Key Metrics for Evaluating Participatory Budgeting (v1.1): A Toolkit for Evaluators and Implementers

Contents

Toolkit Attachments

Key PB Metrics Research Instruments:
- o Idea Collection Participant Survey Template
- o Voter Survey Template
- o Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers

See Also

Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments

Comments

With any questions or feedback, please contact Jake at Participatory Budgeting Project, jake@participatorybudgeting.org.

Introduction

Research and evaluation has been a critical component of the expansion and improvement of participatory budgeting (PB) since it first came to North America in the early 2000s. Local evaluators and researchers took on the task documenting how PB unfolded locally to show what's working and what can be improved. This information has been used to make the case for why PB should be continued and expanded, based on its impacts on local communities and democracy.

In addition to the hard work of local evaluators, a shared framework of tools and strategies for data collection and sharing made it possible to tell the story of the growth of PB across North America - as well as make it a little easier in the process. It allowed Public Agenda to release reports in 2015 and 2016, showing the rapid growth of PB, as well as how it engaged new communities in their local democracy.

This research is guided by several questions about PB's impacts:

Impacts on Civic and Political Life:
a) To what extent does PB engage a significant and growing number of residents, including those who cannot or do not participate in mainstream political life? *(Metrics 1, 7, 8, 9, 10).*
b) To what extent does PB foster collaboration between civil society organizations and government? *(Metric 3)*
c) Is PB associated with elected officials' political careers? *(Metric 11)*

Impacts on Inclusion and Equity:
a) Is PB engaging traditionally marginalized communities? *(Metric 2, 12)*
b) Through what means does PB facilitate participation? *(Metric 4)*
c) Is PB fostering equitable distribution of resources? *(Metric 13)*

Impacts on Government:
a) How are the number of PB processes and dollar amounts allocated to PB changing from year to year? *(Metrics 5, 6)*
b) What is the implementation rate of winning PB projects? *(Metric 14)*
c) Are additional resources being allocated to projects or needs identified through PB? *(Metric 15)*
d) What is the cost to government of implementing PB? *(Metric 16)*

To answer these questions, we have developed a set of *Key Metrics*. The Key Metrics are a set of shared tools and measurements to allow for comparability across PB processes. With shared definitions and methodologies, researchers don't have to start from scratch - they can use tools that have already been created, and which can be used to make comparisons between other PB processes. There are two types of metrics:

- <u>Core Metrics</u> can be used to compare growth of PB across North America. They track participation, as well as some of the institutional factors that can help increase it. These metrics can be collected through records kept throughout the process, or by short surveys of participants.
- <u>Advanced Metrics</u> These measures generally require a more substantial survey of participants, or additional investigation of other data sources.

All of the metrics are important and can be used to help improve PB and make the case for why it should be expanded. e strongly encourage all PB processes to collect and share the Core Metrics and to fill out the Evaluator Questionnaire. Advanced Metrics should be collected when time and capacity render them feasible.

For all metrics, evaluators are strongly encouraged to use the Key Metrics framework and tools, to ensure comparability across PB processes.

This toolkit includes only those metrics defined as the Key Metrics, as well as research instruments to help with data collection and comparability.

For evaluators who are interested in further data collection including the impact and advanced metrics, such as conducting qualitative interviews with participants and observing meetings, we have compiled a selection of additional research instrument templates. These instruments have been used previously in PB evaluations in the U.S. They do not directly inform the key PB metrics, but local evaluators may find them useful as they develop additional research questions. This *<u>Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments</u>* currently includes *additional demographic questions for participant surveys, sample budget delegate surveys, qualitative interview guides* and *sample meeting observation sheets*.

How to Read the Key PB Metrics

The PB Metrics, outlined in the rest of this document, describe PB's potential impacts. They are defined as "core" or "advanced" metrics based on demonstrated ability to collect data for the metrics to date. Each metric is described with:

- A *title* and a *description* of how it contributes to a better understanding of PB
- The specific way that the primary metric is *measured*
- A description of the *sub-metrics*, and how they are *measured*
- Additionally, some metrics include further *notes* on measurement and analysis issue.

Summary Table of Key PB Metrics

Key Metric	Description	Measurement (Local Evaluators)	Sub-metric	Impact Categories	Original Metric #
		CORE METRICS			
1. # of PB participants	Indicates PB's reach and ability to engage the targeted population.	# of unique participants throughout the PB process, in most cases this will be the same as # of voters	# of PB voters, # of volunteers (including idea collection and other meetings), participants as % of area population	Civic and Political Life	1
2. % of PB participants who are people of color	Along with metric 12, indicates PB's potential to engage communities that are marginalized in the traditional political process.	Responses to a survey of voters, asking for racial identity	% of PB voters who are people of color, % of volunteers who are people of color, % of area's population who are people of color	Inclusion and Equity	8
3. # of nongovernmental and community based organizations involved in PB	Indicates the extent to which PB engages civil society and fosters collaborations between civic society and local government.	# and names of organizations represented in steering and district committees, helped with outreach, hosted meetings, etc.		Civic and Political Life	6
4. # of community events and vote sites	Captures aspects of the process implementation that increase access during the idea collection phase, the project development phase and the voting phase.	Sum of all community events in a process, plus the # of in-person voting locations	# of idea collection events, # of voting locations	Inclusion and Equity	9
5. # of total PB processes	Tracks growth and sustainability in PB processes over time. It will track the # of processes implemented each year overall and track the # and proportion of individual PB processes that continue vs. discontinue over time	Total # of active PB processes in a given year	# of new PB processes, # of continued PB processes, # of discontinued PB processes	Government	11
6. Amount of funds allocated to PB Projects	Tracks the money allocated through PB in any one year. It indicates the actual amount of money committed to PB projects by officials.		% of funds allocated to PB projects, type of funding	Government	12

		ADVANCED METRICS			
7. % of PB voters who are eligible to vote, but did not vote in most recent election	Indicates PB's potential to engage residents who do not participate in the mainstream political process.	Voter surveys		Civic and Political Life	2
8. % of PB voters who are ineligible to vote in local elections	Indicates PB's potential to engage people who are excluded from standard forms of political participation.	Voter surveys		Civic and Political Life	3
9. % of participants who report prior civic engagement or participation	Indicates PB's potential to attract otherwise less civically engaged residents.	Voter surveys		Civic and Political Life	4
10. % of participants who report being new or returning to PB	Indicates both growth and retention of PB participants and various patterns of participation over time.	Voter surveys		Civic and Political Life	5
11. % of elected officials re-elected	Help to assess over time PB's association with officials' political careers.	The # of elected officials re-elected after PB	Media	Civic and Political Life	7
12. % of participants who are of low household income	Indicates PB's potential to engage communities that are marginalized in the traditional political process.	Voter surveys	% of voters who are low household income, % of volunteers who are low household income	Inclusion and Equity	8
13. Allocation of PB funds by projects type	Describes how PB funds get allocated across types of projects.	% of PB funds allocated by the following project types	Allocation of comparable funds outside of PB	Inclusion and Equity	10
14. % of projects completed within 3 years	Highlights the # and % of winning ballot projects that are completed within a three-year time frame	% of projects fully implemented within 3 years		Government	13
15. Amount of additional money allocated to project and needs identified through PB	Indicate PB's potential to bring additional funds to communities and/or to allocate funds differently by raising the importance of and issue.	Amount of money allocated, beyond winning ballot items		Government	14
16. Dollar amount spent on PB implementation	Makes transparent implementation costs	Total dollar amount spent by agencies to execute a PB process		Government	15

Detailed Descriptions of Key Metrics

1. Number of PB participants

CORE	Civic and Political Life

Description: This metric indicates PB's reach and ability to engage the targeted population.

Measurement: # of unique participants throughout the PB process. <u>In most cases this will be the same as # of voters</u> (described below).

If you have the ability to track an individual's participation at different stages of the process (idea collection, delegates, voting, etc), then you can have a more accurate view of the type of participation in your process. Otherwise, use the total number of voters in the final ballot.

Sub-metrics:

a. *Number of PB voters*
   i. *Measurement: a count of the number of total unique voters in your PB process.*
b. *Number of volunteers*
   i. *Measurement: a count of the number of unique volunteers throughout a PB process.*
      1. *A "volunteer" is anyone that helps at a non-voting stage of the process. This can be an idea collection participant, a steering committee member, an outreach volunteer, or others. Since voting is very different from other types of PB volunteering, the better you can track this for your process, the better picture you will have of the type of engagement your PB process has.*
c. *Participants as percent of area population*
   i. *Measurement: Participants divided by the total area population, as reported by the Census.*

Notes:

The better you can track detailed participation, the better you can understand the depth of engagement with PB. Here are some other numbers you can collect relatively easily to help give you a picture of your local process:
- # of participants at idea collection assemblies and other idea collection events (e.g., sign-up sheets or head counts)
- # of people submitting ideas online (if applicable)
- # of *active* budget delegates/community representatives/change agents (e.g., as reported by facilitators)
- # of online versus in-person voters

2. Percent of PB participants who are people of color

CORE	Inclusion and Equity

Description: This metric and Metric 12 indicates PB's potential to engage communities that are marginalized in the traditional political process due to race or ethnicity.

Measurement: Responses to a survey of voters, asking for racial identity.

Sub-metrics:

a. *Percent of PB voters who are people of color*
   i. *Measurement: Percent of Voter survey respondents who indicate something other than "white" as their racial identity. Include those who indicate "white" in conjunction with other racial identities.*
b. *Percent of volunteers who are people of color*
   i. *Measurement: Percent of (Idea Collection/Budget Delegate) Participant survey respondents (or other surveys you may administer) who indicate something other than "white" as their racial identity. Include those who indicate "white" in conjunction with other racial identities.*
c. *Percent of area's population who are people of color*
   i. *Measurement: Census data for the district/city where the specific PB process is being implemented. This number will be the share of the area's population who are not "white alone".*

Notes:

Collecting demographic information at different stages of the process is very useful to see if there are differences as different stages of participation.

In most cases, racial identity will not be available for *all* participants, so you will have to get surveys from a *sample* of participants. This means that these numbers will be *estimates* of the total percent of people of color participating in PB. See the Participant Surveys Template for suggested racial categories for your survey.

For Census data, check if the district or city has these numbers available and calculated for the area. If not, you can find the information at the US Census American FactFinder. Table "DP05" provides detailed demographic information, and you can select the relevant geography.

Additional demographic questions: Some local evaluators have included additional demographic questions on their idea collection participant and voter surveys to assess participation of traditionally marginalized communities, including questions about their primary language use, country of origin, etc. The *Additional Demographic Questions for PB Participant Surveys* document in the *Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments* includes examples of these questions.

3. Number of nongovernmental and community-based organizations involved in PB

CORE	Civic and Political Life

Description: This metric indicates the extent to which PB engages civil society and fosters collaborations between civic society and local government. It is also an indicator of variation in how processes are implemented. Organizations may include nonprofits, community groups, religious institutions, business improvement districts, parent-teacher associations, political clubs, etc.

Measurement: # and names of organizations represented in steering and district committees and that helped with outreach—we recommend including only organizations that district/city/county offices partnered with (through contracts and on a volunteer basis) for the purpose of outreach, including organizations that hosted an idea collection meeting or were a voting site

Notes:

> Why limit the count of organizations involved in outreach only to those who formally partner with city staff? This count provides an indicator of the degree to which civil society and local government collaborate on and share efforts around the implementation of PB. Greater collaboration may be associated with greater sustainability of PB overtime and with better outcomes. It is important to note however that this fairly narrow count of nongovernmental and community-based organizations involved in outreach is likely to underestimate the actual involvement of civil society in PB.

4. Number of community events and vote sites

CORE	Inclusion and Equity

Description: A metric that captures aspects of the process implementation that increase access during the idea collection phase, the project development phase and the voting phase.

Measurement: Sum of all community events in a process, plus the number of in-person voting locations

Sub-metrics:

    a. *Number of idea collection events*
        i. *Measurement: Number of idea collection events*
    b. *Number of voting locations*
        i. *Measurement: Number of in-person voting locations*

Notes:

You can also track number of mobile voting locations, and whether online participation (voting/idea collection/etc.) was available.

Surveys can also be used to identify how participants heard about PB (See the Participant Survey template for wording)

Additional accessibility measures: Some local evaluators have used additional accessibility measures in the past, such as whether or not idea collection events had language translation, child care, food, transportation, etc. (For example, PBNYC 2014-15 used an idea collection event observation sheet that included these and other questions.) The *Event Observation Sheets* included in the *Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments* include these measures.

5. Total number of PB processes

CORE	Government

Description: This metric tracks growth and sustainability in PB processes over time. It will track the number of processes implemented each year overall and track the number and proportion of individual PB processes that continue vs. discontinue over time.

Measurement: Total number of active PB processes in a given year

Sub-metrics:

a. *Number of new PB processes*
   i. *Measurement: Number of jurisdictions having a vote in their first cycle in a given year*
b. *Number of continued PB processes*
   i. *Measurement: Number of jurisdictions having a vote for their second or more cycle in a given year*
c. *Number of discontinued PB processes*
   i. *Measurement: Number of jurisdictions which did not have a vote in a year, when they had a vote in the previous year*

Notes:

Given that PB processes span multiple months, to maintain consistency the date of the final vote is used to specify when a process occurs.

6. Amount of funds allocated to PB projects

CORE	Government

Description: This metric tracks the money allocated through PB in any one year. It indicates the actual amount of money committed to PB projects by officials—can be compared with the amount spent on implementation (Metric 16).

Sub-metrics:

a. *Percent of funds allocated to PB projects*
    i. *Measurement: The total amount allocated divided by the total size of the source pot of money*
b. *Type of funding*
    i. *Measurement: Whether the funds are capital or operations funding, or other.*

Notes:

The denominator for this fraction can vary. For example, is it an individual city council member's discretionary budget? All councilmember discretionary money in a city? A city's entire capital budget? Make sure to specify which denominator you're using.

Comparing relative PB allocations across sites: One could divide the exact $ amount allocated to PB by the total population size in respective PB districts, cities or counties.

7. Percent of PB voters who are eligible to vote, but did not vote in the most recent election.

ADVANCED	Civic and Political Life

Description: This metric indicates PB's potential to engage residents who do not participate in the mainstream political process.

Measurement: From a survey of voters. The following survey question is suggested:

> *Did you vote in the [specify year and type of last local election]?*
>
> ❏ *I am not eligible to vote*
> ❏ *No, I did not vote, but I am eligible to vote*
> ❏ *Yes, I voted*
> ❏ *I am not sure*

Notes:

Some other data to consider that might help give this number context, that you can report:

- The "citizen voting age population" (CVAP) - the actual number of eligible voters in your district
- The voter turnout in recent elections.

Depending on the PB voter verification process and what data you have access to, you can try matching PB voters with the general Voter File to analyze voter history.

Note, these measures and extra data may not align with your PB process's voter eligibility rules if, for example, people who are non-residents but work in the district are eligible to vote.

8. Percent of PB voters who are ineligible to vote in local elections.

ADVANCED	Civic and Political Life

Description: This metric indicates PB's potential to engage people who are excluded from standard forms of political participation owing to age, immigration status or other reasons.

Measurement: From a survey of voters. The following survey question is suggested:

Did you vote in the [specify year and type of last local election]?

- ❏ *I am not eligible to vote*
- ❏ *No, I did not vote, but I am eligible to vote*
- ❏ *Yes, I voted*
- ❏ *I am not sure*

Notes:

This metric is important because it shows how much PB brings people who, for a variety of reasons, haven't been involved in the traditional democratic process. It's important to ask it as a survey question, because even though many PB processes are officially open to many otherwise ineligible voters (due to age, citizenship status, criminal background, etc), we don't know if they actually participate in PB.

Additional question regarding ineligibility to vote in local elections: Some local evaluators have included a question on their voter surveys about the *reason* why a PB voter may not be eligible to vote in local elections (such as age, immigration status, etc.). (For example, these questions were included on voter surveys in PBNYC 2014-15 and Chicago 2014-15.) The *Additional Demographic Questions for PB Participant Surveys* document in the Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments includes this question.

9. Percent of participants who report prior civic engagement or participation.

ADVANCED	Civic and Political Life

Description: This metric indicates PB's potential to attract otherwise less civically engaged residents.

Measurement: From a survey of voters. The following survey question is suggested:

> *In the past 12 months, have you worked with other people in your neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition in your community, not including work you may have done related to participatory budgeting?*
>
> ❏ *Yes, I have done that*
> ❏ *No, I have not done that*
> ❏ *I am not sure*

10. Percent of participants who report being new or returning to PB

ADVANCED	Civic and Political Life

Description: This metric indicates both growth and retention of PB participants and various patterns of participation over time. (This metric is not applicable to PB processes in their inaugural cycle.)

Measurement: From a survey of voters. The following survey question is suggested:

> *Is this the first time you have voted in a participatory budgeting process, or did you vote in a participatory budgeting process last year [if district/city/county has a longer history of PB: a previous year]?*
>
> ❑ *First time*
> ❑ *I voted in participatory budgeting last year [in a previous year]*
> ❑ *I am not sure*

Notes:

You can also ask a similar question of idea collection participants, or people at other phases of the PB process. Since voting is one of the less time-consuming phases of PB, it would be important to know if people come back after being involved in a deeper way with PB.

Here's some suggested wording if you were to ask a similar question of <u>idea collection participants</u>:

> *Did you vote or participate in any way in participatory budgeting last year [if district/city/county has a longer history of PB: a previous year]?*
>
> ❑ *Yes*
> ❑ *No*
> ❑ *I am not sure*

11. Percent of elected officials re-elected.

ADVANCED	Civic and Political Life

Description: This metric can help to assess over time PB's association with officials' political careers.

Measurement: The number of elected officials who are re-elected after implementing PB, divided by the total number of elected officials implementing PB, in a particular geography and over a particular period of time

Notes:

    This metric could be calculated separately for a city, region, country, or continent.

    Special consideration should be paid to:

- Term limits for an office
- Whether the elected official ran again
- Whether the elected official ran for a different office
- How competitive an elective office is (measured by vote share, number of candidates, etc)
- Local differences between primary and general elections
- Other factors that might over/under-state the re-election rate of elected officials in a particular area.

12. Percent of participants who are of low household income.

ADVANCED	Inclusion and Equity

Description: This metric indicates PB's potential to engage communities that are marginalized in the traditional political process due to socio-economic status.

Measurement: From a survey. The following question is suggested:

> *What was your total household income in [LAST YEAR]:*
> ❏ *Under $10,000*
> ❏ *$10,000–$24,999*
> ❏ *$25,000–$49,999*
> ❏ *$50,000–$74,999*
> ❏ *$75,000–$99,999*
> ❏ *$100,000 or more*

Sub-Metrics:
   a. Percent of voters who are of low household income
      i. Measurement: The above question wording, on a survey for voters.
   b. Percent of volunteers who are of low household income
      i. Measurement: The above question wording, on a survey for idea collection participants, budget delegates, or other volunteers/participants throughout your PB process

Notes:

Collecting socioeconomic status information at different stages of the process is very useful to see if there are differences as different stages of participation.

In most cases, income will not be available for all participants, so you will have to get surveys from a sample of participants. This means that these numbers will be estimates of the total percent of low household income participants in PB.

With detailed survey data, you can calculate cross tabulations with other Key Metrics for more refined information (eg. "what percent of PB participants are low household income AND people of color?)

You may also wish to collect data on educational background and age, as these can help add context to the income data. The following survey questions are suggested:

> *Highest level of education:*
>
> ❏ *Less than high school diploma*
> ❏ *High school diploma, GED or equivalent*
> ❏ *Some college, no degree*
> ❏ *Associate's degree*

❏ *Bachelor's degree*
❏ *Graduate or professional degree*

What is your age?

❏ *Under 18*
❏ *18–19*
❏ *20–24*
❏ *25–34*
❏ *35–44*
❏ *45–54*
❏ *55–64*
❏ *65+*

To make comparisons to the rest of your area, check if the district or city has these numbers available and calculated for the area. If not, you can find the information at the US Census American FactFinder. Table "DP03" provides detailed household income, and you can select the relevant geography. Table "S1501" has information on education, and Table "S0101" has information on age.

13. Allocation of PB funds by project type.

ADVANCED	Inclusion and Equity

Description: This metric describes how PB funds get allocated across types of projects. It is one step toward studying differences in the allocation of funds through PB compared with traditional methods of allocation and one step toward considering equity in the distribution of PB funds. The metric can also highlight differences between the distribution of ballot items across project types and the distribution of winning projects across project types (e.g., are winning projects representative of the distribution of projects that are on the ballot or not?).

Measurement: Percent of PB funds allocated by the following project types:
- Culture & Arts
- Libraries
- Community & Social Services
- Schools
- Parks & Recreation
- Streets & Sidewalks
- Transportation & Traffic

Sub-metric:
   a. *Allocation of comparable funds outside of PB*
      i. *Measurement: Comparison of funding expenditures using the same categories above, prior to PB.*

Notes:

This metric is to see if PB allocates money differently than other budget methods. You will need to select an original budget to compare it to. This should be the same budget used for *Metric 6a.*

You can gather additional information by making the same comparisons to:
- % of winning PB project by project category
- % of PB ballot items by project category
- % of money proposed in each project category (based on ballot items)

Analyzing spatial equity: Another way to think about project diversity and equity is to consider where in the community projects are located and whether the location benefits some community members more than others. Such a spatial equity project would use geographers' and planners' tools to estimate characteristics of the population most likely to benefit from the project. That can then be compared with spatial analyses of projects funded prior to PB or with projects funded in matched comparison districts/cities/counties.

14. Percent of projects completed within 3 years.

ADVANCED	Government

Description: This metric highlights the number and percentage of winning ballot projects (i.e., ballot projects that are awarded funding from the pot of money dedicated to PB) that are completed within a -year time frame (and every year thereafter).

Measurement: Number of projects fully implemented within 3 years, divided by total number of projects that won in the same time frame.

Notes:

> This may require enquiring about the status of winning ballot projects by calling district/city/county staff, or searching through public records.
>
> For projects that were not implemented, it can be useful qualitative data to track why.
>
> Additionally, it may be useful to track implementation costs of winning ballot projects. You can compare this with the total amount allocated by PB.

15. Amount of additional money allocated to projects and needs identified through PB.

ADVANCED	Government

Description: This metric indicates PB's potential to bring additional funds to communities and/or to allocate funds differently by raising the importance of an issue. It is the amount of matching or external funds invested in projects or needs that were identified and/or developed during the PB process. Funds could come from other officials, other district/city/county budgets and/or third parties. (Does not include money provided to organizations to implement PB: e.g., foundation grants.)

Measurement: Amount of money promised to some project as a result of PB, that is above and beyond what official won on the ballot.

Notes:

Instances of extra money coming in to fund projects that the PB process highlighted as an important need is common. The stories of exactly why the extra money was allocated are helpful to point out the ripple effects of PB, and are great to report.

Context of the money: This metric is most valuable with more context of the fiscal structure and the budget context of the respective PB process (see Metric 6). It's also helpful to report specifically which projects received the additional money, and where that extra money came from.

Causality attributions: These data alone do not allow for causal attributions—that is, it is not clear what might have happened to these additional resources without PB. The data depend on staff or implementers identifying PB as the primary reason for the allocation of certain additional funds. However, anecdotal evidence is growing regarding this issue, and capturing it systematically is important, even for purely descriptive purposes.

16. Dollar amount spent on PB implementation.

ADVANCED	Government

Description: This metric will help make transparent how much money is spent on PB implementation and how that compares with the funds allocated to projects, with quality indicators of the process and with outcomes.

Measurement: Total dollar amount spent by the implementing agencies to execute a PB process

Notes:

To implement PB, it takes staff time from city agencies, as well as additional fees when outside help is brought in. Here are some possible expense sources for a PB process:

- Government staff time
- Technical assistance consultants
- Organizing help, other than technical assistance consultants (e.g., canvassers, contracts with community organizations)?
- IT services
- Event space, food, language support, transportation, photocopies and other materials for events
- Other expenses

Government staff time can be one of the largest implementation costs, and can be difficult to track. It requires a way for staff to track the amount of time they spend on PB tasks, compared with their other work. Time tracking software (eg. Harvest, Toggl, TimeCamp, etc.) can assist with this. This would then need to be converted to a dollar amount, based on staff wages.

About

The Participatory Budgeting Project

The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) is a non-profit organization that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money, primarily in the US and Canada. We create and support participatory budgeting processes that deepen democracy, build stronger communities, and make public budgets more equitable and effective.

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