

NASA Vendor Communication PLAN

EXPLORE
PROCUREMENT

The cornerstone of NASA's current and future missions



An engineer guides one of the canisters containing a mirror segment for NASA's James Webb Space Telescope. (NASA/Desiree Stover)

OVERVIEW

The NASA Headquarters Office of Procurement oversees the acquisition process to support successful accomplishment of the Agency's current and future missions. It provides policy, oversight, and optimization of procurement resources, and it supports Mission Directorate acquisition strategies to enable more efficient operations for the Agency.

Purpose of the Publication

- ▶ Outline the Office of Procurement's intent, cadence, and framework to communicate with Industry.

Office of Procurement Mission Statement

- ▶ Acquisition excellence in an evolving environment.

Office of Procurement Vision Statement

- ▶ Explore and execute innovative, effective, and efficient acquisition business solutions to optimize capabilities and operations that enable NASA's missions.

I. BACKGROUND

For more than 60 years, NASA has led the world in human and robotic exploration of the solar system, scientific discoveries, advancements in technology and flight that benefit us here on Earth, and more. While growing our own portfolio, we've fostered a new economy in low-Earth orbit and are doing the same with our commercial partners as we return to the Moon under Artemis. Maintaining our leadership in space is a top priority for the nation and our Agency. To do so, NASA must continue to evolve the way we work as we carry out our vast portfolio of missions here on Earth, in low-Earth orbit, at the Moon, Mars, and beyond.

As of December 2021

NASA spends approximately 78 percent of its budget on acquiring the goods and services—including research and development services— required to meet the Agency’s mission and programs. Over 80 percent of the Agency’s authorized funding and the resultant direct employment is dispersed widely in the national economy through NASA contracts and grants.

In February 2011, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) issued a memorandum, *“Myth-Busting”: Addressing Misconceptions to Improve Communication with Industry during the Acquisition Process - PDF,*” requiring Federal agencies to develop a high-level vendor communication plan outlining efforts to reduce unnecessary barriers, publicize communication opportunities, and prioritize engagement opportunities for high-risk, complex programs or those that fail to attract new vendors during re-competitions. NASA published its first Vendor Communication Plan in October 2011, which it updates regularly and outlines the Agency’s engagement with Industry.

II. AGENCY COMMITMENT

This Vendor Communication Plan represents NASA’s commitment to continued and increased dialogue and exchange of information with the Industry from the earliest identification of a requirement through announcement of the award (*see Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) subpart 15.2*).

NASA is well aware that early engagement with vendors can add significant value and create efficiencies in the acquisition process. NASA is not only committed to the requirements of OMB’s 2011 memo but also to a transparent acquisition process and is poised to engage vendors in an increasingly innovative manner during the pre-award, award, and post-award contracting phase.



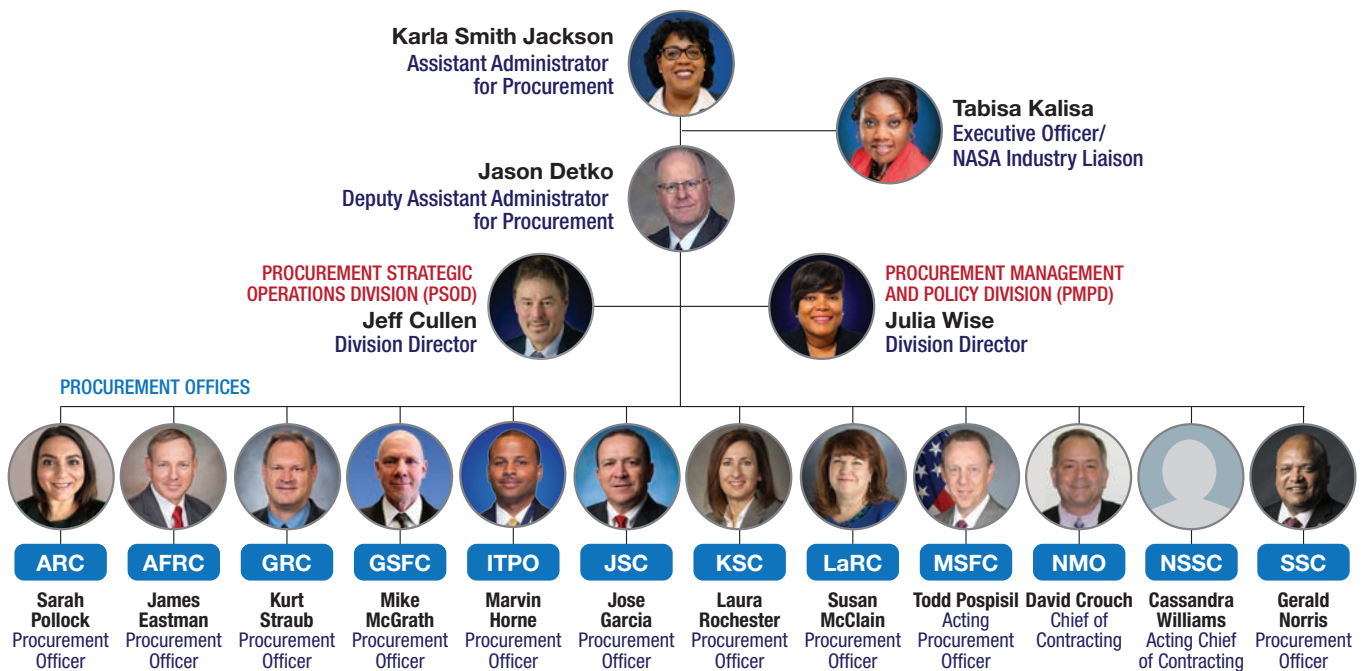
A NASA F/A-18 is towed to the apron at NASA’s Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, California during sunrise over Rogers Dry Lake. (NASA/Lauren Hughes)



III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

NASA's Senior Procurement Executive, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Procurement, Director of Procurement Management and Policy, along with the ten NASA Center Procurement Officers and the Industry Liaison are responsible for promoting consistent and timely vendor engagement. The acquisition workforce: contract specialists, contracting officers, contracting officer representatives, procurement analysts, small business specialists, program and project managers, finance and legal counsel all play an integral role in effective, continual vendor communication throughout the acquisition life cycle which is all a part of NASA's acquisition partnership process.

NASA Office of Procurement Organization Chart



NASA's Industry Liaison: Ms. Tabisa Kalisa, is also responsible for updating this plan periodically throughout the year to ensure the plan is current and includes innovative communication practices.

IV. PRE-AWARD VENDOR ENGAGEMENT

NASA hosts various vendor engagement events throughout the year to obtain feedback from industry on requirements; discuss the technical feasibility of a particular requirement; discuss NASA's preliminary evaluation of a particular system; address specific requirements that significantly impact the viability or are major cost drivers to industry; obtain feedback to determine if requirements in NASA solicitations provide enough detail to design, develop, produce, and operate the articles to be procured; and identify any unnecessary, overly burdensome, and/or overly prescriptive requirements. These events include industry days, small business outreach sessions, and pre-solicitation conferences and others as detailed below.

NASA takes a strategic and intentional approach at targeting the various social economic categories, especially those under-represented in NASA's procurement processes (Small Business, Small Disadvantaged Business, Women-Owned Small Business, Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business and Historically Under-utilized Business Zone concerns. The Agency takes a proactive approach to ensure they have a fair opportunity to compete for NASA procurements.

A. The Acquisition Forecast

The NASA FAR Supplement (NFS) at [1807.72, Acquisition Forecasting](#), delineates NASA's policy regarding the preparation of an annual acquisition forecast and semiannual update of expected contract opportunities for each fiscal year to alert the public of upcoming NASA procurements. The anticipated acquisitions included in the forecasts are listed on each Center's acquisition forecast where they may be viewed by members of the public, industry, and government officials. The NASA Acquisition Forecast, which includes the Agency-wide and center-by-center acquisition forecast is available at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/forecast/index.html>.

B. NASA Vendor Database

NASA vendor database is open to all vendors, both large and small, who wish to do business with the NASA. Vendors can post capability briefs in any format and sign up to receive email messages concerning business opportunities with NASA such as Source Sought Notices, the NASA Office of Small Business Programs Newsletter, Requests for Information (RFIs), and Requests for Proposals (RFPs). This database is web-based and available at https://www.osbp.nasa.gov/vendor_database.html.



An Atlas V rocket with Cygnus spacecraft prepares to launch.



NASA astronaut Mark Vande Hei is pictured servicing components on the Canadarm2 robotic arm during a spacewalk (NASA/Norishige Kanai)

C. NASA OSBP Mobile

The Office of Small Business Program's (OSBP) official mobile app is NASA OSBP Mobile. This app is designed as a user-friendly tool for contractors and other users to learn how to do business with NASA and have all the required resources at their fingertips. Key features allow users, vendors, and government officials to easily contact NASA Center Small Business Specialists and view active contract listings by product categories such as IT, Engineering, Finance and Accounting, Construction, Facilities, Occupational Health, Office Supplies, and Protective Services, and others. The app is available for both iOS and Android devices and offers users current information on upcoming networking events.

D. NASA Sponsored Industry Meetings

For complex efforts, NASA invites industry to meetings to dialogue about the contracting requirements, policy, and practices. The invitation to the meeting is posted to the Federal Register or other medium. During the meetings, NASA officials and industry representatives confer and exchange ideas on contracting practices, policies, how to reduce burden and leverage commercial practices, how to improve NASA's contracting relationships, and more. Industry representatives meet with NASA officials and submit in writing their ideas on improving affordability of NASA programs. Industry feedback is also vital to the development of the acquisition strategy. Industry's representation covers the spectrum in size and role, including prime contractors, subcontractors, and entrepreneurial commercial providers, as well as non-profit organizations.

E. Draft Request for Proposals

Contracting Officers issue draft requests for proposal (RFP) for all competitive acquisitions expected to exceed \$10 million except for Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs), Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) solicitations, and architect-and-engineering services, unless the NASA contracting officer determines in writing that a draft RFP is not beneficial to the acquisition (see *NFS 1815.201, Exchanges with industry before receipt of proposals*). When a draft RFP is issued, it requests that potential offerors identify unnecessary or inefficient requirements. If the draft RFP contains government-unique standards, prospective offerors are invited to identify

voluntary consensus standards that meet the government's requirements as alternatives to government-unique standards (See FAR 11.101). Comments are also requested on any perceived safety, occupational health, security (including information technology security), environmental, property, quality assurance, export control, and/or other programmatic risk issues associated with performance of the work.

Thorough acquisition planning is executed to ensure adequate time for issuance of the draft RFP, prospective offeror review and comment, and NASA evaluation and disposition of the comments. The RFP may be modified as a result of industry questions and comments provided in response to the draft RFP.

F. Conferences and Site Tours

NASA hosts conferences and site tours to facilitate the early exchange of information with prospective offerors before receiving proposals, in accordance with FAR 15.201. Such events provide a means of exchanging information to improve potential offerors' understanding of the Agency's requirements, enhance the Government's ability to obtain quality supplies/services, and increase efficiency in proposal preparation, evaluation, negotiation, and award.

A pre-proposal conference to brief prospective offerors may be conducted after a solicitation has been issued, but before proposals are received, in accordance with FAR 15.201. NASA contracting officers, in coordination with management and the Source Evaluation Board (SEB), decide, prior to issuance of the RFP, whether a pre-proposal conference is required. These conferences benefit both the Government and prospective offerors in acquisitions where it is necessary to explain or clarify specifications and requirements. Prospective offerors have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to network with other industry representatives.



The liquid oxygen tank structural test article for the Space Launch System is loaded onto NASA's Pegasus barge (NASA/Jude Guidry)



V. POST-AWARD, ONGOING ENTERPRISE VENDOR ENGAGEMENT

NASA continues to promote industry engagement after award in an effort to remove barriers, enhance innovation, and maximize the business relationship between industry and government. NASA post-award vendor engagement are detailed below.

A. Regional Outreach Events

NASA hosts conferences annually to promote small business awareness and participation, utilizing innovative techniques at nontraditional venues in geographically targeted areas, to enhance all categories of small business. In October 2021, the “NASA Small Business Opportunities Virtual Expo 2021” was conducted virtually with approximately 941 participants; both large and small businesses. It provided for businesses learn about upcoming Agency programs and requirements from the Office of Small Business Programs, Office of Procurement, and the Artemis program. Sixty-five percent of the event registrants remained for the entire event to network and exchange innovative ideas contracting best practices.

B. Oral Debriefings

Face-to-face debriefings give offerors a better understanding of the source evaluation board findings and how the source selection authority reached their decision.

C. The Small Business Industry Awards Program

The Small Business Industry Awards (SBIA) recognize the outstanding Small Business Prime Contractor, Small Business Subcontractor, Large Business Prime Contractor,

and Mentor-Protégé Agreement that support NASA in achieving its mission. Small Business Industry Awards (SBIA) is given in four categories: (1) Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year, (2) Small Business Subcontractor of the Year, (3) Large Business Prime Contractor of the Year, and (4) Mentor-Protégé Agreement of the Year.

D. Small Business Showcase

The small business showcase is hosted quarterly and allows vendors to display their capabilities. In addition to showcasing their talents, vendors also inquire about potential opportunities at NASA. Attendees include, as available, the Small Business Specialists, Small Business Technical Advisor, available Contracting Officers and Prime Contractor representatives.

E. Contractor Steering Council

The Council (consisting of on/near site contractors and civil service employees) provides an informal framework in which contractors with a vested interest and existing business near the hosting Center can establish working relationships to enhance the partnership bond that already exists. The Council meetings are held monthly or quarterly, depending on the NASA Centers, and provides timely information and advice on Center-wide requirements and issues of mutual interest and acts as a forum for ad hoc communications between the Center and the local contractor community. An Executive Committee provides assistance and guidance for the Council Co-Chairs.

VI. NEW VENDOR ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

NASA takes a strategic approach to finding innovative and cost-effective ways to procure its science, aeronautics and space exploration requirements. Effective vendor engagement positions the organization to procure and manage business relationships effectively. NASA is exploring the following new methods and events to enhance NASA's vendor engagement.

A. Meetings with Industry

The NASA Deputy CAO/SPE, Ms. Karla Smith Jackson, proactively meets with Industry at least twice a month to discuss and address any issues or concerns they may have in doing business with the Agency. [A link to Request a Meeting with the Senior Procurement Executive](#) is also posted on the OP website.

B. Update to the NASA Acquisition Forecast

OFPP presented the Professional Services Council's article entitled, "PSC Business Forecast Scorecard 2019" to the Industry Liaisons, at the OFPP Industry Liaisons Roundtable and encouraged the group to be mindful of and consider incorporating the findings. The updated NASA Acquisition Forecast will include all of the attributes rated as user friendly and most effective by vendors as reported by Professional Services Council in the aforementioned article

C. Update to the "Doing Business with NASA" Page

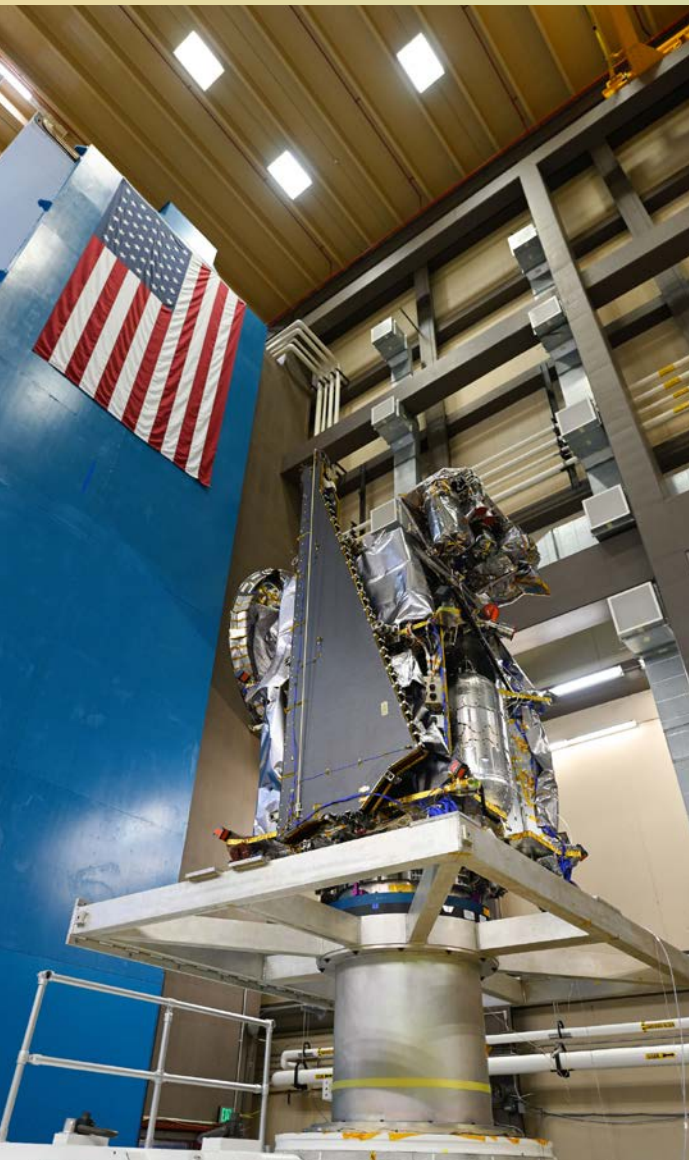
The updated "[Doing Business with NASA](#)" page includes the agency's Industry Liaison's, Procurement Ombudsman and Competition Advocate names and email address. Links to the [NASA Office of Small Business Programs](#), [NASA Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer \(SBIR\) Programs](#) and [NASA Partnership Office](#) are also posted on the site. The following feature will also be added to the web page.

NASA Vendor Engagement Meetings

NASA HQ engagement events will include periodic outreach efforts such as virtual meetings, webinars, conference calls and face to face smaller round-table discussions or larger industry town hall meetings with vendors and industry associations on topics such as: the role of the Procurement Ombudsman; innovations in Supply Chain Management practices, novel and complex FAR and NASA FAR Supplement policy updates and how they affect industry, to



The primary mirror of NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, consisting of 18 hexagonal mirrors, looks like a giant puzzle piece standing in the massive clean room of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. (NASA/Goddard/Chris Gunn)



Seen here in March 2021, NASA's Lucy spacecraft undergoes its Clampband Shock Test at Lockheed Martin Space's Littleton, Colorado, facility. (Lockheed Martin)

name a few. These meetings will be listening sessions and will also allow exchanges between government and industry as well as industry to industry on topics that are helpful but rarely discussed in these types of forums.

D. NASA Promotes Diversity and Inclusion in Contracting

NASA promotes diversity in contracting efforts by working to ensure large vendors work with diverse small vendors for sub-contracting opportunities. Also, encouraging large contractors to partner with, mentor, and team with smaller contractors for Federal Government contracting opportunities. NASA has a long-standing practice of promoting equal employment opportunity and diversity and will continue to work to foster diversity in procurement, with a focus on minority-owned and women-owned businesses. Industry Liaisons will partner with NASA mission directorates and their targeted program and project initiatives and outreach efforts and coordinate and support as appropriate. More details on NASA's efforts in this area is provided in Section VII.

E. Excellence and Innovations at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Minority Serving Institutions and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) organizations

NASA is the only Federal Agency that has a goal of one percent of total contract value of prime and subcontracting awards for acquisitions to HBCU and MSI, pursuant to 51 U.S.C. 30304 (Pub. L. 111-314). To accomplish this goal, NASA hosts NASA Technology Infusion Road Tours three times a year, targeted at these educational institutions, by teaching them how to do business with the Agency in addition to discussing upcoming requirements. Thirteen Agencies/Departments have participated at these events thus far and NASA has seen also a number of minority institutions that are now doing business with the Agency.

In addition, NASA will establish a plan and launch a campaign to implement the President's Executive Order (E.O.) 13779, White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) issued on February 28, 2017. NASA's plan will focus on exceeding the current, aforementioned goal working with HBCUs to promote knowledge of contracting opportunities at NASA; providing to HBCU community, to the maximum extent practicable, opportunities to participate in NASA contracts; and providing information and guidance to HBCUs that will enhance their probability of doing business with NASA. NASA will partner with other agencies to support and implement the requirements of this E.O.

Illustration of the X-59 aircraft landing at Edwards Air Force Base.



VII. INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESSIBILITY (IDEA) OUTREACH

The following engagements are specifically aimed at expanding opportunities for Americans in underrepresented and underserved communities consistent with Executive Order 13985 on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government.

A. Inclusion Summit

NASA OP will participate in the Agency's Inclusion Summit planned for early 2022. This event will include speakers from industry and Agency leadership, breakout sessions, sharing of best practices and lessons learned, networking, and more.

B. Targeted Small Group Virtual Forums/Meetings

NASA OP will convene and/or participate in targeted small group virtual forums with MIs/HBCUs and meetings with various minority-based associations and organizations, such as the National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP), National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), Great Minds in STEM, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Space (SACNAS), Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers (SASE), Women of Color, and Society of Women Engineers. In addition, NASA OP will participate in National HBCUs Week, an annual event that provides a forum to exchange information and share innovations among and between institutions and increase an understanding of Federal policies that support higher education, such as opportunities to participate in Federal acquisition.

C. OSBP Meetings

The OSBP hosts outreach events aimed at engaging and communicating with industry to ensure the agency has access to new entrants, innovative contractors, and members of the underserved and underrepresented communities. OP will continue to support OSBP's meetings to share information on how to do business with NASA, NASA's acquisition forecast, NASA's enterprise delivery model, how to comply with new acquisition practices, and so on.

D. NASA's Mission Equity Website

The Mission Equity website will be utilized to share information with industry about all of NASA's efforts underway to advance equity under programs, projects, contracts and grants, such as the Request for Information on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities in NASA Programs, Contracts and Grants Process (NASA Equity RFI) issued on June 15, 2021 and the public meeting held on July 13, 2021 that included a general assembly session hosted by key NASA Senior Leaders, as well as inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility focused breakout sessions.

E. Meetings with AbilityOne

NASA OP's AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) meets biweekly with SourceAmerica, one of the Central Non-Profit Agencies supporting the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, to discuss and collaborate on opportunities for NASA to contract with non-profit agencies employing individuals with disabilities using the AbilityOne Program.

VIII. PUBLICATION OF ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Vendor engagement events posted on the following websites.

- ▶ Doing Business with NASA: <https://www.nasa.gov/office/procurement/doingbusiness>
- ▶ NASA Mission Equity: <https://www.nasa.gov/mission-equity>
- ▶ NASA Office of Small Business Programs: <https://www.nasa.gov/osbp>
- ▶ NASA SBIR/STTR: <https://sbir.gsfc.nasa.gov>
- ▶ US Small Business Administration: <https://www.sba.gov>
- ▶ Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR); <https://www.sbir.gov>
- ▶ System for Awards Management: <https://sam.gov/content/home>
- ▶ Portal for Federal Grants: <https://www.grants.gov>
- ▶ NASA Solicitation and Proposal Integrated Review and Evaluation System: <https://nspires.nasaprs.com/external>
- ▶ NASA Vendor Database: <https://www.nasa.gov/osbp/nasa-vendor-database>
- ▶ NASA OSBP Mobile: <https://www.nasa.gov/osbp/mobile>

IX. CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions regarding this plan or related topics may be directed to the Assistant Administrator for Procurement at procurement@hq.nasa.gov or (202) 358-2090.

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