

CHILD CARE CAPACITY INITIATIVE PROGRESS REPORT

MAY 2023



We are working toward a community where high-quality, affordable, equitable, culturally-inclusive child care can be accessed where and when it's needed.

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INTRODUCTION



The lack of high-quality, accessible, affordable, culturally-inclusive child care has created a national crisis. The Child Care Capacity Initiative (CCCI) was created to address the child care desert in Pierce County, Washington. The purpose of the Child Care Capacity Initiative is to increase the number of child care slots in Pierce County.

We previously reported in the Child Care Capacity Initiative Annual 2022 Report that providers are facing ongoing barriers to starting, expanding, and sustaining businesses. This progress report will help define solutions and operations that are currently in place to address and eliminate roadblocks for child care and early learning professionals.

This is the first time that our community is implementing this type of project. We are building the plane as we go which has allowed for the utilization of Liberatory Design. We are processing new information while managing it from an equitable perspective. This means that the early childhood professionals and small business owners engaged in this process are able to retain their autonomy, make ongoing decisions for the direction of their businesses, and network with one another and the community as needed. This is done via cohorts of providers accessing technical assistance, shared services, grants, networking, and other major supports through the Child Care Capacity Initiative. Cohort A is currently operating and working hard to open new child care slots.

The CCCI project has many complex layers of support. This includes the Pierce County Early Childhood Network's Child Care Voice Action and Leadership Teams. The Action team is a learning and support network consisting of local child care providers, city, state, and county government leaders, non-profit and social service organizations, representatives from the business community, child care policy experts, advocates, and families. The Child Care Voice Leadership Team is made up of policy, strategic, early childhood, project management, and business experts who work to design and implement solutions to overcome barriers and pitfalls to accessing early childhood education and child care. Both teams simultaneously work toward improvements in child care sustainability, access, and resourcing.



2023-2024 GOALS

1

Increase the number of child care slots in Pierce County by a minimum of 200.

The child care crisis in our community continues to grow impacting employers, child care professionals, our military installations at JBLM and Camp Murray, the local economy, and countless families. We are committed to building a sustainable equitable network of support for early learning professionals. The CCCI project will open a minimum of 200 new child care slots in our community by September 2024.

3

Continue to create a roster of community professionals with early learning experience.

We are building a road map for the community that we intend to take statewide, so that early learning and child care professionals can access architects, brokers, licensing, business start-up, and other services throughout their journey to open, expand, or stabilize their businesses.

2

Continued networking and relationship building with community partners.

More than 300 organizations and individuals have joined the CCCI project. This includes braiding funding in an effort to serve a larger population of the community, collaborating on building child care sites with other non-profits increasing both in-home and center based care, and working with financial partners to ensure access for child care providers to needed funding for their sites. The network is growing, join us!

4

Ensure sustainability for the project and the network

Through the Child Care Voice Teams, the cohort leaders of child care professionals, and many agencies leaning into our project to ensure long-term success, we are continuing to build systems based on equity, accessibility, flexibility, and consistent services. Our goal is that Pierce County families can access child care and thrive!

STRATEGY

The Child Care Capacity Initiative is building a sustainable roster of professionals who can assist with early learning projects on an ongoing basis in Pierce County. We are subcontracting with industry professionals on behalf of early learning educators. Cohort participants have no additional or incurred costs to their businesses for accessing and participating in business start-up and expansion. Early learning educators are able to utilize a host of resources and technical assistance that creates equitable access and support their businesses.

The CCCI project covers the costs associated with working alongside of the following professionals for cohort participants:

Project Management for all aspects including; advocacy with state, county, and city, pre-licensing, fire and health departments, zoning, and all other agencies and entities involved in opening child care sites throughout the process.

Commercial real estate brokers to assist in locating, negotiating, and securing new child care sites.

Architects to assist and oversee design and consultation for new facilities ensuring WAC compliance, ADA accessibility, allowing for building designs to be financed.

Landscape architects to ensure outdoor spaces include WAC requirements and exceed the normal early learning models through design and consultation.

Grant Writers to assist child care and early learning professionals with grant writing and helping to identify potential funding that matches their business needs.

Non-profit professionals to assist in starting, navigating, and operating non-profit businesses.

Business administration to train and assist in office and employee management, record keeping, reporting, taxes, HR, and other key components to business operations.





Cohort members can also access interior designers to create spaces that inspire a sense of awe and wonder. Rather than designing from a deficit, providers are able to dream of beauty and demand quality materials and design. Early learning professionals traditionally operate on limited budgets which restrict their ability to purchase quality materials. The CCCI project is working toward opportunities for lasting design.

Technical assistance through technology. This includes access to software that provides user friendly communications, child care slot availability information in real time, record keeping, business records, marketing, and other day to business operational supports.

The cohort can access new materials and equipment which includes furniture, storage, outdoor and indoor equipment, and other items needed to operate their site.

They can participate in focus groups and cohort meetings that are committed to equity and the liberatory design process. Early Learning educators are the the helm of their own business future.

The CCCI project also ensures access to needed materials translation as eight languages are spoken by Cohort A with more cohorts coming this year.

Providers have needed marketing support which includes advertising, communications, social media, and other business promotions through companies that have existing software and programs.





The CCCI project offers incentives to providers who prioritize serving disabled and special needs students. This includes specialized equipment purchases, access to training with special educators, trauma informed care training, and classroom supplies that help educators interact with children and families. Through this process children can experience their environment along with their peers.

Additionally, providers can access support with construction and facilities improvements that are needed to support children with disabilities to ensure ADA compliance. This includes support in meeting fire and health department codes.

Cohort members receive financial support including access to governmental and private funders who are partnering with CCCI to ensure new child care slots are created.

By utilizing liberatory design at every phase of the project, CCCI also leaves room for other child care provider investments as needed.

Support also includes incentives to prioritize infant classrooms. Infant care is nearly non-existent in Pierce County due to strict licensing requirements, high cost of operations, and ratio restrictions in staffing numbers. Most new parents having to return to work are unable to find infant care.



IMPACT

The Child Care Capacity Initiative is a growing project set to impact thousands of Pierce County families while changing the way that early learning centers are supported.

One of our goals is to create a community roster of designers that understand the unique challenges that face the early learning community. For example, the majority of early learning educators and participants are coming from a mentality of scarcity. In most situations, any design is an upgrade but we want the bar to be higher; we want excellence and beauty.



The CCCI project is creating ongoing opportunities for educators to learn to think about their environments differently. They should demand spaces that are wondrous and align with their pedagogy, community values, and go the beyond minimal licensing guidelines. There isn't a known template for "best practices" for community collaboration in early learning. We are designing one alongside those who are the most impacted by this work.

Designing with the community, rather than "for the community" allows for longevity, dignity, individualized solutions that make sense, and an inclusive process ensuring that small business owners retain autonomy in their choices.

The CCCI project also has the following impact:

- A road map from pre-licensing to opening day, and through four to six months of operations for Pierce County child care providers.
- Child care providers are able to access technical assistance and shared services previously unavailable to them at no cost.
- Child care providers are able to access business start-up grants
- Child care providers are able to work with architects, brokers, landscape architects, interior designers, and other early learning professionals at no cost to their businesses.
- Pierce County families will be able to return to work.
- Military families can access child care close to JBLM and remain active duty.
- Unused licensed child care slots will be filled as providers have more resources to retain staffing and for facilities expansion.
- Employers will have increased workforce productivity, employee retention, less absenteeism, and decreased operating costs.
- A minimum of 200 new child care slots in Pierce County is being created.
- Affordable, equitable, culturally-relevant, child care where and when it's needed.
- A roster of child care and early learning experts is being created to be utilized long-term by the Pierce County community and beyond.



- Recent architectural degree graduates are expressing interest in social impact architectural work. Their collaboration will allow for new ideas and solutions to creating inspiring child care spaces.
- Incentives for long-term sustainability for professionals interested in gaining early learning design expertise to assist child care providers with their facilities needs and meeting of career goals.
- Design consulting to assist other architectural firms in their production of designs and construction documents that meet code requirements.
- A cost analysis and budget for sustainability of shared services.
- The Child Care Voice Action Team continues to grow and offer pertinent partnerships, learning opportunities, and networking to expand support and opportunity for local providers.

CCCI helps the Pierce County economy to thrive as more families are able to return to work. Small business owners are getting the support they need to open or expand their businesses to serve more families.

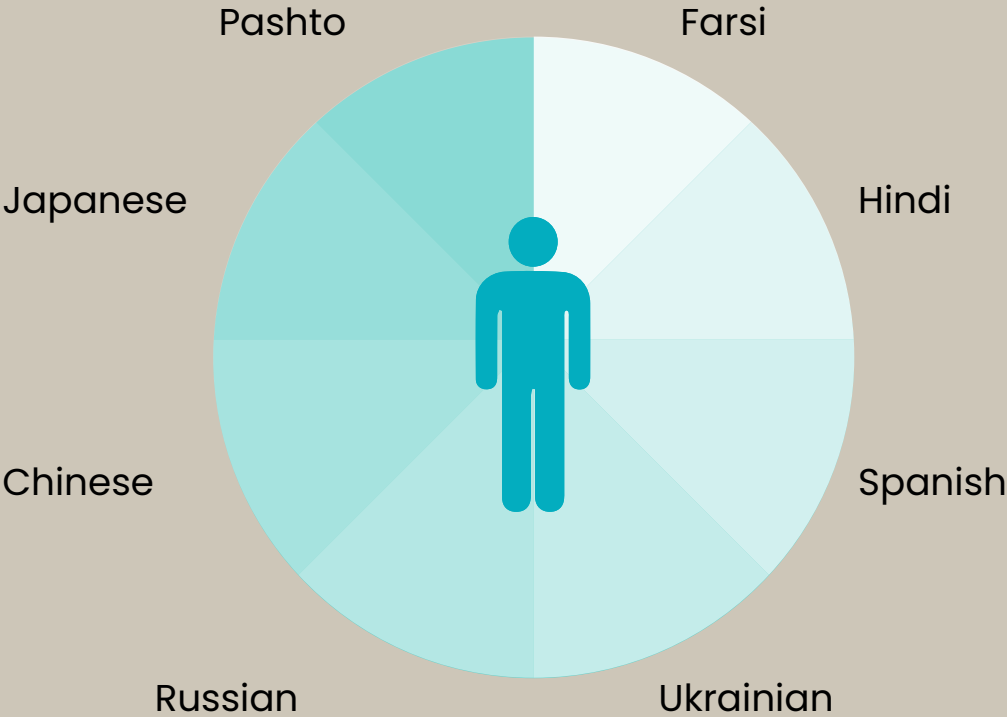
COHORT A

Cohort A is made up of Pierce County child care and early learning professionals:

- looking to expand their current business from in-home care to center-based sites.
- opening brand new child care businesses for the first time.
- looking to expand their business to an additional child care site.

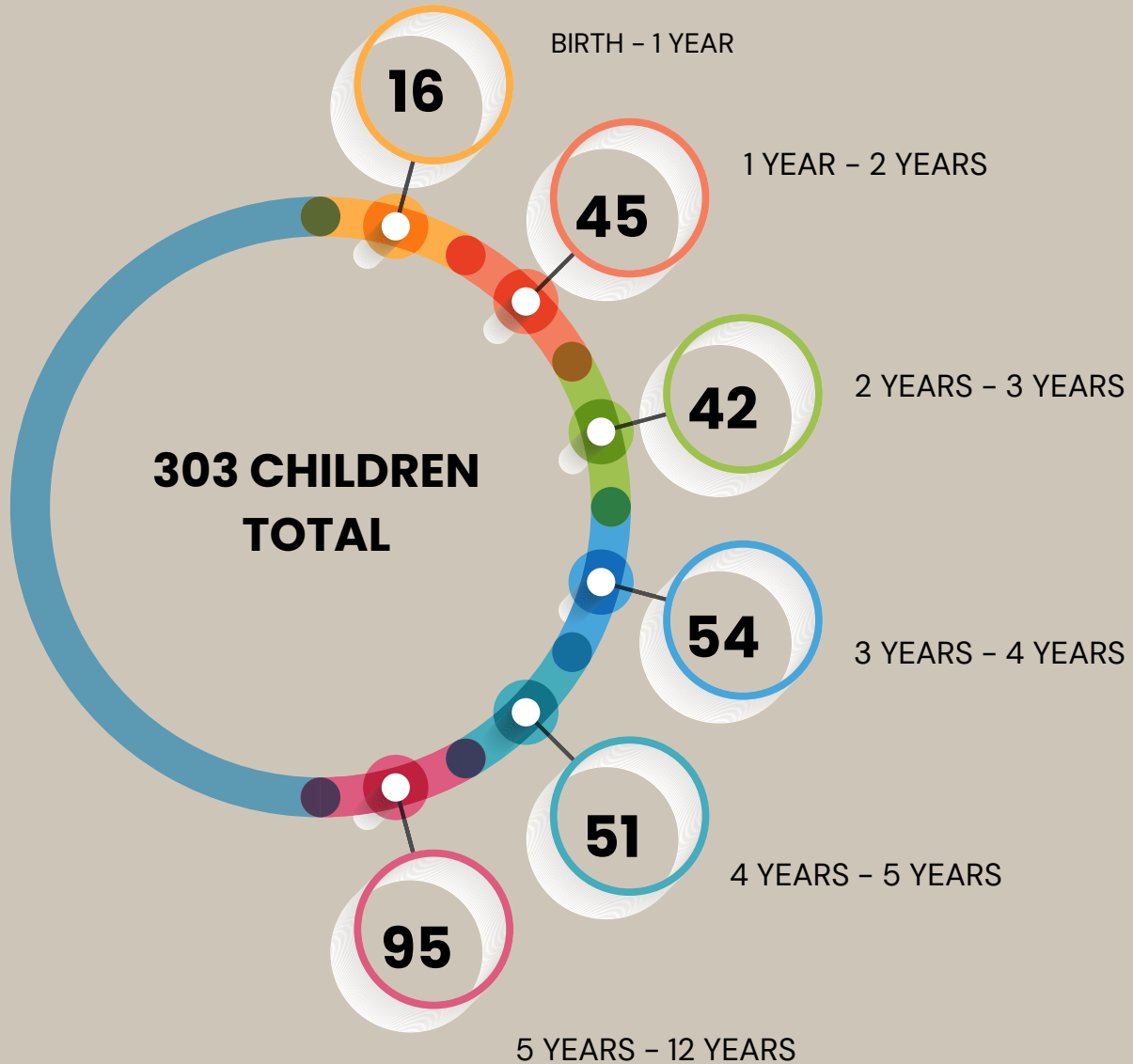


Among the cohort of thirteen child care providers, eight languages are spoken at their sites including:



CURRENT AGES SERVED

The Child Care Capacity Initiative's first cohort of thirteen child care professionals serves over three hundred children. This includes children ages four weeks through twelve years old.

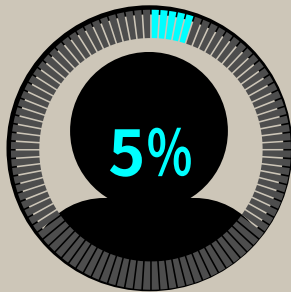


Our goals are to expand child care in Pierce County by a minimum of 200 new slots by September 2024. This includes serving in rural areas, child care deserts, culturally diverse populations, children with special needs, disabled children, infant care, access for military families, immigrants, refugees, low-income families, and families priced out of subsidies with multiple children needing child care access to work.

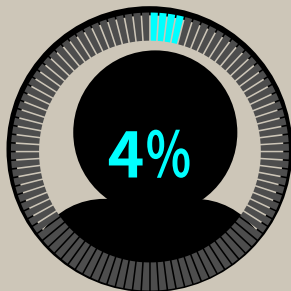
DEMOGRAPHICS

The Child Care and Early Learning professionals in Cohort A currently serve the following demographics:

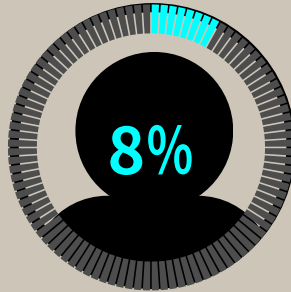
AFGHANI-ARAB



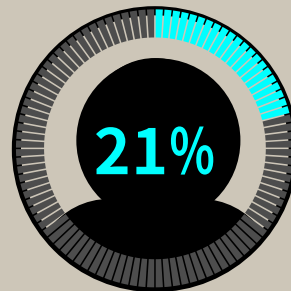
ASIAN



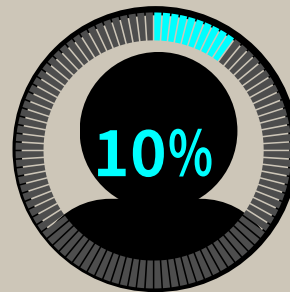
INDIGENOUS



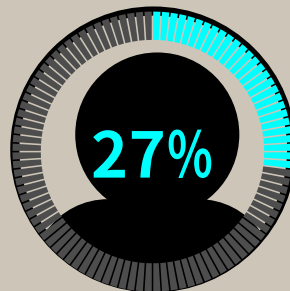
WHITE



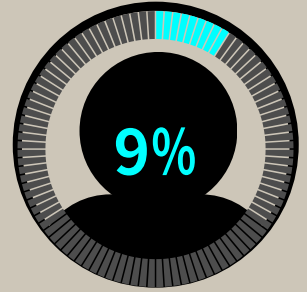
HAWAIIAN/SOMOAN



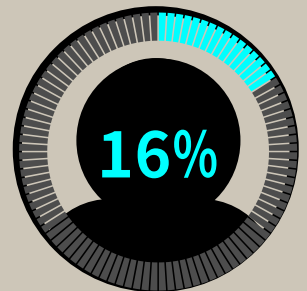
BLACK



MULTI-RACIAL



HISPANIC



CHILD CARE SLOTS

The Pierce County early learning professionals participating in Cohort A are currently licensed to serve 340 children ages four weeks through twelve years old. However, due to lack of staffing and other resources only 265 of these licensed slots are actually full. This means that in this group of thirteen child care providers, 75 slots – or 22% – of available licensed child care slots are going unfilled.

These numbers are reflective of the larger Pierce County child care landscape as licensed child care slots are sitting unused county-wide. Why is this happening and what are we doing to combat the issue?

Along with ensuring new licensed child care slots are opened in Pierce County, another impacted part of the child care crisis through the work of the Child Care Capacity Initiative is filling currently licensed slots.

Providers struggle to retain staffing, have lack of access to useable and effective marketing software to communicate open child care slots in real time, have design and facilities barriers, and many other barriers to opening, sustaining, and expansion of their businesses.

265

Number of Licensed Spots Filled in Cohort A

303

Number of Children Currently Served by Cohort A

340

Current Licensing in Cohort A allows for 340 children to be served

75

Number of Unused Licensed Slots in Cohort A

These issues are all being addressed through the Child Care Capacity Initiative and the Pierce County Early Childhood Network's Child Care Voice Action and Leadership Teams.

It's important to note that parent cooperatives, family, friend, and neighbor care (FFN), and some part-time preschools are not required to be licensed. That is how some providers are currently serving children in an unlicensed capacity.

The providers in Cohort A who are serving children while unlicensed are working to become licensed and shift their businesses for expansion.

SUBSIDIES – PRIVATE PAY

Cohort A child care professionals currently accept the following forms of subsidies which are both federal (military) and state:



Early Achievers
Early ECEAP
ECEAP
Headstart
Early Headstart
Youth Program Quality
MCCYN
MCCYN+



Every child care and early learning professional has a unique program. Not all providers accept the same subsidies, nor do they accept all of the subsidies available in one business as that requires engagement in multiple programs simultaneously.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Cohort A child care providers currently serve in the following school districts; Tacoma Public Schools, Franklin Pierce, Bethel, University Place, Clover Park, Spanaway, Puyallup, Key Peninsula, Chief Leschi, Eatonville, and Dieringer.

MILITARY FAMILIES

The current cohort of thirteen Pierce County child care professionals working with the Child Care Capacity Initiative serve 111 military families. That means nearly 1/3 of all families Cohort A is serving are active duty military or National Guard.

SPECIAL NEEDS

This group of child care providers in Cohort A is committed to serving children with physical, emotional, and cognitive disabilities. They are currently serving 70 children with disabilities which includes both cognitive and physical delays.

BUSINESS START-UPS

The Child Care Capacity Initiative (CCCI) is also supporting entrepreneurs who are interested in starting new child care businesses for the first time. Through the CCCI project, child care businesses are in the process of opening county-wide. This includes access to technical assistance, shared services, new business start up grants, and support walking through the process of starting a child care in Pierce County from opening day to four – six months of operations. The DCYF Pre-Licensing Team has been instrumental in ensuring timely visits are being conducted with scheduling, communications, and follow-up. We appreciate their partnership!



"The Child Care Capacity Initiative is giving me the opportunity to own and operate my own business. As a black woman, I want to serve my neighborhood. This is my chance to make a difference in my community that will allow parents to work and escape the poverty cycle that we are used to living with generation after generation." – Cohort A Child Care Professional

These entrepreneurs are educated, have completed the required state trainings, certifications, and background checks. They have business plans ready to implement and are actively looking for a site where they can open their businesses. They are here to serve Pierce County families in both rural and urban areas, offering both in-home and center based care.

PROGRESS

The Child Care Capacity Initiative has been operating the project's first cohort since January 2023.

In the first 5 months of 2023, the Child Care Capacity Initiative Cohort A has increased slots by 120 for before and after school care. These slots will serve families with children and students ages 5 years - 12 years. This progress will have a positive impact on the waiting list for before and after school child care care that Tacoma Public Schools is experiencing.

We have met 60% of our goal! We plan to move well beyond that in the coming year and a half. These early learning professionals are determined to succeed!



120

Join us as we increase child care slots in Pierce County, Washington through creative, flexible, and sustainable networking, while practicing the processes of Liberatory Design. Cohort A will continue to run congruently with Cohort B. Cohort B applications will be open June 1, 2023 - June 30th, 2023. Cohort B is set to begin in July 2023!

Congratulations!

COHORT B APPLICATIONS

Any Pierce County child care and early learning providers interested in expanding their existing business and/or desiring to open a new child care site can apply! Cohort B applications for participation in the Child Care Capacity Initiative open on June 1, 2023 and close on June 30th, 2023.

For more information visit www.pcecn.org/ccci.



To join the Child Care Voice Action Team meetings on fourth Fridays at 11am via Zoom, please visit www.pcecn.org/child-care-voice. These meetings are open to the public.

You can also view the current Pierce County Early Childhood Network's Child Care Voice Newsletter or sign up to receive future monthly editions using the link above.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the CHILD CARE CAPACITY INITIATIVE PROJECT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A warm thank you to the fearless Early Learning Professionals in Cohort A for paving the way for the future.

Thank you to **McKinley McPheeters and Muriel Herrera-Velasquez**, both stellar Project Coordinators.

Thank you to **Diane Kroll**, Co-founder of Design for Early Learning; she refuses to settle for less than miraculous and awe-inspiring child care and early learning spaces. She reminds us of our values and encourages us to imagine endless possibilities. She reinvents the wheel.

To **Susan Barbeau**, our former Executive Director, and the inspirational challenger whose encouragement and example will continue to elevate our work both personally and professionally for years to come.

We are grateful for partnerships with the Pierce County Council, Foundation for Tacoma Students, local school districts, the DCYF Pre-licensing Department, Tacoma Fire Department, Pierce County annex and zoning, JBLM, Camp Murray, Key Peninsula Partnership for a Healthy Community, WorkForce Central, Brightspark, Wonderschool, Imagine Institute, Mercy Housing, Child Care Aware of WA, Opportunities Exchange, The Bamford Foundation, The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, The Pierce County B25 Board, Tanya Overton, The Multicultural Family and Hope Center, Greentrike, Elvin Bucu, Carol Mensah, Linda Donley, Zach Sokolik, Kate Ginn, the amazing staff at First 5 Fundamentals, and to the whole network! Thank you!

See you this fall,

Cheri Beavers
Progress Report Designer, Writer, CCCI Project Manager



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