

HL7 Model Interchange Format Change Control

Policy and Procedures

HL7 Tooling Committee

Version 1.0

Approved 2006-12-21

This document describes the policies and procedures associated with maintaining the HL7 Model Interchange Format (MIF).

1 MIF approval status

The MIF consists of a number of schemas each with numerous elements and attributes. Within a packaged release, MIF elements shall have one of the three status types described in this section. The status of each element will be clearly signified by an annotation for the element¹. The status of a given element may change as new releases of the MIF are published.

1.1 Approved

MIF data elements shall not be considered APPROVED until successfully passing HL7 Tooling Committee votes to approve. Such votes will be conducted in accordance with the Committee's Decision Making Practices document.

HL7-endorsed tools are expected to support APPROVED elements in order to satisfy HL7's current and near-term design and implementation requirements.

1.2 Draft

MIF data elements that are approved for inclusion but not yet tested shall be clearly marked as 'DRAFT' within the MIF documentation. DRAFT components may be implemented for testing, and may be subject to change prior to committee approval.

DRAFT MIF material shall not be implemented within tools endorsed by the Tooling Committee and released for use within the HL7 membership as "stable" tools, though DRAFT MIF may be included in Alpha or Beta-release tools with the prior approval of the Tooling Committee.

All tools shall be capable of successfully parsing, validating, and round-tripping without data-loss DRAFT content even if they do not otherwise expose or manipulate it.

Note: Because the MIF schemas make use of inheritance as part of their definition, it is possible that an inherited element may be considered APPROVED for some usages, but DRAFT for other usages. This will be managed by including comments explaining the differences in usage.

¹ In practice, flags for DRAFT and DEPRECATED will be used and the absence of a flag will signify APPROVED.

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1.3 *Deprecated*

MIF data elements that have previously been approved but for which support has been withdrawn shall be marked as DEPRECATED. Any DEPRECATED element must also have recorded:

- the date of deprecation
- an explanation of the reason for deprecation
- the mechanism intended to replace the function previously handled by this element

DEPRECATED elements may be removed from the MIF schema 2 years after the date of deprecation. Prior to that time, tools must be capable of successfully parsing, validating, and round-tripping without data-loss DEPRECATED content even if they do not otherwise expose or manipulate it.

2 MIF versioning, naming and publishing

The MIF shall be versioned according to the principles documented in the Tooling Committee's *HL7 Tools Release Practice on GForge* document. Part of that document has been copied over for application to MIF versioning and naming within this section.

2.1 *MIF Versioning*

Once promoted as a major release, the only changes made to the main branch of the MIF are those needed to fix bugs. New development occurs in 'branches', with multiple branches possible (e.g. one branch for near-term functionality and another branch for major re-writes.) MIF components may be released from these branches as "beta" releases, indicating that the MIF is ready for preliminary or test usage, but has not yet undergone full testing. When a "beta" has undergone full testing, it can then be migrated to the production MIF branch, superseding the previous main branch, and forming the basis for subsequent bug patch releases. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

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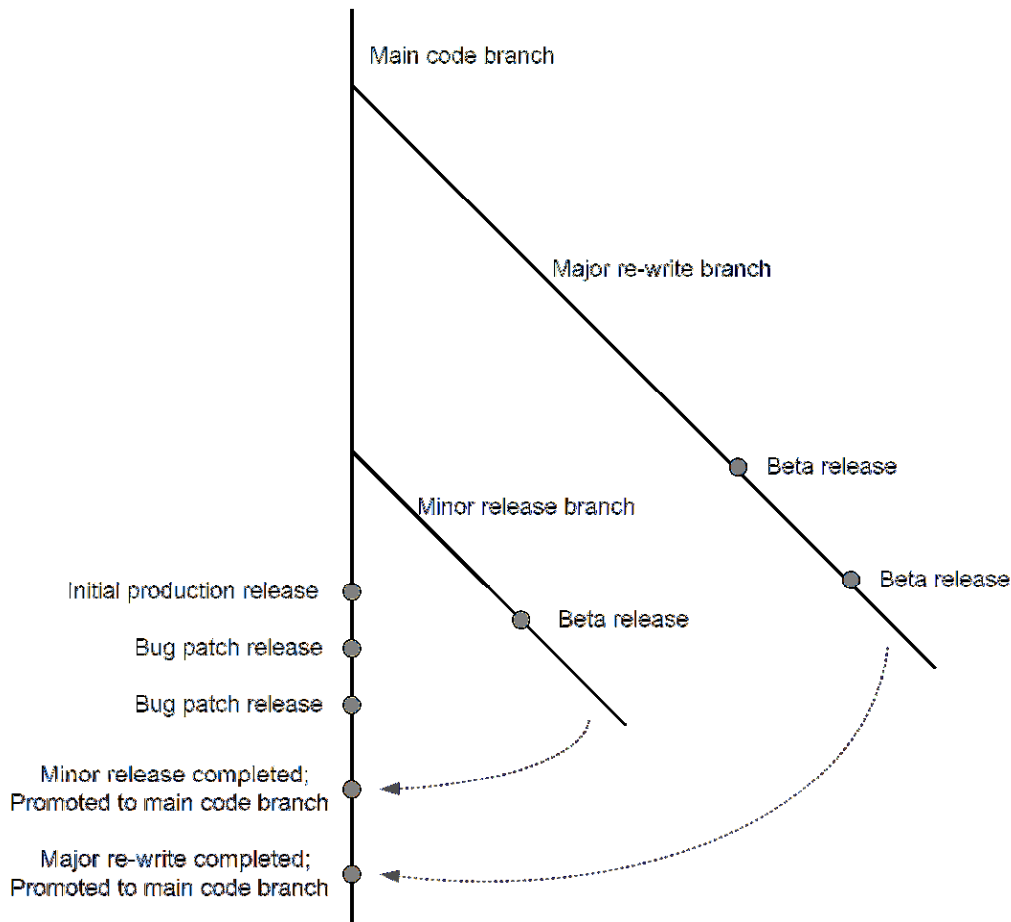


Figure 1: MIF release life cycle - Branching Approach

Note that at any given point in time there may be several fix-packs against previous MIF releases as well as the next release itself. A key part of the branch release process is to ensure that the different types of releases are clearly distinguished, and that users are guided to the appropriate release. For example, most users should be pointed at the most recent release on the main code branch. Only the “beta” tester should be guided to one of the other branches.

2.2 MIF Naming

MIF file naming convention follows the GNU-style names with a project stem prefix and major.minor.patch numbering format. The MIF name format is **mif-[Version Number].[Minor Release Number].[Patch Level]**.

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The MIF release in current use by a particular version of each of HL7, Inc. tools shall be clearly noted. The MIF release in current use by versions of HL7 Tooling Collaborative tools shall also be clearly noted.

2.3 MIF publication

The MIF will be available as packaged releases (including historical releases) on the HL7 Project Homepage site and will be appropriately tagged within the source control system. This site is accessible to all HL7 members.

3 MIF change proposals

MIF change proposals for DRAFT (for testing) or APPROVAL shall be submitted for acceptance via HL7 Project Homepage and in accordance with Committee decision-making practice policies.

Defect reports (areas where the MIF is inconsistent or does not reflect existing methodology) may also be posted to the HL7 Project Homepage.

Each change request should include the following information:

- Type (bug, feature request or support request)
- Target change category (DRAFT, APPROVED, DEPRECATED)
- Group (Identifies which MIF schema file)
- Priority (1-lowest to 5-highest)
- State (Open, Closed, Deleted)²
- Description
- The requestor (log-in ID)

Following resolution, the Tooling Committee shall add the following information in association with each change request:

- Resolution (None, Accepted, Rejected, Postponed)
- The MIF release for which the change is planned or has been applied
- Impact assessment
- Target implementation date³
- Actual implementation date

Appendix A describes how MIF change request status is documented using the HL7 Project Homepage site.

² Initial state is always "Open"

³ 'Implementation' reflects when the agreed change will be written in MIF and made available on the HL7 Project Homepage site.

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A. Managing change requests in HL7 Project Homebase

Change request status is managed using two separate attributes: State and Resolution. Allowed combinations and interpretations are as follows

State	Resolution	Interpretation
Open	None	The proposal or defect has not yet had a decision made about it.
Open	Accepted	The proposal or defect has been discussed and approved by a vote of the Tooling TC but not yet implemented in a committed release of the MIF.
Open	Postponed	Decision on resolution of the item has been postponed. Target date or issues to be resolved prior to reconsideration shall be tracked in a comment made at the time of posting.
Closed	Accepted	The change has been made and committed into a published MIF release. The change implementation date and MIF release shall be documented.
Closed	Rejected	The Tooling Committee has voted to reject the proposed change. Details of the reason for the rejection shall be captured as a comment at the time this status is documented.
Deleted	None	Used when duplicate, "test" or other withdrawn (prior to resolution) proposals are posted.

Note: "Out of Date" is an available resolution in the Homebase drop-down list but will not be used for tracking MIF change requests.

In addition to the Homebase tracking logs, the following actions shall be used to link change proposals to MIF releases:

Source Control

When committing MIF changes associated with a particular proposal or defect, the number associated with the change, and ideally a hyperlink should be included as part of the description of the change

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Change Log

A change log shall be maintained for the MIF which identifies the changes associated with each version of the MIF. Each change associated with a change log item will identify the number of the item.