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# NC TraCS Clinical & Translational Science (CTS) Innovation to Impact Awards

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The University  
of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill



# Today's info session

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- CTS Research Program overview
- Translational Research vs. Translational Science
- Innovation to Impact (i2i) Awards
- Application process
- Getting started with your Concept Proposal
- Developing your Full Proposal
- Key dates

# CTS Research Program: Who are we?



**Evan Dellon, MD, MPH**  
Director, CTS-RP

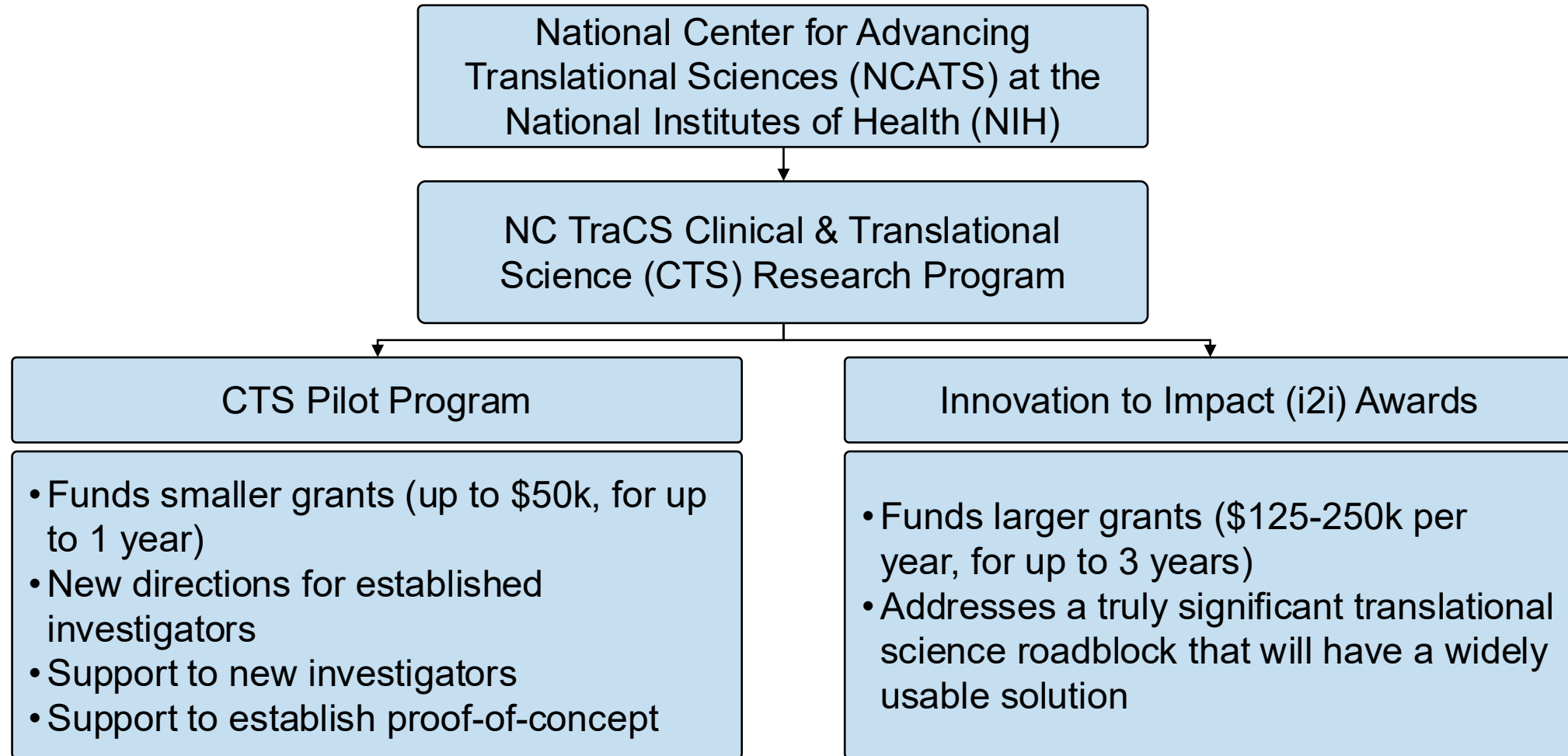


**Kaitlin Zalcikova, PhD**  
Program Manager, CTS-RP



**Leah Gardner, MIS, PMP**  
Project Manager, CTS-RP

# NC TraCS CTS Funding



# CTS Research Program: Goals

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## Advance

*generalizable translational science methods* that accelerate translation

## Enhance

the *efficiency and effectiveness* of translational research through hypothesis-driven clinical and translational science

## Support

projects with strong potential for *rapid implementation at UNC Health and beyond*

# Translational Research vs Translational Science



[Click here for the University of Rochester CTSA Pie Example!](#)

# Translational Research vs. Translational Science



Category	Translational Research	Translational Science
<b>Primary focus</b>	Advances work on a specific disease, target, or intervention	Improves the <b>overall</b> translational process across diseases
<b>Main goal</b>	Move a particular discovery toward practice or improved patient outcomes	Identify causes of inefficiency and develop broadly applicable solutions
<b>Key questions</b>	How do we advance <b>this</b> intervention for <b>this</b> population?	How do we improve the translational pipeline for <b>all</b> research?
<b>Outputs</b>	Findings relevant to one disease or condition	Methods, tools, or principles that apply across many studies
<b>Who benefits</b>	Patients, clinicians, and researchers working on the specific condition	Researchers and institutions engaged in translational research broadly

# Innovation to Impact Awards

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- ***Part of UNC's NIH-funded CTSA program***, i2i Awards support innovative translational science that improves how research is conducted across diseases and disciplines
- ***Funds solutions to major roadblocks in the translational pipeline***, creating methods and approaches that benefit the broader research community, UNC Health, and beyond
- ***Provide generalizable innovations or insights*** that increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of translation
- ***Strengthens UNC's translational ecosystem*** through close collaboration with TraCS experts and resources

# Innovation to Impact Awards



- Now accepting proposals for Award Cycle 3
- Proposals must pair a **translational science** aim with a **translational research** question or use-case
- Goal is to develop **generalizable solutions** to major scientific or operational roadblocks in the translational pipeline

## Awards at a glance:

- **\$125,000/year in Years 1 & 2** and **up to \$250,000 in Year 3** in direct costs over a period of **up to 3 years**
- **NC TraCS services** are available at a 1:1 match (50% cost reduction)
- Operate as **Cooperative Agreements**, with active involvement and oversight from CTS-RP

# Examples of funded i2i projects



## Wayfinding for Prognostic Modeling

Goal	Develop a <b>TS process</b> (“wayfinding”) that bridges the gap between <b>prognostic model development</b> and <b>actionable clinical intervention delivery</b>
TS challenge	Disconnect between creating risk prediction models and integrating them into <b>patient-centered clinical workflows</b>
Approach	Created a repeatable “wayfinding” framework combining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clinician judgment</li><li>• Statistical modeling + verification</li><li>• Risk-targeted care plan development</li></ul> Implemented within UNC Health’s Epic environment to support early identification of patients at risk for Acute Care Events (ACEs)
Impact	Provides a <b>scalable TS prototype for integrating predictive analytics into clinical workflows</b> across diverse contexts
TraCS collaborators	Informatics & Data Science (IDSci) and Biostatistics

# Examples of funded i2i projects



## CAR-T Beyond Cancer

Goal	Develop <b>engagement and communication strategies</b> to support broader participation in <b>CAR-T cell therapy trials</b> for lupus and autoimmune diseases
TS challenge	CAR-T is strongly associated with cancer, leading to <b>low awareness, limited clinician familiarity, and reduced trial participation</b> in non-oncology settings
Approach	Use patient and clinician perspectives to design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Educational resources</li><li>• Engagement strategies</li><li>• Communication frameworks</li></ul> These tools aim to improve understanding and participation in CAR-T lupus trials, serving as a generalizable TS model for emerging therapeutic areas
Impact	Creates <b>a scalable framework for improving recruitment, communication, and stakeholder engagement</b> in novel therapeutic trials across diverse diseases
TraCS collaborators	Qualitative Research Service, Recruitment & Retention, PaCER, and Biostatistics

# Application process



## Concept Proposals

- Required consultation with CTS-RP Program Staff
- Identify relevant TraCS resources and services
- Submit proposal by May 26, 2026

## Review & Invitation

- Proposals reviewed June 2026
- Invitations to submit a Full Proposal June 2026

## Full Proposals (by invitation only)

- Required consultation with TraCS resources and services
- Submit proposal by October 1, 2026

## Review & Invitation

- Proposals reviewed Fall 2026
- Select invitations to present project to TraCS leadership
- Provisional proposal selection

# How to get started with your Concept Proposal



- Review the RFA on the [i2i webpage](#)
- Review [TraCS resources and services](#) to determine if any might be relevant to the project
- Review [NCATS Translational Science resources](#)
- Sketch out your proposal's TS challenge and TR use-case
- Submit a request for a consultation with the CTS-RP
- Review TraCS resources and services to determine if any would be a good fit for your proposal
- ***Submit your Concept Proposal by May 26, 2026***

# How to get started with your Concept Proposal



- To schedule a ***mandatory*** consultation with the CTS-RP, submit a [Request for TraCS Services](#)
  - When asked to assign an NC TraCS program, select “CTS Innovation to Impact Awards”
  - Enter a brief (~250 characters) description of the TS challenge and TR use-case your proposal aims to address

A screenshot of a web form titled "Request for TraCS Services" with a help icon. The question is "Which NC TraCS program do you need help from? \*". Below the question is a link: "Not sure what to choose? Select 'Not sure/TraCS Service Navigation' or click here to learn more about TraCS services". A dropdown menu is open, showing a search bar with "CTS Innovation to Impact Awards" and a list of options: "Not sure / TraCS Service Navigation", "Assessment, Design & Analysis for Population validiTY (ADAPT)", "Biostatistics Service", "Clinical & Translational Research Center (CTRC)", "CTS Innovation to Impact Awards" (highlighted in blue), "CTS Pilot Program", and "FastTraCS".

# How to get started with your Concept Proposal



- What to expect during the consultation:
  - ~30-minute meeting with TraCS staff familiar with the requirements and goals of the i2i Program
  - A discussion of the project idea and whether it is a good fit for the i2i mechanism (how does the TR work relate to the broader TS question)
  - A discussion on the development of your Concept Proposal and identification of potentially relevant NC TraCS resources and services

# I've submitted my Concept Proposal... now what?

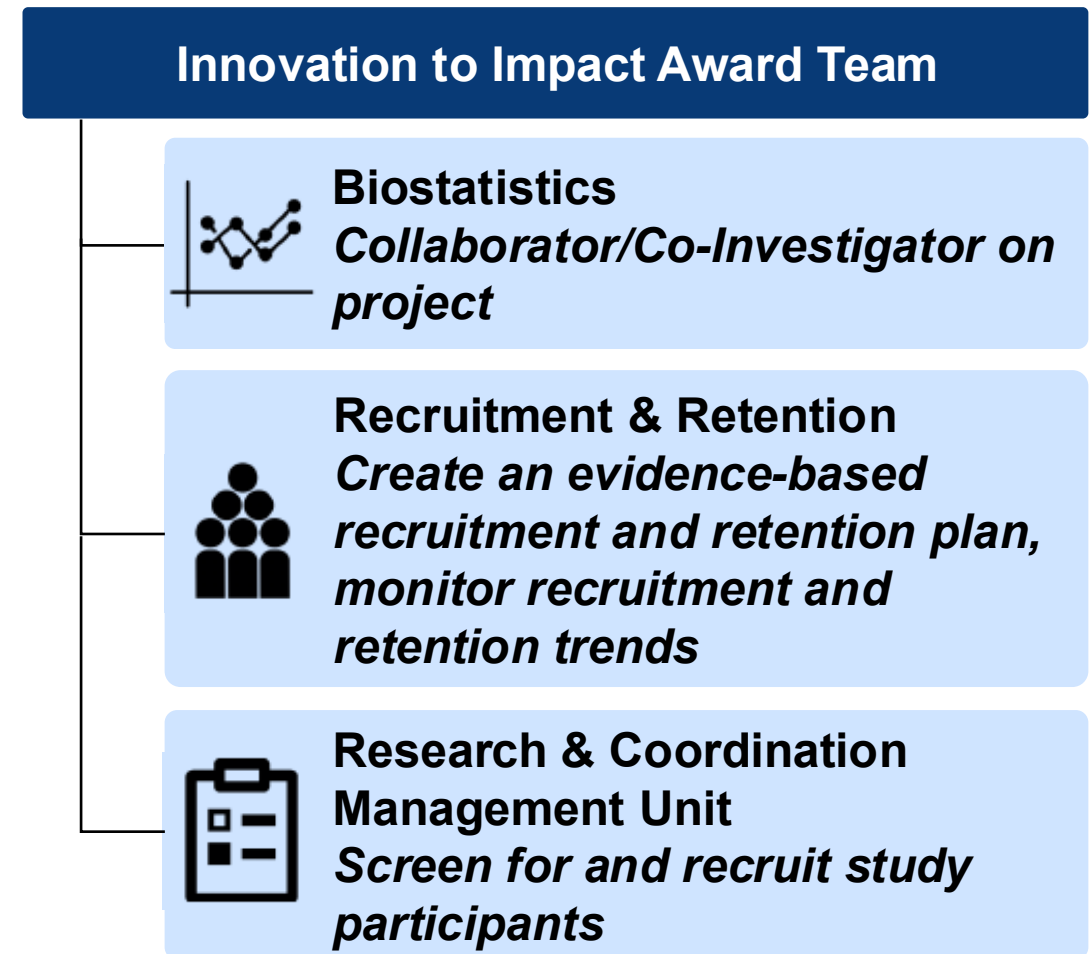


- CTS-RP reviews Concept Proposals in June and reaches out to selected applicants with invitations to submit a Full Proposal
- Applicants can meet with CTS-RP to refine their proposal
- Applicants ***must*** meet with TraCS service reps for any services you plan to engage
- ***Full Proposals are due October 1, 2026***

# Developing your Full Proposal – working with TraCS Resources & Services



- If invited to submit a Full Proposal, consultations with proposed TraCS services are ***mandatory***
- Use of services must be agreed upon with service reps and described in the Service Agreement Form submitted with your Full Proposal (one Agreement per service)



# Developing your Full Proposal – the application



- Full Proposal components:
  - Scientific Abstract
  - Impact Statement
  - Generalizable Insights
  - Research Team
  - Research Plan
  - **New:** Data Analysis Plan
  - Cited References
  - TraCS Service Agreement(s)
  - Timeline
  - Plan for Dissemination and Implementation
  - Budget
  - Budget Justification
  - Protection of Human and/or Animal Subjects
  - Biosketches
  - Letter(s), if applicable

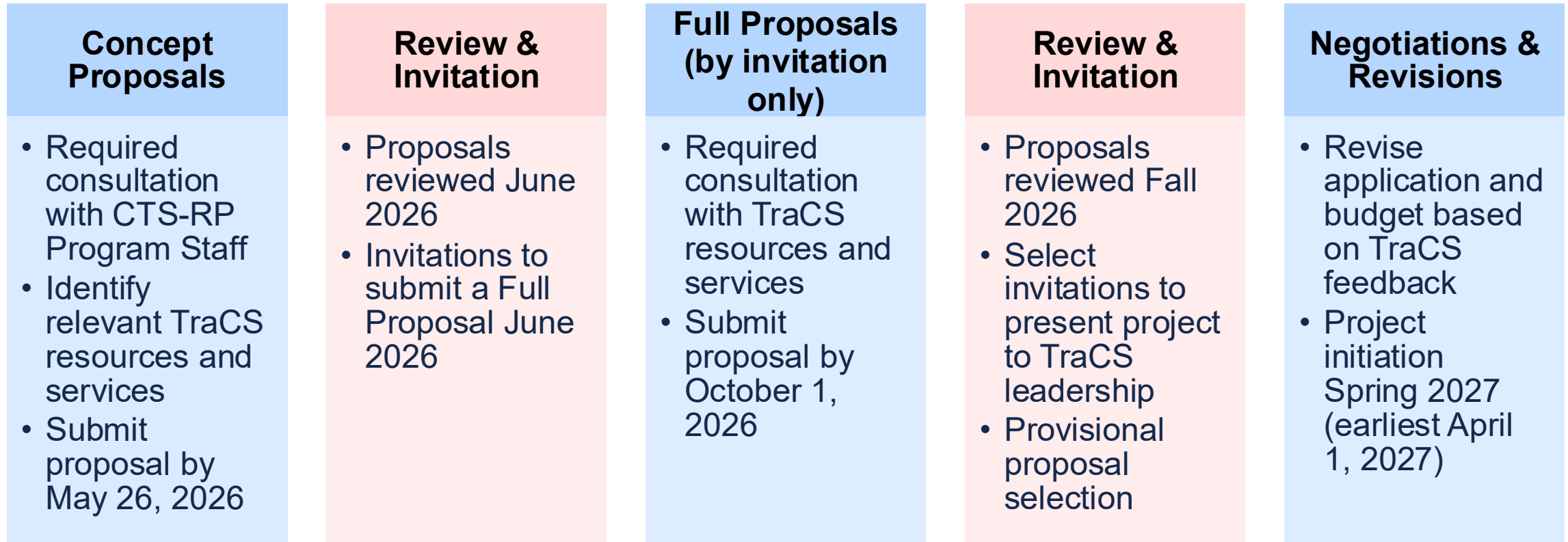
# Developing your Full Proposal

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- Full Proposal review criteria:
  - Significance
  - Novelty/Innovation
  - Impact/Implementation Potential
  - Multidisciplinary Team
  - Scientific and Methodological Rigor
  - Feasibility
  - Community Engagement, if applicable

# Application process



# Key dates



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Milestone	Timeline
FOA Release Date	March 9, 2026
FAQ Session	March 25, 2026
<b>Concept Proposal Due Date</b>	<b>May 26, 2026</b>
Invitations for Full Proposals	June 2026
Full Proposal Due Date	October 1, 2026
Review of Full Proposals	Fall 2026
Anticipated Negotiations and Revisions	Winter 2027
Anticipated Project Initiation Activities	Spring 2027
Anticipated Funding/Project Start	Earliest start April 1, 2027



**Questions for us?**



# Links

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- [i2i webpage](#)
- [TraCS resources and services](#)
- [Request for TraCS Services](#)
- [NCATS Translational Science resources](#)
- [Application submission portal](#)



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