

1        **Dissecting super-enhancer hierarchy based on chromatin interactions**

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18

19 **Abstract**

20 Recent studies have highlighted super-enhancers (SEs) as important regulatory  
21 elements for gene expression, but their intrinsic properties remain incompletely  
22 characterized. Through an integrative analysis of Hi-C and ChIP-seq data, we find that a  
23 significant fraction of SEs are hierarchically organized, containing both hub and non-hub  
24 enhancers. Hub enhancers share similar histone marks with non-hub enhancers, but are  
25 distinctly associated with cohesin and CTCF binding sites and disease-associated  
26 genetic variants. Genetic ablation of hub enhancers results in profound defects in gene  
27 activation and local chromatin landscape. As such, hub enhancers are the major  
28 constituents responsible for SE functional and structural organization.

29

30 **Keywords**

31 Super-enhancer, Chromatin interaction, Hub enhancer, Hierarchy, CTCF

32

### 33 **Introduction**

34 Enhancers are *cis*-acting DNA sequences that control cell-type specific gene expression  
35 (Banerji, Rusconi, & Schaffner, 1981). Super-enhancers (SEs) are putative enhancer  
36 clusters with unusually high levels of enhancer activity and enrichment of enhancer-  
37 associated chromatin features including occupancy of master regulators, coactivators,  
38 Mediators and chromatin factors (Hnisz et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2013; Whyte et al.,  
39 2013). SEs are often in close proximity to critical cell identity-associated genes,  
40 supporting a model in which a small set of lineage-defining SEs determine cell identity in  
41 development and disease.

42 Despite the proposed prominent roles, the structural and functional differences  
43 between SEs and regular enhancers (REs) remain poorly understood (Pott & Lieb,  
44 2015). A few SEs have been dissected by genetic manipulation of individual constituent  
45 enhancers. In some studies, the results are consistent with a model whereby SEs are  
46 composed of a hierarchy of both essential and dispensable constituent enhancers to  
47 coordinate gene transcription (Hay et al., 2016; Hnisz et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2016; H.  
48 Y. Shin et al., 2016). Due to the technical challenges in systematic characterization of  
49 SEs on a larger scale, it remains difficult to evaluate the generality of hierarchical SE  
50 organization in the mammalian genome.

51 Enhancer activities are mediated by the 3D chromatin interactions. Recent  
52 advances in Hi-C (Lieberman-Aiden et al., 2009) and ChIA-PET (Fullwood et al., 2009)  
53 technologies enable systematic interrogation of the genome-wide landscapes of  
54 chromatin interactions across multiple cell types and growth conditions (Dixon et al.,  
55 2015; Dixon et al., 2012; Downen et al., 2014; Javierre et al., 2016; Ji et al., 2016; Jin et  
56 al., 2013; Rao et al., 2014; Tang et al., 2015). These data strongly indicate that the 3D  
57 chromatin organization is highly modular, containing compartments, topologically  
58 associating domains (TADs), and insulated neighborhoods. Of note, genomic loci with  
59 high frequency of chromatin interactions are highly enriched for SEs (Huang, Marco,  
60 Pinello, & Yuan, 2015; Schmitt et al., 2016), suggesting that proper 3D chromatin  
61 configuration may be essential for orchestrating SE activities.

62 Here we developed an approach to dissect the compositional organization of  
63 SEs, based on the patterns of long-range chromatin interactions. We found that a subset  
64 of SEs exhibits a hierarchical structure, and hub enhancers within hierarchical SEs play  
65 distinct roles in chromatin organization and gene activation. Our findings also identified a  
66 critical role for CTCF in organizing the structural (and hence functional) hierarchy of SEs.

67

## 68 **Results**

### 69 **A subset of SEs contains hierarchical structure**

70 To systematically characterize the structural organization of SEs, we developed a  
71 computational approach that integrates high resolution Hi-C and ChIP-seq data (**Figure**  
72 **1A**). We defined SEs with the standard ROSE algorithm (Loven et al., 2013; Whyte et al.,  
73 2013). Briefly, neighboring enhancer elements defined based on H3K27ac ChIP-seq  
74 peaks were merged and ranked based on the H3K27ac ChIP-seq signal, where top  
75 ranked regions were designated as SEs. To quantify the degree of structural hierarchy  
76 associated with each SE, we defined a computational metric, called hierarchical score  
77 (or H-score for short), as follows. First, we divided each SE into 5kb bins to match the  
78 resolution of Hi-C data (**Figure 1B**). Next, we normalized the frequency of chromatin  
79 interactions within each SE by transforming the raw frequency values to z-scores. Third,  
80 we evaluated the maximum z-score across all bins in each SE, and referred to the  
81 outcome as the H-score associated with the SE. A higher H-score value indicates the  
82 chromatin interactions associated with a SE are mediated through a small subset of  
83 constitutive elements (**Figure 1B**). Fourth, by applying a threshold value of H-score, we  
84 divided all SEs into two categories, which we referred as hierarchical and non-  
85 hierarchical SEs, respectively (**Figure 1B**). Finally, if an enhancer element within  
86 hierarchical SEs is associated with a z-score greater than the threshold of H-score, the  
87 element is referred as a hub enhancer, whereas the remaining enhancers within the  
88 same SE are termed non-hub enhancers (**Figure 1B**).

89 We applied this pipeline to dissect the SE hierarchy in two human cell lines K562  
90 (erythroleukemia cells) and GM12878 (B-cell lymphoblastoid cells), using publicly  
91 available high-resolution Hi-C and ChIP-seq data (T. E. P. Consortium, 2012; Rao et al.,  
92 2014). In total, we identified 843 and 834 SEs in K562 and GM12878 cells, respectively.  
93 On comparison of high-resolution (5kb) Hi-C profiles in K562 and GM12878 cells (Jin et  
94 al., 2013), we observed that SEs contain a significantly higher frequency of chromatin  
95 interactions than regular enhancers ( $P = 1.2E-69$  in K562,  $P = 2.0E-123$  in GM12878,  
96 Student's t-test, **Figure 1-figure supplement 1A**), consistent with previous studies  
97 (Huang et al., 2015; Schmitt et al., 2016). By applying a threshold value of H-score = 1.5,  
98 which roughly corresponds to the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of z-scores (**Figure 1-figure**  
99 **supplement 1B**), we divided SEs into two categories: hierarchical and non-hierarchical  
100 SEs (**Figure 1-figure supplement 1C**). As expected, hub enhancers display a higher  
101 frequency of chromatin interactions than non-hub enhancers (**Figure 1-figure**

102 **supplement 1D**). On average, both hub and non-hub enhancers within SEs contain a  
103 higher frequency of chromatin interactions than REs.

104 In total, we identified 215 (23% of all SEs) and 319 hierarchical SEs (34%) in  
105 K562 and GM12878 cells, respectively (**Figure 1C** and **Figure 1-figure supplement**  
106 **2A**). The hierarchical SEs tend to be ranked higher than non-hierarchical SEs based by  
107 the ROSE algorithm ( $P = 1.2E-25$  in K562,  $P = 2.5E-21$  in GM12878, Wilcoxon rank-sum  
108 test, respectively, **Figure 1D** and **Figure 1-figure supplement 2B**). Using GREAT  
109 functional analysis (McLean et al., 2010), we observed that, compared with non-  
110 hierarchical SEs, hierarchical SEs were more enriched with gene ontology (GO) terms  
111 associated with cell-type-specific biological processes, such as ‘blood coagulation’ in  
112 K562 cells and ‘B cell homeostasis’ in GM12878 cells (**Figure 1E** and **Figure 1-figure**  
113 **supplement 2C**). These results suggest that hierarchical SEs may play a more  
114 important role in the maintenance of cell identity.

115

116 **Both hub and non-hub enhancers are associated with active chromatin marks and**  
117 **master regulators**

118 To further investigate molecular differences between hub and non-hub enhancers within  
119 hierarchical SEs, we compared the spatial patterns of histone marks among three  
120 enhancer groups: hub, non-hub and REs. Compared with non-hub enhancers, hub  
121 enhancers display no significant difference in H3K4me1 ChIP-seq signal (**Figure 2A** and  
122 **Figure 2-figure supplement 1A**), but are slightly more enriched for H3K27ac and  
123 DNase I hypersensitivity (**Figure 2B,C** and **Figure 2-figure supplement 1B,C**).

124 One of the hallmark features of SEs is the enrichment of cell type-specific master  
125 regulators and coactivators (Whyte et al., 2013). We then compared the distribution of  
126 transcription factor binding profiles. Hub enhancers contain moderate but significantly  
127 higher ChIP-seq signals for the binding of lineage-regulating master regulators than non-  
128 hub enhancers, such as GATA1 and TAL1 in K562 cells, and PAX5 and EBF1 in  
129 GM12878 cells (**Figure 2D,E** and **Figure 2-figure supplement 1D,E**). Hub enhancers  
130 also display increased occupancy of histone acetyltransferase p300, a  
131 coactivator associated with active enhancers (**Figure 2F** and **Figure 2-figure**  
132 **supplement 1F**). Taken together, these results demonstrate that hub and non-hub  
133 enhancers are characterized by quantitative differences in the occupancy of active  
134 enhancer-associated histone modifications and lineage-specifying transcription factors  
135 (TFs).

136

137 **Hub enhancers are distinctively enriched with cohesin and CTCF binding**

138 Since hub and non-hub enhancers are defined based on the frequency of chromatin  
139 interactions, we next compared the occupancy of cohesin and CTCF, two factors  
140 essential for mediating long-range enhancer-promoter interactions and DNA looping  
141 (Ing-Simmons et al., 2015). To this end, we compared the enhancer groups with the  
142 ChIP-seq profiles for CTCF and two cohesin components, SMC3 and RAD21.  
143 Compared with non-hub enhancers, the occupancy of all three factors is markedly  
144 elevated at hub enhancers (**Figure 3A-C** and **Figure 3-figure supplement 1A-C**),  
145 consistent with a critical role of CTCF and cohesin in mediating chromatin interactions  
146 associated with hub enhancers. Importantly, while the role of CTCF in mediating  
147 chromatin organization, such as TADs, has been well established (Dixon et al., 2012), its  
148 association with SE constituents has not been previously reported. In fact, only a small  
149 fraction (6% in K562; 24% in GM12878) of hub enhancers overlap with known TAD  
150 boundaries (**Figure 3D** and **Figure 3-figure supplement 1D**), which is comparable to  
151 the genome-wide frequency of CTCF peaks overlapping with TAD boundaries,  
152 suggesting a TAD-independent role of CTCF.

153 To identify potential contextual differences between CTCF binding associated  
154 with distinct functions, we divided the CTCF ChIP-seq peaks into three non-overlapping  
155 subsets that overlap with hub enhancers, non-hub enhancers or TAD boundaries,  
156 respectively. To further distinguish CTCF binding at distinct regulatory regions, we  
157 excluded peaks that overlap with both hub enhancers and TAD boundaries (**Figure 3d**  
158 and **Figure 3-figure supplement 1D**). We first examined the cross cell-type variability of  
159 CTCF binding based on CTCF ChIP-seq signals in 55 cell types from ENCODE (T. E. P.  
160 Consortium, 2012). Consistent with previous studies (Dixon et al., 2012; Pope et al.,  
161 2014), we found that CTCF binding sites associated with TAD boundaries are highly  
162 conserved (**Figure 3E** and **Figure 3-figure supplement 1E**). In addition, within SEs,  
163 CTCF sites associated with hub enhancers are more conserved than those associated  
164 with non-hub enhancers. We hypothesized that the cell-type variability of CTCF binding  
165 may reflect the binding affinity of CTCF to its cognate sequences, which can be  
166 quantified by the motif-matching scores. Therefore, we compared the distribution of motif  
167 scores associated with different subsets of CTCF binding sites. The motif scores for  
168 CTCF sites associated with TAD boundaries and hub enhancers are higher than non-  
169 hub enhancer-associated CTCF sites, consistent with the CTCF ChIP-seq signal

170 intensity (**Figure 3F** and **Figure 3-figure supplement 1F**). Of note, a similar pattern is  
171 observed for the genomic sequence conservation of CTCF binding sites as quantified by  
172 the phastCons100way score (**Figure 3G** and **Figure 3-figure supplement 1G**),  
173 suggesting that the cell-type variation associated with CTCF binding may be under  
174 evolutionary pressure.

175 Somatic mutations of TAD or insulated neighborhood boundaries have been  
176 reported in cancer (Flavahan et al., 2016; Hnisz, Weintraub, et al., 2016; Katainen et al.,  
177 2015). Consistently, we observed high frequency of somatic mutations in TAD boundary-  
178 associated CTCF sites using somatic mutations in different cancers from the ICGC  
179 database (International Cancer Genome et al., 2010). Hub-enhancer-associated CTCF  
180 sites display comparable rates of somatic mutations with TAD boundaries-associated  
181 CTCF sites, which are significantly higher than non-hub enhancer-associated CTCF  
182 sites ( $P = 9.0E-3$  in K562,  $P = 2.3E-2$  in GM12878, **Figure 3G** and **Figure 3-figure**  
183 **supplement 1G**). Our results suggest that genetic alterations of hub enhancer-  
184 associated CTCF sites may confer similar consequences as perturbations of TAD  
185 boundary-associated CTCF sites, such as activation of proto-oncogenes (Flavahan et al.,  
186 2016; Hnisz, Weintraub, et al., 2016). Taken together, our results support a model that  
187 hub enhancers have two molecularly and functionally related roles in SE hierarchy  
188 (**Figure 3I**). Hub enhancers act as ‘conventional’ enhancers to activate gene expression  
189 through the recruitment of lineage-specifying transcriptional regulators and coactivators.  
190 In addition, they act as ‘organizational’ hubs to mediate and/or facilitate long-range  
191 chromatin interactions through the recruitment of cohesin and CTCF complexes.

192

### 193 **Hub enhancers are enriched for genetic variants associated with cell-type-specific** 194 **gene expression and diseases**

195 Genetic variations colocalized with regulatory genomic elements often associate with  
196 variation in expression of the linked target genes. As such, expression quantitative trait  
197 loci (eQTL) enrichment analysis serves as an objective and quantitative metric to  
198 evaluate regulatory potential. We compared the frequencies of eQTLs that are  
199 significantly associated with gene expression from the GTEx eQTL database (G. T.  
200 Consortium, 2013) with hub, non-hub and regular enhancers (**Figure 4A** and **Figure 4-**  
201 **figure supplement 1A**). We observed that SEs are more enriched with eQTLs than  
202 regular enhancers (**Figure 4-figure supplement 2A**). Importantly, within SEs, hub  
203 enhancers are more enriched with eQTLs compared to non-hub enhancers (**Figure 4A**



204 and **Figure 4-figure supplement 1A**). The difference is more apparent in the  
205 comparison using eQTLs identified in blood cells (**Figure 4B,C** and **Figure 4-figure**  
206 **supplement 1B,C**).

207 To gain insights into the function of hub enhancers, we next compared the  
208 enhancer groups with genome-wide association study (GWAS)-identified disease-  
209 associated genetic variants. Specifically, we analyzed the enrichment of single-  
210 nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) linked to diverse phenotypic traits and diseases in the  
211 GWAS catalog (Welter et al., 2014). Whereas REs are 1.6- and 1.9-fold more enriched  
212 with GWAS SNPs relative to genome background in K562 and GM12878 cells,  
213 respectively, the enrichment scores for SEs are significantly higher (2.7- and 4.8-fold,  
214 respectively) (**Figure 4-figure supplement 2A**). The enrichment of GWAS SNPs at SEs  
215 is consistent with previous studies that SEs are enriched with disease-associated  
216 variants (Hnisz et al., 2013; Maurano et al., 2012). Importantly, within SEs, hub  
217 enhancers display significantly higher enrichment (6.4- and 6.8-fold) than non-hub  
218 enhancers (2.5- and 4.5-fold) or REs (**Figure 4D** and **Figure 4-figure supplement 1D**).  
219 Furthermore, hub enhancers in K562 cells display the highest enrichment of GWAS  
220 SNPs associated with blood traits (22.4-fold, **Figure 4E,F**), indicating that hub  
221 enhancers enrich for cell-type-specific diseases-associated variants. We also found the  
222 hub enhancers defined by different thresholds of H-scores display similar enrichment of  
223 eQTLs and GWAS SNPs (**Figure 4-figure supplement 2B,C**), indicating that the  
224 properties of hub enhancers are not dependent on the specific threshold of H-score.  
225 Taken together, our studies demonstrate that hub enhancers within SEs are most  
226 significantly enriched with genetic variants associated with diseases and cell-type-  
227 specific gene expression, supporting their roles in the control of cell identity and disease.

228 To test the robustness of our method, we repeated our analysis to define  
229 hierarchical SEs and hub enhancers based on CTCF-mediated ChIA-PET datasets in  
230 K562 and GM12878 cells (Tang et al., 2015) (see Methods). We observed that 102 of  
231 188 hierarchical SEs in K562 and 227 of 427 hierarchical SEs in GM12878 defined by  
232 ChIA-PET datasets overlap with those defined by Hi-C data ( $P < 2.2E-16$  in both K562  
233 and GM12878, Fisher's exact test, **Figure 4-figure supplement 3A**). The hub  
234 enhancers within the hierarchical SEs shared by both data types also significantly  
235 overlap ( $P < 2.2E-16$  in both K562 and GM12878, Fisher's exact test). Similar to previous  
236 analysis, we observed that hub enhancers defined by ChIA-PET data were also more  
237 enriched with disease-associated variants compared to non-hub enhancers (**Figure 4-**



238 **figure supplement 3B**). The consistency between analyzing two independent  
239 experimental platforms (Hi-C and ChIA-PET), as well as between analyzing two distinct  
240 cell types (K562 and GM12878), strongly indicates that our approach is robust and  
241 generally applicable.

242

### 243 ***In situ* genome editing reveals distinct requirement of hub vs non-hub enhancers** 244 **in SE function**

245 Since the structural organization of chromatin plays a critical role in establishing  
246 enhancer activities, we then compared the regulatory potential of hub and non-hub  
247 enhancers subjected to genetic perturbation. In prior work, we applied CRISPR/Cas9  
248 based genome-editing to systematically dissect the functional hierarchy of an erythroid-  
249 specific SE controlling the *SLC25A37* gene encoding the mitochondrial transporter  
250 critical for iron metabolism (Huang et al., 2016). Following deletion of each of the three  
251 constituent enhancers alone or in combination, we identified a functionally ‘dominant’  
252 enhancer responsible for the vast majority of enhancer activity (Huang et al., 2016). Of  
253 note, we found that this ‘dominant’ enhancer is identified as a hub enhancer and  
254 associated with significantly higher chromatin interactions compared to the neighboring  
255 non-hub enhancers (**Figure 5-figure supplement 1A**). These studies provide initial  
256 evidence that hub enhancers may be more transcriptionally potent than non-hub  
257 enhancers in gene activation.

258 To further establish the functional roles of hub enhancers, we performed  
259 experimental validation of hierarchical SEs identified in K562 cells based on the  
260 predictions of our model. We first employed CRISPR interference (CRISPRi) in which  
261 the nuclease-dead Cas9 protein (dCas9) is fused to a KRAB (Kruppel-associated box)  
262 transcriptional repressor domain (Gilbert et al., 2014; Thakore et al., 2015; Xie, Duan, Li,  
263 Zhou, & Hon, 2017). Upon co-expression of sequence-specific single guide RNAs  
264 (sgRNAs) targeting individual hub or non-hub enhancers in K562 cells, we measured the  
265 expression of SE-linked target genes as a readout for the functional requirement for SE  
266 activity. We focused on two representative SE clusters located in the proximity of the  
267 *MYO1D* and *SMYD3* genes (**Figure 5-figure supplement 1B,C** and **Figure 5A,B**). Both  
268 SEs were predicted to contain hierarchical structure (H-score=2.2 and 1.6 respectively),  
269 while their nearest target genes *MYO1D* and *SMYD3* are highly expressed in K562 cells.  
270 Moreover, both SEs contain hub and non-hub enhancers within a defined TAD domain  
271 (**Figure 5-figure supplement 1B,C**). Importantly, whereas CRISPRi-mediated

272 repression of the two non-hub enhancers at the *MYO1D* SE led to modest  
273 downregulation (3.1-fold) of *MYO1D* expression, repression of the hub enhancer  
274 significantly decreased *MYO1D* expression by 8.3-fold (**Figure 5C,D**). Similarly,  
275 CRISPRi-mediated repression of the hub enhancer located in the *SMYD3* SE cluster  
276 resulted in more profound downregulation of *SMYD3* expression compared to the non-  
277 hub enhancer (**Figure 5E**).

278 To further interrogate the role of hub versus non-hub enhancers in SE structure  
279 and function *in situ*, we employed CRISPR/Cas9-mediated genome engineering to  
280 delete individual hub or non-hub enhancers with paired sgRNAs flanking the enhancer  
281 elements at the *MYO1D* SE (**Figure 5F**). We observed that 3 of 5 genes within the SE-  
282 containing TAD domain (*MYO1D*, *TMEM98* and *SPACA3*) displayed significant  
283 downregulation in mRNA expression, whereas the other two genes (*PSMD11* and  
284 *CDK5R1*) remained unaffected (**Figure 5G** and **Figure 5-figure supplement 1B**),  
285 suggesting that the *MYO1D* SE regulates only a subset of genes within the same TAD  
286 domain. Furthermore, knockout of the hub enhancer resulted in more significant  
287 downregulation (5.4, 14.0 and 3.2-fold related to control;  $P < 0.001$ ) of *MYO1D*,  
288 *TMEM98* and *SPACA3* genes compared to the non-hub enhancers (1.6, 1.5 and 1.5-  
289 fold), respectively, consistent with a prominent role of hub enhancers in SE activity. To  
290 measure the effects on the local chromatin landscape, we performed ChIP experiments  
291 in control, hub and non-hub enhancer knockout cells (**Figure 5H**). We observed that  
292 knockout of the non-hub enhancer had only a subtle effect on the enhancer-associated  
293 histone mark (H3K27ac) and binding of master TFs (GATA1 and TAL1) at the promoter  
294 or enhancer regions of SE-linked *MYO1D* and *TMEM98* genes. In contrast, knockout of  
295 the hub enhancer led to marked downregulation, or near absence, of H3K27ac,  
296 H3K4me3 and GATA1/TAL1 binding at neighboring enhancers or promoters. These  
297 results demonstrate that hub enhancers are functionally more potent than neighboring  
298 non-hub enhancers in directing transcriptional activation of SE-linked gene targets.

299 Taken together, our *in situ* genome editing analysis of multiple representative SE  
300 clusters provides compelling evidence that at least a subset of SEs are composed of a  
301 hierarchical structure containing hub and non-hub enhancer elements, whereby hub  
302 enhancers are functionally indispensable for SE activities.

303

304 **Discussion**

305 SE assignment provides a means to identify regulatory regions near important genes  
306 that regulate cell fate (Pott & Lieb, 2015). However, it has remained unclear how SEs  
307 function and the extent to which they are distinct from more conventional enhancers. As  
308 such, the challenge has been to ascribe functional features uniquely associated with  
309 SEs, and account for how the activities of the constituent elements are coordinated for  
310 SE function (Pott & Lieb, 2015). Here, we have developed a systematic approach to  
311 interrogate the structural hierarchy of SE constituent elements. First, we observed that  
312 only a subset of SEs contains a hierarchical structure, which is consistent with previous  
313 findings that SEs are intrinsically heterogeneous, with a large fraction of SEs containing  
314 3 or fewer constituent elements (Pott & Lieb, 2015). Such heterogeneity may provide one  
315 explanation for an apparent paradox in the literature (Dukler, Gulko, Huang, & Siepel,  
316 2016; Pott & Lieb, 2015). For example, recent studies by our group and others provided  
317 evidence that SEs may be composed of a hierarchy of enhancer constituents that  
318 coordinately regulate gene expression (Canver et al., 2015; Fulco et al., 2016; Hnisz et  
319 al., 2015; Huang et al., 2016; H. Y. Shin et al., 2016). On the other hand, other examples  
320 suggest that some SEs may not contain hierarchical structures and the SE constituents  
321 contribute additively to gene activation (Hay et al., 2016; Moorthy et al., 2017). Within  
322 hierarchical SEs, we identified those hub enhancers associated with an unusually high  
323 frequency of long-range chromatin interactions, suggesting that these elements may  
324 play an important role in maintaining the structure of SEs. Moreover, hub enhancers are  
325 significantly more enriched with eQTL and GWAS-identified genetic variations, and  
326 functionally more potent for gene activation than neighboring non-hub enhancers within  
327 the same SEs. Hence, our results support a model in which the structural hierarchy of  
328 SEs is predictive of functional hierarchy.

329 We observed that CTCF binding is highly enriched at hub enhancers compared  
330 to other constituent elements. CTCF has an established role in orchestrating genome  
331 structure (Phillips & Corces, 2009). The prevailing model posits that the primary function  
332 of CTCF is to maintain the boundaries of topological domains and the insulated  
333 neighborhoods (Hnisz, Day, & Young, 2016). Beyond this, our results suggest that CTCF  
334 plays additional, yet important, roles in organizing the structural hierarchy of SEs. We  
335 speculate that hierarchical organization may be established in a step-wise manner  
336 during development through coordinated interactions between CTCF and cell-type  
337 specific regulators. Disruption of the hierarchical organization of SE structures may  
338 impair SE function and predispose to pathological conditions (Flavahan et al., 2016;

339 Hnisz, Weintraub, et al., 2016; Katainen et al., 2015). Consistent with this model, we  
340 found that hub-enhancer-associated CTCF sites display a significantly higher frequency  
341 of somatic mutation than non-hub enhancer-associated CTCF sites. Thus, it will be  
342 important to investigate chromatin interaction landscapes at both single gene and  
343 genomic levels in cancer cells harboring somatic mutations in CTCF sites.

344 At present, Hi-C or ChIA-PET datasets are limited in resolution and available cell  
345 types, which presents a significant challenge for further investigation of structural  
346 organization within SEs across cell types and cellular conditions. However, the recent  
347 development of new technologies, including Hi-ChIP, GAM and capture Hi-C (Beagrie et  
348 al., 2017; Mumbach et al., 2016; Schoenfelder et al., 2015), promises to enhance the  
349 quality and efficiency of data collection for 3D genome structures in various cell types. At  
350 the same time, improved methods for functional validation are also being rapidly  
351 developed, such as high-resolution CRISPR/Cas9 mutagenesis (Canver et al., 2017;  
352 Canver et al., 2015; Diao et al., 2017). With anticipated availability of additional  
353 chromatin interaction datasets, the computational method we describe here should find  
354 wide applications to the systematic investigation of the functional and structural  
355 organization of regulatory elements, including and beyond SEs. Findings from these  
356 studies will provide mechanistic insights into the genetic and epigenetic components of  
357 human genome in development and disease.

358

## 359 **Materials and Methods**

### 360 **Identification of SEs**

361 ChIP-seq data of H3K27ac in K562 and GM12878 cells were downloaded from  
362 ENCODE (T. E. P. Consortium, 2012). All data were in the human genome version  
363 hg19. MACS2 (Zhang et al., 2008) was used to identify H3K27ac peaks with a threshold  
364 Q-value=1.0E-5. H3K27ac peaks were used to define the enhancer boundary, followed  
365 by further filtering based on the criteria: (1) excluding H3K27ac peaks that overlapped  
366 with ENCODE blacklisted genomic regions (T. E. P. Consortium, 2012); and (2)  
367 excluding H3K27ac peaks that were located within +/-2kb region of any Refseq  
368 annotated gene promoter. The remaining H3K27ac peaks were defined as  
369 enhancers. Then, SEs were identified by using the ROSE (Rank Ordering of Super-  
370 Enhancers) algorithm (Loven et al., 2013; Whyte et al., 2013) based on the H3K27ac  
371 ChIP-seq signal with the default parameters.

372

### 373 **Analysis of Hi-C data**

374 The 5kb resolution intra-chromosomal raw interaction matrix in K562 and GM12878 cells  
375 were downloaded from a public dataset (Rao et al., 2014). The statistically significant  
376 chromatin interactions were detected as previous (Huang et al., 2015). Briefly, the raw  
377 interaction matrix was normalized by using the ICE algorithm (Imakaev et al., 2012), as  
378 implemented in the Hi-Corrector package (Li, Gong, Li, Alber, & Zhou, 2015), to remove  
379 biases (Imakaev et al., 2012; Peng et al., 2013). Fit-Hi-C (Ay, Bailey, & Noble, 2014)  
380 was used to identify statistically significant intra-chromosomal interactions, using the  
381 parameter setting '-U=2000000, -L=10000' along with the threshold of FDR=0.01. The  
382 interaction frequency for each 5kb bin was calculated as the number of significant  
383 chromatin interactions associated with the bin. The list of TADs in K562 and GM12878  
384 cells were downloaded from the supplementary data (Rao et al., 2014).

385

### 386 **Analysis of chromatin mark distributions**

387 ChIP-seq of histone marks (H3K27ac, H3K4me1) and transcription factors/co-activators  
388 (GATA1, TAL1, PAX5, EBF1, p300, CTCF, SMC3, RAD21), DNase-seq in K562,  
389 GM12878 cells were downloaded from ENCODE (T. E. P. Consortium, 2012). Replicate  
390 data were merged if available. The sitepro plots for chromatin marks were plotted based  
391 on the binned density matrix range from +/-5kb centered by enhancer generated by  
392 using the CEAS software (H. Shin, Liu, Manrai, & Liu, 2009).

393

#### 394 **Analysis of CTCF related datasets**

395 Genome-wide CTCF peak locations in 55 cell types, including K562 and GM12878 cells,  
396 were downloaded from ENCODE (T. E. P. Consortium, 2012). For each CTCF peak in  
397 K562 or GM12878, the cell type consensus score was defined as the percentage of cell  
398 types in which the peak was detected.

399 CTCF motif information, represented as a position weight matrix, was  
400 downloaded from the JASPAR database (Mathelier et al., 2014). For each CTCF peak  
401 in K562 or GM12878, the corresponding maximum motif-matching score was evaluated  
402 by using the HOMER software (Heinz et al., 2010).

403 The phastCons scores (Siepel et al., 2005) for multiple alignments of 99  
404 vertebrate genomes to the human genome were downloaded from the UCSC Genome  
405 Browser. The sitepro plots of conservation score were plotted within +/-200bp centered  
406 by CTCF motif sites.

407 Known somatic mutation loci in cancer were downloaded from International  
408 Cancer Genome Consortium (ICGC) (International Cancer Genome et al., 2010) Data  
409 Portal under release 23. The sitepro plots of mutation frequencies were plotted within +/-  
410 200bp centered by CTCF motif sites with a 10bp smoothing window.

411

#### 412 **Enrichment analysis of GWAS SNPs and eQTLs**

413 The SNPs curated in GWAS Catalog (Welter et al., 2014) were downloaded through the  
414 UCSC Table Browser (Karolchik et al., 2004). The subset of blood-associated GWAS  
415 SNPs was selected as those associated with at least one of the following keywords in  
416 the "trait" field: 'Erythrocyte', 'F-cell', 'HbA2', 'Hematocrit', 'Hematological', 'Hematology',  
417 'Hemoglobin', 'Platelet', 'Blood', 'Anemia', 'sickle cell disease', 'Thalassemia', 'Leukemia',  
418 'Lymphoma', 'Lymphocyte', 'B cell ', 'B-cell', 'Lymphoma', 'Lymphocyte', and 'White blood  
419 cell'. Enrichment analysis was carried out as described previously (Huang et al., 2015),  
420 using random permutation as control.

421 Statistically significant eQTL loci in multiple tissues were downloaded from the  
422 Genotype-Tissue Expression (GTEx) database (Accession phs000424.v6.p1) (G. T.  
423 Consortium, 2013). Blood-associated eQTLs were those identified in the whole blood.

424

#### 425 **Analysis of ChIA-PET dataset**



426 CTCF-mediated ChIA-PET data were downloaded from ENCODE (for K562) and from  
427 the publication website (Tang et al., 2015) (for GM12878), respectively. The interaction  
428 frequency of each 5kb bin was calculated as the number of chromatin interactions  
429 associated the PET clusters located in the bin.

430

#### 431 **Data visualization**

432 The ChIP-seq signal and peaks were visualized using Integrative Genomics Viewer  
433 (IGV) (Robinson et al., 2011).

434

#### 435 **Cell culture**

436 K562 cells were obtained from the American Tissue Collection Center (ATCC). K562  
437 cells were cultured in RPMI1640 medium supplemented with 10% FBS and 1%  
438 penicillin-streptomycin.

439

#### 440 **CRISPR/Cas9-Mediated Interference (CRISPRi) of enhancer elements**

441 The CRISPR interference (CRISPRi) system was used to investigate the function of  
442 enhancer elements following published protocol with modifications (Gilbert et al., 2014;  
443 Thakore et al., 2015). Briefly, sequence-specific sgRNAs for site-specific interference of  
444 genomic targets were designed following described guidelines, and sequences were  
445 selected to minimize off-target effect based on publicly available filtering tools  
446 (<http://crispr.mit.edu/>). Oligonucleotides were annealed in the following reaction: 10  $\mu$ M  
447 guide sequence oligo, 10  $\mu$ M reverse complement oligo, T4 ligation buffer (1X), and 5U  
448 of T4 polynucleotide kinase (New England Biolabs) with the cycling parameters of 37°C  
449 for 30 min; 95°C for 5 min and then ramp down to 25°C at 5°C/min. The annealed oligos  
450 were cloned into pLV-hU6-sgRNA-hUbc-dCas9-KRAB-T2a-Puro vector (Addgene ID:  
451 71236) using a Golden Gate Assembly strategy including: 100 ng of circular pLV  
452 plasmid, 0.2  $\mu$ M annealed oligos, 2.1 buffer (1X) (New England Biolabs), 20 U of BsmBI  
453 restriction enzyme, 0.2 mM ATP, 0.1 mg/ml BSA, and 750 U of T4 DNA ligase (New  
454 England Biolabs) with the cycling parameters of 20 cycles of 37°C for 5 min, 20°C for 5  
455 min; followed by 80°C incubation for 20 min. Then K562 cells were transduced with  
456 lentivirus to stably express dCas9-KRAB and sgRNA. To produce lentivirus, we plated  
457 K562 cells at a density of  $3.0 \times 10^6$  per 10 cm plate in high-glucose DMEM  
458 supplemented with 10% FBS and 1% penicillin-streptomycin. The next day after  
459 seeding, cells were cotransfected with the appropriate dCas9-KRAB lentiviral expression



460 plasmid, psPAX2 and pMD2.G by PEI (Polyethyleneimine). After 8 h, the transfection  
461 medium was replaced with 5 mL of fresh medium. Lentivirus was collected 48 h after the  
462 first media change. Residual K562 cells were cleared from the lentiviral supernatant by  
463 filtration through 0.45  $\mu\text{m}$  cellulose acetate filters. To facilitate transduction, we added  
464 the PGE2 (Prostaglandin E2) to the viral media at a concentration of 5  $\mu\text{M}$ . The day after  
465 transduction, the medium was changed to remove the virus, and 1  $\mu\text{g}/\text{ml}$  puromycin was  
466 used to initiate selection for transduced cells. The positive cells were expanded and  
467 processed for gene expression analysis.

468

#### 469 **CRISPR/Cas9-mediated knockout of enhancer elements**

470 The CRISPR/Cas9 system was used to introduce deletion mutations of enhancer  
471 elements in K562 cells following published protocols (Canver et al., 2014; Cong et al.,  
472 2013; Mali et al., 2013). Briefly, the annealed oligos were cloned into pSpCas9(BB)  
473 (pX458; Addgene ID: 48138) vector using a Golden Gate Assembly strategy. To induce  
474 segmental deletions of candidate regulatory DNA regions, four CRISPR/Cas9 constructs  
475 were co-transfected into K562 cells by nucleofection using the ECM 830 Square Wave  
476 Electroporation System (Harvard Apparatus, Holliston, MA). Each construct was directed  
477 to flanking the target genomic regions. To enrich for deletion, the top 1-5% of GFP-  
478 positive cells were FACS sorted 48-72 h post-transfection and plated in 96-well plates.  
479 Single cell derived clones were isolated and screened for CRISPR-mediated deletion of  
480 target genomic sequences. PCR amplicons were subcloned and analyzed by Sanger  
481 DNA sequencing to confirm non-homologous end-joining (NHEJ)-mediated repair upon  
482 double-strand break (DSB) formation. The positive single-cell-derived clones containing  
483 the site-specific deletion of the targeted sequences were expanded for processed for  
484 gene expression analysis. The sequences of sgRNAs and genotyping PCR primers are  
485 listed in **Figure 5-figure supplement 2**.

486

#### 487 **Chromatin immunoprecipitation (ChIP)**

488 ChIP experiments were performed as described with modifications (Huang et al., 2016).  
489 Briefly,  $2\text{--}5 \times 10^6$  cells were crosslinked with 1% formaldehyde for 5 min at room  
490 temperature. Chromatin was sonicated to around 500 bp in RIPA buffer (10 mM Tris-  
491 HCl, 1 mM EDTA, 0.1% sodium deoxycholate, 0.1% SDS, 1% Triton X-100, 0.25%  
492 sarkosyl, pH 8.0) with 0.3 M NaCl. Sonicated chromatin were incubated with 2 $\mu\text{g}$   
493 antibody at 4°C. After overnight incubation, protein A or G Dynabeads (Invitrogen) were

494 added to the CHIP reactions and incubated for four additional hours at 4°C to collect the  
495 immunoprecipitated chromatin. Subsequently, Dynabeads were washed twice with 1 ml  
496 of RIPA buffer, twice with 1 ml of RIPA buffer with 0.3 M NaCl, twice with 1 ml of LiCl  
497 buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl, 1 mM EDTA, 0.5% sodium deoxycholate, 0.5% NP-40, 250 mM  
498 LiCl, pH 8.0), and twice with 1 ml of TE buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl, 1 mM EDTA, pH 8.0).  
499 The chromatin were eluted in SDS elution buffer (1% SDS, 10 mM EDTA, 50 mM Tris-  
500 HCl, pH 8.0) followed by reverse crosslinking at 65°C overnight. CHIP DNA were treated  
501 with RNaseA (5 µg/ml) and protease K (0.2 mg/ml), and purified using QIAquick Spin  
502 Columns (Qiagen). The purified CHIP DNA was quantified by real-time PCR using the iQ  
503 SYBR Green Supermix (Bio-Rad). The following antibodies were used: H3K27ac  
504 (ab4729, Abcam), H3K4me3 (04-745, Millipore), IgG (12-370, Millipore), GATA1  
505 (ab11852, Abcam), TAL1 (sc-12984, Santa Cruz Biotechnology).

506

#### 507 **Replicates**

508 The biological replicates are defined as experiments performed using independently  
509 isolated biological samples grown/treated under the same conditions. The technical  
510 replicates are defined as experiments performed using the same sample (after all  
511 preparatory techniques) and analyzed in multiple times. For the CRISPR/Cas9-mediated  
512 knockout (KO) of hub or non-hub enhancers (**Figure 5C-G**), three or four independent  
513 single cell-derived homozygous KO clones were analyzed, each with two technical  
514 replicates. The unmodified control cells were analyzed as two independent biological  
515 replicate experiments, each with two technical replicates. For the CHIP-qPCR analysis  
516 (**Figure 5H**), the results are shown as means ± SEM of two biological replicates, each  
517 with two technical replicate measurements. All experimental data points including  
518 outliers were included in the data analysis.

519

520 **Competing interests**

521 The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

522

523 **Authors' contributions**

524 J.H., J.X. and G.C.Y. conceived and designed the experiments. J.H. and Y.Z.  
525 performed bioinformatic analyses. K.L. and X.L. performed experimental  
526 validation. J.H., J.X., G.C.Y., K.L., W.C. and S.H.O. wrote the manuscript. J.X.  
527 and G.C.Y. supervised the project.

528

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538

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747  
748

749 **Figure legends**

750

751 **Figure 1.** Definition of hierarchical SEs and hub enhancers based on Hi-C chromatin  
752 interactions.

753 (A) Overview of pipeline.

754 (B) Representative hierarchical (left) and non-hierarchical (right) SEs. For each 5kb bin  
755 within SE, the frequency of chromatin interactions (left *y-axis*) of and the z-score (right *y-*  
756 *axis*) are shown. The dashed red line represents the threshold of z-score = 1.5.

757 (C) The proportion of hierarchical and non-hierarchical SEs.

758 (D) The ROSE ranking of hierarchical and non-hierarchical SEs. *P* value is calculated  
759 using Wilcoxon rank-sum test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001.

760 (E) GREAT functional analysis of hierarchical and non-hierarchical SEs.

761

762 **Figure 2.** Chromatin landscapes at hub enhancers.

763 (A-F) Spatial distribution of chromatin marks centered by enhancers in three groups in  
764 K562 cells, H3K4me1 (A), H3K27ac (B), DNase I hypersensitivity (C), master regulators  
765 GATA1 (D) and TAL1 (E), coactivator p300 (F). *P* values are calculated using Student's  
766 t-test based on the ChIP-seq signal intensity within 1kb window centered by enhancers.  
767 \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

768

769 **Figure 3.** CTCF binding at hub enhancers within SEs hierarchy.

770 (A-C) Spatial distribution of two cohesin components SMC3 (A) and RAD21(B), and  
771 CTCF (C), centered by enhancers in three groups. *P* values are calculated using  
772 Student's t-test based on the ChIP-seq signal intensity of 1kb window centered by  
773 enhancers. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

774 (D) Percentage of hub enhancers with (purple) or without (red) overlapping with TAD  
775 boundaries collected from(Rao et al., 2014). The CTCF ChIP-seq peaks/motif-sites  
776 associated with hub enhancers overlapping with TAD boundaries were excluded for  
777 analysis in (E-H).

778 (E) CTCF binding consensus across cell types in different contexts: hub (red), non-hub  
779 enhancers (blue) and TAD boundaries (purple). For each CTCF peak in K562, the  
780 consensus score (*y-axis*) was quantified as the percentage of cell types containing the  
781 same CTCF peak. *P* values are calculated using Student's t test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01;  
782 \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

783 (F) CTCF-motif-matching score (y-axis) of CTCF peaks. *P* values are calculated using  
784 Student's t-test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. *not significant*.

785 (G) Sequence conservation around CTCF motif sites. The sitepro plots were centered by  
786 CTCF motif sites. *P* values are calculated using Student's t-test based on the  
787 PhastConst100way score (y-axis) within CTCF motif sites. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* <  
788 0.001, n.s. *not significant*.

789 (H) Somatic mutation rate in cancers collected from IGGC around CTCF motif sites. The  
790 sitepro plots were centered by CTCF motif sites with 10bp smoothing window. *P* values  
791 are calculated using Fisher's exact test based on overlap between CTCF motif sites and  
792 somatic mutation sites. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. *not significant*.

793 (I) Model of the hierarchical organization of SEs containing both hub and non-hub  
794 enhancers. Hub enhancers are highly enriched with CTCF and cohesin binding, and  
795 functions as an organization hub to coordinate the non-hub enhancers and other distal  
796 regulatory elements within and beyond the SE.

797

798 **Figure 4.** Enrichment of genetic variants associated with cell-type-specific gene  
799 expression and diseases in hub enhancers.

800 (A-C) Enrichment of the eQTLs curated in GTEx in the enhancers in three groups in  
801 K562 cells, using randomly selected genome regions as control (see Methods). The  
802 GTEx eQTL identified in all tissues (A) were separated into two subsets, identified in  
803 whole blood (B) or other tissues (C). The number of enhancers overlap in each group  
804 with eQTLs were labelled on each bar. *P* values are calculated using Fisher's exact test.  
805 \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. *not significant*.

806 (D-F) Enrichment of the disease or traits-associated SNPs curated in GWAS catalog in  
807 the enhancers in three groups in K562 cells, using randomly selected genome regions  
808 as control (see Methods). The GWAS SNPs associated all diseases/traits (D), were  
809 separated into two subsets, associated with blood-related diseases/traits (E) or other  
810 traits (F). The number of enhancers overlap in each group with SNPs were labelled on  
811 each bar. *P* values are calculated using Fisher's exact test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* <  
812 0.001, n.s. *not significant*.

813

814 **Figure 5.** *In situ* genome editing reveals distinct requirement of hub vs non-hub  
815 enhancers in SE function.

816 **(A)** Chromatin signatures and TF occupancy at the MYO1D SE locus in K562 cells are  
817 shown. The identified hub and non-hub enhancers are depicted by red (hub) and blue  
818 (non-hub) lines, respectively. The Hi-C chromatin interaction z-score and frequency at  
819 5kb resolution is shown at the bottom (see Methods). The positions of sgRNAs used for  
820 CRISPRi or CRISPR/Cas9-mediated knockout analyses are shown as arrowheads.

821 **(B)** Chromatin signatures and TF occupancy at the SMYD3 SE locus in K562 cells are  
822 shown.

823 **(C)** Schematic of CRISPRi-mediated repression of hub or non-hub enhancers.

824 **(D,E)** Expression of MYO1D and SMYD3 mRNA in untreated (control), CRISPRi-  
825 mediated repression of hub or non-hub enhancers. The mRNA expression levels related  
826 to GAPDH are shown. Each colored circle represents an independent biological replicate  
827 experiment. Results are means  $\pm$  SEM. *P* values are calculated by two-sided Student's t-  
828 test. \**P* < 0.05, \*\**P* < 0.01, \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

829 **(F)** Schematic of CRISPR/Cas9-mediated knockout of hub or non-hub enhancers.

830 **(G)** Expression of all genes within the SE-containing TAD domain in unmodified (control),  
831 CRISPR/Cas9-mediated knockout of hub or non-hub enhancers. The mRNA expression  
832 levels relative to GAPDH are shown. Each colored circle represents an independent  
833 single-cell-derived biallelic enhancer knockout clone. A schematic of the SE-containing  
834 TAD domain and associated genes are shown on the top. Results are means  $\pm$  SEM. *P*  
835 values are calculated by a two-sided Student's t-test. \**P* < 0.05, \*\**P* < 0.01, \*\*\**P* < 0.001,  
836 n.s. not significant.

837 **(H)** CHIP-qPCR analysis of H3K27ac, H3K4me3, GATA1, TAL1 and IgG (negative  
838 control) in unmodified (control), hub or non-hub enhancer knockout cells. Primers  
839 against MYO1D and TMEM98 promoters, hub and non-hub enhancers, and a negative  
840 control genome region (chr2:211,337,339-211,337,429) are used. The results are shown  
841 as fold enrichment of the CHIP signals against the negative control region as means  $\pm$   
842 SEM of four independent experiments. *P* values are calculated by a two-sided Student's  
843 t-test. \**P* < 0.05, \*\**P* < 0.01, \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

844

845 **Supplementary Figures**

846

847 **Figure 1-figure supplement 1.** Definition of hierarchical SEs and hub enhancers using  
848 chromatin interactions in K562 and GM12878 cells.

849 (A) Chromatin interactions frequency for 5kb bins overlapping with SEs (yellow), REs  
850 (green), using randomly selected genome 5kb bins as control (gray) in K562 and  
851 GM12878 cells. *P* values are calculated using Student's t-test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01;  
852 \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

853 (B) Distribution of z-score of 5kb bins in all SEs. The dashed line represents the  
854 threshold value of H-score = 1.5, which roughly corresponds to the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of z-  
855 scores.

856 (C) Hierarchical SEs and hub enhancers defined using different thresholds of H-score.

857 (D) The frequency of chromatin interaction of enhancers in three groups of enhancers  
858 (red for hub enhancers, blue for non-hub enhancers, green for regular enhancers). *P*  
859 values are calculated using Student's t-test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not  
860 significant.

861

862 **Figure 1-figure supplement 2.** Hierarchical and non-hierarchical SEs in GM12878 cells.

863 (A) Proportion of hierarchical and non-hierarchical SEs.

864 (B) The ROSE ranking of hierarchical and non-hierarchical SEs. *P* value is calculated  
865 using Wilcoxon rank-sum test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

866 (C) GREAT functional analysis of hierarchical and non-hierarchical SEs.

867

868 **Figure 2-figure supplement 1.** Chromatin landscapes around hub enhancers in  
869 GM12878 cells.

870 (A-F) Spatial distribution of chromatin marks centered by enhancers in three groups,  
871 H3K4me1 (A), H3K27ac (B), DNase I hypersensitivity (C), master regulators PAX5 (D)  
872 and EBF1 (E), and coactivator p300 (F).

873

874 **Figure 3-figure supplement 1.** CTCF binding at hub enhancers within SEs hierarchy in  
875 GM12878 cells.

876 (A-C) Spatial distribution of two cohesin components SMC3, RAD21 (A,B) and CTCF  
877 (C), centered by enhancers in three groups.

878 **(D)** Percentage of hub enhancers with (purple) or without (red) overlapping with TAD  
879 boundaries collected from (Rao et al., 2014). The CTCF ChIP-seq peaks/motif-sites  
880 associated with hub enhancers overlapping with TAD boundaries were excluded for  
881 analysis in **(E-H)**.

882 **(E)** CTCF binding consensus across cell types in different contexts: hub (red), non-hub  
883 enhancers (blue) and TAD boundaries (purple). For each CTCF peak in GM12878, the  
884 consensus score (y-axis) was quantified as the percentage of cell types containing the  
885 same CTCF peak. *P* values are calculated using Student's t test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01;  
886 \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

887 **(F)** CTCF-motif-matching score (y-axis) of CTCF peaks. *P* values are calculated using  
888 Student's t-test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

889 **(G)** Sequence conservation around CTCF motif sites. The sitepro plots were centered by  
890 CTCF motif sites. *P* values are calculated using Student's t-test based on the  
891 PhastConst100way score (y-axis) within CTCF motif sites. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* <  
892 0.001, n.s. not significant.

893 **(H)** Somatic mutation rate in cancers collected from IGGC around CTCF motif sites. The  
894 sitepro plots were centered by CTCF motif sites with 10bp smoothing window. *P* values  
895 are calculated using Fisher's exact test based on overlap between CTCF motif sites and  
896 somatic mutation sites. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001, n.s. not significant.

897

898 **Figure 4-figure supplement 1.** Enrichment of genetic variants associated with cell-type  
899 specific gene expression and diseases in hub enhancers in GM12878 cells.

900 **(A-C)** Enrichment of the eQTLs curated in GTEx in the enhancers in three groups, using  
901 randomly selected genome regions as control (see Methods). The GTEx eQTL identified  
902 in all tissues **(A)** were separated into two subsets, identified in blood **(B)** or other tissues  
903 **(C)**. The number of enhancers overlap in each group with eQTLs were labelled on each  
904 bar. *P* values are calculated using Fisher's exact test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\**P* < 0.01; \*\*\**P* < 0.001,  
905 n.s. not significant.

906 **(D-F)** Enrichment of the disease or traits-associated SNPs curated in GWAS catalog in  
907 the enhancers in three groups, using randomly selected genome regions as control (see  
908 Methods). The GWAS SNPs associated all diseases/traits **(D)**, were separated into two  
909 subsets, associated with blood-related diseases/traits **(E)** or other traits **(F)**. The number  
910 of enhancers overlap in each group with SNPs were labelled on each bar. *P* values are

911 calculated using Fisher's exact test.  $*P < 0.05$ ;  $**P < 0.01$ ;  $***P < 0.001$ , n.s. not  
912 significant.

913

914 **Figure 4-figure supplement 2.** Enrichment of genetic variants associated with cell-type  
915 specific expression and diseases in K562 and GM12878.

916 **(A)** Enrichment of GTEx eQTL (left) and GWAS SNPs (right) in SEs and REs in K562  
917 (upper) and GM12878(lower). The number of enhancers overlap in each group with  
918 eQTLs were labelled on each bar.  $P$  values are calculated using Fisher's exact test.  $*P <$   
919  $0.05$ ;  $**P < 0.01$ ;  $***P < 0.001$ , n.s. not significant.

920 **(B,C)** Enrichment of GTEx eQTL (left) and GWAS SNPs (right) in hub enhancers defined  
921 based on the threshold of H-score  $>1.25$  **(B)** or H-score  $>1.75$  **(C)** in K562 (upper) and  
922 GM12878(lower). The number of enhancers overlap in each group with eQTLs were  
923 labelled on each bar.  $P$  values are calculated using Fisher's exact test.  $*P < 0.05$ ;  $**P <$   
924  $0.01$ ;  $***P < 0.001$ , n.s. not significant.

925

926 **Figure 4-figure supplement 3.** Comparison of hub enhancers defined based on  
927 chromatin interactions from Hi-C and ChIA-PET datasets in K562 and GM12878 cells.

928 **(A)** Overlap between hierarchical SEs (left) or hub enhancers (right) using Hi-C and  
929 ChIA-PET dataset in K562 (upper) and GM12878 (lower).  $P$  values are calculated using  
930 Fisher's exact test.  $*P < 0.05$ ;  $**P < 0.01$ ;  $***P < 0.001$ , n.s. not significant.

931 **(B)** Enrichment of GTEx eQTL (left) or GWAS SNPs (right) in hub enhancers defined  
932 based on ChIA-PET.  $P$  values are calculated using Fisher's exact test.  $*P < 0.05$ ;  $**P <$   
933  $0.01$ ;  $***P < 0.001$ , n.s. not significant.

934

935 **Figure 5-figure supplement 1.** *In situ* analysis of the functional requirement of hub vs  
936 non-hub enhancers.

937 **(A)** A genome browser view of the chromatin signatures and TF occupancy at the  
938 SLC25A37 SE locus in K562 cells. The identified SE is depicted by the blue shaded area.  
939 The hub and non-hub enhancers are denoted by the red and blue shaded lines,  
940 respectively. The Hi-C chromatin interaction z-score and frequency at 5kb resolution is  
941 shown at the bottom (see Methods).

942 **(B)** A zoom-out view of the chromatin signatures and TF occupancy at the MYO1D SE  
943 locus in K562 cells is shown.



944 (C) A zoom-out view of the chromatin signatures and TF occupancy at the SMYD3 SE  
945 locus in K562 cells is shown.

946

947 **Figure 5-figure supplement 2.** List of primer and sgRNA sequences used in this study.

948

## Figure 1

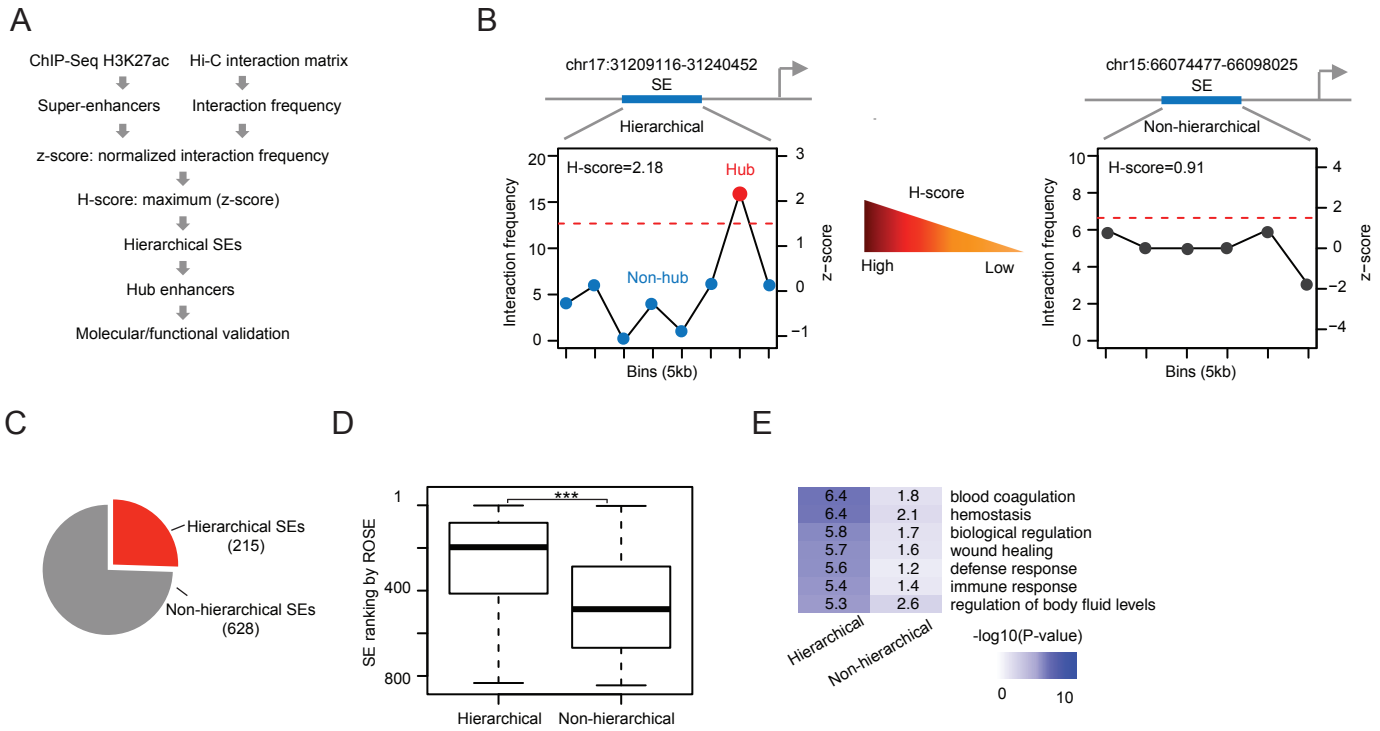


Figure 2

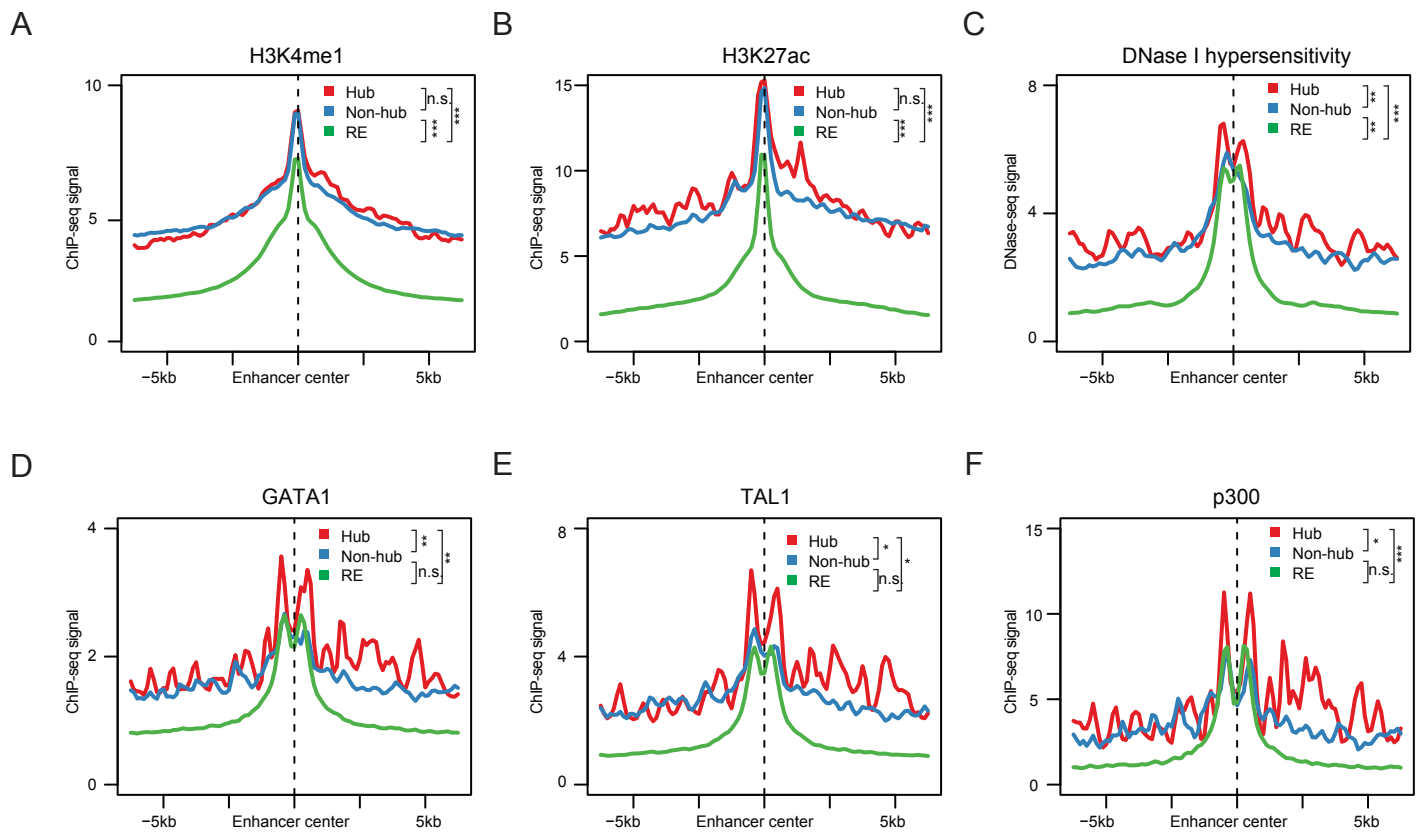


Figure 3

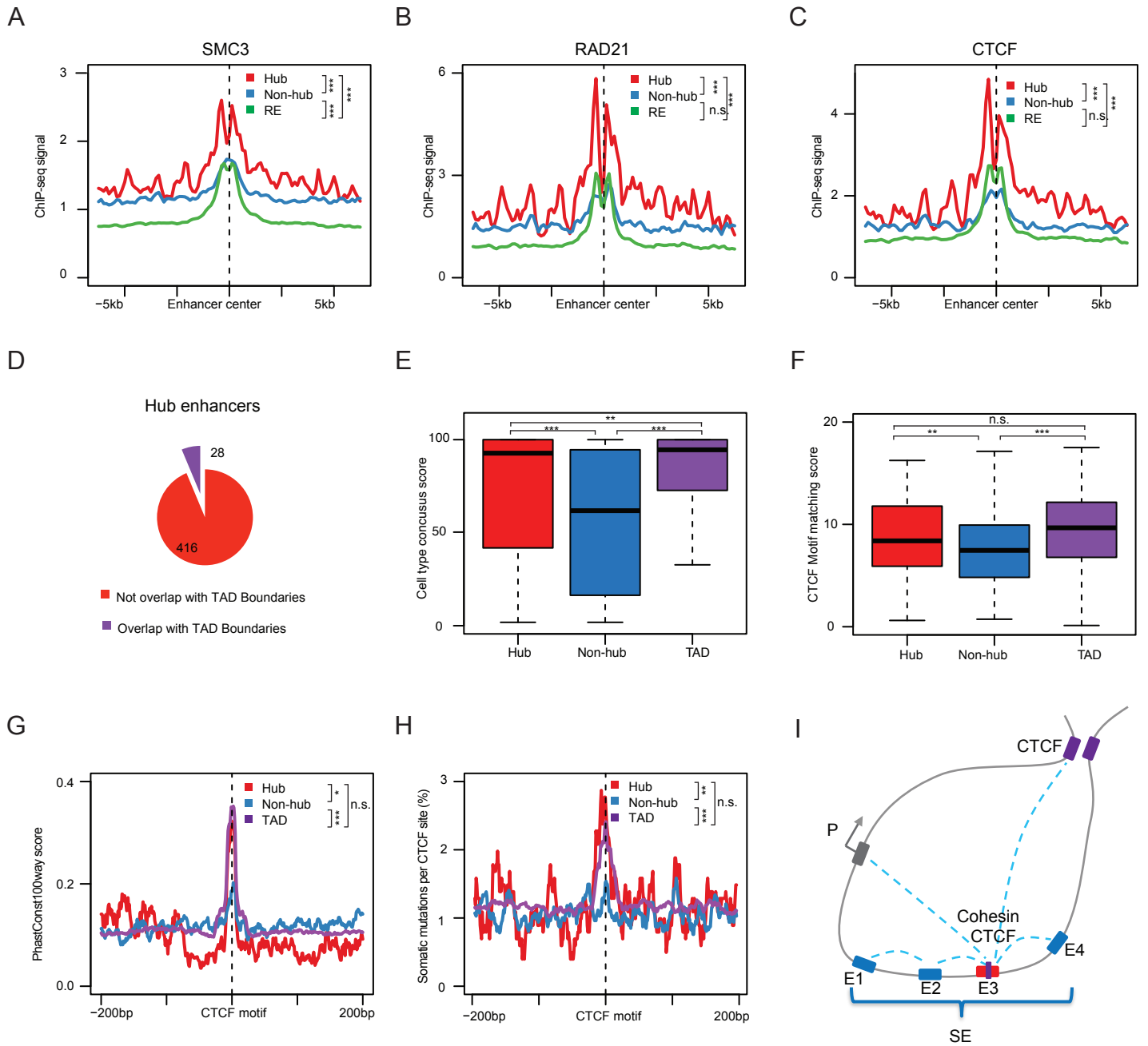
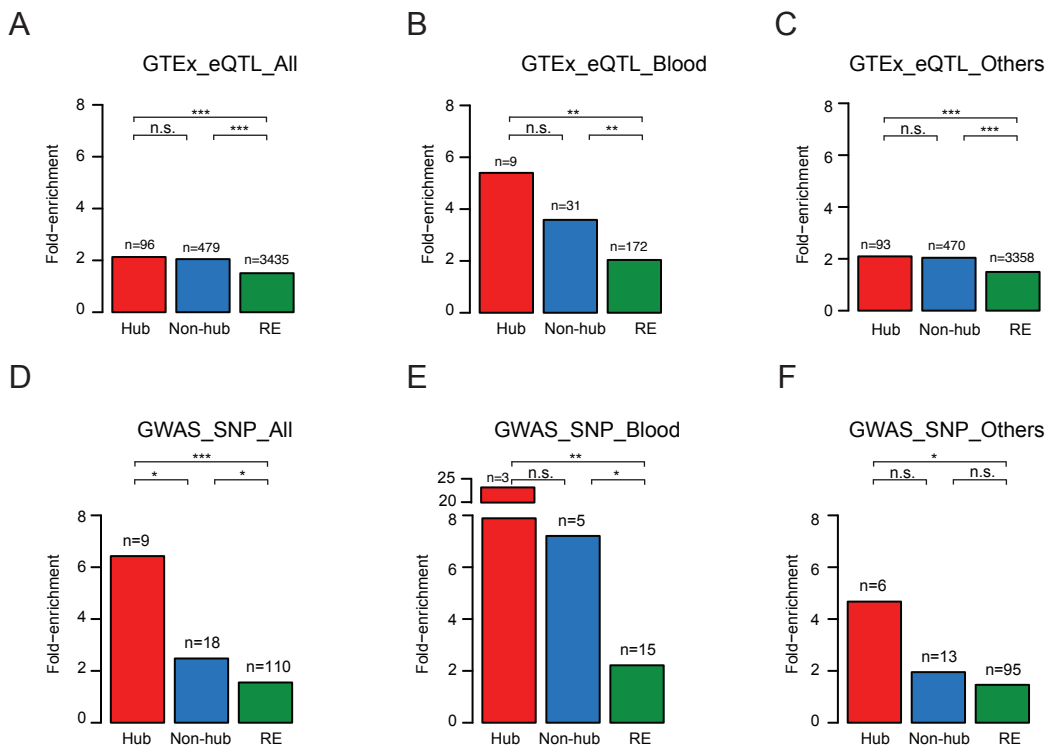
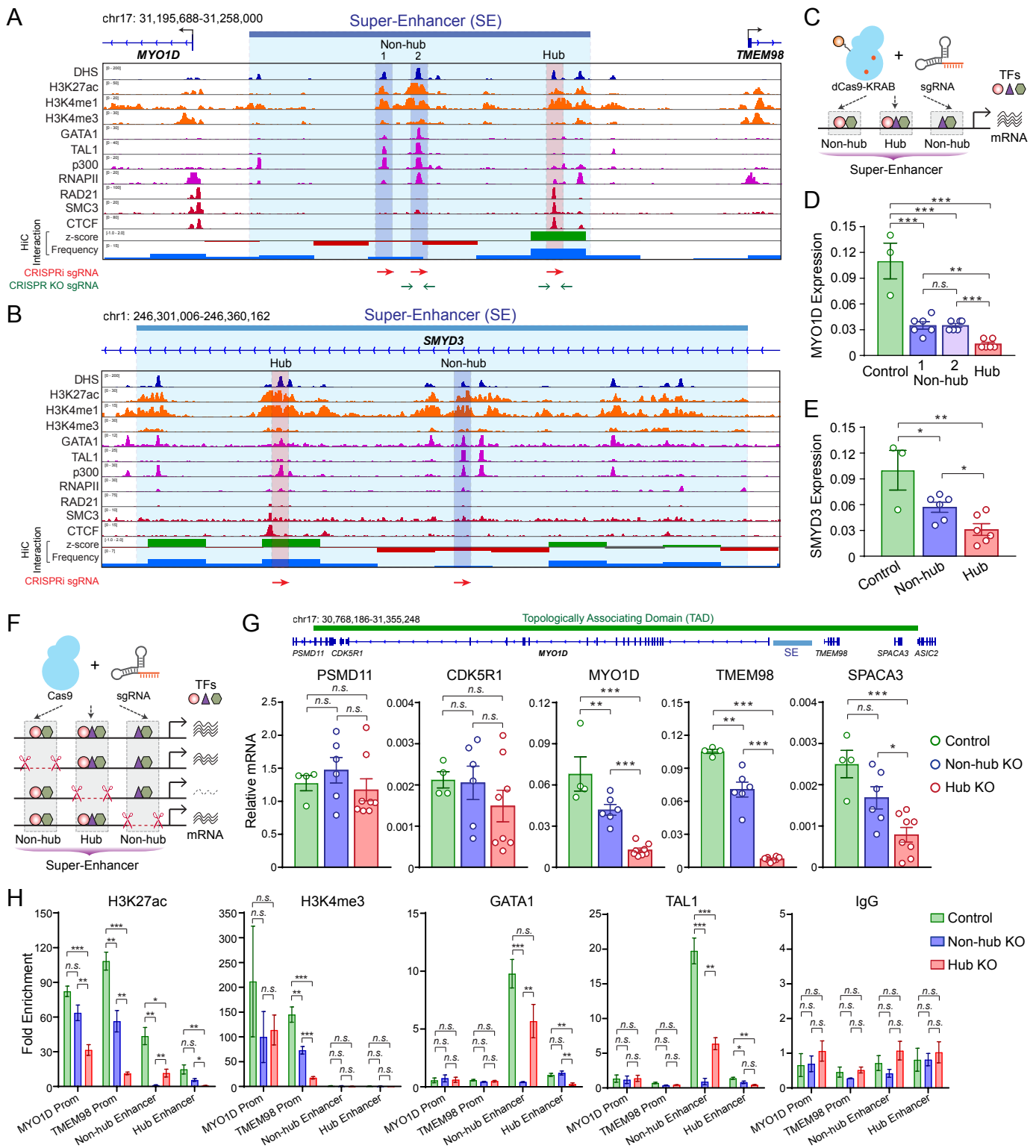


Figure 4

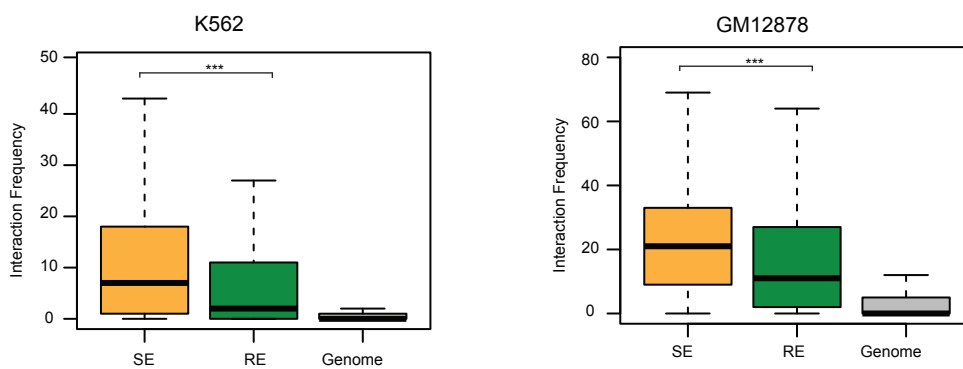


## Figure 5

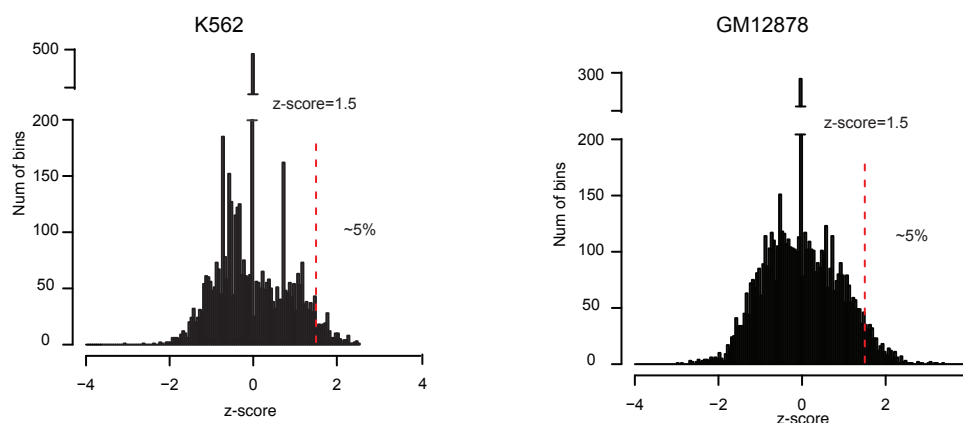


## Figure 1-figure supplement 1

A



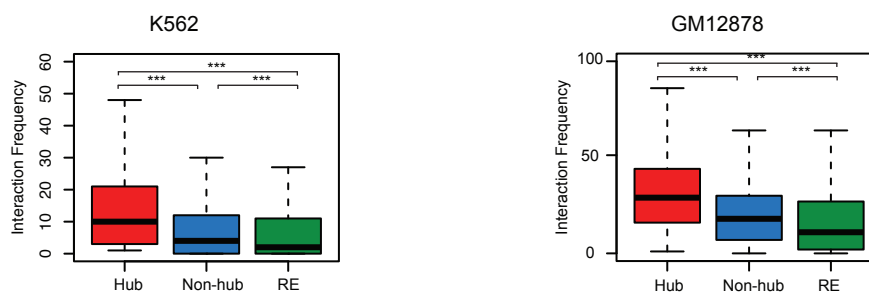
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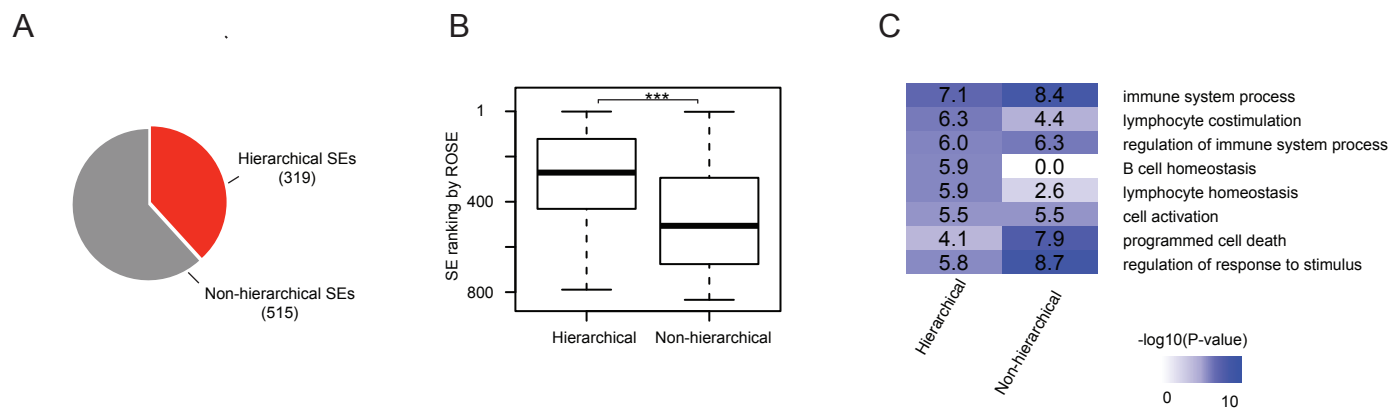
K562			GM12878		
H-score	Hierarchical SEs	Hub enhancers	H-score	Hierarchical SEs	Hub enhancers
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1.50	198	444	1.50	286	606
1.75	114	246	1.75	153	316

D

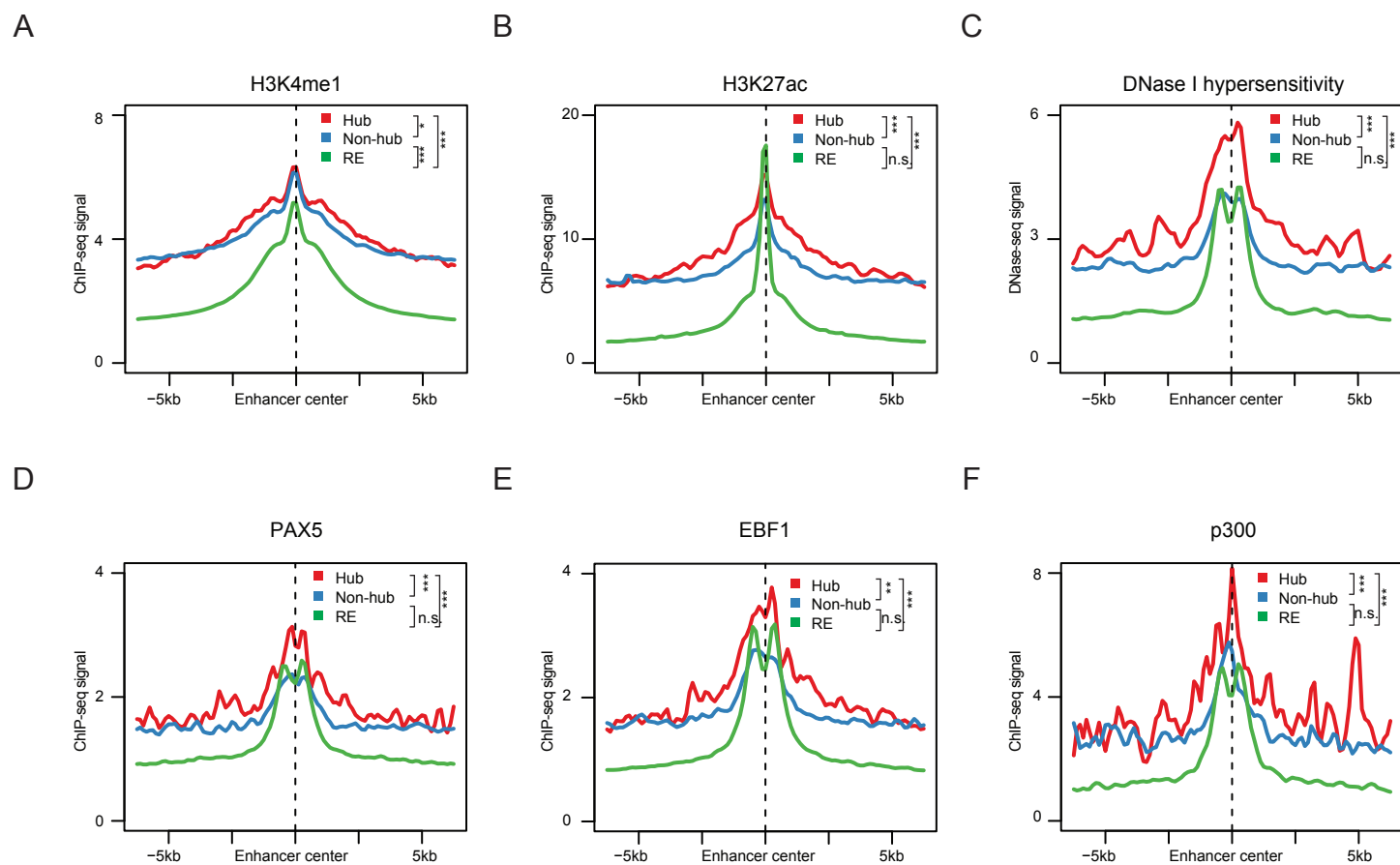




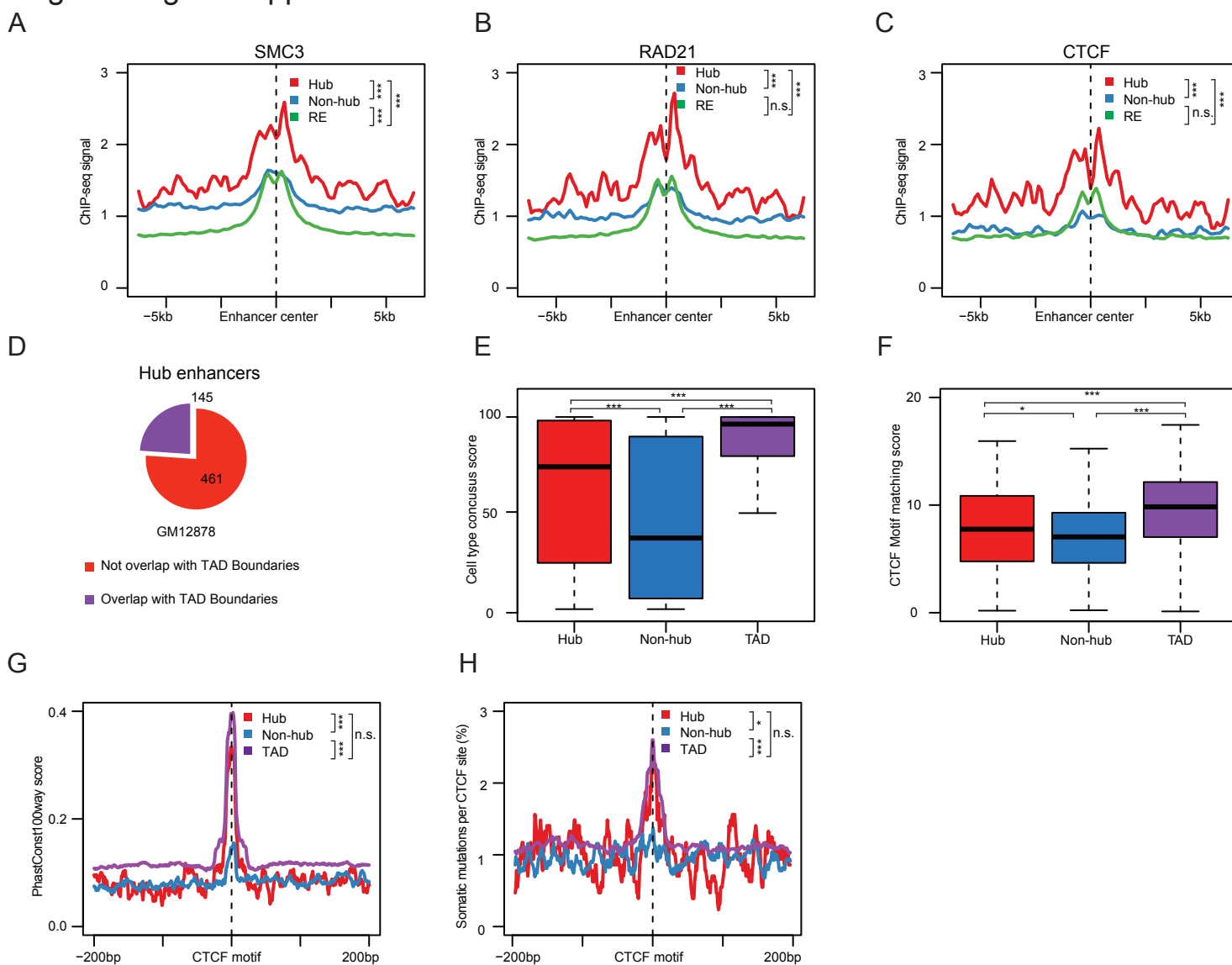
## Figure 1-figure supplement 2



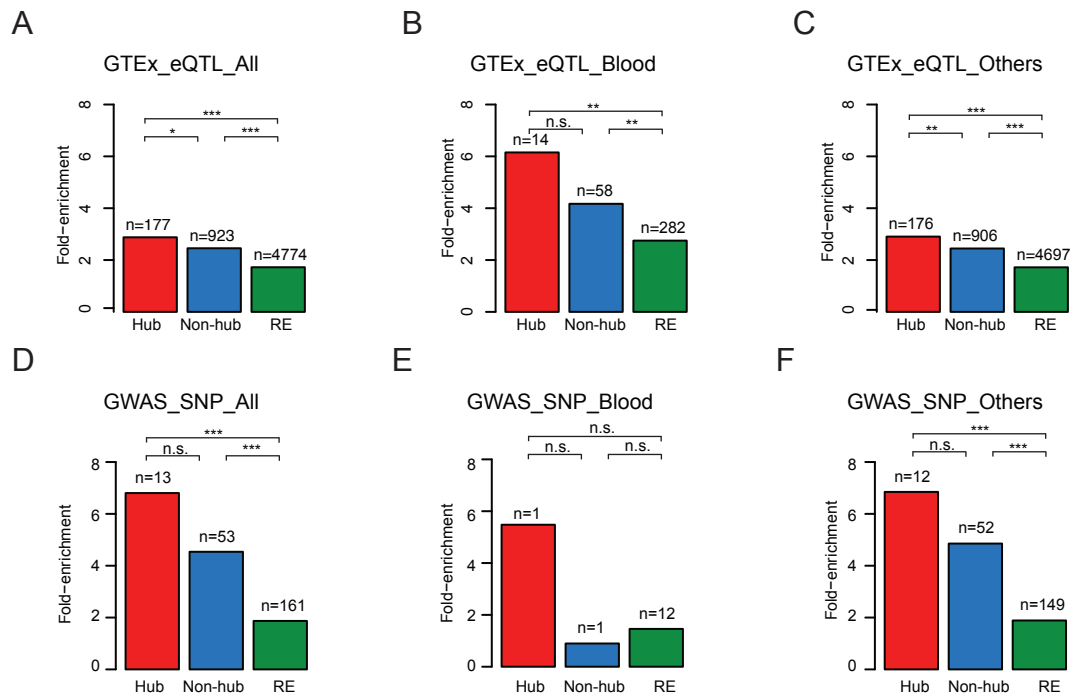
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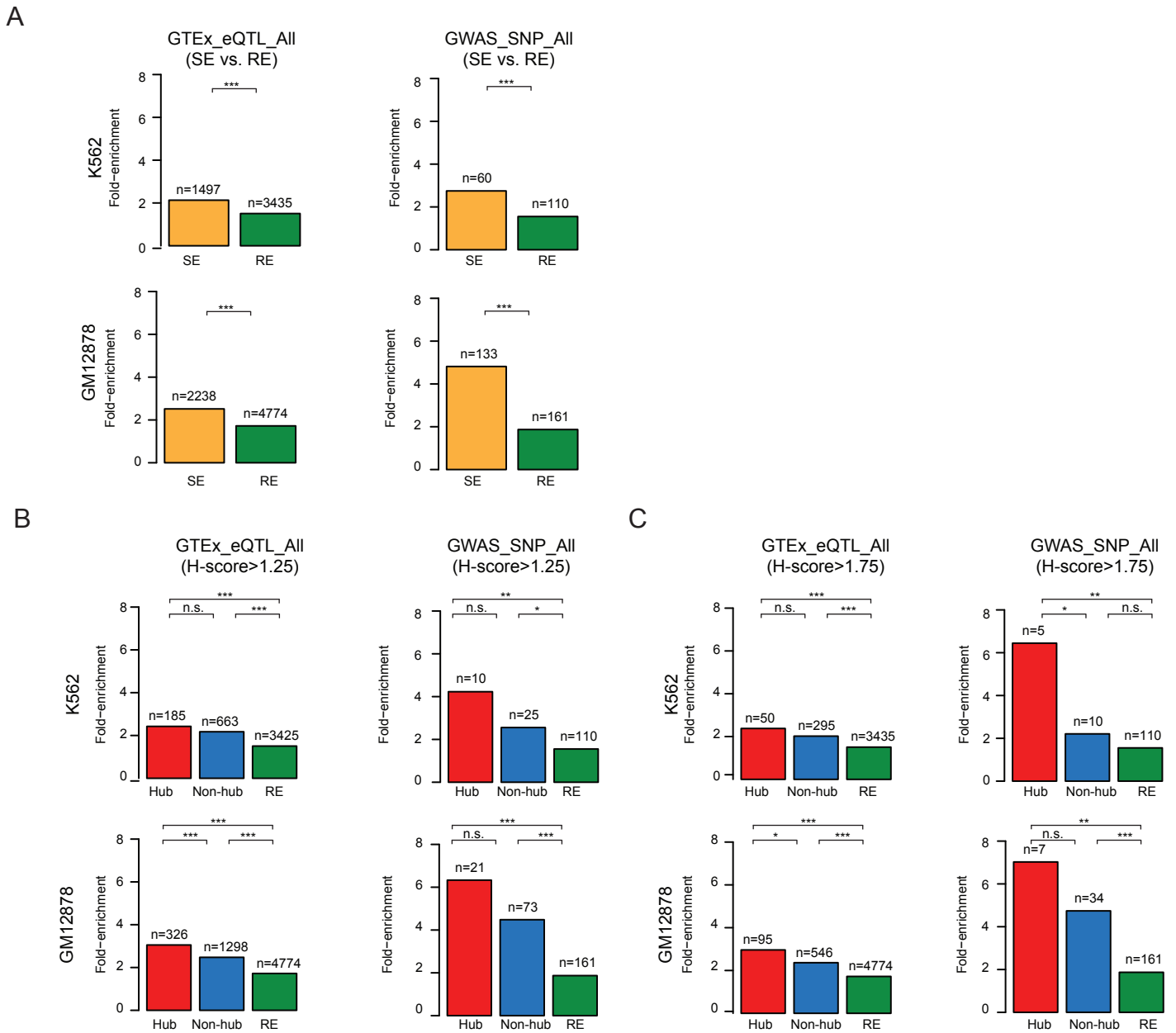
## Figure 3-figure supplement 1



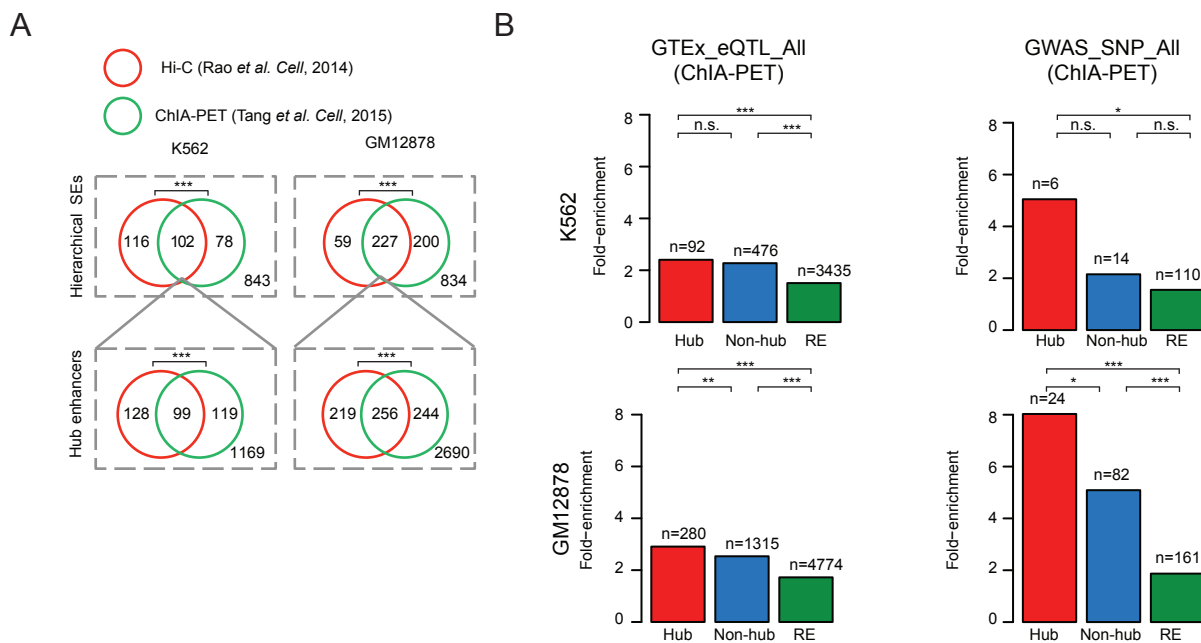
## Figure 4-figure supplement 1



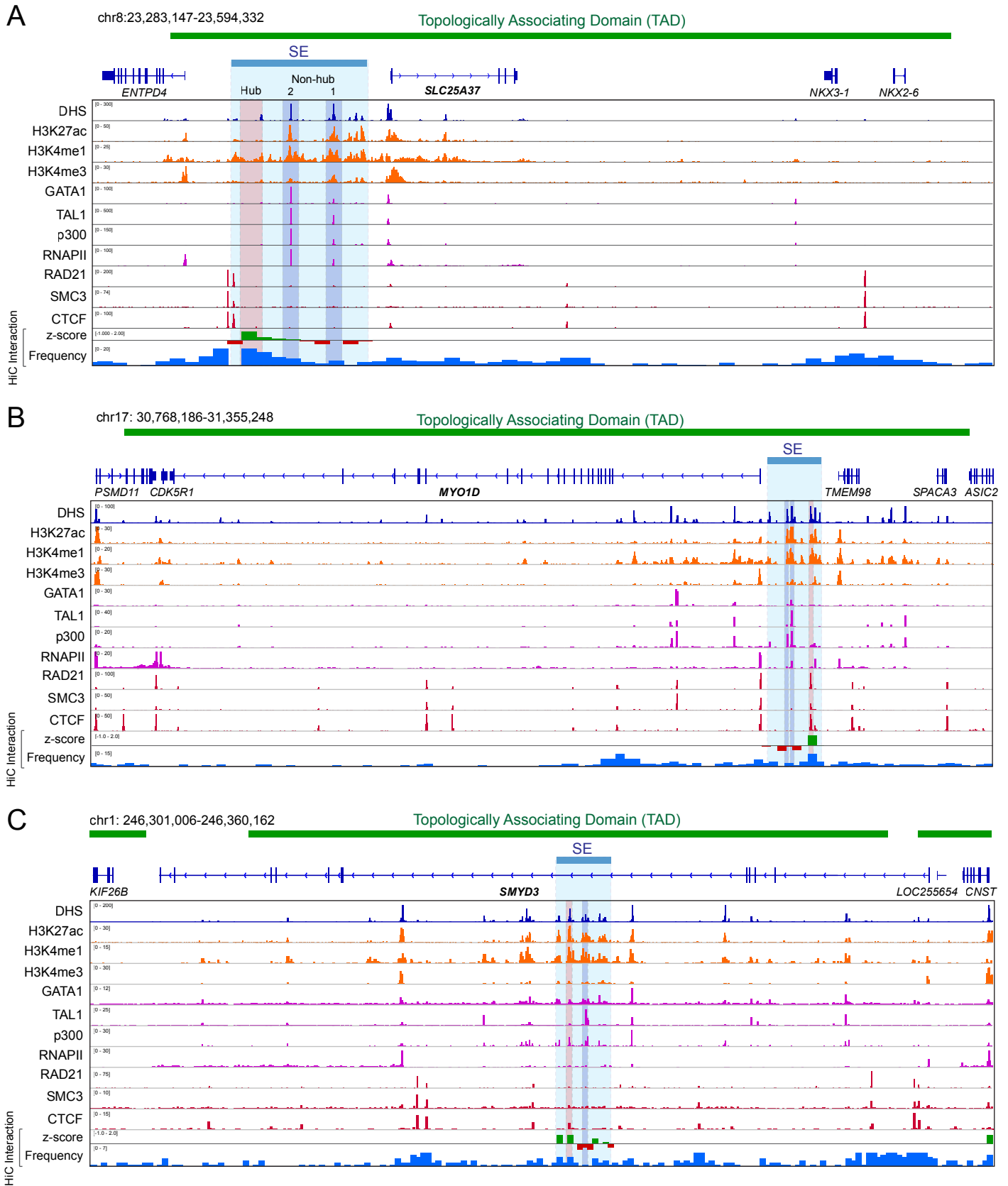
## Figure 4-figure supplement 2



## Figure 4-figure supplement 3



## Figure 5-figure supplement 1



## Figure 5-figure supplement 2

Name	Forward	Reverse	Application	
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh1-sgRNA1	CACCGCTTATCTGTTCTGTTCTGTC	AAACGACACGAACGAACAGATAAGC	sgRNA oligos for CRISPRi	
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh1-sgRNA2	CACCGTGAAGTATGATACTAATTGC	AAACGCAATTAGTGTATCAGTTCAC		
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2-sgRNA1	CACCGCATGTAGCAACATGTGATAC	AAACGTATCACATGTTGCTACATGC		
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2-sgRNA2	CACCGCATTGGCACTCTCTGCCGTC	AAACGACGGCAGAGAGTGCATATGC		
MYO1D_Hub Enh-sgRNA1	CACCGGCTAACGTTGAAGATTGCTG	AAACGCAATCTTCAACGTTAGCC		
MYO1D_Hub Enh-sgRNA2	CACCGGCACTTCAAAGAGTGGTCAC	AAACGTGACCACTCTTTGAAGTGCC		
SMYD3_Hub Enh-sgRNA1	CACCGGGACTGTTCTCTCAAAGT	AAACACTTTTGAGAGGAACAGTCCC		
SMYD3_Hub Enh-sgRNA2	CACCGGAAGTCCAGGTTATGACTGT	AAACACAGTCATAACCTGGACTTCC		
SMYD3_Non-hub Enh-sgRNA1	CACCGGTGAGCTTACCCGTGACTCC	AAACGGAGTCACGGGTAAGCTCACC		
SMYD3_Non-hub Enh-sgRNA2	CACCGCTATCTATTCGTTGCAGTG	AAACACTGCAACGAATAGATAGGC		
Gal4-4 sgRNA	CACCGAACGACTAGTTAGGCGTGT	AAACTACACGCCTAACTAGTCGTTT		
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2-sgRNA1	CACCGCTTAGGAGGGGTAGGCACCC	AAACGGGTGCCTACCCCTCCTAAGC		sgRNA oligos for KO
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2-sgRNA2	CACCGCACCCCGTGGCATAAGAAAT	AAACATTTCTTATGCCACGGGGTGC		
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2-sgRNA3	CACCGTAGTGATTTTGGGGTCCCA	AAACTGGGACCCCAAATCACTAC		
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2-sgRNA4	CACCGGAGAAAATTAATCTGCTCTC	AAACGAGAGCAGATTAATTTTCTCC		
MYO1D_Hub Enh-sgRNA1	CACCGGAGATGAGATACAGAGTAG	AAACCTACTCTGTATCTCATCTCCC		
MYO1D_Hub Enh-sgRNA2	CACCGGTAAGCAGAAATAGGGCAT	AAACATGCCCTATTCTGCTTTACC		
MYO1D_Hub Enh-sgRNA3	CACCGCCATTTACAGTTGTCCCCC	AAACGGGGGACAACGTAAAATGGC		
MYO1D_Hub Enh-sgRNA4	CACCGTCTCATTCTCTGTCGCCAC	AAACGTGGCGACGAAGGAATGAGAC		
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2-del	ATAGGGTCTCACTACGTTTCCCAGG	CCCTACGAACCTGAACTAGACAAC	genotyping primers for enhancer KO	
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2-WT	ATAGGGTCTCACTACGTTTCCCAGG	TCACTACACATCATGCACCTTCTC		
MYO1D_Hub Enh-del	AAGTTGAAGAGAGAACGGGAGGTAG	CCCTGGCTCTGTTGTGAAATGTGG		
MYO1D_Hub Enh-WT	AAGTTGAAGAGAGAACGGGAGGTAG	CACGGAGTTGCTCTCTTGCTCTTC		
hMYO1D_RT	AAGGCAGACTTCGTGCTGATG	TAAGGGTTCACAGAAACGACG	RT-qPCR primers	
hMEM98_RT	TTCTGGCTTCGTTTGCAGC	CGTCCAGTTCTAACTCAGAGGG		
hSPACA3_RT	CCGGCATAGAAGCCAGGAG	TCACAACGACCGTAGAGCTTG		
hCDK5R1_RT	AGAACAGCAAGAACGCCAAG	CGGCCACGATTCTCTTCCA		
hPSMD11_RT	GCCTCCATCGACATCCTCC	GAGCTGCTTTAGCCTTGCTG		
hSMYD3_RT	CGCGTCGCCAAACTACTGTAGT	CAAGAAGTCGAACGGAGTCTG		
hGAPDH_RT	ACCCAGAAGACTGTGGATGG	TTCAGCTCAGGGATGACCTT		
MYO1D_Non-hub Enh2	GGACACATCCGAGGAAGACCAAG	GACATTTCTCAATCTTCAGCCTCTC	ChIP-qPCR primers	
MYO1D_Hub Enh	TTTAGAAGCAGTGGTGACACCCAG	GAGAATGGTGAGGGCTCTGATGC		
MYO1D Prom	TCTCGGAAAGCGCAGCCTC	GGCAAGGCAGACTTCGTGCTGATG		
TMEM98 Prom	GCGGGTGCCGAGCTTTGTTCTTG	GACCCAAGACCTACCCGCTTC		
Ctrl	AAACCCACGTCCAGCACAGTGC	AATAGCGGGTAAGGATGTAGACAGG		