

**RIVERSIDE CITY COLLEGE**  
**Assessment Plan**



Riverside Assessment Committee  
Office of Institutional Effectiveness  
Institutional Effectiveness Leadership Council

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## **Table of Contents**

I. Introduction

II. Guiding Principles for Assessment

III. Assessment Fundamentals

IV. Levels of Assessment

V. Creating Effective Outcomes and Designing an Assessment Cycle

VI. Assessment Cycle and Program Review Process

Additional Resources

References

Appendix: Bloom's Taxonomy

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## **I. Introduction**

Riverside City College believes that learning not only encompasses the knowledge of discrete facts and concepts but also the demonstration of ability to integrate facts and concepts in critical, creative, and practical ways.

### *Assessment Vision Statement*

Riverside City College aspires to continue and expand its tradition of excellence as a premier community college that is recognized for excellence in education, innovation, and service.

### *Assessment Mission Statement*

The Mission of assessment at Riverside City College is to improve student success and learning, thus helping the College fulfill its educational mission. The assessment process provides the college with evidence that allows it to strengthen the content and delivery of its curriculum and services by identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement. Assessment is more meaningful and likely to lead to improvement when students are committed to learning and the faculty and staff who deliver the programs and services own the process.

Assessment at RCC is overseen by the Riverside Assessment Committee (RAC). The RAC is a standing committee of the Academic Senate as established by Article III, Section 5 of the Academic Senate ByLaws and is composed of faculty members from each department and an additional six non-voting administrative and staff members representing a broad cross-section of the college community.

- The Riverside Assessment Committee recognizes the dual purpose of assessment as both summative and formative. While the committee strives to meet the external accountability demands of the accrediting commission and acknowledges the role of assessment in college planning processes and resource allocation decisions, its focus is on the intrinsic value of assessment as a means of improving student learning.
- The Riverside Assessment Committee supports student learning outcomes assessment by facilitating college-based activities and discussion, and by consulting with and providing guidance to departments, disciplines, and other units undergoing program review. The committee seeks to foster engagement in student learning outcomes assessment by encouraging dialogue related to pedagogy and curriculum, and supporting college-wide assessment efforts.

The responsibilities of the Riverside Assessment Committee include:

- Serve as consultants for assessment projects and as leaders to support a culture of assessment throughout the College
- Support College and department assessment representatives with information and resources, including technology, to maintain and carry out current assessment plans
- Regularly review College assessment policies and procedures and recommend improvements as needed to the Academic Senate and College leadership
- Update the College Assessment webpage with current developments, projects, and resources associated with assessment at Riverside City and in the larger community of higher education
- Disseminate information gathered through assessment projects and facilitate assessment training College-wide

## II. Guiding Principles for Assessment

1. The primary purpose of assessment is improvement of student learning.
  - By gathering meaningful evidence about student learning outcomes and processes we can make better decisions about pedagogy, the design of curricular and co-curricular programs and services, and how to allocate resources to enhance a student's college experience.
2. Assessment of student learning depends on clear statements of expected outcomes.
  - These statements describe what we expect students to know, be able to do, and value as a result of their college experience.
  - These statements should be informed by the mission statements of the College, the departments and disciplines, and individual programs, as well as from faculty and staff intentions in program and course design.
3. Effective assessment attends not only to outcomes, but also to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
  - Knowing about final outcomes is important, but in order to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experiences along the way – about teaching, the learning environment, curricula, co-curricular programs, and the kinds of student efforts that lead to particular outcomes.
  - By examining these processes we can align our work more effectively with the College's mission and goals.
4. Effective assessment recognizes that learning is complex and multidimensional, and occurs in a variety of settings.
  - Assessment should involve a diverse array of methods, including those that call for objective evidence of student performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration.
5. Effective assessment is designed to be meaningful, manageable and sustainable.
  - It is embedded into the ongoing work of educating students.
6. Clear statements of expected student learning outcomes will guide the design and ongoing review of programs.
  - By starting with learning outcomes, programs can intentionally plan meaningful, diverse learning experiences that will lead to student achievement of the outcomes.
  - By starting with learning outcomes, programs can embed manageable assessment methods into program design and ongoing review processes.
7. The College is committed to an ongoing program of assessment of student learning.
  - The College will provide the necessary resources for assessment activities, including professional development for faculty and staff.
  - The College supports the integration of assessment with program review, institutional research and planning, and resource allocation.

### III. Assessment Fundamentals

#### *What is Assessment?*

Assessment is the use of evidence-based, systematic, and intentional processes to enhance and improve student learning (Moore Gardner, M.; Kline, K.; and Bresciani, M.; 2014).

While traditional outcome metrics such as course success, student persistence, degrees and certificates awarded, and transfer rates are used to measure progress, the results from ongoing assessment are critical tools to informing conversations about improvement and student success – providing better understanding of what students know and are able to do. By gathering meaningful evidence about student learning outcomes and processes we can make better decisions about pedagogy, the design of curricular and co-curricular programs and services, and how to better allocate resources to enhance a student's college experiences.

#### *Assessment is...*

- Faculty-driven for all academic areas – courses, programs, certificates, and degrees
- Used to inform conversations about ways to improve student learning and development
- Used to evaluate the outcomes for non-academic areas including Student Services and Administrative Units
- Integral to the Program Review Process
- Dynamic, cyclical, and sustainable

One of the common concerns about assessment is that it is an external, top-down imposition upon faculty, and assessment results may be used to evaluate faculty. However, Riverside City College faculty members are primarily responsible for assessment, and thus have direct responsibility for establishing learning outcomes and for identifying processes for assessing them, verifying whether they have been reached, and pursuing future directions. This is further codified in the Faculty Memorandum of Agreement: Assessment “shall not be used as a criterion of evaluation.”

#### *What are Learning Outcomes?*

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) defines student learning outcomes as:

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are the specific observable or measurable results that are expected subsequent to a learning experience. These outcomes may involve knowledge (cognitive), skills (behavioral), or attitudes (affective) that provide evidence that learning has occurred as a result of a specific course, program activity, or process. An SLO refers to an overarching outcome for a course, program, degree or certificate, or student services area (such as the library). SLOs describe a student's ability to synthesize many discreet skills using the higher level thinking skills and to produce something that asks them to apply what they've learned. (ASCCC *SLO Terminology Glossary*, 2010, pg 13).

#### *Effective assessment:*

Recognizes that learning is complex and multidimensional, and occurs in a variety of settings.

- Involves a diverse array of methods, including those that call for objective evidence of student performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration.

Is designed to be meaningful, manageable and sustainable.

- The evidence collected and used to assess outcomes should not be so difficult or complex that its collection requires substantial work as a stand-alone activity.
- Evidence should be embedded into the ongoing work of educating students or the ongoing processes of a non-instructional unit.

Acknowledges that measuring students' inputs and environment as well as outcomes creates a more fully contextualized picture of a student's experiences.

- Knowing about final outcomes is important, but in order to improve outcomes, we need to also understand how the student experiences – teaching, the learning environment, curricula, co-curricular programs, affect these outcomes (Bresciani, M.; Moore Gardner, M.; Hickmott, J.; (2009).
- By examining these processes we can align our work more effectively with the College's mission and goals.

Is designed with at least one of three purposes in mind: to improve, to inform, and/or to prove.

- “The results from an assessment process should provide information that can be used to determine whether or not [sic] intended outcomes are being achieved and how the programs can be improved. An assessment process should also be designed to inform departmental faculty and other decision-makers about relevant issues that can impact the program and student learning.” (University of Massachusetts, Amherst, “Program-Based Review And Assessment Tools And Techniques For Program Improvement,” [2001], 7; adapted from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, “Using Assessment for Academic Program Improvement, [April 2000]).

## **IV. Levels of Assessment**

Instructional assessment is conducted simultaneously at many different levels throughout the college. Formal and informal evidence of learning is collected and assessed. The results of assessment are used to inform conversations and activities focused on improving student learning.

Non-instructional assessment is conducted at the unit level using Service Area Outcomes (SAO's). As with instructional assessment, evidence of progress for each SAO should be collected and assessed. The results of these assessment activities should inform improvement conversations at the unit, department, discipline, and College levels and provide evidence-based metrics which can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of processes and services.

### **Course-level Assessment**

Course-level assessment measures student learning for a particular course. Each SLO must be assessed at least once during each Program Review cycle. SLOs are approved by the College's Curriculum Committee and appear on the Course Outline of Record (COR) within CurricUNET. It is important to emphasize that course-level assessment is a measure of what students have learned in the course regardless of who was teaching it. Assessment results are used by faculty in the discipline to inform activities, to review and improve CORs, and to implement changes to instruction to improve student learning. Course-level SLO's are the same throughout the District.

### **Program-level Assessment**

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) are defined by faculty and reflect the skills and knowledge a student will gain through the sequenced curriculum. Often, PLOs are informed by a licensure or certification exam. The program assessment process is designed to align course-level SLOs and curriculum requirements with PLOs. PLO assessment results inform conversations and decision at the discipline, department, and College levels. PLO's are the same throughout the District.

### **General Education Assessment**

General Education assessment measures the skills and knowledge the College expects students to demonstrate upon completion of an A.A. or A.S. degree. The Riverside Assessment Committee coordinates the assessment of the General Education Program Student Learning Outcomes (GE SLOs) at the College. All colleges in the district participate in the review and revision of the GE SLOs, and provide recommendations to the District Academic Senate.

- In practice, most degree-bound students at RCCD complete a broader General Education (GE) program as required by UC (IGETC) or by CSU (IGETC plus US History, Constitution, and American Ideals). The GE program also includes additional requirements for Health Science and Self Development.
- In defining and assessing RCCD GE SLOs the college is guided by the 2002 ACCJC accreditation standards:

General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including the following:

- An understanding of the basic content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: areas include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.

- A capability to be a productive individual and life-long learner: skills include oral and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means.
  - A recognition of what it means to be an ethical human being and effective citizen: qualities include an appreciation of ethical principles; civility and interpersonal skills; respect for cultural diversity; historical and aesthetic sensitivity, and the willingness to assume civic, political, and social responsibilities locally, nationally, and globally.
- RCCD's General Education Program Student Learning Outcomes were revised in 2012. They can be found at: <http://academic.rcc.edu/assessment/files/GenEdSLORevisedFinal.pdf>

### **Institution-level Assessment**

Institution-level assessment is assessment of Institution Learning Outcomes (ILOs). These outcomes are set by each College. At Riverside City College, ILOs correspond to the College goals.

### **Non-Instructional Assessment**

Administrative and Student Services departments develop and assess Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) to ensure units are examining programs and services, to provide data for review and discussion, to document internal improvement efforts, to allow staff to prioritize projects and improvements, and to provide rationale for resource requests. An SAO is a specific statement that describes the benefit that a unit hopes to achieve or the impact that is a result of work that a unit performs.

The purpose of non-instructional assessment is to:

- Evaluate how well a learning resource, student service area, or administrative unit functions in relation to its plan, the mission of the College and unit, the College's institutional goals and priorities, and the needs of the community.
- Provide a framework to strengthen and integrate planning and decision making.
- Encourage program or unit development and improvement.
- Improve the use of College resources.
- Ensure compliance with accreditation and matriculation requirements.

Student Services Units may also develop SLOs to describe what a student should know or be able to do after participating in or receiving a particular service. SLOs in student services assess the degree to which students' achieve the knowledge and/or abilities associated with the outcomes as a result of their interaction with the unit. An example SLO for Counseling is "The student will be able to state an informed academic goal."

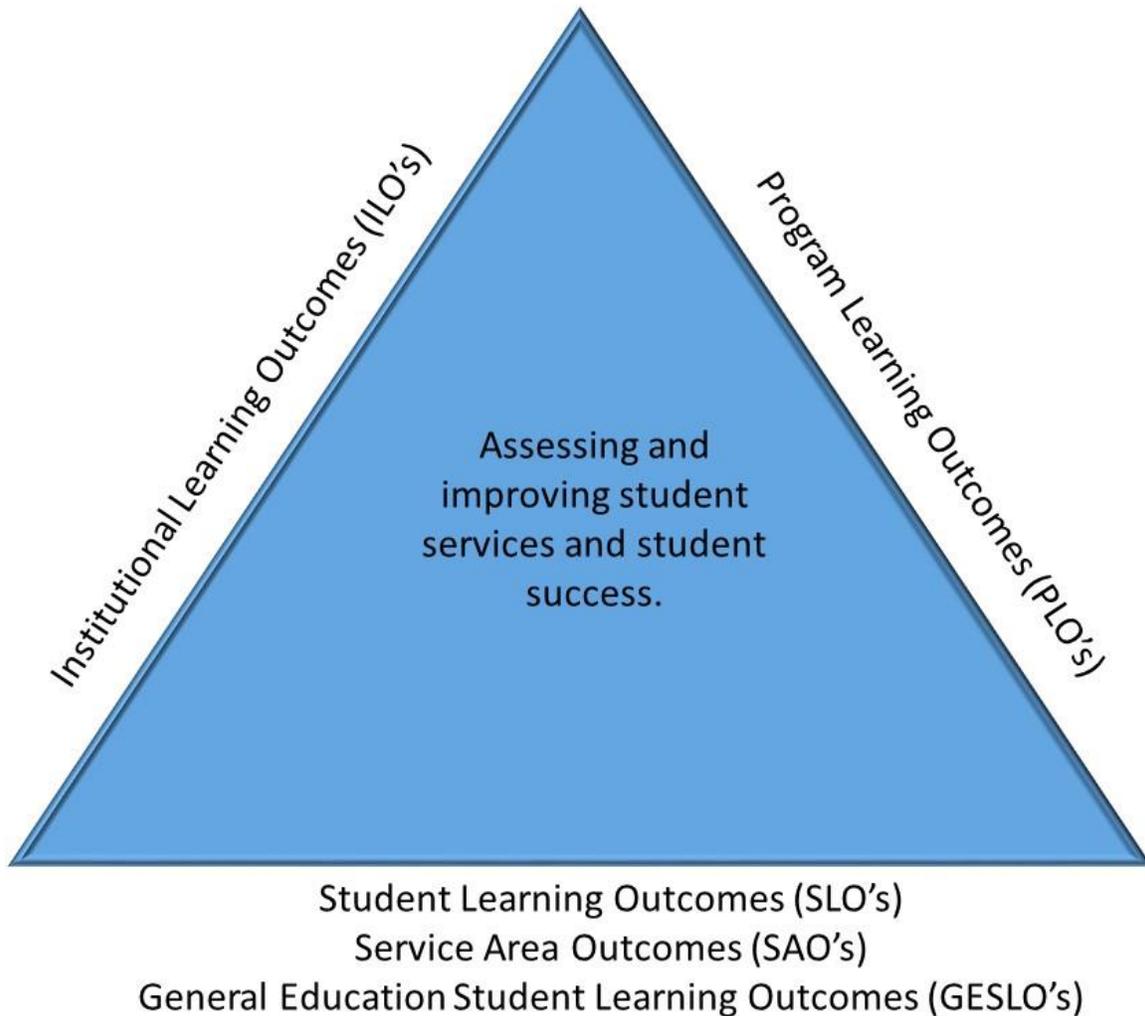
The focus for Administrative and Student Services Unit assessments is on clients' needs and satisfaction and on the effects for clients. "Clients" may refer to students, faculty, staff, and/or the public. Using available data, such as the types and frequencies of services offered, is recommended.

Methods of assessment for Administrative and Student Services Units may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- CCSSE and RCC Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Number and types of suggestions and/or complaints

- Growth in a specific function
- Comparisons to professional organizations' best practices
- Focus groups
- Time to complete a task
- Student data on enrollment, retention, success, goal attainment, etc.
- Faculty data on professional development, use of emerging technologies, grant proposal development and subsequent funding, etc.

This diagram shows how each type of outcome supports student success.



## V. Creating Effective Outcomes and Designing an Assessment Cycle

Creating an effective assessment cycle begins with a sense of course, program, and/or institutional goals and mission. Much of what a course or program hopes to accomplish Course and program improvements center on fostering student learning and increasing competencies, knowledge, and skills. Creating effective student learning outcomes and designing successful assessment strategies starts by identifying

what students are expected to learn, understand, and be able to do upon successful completion of their studies.

Using assessment results, often called “closing the loop,” is a key step in the assessment cycle. Closing the loops means that courses, programs, student services, administrative units, and the institution are informed by assessment results. The steps in Riverside City College’s assessment cycle are:



*Plan: Clearly Identify and Define Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and other outcomes*

- Outcomes are concise, measurable statements about what a student should know, think, or be able to do upon completion of a course.
- Outcomes are written using action verbs which follow the higher-order skills on Bloom’s Taxonomy.
- “...SLO activities must understand the difference between the content of the class and the steps that establish the framework for student learning on one hand and the overarching, observable knowledge, skills, or behavior to which those steps should lead on the other.” (ASCCC *Guiding Principles for SLO Assessment*, 2010, p. 5).

*Assess: Provide Learning Opportunities and Gather Evidence*

- Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic. Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, “one-shot” assessment can be better than none improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.
- Success can be demonstrated by the student in several ways:
  - *Cognitive Outcome*: What does a course/program want a successful student to know?
  - *Affective Outcome*: What does a course/program want a successful student to think or care about?
  - *Behavior Outcome*: What does a course/program want a successful student to be able to do?
- Classroom activities are only one source of learning activities on campus. Other activities may include learning through co-curricular programs or student services initiatives.
- Assessment strategies and methods are essential to being able to arrive at answers to the questions about how a course or program is doing with respect to student learning.
- Assessment methods should be selected based on the resources, time, people, and materials, available.
- Most importantly, assessment efforts should provide useful feedback.
- When considering assessment methods, there may not be a single measure for all of the outcomes. Different measures may be required for different outcomes.
- Measures can be direct or indirect, although indirect measurement alone does not usually provide sufficient evidence of student learning.
- Typically, grades are not used as evidence of student learning as they do not give the full details of learning achievement.
  - Grades can be used to report on success, but often do not provide feedback to the student, instructor, course, or program about what needs to be done to achieve a higher success level.
- Examples of direct methods of assessment include:
  - External Licensure Exams
  - Culminating project / Capstone
  - Exam
  - Homework assignment
  - In-class preparation
  - Portfolio
  - Pre-test / post-test
  - Video
  - Writing assignment
- Examples of indirect methods of assessment include:
  - Anecdotal data
  - Focus group
  - Interview
  - Student-reported survey

Adapted from The Educational Assessment Committee (2013.) *Program-Based Assessment Tools and Guide*. University of Redlands.

*Analyze: Report and Discuss the Assessment Results*

- Riverside City College uses TracDat as the software for collecting and reporting assessment results. TracDat will eventually be used for completing discipline/department and unit program reviews and plans.
- Assessment results are recorded in TracDat and used to inform conversations at the discipline, department, unit, and institutional levels regarding improving student learning and services.
- Discipline/department assessment representatives provide assistance with assessment procedures and entering results.
- Questions which assessment results may help answer include:
  - What does the data say about students' mastery of a learning outcome?
  - Where are students doing exceptionally well?
  - Where are students consistently not doing well?
  - Where do faculty want to see higher levels of performance and how might the data be used to facilitate this?
- Assessment methods should be defined with measurable targets. Reports should include the assessment results and an analysis of the results.
- While all faculty should play a role in assessing student learning outcomes and discussing assessment results, reporting of the results in TracDat may or may not be a responsibility of associate faculty. This will differ department by department depending on individual departments' operations.

*Improve: Determine actions to improve*

- Use assessment results to improve student learning through informed collegial dialogue at the discipline, department, unit, division, and institutional level.
- This is part of the continuous cycle of collecting assessment results, evaluating the results, using the evaluations to identify actions that will improve student learning, implementing those actions, and then cycling back to collecting assessment results, etc.
- Continuous improvement is reflected when an on-going, cyclical process is used to identify evidence and implement incremental changes to improve student learning.
- Assessment results will be included in the five-year program review and plan process. These results will help provide evidence for course changes and/or program improvement.
  - If additional resources are needed to implement an improvement, the evidence collected during the assessment cycle will help articulate the need for these resources.
- On-going, evidence-based discussion will create stronger alignment of courses and programs with the College's strategic plan and mission.

## **VI. Assessment Cycle and the Program Review Process**

In an effort to better align assessment and program review with planning, Riverside City College has revised its Program Review Process. The process includes assessment cycles for every discipline and department. The program review cycle is a five year cycle, with each discipline and department completing their comprehensive review during the same year.

During a Program Review Cycle, a discipline and department will:

- 1) Create an assessment plan including which terms each SLO, PLO, and/or SAO will be assessed
- 2) Instructional disciplines/departments will review and update the discipline's curriculum map. Completing a curriculum map allows the program to identify gaps and inconsistencies in the curriculum.
  - Mapping course SLOs to PLOs ensures that the courses in the program (and any relevant co-curricular activity) align with the PLOs
  - Mapping PLOs to GE SLOs will allow further refinement of the GE Program, and provide linkages to assess GE outcomes.
  - Mapping SAOs to ILOs ensures that administrative and student service units are in alignment with college goals.
- 3) Instructional disciplines/departments will review each Course Outline of Record (COR)
- 4) Assess each SLO, PLO, and/or SAO *AT LEAST ONCE* during the program review cycle
- 5) Complete yearly updates, reporting on the progress of initiatives, activities, and goals using quantitative and qualitative results as evidence

## Resources

Riverside City College Learning Outcomes Assessment homepage: <http://academic.rcc.edu/assessment/>

Riverside City College TracDat homepage: <http://academic.rcc.edu/assessment/tracdat.htm>

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment: <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/>

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Guiding Principles for SLO Assessment: <http://www.asccc.org/papers/guiding-principles-slo-assessment>

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## Appendix: Bloom's Taxonomy

*Bloom's Taxonomy* provides a taxonomy of cognitive skills which are useful when developing learning outcomes. Bloom's taxonomy is:

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Count	Associate	Add	Analyze	Categorize	Appraise
Define	Compute	Apply	Arrange	Combine	Assess
Describe	Convert	Calculate	Breakdown	Compile	Compare
Draw	Defend	Change	Combine	Compose	Conclude
Identify	Discuss	Classify	Design	Create	Contrast
Labels	Distinguish	Complete	Detect	Drive	Criticize
List	Estimate	Compute	Develop	Design	Critique
Match	Explain	Demonstrate	Diagram	Devise	Determine
Name	Extend	Discover	Differentiate	Explain	Grade
Outlines	Extrapolate	Divide	Discriminate	Generate	Interpret
Point	Generalize	Examine	Illustrate	Group	Judge
Quote	Give examples	Graph	Infer	Integrate	Justify
Read	Infer	Interpolate	Outline	Modify	Measure
Recall	Paraphrase	Manipulate	Point out	Order	Rank
Recite	Predict	Modify	Relate	Organize	Rate
Recognize	Rewrite	Operate	Select	Plan	Support
Record	Summarize	Prepare	Separate	Prescribe	Test
Repeat		Produce	Subdivide	Propose	
Reproduces		Show	Utilize	Rearrange	
Selects		Solve		Reconstruct	
State					
Write					

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives: Complete edition*. New York: Longman.

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