This plan represents work facilitated by Margaret Sullivan Studio and studioPQ in collaboration with the Fort Worth Public Library.
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Cover Photo by Tom Marvin, 1st Place Pix
Mural Location: Brewed Fort Worth
Welcome to the new Fort Worth Public Library Strategic Services Plan. In these pages, you will see the culmination of a year’s worth of work to figure out who we want to be in the future and how we can best serve our community. We have big dreams at the Fort Worth Public Library, and we’re thrilled to bring you along on our journey.

The primary objectives of this plan are threefold:
• Re-envision the Library’s programs and services to create meaningful and impactful customer experiences;
• Lay the groundwork for future community partnerships and collaborations with other like-minded organizations; and
• Provide Library staff with direction for the future.

We’re excited about this plan, and what the future holds for our Library system. We invite you to spend some time engaging with our new mission, vision, goals, and strategic priorities. We hope that you see yourself reflected in the future of the library. Maybe you are excited for longer hours and more access to the library, or you’re a book lover who is thrilled to have somewhere to connect with other book lovers. Perhaps you enjoy “3rd Thursday Jazz” and can’t wait to have more arts and culture programming across the library system, or you want to start a small business and look forward to the Library’s expanded focus on workforce development and support for local entrepreneurs.

We want Fort Worth to Learn, Dream, and Do. Join us on this journey. Your library is here for you.
In the city of Fort Worth, “Cowboys and Culture” is more than a tagline – it’s a way of life. Seemingly unrelated at first glance, spend some time in this city, and you’ll realize that Fort Worth’s “Cowtown” moniker is about more than cattle drives and ranch life. It’s about a “can do” attitude, and it’s about honoring the past, celebrating the present, and preparing for the future. It’s about integrity, pride, community, and taking care of one another.

The same can be said of the Fort Worth Public Library. For more than one hundred years the Library has been standing strong and proud in this city, serving as a community gathering place and point of entry for those who are seeking to better themselves or learn something new.

Today Fort Worth is one of the fastest growing cities in the nation, and the need for library services continues to grow exponentially. Currently the Fort Worth Public Library delivers services to a population of almost 900,000 residents through 268 committed staff members across 16 locations, as well as virtual and outreach services. However, as the community continues to grow, the Library must expand and evolve to meet the changing needs of residents.

This Strategic Plan will serve as a road map for staff as they drive the expansion and evolution of the Fort Worth Public Library. It will also provide a blueprint for staff and decision-making stakeholders as they work to position the Library as a relevant and essential civic asset, responsive to the many ways the Library can and will serve the community now and in the future.

The Fort Worth Public Library will be an adaptive, dynamic institution that is customer focused and community driven. The Library will focus on strengthening the City of Fort Worth by contributing to community vitality and creating meaningful experiences for all.

This Strategic Plan is bold. Although it identifies needs and goals for the next three years, it is intended to be a visioning document that will position the Library for continued success and unparalleled growth well into the 21st century.

Photo at left: Teen showing her winning library card design

Adults using computers at branch library
Process and Methodology

In May 2018, the Library contracted Margaret Sullivan Studio to assist in developing a new strategic direction for the Fort Worth Public Library.

The framework for this planning process was derived from two recent strategic planning processes and publications from the Institute for Museum and Library Services\(^1\) and the Aspen Institute\(^2\). Strategies from these documents were adopted to guide the Library in the planning process, as outlined below:

1. Align Library goals with community goals  
2. Prepare staff to be ready for change  
3. Become a learning organization  
4. Cultivate leadership  
5. Tell the Library’s story  
6. Deliver a Strategic Plan that has a flexible framework

“It was quite gratifying to collaborate with others around the table when you hosted that first meeting. For me, there was an increased sense of well-being as I realized that those strangers were people who share my values.”

- Lisa Reinhart

The process was intended to realign services and programs with community needs and aspirations and amplify the Library’s resources to create the most significant impact for Fort Worth residents.

Working with Margaret and her team, a key group of Library staff members engaged in a six-month, highly-participatory strategic planning process that utilized service design, strategic visioning, and community engagement.

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1 \(^{\text{It was quite gratifying to collaborate with others around the table when you hosted that first meeting. For me, there was an increased sense of well-being as I realized that those strangers were people who share my values.”}}\)

2 \(^{\text{It was quite gratifying to collaborate with others around the table when you hosted that first meeting. For me, there was an increased sense of well-being as I realized that those strangers were people who share my values.”}}\)
In addition to soliciting feedback through staff and community member surveys, the team conducted dozens of interviews to elicit critical feedback and facilitated several community workshops, including:

- A community leadership breakfast attended by leaders representing community organizations and city departments
- Four community engagement workshops held across the city
- A focus group with the Fort Worth City Manager and Assistant City Managers
- In-depth interviews and one-on-one conversations with a variety of stakeholders

The team used the Healthy Communities model\(^3\) as a framework, facilitating conversations that intentionally did not ask what participants needed from the library, but what they and their communities need for personal growth, fulfillment, and enrichment.

From these conversations, the team learned that Fort Worth’s challenges are consistent with national issues: lack of access to quality education for all, scarcity of transportation options as a barrier to opportunities (including access to library services), and the need to overcome poverty and inequality. They also heard specific challenges unique to the City of Fort Worth, including the impact of “rapid city growth”, the need for shared cultural identity, and a call for investment in community and neighborhood vitality throughout the city, not just downtown.

The Healthy Communities model envisions a vibrant future in which populations are empowered through education, unified by a shared cultural identity, and elevated by the elimination of poverty and a commitment to equity that ensures opportunity for all.

The team also used this process to garner feedback about how the community currently uses the Library, what it most values about the Library, and how core customers envision using the Library in the future. What staff found is that the community uses and values the Library for core services, including:

- Access to materials and collections, including books, movies, CDs and DVDs
- Studying and research
- Programs such as concerts, art exhibits, STEM programs, and ESL classes

The community also imagines using the Library in the future for interest-driven, multi-generational programs and services that allow them to explore personal interests and hobbies, including reading, gardening, traveling, history, cooking, games, music, art, crafting, and creating.

Although customers cited mostly positive experiences, some conveyed negative ones. Some experienced barriers to service, including not being able to check out materials because they owe fines. Others experienced confusion about the hours of operation, and several expressed the need for more accommodating hours of operation.

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And finally, when discussing the future, customers shared the following feedback about what they believe the Library will need to do to successfully meet the needs of the public:

• Stay abreast of current trends
• Provide more effective programming for all ages
• Market Library offerings more effectively
• Provide specialized programs that respond to the customer’s interests
• Invest in libraries to make them physically vibrant, lively, attractive, and functional for a variety of customer uses
• Extend the Library’s services beyond the walls, out into the community
• Ensure the Library’s resources, collections, and technology are state-of-the-art, current, and reliable
• Align access to facilities, services, and programs with the needs of the community
• Ensure Library staff members have the tools to assist customers

Ultimately, the team used the feedback received from community members to inform the development of this plan, and the result is an aspirational, goal-setting document anchored by the Library’s newly developed mission, vision, and values and guided by the strategic focus areas that emerged as a part of the process.
OUR MISSION
Building a community of learners, dreamers, and doers.

OUR VISION
Your community gathering place for learning, self-discovery, shared experiences and personal growth.
OUR VALUES

Customer-focused
We are committed to service excellence and treating all of our internal and external customers with respect and courtesy. We welcome input and feedback from all, and we strive to deliver personalized experiences.

Community-driven
We are committed to working closely with the community to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes. We are committed to partnering with like-minded organizations, and combining forces for the greater good of our community.

Curious and creative
We believe in the power of insatiable curiosity and creative expression. We ask questions. We seek answers. We embrace change.

Inclusive and accessible
We are a safe space where all are welcome and valued. We aim to be accessible and approachable, to accommodate differences, and to honor the diversity of our community.

Trustworthy and accountable
We are good stewards of taxpayer dollars, and we embrace transparency and engage in all endeavors with honesty and integrity.
Strategic Focus Areas

During the strategic planning process, the team identified community needs, strengths, and assets of the Fort Worth Public Library, challenges currently facing the Library, and opportunities for future innovations and expansion. With this information, six clear strategic focus areas emerged:

**Customer Engagement**
Reducing barriers to access, expanding the Library’s reach, and evolving services beyond buildings.

**Books & Reading**
Cultivating a community of readers and serving as the literary hub for the City.

**Arts & Culture**
Contributing to the City’s thriving arts scene while celebrating the past and embracing the future.

**Community Vitality**
Nurturing economic development, entrepreneurship, and opportunity for all.

**Education & Growth**
Enriching out-of-school-time and making learning fun and enjoyable.

**Employee Empowerment**
Supporting City goals, developing staff, and aligning capacity with strategy.

Though each one of these focus areas is based on distinct community needs and comprised of unique goals and initiatives, there is a significant amount of overlap. Individually, each one of these focus areas will allow the Library to tap into the needs of the community. Collectively, they will help the Library realize their new vision of serving as the community gathering place for learning, self-discovery, shared experiences, and personal growth.
Strategic Focus Areas

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT
Reducing barriers to access, expanding the Library’s reach, and evolving services beyond buildings.

ARTS & CULTURE
Contributing to the City’s thriving arts scene while celebrating the past and embracing the future.

BOOKS & READING
Cultivating a community of readers and serving as the literary hub for the City.

EDUCATION & GROWTH
Enriching out-of-school-time and making learning fun and enjoyable.

COMMUNITY VITALITY
Nurturing economic development, entrepreneurship, and opportunity for all.

EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT
Supporting City goals, developing staff, and aligning capacity with strategy.
Customer Engagement
During the information gathering phase, the team identified a variety of barriers to access, including inconsistent and insufficient hours of operation, a punitive fee structure, lack of robust services for adults, and imbalanced services across the City. Additionally, as the City continues to grow, the Library will need to provide services where no current library building exists.

To address these deficits, the Library will need to identify new and creative ways to respond to the communities they serve, including engaging customers to learn about their needs and determining their interests in new programs and services. The Library will also need to seek alternative service delivery models to meet the needs of this rapidly growing city.

With intentional investment in service expansion, staff training, and leveraged partnerships, the Library will increase use and expand impact by creating excellent customer experiences and shifting the service model from transactional to community-focused.

“I love the ability to order the books I want and get notifications when they're at my local branch. I rarely just breeze in, pick them up, and leave. There are always cool displays to check out, and my kids want to look around. The library is my happy place!”

- Sarah Martinez

Identified Needs

- Increased access to Library services for all residents
- Libraries open more and consistent hours
- Expanded adult programs and services
- Examination of policies that create barriers to access
- Increased engagement with the community

Key Goals

- Increase the number of city residents with an active library card
- Provide services beyond the walls of the buildings
- Increase checkout of library materials
- Eliminate fines and fees as a barrier
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for adult programming

Photo at left: Children playing with bubbles at the “B is for Bubble” program

Staff assisting customers
Strategic Services Plan 2019-2021

The City of Fort Worth is no stranger to world-class arts programming and cultural events. The Library has capitalized on this in the past by providing cultural experiences in partnership with local arts and cultural organizations such as the Fort Worth Symphony, Fort Worth Genealogical Society, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Amon Carter Museum, and more.

In the future, the Library will not only continue to pursue shared programming opportunities with these partners, but grow program offerings by reaching out to new and exciting community partners such as the Texas Ballet Theater, Fort Worth Opera, Jubilee Theatre, and Casa Mañana. The Library is also committed to bringing these offerings to library locations across the city.

Additionally, the Library will more fully embrace their role in connecting residents of Fort Worth to the past, present, and future of the City by activating its cultural assets including the genealogy and local history collections, digital archives, and Municipal Archives for the City of Fort Worth. The Library will also explore opportunities to develop projects and collaborations that expand the community’s interest in special collections such as historical maps, photographs, and oral histories. Ultimately, the Library will focus on bringing history to life and making it accessible to all members of the community.

“My Fort Worth Pride is the great people and the engaging history of the city.”

- Anonymous

A child playing the violin at the “All About the Orchestra” program

IDENTIFIED NEEDS

• Celebration of the City of Fort Worth’s history and culture
• Facilitated experiences to foster community cohesion
• Awareness of the City’s arts and cultural resources

KEY GOALS

• Increase the archives and local history collection’s reach in the community
• Provide programs that celebrate the arts in all forms
• Promote civic engagement
• Expand cultural collaborations with local arts organizations
• Foster community cohesion through education and conversation

Photo at left: The Thaddeus Ford Band performing for the “3rd Thursday Jazz” concert series
In the City of Fort Worth, education is a community affair. From the Mayor’s Office to the chambers of commerce, to the independent school districts, and the Read Fort Worth program, the City is committed to working together for the greater good of the community.

As a people-centered, community-focused organization, the Library is proud to be a partner in education and prides itself on providing residents of all ages with lifelong learning opportunities. Some opportunities include family-centered programming, ESL and citizenship classes, computer assistance and technology help, health and wellness programming, student support, and the summer reading program.

The Library is committed to investing in the personal learning journey of all residents, and staff recognize there is room for growth in this area including opportunities to provide more afterschool and out-of-school-time programming, experiential learning, 21st Century skill development programs, services to meet unique populations such as homeschool families, STEM programs, and interest-driven learning opportunities for all ages including adults and seniors.

“Thanks for the Panther Lab makerspace and the DIY club – the crew at the Northwest library encourage STEM learning for kids and grownups alike. We have enjoyed the classes and the 3D printers.”

- David Boyd

**Identified Needs**

- Access to tools including technology
- Development of multiple types of literacy skills
- Meaningful learning and out-of-school experiences
- Leveraging partnerships
- Support for all styles of learning
- Opportunities for the home-schooled community
- Learning opportunities for adults

**Key Goals**

- Provide opportunities for family-centered learning
- Improve access to tools and technology
- Increase and improve creative learning opportunities
- Increase and expand educational partnerships
- Create opportunities for discovery and self-directed learning
- Offer more programs, workshops, and classes for adults
Books & Reading

The Library recognizes the value of building a culture of reading and a community of readers and is committed to becoming a literary hub for the City of Fort Worth where people of all ages can come together to enjoy books and the reading experience. Readers know that the act of reading can be transformational, and the Library is committed to helping these people branch out and explore new worlds through the pages of a book.

To cultivate a community-wide love of reading, Library staff are dedicated to helping customers find books, creating opportunities for community members to share and talk about books, and hosting events in person and online that center around books. Examples of some events include author talks, lectures, book discussion groups, poetry readings, and a newly designed city-wide summer reading program.

The Library will actively seek new and exciting ways to encourage people to read and to bring the community together in conversation around books and the literary experience.

“The Library is like a haven because it allows people to read books and escape the worries of life.”

- Anonymous teen

“I love all things downloadable but I visit the Fort Worth Public Library for serendipitous discoveries, to pick up holds on items that are not available digitally that I know I want to read, and to see my favorite library staff.”

- Susan Lynn Byerly Smith

**IDENTIFIED NEEDS**
- Increased literacy experiences
- Increased access to early literacy materials
- Shared experiences with shared stories
- A place to discover, imagine, and read for pleasure

**KEY GOALS**
- Serve as the literary hub of Fort Worth
- Increase the use of the collection
- Increase program participation related to books and storytelling

Photo at left: A girl enjoys reading in front of the Northwest Branch Library
The City of Fort Worth is currently undergoing a period of rapid transformation. According to the City’s recently released Economic Development Strategic Plan, “Fort Worth is on track to become the nation’s 12th largest city by 2019, a significant leap from its 2016 ranking as the 16th largest.”

The Fort Worth Public Library is fully committed to contributing to the City’s economic growth, and to supporting the City’s work in this area through programs and services that support the business community. Building on the City’s Economic Development Plan, the Library will expand its role and presence as a key contributor to economic growth, primarily in the areas of small business and entrepreneurial support. The Library is also committed to providing assistance to job seekers and members of the community looking to expand their skillsets in order to be more successful in the workforce.

The Fort Worth Public Library is an integral part of the City’s commitment to creating vital communities. Through pop-up libraries in retail locations, co-locations with other city services, and bringing library programs outside the four walls of the buildings, the Library will utilize the concept of “place-making”, or “capitalizing on the community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people’s health, happiness, and well-being.”

“I’m more me in the library.”

- Kirk Norrid

(IDENTIFIED NEEDS)

• Support and enhancement of the City’s commitment to economic development
• Help create and support vital communities
• Support an individual’s commitment to improvement
• Support job creation and growth

(KEY GOALS)

• Expand workforce development programs across the Library system
• Play a key role in support of small businesses and entrepreneurship
• Transform Library locations into vital community spaces

Photo at left: Children meeting Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price at the Central Library
Employee Empowerment

To realize the work outlined in this strategic plan, the Fort Worth Public Library must find ways to increase internal capacity while improving service excellence. This culture shift will need to foster innovation and risk-taking and provide staff with opportunities to get out in their communities and establish meaningful, local partnerships that will move both the Library and the community forward.

The Library will need to develop and implement a comprehensive customer service program that empowers all staff members to consistently provide outstanding service. The Library will also need to create a work environment where staff members have the equipment, training, and support necessary to plan, implement, and evaluate new ideas and services.

The Library’s infrastructure and processes will also need to be redefined to align with strategic goals and initiatives, and the organization must continue to hone techniques for identifying real community needs, generating feedback, and designing metrics for effective evaluation of strategic initiatives. To understand the needs of the communities they serve, staff will need to proactively engage residents and use pertinent data to customize services and programs.

The Library has two non-profit stakeholder groups that support the Library financially—the Fort Worth Public Library Foundation and the Friends of the Library. The Library will strengthen relationships with these two groups as well as pursue a much higher level of private and grant funding. Ultimately, the Library will be a community-centered, outcomes-based institution with a focus on creating high-quality customer experiences.

“The planning process helped me develop skills to analyze challenges and face solutions ‘Head-on’, to learn how to develop a road map to achieve a dream to a vision, and to be inspired and proud of the work ahead.”

- Virginia Brylinski

Fort Worth Public Library. The Library will strengthen relationships with these two groups as well as pursue a much higher level of private and grant funding.

Ultimately, the Library will be a community-centered, outcomes-based institution with a focus on creating high-quality customer experiences.

**IDENTIFIED NEEDS**

- Aligning capacity with strategy
- Continuous staff development
- Private and grant funding for new programs and services

**KEY GOALS**

- Develop and implement a new employee orientation process
- Provide staff with ongoing learning and development opportunities
- Maximize the allocation of staff resources
- Identify and pursue private and grant funding

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*Photo at left: Staff member conducting a storytelling program for children*

*Staff checking material out for customers at a branch library*
Next Steps

This strategic plan will serve as a guiding document for the Fort Worth Public Library. It is intended to provide staff with the information they need to successfully navigate the forthcoming period of rapid change, growth and transformation the Library will experience over the next three years. This plan is intended to address the Library’s near future goals, as well as the significant shift the organization must undergo to remain relevant in the coming years.

Library leadership will have to do the following to operationalize the strategic plan:

- Plan and carry out the organizational culture shift required to actualize the strategic plan.
- Evolve the service model so that it places a greater emphasis on delivering excellent customer service.
- Focus on building a sustainable operation with increased private and grant funding to support existing and new programs and services.
- Continually assess community goals and needs to ensure Library programs and services are impactful.
- Equip employees with the mindset, tools, and methods to try new things, think outside the box, and take risks to collectively impact the community.
- Create and strengthen relationships with City leadership and community partners to secure mutually-beneficial outcomes.

The following provides a high-level overview of the implementation timeline, and what the Library hopes to achieve with the strategic plan during the next three years.

Year One

During the first year, Library staff will focus on designing a successful implementation plan, developing staff, and engaging with strategic partners. The implementation plan will detail the Library’s impact goals and measurement techniques for each strategic initiative. During this year, the Library will invest in staff development and training, aligning skills and talents with strategic initiatives. The Library will also identify institutional gaps in achieving strategic goals. Leadership will engage in strategic partner conversations. Staff will be encouraged to begin experimentation and prototyping with new programs and services that align with the strategic plan. Some of the large-scale initiatives the Library will launch during year one include expanding hours at most Library locations, reducing barriers to access through eliminating or reducing fines and fees, creating a comprehensive communications plan, and increasing private funding.

Children enjoying a program about dinosaurs
Year Two
During the second year, staff will focus on continued implementation, assessment and designing measurement techniques. Programs and services will be refined, assessed and evaluated for impact. Staff will also test, assess, and evaluate measurement techniques to ensure that the combination of raw data and anecdotal data collection is providing the most useful information to improve each strategic initiative’s impact goals. Year two initiatives will include: expanding the Library’s footprint via alternative service delivery models such as pop-up libraries, book vending machines, and facilities co-located with other city agencies; extensive outreach to take the Library’s services and programs out into the community; and advocating for increased participation in the 2022 bond development cycle.

Year Three
In year three, the Library will continue to refine and expand its services, with an emphasis on leveraging community partnerships, and utilizing data-driven decision making for planning future collections, programs, services, and facilities. Year three initiatives will include participating in the 2022 bond cycle; redesigning the Library’s service offerings in the areas of local history, genealogy and digitization; and launching a large-scale, city-wide arts and culture program.
Children enjoy former City Council Member Danny Scarth reading to them

Community member teaching children in the library

Photo at left: Former City Council Member Zim Zimmerman reading to children in the Library
Participants

Special thanks to the Library Leadership Team and the Staff Working Group for their hard work and dedication to this project. These dedicated staff members analyzed staff and community input, assisted in developing strategic priorities, and designed future visions for strategic initiatives. Applying the service design techniques learned during this process, this group will lead the organization into its dynamic future. Participants represent a diverse cross-section of the entire organization.

LIBRARY LEADERSHIP TEAM
Manya Shorr, Library Director
Marilyn Marvin, Assistant Library Director, System-wide Services
Michele Gorman, Assistant Library Director, Public Services
Osei Baffour, Regional Manager, Public Services Administration
Shelia Barnett, Regional Manager, Central Region
Aaron Cummins, Administrative Services Manager
Theresa Davis, Communications Manager
Deborah Duke, Collection Management Manager
Barbara Henderson, Regional Manager, South Region
Michelle Lee, Youth Services Manager
Paul Orr, Management Analyst II
Tim Shidal, Senior Business Process Analyst
L.G. Swift, Regional Manager, North Region
Deanna Wright, Facilities Supervisor
Jabari Jones, Central Library Genealogy, Local History and Archives Department
Tracy Lane, COOL Branch Library
Robert Chase LaRiviere, Wedgwood Branch Library
Linda Le, Communications Department
Ronni Marich, East Berry Branch Library
Erin McCright, Southwest Regional Library
Maricela Mendoza, System-wide Youth Services, Early Childhood Matters
Deniece Middlebrooks, Southwest Regional Library
Teresa Myers, System-wide Youth Services, Early Childhood Matters
Coco Parrish, Collection Management Department
Sylvia Polk, East Regional Library
Rosie Rangel, System-wide Youth Services, Early Childhood Matters
Jonathan Rubio, Northside Branch Library
Trimaine Sipho, Central Library Circulation Department
Gilbert Smith, Northwest Regional Library
Julie Terrell-Ford, Summerglen Branch Library
Olivia Todd, System-wide Youth Services Department
Beth Walters, Collection Management Department
Evelyn Williams, Central Library Circulation Department
Shirley Wise, East Regional Library
Deanna Wright, Facilities

STAFF WORKING GROUP
Rogelio Alvarado, Central Library Adult Services Department
Sonia Alvarez, Seminary South Branch Library
Cecilia Bailey, BOLD Branch Library
Virginia Brylinski, Central Library/System-wide Access Services
Maki Carter, East Regional Library
Rebecca Conkle, Diamond Hill-Jarvis Branch Library
Aaron Cummins, Administrative Services
Victor Gonzalez Hernandez, Ella Mae Shamblee Branch Library

PROJECT MANAGERS
Paul Orr, Lead
Teresa Myers, Assistant
Resource Guide

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http://fortworthtexas.gov/comprehensiveplan/current/

City of Fort Worth Economic Development Plan, December 2017
http://fortworthtexas.gov/edplan/

Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce: Fortify - A Four Year Strategic Plan

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