



Reception House  
Waterloo Region



Annual Report  
2023-2024

## Vision

We are a sustainable organization helping refugees adapt and integrate into a new community they can call home.

## Mission

Reception House provides quality settlement, integration, and support services for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), helping them successfully transition to a new life in Waterloo Region.

## Values

Reception House values relationships and respects the dignity and agency of those we serve and collaborate with.

## Board of Directors

**Rick Silva**  
Chair

**Julie Dopko**  
Vice - Chair, HR Committee Chair

**Hilde Bouckennooghe**  
Secretary, Advocacy Committee Chair

**Debra Tonin**  
Treasurer, FAIR Committee Chair

**Ash Shinh**  
Director, Revenue Diversification Committee Chair

**Saba Shafiq**  
Director, Governance Committee Chair

**Raphael Kanai**  
Director

**Kelly Kipfer**  
Director

**Sheau Lih Vong**  
Director

# Message from Board Chair and CEO

Reception House Waterloo Region is a vision-driven, mission-focused organization proudly committed to welcoming and supporting refugees with their settlement journey. We concluded a challenging yet rewarding year by welcoming and supporting over 1400 Government Assisted Refugees in 2023-2024.

As we reflect on the past year at Reception House, we are filled with gratitude for the support and engagement from you and others in the community. This year, more than ever, we have seen the profound and positive impact that refugees have on our community, both socially and economically.

Refugees bring with them a wealth of skills, experiences, and perspectives that enrich our lives in countless ways. Their contributions to our local economy are significant, from filling vital roles in the workforce, starting new businesses and creating jobs, and driving innovation. Socially, they help build a more diverse and vibrant community, fostering understanding and empathy among all of us.

This work is not possible without the support of the community and funders. We recognize the integral role played by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and our many other funders, donors, and community supporters. This support, along with the dedication of our Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers, makes this work possible.

We invite you to join us in raising awareness about these positive impacts refugees bring into our community and to engage with Reception House in supporting our newest neighbours. By doing so, we not only help them build new lives here but also strengthen our entire community.

Together, we create a welcoming environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Thank you for your continued support.



Rick Silva, Board Chair



Babur Mawladin, CEO

*Welcoming refugees in Waterloo Region since 1987.*



# Resettlement Assistance Program and Client Support Services

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This past year Reception House received over 700 new Government Assisted Refugees arriving in Canada from Myanmar, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, Cuba, Iran, Congo DRC, Sudan, South Sudan, Venezuela, El Salvador, Bangladesh, Somalia, Jamaica, Zambia, and some who were stateless.

Reception House services to families and individuals arriving in our Region begins with providing temporary accommodation, orienting them to life in their new community and assisting in finding a permanent home. Reception House's Community Navigation and Life Skills Teams walk newcomers through everyday activities like making health practitioner appointments, setting up bank accounts, budgeting, applying for social insurance numbers, learning the Grant River Transit (GRT) system, improving their digital literacy, and learning how to operate new equipment.



A highlight from this past year was a successful addition to our volunteer led services that helped empower people to use Grand River Transit (GRT). 'Bus Buddies' matched volunteers with individuals and families in temporary accommodation to ride to various places around the community together. This was a safe and fun way to reinforce the need to learn how to use our public transportation system and how vital it is as an affordable method to get around the region. During the trips, people shared stories, ask questions about community services, and enjoyed seeing what Waterloo Region has to offer. It has been a very successful pilot, and we plan to continue the initiative celebrating its social connectivity.



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Despite the housing challenges in the Waterloo Region and the difficulties refugees face upon arrival in the country, the Reception House Housing team successfully helped every individual, save one, find a home. A big thank you to landlords across the region who willingly work with us to house these newcomers.



Once individuals are housed and settled in their homes, Case Managers provide continued support, guiding them through their settlement journey for at least a year, longer if needed. For some clients, the settlement process involves overcoming significant challenges and barriers, requiring the expertise of Reception House's skilled professionals.

Over the past year, we supported a client with chronic illness, limited English proficiency, and unfamiliarity with common amenities. Through intensive case management, this individual became independent in using public transit, established friendships, participated in English language classes, and is now eagerly anticipating reunification with family members in Canada.







*"A Place For New Beginnings"*

## Children and Youth

Children and youth made up 47% of the newly arrived refugees. While in temporary accommodation, those under 18 years of age are not enrolled in school. Reception House staff offer a variety of activities for children and youth while in temporary accommodation to keep them busy, provide learning opportunities, and help them make new friends. Activities with the children involve crafts, games, playtime, preparing for classroom learning, practicing English, singing songs, and laughing.

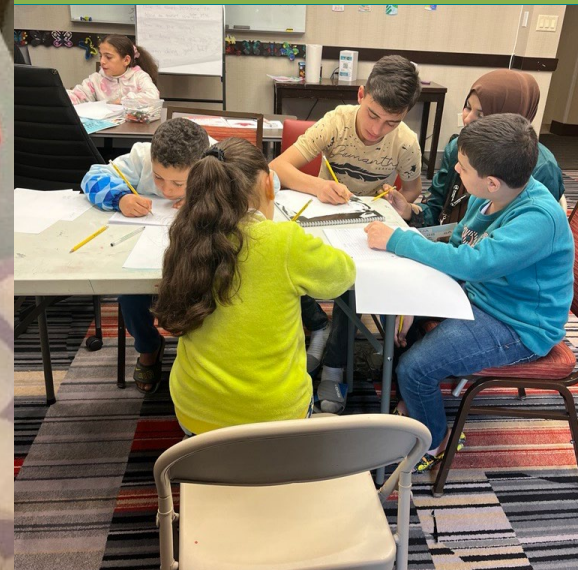


For youth, Reception House staff collaborated with various partners, to organize activities such as field trips, outings to summer festivals, and visiting City Hall, the Museum, and the library.

Youth also participated in the Ride for Refugee event, went Tubing at Chicopee, and some youth experienced their first ever camp out! Thank you to the City of Kitchener, the YMCA, and the Kitchener Public Library for their collaborative support of Reception House youth.



An additional art project engages participants in a variety of different creative activities: collage, self-portraits, murals, sculptures, and more. Through art, children and youth find a safe space to process their experiences, express their emotions, and build resilience as they navigate the challenges of relocation, settlement, and adaptation.



"I'm bored...and anxious about when we will find housing and go to school. The youth programs like Rec Night, English Conversation Circle, and Art Program help me learn, release my stress, and make me happy."

Ahmed, 15 Years old



# Year At A Glance



715 people arrived from 15 countries.



1439 unique individuals  
were served by Reception House  
in the past year.



20 languages spoken, through which Reception House delivered services.



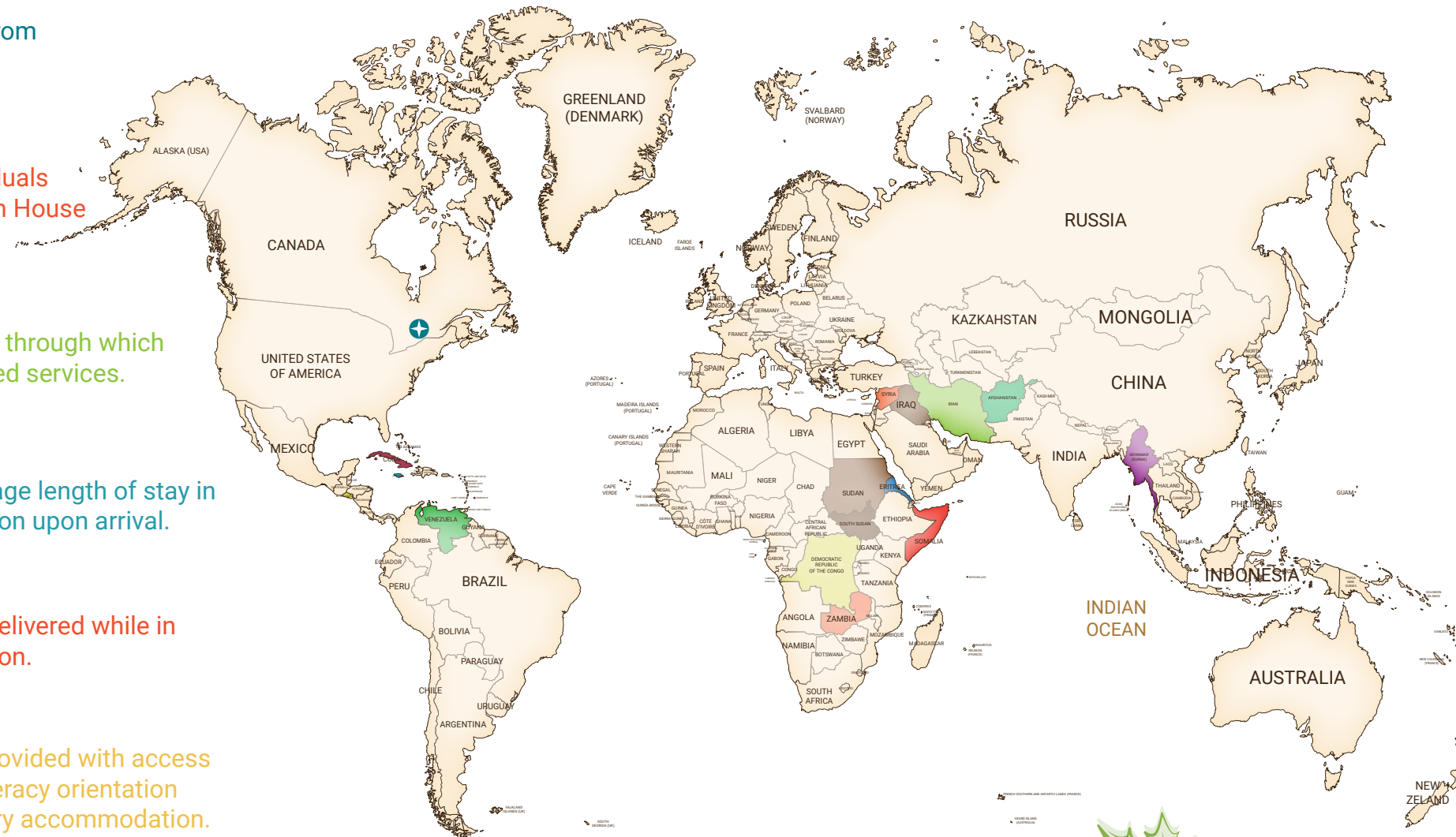
43 days was the average length of stay in temporary accommodation upon arrival.



695 vaccines were delivered while in temporary accommodation.



**108** families were provided with access to a laptop and digital literacy orientation while staying in temporary accommodation.



47% of arriving refugees are children.



**387** children and youth were registered for school.



**158** people accessed  
Reception House employment  
support.

**37** people found employment through Reception House employment services.



99% of people served were housed.





## Health and Well-Being



Last year, Reception House utilised our medical discretionary fund to support people in need of essential medical treatment, mobility devices, and dental care not covered by other health insurance coverage. We continue to work with our health care partners to expand access to primary care as the number of people arriving with serious health care needs is increasing. benefit from the partnerships we have built by having ready access to on-site immunizations, TB testing, dental screening, eye examinations, on-site counseling, accessibility needs assessments, and primary health care focused

on serving refugees. We would especially like to thank the following partners for their ongoing support: Centre for Family Medicine, Ontario Health atHome, Camino, University of Waterloo School of Optometry, Kidsability, Benton St Walk-in Clinic, the Pharmashoppe, and Monarch Dentistry.

## Preparing to Work

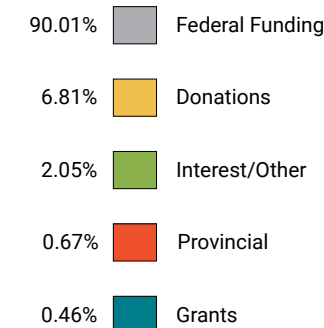
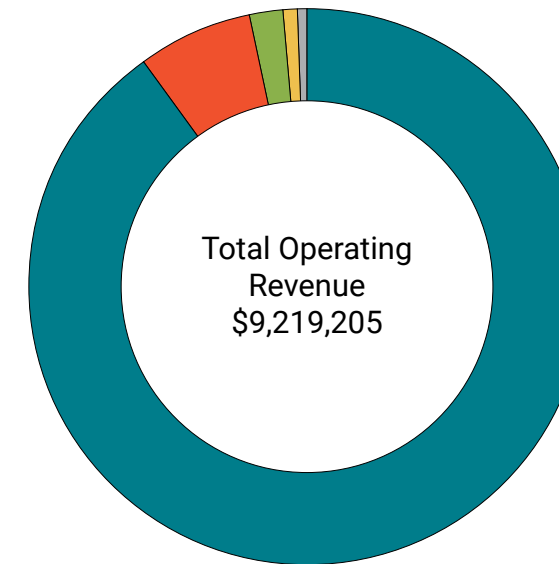
Over the past year, employment related services have been carried out with the aim of providing people with orientation to working in Canada, Canadian workplace culture, and an employment assessment to develop an individualised pathway to employment for individuals ready and willing to work. We partnered with the KW Multicultural Centre to deliver Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training and Occupational Health and Safety Awareness training. Referrals are made to other agencies as appropriate.

Reception House worked closely with about 15 employers this past year. Close to 40 people found jobs through Reception House's employment services.

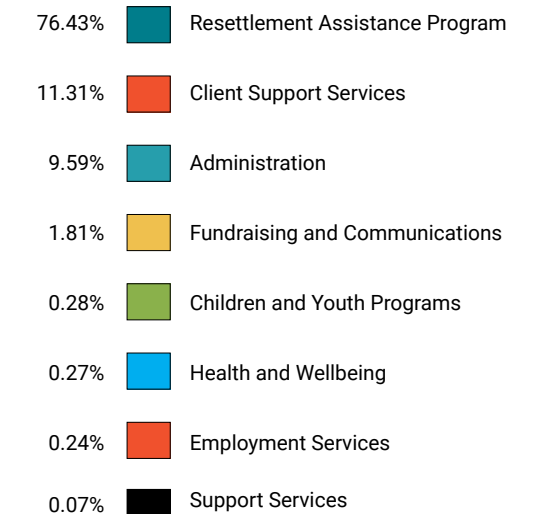
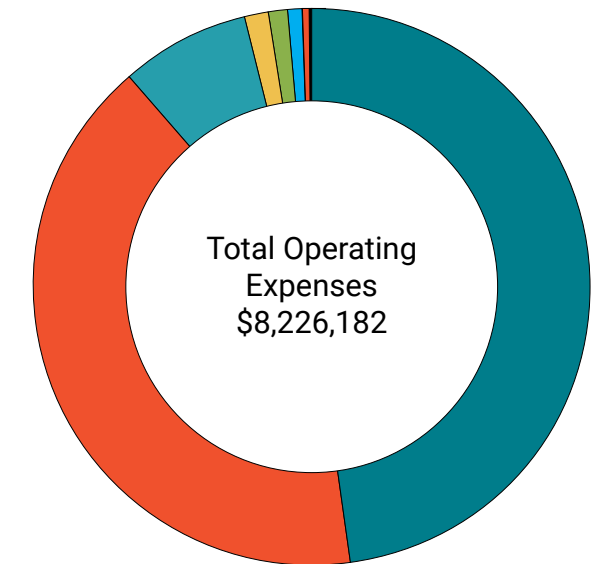


## Financial Snapshot

Our support comes from



Your support goes to





## You Make a Difference!

With the support of 137 generous funders, donors, community partners, and supporters, we had another successful year! In keeping with our financial stewardship plan, we now have funds in place to act on opportunities to better serve our clients. Together, we create new beginnings for newcomers in Waterloo Region.

Thank you to our major funders and donors who contributed \$10,000 or more last year!



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada



LYLE S. HALLMAN  
FOUNDATION



United Way  
Waterloo Region  
Communities

FAIRMOUNT  FOUNDATION



An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

## There are so many ways to support our vision in the coming year



Donate  
[receptionhouse.ca/donate](https://receptionhouse.ca/donate)



Volunteer  
[receptionhouse.ca/volunteer](https://receptionhouse.ca/volunteer)



Join us at Not Another Gala on September 26, 2024  
[receptionhouse.ca/notanothergala2024](https://receptionhouse.ca/notanothergala2024)



Ride for Refuge October 5, 2024. Join or support a team  
[rideforrefuge.org/location/waterloowestmount](https://rideforrefuge.org/location/waterloowestmount)



Rent to Refugees  
[receptionhouse.ca/rent-to-refugees/](https://receptionhouse.ca/rent-to-refugees/)



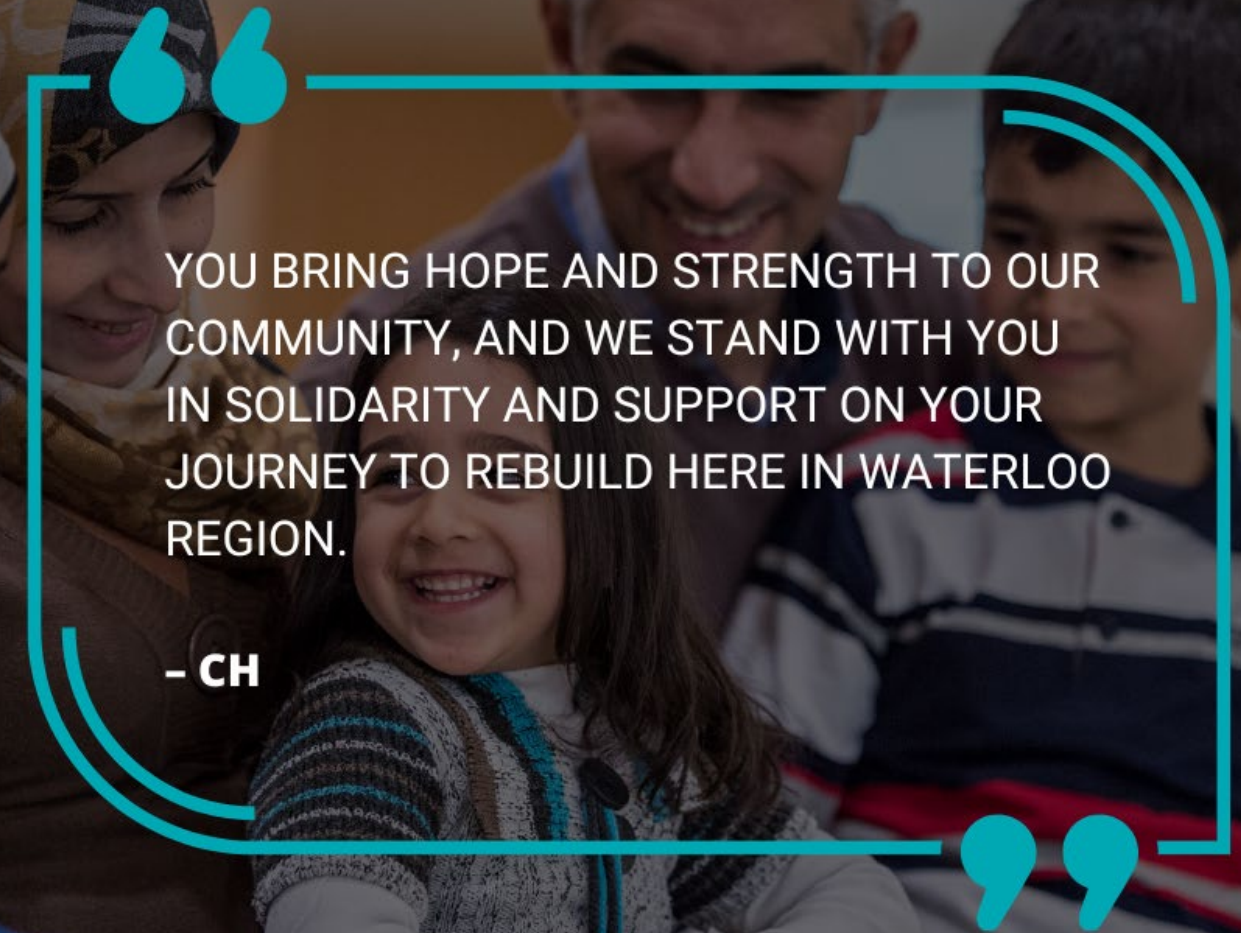
# Our volunteers make a difference!



Reception House volunteer Kimberley Luu received an Award of Distinction in recognition of her outstanding dedication to working with refugees in Waterloo Region. The Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns handed out the award on World Refugee Day.

Reception House staff coordinated over 240 volunteers as they contributed their time and talents to the work of belonging. Our volunteers are instrumental in supporting our clients through various activities, helping to create a welcoming environment and fostering social integration for newcomers. Volunteering takes various shapes at Reception House. The Family Partnership Program offers social support for newcomer refugee families engaging their new neighbours in enjoyable activities, practicing conversational English, and connecting with and discovering their community. The English Outreach Program aims to improve English language skills in a classroom setting as a path to social integration, boosting confidence, and increasing competency in a new language. Volunteering with the children and youth activities helps to reduce isolation, bring laughter into a challenging situation, and build a sense of connectedness to the community. Last, but not least is the Board of Directors and various Board Committees with volunteer community members lending their finance, fundraising, HR, governance and advocacy experience to the work of Reception House.

A bright light, named Rahima, arrived as a refugee in 2023. She quickly became a volunteer in the English Outreach Program and assisted with interpretation. Rahima challenges all of us to volunteer when she says, "...volunteering with Reception House is a profound sense [of] fulfillment to me because by volunteering we are able to make a positive change and impact to other's lives..."



YOU BRING HOPE AND STRENGTH TO OUR  
COMMUNITY, AND WE STAND WITH YOU  
IN SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT ON YOUR  
JOURNEY TO REBUILD HERE IN WATERLOO  
REGION.

– CH



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Waterloo Region





# Reception House

Waterloo Region

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