

# Participating in HL7

This page provides a quick over view of who and what HL7 International is and how to participate.

## Who we are

HL7 International is officially constituted as a standards development body under the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). While ANSI is a U.S.-specific organization, many of the specifications HL7 develops are targeted for international consumption. (In HL7-speak, they are 'universal' or 'UV' specifications.) HL7 also has a large number of [international affiliates](#) which contribute to the development of HL7's standards, as well as the adaptation of those standards to their country-specific environment. The U.S. is a special case and does not have a separate affiliate, but instead has a specific group - the [U.S. Realm Steering Committee](#) - that helps coordinate U.S.-specific standards development.

Almost all of the work performed at HL7 is done by volunteer participants - though many of those 'volunteers' are funded by their employers to participate. Participation is open to anyone and we welcome a wide range of perspectives - software developers and vendors, clinical, patients and care-givers, academic, insurance, government, pharmaceutical, etc. Some participants are independent consultants who spend much of their time working on various HL7 projects. In addition to its volunteer workforce, HL7 maintains a small staff who helps to support the organization's infrastructure - running the websites and other technical services, organizing and managing meetings, providing administrative services to governance bodies, supporting education and outreach, etc.

## Organization Structure

The HL7 organization is divided up into 40 or so "[work groups](#)" covering different areas of healthcare, such as pharmacy, public health, research, etc. Some work groups only have a small number of active participants and others may have 40 or 50 - and lots of others who contribute occasionally. Each work group also has from 2 to 6+ co-chairs elected by the participants who are responsible for chairing meetings, organizing agendas and generally trying to ensure that the work within each work group is conducted smoothly and efficiently. The various work groups are organized into four '[steering divisions](#)' that help coordinate work across work groups focused on different areas. The steering divisions then report to the [Technical Steering Committee \(TSC\)](#) which oversees standards development across the organization. In addition to this, there are several other governance bodies that manage some of the major product families we develop standards for, that provide specific organizational process support, etc. These generally also report to the TSC. Finally, [HL7's Board of Directors](#) provides strategic oversight and manages the strategic direction and financial stability of the organization

## Getting involved

HL7 welcomes and encourage newcomers to join in discussion and contribute to the development of our specifications. We encourage all participants to be members because it helps to support the organization and provides a [number of benefits](#) including reduced costs for meetings and education. Membership either in HL7 itself or one of its affiliates is a requirement in order to take on an official leadership role - i.e. be elected as a co-chair, be a member of one of the governance bodies, or be a member of the board of directors. Membership is also necessary to be able to participate in the formal voting on proposed standards for free. Non-members who are members of certain other standards organizations may be entitled to reciprocal voting rights, but otherwise non-members must pay a fee for each specification they wish to vote on.

However, beyond getting involved in governance or formal voting, contribution to HL7 standards development is open to anyone. Non-members are free to join calls, participate in <http://chat.fhir.org> (HL7's community discussion forum), submit requests for change to HL7 specifications and vote on decisions in work group meetings.

To engage with a particular work group, go to the work group's page on the HL7 website (<http://www.hl7.org/special/committees>) and either sign up to their list serve or look for the [next conference call](#) time-slot. You can also email the co-chairs and ask for the best mechanism to engage.

## More information

- [Understanding the Standards Process](#)