Recruitment Pack

Director of Programme Development

mary's meals

a simple solution to world hunger

Our Vision

Mary's Meals' vision is that every child receives one daily meal in their place of education and that all those who have more than they need, share with those who lack even the most basic things.

Working together with people who share our ideals, we believe that this vision can be achieved in this world where there is enough food for everyone.

Welcome from Our President & Founder

Thank you for your interest in working with Mary's Meals International. I hope you will find this pack informative and useful in supporting your decision to apply to join our team of employees, which exists to serve a global movement of people who are united around a simple mission; the provision of a daily meal in a place of education for the world's poorest children.

This meal, cooked and served by local volunteers, meets the immediate need of the hungry child and, at the same time, plays a key role in encouraging them into the classroom where they gain an education that can set them free from poverty.

Today we serve over 3 million children each school day in 16 of the world's poorest countries. This global movement of ours is achieving something wonderful, each meal served is the product of lots of 'little acts of love' carried out by people across many countries who freely give their time, money, skills or prayers and it is through that, that our movement grows.

Our work is named after Mary, the mother of Jesus, and our values and culture are rooted in and shaped by a Christian spirituality. We feel that the way we do things is as important as the end results. Ours is also a universal mission involving people of all faiths and none across the world. Everyone is invited to join and provide their own unique contribution to this work.

With 67 million children out of school around the world and a further 73 million attending school so hungry they're not able to concentrate and learn, our work is only just beginning. Will you play a crucial part in shaping the future of Mary's Meals and with it, the lives of thousands of children across the world?

Good luck with your application.

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow
President & Founder

Working at Mary’s Meals

Our mission, vision, and values are at the very heart of everything we do, and this is more than a role, it’s an extraordinary opportunity to play a part in changing the story for children in some of the world’s poorest countries. You will be a true ambassador for our work and will demonstrate commitment to our movement, mission and vision.

We offer the opportunity to support our global movement in a dynamic, flexible and inclusive environment with a real focus on professional and personal development.

We believe in the innate goodness of people, respect the dignity of every human being and family life and believe in good stewardship of the resources entrusted to us. In line with our values, Mary’s Meals is fully committed to a culture of safeguarding.

Director of Programme Development

Reporting to: Chief Programmes Officer
Contract type: Permanent
Location: Remote role
Salary: GBP £64,266

Our pay philosophy ensures consistency across locations and salaries. For candidates based outside of the UK, your salary will be converted from GBP to your local currency at the current budget rate, which is then fixed for the duration of your employment.

An expectation of a vocational approach has shaped our approach to compensation for senior roles within Mary's Meals International.

Benefits:

- Flexible working hours
- 34 days' annual leave (including public holidays) + 1 extra day per year up to 39 days.
- Non-contributory pension with employer contributions of 8% if UK based (8% payment in lieu of pension depending on the location of the candidate. Any pension contribution paid as part of salary will be subject to normal statutory deductions/ taxation)
- Life assurance
- Wellbeing Solutions Assistance Programme

Role Purpose

The Director of Programme Development is responsible for leading the strategic development, design and continuous improvement of Mary's Meals programmes globally, ensuring programmes are informed by evidence, aligned with organisational priorities and positioned to maximise impact for the children and communities we serve.

The role provides leadership to Programme Development teams and works closely with Programme Management, Programme Operations and implementing programmes to drive programme quality, learning, innovation and strategic growth. The postholder oversees programme development frameworks, policy, research, impact measurement, organisational learning and programme design, ensuring that lessons, evidence and emerging opportunities are translated into effective practice across the global movement.

Acting as a key strategic leader within Programmes, the postholder plays a central role in shaping organisational strategy through programme development insight, influencing future direction and supporting the achievement of Mary's Meals' global growth ambitions and strategy.

Key Responsibilities & Activities

Strategic Leadership

- Lead the development and evolution of Mary's Meals' Programme Development strategy, ensuring alignment with organisational strategy, priorities and growth ambitions.
- Provide strategic leadership on programme design, quality, learning and development across the global movement.
- Lead transformational initiatives that strengthen programme effectiveness, sustainability, impact and reach.
- Contribute as a senior member of the Programmes leadership team, helping shape organisational direction and strategic priorities.
- Use evidence, learning and programme insights to influence organisational decision-making and future strategy.

Programme Strategy & Policy

- Oversee the development and implementation of programme development frameworks, strategies and policies across Programme Countries and Affiliates.
- Lead the development and implementation of country-level strategic plans, including government engagement plans, ensuring alignment with organisational priorities and the Who We Reach strategy.
- Ensure programme policies, standards and approaches are informed by evidence, best practice and organisational learning.
- Work collaboratively with Programme Management, Programme Operations and implementing programmes to ensure strategy and policy are effectively translated into practice.
- Lead or contribute to strategic organisational projects and initiatives relating to programme development and future programme growth.

Research, Learning & Evidence

- Lead the organisation's programmatic learning agenda, embedding a culture of evidence-based improvement, reflection and continuous learning.
- Champion the integration of research findings, impact evidence and lessons learned into programme policy, strategy and practice.
- Oversee programme-related research activities and ensure findings are effectively disseminated and applied across the organisation.
- Ensure learning and knowledge-sharing mechanisms support collaboration across Programme Countries, Affiliates and organisational functions.
- Promote the use of evidence and data to inform programme design, decision-making and strategic planning.

Key Responsibilities & Activities

Programme Excellence, Innovation & Impact

- Oversee the development and continuous evolution of Mary's Meals' Theory of Change and associated programme quality frameworks.
- Identify, lead and support programme innovation opportunities, ensuring pilots and new approaches are effectively tested, evaluated and embedded where appropriate.
- Ensure programme development approaches reflect emerging best practice and support long-term programme quality and sustainability.
- Lead initiatives that strengthen programme effectiveness, scalability and learning across the movement.

Cross-Functional Leadership & Collaboration

- Act as a key strategic interface between Programmes and other organisational functions, ensuring alignment on programme development priorities.
- Work closely with Growth teams to support funding opportunities, donor engagement and strategic programme development initiatives.
- Collaborate with Programme Management and Programme Operations teams to ensure programme strategies, policies and development priorities are effectively implemented.
- Partner with safeguarding, finance, people and culture, communications and other organisational functions to ensure programme development work is integrated and aligned.
- Represent Programme Development within cross-organisational working groups, steering groups and strategic initiatives.

Government & External Relationships

- Build and maintain effective relationships with government stakeholders, research institutions, development partners and other external organisations.
- Support Programme Countries and Affiliates in developing strategic external partnerships that strengthen programme effectiveness and growth.
- Build and maintain effective relationships with government stakeholders, partners and external organisations in collaboration with Country Directors and programme leadership.
- Represent Mary's Meals externally in relevant forums, conferences, networks and stakeholder engagements.
- Promote Mary's Meals' programme development approach and contribute to thought leadership within the international development and school feeding sectors.

Key Responsibilities & Activities

Additional Information:

- **All MMI employees are expected to undertake the following general duties:**
- Work within the framework of the Mary's Meals mission, vision and values.
- Work towards achieving department strategy, operational plans and objectives.
- Ensure familiarity with and adhere to all MMI policies and procedures whilst contributing to an inclusive and welcoming environment.
- Undertake and apply learning from appropriate training and development programmes.
- You may be required to travel to countries where Mary's Meals operates
- Understand and uphold the standards outlined in MMI's Safeguarding Policy, acting with due care and attention to safeguard anyone that comes into contact with our work.
- Demonstrate behaviours that promote a safe culture and raise any safeguarding concerns immediately.
- Uphold the principles of Simplicity, Service and Stewardship (3S), alongside the standards outlined in our Personal Conduct Policy, ensuring you act in a way that reflects our values and supports our mission.

Leading & Managing:

- As a leader at Mary's Meals, you are expected to consistently demonstrate the behaviours and standards set out in our Way We Lead framework, modelling these in your day-to-day actions, decision-making and interactions.
- Provide strategic support, leadership and direction to a high performing team.
- Oversee the delivery, monitoring and reporting of progress made against team and department strategies and plans.
- Lead, develop, coach and inspire a high-performing team, promoting a culture of engagement and empowerment including identifying and implementing opportunities for delegation and development.
- Seek all opportunities for personal growth and development to support the aims of our organisational strategy.
- Role-model Mary's Meals values and leadership behaviours.
- Ensure MAP's and Development Conversations are in place for all direct reports.
- Ensure integration and collaboration between the different strands of the directorate.

Essential Skills & Experience

- Strong commitment to Mary's Meals vision, mission and values.
- Significant strategic leadership experience within international development or a related sector.
- Proven experience leading programme development, design, quality improvement, learning or research functions in complex international contexts.
- Experience shaping organisational strategy through evidence, research and programme insight.
- Experience leading and developing high-performing, multicultural teams.
- Strong experience developing programme strategies, frameworks, policies and organisational approaches.
- Experience overseeing research, learning, monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement activities.
- Strong stakeholder management skills, with experience working across multiple functions and diverse international contexts.
- Excellent communication, influencing and relationship-building skills.
- Understanding of safeguarding, governance and compliance within international development programmes.

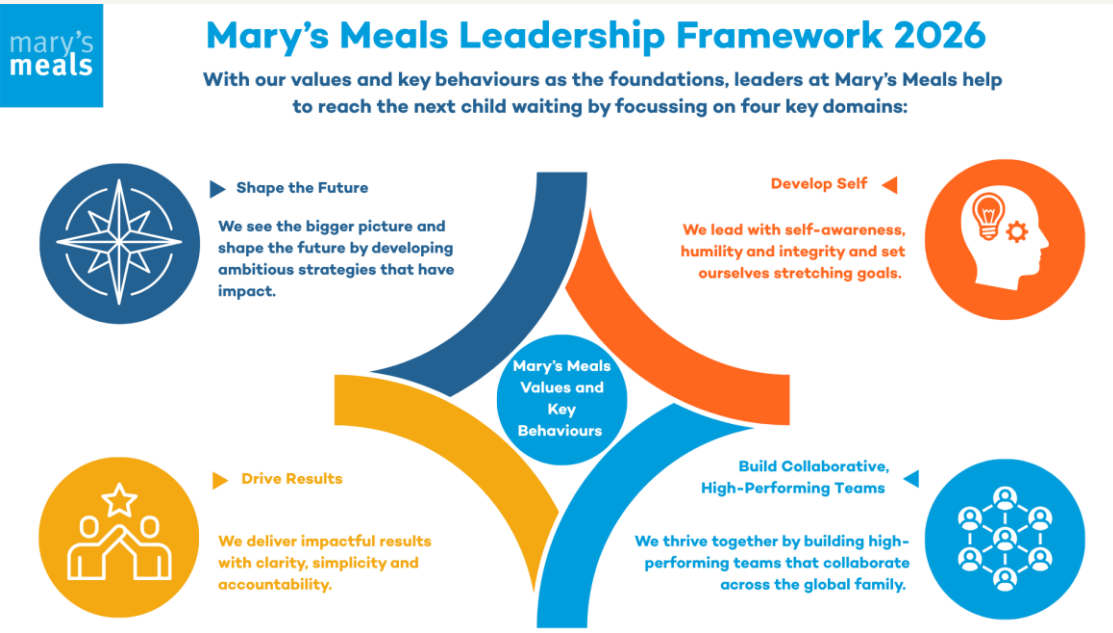
Desirable skills & experience required for this role:

- Experience working with governments and senior external stakeholders.
- Experience leading programme innovation, pilot initiatives and programme transformation projects.
- Strong understanding of evidence generation, research methodologies and learning systems.
- Familiarity with school feeding, education, nutrition or community-led development approaches.
- Experience contributing to organisational growth strategies and programme expansion.
- Strong understanding of safeguarding in international contexts, particularly child safeguarding.

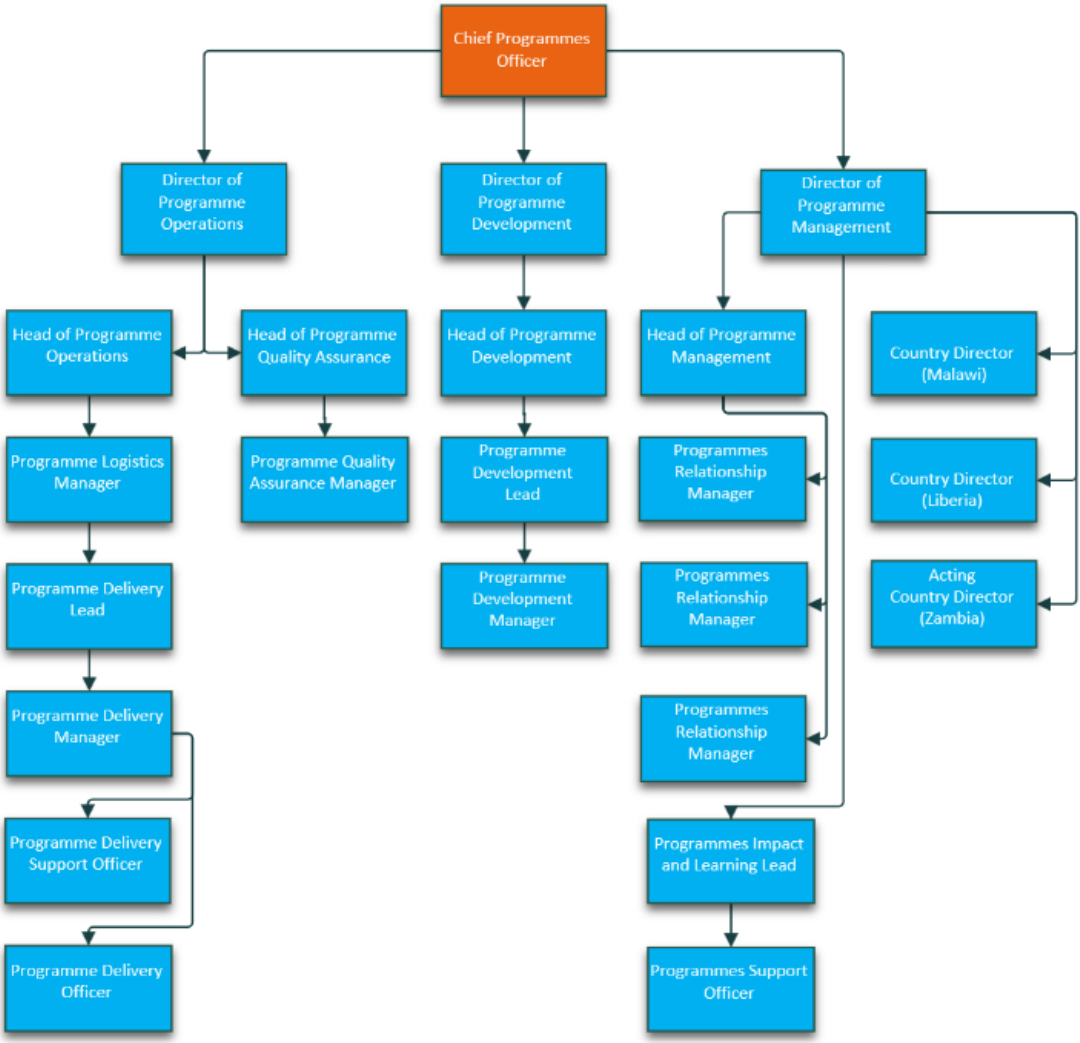
Qualifications:

- Degree qualification in Social Sciences, International Development, Education, Public Policy or a related field, and preferably a relevant postgraduate qualification.

Our Leadership Framework

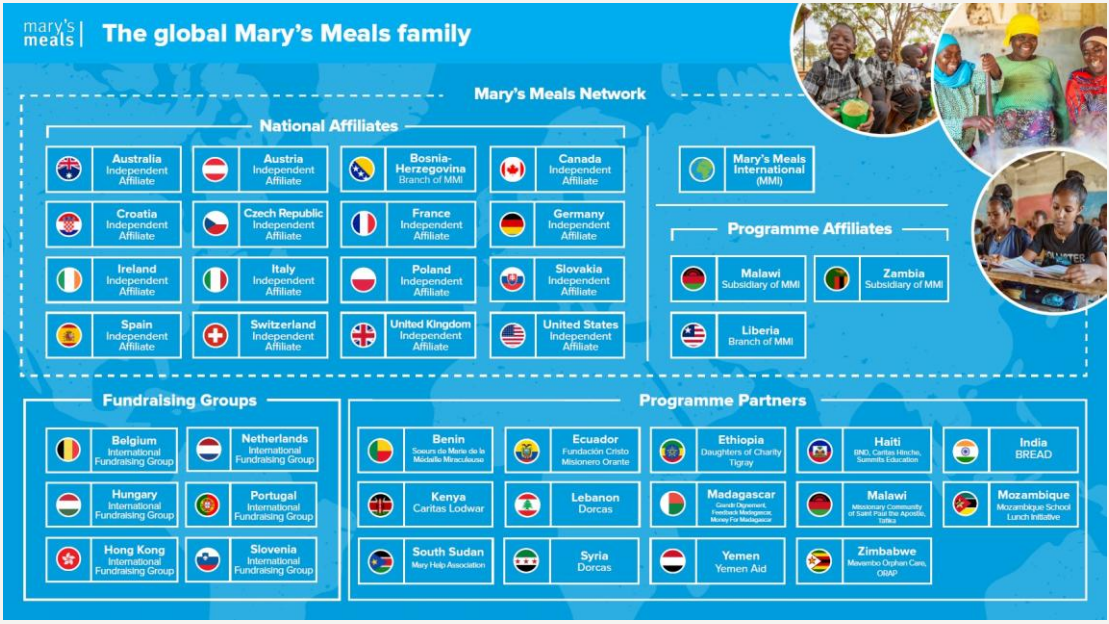


Organisational Chart



Our Network

Mary's Meals fundraises directly through the National Affiliate Network and International Fundraising Groups, as well as internationally through Mary's Meals International and our information centre in Medjugorje.



Where to find more information on our website

Where we work

Our Impact

Books & Films

Mary's Meals

Strategic Plan 2026-2028

Recruitment process

Our processes are informal and informative. Designed to get to know you, your experience and motivations, while giving you a clear insight into the role and life at Mary's Meals International.

The recruitment process will include:

- Initial MS Teams call with Head of Recruitment – MMI.
- MS Teams interview with Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Programme Operations.
- MS Teams interview with Chief Programmes Officer and Chief Operations Officer.

How to Apply for this Role

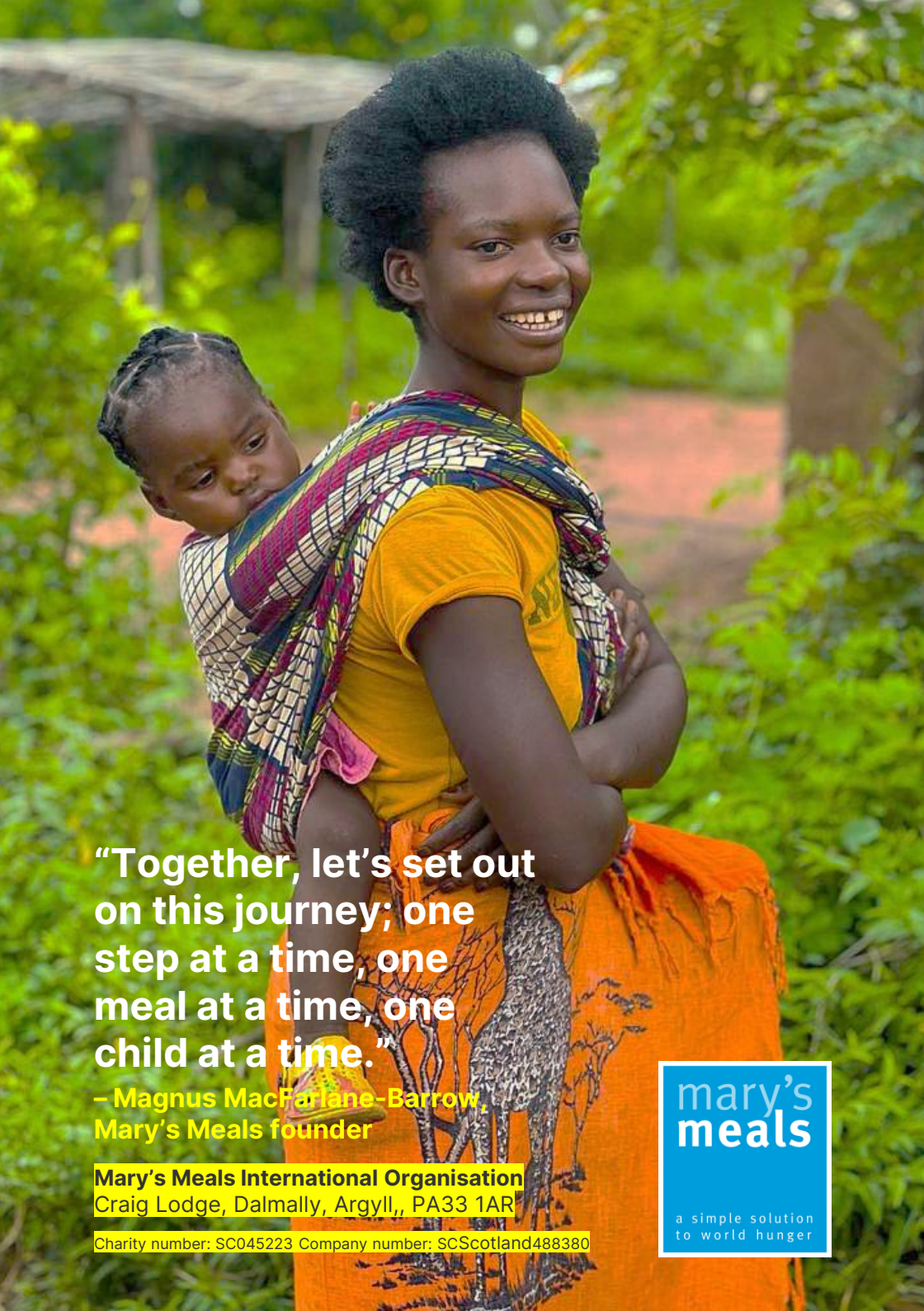
If you are inspired to join our movement and our mission and values resonate with you, we would love to hear from you. To apply please visit our Work With Us page, Work with us | Mary's Meals

Please click Apply and include your CV and a succinct covering letter, of no more than one A4 page, highlighting your motivations, suitability and outlining your participation in our mission.

Closing date: 25th October 2026

We reserve the right to close this vacancy early if we receive sufficient applications for the role. Therefore, if you are interested, please submit your application as early as possible.

For any enquiries or questions regarding the role or to discuss any adjustments to our recruitment process please email Leanne Gordon – Head of Recruitment at jobs.mmi@marysmeals.org



“Together, let’s set out on this journey; one step at a time, one meal at a time, one child at a time.”

– Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, Mary’s Meals founder

Mary’s Meals International Organisation
Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Argyll,, PA33 1AR

Charity number: SC045223 Company number: SCScotland488380

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