RISSB

RAIL INDUSTRY SAFETY AND STANDARDS BOARD

ADMIN 3-7

Meeting Management Guide

- Meeting Management
- Consensus Votes
- Minutes

Version 1

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Distribution and Change

The RISSB Board maintains the master and a controlled distribution list for this publication, according to the procedure for distributing documents.

Any changes to the content of this publication require the version number to be updated and those changes to be distributed to the listed recipients.

Changes to this publication must be approved according to the procedure for developing management system documents.

The RISSB Board must identify and communicate changes to this publication.

Referenced Documents

Item	Title	Issued By	Document #	Issue Date	Version #
1	Meeting Process Manual	United States Green Party		24/04/2007	1-1
2	How to Run a Meeting	Reader's Digest		24/04/07	1-1
3	Learning in Teams: A Student Manual	Oxford Centre for Staff Development		21/02/06	1-1

Document History

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1	09/07/07		Promulgation

Glossary of Terms

The terms/acronyms listed in this table currently do not appear in the RISSB/ARA Dictionary.

Term / Acronym	Description
DAB	Development Advisory Board
DG	Development Group
GM	General Manager RISSB
NSO	National Standards Office
PM	Project Manager
SA	Standards Australia
SAB	Standards Accreditation Board
SC	Standing Committee
SDO	Standards Development Organisation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the requirements of Meeting Management in order to ensure a transparent and documented meeting process is followed.

1.2 Scope

This procedure applies to the Meeting Management Stage of the RISSB Quality Management System.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Scope of Accreditation

The RISSB is accredited by the SAB to develop Railway Operations Standards covering Rollingstock and Infrastructure.

2.2 RISSB Roles and Responsibility

The RISSB is divided into the following hierarchy and roles:

- The RISSB Board; reviews the process and approves documentation provided that the process has been followed, the scope is complete, the quality of tasks is complete and the impact assessment is positive.
- Development Advisory Board (DAB); reviews and advises adherence of process to RISSB Board. The DAB is also responsible for providing Governance of public funds.
- The General Manager (GM) manages RISSB.
- Standing Committee (SC); reviews technical scope. The SC also approves technical scope.
- The Project Manager (PM) supervises and facilitates the process.
- The Development Group (DG) is responsible for authoring the document as well as responding to public comment including wider stakeholders.
- Following public consultation review, technical issues are resolved by the relevant SC while non-technical issues and process adherence are resolved by the DAB.

The RISSB organisational structure can be seen in Diagram 1.

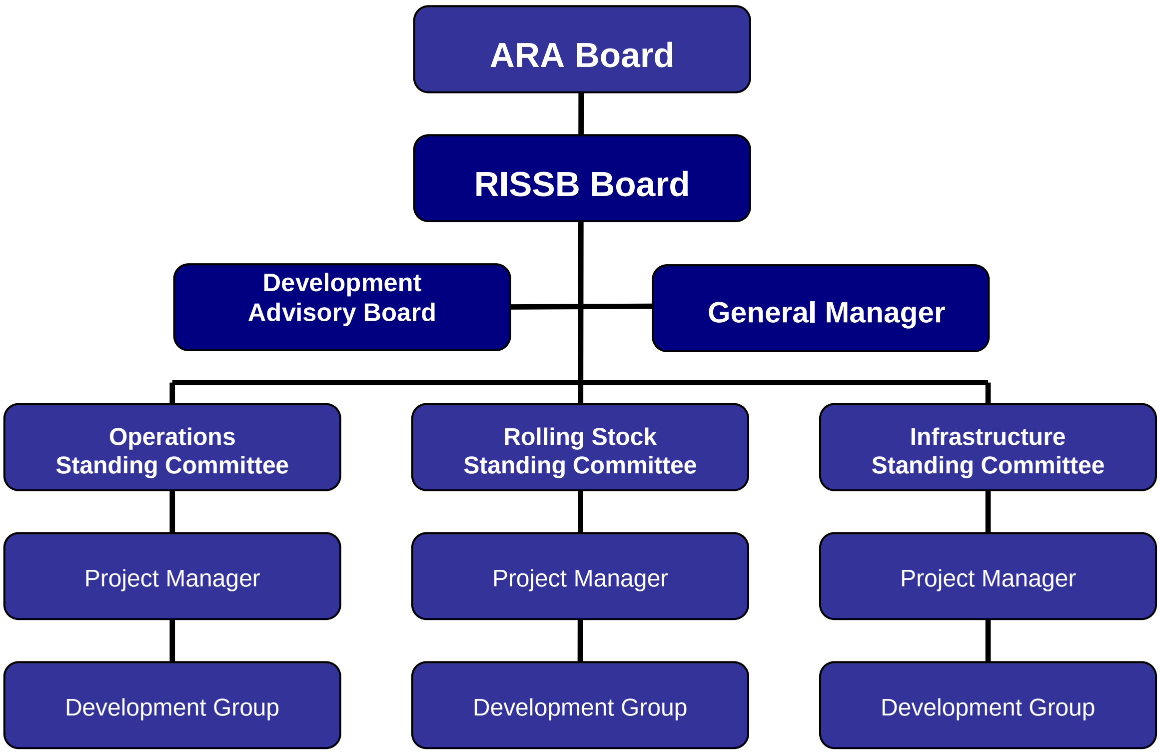

Diagram 1: RISSB Organisational Structure

2.3 The Role of the NSO and SAB

The Standards Accreditation Board (SAB) is an independent Board that reports to Standards Australia (SA) with the role of accrediting Standards Development Organisations (SDO) that wish to develop Standard(s) to be published as a recognised Australian Standard.

The National Standards Office (NSO) is the body responsible for the oversight, co-ordination and governance of Standards development and related activities.

The RISSB must co-operate and liaise with the NSO with the intent of enhancing communication and co-ordination of Standards development activities across industry and government.

The RISSB is obligated to:

a. Comply with all policies and procedures of the NSO and the Standards Accreditation Board (SAB), including for the determination and funding of appeals
b. Notify the SAB of any significant changes in the organisation's Standards development processes and obtain any necessary approval of those processes
c. Submit to the SAB's determination where there is a conflict in the scope of areas of accreditation
d. Co-operate with the NSO and the SAB regarding hand-over of relevant information and records where an RISSB's accreditation ceases, and
e. Pay all relevant fees to the SAB to achieve and maintain accreditation.

3 PROCESS

This procedure has been assembled to provide participants with a common basis for developing effective group decision-making techniques. It is hoped that it will be useful both as a means of orientation for new participants as well as a reference for veterans.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1.1 Chairperson

The role of the Chair is to act as the facilitator for the meeting; their primary task being to orchestrate the flow of input in a meeting.

- It is important to note that the Chair does not control the direction of the meeting. The Chair is to act as the manager of the meeting process and not the manager of the final outcome.
- In some situations such as large meetings, or when dealing with highly charged issues, the Chair may choose to utilise another to keep track of time and monitor the meeting process.

3.1.2 Note Keeper

The role of the Note Keeper is to record the general content of any discussion (what is said and who it is said by) as well as any decisions reached from votes or consensus. If the meeting is planned to be recorded on audiotape, the tasks for the Note Keeper become more focused as a result.

Note Keepers, in whatever format is most appropriate, list ideas generated during brainstorming, list names during "stacking" (refer section 3.2.3), and post other relevant data so it is visible to the entire group during discussion.

As an aid to the Note Keeper, a proposal that is adopted by the group should be written up in its final form and submitted to the Note Keeper for inclusion in the minutes by the delegate making the proposal. This guarantees that all agreed upon items get included and frees the Note Keeper for other duties.

3.1.3 Minute Secretary

The role of the Minute Secretary is to record the minutes of the meetings. The minutes play an important function because they act as a written record of what has transpired.

The minutes are expected to:

- give a brief background of issues;
- explain the circumstances surrounding an issue discussed;
- summarise the arguments for and against a matter put forward by meeting participants;
- record a summary of reasons leading to a decision or non-decision, including points of clarification;
- record any agreed amendments to the documentation;
- record each resolution passed at the meeting; and
- record any follow-up action required.

The draft Minutes should be distributed to all Development Group participants within the space of five working days.

Accepted Minutes should be published and distributed in a timely manner.

For a Minutes pro-forma, please refer to Appendix 4.

3.1.4 Participants

The role of the participant is to contribute to the discussions of the meeting. Each participant should speak for the same amount of time; those who do too little or too much should be regulated by the discretion of the Chair.

3.1.5 Visitors

Visitors may be those who have an interest in the content of a meeting and attend as spectators. In order for a visitor to attend a meeting, they must first gain permission from the Chair.

As visitors often hold predisposition in their views, it is the responsibility of the Chair to monitor their behaviour so as not to allow visitors' comments to intimidate participants or the outcome of a meeting.

Visitors can be excluded from certain portions of a meeting (such as voting) or can be refused attendance entirely.

3.2 Meeting Practice

3.2.1 Agenda review

A formal written agenda is prepared one week prior to the commencement of the meeting and issued to participants. This agenda is created in consultation with those attending the meeting.

During the course of the meeting, the agenda should be on display so it is easily visible to all participants.

The entire agenda should then be reviewed by the meeting after the opening business is complete. The Chair should then call for limited discussion to arrive at:

- the appropriateness of the initial items on the agenda
- those items to be added or deleted
- the order of the items
- the amount of time each item should be allotted, and
- the priority of the items (if necessary)

3.2.2 Introductions

When participants of a group meet for the first time, everyone should position themselves wherever they feel most comfortable. They should then introduce themselves, stating their names and the organisation they belong to. It is the responsibility of the Chair to make it clear each participant's status at the meeting, i.e. voting member, delegate, observer, etc.

When a new member begins attending meetings, everyone must reintroduce themselves again.

It is also essential for participants to complete an Attendance Register. Separate to the minutes, this document records a list of all members in attendance as well as their contact details. This information is distributed to all other participants so that each member can communicate with one another as needed.

3.2.3 Discussion management

In a large group format, several formalised processes have been used successfully to help make the discussion process workable. The process of “stacking” is a means of ordering members' input. Those wishing to speak raise their hands. The Chair generally uses body language to acknowledge them, and either logs the order mentally or, perhaps with assistance from the Note Keeper, records them on a list and they are called in that order. This helps equalise participation. Periodically, the Chair may wish to state the order of the stack or inform the group of the number of people in the stack.

There are variations and exceptions. Generally, no participant should speak twice on an issue until all participants wishing to do so have had an opportunity to speak. However, when discussion is heated, people often become too eager to speak or respond to allow proper attention to be paid to other's input. In this instance, "limited exchange" can be allowed after the person in the stack has spoken. The Chair, however, must carefully guide it so that it doesn't get out of hand. When a "limited exchange" should be terminated, the Chair so indicates and calls on the next person in the stack.

Other allowed interruptions in the stacking process or in general discussion include "point of information", "point of clarity", and "point of process." If a participant has information unknown to the rest of the group that is immediately relevant and necessary to what a speaker is saying, that participant should interrupt by saying, "point of information". The Chair should then allow that participant to briefly and concisely present their strictly informational, non-opinionated input. Following this interruption, the regular sequence of discussion is resumed.

If a participant is unclear about what has been said or what is going on and interrupts with "point of clarity", the Chair may suspend discussion briefly to respond to that participant's question. If the Chair is unable to clear up the confusion, another participant may be recognised to briefly offer the necessary information. This allows the participant seeking clarity to be brought up to speed so their input can be included in the ongoing discussion. Once the issue is resolved, or reasonable effort has been expended trying to do so, the Chair should direct the group back to the regular sequence of discussion.

The call for "point of process" should come from any participant who sees a problem developing due to the process breakdown. Once recognised by the Chair, the participant should briefly indicate what "point of process" is involved (such as an impending time limit, straying from the topic, dealing with a non-agenda item, etc) and offer a proposed solution.

3.2.4 Time limits

When a significant issue arises and everyone wants to address it, the Chair may need to impose time limits. Generally, limiting each speaker to one or two minutes encourages speakers to be concise, emphasise only the most important ideas, and not dwell on long, rhetorical arguments or rebuttals.

3.3 Proposals

Proposals may come complete from a single author, group, committee, or may be formed through discussion and brainstorming during the meeting.

During discussion of a particular item, a "sense of the meeting" often emerges that can be put into words. When a participant feels that it would be helpful, he or she should state their understanding of the "sense" as a proposal. A Proposer should have the proposal written out for clarity.

3.3.1 Question

When the Chair or any participant of the meeting feels that discussion is complete and no new input is forthcoming, he or she may say "call the question". The Chair should briefly restate the proposal or decision at hand, check to see that there is general agreement on calling the question, and ask, "Is there any call for clarification?" At this point the proposal is modified, if necessary. If there is no call for clarification, the Chair will ask, "Is there any call for concern?"

Participants should clearly indicate their position either with body language or vocally so that the Chair has no difficulty determining the sense of the meeting. If there are no questions or concerns, consensus has been reached and should be so recorded. The Chair should then move the group on to the next item. If there are questions and concerns, discussion should continue.

3.3.2 Clarification

The Chair will state the proposal and ask if there is any call for clarification. Questions about the proposal are answered during this part of the process; concerns are saved for later discussion. Once the group is satisfied that the proposal is clearly understood, the Chair will ask if there is any call for concern.

3.3.3 Concern

The Chair will re-state the proposal and ask if there is any call for concern regarding the proposal as stated. A concern is a statement of how the proposal might conflict with the group's stated purpose and shared values.

The Chair will recognise those with concerns, distil the concerns into short phrases and list them on a blackboard or large easel. Listing concerns in this manner helps the group focus on the concern, not the presenter or the person raising the concern (concerns should be impersonal).

After all the concerns have been listed, the Chair will deal with each in turn to resolve the concerns through group discussion and friendly amendments.

3.4 Group Resolution

Concerns are resolved as the proposal is explained or changed to address them. To make consensus more easily attainable, it may be possible for a participant having difficulty accepting a proposal decision to offer a "friendly amendment" that expands somewhat on the original idea or changes it to a minor degree in a manner that satisfactorily addresses their concerns without altering the "sense of the meeting" on that issue. If accepted by the group, the friendly amendment should be worded into the proposal being discussed.

If, after further discussion, the proposal seems satisfactory, it should be carefully restated and the Chair should call the question. The accepted proposal should then be written down by the Proposer in its final form and submitted to the Minute Secretary for inclusion in the minutes.

3.4.1 Stand aside/withdraw

If, after reasonable discussion and exploration, the group cannot resolve the concerns through friendly amendments, then the Chair should try to determine the depth of the concerns. The Chair will ask if those with concern will stand aside to allow the proposal to pass. If not, the Chair will ask the Proposer if they will withdraw the proposal or the part raising concern to allow the proposal to pass. If not, the proposal shall be delegated to a committee of resolution.

3.4.2 Committee of resolution

This smaller group should include skilled representatives of all sides of the issue who are acceptable to all members of the larger group. They may meet during a break or temporarily withdraw from the larger group, which should then occupy itself with some other relatively minor issue, and attempt to come to consensus. The resolution they develop is then carried back to the larger group and introduced for discussion and approval. It may be necessary to reconvene the smaller group for further attempts at achieving a workable solution before consensus can be reached.

3.5 Consensus Voting

Prior to the adoption of the document as a Standard, the responsible DG (through a formal ballot of committee members) approves the content of the Standard. It is the responsibility of the committee members to submit votes at the ballot stage on behalf of their nominating organisation, either in the affirmative or in the negative. All negative votes are required to be accompanied by technical reasons for the vote. Only when consensus has been achieved can the document proceed to become a Standard.

Where a DG member casts a negative vote, the committee is obliged to give thorough consideration to the reasons for the negative vote and to attempt to find a resolution that is acceptable to the DG as a whole. Note that DG members are voting on behalf of their nominating organisation and not acting as individuals.

Consensus is achieved when all of the major stakeholders (as described in the Standards Proposal Procedure) that are involved with the subject of the Standard have collectively accepted the content of the document and have voted affirmatively. This normally implies a unanimous affirmative vote, but occasionally it may be achieved where there are one or more outstanding negative votes.

If the DG has made all reasonable efforts, but is still unable to resolve one or more negative votes, consensus may be deemed to have been achieved if

- a minimum 67% of those eligible to vote have voted affirmatively, and
- a minimum 80% of votes received are affirmative, and
- no major stakeholder involved with the subject of the Standard has collectively maintained a negative vote.

In all cases where unanimity has not been achieved on the ballot, it is the responsibility of the SC to arbitrate on whether or not these criteria have been met.

If the SC deems that consensus has not been achieved, it may make recommendations aimed at resolving the impasse or may determine that consensus is not achievable on this subject at this point in time.

A nominating organisation whose objection is not resolved is given the option to withdraw the name of that nominating organisation from the published standard.

A record of the votes must be collected, specifying exactly who voted and how.

3.6 Evaluation

If the process is to improve, there must be an opportunity to review what went on and why and a time to suggest ways to make it work better next time.

A suggestion for a large group is for the Note Keeper to make a list on a blackboard or a large sheet of newsprint that the whole group can see. These headings should be placed at the top: a "-" on the left side, and a "+" on the right side. Then, in brainstorming fashion and without argumentation or discussion, list those things that did not work out well under "-" and those things that did go well under "+". After listing, the group should briefly discuss how to improve those items listed under "-" and, where necessary, ways of maintaining the "+" items. Suggestions and listings should be included in the minutes.

3.7 Closing Business

The closing of the meeting is a vital time where results can easily be lost by misdirection. The end of the meeting means that discussion is over, but to ensure a cohesive understanding from all participants, the following steps should be taken:

- Point out the decisions that were reached; this gets any and all conclusions out in the open. The summary of decisions reached in the meeting will bring to the surface any individual misunderstandings and disagreements. Naturally, this helps to avoid additional meetings.
- Point out differences; these disagreements may very well be vital for future discussions. State them clearly, evaluate them and indicate whether they are small or great. Try to define them to the satisfaction of all present. Remember, you will have to deal with them in the next meeting.
- Point to future action; state clearly the next steps to be taken and announce if another meeting will be necessary, and when. Indicate how the decision(s) reached at the meeting will be used.

3.8 Additional Information

3.8.1 Emotional participants:

It is common for individuals or groups to become emotionally charged or even develop personality clashes during a discussion.

If real, angry conflict arises:

- Call an immediate halt to any bickering. If necessary, take a break and speak to the contenders individually.
- Let all members know that it’s fine to be passionate, but ask people who are unable to control their tempers to deal with their issues outside the meeting room.
- Reaffirm the norms for behaviour that have been agreed upon.

- Focus on the substance of ideas or opinions – not on the contributor's personal style or status in the organisation.
- Encourage members to keep their comments positive and constructive and try to see all sides of a contentious issue.
- Use probing questions to steer members away from entrenched positions and to help uncover the underlying issues.
- As a last resort, ask the contenders (offending participants) to leave the meeting.

3.8.2 Silent participants:

It is important that all participants make a contribution to the meeting in some way. Therefore, attempt to encourage the participants who show signs of meekness. Be careful, however, not to put a reluctant person on the spot. Draw him or her into the discussion through a topic you know is familiar to them. This will reduce the danger of comments being made after the meeting, usually in the hallway outside the meeting room such as, 'I just don't think I can go along with the decision made in the meeting.'

These comments are important and pertinent. Unfortunately, they are being made at the wrong time and in the wrong place. They should have been made in the meeting for the enlightenment and consideration of all. Such comments afterwards usually mean yet another meeting.

3.8.3 Verbose participants:

For the decorum of the meeting, see that only one person speaks at a time as there is no room for a meeting within a meeting. Private discussions within the group can only cause conflict and disunity. The Chair must firmly refuse to allow the meeting to break up into smaller discussion groups. It is the responsibility of the Chair to see that each member is heard by all present. If a splinter group persists, focus the attention of the whole group on it. This will, more than likely, disperse the offenders.

3.8.4 Regular summaries:

It is good practice to make regular summaries during the meeting of the key points of discussion. These act as are a scoreboard of the success of the group in attacking the problem. Summaries also serve to check on disagreements and point out to the participants which problems demand their attention. Otherwise disagreements tend to get lost in the discussion, only to turn up at the end of the meeting, much to the dismay of all concerned.

Summaries should be kept under 30 seconds; this is plenty of time to do the job. Quick summaries will not interrupt the flow of the meeting. In fact, they will serve as an example to the meeting group that you are very conscious of time, and that you plan to keep the ideas marching forward.

4 APPENDIX 1 – MEETING CHECKLIST

Before the meeting:

- Schedule the meeting carefully. Who, when, where, why? Can all members attend?
- Plan what the meeting was meant to achieve
- Prepare a meeting agenda, and distribute before the meeting
- Have a clear list of things to discuss and work on, decisions that need to be made
- Decide who will prepare an agenda
- Decide who is chairing the meeting
- Decide who is to take notes. Set up the meeting room

During the meeting:

- Start on time, and finish on time
- Review the last meeting, have actions required from previous decisions been done
- Review progress since the last meeting
- Conduct the business of the meeting briskly
- Move through the various topics on our list in an orderly way
- Spend a balanced amount of time on the different things discussed
- Focus the discussion around decisions that have to be made
- Make a clear record of the decisions made
- Make someone responsible for each decision that requires action
- Set clear time frames or deadlines for the tasks
- Make someone responsible for distributing the meeting notes/decisions to all group members
- Ensure that everyone knows the actions they need to complete before the next meeting
- Decide the time and place for the next meeting
- Decide what the next meeting will consider
- Decide on the roles in the next meeting who will prepare an agenda, distribute the agenda, chair the meeting, and take minutes/notes
- Close the meeting positively
- Clean up the room

After the meeting reflect upon:

- Was the meeting successful (Why/why not)?
- Was the meeting enjoyable (Why/why not)?
- How might we make the next meeting more productive, interesting?

5 APPENDIX 2 – AGENDA PRO-FORMA

The following is the layout used for the Agenda Pro-forma.

Date: **Time:** **Place:**

Opening business

- Apologies
- Visitors
- Delegates
- Introductions
- Correspondence
- Acceptance of minutes from last meeting
- Reports

Meeting business

- *Enter text*
- *Enter text*
- *Enter text*

Other business

- *Enter text*
- *Enter text*
- *Enter text*

Closing business

- *Enter text*
- *Enter text*
- *Enter text*
- Details of time and location of next meeting

6 APPENDIX 3 – ATTENDANCE REGISTER

The following is the layout used for the Attendance Register.

Attendance Register

Workshop Title:	***Day:***	***Date:***
Venue:	***Start:***	***Finish:***

First Name	***Last Name***	***Position***	***Company/Division***	***Contact Details***

7 APPENDIX 4 – MINUTES PRO-FORMA

The following is the layout used to record the Minutes.

MINUTES OF MEETING (SIZE 14)

NAME OF MEETING

DATE AND LOCATION OF THE MEETING

Present (Size 12)

- Names of all attendees including their company
- The Chair and the Secretary need to be identified

Apologies (Size 12)

- Names of those who advised the Secretary of their unavailability.

Opening Comments (Size 12)

- To include meeting start time
- To include any opening comments by the Chair

Previous minutes (size 12)

- Need to state if there is disagreement on the content of the previous minutes
- Need to identify who passed motion to endorse previous minutes
- Need to identify who seconded the proposal

Outstanding Action Items (Size 12)

- This section should comment on any issues that were contentious or why certain action items were not completed by the due date.
- Attach a table that identifies those action items closed off and that remain outstanding

Meeting Business (Size 12)

- In order of those items noted in the agenda

Additional Business (Size 12)

Date, Timing and Venue of next meeting (Size 12)

8 APPENDIX 5 – COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

The following is a sample Development Completion Certificate from the RISSB archives. This format can be utilised to provide official recognition that the standard(s) in question have been authorised.

Development Completion Certificate

Development of the Axle standards is now complete and as a member of the Development Group providing oversight to this project, you are requested to advise your concurrence with development completion. The specific standards are:

- Roll 15-1 Axles – Locomotive Rolling Stock
- Roll 15-2 Axles – Freight Rolling Stock
- Roll 15-3 Axles – Passenger Rolling Stock
- Roll 15-4 Axles – Infrastructure Maintenance Rolling Stock

Please sign the following certificate and forward the signed document by fax or email to the project manager.

Certificate

I agree/do not agree (*delete whichever is not applicable*) that development of the above standards is complete and the standards should be approved for issue.

Signed ………………………………………….

Name ……………………………………………

Date ……………………………………………

Comments (if any):
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