

CIMS: Offering One Comprehensive Standard

How the Standard applies to an entire organization while recognizing other industry programs and certifications

By Dave Frank

The cleaning industry offers many training courses, seminars, programs and certifications. For years, trade associations, manufacturers and other organizations have been offering many helpful how-to sessions, educational management courses, useful safety trainings and more. Cleaning professionals have been earning certifications in carpet cleaning, housekeeping management and safety, among others.

What the industry had been lacking was one clear, comprehensive industry standard – until ISSA introduced the Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS). The Standard was created through industry consensus for all types of cleaning organizations and applies to an organization's management and performance systems and processes. It should be thought of as a framework to help organizations become top-notch, customer-centered organizations.

Though CIMS is still fairly new to the industry, already [number] organizations are either CIMS-certified or well on their way to becoming certified. The industry is catching on, welcoming the long-awaited Standard and beginning to raise the bar. Even some customers are starting to include certification in bid specifications. Compliance with the Standard demonstrates that the organization is structured to deliver consistent, quality services.

What about other industry certifications? How is CIMS different? What is in it for your organization? These frequently asked questions get to the heart of the certification benefits, the purpose of the Standard and what it means for the industry.

How is CIMS different from other industry certifications?

CIMS is comprehensive. The Standard does not focus on just one or even a few aspects of a cleaning organization. CIMS applies to the management, operations and performance systems of cleaning organizations and includes five principles – Quality Systems, Service Delivery, Human Resources, Health, Safety, and Environmental Stewardship and Management Commitment.

Many other industry certifications and programs apply to people (managers and technicians), products or cleaning procedures. CIMS applies to an entire cleaning organization.

CIMS is non-prescriptive. Each organization has the flexibility to choose the most effective ways in which to meet the Standard's requirements. To achieve certification, an organization must meet 100 percent of the mandatory elements and 60 percent of the recommended principle elements.

Does CIMS compete with or complement other industry certifications?

CIMS recognizes and complements existing industry programs. Existing certification programs actually can help organizations comply with the Standard. When studying CIMS, organizations will assess the entire organization including any programs already in place. For example, certifications from the International Executive Housekeepers Association (IEHA) or International Facility Management Association (IFMA) may be used to satisfy the management training element. Similarly, specific cleaning procedure-related certifications could be used to support the service provider training component.

What are the benefits of CIMS certification?

ISSA has published many CIMS case studies featuring various certified organizations' certification stories including the benefits they've seen. Almost every organization certified so far has said that the certification process is 1) a time-consuming process and 2) the best learning experience. The process of complying with the Standard forces organizations to do a lot of research, bring together many people and departments within the organization, and challenges them to get organized, improving operations.



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Certified organizations will differentiate themselves from competitors for having an independent, third-party certification that encompasses the entire organization. They also will operate more efficiently having developed and implemented a master plan and best practices. They'll also become better, more customer-centered organizations.

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