Australian Government

Australian Digital Health Agency

Australian Digital Health Agency AFCP Compliance

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1   Introduction

1.1   Purpose

This document aims to meet the requirements of the Australian FHIR Community Process (AFCP) by outlining the approach of the Australian Digital Health Agency (The Agency) in developing, managing, and publishing Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) specifications that are submitted to the AFCP.

The document is designed to ensure that the Agency's activities align with the principles and processes outlined in the [Australian FHIR Management Framework (AFMF) v2.0](#), which provides a structured approach to the governance, development, and implementation of FHIR standards in Australia through a community-driven approach. A detailed traceability table can be found in section 5 – AFCP Requirement Traceability.

The Agency is a Partner organisational member of HL7 Australia and the FHIR specifications it develops are applicable to all Australian jurisdictions, unless stated otherwise. The Agency is also, since July 2025, an approved AFCP Participant.

1.2   Scope

The document applies to all projects and activities undertaken by the Agency that involve the development, management, and publication of FHIR specifications that are submitted to the AFCP.

2   FHIR Specification Development

2.1   Inputs

When developing FHIR specifications, Agency developers follow a process that stipulates that multiple inputs are needed to ensure specifications are fit for purpose. The figure below identifies the most common inputs that are required to inform the development of FHIR specifications at the Agency. The inputs can be classified into two main categories:

- **Internal** – produced by the Agency teams involved in the overall solution delivery. They include, for example, information requirements, and help translate business requirements into implementation requirements for the FHIR specifications.

- **External** – usually produced externally to the Agency but are heavily utilised in the development of FHIR specifications. They include, for example, national standards such as HL7 FHIR AU Core, from which FHIR specifications may derive content from. The Agency makes use of the FHIR Implementation Guide (IG) Registry when searching for published specifications.
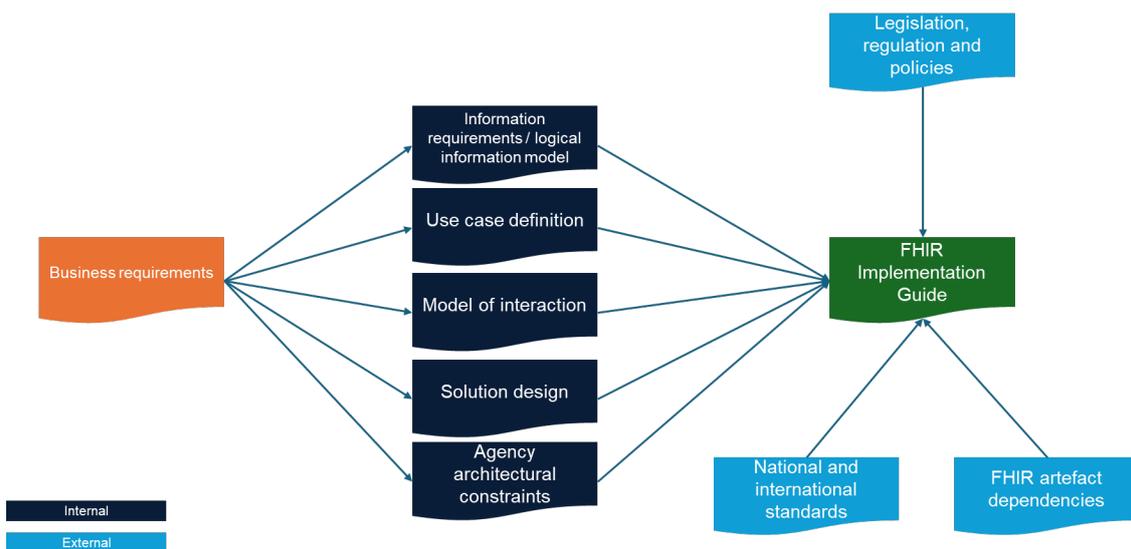

Figure 1 - inputs to FHIR specification development

2.2   Development Lifecycle

The figure below shows the typical development lifecycle that applies to FHIR specifications developed by the Agency. From a community consultation perspective, engagement commences as soon as a mature draft that has passed Agency internal quality assurance is available.
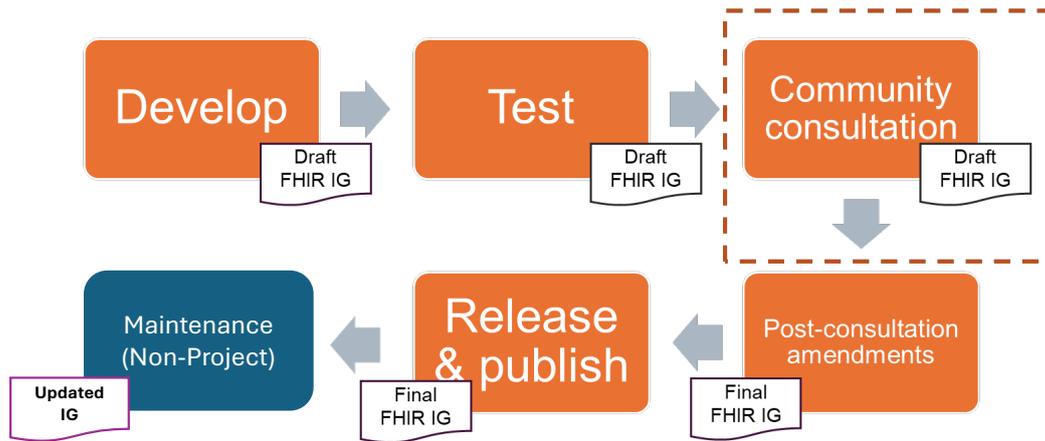
Figure 2 - FHIR specification development lifecycle

It is important to note that implementer feedback may be provided to the Agency during the initial stages of the FHIR IG development, if Agency projects establish working / reference groups for that purpose.

For detail regarding Community Consultation, refer to section 3 – Community Engagement.

Specification development will exit the project development lifecycle at the end of a project when a final IG is published. At that stage the specification is transitioned to "Maintenance" and will be kept updated in line with section 2.4 – Long-term Maintenance.

2.3   Publication, Versioning, Intellectual Property, Licencing and Copyright

The Agency process for publishing a specification requires that:

- (Quality) Assurance processes are complete. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - o   Successful IG Publisher validation without errors.
    - o   Examples for each profile.
    - o   Link integrity checks.
    - o   Terminology validation.
    - o   Narrative quality and consistency.
    - o   Known issues (including security, safety, and privacy issues) are adequately highlighted.
- The publication approval processes are complete.
- Each IG will be published at a stable canonical URL (permanent home) with a directory of published versions. Releases are tagged, with changelogs and archived snapshots.
- The implementation guide is built and packaged for publication.
- A publication request is submitted to the Agency Products team.

The versioning of specifications is done in accordance with the [HL7 FHIR Version Management Policy](#).

The content of AFCP FHIR specifications produced by the Agency is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Specifications are published in the Agency's Developer Portal, which is covered by these [Terms of Use](#).

All Agency specifications are publicly available and can be found in the Agency's [Developer Portal](#).

Agency specifications developed as part of the AFCP will also be published in the FHIR [Implementation Guide Registry](#).

The Agency will notify the AFCC when an IG reaches publication readiness and for subsequent releases.

2.4   Long-term Maintenance

Maintenance will be carried by Agency resources. If this approach is no longer viable, if required, the Agency commits to attempting to handing the project over to another party to carry out maintenance of the specification.

After an Agency AFCP specification has been published, contributions can still be raised by the community with the Agency through the support channels in the Agency Developer Portal. Any contributions submitted will be assessed and addressed ensuring the impact to implementations of the specification is minimised.

Contributions that lead to changes to a specification will be reflected in a newer version, delivered according to section 2.3 – Publication, Versioning, Intellectual Property, Licencing and Copyright. The Agency will re-submit the specification to the AFCP in the event of a major version change.

2.5   Use of AFCP Logo

The Agency will submit approval requests to AFCC for FHIR specifications seeking to use the AFCP logo. If approved, the Agency will display the logo on FHIR specification pages.

3   Community Engagement

The Agency will notify the Australian FHIR Coordination Committee (AFCC) of new AFCP Projects and post to announce the project on FHIR Community Chat (chat.fhir.org) in the #Australia channel. In future, a post will also be made on the Agency Community Forum Platform (CFP), when live. In addition to a post, the Agency will also organise a kick-off project presentation at the FHIR Working Group (or dedicated online meeting, if deemed required).

The information shared with the community will include:

- Project information, including milestones and high-level schedule focused on testing and community consultation and communication plan.

- Link to the AFCP project register in the HL7 Confluence.

- Link to the Agency GitHub where the draft FHIR specification can be found in a public repository.

- Summary of the rules for the AFCP project describing how to address contributions raised by the community, decision-making process for work prioritisation, project contacts.

The following guidelines will be followed as part of the community engagement process:

- Unless stated otherwise, a formal ballot process will not be followed by Agency-developed specifications.

- Contributions of intellectual property to a specification are open to anyone in the community unless it is stated otherwise.

- Contributions regarding the draft FHIR specification can be raised in the Australian Digital Health Agency GitHub as "Issues" or "Pull Requests". All contributions raised are publicly accessible in GitHub, so anyone can see what the community has raised.

- A web browsable publication of the FHIR specification will be made available on a publicly accessible test web server operated by the Agency.

- Regular updates will be posted on FHIR Community Chat / CFP throughout the consultation phase.

- Testing of specifications with the community will also be conducted at HL7 Australia Connectathon events, subject to individual project requirements.

- A publicly available Agency mailbox will be available for the community to submit queries; Queries can also be submitted through the FHIR Community Chat / CFP.

- AFCP projects will submit regular updates to the Australian FHIR Working Group (or dedicated online meeting, if deemed required) through its distribution list and respond to queries during conference calls.

- AFCP projects will release email updates to the community by making use of the FHIR Working Group mail list fhirwglist@hl7.com.au and AU Core mail list aucorelist@hl7.com.au.

3.1 Community Contributions

As stated above, contributions regarding the draft FHIR specification can be raised in the Australian Digital Health Agency GitHub as "Issues" or "Pull Requests." All contributions logged will be analysed by the Agency internal teams and an update on the proposed resolution will be provided back to the community.

The Agency teams responsible for developing the FHIR specification will follow an internal process of decision-making to determine the right course of action to take regarding each contribution received as part of the community consultation process.

When contributions are deemed to potentially have an impact on overall project schedule or scope, they will be escalated to the Agency project manager and key project stakeholders for advice.

When contributions are assessed as accepted for inclusion in the specification, they will be prioritised according to their date of submission, impact, and effort. It is possible that contributions may also be deferred for inclusion in the specification at a later stage (i.e., during the maintenance phase).

Contributions can also be rejected by the Agency, if determined through the decision-making process.

To ensure full transparency of the decision-making process, the Agency will commit to updating the original GitHub contribution with a proposed resolution and providing a summary of all contributions received, their nature, and recommended resolutions at the FHIR Working Group calls (or dedicated online meeting, if deemed required).

When a party who has submitted a contribution does not accept the proposed resolution, they can raise their concerns directly with the Agency AFCP project leader. The Agency may, at that time, engage the contributor directly.

After a project is concluded, Agency FHIR specifications developed through the AFCP will transition to a maintenance state as per section 2.4 – Long-term Maintenance. When in maintenance, users in the community will still be able to raise contributions in the same way through GitHub.

4 Other Considerations

4.1 Community Support

The Agency is responsible for funding arrangements and provision of community support for the AFCP project. More specifically, the Agency will provide Secretariat support during AFCP project discussions at the FHIR Working Group meetings (or dedicated online meeting, if deemed required).

4.2 Conflicts of Interest

Any conflicts of interest that apply to an Agency AFCP project will be clearly and concisely documented. If any conflicts of interest are identified at the time of submission of an AFCP project, they will form part of the submission pack and the community informed. If, during the project's lifecycle a new or updated conflict of interest is identified, the Agency will notify the AFCC and the community through the channels highlighted in this document.

4.3 AFCP Project Leadership

The AFCP Project Leader will be the Agency Director Clinical Informatics, unless determined otherwise by the Agency Senior Responsible Officer, the Branch Manager Informatics and Standards. The Secretariat will be notified of any changes to the project's leadership.

5 AFCP Requirement Traceability

The table below describes how requirements **a)** to **k)** from the **Australian FHIR Management Framework (AFMF) v2.0**, section 2.2.1. AFCP Projects and Participation | New AFCP Projects, are met by this Agency document.

Requirement	Relevant Section in Document
a) The project leader shall be an AFCP Participant, and the Secretariat shall be notified of any changes to the project's leadership. Where conflict of interest or other governance issues are identified by the AFCC, the AFCC will bring this to the Participant's attention and negotiate a solution.	4.1, 4.2
b) The license and intellectual property (IP) contribution requirements shall be under a Creative Commons Public Domain license unless otherwise agreed in writing with the AFCC.	2.3
c) There shall be a way for anyone to comment and contribute IP to the project.	3.1
d) Input into the issue resolution, formal ballot and work prioritisation decision and project leadership may be restricted to a sub-community based on AFCP Participant policy or membership (or government obligations). Such rules shall be documented.	3.1
e) Community engagement strategies shall be documented (e.g., meetings, teleconferences/videoconferences, wikis, email lists, chat lines, etc.).	3
f) The means via which stakeholders will be notified of significant project events shall be documented.	3
g) The means via which community support (particularly the Secretariat) is provided and funded shall be documented.	4.1
h) Potential conflicts of interest shall be made public to the community.	4.2

i) The project development cycle should follow these general steps and shall be documented:
• Development of scope and intent.
• Recruitment of interested parties (marketing – AFCP Participants undertake to help each other in this process).
• Repeated cycles of:
   o Publishing draft specifications.
   o Open community discussion.
   o Testing the specification at community events.
	2, 3

j) Optional formal review cycle or ballot, according to HL7 AU balloting rules. This provides the last call for comment	3
k) Publication of milestone release - usually, a FHIR® Implementation Guide, but other outputs (see viii below) are possible if they better capture community agreements.	2.2, 2.3, 2.5

Table 1 - requirement traceability

When producing documentation during the course of the AFCP project, the Agency will link that documentation to this compliance policy and requirements listed in this section to streamline the assessment process for the AFCP project.

6 Acronyms

Term	Meaning
AFCC	Australian FHIR Coordination Committee
AFCP	Australian FHIR Community Process
CFP	Community Forum Platform
FHIR	Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources
IG	Implementation Guide