



X3 REPORT 2023



Acknowledgement

We want to express our gratitude to Mariana Grajeda for sharing her story, Apex for the Social Capital and Future Impact analyses, and all our outstanding X3 and X3 NeXt interns and mentors who step out of their comfort zones to create new relationships between young people and adults and whose voices are reflected in this report.

Also, thank you to our many school and employer partners. See the full list at the conclusion of this report.

[front cover] X3 intern Eden Gomez (right) stands with her mentor Lyric Ellison (left) at Explora Children's Museum where she works on interactive exhibitions with elementary schoolers.

[inside cover] A student at ACE Leadership High School works on a construction project in his work-based learning curriculum.



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MARIANA'S JOURNEY

In 2022, Future Focused Education held a listening and learning session with interns and employers to hear firsthand the program's impact on both students and mentors. Mariana Grajeda attended the event after concluding her internship at the City of Albuquerque. She sat in a circle with her peers, nervously glancing at her phone as she read a prewritten emotional statement summarizing her X3 experience.

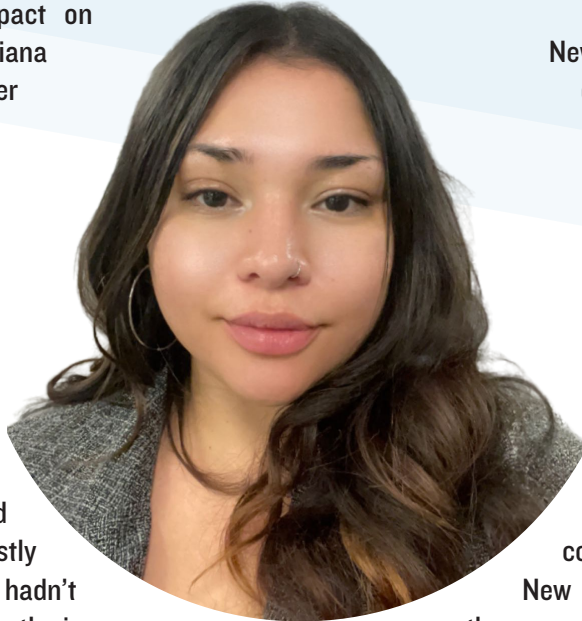
Mariana's eyes filled with tears as she held them in to avoid getting too emotional. She looked up for a brief moment. It was a split second of gratitude and sincerity. "I honestly can't imagine where I would be if I hadn't gotten this opportunity. I'm currently in my fourth semester in college, and I plan to finish, for sure." The cohort applauded for the self-confidence Mariana developed and the distance she covered to turn her situation around.

Mariana had the power and tenacity to break down barriers in her life that easily could've blocked her from finishing high school, resulting in her disconnecting from her studies and potential employment to better her situation. A monumental triumph over a rocky past. Future Focused Education believes young people like Mariana are the heroes of their own story and have everything they need to succeed within them. They are simply looking for an open door to fruit their passion and learn more.

"Coming into Future Focused, I was homeless. I wasn't mentally, physically, or emotionally 'there.' I was very unstable. Then Ali (Mariana's mentor) came, and she gave me my first start. She believed in me. I went from high school dropout and being emotionally unstable to having a home for the last few years and got my diploma," said Mariana.

The youth of New Mexico have a deep passion for learning and contributing to their community. Many, like Mariana, aspire for the systems and structure to overcome their current circumstances and further grow as students,

working professionals, and community members.



New Mexico has a 19.6% disengagement rate, the highest in the nation.¹ Additionally, 57% of New Mexicans 16 and older were in the labor force in June 2022, compared to 62% nationally.² Many teenagers are not finishing school and completely disengaging from being an active, employed member of their community. Disengaged

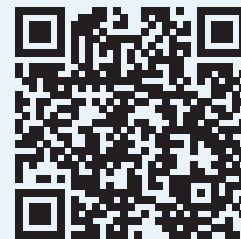
New Mexicans is tough for them personally and presents a negative impact on the state financially. Over their lifetime, the estimated social cost of disengaged young people is \$900,000.

The disengagement data can feel disheartening, but it fuels our passion for keeping X3 going for young people in New Mexico and scaling it for additional opportunities across the state. The young people we meet have the desire and willpower within them to succeed professionally; they just need an opportunity to get started.

New data shows that when X3 connects young people to paid internships with local employers, they have more access to essential career connections and professional networks. Additionally, early and promising analysis suggests these interns are more likely to stay in school. Over the course of four years in two high schools, we found that 0.6% of interns left school compared to 12.9% of non-interns.³ Future Focused Education sees the results of work-based learning and how it can change the lives of young people like Mariana.

Mariana was invited to explore, experience, and expand herself through a paid internship. As a result, she was able to overcome insurmountable challenges by having someone bet on her and her abilities. Mariana's beginnings are similar to many young people in New Mexico but as our program moves forward, we can further develop and expand so others can have the same success as her. This report lays out the impact and potential future for X3. Whenever we hear stories like Mariana's, we are reminded that every young person is worth investing in.

Scan the QR Code to hear more of Mariana's journey



Footnotes:

¹ Kristen Lewis, A Disrupted Year: How the arrival of COVID-19 affected youth disconnection (The Measure of America Youth Disconnection Series, 2022)

² Colleen Heild and Matthew Narvaiz: New Mexico needs every worker it can get (ABQ Journal, August 6, 2022)

³ Apex (<https://apexeval.org/>)

LETTER FROM TONY

Tony Monfiletto,
Executive Director, Future Focused Education



Over the past five years, we have been fortunate to witness 465 young New Mexicans unlock their untapped potential and discover that they can achieve their dreams with modest support. Everything they need for a prosperous future is in them. The X3 and X3 NeXt programs are stewards of these inspiring young people. We want to open doors to opportunities that currently may not be available to them and help them discover what they need to succeed.

The X3 program was born out of the need to aid young people with better work opportunities than dead-end jobs that keep them out until midnight—competing with their best efforts to graduate. Many of these young people are from low-income families and have to work to support their households. Work-based learning collapses the walls constructed by their economic circumstance by getting them paid while gaining valuable learning opportunities. It also helps them create a web of caring adults who know them and know what they can do in a real-life work setting.

Those walls are a reality for many vulnerable young people at risk of disconnecting from their studies and meaningful work. This disconnection will veer them off the path to a fruitful and meaningful career and community engagement. It is not possible to help vulnerable young people move forward without care and concern for their well-being and mental health. We must invest in more social workers, school psychologists, and teacher training. But we can't limit our vision to the internal workings of the school. Instead, building a network of support for young people beyond the school through programs like X3 and X3 NeXt paid internships and mentorship is our most significant opportunity for long-lasting success.

As a community, we must invest in the social capital and well-being of young people. These investments are necessary experiences young people need to imagine a prosperous future for themselves and their community. Young people have the drive, passion, and creativity to thrive in new and exciting environments; they are just looking for an investment in the opportunities and systems to do so.

Tony Monfiletto



STUDENT IMPACT

Confidence in the future

Feedback from our students is a critical component to scaling X3 across New Mexico. The data is clear in our student surveys: work-based learning has a profound impact on a young person's life trajectory. X3 is molding and shifting futures for the students who participate in the program, with 99% feeling more confident in their future success than before. The experience opens doors for them to think earlier and more critically about a career direction and what is possible for them in the future. Internships expand the universe of possibilities for young people and the more work-based learning opportunities we create, the greater the impact we can have on their future.

"I was thinking I would just be a waitress, but this internship has helped me realize that maybe I could get a job at the City, go back to school. I can think more long term."

-Amarisa Barboa,

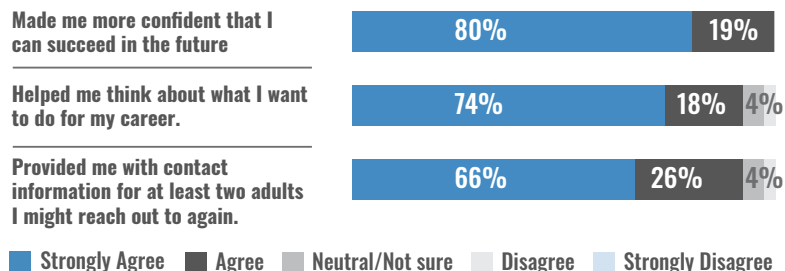
X3 intern at the City of Albuquerque Office of Equity Inclusion

"Amarisa came with a really strong sense of community organization, which matches well with what our office does out in the community. Where she has grown is really in her understanding of the scope and whole breadth of what we mean by equity and inclusion and how you operationalize that within city government."

-Michelle Melendez,

mentor and Director of Equity and Inclusion at the City of Albuquerque

My X3 internship...



Workplace Preparedness

Mentor feedback and evaluations help us understand a student's development over the course of the internship. A key finding through these evaluations is the exponential professional growth young people get when participating in work-based learning. Interns learn essential workplace skills that are not taught in schools because of their openness, passion and ambition that they bring to the workplace. Skills like time management, email composition, independent problem-solving, and collaboration experience are important for early career success.

How likely would you be to ask your mentor for help with your career in the future?



Scan the QR Code to hear more of Amarisa's journey



Marcos Vigil (X3 NeXt Intern - CNM Student)

Marcos worked with local construction firm Bradbury Stamm, and got new insights into what that career path looks like, gaining professional skills and new network connections along the way.

“I’ve never worked in an office before so getting this experience now, to see how everything is, is really good experience.”

“When Marcos first came to us, he was a quiet, shy kid. He didn’t know anything about construction. I’ve seen him grow as a person being a lot more social and a lot more open to people around, which is incredibly important in a professional setting.”

-Dante Gonzales,
Mentor, Project Engineer, Bradbury Stamm



Scan the QR Code to hear more of Marcos's journey

Interns gain key workplace skills

Mentors evaluate interns on their skills every term

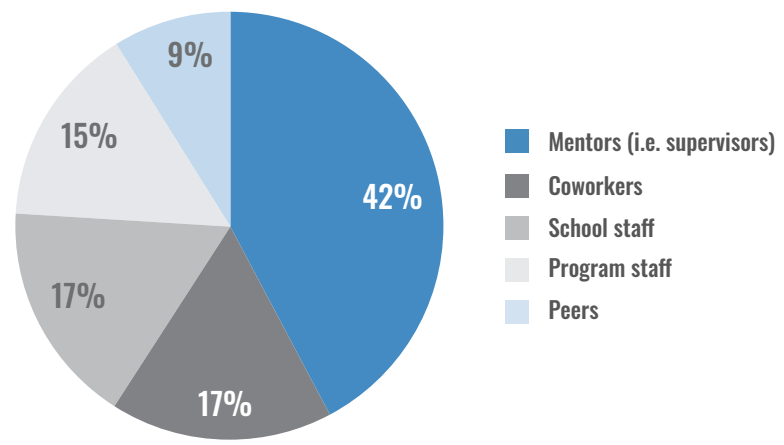


Social capital

The further a professional gets in their career the more important it is to network and connect with others in your field to create opportunities. Disengaged young people forfeit this potential advancement by not participating in engaging employment. However, through X3 interns create professional networks and social capital for students who otherwise would have none. On average, interns reported forming more than 3 developmental relationships during their internship. Interns get new, positive, and influential relationships with adults that can lead to professional development and potential permanent employment.

On average, interns report forming 3.3 important relationships

Mentor relationships are the most commonly reported





"I didn't expect to personally learn so much from the experience. My "ah-ha!" moment was understanding that mentorship is about mutual learning. Mentorship spans beyond benefits to the mentee, but to you as well. It's about respecting values and expectations. Tori taught me that a younger perspective keeps us more relevant to the changing world and workforce. My frame of reference has expanded and I have a better insight into how younger minds think and their hunger to share value and purpose."

There is so much to be learned from your mentee and the critical skills you develop as a result. Self-awareness is a powerful tool; mentoring is another way to become more self-aware."

- Kelly Roepke,

Chief Operations Officer, Associated General Contractors

MENTOR/EMPLOYER IMPACT

The impact X3 has on students is just half the story. We are profoundly affecting mentors in ways we didn't predict. Mentors report personal growth and connectedness by supporting young people in their community and growing in their supervisory skills. X3 is also shifting employers' perspectives on young people and their potential. They report that hosting interns benefits their entire organization by making them more welcoming to people from diverse backgrounds, moving projects forward, and influencing changes in procedures or strategies. Students learn and grow from the internship, as do their mentors and employers.

Mentor Perspective

We asked mentors: What have you appreciated about the program?

Serving as an X3 mentor has...

Resonated with my personal values.

62%

33%

4%

Taught me something new about how to support young people.

74%

28%

8%

5%

Strengthened my own supervisory skills.

39%

47%

11%

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral/Not sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

FUTURE IMPACT

X3 works because of the passion, openness to learning and career aspirations of young people. They have what it takes to thrive in a professional work setting and contribute to their community. Our job is to create the systems and structures that open the doors for them to walk through. X3 and X3 NeXt are ready to scale work-based learning to connect more high school students with paid work experiences outside the classroom and inside the professional workforce. As the program grows, we will never lose sight of aspects of the program that make X3 special, maintaining an equitable program partnered with quality internships.



Scan the QR Code to read more of Kelly's experience

Equity

We must maintain an equity-based program that connects students of all backgrounds to quality internships. Some programs disproportionately enroll white students over students of color. X3 does not.

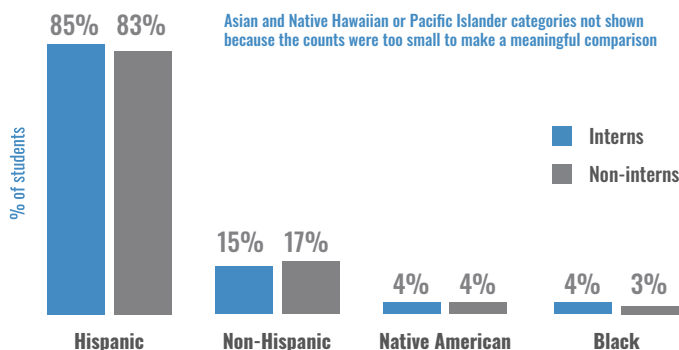
Quality Internship

Quality internships are a bedrock of student success. Over the past five years, Future Focused Education works hard to ensure that quantity never precludes quality as we have grown from six interns to several hundred. We are learning about what matters, and three critical elements of quality internships rise to the top: 360-degree support, financial compensation, and transition support.

360 Degree Support

360-degree support through an intermediary organization like Future Focused Education is the first element. We support interns through the following:

- **Preparation.** Comprehensive orientation for interns reduces anxiety and prepares them with basic professional skills
- **Mentorship.** Multiple adults (e.g., school staff, intermediary coach, and mentor/supervisor) provide social-emotional support, accountability, and mentorship
- **Basic needs.** Intermediary ensures interns' basic needs are met: (e.g., clothing, transportation, childcare, internet access, etc.)
- **Learning structure.** Structure for goal-setting, reflection, evaluation, and presentations of learning keeps students engaged



“Mentorship creates rich work-related experiences that give students a space to grow. For young people of color, this is especially essential. They need mentors who believe they are capable or anything they set their minds to, regardless of their background. Studies have shown that white professionals experience a “fast track” when it comes to executive positions as opposed to their non-white counterparts. Non-white professionals have slower career advancements and don’t have as much access to professional development opportunities. In my work with Brisa, I’ve made a point of providing tasks that require more critical thinking and leadership skills so that in the future she is not limited to lower-paying and stagnant positions”

-Tatiana Falcón Rodríguez,
Community Health Program Manager, Food Farmacy Manager



Scan the QR Code to read more from Tatiana

360 degree support extends to employers as well. An intermediary organization must give their employer partners the necessary support to ensure both the student and employer get the most from the program. Support for employers includes:

- **Administrative support.** Personalized outreach and administrative support reduces barriers to employer participation
- **Stipend management.** Intermediary provides time tracking and awards stipends to interns
- **Position descriptions.** Employers determine best fit for interns
- **Training.** Intermediary trains mentors in asset-based approaches

Financial compensation

Financial compensation is also a vital element to a quality internship program. Interns should be awarded stipends equivalent to or more than minimum wage. Financial compensation allows students to earn money while staying in school and developing their professional skill set. This also means the student does not have to work a separate job as they continue their studies and participate in an internship, which will do more for their career than a low earning, low skilled position.

Transition Support

Another critical element for a quality internship is transition support. Transition support provides opportunities for interns to earn credentials, build a resume, and prepare earlier for college/career. Intermediaries help interns establish connections and networks to guide them into higher-paying career paths or post-secondary education options. At its core, X3 is a bridge to greater opportunities to help young people discover and create a better future for themselves. Transition support helps create that bridge.

To further that bridge, FFE started NeXt because we saw the drop in support that can happen after high school graduation. We have extended our work with interns into the post-high school and college years. We created NeXt to proactively build steps that move young people more purposefully and prepared towards meaningful employment and the requisite training.

Where do we go from here?

Opportunity to Scale

In five years of implementation, we've learned a lot about the positive impact of work-based learning and the tremendous potential of scaling our program. The X3 and X3 NeXt internship programs have grown to over 130 employers and 1,000 placements—and have awarded nearly \$1 million in stipends to interns. Paid internships can sustain large scaling and high growth while maintaining high satisfaction of interns and employers. Internships become even more impactful when extended over multiple semesters and in different communities to reach more students and mentors.

3. Policy Recommendation

Scaling X3 to have a greater impact will take policy adjustment from both local and state governments. We have simplified our policy recommendation to three core components to aid lawmakers as they visualize the potential of larger scaled work-based learning for young people.

1. **Funding** - Fund high-quality internships for high school students in more districts, with effective intermediary organizations to ensure quality and sustainability. The cost for an internship isn't any more than the cost of an equivalent part-time employee, but participation in X3 can yield many benefits that we highlight throughout this report. Moreover, the possibility of cost offset through policy adjustment may provide funding assistance for employers.

Total Cost Per Student \$8,533

1,000 Students x 8,533 = **\$8,533,000**

5,000 Students x 8,533 = **\$42,665,000**

10,000 Students x 8,533 = **\$85,330,000**

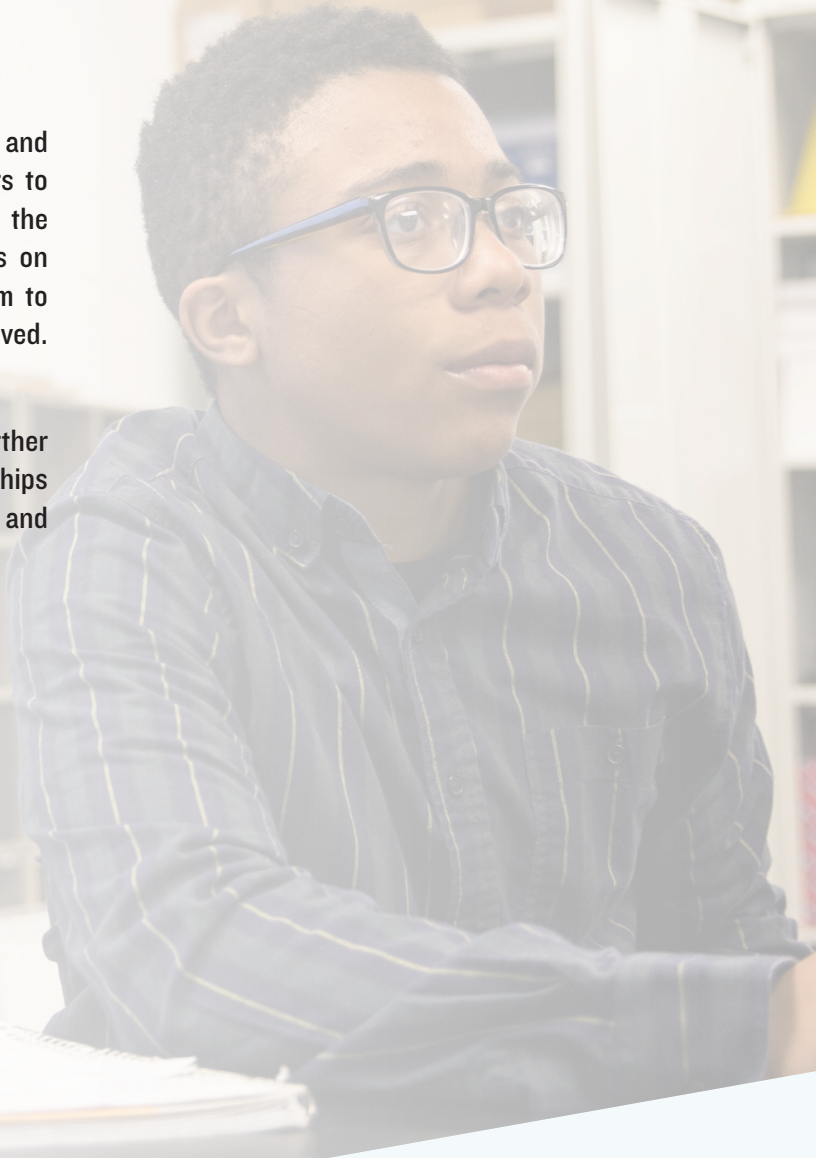
**Total Cost Per Student with Employer
Contribution \$5,333**

1,000 Students x 5,333 = \$5,333,000

5,000 Students x 5,333 = \$26,665,000

10,000 Students x 5,333 = \$53,330,000

- 2. Training** - Train educators statewide to share and reinforce promising practices. We need educators to buy-in and collaborate to help make the program the best it can be. We also need to train employers on how to engage with young people in the program to maximize the experience and benefits for all involved.
- 3. Evaluation** - Fund continued evaluation to further understand the difference high-quality internships are making for students, schools, employers, and communities.



X3 and X3 NeXt Schools and Employer Partners Over the Years

School Partners

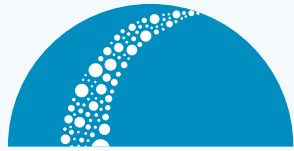
ACE Leadership High School
 Amy Biehl High School
 Career Enrichment Center
 Capital High School
 Cesar Chavez Community School
 Central NM Community College
 Cuba High School
 Health Leadership High School
 Highland High School
 Independence High School
 New Futures High School
 Santa Fe Community College
 Siembra Leadership High School
 Tech Leadership High School
 University of New Mexico
 Zuni High School

Employer Partners

505NDE, LLC
 ABC Prevent Coalition
 Adelante
 AGC Association of General Contractors
 Albuquerque Center for Peace & Justice
 Albuquerque Journal
 AMP Concerts
 Apex Evaluation
 AREA (Albuquerque Regional Economic Alliance)
 Ask Tower Supply
 Associated Contractors of New Mexico
 Association Collaborative MCA-SMACNA
 Gerard's House
 Hasse Contracting Company
 Heading Home
 Heritage Driven
 Improve Group
 Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
 International District Economic Development
 International District Healthy Community
 Coalition

International Folk Art Market
 Jaynes Corporation
 JB Henderson
 Kei and Molly Textiles
 Keller Williams Realty
 Keshet Dance and Center for the Arts
 La Plazita Institute
 Learning Alliance of NM
 Littlelobe, Inc.
 Los Poblanos: Historic Inn & Organic Farm
 Lovelace Health System
 Lovelace Women's Hospital
 Many Mothers
 McPartlon Roofing
 MediaDesk
 Miller Bonded
 Mobile Mall Glam Shots
 Modrall Sperling
 NACA Inspired Schools Network
 National Hispanic Cultural Center
 National Latino Behavioral Health Association
 New Day Youth & Family Services
 New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
 New Mexico Mutual
 New Mexico Public Education Department
 New Mexico Tech Council
 Next State Systems
 NM Department of Health
 NM Office of Archeological Studies
 Nusenda
 Parnall Law Firm, LLC
 Partnership for Community Action
 Planned Parenthood Rocky Mountains
 Presbyterian Center for Community Health
 Presbyterian Health Services
 Pueblo of Tesuque
 Red Shovel
 Reunity Resources
 River Source, Inc.
 Safety Counselling, INC
 Sam Sterling Architecture
 San Ildelfonso Pueblo

Sandia Laboratory Federal Credit Union
 Santa Fe Children's Museum
 SDV Construction
 SeedCrest
 Sign and Image Factory
 Southwest Care
 STEM Santa Fe
 Street Food Institute
 SunWest Trust
 Taos Ski Valley
 TeamBuilders
 Tema Furniture
 The Haven
 Three Sisters Kitchen
 TLC Plumbing
 Together for Brothers
 TriCore
 UNM Health Sciences Center
 UNM Hospitals
 US Electrical
 VisitABQ
 Visiting Angels
 Vizionz Sankofa
 WESST
 Western Sky Community Care
 Working Classroom
 Yearout Mechanical



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