
Troubleshooting a Broken Web3Forms Contact Form API Submission

With Chrome DevTools

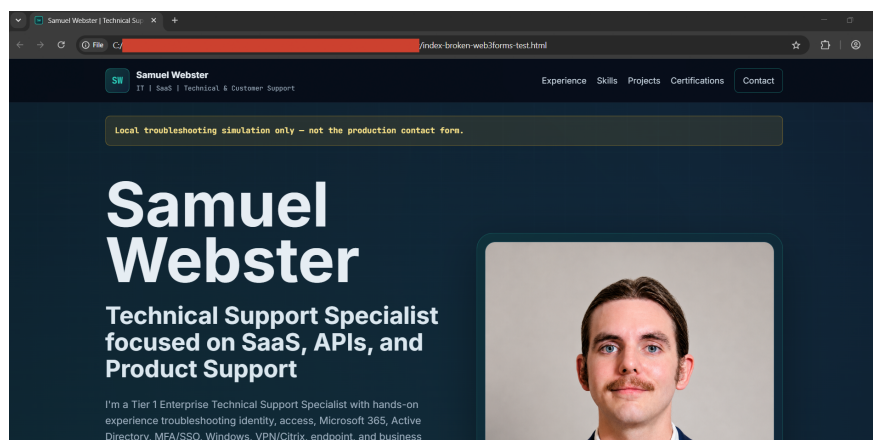
Issue Summary

In a local troubleshooting copy of my portfolio website, the contact form fails because the frontend sends the Web3Forms access key using the wrong field name. The form sends `accessKey`, but the Web3Forms API expects the hidden field to be named `access_key`.

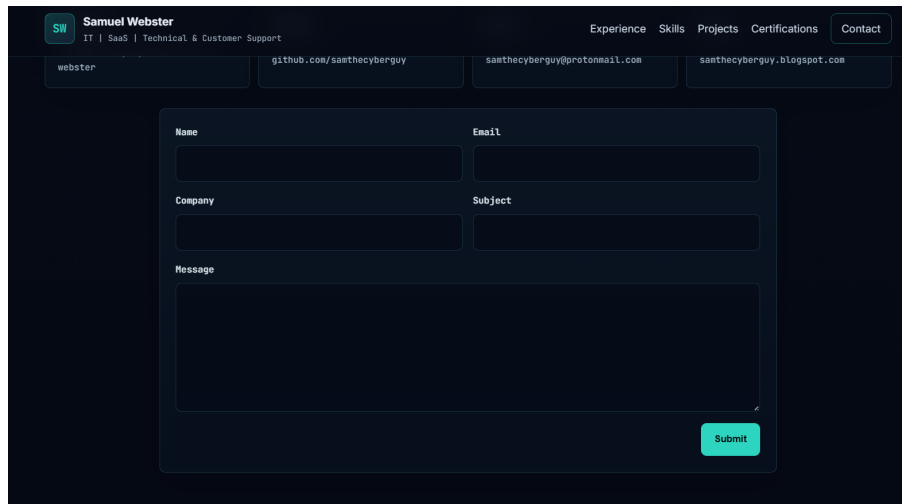
This project simulates a real-world REST API troubleshooting issue where a frontend form submission fails because the request payload does not match the API's expected format.

Steps to Reproduce

1. In Chrome, open the local troubleshooting copy of the website:
`index-broken-web3forms-test.html`

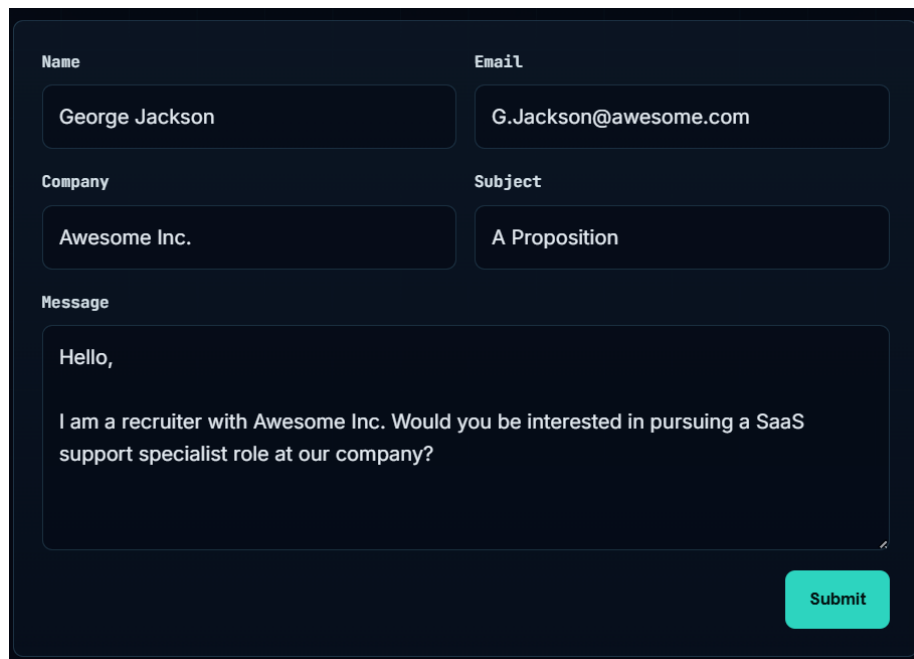


2. Scroll to the Contact section.



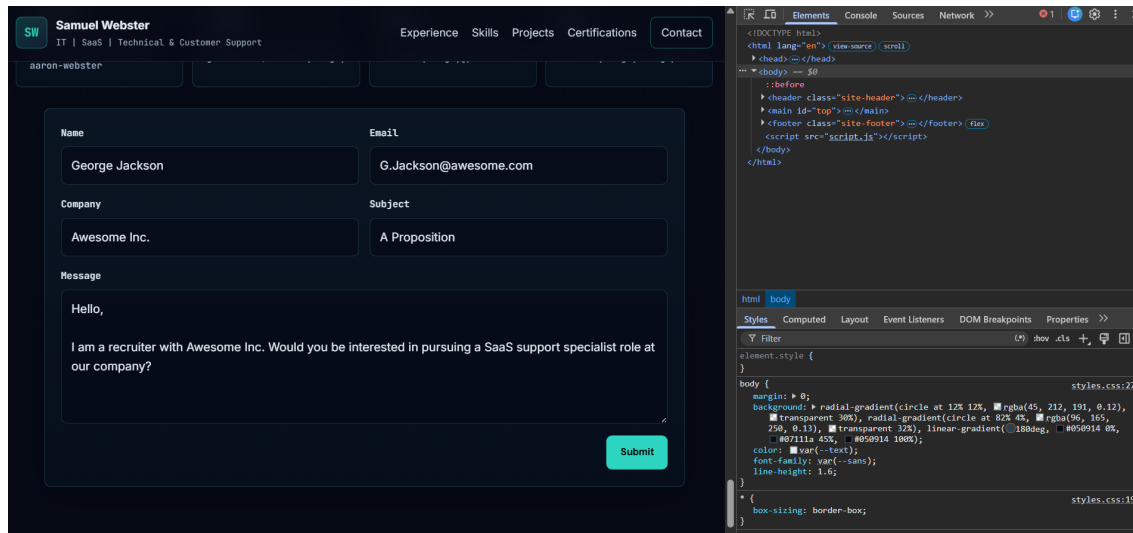
The screenshot shows a contact form on a resume website for Samuel Webster. The website header includes the name 'Samuel Webster', a title 'IT | SaaS | Technical & Customer Support', and navigation links for 'Experience', 'Skills', 'Projects', 'Certifications', and 'Contact'. Below the header, there are four social media links: 'webster', 'github.com/samtheberguy', 'samtheberguy@protonmail.com', and 'samtheberguy.blogspot.com'. The contact form itself has fields for 'Name', 'Email', 'Company', 'Subject', and a 'Message' text area. A 'Submit' button is located at the bottom right of the form.

3. Fill out the contact form with test information.

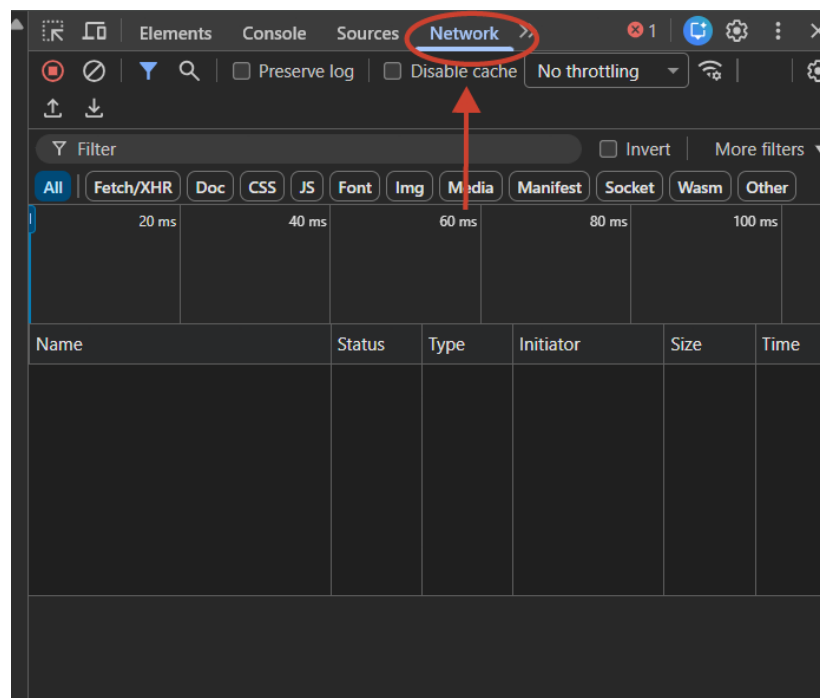


The screenshot shows the same contact form as before, but now it is filled with test information. The 'Name' field contains 'George Jackson', the 'Email' field contains 'G.Jackson@awesome.com', the 'Company' field contains 'Awesome Inc.', and the 'Subject' field contains 'A Proposition'. The 'Message' text area contains the text: 'Hello, I am a recruiter with Awesome Inc. Would you be interested in pursuing a SaaS support specialist role at our company?'. The 'Submit' button is still at the bottom right.

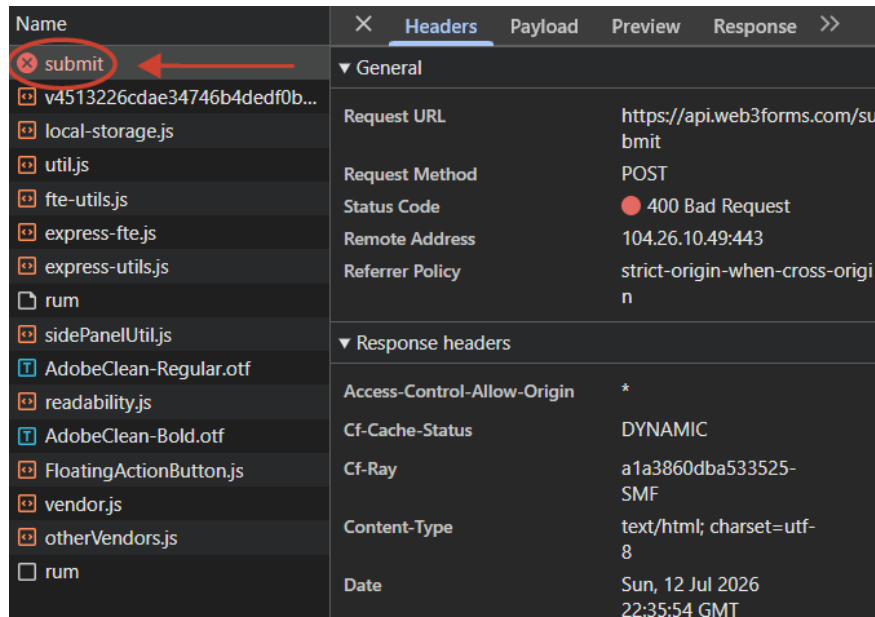
4. Open Chrome DevTools by pressing **ctrl + shift + I**



5. Go to the Network tab.



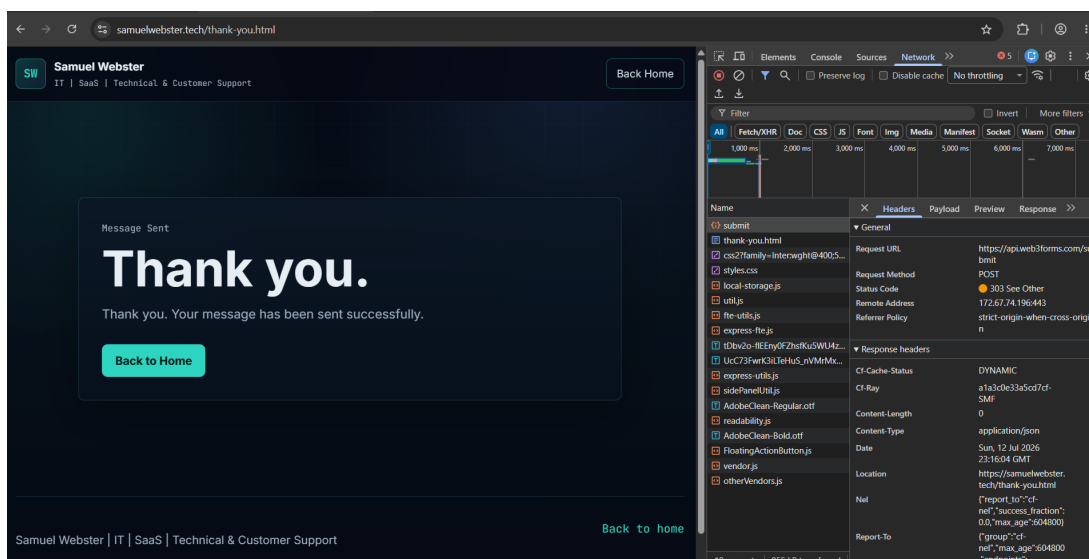
6. Submit the contact form.

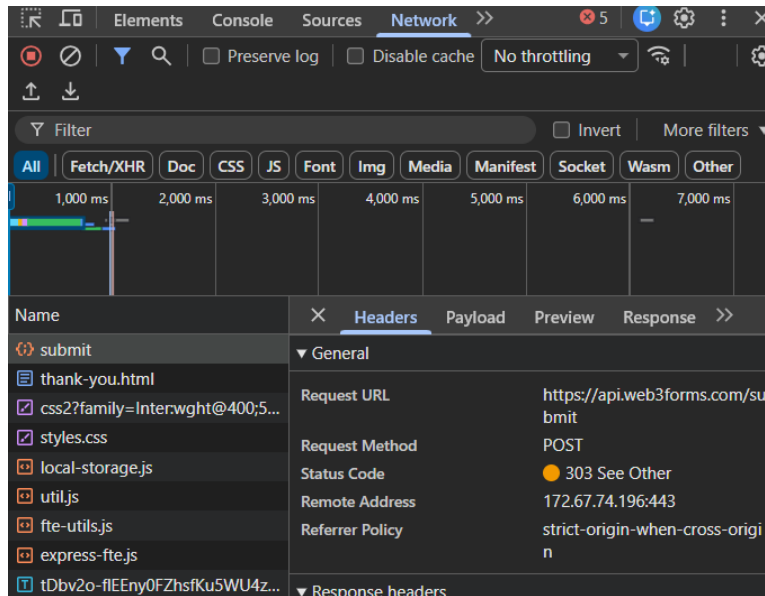


Expected Result

When the contact form is submitted, the website should send a POST request to the Web3Forms API with the required `access_key` field included in the form payload.

The API should accept the submission, return a successful response, and allow the message to be delivered to my email inbox. The user should see the normal success/thank-you confirmation instead of an error page.





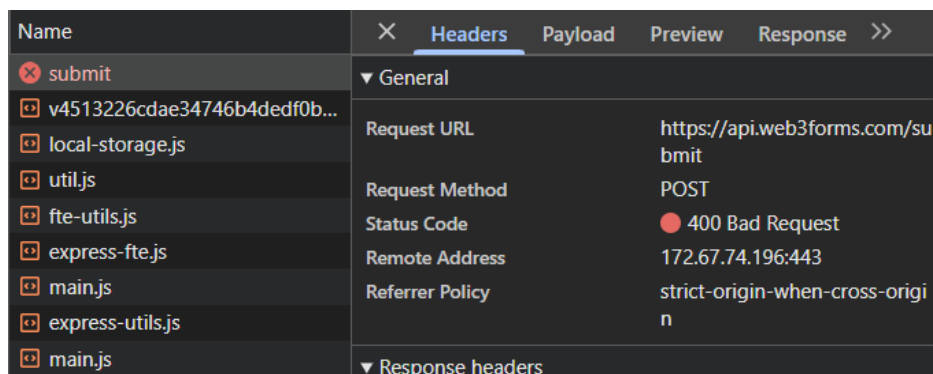
Actual Result

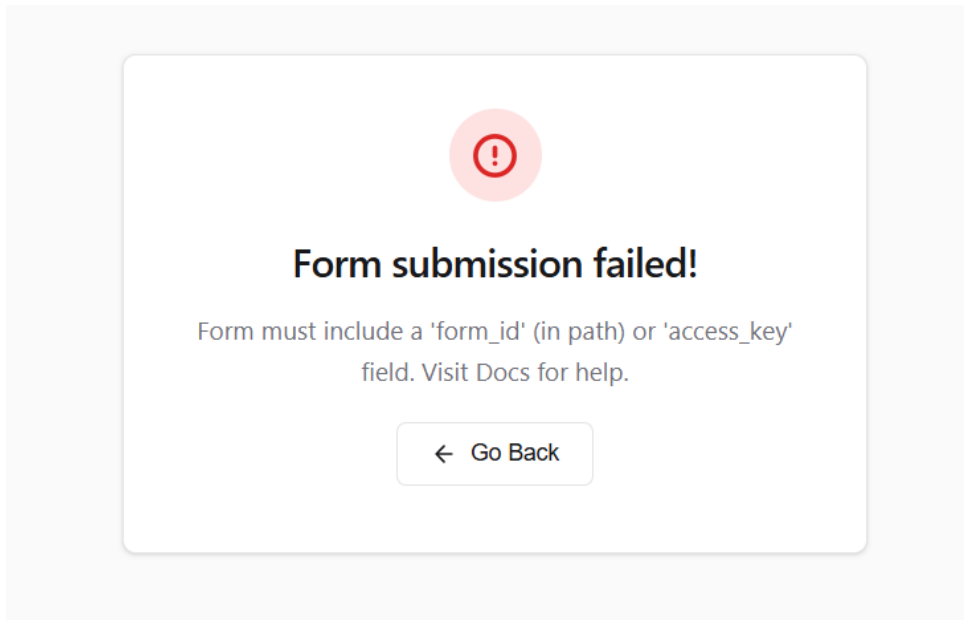
When I submitted the local test contact form, the submission failed. Chrome DevTools showed a failed request named **submit** in the Network tab with a **400 Bad Request** status.

The Web3Forms error page displayed the message:

Form must include a 'form_id' (in path) or 'access_key' field. Visit Docs for help.

This means the API rejected the form submission because it did not receive the required **access_key** field in the request.





Troubleshooting Steps

1. I reproduced the issue by opening the local test copy of my website and submitting the contact form with test information.
2. After the form failed, I opened Chrome DevTools and went to the **Network** tab to inspect the browser request.
3. I located the failed request named `submit`, which showed a **400 Bad Request** status.
4. I clicked the failed `submit` request and reviewed the request details.

Name	×	Headers	Payload	Preview	Response	>>
✖ submit	▼	General				
🔗 v4513226cd4e34746b4dedf0b...	Request URL		https://api.web3forms.com/submit			
🔗 local-storage.js	Request Method		POST			
🔗 util.js	Status Code		400 Bad Request			
🔗 fte-utils.js	Remote Address		172.67.74.196:443			
🔗 express-fte.js	Referrer Policy		strict-origin-when-cross-origin			
🔗 main.js						
🔗 express-utils.js						

5. In the **Payload** tab, I reviewed the form data being submitted by the browser.

- Based on the failed request, payload, and API response, I determined that the issue was caused by the form sending the wrong field name for the Web3Forms access key.

Root Cause

The root cause was an incorrect hidden field name in the local test version of the contact form.

The Web3Forms API expects the access key field to be submitted as: `access_key`

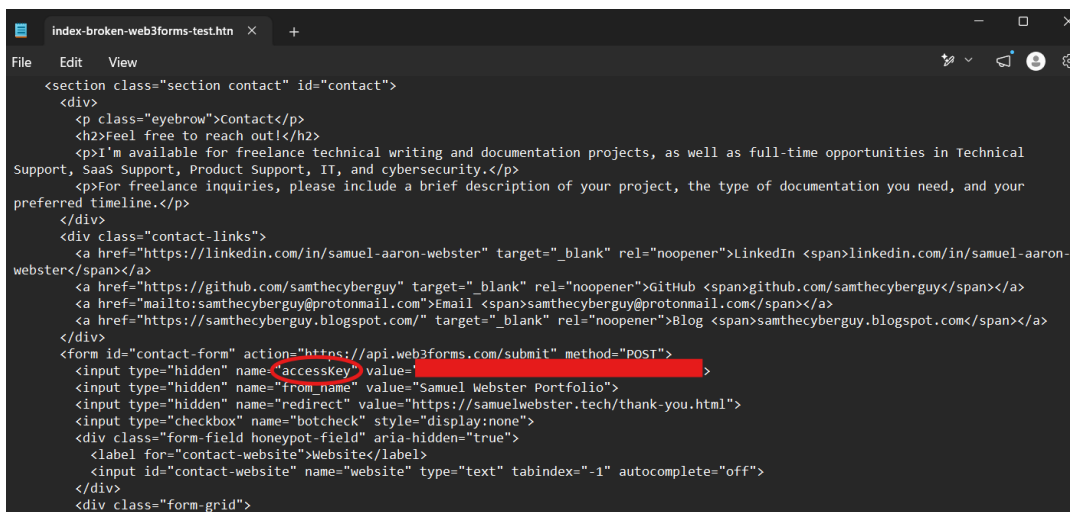
However, the broken test form submitted the field as: `accessKey`

Because the required `access_key` field was missing from the submitted payload, Web3Forms rejected the request and returned a `400 Bad Request` error.

Fix

To fix the issue, I updated the hidden Web3Forms access key input in the local test form.

The broken version used: `name="accessKey"`

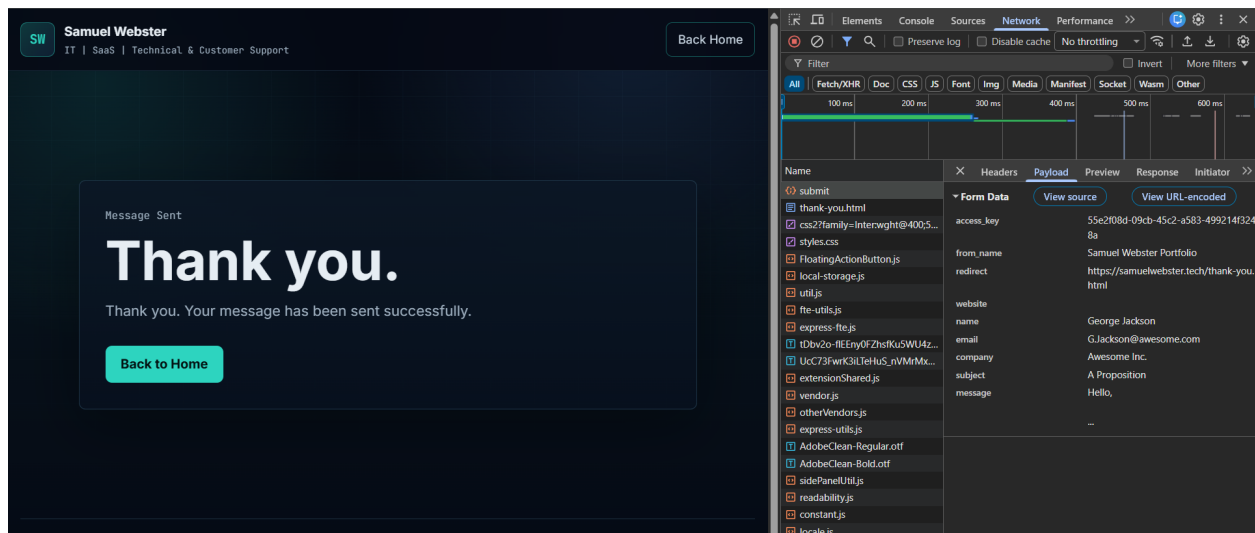


```
<section class="section contact" id="contact">
  <div>
    <p class="eyebrow">Contact</p>
    <h2>Feel free to reach out!</h2>
    <p>I'm available for freelance technical writing and documentation projects, as well as full-time opportunities in Technical Support, SaaS Support, Product Support, IT, and cybersecurity.</p>
    <p>For freelance inquiries, please include a brief description of your project, the type of documentation you need, and your preferred timeline.</p>
  </div>
  <div class="contact-links">
    <a href="https://linkedin.com/in/samuel-aaron-webster" target="_blank" rel="noopener">LinkedIn <span>linkedin.com/in/samuel-aaron-webster</span></a>
    <a href="https://github.com/samthecyberguy" target="_blank" rel="noopener">GitHub <span>github.com/samthecyberguy</span></a>
    <a href="mailto:samthecyberguy@protonmail.com">Email <span>samthecyberguy@protonmail.com</span></a>
    <a href="https://samthecyberguy.blogspot.com/" target="_blank" rel="noopener">Blog <span>samthecyberguy.blogspot.com</span></a>
  </div>
  <form id="contact-form" action="https://api.web3forms.com/submit" method="POST">
    <input type="hidden" name="accessKey" value=" " >
    <input type="hidden" name="from_name" value="Samuel Webster Portfolio">
    <input type="hidden" name="redirect" value="https://samuelwebster.tech/thank-you.html">
    <input type="checkbox" name="botcheck" style="display:none">
    <div class="form-field honeypot-field" aria-hidden="true">
      <label for="contact-website">Website</label>
      <input id="contact-website" name="website" type="text" tabindex="-1" autocomplete="off">
    </div>
  </form>
</div>
<div class="form-grid">
```

I corrected it to: `name="access_key"`

```
form" action="https://api.web3forms.io/submit" method="POST">  
  <input type="text" name="access_key" value="55e2f08d-09cb-45c2-a583-499214f3248a"/>  
  <input type="text" name="from_name" value="Samuel Webster"/>  
  <input type="text" name="redirect" value="https://samuelwebster.tech/thank-you.html"/>
```

After this change, the form payload included the required `access_key` field, allowing Web3Forms to authenticate and process the submission correctly.



Support Notes

Issue:

The local test version of the portfolio contact form failed when submitting a message through Web3Forms.

Impact:

A user submitting the form would not be able to send a contact request successfully.

Troubleshooting Performed:

I reproduced the issue by submitting the local test contact form. In Chrome DevTools, I reviewed the failed `submit` request in the Network tab. The request returned a `400 Bad Request` status. I inspected the request payload and confirmed that the form was sending `accessKey` instead of the required `access_key` field. I also reviewed the Web3Forms error message, which stated that the form must include a `form_id` or `access_key` field.

Root Cause:

The hidden Web3Forms access key input used the wrong field name. The API expected `access_key`, but the form submitted `accessKey`.

Resolution:

Updated the hidden input field name from `accessKey` to `access_key`.

Verification:

After correcting the field name, the form payload should include the required `access_key` field. A successful test submission should confirm that Web3Forms accepts the request and processes the message.