



ALBERTA INSTITUTE **FOR** WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

2019 – 2024

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Executive Summary

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) has created this Strategic Plan of 2019 to guide our operations by determining the goals of the organization, and how we will prioritize our resources. This document will provide guidance to AIWC, its Board of Directors, management, employees and volunteers in pursuit of its vision and mission.

AIWC has been operating in wildlife conservation and rehabilitation since 1993. The organization is a non-profit, Alberta Veterinary Medical Association accredited animal hospital with limited resources, that has experienced a great amount of growth over its 26-year history. Its operations are managed by an Executive Director, with oversight by its Board of Directors. Both in governance and in operations, AIWC strives to be ethical, accountable, and compassionate. AIWC is a steward of Alberta's wildlife, and intends to make a positive impact on wildlife conservation, rehabilitation and our co-existence with wildlife.

This document targets four main objectives of AIWC:

- Improve infrastructure at the AIWC facility;

- Properly manage human resources of AIWC to ensure retention of knowledge and foster internal harmony;

- Increase public awareness of AIWC and proper wildlife conservation and rehabilitation;

- Focus on fundraising efforts to ensure continued financial viability of the organization.

With a renewed focus on these four objectives, AIWC will experience success in the rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife; and expand our reach in the community through education on wildlife.

Vision

Preserving the legacy of wildlife.

Mission

AIWC is committed to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. We provide expert advice and education that fosters an appreciation of wildlife.

Core Values

STEWARDSHIP –

At AIWC we are responsible **stewards** of the organization securing the growth, sustainability and legacy of wildlife.

ACCOUNTABILITY –

At AIWC we are **accountable** to our wildlife and human communities, including donors, members, staff and volunteers, industry colleagues, and ourselves.

COMPASSION –

At AIWC we are fostering the co-existence with and **compassionate** and ethical treatment of wildlife.

IMPACT –

At AIWC we are maximizing our **impact** through education, outreach, and social awareness.

Guiding Principles

Definition of Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife conservation is the protection of wild animals within their natural habitat ensuring their long-term survival. It is the prevention of exploitation, destruction, or neglect of wildlife and their habitats, especially from the damaging effects of human activity.

In both urban and rural locations our interactions with wildlife are increasing. These interactions bring to light the changing landscape that wildlife encounters as their natural habitats intersect with the continuing expansion of our human presence.

It is when these interactions result in injury, disease, abandonment, or orphaning that wildlife rehabilitation is necessitated and plays a key role in wildlife conservation.

Definition of Wildlife Rehabilitation

Wildlife rehabilitation is the treatment and temporary care of injured, diseased and displaced indigenous wildlife and the subsequent return of healthy animals to appropriate habitats in the wild.

(National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association)

Wildlife rehabilitation involves specific techniques for animal handling, surgical and medical care, nutrition, housing, and release. It blends veterinary medicine, animal behavior and environmental and animal ethics with public service and education. It provides a platform for educating the public about wildlife and environmental issues, inspiring care, respect and stewardship of wildlife individuals, populations and habitats.

Code of Ethics

As a member of The National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, AIWC conforms to the following Code of Ethics:

A wildlife rehabilitator should strive to achieve high standards of animal care through knowledge and an understanding of the field. Individuals must make an effort to be informed of current rehabilitation information, methods, and regulations through participation in continuing education.

A wildlife rehabilitator should be responsible, conscientious, and dedicated, and should work continuously toward improving the quality of care given to wild animals undergoing rehabilitation.

A wildlife rehabilitator must abide by local, state, provincial and federal laws concerning wildlife, wildlife rehabilitation, and associated activities.

A wildlife rehabilitator should establish safe work habits and conditions, abiding by current health and safety practices at all times.

A wildlife rehabilitator should acknowledge limitations and enlist the assistance of a veterinarian and other trained professionals when appropriate.

A wildlife rehabilitator should respect other rehabilitators and persons in related fields, sharing skills and knowledge in the spirit of cooperation for the welfare of animals.

A wildlife rehabilitator should place optimum animal care above personal gain.

A wildlife rehabilitator should strive to provide professional and humane care in all phases of wildlife rehabilitation, protecting the welfare, respecting the wildness, and maintaining the dignity of each animal in life and in death. Releasable animals should be

maintained in a wild condition and released as soon as appropriate. Nonreleasable animals have a right to euthanasia.

A wildlife rehabilitator should encourage community support and involvement through volunteer training and public education. The common goal should be to promote a responsible concern for living beings and the welfare of the environment.

A wildlife rehabilitator should work from a foundation of sound ecological principles, incorporating appropriate conservation ethics and an attitude of stewardship.

A wildlife rehabilitator should conduct all business, activities, and communications in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, compassion, and commitment, realizing that an individual's conduct reflects on the entire field of wildlife rehabilitation.

“The love for all living creatures is the most noble attribute of man.”

Charles Darwin

AIWC History

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) was incorporated in April 1993 and began recording patient admissions in 1994 with the admission of a Red-tailed Hawk found in a cow pasture in Dogpound, Alberta, emaciated and with a radius fracture. Located 45 minutes north of Calgary, near Madden, Alberta on 9.7 acres, and known as Rockyview Wildlife Recovery until 2004, AIWC has grown over the years into an accredited wildlife hospital, having received accreditation from the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association in 2009. In 1994 there were 111 animals admitted for treatment and that number has increased to be as high as 1891 in 2016, with 1066 animals being admitted in 2018. On average since 1994 over 1000 animals are admitted to AIWC for treatment every year.

AIWC's hospital building was originally a church in Didsbury, Alberta that was relocated to its current site and transformed into the hospital centre in 1995. The Annex building, which houses the administrative offices and functions as the onsite education classroom and volunteer training centre was later added in 2009.

Rehabilitation enclosures that suit a variety of species and rehabilitation needs have been added to the site since 1995 and now number 20 outdoor enclosures with a varying number of in hospital suites depending on need.

Since inception AIWC has received into care over 250 native species with the average annual numbers ranging from 120 to 135. Some of the lesser known species admitted to AIWC have included Calliope hummingbird, marbled godwit, bushy-tailed woodrat, tiger salamander, American dipper and Say's phoebe. Annually the percentage of patient admissions by general group has remained consistent with the higher percentages being songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors, followed by mammals, sea, shore or game birds, and lastly reptiles and amphibians.

Some AIWC patients have arrived by airplane for treatment. From the Northwest Territories AIWC has received peregrine falcons, bald eagle, ravens and black bear, while from Ontario a great horned owl and a wood frog, that was found on an airplane, were admitted to AIWC for care, and from Lethbridge came a northern flicker.

AIWC has long played a part in local disaster response. In 2000 AIWC received an injured and orphaned fawn following the Pine Lake tornado. In 2005, AIWC was one of the responders involved at the Wabamun Lake oil and chemical spill, and in 2012 sent a volunteer team to the Plains Midfield Glennifer Lake pipeline spill.

To keep current with rehabilitation techniques and knowledge, AIWC became a member of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council. AIWC has presented at conferences of and been published in journals of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association. In 2009 AIWC hosted the Alberta Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and facilitated the 2010 workshop with the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre at the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

AIWC's accessibility and outreach has continued to grow since 1994. Initial access for reporting animals in distress or gathering 'let them be' information was via the phone hotline. AIWC extended its reach by launching its first website in 1999. As recognition and interest in AIWC grew memberships were initiated and newsletters, the Recovery Review and Talons and Tails, began publishing for members and the public. These newsletters remain the primary correspondence with the membership today, however AIWC's presence on Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, and Instagram garners a level of interest and appreciation for AIWC that only social media can afford.

"When we return wild animals to nature, we merely return them to what is already theirs. For man cannot give wild animals freedom, they can only take it away."

Jacques Cousteau

Governance and Human Resources

Board

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation is governed by a board of directors elected by the voting membership of the organization at the annual general meeting. The board may have up to 11 members and functions in a governance role.

The board consists of several committees including executive, finance, compensation, and strategic planning, with the bylaws allowing for formation of other committees as required.

The board of directors meet every four to eight weeks. Regular contact with and monthly reporting to the board is maintained by AIWC's executive director.

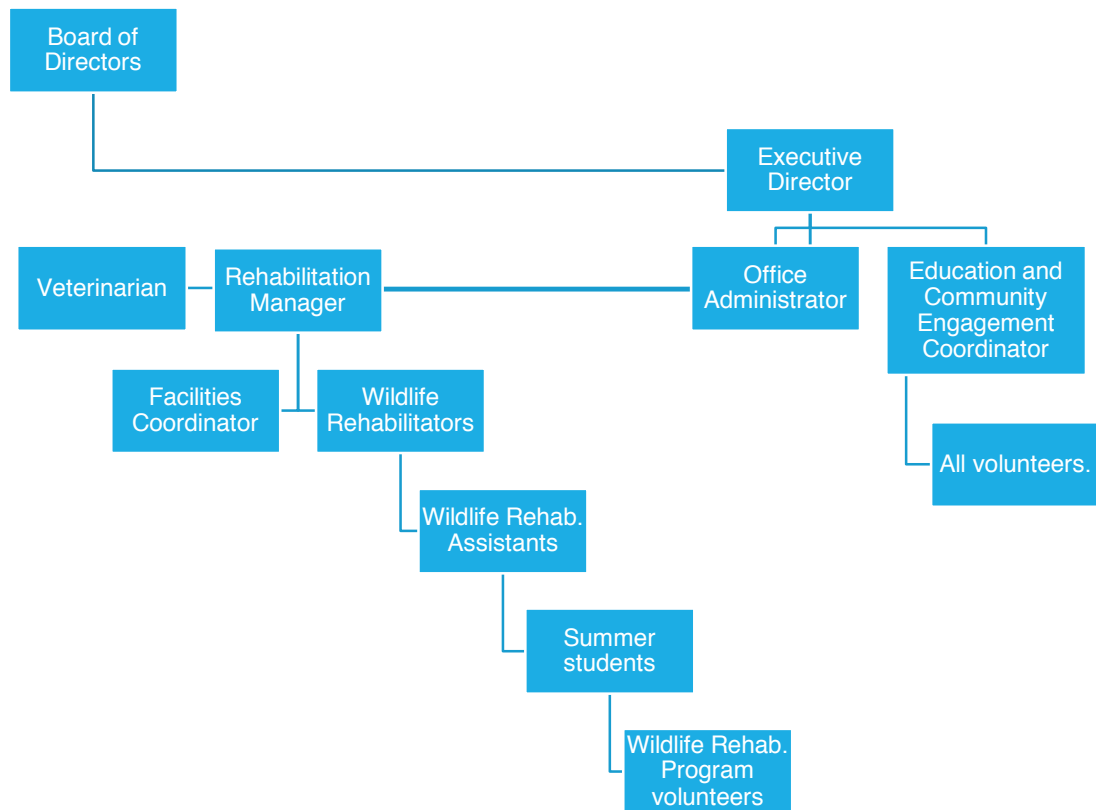
Management

AIWC is managed by an executive director who reports to and takes direction from the board of directors.

Staffing and Volunteers

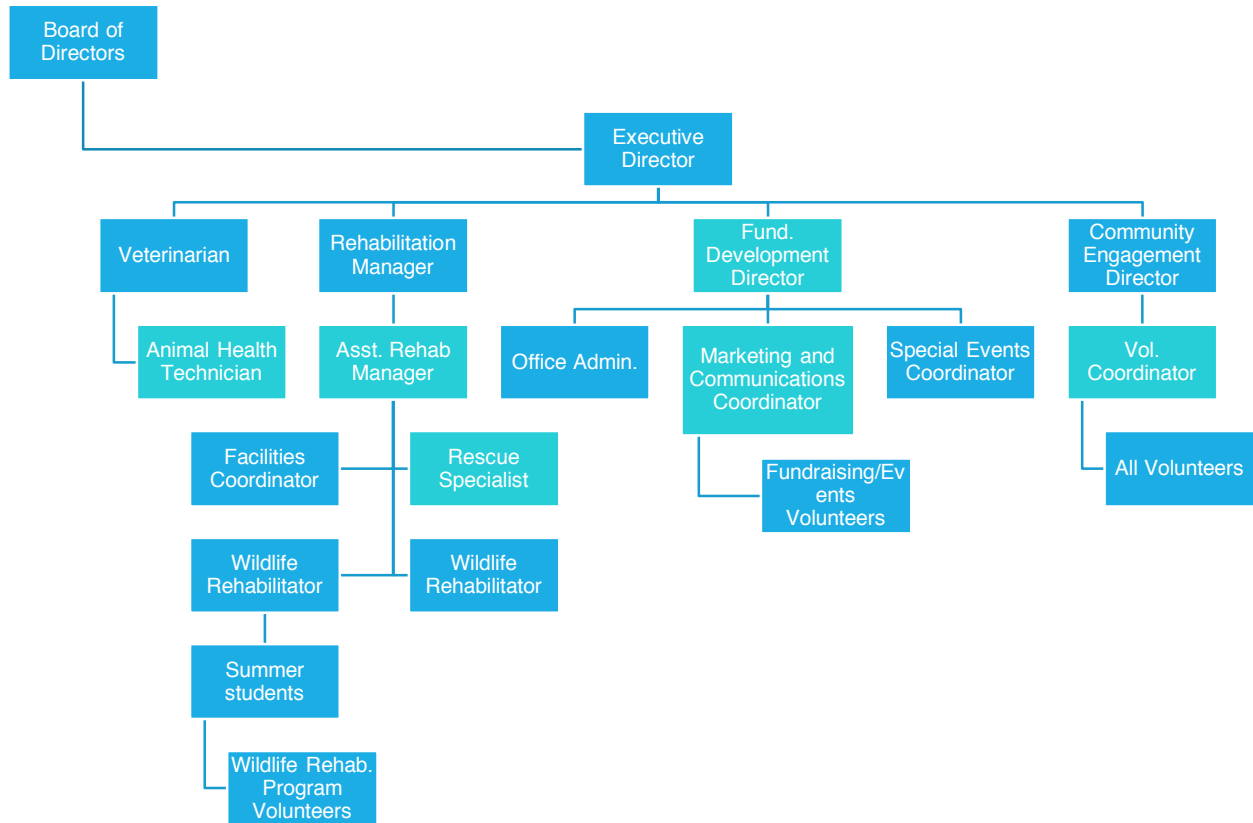
Reporting to the executive director in the operation of AIWC are a part-time veterinarian, rehabilitation manager, education and community engagement coordinator, wildlife rehabilitators, office administrator, and facilities coordinator. Rehabilitation staff are managed by the rehabilitation manager. All volunteer recruitment, intake, and training are overseen by the education and community engagement coordinator prior to assignment within the organization.

Organization Structure – current - 2019



Organization Structure – future

Highlighted positions are not yet created.



Analysis and Trends

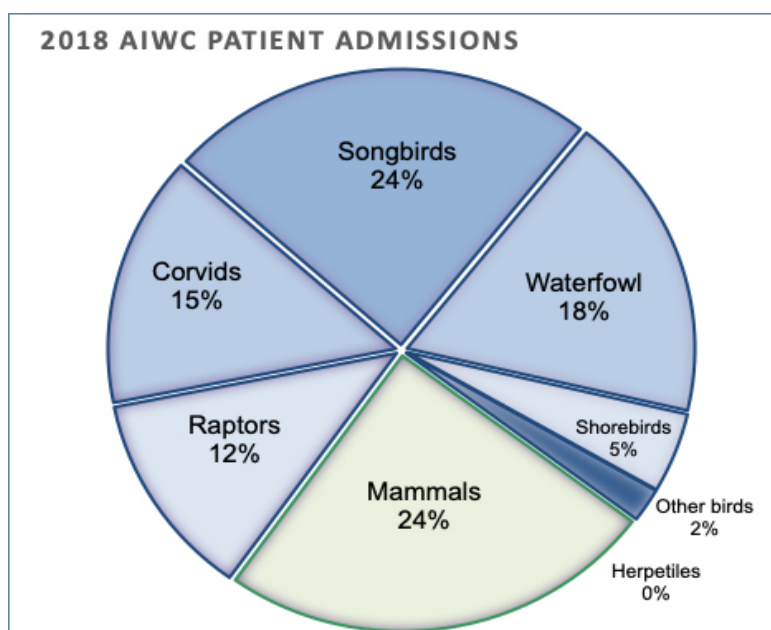
Current Operations

Since 1993, the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) has been a champion for the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife. Accredited through the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, AIWC serves the needs of Alberta's diverse wildlife in Calgary and southern Alberta. As a registered charity, AIWC relies on charitable donations and dedicated volunteers to support the more than 1,000 varied animals in need of care every year. AIWC welcomes Alberta's injured, orphaned, and oiled wildlife, small and large, from hummingbirds to deer fawns.

Each year, the demand for our services increases. In 2018, AIWC:

Treated 1,066 wild animals and helped hundreds more by assisting members of the public with wildlife-related issues, educating Albertans about natural wildlife behaviours and how best to live alongside our wildlife; and

Answered more than 4,100 wildlife related calls, providing assistance and information to support the wellbeing, and, in some cases, the survival of animals.



Our Space

Our wildlife hospital consists of a surgical suite, laboratory, x-ray room, and various care units. Outdoor enclosures support the rehabilitative cycle and include two large flight-conditioning spaces for raptors, five songbird enclosures, a pasture and corral for young deer and moose, a shorebird enclosure, aquatic bird building, outdoor aquatic mammal enclosure, two outdoor waterfowl enclosures, two aerial insectivore enclosures, and four mammal enclosures.

Our People

The AIWC team is comprised of six full-time staff, six part-time staff, and more than 125 volunteers.

We believe in developing awareness through education.

Through outreach programming, we are working to create strong co-existence between Albertans and wildlife. In 2018, our education team provided wildlife education to more than 4,300 members of the public. AIWC also has a strong social presence on Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and Instagram with following and commentary daily.

Challenges

Operationally AIWC experiences the same challenges as other not for profit organizations that rely on individual and corporate donations, public sector grants, a small staff and large volunteer base. These challenges generally fall into categories of operations, funding, program delivery and strategy:

- Attraction, retention and motivation of staff and volunteers

- Board structure and succession

- Engaging and retaining donors

Financial management and resource utilization
Internal communication – level, structure and flow
Outreach – education programs and social media
Public perception and reception
Responsiveness to change
Staff structuring – departments and disciplines to comply with strategic directives
Team mentality

Opportunities

Opportunities for growth and expansion of AIWC, as well as its social presence, outreach and impact become evident as the understanding of the need for wildlife rehabilitation increases. AIWC strives to promote this understanding and the coexistence with wildlife by:

Collaborative industry relationship development
Demonstrate lead industry standard of ethical care in wildlife rehabilitation
Development of onsite interpretive centre
Donor recognition and relationship enhancement
Increase and expand scope of education programs
Invite corporate social responsibility and citizenry
Mobile treatment clinic capability
Social awareness and funding campaigns

Risk Assessment

Internal and external factors can create risk scenarios for AIWC that may fall into any one, or a combination of, types of risk such as operational, financial, reputational, regulatory, governance or strategic. Each identifiable risk will carry a probability of occurrence and level of potential impact, however AIWC identifies as having a low risk tolerance:

- Board turnover or burnout

- Fewer public sector grants available

- Government regulation of animal species being treated

- Infrastructure damage or demise

- Lack of understanding and respect for wildlife

- Loss of accreditation

- Poor economy resulting in decreased donations

- Poor implementation of strategic directives

- Poor public relations and media

- Staff and volunteer turnover or burnout

Risk factors that are determined as manageable will be addressed with training, recognition, policies and procedures. All risk probability and impact will be monitored at the executive and board level with regular review and oversight.

Emergent Trends

Wildlife rehabilitation is a developing discipline drawing on knowledge from conservation, ecology, wildlife biology, veterinary medicine, animal behaviour and habitat, epidemiology, ethics, public service and education. The primary goal is to provide professional level, species specific care to injured, orphaned or pollution affected wildlife in order to return the animal to full functioning for release back into its natural habitat. In cases where physical and behavioural rehabilitation is not possible, the wildlife rehabilitators provide the humane service of euthanasia to end suffering.

As the awareness of wildlife rehabilitation as a career discipline increases “many schools offer degrees in biology, ecology, wildlife management, animal science, and other related fields. Within biology or animal ecology degree programs, several schools now offer areas of specialization in wildlife, wildlife care, and/or pre-veterinary medicine. Many schools offer classes related to wildlife rehabilitation such as wildlife management, behavior, ecology, field techniques, restraint, raptor physiology, and others. There are more than 60 colleges offering accredited veterinary technology or animal health technology programs in North America. Some schools are affiliated with or located near wildlife rehabilitation facilities where students can volunteer or extern. Valuable training and experience is gained by working with either a private wildlife rehabilitator or at a clinic or center.” (*National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association, NWRA*) The International Wildlife Rehabilitators Council (IWRC) also offers basic and advanced skills courses in Canada and the US and through online courses.

Volunteering and practicums bring people from diverse backgrounds to the field of wildlife rehabilitation with or without a specific education platform. It is sometimes the initial step into a directed career or related discipline involving the care and rehabilitation of wildlife.

There is a direct correlation between the human encroachment into wild habitats and the increasing numbers of injured and orphaned wildlife presentations at wildlife rehabilitation centres locally, provincially and throughout North America each year. Statistics and reporting show not only these admissions, but the rising number of rehabilitated animals being released back into the wild.

As knowledge in the field of wildlife rehabilitation continues to expand and develop, increasing importance can be placed on the roles awareness and public education play. In addition to the rehabilitation and administrative staff a centre will have for operations, it now also has communication and education specialists to relate relevance and accountability of the organization and the responsibility of fostering coexistence with and understanding of local wildlife.

“That is our hope. Because if we all start listening and helping, then surely, together, we can make the world a better place for all living things. Can’t we?”

Jane Goodall

Strategic Directives and Objectives

INFRASTRUCTURE

Develop a long-term plan for infrastructure needs, demonstrating AIWC is a leader in wildlife rehabilitation and education.

Objectives:

- Perform feasibility study on potential education centre
- Identify long-term enclosure needs, along with development timelines
- Develop Repair and Maintenance Plan
- Identify capacity for black bear rehabilitation

HUMAN RESOURCES

AIWC will maximize internal capacity and organizational stability.

Objectives:

- Develop a succession plan
- Provide professional development opportunities
- Review and revise organizational bylaws, policies and procedures
- Provide transparency through regular communication

PUBLIC AWARENESS

AIWC will establish itself at the forefront of wildlife rehabilitation and education.

Objectives:

- Expand public education programs
- Dedicate resources to marketing, social media and communication plans
- Expand outreach to create collaborative partnerships within the community
- Long-term development of dedicated education infrastructure

FUNDING

AIWC will create a plan for long-term financial sustainability.

Objectives:

- Dedicate resources to create a sustainable funding model
- Develop a multi-year business operations plan
- Identify strategic partnership opportunities
- Develop reserve and legacy funds

Key Performance Indicators

The following key performance indicators will be used to measure how efficiently AIWC is functioning, utilizing its resources, and key activities are being performed in relation to the strategic directives and objectives.

in versus # out – rehabilitation success rate

Attendance at Community events

Education programs

Fiscal and Operational Stability – Longevity

HR activities – training and skills development of staff

Legacy building

Media appearances and press releases

Memberships

Physical plant – infrastructure

Relationship building

Social media reach

Volunteer Retention, Engagement and Appreciation

Plan Review and Renewal

AIWC will review the strategic plan on an annual basis to the extent of the performance indicators as previously noted. This review will be conducted by survey and summary report by the board in conjunction with the executive director and key staff members.

Review of the strategic plan for the purpose of amendment and renewal will take place every three years. This allows time and opportunity for implementation of the strategic directives and noted objectives.

"We don't own the earth. We are the earth's caretakers. We take care of it and all the things on it. And when we're done with it, it should be left better than we found it."

Katherine Hannigan



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