

# *Cooperatives* **BUILD**



*Unity*



*Partnerships*



*Value*



*Community*



*Leadership*



*A better world*

# 2016

# We've launched!

## CHECK OUT OUR NEW MOBILE-FRIENDLY WEBSITE

**Cooperative Network**  
THE TRUSTED VOICE FOR COOPERATIVES

ABOUT ADVOCACY EDUCATION RESOURCES MEMBERSHIP NEWS CONTACT

**Cooperatives BUILD**  
COOPERATIVE NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING  
NOV. 14-16, 2016

**WE ARE YOUR CO-OP**

Join cooperative and industry leaders to dive into the opportunities and challenges that exist for cooperatives and be inspired by collaborative efforts within the larger community. Our annual meeting is Nov. 14-16, 2016, in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

**LEARN MORE**

**RECENT NEWS**

**SORT BY:** SECTORS TOPICS

**RECENT NEWS**

**coop** **COOPERATIVE BUILDER HONOREES ANNOUNCED**  
OCTOBER 7, 2016

David Cramer, United Cooperative president and CEO; Tim Harrington, Premier Cooperative chairman; and Judy Ziewacz, National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA CLUSA) president and CEO, will receive Cooperative Network's 2016 Cooperative Builder Award. The annual distinction honors individuals who have made outstanding contributions at the local, state, and/or national level to...

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Cooperative Network**

**MENU** Search

**Cooperatives BUILD**  
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**LEARN MORE**

- \* Get the **latest news** front-and-center
- \* Locate **information by sector**
- \* Access **helpful resources**
- \* Easily navigate **our positions on co-op issues**
- \* **Find a member** co-op

# About Cooperative Network

**Cooperative Network is committed** to protecting and promoting Minnesota's and Wisconsin's cooperative businesses and their shared cooperative principles. It is the largest statewide co-op trade association in the United States, representing a diverse and active group of approximately 400 members.

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We are builders.

This is what we do and who we are as cooperatives. We are on constant lookout for constructive opportunities that will benefit our members and communities. And we step up when leaders are needed to rally a team or to create solutions. That is and always has been the cooperative way.

At Cooperative Network, we have worked hard this year to continue building value for your membership. We've done this through our successful lobby day events, tailored training opportunities, youth education programs, and promotional resources for your cooperative. You keep us inspired with your service, and we love sharing your stories.

We are proud of our heritage and the hardworking businesses we represent. We are confident in our future and grateful for your continued trust and support in us.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas M. Liebe', written in a cursive style.

Tom Liebe  
President & CEO

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### **WE HELP COOPERATIVES BUILD *Unity***

We are proud to represent the largest regional group of cooperatives in the nation. See this year's numbers in advocacy, education, and outreach.

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### **WE HELP COOPERATIVES BUILD *Partnerships***

Learn about our latest collaboration with cooperative and community partners to expand worker-owned cooperatives, work together on stray voltage issues, and defend financial cooperatives.

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### **WE HELP COOPERATIVES BUILD *Value***

From buffer strips to rural broadband, see how we did on your behalf in legislative and regulatory advocacy.

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### **WE HELP COOPERATIVES BUILD *Community***

We strive to build resources that make your job easier and help showcase co-op diversity and value. This year, we led on Co-op Month, shared your unique stories, and doubled your stock photo collection.

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### **WE HELP COOPERATIVES BUILD *Leadership***

Our education programs and events address the most pressing concerns of our members with expertise from industry and political leaders. See where we went this year.

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### **WE HELP COOPERATIVES BUILD *A Better World***

The Minnesota Cooperative Education Foundation and Federated Youth Foundation led our youth board on local co-op tours this year and celebrated new scholarships for legal and agricultural education.

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### **COOPERATIVE NETWORK 2015-16 *Board of Directors***

We are led by a 26-member board of directors who provide a voice for each of the cooperative sectors within our membership.



# COOPERATIVES BUILD *Unity*

We help bring together two of the largest and most diverse co-op states in the nation with 12 “Top 100 Co-ops” and three Fortune 500 companies.\*

## THE LARGEST REGIONAL CO-OP ASSOCIATION



- Credit Union
- Dairy
- Electric
- Farm Credit
- Farm Supply
- Health Care
- Agricultural Marketing & Processing
- Mutual Insurance
- Senior Housing
- Telecommunications
- Service & Retail

### CO-OP *Advocates*

**95**

legislative issues

**860**

member legislative office visits

**93%**

success on lobby day issues

### CO-OP *Educators*

**42**

education, professional development,  
and lobby day events

**2,300**

participants

### CO-OP *Promoters & Champions*

**500+**

young people  
introduced to cooperatives

**4,000**

booth visitors at Co-op  
Connection in Madison  
(hosted by Summit Credit Union)

**10,500**

“Co-ops are Everywhere”  
video views

+

1 cooperative education award

\*Source: National Cooperative Bank, 2015



# COOPERATIVES BUILD *Partnerships*

One of our greatest strengths is our ability to bring together cooperatives from diverse business sectors to support a cooperative cause. It’s “cooperation among cooperatives,” the sixth of our seven shared business principles, at its best.

## Madison Cooperative Development Coalition

“

This has been a truly collaborative effort among key community groups and the City of Madison to create sustainable economic models rooted in our communities.”

—Anne Reynolds, University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives



Madison to provide an ongoing network of support and financing for workers who want to own their own businesses and for retiring owners who would like to sell their businesses to employees.

Each of the coalition’s three partner groups has a critical role in the initiative. Community organizations will identify workers and business opportunities and provide culturally relevant materials and support. Labor partners will carry out appropriate assessments and trainings. They will also provide union resources and benefits. Local cooperative developers will guide the provision of technical assistance as cooperatives grow from concept to reality.

“

Through this innovative approach, we hope to build ties, break down cultural barriers, and drive cooperative development in a way that best serves the individuals and families this program is meant to serve.”

—Eric S. Upchurch II

Young Gifted and Black Coalition, Opportunity Inc., Chamber for Black Economic Empowerment

When the Madison Common Council sought proposals to develop worker-owned cooperatives in the city’s underrepresented communities, Cooperative Network took a leadership role in submitting a joint proposal with nearly two dozen community-based organizations, labor groups, and cooperative developers. The City of Madison awarded funding for the Madison Cooperative Development Coalition project in August 2016.

Cooperative Network is serving as an interim steering committee member and will contract with the City of

## Coalition Participants, Supporters, and Partners

Centro Hispano of Dane County  
Chamber for Black Economic Empowerment  
Cooperative Network  
Democracy at Work Network  
Freedom Inc.  
Heartland Credit Union  
Interpreters’ Cooperative of Madison  
Latino Chamber of Commerce of Dane Cty

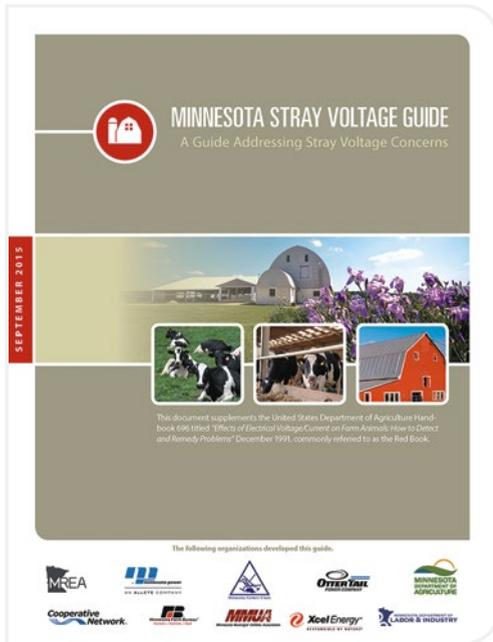
Latino Professionals Assn of Greater Madison  
IUPAT 802  
Madison Development Corporation  
MadWorC  
Northside Planning Council  
Operation Welcome Home  
SMART Local 18 and Local 565  
South Central Federation of Labor

ReSCI Consulting  
Shared Capital Cooperative  
Workers’ Rights Center  
WRTP/Big Step  
UFCW 1473  
UW Center for Cooperatives  
Young Gifted and Black Coalition

## Minnesota Stray Voltage Guide

Cooperative Network was part of a broad-based stakeholder group that developed the *Minnesota Stray Voltage Guide* as a resource for dairy farmers and utilities operating in the state. The collaboration marked the first time in state history that such a group had developed an approach for handling stray voltage concerns.

*Free guide online at*  
[minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com](http://minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com)



## Credit Union Collaboration

Cooperative Network brings the support of the larger cooperative community to several credit union-related issues every year. Together with the Minnesota Credit Union Network and Wisconsin Credit Union League, cooperatives supported proposed changes to national field-of-membership rules, successfully pushed for commonsense patent reform in Minnesota, and supported key credit union statute updates in Wisconsin. Last year's support of prize-linked savings in Minnesota led to the creation of the WINcentive® Savings program in 14 credit unions. Participants have saved over \$2 million through 3,536 savings accounts.

### MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

#### UFC and RS Fiber Cooperative



When an investor-owned utility ignored a rural community's pleas to bring broadband to southern Minnesota, United Farmers Cooperative brought the community together to form a fiber optics cooperative.

#### Co-op Alliance of Polk and Burnett Counties



Representatives from credit union, electric, grocery, mutual insurance, and publishing cooperatives meet regularly in Polk and Burnett counties to discuss ways they can work together to promote shared cooperative ideals.

*See the stories at*  
[ourcooperativestory.coop](http://ourcooperativestory.coop)



# COOPERATIVES BUILD *Value*

We are the trusted cooperative voice among policymakers on both sides of the aisle. We keep a pulse on rural, suburban, and urban issues that affect your community, and we've built strong relationships as respected advisers.



Thanks to legislation we worked on with Cooperative Network, one electric co-op was able to save thousands in rail crossing fees this year—money now reinvested in the member-owned cooperative.”

—Jim Horan, Director of Government Affairs and Counsel, Minnesota Rural Electric Association



## Minnesota

Legislation	Position	Outcome
<b>Buffer Strips.</b> New legislation clarifies provisions established last year. The law excludes private ditches from the buffer requirement, provides more fair compensation for landowners, and establishes a state-funded program for local implementation.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>Railroad Crossing Fees.</b> We worked with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association to set reasonable standard crossing fees for utilities and right-of-ways.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>Property Tax Relief.</b> We supported tax credits and relief for agricultural land and fought to keep a tax exemption for chemical and fertilizer containment facilities. The proposals were denied as part of the governor's tax bill veto.	Supported	Vetoed
<b>Rural Broadband.</b> We supported funding and other measures to stimulate statewide broadband development and infrastructure.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>Farm Safety.</b> We supported a provision of \$250,000 for Minnesota's tractor rollover protection pilot program. Several Cooperative Network members committed private funds to the program.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>Patent Reform.</b> Together with the Minnesota Credit Union Network, we advocated for a prohibition on bad faith assertions of patent infringement. The law allows for penalties up to \$50,000.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>Elevator Manlift Regulation.</b> We worked to repeal a two-cable mandate for manual grain elevator manlifts. The Dept. of Labor and Industry agreed to eliminate the requirement after conversations with Cooperative Network and others.	Supported	No hearing; resolved by agency



Legislation	Position	Outcome
<b>Rural Broadband.</b> We supported a rural broadband expansion grant program and worked to protect telecommunications cooperative investments.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>Electronic Voting.</b> We promoted legislation to clarify that electronic voting may be used in the election of cooperative directors.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>Agricultural Producer Security Fund.</b> We continued to support an assessment holiday for dairy and grain contractors after a default outside their industries wiped out more than half the fund in 2014. Cooperative Network's John Manske chairs the APS Council.	Supported	Approved
<b>Credit Union Regulation.</b> Statute Chapter 186 governing credit unions was updated to reflect current industry practices, despite banker protests. We worked with the Wisconsin Credit Union League to pass the legislation.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>High Capacity Well Permits.</b> Legislation introduced in both houses allowed permits for the replacement, reconstruction, or ownership transfer of high capacity wells without requiring a Department of Natural Resources review. Bills passed their respective chambers in different forms.	Supported	Stalled in Legislature
<b>Unfair Sales Act Repeal.</b> We joined the Main Street Business Coalition in support of upholding a Wisconsin law that protects small businesses from below-cost sales competition.	Opposed	Rejected
<b>Dairy Farm &amp; Plant Operations Rule.</b> Dairy farm and dairy plant rules were made one this year. We successfully advocated keeping performance-based inspections in the new rule.	Supported	Approved
<b>State Health Plan Notice.</b> We supported a mandate for Wisconsin's Group Insurance Board to notify the Joint Finance Committee of any intent to contract self-insured group health plans for state employees.	Supported	Signed into law
<b>Dog Owner Liability &amp; Insurance Regulation.</b> We supported the insurance industry in limiting the liability of a dog owner in certain dog bite situations. We also advocated for several updates to the insurance statutes.	Supported	Signed into law



“Our members saved \$30,000 last year because Cooperative Network stood up for dairy contractor rights to continue receiving reprieve from APS fund assessments.”

—Ron Statz, General Manager, Scenic Central Milk Producers



# COOPERATIVES BUILD *Community*

We led several collaborative projects this year to grow cooperative awareness and to add value to your membership. Each of the following projects was made possible with grant funding from the CHS Foundation.

## National Co-op Month



After years of creating our region's own Co-op Month theme and campaign, we set out to make it a collective national effort this year. We worked with the Cooperative Communicators Association to create a cross-sector group to develop the 2016 Co-op Month theme, logo, and campaign collateral. Fourteen committee volunteers represented several national cooperative organizations, including the Minnesota Cooperative Education Foundation, and geographically and industry-diverse cooperative sectors. Member communicators from Eau Claire Energy and United Farmers Cooperative also served on the committee. The [coopmonth.coop](http://coopmonth.coop) website received about 23,000 page views leading up to October Co-op Month, compared to 6,400 on Cooperative Network's website last year.

**THE CO-OP MONTH CAMPAIGN RECEIVED 16,600+ MORE VIEWS THAN LAST YEAR**



## Our Cooperative Story



We set out on a multimedia storytelling project this summer to showcase the cooperative business difference in action. Stories were collected from pieces already produced by cooperatives, and we created several pieces specifically for the project. The stories were featured through social media during national Co-op Month in October. The collection is at [ourcooperativestory.coop](http://ourcooperativestory.coop).

## Stock Photo Collection

We doubled our stock photography collection with photos of the fall harvest, small farmers, a food co-op café and warehouse, and a variety of lifestyle shots. Nearly 2,000 high-resolution photos are now available as an exclusive member benefit. We are grateful to Becketwood Cooperative, Country Visions Cooperative, Medford Cooperative, Wedge Community Co-op, Co-op Partners Warehouse, and Shared Ground Cooperative for their help coordinating and participating in the photo shoots.



*See our complete stock photo collection online at*  
[cooperativenetwork.smugmug.com](http://cooperativenetwork.smugmug.com)

The collection is for members only and is password protected.



### MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

#### United FCS



United FCS created a nonprofit community garden in Olivia, Minnesota, and partnered with a local hospital to help educate the community on healthy living.

#### Union Cab



A worker-owned taxi cooperative in Madison, Wisconsin, is offering the city's only wheelchair-accessible service.

*See the stories at*  
[ourcooperativestory.coop](http://ourcooperativestory.coop)



# COOPERATIVES BUILD *Leadership*

Giving cooperatives the specific tools and information they need to perform their best is important to us. This year's education and professional development participants explored topics including credit-related issues, cooperative housing, governance, legislative and regulatory updates, marketing and communications, and more.

## Senior Housing Cooperatives



The rebranded **Senior Cooperative Housing Conference** in May attracted a record 300 participants to the country's heart of senior housing co-op development. Co-op collaboration was highlighted in a panel on financial resources, which featured SPIRE Credit Union, South Metro Federal Credit Union, and Shared Capital Cooperative. The finance cooperatives offered unique credit and investment solutions for senior housing cooperatives

and their members.



Cooperative Network has annually presented the Senior Cooperative Housing Conference with the Senior Cooperative Foundation since 2001. Three-quarters of the nation's senior housing cooperatives are located in Minnesota.



## Young Leaders



Sponsored by their local co-ops, FFA chapters, and other organizations, nearly 120 high school students attended Cooperative

Network's annual **Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference** in March. Participants learned about the cooperative structure and principles from speakers representing co-op organizations including Aynah, Central City Credit Union (now Simplicity Credit Union), CHS, Co-op Credit Union, Harvest Land Cooperative, Organic Valley, Riverland Energy Cooperative, SPIRE Credit Union, and Wakota Federal Credit Union. Peer-elected youth board members had the chance to experience additional leadership opportunities in Washington, D.C., and during cooperative tours in Minnesota and Wisconsin (see p. 12).

## CO-OP Directors

With support from the USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant program, Cooperative Network co-hosted its first Co-op Directors Forum with the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives in April. More than 40 attendees from 13 diverse cooperatives in Minnesota and Wisconsin took part in the program, which featured presentations on cooperative financials, legal and fiduciary duties, and governance best practices.



## Co-op Communicators



Communication professionals from more than 40 diverse cooperatives in Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Iowa gathered February in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, for the **Co-op**

**Communicators Workshop**. Attendees practiced skills and tactics for video, social media, writing, and interviewing. Local *New York Times* best-selling author Michael Perry was the featured speaker and sat down with participants to offer tips and answer questions during a roundtable session.



“

I left feeling I gained more than expected. First class all the way.”

—Co-op Communicators Workshop attendee

## Dairy Cooperatives

Cooperative Network focuses the majority of its advocacy efforts on state issues, but events like the **Federal Milk Marketing Orders Forum** in September 2015 and **Federal Dairy Issues Forum** in August 2016 helped inform members about a growing number of important federal issues affecting the dairy industry. They also provided members an opportunity to discuss their positions and concerns with Congressional representatives in attendance. Program speakers addressed key topics including California’s proposed federal milk marketing order, international trade, immigration reform, and the margin protection program.

## MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

### CHS, Inc. & CHS Foundation



Rural leadership programs are helping young farmers build their skills and experience as they transition into farm ownership and onto cooperative boards.

### STAR Credit Union



Summit Credit Union worked with the local Boys and Girls Club to open the nation’s only youth-chartered credit union. The youth-run credit union helps its members save for the future.

*See the stories at*  
[ourcooperativestory.coop](http://ourcooperativestory.coop)



# COOPERATIVES BUILD *A Better World*

Two affiliated statewide cooperative foundations, the Minnesota Cooperative Education Foundation and Federated Youth Foundation, help educate others about co-ops and provide generous scholarship support.

“

No matter the size, there is still a sense of home and community in every co-op.”

—Shantelle Des Marais (Pipestone, Minnesota)

## Scholarships

### SUPPORTING COOPERATIVE LAW STUDENTS



Rhiannon Buehler, a paralegal student at Madison Area Technical College, was awarded the Federated Youth

Foundation’s inaugural Charles Van Sickle Scholarship. The \$2,000 scholarship is available to Wisconsin residents who are law or pre-law students with interest in cooperative law. The fund was created to honor the Wheeler, Van Sickle and Anderson cooperative attorney and lobbyist who died in 2012.

### CULTIVATING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS



The Minnesota Cooperative Education Foundation’s new Cultivating Agricultural Educators Scholarship will be available in 2017 to Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, and North Dakota residents studying agricultural education. The scholarship was created to honor the accomplishments of William Nelson, past CHS vice president of stewardship and CHS Foundation president, a 2015 National Cooperative Hall of Fame honoree. Donations to the endowment may be made through 2016 at [www.mcef.coop](http://www.mcef.coop).

## Youth Outreach



A group of young leaders experienced the cooperative business principles in action, diversity of cooperative sectors, and variety of cooperative careers during two local tours this year. The tours were funded by the Minnesota Cooperative Education Foundation and Federated Youth Foundation.

Students from the Co-ops Yes! youth board toured Twin Cities cooperatives in February as part of their year-long leadership experience. The board visited CHS, Inc.; Land O’Lakes; Gramercy Park Cooperative of Inver Grove Heights; SPIRE Credit Union; and Wedge Community Co-op. Students also met with Minnesota legislators and staff to gain insight on government and the legislative process.

Wisconsin’s Federated Youth Foundation sponsored The Cooperative Experience in August for high school and university students representing Cooperative Network’s Co-ops Yes! youth board, the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association youth board, and Wisconsin FFA state officer team.

The students visited Dairyland Power Cooperative, Organic Valley, People’s Food Co-op, Vernon Electric Cooperative, and WCCU Credit Union.

# COOPERATIVES BUILD *A Better World*



“  
Our guide left us with a powerful message: ‘At the end of the day, it’s not the products we move that matter, or how efficient we were today, it’s the people.’”

— Jenna Jereb (Kendall, Wisconsin)

## COOPERATIVE NETWORK 2015-16 *Board of Directors*

Credit Union – Minnesota

**Dan Stoltz**, SPIRE Credit Union

Credit Union – Wisconsin

**Mary Bliss**, Wisconsin Credit Union League

**Michele Steien**, Co-op Credit Union

Dairy – Minnesota

**Mark Berning**, Land O’Lakes

Dairy – Wisconsin

**Secretary Bob Topel**, Foremost Farms USA

Farm Credit

**Treasurer Staci Martin**, AgStar Financial Services ACA

Health Care

**Al Wearing**, Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin

Housing

**Bill Buending**, Gramercy Park Cooperative Northwest

Local Supply – Minnesota

**Kelly Christianson**, Northern Resources Cooperative

Local Supply – Wisconsin

**Brian Koenig**, Insight FS

Marketing-Processing

**Vice Chair Terri Dallas**, Cooperative Resources International

Mutual Insurance

**Gregg Westigard**, Trade Lake Mutual Insurance Company

Regional Supply

**Chair Curt Eischens**, CHS Inc.

**Executive Committee Member Bill Zuhlke**, Land O’Lakes

Service

**Matt Brandrup**, Rural Electric Supply Cooperative

Telecommunications

**Scott Behn**, Mosaic Telecom

Utility Distribution – Minnesota

**Harlan Lanz**, BENCO Electric Cooperative

Utility Distribution – Wisconsin

**Larry Amble**, Dunn Energy Cooperative

**Elaine Eckendorf**, Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative

**Bill Fischer**, Rock Energy Cooperative

**James Hathaway**, Dunn Energy Cooperative

Utility Generation and Transmission

**Greg Sacia**, Dairyland Power Cooperative

At Large

**Cheri Gibeaut**, Adams–Columbia Electric Cooperative (Wis.)

**Brent Imker**, South Central Electric Association (Minn.)

**Dave Johnsrud**, CHS, Inc. (Minn.)

**James Kinzie**, Bayfield Electric Cooperative (Wis.)



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St. Paul, MN 55103  
P: 651-228-0213  
F: 651-228-1184

Find cooperative news, upcoming events, member resources and more on our **new mobile-friendly website**  
[www.cooperativenetwork.coop](http://www.cooperativenetwork.coop)

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