**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS AND CONTRACTORS**

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| **Title**‘Evidence Synthesis Specialist – Team Leader’ Consultancy for producing an Evidence Gap Map on Children with Disabilities *6-month Full-Time Consultancy*  |  | **Duty Station:**Florence (Italy) |
| **Purpose of Activity/Assignment:** UNICEF Innocenti, in collaboration with Programme Division seeks a full-time, experienced Team Leader/Evidence Synthesis Specialist for the production of an Evidence Gap Map documenting and analyzing the state of the evidence on CWD. The intention is to focus on evidence from Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), but the geographic scope will be determined by the scoping outlined below, and possibly expanded to a global scope if not enough evidence is available from LMICs.  |
| **Scope of Work:**1. Background

The UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti (UNICEF Innocenti) undertakes and commissions research on emerging or current issues of relevance for children in order to inform the strategic directions, policies and programmes of UNICEF and its partners. The office explores emerging issues, identifies research gaps, and brings together existing researchers to support or undertake new research, data collection and analysis to address critical questions.The Research Facilitation & Knowledge Management (RFKM) unit within which this position is located plays a leading role in building a knowledge culture across UNICEF and beyond by providing essential guidance and tools to strengthen generation, communication and use of evidence in decision-making including across the following areas:-  *Ethical Evidence Generation*The Unit provides substantial advisory support to ensure application of ethical standards across all of UNICEF’s research, evaluation, and data collection activities, particularly those that engage with children and pioneering new areas such as ethics and child rights in a digital age. *Research Uptake and Impact*The Unit works with UNICEF colleagues to enhance research uptake by commissioning independently verifiable impact case studies, supporting thinking about appropriate impact monitoring tools and brokering knowledge translation activities with external partners. *Building Skills and Capacities Internally and with Research Partners*The Unit produces a variety of training and capacity-building tools for UNICEF staff and others including methodological briefs, online and face to face training courses and webinars. It works to bring together civil society, academic and government partners to strengthen research ecosystems including enhancing the use of evidence in policy and programming and strengthening evidence literacy and critical thinking.*Evidence Synthesis* To frame UNICEF research in the context of the global body of evidence, the Unit works with key partners to produce evidence synthesis products, such as Evidence Gap Maps, Systematic Reviews, Rapid Evidence Assessments and Rapid Reviews.We seek an experienced, Senior Consultant to act as Team Leader to support the production of an Evidence Gap Map to inform an innovative UNICEF Global Research Agenda for Children with Disabilities (CWD).1. Evidence Synthesis

Evidence synthesis products - particularly Evidence Gap Maps (EGMs), Rapid Evidence Assessments (REAs) and Systematic Reviews (SRs) - are becoming an increasingly important part of UNICEF’s efforts to ensure that: (1) policymaking and programming decisions are evidence-informed; and that (2) evidence on ‘what works’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ is made easily accessible and understandable to UNICEF staff and strategic partners. The Research Facilitation & Knowledge Management Unit has played a key role in commissioning and supporting the production of evidence synthesis products that respond to UNICEF’s strategic priorities. These include:* EGMs on [Adolescent Well-Being in Low- and Middle-Income Countries](https://www.unicef-irc.org/evidence-gap-map/)and a [MegaMap on Child Welfare](https://www.unicef-irc.org/megamap/).
* An [EGM on Ending Violence against Children](https://www.unicef-irc.org/evidence-gap-map-violence-against-children/), in support of the Child Rights and Protection Team
* A Rapid Review on the [Impact of Pandemics and Epidemics on Child Protection](https://www.unicef-irc.org/article/2029-5-questions-on-the-impact-of-pandemics-and-epidemics-on-child-protection.html), in collaboration with the Child Rights and Protection Team
* A Systematic Review of Reviews on the [Impact of Social Protection on Gender Equality in Low‐ and Middle‐Income Countries](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cl2.1161) (forthcoming)
* A Rapid Review on the impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health outcomes, in collaboration with UNICEF Innocenti’s Director’s Office (forthcoming)

Further evidence synthesis products are planned or in the pipeline. Alongside the commissioning of evidence synthesis products, the Unit is working to build the internal capacity within UNICEF for producing, commissioning, and managing evidence synthesis. This includes production of a [series of methodological briefs on evidence synthesis](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/1077-methodological-briefs-on-evidence-synthesis-brief-1-overview.html) in 2020 and other capacity building initiatives, such as a recent series of training workshops. UNICEF Innocenti, in collaboration with Programme Division seeks a total of four consultants to work as a team and to an undertake the production of an EGM documenting and analyzing the state of the evidence on CWD. The team will consist of one full-time Consultant to act as the Team Leader, 1 part time Senior Consultant, 1 part-time Junior Consultant, and 1 part-time Information Specialist, all with methodological expertise in evidence synthesis. This TOR refers to the part-time Senior Consultant role. Separate TORs describe the other team roles. Additional support will be provided by in-house staff/subject matter experts with expertise in CWD.This EGM will be conducted alongside complementary ongoing work to inform a broader UNICEF Global Research Agenda on the same topic.1. Children with Disabilities (CWD)

CWD are among the poorest members of the population and are one of the most marginalized and excluded groups in society. Facing daily discrimination in the form of negative attitudes, lack of adequate policies and legislation, they are effectively barred from realizing their rights to healthcare, education, and even survival. Marginalization whether through stigma, lack of assistive technologies, physical or communication or attitudinal barriers, or other shortcomings of social support mechanisms, means that CWD are less likely to attend school, access medical services, or have their voices heard in society. The barriers that they face also place them at a higher risk of violence and abuse, and often exclude them from receiving proper nutrition or humanitarian assistance in emergencies, leaving them vulnerable to exclusion and harms that are manifold and complex.UNICEF estimates that there are close to 100 million children with disabilities in the world, but numbers could be much higher. Out of 7.8 billion people around the world, WHO estimate that 15% have some form of disability, which is projected to double by 2050.Numerous reports document evidence gaps that need to be critically addressed to inform national policies, including the World Health Organization (WHO) [World Report on Disability 2011](https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability); UNICEF’s [State of the World’s Children 2013](https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2013) which focused on CWD: from exclusion to inclusion; the UN DESA [Flagship Report on Disability and SDGs 2018,](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/publication-disability-sdgs.html) the UNICEF 2020 Draft Fact Sheet on Children and Young People with Disabilities and a 2018 Campbell Collaboration Evidence Gap Map assessing the [Effectiveness of Interventions for People with Disabilities in Low and Middle Income Countries](https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/effectiveness-of-interventions-for-people-with-disabilities-in-low-and-middle-income-countries-an-evidence-and-gap-map.html). The [SDGs](https://sdgs.un.org/goals), [Global Disability Summit 2018](https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/global-disability-summit-2018), [UN treaty bodies](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/TreatyBodies.aspx), the [Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network](https://gladnetwork.net/) all call for increased demand for data and evidence for disability inclusion. Not least, the [Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) (CRPD) calls for research to inform policy making and to make a fundamental shift in research priorities from medical approaches to disability-inclusive and human rights-based (social model) approaches. However, the evidence base on the specific case of CWD is less clear and perceived to be weak. A UNICEF global research agenda for CWD, led by Programme Division, is currently under development which aims to position activities strategically under the [child and adolescent focused SDGs](https://data.unicef.org/sdgs/#:~:text=Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20%28SDGs%29%20for%20children%20The%20SDGs,custodian%20for%20children%20in%20the%20Sustainable%20Development%20Agenda) and revised [Core Commitments to Children](https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/core-commitments-children#:~:text=The%20Core%20Commitments%20for%20Children%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action,humanitarian%20crises.%20Download%20the%20Core%20Commitments%20for%20Children), as well as to frame research and evidence generation activities to align to UNICEF’s broader disability programming and advocacy agenda. This will be conducted in progressive steps, from conceptualization through to consultations and a series of multi-stakeholder meetings will expand on the same with representatives from: a) UN entities & mechanisms; b) organizations of persons with disabilities; c) iNGO’s and child rights organizations; c) Member States, international cooperation agencies and private donors; and research centres. Those consultations seek to collect the views and inputs from Member States, UN entities, organizations of persons with disabilities, child rights organizations, civil society, research centres and international cooperation agencies. The purpose of the consultations is to agree priorities with a goal of stimulating investment in effective programmatic interventions to support the inclusion and rights of children with disabilities. However, an important complementary step will be to systematically, objectively and transparently document the existing evidence base on CWD to help enable a clear and common understanding of evidence and gaps before constructing a global research agenda on children with disabilities. Initial work on this global research agenda has identified the following indicative themes which will provide a conceptual starting point for the EGM intervention and outcome domains:**Intervention domains:** * Advocacy and empowerment: children and adolescents’ participation, self-advocacy;
* Community living and full participation: children living in a family and having access to inclusive services in the community;
* Community Engagement and Social Behavioral Change: addressing stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities;
* Assistive Technologies, Inclusive Products: innovative approaches and impact of available and affordable products in the lives of children with disabilities;
* Accessibility and Transportation: impact of accessible environments on the participation of children with disabilities (inclusion x exclusion).

**Outcome domains:*** Nutrition: early childhood development, food security;
* Health care: health promotion and prevention, community-based rehabilitation, palliative care;
* Learning and skills: inclusive education, online learning and digital technologies, universal design;
* Child protection: community support, parent and caregiver support (LMIC), alternative care, violence, bullying (LMIC), child labour;
* Social protection: disability determination, community-based approaches (LMIC), disability extra costs;
* Water, Sanitation and Climate Security: accessible WASH, climate change.

**Cross-cutting themes:*** COVID 19 and other Global Health Emergencies: impact on marginalized and excluded groups e.g. children and persons with disabilities;
* Humanitarian action: humanitarian-development nexus (inc. system strengthening); Public Health Emergencies (e.g. COVID-19); migrating children with disabilities; budgeting for inclusion in HRPs and associated projects; etc.
1. Objectives of the consultancy

UNICEF Innocenti, in collaboration with Programme Division seeks a full-time, experienced Team Leader/Evidence Synthesis Specialist for the production of an Evidence Gap Map documenting and analyzing the state of the evidence on CWD. The intention is to focus on evidence from Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), but the geographic scope will be determined by the scoping outlined below, and possibly expanded to a global scope if not enough evidence is available from LMICs. The purpose of the EGM is to provide an easy-to-understand overview of the “state of the evidence” related to key intervention and outcome domains, to prioritize global evidence synthesis needs and to identify areas in which there is a need to strengthen and/or scale-up evidence generation for disability inclusion interventions (research/evidence/knowledge gaps). All of these should help inform the development of the research agenda (and potentially, already inform policy and programming). The mapping should include an assessment of the quality of the evidence, as well as short summaries of, and links to, the relevant studies/reports. Under the guidance of the Chief, Research Facilitation and Knowledge Management, the Consultant is responsible for the implementation of the activities specified below. For this analysis, we seek candidates with experience in leading and conducting evidence synthesis, such as Systematic Reviews or production of Evidence Gap Maps, and with understanding of qualitative and quantitative methods, (including experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluation). Specific expertise related to disability and children with disabilities, gender, and human/child rights will be regarded favorably, although this is not essential as the UNICEF Manager of Humanitarian Research, who is a subject matter expert will form part of the team.1. Major areas of work and responsibilities

The full-time senior Consultant will be responsible for finalizing the scope, conceptualisation, and methodology of the EGM, acting as Team Leader on the EGM, and supporting UNICEF staff in enhancing uptake and utilization of the EGMs key messages. Responsibilities will include:* **Scoping and protocol:** The first task of the Consultant will be leading and undertaking an initial review of the findings of bilateral and multi-stakeholder consultations, taking place ahead of the EGM, in order to define the scope and methodology for the EGM. This stage may also entail a short desk-based scoping exercise, to determine the extent and nature of evidence. This will help inform decisions on the thematic and geographic scope of the EGM (for example, whether the EGM should be global or limited to LMICs), keeping manageability in mind. The results of the consultations and desk-based scoping will form the basis of an EGM conceptual framework (which may be based on the indicative themes outlined in section 3 above), research question, and inclusion criteria. This information will be included in an EGM protocol to prevent duplication of effort and to enable transparent peer review, working closely with key UNICEF staff and the governance group of the Global Research Agenda.
* **Leading production of a final systematic and objective overview in interactive EGM format:** produced using EPPI-Reviewer to summarize what is known about the distribution and quality/rigor of existing evidence from research related to CWD. Short summaries of, and links to the relevant studies/reports should be included within the EGM. This should be produced using rigorous and systematic methods consistent with current standards for literature searching, screening, quality appraisal and data extraction.
* **Leading production of an initial version of the draft EGM Report**: which includes descriptive analysis of the EGM and provides recommendations for future research priorities. An informal ‘check in’ presentation of initial findings should be given to the governance group of the Global Research Agenda after early scoping, with course correction taken as necessary.
* **Leading production of a Final Report** containing a summary Brief describing the EGM’s key messages and state of the evidence base, an overview of the findings including strategic identification of key gaps in knowledge where there is a need to strengthen and/or scale up evidence generation (new primary research) including proposed framing of suitable approaches, or additional evidence synthesis activities related to CWD.
* **Leading organization of a half-day virtual convening of the UNICEF governance group** **of the Global Research Agenda on Children with Disabilities**, other UNICEF staff and key stakeholders for the research team to present the Report findings and receive feedback ahead of producing the final Report and recommendations.
* **Giving a webinar presentation** of the final Report and EGM content to UNICEF colleagues.
* **Supporting effective ongoing communication of the EGM** with UNICEF colleagues throughout the process. This includes supporting communication and presentation of the EGM and associated products on social media and potentially at academic conferences and other relevant fora in order to enhance the potential uptake and utilization of the final product.

Such a systematic mapping and accompanying analysis will provide an intuitive visual overview of the distribution of evidence (both what is known as well as where there is little or no evidence) on the effectiveness of disability inclusion interventions in key outcome areas AND draw conclusions from that learning as well as giving some confidence ratings to the quality of the evidence. Collaboration with UNICEF staff as core members of a broader team from the onset will ensure maximum coherence between definition and terminology of outcome and intervention domains and key goal and results areas in UNICEF’s forthcoming Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and also solidify the basis for a Global Research Agenda on Children with Disabilities.The key audience for the EGM and report is UNICEF’s Disability Section in Programmes Division and other key stakeholders that comprise the governance group for the Global Research Agenda on Children with Disabilities. It will provide an overview of evidence and gaps for all future research commissioned under the Disability Research Agenda and will also be equally relevant for independently commissioned research on CWD. As such, it is being developed as a global public good and will be made openly accessible on the UNICEF Innocenti website. Production of the EGM should also aim to inform the [Global Disability Summit 2022](https://atlas-alliansen.no/global-disability-summit-2021/global-disability-summit-oslo-2021/), planned to take place in Oslo, Norway in February 2022.1. Duration of the consultancy

The consultancy will include a total of 120 days, distributed over a six-month period, from 28 July 2021 to 27 January 2022. An indicative timeline for the consultancy is presented below:

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| **Deliverables** | **Timeline** |
| **PHASE I** |  |
| Contract signed | 28 July 2021 |
| Initial inception meeting (Zoom/Skype) with UNICEF (Programme Division, key Innocenti colleagues and governance group of the Global Research Agenda on Children with Disabilities) for UNICEF to present the themes and domains for the evidence mapping (based on preliminary work being conducted by UNICEF, that will highlight priority areas for the EGM); and agree on roles and responsibilities; and establish mutual understanding of expectations. | 29 July 2021 |
| Production of draft Study Protocol. Review of the findings of the bilateral and multi-stakeholder consultations in order to define the scope and methodology for the EGM; additional scoping to define the extent and nature of the evidence base; drafting the EGM conceptual framework and inclusion/exclusion criteria in consultation with key UNICEF stakeholders.  | By 7 September 2021 |
| Review of draft Study Protocol and incorporation of feedback from key external stakeholders in the CWD and evidence synthesis communities. Piloting and refinement of the search strategy. | By 20 September 2021 |
| Informal ‘check in’ presentation of initial scoping findings to the governance group of the Global Research Agenda, with course correction taken as necessary. | 21 September 2021 |
| Finalization and open publishing of the Study Protocol  | By 27 September 2021 |
| **PHASE II** |  |
| Full systematic search undertaken to populate a draft Report on Children with Disabilities including screening; critical appraisal including risk of bias assessment and quality assessment; coding (data extraction) of relevant studies and narrative synthesis. | By 16 December 2021 |
| Production of a draft Summary Brief describing the EGM’s key messages including the state of the evidence base; Production of a draft Report containing an overview of the findings including strategic identification of key gaps in knowledge where there is a need to strengthen and/or scale up evidence generation (new primary research) including proposed framing of suitable approaches, or additional evidence synthesis activities related to CWD. | By 28 December 2021 |
| Production of a final systematic and objective overview in interactive EGM format to summarize what is known about the distribution and effectiveness of existing evidence from research related to CWD. Short summaries of, and links to the relevant studies/reports should be included within the EGM. | By 3 January 2022 |
| **PHASE III** |  |
| Organization of a half-day virtual convening of UNICEF governance group of the Global Research Agenda on Children with Disabilities, other UNICEF staff and key stakeholders for the research team to present the Report findings and receive feedback ahead of producing the final Report and recommendations. | 4 January 2022 |
| Final Report and Summary Brief report produced and signed off that presents the evidence to support UNICEF’s Global Research Agenda on Children with Disabilities, organized according to themes/domains agreed in Phase I. This should include an assessment of the quality of the evidence; and identification of the gaps in knowledge where there is a need to strengthen and/or scale-up evidence generation or evidence synthesis activities. | By 13 January 2022 |
| Webinar presentation of the final report and EGM content to UNICEF colleagues. (note- a subsequent workshop may be held to discuss and reach consensus on the scope and nature of the eventual research agenda, but this does not form part of the current ToR. Similarly, additional promotional opportunities may be identified for presentation of findings, but this is also outside the scope of the current ToR.) | Before 27 January 2022 |

1. Supervision and work arrangements

The Consultant will work under the supervision of the Chief, Research Facilitation and Knowledge Management based at UNICEF Innocenti (Kerry Albright) with a dotted reporting line to the Chief Disability Section, Programmes Division (Dr Rosangela Berman Bieler). Day to day technical oversight will be provided by the Knowledge Management Specialist in the Research Facilitation and Knowledge Management Unit (Shivit Bakrania).The Consultant will work in close collaboration with Dr Gavin Wood (Manager of Humanitarian Research, UNICEF-Innocenti) who is managing the broader Global Research Agenda on Children with Disabilities and Dr Alberto Vasquez (Consultant, Disability Section, Programmes Division). Other potential team members who bring information management expertise or other specialist evidence synthesis skills will be identified separately. Additional relevant UNICEF staff from headquarter and regional/country offices will be consulted throughout the process. The Consultant is to direct all queries, ideas, drafts, and other deliverables to Mr Bakrania, who will consult appropriately and provide feedback to the Consultant. The Consultant must respond to all deliverable related questions by UNICEF within one week.The Consultant must meet all deliverable deadlines unless otherwise agreed with UNICEF. Should the Consultant not be able to meet a particular deadline they must advise UNICEF in writing at least one week in advance. The Consultant must also ensure that all publications produced during the consultancy are factually correct and that all hyperlinks are active and accurate. All work must follow the highest academic standards for referencing and citation. Under no circumstances can the Consultant engage in plagiarism or breaches of copyright law. However, where legal opportunity to build on good quality work exists, the Consultant may do so provided that permission is granted from the copyright owner and the original work is appropriately referenced. Academic references should be inserted as footnotes and follow formatting instructions outlined in the *UNICEF Style Guide*. Communication with UNICEF is to take place over email, the phone or Skype/Zoom. The Consultant is to deliver all deliverables electronically, via email to sbakrania@unicef.org. The Consultant is to participate in teleconferences as requested by UNICEF. No budget will be allocated to the Consultant for telephone calls or internet usage. However, the Office of Research-Innocenti will initiate telephone calls and teleconferences whenever possible.The Consultant is free to work from a location of their choice so long as all deliverables are delivered on time and they are able to participate in team meetings as necessary during UNICEF-Innocenti working hours. 1. Payment Schedule

The Consultant will be paid monthly, upon submission of a progress report and confirmation from supervisor of satisfactory services rendered. Monthly payments will be paid for the equivalent of 120 days of work (FTE 20 days a month) at the agreed daily rate for a total of 6 months.  |
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| **Minimum Qualifications required:** | **Knowledge/Expertise/Skills required:** |
| [ ]  Bachelors [x]  Masters [x]  PhD [ ]  Other Enter Disciplines:Social Sciences, Public Policy, Evidence Synthesis, Research Methods, Impact Evaluation or another technical field relevant to the work of UNICEF | Qualifications and/or specialized knowledge/experience required and desirable for undertaking the assignmentThis consultancy is open to **individual consultants**– throughout this document referred to as “The Consultant’. As part of their application, applicants are asked to provide an up-to-date CV and cover letter outlining their previous experience in leading teams to develop Evidence Gap Maps and/or other evidence synthesis products, conducting and/or reviewing Impact Evaluations and Systematic Reviews, and any experience and knowledge of disability research, particularly relating to CWD. A proposed daily fee rate should also be quoted in US$.Academic Requirements:* Master’s degree in the social sciences, public policy, evidence synthesis, research methods, impact evaluation or another technical field relevant to this consultancy (PhD/doctorate or equivalent preferred).

Professional Experience Requirements:* At least 8 years of professional experience in social research, policy, impact evaluation or knowledge management.
* 8 plus years’ experience conducting evidence synthesis, including Systematic Reviews or comparable products such as Rapid Evidence Assessments, Rapid Reviews, and Evidence Gap Maps. Experience with a range of synthesis approaches, including the narrative synthesis of quantitative evidence, and the thematic synthesis of qualitative evidence.
* Experience of managing and training colleagues in systematic approaches to evidence synthesis.
* Sound knowledge of approaches to social research use which address complexity and of impact evaluation designs and methods.
* Sound knowledge of and experience in using critical appraisal tools to assess methodological quality such as AMSTAR, PRISMA.
* Access to and experience of using Systematic review software (e.g. EPPI-Reviewer, RevMan, Covidence) and/or qualitative and qualitative analysis software.
* Access to and experience of using Citation Management Software (e.g. Zotero, EndNote)
* Demonstrable experience as a team leader in conducting evidence synthesis products, including in remote management of teams.
* Knowledge and experience of conducting research on disability, child rights or gender-related themes is an advantage but not necessary.

Other Requirements:* Access to and experience of using academic journal databases (an information specialist will be contracted separately as part of the team, but the consultant is required to have access to academic databases).
* Good attention to detail and demonstrated ability to organize own work, and work of others according to deadlines.
* Ability to work collaboratively in a team environment with staff with differing experience and skills and with staff in different geographic locations.
* A strong ability to manage, negotiate and collaborate with external and internal experts.
* A flexible mindset and ‘can-do’ attitude in an evolving programme context.
* Demonstrated ability to set high standards for quality of work and consistently achieve project goals.
* Solid writing, analytical, problem-solving, writing and presentation skills, particularly in the context of international work settings.
* Demonstrated ability to communicate complex issues to a lay audience.
* Fluency in English.
* Knowledge of other UN official languages (French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese) is an advantage.
* Prior experience of working with the United Nations and good knowledge of UNICEF’s internal organization is an advantage but not essential.
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|  | Core Values and CompetenciesCore Values: Commitment, Diversity and Inclusion, IntegrityCore Competencies: Communication, Working with People, Drive for Results  |
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