

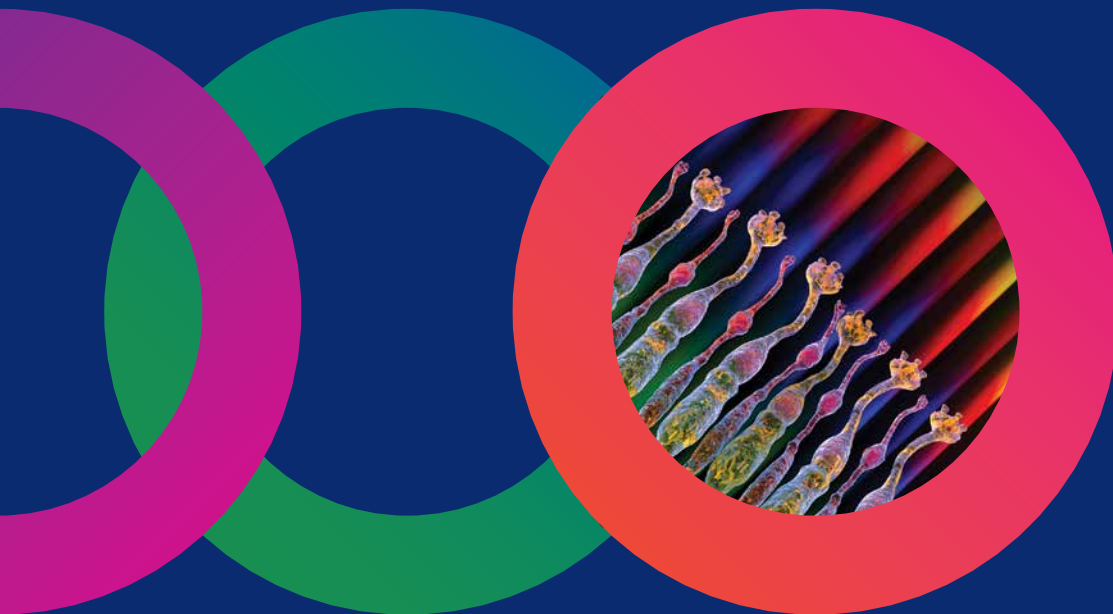


FIGHTING BLINDNESS CANADA

# SPOTLIGHT ON SIGHT

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

# SPOTLIGHT ON SIGHT



# Letter from the President & CEO and Board Chair

Dear Friends,

2024 was a defining year for Fighting Blindness Canada (FBC) as we proudly celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was a moment to reflect on how far we've come while shining a spotlight on the innovative ideas and breakthroughs that are shaping the future of vision health.

Thanks to the unwavering generosity of our donors, supporters and community, we advanced our mission in powerful ways this year. We supported innovative research and visionary researchers, expanded our reach across Canada, strengthened existing programs, and introduced new events and partnerships that are already making a difference in people's lives.

This milestone year was also defined by stories of resilience and connection. We're continually inspired by the strength of those living with vision loss and the supportive communities that surround them.

Inside this report, you'll discover all the moments that made our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary a year unlike any other. We hope it leaves you feeling proud of what we've accomplished and excited for what's to come.

As we looked back at our 50 year history, we also looked forward, and launched a new five year strategic plan—a plan informed by input from our community to ensure we continue to meet your needs and hit new milestones.

Thank you for being part of this journey! Together, we're building a brighter future for vision health and celebrating the vital work being done to make vision loss a thing of the past. We look forward to continuing to share our progress with you.

With gratitude,



**Jennifer Jones**  
President & CEO



**Tara James**  
Board Chair



# 2024 at a Glance

In 2024, we continued to shine a spotlight on world-class research, by handing out grants and awards to researchers who are pushing the boundaries of our understanding of blinding eye disease and working towards treatments that could transform the lives of those living with vision loss. We also helped bring our communities together through fundraising events and educational programs. We fueled breakthroughs, answered your questions and helped forge connections.



The 2024 numbers below are more than just numbers. They represent the impact that's possible when donors, researchers, partners and communities work together to create a future without vision loss.

# Fueling Breakthroughs



**\$2,093,260**  
invested in  
vision research



**30**  
new academic  
discoveries  
supported



**36**  
scientists and  
clinical researchers  
supported



**12**  
clinical trials  
made possible by  
our support

# Connecting Communities

**\$1,016,451**

invested in education, support  
and community programs

**50+**

communities from across Canada  
represented by MOVE FOR SIGHT participants

**10+**

educational  
and fundraising  
events held

**25%**

increase in traffic  
to FBC website

**1,560**

people reached through national  
education and support programs

SPOTLIGHT ON...

# A Year Unlike any Other

In 2024, FBC marked five decades of discovery, community and hope for people living with vision loss. Since our founding in 1974 as the Retinitis Pigmentosa Foundation, we've grown into Canada's leading voice for vision research, education, and advocacy, with progress made possible by the dedication of supporters across the country.



Over the past  
50+ years:

**\$42M+**

invested in research,  
leading to over  
**850 discoveries**

**\$5M+**

invested in education,  
advocacy and community  
connection programs

**230+**

funded  
research grants



mobilized thousands to  
organize and participate in  
fundraising events



accelerated access to  
clinical trials and research  
participation through the  
IRD Patient Registry

And just as we have for the last half-century, FBC continued to build on our legacy of impact in 2024. Here are just some of the highlights from our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year:

APRIL

**View Point Education Series hosted in Vancouver**—The first event of the year featured topics on inherited retinal disease, age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma and gene therapy ([SEE PAGE 15](#)).

MAY

**MOVE FOR SIGHT launched nationwide as an annual fundraising event**—In celebration of FBC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, hundreds of Canadians in more than 50 communities walked, cycled, danced and more in this inaugural event to raise funds and awareness for vision research ([SEE PAGE 17](#)).

OCTOBER

**2024 Clinician-Scientist Emerging Leader Awards announced**—Drs. Sheetal Pundir and Sharon Qiu received vital support to advance their ground-breaking clinical research ([SEE PAGE 11](#)).

**Latest Report Card on vision health released at 2024 Vision Health Conference**—results highlighted post-pandemic challenges in eye care and the urgent need for system-wide improvements across Canada.

NOVEMBER

**Bill C-284 receives Royal Assent, establishing Canada's National Strategy for Eye Care Act**—This important legislation formally recognized vision loss as a national health priority ([SEE PAGE 13](#)).

**\$784,000+ in early-career grants awarded**—FBC provided critical funding to four emerging researchers conducting innovative work in inherited retinal diseases, macular degeneration and glaucoma ([SEE PAGE 11](#)).

DECEMBER

**FBC's new five-year strategic plan released**—*Raising Our Sights: Vision 2030* outlines priorities to expand research investments, enhance fundraising and brand awareness, deepen community connection and scale for even greater impact.

[Learn more at fightingblindness.ca/strategic-plan](https://fightingblindness.ca/strategic-plan).

Discover more of what FBC has achieved in its first 50 years at: [fightingblindness.ca/milestones](https://fightingblindness.ca/milestones).



SPOTLIGHT ON...

# Stories of Impact

There's no better way to understand the difference FBC has made than through the eyes and experiences of those most affected. These stories from people impacted by blinding eye disease are just some of the many examples that show how research, support and community can transform lives. Their words show what's possible when we come together to create a brighter future for vision health.

## NATHAN & ANDRE'S STORY

### Two Brothers Finding Strength Together

Twins Nathan and Andre were just six when their family learned that their struggles seeing at night were symptoms of a rare genetic eye disease. As their vision deteriorated, their family fought for access to Luxturna, a life-changing gene therapy. The path was long and filled with obstacles—from insurance rejections to bureaucratic delays—but with union leaders, doctors and organizations like FBC in their corner, the brothers became some of the first children in Canada to receive the treatment.



"Now I can  
see planes and stars—  
things I'd never seen before."

—Andre

"At night, I can finally move  
around my room without  
bumping into things. It's  
made a huge difference."

—Nathan





“Let yourself grieve, then make a plan. Find a community for your child and yourself. Help your child stay connected to what they love and never stop doing the things that bring you joy together.”

—Alexis

## ALEXIS & HARRY'S STORY

### Turning Uncertainty into Empowerment

When Harry Nickerson was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa at age nine, FBC became a lifeline for his mother Alexis, offering trusted information, guidance and connection in the face of uncertainty. Through events like Cycle for Sight, the mother and son turned their hope into action, raising funds for research and building a strong support network. Today, Harry is thriving as he pursues gymnastics with adapted coaching, competes on the national goalball team, and even gains national recognition for his science projects, including one aimed at diagnosing retinitis pigmentosa with AI.

## GREGORY'S STORY

### Giving Guided by Gratitude

At 83, Gregory Walker knows the challenges of living with age-related macular degeneration (AMD). But thanks to the research and support driven by FBC, he also sees hope. Gregory discovered FBC more than a decade ago and was inspired by its commitment to accelerating treatments and supporting people living with vision loss. Since 2014, he has been a proud monthly donor, giving back to ensure others like him can benefit from life-changing research and education.



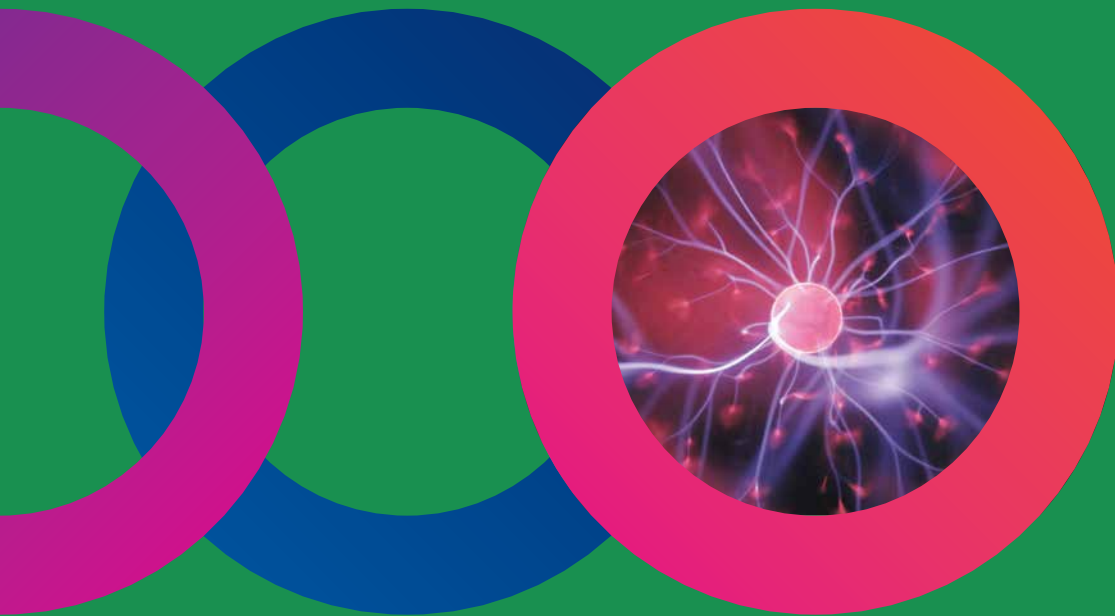
“Living with AMD has its challenges, but thanks to FBC, I can see a brighter future for myself and others. And that’s why I choose to give back. I am forever grateful to the life-changing work FBC does for people each and every day.”

—Gregory

SPOTLIGHT ON...

# Sight-Saving Research

Researchers across Canada made significant strides in 2024 thanks to funding from FBC and the generosity of our community. From launching new projects and driving discoveries to supporting future leaders in the field, we invested in the breakthroughs that will bring us closer to better treatments and even improved outcomes for people with blinding eye disease.



## CLINICIAN-SCIENTIST EMERGING LEADER AWARDS

These awards provide vital support to early-career vision researchers who are bridging the gap between science and patient care. In October 2024, two clinicians received a combined \$100,000 to advance research that could change how we diagnose, monitor and treat blinding eye disease:

**DR. SHEETAL PUNDIR**  
(McGill University Health Centre)  
Tracking Vision Loss  
in Rare Genetic Disease



Dr. Pundir is studying how vision loss progresses in people with Zellweger Spectrum Disorder, a rare inherited disorder. By collecting detailed eye test results over time, her research will help lay the groundwork for future clinical trials and therapies.

**DR. SHARON QIU**  
(University of Waterloo)  
Designing Better Lenses  
for Corneal Disease



Dr. Qiu is creating and testing new scleral contact lenses to improve vision for people with conditions like keratoconus and corneal scarring, which are major causes of blindness worldwide. Her work aims to boost outcomes and quality of life for patients who rely on these specialized lenses.

Learn more about the Clinician-Scientist Emerging Leader Awards at:  
[fightingblindness.ca/csel-2024](https://fightingblindness.ca/csel-2024).



## RESEARCH GRANT AWARDEES

In November 2024, FBC awarded over \$784,000 to four early-career scientists advancing innovative vision science. These new projects are laying the groundwork for tomorrow's treatments by exploring gene therapy, stem cell treatments, advanced imaging and the underlying causes of retinal disease:

**DR. MATTHEW BENSON**  
(University of Alberta)  
Understanding Cell Health  
in the Eye



Dr. Benson is exploring how tiny parts of our cells, called peroxisomes, help keep the back of the eye healthy. By understanding what happens when these structures malfunction, this research could lead to new treatments for inherited retinal diseases and AMD.

**DR. BAOHUA LIU**  
(University of Toronto Mississauga)  
Testing Gene Therapy  
for Childhood Vision Loss



Dr. Liu is working on a potential gene therapy for a rare condition called congenital stationary night blindness, which affects vision from birth. His research will test whether we can restore sight, even long after vision loss has occurred, by looking at how the brain responds to treatment.

Learn about all our grant awardees, including Dr. Brittany Carr and Dr. Pierre Mattar at:  
[fightingblindness.ca/grant-awards-2024](https://fightingblindness.ca/grant-awards-2024).



## FROM LAB TO CLINICAL TRIAL

### FBC-Supported Stem Cell Therapy Moves Closer to Patients

Progress in vision research doesn't happen overnight—these breakthroughs are built on years of dedication and donor support. And after years of investment and partnership by FBC, a promising stem cell therapy has reached an exciting new milestone in 2024.

Thanks in part to FBC's 2018 Restore Vision 20/20 grant, Dr. David Gamm and his team at the University of Wisconsin developed a stem cell-based therapy designed to replace lost photoreceptor cells, which are the light-sensing cells critical to vision. This work laid the foundation for BlueRock Therapeutics' announcement in September 2024 that their cell therapy has received FDA approval to begin clinical trials—a first-of-its-kind treatment targeting primary photoreceptor diseases like retinitis pigmentosa.

Read more at:  
[fightingblindness.ca/dr-gamm](https://fightingblindness.ca/dr-gamm).



"This is a major accomplishment for our collaborative team of academic and industry scientists and clinicians. It is the culmination of nearly a decade of concerted effort, much of which has been inspired or advanced via support from FBC."

—Dr. David Gamm







## NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR EYE CARE ACT

### Turning Awareness and Advocacy Into Action

In 2024, Parliament passed Bill C-284, creating the National Strategy for Eye Care Act, taking a major step forward for vision health nationwide. Championed by FBC alongside a coalition of partners and advocates, the strategy aims to improve access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment, particularly for those most at risk. It also established Canada's first Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month in February 2025.

Learn more at:  
[fightingblindness.ca/news/bill-c-284](https://fightingblindness.ca/news/bill-c-284).



“An investment in research is an investment in hope. As we look to the future, the creation of a National Eye Care Strategy will help advance treatments and technology which have meaningful impacts on the quality of life for Canadians with vision loss and their caregivers.”

—Jennifer Jones,  
President & CEO, Fighting  
Blindness Canada

“There are thousands of people who are currently unaware they need to take better care of their vision. We need to help people prevent vision loss and blindness through education and awareness.”

—The Honourable Judy  
A. Sgro, Member of  
Parliament

SPOTLIGHT ON...

# Connection and Community

FBC's growing line-up of programs and events brought people together across the country in 2024, both online and in person. From education and mentorship programs to one-on-one support and a new fundraiser, these efforts are building a stronger community for people with vision loss—and their families, caregivers and supporters—by empowering them with knowledge, community and hope.



## VIEW POINT

### Connecting Through Shared Experience

Across Canada, the View Point education series brought even more people impacted by vision loss together to learn, share their experiences, and support one another. With expert speakers and honest conversations, these sessions helped individuals and families understand vision loss, learn about the latest research, and build stronger connections within the community.

**1,105** attendees across three in-person events and one webinar

**33%** increase in in-person participation over 2023

**93%** rated the program excellent or very good

Learn about the View Point Series at: [fightingblindness.ca/viewpoint](https://fightingblindness.ca/viewpoint).



## YOUNG LEADERS PROGRAM

### Equipping the Next Generation

The one-of-a-kind Young Leaders Program continued to support youth throughout 2024. Through mentorship, in-person events and online learning, participants, aged 15–35, gain the skills, confidence and support they need to shape the future. The program fosters career readiness, personal growth and lasting peer connections, helping build a more inclusive world.

**3** events hosted in 2024

**75** participants across Canada

**12** pairs in mentorship program

**50%** increase in engagement from 2023

**100%** felt more prepared for challenges

**95%** rated the program excellent or very good

Learn about the Young Leaders Program at: [fightingblindness.ca/youngleaders](https://fightingblindness.ca/youngleaders).



“As someone who is newly diagnosed, it was nice to meet others who may be going through the same thing that I am. The speakers were also very interesting, and I learned lots!”

—2024 View Point Participant



“I really enjoy talking with my mentor. She really hears me. To have someone who can listen and understand what you’re living is really nice.”

—2024 Young Leaders Participant

## HEALTH INFORMATION LINE

### Trusted Support when it's Needed Most

FBC's Health Information Line remained a trusted resource for individuals and families facing vision loss. In 2024, we expanded our online content and responded to hundreds of questions about diagnosis, treatment, clinical trials, genetic testing, and more. This vital service is helping people across Canada navigate every step of their journey and advocate for their eye health with confidence.

**409+** people supported through the Health Information Line across ten provinces

**Top topics:** clinical trials, treatment options and research updates

**88%** felt their questions were answered with compassion

Learn about the Health Information Line, at: [fightingblindness.ca/healthinformationline](https://fightingblindness.ca/healthinformationline).

"It was very helpful to get more information that the doctor doesn't always have time to explain to us. Overall, I'm happy you are offering this opportunity."

—2024 Health Information Line User

"I was really pleased with the timely response and the information I received was very helpful and reassuring. I now finally have some understanding of my eye disease. Thank you so much!"

—2024 Health Information Line User

## ACCELERATE VISION HEALTH

### Exploring the Future of Vision Health

FBC hosted a three-part series featuring vision health experts and those with lived experience discussing the future of vision health and how, together, we can accelerate progress towards cures. The series examines the importance of vision health and our investments in scientific peer-reviewed research.

Learn about Accelerate Vision Health Series at: [fightingblindness.ca/accelerate](https://fightingblindness.ca/accelerate).





## MOVE FOR SIGHT

### Launching a New National Movement

On June 23, 2024, FBC launched the first-ever **MOVE FOR SIGHT**, a nationwide fundraising initiative encouraging Canadians to move in support of vision research. Evolving from the long-running Cycle for Sight event, it builds on that legacy and broadens its reach through a more community-based and inclusive format.

The inaugural event saw hundreds of participants, from multiple provinces, representing over 50 cities and towns across Canada walk, bike, swim, skate and move however they wanted, to raise funds in support of FBC's mission and those living with vision loss. And with the momentum built, the event is only continuing to grow, expanding to incorporate in-person gatherings alongside virtual participation.

See highlights from our most recent event and discover how you can take part at: [MOVEFORSIGHT.ca](https://moveforsight.ca).



## RIDE FOR SIGHT

### Bringing Hope through Passion

Riders once again hit the road in 2024 for their 46<sup>th</sup> annual ride in Ride for Sight in support of Fighting Blindness Canada.

**\$160,000+** raised in 2024

Learn about the Ride for Sight, at: [rideforsight.com](https://rideforsight.com).



"I love the accessibility of **MOVE FOR SIGHT**—giving participants a range of opportunities to engage in support of what is a phenomenal cause in Fighting Blindness Canada."

—2024 **MOVE FOR SIGHT** Participant



"I'm so thankful for this mentorship opportunity. My mentor has been able to give me one-on-one advice. Hearing about how he's overcome all his challenges and built all his skills has been really helpful."

—2024 Young Leaders Participant

SPOTLIGHT ON...

# Your Support

With just one per cent of our funding coming from government sources, FBC relies almost entirely on the generosity of donors like you. That's why we're committed to being transparent, accountable and careful stewards of every dollar you give.

Our financial statements are prepared in line with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profits and are independently audited each year by Pennylegion Chung LLP.

We're also proud to be an accredited member of the Imagine Canada Standards Program, meeting 73 rigorous standards for excellence in governance, financial oversight, fundraising and transparency.



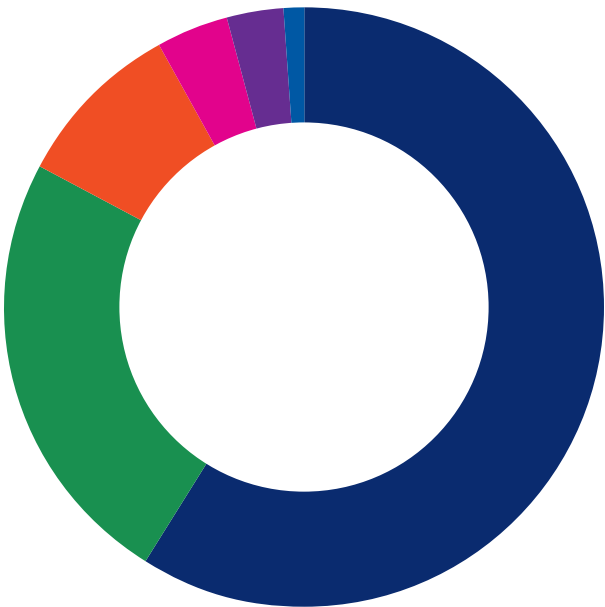
# 2024 Financial Summary

## Where our money comes from:

● <b>Individuals:</b> \$ 3,285,177 (59%)	● <b>Foundations:</b> \$231,216 (4%)
● <b>Corporations:</b> \$1,324,373 (24%)	● <b>Investments:</b> \$178,942 (3%)
● <b>Fundraising Events:</b> \$474,836 (9%)	● <b>Government:</b> \$66,528 (1%)

Total:

**\$5,561,072**

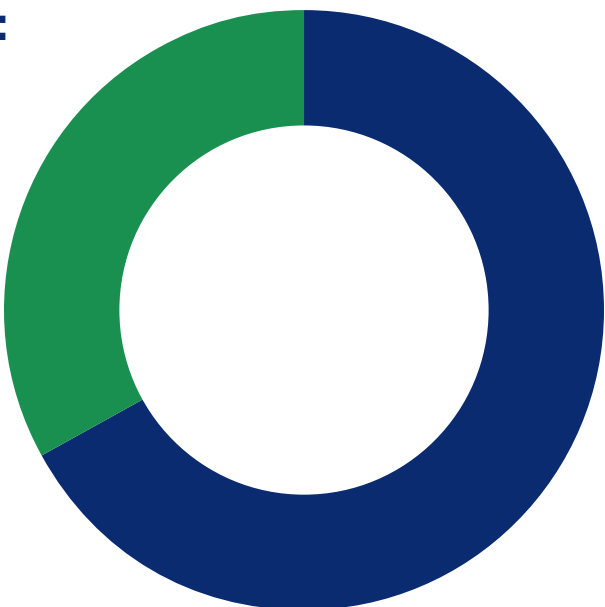


## How we spend on our programs:

● <b>Research Grants &amp; Oversight:</b> \$2,093,260 (67%)
● <b>Education &amp; Advocacy Programs:</b> \$1,016,451 (33%)

Total:

**\$ 3,109,711**



You can view our 2024 audited financials at:  
[fightingblindness.ca/about-us/financials](https://fightingblindness.ca/about-us/financials).





**FIGHTING BLINDNESS CANADA**

As Fighting Blindness Canada's 50<sup>th</sup> year comes to a close, we remain grateful for the incredible progress we've made together. With your continued support, we're saving sight, changing lives and building a future without vision loss—and the best is yet to come.

**To learn more and donate, visit:  
[fightingblindness.ca](https://fightingblindness.ca)**

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