



ENHANCING THE RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE EXPANSION OF THE
SCIENCE SHOPS ECOSYSTEM IN EUROPE

Modules for Training of Science Shops Staff

Science Shops: Project Evaluation and Impact Assessment



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Objectives

In the area of expanding knowledge, after this module, participants will:

- Acquire knowledge of the concept, importance and methods of project evaluation and impact assessment
- Obtain a greater insight into the impacts of Science Shop projects
- Be familiar with the specifics and good practices of project evaluation and impact assessment at Science Shops

In the area of skills and attitudes, they will:

- Be able to choose and apply methods and tools for project evaluation and impact assessment
- Be more motivated to perform project evaluation and impact assessment of Science Shops

Session outline

Methodology	Material required	Duration Total: 3 hr 45 min
1. Welcome	Training agenda (printed)	5 min.
2. Personal introductions and initial evaluation	"Post-it notes" (different colours)	15 min.
3. Presentation Parts 1-5	- Projector & large screen - Key messages - PowerPoint presentation	60 min. (including Q&A and discussion)
5. Interactive exercise 1 "Plan your project evaluation strategy"	-	40 min.
6. Presentation Parts 6-11	- Projector & large screen - Key messages - PowerPoint presentation	45 min. (including Q&A and discussion)
7. Interactive exercise 2 World café on challenges of impact assessment	- Room with three large separate tables - Large sheets of paper	60 min.

Description of methodologies

Welcome

The trainer welcomes participants, presents the session's aims, distributes and comments briefly on the training agenda.

Personal introductions and initial evaluation

If there is a need (depending on the training programme), the trainer can ask participants to present themselves.

For the initial evaluation, attach 2-3 sheets of paper with questions for the participants on the wall. Questions could be:

- What questions do you have about project evaluation and impact assessment?
- On a scale from 0 to 5, how much do you think evaluation and impact assessment of Science Shop projects is useful (0=not useful, 5=useful)?
- On a scale from 0 to 5, how much do you think evaluation and impact assessment of Science Shop projects is an easy task (0=easy, 5=difficult)?

Give sticky notes to the participants, ask them to write answers to every question (on a separate sticky note) and put them on the wall. At the end of this training invite all the participants to the wall and go through all questions and comments together to see if they were answered during the day, and also discuss how much their attitudes about project evaluation and impact assessment have changed.

Key messages corresponding to the different slides

Project evaluation and impact assessment are very important activities undertaken by Science Shops to ensure project quality management and demonstrate the Science Shops' impact on society. However, many Science Shops still neglect the importance of such activities and do not perform them in their work (Stanescu et al., 2018). The aim of this presentation is to present a general introduction to project evaluation and impact assessment, its benefits and related challenges. This presentation also provides an overview of the steps to be followed for implementing project evaluation and impact assessment.

1. Definition of project evaluation

Project evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project. The aim is to determine the relevance and level of achievement of project objectives, development effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (OECD DAC Glossary, 2002). Project evaluation helps to steer the project towards the set goals and assesses how well planning and managing for future impact is being done during the project cycle (International Labour Office, 2018). Project evaluation is a valuable tool to assess and improve Science Shops' activities.

2. Types of project evaluation

Types of project evaluation are distinguished on the basis of when the evaluation is performed:

- **Early stage (*ex-ante*) evaluation** should take place in the preparatory phase of a project, before any substantive work has been done. The main purpose of evaluation at this stage of a project is to ensure that the objectives and methods have been clearly defined and that the resources are in place to meet the stated objectives. It can also help identify the anticipated impacts of the project.
- **Monitoring** is a type of evaluation that is performed while a project is being implemented, with the aim of improving the project's impact. As a result of the evaluation, certain measures may be taken during the project which may lead to an increase in its foreseen impact (Gnaiger and Schroffenegger, 2003). Unlike other types of project evaluation, monitoring is usually performed through communication and reflection between the project coordinator and the staff involved in the project implementation. As such it does not need specific tools and does not result in a report.
- **A mid-term evaluation** is formative in nature and typically used to assess achievements half-way through the project and to derive lessons for implementation. It should be conducted at the mid-point of projects that run for more than six months. Thus it may not be practical for shorter projects. The main purpose of evaluation at mid-point in a project is to identify where improvements can or must be made in order to complete the project satisfactorily.
- **A final (*ex-post*) evaluation** is performed shortly before the end of a project (or a project's phase) in order to determine the extent to which planned and unplanned objectives and outcomes were achieved, to identify the factors of success or failure, to assess the sustainability of the benefits generated, and to draw conclusions that may inform future

projects. This evaluation aims mainly to establish the level of satisfaction of those involved with the outputs and conduct of the project.

- **Post-project evaluation** should be conducted one year after the delivery of the final report. This aims to establish longer-term impacts of the project both through retrospective assessments of the outcomes and through the detail of research outputs. It may be especially useful for longer-term planning by Science Shops.

More information: Trench, B., Smith Kaiser D, Vargiu A., van der Windt H. (2013) PERARES Deliverable D9.1- Evaluation Guidelines and Instruments, available at: https://www.livingknowledge.org/fileadmin/Dateien-Living-Knowledge/Library/Project_reports/PERARES_EVALUATION_Guidelines_and_Instruments_D9.1.pdf

3. Criteria of project evaluation

The following main criteria can be advised for Science Shop project evaluation (based mainly on UNODC criteria definitions and sample, UNODC):

- **Design** of a project measures the extent to which the logical framework approach was adopted, with measurable expected objectives, outcomes and outputs, performance indicators.
- **Relevance** of a project or programme is the extent to which its objectives are continuously consistent with recipient needs.
- **Efficiency** is a measure of how resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into outputs.
- **Effectiveness** is the extent to which a project achieves its objectives and outcomes.
- **Stakeholder engagement** is a measure of the level and quality of project coordinators' cooperation with partners and other stakeholders.
- **Impact** is the positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term economic, environmental, social change(s) produced or likely to be produced by a project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended, after the project was implemented.
- **Sustainability** is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of a project or programme are likely to continue after they have come to an end.

Explanations:

- **Inputs** - resources at the disposal of the project, including staff and budget;
- **Outputs** - the tangible goods and services that the project activities produce (measurable);
- **Outcomes** - results likely to be achieved once the beneficiary community uses the project outputs; these are usually achieved in the short to medium term (direct effects of the project);
- **Final outcomes/long-term impact** - the final results achieved indicating whether project goals were met. Indirect effects of the outcomes are achieved over a longer period of time.
- **Performance indicators** - a quantitative or qualitative measurement by which the performance, efficiency, achievement, etc. of a person or organisation can be assessed, often by comparison with an agreed standard or target

Examples of performance indicators:

- Students or other project assistants involved in the project
- Total credits, e.g. ECTS, obtained by students for participation in project
- Academics involved in the project
- Civil society organisations contributing to the project
- Private enterprises contributing to the project
- Local government agencies contributing to the project
- State agencies contributing to the project
- Organised meetings with stakeholders
- Academic publications produced arising from this project
- Requests for advice on policy or legal issues relating to the project topic

More information: Trench, B., Smith Kaiser D, Vargiu A., van der Windt H. (2013) PERARES Deliverable D9.1- Evaluation Guidelines and Instruments, available at: https://www.livingknowledge.org/fileadmin/Dateien-Living-Knowledge/Library/Project_reports/PERARES_EVALUATION_Guidelines_and_Instruments_D9.1.pdf

4. Steps of project evaluation

Main steps of project evaluation (mainly based on Perares Project Evaluations 2012):

Step 1. Preparing the evaluation

Step 2. Collecting data

Step 3. Analysing results

Step 4. Writing the evaluation report

Step 5. Communicating the results

Step 1. Preparing the evaluation. In preparing a project evaluation, the following activities are recommended:

- Identify who in the project team will be responsible for overseeing the evaluation;
- Identify stakeholders and partners to be included in the evaluation;
- Discuss the purpose and procedures of the evaluation with participants and set out the scope and aims of the evaluation;
- Prepare partners for the possibility that evaluation results may not be universally welcomed;
- Identify specific indicators, which can help to make it possible to demonstrate project results;
- Prepare or select tools for evaluation.

Step 2. Collecting the data. The main recommendation in this step is to use contact methods for collecting of data (face-to-face qualitative or quantitative interviews, focus groups, evaluation meetings, etc.) rather than sending questionnaires out. This ensures a higher completion rate and completion on time. However, it may not always be possible to have the forms completed in this way. If the forms are being sent by email or post, it is important to keep track of where and how many forms have been sent out and returned. Keep the completed forms safe at least until the end of the project.

Step 3. Analysing the results. Filling in the forms does not constitute the evaluation. It is the analysis of the responses and reflection on this analysis that makes for an evaluation. It is the responsibility of

the project coordinator and key partners to ensure all other partners have an opportunity to respond to the evaluation findings as represented in an overall evaluation report.

Step 4. Writing the evaluation report. Along with a summary of findings, the evaluation report should outline in a single page the conclusions and recommendations, including plans to remedy any shortcomings. A draft copy of the evaluation report should be provided for all stakeholders who should be invited to give their observations on it. The report should then be finalized.

Step 5. Communicating the results. Early stage or mid-term evaluation reports are usually only circulated to stakeholders involved in the project, while final evaluation and post-project evaluations can also be used to inform the communication of project results to a wider audience.

5. Tools for Science Shop project evaluation

The essential tool for evaluation and impact assessment, adapted to the kind of projects implemented by Science Shops, is the “Perares Project Evaluations” toolkit. It presents four different checklists and survey forms for project and impact evaluation for different stages of a project:

- Checklist for early-stage evaluation; this is to be used in the preparatory phase before substantive interventions happen and researchers go into the field;
- Questionnaire for mid-point evaluation; this is to be used at a stage in a project when the project can still be modified without damaging it;
- Questionnaire for end-point evaluation; this is to be used when the project report is submitted;
- Questionnaire for post-project evaluation; this is to be used for assessing longer-term impacts and carried out approximately 12 months after the project has completed.

More information: Trench, B., Smith Kaiser D, Vargiu A., van der Windt H. (2013) PERARES Deliverable D9.1- Evaluation Guidelines and Instruments, available at: https://www.livingknowledge.org/fileadmin/Dateien-Living-Knowledge/Library/Project_reports/PERARES_EVALUATION_Guidelines_and_Instruments_D9.1.pdf

However, the Science Shop can develop its own tools for evaluation or adapt existing tools for its needs. The evaluation can also be done using qualitative interviews, focus groups or evaluation meetings, and the necessary information collected without the use of questionnaires or surveys. Some Science Shops use both qualitative and quantitative ways, as shown in one of the following examples from Deliverable 2.2. “Existing RRI tools and successful participatory community-based research case studies report” (Garrison et al. 2018).

Example 1

The Science Shop Language, Culture and Communication at University of Groningen, Netherlands.

Coordinators of Science Shop carry out an evaluation with students and the community organisations to assess their satisfaction with the project process and the results and if their expectations have been met. The evaluation consists of their own standard questionnaire that is completed face-to-face together with the students and organisations to allow other observations to be discussed as well.

At the start of the project, objectives in terms of impact for the organisation requesting the research are clearly defined to ensure that the results can be used by the organisation at the end of the project. Due to the thematic approach, certain projects can result in considerable societal impact over time. However the impact is not formally monitored after the end of the project.

Example 2

UTS Shopfront Community Program is a Science Shop based at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia.

Shopfront has a formal evaluation process that takes place at the end of each semester. Customised online surveys are completed by both the students and community organisations to evaluate the quality and significance of their experiences. Shopfront also gets face-to-face or telephone feedback from the community organisations at the end of each project.

Shopfront views a project as successful if it results in an outcome that is used by the community organisation. Many projects also result in follow-on projects in a different disciplinary area (for example a community consultation may lead to a funded project, or a feasibility study may lead to a new programme design).

6. Definition of impact assessment

Impact assessment is usually defined as a tool used to identify the environmental, social and economic impacts of a project (e.g. the conventions on biological diversity). Yet in fact, impact evaluation should also assess long-term changes produced by the project. It is a tool conceived to rate the effectiveness of a project by determining the importance of changes triggered by its activities. Such changes cover all the positive and negative impacts; intended and unintended; and direct or indirect long-term results arising from the project activities in the economic, social, cultural and environmental arenas (OECD-DAC, 2010; Stanescu et al., 2018).

7. Rationale behind impact assessment

Despite the fact that impact evaluation is one of the parts or types of project evaluation, it deserves special attention because, on the one hand, impact assessment is rarely undertaken by Science Shops, and on the other, it provides insights into the long term impact of Science Shop projects and in this way demonstrates the main benefits of work done by Science Shops.

As revealed by SciShops' study on Science Shop impacts, impact assessment is not a standard practice among Science Shops or, if done, it is not widely communicated, as examples of systematic impact assessment are very rare (Stanescu et al. 2018). The main reason is rooted in the fact that a majority of projects do not include long-term impact assessment in their design, and after the end of the project there are no allocated resources for conducting this type of assessment.

Nevertheless, while project evaluation might be indeed a superfluous activity for short term student-implemented projects, post-project impact assessment is beneficial to all Science Shops as:

- a tool to demonstrate accountability;
- a useful source of evidence for future project proposals;
- an argument for fund-raising activities.

Moreover, the recent emphasis on “research impact” or the “third mission” of universities will heighten the need for universities to demonstrate their impact on communities, and this will also apply to Science Shops and how they collect evidence on their impact on society.

The results of impact assessment can be an invaluable source of information for communication and dissemination activities within the research community, civil society and interested authorities.

8. Possible impacts of Science Shops projects

The impacts of Science Shops projects can be direct and indirect. Direct impact mainly deals with social impact – a change or direct influence that a CBPR project can have on community/society. Indirect impact of these projects can be in various areas:

- Scientific Impact
- Economic impact
- Health impact
- Technological impact
- Environmental impact
- Political Impact

An analysis of the impacts of 31 selected Science Shops across Europe and beyond was conducted by SciShops partners and based on the PERARES “Post-project evaluation” questionnaire (Stanescu et al., 2018). The analysis revealed five main types of impacts that Science Shops have on their communities.

In more than 50% of cases the Science Shop projects:

- Increased stakeholders’ knowledge of how research is done;
- Increased researcher’s interest in the subject;
- Helped to develop ongoing relationships between academics and CSOs;
- Influenced the direction of further research;
- Showed the prospect to produce long-term impacts for the community: changes in public policy, legislation, awareness on the issue, etc.

Revealed specific impact on stakeholders

Students:

- new knowledge and skills
- concept and practice of social responsibility
- building professional reputation

Science Shops:

- influence on choice of subsequent research topics
- increased interest of academics and students in community-based participatory research
- increase in research requests
- expansion of collaborations and networking
- establishment of new Science Shops

Community organisations:

- improvement of programmes or services
- increased trust in research
- increased citizen awareness/understanding about issues and involvement in tackling the problems

- citizen learning about the research process
- educational impact on citizen
- impact on quality of life improvement

More information: SciShops deliverable 2.5 “Existing Science Shops assessment” (Stanescu et al. 2018).

Example

Science Shop InterMEDIU at the Technical University of Iasi (TUI), Romania

In its pilot project “Evaluation of the quality of drinking water supplied in the city of Iasi”, this Science Shop achieved the following project outputs:

- Large public debate involving the stakeholders
- Press releases and articles in the local newspapers
- One TV debate
- Four papers published in peer-reviewed journals
- Three graduation theses

The following short-term impacts were identified:

- Increased the stakeholders’ knowledge about university researchers’ potential contribution to solving environmental problems
- Increased cooperation and collaboration between universities and civil society organisations as representatives of the community
- Increased the interest of academics and students in CBR and solving community concerns related to the environment
- InterMEDIU TUI promoted and disseminated its research activities, to raise community awareness about the quality of drinking water and to gain its trust
- The researcher groups identified new research topics on other community concerns related to their quality of life.
- Broader collaboration with another Romanian Science Shop from the University “Dunarea de Jos” of Galati that ran a similar research project upon request from the local water company.

The following long-term impacts were identified:

On the community:

- Improvement to the quality of drinking water and the reduction of the risk of occurrence of hazardous chemical compounds in the treated water
- Gaining trust on the research done by the Science Shop and on the reliability of information about the quality of drinking water in Iasi
- Opened up public debate about drinking water quality, involving CSOs, academics, research institutions, governmental organisations, water companies and the media
- New invitations addressed to the InterMEDIU TUI by other NGOs to get involved in two additional projects regarding water quality
- NGO project partner became a catalyst of the public debates and seminars organised by the InterMEDIU TUI, in promoting public involvement in environment protection

Impacts on the university/Science Shop’s researchers

- InterMEDIU TUI gained recognition of its research group at university and national levels
- Students developed new research skills: how to apply social inquiry techniques and how to put their technical knowledge into practice

- Students acquired new knowledge about research methodologies and project management, improved their communication skills and were able to use the experience they had gained in other projects
- Science Shop gained experience of working with international partners and skills in addressing/approaching community problems.
- The university developed new curricula and engaged students in voluntary research and in cooperating with community organisations
- Faculty staff acquired an in-depth understanding of methods and ways to involve and coordinate students in teamwork and interdisciplinary research activities.

Impacts on enterprises (Water Works Company):

- Awareness of the need to improve and modernise the drinking water treatment facilities
- Long-term collaboration with the Science Shop which provided reliable information used to inform upgrades and improvements to the efficiency of the drinking water treatment plants
- Awareness of the need to incorporate the research findings into local development strategies related to drinking water quality

More information: SciShops deliverable 2.5 “Existing Science Shops assessment” (Stanescu et al. 2018).

9. Steps of impact assessment

Main steps of impact assessment:

Step 1. Identify which potential impacts are relevant to the project

Step 2. Plan and allocate resources for impact assessment

Step 3. Chose tools for the impact assessment

Step 4. Decide which stakeholders need to be involved

Step 5. Perform the impact assessment and write a report

Step 6. Communicate the results

Step 7. Monitor the impact

Step 1. Identify which potential impacts are relevant to the project. Impacts can vary in different Science Shop projects depending on the topic, scope of the project and available resources. Depending on how these factors develop, projects can anticipate small or quite substantial impacts. The envisioned impacts should be connected to the project objectives, activities, and outcomes. The main stakeholders of the project should be involved in this step as well as the following steps. It is worth asking the questions: When/if the stakeholders will use your research results, what would change? What changes in individuals, groups, organisations, or at a societal, cultural or some other level can you envision? Would these changes be beneficial or might some groups be disadvantaged in some way as a result of your research?

Step 2. Plan and allocate resources for impact assessment. As already mentioned, if an impact assessment is not planned and financial and human resources allocated, it is unlikely that an impact assessment will be undertaken once the project has come to an end. The recommendation is to conduct an impact assessment one year after the end of the project.

Step 3. Select the tools for impact assessment. Identify specific indicators demonstrate impact. Use, adapt or create impact assessment tools (questionnaires, interview guides, etc.) for the impact

assessment. Sometimes qualitative methods can give you more innovative insights about the impacts achieved and what needs to be improved, than quantitative questionnaires, which as a rule mainly reflect what is already known and only show the distribution of opinions. As with the project evaluation, it is worth using a number of methods to contact respondents to ensure a higher completion rate and timely completion.

Step 4. Decide what stakeholders need to be involved. It is useful to involve not only the main project stakeholders, but also other relevant stakeholders from the field related to the implemented project. It is worth asking questions such as: What is the purpose of stakeholder participation in this impact evaluation? Whose participation matters, when and why? When is participation feasible?

Step 5. Perform the impact assessment and write a report. In this step, data should be collected using dedicated tools and involving all the relevant stakeholders. As in project evaluation, a draft copy of the assessment report should be given to all stakeholders in order to receive their feedback and improve the report.

Step 6. Communicate the results. In fact, the main goal of the impact assessment is to demonstrate the impact of a Science Shop project to a wider audience as well as all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure future support and funding. Detailed recommendations on how to successfully communicate project results are provided in training module 6 “Communication and public awareness”.

Step 7. Monitor the sustainability of the impact. It is also worth monitoring the achieved impact in order to identify changes at local or even at national level, as in the example provided below:

Example

Wageningen University & Research (WUR) Science Shop at Wageningen University, The Netherlands

WUR Science Shop in 2006 performed the “Ons Buiten” project that demonstrated the benefits of gardens to the community. During the project short (one year) and long term (ten year) plans for the maintenance of the community garden were developed. These plans outlined the activities to be undertaken to achieve the goals. It was also agreed that the steering committee would meet twice a year during this ten year period to monitor and evaluate the activities.

More information: SciShops deliverable 2.5 “Existing Science Shops assessment” (Stanescu et al. 2018).

10. Tools of impact assessment

The essential tool for impact assessment, suitable for the kind of projects implemented by Science Shops, is the “Perares Project Evaluations” toolkit, which includes the already mentioned questionnaire for post-project evaluation. However, any Science Shop can also develop its own tools for impact assessment or adapt existing tools for its needs.

11. Best practices of impact assessment conducted by Science Shops

Several examples of impact assessment by Science Shops CBPR initiatives:

Example 1

UTS Shopfront Community Program at the University of Technology Sydney (Australia) each year produces an impact report (e.g. UTS Shopfront Impact Report 2016).

Lisa Andersen, the Programme Manager of Shopfront, analysed 10 years of evaluation data, to define the value that is created for community partners and students through the project work in her paper on 'Useful, usable and used': Sustaining an Australian model of cross-faculty service learning by concentrating on shared value creation'.

Example 2

In 2016-2017, the Office of Community-University Engagement at the University of Victoria (Canada), co-sponsored a research project, Community-Engaged Research at the University of Victoria 2009-2015. The project examined the breadth and impact of community engagement initiatives that occurred at UVic between 2009–2015. The study identified 167 instances of impact at UVic, and calculated that \$21 million was secured in research funding for community engaged projects between 2009–2015. One publication produced by the project was a brochure with 12 impact case studies that illustrate the impact of community-engaged research conducted by the university. The reports can be downloaded from here:

<https://www.uvic.ca/cue/research/our-research-projects/index.php>

Interactive exercises

Interactive exercise 1: “Plan your project evaluation strategy”

Aim: the exercise will help participants to think about their own project evaluation strategy.

Number of participants: not limited; participants are asked to form groups of 4-5 people.

Duration: 40 min. (20 min. of work in groups + 20 min. presentation)

Process: Participants work in groups. Each group is given the same task, but for different kinds of CBPR projects:

- The first project is small and short (up to 6 months) and is performed by students as a one semester coursework and involves only one community organisation.
- The second project is medium-sized, lasts about two years and involves several local community organisations, as well as other stakeholders.
- The third project is large, lasts more than two years and involves not only local, but also national NPOs, policy makers, etc.

The groups are then asked to draft a project evaluation strategy by answering these questions:

- 1) What type of project evaluation would be affordable to undertake?
- 2) What is needed to do to perform this type of evaluation?
- 3) Who needs to be involved in the evaluation?
- 4) What criteria should be included in the evaluation and how could they be assessed?
- 5) How data will be collected? Who will perform data collection?
- 6) How should results of the evaluation be communicated?

After the group work, groups are asked to present their findings (a summary of their discussion and the most interesting insights) to the other participants.

Wrapping up: The exercise is finished by a short summary given by the trainer emphasising the number of options for performing project evaluation at Science Shops.

Interactive exercise 2: World café on the challenges of impact assessment

Aim: to discuss challenges related to impact assessment at Science Shops and possible solutions.

Duration: 60 min. (3x15 min. of work in groups + 15 min. presentation)

Process: For this exercise, the room has to be prepared so that there is space for three larger groups to work together at separate tables. Three discussion leaders should be appointed, one for each table (the trainer plus two participants, whom the trainer should ask and brief about this exercise in advance).

Each table will discuss one of the three questions:

- 1) what are the general challenges of impact assessment?
- 2) what are the reasons why Science Shops generally do not perform impact assessment of their projects?
- 3) what can Science Shops do to enable impact assessments of their projects to be undertaken?

After 15 minutes, the groups change tables and start discussing another question. The table leader (who remains at the same table) summarises the discussion from the previous group, so the groups do not repeat the points made by previous groups and continue from there to look for more insights. The table leaders should be given large sheets of paper on which to write down the points made by each group.

After the three rounds are finished, table leaders present the results of the discussions to the whole group.

Wrapping up: The exercise is finished by a short summary presented by the trainer who should emphasise the complexity of the assessment task and various ways to solve challenges related to it.

References and further reading

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