



# Community Engagement Framework



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### Acknowledgement

In preparation of this document a number of key sources were utilized and should be acknowledged:

- Vancouver Coastal community Engagement Framework
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Community Development Framework
- Calgary Community Service Development Strategy

## Introduction

This framework is intended to assist Fraser Health decision-makers, managers and staff in better understanding the broad practice of community engagement. It offers an overview and process guidance of how engagement can assist leaders and staff in meeting their responsibility to respond to key stakeholders, community and clients needs, to improve clinical quality, and to improve health outcomes.

Community engagement is defined by the World Health Organization as “a process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies, in planning, developing and delivering services and in taking action to active change.” Fostering public engagement is one of the three strategies for health promotion encouraged in early policy documents from the Canadian government.

The ultimate goal of community engagement for Fraser Health is to impact conditions that influence the health of communities and contribute to better health of the population.

There are many definitions of community and communities. It is important to recognize that people define for themselves which communities they feel part of...“the sense of community implies interaction, identity, mutuality and shared values. Most individuals belong to more than one community”, (Bezzina 1998). There are two broad categories of community: internal and external. The Internal communities consist of staff, physicians, volunteers and contracted and shared service providers. Generally external communities are thought of in several categories. These are:

- geographic communities such as municipalities or defined neighborhoods;
- non-geographic communities based on age, gender, ethnicity, disability such as older adults, aboriginal people, new immigrants;
- users of services which are patient or clients with similar needs such as mental health consumers, cancer clients, parents of clients with special needs, primary care clients;
- the general public (organizations or individuals).

It should be recognized that even though individuals may share a community of interests they are often diverse and characterized by varying degrees of difference and subject to conflict.

Community engagement encompasses a wide variety of activities from information sharing to community empowerment. Community engagement strategy relates to all activities undertaken by the organization with the exception of those where statutory or legislative requirements take precedence (but the implementation of said statute or legislation should be consistent with the community engagement strategy).

Community engagement is:

- a dialogue focused on a particular topic that lays the groundwork for a shared sense of direction, resources and responsibilities;
- long term effort to surface the communities' insights questions and concerns about issues;
- a means of helping citizens understand the issues confronting their community and possible solutions.

Community engagement should not be treated as a singular strategy for swaying public opinion on a predetermined outcome under the pretense of community dialogue.

It is very important for Fraser Health to set the right tone and provide the context for embarking on this commitment. Engagement must be thought of as a process that evolves over time and the organization needs to be clear of the intended outcomes of each initiative. This includes setting up processes for receiving and giving feedback so that people involved are aware of how input is utilized.

It is also important that participants understand the context of policy making in health, that it is neither rational nor linear but a complex political process that is influenced by a multitude of factors both internal and external to the organization.

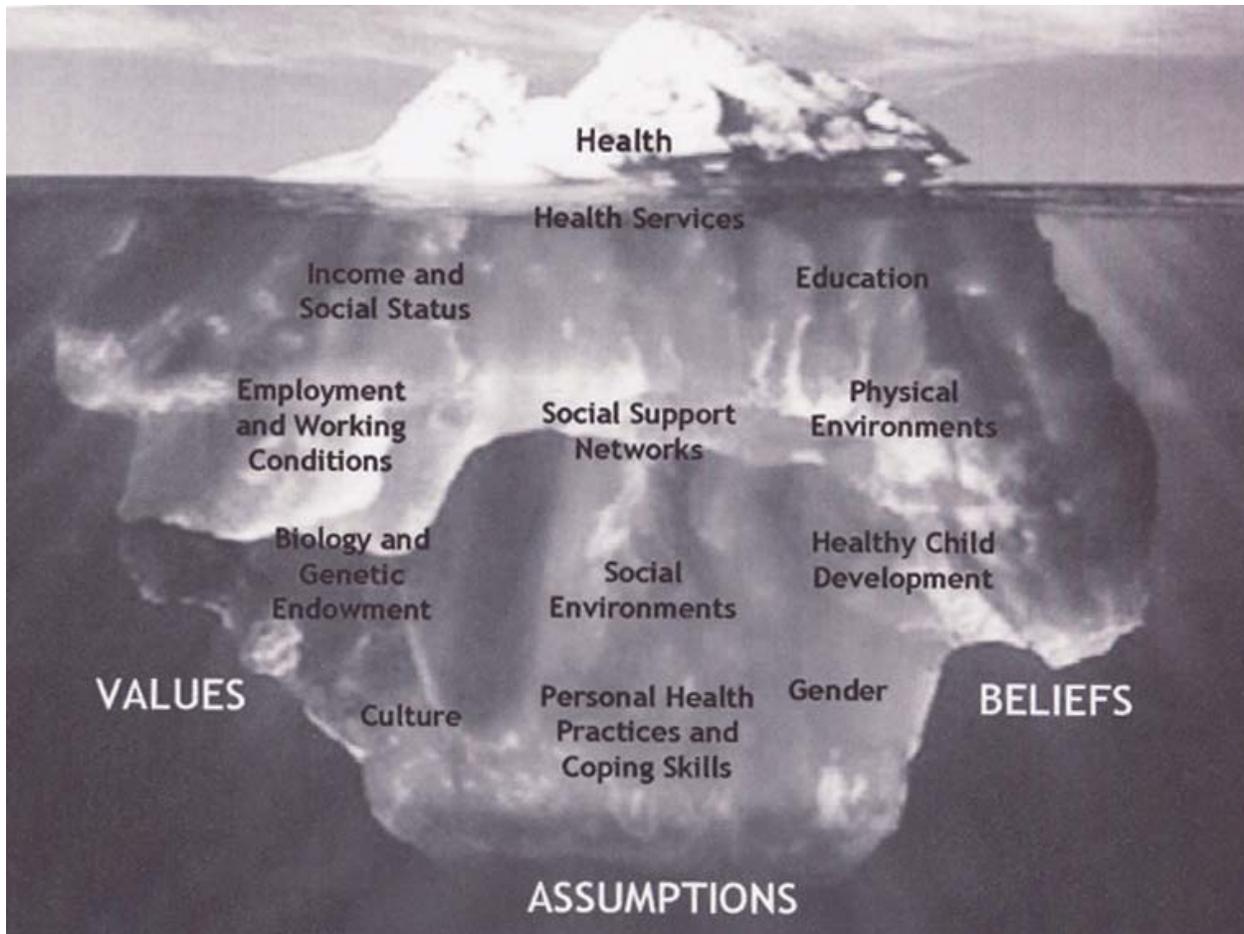
Once the framework is adopted it must be built into all key strategies of the organization and form a fundamental part of how the organization operates.

Over the past decade an increased collective interest has moved community engagement practice to centre stage in health care. The Health Council of Canada speaks to the functions of public involvement in the governance of the health system:

- to improve the quality of information concerning the population's values, needs and preferences;
- to encourage public dialogue and debate over fundamental direction of the health system;

- to ensure public accountability for the processes within and outcomes of the system;
- to protect the public interest.

Community engagement is seen in the literature as a core approach to improving population health. The following figure from the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse materials provides a good view of approaching population health:

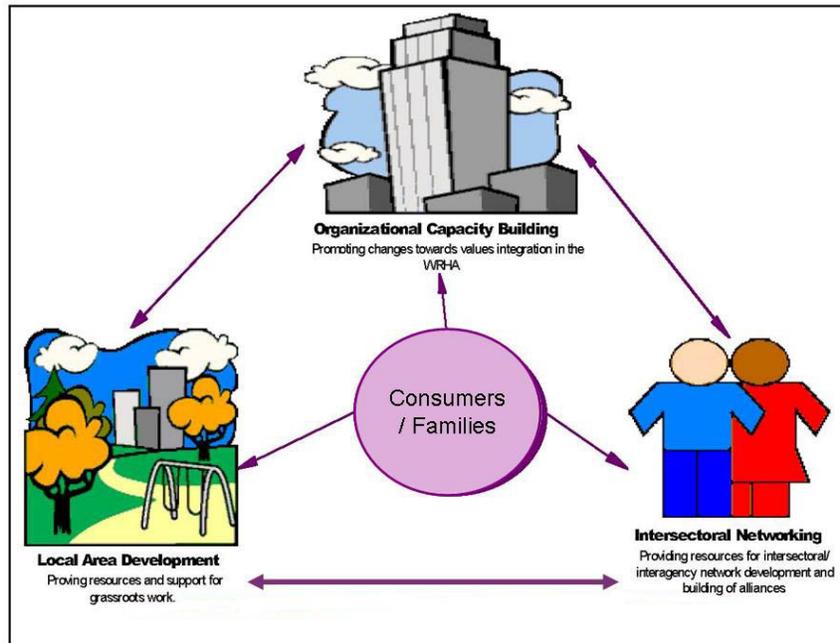


“Canada has developed a health system that is relatively good at treating illness but ineffective at recognizing and stimulating action to address the determinants of health such as an adequate income, shelter and food. By associating health with health care, we have largely ignored the important role communities play in creating the conditions that support and sustain health. We need to find ways to turn the treatment system into a health system by emphasizing health promotion and by strengthening communities to identify issues, set priorities, make decisions and take action around health issues”. (Health and Welfare Canada)

Health providers in Canada, Europe and the United States have also developed strong consensus on a new model of quality care, one that identifies the needs and wishes of the patient, client or resident as the primary drivers of clinical and policy decision-making. Patient-centered care is a multi-dimensional shift by healthcare institutions away from models of healthcare delivery that have often been hierarchical, provider-driven, and depersonalized. The international practice of people-centered care embraces such initiatives as: measurement systems that track patient satisfaction, increased involvement of patients in the direction of their own care, increased focus on safety and customer service, mechanisms for the community, patients and family members to influence health system design and policy.

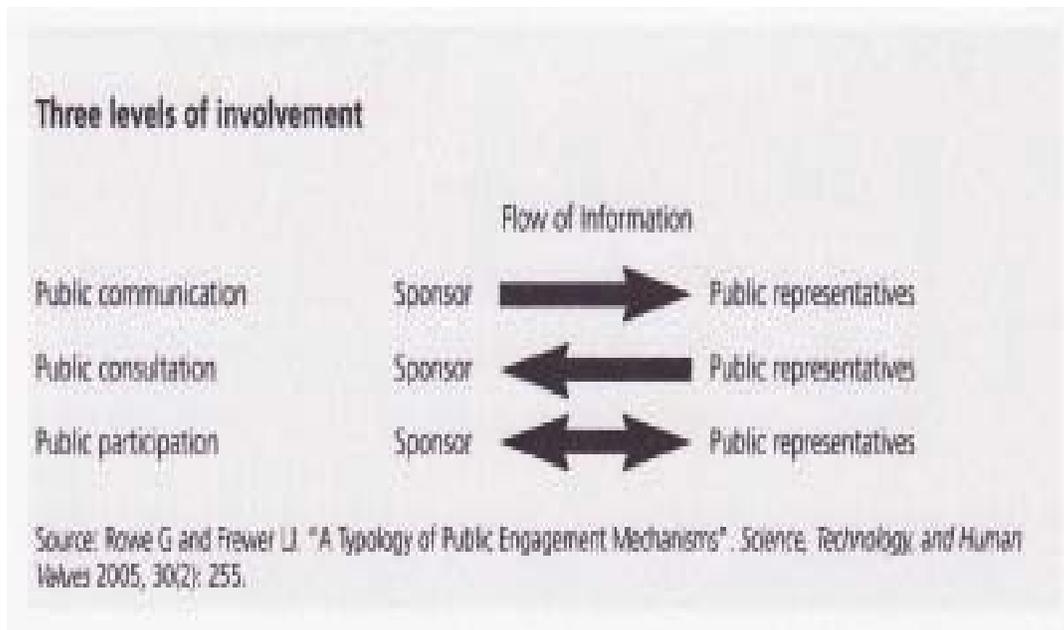
Research indicates that greater patient and family involvement in care results in fewer errors and better clinical outcomes. Community engagement is thought of as both an art and science. Health and Welfare Canada and several regional health authorities have all adopted community engagement frameworks, recognizing that virtually everyone is either receiving care, has received care or will receive care. Many jurisdictions across Canada are developing mechanisms to bring the experience of the public, clients and families into the planning and policy process.

The Fraser Health goal of creating an integrated health delivery system uses Steven Shortell's definition, "a network of organizational entities that provide or arrange to provide a coordinated continuum of services to a defined population and is willing to be held clinically and fiscally accountable for the outcomes and the health status of the population served." In order to successfully achieve this level of integration meaningful engagement of providers and consumers is critical.



This figure modified from the Winnipeg Region community development framework reflects the main components that must be considered and must support one another in achieving successful community engagement.

Community engagement includes different levels of involvement as demonstrated by the chart In the Health Council of Canada, *Primer on Public Participation*.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS

Community engagement delivers a direct benefit to the healthcare system in its policy and planning activities, enabling the system to design programs more closely tailored to the needs of both individuals and special populations. The underlying goals of community engagement practice are:

### **To Improve Quality by**

- improving the quality of information sharing and input from key stakeholders to develop evidence-based services;
- supporting a client-centered care approach;
- building capacity in communities and within the organization;
- contributing to better health outcomes through empowering individuals, families and local communities to take increased responsibility for self care and management;
- increasing health literacy and health system literacy on the part of the public;
- assisting providers with tools to align information, technology and services in building a integrated health system.

### **To Support Progressive Partnerships by**

- bringing diverse range of partnerships and networks together into the planning process to allow for consideration of perspectives that might not otherwise be understood;
- developing bridges between the health system, non profit organizations working in health and social services;
- partnering with local governments in a collaborative partnership to foster development of healthy communities;
- engaging in processes that support clients as partners in the management of their health and health care;
- developing internal partnerships to align and improve health services across large continuum.

### **To Strengthen Accountability by**

- building trust and credibility with communities that input is honored and acted upon; providing the health system with detailed information concerning community members' priorities and an opportunity to evaluate the responsiveness and accessibility of programs and services to meet those needs;
- stimulating innovation as the system responds to emerging needs;
- establishing transparent communication and evaluation systems by informing Fraser Health on priority areas where it can fulfill an advocacy and health promotion function.

### To Support Sustainability by

- recognizing that sustainability includes economic, social and political dimensions;
- recognizing the connection among a host of action outcomes and responses on improving population health;
- including the value of public interaction into health planning and policy development.

## FRASER HEALTH'S VISION FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The context for the practice of community engagement is contained within the organization's guiding vision of **Better Health, Best in Health Care**.

Community engagement practice is a strategy for achieving this vision and supports the objectives identified in Fraser Health's Strategic Imperatives by:

- involvement not only in clinical program design and operations but also on matters of broader policy significance;
- special effort to identify and engage marginalized groups e.g. ethno-cultural communities, people with disabilities, and frail, isolated seniors;
- engaging the community across the full spectrum of participation levels, ranging from informing, consulting and involving to collaborating and empowering.

Fraser Health is committed to supporting healthy living in healthy communities with our partners through care, education and research. Engagements strategies embrace the values inherent in community development: respect, equity, social justice, inclusion of diversity, sharing power and responsibility, and choice and empowerment.

Although community engagement has been a strong part of the foundation of Fraser Health, we believe the time has come to increase the consistency and sophistication of our community engagement strategy as part of our desired future.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles of community engagement will guide all of Fraser Health's activities:

### Clarity of Purpose

Clear purpose about why engagement is occurring and its context in order to plan and resource an effective process.

## **Everyone is a Stakeholder**

Communities and cities are complex organisms that are living, breathing, growing and constantly changing. A healthy city is not a finished product created at one point in time: it is a dynamic place where citizens and government have established structure and processes that allow them to collaborate in tackling any problems that arise. The healthy city approach calls for collective action in which all sectors - local government as well as community, religious, groups, and individual citizens - work together for a common purpose. (DUHL and Hancock, 1997)

A healthy community is recognized by the World Health Organization as one that works to improve environments and share its resources so that people can effectively support each other in achieving their highest potential. Fraser Health is committed to a population health approach and will support engagement mechanisms and formalized partnerships with the municipalities within its boundaries. Fraser health will provide leadership to help build within each of the communities a solid understanding of the full spectrum of factors and their interrelationships known to impact health.

Population health will be understood to be the health of a population as measured by health status indicators and as influenced by social, economic, physical environments, personal health practices, human biology, individual and community capacity, early childhood development and health services. As such key strategies will be put into place supporting a Healthier Community's vision.

## **Commitment**

Citizen participation is recognized as an asset and is valued and encouraged. The underlying principles of population health are reflected in all activities.

## **Hospitality**

Friendly welcoming environment, barriers to access are recognized and overcome.

## **Respect**

Respect for the needs aspirations and opinions of all within the community that are affected are embraced. The purpose and the process are clear to all participants. The process is fair, effective and transparent. Internal leadership will observe the policies related to levels of authorized decision making, communication and strategic goals.

## **Accessibility**

Ensure that all individuals or groups can access the process. Be sensitive to the needs of particular individuals or groups to maximize their ability to contribute. Provide information that is easy to understand and appropriate for all sectors of the community.

### **Communication**

Establishment of a two-way process of providing accurate, effective and timely information and demonstration that feedback is valued.

### **Flexibility and Responsiveness**

Flexible engagement plans and openness to input.

### **Timelines**

Participants know how long an engagement is expected to last and when feedback will occur at each stage of the process.

### **Inclusiveness**

Ensure that a cross-section of the community is invited to the engagement activity.

### **Collaboration**

Establishment of partnerships with a wide variety of key stakeholders.

### **Ethics**

Members of any group are expected to adhere to relevant codes of conduct including declarations of conflicting interests.

### **Integration**

Through engagement, we can follow the patient from a community health centre, to a complex acute care episode, possibly back to the community or to residential care, with the goal of making the entire process as seamless as possible. The patient experience spills over organizational boundaries, highlighting the need for intra-departmental cooperation.

## **THE SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Participation in community engagement ranges from information dissemination and sharing to full partnership with communities. Our goal is to move as far as possible towards empowerment, and to build capacity within the community to partner with us to achieve better health outcomes. The following model of participation has been adapted from the World Health Organization and from the International Association of Public Participation and is recommended for use by Fraser Health.

### **Informing**

Fraser Health devotes considerable resources to implementing diverse strategies for communicating with and educating the community. These include publications, newsletters and press releases to a wide variety of stakeholders, electronic medium

and website, regular and topic specific group and individual meetings and designated times and forums for presentations by community groups to the board and executive.

### **Consulting**

Consultation is considered to mean asking the community for input on a specific decision, policy or planning process. Fraser Health consults with community stakeholders through a variety of mechanisms such as consumer and family participation in advisory groups, quality feedback surveys or opinion polls, provider contract management meetings, advisory councils, professional development councils and specific clinical planning projects and teams.

### **Involving**

At this level, community stakeholders are participating in a more ongoing official capacity. Fraser Health has established the Mayors Advisory Council on Health and consumers have a voice on internal planning and policy committees such as the Ethics Committee and Mental Health Redesign Committee. There are also a number of standing advisory, action and monitoring committees like the Family and Resident Councils in Residential Care. Providers are involved in specific projects or strategies, for example, primary care physicians through integrated clinics and divisions. Getting the community involved at this level gives Fraser Health the benefit of ongoing input about the patient, client, and resident viewpoint. Community stakeholders gain by developing greater insight into the complexity of delivering care in sometimes challenging circumstances.

### **Collaborating**

Fraser Health collaborates with community stakeholders by providing leadership, resources and assistance for community partners undertaking initiatives. Some examples of this would be joint projects with Heart and Stroke and the Alzheimer Society, wellness initiatives, healthier community grants for community initiatives and community health planning like the project in Mission.

### **Empowering**

Given that so many determinants of health are community based, Fraser Health is providing leadership in the development of healthier community councils for each of the municipalities it serves. These councils will employ a full spectrum of tools to engage local stakeholders in identifying needs and issues and set priorities on recommended actions for improving the overall health of the population and the health care system.



# IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



	<b>Inform</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
<b>Public participation goal</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
<b>Example techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fact sheets</li> <li>▪ Web sites</li> <li>▪ Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public comment</li> <li>▪ Focus groups</li> <li>▪ Surveys</li> <li>▪ Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workshops</li> <li>▪ Deliberative polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizen advisory committees</li> <li>▪ Consensus-building</li> <li>▪ Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizen juries</li> <li>▪ Ballots</li> <li>▪ Delegated decision</li> </ul>

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

It is important to set the right tone and provide the right context for this strategy, to think of it as a process that unfolds over time, and to be clear of the intended outcomes of any initiative. A full engagement process takes time and requires a long term commitment. It is critical for the organization to be ready to support and receive input from any participation initiative, which includes establishing formal processes for both receiving and giving input to the people involved and determining the appropriate method. Program supports and resources should be identified and in place. The organization must be clear on what level of decision making it is involving the stakeholders in with any of the initiatives. A multi-dimensional approach is seen as stronger, more resilient and creative.

The organization must also recognize the limitations of the various methods of participation. For example public communication will only be as good as the medium or distribution system, depends on people reading the material and is often a one way flow of information with little meaning interaction as to the impact, materials may be difficult to maintain currency and could be expensive to distribute. The remaining strategies may require ingoing resource commitment, may or may not reach the intended stakeholders, requires conditions that will effectively motivate people to invest time and effort and will need to connect contributions with decision outcomes to avoid cynicism.

The Canada Health Council's Primer on Public Involvement cites the following as key conditions for success;

### **Representativeness**

Participants must be representative of the population as much as possible.

### **Independence**

The public involvement process must be perceived as fair and independent in that everyone must have a chance to express him or herself including those who hold diverging views.

### **Early involvement**

Participants should be involved as early as possible in the process.

### **Influencing**

Participants must have a real impact on the decision making process.

### **Providing information**

Information must be provided to allow time to learn, discuss and deliberate. It must be clear, transparent, easy to understand and interpret.

### **Resource accessibility**

Resources must be available to allow meaningful participation. It also means making sure disenfranchised populations are considered as to venue, timing and travel support.

### **Structured decision making**

The community involvement process must be legitimate, transparent and official. The objectives must be realistic and communicated clearly. A feedback mechanism around input about decisions must be in place.

## **OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

We accept and endorse the International Association of Public Participation “spectrum of public participation” to guide the implementation of a community engagement strategy within Fraser Health and support the principles espoused in this framework document.

Our internal leadership will develop a team to establish clear processes, tools (including education and checklists) and resources to support an effective community engagement strategy.

We will create an inventory to identify current Fraser Health activities along the spectrum in all clinical and support services within Fraser Health.

All Fraser Health senior leadership will create opportunities to incorporate community participation into identified strategic imperatives.

We will establish an active agenda for advocacy related to healthy public policy issues such as tobacco cessation, homelessness, safe communities and safe and sustainable environments.

We support healthy living by engaging diverse communities to address priority health promotion and disease prevention strategies.

We will fully deploy technology that enables citizens and providers to share relevant information to support quality care across the health continuum.

We will evaluate the results of the community engagement strategy on an annual basis and invest in public education and capacity building.

## Key Reference Material

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