BRI Impact Report 2025-26

Dare to shape the future of disability health care for kids



Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Bloorview
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



Land acknowledgement

As we reflect on the past year, we affirm our commitment to truth and reconciliation. This commitment is grounded in trust, respect, continuous learning and unlearning, and honouring diverse ways of knowing, being and healing.

We are grateful to be in Tkaronto (Toronto), a Mohawk word meaning, "the place in the water where the trees are standing." We live, work and provide care on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee-speaking nations, including the Huron-Wendat, Seneca and Mohawk. For more than 15,000 years, this land has been a place of gathering.

On our journey toward truth and reconciliation, we continue to examine our responsibility to support decolonization in pediatric rehabilitation across the health-care system and to value all ways of healing. Over the past year, Holland Bloorview has continued to take meaningful action, including creating accessible smudging spaces to support inclusive, culturally and spiritually sensitive care for Indigenous clients and families.

We recognize this work is ongoing. Guided by the wisdom of the communities we serve, we remain committed to listening, learning and taking action across this territory known as Turtle Island (North America).

Chi Miigwetch, Nia:weh, Merci – Thank you.

Messages from leadership



Over the past year, BRI has made incredible progress in conducting transformative research grounded in our commitment to our four strategic priorities. By advancing research practices through inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility and anti-racism (IDEAA), fuelling precision health, empowering a thriving research team and enabling transformative impact, we are deepening our understanding of what a good life means to each child and family, as well as to the community and advancing the research, care and solutions that can help them realize it.

Dr. Evdokia Anagnostou
vice president of research and director,
Bloorview Research Institute



Since opening its doors in 2004, BRI has provided global leadership in equity-driven, clinically relevant, impact-focused research. As the new president and CEO of Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, I am honoured and excited to work alongside such a talented team of researchers and trainees across a wide range of fields and areas of expertise. I look forward to supporting their continued pursuit of research excellence and the meaningful impact their work has on children, youth and families in Canada and around the world.

Bruce Squires
president and CEO,
Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

A year of impact

The Bloorview Research Institute (BRI) is a global leader in pediatric disability research, working with researchers, clinicians, families and community partners to advance discovery and innovation in childhood-onset disability, injury and developmental diversity. Embedded within Holland Bloorview, BRI is uniquely positioned to connect research with clinical care and community priorities. This first Impact Report highlights key initiatives, collaborations and milestones from the past year across the institute.





Who we are

The BRI is home to the highest concentration of pediatric disability research in the world. As part of Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Canada's hospital for kids with disabilities, BRI connects research with clinical care, helping translate discoveries into meaningful impact for children, youth and families. BRI is fully affiliated with the University of Toronto and, for more than a decade, has ranked among Canada's top 40 research hospitals. It is the only university-affiliated research institute in Canada dedicated to pediatric disability and one of very few of its kind around the world.

Our vision

To be a global leader in transformative, equity-driven research dedicated to enabling personalized versions of a good life for all individuals with childhood-onset disabilities, acquired injuries and developmental differences, their families and communities across the lifespan.

Our mission & values

Through trusted, diverse and transdisciplinary local, national and international partnerships and co-design with children, youth, families and communities, we will:

- Advance understanding of disability and developmental differences to promote physical and mental health, participation and well-being across the lifespan.
- Propel precision health discoveries through data science by integrating biological, psychological and social aspects of health and wellness.
- Mobilize knowledge, evidence-based practices, technologies, treatments and interventions nationally and globally.
- Use an inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility and anti-racism (IDEAA)-informed approach in all our work.
- Empower and support research teams by providing the resources, skills and technology required to advance research excellence and impact.

BRI at a glance

21
scientists

12
clinician team and study investigators

191
trainees across six levels of study

3
Canadian Research Chairs (CRCs)

5
hospital-university endowed chairs

11
research labs/ centres



CANADA'S TOP 40 RESEARCH HOSPITALS 2025 RE$EARCH Infosource Inc.

Top 40
among Canada's research hospitals*



Top
among pediatric hospitals for research intensity*

Top 3
among small-tier institutions for hospital intensity*

$786,168
in research spending per scientist**

*Rankings and research-intensity data are based on a report by RE$EARCH Infosource Inc.
** Based on BRI's FY25-26 data submitted to RE$EARCH Infosource Inc.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY IN ACTION

Advance research practices through IDEAA



At BRI, inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility and anti-racism (IDEAA) are shaping both who has opportunities to participate in research and how research is designed, conducted and shared. In 2025-26, we continued to strengthen inclusive research practices while advancing research that addresses barriers experienced by children and youth with disabilities and developmental differences.

Opening pathways into research



A more inclusive research community starts by giving more people the opportunity to see themselves as part of it. Through the SOAR stream of the Ward Summer Student Research Program, BRI creates research opportunities for students from communities historically underrepresented in health and academic research, in partnership with the University of Toronto's Office of Access and Outreach. In 2025, Gabriela Masri Ahmar was among 17 students selected from more than 1,200 applicants. Drawing on her family's experiences navigating the Canadian pediatric system as newcomers, she brought her lived experience and commitment to equity to her work in Dr. Melanie Penner's ACCEPT Lab, contributing to the national ECHO AuDIO study to improve access to timely and equitable autism diagnosis. Read Gabriela's story.

Understanding who participates in research



BRI developed the processes and infrastructure to begin collecting sociodemographic information from research participants. The new initiative, launched April 1, 2026, will help to better understand who participates in research, identify and address barriers to participation and increase representation.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS THIS PRIORITY



Advancing research at the intersection of childhood disability, racial identity and ethnicity

Dr. De-Lawrence Lamptey, EMBARK scientist, examines the experiences and needs of racialized and ethnically diverse children and youth with disabilities and their families.



Turning research on discrimination into tools for change

Research led by Dr. Sally Lindsay, senior scientist and lead of the TRAIL Lab, explored how ableism, racism and other forms of discrimination affect youth with disabilities, drawing on the experiences of 52 youth, clinicians and service providers. The findings informed the Anti-Discrimination Resource Hub, co-developed with youth, family leaders and other partners. The hub brings together more than 100 resources to help youth, families and service providers understand and address discrimination and foster inclusion. Learn more about the Anti-Discrimination Resource Hub.

Creating more inclusive conversations about sexuality and disability

Through the SSHRC-funded We Are Sexual Too partnership, Dr. Amy McPherson, senior scientist and lead of the ProFILE Lab, has been working with youth and community partners across Canada to address critical gaps in knowledge and resources related to sexuality and disability. The partnership has helped build a nationwide community of practice and mobilize practical resources, including BRI's Disability and Sexuality Resource Hub, which offers lived-experience stories, videos and educational tools for youth with disabilities, families and health-care providers. The hub has been accessed almost 40,000 times by users in 72 countries. Explore the Disability and Sexuality Resource Hub.



Making transportation more accessible

Through a SSHRC-funded partnership with Checker Taxi, Dr. Tim Ross, senior scientist and lead of the EPIC Lab, served as principal investigator on a program of research aimed at improving accessible taxi services for disabled riders. As part of this work, Ross and PhD graduate Élyse Comeau examined the experiences of riders and drivers in the City of Toronto, identifying opportunities to improve safety, communication and disability awareness and proposing a practical training framework. The findings could help inform training, policies and service practices to make accessible transportation safer, more inclusive and responsive to the needs of disabled riders. Read the paper.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY
IN ACTION

Empower a thriving research community



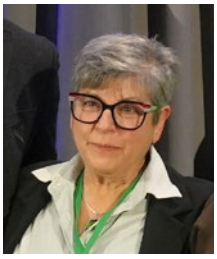
Together, we are building a sustainable, inclusive and high-performing research community where researchers, staff, trainees and partners are supported to grow, contribute and thrive.

Celebrating family engagement champions

BRI launched its Family Engagement in Research Awards at the 2025 BRI Symposium to recognize exceptional contributions to meaningful family engagement. Manuela Comito and Dr. Tom Chau received Distinguished Service Awards, while the BRI Legacy Award for Family Impact in Research was presented posthumously to Gideon Sheps for his lasting contributions to family engagement at BRI. His wife, Natalie Richter, accepted the award on his behalf.









Supporting the next generation of researchers

At the 19th annual Anne & David Ward Family Summer Student Research Day on July 22, undergraduate and medical students experienced research beyond the lab. Through research talks, poster presentations and quick-hit competitions, students were challenged to distill and communicate their work to the broader BRI community, building practical skills and gaining firsthand experience of what it means to contribute to pediatric disability and rehabilitation research. Learn more about the students' research.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT ACROSS THIS PRIORITY

Strengthening family partnership in research

A paper published in *Disability & Rehabilitation* highlighted Holland Bloorview's refreshed Family Engagement in Research Framework, co-created by family and youth leaders, researchers, trainees and staff. The framework provides clearer roles, guiding principles and practical resources to support meaningful family partnership throughout the research process. Read the story.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY IN ACTION

Fuel precision health



BRI is advancing precision health to better understand individual differences and move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches toward more personalized care and support for children and youth with disabilities and developmental differences.

Advancing precision health through collaborative research



BRI advances precision health by bringing together researchers, clinicians, people with lived experience and families through collaborative research networks. Two examples of this work are the Province of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Disorders (POND) Network and the Cerebral Palsy Integrated Neuroscience Discovery Network (CP-NET).

The Province of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Disorders (POND) Network, led by Holland Bloorview, continued its province-wide efforts to improve the lives of children and youth with neurodevelopmental conditions. By uniting researchers, clinicians, engineers, youth and families across Ontario, POND advanced discoveries into the biological pathways underlying autism, ADHD, OCD, intellectual disability and related conditions and translated this understanding to clinical trials for novel therapies and supports. The network's collaborative research model continues to accelerate innovation and improve care for individuals and families affected by neurodevelopmental differences. Learn more about the POND Network.

The Cerebral Palsy Integrated Neuroscience Discovery Network (CP-NET), a province-wide research network that includes Holland Bloorview researchers and is co-led by Dr. Darcy Fehlings, senior clinician scientist, continued to advance discoveries aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with cerebral palsy across the lifespan. In FY25-26, CP-NET brought together researchers, clinicians, people with lived experience and families to drive innovation in cerebral palsy care through research in rehabilitation, brain repair, genetics and neuroimaging, while accelerating the development and evaluation of new interventions. Through its collaborative research and knowledge mobilization efforts, CP-NET is helping build a stronger evidence base to improve care and quality of life for individuals with cerebral palsy and their families. Learn more about CP-NET.

Building Canada's clinical trials capacity

BRI is the lead site of KINDtrials (Kids and Beyond Neurodevelopmental Trials Network), a national clinical trials network bringing together researchers, clinicians, families, community partners and industry. With more than 100 stakeholders involved, the network is developing a coordinated, pan-Canadian approach to clinical trials that strengthens trial readiness, enables multi-site collaboration and expands opportunities for people with neurodevelopmental conditions and childhood-onset disabilities to participate in research. Learn more about the KINDtrials.

Enabling a learning health system

In 2025-26, teams across Holland Bloorview's Research Institute, Strategy and Information Management & Technology (IMT) worked together to develop the data infrastructure for the integrated informatics platform and the new Research Participant Registry. The registry, launched April 1, 2026, is an important step toward better connecting research and clinical systems and advancing Holland Bloorview's journey as a learning health system.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS THIS PRIORITY

Building Canada's largest genomics dataset focused on childhood brain conditions

Led by Dr. Evdokia Anagnostou, vice president of research and director of BRI, a $12-million Genome Canada investment will support the sequencing of 10,000 individuals to create the largest genomics dataset dedicated to childhood-onset neurodevelopmental, mental health and brain injury conditions. By linking genomic information with clinical, environmental and administrative data, the initiative will help researchers identify biological and other factors that may explain differences among children and across conditions, creating a foundation for more precise research and care. Learn more about the Canadian Precision Health Initiative.

Expanding access to genomic investigation for individuals with neurodevelopmental conditions

Dr. Danielle Baribeau, clinician scientist at BRI, chairs the Ontario Provincial Genetics Program's Neurodevelopmental Disorders expert group, which developed clinical guidance leading to expanded access to genome-wide sequencing for people with neurodevelopmental disorders in Ontario. Approved in January 2025, the approach made Ontario the first province in Canada and one of few regions in the world where genome-wide sequencing is a funded first-line test for people with autism or intellectual disability and can be ordered by pediatricians and other physicians caring for people with NDDs, not only by geneticists. Since the change, the volume of genetic testing ordered for people with neurodevelopmental disorders has increased substantially, representing a tangible shift in the clinical translation of genomic advances.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS THIS PRIORITY



Harnessing data to advance precision health

Led by Dr. Azadeh Kushki, senior scientist and associate chief of data science, the WONDER platform, supported by major funding from Brain Canada, is strengthening BRI's capacity to bring together, analyse and use complex research data to better understand children's needs. The platform will enable researchers to identify patterns across different types of information and generate insights that can inform care and support for children with conditions including autism, ADHD, cerebral palsy and genetic conditions. Read the announcement.

Strengthening clinical trial readiness

Holland Bloorview and SickKids were awarded up to USD$17.25 million from ARIA to join the international ARIA IMPACT Network. Led in Toronto by Dr. Evdokia Anagnostou, with BRI investigators Drs. Danielle Baribeau, Jessica Brian and Azadeh Kushki, the multi-year study will integrate genomics, neuroimaging, EEG and real-world clinical data and expand capacity for future clinical trials in autism and related neurodevelopmental conditions.
Read the announcement.

Understanding the biological diversity of neurodevelopmental conditions



Dr. Jacob Ellegood, neuroimaging scientist at BRI, is advancing research that combines brain imaging, machine learning and molecular data to better understand the biological diversity of neurodevelopmental conditions. His work has established a framework for identifying shared patterns of brain organization across 135 mouse models and human cohorts with conditions including autism, ADHD and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). By linking these patterns to underlying biological pathways, the research aims to identify biologically informed subgroups that could guide future investigations and interventions. Read the paper.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY
IN ACTION

Enable transformational impact



BRI works to move research into real-world impact by translating evidence into care, scaling innovation, building partnerships and sharing expertise with communities locally, nationally and globally.

Expanding access to BRI-developed knowledge

Holland Bloorview launched its new Learning & Resource Portal in fall 2025, creating a centralized platform to make training, educational resources and other knowledge developed across the organization more widely accessible. Dr. Virginia Wright, senior scientist, is among those using the platform to more widely disseminate evidence-based training and educational programs for clinicians, including certification and online training for the Challenge, ABI Challenge and Motor Learning Strategies programs. Visit the Learning and Resource Portal.

Sharing knowledge across the community

BRI creates opportunities for researchers, clinicians, families, trainees, community partners and industry partners to exchange knowledge, build connections and move research toward real-world impact. In 2025-26, two signature events connected the BRI community across Canada and around the world:

- Global Guest Speaker Series: Launched in September 2025, BRI's free monthly virtual series connects its community with leading international experts in childhood disability research, rehabilitation and inclusion. Since its launch, the series has featured 12 experts from around the world, reaching more than 1,500 attendees across 37 countries. Learn more.
- 20th annual BRI Symposium: BRI's annual flagship event reached a milestone in 2025 with its 20th Symposium, drawing more than 450 people from Canada and seven other countries through its hybrid format. The two-day event created a forum for dialogue, collaboration and innovation, bringing together researchers, clinicians, trainees, families, community partners and industry partners to exchange knowledge and connect across disciplines. Learn more.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS THIS PRIORITY



Advancing community-based autism care

Supported through CIHR's THINC initiative, Dr. Melanie Penner, senior clinician scientist, is leading the ECHO AuDIO project to strengthen integrated, community-based care for autistic children and youth. In 2025-26, the team interviewed 36 community health-care providers across Canada to understand barriers and facilitators to delivering autism care in community settings. Using implementation science approaches, these findings will inform tailored strategies to support local care teams, while lived-experience councils continue to guide the project. Learn more about ECHO AuDIO.



Bringing brain injury research into practice

Led by Dr. Shannon Scratch, senior clinician scientist, the NOvEL Lab works with educators, health-care providers, community organizations, young people and families to bring evidence-based brain injury knowledge and resources into the settings where children and youth live, learn and receive care. Its work includes concussion education, resources to support children returning to school after brain injury and training for professionals and families. Learn more about the NOvEL Lab's research and knowledge mobilization work.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS THIS PRIORITY

Building an innovation ecosystem to move ideas toward impact



As the first company in Holland Bloorview's commercialization-zone incubator, Bionic Power spent nearly three years embedded in the organization, gaining access to pediatric rehabilitation and research expertise, innovation networks and opportunities to collaborate on meaningful research. The relationship has grown into an ongoing research collaboration with the PROPEL Lab, led by senior scientist Dr. Jan Andrysek, demonstrating how commercialization, research and industry partnerships can come together to advance technologies designed to improve mobility for children and adults. Read the full story.



Combating misinformation with evidence

Amid heightened public discussion and misinformation about autism in 2025, Drs. Evdokia Anagnostou, Melanie Penner and Jessica Brian brought evidence-based research into the national conversation through coverage in major media including CBC, Global News, The Globe and Mail and The Canadian Press. Their expertise helped provide clear, research-informed information about autism, its underlying causes and therapies, while reinforcing the dignity and inclusion of autistic people. See the media coverage.



Democratizing rehabilitation technology

Dr. Elaine Biddiss, senior scientist, was awarded Kids Brain Health Network Innovation and Implementation funding for BLAST-OFF, a project designed to expand access to Bootle Blast, a movement-tracking video game that supports children's motor skill development at home. The project will establish a lending-library model so families can access the technology beyond research studies, with clinician support for personalized home training. Learn more about the BLAST-OFF project.

Developing and testing new approaches to neurorehabilitation

Research led by Dr. Deryk Beal, senior scientist, and lead of the CONNECT Lab, includes combining brain stimulation with rehabilitation to improve recovery for children with acquired brain injury.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS THIS PRIORITY



Evaluating new approaches through clinical trials

BRI researchers are leading and participating in investigator- and industry-initiated clinical trials across a range of conditions, evaluating promising treatments and approaches for children and youth with disabilities and developmental differences. In 2025-26, this included studies examining potential treatments for Phelan-McDermid syndrome and Rett syndrome, approaches to anxiety across neurodevelopmental conditions and treatments and medication strategies for autism, irritability associated with autism and ADHD. These studies represent only part of BRI's broader clinical trials portfolio.



Expanding access to brain-computer interface technology across Ontario

Through EmpowerBCI, technology developed by Dr. Tom Chau, distinguished senior scientist at BRI and lead of the PRISM Lab, is expanding beyond Holland Bloorview to children and youth across Ontario through the Clinical BCI Program. Supported by funding from the Slaight Family Foundation and delivered through a partnership between Holland Bloorview and Empowered Kids Ontario, the initiative will provide 20 EKO member organizations with BRI-developed BCI technology and clinician training. To date, eight sites have been set up and trained, expanding access to BCI technology for children and youth with significant movement and communication disabilities. Read the full story.

Fostering research partnerships across Canada and beyond

BRI strengthened partnerships that connect research with communities and collaborators in Canada and around the world. A new MicroResearch partnership with IWK Health is building capacity for community-driven disability research, with Drs. Jessica Brian and Sarah Munce mentoring research teams in India. BRI also partnered with Fragile X Canada on its first national conference, bringing together families, researchers, clinicians and advocates to strengthen connections, share knowledge and advance dialogue around research and care. BRI also co-hosted a community event with the CIHR Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health, creating opportunities for researchers, youth representatives and CIHR leaders to exchange knowledge and share perspectives. Read about the MicroResearch partnership.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS THIS PRIORITY



Rethinking how family-centred care is measured

Dr. Gillian King, distinguished senior scientist at BRI, co-led the development of the updated Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC 2.0) with colleagues at CanChild. The MPOC 2.0 is a tool used to understand parents' experiences of the services they receive. The updated measure provides a contemporary way to assess how well health and rehabilitation services reflect family-centred principles, helping teams better understand families' experiences and identify opportunities to improve care. The publication describing MPOC 2.0 was selected as an Editor's Choice article in Disability and Rehabilitation. Read the MPOC 2.0 paper.



Turning innovation into everyday care

Two projects supported through the INSPIRE Awards have moved from promising ideas into routine clinical practice. A personalized prosthetic-cover workflow led by Dr. Jan Andrysek, senior scientist, and collaborators reduced turnaround times by 47 per cent and average costs by 33 per cent, giving clients faster access to prosthetic covers tailored to their anatomy and preferences. Meanwhile, Dr. Shannon Scratch, senior clinician scientist, and her team embedded TeachABI into discharge planning to better support children and youth returning to school after acquired brain injury. Today, 31 clinicians and school transition liaisons have incorporated the resource into their practice. Read the full story.

Strengthening implementation science

Dr. Sarah Munce, senior scientist and associate chief of implementation science, was awarded a $1-million, five-year CIHR Implementation Science Chair to advance meaningful youth and family engagement in learning health systems. Her work will use UNITE, a measure of youth and family engagement in research and study its implementation, with the goal of strengthening how youth and family perspectives shape research, care and continuous improvement at Holland Bloorview and beyond. Read the full story.

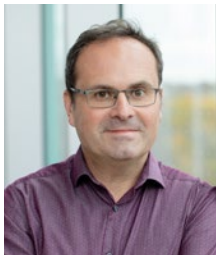




Holland Bloorview's Executive Leadership Team explores brain-computer interface (BCI) technology by creating artwork using brain signals.

Awards & recognition

Dr. Jan Andrysek and Dr. Sarah Munce — Academic Promotions





BRI scientists Dr. Jan Andrysek and Dr. Sarah Munce received academic promotions at the University of Toronto in 2025. Dr. Andrysek was promoted to full professor at the Institute of Biomedical Engineering, while Dr. Munce was promoted to associate professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health. The promotions recognize their contributions and leadership in rehabilitation engineering and implementation science. Read the story.



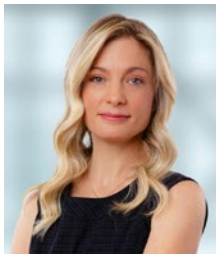
Dr. Jessica Brian — EKO Award of Excellence

Dr. Jessica Brian, psychologist and senior clinician scientist, received the 2025 Empowered Kids Ontario Award of Excellence for her transformative research and clinical implementation work to improve early diagnostic assessment, intervention and health services for children with autism and other developmental conditions. Read the announcement.



Dr. Tom Chau — Officer of the Order of Canada

Dr. Tom Chau, distinguished senior scientist at BRI, was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada for his pioneering contributions to pediatric rehabilitation engineering and his commitment to developing technologies that help children with disabilities communicate and participate more fully in life. Read the announcement.



Dr. Sarah Munce — CIHR Implementation Science Chair

Dr. Sarah Munce, senior scientist and associate chief of implementation science at BRI, was awarded a five-year, $1-million CIHR Implementation Science Chair to advance meaningful youth and family engagement in learning health systems and strengthen the implementation of research evidence in real-world care. Read the announcement.

Tributes & acknowledgments

Thank you, Julia Hanigsberg, for more than 10 years of outstanding leadership as president and CEO of Holland Bloorview. Your passion and commitment to research, teaching and learning have had a transformative impact on the lives of children and youth with disabilities and developmental differences across the health-care sector.

We are deeply grateful to the Holland Bloorview Foundation, our dedicated fundraising partner and to the many generous donors whose support makes the work and impact of BRI possible.

DARE TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF DISABILITY HEALTH CARE FOR KIDS.

Stay connected with BRI to discover the latest research, stories, events and opportunities.



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Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

A TEACHING HOSPITAL FULLY AFFILIATED WITH UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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