

Community Engagement Planning Framework



Council's Commitment

The City of Greater Dandenong has made a strong commitment to engaging with the community through the Council Plan 2013-2017. Community engagement is an important aspect of all levels of decision making. Council uses various approaches and consultation tools to improve the community's engagement in relation to Council decision making.

Council is committed to maintaining high quality processes in the area of community engagement and continuing to strive for best practice.

Introduction

Effective and thoughtful community engagement provides an opportunity for the community to participate in decision making and for Council to enhance its relationship with key stakeholders and residents.

This Community Engagement Planning Framework is a practical and useful tool for Council to use to successfully engage with the community and stakeholders about key issues or decisions that Council is considering. Given the importance of consistent and successful engagement, this Planning Framework provides a strong foundation for selecting and implementing the most effective methods to maximise appropriate levels of community participation in planning, decision making and project implementation.

The Community Engagement Planning Framework is supported by a set of guidelines for many of the different methods of community engagement to ensure that the approaches used throughout the City of Greater Dandenong are fair and equitable and tailored to the diverse communities in this municipality.

What is Community Engagement?

“Community engagement is about involving the community in decision making processes, which is essential in the successful development of acceptable policies and decisions in government, the private sector and the community.”¹

Why is Community Engagement Important?

In the past local government has relied on the community representation of elected Councillors to ensure that community priorities are reflected in decision making and service provision. While this is still the case today, the community is increasingly expressing an expectation that it should have greater involvement in policy making, being informed about key activities and having input into the setting of priorities and agendas of the Council.

The Local Government Act 1989 describes Council's role to include “acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making” as well as “fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life” (section 3D). Further to this Council's are required to “develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides” and that “all services provided by a Council must be responsive to the needs of its community” (section 208B).

While community engagement is not mandated in all cases, some Council matters are required by legislation to engage with the community in certain circumstances. Further to this, some statutory requirements even prescribe the methods that must be used to engage with the community. Council is committed to complying with these requirements as a

¹Adapted from www.dpi.wa.gov.au/communityengagement/717.asp

minimum and further community engagement can be implemented where there are local sensitivities or project complexities.

In addition to the Local Government Act, community engagement is required under the following legislation:

- Planning and Environment Act 1987;
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008;
- Road Management Act 2004; and
- Victorian Disability Act 2006.

Engaging with the community helps Council to better understand needs, aspirations and ideas of residents and stakeholders and this understanding enhances the democratic process and decision making. Effective community engagement builds trust between council and the community and strengthens democracy and community capacity.

Where Council staff represent the City of Greater Dandenong in a community engagement process that is being undertaken by a third party organisation, Council's participation and advice will be based on the Community Engagement Policy and Framework.

Council's Meeting Procedure Local Law 2013 provides guidance about how residents and ratepayers can participate in the governance processes of Council through mechanisms such as public question time, deputations and having petitions presented to the Council. These approaches are formal and are prescribed under the Local Law. They are recognised as further ways that the community can participate in Council's decision making.

Principles of Community Engagement

Effective community engagement contributes to increasing the capacity of the community to participate in decision making and the democratic processes of local government, building social capital. Council is committed to community strengthening and supporting inclusive and engaging participation by all stakeholders.

The City of Greater Dandenong's Commitment is that community engagement will:

- Be genuine and transparent in seeking valuable input from the community;
- Respond to the issues and needs being expressed by the community;
- Be inclusive and accessible to all groups and residents across the city incorporating all ages, abilities, genders and cultural backgrounds;
- Reflect diversity that exists across the City of Greater Dandenong communities;
- Respect people's time and their right to privacy;
- Be thorough and appropriate to the issues and actions about which input is sought;
- Consider contributions from the community when decisions are made;
- Be conducted in a timely and efficient way;
- Report back to the community indicating how input has been used to influence final decisions; and
- Foster positive relationships between Council and the community.

How does Council Monitor its Community Engagement Performance?

The City of Greater Dandenong participates each year in the Community Satisfaction Survey coordinated by the Department of Planning and Community Development on behalf of Victorian Councils. A core theme of this survey is Community Consultation and Engagement. The Community Satisfaction Survey provides comparison to previous years as well as benchmarking the City of Greater Dandenong with other Local Government Areas. This provides a broad level of monitoring.

As part of this Policy, Council will monitor its performance regarding specific community engagement activities via feedback from those involved.

Respect for Cultural Diversity

As part of Council's commitment to acknowledging and respecting diversity, community engagement will incorporate the following planning and recognition.

Respect for Country and the Indigenous Community

In accordance with Council's Indigenous Policy 2012, Council will:

- Verbally acknowledge the Bunurong, Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land on which the City of greater Dandenong is located at significant community and cultural events, including large and formal community engagement events; and
- Advocate for improved communication and understanding between the indigenous community and the wider community, including the participation of indigenous people in community engagement activities.

Respect for a diverse community

With approximately 60% of residents born overseas from over 150 different birthplaces and 55% from non-English speaking backgrounds², Council recognises that this broad mix of nationalities enriches the diversity of the community.

The top ten primary languages spoken in the City of Greater Dandenong are English, Vietnamese, Khmer, Cantonese, Punjabi, Greek, Sinhalese, Mandarin, Arabic and Italian.

In accordance with Council's Cultural Diversity Strategy 2010-2015 Council will promote community participation, social inclusion and equity by ensuring the community is well informed and has the opportunity to be involved in local planning.

More specifically, Council will:

- Provide information in clear and simple English and where it is possible and appropriate will provide material in multiple languages and interpreters for conversations; and
- At all times respect cultural and religious differences in undertaking community engagement activities.



² 2011 Census data for City Of Greater Dandenong.

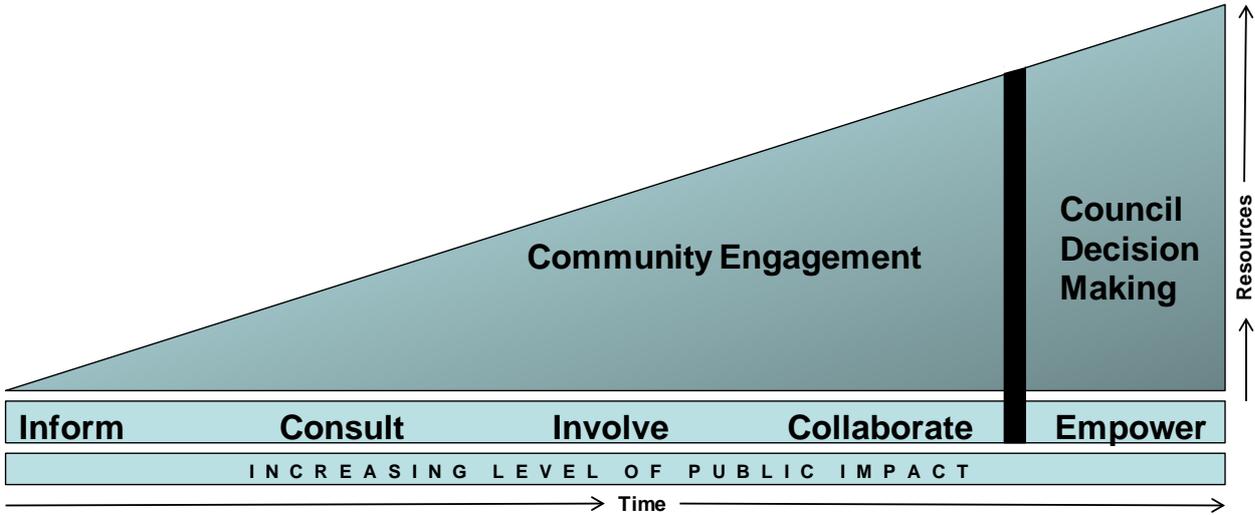
The Community Engagement Framework

The City of Greater Dandenong has adapted the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum² to develop a framework that tailors community engagement to the specific service area, project or activity or topic based open-ended community engagement where this is decided to be embarked on based on community advocacy.

The key levels of community engagement defined by IAP2 are:

Inform	<i>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.</i>
Consult	<i>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</i>
Involve	<i>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.</i>
Collaborate	<i>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</i>
Empower	<i>To place final decision making in the hands of the public.</i>

The following spectrum reflects the varying degrees of community participation depending on the requirements of the decision making process.



While it is an excellent tool for community engagement, the highest level of ‘Empower’ will rarely be used as the final decision making in local government rests with the Council and not the public. As elected representatives on behalf of the community, final decisions ultimately rest with the elected Councillors. As the spectrum above demonstrates, the Inform, Consult, Involve and Collaborate levels all apply to community engagement (to the left of the solid black line) while the Empower level is reserved primarily for Council decision making.

It is also noted that the further along the spectrum of public participation one travels in response to the increasing level of public impact, the more time and resources are required for community engagement. This is an important factor in determining the appropriate level of community engagement for each project or activity.

³ International Association for Public Participation
Community Engagement Planning Framework

Identifying the level of impact in Community Engagement

The IAP2 spectrum of public participation takes account of the level of public impact of a service, project or activity. Added to this is the level of risk or significance that a service, project or activity may have for the organisation or community. Once the level of impact has been identified using the guidelines below, the extent of community engagement can be better defined. Generally speaking, the higher the risk, and/or the more significant the impact, the greater the extent of community engagement. This framework can also be used to evaluate requests for topic based open-ended community engagement to be considered by Council.

Level of Impact	Definition	Extent of Engagement			
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum level of impact for community • Low level of risk • Little risk of controversy • Little interest likely from the community • Outcome may reflect a small change to service or activity 	✓	✓		
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable level of impact for the community • Medium level of complexity • Likely to raise interest, debate and varying views from the community • Outcome is likely to reflect some change or reduction to a service or activity 	✓	✓	✓	
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for significant level of impact for community • High level of interest from the community • More likely risk of controversy or conflict • Outcome will reflect change or loss of a service or activity 	✓	✓	✓	✓

Council's risk management framework provides guidance about the assessment and management of risk from the perspectives of:

- Financial risk;
- People risk;
- Risk to business or service continuation;
- Environmental risk;
- Reputational risk; and
- Political risk.

When assessing the level of impact of a particular issue or matter that Council seeks to decide on, the above risks should be considered and will help to inform the level of community engagement that will be required.

Community engagement plans need to be tailored for each particular issue. Careful and consistent planning will ensure that the appropriate levels of community engagement and appropriate techniques are chosen to maximise community participation. It should also be noted that while there is an overall level of engagement identified, activities may target different stakeholders at different levels. This acknowledges that varying levels of impact

may exist for different people, requiring varying levels of participation in the community engagement process.

It may be possible that the level of community engagement might change throughout the life of a particular issue, depending on the progress and impact of potential outcomes. The following table indicates how the IAP2 spectrum for public participation applies to the City of Greater Dandenong, with examples taken from local projects and activities.

Low Impact
Medium Impact
High Impact

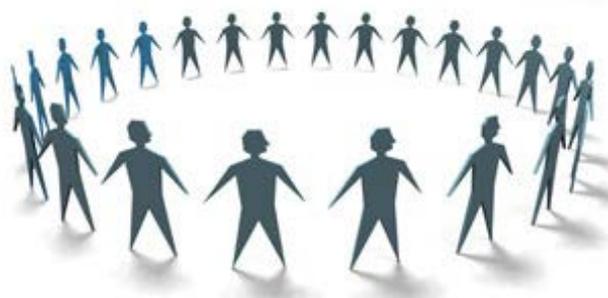


CGD	INFORM Level 1	CONSULT Level 2	INVOLVE Level 3	COLLABORATE Level 4	EMPOWER Level 5
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns 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.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation on formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City • CGD Website • Open Day – Alex Wilkie Nature Reserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine 2030 Survey • Health and Wellbeing Plan Focus Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Leadership Sounding Board • Imagine 2030 business sector workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Drum Advisory Committee • Youth Summit • Community Safety Advisory Committee • Menzies Ave Community Reference Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Dandenong Market Board of Management

Applying the Community Engagement Framework

When considering the level of impact of a service, project or activity and the appropriate level of community engagement, it is important to consider the communities and stakeholders that will be asked to participate. It may be helpful to consider factors such as:

- Exactly who the stakeholders are and how they might best be engaged (certain CALD communities may respond best to particular community engagement methods);
- Recent engagement outcomes and the feedback provided by the same communities and stakeholders;
- The experience of other Council staff who may have engaged with similar people; and
- Whether there is an opportunity to combine with another project or activity so that the community is asked to participate in a single process that



informs more than one set of outcomes.

Once the risk and level of engagement have been determined, the community engagement techniques need to be chosen so that a Community Engagement Plan can be developed and approved. The techniques that are preferred in the City of Greater Dandenong are outlined in the following table:

Technique	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Printed Material	✓	✓	✓	✓
Displays	✓	✓	✓	✓
Website / Social Media	✓	✓	✓	✓
Information Sessions	✓	✓	✓	✓
Open Days	✓	✓	✓	✓
Surveys		✓	✓	✓
Touch Screen Kiosks		✓	✓	✓
Suggestion Box		✓	✓	✓
Briefings		✓	✓	✓
Phone Hotline		✓	✓	✓
Seeking Feedback		✓	✓	✓
Interviews		✓	✓	✓
Focus Groups		✓	✓	✓
Meetings		✓	✓	✓
Drop-In Sessions		✓	✓	✓
Ward Meetings		✓	✓	✓
Stakeholder Meetings			✓	✓
Workshops			✓	✓
Field Trips			✓	✓
Expert Panels			✓	✓
Polling			✓	✓
Community Sounding Boards			✓	✓
Negotiation / Mediation				✓
Community Summits				✓
Community Reference Groups				✓
Advisory Committees				✓



Planning for Community Engagement

In this section, the process of developing and implementing a Community Engagement Plan is outlined. A set of Guidelines for the techniques that can be used for community engagement should be read in conjunction with this Planning Framework.

The first question to ask:

Will there potentially be a change in Council’s decision making strategic direction, policy position, level of service provision or delivery of particular actions as a result of community engagement?

<p>NO</p>	<p>The answer to this question might be NO for various reasons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a statutory process where specific requirements only can take place; or • Community Engagement has already been undertaken and a decision is pending. <p>If the answer is NO, there may be no need to develop a Community Engagement Plan. There may be a requirement to inform the community of the decision; however it is clear that the community cannot influence the decision.</p>
<p>YES</p>	<p>If the answer is YES, then a Community Engagement Plan will need to be developed to ensure that the processes undertaken are consistent with Council’s Community Engagement Policy.</p>

The steps to undertake Community Engagement are:



Step 1: Set the Objectives and Scope

At the beginning of any consultation it is important to clearly define the objectives. These are statements that clearly define what you intend to achieve by undertaking community engagement. When developing the objectives, consider:

- All relevant background information that has led to this point;
- Is the community engagement required by legislation;
- Who will be making the final decision;
- What engagement has occurred in the past for this project, or this community, and what were the outcomes;
- What are the expected outcomes from the community engagement process; and
- What level of engagement is appropriate for the particular issue.

Defining the scope of the community engagement involves putting boundaries around what is required and appropriate – and may involve:

- Subject matter that is included and excluded;
- Geographic area/s;
- Defining different levels of engagement for different types of stakeholders; and
- Defining aspects that might be non-negotiable and other aspects where community input is required to influence the final decision.

Step 2: Identify the Stakeholders

It is important to understand who should be invited to participate in the community engagement process and to consider who will have an interest or who might be affected by the final decision. Not all stakeholders necessarily need to be engaged at the same level so some thought should be given to defining the involvement level of each stakeholder group as they are identified.

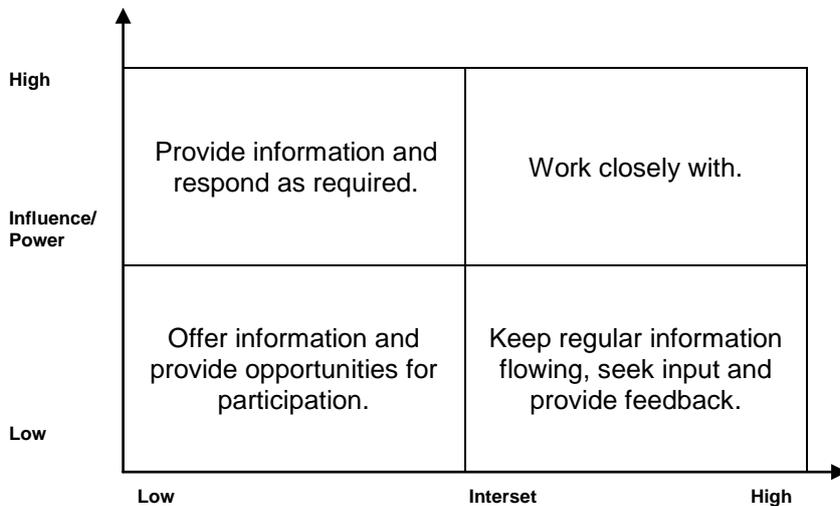
When developing a list of stakeholders, the following can be used as a guide and checklist.

Residents and Ratepayers	Owners and renters – residential and business Residents in particular streets, suburbs or wards
Interest Groups and Lobby Groups	Local, Municipal and Regional
User Representative Groups	Resource Centres Formal Groups providing a voice for minority sectors
Community Organisations	Not-for-profit
Council Representatives	Committees and Forums with Council Representation
Service Clubs	Local and head office
Sport and Recreation Groups	Local, Association / League, State Association
Cultural Organisations	Refugee, Language and Social Groups Community Leaders Local, Regional and Statewide
Private Sector	Developers, Builders and Investors

	Consultants, Suppliers and Contractors Service Providers
Government	State and Federal Government Departments, Offices and Agencies, Local Government Sector Federal, State and Local Members and Politicians
Business	Industry and Commercial Interests / Peak Bodies Local and Small Business / Traders Shopping Strips and Centres
Media	Web communities and social networks Journalists and publicists
Demographic	Specific target groups – generational, gender, family status

Once the stakeholders have been identified it is useful to complete a simple ‘mapping’ exercise to understand the extent of community engagement that may be required for each stakeholder group.

The diagram below indicates how stakeholders might be grouped into levels of interest and influence and the resultant community engagement measures that might be used.



Another technique to effectively map stakeholders is to identify the level of impact of outcomes on groups of stakeholders as indicated by the table below.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS - AFFECT & INFLUENCE	
<p>Directly affected e.g. it may change the services people receive, or the way they interact with the council.</p>	
<p>Strategic interest e.g. it may have longer-term implications for the community or council, which may not be apparent right now.</p>	
<p>Influencers e.g. councillors, other levels of government, funding providers, agencies, forums with council representation.</p>	

One or both of these techniques can be used to clearly identify the involvement of all appropriate stakeholders in the community engagement process.

Step 3: Select the Engagement Methods

Once the level of engagement and stakeholders have been determined, this assists with narrowing the list of engagement methods to choose from. For each method selected, the stakeholders should also be identified so that a matrix of community engagement is built as the primary working document for the community engagement process.

To select the most appropriate methods, consideration should be given to:

- Who is leading the overall process and who will be involved in each component;
- The level of awareness of the issue among the stakeholders;
- Opinions and views that stakeholders might currently have about Council and the service, project or activity;
- Language or cultural barriers;
- Urgency – the project timelines;
- Any OHS considerations;
- What is required and how input is likely to be used to influence outcomes; and
- Time of year – school holidays, public holidays, seasons, daylight savings, major and religious events, etc.

Be mindful to select only those methods that are likely to provide the most effective participation and outcomes. There is no need to 'go overboard' with too many methods, it is best to select carefully and execute a few methods exceptionally well rather than try to achieve too much.

All methods must be well documented to ensure that all the required tasks are identified and planned for. For assistance with this task, refer to the Guidelines for each community engagement method [insert hyperlink to each guideline here].

It may be necessary to also develop a Communication Plan in addition to the Community Engagement Plan so that informing and reporting back to the community is well managed at critical hold points during the engagement process. If a separate plan is not developed the Community Engagement Plan should explain how communication during the engagement will be managed.

Step 4: Seek Approval

The timelines for completion of a community engagement process should allow sufficient time for the community to participate in a fair and equitable way. It is also important that the Community Engagement Plan can be implemented in its entirety within the agreed timelines.

A centralised register of community engagement will be held by the Communications and Customer Service Unit and a calendar of community engagement activities will be available through WebStar. Advice and liaison throughout the entire community engagement process can be provided by the Communications and Customer Service Unit.

Budget considerations must also be factored into the planning for a community engagement process. Sufficient expertise and resources must be costed and included in the plan.

Once the Community Engagement Plan is completed, approval must be sought prior to implementation. This approval is provided by the Director (or delegated Manager).

Step 5: Implement the Plan

Once all this is done, it's time to get started. Stick to the plan and ensure that the community engagement process is inclusive, thorough and professionally executed. Remember that the

people who participate in the community engagement process are giving up their time to be involved. This commitment is to be respected and their contributions valued. At the commencement of a community engagement process, Councillors, customer service and relevant Council staff are to be notified of the community engagement methods that will be used.

Step 6: Report and Evaluate

At the conclusion of the community engagement process, all results will be collated, summarised and reported as part of the final reporting and decision making.

A critical part of the process (that is often forgotten) is to report back to the stakeholders who participated in the community engagement. It is important to advise all stakeholders how their input has influenced the final decision making and what other factors may have led to the final outcomes.

Where appropriate, project outcomes will be reported on Council’s website, in The City and through appropriate mediums.

At the conclusion of each community engagement program, time must be given to a ‘reflect and evaluate’ process as part of Council’s commitment to continuous improvement, where:

- The performance of the community engagement plan against its objectives is assessed;
- Each of the community engagement methods used is critically evaluated to determine its success in the context of the issue; and
- Any improvements to the community engagement method are identified and reported so that future community engagement can benefit from learnings and improvements.

Relevant Reference Documents

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement Policy 2013 • Community Engagement Guidelines 2013 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Printed Material ▪ Displays ▪ Website / Social Media ▪ Information Sessions ▪ Open Days ▪ Surveys ▪ Touch Screen Kiosks ▪ Suggestion Box ▪ Briefings ▪ Phone Hotline ▪ Seeking Feedback ▪ Interviews ▪ Focus Groups ▪ Meetings ▪ Drop-In Sessions ▪ Ward Meetings ▪ Stakeholder Meetings ▪ Workshops ▪ Design Charrettes ▪ Field Trips ▪ Expert Panels ▪ Polling ▪ Community Sounding Boards ▪ Negotiation / Mediation ▪ Community Summits ▪ Community Reference Groups ▪ Advisory Committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan 2013-2017 • Indigenous Policy 2003 • Information Privacy and Health Records Policy 2010 and Council’s Corporate Privacy Statement • Cultural Diversity Strategy 2010-2015 • Risk Management Framework (City of Greater Dandenong – currently under review)
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