



WoodGreen Community Services Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027

Building community health and well-being through innovation and
transformational system leadership



Land Acknowledgment

WoodGreen Community Services acknowledges the land we are on is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat people, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples.

We also acknowledge that Tkaronto (Toronto) is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit. We are all Treaty people. Many of us have come here as settlers, immigrants, and newcomers in this generation or generations past. We'd like to also acknowledge and honour those who came here involuntarily, particularly those who are descended from those brought here through enslavement.

A message from our leadership

There comes a time when change is not an option but an imperative.

Every day, WoodGreen Community Services is on the frontlines, working to create positive social change in our city and deliver on our vision of a Toronto where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

But, amidst the post-pandemic shockwaves still being felt, the scale and complexity of socio-economic vulnerability have been changing. Marginalized communities and already fragile lives are being tested in unprecedented ways. The affordability crisis has gone mainstream. Uncertainty abounds. Community health and well-being are suffering.

The basic needs of far too many individuals and families in Toronto are UNMET, as are the needs of the organizations that serve them.

To respond to escalating demand for community-based social service supports in our city, we need strategic stretch. Deeply embedded in the communities where we work and equipped with solid inter-agency partnerships across multiple sectors, WoodGreen is uniquely positioned to inform and drive the system change necessary to tackle inequality at the margins and forge pathways to opportunity for Toronto's residents.

Transformative client outcomes happen when services operate in concert, and clients can seamlessly access what they need, when and how they need it. As a lead agency in the city, our ability to offer clients multiple entry points to service, craft programs that address critical social needs, pioneer new financial models, engage stakeholders, and leverage partnerships will continue to drive successful results.

Our last strategic plan was anchored in the social determinants of health and focused on growth in four key areas: housing, community health, employment, and youth. Building on these foundations, this new strategic plan outlines how WoodGreen can MEET vulnerable Torontonians' increasingly complex and system-driven needs by charting an intentional path for transformational change in integrated social services delivery over the next three years and beyond.

With clients at the core and empowered by our talented staff, we have the tools to reshape our services and our sector.

The time for change is now.



Anne Babcock
President and CEO
WoodGreen Community Services



Nupi Zadair
Chair
WoodGreen Community Services

About WoodGreen Community Services

For 87 years, WoodGreen has built innovative and evidence-informed solutions to meet critical social needs across our city.

Today, we are one of the largest community agencies in Toronto. At 44 locations across the city, almost 1,000 WoodGreen staff and 750 volunteers support 40,000 people of all ages, religions, races, cultures, gender identities, and sexual orientations.

We help reduce the vulnerability of those most at risk by expanding service offerings

where UNMET needs arise and adapting to a changing social service landscape.

Working together, we help clients attain and sustain affordable housing, improve their physical and mental well-being, build financial literacy and achieve economic empowerment, avoid food insecurity, overcome social isolation, and more.

Our Vision

A Toronto where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Our Mission

WoodGreen Community Services enhances self-sufficiency, promotes well-being and reduces poverty through innovative solutions to critical social needs.

Our Values

Our values underpin our approach to our clients, our community, and our colleagues. As we move forward in a new strategic cycle, we align our actions with these core values and rely on them as benchmarks to guide our decisions.

We are client-centric.

Our clients are at the core of everything we do.

We are collaborative.

We work in partnership with our community to build a better Toronto.

We are inclusive.

We value equity and diverse perspectives and create safe spaces for everyone.

We are impactful.

Our work has value, meaning, and impact for our clients and Toronto.

We are compassionate.

The well-being of our staff, clients and volunteers is essential in our organization.

We act with integrity.

We honour and uphold the trust our community places in us.



Strategic Plan | 2024-2027

Introduction

As one of Toronto's largest social service agencies, WoodGreen knows firsthand the depth and breadth of the UNMET needs confronting our city's residents.

Growing numbers of Torontonians are UNhoused, UNemployed, UNseen, UNsafe, UNSupported, and UNwelcome.

Our new Strategic Plan is intended to help us chart, together, an intentional path forward for supporting vulnerable members of our community to thrive amidst challenging and uncertain times.

Beyond the disruption of the global pandemic and the ensuing economic turmoil that we are still feeling, the pace of technological changes, shifting population demographics, and the impact of climate change is accelerating. At home and abroad, powerful socio-economic and environmental forces are driving social change in the direction of hardship for a growing majority of the population.

Our most vulnerable citizens are losing ground they cannot afford to cede. We must tap into our collective strengths to lead as a unified force for change, building community health and well-being for the future we want in our city.

Current solutions to critical social issues fail to address the diversity, interconnectedness, and scale of clients' needs. Incremental service growth is needed to keep pace with growing demand, but more integrated services are also required to enable holistic approaches that tackle root causes.

To maximize outcomes for client and community health and well-being, we need bold, creative thinking to transform how social services are delivered at WoodGreen and across the sector.

Nearly 100 people were involved in creating this strategic plan, including staff, community partners, sector experts, volunteers, and clients. Environmental scans confirmed what we sensed. Toronto faces pressing challenges:

- 1. Growing Demands on Social Services:** The demand for services is skyrocketing. Our community is looking to us for support, and we must rise to the occasion.
- 2. Increasingly Complex Client Needs:** Clients face multiple co-occurring challenges that require integrated support coordinated across various social service disciplines. WoodGreen has service breadth and depth; we need to build up our interconnectedness.
- 3. Navigational Obstacles:** Disjointed service pathways between and within agencies make it difficult for clients to identify, access, and navigate the services they need. When vital services are a labyrinth, clients suffer.
- 4. Affordability Crisis:** Growing income inequality, structural changes in the labour market, constrained housing supply, and increased living costs are pushing more people toward poverty. While some costs may ease as interest rates lower, the housing crisis is system-driven and requires sustainable solutions.

Meeting these challenges will test our abilities and imagination – as individuals and as an organization.

WoodGreen has strong foundations in service excellence, innovation, entrepreneurship, and partner-building to draw on. Working together, we are a force for change.

Intentional Leadership in Uncertain Times

Existing approaches to critical social issues are unable to address the growing complexity and interconnectedness of clients' needs.

Incremental growth cannot bridge this gap. Today's services are too siloed, transactional, and challenging to access. The social services system we work in needs transformational change led from our sector's frontlines.

We must take action to meet the challenges ahead. Frontline agencies like WoodGreen must be bold and take on sector leadership roles with allied stakeholders to maximize client outcomes and community well-being.

Through four strategic pillars and the cross-cutting themes that underpin them, this new Strategic Plan builds iteratively on past strategic priorities to outline how WoodGreen will continue to innovate solutions that help vulnerable community members thrive.

In addition to refining our programs and services, this plan charts a new path for WoodGreen's response to the growing diversity, complexity, and scale of needs in our city, which are increasingly driven by systemic tensions, gaps, and countervailing forces.

It is a plan for strategic transformation.

Our Strategic Pillars & Accelerators

PILLAR

1. Expand Resources and Solutions to Meet Toronto's UNMET Needs

We will expand the depth and breadth of our services in priority areas and diversify our revenue sources to build financial flexibility and sustainability.

PILLAR

2. Transform the Client Journey to Enhance Service Quality and Maximize Outcomes

We will build our holistic understanding of clients' needs through improved data modelling and intentionally transform our service pathways to support better outcomes through integrated care.

PILLAR

3. Drive System and Policy Solutions for Greater Community Impact

We will leverage WoodGreen's service expertise, economies of scale, and collaborative strengths to lead capacity building across providers, inform public policy, and drive sector change.

PILLAR

4. Build a Thriving Workforce for Sustainable Organizational Success

We will continue to nurture a thriving, inclusive workforce of change agents, empowered to design and deliver innovative programs and equipped with the skills to navigate organizational and sector transformation.

Accelerators

These cross-cutting themes underpin all four Strategic Pillars. Working to align them to our strategic priorities and leverage them effectively will enhance our success.

Investment in technology

Diverse and flexible revenue generation

Strategic partnerships

Government relations and strategic communications

Robust change management

Pillar 1. Expand Resources and Solutions to Meet Toronto's UNMET Needs

Toronto is Canada's largest city and consistently ranks among its fastest-growing, creating myriad infrastructure and social service challenges. From the housing crisis and escalating cost of living to challenges accessing child care and family health services to precarious work in a gig economy, the UNMET needs of Torontonians keep rising.

The need for social services in our city today is greater than ever, and it will be greater still tomorrow. It's vital that WoodGreen expand its resources to match our services to our city's population growth and evolving needs. For our sustainable growth, we will need *both* focus and diversification.



Priority 1: Grow in priority areas to address critical needs

Torontonians' urgent UNMET needs are growing on every front. To be effective, WoodGreen will need to focus its growth efforts in 2024-2027 on certain key priority areas that offer us the best potential to leverage our strengths to benefit our clients, our sector, and our city.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of priority areas but focal points suited to today's world. Scaling access to these services will directly improve many Torontonians' ability to navigate the affordability crisis.

In this priority, we are focused on leveraging our internal capacity to build service scale. We know our strengths and where we can independently grow our services over the next three years.

Objectives:

1. Grow the number of housing units to 3000 by 2027 to meet our goal of 5000 units by 2030.
2. Launch at least one additional child care centre.
3. Expand Rites of Passage and double the number of youth participants.
4. Create a Homeward Bound franchise model and support 50% more participants across Ontario.
5. Drive growth of a Financial Empowerment Collaborative with multiple agencies across Toronto and surrounding regions, aiming to increase our annual client service numbers by 25%.

Priority 2: Diversify revenue streams for sustainable growth

Adequately resourcing the organization to enable us to meet client needs is an ongoing challenge.

Our traditional social service funding models have clear constraints in terms of financial and program autonomy and growth. To transform how community-based social services are delivered at WoodGreen, we must build additional revenue streams that offer the right balance of reliability and flexibility for sustainable growth.

In 2024-2027, we will diversify and grow our access to flexible and renewable revenue sources by leveraging our competencies in client-centric property and facilities management, building on the UNMET Needs Campaign to increase philanthropic giving, and tapping into our entrepreneurial skills to develop innovative social enterprise models that offer positive impact to the community.

This combination of earned and charitable income will afford WoodGreen increased resource autonomy and financial resilience to design and offer more interconnected and holistic wraparound services to ensure client needs are MET.

Objectives:

1. Expand WoodGreen's property management portfolio as a source of earned income.
2. Grow WoodGreen Foundation's annual philanthropic revenue to \$10M.
3. Explore feasible social enterprise opportunities. Develop and bring to market one viable model.

WoodGreen's Meals on Wheels program increases food security and supports independent living for seniors and adults with disabilities. Our volunteers deliver hot and frozen meals, provide at-home security and wellness checks and facilitate access to community services.



Pillar 2.

Transform the Client Journey to Enhance Service Quality and Maximize Outcomes

Client well-being and safety are paramount to our work and a strategic priority for WoodGreen.

In 2024, marginalized Torontonians face challenges on multiple fronts. Almost nobody who is struggling is dealing with just one thing, and increasingly, many of the forces confronting residents are driven by gaps and tensions between system-level issues.

Client needs are increasingly complex, and there is a growing need for social service supports to be holistic in design and intersectional in delivery.

To intentionally transform today's transactional service programs into tomorrow's integrated community care, we need to improve our understanding of clients as whole persons.

The intent behind this pillar goes beyond expanding services in response to growing demand; it's about delivering better end-to-end services that improve outcomes. Leveraging our client data to understand their client journey and evolving needs will enable us to increase the interconnectedness of WoodGreen services to truly offer wrap-around supports to our clients.

Priority 1: Understand and leverage client data to offer more impactful and proactive service pathways

We rely on data to design evidence-informed services, monitor client outcomes, and evaluate our impact over time.

To understand the complexity of clients' needs, we first need to deepen our holistic understanding of our clients well-being. We need to better connect our client data, which currently sits across multiple systems and programs.

Guided by our equity principles, we need to create consistent and ongoing mechanisms to capture client data so that we can better understand whom we serve and whom we do not.



Objectives:

1. Establish consistent and ongoing ways for capturing client data, guided by equity principles, to better understand whom we do and do not serve.
2. Integrate client data across the organization via the data repository to better understand and support client journeys.
3. Identify, embed, and leverage a range of client outcome and impact metrics across the organization and with our network of partners to advance program development and service pathways.
4. Develop a predictive planning model to forecast future service needs and create bundled service pathways.

Priority 2: Transform the client journey, deepening seamless integration of services and wrap-around supports

WoodGreen delivers over 80 programs and services across 44 sites to Torontonians of all ages and backgrounds. These client touchpoints are natural opportunities to transform our clients' experiences and journeys. No matter what door a client enters, we want them to receive the scope of service they need.

For staff and volunteers, this can mean shifting from a single service, program focus to a WoodGreen "ecosystem of care" approach. Eliciting client needs

and intentionally directing services toward them will enhance their experience and improve their outcomes.

Most of the mechanisms connecting clients to our services are analog systems. Technology is a great connector and accessibility tool. Learning how to leverage technology to more seamlessly link clients to the support services they need in the ways that best suit them will be a key challenge.

Objectives:

1. Develop and implement a centralized intake function and a common needs assessment for clients.
2. Create and implement a service model for consistent and tailored support to clients from their first point of contact to the development of unique service plans as they navigate from service to service.
3. Operationalize a technology-enabled full service model at selected sites.
4. Develop and implement online client portals that span services and enable client-led service discovery and navigation.

Are you looking
for a new job?
Start with us!

woodgreen.org/employment
416-405-5254
findajob@woodgreen.org

“ Welcome to
WoodGreen; how can
we help you? ”

A client coming to one of our Employment Centres is most likely looking for a job, but they may also be a caregiver who needs support for their loved one, be in search of affordable child care, or need counselling for their mental health.

The most impactful thing we can do is ask if they're ok and how else we can help. By deepening our internal connectedness, we can leverage our breadth of programs to tailor wraparound supports to our clients' unique combination of needs.

Pillar 3. Drive System and Policy Solutions for Greater Community Impact

Despite an increasingly diverse population, racialized groups remain disproportionately affected by systemic inequities and barriers to opportunity. With rising income inequality continuing to erode living standards in major cities like Toronto, economic forecasts for the coming five years are sobering. The health and social disruption of the pandemic and ensuing economic downturn is set to be followed by a global recession once the inflationary fallout settles, compounding the affordability challenges already being felt.

When individuals and communities suffer hardship, organizations like WoodGreen are on the front line. Supporting the sector's capacity to respond to the growing burden of systemic forces is critical to residents' health and well-being and the cohesion of communities.

WoodGreen must take the initiative to lead system change by fostering greater coordination among the sector to pool resources, share expertise, and build capacity for better community outcomes. We have a track record for turning ideas and proofs of concept into best practice programs and documenting outcomes for evidence-informed insights able to inform policy.



Priority 1: Create an institute for social housing and health system excellence

To effectively meet and exceed UNMET client and community needs, we must promote the transformation of social services design and delivery beyond WoodGreen.

The issue of overly siloed, inaccessible services geared toward short-term outputs is prevalent across the sector. There is broad consensus at the policy level that the sustainability of our social safety net hinges on transformations to become more integrated and people-centred. But, in practice, restructuring our system models to improve support for people needing integrated care has struggled.

We need collaboration across the sector to realign how we design and deliver support services to address the interconnected needs of clients, and maximize social and community health outcomes.

WoodGreen's combined strengths in housing, health, and financial empowerment for Torontonians of all ages and backgrounds position us to help develop, model, and lead this change.

We will expand our collaborative partnerships to pool resources, share expertise, and proactively build collective capacity with other service providers, knowledge centres, and policy makers.

Objectives:

1. Develop and launch an affordable housing equity fund, supporting the development of 200 affordable housing units (100 WoodGreen, 100 other providers).
2. Bolster the affordable housing sector by providing expertise, support, and innovative solutions to other non-profits to develop, acquire and sustain affordable housing. Add 500 new units to the sector and support 800 units via energy retrofits.
3. Lead community-level health system planning projects to coordinate and leverage resources across providers to create streamlined services and increased client value.



Priority 2: Establish thought leadership to influence policy

WoodGreen has a proven track record of demonstrated impact that we can build on as a sector thought leader. Over the next three years, we will challenge conventional thinking and drive innovation to shape policy decisions that affect community health and well-being.

By leveraging our expertise in program development, research, continuous learning, collaboration, and networking, we will amplify our voice among sector stakeholders and support transformational change in social services for marginalized Torontonians.

Objectives:

1. Partner with reputable organizations to produce content (white papers, articles, etc.) that provides meaningful insights and analysis and proves the efficacy and impact of solutions offered by WoodGreen at the sector level.
2. Leverage produced content and proven models of impact to demonstrate WoodGreen leadership on difficult social issues, influencing policy and sector change.

Pillar 4. Build a Thriving Workforce for Sustainable Organizational Success

WoodGreen staff are at the heart of our success as a community services organization. We are a team of diverse and innovative change-makers working together to make a difference in our clients' lives and our city. We draw on each other's compassion, creativity, and insight to develop innovative solutions to critical social needs.

This pillar is about continuing to invest in our people - revisiting outdated employment practices that no longer align with the dynamism of our workforce and nurturing staff as resilient, adaptable champions of change. Empowering staff to lead from within strengthens our collective capacity to drive broader system change through sector leadership.

Supporting staff well-being, promoting an inclusive and equitable workforce, and equipping staff to thrive in a changing environment that empowers them to lead from within will strengthen our collective capacity to drive both organizational and broader system change.



Priority 1: Attract and retain top talent

WoodGreen is a Toronto employer of choice. We are passionate about creating an environment where innovation, collaboration, and personal growth are encouraged and celebrated.

Our goal is to nurture a thriving workplace that attracts, retains, and develops top talent while maintaining a culture of respect, integrity, and diversity.



Objectives:

1. Modernize ways of working to align with the shifting values of a contemporary workforce.
2. Enhance total compensation through expanded monetary and non-monetary programs.
3. Develop dedicated workforce housing for WoodGreen staff.
4. Create more robust career pathways for employees, including paths to promotion, role expertise, and specialized skill development.
5. Scale WoodGreen College – offering specialized skills training for eligible staff.



Priority 2: Cultivate an equitable and values-driven workforce

Creating a Toronto where everyone has the opportunity to thrive starts at our own door. We are responsible for modelling what it means to be an equity-centred organization.

Dismantling inequity means proactively integrating anti-racism, diversity and inclusion in our workplace culture.

We are committed to building an inclusive and diverse workforce that is representative of the communities we serve.

Objectives:

1. Launch and embed revitalized core values and equity principles across the organization, including employee development frameworks.
2. Establish a representative and equitable workforce.
3. Continue our Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging & Equity (DIBE) work, shifting from education to implementing identified equity best practices.
4. Develop an equity framework for program design, development and alignment.

Priority 3: Support staff through organizational transformation

The first condition for successful organizational transformation is to engage staff as co-authors of our envisioned future. Belief in positive change is the fuel that ignites innovation and propels an

organization toward growth and success. By engaging and empowering ourselves as employees and recognizing and nurturing our own agency, we will drive organizational improvement from within.

Objectives:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive change management program to support staff, including clarity of "from-to" concerning roles and responsibilities, job competencies, and ways of working.
2. Replace traditional performance management tools with a modern employee development framework focused on continuous improvement, consistent coaching, and adaptability in a changing environment.
3. Invest in technology that enhances staff capacity, creates greater sustainability and facilitates improved working methods.

Accelerators: Enabling our Success as a Force for Change

These cross-cutting themes overlap with and impact all four of our Strategic Pillars.

To meet our 2024-2027 organizational, service, and sector transformation objectives, we will need to keep these Accelerators in our sights and leverage them to enhance our success.

Investment in technology

Data tools and collaborative technology are essential to our work. Evidence informs our identification of needs and our service design. It anchors our programs in results-based management and lets us track our impact.

To better understand our data, we will invest in building out our data repositories and centralizing our systems. We will leverage technology's enabling potential to work better together, break down silos, and find more efficiencies.

Diverse and flexible revenue generation

We need to be financially nimble to respond to emerging and complex needs in uncertain and fast-moving times. Funding flexibility allows us to invest resources in piloting good ideas as seed projects and creating self-driven opportunities to innovate. We will foster long-term financial sustainability to grow our program operations by increasing our revenue streams' diversity, resilience, and autonomy.

Robust change management

To set ourselves up for success throughout this transformation, we must deepen our change management competencies, including soft skills and processes.

Strategic partnerships

We are not alone in this work. The strength of our many partnerships has enabled WoodGreen to leverage our skills and amplify our impact on the sector. We will continue to build strategic partnerships with allied agencies, funders, policy-makers, and other stakeholders to advance our effectiveness.

Government relations & strategic communications

To support our current and future engagement with stakeholders on service design, delivery, and policy making, we must continue to invest in relationship building and thought leadership. Through strategic communications and content creation, we will raise awareness of WoodGreen and the work we do to showcase our expertise, frontline leadership, and insight as a force for system change.



Future State: Transformation in Action

TODAY 2024	TOMORROW 2027
<p>UNMET needs are growing across Toronto:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing unhoused population • Increasingly aging population • Lack of access to primary care • Increasing food insecurity • Growing gap between settlement services and increasing volume of newcomers and refugees • Jobseekers' needs are increasingly complex 	<p>Improved solutions are in place to MEET Toronto's needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased supply and accessibility of affordable housing • Increased range & availability of community health supports for seniors and others • Increased access to healthy, affordable food • Increased support in place for newcomers and refugees • Increased access to meaningful, long-term employment
<p><i>Client challenges are increasingly complex and intersectional.</i></p> <p><i>Siloed service delivery is not meeting client needs. Programs are designed to support singular challenges vs. multiple co-occurring challenges.</i></p>	<p><i>More services meet intersectional client needs.</i></p> <p><i>Services are easy to access and navigate both within and across providers.</i></p> <p><i>Clients have choices and are in control of charting their journeys.</i></p>
<p><i>Disconnected sector results in multiple small agencies competing and gaps in service.</i></p> <p><i>Current government policies limit innovation & solutions.</i></p> <p><i>Funders focused on short-term activities and outputs, constrain meaningful long-term client impacts.</i></p>	<p><i>Social services work collaboratively, not competitively, to scale and address service gaps.</i></p> <p><i>Public policy influenced by documented impact reports, driving sector-wide innovation & impact.</i></p> <p><i>Funders and sector partners are more focused on enabling long-term client outcomes and impact.</i></p> <p><i>WoodGreen is a recognized system leader.</i></p>
<p><i>Many staff are struggling to meet clients' changing and increasingly complex needs.</i></p> <p><i>Traditional employment practices and work methods do not meet changing workforce demands.</i></p>	<p><i>Skilled and engaged staff drive client outcomes and act as ambassadors for sector change.</i></p> <p><i>Modernized ways of working and employment are aligned to labour market needs.</i></p>

Futurewords

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that we are a resilient, nimble, and ever-learning organization. We learned to pivot from the rapidly changing emergencies of the first wave to a more sustainable and longer-term approach of moving in and out of various priorities as crisis levels rose and fell in subsequent waves.

In the aftermath, it is clear that the challenges of daily life have deepened for those who were already struggling and increased the vulnerabilities of even more Torontonians. Too many are UNhoused, UNemployed, UNseen, UNSafe, UNSupported, and UNwelcome.

This strategic plan outlines how WoodGreen will respond to our city's growing and increasingly complex needs. Over the next three years, we must focus on building community health and well-being through innovation and transformational system leadership.

WoodGreen will chart an intentional path for transformational change in integrated social services delivery through the priorities and objectives of the four Pillars we have outlined and the Accelerators that underpin them.

As we move forward, the same resiliency and adaptability that steered us through the pandemic will empower us to become ambassadors of the system change our clients need us to enact.

Working together, we will challenge our limitations and make our own waves as a force for organizational and sector change to create a more equitable city and ensure Torontonians' needs are MET.

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I'm really excited about our strategic plan for the next three years. WoodGreen is an organization that is innovative and passionate.

We are always looking for new ways and new partnerships to work with our community.

We want to ensure that when you come through our doors, any door is the right door. Our staff are there for you.”

Anne Babcock



Helping Toronto's
most vulnerable to be:

**SEEN
SUPPORTED
SAFE
WELCOME
EMPLOYED
HOUSED**



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