

Sussex and Brighton Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2026-2029

Shaping Future Skills for Sussex & Brighton

Action Planning Workshop – 25 February 2026

Welcome and Scene Setting

Ana Christie – CEO, Sussex Chamber of Commerce

What is the Local Skills Improvement Plan?

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) sets out the **skills and training priorities for Sussex and Brighton.**

It is:

- Employer-led
- Evidence-based
- Focused on skills from **entry level through to higher and professional levels**

Why this matters

- It directly influences local education and training provision
- It shapes investment decisions and funding priorities
- It helps ensure people can access the skills employers need

What is Sussex Chamber doing?

We are working with employers, core partners and wider stakeholders to develop the **next Sussex & Brighton LSIP** report and action plan to cover **2026–2029**.

This includes:

- Employer surveys and in-depth interviews
- Sector-specific and cross-sector workshops
- Analysis of labour market and workforce data
- Consultation and collaboration with education and training providers

What's different this time

- Stronger focus on **cross-sector skills**
- Skills up to **Level 8**, including higher and professional skills
- Alignment with devolution

What you can expect today

- To hear more about the **Strategic Context** of the LSIP
- To find out what the LSIP **Evidence Base** (Labour Market Information and Employer Feedback) is telling us
- To learn about the **Skills Priorities** identified from the evidence
- To collaboratively and collectively develop the **Action Plan** for the Priorities for Change
- To find out more about the **process and next steps**

Strategic Context

Claire Witz – LSIP Lead, Sussex Chamber of Commerce (Consultant)

LSIP and the wider skills system

The Local Skills Improvement Plan sits **at the centre of the skills system**, connecting national priorities with local delivery and employer needs.

National direction

- UK Industrial Strategy
- Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper
- Skills England

Local direction

- Devolution and Local Growth Plans
- Get Sussex Working Plan
- Local Economic Strategies

Where the LSIP fits

- Brings the **employer voice** into this system
- Translates national priorities into **local skills needs**
- Aligns provision to **real jobs and workforce demand**

LSIP Key Sectors



Construction



Creative & Cultural



Digital Technologies



Engineering & Advanced Manufacturing



Health Care & Life Sciences



Land-based Industries



**Professional & Business Services
(new)**



Hospitality & Visitor Economy

LSIP Cross-Sector Skills Themes

Alongside sector-specific needs, we are focusing on **four cross-sector skills themes** that cut across every industry in Sussex and Brighton.

These themes will:

- Sit at the heart of the LSIP
- Shape future training, provision and pathways
- Apply across all sectors and occupations

Digital and Technological Readiness

- Digital confidence, data literacy and applied technological capability
- Embedded within roles
- Enabling productivity, efficiency, innovation and informed decision-making

Green & Sustainability Skills

- Embedding net-zero, energy efficiency and sustainable practice into training
- Practical green skills, not just policy knowledge
- Relevant to everyday roles as well as specialist jobs

Innovation & Technical Excellence

- Fostering problem-solving, R&D literacy and advanced technical skills
- Supporting quality, competitiveness and growth
- Encouraging continuous improvement and innovation

Access Routes into Employment & Career Pathways

- Ensuring jobs and careers are open to everyone
- Clear entry routes, progression and retraining pathways
- Supporting young people, career changers and those furthest from work

Important – Please Note

- The slides that follow are a **summary of our findings** in the development of the Sussex and Brighton LSIP **as of 25 February 2026**.
- We are using them for consultation and planning purposes and as such **they are subject to change**.

Labour Market Information

- what is it telling us?

Kirsten Trussell – LSIP Strategic Lead, Sussex Chamber of Commerce (Consultant)

A high-skill economy... but not everywhere

- Sussex and Brighton has a **higher-than-average concentration of professional and higher-skilled roles**
- BUT, the **structure of employment** varies significantly by place
- **Productivity** is strong overall but is not consistent across the area

What this implies for the LSIP

Skills provision needs to respond to **place-based variation**, not assume uniform demand.

Rising pay, but uneven outcomes

- Average weekly pay has **increased in every Sussex local authority since 2021**.
- Despite this growth, **only a small number of areas now match or exceed national and South East pay levels**.
- Areas with higher pay tend to have a **greater concentration of professional and technical roles**.

What this implies for the LSIP

The LSIP must focus on **progression and skills depth**, not just entry-level supply.

An ageing workforce we're not replacing

- Sussex has an **older working-age population profile** than England and the South East.
- **People aged 16–24 form a smaller share of the population in Sussex than in the South East and England**, limiting the scale of new labour-market entrants.
- Participation among people aged **50–64 varies widely by area**, with some local authorities performing significantly better than others.

What this implies for the LSIP

Adult retraining and mid-career pathways are **structural requirements**, not marginal activity.

Jobs exist, but participation doesn't follow

- Economic inactivity exceeds national and regional averages in **several Sussex districts**, particularly in coastal and rural areas.
- Claimant rates have **risen locally while falling nationally**, indicating localised labour-market pressures.
- Recruitment demand remains **strong across care, service and technical roles**.

What this implies for the LSIP

The LSIP needs to address the **interface between skills, employability and access**, not treat them separately.

A micro-business economy under pressure

- Most Sussex businesses are micro-firms: **at least seven in ten – and in some sectors more than nine in ten – employ fewer than 10 people.**
- Net business growth returned in 2023–24 but remains **below the England average.**
- Construction and professional services account for a **large share of enterprises across Sussex.**

What this implies for the LSIP

Skills delivery models must work for **small employers with limited capacity**, not just large organisations.

Demand that doesn't go away

- **Care, health and people-facing roles dominate** vacancy volumes across Sussex.
- Technical and professional roles appear **consistently year-round**, albeit in lower volumes.
- Recruitment patterns repeat over time, indicating **ongoing replacement demand**.

What this implies for the LSIP

The LSIP should prioritise **retention, progression and quality of outcomes**, not just throughput.

Any questions or reflections so far?



Employer Findings

- what are they telling us?

Kirsten Trussell – LSIP Strategic Lead, Sussex Chamber of Commerce (Consultant)

Digital and Technological Readiness

What the evidence is telling us

- **Digital and AI capability is now a core business competence across all sectors**, embedded in everyday roles, workflows and decision-making – not a specialist or IT-only function.
- **The primary readiness gap is applied judgement and confidence**, not awareness: employers are struggling to embed digital and AI tools safely, consistently and productively into live work.
- **Leadership and management capability is the critical enabler or blocker** of digital and AI adoption, shaping whether tools deliver productivity, quality and compliance benefits.

“

“AI doesn’t reduce the need for skills - it raises the bar on who we need.”

Technical skills needed

Applied, role-embedded – not “digital jobs”

- Confident use of **sector-specific digital systems and platforms**
- **Data handling and interpretation** relevant to role and context
- Safe and effective use of **AI-enabled tools**, including validation and quality checking
- **Cyber awareness** and **secure digital working** practices
- Integration of digital tools into **day-to-day operational workflows**

Strategic capabilities needed

How organisations adopt, govern and scale digital and other technologies

- **Judgement in selecting and implementing tools**, not just using them
- Understanding **risk, ethics, data quality and governance** in AI-enabled work
- Ability to **standardise digital practice** across teams and roles
- Translating technology adoption into **productivity, quality and resilience**
- Leading digital and AI change **without disrupting delivery**

Core workplace skills needed

Sometimes called employability skills, but clearly more than that

- **Critical thinking and professional judgement**
- Confidence to **question outputs, challenge assumptions** and **escalate risk**
- **Accountability for decisions** supported by digital or AI tools
- **Adaptability** as systems, tools and processes change
- Clear communication in **digitally mediated environments**

Green and Sustainability Skills

What the evidence is telling us

- **Green and sustainability skills are primarily being expressed as embedded requirements within existing roles**, rather than as demand for large volumes of new, standalone “green jobs”.
- **Where green skills are surfacing most clearly, they are driven by delivery, compliance and procurement pressure**, with strongest signals in construction, land-based activity and professional services.
- **There is a growing risk of under-preparing the mainstream workforce**, as Net Zero expectations rise faster than employers’ confidence, capacity and clarity about what skills are required in practice.

“

“Net Zero sounds clear until you have to make real decisions on cost and delivery.”

“Sustainability is part of everyone’s job now - it’s not a separate role.”

Technical skills needed

Applied, role-embedded – not specialist

- **Low-carbon methods and processes** within existing roles
- **Resource efficiency** (energy use, waste reduction, materials)
- Understanding and applying **environmental standards and regulations**
- Sustainability-related **data capture** and **basic reporting**
- **Sector-specific green practice** in sectors such as construction and land-based

Strategic capabilities needed

How organisations respond to sustainability expectations

- Translating Net Zero ambition into **practical delivery decisions**
- Understanding **compliance, procurement and reporting requirements**
- Managing trade-offs between **cost, quality and sustainability**
- Anticipating **future regulatory** and **client expectations**
- **Embedding sustainability consistently** across teams and supply chains

Core workplace skills needed

Mainstream workforce capability

- **Environmental awareness** applied to day-to-day work
- **Responsibility and accountability** for compliant practice
- **Problem-solving** in constrained, real-world environments
- **Willingness to adapt** established ways of working
- **Collaboration** across roles and organisations to meet sustainability requirements

What's on your mind?



Innovation and Technical Excellence

What the evidence is telling us

- **The most acute pressure is at technician and mid to higher-level technical roles**, where employers report persistent shortages, rising technical standards and increasing reliance on a shrinking pool of experienced staff.
- **Innovation is being experienced as implementation and improvement, not invention**: employers need people who can embed new methods, technologies and standards consistently into everyday operations.
- **Succession and knowledge transfer risks are growing**, as delivery pressure, ageing workforces and reduced mentoring capacity weaken pipelines into technical excellence roles.

“

“Our biggest risk is losing experienced technical staff with no one ready to step up.”

“We rely too heavily on a few experienced people.”

Technical skills needed

Applied technical competence, not abstract innovation

- Advanced technical and technician-level **occupational skills**
- **Troubleshooting, fault-finding and maintenance** capability
- **Operation and optimisation** of modern equipment, systems and processes
- **Quality assurance, standards compliance** and **continuous improvement** methods
- **Use of data and digital tools** to support technical decision-making

Strategic capabilities needed

How organisations sustain excellence and improvement

- **Embedding new methods and technologies** into consistent operational practice
- **Managing technical change** without disrupting delivery
- **Knowledge transfer, mentoring and succession planning**
- Judgement about **where and when to invest in innovation**
- **Leading improvement** at team and supervisor level

Core workplace skills needed

What enables technical excellence in practice

- **Professional judgement** and **accountability**
- **Attention to quality, standards and detail**
- **Problem-solving** under real-world constraints
- **Collaboration** across technical, operational and support roles
- **Willingness to learn, adapt** and **improve** as practices evolve

Access Routes into Employment and Career Pathways

What the evidence is telling us

- **Traditional entry and junior pathways are weakening**, as employers face delivery pressure, reduced mentoring capacity and AI/automation absorbing entry-level tasks.
- **Progression, not attraction, is now the weakest point in the system**, with employers struggling to move people from entry, into productive mid-level roles.
- **Demographic change is amplifying risk**, with an ageing workforce, fewer young entrants and a large inactive population increasing pressure on how and where people enter work.

“

“We don't really have space for people to learn on the job anymore.”

“You need people who can contribute straight away, which makes it harder for new entrants.”

Technical 'readiness' needed

Technical readiness now required earlier and at more entry points into work

- **Baseline occupational competence at the point of entry or transition into a role**, rather than being developed primarily after entry
- **Ability to operate safely and compliantly in-role from the outset**, particularly in regulated, safety-critical or customer-facing environments
- **Familiarity with the core tools, equipment or systems required to do the job**, before entering the workplace

Strategic capabilities needed

How organisations are being forced to rethink entry and progression

- Rethinking **where 'entry' into a profession now starts**, given AI, automation and role compression
- Designing what progression looks like where **traditional junior roles are fewer or different**
- Balancing productivity with workforce development and inclusion
- **Succession planning** in the context of ageing workforces
- Creating viable routes for **inactive and under-represented groups** to enter work

Core workplace skills needed

What enables progression when pathways are compressed

- **Work readiness** and **professional behaviours**
- **Reliability, communication** and **self-management**
- Confidence to **take responsibility earlier**
- Ability to **learn quickly in live work environments**
- **Resilience** and **adaptability** as roles and expectations change

Can we clear anything up?



Skills Priorities

Sussex and Brighton LSIP 2026-29

Skills Priority 1

Secure and grow **technical capability** across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline to underpin innovation, productivity, business leadership, quality and environmental sustainability

Rationale:

- **technician and higher technical roles (typically Levels 3-5+)** are the most fragile point in the workforce
- **systemic weakness** rather than a short-term recruitment issue
- **replacement demand outweighing expansion demand** in key technical occupations
- **extra pressure from major infrastructure projects** (e.g. Gatwick Northern Runway and Rampion II)
- **risk losing technical capacity** required to maintain standards, adopt new methods, increase productivity and deliver change at pace

Skills Priority 2

Make **safe, equitable, sustainable and effective digital and technological capability** a baseline expectation across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline

Rationale:

- digital, AI, automation and other technological tools are already embedded in everyday work across sectors, with the **most significant gaps relating to applied use, judgement, security, governance and leadership confidence**
- concerns about the **pace of change, ethical use and accountability**, particularly within SMEs - significant risk if capability is not developed systematically or applied equitably across employers, sectors and individuals.
- growing role of **human oversight**, involvement in and management of digital technologies such as AI agents, advanced digital tools and automation.

Skills Priority 3

Modernise **access, entry and progression routes into employment** to reflect technological change and Sussex and Brighton's demographic realities, ensuring pathways remain inclusive, navigable and aligned to employer expectations

Rationale:

- **erosion of traditional junior roles**, rising expectations at entry and reduced capacity for informal learning
- **shifting entry points, progression breakdown** and **growing exclusion risk**
- **ageing workforce, fewer young entrants** and **high economic inactivity**, making traditional pipeline assumptions increasingly untenable
- system design challenge that **cuts across skills, employment and support provision** and links closely with the Get Sussex Working Plan.

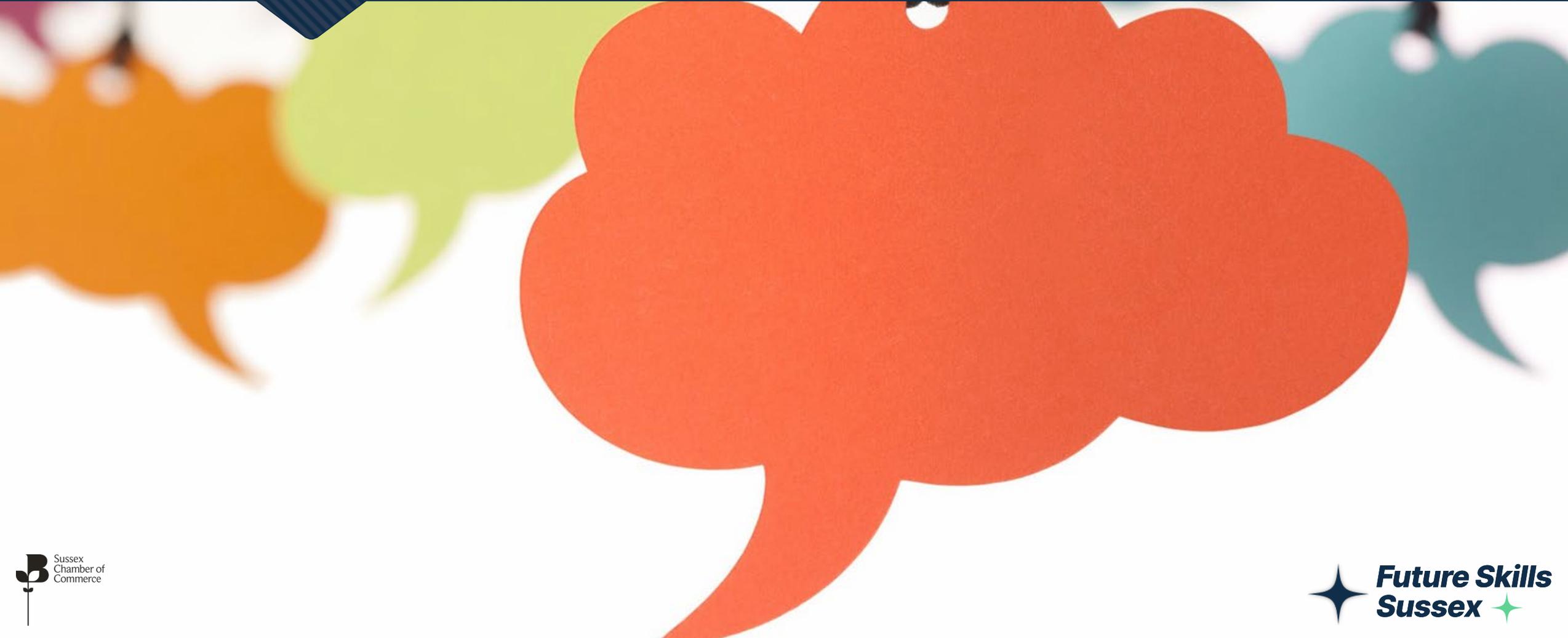
Skills Priority 4

Embed skills for **environmental sustainability and climate resilience** across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline, supported by strong leadership to ensure consistent, compliant and effective delivery

Rationale:

- sustainability is primarily **embedded within existing roles or expertise is bought in**, rather than new specialist roles - driven by regulation, operational requirements and growing public procurement expectations
- **uneven demand and uncertainty about pace of adoption**, highlighting **leadership capability** as a key enabler of consistent application
- Sussex and Brighton's diverse economic structure requires environmental capability to be **mainstreamed rather than treated as a niche specialism**

Any final thoughts?



Let's take a 15-minute break



Action Planning

Stage 1 – What needs to change?

To achieve this priority in Sussex and Brighton, what needs to change in how the system currently works?

- Focus on **what needs to change**, not new projects
- Think about **system alignment**, not individual delivery
- Be realistic about **what you can influence**
- Prioritise actions that would **make the biggest difference**

Identify up to three system-level actions. Be specific and prioritise.

Time for lunch!



Stage 2 – What activities are needed to make this change happen?

For each action, identify the key activities needed over time, who needs to be involved and what levers could support?

Time horizon	What needs to happen?	Which partners need to be involved and who could lead?	Existing/Upcoming levers that could support this? e.g. funding, policy, commissioning, devolution
Short term / quick wins			
Medium term			
Longer term			

Next steps

Development Process

Identify Skills Needs

Build a clear picture using sector priorities, employer engagement, and Skills England analysis. Engage SMEs, public sector, and providers to understand current and future gaps.

- Evidence base data refresh – Nov/Dec
- Employer workshops - Jan
- Stakeholder & Provider workshop – 3rd Feb
- Development of Case for Change

Define Changes & Actions

Collaborate with Local Authorities, providers, employers and stakeholders to agree overarching changes and specific activities.

- **Action Planning Group Workshop – 25th Feb**
- **Possible follow up** via networks, individually or online meetings to develop further

Draft the LSIP

ERB to develop the LSIP Report and associated action plan

- **First draft** submitted to Skills England – **31st March**
- **Final draft** submitted – **15 May**
- Approved LSIP **published – end June**

LSIP Delivery 2026-2029

Delivering and monitoring the LSIP action plan.

- ERB-led coordination of LSIP delivery of action plan
- LSIP launch event – late summer / autumn 2026
- Annual data and evidence refresh
- Annual LSIP progress reports

Thank you!

Thank you for contributing to the Sussex and Brighton LSIP.

We value your time, experience and ongoing collaboration.



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