment of the benefits, scope and any future business processing requirements.	October 2022	Paul Duffy
		Launch the procurement of replacement technology, Systems Implementation Partner and ongoing support.	December 2022	Paul Duffy
19	Produce NICS Digital & Data Strategy.	Develop a Digital and Data Strategy to transform digital public services.	March 2023	Paul Duffy

## PRIORITY 4: EXCELLENT PUBLIC SERVICES

NO.	TARGET	MEASUREMENT	TIMESCALE	OWNER
20	Deliver high quality citizen facing services.	Achieve 90% green rating on Divisional/Agency business plans' (Key Performance Indicators) relating to citizen facing services.	March 2023	Paul Duffy Siobhan Carey Ian Snowden
21	Provide high quality shared services to government departments.	Achieve 90% green rating on individual business plans (KPIs) relating to shared services to government departments.	March 2023	Paul Duffy Sharon Smyth Jill Minne Siobhan Carey Ian Snowden Emer Morelli Louise Crilly

22	Provide high quality statistical information to support public policy.	<p>Publish 2021 Census results;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• headline population and household statistics.</li> <li>• demography, ethnicity and equality statistics including statistics for local areas.</li> <li>• high level qualification, labour market and communal establishment statistics.</li> </ul> <p>Maintain the high % of the general public who state they trust statistics produced by NISRA from the Public Awareness of and Confidence in Official Statistics survey.</p>	May 2022	Siobhan Carey
			Autumn 2022	Siobhan Carey
			Spring 2023	Siobhan Carey
			Autumn 2022	Siobhan Carey
23	Collaborate with NICS Departments to provide strategic support and leadership to enable delivery of excellent public services.	<p>360 feedback from Permanent Secretary colleagues and HOCS.</p> <p>Develop and progress Action Plan on relationships between Departments and Arm's Length Bodies, focusing on the role of Departments and implementation of Partnership agreements.</p> <p>Draft legislation for Executive consideration to enable changes identified through the Arm's Length Body Review to be implemented.</p>	March 2023	Neil Gibson
			March 2023	Stuart Stevenson
			March 2023	Emer Morelli
24	Commission research to inform action plan on the long term future of the Mournes.	Completion of a research project that includes comprehensive engagement in the Mournes area and insights and evidence to support the development of an action plan for the long term future of the Mournes.	March 2023	Emer Morelli
25	Amend defamation law.	Facilitate enactment of the Defamation Act and subsequent amendments to court rules.	November 2022	Hugh Widdis Louise Crilly Michael Foster
	To review the operation of the Defamation Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and relevant developments in defamation law in other jurisdictions.	Completion, for the Minister, of an interim report outlining relevant developments in defamation law and to identify areas for further policy development.	June 2023	Hugh Widdis Louise Crilly Michael Foster

# DoF Board Members



**Neil Gibson**  
Permanent Secretary  
Department of Finance

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**Mark McLaughlin**  
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**The Department currently has 3 Non-Executive Directors:**



**Tom Taylor**



**Liz Ensor**



**John Smyth**

# Stay connected with the Department of Finance

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