

FPF FlexCollect: A UK first: Insights and learnings for the future of flexible plastic recycling

APSE Waste, Recycling and Circular Economy
Conference

Nottingham, October 23rd 2025





An innovative and collaborative fund giving value to flexible plastics so they are properly recycled

Established in 2021 and supported by:

“The long-term goal is to close the loop and return post-consumer flexible plastic film as food grade plastic and to shift to recycling at scale from kerbside collections.”



Flexible Plastic Fund activities



FlexCollect – Household collections

~£3M FPF FlexCollect kerbside
collection & recycling pilots



FlexRecycle - Sorting & Reprocessing

Improving the recycling outcomes
for flexible plastic packaging



FlexCollect Project

160,000 households

1.5 million bags collected

450 tonnes
recycled

20 composition tests

90% Recyclable material collected

19 brands

10 local authorities

5 MRF contractors

14 Recycling end markets

9 local authorities launching a service ahead of 2027

The Flexible Plastic Fund FlexCollect Project is funded by:



Brands supporting the Flexible Plastic Fund:



**FlexCollect
project team:**



ECOSURETY



WRAP



RECOUP



1. Collections

- Flexibles can be collected with zero/minimal disruption to crew schedules or vehicle capacity
 - No impact on rounds
- Collection bags:
 - Will work anywhere - essential for kerbside sort
 - Contain and protect the material
 - Encourage participation and reduce contamination and litter
 - Facilitate easier sorting – easier to identify and separate and MRF modifications are easier



How much material could be collected?

Weight per household per category (normalised per week)

and bags per household per cycle (not normalised for collection frequency)

Parameter	Weight per household (g)	Bags per household
Co-mingled	44	0.27
Twin stream	42	0.29
Source segregated	78	0.35
Weekly collections	86	0.32
Fortnightly collections	46	0.3

- Residents with source segregated collections put out more material
- Weekly collections generate more material than fortnightly collections
- Once separated, the flexible plastic needs baling immediately otherwise the volume becomes a storage issue





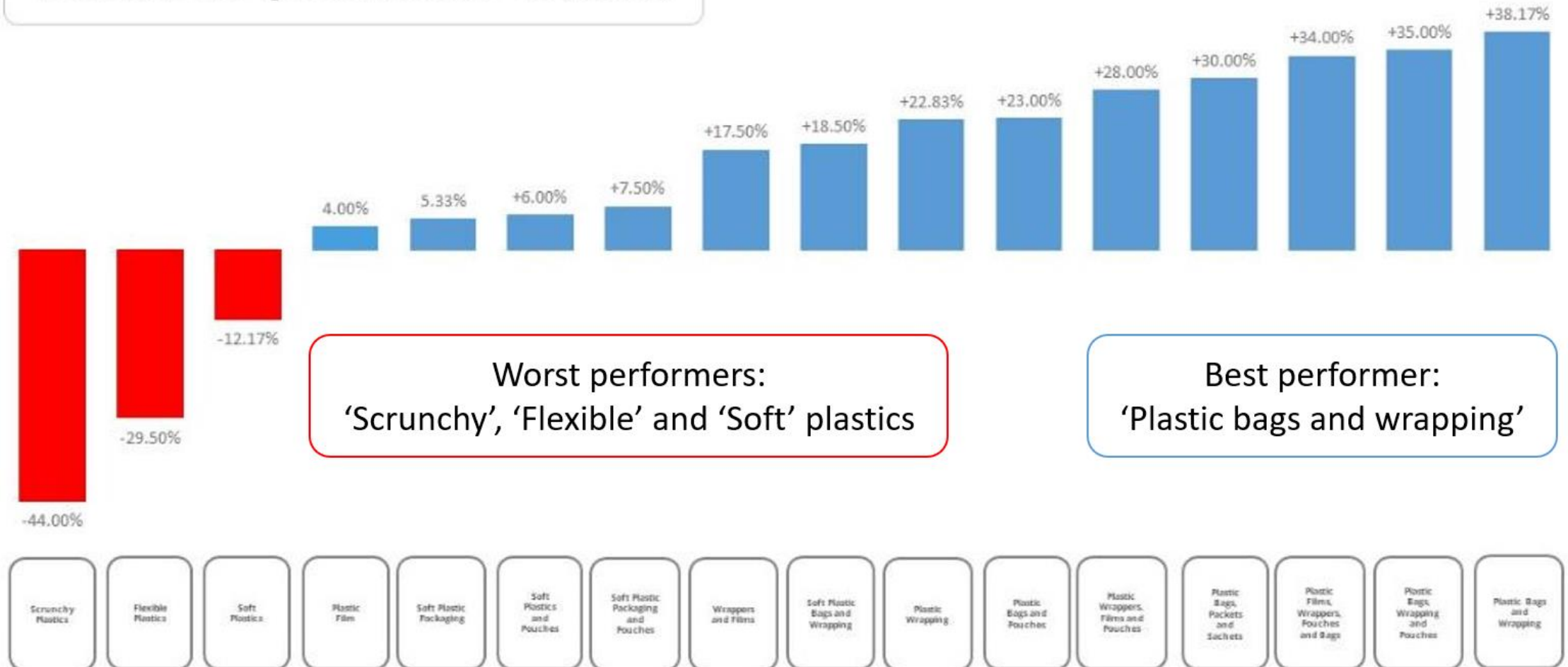
2. Householder communications

- Residents valued the scheme:
 - 89% satisfaction among surveyed householders
- Residents are ready and willing to participate
- Participation is around 30%



Terminology – ‘soft’, ‘flexible’ or ‘plastic bags and wrapping’?

NB. these are “net” figures (% most sense - % less sense)



Your plastic bags and wrapping recycling service is here



 [Location] Recycles

[Insert Council Logo Here]

Householder communications

Three stage programme

1. Teaser leaflet
2. Service leaflet with bags
3. Nudge/reminder leaflet

Welcome to your new plastic bags and wrapping recycling collection trial

From your next collection, your plastic bags and wrapping will be collected on the same day as your normal recycling collection. This trial is available to a small number of households. Lets recycle better together. For each other. For [\[location\]](#).

What do I need to do?



1. Fill your collection bags



2. When full, tie your collection bags in a double knot



3. Place your collection bags in your existing container

From your next collection, your plastic bags and wrapping will be collected on the same day as your normal recycling collection.

How do I get more bags?

What will I be able to recycle?

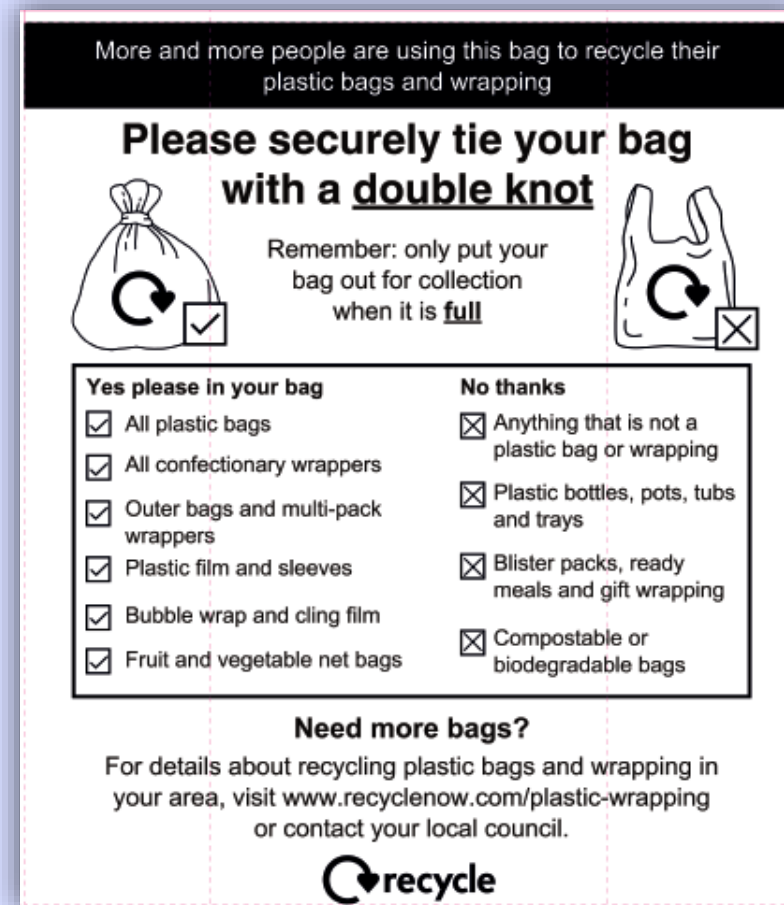
All items should be **clean** and **free of food**.

 All plastic bags carrier bags salad/fruit/vegetable bags frozen food bags bread bags cereal bags flower bags	 Cheese, fish, and meat wrapping
 Confectionary wrappers chocolate sweets biscuits cakes ice cream and chewing gum wrappers	 Outer layer bags and wrapping multipack toilet and kitchen roll magazine and newspaper wrapping
 Foil lined packaging crisp/snack packets coffee bags	 Plastic film and sleeves removeable film lids plastic sleeves for bottles and jars
	 Bubble wrap and cling film
	 Fruit and vegetable net bags

The bags are important



- Are a valuable communications tool
- Provide in-home storage solution
 - Encourage participation
 - Improve quality
- Participation significantly reduced if residents asked to use own bag
- Thinner (18 – 20 micron) bags suitable for source segregated collections
- Thicker (40 micron) bags suitable for comingled and twin-stream collections





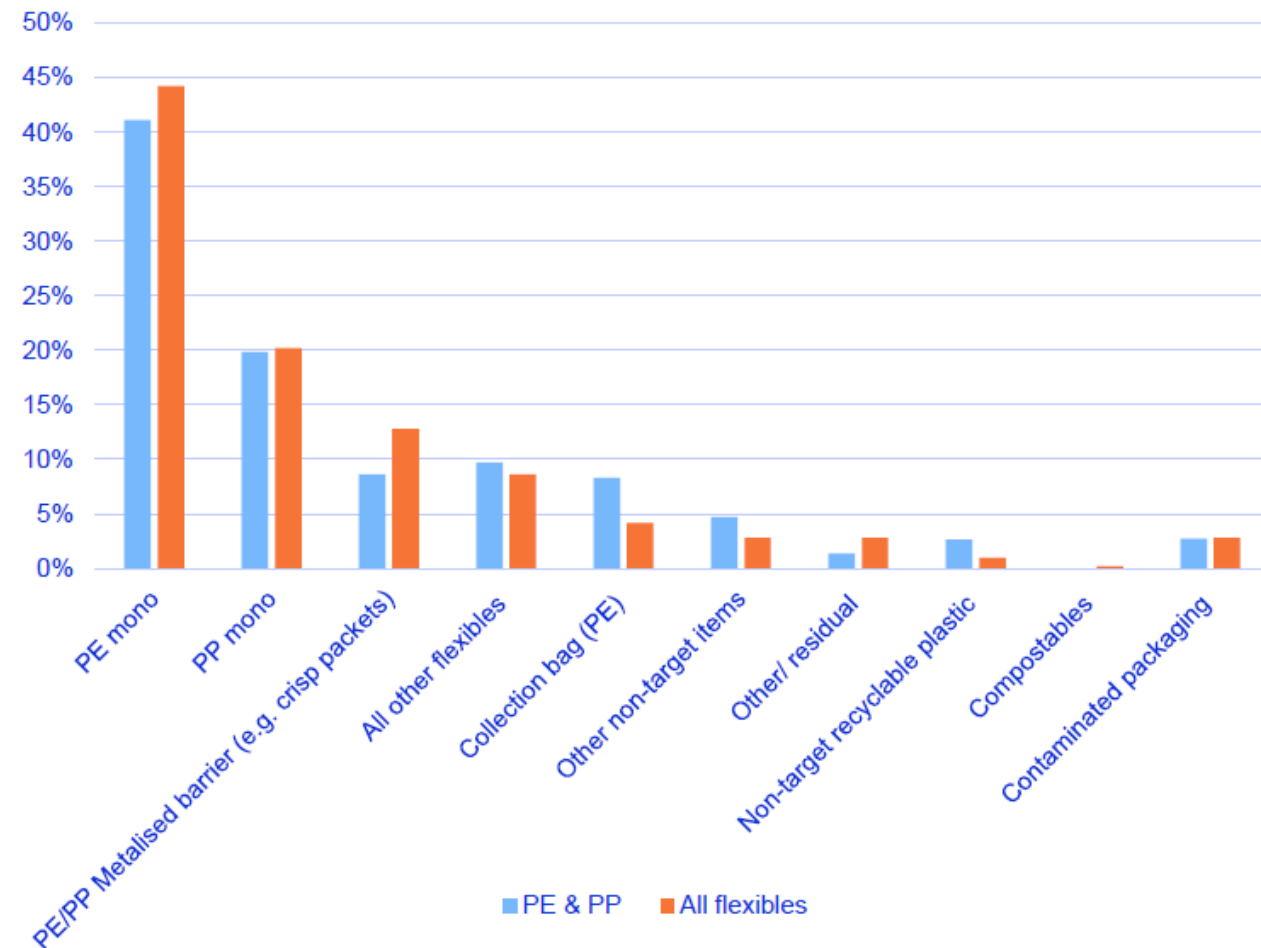
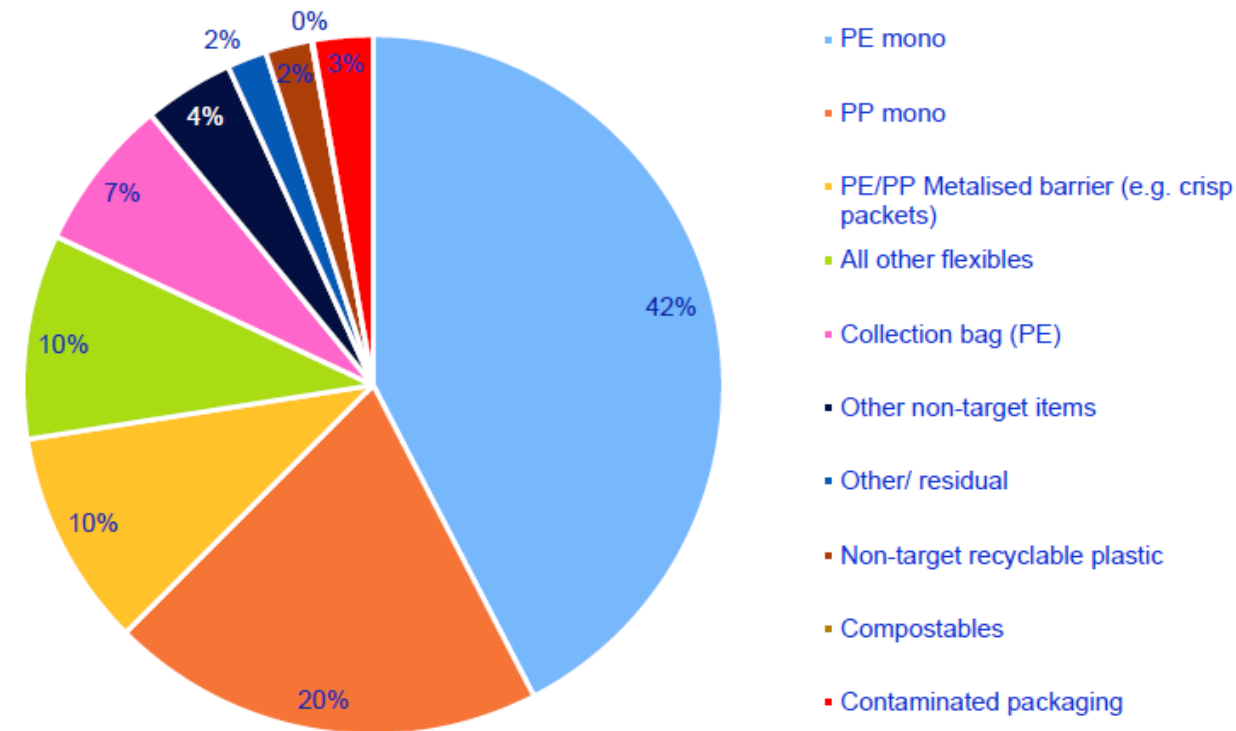
3. The material

- 90% of collected material was target flexible plastic and very clean
- Demonstrates good sorting behaviour and low contamination
- Shows the public are ready and willing to participate



Residents have a good understanding of target material

Overall composition





4. Sorting

- All participating MRFs accepted and processed bagged flexible plastic with little operational impact
- No major infrastructure investment required to sort when using bags
 - Bags can be effectively picked – one extra picker should be sufficient
 - Small modifications may be required - high volume requires space
 - Loose processing is possible but most current MRFs will not cope with loose plastic film immediately – collections bags will be essential at first



Temporary MRF 'fixes'



Temporary chutes - Pearce Recycling / N&E Herts and FCC / re3 / Reading & Bracknell Forest

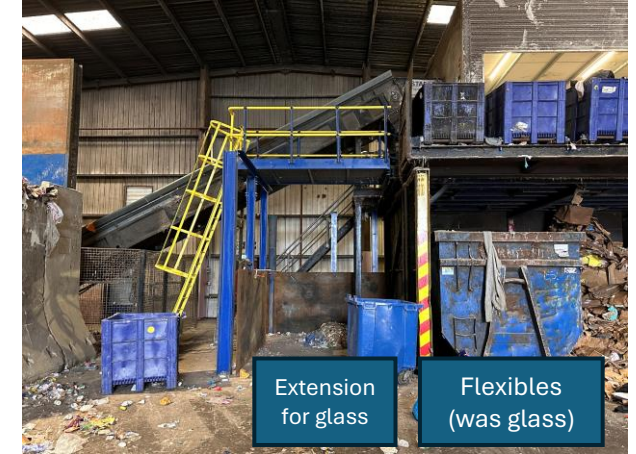
Permanent MRF modifications



Extra conveyor belt &
bay – Suez,
Evercreech (Somerset)



Vacuum extraction system
– Suez, Avonmouth
(S. Gloucestershire)



Picking cabin extension
& extra bay – J&B
Recycling, Hartlepool
(Newcastle)

Mechanical



Chemical

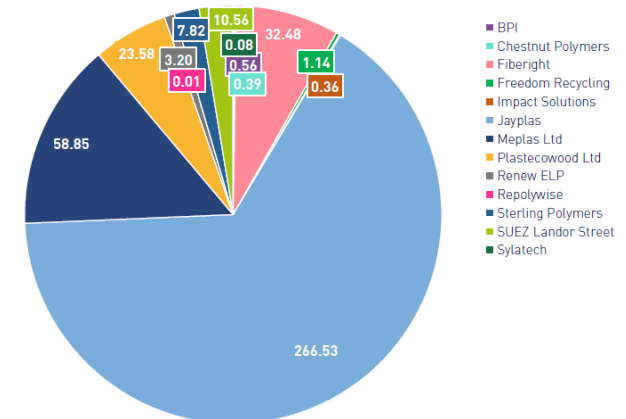


European



5. Reprocessing and End Markets

- Over 30 reprocessors engaged (mechanical & chemical) and over 425 tonnes sent for recycling
- 80% to 100% of collected material was successfully recovered, highlighting the potential for real circularity in flexible plastics.
- Material suitable for:
 - New film or rigid plastic products
 - Plastic timber manufacture
 - Chemical recycling



Costs – per household & per tonne

Service costs per household

Activity	Cost per household
Collection	£3.14 (£1.96 in year two)
Sorting (picking)	£0.81
Sorting (materials recycling facility modifications)	£0.06
End markets	£2.55
Total cost per household	£6.56 (£5.38 for subsequent years)

Service costs per tonne

Activity	Cost per tonne
Collection and sorting	£1,021
End markets	£650
Total cost per tonne	£1,671

Assumptions:

- A local authority with 75,000 households
- Participation at 30%
- 40-micron bags used to collect flexible plastic packaging
- Bags delivered on request FoC at £2 per delivery
- End market gate fees cost £650 per tonne
- Year two collection costs reduce as a batch delivery of bags is not required (bags delivered only on request)
- A modification cost of £50,000 at the in-house processing line, depreciated over 10 years





The Future

FlexCollect estimates 152,000 tonnes could be collected in 2027, rising to 207,000 tonnes in 2030

UK treatment capacity and end markets exist BUT there will be a 'gap' in 2027

The facilities currently in development *and* the potential to use existing European capacity should help the UK address this treatment capacity gap

More work is required to stimulate the right infrastructure and market demand

The FlexRecycle project will explore these issues



FlexCollect goes global

★ **Canada** – Canadian Plastics Pact, Circular Materials, Chemical Industry Association of Canada, Eco Entreprises Québec, Recycle BC, The Recycling Partnership, the Circular Plastic Taskforce

★ **USA** – US Flexible Film Initiative & Circular Action Alliance

★ **Australia** – Australian Food and Grocery Council and Australasian Institute of Packaging (AIP). Presentation at Australasian Packaging Conference

★ **New Zealand** – The Packaging Forum Aotearoa New Zealand



Over 400 FlexCollect report downloads (Oct 10th 2025)
Over 50 from around the world



Download the full report & blueprint

Download the FPF FlexCollect 2025 report

Choose to download the full report, an executive summary or our shareable highlights.



Final report and blueprint

Read the full 191-page report, authored by project delivery managers SUEZ recycling and recovery UK.



Executive summary

For a concise overview of the key results and findings, read this 10-page summary.



Highlights

Download our highlights overview to share on your social media channels or website.



www.flexibleplasticfund.org.uk/flexcollect-report-2025





Thank you

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