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**The Urban Lab of Europe !**

# The USE-IT! project Journal N° 4

*Project led by the **City of Birmingham***



**URBAN POVERTY**

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# The USE-IT! project

Social deprived neighbourhoods – urban regeneration – poverty alleviation: Linking large capital investments with community skills and assets to combat urban poverty

Although Birmingham is a key economic hub, the reality of poverty and underemployment amongst indigenous and migrant populations is leading to increasing social, economic and environmental isolation. Therefore, the USE-IT! project seeks to identify and connect social, cultural and economic assets already existing in poor and migrant communities to major capital and infrastructure investments, in order to reduce displacement and maximise the economic and social benefits of urban development for marginalised residents. The building of a new hospital, local social enterprise structures and universities rich in cultural and creative capital will be relied upon to enable the population to self-empower in a sustainable way.

The model proposed will rely on Community Researchers, recruited among the local community and trained in research methods to identify local assets. Mechanisms will be tested in order to unlock the potential of poor communities and facilitate the creation of a matching skills service to enhance employment and encourage the spin-off of social enterprises that are socially innovative and resilient. The project will provide peer-to-peer support for communities, and act as change and innovation drivers to bring out bold and sustainable solutions.

As a result of the project, people in the communities will be supported to raise their aspirations and to access affordable educational and training opportunities. They will access job opportunities linked to the large investment projects planned for the area (macro-assets), and new businesses will be created and developed in the area by local people.

## The USE-IT! project

**Partnership:**

- Birmingham City Council

- University of Birmingham- University

- Karis Neighbour Scheme- NGO

- Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs- Private Company

- Birmingham Voluntary Services Council- NGO

- Localise West Midlands - NGO

- Smethwick Church Action Network - NGO

- Co-operative Futures - NGO

- Birmingham City University- University

- Canal and River Trust- NGO

- Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust- Public Service Provider

- Father Hudson's Care- NGO

- Health Exchange CIC - Private Company

- Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

- Citizen Coaching CIC- Private Company

**For further information**

USE-IT! UIA website: www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/birmingham

USE IT! Facebook: www.facebook.com/USEITUIA/; @USEITUIA

USE IT! Twitter: https://twitter.com/UseItUIA; @UseItUIA;

USE IT! Instagram: www.instagram.com/useituia; useituia

USE IT! YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCfZrYQBA87FsszE4JvhlZug/featured

USE-IT Zoom-in – The creation of social enterprises: Download

USE-IT Zoom-in – Jobs for overseas migrants: Download

USE-IT! 1st journal: Download

USE-IT! 2nd journal: Download

USE-IT! 3rd journal: Download

USE-IT! Social entrepreneurs programme:
http://sohosen.org.uk/www.i-se.co.uk/news/use-it-social-entrepreneurs-programme/
www.i-se.co.uk/news/use-it-catalysing-social-change-in-birmingham/

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# 1 Executive Summary

**USE-IT!** is a £3.13m (3,6 Mio. €) project by Birmingham City Council and one of the "Innovative Urban Actions" from the European Commission initiative. It tests **new solutions combating urban poverty by linking larger capital investment projects (macro-assets) in deprived neighbourhoods with local community skills, talents and ideas (micro-assets).** It does all that with the intention to unlock social and economic innovation and to improve the socio-economic situation of the deprived residents. The project strives to increase the employment prospects of the residents and migrants by generating jobs and stimulating local economy.

For an overview about the USE-IT! project, the background, its innovative approach, mechanism and partnership as well as the challenges implementing such an approach, take a look at the previous journals of the USE-IT! project.

The **4**th **journal** focuses on the presentation of interim results, lessons learnt and further actions needed to ensure the long-term success of the project. Because after 2 years of project implementation, the project has become well-rehearsed and new challenges only arise very sporadically. Results and the legacy of the USE-IT! project become clearer and more visible for the main elements, which are:

- Identifying and mapping local skills and assets (cf. 2.1)

- Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities (cf. 2.2)

- Creating a community of social enterprises (cf. 2.3)

# 2   Interim results and further requirements for action

The USE-IT! project consists of three main elements:

- **Identifying and mapping local ideas, skills and assets** in the deprived neighbourhoods of Sandwell and West Birmingham (Ladywood, Soho and Smethwick) through Community Researchers.

- **Matching job skills in the communities with job opportunities** in the deprived neighbourhoods of Sandwell and West Birmingham (Ladywood, Soho and Smethwick).

- **Creating a community of social enterprises** in the deprived neighbourhoods of Sandwell and West Birmingham (Ladywood, Soho and Smethwick) and embedding them in local markets and supply chains.



*The Use-IT! newsletter*

Important for all these elements were to make them known to the diverse target groups and explain the benefits of them. Here the Brokerage and Communication Manager has been a key providing the USE-IT! partners with professional communication and promotion support. For instance, by producing flyers for workshops and recording results on videos and in social media posts or by co-producing events with the USE-IT! partners and livestreaming them on Facebook. In addition, a series of films were produced to promote the project at USE-IT! events. Newly developed social enterprises were supported in their social media presence.

Currently a USE-IT! website is developed to document the legacy of USE-IT!, share knowledge and best practices and to function as learning platform.

To support the internal communication between the wide and diverse partnership a USE-IT! newsletter was launched, informing about the various activities and successes as well as upcoming events. In addition, they ran a series of communication workshops to open up cross-partnership communication channels.

## 2.1 Identifying and mapping local skills and assets

Main approach of "Identifying and mapping local skills and assets" has been to develop research and analytical skills in the local communities of Sandwell and West Birmingham through a programme of Community Research. Two main activities have been:

- Skills and labour market survey report;

- Community Researcher training and partner programme, where local people have been trained and mentored to identify local assets and personal skills through interviews and surveys conducted with the local population.

### Interim results and lessons learnt

As outcome, over 60 Community Researchers were trained and mentored, increasing their confidence, communication and social skills. These Community Researchers have conducted research with around 175 members of the local community. In addition, a commissioning model has been developed, which allows accredited Community Researchers to be listed on an online platform, and commissioned by the wider USE-IT project, the University or other interested parties for research tasks.

An important lesson learnt was that, if a larger number of community researchers are to be recruited, a good balance between the requirements for participation in the training programme (time commitment) and the resulting benefits for the community researchers (i.e. personal mentoring) is needed. The expectations towards the community researchers to identify local assets and personal skills should also not be set too high.

The Community Researchers are also a good source to get in touch and engage with communities that feel minority, when they belong to these minority groups.
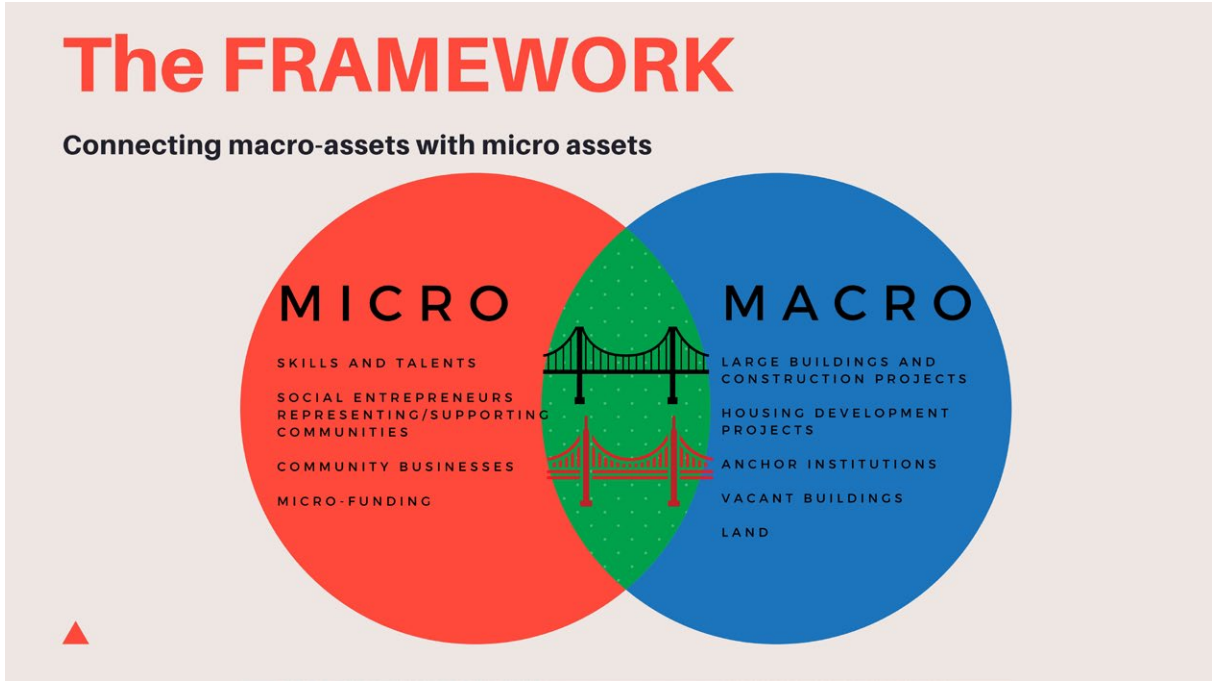


*The USE-IT! framework*

## Progress made since last journal

- There are now more than 60 community researchers working on a variety of projects
- 2 community researchers have started their USE-IT! funded studentship for Masters in Urban Planning in the University of Birmingham
- A "Train the trainers" workshops was done to build the community researchers capacities
- A USE-IT! Community Day was organised
- A commissioning model was lunched, which allows accredited Community Researchers to be listed on an online platform, and commissioned by the wider USE-IT project, the University or other interested parties.
- Among the community researchers, discussions have started to form a co-operative of community researchers and to develop a business plan.

### Next steps and need for action

To sustain and support the work of the Community Researchers it needs ongoing mentoring. So far, the mentoring has been financed through the UIA Initiative, which financial support ends in 2019. A more self-sustaining model needs to be developed i.e. through peer-to-peer support, which is selectively supplemented by professional support i.e. from the University of Birmingham (i.e. through a course at the University together with enrolled students).

The community researchers also have brought up the idea to form a research co-operative or social enterprise. To set up such a business, the structures and support services of the community of social enterprises could be used (cf. 2.3), for example for creating a business plan, to learn how to run a business, contracting issues, etc.

*"Mentoring was not built into the bid, but turned out to be a key component to a successful Community Research programme."*
**Dr. Peter Lee and Dr. Sara Hassan, University of Birmingham**

## 2.2   Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities

The USE-IT! project aims to identify and train local overseas migrants with relevant medical and non-medical qualifications that could be matched with the jobs available in the NHS hospital, a major provider of health resources and employment in Greater Icknield. The main activities have been:

- Identifying local overseas migrant with relevant health qualifications through local community organisation, work clubs and word-to-mouth;

- Training of identified overseas migrants, in particular through the Learning Works (a one-stop-shop for access to training, development and employment opportunities within the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust), Brushstrokes Community project, mentors and peer support;

- Provision of personal services (language training, support of accreditation process, work placements, hosting apprentice, job placements);

- Matching job opportunities with trained persons through a match-up database.

For further information about this approach, read the USE-IT Zoom-in – Jobs for overseas migrants.

### Interim results and lessons learnt

Within two years, 208 individuals with relevant medical and non-medical qualification are on the USE-IT! clients database. 143 have been invited to the free training for the language exam IELTS (International English Language Testing System; passing it is a prerequisite to be able to start with



*Hanan, Doctor from Palestine*

## Progress made since last journal

The USE-IT! approach to identify and train local overseas migrants with relevant medical and non-medical qualifications that could be matched with the jobs available in the NHS hospital:

- **has been shortlisted for three national awards;**
- **is now being championed by a local MP plus local councillors which has helped broker relationships with other hospital trusts and bring the programme to national attention;**
- **is now working directly with four other hospital trusts – Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall, Birmingham Children's Hospital as a mechanism for rolling out the USE-IT! programme.**

2 -3 new clients join every week the USE-IT! training programme for overseas migrants.

Black Country sustainability and transformation partnership has set up a "Foundation Fellowship Programme" which will pay all the costs for overseas doctor's trying to become general practitioners.

USE-IT! is now working with Aston University to see if they can find alternative employment pathways for professions where there is not a current shortage in the NHS.

The Hospital Trust has been approached by a TV production company who wish to make a 40-minute documentary for the BBC based on some of the stories from USE-IT!.

the training to become a doctor or be able to work in the NHS). 15 persons have started work experience placements at the Hospital. 32 are in paid work in Health Care as an interim employment opportunity. 6 have been invited for placement as General Practitioners in primary care settings. 3 have accepted.

It had been feared that the surge of applicants experienced in year 1 would lead to a decline in numbers as USE-IT! progressed. But this has not been the case. 2-3 new clients join the training programme every week.

Based on these good experiences and results this approach has been shortlisted for three national

awards in the UK. The NHS Hospital Trust has been approached by a TV production company who wish to make a 40-minute documentary for the BBC based on some of the stories from this approach. A local Member of Parliament and local councillors are also championing this approach, which has helped broker relationships with other hospital trusts and bring the programme to national attention.

The approach continues to expand: The Black Country sustainability and transformation partnership – STP (that oversees all the health trusts in the Black Country) has set up a "Foundation Fellowship Programme". It will pay all the costs for overseas doctors trying to become

General Practitioners, as well as providing a mentor, in return for the Doctors committing to a 2-year honorary contract in the Black Country once they are in full employment. USE-IT! is also working with four other hospital trusts as a mechanism for rolling out this approach.

**Key for the success** of this approach has been that the needed resources were already there! All the partners required to set up the employment pathways for the local overseas migrants already existed. USE-IT! did not have to invent anything new. Instead, it has been the role of USE-IT! to join these partners up, help them to work together and provide some initial additional funding. Key was setting up the partnership between the NHS hospital Trust and social care providers to help with the recruitment of social care staff. Social care providers benefit in terms of recruitment and retention. The hospital benefits from having a fully staffed service to help support successful hospital discharge. Also crucial were the partnerships between the hospital and local specialist community organisation to build more effective employment pathways that can engage traditional hard to reach or hard to employ groups.

**An important lesson learnt** is, if you want to work with large institution like the NHS to help unlock it as a local asset do not start with an exhaustive strategy. Start with specific activities, which will deliver more quickly, will demonstrate quicker successes and will build initial trust and confidence in a new way of working (in particular

with regards to senior managers and staff). With this in place, the activities and partnership can organically grow to take on other challenges and opportunities as they arise. In addition, you have to be prepared to provide personal as well employment support to people arriving with overseas health qualification because their journeys and life circumstances can be very different. This can create an administrative challenge, as any process put in place has to be able to respond to and record journeys of such variety and complexity.

To learn more about key success factors and lessons learnt of matching overseas migrants with job vacancies in the NHS, read the USE-IT Zoom-in "Jobs for overseas migrants".

Nevertheless, the approach was also confronted with some **challenges** i.e. the financing of the language training to ensure their affordability for the clients. However, with the successes more direct funding for this training is coming from different organisations. Another challenge is finding appropriate interim employment opportunities for the clients (i.e. that pay a decent wage, are still health related and are flexible) while they take their language exams. Here, the Social Care providers are important partners to provide job opportunities. In the future, the Foundation Fellowship Programme of the Black Country STP will help to address this, too. How in general the challenges were dealt with can be found in the relevant chapters of the 2nd and 3rd USE-IT! journal.

## Next steps and need for action

The role out of this USE-IT! model has already started. USE-IT! has started helping other hospital trusts in the Black Country to set up the kind of community partnerships needed for this USE-IT! model and to attract further funding from Health

Education England to finance the language training. In addition, it is working with Aston University, who recently opened a new School of Medicine, to see if they can find alternative employment pathways for professions where

there is not a current shortage in the NHS i.e. Biochemists or Lab Technicians.

Another step is to expand the USE-IT! model to provide employment opportunities for other priority groups as people with overseas construction skills or people with higher level IT and finance qualifications for jobs in the NHS.

Despite the fact that the NHS Trusts recognise that recruiting from local communities might be cheaper (i.e. it currently costs about £5k to recruit a nurse through USE-IT! and £31k to recruit a nurse from Australia) and leads to a more stable workforce than looking to fund overseas employment initiatives, they also recognise that the USE-IT! approach can take a longer time – particularly for clients with weaker language skills. Thus, to support the role out evidence of the costs and benefits of this approach is needed. For that, a company was hired to produce a financial business case for other partners to invest in the programme.

Further attention must be paid to a financial support scheme for overseas migrants. This is because the livelihood must be financed during the training and education phase (up to 5 years), like the training itself. This is particularly important for people with families. I.e. more paid placements could be offered. The NHS Trust could retrain relevant migrants i.e. as nurses for their hospital and pay their salary over a certain period of their training. The funding could come from the funds that normally are used to recruit personnel from abroad (paying them for relocation, finding a home, etc.).

Access to finance/loans for overseas migrants must also be created i.e. a revolving fund. Since they have a job in the NHS in prospect, this should be feasible.

Also a sustainable financing mechanism for the language courses and IELTS exam needs to be developed and applied as the language is the bottleneck for the further forthcoming and training of the overseas migrants (cf. USE-IT! 3rd journal, p.20).

All the support activities could be combined under one regional umbrella programme for overseas healthcare worker, based on the USE-IT! experience.

## 2.3   Creating a community of social enterprises

The USE-IT! project aims to support employment and the development of socio-economic activities in the community through social enterprises and cooperatives, boosting "community services" through citizens and socially innovative producers; this linked in particular to the new hospital and housing developments in the area. The main activities have been:

• Raising the awareness and profile of social enterprise within the communities in Greater Icknield to activate locals to become social and community entrepreneurs;

• Provision of support and capacity building for social entrepreneurs to solve local social and economic issues by starting or growing social enterprises, cooperatives and community businesses;

• Development of a Social Enterprise network and Online Networking Platform (SOHO) and social enterprise consortia.

For further information about this approach, read the USE-IT Zoom-in – The creation of social enterprises and the relevant chapters of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd USE-IT! journal.

*SOHO Micro Fund event*

## Interim results and lessons learnt

86 people have signed up as members of the SOHO network. Around 50 % regularly engage in events and networking meetings.

Due to the awareness raising activities about social entrepreneurship and the social enterprise start-up programmes (FUSE) 30 social enterprises were supported into existence. However, it should be noted that not all of these organisations who have joined the social enterprise start-up programmes and received support will go on to register and remain in business. The types of business are very diverse from health/social support, boat hotel, creative, food, to support services to widows. The majority of these social enterprises are women-led.

The support provided to existing social enterprises (themed workshops, individual consultancy and opportunities for networking) has been less than expected, however the demand and support required by the organisations has been more complex than initially thought. 18 organisations have received mentoring and coaching. For this,

36 mentors are available in the database of the SOHO network.

To support the engagement and market development of the social enterprises 4 social enterprise consortia have been established. So far, they have developed 16 new products and services.

**Key** to all this has been the function of USE-IT! to act as broker: bringing together social entrepreneurs, social enterprises and existing organisations and providing them with access to expertise, mentors and business coaches as well as access to new market opportunities supply chains and possible partner organisations. Because in social deprived neighbourhoods the occurrence of entrepreneurial spirit is not very strongly developed and they do not have the connections to start and grow their social businesses. Thus, the brokering and capacity building training is a crucial key.

Bringing new products and services to the market has been a **challenge** as the start-up social

# Progress made since last journal

**SOHO network**

- holds regular meetings with guest speaker and time for networking;
- has 86 signed up members, 50 % regularly engaging in the activities;
- organised a pitching event with local social enterprises pitching for a £500 development grant;
- improved navigation on their website and access to downloadable resources.

**Engagement and Market Development**

- Further development of new products and services by the social enterprises;
- Pop-up markets, pop-up picnics, city drive, social enterprise festival and opportunities for awareness raising have taken place. These were used to support the market development of the new products and to promote formal and informal networking;
- Four out of the five social enterprise consortiums have been developed.

**Social Enterprise Propeller**

- Continuation of the FUSE start up programme;
- Promoting the interaction between new social enterprises with more established social entrepreneurs through the "New Start Stories" event;
- Organisation of themed workshops, individual consultancy and opportunities for networking to support the social enterprises;
- Promoting the availability of funding programmes to start-ups and supporting organisations to leverage their investments.

**Business Mentors and Coaches Programme**

- Mentoring and coaching has been provided to 18 organisations;
- Commissioning some training from local human rights organisation to improve the USE-IT! training offer to coaches and mentors;
- 36 mentors are now on the USE-IT! database.

enterprises need time to scale up and to get to a level where they have the capacity to engage in consortium work and pitch for larger contracts and pieces of work. Also exist a "grant mentality" that grants will be available, which is often not the case.

## Next steps and need for action

A focus of the next steps will be the strengthening and further development of the social enterprise start-ups and their consortia within the five themes of Built Environment, Food, Tourism, Retail and Health. This with a glance at future business opportunities (development of new product and services), especially in relation to macro assets such as the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, the Port Loop development in Greater Icknield and the coming of the high-speed train connection from London to Birmingham.

The previous structures and activities were largely financially supported by the USE-IT! project, financed by the EU UIA Initiative. With the end of the project in 2019, new sources of funding and support must be found to continue the established structures and activities. This particularly with the aim to support the

- emergence of further new social start-ups through the continuation of the FUSE programme;

- social enterprise start-ups to register that have finished the FUSE programme;

To learn more about key success factors, lessons learnt and challenges and how to deal with them, creating a community of social enterprises, read the USE-IT Zoom-in "The creation of social enterprises" and the relevant chapters of the 2nd and 3rd USE-IT! journal.

- existing social enterprises to become more sustainable, scale up and access new markets;

- development of new products and services and bring them to market via the consortia.

For this, the number of mentors must also be further increased to broaden the skill base. This means as well to keep mentors on board i.e. by organising an annual dinner/ meeting for mentors or publicly reward them. In addition, former participants of the FUSE programme might be acquired to act as mentors.

Another area of action is access to employment through social enterprises. There is a growing list of social enterprises across Birmingham who are interested in providing work experience placements. It has to be continued to identify social enterprises willing to provide work experience placements and to find local people who want to have a work experience and match those with the social enterprises who could provide it.

# 3   Conclusion

USE-IT! is, generally speaking, progressing well and the project is in the "normal" implementation phase. With the official end of the USE-IT! project approaching - and with it the end of the UIA Initiative's financial support - the focus of the USE-IT! project is increasingly on how the successful approach can be continued in the long term after the UIA pilot phase and without the EU funding. Self-sustaining structures as well as support and promotion programmes and mechanism for the individual components of the USE-IT! approach have to be developed as well as the "political back-up" for these has to be obtained in order to be able to continue the approach. For some elements, solutions are in the pipeline, for others these are yet to be developed. The latter is the challenge for the last year of the USE-IT! project under the "patronage" of the UIA Initiative.

To further progress with the single USE-IT! approaches next important steps will be:

For the "**Community researchers**" to discuss with the University of Birmingham on their support and involvement on the Community research lab beyond December 2019.

For **"Bringing overseas migrants into jobs"** helping the other hospital trusts now participating to set up the necessary community partnerships, to attract further funding from Health Education England and to spread the provision of the language training courses across the Black Country. Further, it has to be started developing employment pathways for other professions than the one focused on so far and the Hospital Trust to be supported to use the partnership model to set up employment pathways for other groups disconnected from the workplace (school pupils, ex-offenders).

For "**Creating a community of social enterprises**" to continue with the FUSE programme for start-up organisations whilst supporting those organisations of previous programmes. Further, it needs work with the social enterprise consortiums to develop new products and services and bring them to market. In addition, awareness raising events and pop up markets have to continue to develop and demonstrate market opportunities for social enterprises. Existing social enterprises need further support so they can become more sustainable, scale and access new markets. To support work experience USE-IT! has to continue to identify local organisations and social enterprises willing to host and support local people into those placements.

About this, you will be informed in the next USE-IT! journal. Stay tuned!

**Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.**

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