EVIDENCE IN GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS

METAKETA INITIATIVE
FIELD GUIDE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AEA - American Economic Association

EGAP - Evidence in Governance and Politics

EOI - Expressions of Interest

IDC - Indirect Costs

IPA - Innovations for Poverty Action

IRB - Institutional Review Board

MPAP - Meta-Analysis Pre-Analysis Plan

NDI - National Democratic Institute

OSF - Open Science Framework

PAP - Pre-Analysis Plan

RFP - Request for Proposals

R&R - Revise and Resubmit

UN DPKO - UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations

METAKETA INITIATIVE FIELD GUIDE

BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE EGAP
METAKETA **INITIATIVE**

BACKGROUND

The "credibility revolution" in social science generally and governance research, in particular, has increased the reliability of causal claims about the effects of interventions to promote citizens' engagement in political processes, improve the quality of public services, and achieve other valued ends. However, while the increased use of experimental designs bolsters the credibility of individual studies, several important challenges remain. Three of the most important challenges relate to (i) achieving cumulative knowledge; (ii) ensuring that standards of analysis and reporting equal those of design; and (iii) creating usable evidence for social science and public policy.

Put differently, a lot is known about the effects of various interventions in distinct contexts, but extracting generalizable knowledge that researchers and policy makers can put to use in different settings remains difficult.

Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) is a cross-disciplinary network of researchers and practitioners that is united by a focus on experimental research and dedicated to generating and disseminating rigorous evidence on topics related to governance, politics, and institutions.

To address the challenges outlined above, in 2014, EGAP initiated the Metaketa Initiative. The Initiative is a model for funding experimental research that builds off the premise that some of the difficulty in cumulating learning in governance strategies stems from failures to coordinate research across disparate researchers. These include weak professional incentives to engage in replication, as well as failures to theorize the relationship between distinct interventions and the disparate social and political contexts into which they are introduced.

In the modal practice of experimental research in the social sciences, researchers or teams of researchers work independently, developing and addressing research questions that interest them. While there is broad recognition of the need to replicate in order to cumulate reliable knowledge, professional incentives militate against replication. The result is a field where broad conclusions are sometimes drawn on the basis of a single pioneering study. Thus, a key challenge is to strengthen the scope for cumulation, while simultaneously getting the incentives right for researchers to engage in collaborative and coordinated research.

This field guide will describe in detail the policies and processes that can help to ensure a successful program. The Metaketa Initiative is based on the principles that guide the research of the members of the EGAP network.

THE METAKETA INITIATIVE IS BASED ON EIGHT PILLARS.
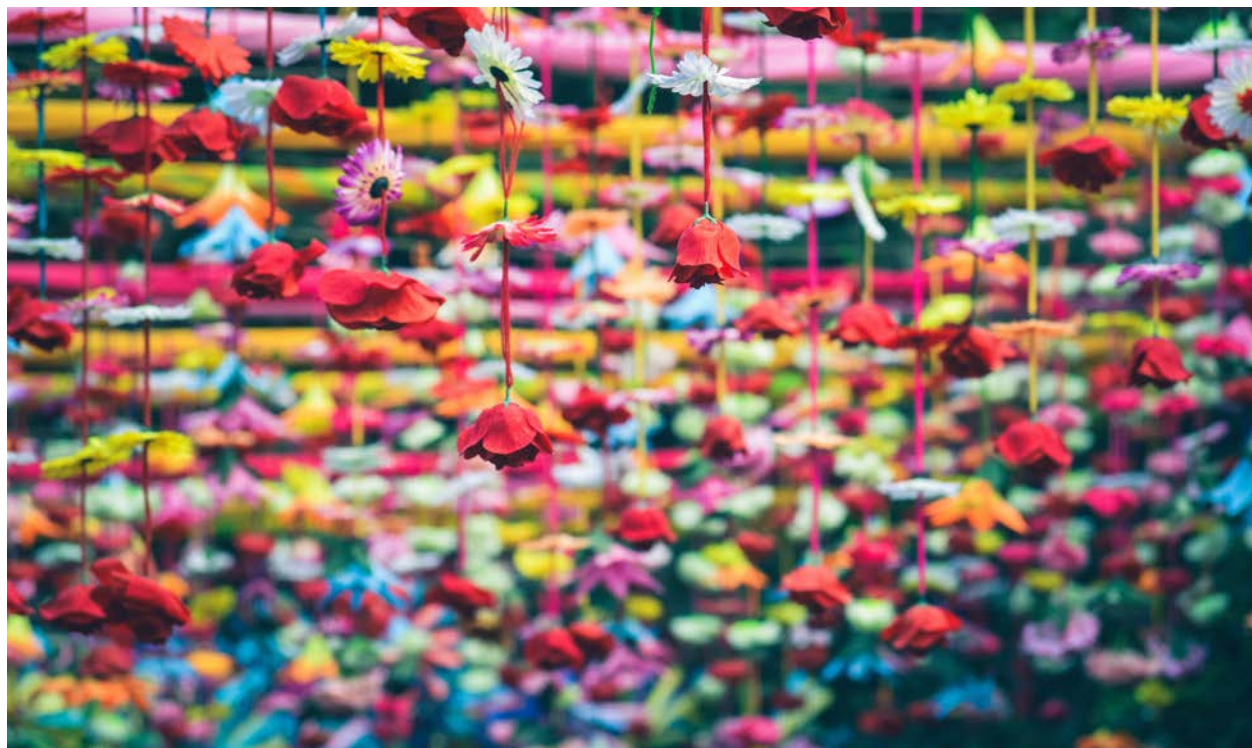
1. COORDINATION ACROSS TEAMS

EGAP sought to generate coordination between funded research teams—as the next seven pillars of the approach depend vitally on integration and collaboration of funded researchers. We achieve the harmonization implied by grant items 2-8 through a series of coordination meetings that bring together successful applicants.

2. PREDEFINED THEMES AND COMPARABLE INTERVENTIONS

Teams of researchers funded under the Metaketa Initiative should work on related themes and study comparable interventions. Themes are pre-defined in two ways: (1) through a Request for Proposal's (RFP) thematic focus; and (2) through the selection of winning proposals, in which we prioritize comparability across research teams. We also value efforts to reduce unplanned variation in interventions across research teams and/or to introduce coordinated variations in treatment that may illuminate why interventions may be more effective in some contexts than in others.

3. COMPARABLE MEASURES

Research teams will use consistent outcome measures agreed during post-funding workshops. Researchers will be encouraged to employ mixed methods in measuring outcomes. They will also be asked to measure potential mediators of the effect of the interventions, including qualitative data collection during the implementation phase.

4. INTEGRATED CASE SELECTION

Proposals should theorize the channels through which an intervention may affect a given outcome—and in doing so provide hypotheses about which of these channels may be operative in the chosen research context(s). Ideally, cases should be selected on the basis of contextual variation that theory and past experience suggests may be important for generalizability to populations of interest.This provides a justification for case selection and may allow greater ex-ante specification of hypotheses about heterogeneous effects across contexts.

5. PREREGISTRATION

Funded research will be required to keep to EGAP's standards for analytic transparency (see http://e-gap.org/resources/egap-statement-of-principles). In particular, after revision of research designs at an initial meeting of funded researchers and before initiation of outcome data collection, researchers must post a study protocol that describes a) the study's purpose; b) the hypotheses it aims to test; c) the main outcome variables; and d) the set of tests and the data analysis that will be performed. In addition, the group of funded studies will itself be pre-registered, with the comparisons and pooled analyses to be conducted from the group of studies made explicit. Funded research teams and steering committee members will collaborate on the development of this group pre-registration document.

6. THIRD PARTY ANALYSIS

Research teams will be expected to make their data publicly available for independent, third-party replication and analysis, with a view to identify errors and discrepancies prior to publication. In addition, at publication, all of the data will be archived in a public repository (Dataverse) and provided free of charge.

7. FORMAL SYNTHESIS

Group preregistration (item 5) will allow the funded researchers to pre-specify a plan for meta-analysis of distinct experiments—and thus for formal synthesis of experimental results. In addition, research teams may collaborate on developing an analytical strategy that can integrate results and account for ways in which contexts may condition causal effects. Here, integrated case selection (item 4) that builds on theory about channels through which interventions affect outcomes assists in stipulating ex-ante expectations of results across experiments.

8. INTEGRATED PUBLICATION

In addition to individual academic papers and EGAP policy briefs, all funded researchers and the steering committee will co-author one or more books and/or articles that present results from the distinct studies in an integrated analysis.

METAKETA INITIATIVE OVERSIGHT

Each Metaketa round is run by a steering committee that is headed by a committee chair, and includes at least one researcher with strong methods expertise, as well as two or three researchers who have substantive expertise.

After grants are awarded, a separate implementation committee composed of the steering committee members and one representative from each individual study is formed. The steering committee is responsible for drafting the meta-analysis pre-analysis plan, conducting the meta-analysis, and drafting the joint publication, with help from funded teams, as needed.

The role of the steering committee is diverse, with one of the most important responsibilities being to serve as advisors to the participants of the Metaketa round and provide guidance where needed. Because of the extensive time commitment involved in chairing a round, it is worth considering providing compensation for the person in that role.

STEERING COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Consult and draft the Expression of Interest (EOI)
- Review EOIs and select the thematic area for the Request for Proposal (RFP)
- Draft the RFP
- Review and select RFPs to be awarded
- Conduct harmonization meetings
- Draft meta-analysis pre-analysis plan
- Bring their knowledge and expertise to cumulation efforts, analysis and reporting, formal synthesis, and meta-analysis
- Conduct meta-analysis
- Serve as co-editors/co-authors on a shared publication

COMMITTEE POSITIONS

POSITION	DUTIES
COMMITTEE CHAIR	Oversees the entire Metaketa process and asks for additional committee members' involvement as needed. Chairs are the central source of continuity between the various committees and steps in the process. By agreeing to serve as chair, this individual is usually not eligible to apply for funding for a research project within the Metaketa round they are chairing.
COMMITTEE MEMBER WITH METHODS EXPERTISE	Plays a key role in drafting the RFP, the meta-analysis pre-analysis plan (MPAP), and the joint article summarizing findings. This person also assists with project funding selections and is responsible for coordinating between Metaketa committees and sharing lessons learned, best practices, etc. By agreeing to serve as the committee member with methods expertise, this individual is usually not eligible to apply for funding for a research project within the Metaketa round committee they are serving on.
COMMITTEE MEMBERS WITH SUBSTANTIVE EXPERTISE	Assist the chair with defining the substantive focus of the Metaketa round, drafting the EOI, RFP, MPAP, and joint publication; and selecting grant recipients. Additionally, committee members are called on by the committee chair to be involved as needed. By agreeing to serve on the committee, these individuals are usually not eligible to apply for funding for a research project within the Metaketa round committee they are participating in.

COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING

Funding Organization

Committee Chair

Committee Members with Substantive and Methods Expertise

Grant Recipients

The steering committee does not operate on consensus. Instead, the committee chair has ultimate decision-making authority and the committee members are asked to weigh in as necessary. This avoids response fatigue to the unforeseen issues that may arise during a Metaketa that require quick trouble-shooting. The committee chair should coordinate relevant decisions with the organization that is funding the Metaketa round.

COMMITTEE SELECTION PROCESS

In practice, the selection process has varied by Metaketa round. Generally, the awarded institution will appoint a committee chair for the Metaketa round. The chair will oversee the steering and implementation committees. Following the selection of the chair, the awarded institution, in consultation with the committee chair, will appoint other committee members with substantive and methods expertise. The awarded institution may also choose to appoint a committee member from a prior Metaketa round, if applicable, as a reference guide for the chair. Should any unforeseen issues arise, members may resign from the committee or may be asked to step down by the awarded institution, in consultation with the committee chair.
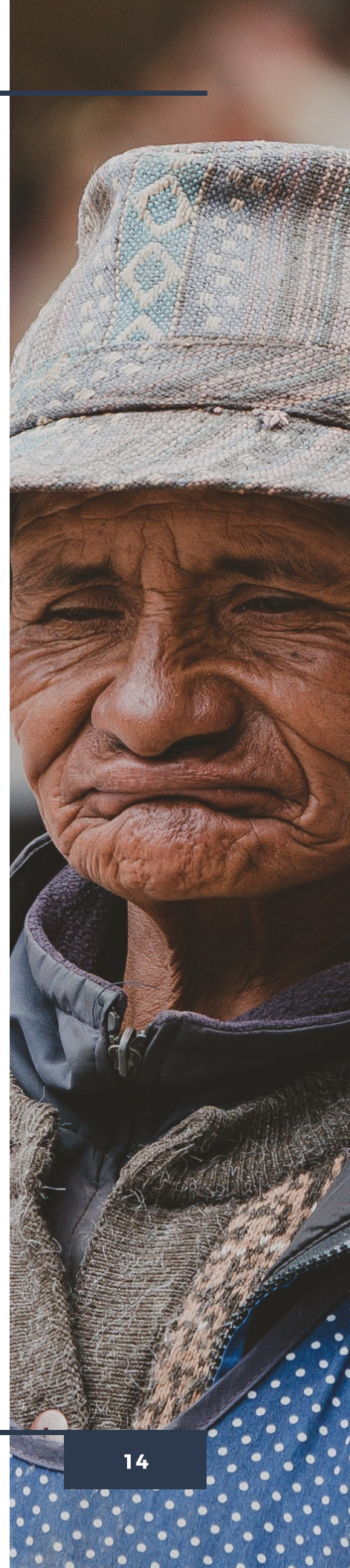
PROGRAM MANAGER

It is highly recommended to hire a full-time program manager that is dedicated to your Metaketa who coordinates meetings and provides research support to ensure that each round moves forward on schedule. Additionally, the program manager coordinates funding for all projects, provides advice to the committee regarding spending, and reviews narrative and finance reports for each project. The program manager liaises with all Metaketa committee chairs and the participating researchers to ensure they have the resources necessary to manage the programs. Further, the program manager ensures that participants adhere to the rules and principles of the Metaketa Initiative including proper preregistration, fulfillment of ethical principles, etc., and will visit projects in the field to ensure compliance.

GRANTS ADMINISTRATION

The awarded institution hosts and manages the Metaketa grant with assistance from the program manager. The program manager is responsible for managing the grant according to the guidelines set out in the grant award letter and the requirements set by the awarded institution's financial departments for disbursing funds .

FUNDERS

The funders for Metaketas usually appoint one or more representative(s) who liaise with the committee and program manager throughout the round. These representatives generally participate in each round as follows:

- Meet with the steering committee and program manager to define the substantive area, which is based on the policy meetings held with stakeholders
- Review the Expression of Interest (EOI) prior to distribution to ensure substantive area is clearly described and that the Metaketa round remains policy-relevant
- Review EOI proposals and work with the steering committee to write the Request for Proposal (RFP) in which the common treatment arm will be outlined
- Review the RFP prior to distribution to ensure substantive area is clearly described and that the Metaketa round remains policy-relevant
- Assist the steering committee and program manager in identifying results dissemination activities
- Attend results meetings

COMMUNICA-TIONS AND OUTREACH

The overall communications and outreach strategy is organized and executed by the program manager. Generally, it includes publicizing the calls for EOIs and RFPs; announcing the Metaketa awards and the submission of pre-analysis plans; providing updates on the Metaketa meetings and the progress of projects; and publicizing the final results of the Metaketa projects including highlighting publications, etc.

The communications and outreach strategy utilizes multiple media outlets including the awarded institution's websites and Twitter accounts as well as asking individuals involved in the Initiative— typically members of the steering committee—to write blog posts aimed at broader audiences about the Metaketa round. Additionally, email blasts are used to send information to interested organizations and individuals.

DEVELOPING A TIMELINE

We recommend following a schedule similar to the one below for the two stage application process, which includes soliciting expressions of interest and full proposals, as well as the award process. We recommend scheduling calls for the committee far in advance, as soon as the statements of interests and proposals are due. This will avoid losing any time to scheduling and help keep your team on track. Timing for the research process after awards will vary depending on the thematic approach of the program. The timeline below is based on a four-year grant.

	STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMEFRAME
1	Define the general substantive focus of the Metaketa	Chair + Committee members with substantive expertise	2 months
2	Secure funding	EGAP + Chair	
3	Expressions of interest	Chair + Committee members with substantive expertise	3 months
4	Request for proposals	Chair + Committee members with substantive expertise	3 months
5	Grantee selection and award process	Chair + Committee members with substantive/methods expertise	3 months
6	Coordination meetings	Chair + Committee members with substantive/methods expertise	1-2 meetings
7	Draft MPAP	All	6 months
8	Implementation	Chair + One representative from each project team	1-2 years
9	Third-party replications	Chair + All teams	4 months
10	Meta-analysis and joint publication	All	8 months
11	Reconciliation meeting	All	1 meeting
12	Dissemination of results	All	

PROPOSAL AND AWARD PROCESS

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

SUMMARY

The application process for a Metaketa round usually consists of two stages: 1) the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage and 2) the Request for Proposal (RFP) stage.

The EOI stage allows the steering committee to identify promising clusters of projects that fit a pre-defined theme that the committee has decided on, sometimes in consultation with an agency (e.g., NDI, DPKO, IPA) that is interested and willing to do the interventions. This "shaking of the trees" allows the committee to issue an RFP with a narrower,

more defined thematic focus that is consistent with the identified clusters. Usually, the EOI stage generates at least two or three individual projects in each broad cluster, but the RFP stage generates additional proposals within those thematic areas.

Note that submission of an EOI (stage 1) does not have to be a requirement for later submission of a full proposal (stage 2). The subsequent RFP stage is usually an open call. However, submitting a short EOI offers substantial benefits for researchers, as outlined in the next subsection.

Requesting EOIs benefits researchers and helps refine the theme that is chosen for the full award. When researchers submit EOIs that

fit the thematic objectives of the Initiative and cluster well with other submitted proposals, they should be encouraged to turn these EOIs into full proposals.

However, this does not mean that they are entitled any funding. Detailed feedback and possibly requests for revision should also be provided for successful EOIs. Submission of an EOI, therefore, offers several benefits to researchers: 1) it provides a low-cost way for researchers to identify the fit of their project with this Initiative and to receive a signal of interest from the selection committee and 2) it may boost the chance that a project fits the focus of the ultimate RFP, as stage 1 of the process will help narrow the RFP's thematic focus.

EOI REVIEW PROCESS

Below is the process used for reviewing EOIs and dealing with critical questions. We encourage you to utilize this process and adapt it to your needs. Note that the entire EOI stage (i.e. drafting the EOI, putting out the call, and reviewing) will likely take at least three months to complete.

1. EOI REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS

The program manager reviews all of the EOIs and groups them into clusters, sends out a request asking each committee member to read certain EOIs, and circulates their comments in advance of the first review call.

2. FIRST REVIEW CALL

During this first call, the committee organizes the EOIs into clusters that focus on similar issues. Each committee member is assigned to read certain clusters and provide comments during the second review call.

3. SECOND REVIEW CALL AND DECISIONS

Hold a second call to discuss each cluster and its merits/demerits as a thematic cluster for the RFP. Narrow down the number of clusters that look promising and then make a decision about the thematic area to base the RFP on.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Once decided, the program manager prepares a public document sharing the EOI process and announcing the theme of the RFP. This document is usually posted on the organization's website in some fashion.

EOI FAQS

These are some of the questions that are commonly asked during the EOI phase, with answers based on the way that EGAP has structured its recent Metaketas. We encourage you to address them in your materials to avoid any confusion.

Q: If I submitted an EOI in a thematic area that is not consistent with the RFP, can I submit a proposal focused on a project that is consistent with the focus of the RFP?

A: Yes.

Q: Is it OK for the same researcher(s) to submit more than one proposal?

A: Yes.

Q: If a researcher(s) submitted an EOI for one project in two different contexts and both treatment arms are the same in the two different contexts, should the researcher(s) submit one proposal or multiple proposals?

A: The researcher(s) should submit one proposal outlining the various contexts.

Q: Can applications be made for projects that are underway?

A: Yes. Projects that are underway will be welcome to apply for funding under the Metaketa round to the extent that they address the same topic as the theme of the round and can meet the same standards.

Q: Can existing projects coordinate with the collection of funded projects even if they do not seek funding?

A: Yes; such coordination will be welcome to the extent that projects address the same topic as the theme of the round and can meet the same standards.

Q: Does an implementing partner need to be in place for the application or can I state that a partner will be selected if the application is selected? Would the proposal be less competitive if the implementing partner is not specified?

A: It is OK to state that an implementing partner will be selected should the proposal be chosen. However, it is best practice to have the implementing partner lined up when the proposal is submitted. The proposal may be less competitive if the implementing partner is not specified, but it does not disqualify a project.

Q: How long should the proposal be?

A: The length of the proposal is open-ended; however, we would prefer that it be no more than 5 pages.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SUMMARY

The second stage of the application process is the RFP stage. During this stage, the steering committee uses the theme generated by the EOI stage to draft a narrower, more defined request. It is important to include whatever aspects that will need to be harmonized across projects within the RFP. These aspects usually include theories of change, interventions, hypotheses, outcome measures, measurement of covariates and modifiers, cumulation, and design modifications. Note that the entire RFP stage (i.e. drafting the RFP, putting out the call, reviewing, and awarding) usually takes at least six months to complete.

TARGETED OUTREACH

Targeted outreach is suggested to increase the number of people who submit RFPs.

- PERSONAL EMAILS: Send targeted emails to people who applied to the EOI round, but whose topic was not chosen, as well as to organizations and academics.
- GENERAL EMAILS: Make a second general outreach push to encourage people who did not submit to the EOI round to submit an RFP. Make language clear that the EOI round is not required in order to submit to the RFP.
- BLOG: Draft a blog post on a major media outlet that is relevant to your preferred audience (e.g., Monkey Cage for social science).
- TWITTER: Tweet and ask relevant influencers to tweet or retweet.
- WEBSITE: Post the RFP on your website and ask relevant institutions to post links to these pages on their websites.

RFP REVIEW PROCESS

Below is the process used for reviewing RFPs and dealing with critical questions. We encourage you to utilize this process and tweak it to fit your round's needs.

1. RFP REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS	All members review RFPs submitted and provide grades based on criteria associated with the project teams' experience levels, the project itself, and the project's potential for policy impact. The program manager compiles all grades into a master spreadsheet and shares it in advance of the first call.
2. FIRST REVIEW CALL	During the first call, one member is assigned to comment on each proposal and then the floor is open for discussion. The committee then decides on how many projects to fund (usually 5-7 projects) and whether they need to request any projects to revise and resubmit (R&R) their proposals.
3. R&RS AND REJECTION LETTERS	The program manager sends requests to the teams chosen to submit R&Rs and sends denial letters to the project teams that are not chosen. Note that the steering committee members usually draft each of the R&Rs with specific requests for each project.
4. SECOND REVIEW CALL	Hold a second call to review each of the R&Rs submitted and decide which projects to fund.
5. ANNOUNCEMENTS	Once decided, the program manager sends award letters to project teams and prepares a public document sharing the RFP process and announcing the awarded projects. This document is usually posted on the organization's website in some fashion.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection criteria at the RFP stage includes individual merit of the projects and the experience of researcher(s), as well as adherence to methodological and transparency standards. Competitive applicants should propose experimental designs consistent with the thematic focus and the pillars of the Metaketa Initiative as well as propose projects that are implementable in the timeline of the grant. Additionally, positive weight is usually given to studies which demonstrate clear routes to impact, e.g., existing interest in the study from governments, civil society organizations, and/or implementers who could potentially scale up or take forward successful trials.

Thus, the RFP encourages applications with the following features:

1. Study sites and units. Proposals should include a description of the study sites and study units included in the research design.

2. Motivation for alternative arms. Teams should include a description of the motivations for additional treatment arms that are being added above and beyond the common treatment arm and control arm that are the basis of the Metaketa.

3. Interventions. Experimental designs should focus on the effects of interventions that are tested, scalable, simple, portable, punctual, and ethical.

4. Outcome measures. Designs should focus on outcomes that are central to the thematic focus.

5. Estimation. Project descriptions should include how effects are to be estimated. Please include power calculations.

6. Build on existing knowledge base. Special interest should be paid to designs that build on the results of prior research, or that replicate and modify interventions used in previous research.

7. Theorize heterogeneous effects across research contexts. Proposals should consider explicitly the channels through which interventions may affect outcomes, and discuss why such channels may or may not be operative in particular contexts.

8. Allow the study of downstream effects. Designs should ideally allow for significant learning about downstream effects.

9. Timeline. Proposals should also include a detailed timeline of the study, which takes into account the overall timeline of the Initiative.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

PARTICIPATION IN THIS INITIATIVE OFFERS SUBSTANTIAL BENEFITS TO RESEARCHERS:

- Pre-planning and coordination across research teams in post-funding workshops can sharpen and improve the quality of individual research projects.
- Integrated publication may limit the risk to researchers of null findings. Replications of prior research (which are otherwise often challenging to publish) are explicitly encouraged.
- Co-authorship of synthetic publications provides a way to contribute to an innovative mode of social science research.
- Access to substantial funding for the research project that includes financing for both the common arm and an alternative arm of the researchers' choosing.

SAMPLE LETTERS

AWARD LETTER

Dear [name],

The [organization name] is pleased to inform you that your project proposal, "[title]," submitted to the [name of initiative], has been awarded funding in the amount of [$ amount].

This grant is funded by the [name of sponsor] and is being provided at the discretion of the [name of initiative] steering committee acting on behalf of [organization name]. Funds are to be used for the purpose described in the proposal narrative and the proposal budget. If that is not possible, grantees should inform [organization name] and apply for a new budget approval or otherwise make a refund to [organization name].

Note that payment is contingent on a) that you are in compliance with all terms and conditions of this subaward and b) that satisfactory progress and performance has occurred and is likely to continue to occur. These conditions would be violated if your study fails to follow the agreed upon harmonization decisions made during the coordination meeting and/or fails to carry out the design proposed in your last submission without prior notification and approval of the [name of initiative] steering committee. Funding may be modified, curtailed, or discontinued, and any funds must be repaid, if at any time organization name]/[sponsor] determines that the purposes of the subaward are not being met.

Accessing the Grant
To access the grant, please submit the following information to [name] at [email]:

[list of required documents to access grant]

As a reminder, we are planning a coordination workshop for all funded teams to bolster the strength of individual projects and to build possibilities for knowledge accumulation through coordination across teams. As you know, this meeting will be held on [date] at [location]. If you have not already RSVP'd for this meeting, please do so to [name] at your earliest convenience. Additional details about the workshop are forthcoming.

We look forward to working with you soon.

Sincerely,
[Name of Initiative] Steering Committee

REVISE AND RESUBMIT LETTER

Dear [name],

Thank you for submitting a proposal to the [name of initiative]. We received many strong proposals, which made choosing among them a very difficult task. Your project is among a cluster that were well designed and fit together closely, so we invite you to revise and resubmit the proposal with attention to the concerns and suggestions outlined in the attached document.

Please submit your revised proposal, budget, and due diligence documents to [name] at [email] by [date].

Sincerely,
[Name of Initiative] Steering Committee

REJECTION LETTER

Dear [name],

Thank you for submitting a proposal to the [name of initiative]. We received many strong proposals, which made choosing among them a very difficult task. Unfortunately, your proposal will not be funded under this [name of initiative]. Please note that [organization name] hopes to initiate future [name of initiative] and would invite you to apply for one of those.

Sincerely,
[Name of Initiative] Steering Committee

RESEARCH DESIGN AND INTERVENTIONS

COORDINATION MEETINGS

Once project teams are notified of their awards, all teams, the steering committee members, and the project manager hold a coordination meeting to bolster the strength of individual projects and to build possibilities for knowledge accumulation through harmonization across teams.

The decisions made at the coordination meeting inform what is included in a meta-analysis pre-analysis plan and individual pre-analysis plans (see next section for details). Note that this is the first discussion about the meta-analysis and publication strategy; most of the planning for these items comes at a later date.

*Pro-Tip: It is helpful to invite only 1-2 members from each team to participate in these meetings, as there are a lot of topics to cover and not a lot of time for each person to share their views.

*Pro-Tip: It is helpful to have the project manager take detailed notes during the meeting that can be used as a reference for the steering committee and project teams.

THE MEETING(S) USUALLY LASTS TWO DAYS AND CRITICAL TOPICS TO DISCUSS INCLUDE:

- Interventions: Common treatment arm and alternative treatment arms
- Theory of change
- Hypotheses and mechanisms
- Measurement of covariates and modifiers
- Outcome measures and moderators
- Meta-analysis
- Design modifications of individual projects
- Publication strategy
- Risk assessment

PREREGISTRATION

Part of the Metaketa Initiative involves registering both individual and meta-analysis pre-analysis plans to a design registry. This is done as a commitment to the social science standards of analytic transparency.

INDIVIDUAL TEAM PRE-ANALYSIS PLANS

After the revision of research designs during the coordination meeting of funded researchers and before initiation of outcome data collection, teams should post a pre-analysis plan (PAP) that describes a) the study's purpose; b) the hypotheses it aims to test; c) the main outcome variables; and d) the set of tests and the data analysis that will be performed. Circulating these PAPs in a round robin review process among teams with a predetermined schedule is an efficient way to check that the documents contain all the harmonized elements of the meta-analysis pre-analysis plan (see description below). PAPs can be registered on any of the design registries available (e.g., EGAP, AEA, OSF).

META-ANALYSIS PRE-ANALYSIS PLAN

In addition to individual project pre-analysis plans, the group of funded studies should be pre-registered as a meta-analysis pre-analysis plan (MPAP). This MPAP should include items (a)-(d) above, as well as the comparisons and pooled analyses to be conducted from the group of studies.

OPEN ACCESS AND DATA POLICY

The Metaketa Initiative adheres to the UK's Department of International Development's Research Open and Enhanced Access Policy: Open access refers here to irrevocable and free online access by any user worldwide to full text/full version scientific and scholarly material ("outputs"). Unrestricted use of manual and automated text and data mining tools, and unrestricted re-use of content with proper attribution should be allowed. By enhanced access, we mean steps taken to help users find, view, and download materials. By research, we mean a wide range of activities designed to generate primary and secondary empirical data to inform our own work and as a global public good ("projects").

We encourage you to adhere to an open access and data policy too, as this allows for research transparency and replication.

INTERVENTIONS

The key idea of the Metaketa Initiative is to take a major question of policy importance for governance outcomes, identify a suggested intervention, and implement a cluster of coordinated research studies in diverse geographic regions that can provide reliable and generalizable answers to the question. In general, interventions come from the recommendations of policymakers or research of scholars but have not been evaluated rigorously or systematically across contexts.

To answer these policy relevant questions, funded research teams will carry out harmonized interventions that consist of a common treatment arm with coordinated hypotheses, mechanisms, measurement of covariates and modifiers, and outcome measures and moderators. Teams are encouraged to employ mixed methods in measuring outcomes of the common arm interventions.

Research teams are also encouraged to include an alternative treatment arm in their study. The purpose of this additional arm is to allow for a comparative assessment of interventions: If the common treatment arm is not effective, what is? If it is effective, is it more effective than other interventions of similar cost? Under what conditions is it most effective? This alternative intervention arm opens up space for considerable differentiation and innovation across projects, but in a way that addresses a common agenda.

*Pro-tip: Create a subcommittee that consists of the steering committee chair and one member from each team that will be responsible for troubleshooting issues during field implementation. Hold monthly or bi-monthly check in calls with the subcommittee to monitor intervention progress.

*Pro-tip: Draft the meta-analysis pre-analysis plan sooner rather than later because this is when the majority of the harmonized portions of the interventions are fleshed out.

Before projects begin the implementation of the intervention, it is important to discern when a project has been deemed a "failure" and when it will be excluded from the meta-analysis. These could include: 1) Inability to complete the intervention due to unanticipated logistical issues; 2) Excessive attrition—in the case in which attrition for the main outcome variable is missing for more than a set proportion of observations, the study will be reviewed by a panel of three substantive experts unassociated with the Initiative to determine whether inclusion in the meta-analysis is warranted; and/or 3) Inability to complete empirical analyses or written products in accordance with the Initiative timeline.

The timeline for interventions will vary based on the funding cycle and the type of interventions being conducted.

SITE VISITS

The program manager for the Initiative is tasked with oversight duties that include visiting projects during the intervention phase to see how the studies are progressing in the field. Below is a list of items that should be included in each site visit:

- Visit project locations to meet, observe, and interview implementing partners to learn about their experiences working on the projects and about any capacity building that has arisen from the study collaboration
- Ensure that agreed upon harmonized portions (e.g., survey instruments, hypotheses, training protocols) in the meta-analysis pre-analysis plan are being followed
- Transport any equipment, paperwork, etc. for the research team from the US to project countries
- Discuss any changes to the identified risks associated with projects
- Check in with teams about the management of assets being monitored
- Discuss intervention timelines and any foreseeable delays
- Speak with implementing partners about reporting requirements and invoicing; answer any questions they may have about financial system
- Look for opportunities for results dissemination events (e.g., possible co-branding with implementing partners, etc.)

Deliverables from the site visit usually include:

- A photo journal of observations for publicity and social media outreach
- A report that details the site visit schedule, general observations, and specific issues, as well as provides updates about the items listed in numbers 1-8 above
- A list of interviewees with contact information for future follow up

Note that some of these tasks and deliverables help with reporting back to the Metaketa round's financial sponsor. Other donors may have additional requirements that should be incorporated into site visits.

ANALYSIS, REPORTING, AND RESULTS DISSEMINATION

META-ANALYSIS

ADDRESS THE CRISIS OF EXTERNAL VALIDITY

To address the crisis of external validity and extend the "credibility revolution" in the social sciences—i.e. achieving cumulative knowledge; ensuring that standards of analysis and reporting equal those of design; and creating usable evidence for social science and public policy—each Metaketa round conducts a meta-analysis to study variation in the impacts of interventions across multiple country settings.

The meta-analysis should be pre-specified in a meta-analysis pre-analysis plan written by the Metaketa steering committee and funded research teams and pre-registered at one of the available online registries (e.g., EGAP Registry, AEA Registry). Group pre-registration will allow the steering committee and funded researchers to pre-specify a plan for meta-analysis of distinct experiments—and for formal synthesis of experimental results using meta-analysis techniques. In addition, research teams may collaborate on developing models that can integrate results and account for ways in which contexts may condition causal effects. Here, integrated case selection that builds on theory about channels through which interventions affect outcomes assists in stipulating ex-ante expectations of results across experiments. Further, pre-specification of the meta-analysis plan limits the scope for data mining at the aggregation stage. Typically, the steering committee is tasked with spearheading the meta-analysis, but funded research teams are heavily involved in the design and implementation of the analysis. Prior to conducting the meta-analysis, the steering committee should request IRB approval from one of their home institutions. Note that IRB approval is only required when human subjects are involved in the research.

As mentioned in the replications section below, the meta-analysis is subject to the same replicability procedures as the site-level studies and should take place before the meta-analysis is completed.

REPLICATIONS

Metaketa research teams are expected to make their data publicly available for independent, third party replication and analysis funded by the Metaketa Initiative, with a view to early identification of errors and discrepancies prior to publication. In addition, at publication, all of the data should be archived in a public repository and provided free of charge. Replications are run on both individual project data and the Metaketa round's meta-analysis.

METAKETA REPLICATIONS WILL:

- Replicate the cleaning code that teams submit to get to the meta-analysis data set and document deviations from the meta-pre-analysis plan, as well as run/implement the primary meta-analysis estimator for each study
- Replicate the meta-analysis for each round

THESE REPLICATIONS WILL:

- Provide those conducting the meta-analysis with meta-analysis-ready data that has been checked and verified by a team of third-party replicators
- Provide third-party independent replication of the meta-analysis for each round

ONCE ENDLINE IS COMPLETE, TEAMS WILL SUBMIT:

- The raw data
- The cleaning code that transforms the meta-analysis data set; cleaning code must be "one click," meaning that it transforms raw data into meta-analysis data in a single execution
- The dataset of meta-analysis variables should be exactly labeled according to a stylesheet written by the steering committee
- A codebook of all variables in the meta-analysis dataset (for each variable, the codebook must state, at least):
- Variable names
- Variable descriptions
- Source
- (Where appropriate:) Survey question, in the original language of the instrument AND with an English translation
- Range or levels of the variable

BEST PRACTICES FOR REPLICATION PROJECT MANAGEMENT:

- All replications and meta-analyses should be conducted in the same language (e.g., R, STATA)
- Most teams should have four to six months from the last day of their endline data collection to provide requested materials to replicators
- Teams should be required to write the code for their analyses ahead of endline data collection and share this with replicators
- Replicators should have two weeks to conduct each replication from the time they receive the requested materials
- Replicators should use GitHub or similar to manage each replication so work can be quickly checked, which should be set up ahead of receiving the first team's data
- There should be at least two replicators assigned to each replication

PUBLICATIONS

SUMMARY

Generally, Metaketa-funded researchers and the round's steering committee will co-author one or more books and/or articles that present results from the distinct studies in an integrated analysis. To date, Metaketa rounds have required that participation in the Initiative be conditional on participating in these integrated publication initiatives as well as any optional individual publications.

There are benefits of this format that may be attractive to researchers, which include: 1) publications of this sort highlight the intellectual benefits of collaboration and integration across research teams; and 2) co-authorship of integrated publications provides a way to contribute to an innovative mode of social science research.

FOUR TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS

There are four types of publications that usually arise for researchers who participate in the Metaketa Initiative.

1. SYNTHESIS ARTICLES: All funded researchers and the steering committee co-author one or more articles that present results from the distinct studies in an integrated fashion.

2. STANDARD INDIVIDUAL PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES OR CHAPTERS: Individual grantees publish stand-alone papers in academic outlets, which may present extended analyses or focus on particular outcomes of interest to individual researcher(s).

3. JOINT PUBLICATION OF INDIVIDUAL ARTICLES: Previous Metaketa rounds have pursued a discussion with journal editors about a publication model in which Metaketa teams may try to have the collection of papers published jointly as part of a journal special issue. Ultimately the decision to undertake such a joint publication will rest with the research teams and steering committee. Note that there are some challenges associated with this approach. Namely, that there are few high quality journals, most of which are generally less open to this type of publication model. Therefore, if you choose to go this route, it is important to begin discussions with editors early on.

4. POLICY BRIEFS: Research staff draft policy briefs reflecting core lessons from the individual research projects and the meta-analysis.

Discussion about the publication strategy should begin at the coordination meeting that includes the steering committee and all funded researchers, and continue to develop as the round progresses. Decisions about the publication strategy should be included in the meta-analysis pre-analysis plan (MPAP) and should include how teams should go about publishing articles on the alternative arms included in their project (i.e. what is ok to publish, when it is ok to publish, etc.). Here's an example of what one Metaketa round decided about their publication strategy that is included in their MPAP:

"Metaketa teams all agree to work according to a common timeframe, to make good faith efforts to complete all interventions and data collection by the agreed upon end date, and to restrict any individual project publication or presentation of results, which draws from the common treatment arm, until submission for publication of the meta-analysis. However, Metaketa teams have agreed to consider individual teams' proposals to publish individual papers drawing only on alternative treatment arms. For such proposals to move forward, Metaketa teams need to reach a positive consensus before the team moves forward with diffusion of results, and submission to academic journals."

Teams and the round's steering committee generally hold a final meeting once projects are complete at which the meta-analysis and other joint publications are shared and final edits are made prior to submission. Sometimes, this meeting includes substantive experts (e.g., policy makers, academics, practitioners) to weigh in on the publications and provide feedback.
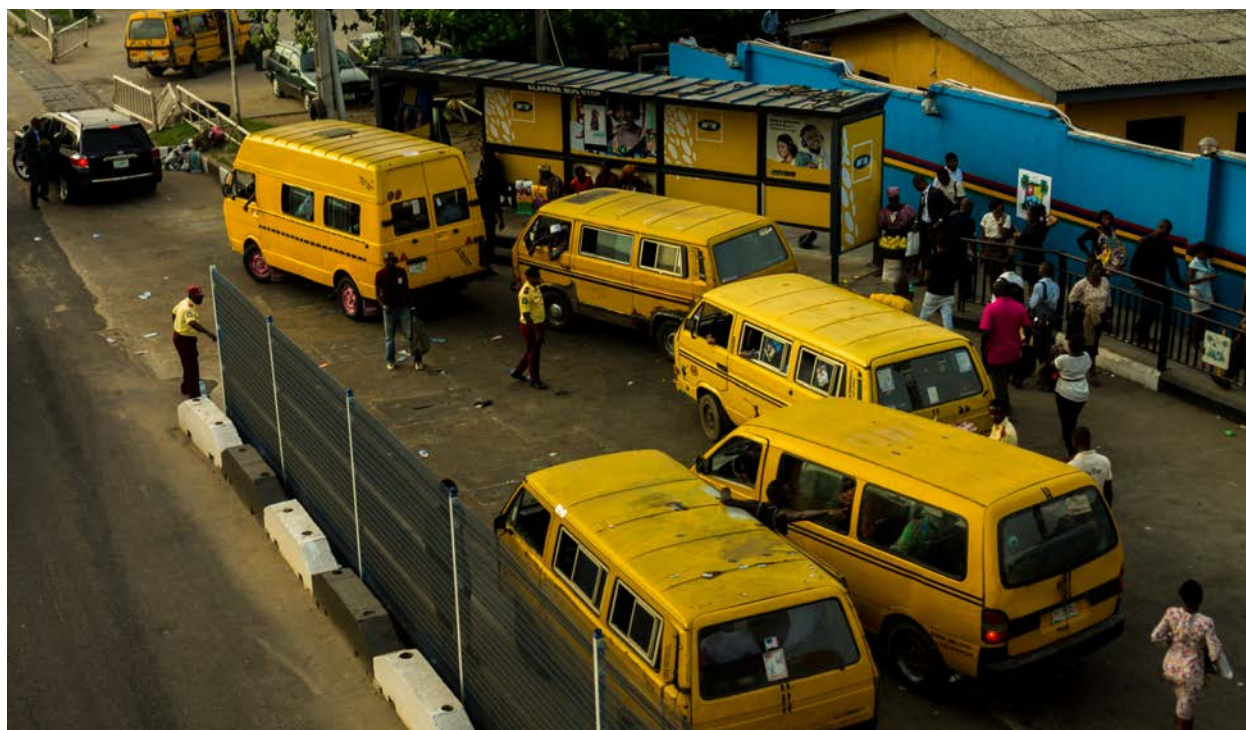
RESULTS DISSEMINATION

The Metaketa Initiative is tasked with the dissemination of results from both individual projects and the meta-analysis. In order to reach the relevant stakeholders who should receive the results, we usually conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise that identifies the many types of individuals and organizations that may be interested. We strongly encourage you to conduct a mapping exercise for your round (and to think outside the box about who might be a relevant stakeholder) but, leave it to the round's organizers to choose from the many resources available for this practice. Here's a non-exhaustive list of stakeholders that project teams have engaged in our Metaketa rounds:

- Government
- Academics
- Donors
- Civil Society Organizations
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Media
- Multi-Lateral Organizations
- Research Study Participants
- Research Program Staff

*Pro-Tip: It is useful to begin thinking about results dissemination early on during the Initiative (e.g., at the first coordination meeting) and begin building your strategy before the projects' implementation phases are completed.

*Pro-Tip: It is useful to set aside a specific budget for dissemination events.

*Pro-Tip: Baseline and midline data can also be disseminated before the projects end, as long as this does not compromise the research design.

WAYS TO DISSEMINATE

Here we provide a non-exhaustive list of ways to disseminate the results from each individual study as well as the results of the meta-analysis.

- In-Country or Regional Results Meetings
- Policy Briefs
- Journal Articles
- Books
- Social Media Campaigns
- Blog Posts
- Newsletters
- Email Blasts
- Conference Presentations
- Webinars
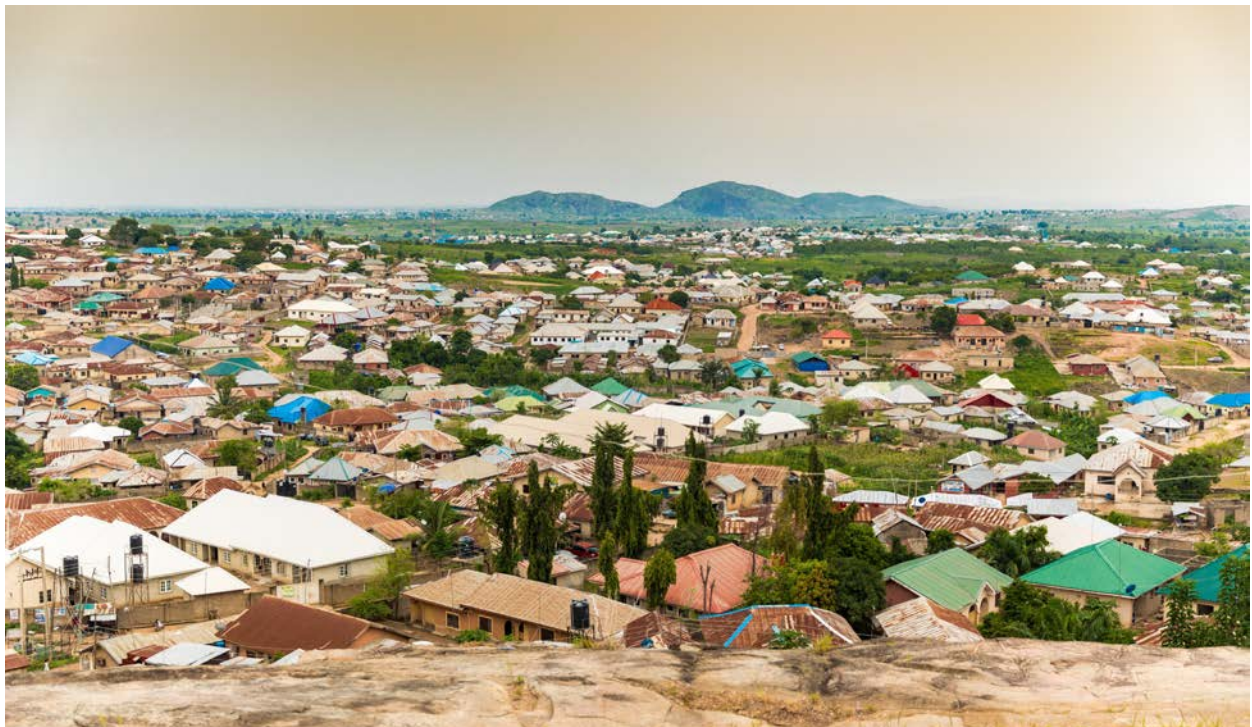
GRANTS MANAGEMENT

SUMMARY

This section provides a non-exhaustive list of the elements of the Metaketa Initiative's grants management.

We encourage you to review this list ahead of time with your funder and incorporate the relevant elements into your request for proposals, award letters, and financial contracts with funded research teams.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT ELEMENTS

- Due Diligence Assessments
- IRB and Government Approvals
- Reporting Requirements
- IDC Rates
- Meeting Participation
- Project Management
- Timeline Maintenance
- Intellectual Property, Copyright, and Data
- Publicity and Use of Name
- Acknowledgement of Support
- Asset Registers
- Risk Registers
- Ethics
- Human Rights Compliance
- Breaches to ethical standards and human rights abuses
- Reimbursable awards v. Fixed Payment awards (i.e. paying for services ahead of time)

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