

Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation, Inc.

Strategic Plan

2020-2025

The Vannie E. Cook, Jr. Cancer Foundation serves the needs of South Texas children by supporting cancer-related patient care services, programs, research, and education.





WHO WE ARE

Saving Our Children. Healing Our Families.

For 47 years, the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation has served the Rio Grande Valley by providing financial resources and support for cancer treatment, research, and education. Since 2001, the Foundation has exclusively supported the Vannie E. Cook Children's Cancer and Hematology Clinic in McAllen, Texas.

This successful partnership, in a joint effort with Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine, has facilitated care for thousands of children and their families close to home and regardless of their ability to pay and provided an important level of financial peace-of-mind to the Clinic's leadership and medical staff. The Foundation's support has allowed the Clinic to concentrate their efforts in providing the highest level care without the worry of ever-increasing overhead expenses and facilities maintenance costs. Assistance with funding for patient care and services is also provided by the Foundation.

As we look forward to the next five years our Leadership and Board of Directors pledge their commitment to build a stronger and sustainable Foundation and create an endowment that will fund pediatric cancer and hematology treatment and exceptional care for generations to come.

This plan is ambitious and far-reaching but has one simple goal: to be a partner in bringing the power of hope, care, and cures to as many children and their families as possible.



Message from the Executive Director

It is with great pride that the Board of Directors and administration of the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation, Inc. introduce its strategic plan for 2020-2025. The plan builds on the Foundation's longstanding mission to serve the needs of South Texas children by supporting cancer-related patient care services, programs, research and education.

This strategic plan is the result of many months of assessing, discussing, and planning for the future. It identifies organizational priorities, sets goals and outlines plans to achieve them. The strategic plan serves as a guide for current and future leadership to promote sound fiscal and organizational sustainability and support programs to benefit the children and families we serve in the community.

This plan is a working document which will be carefully monitored, routinely evaluated and updated as needed to deliver on the strategic objectives identified and the ongoing implementation process.

I am thankful to the Board of Directors and Lee + Associates for the unwavering commitment and input to this important process. I thank our many donors and stakeholders for their support throughout the years and look forward to sharing our future achievements.

Sincerely,

Laura Martinez Ilgun
Executive Director



From the Board Chair

I am pleased to introduce you to the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation's 2020-2025 strategic plan.

The Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation has a long history of supporting cancer care and treatment in South Texas. Its latest initiative is a collaborative partnership with Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine. This partnership has addressed a critical need for pediatric cancer and hematology services in the region. With the opening of the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Children's Cancer and Hematology Clinic in 2001, local children battling cancer or serious blood diseases have access to care of the highest quality delivered in a state-of-the-art facility, close to home. With extensive support from the Foundation, the clinic medical team has seen over 10,000 young patients—children who otherwise would have had to travel long distances for a chance at life.

As we focus on our mission and evaluate our values, objectives, and goals as outlined in the strategic plan, our Executive Director and Board of Directors with the guidance of Lee + Associates have created a clear plan that guides us and prepares us for long-term growth and sustainability.

Voices from our board members, staff, and stakeholders helped to create, shape, and direct this plan. We appreciate their thoughtful input and are committed to enhancing their trust and confidence as we implement this blueprint for the future of the Foundation and the many children we serve.

Sincerely,

Kathy C. Collins
Board Chair



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS

Creating greater opportunity to treat and cure childhood cancer in the Rio Grande Valley.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities focus the goals for the Foundation's strategic plan. Each priority will help us continue to make a positive impact on pediatric cancer care and treatment.

Develop unique identities for the Foundation and the Clinic

Succession Planning for operational excellence

Foster Board excellence to uphold legacy

Strengthen Sustainability

STRATEGIC GOALS

- 1 Strengthen and develop the Board to ensure committed, engaged, and active members for the continuation of its legacy for generations to come.
- 2 Focus efforts on creating a diversified development plan with particular emphasis on building an endowment to solidify the Foundation's sustainability and commitment to provide support to the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer and Hematology Clinic.
- 3 Develop a strategy for clarity and mutuality between the Foundation and the Clinic to elevate and strengthen their working relationship.
- 4 Create a marketing and communications campaign to educate and engage current and potential stakeholders about the Foundation and its mission.
- 5 Promote organizational sustainability by creating a succession plan for key staff members and a staffing plan to support future growth.

This strategic plan serves as a guide to promote sound fiscal and organizational sustainability and support programs to benefit the children and families we serve.

PLANNING OVERVIEW

The Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation developed this strategic plan with assistance from Lee + Associates, a nonprofit consulting firm in San Antonio, Texas. The work and deliberation of the Planning Committee and Executive Director produced the strategic goals and objectives for the next five years, along with an operations plan to ensure accountability for implementation. This strategic plan is a key step toward continued success and provides the Foundation with a clear roadmap for strengthening organizational capacity and sustainability.

This plan was developed with involvement and guidance from a Strategic Planning Committee composed of members of the Board and the organization's Executive Director. The Committee met twice, first to reflect on the vision of the organization and develop strategic priorities, and later to determine the strategic goals to govern the strategic plan. The Planning Committee also assessed the mission statement during the visioning session.

The Foundation sought the voice and opinion of its stakeholders, including the Board, staff of both the Foundation and the Clinic, community partners, donors and funders. Based on input from its stakeholders, this plan focuses the Foundation's vision and direction towards creating greater impact in the communities it serves.

The survey results and visioning report were presented at the second Strategic Planning Committee session. The data gathered helped the group assess both the challenges and opportunities that the Foundation is likely to face over the next five years and set the context for the choices reflected in this strategic plan.

Lee + Associates also conducted a focused organizational scan to review specific operational aspects important to the Executive Director. Recommendations for improvement were reviewed in detail, and assistance for development of particular systems was given.

This plan will provide direction for the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation as it focuses over the next five years upon achieving greater financial support for the Clinic and other entities who work arduously to treat and eradicate childhood cancer.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation was incorporated in 1972 to operate the Rio Grande Cancer Treatment Center. The Center provided oncology care and treatment to residents of the Rio Grande Valley and Northern Mexico as an extension of M.D. Anderson and the Tumor Institute in Houston. When competing oncology programs entered the community in 1994, the Center closed its doors and leased the building until 2000. It was then that the Board of Directors realized a critical unmet need for local pediatric cancer care. Parents had little option up to this time other than to leave the comfort of family and friends to seek treatment hundreds of miles away in Corpus Christi, San Antonio or Houston.

With this realization in mind, saving children close to home became a top priority for the Board. In 2001, the Foundation forged a strategic collaboration with Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital in Houston by opening the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Children's Cancer and Hematology Clinic. **For the first time ever, full-time, comprehensive pediatric cancer care was available in this medically underserved region with a predominantly low-income, Hispanic and indigent patient population.** Since then, the sole purpose of the Foundation has been to support the Clinic, ensuring that South Texas children have access to the most up-to-date care and treatment available, delivered locally.

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MISSION IN ACTION

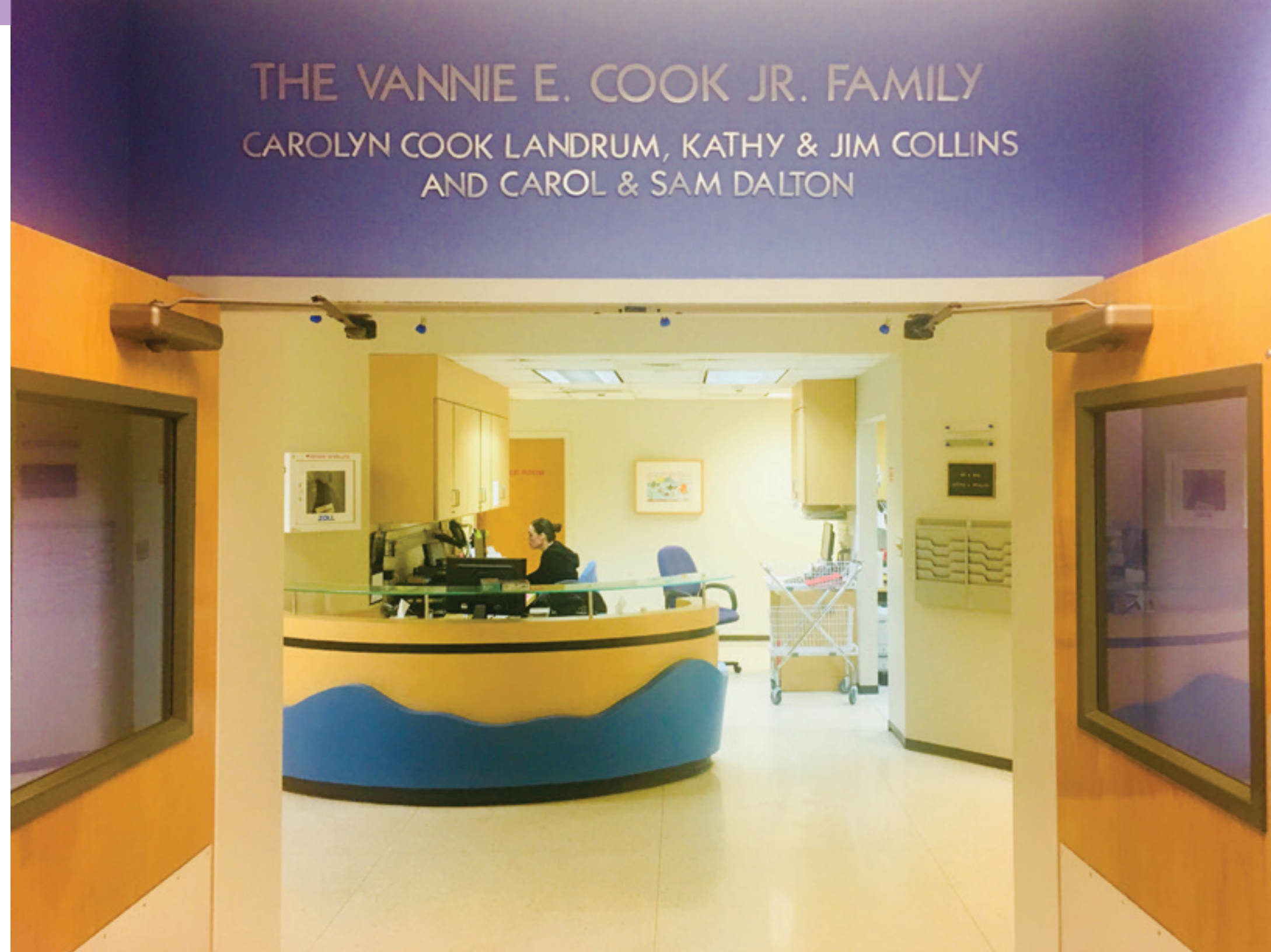
With the help of the Foundation, the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Children's Cancer & Hematology Clinic has become the premier facility in South Texas for the care and treatment of pediatric oncology and hematology.

In addition to diagnostic services and leading-edge therapies for pediatric cancer, the Clinic provides other programs vital for children and their families, including a Psychosocial Support Program; a Long-Term Survivor Program; In-House Laboratory Services; and Childhood Cancer Epidemiology and Prevention Research. In 2016, the Clinic was credentialed by the National Children's Oncology Group to enroll patients in Clinical Trials in the hope of extending lives and someday finding a cure.

In the 20 years of partnership between the Foundation and Clinic, the Clinic staff has cared for more than 10,000 patients—more than four times the patient demand originally anticipated. Eighty-five percent of Clinic patients are low-income or indigent and more than 90% are of Hispanic heritage. Patients come from all over the Rio Grande Valley, northern Mexico, and as far away as Laredo.

The Clinic's programs are strengthened by its partnership with Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Cancer Center in Houston, giving the medical staff access to the latest comprehensive support services and innovative therapies. Both institutions are recognized internationally for their expertise and breakthrough developments in the treatment of childhood cancer, blood disorders, and many other diseases.

The decision in 2000 by the Foundation's Board to solely fund the Clinic has helped deliver top-tier cancer care to the most vulnerable in the Rio Grande Valley.





STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Strengthen and develop the Board to ensure committed, engaged, and active members for the continuation of its legacy for generations to come.

GOAL OVERVIEW

The Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation is in the enviable position of possessing a Board of Directors whose members genuinely value both the organization and their board service. To many, serving on the Board is an honor, both because of alignment with the mission and because of the opportunity to join with esteemed colleagues.

At the same time, the Board faces a challenge in common with many other nonprofits: how to engage its members in meaningful work, and how to build a Board that is reflective of the community at large.

The size of the Board makes structured committee work a natural venue for increasing engagement. Involving members in a more meaningful way in fund development, board governance, finance, and periodic ad hoc issues will yield results both individually and organizationally.

And, while it is not necessary at this time to add Board members for the sake of numbers, a mindful, intentional process aimed at sustaining Board diversity in geographic area, age, gender, ethnicity, skillsets and other variables will place the Foundation on a sound footing for its future.



STRATEGIC GOAL 2

Focus efforts on creating a diversified development plan with particular emphasis on building an endowment to solidify the Foundation's sustainability and commitment to provide support to the Clinic.

GOAL OVERVIEW

The Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation continues with an eye toward meeting long-term community needs by providing support for necessary pediatric cancer care to the Rio Grande Valley. In that context, it has raised funds, invested them, and grown over the years with the goal of generating revenue for that support. Recent market trends, however, have made it difficult for the invested funds to generate the income desired for significant clinic support. Additionally, since the investment portfolio is a "quasi" endowment (so designated by the board, not donors), the organization has withdrawn portions of the principal for various pressing needs from time to time.

In this context, building a true endowment (and formalizing its identity) makes sense in light of long-term sustainability, allowing an elevated and steady commitment to provide operating support to the Clinic. The intentional creation of such an entity could be used to engage various publics and build support.

As well, a diversified development plan to strategically tap other sources of annual fundraising will strengthen the organization and its current ability to fulfill its mission. This could include major gifts, tribute and legacy giving, annual giving and donor giving clubs, grant seeking, and special events.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3

Develop a strategy for clarity and mutuality between the Foundation and the Clinic to elevate and strengthen their working relationship.

GOAL OVERVIEW

By virtue of several shared goals, including access to cancer treatment, research, and education for Rio Grande Valley children and their families, the Foundation and the Clinic are often confused as being one and the same; they are not. Each organization is a separate entity with distinct missions, visions, and strategic directions. The Clinic operates as an extension of Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston, and each organization works diligently toward ensuring its stakeholder needs are met and sustainability is reached.

This goal will focus efforts to build on an already critical partnership and integrate a mutually beneficial and synergistic relationship, especially in fund development: exploring opportunities and creating strategies to leverage charitable giving for both the Foundation and the Clinic.



STRATEGIC GOAL 4

Create a marketing and communications campaign to educate and engage current and potential stakeholders about the Foundation and its mission.

GOAL OVERVIEW

The Foundation understands the opportunity to inspire greater stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and support by enhancing understanding of its mission and purpose. Finding more effective ways to affirm the Foundation’s identity, through intentional public awareness, communications, and marketing campaigns, will be sought.

Better public and stakeholder understanding of the Foundation’s mission will create meaningful and lasting community engagement, including greater financial support from funders and donors. Our mission to serve the needs of South Texas children by supporting cancer-related patient care services, research, and education can be fully realized if there is a process of community education and clarity in messaging about who we are and what we do.





STRATEGIC GOAL 5

Promote organizational sustainability by creating a succession plan for key staff members and a staffing plan to support future growth.

GOAL OVERVIEW

The Foundation has had a long, stable, and successful history of Executive Leadership. Organizational sustainability involves a combination of mission-centered leadership and enough staffing to support the implementation of strategy, continuity of stakeholder engagement and stewardship, and accountability to carry out planned organizational growth. A succession plan will thoughtfully forge a path to identify, cultivate, and select the next generation of leadership.

As the Foundation works toward achievement of the goals set forth in this plan, the addition of staff will likely be necessary. Building upon the existing commitment and dedication of its staff, the Foundation will focus efforts to ensure adequate human resources are in place to support the Foundation's future growth and lasting community impact.



Vision to Reality

THE OPERATIONS PLAN

Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation has developed an operations plan to ensure timely implementation of strategic goals and objectives and imbue accountability throughout the process.

The operations plan should remain flexible, understanding that objectives may change based on external and internal environmental conditions. Goals should remain as approved by the Board over the duration of the five-year period of the Strategic Plan. Staff will finalize the operations plan with responsible parties and timelines.



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