

Humanitarian Logistics Data Model FAQ

What is the Humanitarian Logistics Data Model?

A freely available list of basic concepts that describe the information we use to manage Humanitarian Logistics. The level of detail that we go to will be decided during the course of the initiative, but some examples could include “warehouse”, “location (bin)” etc. While each organisation may have our own version of a “warehouse”, we can still all agree on the basics of what it is and what it does. That agreement is the basis of the data model and allows us to get the systems to talk to each other.

What does it do?

It will allow stakeholders to exchange information while knowing we are fundamentally talking about the same underlying concepts. This could be from knowing that a Delivery Docket in one organisation is a Waybill in another; to pinpointing the differences between organisations pre-qualifications of suppliers so that supplier lists can be shared and understood. Crucially, while this initiative requires that we create common terms for the purpose of developing and understanding the model, we will still be able to use our own terms in our everyday use. The software platforms will translate the information for us in the background.

Who makes this work?

Technology providers build compatibility with the model into their platforms. In return, by building to the standard, they benefit from lower development costs and their products have greater compatibility with more organisations. This means their product development and maintenance is more commercially viable and sustainable both now and for the long term.

Why is it valuable?

We are looking to ensure that the next generation of Frontline Humanitarian Logistics tools are cheaper for us to operate and for technology providers to build and maintain sustainably. The standard will also facilitate and accelerate collaboration via allowing us to share information irrespective of our technology platforms, how organisations operate, covering differing geographies, parts of the supply chain, subsets of inventories etc.

How will this be achieved?

We shall agree upon fundamental concepts (such as those mentioned above) that provide the basis for managing Humanitarian Logistics. Those areas identified in the Learning Exercise as having the greatest need and consensus will be the starting point for the data modelling, informed by related sector¹ and industry² initiatives. Those areas that are more niche or have little agreement within the community may be left for tech providers and/or organisations to develop as separate extensions to the core data model.

How does the data model fit with the rest of the Nethope initiative?

The *Learning Exercise* will bring out the areas of greatest need, interest and consensus among participating stakeholders. Combining these with related literature, the facilitators will identify a rough starting point (a “straw man”) for us to develop the data model. Both the *Learning Exercise* and the *Humanitarian Logistics Data Model* will inform the resulting technology platforms that are built in the final stage of the initiative.

¹ such as A Blecken's Reference Task Model

² such as SCOR

What happens to the data model after this initiative?

At the end of the initiative we shall have an open source data model that describes maybe 40% of the information that we use in Humanitarian Logistics. This will continue to be a resource for reference on commonalities, however as adoption of the data model increases, the value of this initiative will also further increase. If the initiative takes off in the way that we hope, tech providers and organisations will expand the data model into their own specific areas. Down the line it may well be useful to bring back in some of those expansions and add them to the core data model to ensure it keeps up with the changes in the industry and sector.

Where has this been successful before?

For years the Healthcare sector had been struggling with exchanging patient record information. The FHIR initiative, started in 2011 now has global adoption, including all digital NHS services in the UK and in Apple's iPhone Health app. The core data model has been grown from concepts that are applicable to at least 80% of use cases, ensuring the model has been widely usable and not overwhelming.