Office of Science and Technology Policy Networking and Information Technology Research and Development (NITRD) National Coordination Office (NCO), National Science Foundation

COMMENTS OF INCOMPAS

Developing an Artificial Intelligence Action Plan

Introduction

Since its founding in 1981, INCOMPAS has established itself as a prominent trade association in Washington, D.C., dedicated to promoting open networks, open markets, and the open Internet. Representing a broad tent of competitive communications and infrastructure leaders, as well as technology companies, INCOMPAS has a long and consistent history of championing policies that foster innovation, competition, and consumer choice. Through the Artificial Intelligence Competition Center (AICC), INCOMPAS now continues its important policy development work, seeking to educate stakeholders on the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and to chart a policy path forward.

INCOMPAS believes that sensible policies with appropriate safeguards can ensure AI is integrated securely into the economy while maintaining a climate that encourages continuous innovation and investment. We believe that this is how the U.S. can maintain its technological and economic edge and how we can bolster U.S. competitiveness, promote entrepreneurial market entry, and help to prepare the next generation for the coming opportunities and global challenges. As such, we believe in an "All of the Above" approach to AI policy whereby — according to user needs — both open source and closed AI models are able to advance to meet marketplace demands. We call this approach *"Abundant AI."*

We have long advocated for a fair and open telecommunications landscape, pushing back against monopolistic practices and ensuring that new entrants can thrive in an open and competitive market. As such, we would like to focus our U.S. AI Action Plan recommendations to issues concerning economic leadership and innovation, and infrastructure modernization.

I. Economic Leadership & Innovation

Our economic leadership and innovation suggestions encompass three areas: (1) Competition, (2) American Innovation, Regional Development, and Small and Medium-Sized Businesses (SMBs), and (3) Workforce Development and Education.

Competition

A competitive marketplace is key to driving innovation, investment, and rapid technological advancement, particularly in Al. Open-source models, with contributions from global developers, encourage faster innovation, lower costs, and better products. This competition fosters fresh ideas, challenges traditional practices, and accelerates progress across industries. Maintaining a high standard of openness, transparency, and accountability in this environment is essential for the continued growth of Al in the U.S. and for ensuring global peace and security through strong international leadership.

America's competitive edge in AI stems from its world-class talent pool, investments in R&D and infrastructure, and a vibrant startup ecosystem backed by strong venture capital networks. The U.S. benefits from significant AI research and development, with diverse AI applications across industries like healthcare, finance, and defense, further strengthening its position. This combination of technical expertise, entrepreneurial culture, and financial support ensures that the U.S. remains a global leader in AI innovation and international markets.

Policy Recommendations

- **Support Al Entrepreneurs:** Entrepreneurs and startups have always been the backbone of American innovation. That should now be reinforced through supporting Al startup ecosystems to flourish by funding accelerators, encouraging university partnerships, and making venture capital more accessible.
- Include Smaller Players in Discussions: Although we are heartened by the U.S. government's convenings with Al companies, we should also encourage smaller Al companies to be present at the table.

- Spearhead and Support Public/Private Collaboration: All hands must be on deck to maintain the U.S. lead on AI and they must be aligned. Public/private coordination of strategy can drive more impactful results. Several recent examples abound. The Stargate Project demonstrates the financial commitment that the private sector can make to help achieve economic goals in the national interest while the government can support expediting permitting and production.
- International Collaboration: Targeted international collaboration should aim to prevent a fragmented landscape of frameworks, which reduces productivity and hinders innovation. The recent National Security Presidential Memorandum "America First Investment Policy" sets forth processes to prioritize and fast-track investments from specific allies. Similarly, strategic cooperation with like-minded allies can strengthen economic gains and development across countries.

American Innovation, Regional Development, and SMBs

Al presents a significant opportunity for economic development in the U.S., but to fully capitalize on its potential, innovation must be sustainable and inclusive. Al adoption is currently concentrated in a few cities, which could lead to an "Al divide" and increased regional inequality. Targeted policies can create regional hubs to expand employment opportunities and foster innovation, ensuring that small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are not left behind in the shift to Al. Policies should support SMBs in adopting Al technologies, helping them stay competitive in this evolving landscape.

Policy Recommendations

 "Abundant Al:" The transparency of open source Al is a valuable attribute from both a security perspective and an economic perspective. Open source allows third-party access and can be audited more easily. There is less risk of biases as both inputs will be more diverse, and existing biases can be more easily pinpointed and rectified. Open source can also facilitate more innovation and competition, and promote entrepreneurial market entry. Open source offerings may also use less data and energy and offer more niche, tailored services. Open source Al models built in the US, like Llama, will not only support the prosperity and security of the United States, but they will also help establish US open source standards in the global race for AI leadership.

Closed models will also undoubtedly have a prominent place in the ecosystem. The major investments and financial bets that the largest tech companies are placing on proprietary model AI approaches is evidence of the marketplace building to scale based upon anticipated demand. This is why we call for an approach that encompasses both.

- More R&D: We encourage the U.S. to expedite and expand upon R&D initiatives that can support U.S. innovation. We also encourage the establishment of programs that support smaller, innovative companies that possess the necessary technical capabilities. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) support for startups can be an important vehicle for identifying and supporting home-grown technology startups. Recently, Encharge AI, a DARPA-funded semiconductor startup developing analog chips, raised \$100 million in Series B.¹ In addition, DARPA will launch a domestic hub for prototyping advanced semiconductor fabrication techniques. There is room for more investment to strengthen the U.S. semiconductor industry.
- **Coordinated Technology Development Strategy:** The U.S. government should facilitate increased investment and innovation in AI and other emerging and complementary technologies, such as robotics or quantum computing. The government can itself make investments as well as promote investments in strategic technologies.
- **Government-Led Signaling:** The U.S. government can use its purchasing power to guide the direction of AI development and to help drive adoption within the public sector, particularly to drive more efficiency. It can do so by better communicating its own needs and requirements to the market, reforming procurement practices, and making its own massive data assets available to the market in

¹ Pasternack, Alex, "This DARPA-backed startup banked 100 million for its energy-slashing analog chips," Fast Company, February 14, 2025,

https://www.fastcompany.com/91278505/encharge-ai-banks-100-million-for-its-energy-slashing-ana log-chips.

affordable ways. Directly signaling its needs can not only result in better-suited technology but can also promote and accelerate the advancement of specific clusters and subsectors as needed.

- Al Procurement Reform: Larger players are moving quickly into the government AI procurement market.² Startups and smaller firms which are often the drivers of new technology - will face increasing difficulty competing with large vendors in government procurement contracts. This will stifle their ability to grow, invest further in their companies, and innovate. Congress should work with the relevant departments and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to create a program that allocates part of the procurement budget to purchases from gualified startups. Furthermore, the OMB can conduct outreach to help departments and agencies understand that the place of AI tools is separate and distinct from other software and that startups and midsize vendors are capable and well-positioned to provide these products. Given the Department of Defense (DoD) is one of the largest buyers of these services, special attention should be paid to its role and its procurement practices. Revised procurement processes in the national security realm can be vital to opening new markets for smaller players to compete. Simplification of these processes can help players with limited teams or no prior experience. Finally, government AI procurement should be careful to remain technology neutral, considering both open source and closed models and systems as appropriate.
- **Public Dataset Availability:** The federal government can help the development of AI models by making its vast data resources available to developers and researchers. This information would include a variety of sources that contain valuable demographic, economic, and cultural data, enabling models to contain factually correct information covering a significant period of time. The Department of Commerce (DoC) has already established an "AI and Open Government Data

² Jacob Larson, James S. Denford, Gregory S. Dawson, and Kevin C. Desouza, "The evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) spending by the U.S. government," The Brookings Institution, March 26, 2024, <u>https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-evolution-of-artificial-intelligence-ai-spending-by-the-u-s-g</u>overnment/.

Assets Working Group."³ We encourage other agencies to similarly create working groups and guidelines to make their data available for Al training in affordable and easily accessible ways.

- **University Support:** University research is a critical leg to continued U.S. innovation. University researchers, not constrained by a company's agenda, are more free to pursue experimental or public good research. They are, however, limited by resources.
- **Expanding Public Sector Expertise:** Protecting U.S. innovation will require that government officials and staff have specialized skills and knowledge, adequate experience, and sufficient expertise in making decisions related to AI and other emerging technologies. In addition to providing expert AI training to existing staff, the U.S. government should proactively recruit leading experts from academia and the private sector. Programs like the AI Talent Surge and U.S. Digital Corps should be expanded to meet this acute need.
- Federal Direction for Regional Initiatives: Congress should work with local stakeholders to ascertain what additional geographic locations could benefit from what is needed to become a future hub. Congress could work together with local employers but also scale up place-based investments in emerging AI communities. Renewed funding through the NDAA for the DoC's Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs program is allowing for new awards that will have regional impact as well as support national economic development and national security.
- Small Business Support: Small businesses will need funding or know-how depending on their size. While the SBA does offer some training workshops, more widespread and easily accessible resources can help small businesses integrate AI quickly and easily. The December 2024 Bipartisan House Task Force on AI Report suggestions to determine SMB resource needs, support SMB AI literacy while also

³ Oliver Wise, Sallie Ann Keller, and Victoria Houed, "Preparing Open Data for the Age of AI," Department of Commerce, January 18, 2024, <u>https://www.commerce.gov/news/blog/2024/01/preparing-open-data-age-ai</u>.

lightening compliance burdens for small businesses is practical and implementable.⁴

Workforce Impact and "AI Education for All"

Al offers significant potential to enhance productivity and creativity by automating mundane tasks, but it also poses challenges, particularly in terms of job displacement. To fully capitalize on Al's benefits, policies must focus on upskilling workers and creating new job categories to support those affected by technological changes. While Al's impact on productivity has been modest so far, its potential for exponential growth remains significant. With the right policies, including upskilling, retraining, and education system reforms, Al could help revitalize the middle class and ensure the U.S. remains competitive and prosperous in the evolving global economy.

Policy Recommendations

- More Workforce Impact Research: Congress should work with relevant government departments and other stakeholders to study workforce impact across different industries, functions, and geographies and over time. These parties should also work together to determine which new jobs will likely be created by AI and other emerging technologies. These analyses can then help determine specific education and upskilling policies based on skills needs.
- Incentives for Worker Training: The growing use of AI, even if only for complementing workers, imply a great need for worker training or retraining. Federal or local governments could provide this training or provide incentives for corporate training.⁵
- Creation of Focused Workforce Development Programs: The U.S. needs to create a myriad of opportunities and programs to develop a new generation of workers. Some can focus on community and

⁴ Bipartisan House Task Force Report on AI, 118th Congress, December 2024,

https://www.speaker.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/AI-Task-Force-Report-FINAL.pdf#%5B%7B%22 num%22%3A284%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C69%2C720 %2C0%5D.

⁵ Erik Brynjolfsson, "The Turing Trap: The Promise & Peril of Human-Like Artificial Intelligence," *Daedalus Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Science*, Spring 2022, https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/Daedalus Sp22 19 Brynjolfsson.p

vocational schools, while others can be regionally focused, addressing the specific needs of a region.

• **Revamped Curriculum:** Critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork should be integrated as key components of the K-12 curriculum. Computer science and AI literacy should also be included in the K-12 curriculum across the U.S., *"AI Education for All,"* not unlike the "Internet for All" program in its goal of improving digital equity.

Congress can work together with state authorities to build programs that make additional STEM and technology learning opportunities available at the K-12 level. Furthermore, policymakers can work with industry and universities to identify and coordinate collaboration opportunities across the K-20 timeline.

• Targeted Immigration Reform: Since 2000, half of all U.S. startups valued at \$1 billion or more have been founded or co-founded by immigrants.⁶ Specific immigration reforms can help the U.S. continue to attract and retain top talent in the country. The U.S. government should work to determine the available AI (and related sectors') talent pool in the U.S. and abroad and to create mechanisms to attract and vet those individuals to work in the U.S. Congress should also make it easier for graduates with relevant STEM and AI skills and qualifications to remain in the U.S. by streamlining processes to obtain green cards. Furthermore, Congress could raise the current cap on employment-based STEM visas. Immigration reform could attract individuals and entrepreneurs with specialized AI or STEM skills.⁷

⁶ Graham Allison and Eric Schmidt, "The U.S. Needs a Million Talents Program to Retain Technology Leadership," *Foreign Policy*, July 16, 2022,

https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/16/immigration-us-technology-companies-work-visas-china-talen t-competition-universities/.

⁷ Joel Burke, "National Security AI Entrepreneur Visa: Creating a New Pathway for Elite Dual-Use Technology Founders to Build in America," Federation of American Scientists, June 27, 2024, <u>https://fas.org/publication/ai-entrepreneur-visa-legislative-sprint/</u>.

II. Infrastructure Modernization

Our infrastructure modernization suggestions encompass three areas: (1) Broad Infrastructure and Delivery of Communications Services, (2) Spectrum Policy, and (3) Energy Infrastructure.

Broadband Infrastructure and Delivery of Communications Services

Broadband infrastructure is essential for AI development as it ensures high-speed internet access, which is critical for AI technologies to function effectively. Expanding broadband coverage, particularly in underserved areas, along with investments in computing resources and electricity infrastructure, will enable the widespread use of AI applications. Additionally, AI can enhance the delivery and security of communications services, such as combating illegal robocalls and robotexts. Policies promoting open Internet rules will ensure that consumers have unfettered access to AI applications and lawful online content.

However, the broadband industry faces significant challenges, including the risk of sabotage by malicious actors and the difficulty of controlling access points. While AI can improve security, it also introduces new risks. AI is already providing efficiencies in network optimization and workforce management, leading to better customer experiences and reduced costs. Yet, providers deploying broadband networks continue to encounter barriers such as excessive access fees, permitting delays, and restrictive commercial agreements, which hinder competition and slow deployment to underserved communities. Encouraging market-based solutions, infrastructure sharing, and open access will help address these challenges.

Policy Recommendations

• Improving Physical Access: To support broadband network availability, policymakers should break down existing barriers to fast and affordable deployment. They should speed broadband providers' access to public rights-of-way (ROW) by accelerating permit approval by implementing applicable shot clocks and charging reasonable fees. Policymakers should also ask state and local governments, utilities, and railroads to publicly disclose their fees and ensure that they are competitively and technologically neutral, non-discriminatory, and based on their actual, objectively reasonable costs for access to ROW,

poles, and conduit. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and states should modernize their pole access rules to set specific timeframes for large deployments. Lastly, policymakers should examine unreasonable door fees and inside wiring disputes prevalent in residential and commercial multiple tenant environments (MTEs) while reaffirming the benefits of neutral host operations for MTE rooftops.

- Al-Powered Infrastructure Mapping and Deployment: Use AI to create detailed, real-time maps of existing broadband infrastructure and identify areas with gaps in deployment. This can assist policymakers in targeting investments and incentivizing public-private partnerships for deploying broadband where it is needed most. This would streamline the planning and construction of broadband infrastructure, reducing costs and enabling more accurate, competitive investments in underserved regions. AI can also assist in predictive maintenance and optimizing network performance for new deployments. AI tools for infrastructure mapping could be utilized to deploy fiber networks more efficiently by analyzing geographic and demographic data.
- Al to Reduce Regulatory Barriers for Small ISPs: Use Al to simplify regulatory compliance and reduce the burden on smaller Internet service providers (ISPs) entering the broadband market. Al could automate reporting processes, predict potential regulatory violations, and ensure that smaller providers meet compliance standards without excessive administrative costs. By lowering regulatory and compliance costs, Al can encourage more competition by enabling smaller ISPs to compete effectively with larger, established providers. This could accelerate broadband deployment in areas currently underserved by large providers. Automation tools in regulatory compliance can be explored to streamline processes for small businesses and startups in various industries.

Spectrum Policy

Spectrum is a vital resource for our nation's communications infrastructure, and effective management of its allocation and use is crucial for the AI ecosystem. Maximizing spectrum availability and efficiency can benefit AI applications, which can also play a role in optimizing spectrum management and wireless network deployment. Al has the potential to enhance spectrum efficiency by dynamically allocating resources in real time, analyzing large datasets to predict demand, and reducing interference.

Al can also help detect and mitigate harmful interference by identifying patterns and anomalies in spectrum usage, allowing for quicker resolution of issues. Additionally, Al can assist in ensuring regulatory compliance by continuously monitoring spectrum use, detecting violations, and enforcing policies, ensuring proper management and control of spectrum resources.

Policy Recommendations

- AI-Driven Spectrum Management and Allocation: Implement AI technologies to optimize spectrum management and allocation. By using AI to dynamically assess and manage spectrum usage, regulators can allocate broadband spectrum more efficiently, especially in rural or underserved areas. AI can identify underutilized spectrum in real-time, allowing for more flexible and competitive access. This would increase competition among ISPs, reduce entry barriers for smaller ISPs, and improve overall spectrum utilization for broadband services, particularly in high-demand areas.
- Al-Enabled Dynamic Spectrum Sharing: Leverage Al for dynamic spectrum sharing, where multiple wireless operators or services can share the same spectrum bands based on real-time demand. Al can manage spectrum usage by continuously monitoring traffic patterns and adjusting allocations to avoid interference and maximize efficiency. This would allow for more efficient use of spectrum, especially in crowded urban areas or during peak usage times. It also opens up opportunities for smaller providers to access spectrum more flexibly, fostering wireless competition. This approach can reduce the need for static, exclusive spectrum licenses, enabling more dynamic and competitive wireless broadband deployments.
- Al to Automate and Optimize Licensing Processes: Implement Al tools to streamline and optimize the spectrum licensing process, making it more efficient and transparent. Al could analyze applications, predict spectrum needs based on usage trends, and recommend optimized license terms that consider current and future demand. By reducing

bureaucratic delays and administrative overhead, AI-driven licensing could speed up the deployment of wireless broadband infrastructure, particularly for smaller providers that may struggle with lengthy regulatory processes. Automating parts of the licensing process can also help regulators allocate spectrum more fairly and efficiently, fostering greater competition in the wireless market. Al tools are already being explored in various regulatory settings to simplify complex application processes, and similar approaches could be applied to spectrum licensing.

Energy Infrastructure

The rise of AI will require a significant boost in energy resources. The challenge will not only be meeting this demand but also sourcing energy in a way that aligns with emissions goals and promotes environmental resilience. Access to reliable and affordable energy is crucial for AI scalability and economic development. The need for energy security is so critical that the Trump Administration has declared a national energy emergency.

Geopolitically, China's control over critical mineral extraction and energy production poses a challenge to U.S. competitiveness in AI. To stay competitive, the U.S. must embrace "energy abundance" and address infrastructure development delays. Energy projects face long lead times, slowing AI growth. While natural gas and hydro power will remain major energy sources, solar, wind, and geothermal energy are expected to lead future growth. Additionally, nuclear energy provides a significant portion of carbon-free electricity. Addressing energy availability and reliability will be crucial to maintaining U.S. leadership in AI.

Policy Recommendations

• **Visionary Strategy:** At a high level, the federal government is served well by convening a multidisciplinary group of technology, energy, and environmental experts to examine the dual goals of energy security and sustainability. The recent establishment of the National Energy Dominance Council will enable strategic and comprehensive assessment and planning concerning energy issues.

- **Grid Modernization:** Grid modernization is important. Congress and the Administration should continue to identify ways to incentivize and accelerate the use of grid-enhancing technologies and grid expansion.
- Minimize Red Tape: Build out new sources of energy by reforming permitting processes and making financing more accessible. Congress should work with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy (DoE), and state and local regulatory authorities, and utilities to understand and create new strategies to remove bureaucratic hurdles, fast-track permitting, and secure financing from both private and public sources. The Executive Order that will allow federal land to be rapidly available and prepared for co-located AI data centers and clean power facilities is potentially an effective way of cutting through the bottlenecks for construction. Additional permitting reforms are needed to ensure that natural gas infrastructure can be built quickly to serve AI demand.
- **Continued Support for Nuclear:** Nuclear energy is undoubtedly a clean energy that is having a resurgence around the world. Nuclear energy will require significant investment and time to deploy, but it could be considered a longer-term, sustainable source of energy. In the medium term, repowering old plants could be one option, as well as converting coal to nuclear power. Nuclear fusion is also one technology that is garnering interest. Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) have been well-received for their safety features as well as opportunities to co-locate with data centers.
- Support for Natural Gas Infrastructure: Electricity demand is experiencing three times faster growth per year this decade than what we have seen in prior decades, driven by increasing electrification, the emergence of new, large-load data centers, and a growth in manufacturing. Data centers alone present a challenge, which is projected to add nearly 30 gigawatts of electric demand by 2030. This increase in growth reflects a major opportunity for our country and underscores the need for more natural gas infrastructure to keep up with this growing demand. A comprehensive solution that includes holistic reforms to all federal infrastructure permitting will help

America realize a lower-carbon future while still satisfying the country's energy needs.

- **Support Efficient Technologies and Methodologies:** The U.S. can become better at using existing energy sources by supporting the improvement of existing technologies and encouraging the development of new energy efficiency technologies. The development of energy-efficient technologies and practices, including a ramp-up in heat recycling, is critical. Providing grants and funding for new technologies, such as advanced cooling systems, energy storage, and AI solutions, is essential too. Battery storage will be vital, particularly as renewable usage ramps up. Congress can work with the DoE to provide subsidies that can help drive this change.⁸
- Al as a Tool: Al software can help drive energy efficiency grid management and offer other benefits. For example, the DoE has announced an Al testbed to bring together researchers, national labs, and the private sector to research energy-efficient and/or energy-flexible Al training and inference.⁹ It is also already developing Al tools to improve the way such projects are sited and permitted at the federal, state, and local levels as part of its recently launched voltAlc Initiative.¹⁰
- **Protecting Infrastructure:** Al can be used to mitigate increased cybersecurity threats to energy infrastructure. The DoE has launched several efforts, including the establishment of the Energy Threat Analysis Center, to build partnerships between the public and private sectors to mitigate cyber threats to energy infrastructure.

⁸ "Revamping the Grid: How AI and Renewables Are Reshaping U.S. Energy Infrastructure," Jefferies, August 26, 2024,

https://insights.jefferies.com/boardroom-intelligence/revamping-the-grid-how-ai-and-renewables-ar e-reshaping-us-energy-infrastructure.

⁹ "Recommendations on Powering Artificial Intelligence and Data Center Infrastructure," U.S. Department of Energy, Secretary of Energy Board, Presented to the Secretary of Energy on July 30, 2024, <u>https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/Powering%20Al%20and%20Data%20Center%20Infrastructure%20Recommendations%20July%202024.pdf</u>.

¹⁰ "How AI Can Help Clean Energy Meet Growing Electricity Demand," U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Policy, August 16, 2024,

https://www.energy.gov/policy/articles/how-ai-can-help-clean-energy-meet-growing-electricity-dem and

Cyberattacks will undoubtedly increase. Congress should continue to ensure these solutions are scaled and distributed across the U.S.

Conclusion

INCOMPAS and the AICC believes that as AI reshapes our economy, security, and society, the United States must act decisively to maintain its competitive edge and ensure that the technology serves all Americans.

With regard to the economy, policymakers should ensure we retain our edge by providing innovative entrepreneurs with access to resources and markets through more streamlined procurement processes. We believe in *"Abundant AI"* whereby — according to user needs — both open source and closed AI models should advance to meet marketplace demands. An *"AI Education for All"* program will not only focus on upskilling and retraining the existing workforce but also revamping the education system to prepare for a new generation of workers. Regional development programs will ensure that not just parts, but the whole country can prosper.

Modern infrastructure is a prerequisite for AI advancement. Inclusive broadband serves as a foundation for AI development, while AI stands to provide flexibility and efficiency for spectrum management. There is a significant AI energy challenge that will need to be addressed through grid modernization and expanding access to diverse sources of energy.

We now have a window of opportunity that we cannot miss. It cannot be missed because there exists an alternative outcome in which the world is dominated by "Authoritarian AI," which is based on values antithetical to the United States. Authoritarian AI rests on state power over individuals, surveillance, and control. Failure to adopt an effective AI policy framework could lead not simply to missing opportunities for greater prosperity and societal growth, but it could lead to the United States being dominated by a world system that suppresses the American way of life.

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