

# GRANTS MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY MODEL

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## About PEAK Grantmaking

PEAK Grantmaking is a member-led national association of 3,400 professionals who specialize in grants management for funding organizations. The people of PEAK Grantmaking come together to form a vibrant community of grantmaking practice that advances shared leadership and learning across the sector. This is where *Practice Meets Purpose*. By cultivating resources, learning opportunities, and collaborations across the philanthropic spectrum, we support grantmaking practices designed to maximize mission-driven efficiency and effectiveness of funders of every size.

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# Introduction

For foundations and other philanthropic institutions to help grantseekers best achieve their missions, grants managers need to be experts in their work. They need to be able to connect the dots across knowledge, relationships, and systems to improve grantmaking decisions and design. They need to understand and be able to advocate effectively for good practices in their organizations. And, they need to be able to implement those practices successfully.

There are no existing university degrees, widespread trainings, or professional certifications for grants management like those found in other sectors. This is where PEAK Grantmaking comes in. We are the only place grantmakers can turn to gain industry-specific expertise and, with a 25-year history of delivering high quality, relevant, and transformational learning opportunities to funders across the nation, we are excited to unveil a roadmap to accessing a comprehensive range of learning that covers everything a grants management professional needs to know to do their work.

PEAK Grantmaking's Grants Management Professional Competency Model defines the professional knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of grants management professionals, regardless of their area of specialization, the size of their organization, or their role within the field. By identifying both the functional responsibilities and the knowledge needed for success in every area of grants management, the competencies provide a comprehensive look at the profession. This Model offers everyone working in grants management a direction for professional success.

The Model was developed with a task force of grants management professionals and incorporated feedback from three PEAK Grantmaking member focus groups, more than 500 survey participants, and experts in competency development to ensure the Model represents the experiences of a broad range of grantmaking professionals.

Job responsibilities, titles, and structures for grants management professionals vary widely between organizations. Therefore, this competency model is not designed for any one individual's job responsibilities. Instead, it includes all the competencies that distinguish high-performing grants management professionals and empowers the user to decide which are relevant to them in their current or desired role.

The Grants Management Professional Competency Model is a living and evolving resource, and will be updated as needed to reflect changes in the field.

# How to Use the Model

## **This Model can be used in a variety of ways:**

### **To better define and communicate your role within your organization**

Today – and even more so, in the future – the role of grants management is shifting to meet the needs of the 21st century foundation. Grants management professionals are perfecting the due-diligence, record-keeping, monitoring, and customer service elements of their work while embracing new roles as process specialists, data analysts, relationship experts, troubleshooters, and quality control officers. Many serve on the frontlines of organizational learning and strategy. As grantmakers adapt and expand grants management – while preserving critical aspects of its traditional function, a common understanding of the skills needed in each functional area of the profession and a common vocabulary to use when discussing these competencies is critical. The Model provides that common language by defining several broad functional categories--Direct Service Functions, Management Functions, and Strategy and Policy Functions.

### **As a professional development tool for individuals, supervisors, mentors, and coaches**

The Model and list of competencies enable anyone to assess their own skill set, as well as those of employees; discuss areas for knowledge growth and training; and identify strengths and weaknesses. As a comprehensive list of these skills, the Model serves as a pathway for future professional development. Anyone seeking to improve their skill set or explore career prospects can identify new skills to learn at conferences, during trainings, and by working with a coach or mentor.

### **To enhance collaboration within your organization**

Effective grantmaking organizations deliberately connect the “how” of grantmaking to strategy and impact. In these organizations, the practices, processes, and systems that get money out the door to support important work in communities are informed, assessed, and strengthened using timely data about grantmaking effectiveness. In these organizations, thoughtful conversations about how to make grants most effectively are everyone’s business: programs, operations, finance, and executive staff work together to analyze and improve grantmaking practice. However, siloed structures and systems still exist across many philanthropic organizations, thwarting meaningful collaboration among departments. Much of this misunderstanding comes from the varied nature of the work compared with the many positions in grantmaking organizations. This Model creates a common language that grants managers, senior officers, human resource managers, COOs, and CEOs can agree upon and use to reflect the true nature of the work being done and its importance to achieving your mission.

### **As a framework for developing good talent recruitment and hiring practices, and creating effective position review measures and accurate job descriptions**

As a tool for hiring managers, this document creates a roadmap to good hiring practices and the writing of up-to-date and effective job descriptions. By identifying the necessary skills for a position, a comprehensive description can be written and advertised, and candidates can be assessed fairly and accurately per their skills. Competency-based selection focuses on behavior which ensures all backgrounds and ages have access to new positions. It also helps identify transferable skills for those not previously in a grants management role. Managers also have a solid set of performance indicators through which an employee can demonstrate their proficiency in a particular job-related competency.

# How the Model Is Organized

The Model outlines what a grantmaking professional must know and can do to be successful in a grants management role. This Model is intended to be inclusive. That is, it includes the critical competencies needed by grantmaking professionals working in various roles in various types of organizations. Therefore, any individual grantmaking professional with grants management responsibilities would not necessarily be expected to have all the competencies. *Each grantmaking professional should identify which are relevant to them in their current or desired role.*

**The Model includes two types of competencies: “Cross-Cutting” and “Lifecycle of a Grant.”**

**Cross-Cutting Competencies** describe what all grantmaking professionals with grants management responsibilities must be able to do to effectively carry out their roles. For example, financial management and communications.

**Lifecycle of a Grant Competencies** describe what specific grants management responsibilities must be carried out in each phase of the grants management cycle.

For all competencies, there are:

- Performance Indicators: discrete actions that, when completed, lead to demonstration of the competency.
- Foundational Knowledge: knowledge a grantmaking professional needs to possess to accomplish the competency(ies) and associated grants management performance indicator(s).

For the Lifecycle of a Grant competencies, the model lists three functions that grants management professionals may be responsible for and identifies the performance indicators relevant to each function. Note that these are NOT positions; in fact, a grantmaking professional may be responsible for one, two, or all three functions.

- Direct Service: Provides service directly to external stakeholders (applicants, grantees, funders) and internal stakeholders (program, finance, legal staff, etc.).
- Management Function: Oversees grants management operations including people, projects, procedures, systems, and/or budget.
- Policy Function: Establishes, updates, and approves the policies for achieving the mission and goals of the organization.

The competency statements also include references to required knowledge. These knowledge areas are intended to give the reader a place to start, and will undoubtedly be revised as the Model is used and matures.

# Overview Of Major Categories



## LIFECYCLE OF A GRANT COMPETENCIES

### PHASE I: PLANNING AND PRE-GRANT

- Apply Values, Mission, & Goals
- Design & Implement Review Process

### PHASE II: AWARD AND MONITORING

- Establish Mutual Expectations
- Monitor Grantee Activity

### PHASE III: POST-GRANT

- Determine Success In Meeting Goals & Objectives

### CROSS-CUTTING COMPETENCIES

- Communications
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
- Ethics, Integrity, & Accountability
- Financial Management
- Knowledge Management
- Process & Change Management
- Staff & Volunteer Development
- Strategic Management
- Technology Management

# CROSS-CUTTING COMPETENCIES

Please note that the Cross-Cutting Competencies are listed in alphabetical order and not in order of importance.

## Communications: Listen to others and communicate effectively.

### Performance Indicators:

- Translate technical and policy information into clear and concise content
- Provide diplomatic and accurate customer service and technical assistance to applicants, grantees, staff, volunteers, and external stakeholders
- Express ideas clearly and concisely in written and verbal communications
- Tailor communications to effectively reach intended audiences
- Listen with the intent to understand
- Give and receive constructive feedback
- Ensure that regular communication takes place within area of responsibility

### Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's policies and procedures
- Principles of and strategies for effective oral, written, and digital communication
- Principles of and strategies for effective customer service
- Group facilitation and public speaking skills
- Interpersonal conflict management and resolution
- Collaboration methods

## Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in grantmaking practices.

### Performance Indicators:

- Foster an environment of valuing, encouraging, and supporting differences
- Incorporate diverse perspectives in decision making
- Eliminate barriers to equity, diversity, and inclusion by applying an equity lens to reveal biasness in an issue or situation
- Communicate issues of race, class, gender, power, and other forms of oppression or isms
- Communicate in a culturally appropriate and inclusive manner

### Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's policies and procedures
- Interpersonal communications strategies for culturally appropriate and inclusive communications
- Transparency in grantmaking process
- Cultural sensitivity and competency
- Individual knowledge of own behavior and how it is influenced by experience of privilege and/or oppression
- Principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Potential barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion

## Ethics, Integrity, & Accountability: Act with integrity and accountability.

### Performance Indicators:

- Act honestly and transparently
- Treat others fairly, equitably, and with respect
- Approach relationships with applicants and grantees with sensitivity to the power inequity
- Take responsibility for and seek to remedy mistakes
- Follow applicable codes of conduct and/or standards and established policies and procedures
- Anticipate, identify, and mitigate breaches of confidentiality and security
- Anticipate, identify, and mitigate ethical dilemmas, including conflicts of interests

### Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's policies and procedures and values
- Codes of conduct for the profession
- Standards for the profession
- U.S. law on self-dealing
- Best practices in nonprofit governance and ethics
- Best practices in grantmaking
- Principles of power inequity
- Principles of confidentiality
- Principles of security
- Principles of conflicts of interest
- How to manage social and political pressure in decision making
- Sensitivity to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Donor intent

# CROSS-CUTTING COMPETENCIES

**Financial Management:** Implement financial policies and controls to ensure effective and efficient deployment of financial resources for grantmaking.

## Performance Indicators:

- Keep current on and follow fiscal guidelines, regulations, principles, and standards
- Adhere to internal controls that detect and prevent misuse of funds
- Seek ways to improve internal financial controls
- Apply creative solutions to unusual or challenging circumstances
- Plan and monitor grantmaking budget
- Monitor and report financial data to drive effective decision making

## Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's policies and procedures
- Organization's fiscal guidelines and internal controls
- Grantmaking budget
- Relevant regulations, principles, and standards
- Financial data reporting approaches
- Financial management best practices
- Fundamentals of accounting of various forms of charitable contributions

**Knowledge Management:** Capture and apply knowledge to promote learning and improvement.

## Performance Indicators:

- Evaluate grant results to inform future grantmaking and funding priorities
- Document lessons learned and apply that knowledge to improve the grantmaking process
- Establish and follow document retention processes
- Identify and share knowledge and resources and encourage the same of others
- Foster a culture of transparency
- Foster a culture that encourages the sharing of information
- Establish systems for data collection, management, analysis, and sharing

## Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's policies and procedures
- Organization's available resources
- Principles of knowledge management
- Principles of and techniques for document retention
- Principles of and techniques to foster transparency
- Principles of data collection, management, and analysis
- Techniques to share and communicate information
- Approaches to analyze grant results
- Knowledge management best practices

**Process & Change Management:** Plan and monitor processes efficiently and effectively and manage change as needed to contribute to grantmaker's strategic goals and grantee's success.

## Performance Indicators:

- Continually assess efficiency and effectiveness of grants processes and make improvements as necessary
- Use sound judgment to balance efficiency and effectiveness
- Anticipate and be responsive to changes in the environment
- Assess effectiveness of processes (e.g., collecting feedback from internal and external stakeholders)
- Make timely, informed decisions that take into account the facts, goals, constraints, resources, and risks
- Inform others involved in processes about new developments or plans
- Approach work collaboratively
- Document processes as a resource to the organization
- Establish goals, plan work, and track and communicate progress for specific projects
- Anticipate and manage changes, as needed
- Apply creative solutions to unusual or challenging circumstances

## Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's mission and goals, and culture
- Organization's structure, bylaws, policies, and procedures
- Grants management best practices
- Current trends in grants management practices
- Grantmaking tools
- Basic knowledge of issues and trends in foundation program areas
- Legal obligations of grantmaker type
- Fundamentals of exempt entities law
- Fundamentals of accounting of various forms of charitable contributions
- Process modeling approaches
- Process automation methods
- Process monitoring and improvement methods
- Team building, management, and facilitation
- Technology tools available
- Change management principles

# CROSS-CUTTING COMPETENCIES

**Staff & Volunteer Development: Build the capacity of staff and volunteers to be successful in their grantmaking role.**

## Performance Indicators:

- Identify gaps in learning and provide opportunities to address those gaps
- Design and provide training on grantmaking processes
- Provide staff and volunteers with new experiences to develop their capabilities
- Provide guidance and feedback to help staff and volunteers accomplish a task, solve a problem, or strengthen knowledge, skills, and competencies to improve personal and organizational performance

## Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's policies and procedures
- Principles of and strategies to foster a learning culture
- Available methods and tools to support, promote, and evaluate staff and volunteer development
- Resources for training and skill-building, such as philanthropic and other professional associations
- Training techniques
- Skills and competencies required for grantmaking roles
- Responsibilities of grantmaking roles
- How to give appropriate feedback
- Staff and volunteer management best practices

**Strategic Management: Promote organizational mission and goals and inspire colleagues to achieve them.**

## Performance Indicators:

- Embrace and support the organization's mission, goals, and values
- Motivate internal and external stakeholders to support the organization's mission, goals, and values
- Serve as an influential voice for grantmaking strategies and initiatives within the organization
- Align grantmaking operations with the mission, goals, and values of the grantmaking program and the organization
- Develop infrastructure to ensure grantmaking complies with U.S. law
- Develop goals for grantmaking operations
- Advocate for sufficient resources to be allocated for the grantmaking function
- Advocate for organizational policies that align with and support the grantmaking function
- Foster an environment that values new ideas and innovation
- Design processes to manage changes in the grantmaking systems
- Conduct long-term planning to ensure success and sustainability of organization's grantmaking

## Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's mission and goals
- Organizational structure and department responsibilities
- Organization's policies and procedures
- U.S. laws pertaining to grantmaking
- IRS regulations pertaining to grantmaking
- Grantmaking goals
- Principles of motivation and motivational techniques
- Principles of advocacy and techniques
- Principles of change management
- Rationales for division of responsibilities among program, grants, legal, and finance roles
- Appropriate communication techniques

**Technology Management: Apply technology solutions to grantmaking to support grantmaker, applicant, and grantee success.**

## Performance Indicators:

- Keep current on new technology
- Assess the need for and recommend new technology solutions
- Lead or support implementation of technology solutions, including training as needed
- Align technology solutions with effective processes
- Develop and maintain processes that ensure integrity of data
- Integrate security best practices into technology tools

## Knowledge Needed:

- Organization's policies and procedures
- Organization's culture regarding security and transparency
- Organization's technology status and needs
- Market of technology tools available to support grantmaking and the strengths and limitations of each
- Technology standards as they relate to grantmaking
- Personal and organizational data security best practices
- Database management – structure, field requirements, output/reporting capabilities

# LIFECYCLE OF A GRANT COMPETENCIES

## PHASE I: PLANNING AND PRE-GRANT

Lifecycle of a Grant Competencies describe what specific grants management responsibilities must be carried out in each phase of the grants management cycle. This phase includes planning and budgeting for future proposal review and grantmaking; developing the application policies, process, and guidelines; inviting proposals or opening a proposal submission cycle; proposal review and decision making; and communicating the decision (whether to approve, decline, or take other action).

**Direct Service:** Provides service directly to external stakeholders (applicants, grantees, funders) and internal stakeholders (program, finance, legal staff, etc.).

**Management Function:** Oversees grants management operations including people, projects, procedures, systems, and/or budget.

**Policy Function:** Establishes, updates, and approves the policies for achieving the mission and goals of the organization.

Competency: Apply the grantmaker values, mission, and goals to ensure alignment of application process and guidelines.		
Direct Service Function Performance Indicators	Management Function Performance Indicators	Policy Function Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide applicants with guidance to submit a complete and timely application</li> <li>• Track application invitations and responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and maintain guidelines and applications in collaboration with program staff and other relevant stakeholders</li> <li>• Determine applicant eligibility for support</li> <li>• Incorporate perspective of the applicant and their operating environment into the application process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the external environment in establishing the application process and guidelines</li> <li>• Create grant application policies that align with organizational policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements</li> <li>• Determine grantmaker information needs</li> <li>• Incorporate analysis of grants history and current budget and programmatic priorities into application process and guidelines</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge Needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grantmaker policies and procedures</li> <li>• Grantmaker mission, goals, and funding priorities</li> <li>• Grantmaker evaluation requirements</li> <li>• Relevant U.S. laws and regulations</li> <li>• Characteristics of quality application</li> <li>• Customer service orientation</li> <li>• Perspective of applicants</li> <li>• Technical writing</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis expertise</li> </ul>		
Competency: Design and implement the review process to support an informed grant decision.		
Direct Service Function Performance Indicators	Management Function Performance Indicators	Policy Function Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the application for completeness and eligibility</li> <li>• Correct existing or enter additional data into the grants management system</li> <li>• Provide reviewers with access to the application</li> <li>• Document and track application review notes and/or ratings</li> <li>• Document and communicate decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate perspective of the applicant and their operating environment into the review process</li> <li>• Collaborate with applicant, program staff, and other relevant stakeholders to develop proposal</li> <li>• Confirm the integrity of grants management system data used for review</li> <li>• Provide reviewers with information that supplements the application</li> <li>• Assess applicant's financial health</li> <li>• Analyze applicant alignment of budget with work plan</li> <li>• Verify grantmaker is in compliance with internal policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements</li> <li>• Provide decision makers with relevant information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create proposal review and decision policies that align with organizational policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements</li> <li>• Incorporate analysis of grants history and current budget and programmatic priorities into review process</li> <li>• Incorporate context, risk, theory of change, performance measures, and portfolio analysis into the recommendations to decision makers</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge Needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization process for proposal review</li> <li>• Organization's funding priorities</li> <li>• Grantmaker mission, goals, and funding priorities</li> <li>• Relevant laws and regulations</li> <li>• Making meaning from data</li> <li>• Database management</li> <li>• Research methods</li> <li>• Information needs of reviewers</li> <li>• Methods to mitigate risk</li> <li>• How to analyze applicant resources and capacity</li> <li>• Fundamentals of organization health</li> </ul>		

# CROSS-CUTTING COMPETENCIES

## PHASE II: AWARD AND MONITORING

This phase includes developing and communicating the terms of the grants; requesting, receiving, and analyzing grantee interim reports and requirements; evaluating interim deliverables and outcomes; reporting to internal and external stakeholders on interim results, status of grants, and deliverables, etc.; and making payments.

Competency: Establish mutual expectations between the grantmaker and grantee to support success.		
Direct Service Function Performance Indicators	Management Function Performance Indicators	Policy Function Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate the grant terms to grantee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with grantee, program staff, and relevant stakeholders to develop grant terms</li> <li>Develop the special conditions and requirements of individual grants</li> <li>Structure payments to ensure grant goals achieved</li> <li>Develop grant-related documents</li> <li>Verify grant terms comply with organizational policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align core elements of grant related templates with organizational policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge Needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grantmaker policies and procedures</li> <li>Grantmaker budget, fund accounting, and cash flow</li> <li>Grantee's operating context</li> <li>Relevant laws and regulations</li> <li>Disbursement methods</li> <li>Communication methods</li> <li>Interpersonal communication</li> <li>Cultural competency</li> <li>Outcomes measurement</li> </ul>		
Competency: Monitor grantee activity to support grantee success and determine compliance with grant agreement.		
Direct Service Function Performance Indicators	Management Function Performance Indicators	Policy Function Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide grantees with guidance and support</li> <li>Carry out or support the monitoring strategies (e.g., site visit, desk monitoring, phone calls) in collaboration with program staff</li> <li>Communicate grantee activity to internal and external stakeholders</li> <li>Collect, review, and disseminate reports and supporting materials</li> <li>Track and document grant reporting and activity</li> <li>Review requirements for completeness</li> <li>Collect missing requirement information</li> <li>Send payments to grantee</li> <li>Document the review and findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Troubleshoot and track grant challenges</li> <li>Revise grant terms</li> <li>Incorporate perspective of the grantee and their operating environment into the monitoring process</li> <li>Verify grantmaker is in compliance with internal policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements</li> <li>Create or support the monitoring plan and strategies (e.g., site visit, desk monitoring, phone calls) in collaboration with program staff</li> <li>Analyze grantee spending against budget and work plan</li> <li>Make decision on releasing payments contingent upon grantee monitoring, in collaboration with program staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create grant monitoring and compliance policies that align with organizational policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge Needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grantmaker policies and procedures</li> <li>Grantmaker's tolerance of risk</li> <li>Grantee operating context</li> <li>Relevant laws and regulations</li> <li>Adjustments to terms of grant</li> <li>When to cancel a grant</li> <li>Communication strategies</li> <li>Cultural competency</li> <li>How grantmaker assesses progress</li> </ul>		

# LIFECYCLE OF A GRANT COMPETENCIES

## PHASE III: POST-GRANT

This phase includes requesting, receiving, and analyzing grantee final reports and requirements; evaluating final deliverables and outcomes; reporting to internal and external stakeholders on final results, status of grants and deliverables, etc.; and closing out grants.

Competency: Review grantmaking to determine success in meeting goals and objectives.		
Direct Service Function Performance Indicators	Management Function Performance Indicators	Policy Function Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect, review, and disseminate reports and supporting materials</li> <li>Review requirements for completeness</li> <li>Collect missing requirement information</li> <li>Determine if requirements were satisfied in collaboration with program staff</li> <li>Document the review and findings in collaboration with program staff</li> <li>Communicate grantee activities to internal and external stakeholders</li> <li>Communicate progress in achieving goals to internal and external stakeholders</li> <li>Communicate with grantees about the grant closing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate perspective of the grantee and their operating environment into the review and close-out process</li> <li>Analyze whether intended outcomes of each grant were achieved in collaboration with program staff and determine if changes need to be made to future grantmaking to increase the likelihood of achievement</li> <li>Analyze whether grantmaking goals were achieved in collaboration with program staff and determine if changes need to be made to future grantmaking to increase the likelihood of achievement</li> <li>Verify grantmaker is in compliance with internal policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements</li> <li>Analyze grantee spending against budget and work plan</li> <li>Determine post-grant action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create grant close-out policies that align with organizational policies, U.S. law, and applicable donor requirements, including legacy needs</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge Needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grantmaker policies and procedures</li> <li>Grantmaker's methods to assess outcomes</li> <li>Grantmaker evaluation requirements</li> <li>Best practices in assessing outcomes</li> <li>Grantee operating context</li> <li>Relevant laws and regulations</li> <li>Communication strategies</li> <li>Cultural competency</li> </ul>		

