



HEALTH & WELL-BEING  
**ISSUE**

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# Inner Workings

*Barbara Dashiell, executive director of Inner-City Revitalization and board member Cornelius Coleman took part in Nonprofit Works.*

## Community Development Works

Helping Nonprofits Achieve Success



# HELPING NONPROFITS ACHIEVE

**N**onprofit organizations are an important part of a community. They contribute to a healthy quality of life by giving opportunities to those in need. Particularly during difficult economic times, nonprofits may have to step in to help people where government programs can't. Without them, an essential component would be missing in the structure of a strong community. Recognizing their importance, The Rapides Foundation's Community Development Works program is designed to help nonprofits with their goal of serving others.

"Nonprofits in Central Louisiana are faced daily with numerous challenges, including trying to serve more people with scarce or sometimes dwindling resources. Overcoming these challenges requires not just an obvious influx of financial support, but also the ability to manage all of their resources more effectively," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation.

CDW is designed to give people and nonprofits the resources they need to build a healthier community. "By providing much-needed opportunities to increase capacity and engage individuals to work together in solving community issues, we can help nonprofits to accomplish their missions," Rosier said.

CDW achieves this through the offering of free training sessions available to residents and those in leadership positions within organizations. Sessions cover issues that many of those in the nonprofit sector struggle with, such as fundraising, board development, staff responsibilities and effective communications. CDW also offers a workspace, called the Learning Lab, equipped with reference materials to help residents look up information, from grant opportunities to nonprofit data gathering. The services offered by CDW can be modified to the area of need.

"Through trainings and the CDW Learning Lab, we're able to help many different people and organizations within the community, from individuals trying to plan for new community building efforts all the way to nonprofits and faith-based groups wanting to offer professional development that supports their staff and volunteers to do better work," said Akeshia Singleton, CDW program supervisor.

CDW also offers training for emerging leaders in nonprofit organizations. There has been great success with Cenla Boardbuilders, a program that trains and develops individuals to be effective board members. It serves as a link for local nonprofits and new leaders to connect through governance training and board service. Coming off the success of Cenla Boardbuilders, CDW is implementing a new program aimed at building leadership skills. Starting this year, Cenla Execbuilders will focus on strengthening nonprofit Executive Directors in the areas of leadership and management.

Another service offered by CDW gives a unique opportunity for board members and the Executive Director to work together to build capacity. Nonprofit Works is a grant program awarding up to \$50,000 to nonprofits to increase effectiveness within the organization. Consultants work with the group over a two-year period.

All of these programs have a common goal: to make a positive impact in the community through developing individuals and leaders in nonprofit capacities. "Helping nonprofits achieve their mission makes them stronger and better able to deliver services," Rosier said. "If we can help them achieve their goal, then the community benefits."

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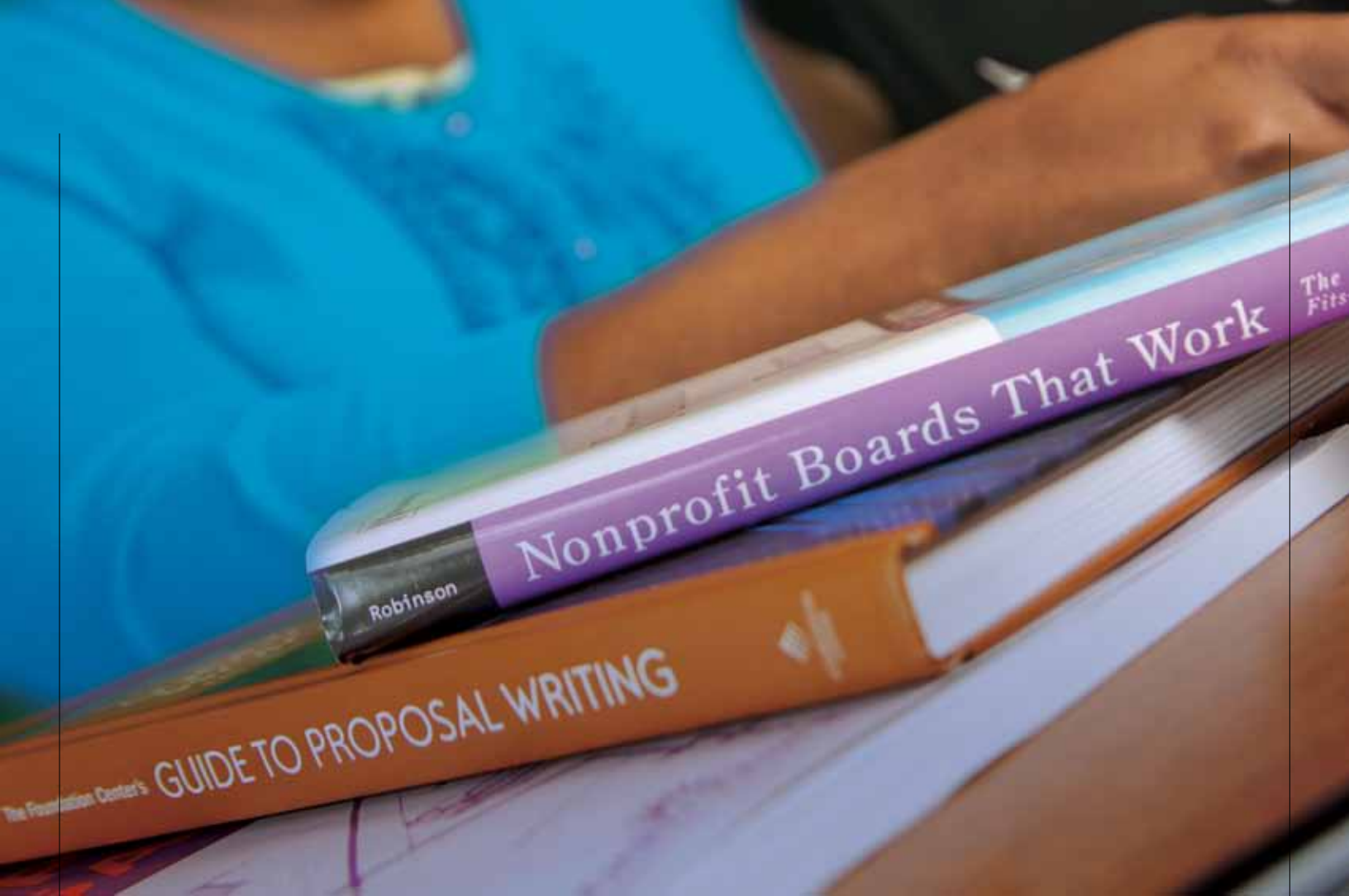
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# CDW PROGRAMS BUILD Nonprofit Capacity

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any individuals have strong passions for nonprofit work and volunteer their time and talent to better their community. Programs offered through Community Development Works give these individuals the resources to be successful in their dedication to nonprofit organizations. CDW's training sessions, Learning Lab resources and Cenla Boardbuilders program provide people with a unique opportunity to learn and implement strategies that can help not only themselves, but help their nonprofit grow and be successful.

"Anyone interested in or currently working with nonprofits is encouraged to utilize what Community Development Works has to offer. From those who already work in a nonprofit capacity to residents who simply want to learn more about charitable service, we offer sessions to help them be successful," said Akeshia Singleton, CDW program supervisor. CDW services are free and accessible by residents within the Foundation's nine-parish service area.

# TRAINING CAL



*Candy Christophe, founder and executive director of Re-entry Solutions, attends a training session for Community Development Works.*

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKS | PROGRAMS

# NG ENDAR

**G**rowing a nonprofit often takes more knowledge than individuals expect. One of the ways CDW helps is through the various citizen and nonprofit training sessions offered through the training calendar. Course topics include grant writing, the purpose and nature of nonprofits, recruitment of volunteers, using social media, financial management, and development of boards. Sessions can help answer questions like whether an organization should be a charitable nonprofit or a business and how to complete the proper paperwork for those endeavors.

Candy Christophe is the founder and executive director of Re-entry Solutions, a nonprofit that specializes in helping people who have been incarcerated find housing, employment, and a sense of restoration with family. Christophe attended CDW workshops and feels they provided insight into the inner workings of not only keeping a nonprofit in business, but making it more successful. "I had an idea of how I wanted my nonprofit to work, but the sessions helped me set out a long-term strategy in written form. It allowed me to identify when changes needed to be made, how to effectively handle my finances, and delegate the roles of my board and volunteer staff," she said.

Christophe knows it is a lot of work to run a nonprofit, but she had a passion to meet certain needs of people in the community. Through the workshops and course sessions, she found a network of people just like her.

"It confirmed we all have the same struggles. Nonprofits often become stagnant and those involved don't always know how to improve them, but it doesn't have to be that way. The courses helped me form a good foundation that I feel confident in, while being able to form a support system with other nonprofit groups."

Those attending workshops and course sessions get input from current and former board directors, outside experts, and consultants. To make them more accessible, the training sessions now include webinars that can be accessed by anyone with a computer. Singleton said webinars are another way to make CDW services easier to use. "Our current economy does not always allow for people to take off work to attend sessions, especially if they are coming from out of town. The webinars provide opportunities for people to learn at their leisure," she said. CDW will still offer nine or 10 training sessions each fall and spring with easy online registration. About 200 to 300 people every year take advantage of courses offered on the calendar.

Christophe said the informational sessions can even help individuals not working in a nonprofit sector. She commended certain companies in Central Louisiana that sent employees to attend workshops. "The topics, like managing volunteers and using social media to recognizing roles of board and staff members, can be applied to anyone, whether they are pursuing a nonprofit endeavor or opening a business," she said. Christophe is confident in the information she received, especially since Re-entry Solutions is still a new nonprofit being under two years old. "I've got a good foundation set as a result of what I've learned. I know it will prove to be fruitful for our organization."





*Felicia Walker, Community Development Works Learning Lab Technician, goes over materials with Erika Carmouche of the Central Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition.*

# LEARNING LAB

**T**he Learning Lab can prove to be beneficial to those wanting to fix or learn more about a problem in their community. Described as a community builder's workspace, the Learning Lab contains helpful resources, like reference books, computers and an online nonprofit database

that allows residents to research and get information on community topics with ease. Located in The Rapides Foundation building in downtown Alexandria, the Learning Lab is open to individuals, community groups, and nonprofit organizations. "Individuals can identify funding opportunities, research charitable data and access best practice resources to address community issues," Singleton said.

Erika Carmouche with the Central Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition is a regular user of the Learning Lab. The coalition provides information, education, and support to pregnant and breastfeeding moms of Central Louisiana. Carmouche uses the Learning Lab to look up potential grants to fund projects, and she has gained a better understanding of how grant funding and scarce resources impact her organization. "Grants are usually very specific as to how funds are to be used. The database I access in the Learning Lab categorizes grants that are available so you can be as specific or general as you would like with your search. It is very helpful. I've been able to look up potential grants that we would be eligible for that I wouldn't otherwise know about," Carmouche said. The database used by Carmouche and available

to others is called the Foundation Directory Online database. The CDW Learning Lab is home exclusively to this database in Central Louisiana as a cooperating collection of the Foundation Center. It contains information like statistical data on nonprofits, research studies conducted on charitable giving and funding opportunities. Over 1,900 requests for knowledge sharing resources have been made through the Learning Lab. In addition to having access to the database, visitors can also use the Foundation Center publications and books located in the Learning Lab. A wide variety of resources are available for organizations in any stage of development.

Carmouche has found using the resources in the Learning Lab to be a good starting point to learning about nonprofits and how they work. "It is great to work for an organization who works to better the community and its citizens, but the way they function is completely different than a regular business. It can be completely overwhelming. Working in the Learning Lab can help you understand the jargon often used and research and read up on other nonprofit organizations."

With convenient hours and a staff member to assist if needed, visitors will find working in the Learning Lab to be helpful. Starting with an idea and a desire to learn more, individuals can use the lab to gain a better knowledge of community issues. Whether it is looking up funding and grant opportunities, facilitating a discussion with other nonprofit groups, or gathering information, the Learning Lab can help individuals build an action plan and be successful in their endeavors.



## LearningLab:

1101 4th St., Suite 101-B  
Alexandria, LA 318-443-7880

## Hours

8 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Mon. - Fri.

[communitydevelopmentworks.org](http://communitydevelopmentworks.org)

# CENLA BOARD BUILDERS



2011 Cenla Boardbuilder Graduates

**H**aving a successful nonprofit organization means having the right people behind it. Nonprofits are board driven and rely heavily on the leadership of people in their community. Often times, people on boards or newly elected to them have the desire to help but do not always know how to do it. Cenla Boardbuilders is an eight-week training program that helps individuals to be effective board members. The program has seen great success and just graduated its eighth class.

"It's impossible to hop on something and really do your program a service if you don't realize your responsibility as a board member," said Jerry Jones, a recent Cenla Boardbuilders graduate who serves on the Rapides Symphony Orchestra Board. "Cenla Boardbuilders was so helpful. I didn't want to leave the program. One of the most important things we learned was that board members have a lot of responsibility and need to be more proactive."

Although the program was designed to help new board members or those with little experience, it is no longer limited to those individuals. John and Sidonie McDaniel both went through Cenla Boardbuilders having served on boards of several Central Louisiana organizations. The newly retired couple was looking to improve their board service. "In the past, we were learning as we were serving on boards. Now, we are more confident going into our positions. We learned to do what we were doing, only better," said John McDaniel.

Currently, Sidonie McDaniel is serving as a board member of the Central Louisiana YMCA. Having taken advantage of the program, she now realizes how important her board will be in continuing the success of YMCA. "We found it so valuable when we were in Cenla Boardbuilders. We could ask consultants questions and we learned information that we may not have been privy to, unless we were there," she said. "I'm more knowledgeable in my role, even down to things like running an effective meeting."

John McDaniel, who serves on the board of the Historic Association of Central Louisiana, agreed. He has a better idea of how to use funds more effectively and raising support. "Because of information learned, I knew what questions to voice about the scope of statewide assistance and what is within the responsibilities of local boards. One of the successes we've seen with the Historic Association is that despite not having in-depth resources, we were able to save a historical building important to our community."

For newly appointed board members, like the Rev. Karli Pidgeon, identifying the responsibilities of a board member were beneficial. Pidgeon is a United Methodist Pastor and a new board member on the Arts Council of Central Louisiana. "Cenla Boardbuilders not only helped me recognize my role as a board member, but it has helped the way I run my administrative board meetings of the church. I have even recommended it to several of my clergy colleagues, because the information is very helpful for serving on boards," Pidgeon said.

Participants also enjoyed the networking opportunities. "We all live in the same community, so it helps to be knowledgeable of other community services that are available and what they do," said Sidonie McDaniel.

It's that mindset that will foster more effective board members and good governance in nonprofits. Through the Cenla Boardbuilders program, over 120 individuals have been trained and matched with a local nonprofit for board service. A new class of participants will start in August and with it, a new set of leaders will emerge bringing a re-energized approach to serving Central Louisiana communities.





Jayne Wright-Velez, executive director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana, with past board chairman Brian Couvillon

# NONPROFIT WORKS

## Building Stronger Nonprofits

**C**haritable contributions and support are important to sustaining a nonprofit. In a difficult economy, nonprofits recognize the need for long-term plans of action to stay successful. As part of Community Development Works (CDW), the Foundation offers a grant program to enhance and strengthen entire nonprofit organizations called Nonprofit Works. Designed specifically to work with an organization's leadership, the program gives a unique opportunity to Central Louisiana nonprofits.

"Nonprofit Works is a two-year grant made to nonprofits to strengthen their operations and board functions. It may be our most long-term effective capacity-building effort to date," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "We've been pleasantly surprised with the number of organizations that want to do this work, and we believe this is going to yield for the community much stronger nonprofits in the future."

Since 2009, 14 local nonprofits have been awarded capacity-building grants through Nonprofit Works. Grants up to \$50,000 are given to participating groups and require a two-year commitment from board members and the executive director. Nonprofit groups are matched with expert consultants who work with the organization's specific needs. Nonprofit Works consultant Carol Todd described this work as very hands-on. "We have monthly coaching calls with the Executive Director, attend their board meetings, conduct program evaluations, and work with committees on fund development and policies and procedures."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

# NONPROFIT WORKS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

For nonprofit board members and staff, it is a chance to work as a whole and be on one page with their mission and vision. Before entrance in the program, nonprofits complete a self-assessment. That data is used to help nonprofits work with a consultant to map out a plan of action for developing the organizations over the two-year period. It's a process that requires dedication but one that proves to be rewarding.

"It was remarkable to see how this program took us to a new level. We have a stronger organization with a long-term strategy set in place," said Jane Wright-Velez, executive director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana. The Food Bank entered the program as a well-established organization in the community, but viewed Nonprofit Works as an opportunity for growth and improvement. "Nonprofits can't afford to be just a feel-good organization. We want to justify costs in our programs and implement the greatest use of our resource money," she said.

Through working together, board members and staff obtain a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Brian Couvillon is a past board chairman for the Food Bank and participated in Nonprofit Works. "The tendency of many board members is to be a 'yes' board. This was a healthy process because it helped us set expectations and delegate responsibilities to specific committees and not overload the executive director," he said. "Plus, people picked up enthusiasm and the need to be responsible. I know that will transition into new board members."

Consultants worked with the Food Bank to streamline programs, improve communication, and evaluate and make changes to current procedures. Velez said they received help in making tough decisions, like the need to make their gift acceptance policy a smoother process. "The consultants work with us to achieve goals that ensure we are being the best stewards to the community and that are aligned with our vision statement," she said.

Barbara Dashiell, executive director of Inner-City Revitalization Corp., found Nonprofit Works to be refreshing for their organization. Inner-City Revitalization provides residents in

Central Louisiana access to affordable and decent housing and home ownership. "You learn so much from the consultants and have someone to bounce ideas off of. We are now more business minded. They help you map out a direction for your organization and make you mindful of the pitfalls that may occur because of the decisions that are made," she said.

Nonprofits work with highly qualified consultants in their field of expertise. The consultants facilitate and keep track of the progress made by the nonprofit based off an organizational development plan made in their early stages of the program. The goal is to make nonprofits more efficient by targeting needs and marking growth. "Commitment, relevance, and rigor can affect sustaining change for these organizations," Todd said.

One of the benefits is that these groups are able to make those changes and decisions together. Dashiell noted, "It was a great meeting of the minds. I was able to understand the board chair and in how and why she made decisions and she was able to understand the financial considerations and organizational needs I based my decisions on." As a result, Inner-City Revitalization secured over \$1 million in grant funding to build six new homes last year. "We could not have been this successful without the tools and consultants to help us fine tune our business model strategies."

Through Nonprofit Works, organizations are finding a fresh approach to accomplish their goals. Kendra Gauthier, Executive Director of the Central Louisiana Coalition to Prevent Homelessness, said the program helped them realize their ideas were not as far-fetched as originally thought. Gauthier said one goal has been to provide one-stop homeless services. The idea is to have one place where a homeless individual can receive proper referrals on where to go for shelter and supplies. "We recognized that we were at a point where we were doing things one way and were at a standstill. The consultants worked with us to start planning our goals and gave us a direction to follow. Now we feel like we are moving forward and will have growth," she said.

Gauthier also said that working directly with consultants allowed for open discussion meetings, where board members and Gauthier could be frank with issues. That helped them map out a long-term plan. "Every organization wants to accomplish their mission statement. We have to think outside the box to make our money go further, best utilize our volunteers, and get people involved," said Gauthier.

By working together, executive directors and board members can achieve the mission set before them. Nonprofit Works offers the resources and support to recognize and make valuable changes to an organization. To keep up with a changing world and limitations on funds and professional experience, those changes enable them to expand services and better meet the needs of the community.



# CENLA Execbuilders

New CDW program  
aims to improve  
executive leadership

**S**trong leadership is the key for success and growth in nonprofit groups. Recognizing this need, Community Development Works introduces a new program for executive leadership within local organizations called Cenla Execbuilders. The program is designed to build the capacity of Executive Directors by developing their skills as leaders in the nonprofit community.

"So often, Executive Directors working in local nonprofits feel ill-prepared for a new leadership role in the nonprofit sector or later suffer from burnout and resign their positions due to the overwhelming nature of working alone in organizations," said Akeshia Singleton, CDW program supervisor.



*Carol Todd, CDW consultant  
for Cenla Execbuilders*

The first pilot group of Cenla Execbuilders starts in late April and will finish in June. The Foundation is hopeful it will see as much success as other capacity-building programs offered through CDW. "Just as Cenla Boardbuilders emphasizes the board's role, Cenla Execbuilders adds to the idea

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

# CENLA Execbuilders

that strong executive leadership is critical to nonprofit growth," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation.

Cenla Execbuilders will put highly qualified consultants to work with Executive Directors through a series of training sessions. Participants will go through a six-week coaching and training program. Carol Todd, a consultant who works with CDW, said participants will work on strengthening effective management and leadership skills that are needed for heading high-performing organizations. "A lot of times Executive Directors are hired, but don't always have the leadership skills needed. The consultants deliver the curriculum and teach directors on a variety of leadership topics," she said. Participants will receive training and participate in team building and effective communication activities.

Topics include the roles and responsibilities of executive leadership, handling operations

of organizations, strategic planning, communications and team building, and leading change. Just as it is important for board members to realize their role in nonprofits, Cenla Execbuilders will train directors to effectively manage and delegate responsibilities in day-to-day functions. "It's an opportunity for them to share knowledge and skills in a peer-to-peer setting. They will have a chance to share ideas and learn from each other," Todd said. She also notes it will give participants the skills to mentor successors when needed.

The goal is to re-energize Executive Directors as leaders in the nonprofit community. Strong leadership is needed to secure a foundation for nonprofit success. Directors need the skills to implement strategies to effectively use funds and community support, while managing an organization. "It is one of the most rewarding experiences for me to help nonprofits achieve their mission. In the end, we are about deepening and broadening services of these organizations to help them serve more clients in Central Louisiana," says Todd.

Those interested in Cenla Execbuilders are encouraged to complete an application through the Community Development Works website. Directors with all levels of experience are encouraged to apply.



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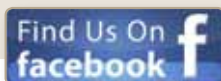
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