Open Referral Version Control process - DRAFT

Purpose

This document is a draft proposal for the open version control process for Open Referral to ensure the standard's development process is transparent, open, consistent and timely. The process is designed to access suggested changes by anyone and ensure the interests of adopters are protected.

Proposals are based on discussions with current Open Referral UK and US adopters and assistance was sought from the Open Data Institute. The process needs to be agreed with the Open Referral UK governance organisation (under construction in March 2022) and with the wider international Open Referral Community during April and May 2022. Concurrent with that, consultation is ongoing for the next version of Open Referral and its Open Referral UK application profile.

When agreed, the process will be published as part of Open Referral public documentation integrated into the contents of Open Referral - public documentation and placed on both the Open Referral and Open Referral UK websites (unless/until the two are combined).

Responsible parties

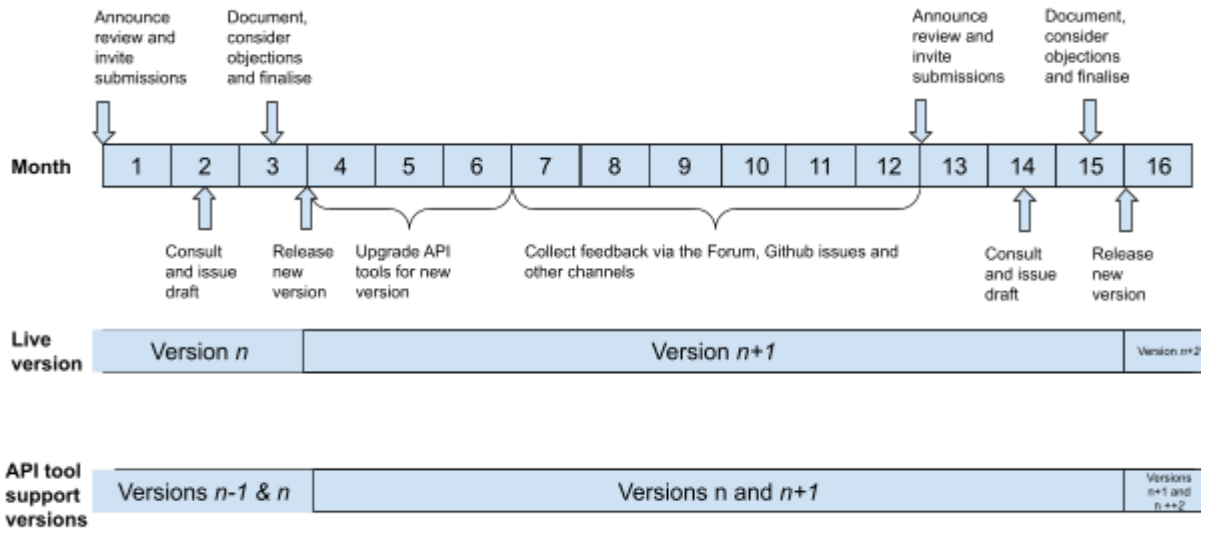
This process will be implemented by an Open Referral organisation, hereafter referred to as "the organisation" which will comprise people appointed by the US and UK Open Referral communities (and potentially more over time) that will over time constitute one or more formal entities.

The organisation will appoint a steward to administer each review process. The steward role may be split between individuals or organisations, each with specific responsibilities.

The Process

The Human Services Data Structure (HSDS) and Human Services Data API (HSDA) will be subject to review at 12 month or shorter intervals leading to version changes as concluded by the review process. The review process will normally take a maximum of three months and tooling will normally be updated to support the new version (as well as the prior version) within a further three months.

Timeline for minor and major releases



The steward will:

- Issue notification of the review on the Open Referral forum and via the mailing list
- Review outstanding proposals for changes and invite new proposals via
    - GitHub and Forum points which the steward will tag as follows:
        - “major-upgrade” for HSDS changes which would not be backwards compatible (as so require a main version number change)
        - “minor-upgrade” for other HSDS changes
        - “api” for API changes other than ones that simply result from HSDS changes
    - Additional properties added in shared public feeds featured in the Dashboard
    - Common service and other attributes in shared public feeds featured in the Dashboard that might be considered as data tables and fields in their own right

  The invitation will state that all proposals and comments may be used and shared by Open Referral under an open licence so they must not include any information for which the contributor or a third party might claim ownership
- Document recommendations for a major or minor version change based on the proposals
- Invite comment on the recommendations in writing and via one or more open online meetings
- Complete and share proposals taking account of comments made, offering the opportunity to object to decisions made
- Consider any objections and finalise proposals. Where there has not been a broad consus on a decision, the reason for the decision will be documented publicly
- Implement the version change in machine and human readable formats with guidance documentation
- Ensure both the new and the immediate prior versions remain supported by online documentation and tooling

Minor versions will be backwards compatible with prior versions. Major versions may introduce incompatibilities. Formal representatives of international or UK communities may

veto backward incompatibilities to parts of the standard implemented in live API feeds. In this way we protect organisations who invest in deploying the standard.

Tables and fields not used in any open feeds will be considered candidates for removal from HSDS.

As part of the process of implementing a new version, the steward will update the “Core tables” and “Extended” application profiles.

The UK community will be responsible for updating the UK application profile. It will be the responsibility of the owners of any other application profiles to maintain them in line with version changes.

API response formats will be defined by a standard mechanistic process applied to the data structure (HSDS) for each application profile. API parameters will be subject to the same version control as the HSDS structure.