



The Global Language of Business

Healthcare

Building a GLN Hierarchy

Best Practice Guide

Release 3.0, October 13, 2023



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Document Summary

Document Item	Current Value
Document Title	Best Practice Guide for Building a GLN Hierarchy
Date Last Modified	10/13/23
Document Description	This document offers definitions of key concepts, examples of hierarchy structures, and best practices for defining a GLN hierarchy.

Log of Changes

Release Number -- Date	Change
Release 3.0 October 13, 2023	Updated section 8.4 on 340B hierarchy
Release 2.0 August, 2012	

1 Executive Summary

GS1 Global Location Numbers (GLNs) enable all supply chain partners to identify the same location or party using one, globally unique identifier. GS1 US Data Hub® | Location is a single source of information for GLNs. All supply chain locations and parties for an organization are brought together and can be presented in a GLN hierarchy defined by the organization.

A GLN hierarchy is a classification structure presenting organizational locations arranged in levels of detail from the broadest to the most detailed. Although it can resemble an organization chart, the purpose of a GLN hierarchy is not to define the legal or corporate structure. Rather, the purpose is to define a relational structure of supply chain locations that supports supply chain operations.

Defining a well-thought-out supply chain structure and GLN hierarchy is an essential part of the process of setting up GLNs to transact business. However, every organization is different. There is no one, standard supply chain structure that fits all companies – and thus no one GLN hierarchy template. However, there are some general principles and best practices for companies to follow when creating a GLN hierarchy, and the GS1 Healthcare US® Location Identification Workgroup created this document to explain some of those high-level concepts and best practices. To that end, this document offers definitions of key concepts, examples of hierarchy structures, and best practices for defining a GLN hierarchy.

2 Introduction

The Global Location Number (GLN) is the globally unique GS1 Identification key for locations and parties. Using GS1 Standards and guidance, organizations assign GLNs to various supply chain locations and parties within their organization to facilitate precise identification within business communications and transactions. For example, the questions below reveal some of the supply chain locations and parties that need to be identified with GLNs to support supply chain transactions:

- Who is the buying organization?
- Where will the products be received/shipped?
- Who will receive the invoice?
- Who is the selling organization?
- Where are payments sent?
- Where are products inventoried?

Within GS1 US Data Hub | Location, all supply chain locations and parties for an organization can be brought together and presented in a GLN hierarchy, a classification structure presenting organizational GLNs arranged in levels of detail from the broadest to the most detailed. It is not a view of an organization's corporate or legal structure. Rather, it is a multi-level view of an organization based on supply chain locations and parties (e.g., Bill-to locations; Ship-to locations; Deliver-to locations; etc.). Figure 1 below presents a hypothetical GLN hierarchy illustrating how various supply chain locations and parties come together in a GLN hierarchy.

Figure 1: Example of a GLN Hierarchy

The purpose of a GLN hierarchy is to define a structure of supply chain locations and parties that supports supply chain processes and transactions. Although every organization is different, there are some high-level concepts and best practices that can help organizations define their GLN hierarchy. Those high-level concepts and best practices are provided throughout the remainder of this guide.

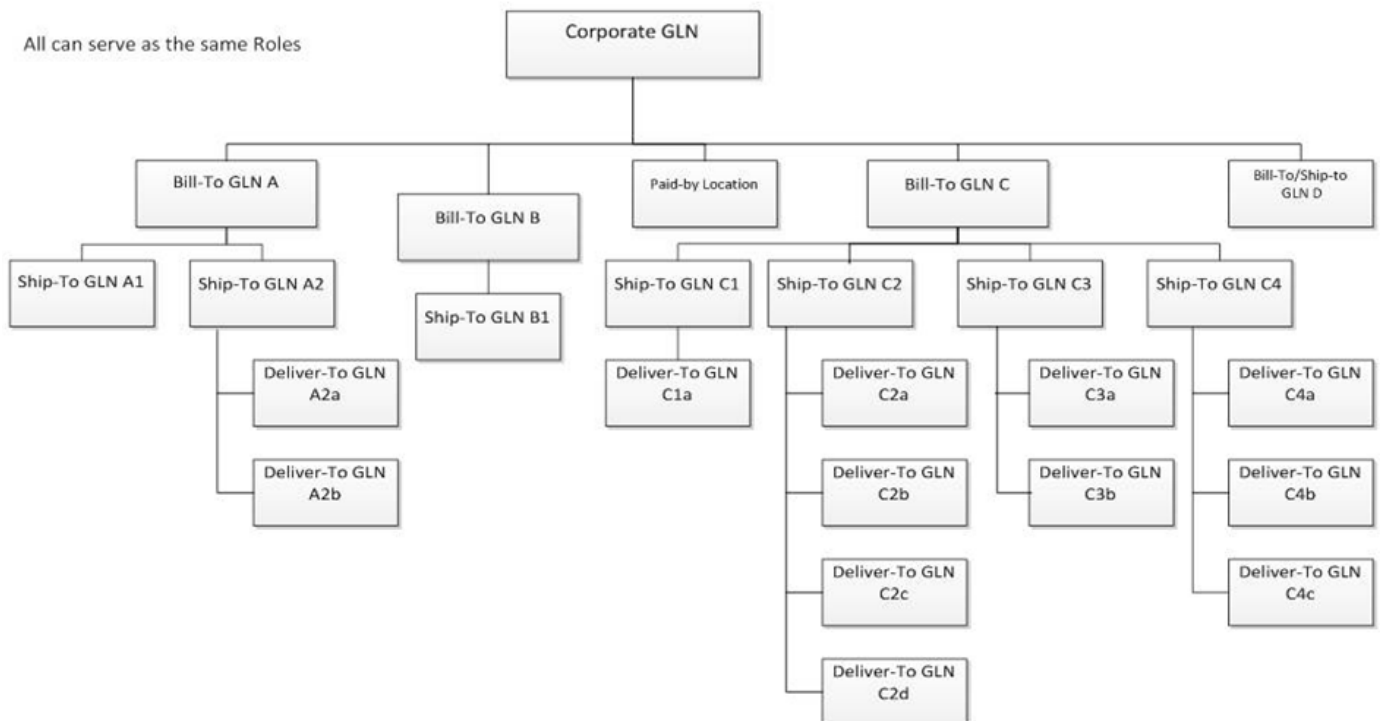
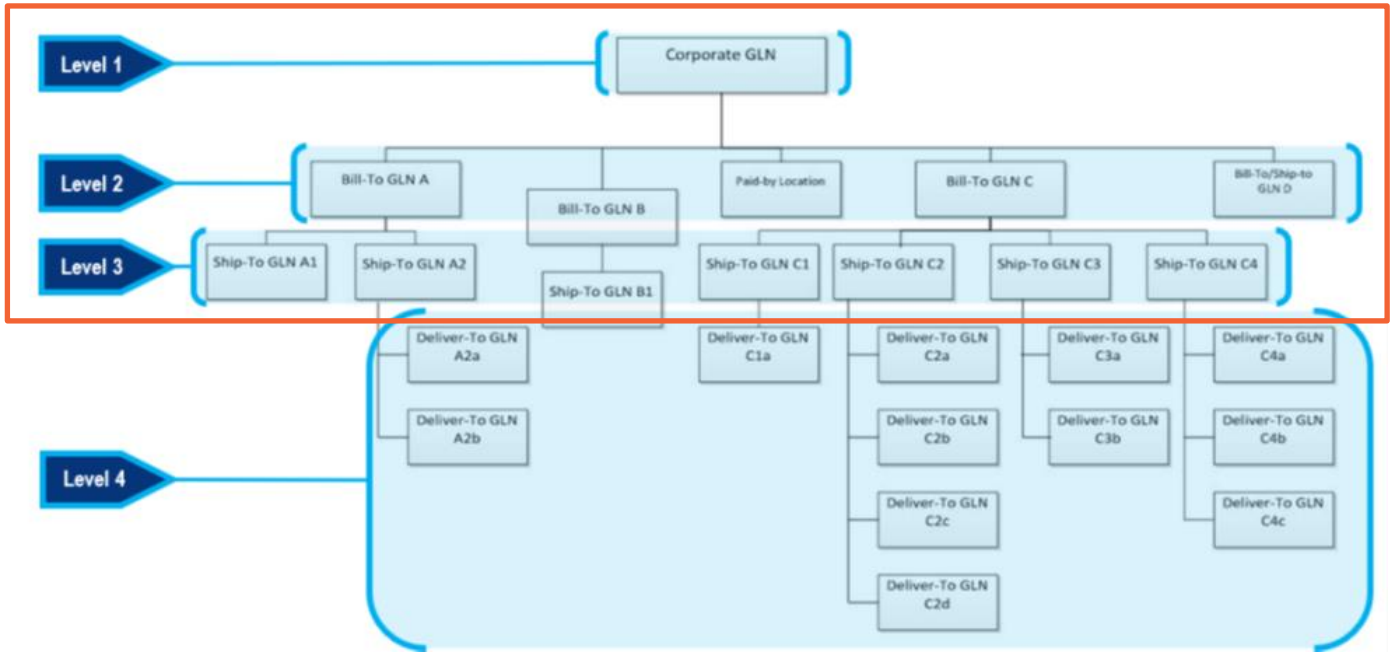


Figure 2: Example of a GLN Hierarchy to support the Drug Supply Chain Security Act

This diagram identifies the GLN enumeration requirements of Electronic Product Code Information Services (EPCIS) to support serialized unit-level traceability in an interoperable manner for the Drug Supply Chain Security Act (DSCSA). The figure identifies the Bill-to/Sold-to GLNs as Level 1 and 2 in addition to Ship-to locations as Level 3. The Bill-To or also known as Sold-To is critical for DSCSA as it is a change of ownership law and identify the party that has ownership of the product. As the Ship-To GLN is important to enable the physical traceability of the product.



3 Allocating/Assigning GLNs

GLNs are used to identify *functional entities* (like a hospital pharmacy or accounting department), *fixed physical locations* (like a warehouse or hospital wing or even a nursing station), and/or *legal entities* (like a health system corporation). Other GLN types are *mobile physical locations* (Mobile Clinic) and *digital locations* (EDI Gateway). GLNs are assigned to locations to support supply chain transactions. For example, trading partners will assign one of their own unique GLNs for the following types of locations to support supply chain transactions and communications:

- Location where orders are placed
- Location where orders are processed (e.g., Customer Service)
- Location where products are shipped from
- Location where products are received
- Location where invoices are sent
- Location where payments are sent

There is no one, standard supply chain structure that fits all companies. For example, *the location where orders are placed* and *the location where payments are sent* may be the same for Supplier A. In that case, Supplier A could assign one GLN to the location, and that one GLN would then be used in supply chain transactions to indicate both the *location where orders are placed* and the *location where payments are sent*. In contrast, *the location where orders are placed* and *the location where payments are sent* may be two different locations for Supplier B. In this case, Supplier B would assign a unique GLN to each location, and then one GLN would be used in supply chain transactions to indicate the *location where orders are placed*, and the other GLN would be used to indicate *the location where payments are sent*.



Best Practice(s) for Assigning GLNs

Because every organization is different, it is important to understand how your organization operates and what you are trying to accomplish with the use of the GLN. This insight is essential for determining what locations need a unique GLN assigned to them, and how to structure all of those GLNs in your organization's hierarchy.



If using an EPCIS based system to provide and maintain Transaction Information (TI) and Transaction Statement (TS) for DSCSA then enumerating the "Sold-from," "Sold-to," "Ship-from" and "Ship-to" locations (and parties) are critical.

- At a minimum, a separate GLN is needed for each physical location that a Trading Partner ships product from and to. The "Sold-from" and "Sold-to" identify the parties involved in the change of ownership.
- These GLNs can be the same or different based on the organization structure. For example, a GLN could represent both the "Ship-to" and "Sold-to."
- Some organizations set up one GLN to identify the corporate entity as the "Sold-to" and then set up additional "Ship-to" GLNs to identify multiple shipping locations.
- There is also the option to identify location information in EPCIS with greater granularity (i.e., Floor or Suite #), but this is not required for DSCSA.

See section 4.6 for 340B GLN Enumeration recommendations for Ship-to pertaining to DSCSA.

3.1 Naming Practices


For the Location name, assign the "name" of the GLN which can be a party, company, department, etc. that you are identifying as you want described. You can also assign a second Location Name. For example, you want to identify the name in another language, or if the legal name and trade name have slight variations, or if you want to provide additional clarification.

4 Understanding Location Types

There are several different types of locations to be specified in supply chain transactions. Figure 3 provides examples of some common location types. (NOTE: Figure 3 is not intended to depict dependencies or relationships.)

4.1 Corporate / Parent Organizational Entity

The Corporate location is generally the organization’s main office or corporate headquarters. (The official name of this location type is “Parent Organizational Entity.”) The Corporate location is the top level of the organization and may be used to tie the entire “system” together for total spend reporting purposes. This is the location where a supplier would send information that needs to be disseminated to your entire organization. Examples: a corporate office; the business office of a smaller hospital or clinic; or the only office in a single physician practice or small clinic.




Best Practice(s)
for the Corporate location/ Parent Organizational Entity

The GLN for the *Corporate* location is usually the top level of the GLN hierarchy that is used to tie the organization’s GLNs together. Beyond that, it is possible that no commerce will occur at this level for a large organization.

4.2 Bill-to / Paid-by

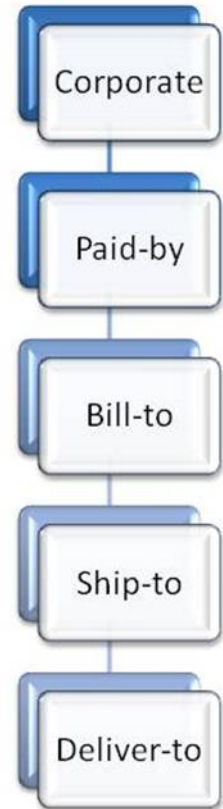
The Bill-to location is the location where invoices are sent for payment. This may be an office next to the receiving dock, a department in another building, etc. The Paid-by location is the location or party that pays the bills (e.g., third party).



Best Practice(s)
for Bill-to / Paid-by locations and parties

- In many cases, invoices are sent to and paid by the same location. In this scenario, either the same GLN would be used for both location types, or alternatively only a *Bill-to* would be implemented.
- In other cases, invoices go to one department for approval and then to a central accounts payable office (or a third party) for actual payment. In this scenario, the *Bill-to* would be the GLN for the location that receives and approves the invoice. The *Paid-by* would be the GLN for the location cutting the check.
- It may also help to think about the path paper invoices follow within your organization to best define these location types.
- EDI invoices may be handled differently based on system automation.

Figure 3:
Examples of
Location Types



4.3 Sold-to

Sold-to is a party or location with whom the sales agreement is negotiated. This is the entity taking ownership of the products/goods.



Best Practice(s) for Sold-to locations and parties

- In many cases, the sold-to is identified as an entity/party GLN. The GLN will identify a party which allows the location details to be dynamic. Where a location GLN is tied to static location details.
- Sold-to can also be the Bill-to or Corporate/ Parent Organizational Entity.



Sold-to is critical for DSCSA to identify the change of ownership while Ship-to is important for the traceability of products.

4.4 Ship-to

The Ship-to location is a top-level location where the supplier “drops” products that were ordered. This is normally a bulk delivery location where trucks unload pallets or boxes of goods and supplies (e.g., receiving dock, central warehouse, etc.). Most often, this is not the final destination for the products. However, for most businesses, this is where ownership of the goods transfers from the vendor/supplier to the customer.

Note: Use Case Perspectives for Ship-to locations and parties

- There may be a need to create multiple *Ship-to* GLN's for the same physical address in order to accommodate legal, regulatory and/or tax distinctions.
- For example, 340B is an outpatient drug pricing program that limits the cost manufacturers can charge “covered entities” for outpatient drugs. If part of an organization has 340B status and part does not, trading partners may prefer the organization to have one *Ship-to* GLN for the part of your organization that has a 340B and a separate *Ship-to* GLN for the part of your organization that does not, even though both may be at the same physical address. (*NOTE: 340Bs are discussed in more detail later in this document*).



Caution: From a DSCSA transaction perspective, having duplicate *Ship-to* locations can hinder the ability to transact a combined shipment of 340B products and non-340B products in an aggregated SSCC and therefore would require separate shipments.

- Similarly, an organization may have a need to create multiple *Ship-to* GLN's for the same physical address in order to accommodate tax distinctions based on the nature of their business (e.g., taxable vs. non-taxable; for profit vs. non-profit; etc.).

4.5 Deliver-to

A Deliver-to location is a location deeper within a Ship-to location. This is usually a department or specific area within the business [e.g., Just-In-Time (JIT) location, nursing station, floor, lab, etc.]. Often, Deliver-to location is the final destination for the products.



Best Practice(s) for Deliver-to locations and parties

- If products are only taken from the receiving dock to the final destination by internal staff, this location may not need to have a GLN assigned to it because the supplier is not involved with the delivery to the final destination. In this case, assigning a GLN to this location is optional.
- If suppliers provide the “internal delivery” service or desk-top delivery, this location should have a GLN assigned to it in order to accurately identify the *Deliver-to* location in supply chain transactions.

5 Understanding GLN Types

GLNs can be used to answer the question of “where” business-related transactions occur for physical and digital locations. GLNs can also identify “who” is involved within business-related transaction by identifying the party.

Physical Locations answer “where?”:

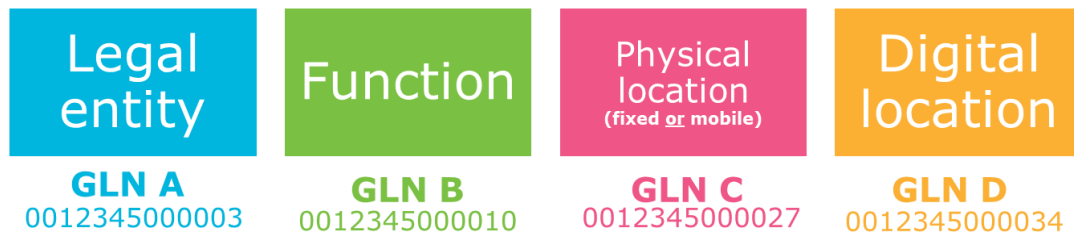
- Fixed Physical Location: a tangible place that does not change locations and may be represented by an address, coordinates, or other means.
- Mobile Physical Location: a tangible place that is expected to change locations and may be represented by an address, coordinates, or other means. This GLN Type cannot be added if the GLN already contains the Fixed Physical Location GLN Type.
- Physical Locations are split into fixed physical location and mobile location. Only one of the two can be associated to a specific GLN.
- Digital Location: An electronic (non-physical) address that is used for communication between computer systems.

Parties answer “who?”:

- Legal Entity: any business, government body, department, charity, individual, or institution that has standing in the eyes of the law and has the capacity to enter into agreements or contracts.
- Function: an organizational subdivision or department based on the specific tasks being performed, as defined by the organization. A GLN can be used to identify a single party or location or a combination of legal entity, function, physical location, and digital location. This value designates exactly what a GLN is being used to identify.

Note: A P.O. Box should only be used for legal and functional entity identifiers.

A GLN can be used to identify a single legal entity, function, physical location, or digital location. These different options are known as GLN types.



GLN may also be used to identify a combination of GLN types.



Allocation option comparison

- 1 GLN = 1 GLN Type
 - Always clear on what is being referred to
 - Simplified application of management rules, attributes, validation rules
 - Noted as being less confusing for users when creating/managing GLNs
 - May support consistency and quality of data
- 1 GLN = >1 GLN Type
 - All GS1 standards permit this
 - Existing GLNs in use may already be used to identify more than one GLN type
 - It may be deemed cost prohibitive to take this route
 - Systems will require logic to consume GLNs with more than one GLN type

7 General Structure of a GLN Hierarchy

As discussed above, a GLN hierarchy is a multi-level view of an organization based on supply chain functions and locations (e.g., Bill-to locations; Ship-to locations; Deliver-to locations; etc.). Although there is no one GLN hierarchy template that fits all companies, there is a general structure for GLN hierarchies. In general, GLN hierarchies are multi-level structures. The levels in the general structure are defined as follows:

Level One (1) is the Main Parent. This should be a location that actively receives products or is the corporate entity.

Level Two (2) is any entity that reports directly to the Main Parent.

Level Three (3) is other buildings and/or the subordinate departments of Level Two.

Additional levels could be used for desktop delivery or Just-in-Time ("JIT") locations.

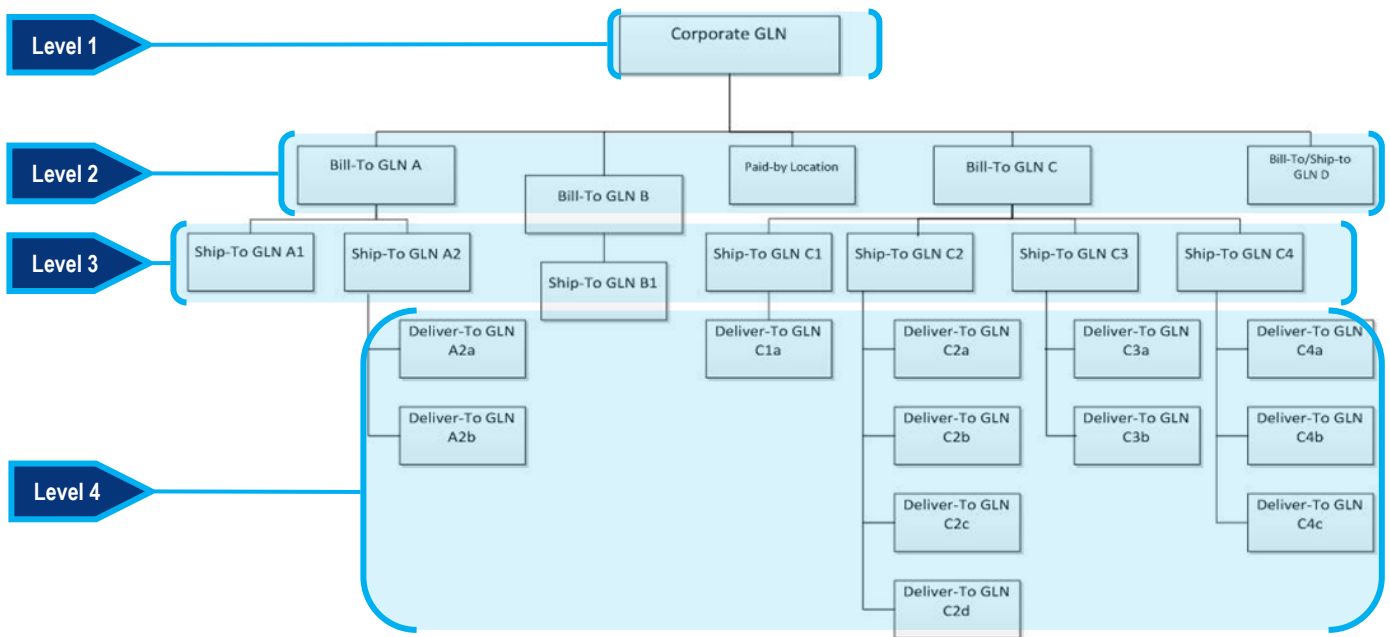


Best Practice(s) for Hierarchy levels

- Best practice is to limit initial hierarchies to *Ship-to* levels. More mature implementations can add *Deliver-to* locations later.
- Be sure to differentiate clearly between *Ship-to* versus *Deliver-to* locations.

Figure 5 below identifies the hierarchy levels of the hypothetical GLN hierarchy from Figure 1 above in order to illustrate each level and the types of locations that can be found on each level.

Figure 5: Levels of a GLN Hierarchy



8 Sample GLN Hierarchies

A GLN hierarchy is a multi-level view of an organization created to support order-to-cash transactions and the use of the GLNs within the managing organization. This section presents two different GLN hierarchy structures as examples. However, it is important to note that a GLN hierarchy does not answer all of the relationship questions between trading partners. Keep in mind that hierarchy design may impact your trading partners in your collaborative business relationship.

8.1 Hierarchical Structure

This hierarchy example shows how Deliver-to GLNs and Ship-to GLNs roll up into Bill-to GLNs, and eventually to the Corporate GLN in GS1 US Data Hub | Location. NOTE: Companies often use Bill-to and Ship-to terminology differently. Therefore, it is important to focus on the structure presented in Figure 6, not the titles.

Figure 6: Sample GLN Hierarchy Using a Hierarchical Structure

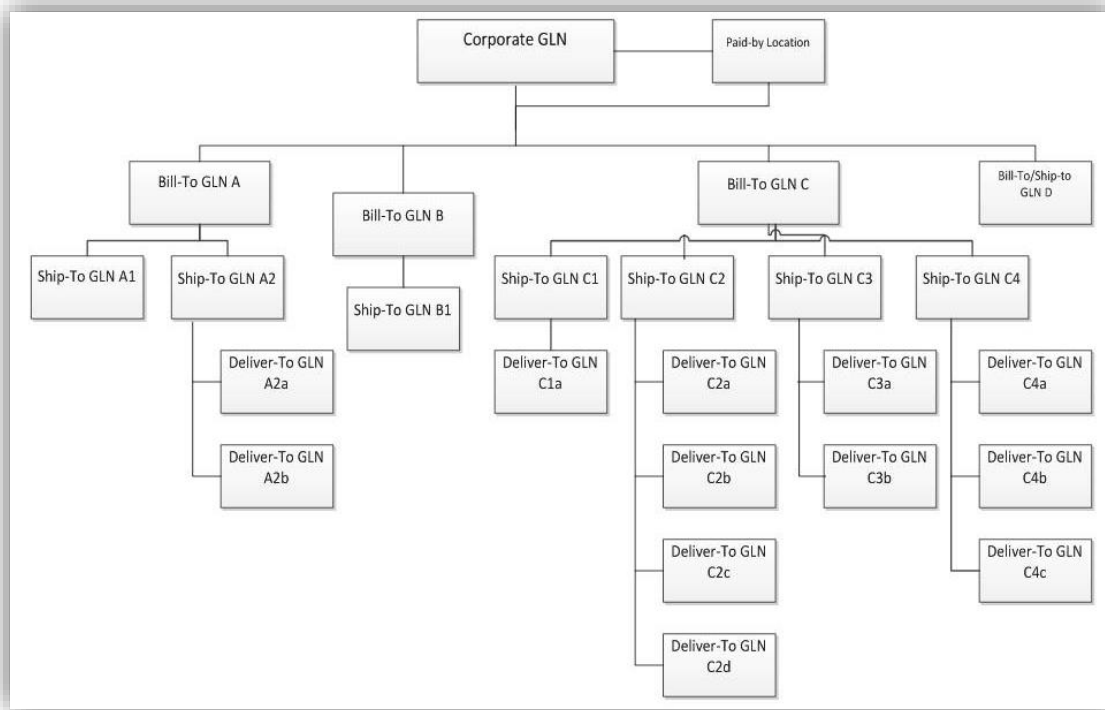


Table 1: Pros and Cons of Using a GLN Hierarchy with a Hierarchical Structure

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear relationship between <i>Bill-to</i> and <i>Ship-to</i> to Corporate Would not require cross-referencing between buyer and seller <i>Bill-to Ship-to</i> Establishes a best practice for hierarchy setup that allows for easy linking or movement from one corporation to another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not reflect the actual organization of the company <i>Delivery-to</i> locations under the <i>Ship-to</i> level might be billed to a different location than the <i>Ship-to</i> More maintenance or validating that <i>Bill-to</i> and <i>Ship-to</i> are depicted correctly

8.2 Detailed Structure

This hierarchy presents a structure that does not include a relationship between Bill-to and Ship-to in order to demonstrate that such a relationship is not required or necessary.

Figure 7: Sample GLN Hierarchy Using a Detailed Structure

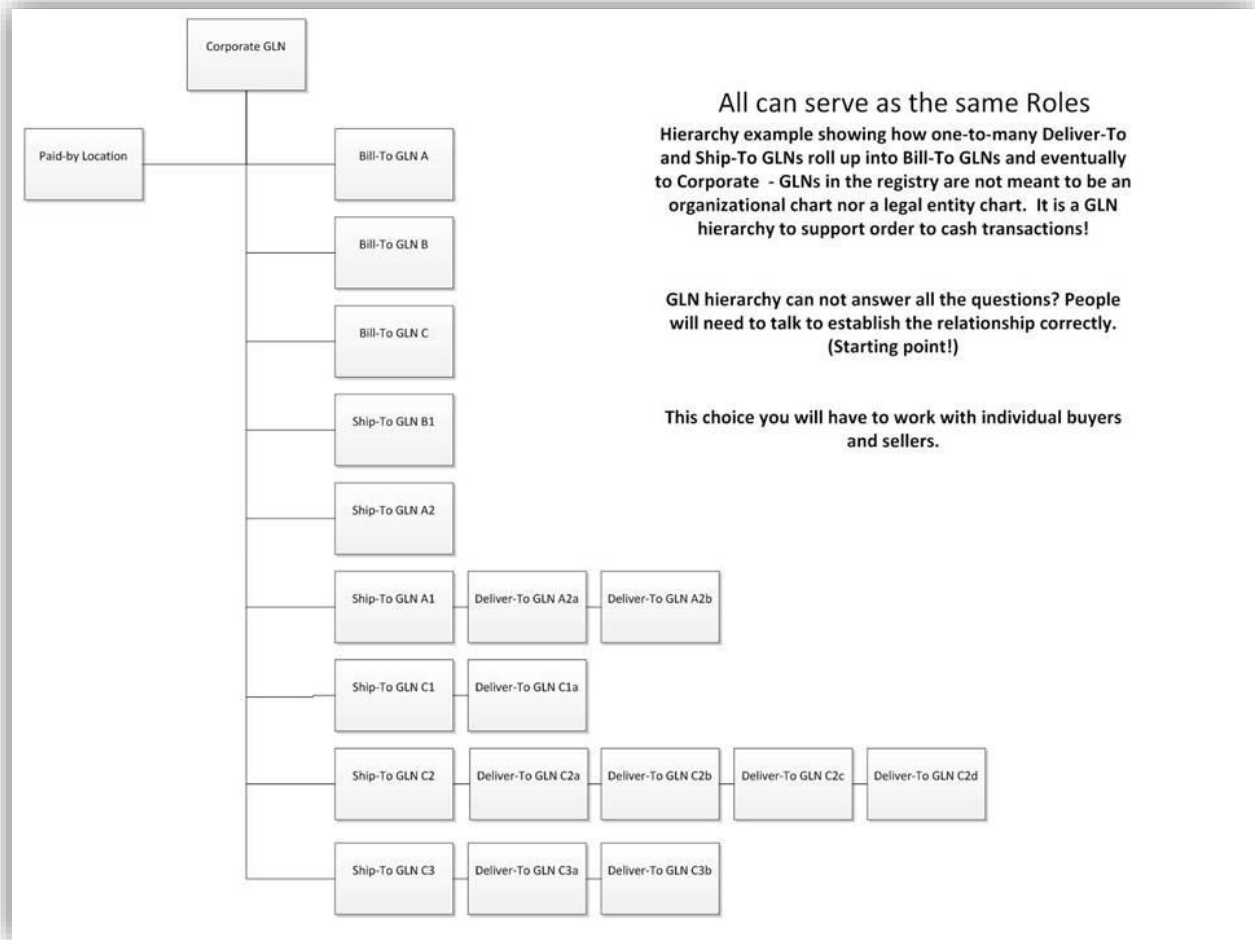
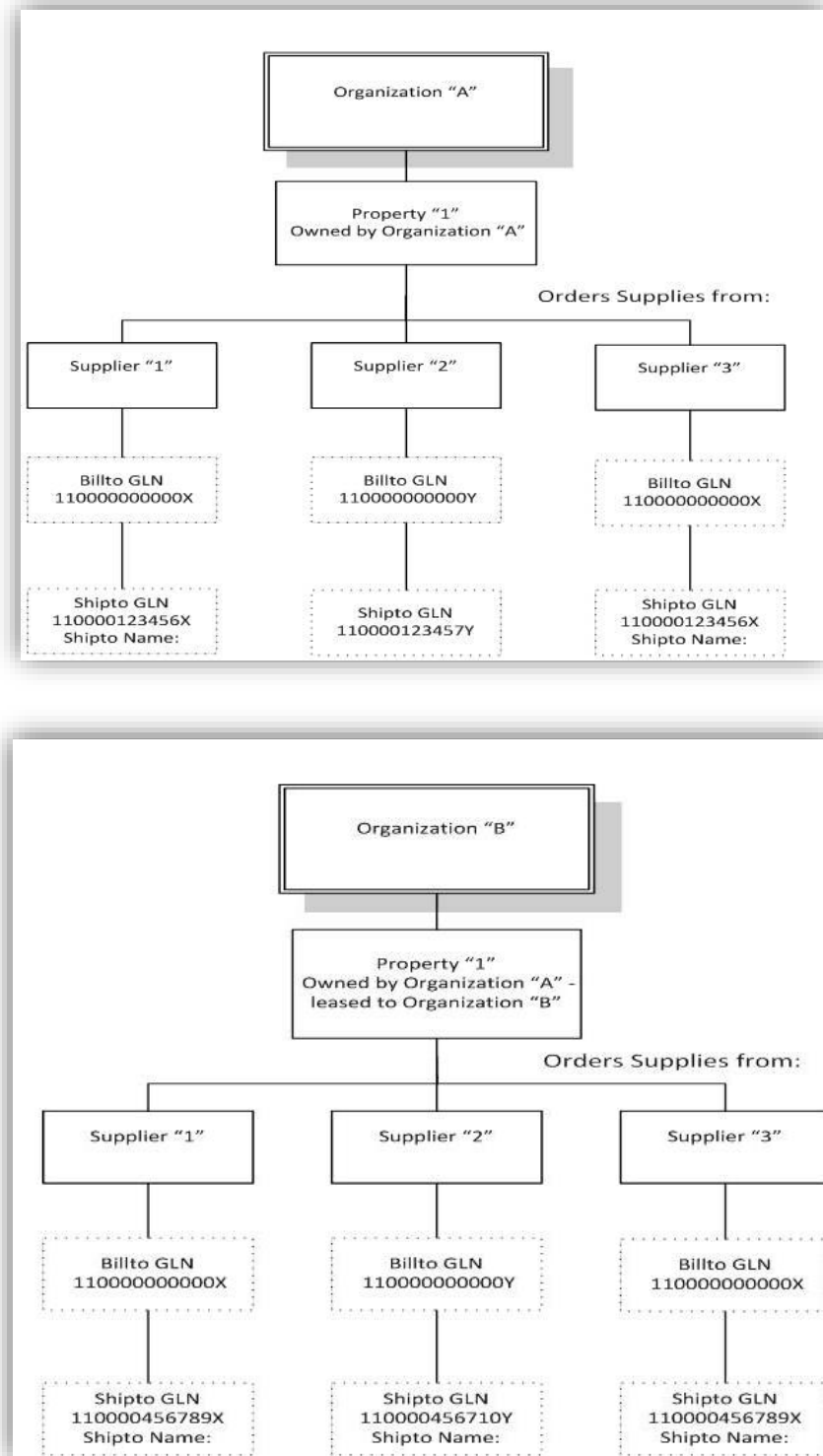


Table 2: Pros and Cons of Using a GLN Hierarchy with a Detailed Structure

Pro's	Con's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not limit the <i>Ship-to</i> relationship to multiple <i>Bill-to's</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would require cross-referencing between buyer and seller for <i>Bill-to / Ship-to</i> Not a clear relationship between <i>Bill-to / Ship-to</i> to corporate May not establish a hierarchy allowing for easier linking or movement from one corporation to another (more maintenance)

8.3 Owned vs. Leased Structures

Figure 8: Sample GLN Hierarchy for Owned vs. Leased Structure



8.4 340B Hierarchy

PHS-340B ("340B") is an outpatient drug pricing program that limits the cost manufacturers can charge "eligible covered entities" for outpatient drugs. Manufacturers participating in the Medicaid Drug Rebate Program are required to offer 340B pricing to eligible covered entities. 340B accounts are set-up based on outpatient pharmacy requests for product that is reimbursed based on Medicare/Medicaid. Regardless of how the facility manages inventory, a 340B location may have its own GLN in order to accommodate contracting and reporting based on reimbursement. This section presents three options for setting up 340B accounts in GS1 US Data Hub | Location. It offers guidance to suppliers, providers, and trading partners on how to create their account hierarchy to support the use of GLNs for 340B accounts and suggestions on what will work based on internal ERP account structures.



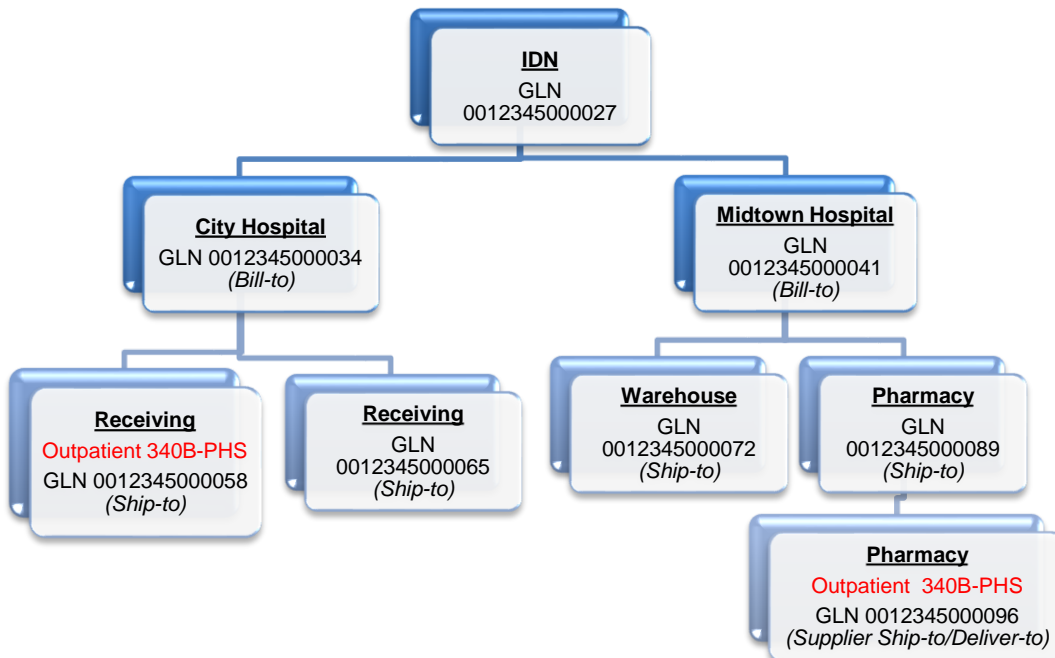
Best Practice(s) for 340B Accounts – Option 1

Providers: To minimize the number of GLNs a provider would have to setup, the recommendation is to:

- setup a GLN for the 340B account as a *Ship-to* under the *Bill-to* hierarchy to which it would be associated,
- enter "Outpatient 340B – PHS" in Address Line 3 in GS1 US Data Hub | Location and flag it as a *Deliver-to*, and then send the 340B GLN in the N1 ST UL segment.

Suppliers: If invoices are submitted to the same location as non-340B accounts, set-up your systems to control the hierarchy based on what is outlined below. The 340B would become a *Bill-to / Ship-to* account tied to the invoicing account.

Figure 9: Example of a GLN Hierarchy with a 340B Account using Best Practice Option 1



The advantage of Option 1 is that it enables the provider to identify the 340B GLN as a Deliver-to location, which is more aligned with its actual purpose. Again, this will be based on how the GLN for the 340B account will be communicated to the supplier from whom you are ordering and how your system is set-up.



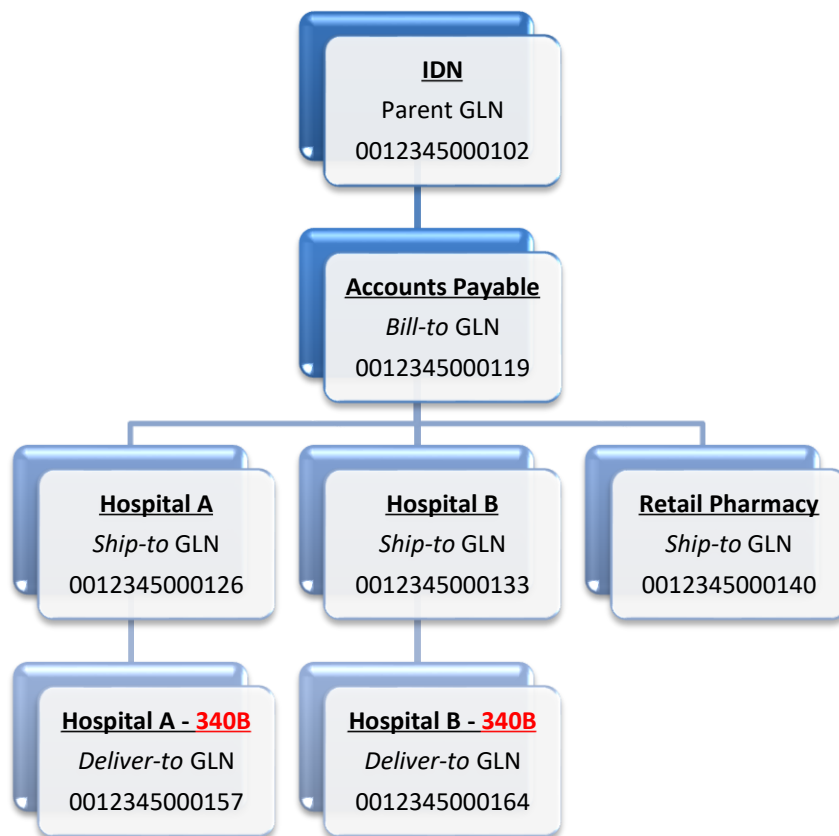
Best Practice(s) for 340B Accounts – Option 2

Provider: Add a *Ship-to* or *Deliver-to* GLN under the *Ship-to* hierarchy associated with the pharmacy depending on how your pharmacy wants the shipments set-up.

Supplier: Set-up the provider GLN in your system based on how you control the pricing. If pricing is loaded at a *Bill-to* account:

- create an account number for the 340B with the attention line that matches the provider setup from GS1 US Data Hub | Location,
- classify the account as a *Bill-to* / *Ship-to* for invoicing and shipping purposes, and
- link the *Bill-to* / *Ship-to* internal account with the GLN of the parent account and with the GLN for where invoices are routed as well.

Figure 10: Example of a GLN Hierarchy with a 340B Account using Best Practice Option 2



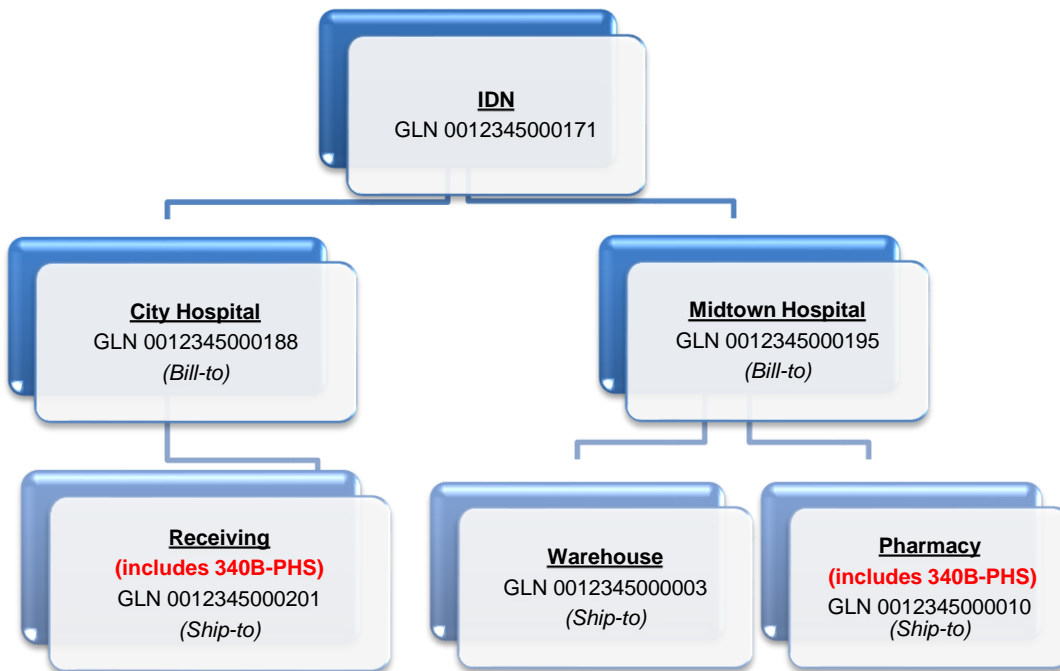


Best Practice(s) for 340B Accounts – Option 3

Provider: Do not add a separate *Ship-to* or *Deliver-to* GLN.

Supplier: No action necessary, use existing account set up for 340B transaction.

Figure 11: Example of a GLN Hierarchy with a 340B Account using Best Practice Option 3



The advantage of Option 3 is that it enables the supplier to ship using EPCIS a combined shipment to the Contract Pharmacy, which is acting as an agent for the Covered Entity, of both 340B covered products and non-340B products in one SSCC (Serialized Shipping Container Code). This enables as an example shipping one tote of combined products versus 2 or more totes of separated product to the same location on the same day.

8.5 Hierarchy Structure for Divestures and Acquisitions

The GLN Allocation Rules should be followed for all acquisitions, whether it is a supplier purchasing another supplier or a hospital purchasing another hospital. There are many factors' suppliers will review and decide when purchasing a new company. The decision to establish a new GLN for an acquired supplier facility is dependent on the supplier's internal processes and decisions.

The GLN Allocation Rules should be followed for all divestitures. When a supplier or provider divests a business group or a product line, the divesting company needs to validate how they will conduct business for that group and/or product line going forward and follow the applicable timelines in the guideline.



Best Practice(s) for Divestitures & Acquisitions

Review the GLN Allocation Rules to understand the guidelines for allocating GLNs.

8.6 Hierarchy Structure for Manufacturers

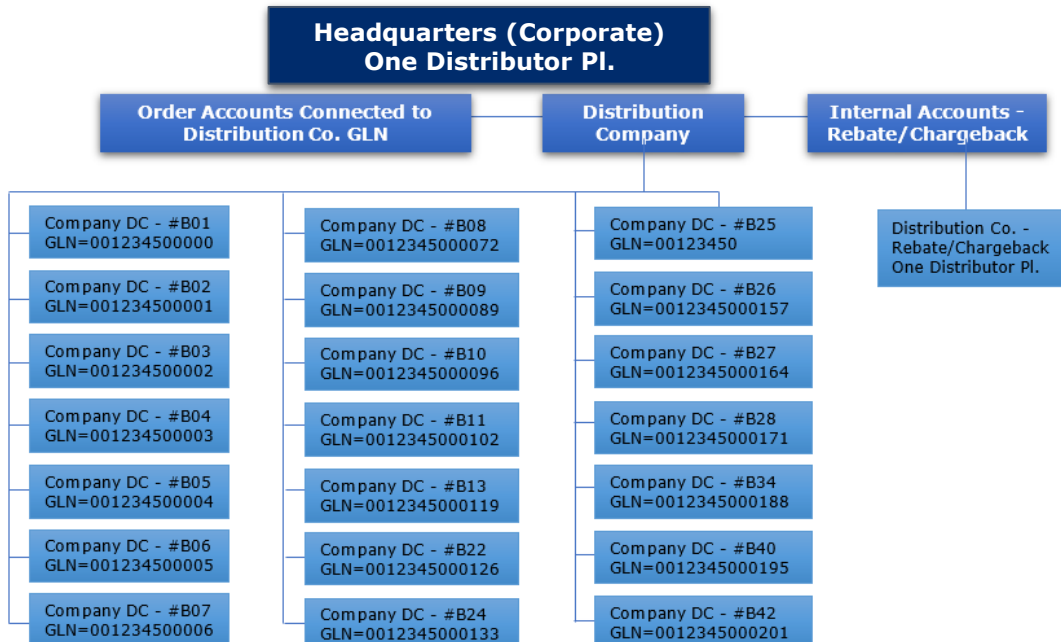
There is no real difference in designing a GLN structure for a manufacturer versus a provider. Therefore, manufacturers should follow the same rules. Although manufacturers may define some of the attributes differently for their locations and parties, the decisions about hierarchy structure can be guided using the same information provided above.

Once the decisions about hierarchy structure have been made, manufacturers need to decide their approach for adding GLNs to GS1 US Data Hub | Location. Manufacturers may choose not to add all of their GLNs to GS1 US Data Hub | Location at this time. For example, some manufacturers have elected to keep a worksheet with the GLNs for all of their locations and parties (e.g., customer service locations, manufacturing, distribution centers, etc.), and only add the GLNs for their customer service and P.O. Box locations based on current use. Decisions regarding which GLNs to add to GS1 US Data Hub | Location and when are left to manufacturers to determine based on what works best for them.

8.7 Hierarchy Structure for Distributors and/or Wholesalers

Distributors use of GLNs to identify locations and parties as a seller versus buyer: The decision of how a distributor/wholesaler identifies their locations and parties in the GS1 US Data Hub | Location is truly up to them. However, there is no need for multiple GLNs to be assigned to the same location based on different contracts within a supplier. The need to have separate GLNs within the same location could be based on product inventory, but the GLNs should not drive how they monitor or control inventory.

Figure 12: Example of a GLN Hierarchy for a Distributor/Wholesaler



9 References

- [*GS1 Standards in Use in Healthcare*](#)
- [*Best Practice Guide for Implementing GLN in Trace, Chargeback & Rebate Processes*](#)
- [*Guidance for Implementing GLNs and GTINs in Order-to-Cash Transactions*](#)
- [*How to Identify your Location for DSCSA Requirements*](#)
- [*Healthcare GLN Implementation Guideline*](#)
- [*GLN Quick Start Guide for Dispensers*](#)
- [*GLN Quick Start Guide for Suppliers*](#)
- **GS1 US Data Hub | Location** <https://www.gs1us.org/tools/gs1-us-data-hub/location>
- **GS1 US Data Hub Help Center** <https://www.gs1us.org/resources/data-hub-help-center/introduction-to-location-gln>
- **Attend GS1 US Data Hub | Location User Group meetings**
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IAPMO

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