

**cool
ventures**
empowering local businesses



COOL VENTURES IMPACT REPORT

November 2024 –
October 2025



“Start Strong. Grow with purpose. Thrive with impact”



Welcome to our 2024 / 2025 Impact Report

Between November 2024 and October 2025, we continued to support entrepreneurs and small businesses across the West of England to start, grow and thrive.

This has been a year of building on strong foundations while continuing to adapt to what businesses need most. We have strengthened our core programmes, introduced new initiatives, and expanded how we deliver support – including working in partnership to reach a wider range of businesses.

Alongside this, we continued to embed our commitment to balancing purpose with performance, submitting for B Corp Certification during this period, which we were proud to achieve in January 2026.

Over the year, we supported 702 businesses, helping 47 new businesses to start and contributing to the creation of 74 jobs. Importantly, more than 1 in 4 of the businesses we supported (27%) were based in priority neighbourhoods, ensuring our support reaches those who may otherwise face barriers to access.

Behind every number in this report are individuals working hard to build something meaningful. We are proud to support them on that journey and to play a role in strengthening our local business communities.

Sue

Sue Marchant, Managing Director



2024 / 25 At a Glance – Our Core Programme.

Supporting businesses to start, grow and create jobs, while increasing access to support across our communities.

- **702 businesses supported**
- **4,950 hours of support delivered**
- **121 events delivered**
- **47 new businesses started**
- **74 jobs created through new and growing businesses**
- **97.9% client satisfaction**
- **More than 1 in 4 clients (27%) from priority neighbourhoods**



Figures shown relate to our core business support delivery across B&NES and South Gloucestershire. Additional programmes, including HR Essentials, are reported separately.



What we achieved last year



- **Supported the creation of 47 new businesses and 74 jobs**, demonstrating the impact of both new and growing businesses
- **Launched new programmes and initiatives**, including the Growth Pilot, Co-working Clubs and Carbon Reduction Accelerator
- **Piloted a Start-Up Grant programme**, awarding 10 small grants to support new businesses to launch
- **Introduced the HR Essentials programme**, our first partnership-delivered contract with The HR Dept, expanding our reach into Bristol
- **Strengthened our core programmes**, including Thrive and our start-up support offer
- **Exceeded delivery targets ahead of schedule**, reflecting strong demand and effective delivery
- **Expanded partnerships and collaborations**, strengthening the local business support ecosystem
- **Submitted for B Corp Certification**, achieving certification in January 2026



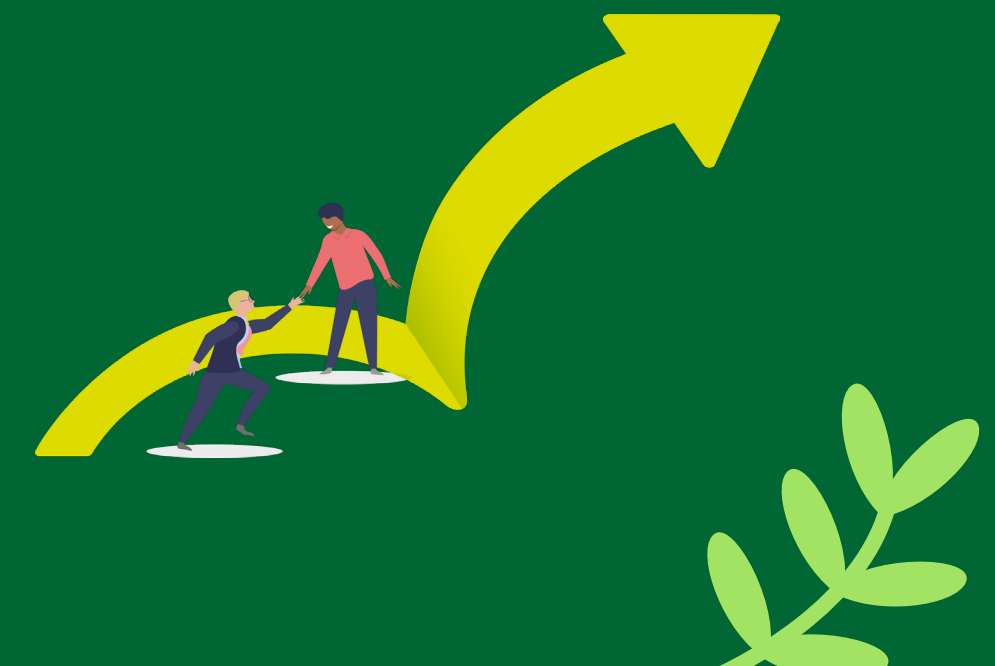
Expanding our Reach through Partnership

Alongside our core programme delivery, we have expanded how we support businesses through new programmes and partnership working, enabling us to reach a wider range of businesses.



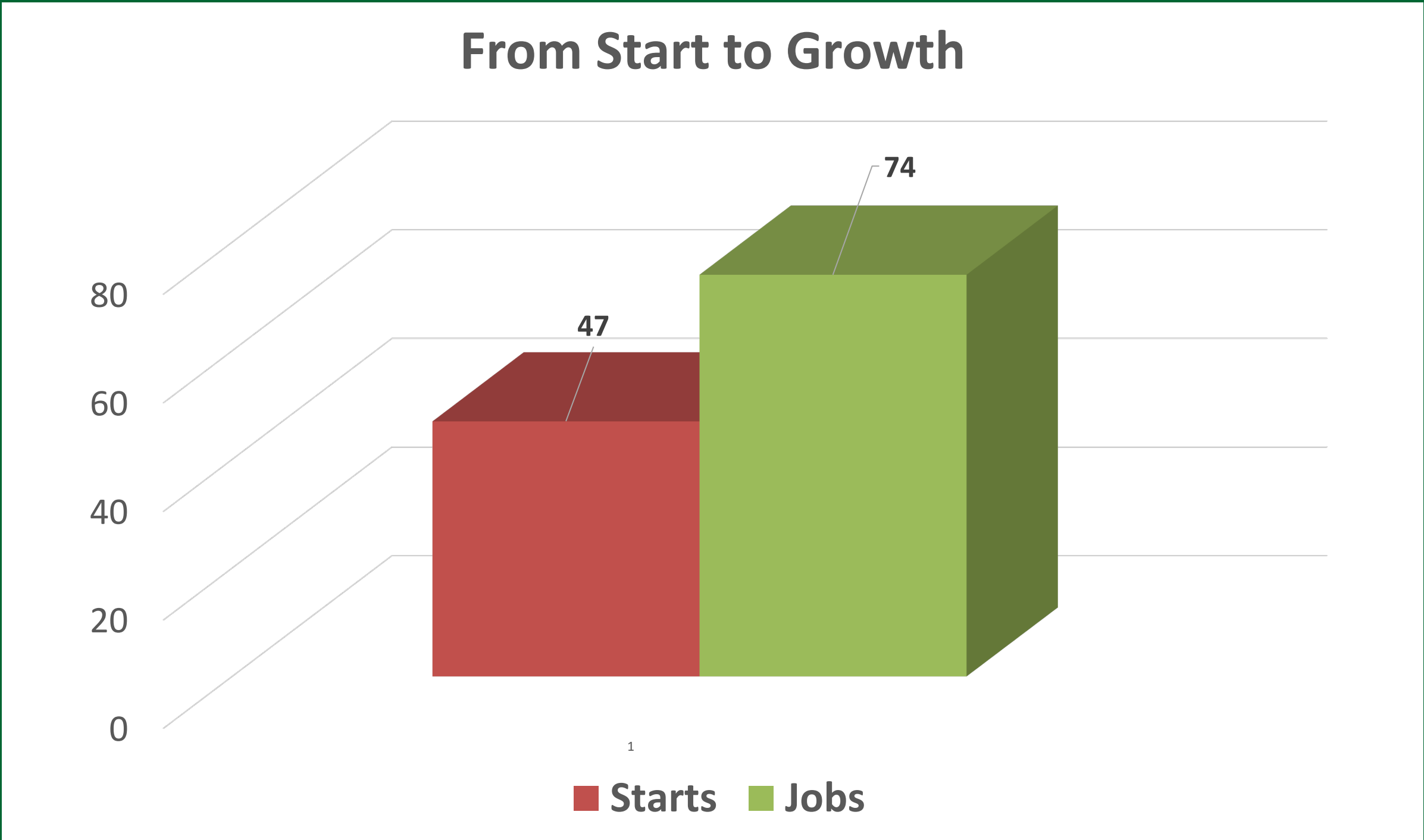
Delivered in partnership with **The HR Dept**, this programme marks our first contract delivered through a partnership model, expanding our reach into Bristol and providing specialist HR support to businesses.

- 62 HR audits completed
- 54 businesses received consultancy support
- 5 jobs supported



From Start to Growth

These outcomes reflect both individuals starting new businesses and existing businesses growing and creating employment following support.



GOVERNANCE



Certified B Corp – January 2026 Score: 109.1

What we Achieved

1

Submitted for B Corp Certification, achieving certification in January 2026

Strengthening how we balance purpose with performance and hold ourselves accountable for our impact

2

Updated our governing documents to embed our mission (mission lock)

Ensuring our commitment to delivering positive impact is formally built into how the organisation is run

3

Strengthened how we measure, monitor and report impact

Providing greater transparency for funders, partners and stakeholders

4

Achieved Cyber Essentials accreditation and Gold Fair Payment Code award

Demonstrating our commitment to data security, responsible business practices and fair treatment of suppliers

PLANS for 2025 -26

Strengthen our approach to impact & accountability, by building on our B Corp certification & impact measurement. Ensure our purpose remains central to decision making, by continuing to embed our mission across the organisation & Improve how we measure and report the difference we make, by refining our impact reporting & processes.

-



WORKERS



What we Achieved



1

Invested in our HR system (BreatheHR), including a learning module

Supporting staff development, improving transparency and creating opportunities for ongoing learning

2

Introduced an additional day's leave to celebrate team members' birthdays

Recognising the importance of wellbeing and creating a positive working culture

3

Launched our first staff survey

Providing a structured way to listen to feedback and shape how we support our team

4

Recruited and developed an apprentice within the team

Providing opportunities for progression while strengthening our internal capability

PLANS for 2025 -26

Support learning and growth through the introduction of a personal development budget. Strengthen team connection and wellbeing through increased team activities & recognition. Provide clearer structure and support for development by enhancing our performance management processes.



COMMUNITY



"I honestly feel extremely privileged and lucky to have you as our Enterprise Advisor
Ms C Murray - SBL School

What we Achieved

1

Increased participation from priority neighbourhoods to 27% (up from 20%)

Through embedding outreach adviser roles across B&NES and South Gloucestershire, bringing support closer to the communities we serve

2

Delivered the Inspiring Futures event at SBL School

Bringing together students, parents and local businesses to raise awareness of employability & enterprise and potential future opportunities

3

Contributed to local economic strategy through leadership roles

Including chairing the Resilient Business Group and sitting on the B&NES Future Ambitions Board

4

Provided staff with dedicated time for community volunteering

Enabling our team to contribute to and support the communities we work within

PLANS for 2025 -26

Increase access to support locally, by delivering more activity within community settings. Support those less likely to engage with traditional provision, by piloting a programme for NEET young people focused on employability and enterprise skills. Strengthen links with schools and partners, to create more opportunities for young people and local businesses.



ENVIRONMENT



What we Achieved



1

Funded climate action projects to offset emissions from previous years

Taking responsibility for our environmental impact while continuing to reduce our footprint

2

Delivered the Carbon Reduction Accelerator programme for small businesses

Supporting businesses to measure and reduce their own environmental impact

3

Encouraged staff to measure their own carbon footprint and make a personal pledge

Embedding sustainability into everyday behaviours across the organisation

4

Continued to develop our approach to measuring & reducing our carbon emissions

to lead internal action and share learning, embedding sustainability across our work

PLANS for 2025 -26

Strengthen our approach to managing our environmental impact, by continuing to measure, reduce & report on our carbon footprint. Take responsibility for new areas of delivery, by measuring & offsetting the impact of the HR Essentials programme in partnership with The HR Dept. Embed sustainability across the organisation, by continuing to encourage positive behaviours & ongoing improvement.



CUSTOMERS



What we Achieved

"I've had a fantastic experience with Cool Ventures! Their business mentoring and strategy support have been incredibly valuable for my growth"

Emma Doney

"Cool Ventures are such an amazing organisation and just an incredible resource for the small and SME business community.."

Em Carboni



1

Provided dedicated time and space for businesses to step back and focus on their next move

Including community co-working clubs, supporting peer learning and focused time on the business

2

Delivered more intensive, hands-on one-to-one support and specialist expertise

Supporting action and implementation, alongside introducing new workshop topics such as sales, email marketing, funding and AI in response to business demand

3

Improved accessibility to support through new approaches

Including the introduction of a Duty Adviser role, making it easier for businesses to ask questions and access support when they need it

4

Maintained consistently high levels of client satisfaction (97.9%)

Reflecting support that is relevant, responsive and shaped around individual needs

PLANS for 2025 -26

strengthen the depth and relevance of our support by introducing practical finance education and gathering insight from businesses to better understand their needs. We will also develop more structured, intensive support for those ready to grow and expand opportunities for peer learning through our co-working clubs.





What Our Clients Say



“Cool Ventures had helped me so so much to gain confidence and navigate the daunting process of starting my own business. Having free, and trustworthy advice during a financially, emotionally and physically challenging time helped me feel I wasn’t alone ...”

Lauren Cattle

“The support from every member of the Cool Ventures Team has been amazing. They take an interest in you and your business and are keen to see you succeed. In addition, they run some great courses on a whole heap of subjects as well as running networking sessions where you can meet other business owners, share stories and swap notes. Thank you Cool Ventures and please don't stop doing what you do!

Sam Baker

“Very valuable support that helped me grow in both confidence and knowledge. I felt genuinely well supported, with thoughtful, tailored guidance that matched exactly what I was looking for. The focus went straight into my business needs, making every moment feel meaningful and contributing to real, tangible growth”

Karin Legumi



What Our Partners Say



“We really value working in partnership with Cool Ventures and the Business Support Programme plays a crucial role in enabling businesses to access HR support that they may not otherwise have been able to access. By working together, we can remove barriers to specialist advice and help growing organisations put strong, compliant people practices in place from the outset.”

Stacey Mead, HR Dept

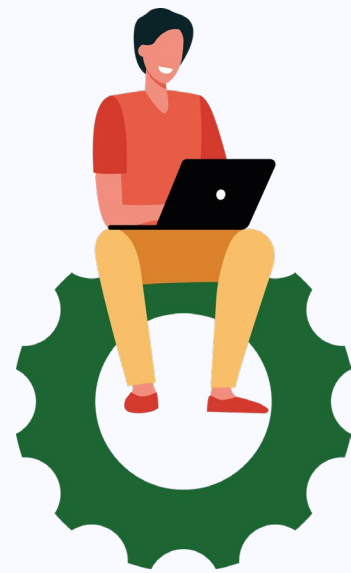


“Community Catalysts BANES has worked closely with Cool Ventures over the last two years, supporting our new homecare focused micro enterprises. We have encouraged our new enterprises to sign up for their excellent online courses, and benefit from the invaluable one to one support provided. We have trialled several joint workshops combining homecare expertise with more practical information about starting a new business.

These have proved a great success with excellent feedback from participants. This approach has been replicated by Community Catalysts colleagues working in other parts of the UK.

Cool Ventures remain a vital partner for Community Catalysts in BANES, ensuring we can continue to improve business and marketing skills for all our enterprises. Long may this partnership thrive.”

Michael Auton, Community Catalysts



What Our Associates Say



“Working as a Cool Ventures Associate has been an absolute highlight for me. Being in the privileged position to deliver fully funded training and mentoring to small businesses really aligns with my personal and business values. Together, we’ve helped so many incredible entrepreneurs - their feedback is always so positive, they feel supported, and what we do genuinely helps them grow their businesses. I’ve also really appreciated the opportunity to grow my network and raise my profile. Thank you, Cool Ventures.

Holly Bell, Your Marketing Sidekick Ltd



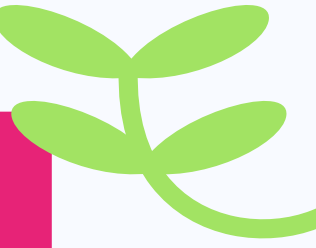
It’s been a pleasure working with Cool Ventures on these programmes. The high standard of programme management and support that Cool Ventures provides helps ensure that participants get the maximum benefit from the programmes. In particular, in matching organisations and individuals to the consultant best placed to help them. Participants always seem clear as to what they can expect which makes the delivery of the support that bit more effective. The structured reviews are very helpful, enabling both a progress check and importantly, some reflection on the support provided.

Neil McKen, Williamstowe

“It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with Cool Ventures on this responsive, flexible and innovative business support program, which has reached people from all walks of life across our community, giving them the confidence and tools to start, grow, and persevere through challenges. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and several program participants shared that they simply would not have started, or sustained, their businesses without this support. “

Emma Smith, Proposer & Thrive Ltd

What Our Funders Say



Dear Sue and the Team

I speak on behalf of Economic Development and South Glos Council and wanted to thank you all for delivering the South Glos Business Support Services.

We are incredibly proud of what Cool Ventures have achieved in supporting residents who had aspirations to start their own business and those business that had ambitions to grow, especially considering the challenging economic conditions.

Manor Singh – South Gloucestershire Council

Thank You

This has been a year of building on strong foundations while continuing to adapt and respond to the needs of the businesses and communities we support.

We are proud of what has been achieved and the difference this has made, and we remain committed to listening, evolving and ensuring our support continues to be practical, inclusive and impactful.

We couldn't have achieved this without working together, and we would like to thank our team, associates, partners, stakeholders, funders and the businesses we support for their continued contribution, support and trust



“Start Strong. Grow with purpose. Thrive with impact”

Thank you for taking the time to read this impact report.

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