Sustainable FM: standards charting the course

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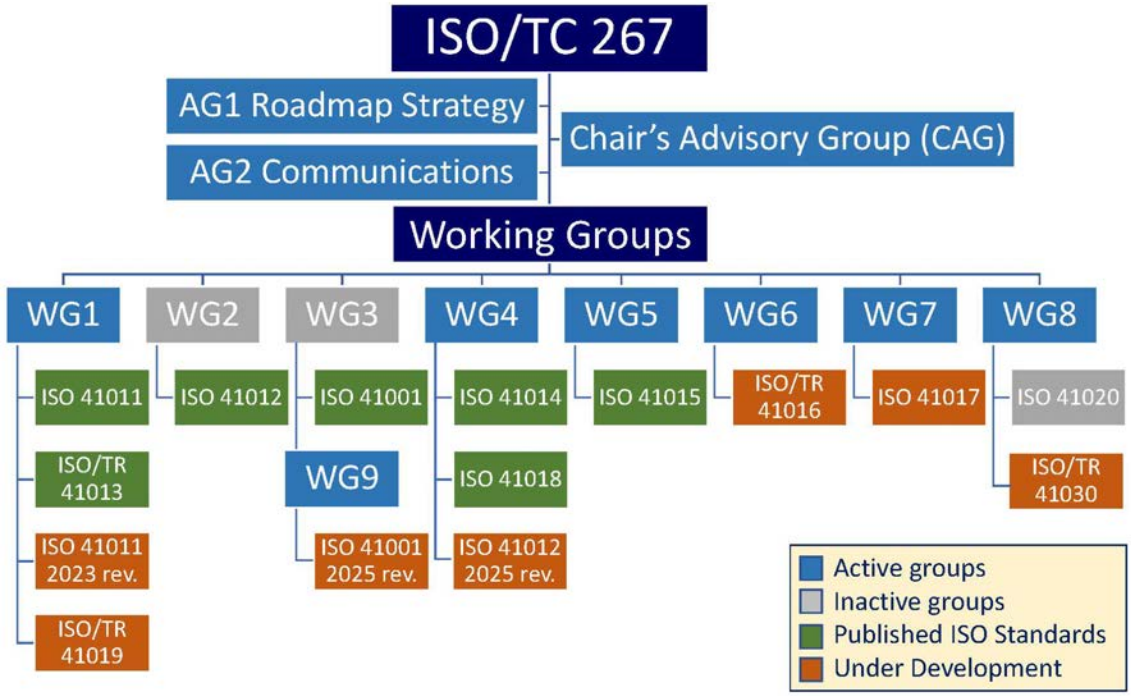
"**Sustainable FM**" is for any FM practitioner interested in making a real difference to our quality of life.

1. The role of standards

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges.

ISO has committed to supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ISO/TC 267 is the Technical Committee responsible for the development and delivery the ISO 41000 series of FM standards. Today ISO/TC 267 (7 August 2023), comprises 53 countries (36 participating members and 17 observing members). In addition, ISO/TC 267 maintains 17 liaisons, including with ISO/TC 251 for the ISO 55000 series of asset management standards.



ISO/TC 267 currently (7 August 2023) has now published seven (7) FM international standards, and seven (7) more publications (including revisions) under development.

The ISO 41000 series provides a common language and framework for FM worldwide and contributes directly to the future of the FM profession and its value proposition. Adopting the ISO 41000 series will better prepare organizations for the uncertainties of our challenging times.

2. FM defined

Facilities Management / Facility Management / FM has been defined as an "*organizational function which integrates people, place and process within the built environment with the purpose of improving the quality of life of people and the productivity of the core business*" (ISO 41011:2017 and AS ISO 41011:2019).

Now with the development of ISO/TR 41019 "**FM's role in sustainability, resilience and adaptability**" (Technical Report working title, publication due late 2023), FM is better placed to meet our global challenges. Australia has taken the lead on the delivery of this defining project for Sustainable FM in the pursuit of a more productive, sustainable and liveable Built Environment for all.

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3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2015 the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (also referred to as "Agenda 2030") a plan for achieving a better future for all. Agenda 2030 has at its heart the 17 SDGs and associated 169 targets and 248 indicators, covering five (5) main themes: humankind, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

The SDGs were developed for governments, primarily to be actionable by countries, not investors and businesses. With the SDGs addressing an array of global challenges it can seem difficult to translate them into the core business strategy and meaningful FM actions.

ISO/TR 41019 as drafted confirms FM has the potential to indirectly contribute to all or most of 17 SDGs, and in collaboration with other built environment professions, significantly influence on: SDGs 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 16.

4. Sustainability, Resilience and Adaptability

The sustainable development concept may officially have its origins within the 1987 Brundtland Report, but long before that the idea of living in balance with nature and the logic of long-term lifestyle and business practices were well-understood.

Sustainability, simply put, is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. **Resilience** is the capacity for systems to cope with a hazardous event, trend or disruption, could be addressed by involving more pre-emptive design. **Adaptation** is a process of adjustment, that implies activities of a retroactive nature. In essence, a 'resilient facility' could be one that is designed for sustainability in the face of anticipated hazards, while an 'adaptable facility' may be one that can be readily modified to meet those challenges.

Beyond embracing sustainability, and understanding reliance, FM will be more called upon to maintain facilities, services and productivity via risk mitigation strategies and adaptation to changed circumstances.

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5. Towards Sustainable FM

FM is central to sustainable development, and underpins aspects of economic growth and delivers the services that are essential to supporting the productivity of the core business and improving the quality of life of people. At the same time, an unsustainable, poorly planned, delivered and maintained built environment can have disastrous effects on organizations, communities, and individuals.

Sustainable FM can also contribute to mitigating risks, increasing resilience, integrating technologies, generating decent jobs, addressing inequalities and delivering on broader sustainability objectives. For example, accepting SDG 13 climate change FM could, in conjunction with a range of other initiatives, contribute to significant carbon dioxide (CO_2) emission savings by:

- Improving facility design and construction.
- Increasing reuse and recycling rates.
- Extending the life cycle of facilities.

Sustainable FM is intended to support Demand Organizations pursuing sustainability and can be justified for a range of reasons (listed alphabetically):

- Compliance with regulatory or statutory requirements.
- Compliance with industry guides and best practice.
- Demonstration of industry leadership and enhanced reputation.
- Increased end-user amenity and return on investment (ability to charge).
- Increased productivity and profitability (changes to processes or access to resources).
- Reduced capital costs during the design and construction phases.
- Reduced life cycle costs during the operational phases.
- Social responsibility.

By adopting extensive integration of performance reporting, such as the GRI (globalreporting.org), shall increasingly require the identification, development, monitoring and maintenance of an organization's sustainable development activities and investments. FM can provide the strategic, tactical and operational level support to ensure the cost:benefit expectations are met.

6. Conclusions

The world has no shortage of global challenges, and it is apparent that "business as usual" is no longer an option. To support Demand Organisations, and ultimately equip our community, facing an uncertain future it is imperative that FM embeds the principles of sustainability, resilience and adaptability into its systems and services.

FM practitioners will increasingly find themselves on the frontlines of the risks associated with climate change in terms of sustainability, resilience and adaptability of the built environment. This will involve the direct and indirect impacts on assets, people, and services contributing to our quality of life.

ISO/TC 267 has responded by identifying the alignment of the ISO 41000 series of FM standards, as published and under development, with the UN's 2030 Agenda with the UN's 17 SDGs and associated targets and indicators to provide an overarching framework for FM to better address these global challenges. Specifically, ISO/TR 41019 "**FM - Role in sustainability, resilience and adaptability**" is due for publication in late 2023.

7. Additional References

- ISO/TC 267 | Facility Management committee
- ISO/TC 267 | Facility Management communications
- ISO | Contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals with ISO standards
- SDG Compass – A Guide for Business Action to Advance the Sustainable Development Goals
- Standards Australia | Facility Management standards
- Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB)
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Australia's Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (dfat.gov.au)
- Insights @ In-Touch Advisory