

# Using OHDSI Workgroups to Get Things Done

## Background & Purpose

The OHDSI community forms workgroups to collaborate and produce evidence or to provide support for evidence production. Workgroups start and develop organically in response to community needs and interests. This has produced a large number of workgroups. Their functional relationships to one another may not be obvious to community members. This document categorizes and describes OHDSI workgroups and their interrelationships and provides guidance on how to use them to get work done.

## Category Definitions

There are different types of workgroups. Some focus on the community’s critically important *core* infrastructure. For example, no other pieces of the OHDSI infrastructure would work without the OMOP Vocabulary that is overseen by the Vocabulary Workgroup. Other workgroups are focused on conducting research in a particular *domain* such as health equity or medical imaging. Finally, some workgroups *support* the community’s organizational needs, or the needs of a segment of the community, or on region-specific objectives. For example, the Asia Pacific Chapter focuses on activities by OHDSI members in the Asia Pacific region.

**Core Workgroups** provide critically important infrastructure.

**Domain Workgroups** do work related to a specific disease domain or exposure domain or data domain.

**Support Workgroups** provide support for the entire community, or a segment of it, or a geographic region of the community.

## Workgroup Categories

Category	Subcategory	Workgroup
Core	Data model	Vocabulary
		Common Data Model
Themis	Methods	Patient-Level Prediction

		Population-Level Estimation
	Tools	HADES
		Data Quality Dashboard Development
		Phenotype Development & Evaluation
		ATLAS/WebAPI
<b>Domain</b>	Data source	Clinical Trials
		FHIR & OMOP
		Geographic Information Systems
		Medical Devices
		Medical Imaging
		Natural Language Processing
		Registry
		Vaccine Vocabulary
	Exposure	Health Equity
		Surgery and Perioperative Medicine
	Disease	Oncology
		Psychiatry
<b>Support</b>	Regional	Africa Chapter
		Asia-Pacific Chapter
		Latin America Chapter
	Community segment	Early-Stage Researchers
		Open-Source Community
		Healthcare Systems
	Broad	Education
		Steering Group (a facilitative, not a directive decision making body)

## Dependencies among core workgroups

OHDSI's mission is to produce evidence to improve health decisions. Any work done by the community to produce evidence requires several interrelated infrastructure components: modeling healthcare data; making data available in modeled form; developing best practice methods for analyzing the data; developing and deploying tools that implement the best analytic practices; and conducting studies that use these tools to produce impactful reliable evidence in multisite research.

The Core workgroups that develop and support this infrastructure for generating evidence are critical to the mission in ways that Domain and Support workgroups are not. If the analytics methods are faulty, for example, this compromises the community's mission in ways that similar problems in a domain or support workgroup do not.

The core workgroups are interdependent. Tooling changes, for example, are required to leverage improvements to the Common Data Model.

## **How to use workgroups to get things done**

All OHDSI workgroups are use case driven. Their objectives, in other words, are driven by the specific needs to produce real evidence, not by work that could be important but has no current use. Work on a use case often presents challenges that require collaboration from another workgroup. You can get a sense of which workgroup is related to your need from the workgroup descriptions linked on the OHDSI main webpage.

When challenges arise that exceed the resources of your workgroup or project, there are several ways to leverage the resources of the relevant workgroups:

1. Post a description of the need or proposal on the OHDSI Forums and include @tags of the leads of the appropriate workgroup that you want help from
2. Attend a meeting of the workgroup and present the need, or invite a member of the other workgroup to attend your meeting
3. Become a member of the workgroup or invite a member of the needed workgroup to participate in your workgroup, study, or project
4. Discuss your challenges, resources needed on an OHDSI community call and ask for collaboration.

After defining your use case and identifying the workgroup(s) with which you will need to collaborate, it is up to that workgroup(s) to prioritize your request. There are often multiple external groups requesting assistance related to their use cases but before work can begin, there is a process to be followed, as defined by each group. For example, the CDM Working Group receives many requests to change, add, or remove from the Common Data Model based on given use cases. In these situations, each use case is presented to the group for consideration. After a decision is made, the request is either denied or approved pending prioritization. Once prioritized against other outstanding requests, the change is then incorporated into a future version of the CDM and the release date is set. These processes and use cases necessitating assistance from other workgroups are not immediate as the impact on the community must be fully assessed prior to approval and incorporation.

## **Workgroup meetings**

Workgroup meetings can have multiple purposes, including: to build community, to coordinate work and to provide a forum for facilitated discussion around the use cases of interest. Each workgroup reserves the right to structure their synchronous time together as needed to achieve their Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) for the year. It is suggested the workgroup leaders set an agenda in advance of each workgroup discussion and provide clear guidance on the intent of the workgroup convening. Where a workgroup may desire to tackle a large project, it is suggested that workgroups set-up additional time outside of the standing workgroup time to have dedicated breakouts to focus on these larger initiatives. Some workgroups may find the “-thon” concept to be a useful motivator for convening large projects. An OHDSI “-thon” refers to a synchronous session over one or multiple days around a targeted effort.

Examples include the CDM Doc-u-thon, the HADES Unit Test-a-thon and even Phenotype WG's mother-of-all-thons the "Phenotype Phebruary" exercise.

We encourage each workgroup to kick off their meetings by recording the sessions. Each workgroup meeting should allocate a few minutes to welcome newcomers and allow them to introduce themselves to the workgroup community. The meeting can then progress to the agenda at hand.

It is at the discretion of the workgroup lead as to what cadence a workgroup needs to convene to accomplish its OKRs. It is suggested that all workgroup leads consult the community calendar to avoid overlapping with other standing workgroup meetings. It is also suggested that workgroups consider hosting alternating time slots to accommodate Eastern and Western hemisphere collaboration.

We highly encourage the use of tools such as GitHub to track ongoing projects. For tips and tricks on how to best utilize GitHub, reach out to OHDSI Titans (Adam Black, Clair Blacketer and Marc Suchard).

Each workgroup is required to provide at least one annual update during the weekly OHDSI Community Call.