



The Development of ISO Standards for the Unique Needs of Facilities Management

By Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA, CEFP, DBIA

Over the past four years, APPA representatives have participated in the development of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards for facilities management. While publication of ISO 41001, 41011, 41012, and 41013 might lead one to believe that everything has been written about facilities management standards, experience and awareness of the typical layman's image of facilities indicates otherwise.

There are hundreds of standards used to design facilities, ranging from those discussing how to protect human life from fire, electricity, high-pressure steam, or other hazards, to those conveying procedures to ensure load-carrying capacity to resist the forces of gravity, wind, earthquakes, and snow on structures and to maintain the integrity of interior environments.

Several organizations and professionals have developed and codified standards that impact facilities in order to make certain they protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. But the use of facilities and the outcomes associated with operational decisions are sometimes more difficult to quantify and frequently misunderstood.

The most recent standard for development by ISO TC 267/WG5 is titled "Influencing Behaviors for Improved Facility Outcomes and User Experience." The title of the proposed standard may sound as if the goal is an impossibility or inappropriate. There are many factors that go into the smooth operation of facilities that should be considered and measured; the proposed standard will attempt to provide guidance into the process of identifying those factors as well as measuring the outcomes.

Identification of factors begins with identifying the goals of the demand organization (the organization that uses the facility to create a product or service). Some may say education facilities do not need to take advantage of this kind of standard because the goal is

well understood. Those who are familiar with education facilities understand that every institution is unique; thus, finding a way to measure the operational, financial, environmental, and social goals for the organization is important, so that facility plans can meet those goals.

The standard plans to address techniques to identify the organization's culture, change processes, roles and responsibilities, and facility life-cycle goals, and to provide metrics that identify how progress is measured. While the work is in the early stages, it will move quickly to meet ISO requirements. A draft will be available for public comment within a year. If you're interested in the standard, you can contact either Casey Martin (casey.martin@jacobs.com) or Ted Weidner (tjweidne@purdue.edu), WG5 convener.

In addition to the standards identified above, ISO has recently approved the standard for the certification systems for organizations wishing to receive certification for the ISO 41001 standard. Certified compliance to ISO 41001 is available to organizations that own facilities, and is similar to APPA's Facilities Management Evaluation Program (FMEP) and the Award for Excellence (AFE), but has some minor variations. It's a high bar to achieve. To date, qualified certifiers have not been identified, but the process is in place—it shouldn't take long before some facilities hold ISO 41001 certification.

Understanding of the importance of facilities is growing, as evidenced by the standards that have been developed and the connections made in those standards. While it may not happen overnight, facilities officers are getting a "seat at the table" because facilities are about people, place, and process in the built environment. §

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