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State of Maine

Information Technology

Standing Accessibility Committee

2005 Annual Report

PREFACE

Purpose of this Report

This report gives an overview of why accessible technology is important to the State of Maine, as well as to report on accomplishments of the Standing Accessibility Committee during this past year and initiatives planned for the upcoming year.

The Standing Accessibility Committee's overarching objective is, and has been, to integrate accessibility into our everyday business processes and practices. With ongoing budget constraints, many involved with deploying technology simply do not have time to take on additional workload. That fact makes this effort even more critical because when accessibility is simply a part of our regular business processes, it does not mean more work; it simply means we are doing it right the first time.

Should you have any questions and/or comments on this report, please communicate them to Paul Sandlin in the Office of Information Technology (paul.sandlin@maine.gov or 624-9427).

Acknowledgements

As we continue to move forward with the idea that through education and example, we will build our culture such that accessibility is no longer a mandate, but simply part of how Maine does business. There are several individuals we wish to thank for their contributions, time, and effort over the past year. First we would like to thank Lisa Thompson, NexTalk Project Manager, for her time and effort in bringing the project to near completion. We would also like to thank Jon Steuerwalt for leading the Law Development Sub-committee. Special thanks go to Jan DeVinney who served on the Accessibility Committee for several years and will be resigning. There are individuals who are not State employees but have generously given their time and talents to advance accessibility: Kelly Hokkanen from InforME and Alan Parks from the University of Maine.

How this Report is Organized

This report is organized into the following sections:

- The Role of Information Technology Accessibility in the State of Maine
- The Standing Accessibility Committee
- 2005 Accomplishments
- 2006 Operational Work Plan Outline

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBILITY IN THE STATE OF MAINE

The State of Maine is committed to ensuring accessibility to information technology for both citizens and employees with disabilities. This commitment is supported by several state accessibility policies and standards which apply to the Web, software programs, and with training and resources, http://www.maine.gov/oit/accessibility/.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 defines accessible information technology in the following manner:

"Information Technology Accessibility is ensuring that technology is such that individuals with disabilities have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access and use by those who are not individuals with disabilities."

In 2001 it was estimated that with the aging population in the United States, 35% of our population may have some type of impairment and/or disability that would require some type of accommodation. State of Maine 2000 Census figures show that almost 30% of Maine's population was 55 or older. This does not consider younger individuals who are dealing with physical and mental challenges.

Statistics show that a third of individuals with disabilities are underemployed and require assistance due to their underemployment or non-independent living. Costs of support (estimated to be in excess of $200 billion dollars nationwide) can not be solely based on cost of their assistance, as we must also factor in the loss of these individuals' productivity (such as loss of tax revenues, contributions to society and creation of wealth).

President George W. Bush, signing the New Freedom Initiative, stated that this initiative would help Americans with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technologies, expanding educational opportunities, increasing the ability of Americans with disabilities to integrate into the workforce, and promoting their increased access into daily community life.

This additional/improved access to technology and related information is critical to Maine, especially with our aging population. Accessible E-government services for our citizens means that those requiring assistance in traveling can obtain information and State services without leaving their homes. Additionally, through Maine's portal, they can obtain information that may improve the quality of their lives in many areas, such as ordering large print or talking library books through an online catalog, receiving air quality notices, updates on legislative issues and current events within their community, and eligibility for services and medical information, all without having to leave their homes.

Obviously, the same pertains to those with physical and cognitive disabilities who may not be a part of our aging population. Accessible technology can allow a student who is blind to obtain the same data on the internet that his/her peers can; provide an individual struggling with learning impairments the ability to receive information in a format that he/she can more easily filter; and offer someone with limited mobility the technology that will allow them to perform the same job as would a fully mobile counterpart.

Eric Dibner, ADA Coordinator for the State of Maine states, "Access to electronic and information technology for employees and members of the public will increase productivity and, for people with disabilities, access is required by state and federal regulation. Each State worker is responsible for removing discriminatory practices. When we send a document attached to an email, design a web page or site, post a document on the Web, or arrange the purchase of electronic equipment or software, we have a responsibility to understand and implement standards of accessibility to ensure the materials are readable by people with sensory, cognitive, and mobility impairments." He makes it clear that accessibility is not only the right thing to do, but it's mandated by law.

THE STANDING ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

Committee History

The Information Services Policy Board (ISPB) recognized the State's commitment to meeting the needs of its employees and citizens with disabilities and adopted a resolution in January 1998 that fully supported the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding reasonable accommodations in the workplace. The Policy Board authorized the establishment of a Standing Accessibility Committee to evaluate and advise the Board regarding technological developments and products to ensure compliance with the ADA and other relevant laws. The committee's charge was broadened in November 1999. In 2005, with the abolishment of the ISPB the Committee was re-chartered by the Chief Information Officer. Their charter is outlined as follows:

Accessibility Committee Charter

- Propose and maintain standards for information technology accessibility
- Expand and maintain an evaluation methodology for current and future information technology endeavors
- Prepare periodic updates on technology, ADA compliance, and other legal requirements
- Complete an annual report on previous year's accomplishments and proposed future work plan
- Work in partnership with the Accessible Information Technology Coordinator on identifying issues and providing technical assistance and solutions

Functions of the Committee

The Committee provides oversight to chartered Subcommittees and project teams that work in specific areas related to accessibility, while the Chair and Staff perform the administrative tasks related to managing the workflow of the Committee.

The Committee may establish project related work groups to address specific issues identified by the Chief Information Officer or the Committee.

The Committee is responsible for designing an ongoing process for membership recruitment and selection and for decision making criteria that meet the policy mandate. The process shall include the review and approval by the Chief Information Officer.

Committee responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Evaluate current and proposed technology, including workarounds, in the testing lab and through independent verification and standard validation methods.

- Facilitate accessibility demonstrations of products being considered for purchase or development by Maine State Government.

- Evaluate national consensus standards to include but not be limited to: software applications and operating systems; web-based Intranet and Internet information and applications; telecommunications products; video and multimedia products; desktop and portable computers; information, documentation and support.

- Review and stay current with standards being developed by nationally and internationally recognized public and private groups, to ensure they meet Maine's needs and provide recommendations to the Chief Information Officer.

- Maintain and monitor procurement proposals for evaluation criteria in RFPs and vendor contracts.

- Develop a process for monitoring progress toward information accessibility statewide.

- Manage, expand and update the accessibility site and links.

- Provide ongoing information on new products, techniques and other changes related to accessibility in a variety of formats, such as email notices via the Webmasters and Web Coordinators listserve, the online Webmaster Resource Center, and various training sessions.

- Review and stay current with federal and other states' legislation, policies, rules and regulations.

- Review and provide ongoing lists of accessibility tools and resources.

- Arrange for and provide information technology accessibility training for State employees, vendors, developers and buyers.

- Provide technical assistance for departments as requested.

Committee Membership

The Standing Accessibility Committee membership shall include expertise in all of the major disability, accessibility and information technology specialty areas. Major core areas represented on the Committee should include deaf and hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired, mobility and speech impaired and cognitive considerations. Members must have a vested interest in accessibility and represent a broad spectrum of skills and knowledge including legal, policy, national perspective, human resources, purchasing and various technologies.

Roles as defined by Membership Subcommittee*

State and Community	Disability Seats	Technology Seats
CIO, Staff Support	Cognitive	Assistive Technology
ISMG Representative	Hearing	Application Development
University System	Mobility	Webmaster/Designer
OIT	Visual	Telecommunication
Community		Hardware
Vocational Rehabilitation		

It is understood that one member may fill more than one role on the committee

2005 Committee Members

Committee contacts:

Kathy Record, Office of the CIO, DAFS - Accessible Information Technology Coordinator for the State of Maine, Staff to the Accessibility Committee 624-7573 or kathy.record@maine.gov.

Pauline Lamontagne Esq., Department of Education, Committee Chair

Carolyn Bebee, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, DOL

Jan DeVinney, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Deafness, DOL

Eric Dibner, Rehabilitation Services, DOL

Kathleen Powers, Statewide Assistive Tech Project, Maine CITE Coordinating Center, University College, University of Maine System

Bruce Prindall, Office of Information Processing, DOL

Floyd White, Office of Information Technology, DAFS

Leigh Wilkinson, Bureau of Human Resources, DAFS

Ellen Wood, Maine State Library

Valton Wood, Office of Information Technology, DAFS

Alan Parks, University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies

2005 ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORTED BY FOCUS AREA

The Committee has documented six focus areas and identified initiatives that would support each. No one area is weighted any higher than another as it is felt all are critical to the objective of equal access to information and technology.

Accountability

The challenge of this focus area continues to be providing guidance to agencies to ensure compliance with the existing state accessibility standards and policies. . Following are the accomplishments in this area.

Vendor participation
All information technology contracts that included web development were reviewed by the Accessibility Coordinator to insure compliance with the Accessibility policy.

HAVA (Help America Vote Act)
All states are required by federal law to implement a Central Voter Registration file. The law also requires that every voting facility have an accessible electronic voting machine. Members of the Accessibility Committee participated, along with the Secretary of State's Office, in testing and evaluating several types of voting machines.

Application software testing (Internal and Vendor)
Committee members Floyd White and Pauline Lamontagne Esq. have continued to provide testing of software for internal and external development groups. The effort has included testing with screen readers, voice recognition software and testing of websites for compliance.

A number of agencies have had concerns about upgrading to the latest version of Oracle Forms due to the uncertainty of its ability to meet Maine's accessibility standards. A very basic level of accessibility had been possible with older version of the product, but it was unknown what would happen with the newer releases. This resulted in agencies not upgrading their software. Floyd White researched this issue, working directly with Oracle staff, and reported his findings. In summary, there are many conditions that must be met in order to make the product work, but if instructions are carefully followed the newer versions of Oracle Forms are accessible.

Internet/Web
The State of Maine Web Standards have been updated to focus on the improvement of the quality, usability and accessibility of all state websites. To assist in this effort, new templates have been developed which meet industry standards for browser compatibility, usability and accessibility. In order to meet the requirements of the new standards, several agencies have converted their sites, utilizing the templates in accordance with the Maine.gov Style Guide.

Worthy of note is Ellen Wood's receipt of the Maine Excellence Recognition in Information Technology (MERIT) award. The individual MERIT award recognizes outstanding

leadership by an individual whose efforts had a broad-range impact felt beyond their jurisdiction. She was praised for her successful work on the Maine State Library web site in improving accessibility for disabled citizens and employees. Her efforts established a process to ensure improved accessibility now and in the future for all State of Maine web pages

Enterprise accessibility software
After much research by the Web Subcommittee, the Accessibility Committee purchased an enterprise license of the HiSoftware AccMonitor Server. Among its many uses, it is an "out-of-the-box" testing and reporting solution for accessibility and usability standards. HiSoftware provides a solution to validate compliance with our web standards and accessibility policies. Additionally, identified web coordinators are licensed to utilize HiSoftware's, AccVerify and AccRepair, user-driven interactive desktop solutions, to test and remediate their projects for compliance with Section 508 accessibility standards and other content quality standards.

Compliance reporting on agency websites
The HiSoftware tool allows enterprise-wide reporting on accessibility compliance. With this tool, InforME began running and distributing quarterly reports for each agency. The purpose of these reports is not only to identify the areas of non-compliance, but also identify areas of improvement. May's reports provided a means of measuring our status, and indicated specific areas which needed to be addressed. Training topics were then focused on the prevalent issues causing page failures. The last report was distributed in December and clearly indicates improvements are being made. (See Fig 1.)
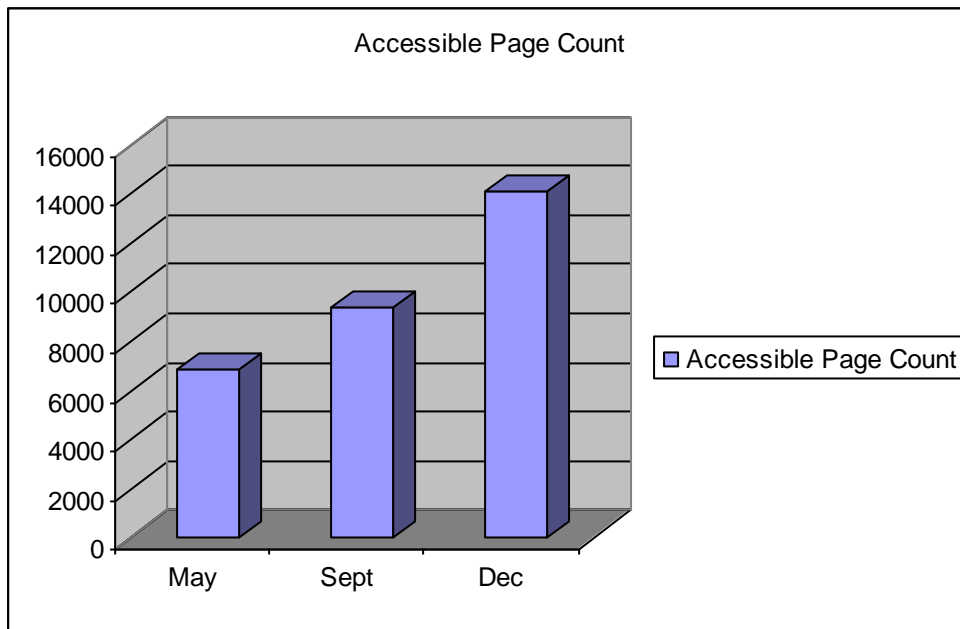

Fig. 1

Web Coordinators and the Webmaster Directory
Historically if an agency had published non-compliant web pages, it was difficult and sometimes impossible to identify the webmaster responsible for correcting the problem. To

remedy this situation, the Web Accessibility Subcommittee, along with InforME, and supported by the Chief Information Officer Richard Thompson, established a two-pronged approach. First they required all agencies to identify one webmaster as a coordinator who would be responsible for their agency's website and the work of the webmasters in their respective agencies. Second, they established a directory where all webmasters were required to register in order to have permissions to create web pages on maine.gov. As of September thirty-three were registered.

Report of the Advantages of a Maine Law on Accessibility
Last year an Accessibility Law Workgroup (ALW) was chartered to research and review whether a Maine state law requiring information technology (IT) accessibility would result in better access for individuals with disabilities to State information systems than the current Maine policies and standards regarding computer application and website accessibility. The ALW researched the topic thoroughly including interviewing national experts in the field of accessibility and studying laws of other states and reported back to the Accessibility Committee. Their recommendation was that the Accessibility Committee should proceed with a plan to develop an IT accessibility law for the State of Maine, because of the many advantages of a state law.

National Policy

Communication of national efforts
Kathy Powers continues to be the liaison between the State and National accessibility efforts. She represents Maine on accessible information technology issues to the Northeast Region ADA Technical Assistance Center, Boston MA, as well on a national work group of Information Technology and Training Technical Assistance Center (ITTATC) that identifies issues and develops resources related to accessible electronic and information technology for state and federal government. Additionally, Kathy was instrumental in providing scholarships which allowed two committee members to attend the Technology and People with Disabilities National Conference at CSUN (California State University at Northridge). The purpose of attending the conference is to increase awareness and knowledge of the impact technologies have in the improvement of the lives of disabled Maine citizens, and also to provide networking opportunities.

Telecommunications

NexTalk
The Telecommunications Subcommittee, which was chartered by the Committee, identified the product called NexTalk as a substitute for TTYs and is implementing this product in all agencies. NexTalk is a network based system with special provisions for the communication needs of the deaf and hard of hearing, but with advanced communications and messaging features. It is a blending of telephone and computer technologies which links TTY callers with every NexTalk personal computer user on the wide area networks. This system can be compared to an instant messaging system. The expectation is that NexTalk will increase the rate of successful TTY communications. To date almost all agencies have implemented the client software, which is running successfully. The remaining focus is to ensure the system is being used appropriately to

meet consumers' needs, and to provide additional user training. While there is no tool available to monitor use, Alan Parks developed a project utilizing University of Maine students to test the system for adequate use by state employees. The students have submitted the results to the NexTalk Project Team, which will assist in evaluating the success of the implementation.

Training

Web training

The Web Subcommittee continues to offer quarterly half day workshops which are open to all webmasters and their managers, at no cost. The attendance has been between 45 – 60 people. One very successful quarterly workshop was organized by our intern, Kimberly Wing. Additionally, Ellen Wood provided training and workshops to every web coordinator who acquired the AccVerify software as a condition of their owning a license, 46 of the 50 licenses were distributed.

InforME continues to host monthly webmaster meetings which include accessibility training and education. This also is open to all state webmasters.

The Office of State Training and Organizational Development created new and revised training curriculums to customize Macromedia training materials to reflect the State web standards and templates. By the end of August, 16 coordinators had received training. In addition to training individuals to utilize Dreamweaver templates for the creation of web sites, Contribute software training was provided. This software is essential for those employees who input content on sites, but are not allowed to create or alter the structure of web pages. This effort will enable us to complete the transition to web standards at a faster pace while sustaining the improvements through controlled input parameters.

During late summer and fall, Ellen Wood trained web coordinators (~20) in administering Contribute with special focus on maintaining accessibility using the government templates.

Management training

All new managers are required to participate in management training provided by the Bureau of Human Resources. As part of that training, we have incorporated accessibility awareness into the Maine Management System training program.

Visibility and Awareness

Report to the Governor

The CIO's monthly report to the Commissioner of the Department of Finance and Administration includes a section on accessibility which is used to regularly update the Governor on the challenges and accomplishments of the Standing Accessibility Committee.

InforME

Every year InforME hosts a day long off-site retreat for State of Maine webmasters. This year the Office of the CIO gave a presentation on accessibility and the future direction and requirement for the State agency web pages.

EASI presentation

Easy Access to Software and Information (EASI) is a premiere provider of online training on accessible information technology for persons with disabilities, reaching people in over three dozen countries. This past year Ellen Wood was invited to give an online presentation (Web Cast) to a national audience. Kelly Hokkanen and Kathy Record, also members of the Web Accessibility Subcommittee, worked diligently with Ellen to create, "The Collaborative Road to Maine State Web Accessibility". After Kelly and Ellen's presentation June 23rd, individuals from other states were able to ask them questions regarding issues such as the degree of acceptance by employees, success of the mandated template, the software chosen, and Maine's strategies. An archive of the conference, the power point presentation, and the individual slides are available on the OIT website (www.maine.gov/oit/accessibility/easi.htm).

Resources and Support

Summer interns

This past summer we were fortunate to have an intern assisting with the accessibility effort. Kimberly Wing, who was hired through the Margaret Chase Smith Intern Program, devoted most of her efforts to updating agency websites with the new templates, analyzing various agencies' AccVerify reports, and providing assistance and training to correct accessibility failures.

OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN OUTLINE FOR 2006

The 2006 work plan is framed around six focus areas, which is a change from past years. This year each focus area was assigned a lead, who may not be charged with accomplishing the tasks in the work plan, but will monitor progress of all efforts. Paul Sandlin, the lead for Administration, is from the Office of Information Technology, E-gov office. He replaces Kathy Record due to her increased responsibilities as Associate to the CIO. The areas and leads are as follows:

Accountability	**Floyd White**
Telecommunications	**Val Wood**
Internet/Web	**Ellen Wood**
Training	**Leigh Wilkinson**
Visibility and Awareness	**Bruce Prindall**
Administration	**Paul Sandlin**

The work plan was drafted during an all day planning session, lead by a facilitator, and refined during a subsequent session. The final objectives are as follows:

Accountability

Develop a plan to create an IT Accessibility Law for the State of Maine. The Accessibility Committee should establish an "Information Technology Accessibility Law Development Subcommittee" (ITALDS) to be chaired by a member of the Accessibility Committee. They will identify and fund sufficient staff resources to support the work of the ITALDS in developing the plan.

Change the language in the State's RFP's and Contracts to include new web standards and policy. Current boiler plate language in the State's contracts and RFPs includes language for the Accessibility Policy, but not the newer Web Accessibility Policy and Web Standards. Work with the Director of Purchases to update this language.

Provide Portfolio Management oversight on accessibility. All agencies are responsible for creating a portfolio of their assets and defining new projects. Floyd White will become involved in reviewing these portfolios to identify new software applications in order to ensure they will be tested for accessibility compliance.

Telecommunications

Complete the implementation of NexTalk software to replace TTYs by fall 2006. Implement in the remaining few agencies, increase training, and complete documentation. Floyd White has been identified as the product manager after implementation is complete.

Assist with statewide NexTalk Training Plan spring 2006. The NexTalk group will identify individuals who need training, have the software loaded on their machines, and

then test it. They will identify locations for presenting the training and modules. The Web will be the vehicle used for delivery, and the training will be recorded for future use.

Secure a new chair for the subcommittee. Val Wood has done an excellent job over the years and he deserves a special thanks.

Review Telco accessibility issues by the summer of 2006. Review, among other services:
- ATM, Video Conferencing
- Distance Learning
- Video Remote Interpreting
- Kiosk
- 211

Internet/Intranet and Web Development

Ensure that agencies continue to show improvement on AccMonitor quarterly test results. Offer AccVerify training. Training will be required for new web coordinators along with others who may just need a refresher. Offer this training twice a year. For agencies that are not showing improvement on their websites, develop a plan of support. Research and implement other resources for webmasters.

Continue to evaluate all state agency pages four times a year. HiSoft will be used to validate these pages and a report will be distributed to each agency indicating pages that require revisions.

Develop and implement a toll gate process for agencies as they launch new websites based on government required templates. Also develop a plan and implement user testing by people with disabilities in the community**.**

Meet the needs of all Executive Branch agencies for training in web software and the government templates. Continue InforME's free monthly training presentations at the webmaster meetings. Survey the web coordinators for web training needs and update existing courses as necessary. This year we began outlining prerequisites for working on the Web as well as job descriptions for Web Coordinators, Webmasters, and "Contributors" (content only). We will write the continuum detail in early 2006, seek consensus from the web coordinator group and newly formed E-Gov agency. After approval we will build supporting programs to assess individual and agency level skills and schedule programs in an effort to bridge the gaps across agencies. (Any activity in developing future skill development programs should be coordinated in partnership with E-Gov office)

Complete the mandate which instructs all state employees who have access to and work on state web pages to register with the Office of the CIO. All agencies will have a coordinator, as well as the webmasters, register through InforME's online registration directory. This must be completed in order to receive FTP rights. InforME

will delete all web server FTP accounts that do not match a specific person listed in the Webmaster Directory. InforME will then publish an online webmaster directory for state agency use.

Inventory and collect all core accessibility training materials/modules. This will be an ongoing effort to insure up to date accessibility training materials are available.

Make basic web design training available to any state employee working on web pages. The focus of this training will be directed towards individuals who have registered online for FTP accounts. To ensure that the Contribute and Dreamweaver software training is customized to meet the objectives of accessibility, the curriculum has been customized. Update the process for selecting a trainer for the different courses based on input from users.

Offer training on new software products through a variety of formats. This includes the quarterly training workshops, such as training on the HiSoftware product used for testing and repairing sites, along with free tools; state software training programs, E-learning and web programs and other selected vendors based on demand.

Awareness and Visibility

Continue presentations to managers during the Bureau of Human Resource Management training session (ongoing). Along with the webmasters, the managers have been identified as key to the advancement of accessibility. Develop and produce a catalog of resources for managers in cooperation with the Department of Labor.

Publicize award / recognition / Best Practices winter 2006. Two awards will be presented annually, one for leadership and the other for information technology accomplishments. Develop the criteria and plan for the nominations. Also develop and present a Certificate of Appreciation for past members.

Work with the Bureau of Human Resources to improve accessibility on their websites. One of the most important, most utilized, and visible site is the state jobs application site. Update this site to make it accessible by spring 2006.

Presentation before the CIO Council. This presentation will explain what IT accessibility actually means and the impact when an application and /or website are not accessible.

Administration

Hire a summer intern from the Margaret Chase Smith Summer Intern Program. For the past three summers we have had a summer intern working on accessibility. Because of their efforts, accessibility initiatives have advanced noticeably; therefore, we will apply for another summer intern for 2006

Produce the 2006 Annual Report

Membership: recruit new committee members by winter 2006. Particular focus needs to be placed on the area of cognitive disabilities. This area requires a higher level of expertise.

Continue to recruit based on a volunteer basis.

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