



## **Cleaning Industry Management Standard Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1. How do I obtain a copy of the Cleaning Industry Management Standard?**  
The Standard is available at [www.issa.com/standard](http://www.issa.com/standard) or by contacting ISSA at 800-225-4772.
- 2. What is the Cleaning Industry Management Standard?**  
The Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) was created for facility service provider (FSP) organizations and applies to an organization's management structure and performance systems and processes. It should be thought of as a framework to help facility service providers develop customer-centered organizations. Compliance with the Standard demonstrates that the organization is structured to deliver consistent, quality services.
- 3. How does CIMS differ from other industry standards and certification programs?**  
Existing programs apply to:
  - People (managers and technicians)
  - Products
  - Cleaning Procedures

CIMS applies to an entire cleaning organization. It focuses on the organization's management systems and processes used to deliver service.
- 4. How does it interact with other industry standards?**  
The Cleaning Industry Management Standard recognizes and complements existing industry programs. Since CIMS is a framework for assessing an entire organization, existing certification programs should play an important role in helping an organization demonstrate compliance with the Standard. For example, certifications from IEHA or IFMA may be used to satisfy the management training element. Similarly, IICRC certification could be used to support the service personnel training component.
- 5. Does the Standard recommend products, procedures, and systems?**  
No. ISSA cherishes the diversity that is woven into the fabric of our industry. The Standard, therefore, is "non-prescriptive" and its goal is to act simply as a quality framework. As such, product, equipment, procedure, and system recommendations are explicitly not part of CIMS and each organization retains the flexibility to choose how it can best meet the Standard's requirements. Cleaning organizations are free to select manufacturers, distributors, products, and educational tools that best assist them in complying with the Standard.

**6. How is the Standard administered?**

The Standard is administered by ISSA. ISSA, a not-for-profit association founded in 1923, prides itself on being the leading association for the cleaning industry worldwide. ISSA administration ensures that there is no commercial bias to any group.

**7. Who developed the Standard?**

The Standard was developed through a true consensus-based process. Experts, representing all sectors of the industry, including the facility management and purchasing communities, were selected by the ISSA Board, staff, and alliance partners to participate on standard-development Technical Committees. The committees worked directly with ISSA and its partner, the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences (AICS) to draft the Standard, which was subject to full peer review prior to official publication.

**8. What was ISSA's role in developing the Standard?**

ISSA provided organizational oversight by leveraging its unique role in the industry. ISSA's diverse membership is comprised of:

- Manufacturers
- Distributors
- Manufacturer Representatives
- Facility Service Providers
- Industry Consultants

The shared interests of its membership base enabled ISSA to provide the necessary oversight. In addition, the many alliances that ISSA has developed with leading organizations in the cleaning and facilities management industries lent valuable insight to ensure a balanced and comprehensive approach.

**9. What does the Standard consist of?**

The Standard is based on universally accepted management principles and consists of five sections of management best practices:

1. Quality Systems
2. Service Delivery
3. Human Resources
4. Health, Safety, and Environmental Stewardship
5. Management Commitment

**10. What does it mean to become certified to the Standard?**

Certification indicates that an organization conforms to the requirements set forth in the Standard and has successfully demonstrated compliance to an independent, accredited assessor.

**11. Does an organization need to meet every element in order to earn certification?**

No. The Standard was designed to focus on performance and recognizes the need for flexibility and practical application.

Organizations seeking certification must demonstrate compliance with all mandatory provisions and at least 60%, per section, of those provisions that are included as recommended elements of the Standard.

**12. What is the process for an organization to become certified?**

An organization achieves certification by demonstrating that its management structure and processes conform to the Standard. The certification process is simple.

1. The organization decides that it wants to develop a quality management system that complies with CIMS, and requests an application.
2. The organization conducts an internal review to be sure that it meets CIMS certification requirements.
3. The organization undergoes a comprehensive assessment by an independent third-party and demonstrates compliance with CIMS. The independent third party that assesses compliance is known as an assessor.
4. An organization applies for re-certification every two years.

**13. Who will determine whether a cleaning organization is in compliance with the Standard and eligible for CIMS certification?**

Cleaning organizations are encouraged to have their systems and processes reviewed by an “assessor.” An assessor is an independent third-party that has earned accreditation by demonstrating that he/she can competently and independently verify that an organization meets the Standard’s requirements.

**14. Does the Standard apply to all FSP market segments?**

Yes. The Standard applies to all FSP organizations – building service contractors (BSCs) and in-house organizations – regardless of organization size.

**15. How will the ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard benefit FSPs?**

The process of complying with the Standard provides the greatest benefit. While certification to the Standard will likely be the end goal, the process itself challenges and improves an FSP’s operation.

In-house organizations will use the Standard to:

- Develop an organization master plan
- Operate more efficiently
- Develop best practices
- Validate performance and quality

Building service contractors will find that the Standard will help them:

- Distinguish themselves from their competitors
- Improve their bottom line
- Better meet the demands of their customers
- Improve the overall quality of their services

**16. What role will distributors and manufacturers play?**

Distributors, manufacturers and manufacturer representatives will play an essential role. Since the Standard rewards systemic approaches to product selection, training, and management it will be a catalyst for sales. Other benefits include:

- Closer ties to customers
- Enhanced professional image for the industry
- Growth opportunities
- Distinctive marketing position
- Business resource to customers

Distributors, manufacturers, and others are encouraged to become "ISSA Certification Experts" (I.C.E.) to uniquely position themselves to assist their facility service provider customers in preparing for CIMS certification

**17. What is the role for industry consultants?**

The Standard creates numerous opportunities for industry consultants. Consultants benefit as FSP organizations seek expertise to assist them in developing programs to meet the Standard, thereby creating a vast array of service opportunities. Training, documentation, and quality assurance are just a few of the services that will be needed.

**18. How is CIMS different from ISO?**

CIMS and ISO are similar in many respects, but CIMS has the advantage of having been developed specifically "by the cleaning industry and for the cleaning industry" (with a large dose of assistance from the facility management and purchasing communities).

The fact that the program was developed specifically for the cleaning industry offers tangible benefits. First of all, CIMS deals with the unique issues faced by cleaning organizations on a daily basis (ISO was originally developed for manufacturing and was drafted to speak to that industry). Second, compliance with the Standard is determined by an individual who is an expert in the cleaning industry. One of the primary concerns with ISO, as it applies to the cleaning industry, centers on the fact that the auditors generally do not know anything about the particulars of our industry. The CIMS assessors, on the other hand, are required to have practical industry experience and, therefore, truly understand its unique nature.



## CIMS-Green Building Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is CIMS-Green Building or CIMS-GB?**  
CIMS-Green Building or CIMS-GB is the sixth dimension to the ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard & Certification Program, providing cleaning organizations with the opportunity to certify that their green cleaning program meets an industry standard. As such, CIMS-GB represents the sixth section of CIMS, joining the five traditional management sections: (1) Quality Systems; (2) Service Delivery; (3) Human Resources; (4) Health, Safety & Environmental Stewardship; and (5) Management Commitment.
- 2. Can a cleaning organization achieve certification to the CIMS-GB criteria?**  
Yes, a cleaning organization can achieve CIMS-GB certification by verifying compliance with the required elements in the Green Building section. Verification of compliance is achieved by undergoing a third-party assessment.
- 3. How does the CIMS-GB assessment process work?**  
The CIMS-GB certification process is identical to the traditional CIMS process. In order to achieve CIMS-GB certification, an organization is required to undergo a comprehensive on-site assessment that includes document review, interviews with personnel and customers, and visits to individual customer sites. Specifically, the organization must provide its third-party assessor with a list of buildings that are “green cleaned,” and the assessor will randomly select properties to visit in order to assess compliance to the CIMS-GB criteria.
- 4. Does CIMS-GB apply to an individual property or to an organization as a whole?**  
CIMS, and by extension CIMS-GB, is a companywide certification. A CIMS-GB certified organization can assert that it is in compliance with the five traditional sections of CIMS for all operations and that its green cleaning program is in compliance with the CIMS-GB criteria in those buildings where green cleaning is performed.
- 5. Can an organization apply for only CIMS-GB certification?**  
No. CIMS-GB certification is an optional “add-on” to the traditional CIMS certification program. Organizations, therefore, may achieve CIMS certification alone by demonstrating compliance with the five traditional management sections of the Standard or may achieve both CIMS certification and the CIMS-GB designation by demonstrating compliance with all six sections of the Standard, including the GB section. An organization may not apply for only CIMS-GB certification.

6. What additional fees are associated with CIMS-GB certification?  
There are no additional application or certification fees for the CIMS-GB designation. Rather, organizations will be responsible for the traditional application and certification fees regardless of whether they pursue traditional CIMS or CIMS-GB certification. ISSA is not charging an additional certification fee for the GB designation in hope that most organizations will pursue the additional designation, thereby accelerating the overall “greening” of the industry.
- Although there are no additional application or certification fees, pursuing CIMS-GB certification will require an additional assessment day to verify compliance with the GB criteria.
7. How is CIMS-GB different from other certifications?  
Like CIMS in general, CIMS-GB applies to an entire cleaning organization and the organization’s capability to meet customer requirements. Further, CIMS-GB is less prescriptive than most industry certification programs, providing general requirements for product, equipment and procedure selection, rather than requiring the use of specific tools and systems. As such, cleaning organizations are free to select manufacturers, distributors, products, and educational tools that best assist them in complying with the criteria.
8. Why has the new CIMS-GB criteria been added?  
Demand for “green” certification is growing, especially as the USGBC’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program gains popularity. Building owners and managers want assurance that their cleaning service provider is capable of providing a sustainable cleaning service and can help them achieve LEED points for green cleaning activities. CIMS-GB is intended to offer cleaning organizations a certification that is closely tailored to provide their customers with precisely what they need to secure LEED-EBOM points, while greening their operations overall.
9. How does CIMS-GB change the “ISSA Certification Expert” (I.C.E.) program?  
Does it affect an industry professional’s I.C.E. status?  
The CIMS-GB criteria will be included in the general “ISSA Certification Expert” (I.C.E.) curriculum and will be taught as part of the I.C.E. workshop. Further, those individuals who achieved I.C.E. certification prior to August 1, 2009, will be given an opportunity to attend a workshop or participate in a complimentary webinar to learn about the criteria. There will be no separate GB designation for I.C.E. certified individuals and no additional fees.
10. Where can I go to learn more about the CIMS program and certification in general?  
The best place to start is with the Frequently Asked Questions document on CIMS certification in general. A copy is available at [www.issa.com/CIMSFAQ](http://www.issa.com/CIMSFAQ).