

Pre-Modeling Cleanup (Step One - Definitions)

Creating an effective UML Model that is based on the current SDSFIE (Release 2.500 and 2.600) requires an understanding of the current state of the standard, its strengths, and its deficiencies. The UML Model will be a collection of classes where the "leaf" classes, e.g. those that are at the ends of the branches, roughly correspond to the Features (Entity Types) in the SDSFIE. While the details of how the attributes associated with these classes get included in the final Physical implementation is a little more complicated, one thing is clear. Some preparatory work needs to be done.

All of us (including all of you) need to be absolutely clear as to what each feature really is, and what it represents. There should be no confusion. Some features are tangible and can be seen and touched while others are imaginary and cannot. How these features are defined determines how they are used, and ultimately how they are interpreted. Once again, an ultimate objective of effectively sharing dictates that the receiver and the giver have exactly the same understanding as to what the feature is. This business is all about conveying information. Names are normally too short to be descriptive enough to really understand what is going on. And sometimes names are jargon, assigned by the Subject Matter Expert (SME) who has known that feature by that name for years. But that name does not always translate to the non-SME. Clear, concise definitions are a must.

As a first step in preparing to model the entire SDSFIE, development and consensus of accurate, descriptive definitions is a must. These definitions need to be clear, especially to inexperienced users. And while style is not critical, a uniform format makes reading all of this a lot easier. An ultimate goal would be to name a feature to local convention, provided the local name is "registered" and the definition is accepted unconditionally. This is only possible with clear definitions.

We have prepared a "straw man" of more than 300 definitions in the SDSFIE that we believe require attention. These definitions are sometimes vague, sometimes conflicting, and sometimes simply incorrect. But we are not the sole authority on definitions and many would argue that we are not to be SME's, and we concur. We need your help, expertise, and input.

In an effort to give everyone visibility of what is being contemplated, as well as to let you comment on various proposals, a series of special "Forums" on the web site will be established. These will offer information on what is happening, what has been accomplished, and what's in work. This has been done for the first set of definition revisions. You can see these under "Definition Review Forum" on the web site, once you log in. This special series of forums allows you, the user, to comment directly on this initial work. If we have completely missed the mark, tell us. If you think it is an improvement, tell us. If you can make it even better, write it down and send it in. All comments and recommendations will be considered, provided they are serious.

Depending on the quality and quantity of comments, there may even be a second round of review. It's a simple concept. We call it "SDSFIE Change in a Glass Box", and the intent is to ensure that nothing is hidden from the user community. But this means that your comments are also visible to everyone else. We will collect these comments for about a month, then work to further improve the definitions. The list will hopefully be a lot shorter the second time. Quality fixes and consensus take time.

The remaining forums will continue to be available for user comments and suggestions, and to help keep us on the right track. Comments regarding approach and policy are always welcome. The intent is to open more doors for communication. The more input we receive, the greater the chance of making the SDSFIE a lot better. We can make it better. We want to make it better. The entire transition process and the quality of the final standard will be considerably improved with your active, continuous involvement.