Internships, Fellowships, and Other Work Experience Opportunities in the Federal Government

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Summary

While there are many opportunities in the federal government for internships, fellowships, and other work experience, there is no comprehensive source to assist in locating these opportunities. This report describes Internet resources for prominent and popular opportunities for internship, fellowship, and work experience programs within the federal government. The report is intended as a selective guide for students of all levels: high school, undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate. It provides information on legislative, executive, and judicial branch opportunities and links to several aggregators of jobs data. The introduction provides a number of insights to assist applicants on understanding terminology, timing applications, and expectations for types of work involved.
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Diversity Opportunities

Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies
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Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation Native American Congressional Internship Program
Women’s Policy Inc. Congressional Fellowship on Women and Public Policy Program

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Introduction

The federal government offers many opportunities for internships, fellowships, and work experiences. However, there is no single centralized source for finding information on every opportunity. This report describes prominent and popular Internet resources for such opportunities and gives applicants a place to begin their search. The Internet resources provided are not exhaustive.

Applying for an internship or fellowship is similar to applying for admission to a college or university. The application process takes time and effort, often requiring essays and interviews. Applicants should begin their search early and explore what best suits their interests and career goals. Application deadlines and program durations vary from agency to agency. Applicants should apply to more than one program because competition is stiff, with applicants often far exceeding the number of positions available. Opportunities are generally available in the spring, summer, and fall, with summer positions being the most popular and competitive.

The terms fellowship and internship are sometimes used interchangeably in the names of specific programs. Fellowships are generally intended for persons with advanced degrees or substantial professional experience and are usually salaried positions lasting nine months to a year or more. Internships, which are either salaried or volunteer short-term arrangements, usually require relatively little experience and are often filled by students.

Although they are sometimes confused with interns, congressional pages are high school students who serve Congress as messengers. The House page program ceased operations in August 2011, but the Senate still employs pages. For more information on the Senate page program, see its website at http://www.senate.gov/reference/reference_index_subjects/Pages_vrd.htm.

The duties, responsibilities, and salaries (if any) of interns and fellows vary from program to program. Most program responsibilities are substantive in nature and often involve challenging projects. They may range from conducting legislative research for a congressional office to biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health. Some programs or universities that offer academic credit may require the intern or fellow to produce a report on the work experience and obtain evaluations from program supervisors. In addition, some programs lead to federal job placement. Recruitment programs like Presidential Management Fellows and the Congressional Research Service Graduate Recruit Program may offer permanent employment after the successful completion of program requirements. Because program details vary from agency to agency, it is best to consult the appropriate website or to contact the program office directly.
General Government Resources

USA.gov
The federal government’s official web portal provides an A-Z list of all federal agencies and departments.
https://www.usa.gov/federal-agencies/a
USA.gov also offers a “Federal Government Jobs” website.
http://www.usa.gov/government-jobs

Go Government—Student and Entry Level Talent
The Go Government website, an initiative of a non-profit organization, the Partnership for Public Service, promotes careers in the federal government. The Student and Entry Level Talent portion of the website includes information on more than 200 federal internship programs and provides tips on creating a federal resume and on navigating the federal hiring process.
http://gogovernment.org/government_careers/students_entry-level_talent.php

USA Jobs—Students and Graduates
The students and graduates section of the official U.S. federal government employment website provides students with information on various educational opportunities available within the federal government, including internships, fellowships, apprenticeships, and cooperative programs, as well as a list of federal occupations by college major.
https://www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads

Office of Personnel Management Programs
OPM administers the government-wide Pathways Programs, which are composed of two fairly new programs—the Internship Program and the Recent Graduates Program—and the existing Presidential Management Fellows Program. The website includes program fact sheets and a FAQs section.
https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/students-recent-graduates/
Some federal agencies that participate in the Pathways Programs include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. General Service Administration, and the Department of Health and Human Services. The Pathways Programs at agencies have specific information on their employee websites, such as the Department of State.

Internship Program
The Internship Program is for students attending high schools, community colleges, four-year universities, trade schools, career and technical education programs, and other qualifying educational institutions. The program provides paid opportunities to explore federal careers while
still in school. Participants must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a qualifying educational program. The Internship Program replaces the Student Career Experience Program and the Student Temporary Employment Program.

https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/students-recent-graduates/#url=intern

**Recent Graduates Program**

The Recent Graduates Program offers paid one year developmental assignments for individuals who have recently graduated from qualifying educational institutions or programs with developmental experiences in the federal government. Participants must have obtained a qualifying degree or completed a qualifying career or technical education program within the preceding two years. Veterans applying to the program who are unable to qualify within the two-year period due to military service may apply within six years of obtaining a qualifying degree or completing a qualifying program.

https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/students-recent-graduates/#url=graduates

**Presidential Management Fellows Program**

The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program was created to attract outstanding persons from many academic disciplines to the federal government who are interested in, and committed to careers in, the analysis and management of public policies and programs. Applicants must have received, within the preceding two years, a qualifying advanced degree as determined by OPM. Fellows serve a two-year appointment. This program includes a special track—the PMF STEM—for science, technology, engineering and mathematics professionals.

http://www.pmf.gov/the-opportunity/pmf-stem.aspx

https://www.pmf.gov

**Executive Branch Opportunities**

**White House Fellows Program**

Intended for young professionals who have demonstrated academic excellence, this program places recipients in Cabinet-level agencies, the Executive Office of the President, the Vice President’s office, or in smaller federal agencies. This is a one-year program. Fellows make domestic and foreign trips to study U.S. policy and take part in roundtable discussions with leaders from the private and public sectors. Applicants must have finished their undergraduate degrees and be working in their chosen fields. A related program, Presidential Innovation Fellows, deploys “Innovation Fellows” to work on technical innovation projects in various federal agencies for one year.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/fellows

https://presidentialinnovationfellows.gov/
White House Internship Program

This program provides unpaid opportunities to learn more about the daily processes of the White House. The competitive program selects about 100 interns every spring, summer, and fall. Each applicant must be a U.S. citizen, 18 years old on or by the first day of the internship, and enrolled in (or recently graduated from) a college or university; or be a recently discharged military veteran.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/internships

Department of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a part of the Pathway Programs. Students and recent graduates are offered opportunities to work as interns in fields such as agriculture, science, technology, math, environmental studies, management, and business. Students work as assistants to scientific, professional, administrative, and technical employees. USDA also participates in the Vets to Feds Intern Program (V2F) for student veterans.


Department of Commerce

The U.S. Department of Commerce, also part of the Pathways Programs, offers a variety of paid and unpaid programs, including Census Postsecondary Internships and a Workforce Recruitment Program for college students with disabilities. Commerce bureaus and offices with internship programs include the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Census Bureau, and the Patent and Trademark Office.

http://www.hr.commerce.gov/careers/studentcareeropportunities

Department of Defense

In addition to participating in the Pathways Programs, the Department of Defense’s (DOD’s) “Student Opportunities” website provides details on opportunities such as the National Security Agency (NSA) Graduate Training Program, the Financial Management Trainee Program, and internships with the Human Resources Directorate and the Washington Headquarters Services. Programs can range from 10-weeks to full-time employment.

http://godefense.cpms.osd.mil/student_opportunities.aspx

Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education offers internships in several departmental offices, such as Elementary and Secondary Education, Civil Rights, and Leadership and Teacher Development. These unpaid internships are available year-round. In order to qualify, students must be enrolled in a high school, trade school, technical or vocational institute, junior college, college, university, or other accredited educational institution.

http://www.ed.gov/students/prep/job/intern/index.html
Department of Energy

The Department of Energy (DOE) recruits interns to research positions at DOE labs. These positions cover a range of subjects and career levels, from high school students to faculty members. Positions are paid but do not necessarily lead to permanent DOE employment.

http://www.energy.gov/student-programs-and-internships

The DOE Scholars program introduces students and recent graduates to the missions and operations of the DOE. These are paid positions for enrolled students aged 18 and older, lasting either 10 weeks in the summer or 16 weeks during the semester.

http://orise.orau.gov/doescholars/

Department of Health and Human Services

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) participates in the Pathways Programs. In addition, lists of specific programs for students and recent graduates are available.

http://www.hhs.gov/about/careers/pathways/index.html

More opportunities within specific divisions of HHS include programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

http://www.cdc.gov/employment/menu_student.html
http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/WorkingatFDA/FellowshipInternshipGraduateFacultyPrograms/default.htm

HHS’s Emerging Leaders Program is designed for applicants to explore fields related to their academic background. The two-year program involves rotations within departmental agencies during the first year and a fixed placement the second year. Students must have one or more of the following degrees: bachelors (with work experience), masters, J.D., or Ph.D.

http://hhsu.learning.hhs.gov/elp/

The Summer Internship Program in Biomedical Research at the National Institutes of Health is open to students aged 16 and older who are enrolled in high school, undergraduate, or graduate programs. Positions are in various agency locations nationwide, and stipends are available for the eight-week-plus program. The National Institutes of Health Academy fellowship program is a year-long program with a stipend and is restricted to recent undergraduates. Other programs are available for specific subject areas.

http://www.training.nih.gov/programs

Department of Homeland Security

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) offers a variety of fellowship, scholarship, and internship programs in its agencies, which include Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Secret Service. Programs include Pathways, a Summer Law Intern Program, the STEM Summer Internship Program, and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) College Intern Program. Most, if not all, of the programs require U.S. citizenship, and some require a security clearance.
Department of the Interior

The Department of the Interior (DOI) offers Pathways internship opportunities in various parts of the agency, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, and Bureau of Reclamation. Fellowships and internships opportunities are available through the National Park Service, Office of Surface Mining, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Survey.

DOI provides a listing of internships on its Youth in the Great Outdoors website, which shows various fellowship and internships programs throughout the federal land management agencies and bureaus.

Department of Justice

The Summer Law Intern Program accepts law students to salaried summer internships throughout the Department of Justice (DOJ). The Volunteer Legal Recruitment Program offers legal internships to law students in their first through third years. This program is unpaid, with placement in U.S. Attorneys’ Offices, the Immigration Courts, and department field offices in cities nationwide, including Washington, DC.

Department of Labor

The Department of Labor (DOL) participates in the Pathways Programs; internships include working in DOL offices, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Employment & Training Administration (ETA), Mine Safety & Health Administration (MSHA), Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA).

Department of State

The State Department’s website provides a portal to available student programs, internships, and fellowships. Opportunities range from Pathways Programs to the Virtual Student Foreign Service to Council of American Ambassadors Fellowships. To help students choose the most appropriate program, an online tool matches academic majors to appropriate offices in the department.

Department of Transportation

The Department of Transportation’s website lists several student programs, including Pathways Programs, the FAA Technical Operations Collegiate Training Initiative, and the FAA Law Honors Intern Program. Minority internship programs, such as the Student Transportation Internship Program for Diverse Groups, are offered by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Federal Highway Administration.
http://www.dot.gov/careers/student-opportunities
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/education/stipdg.cfm
The Office of the General Counsel accepts applications from law students for various internships. These positions are available year round and may be with or without academic credit.

Department of the Treasury

The Department of the Treasury participates in student employment programs, including Pathways, the Hispanic Serving Institution National Internship Program (HSINIP), Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS), National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), The Washington Center (TWC), and Disability Employment Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP).
http://www.treasury.gov/careers/hq-careers/Pages/student-employment.aspx

Department of Veterans Affairs

In addition to participating in Pathways Programs, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers programs for students and recent graduates at over 100 locations nationwide. These programs include the National Diversity Internship Program (NDIP), Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), and the Graduate Healthcare Administration Training Program (GHATP).
http://www.vacareers.va.gov/

Judicial Branch Opportunities

Supreme Court Fellows Program

The Supreme Court Fellows Program Commission selects four individuals for one-year assignments in the Supreme Court of the United States, Administrative Office of the United States Courts, Federal Judicial Center, or the United States Sentencing Commission. The commission is especially interested in applicants who are completing a judicial clerkship and broadening their understanding of the judicial system. Applicants must have a J.D. or other post-graduate degree. Fellows become employees of the federal court system and receive salaries equivalent to the GS-12 government pay scale.
http://www.supremecourt.gov/fellows/default.aspx

Judicial Intern Program

The Judicial Internship Program is designed for advanced undergraduates and graduating college seniors interested in learning about the inner workings of the Supreme Court of the United States. The internship is unpaid, and interns are placed in the Office of the Counselor to the Chief Justice. Internships are available for the fall, spring, and summer semesters.
https://www.supremecourt.gov/jobs/internship/InternshipProgram.aspx
Legislative Branch Opportunities

U.S. Congress

Internships

Internships are available in many Members’ Washington, DC, and district or state offices, as well as in congressional committees’ offices. Internships are generally unpaid and offered year-round.

http://www.house.gov/content/jobs/
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/visiting/h_multi_sections_and_teasers/employment.htm

Applications are usually found at each Member’s or committee’s website, or candidates may contact the desired office directly. For lists of Member and committee websites and office contact information, see the Senate and House of Representatives websites.

http://www.senate.gov
http://www.house.gov

Congressional staff seeking more information may wish to consult CRS Report R44491, Internships in Congressional Offices: Frequently Asked Questions, by Sarah J. Eckman.

Fellowships

Fellowships in congressional offices are offered by many organizations—such as the American Political Science Association (APSA), the American Psychological Association, and the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers—which offer fellows exposure to public policy and the legislative process. Placement for these fellowships is generally not done through the Members’ or committees’ offices but instead through the sponsoring organizations.


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1 House and Senate offices attempting to identify sources of possible congressional fellows may wish to request a copy of the Congressional Research Service congressional distribution memorandum, “Congressional Fellowship Programs” (available from the authors of this report.).
Several congressional fellowship programs, such as those sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and the Women’s Research and Education Institute, are described in the “Diversity Opportunities” section of this report.

**Congressional Budget Office**

Graduate students in relevant fields can apply for paid 10-week summer internships, in which they work on analyses in CBO’s various divisions. CBO also welcomes analysts with Ph.D.s as Visiting Scholars, who may be employed by CBO or by the Visiting Scholars’ home institutions.

https://www.cbo.gov/about/our-careers/our-internships

https://www.cbo.gov/about/careers/visitingscholars

**Congressional Research Service**

In partnership with several organizations, colleges, and universities, CRS offers a limited number of paid summer internships through its Student Diversity Internship Program. Volunteer internship opportunities are available year-round and are available primarily to graduate students, postgraduate students, faculty, and other professionals. Undergraduate students with exceptional academic talent are also welcome to apply. In addition, CRS offers special hiring opportunities under the Presidential Management Fellows Program, CRS Graduate Recruit Program, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Cooperative Education program, and CRS Law Recruit Program. U.S. citizenship is required for all programs.

http://www.loc.gov/hr/employment/index.php?action=cMain.showEmploymentPrograms

http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/opportunities/sdip.html

**Government Accountability Office**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) offers eligible college students paid or volunteer internships. These internships last for 10-16 weeks, and interns may be eligible for conversion to a permanent position once degree requirements are met. Applicants must be U.S. citizens to apply.


**Library of Congress**

The Library of Congress offers unpaid and paid internship, fellowship, and volunteer opportunities in several departments, such as the American Folklife Center, the Conservation Division, the Law Library of Congress and the Hispanic Division. Opportunities include the Junior Fellows Summer Intern Program, which offers a stipend.

http://www.loc.gov/hr/jrfellows/

For more information, select the following link, and then choose “Internships, Fellowship & Volunteer Programs."

http://www.loc.gov/hr/employment/index.php
Other Opportunities

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
In addition to participating in the Pathways Internship Program and the Presidential Management Fellows Program, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) offers two fellowship programs. The Brandeis Honor Attorney Program is a two year fellowship for recent law school graduates, and the Director’s Financial Analyst Program is a two year fellowship for those who have recently obtained a bachelor’s degree and have quantitative training.
http://www.consumerfinance.gov/students-and-recent-graduates/

Environmental Protection Agency
In addition to programs for graduate and postgraduate students, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers paid summer employment for high school students through the Student Summer Employment Program. Internships, fellowships, and other positions for all educational levels are available in Washington, DC, and at EPA laboratories and other regional locations. Applicants must be 16 years of age or older and enrolled at an accredited institution.
http://www.epa.gov/careers/index.html

Federal Communications Commission
The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) offers internship opportunities in several different bureaus or offices. The availability and timeframe for intern positions will vary by bureau or office. All application procedures function on a rolling admission policy.
http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/internships-available-fcc

Federal Reserve Board
The Federal Reserve Board provides internship programs for undergraduate and graduate students considering careers in economics, finance and accounting, information systems, and law. Both paid and unpaid internships are available. Applicants must be U.S. citizens. Each division under the Federal Reserve Board has different requirements for their interns.
http://www.federalreserve.gov/careers/internships.htm

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) participates in the Pathways Programs with options ranging from internships at the Stennis Space Center in Mississippi to social science student trainee positions at the Armstrong Flight Research Center. Specific NASA facilities also host their own unique programs, such as the Jet Propulsion Laboratory’s Summer Internship Program and NASA History Office Fellowships.
https://intern.nasa.gov/index.html
http://nasajobs.nasa.gov/studentopps/Pathways.htm
Internships, Fellowships, and Other Work Experience Opportunities in the Government

Smithsonian Fellowship and Internship Programs
The Smithsonian Institution provides various fellowship and internship programs and academic appointments within its museums and research institutes. Program descriptions are available on the Smithsonian Office of Fellowships and Internships website.

http://www.smithsonianofi.com/

United States Agency for International Development
The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has several internship programs: the Paid Student Internship Program, Volunteer Student Internship Program, Internships in the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs, the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Transition Initiatives, and other Regional Bureaus abroad. These internships are open to undergraduate and graduate students. USAID also offers fellowship opportunities for more advanced applicants.

http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/careers/fellows-program

The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars
The Washington Center is one of several nonprofit organizations that place interns in the Washington area. The center’s internship program provides unpaid opportunities college students and postgraduates. Students are placed within the public (including the federal government), private, and nonprofit sectors. Several internship programs specifically target minority applicants. Financial assistance is also available.

http://www.twc.edu
Others programs include the Washington Internship Institute and the Fund for American Studies.

http://www.wiidc.org
http://www.tfas.org

Diversity Opportunities

Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies
The Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS) offers internship and fellowship opportunities for Asian Pacific Americans to encourage participation in the political process. All positions include a stipend and round-trip airfare to Washington, DC. Selected students work in a congressional office or government agency in Washington, DC. Some fellows positions have a financial services or STEM focus.

http://apaics.org/summer-interns/
http://apaics.org/congressional-fellows/
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Internship and Fellowship Programs

The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) offers an Internship Program, including a specialized communications program, as well as three fellowship programs: the Congressional Fellows Program, the Donald F. Payne Foreign Policy Fellowship, and the Louis Stokes Urban Health Policy Fellows Program. All three fellows programs aim to provide research and policy analysis opportunities for persons with graduate or professional degrees. All CBCF programs include either a salary or a stipend and housing.

http://www.cbcfinc.org/internships/

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Internship and Fellowship Programs

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) Summer Internship Program provides undergraduates with the opportunity to work in congressional offices. Interns receive housing, round-trip transportation, and a stipend. The CHCI Public Policy Fellowship Program provides graduate students, or recent college graduates, with the opportunity to obtain experience in public policy. The range of placements includes congressional offices, federal agencies, media, business federal affairs offices, advocacy groups, and government-related institutions. Fellows receive round-trip transportation and a stipend.

http://www.chci.org/internships
http://www.chci.org/fellowships

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities National Internship Program

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) National Internship Program (HNIP) recruits undergraduate and graduate students from all academic majors for paid summer and semester internships at federal agencies and private companies in Washington, DC, and throughout the country. Interns may also receive round-trip transportation and housing.

http://www.hacu.net/hacu/HNIP.asp
Minority Access National Diversity and Inclusion Internship Program

This is a paid internship program for undergraduate and graduate students. Applicants are selected by federal agencies and other participating organizations in the Washington, DC, area and elsewhere. Interns may receive assistance with travel expenses.

http://www.minorityaccess.org/ndiip.html

Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation Native American Congressional Internship Program

The foundation offers American Indian and Alaska Native students the opportunity to work in congressional offices, federal agencies, or the White House for the summer. Interns receive round-trip transportation, housing, and a stipend.

http://www.udall.gov/OurPrograms/Internship/Internship.aspx

Women’s Policy Inc. Congressional Fellowship on Women and Public Policy Program

The program provides graduate and post-graduate students the opportunity to work for eight months in congressional offices as legislative assistants on policy issues that affect women. This program was previously called the Women’s Research and Education Institute (WREI) Congressional Fellowships.

http://www.womenspolicy.org/our-work/congressional-fellows/

Bibliography

This selective bibliography lists more sources of information on internships, fellowships, and summer job opportunities. The publications can be used to find additional work experience opportunities both inside and outside the federal government. These works may be available in local libraries or school or college guidance offices. Annotations identify publications that are issued annually. Other publications are updated irregularly; check with publishers for information on the latest editions.


A free E-book, described as the “ultimate Capitol Hill internship guide,” from the CQ Roll Call Publishing Group.


Described as a “nuts-and-bolts guide to working in a Congressional office,” this publication includes a chapter on “Finding a job or another internship” on Capitol Hill. This handbook is used in many congressional offices.

This publication can be used to locate organizations by subject area. When standard internship directories contain no entries for internships in a specific field, relevant groups listed in this publication may be able to suggest contacts for internship opportunities. This work can be found in many libraries in print or in electronic form, as the Associations Unlimited subscription database.


This publication provides advice on “surviving and thriving” in political internships, including on Capitol Hill and in congressional district offices.


This directory profiles internship programs at more than 100 companies, organizations and government agencies. Some of this information is also available on the internship portion of the Vault website at http://www.vault.com/find_an_internship.aspx.


This book provides information on how to become a valued intern and enhance networking skills. Insider tips are given on such things as how to deal with work related tasks and locating summer housing.

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