ISO 41000 Series in Brief, with Implications for FM Consultants

Introduction
This article will draw directly from free, online, mostly ISO sources. An objective is for readers to become acquainted with the documents of the ISO 41000 series, which is devoted exclusively to Facility Management. Coverage of parts of the standard that are reserved for licensed users will be by mention, topic, short quote, or summary. The author purchased a license shortly after the release of ISO 41001 in 2018 and complies with terms of use. The article will focus on ISO 41001, Facility management – Management systems – Requirements with guidance. ISO 41001 is the centerpiece of the 41000 series and the point of departure for implementing that standard in any FM organization.

Perspective
This is how ISO Technical Committee 267, authors of ISO 41001, describes itself (https://committee.iso.org/home/tc267).
“We are representatives drawn from 45 countries who have been actively progressing the international FM standards initiative since 2012. We have produced multiple documents within the ISO 41000 series focused on being the foremost contributor to a more productive workplace and sustainable environment and while achieving an improved quality of life for all.”

Tech Committee 267 documents – products - to date include:
- ISO 41011:2017 Facility management – Vocabulary
- ISO/TR 41013:2017 Facility management – Scope, key concepts and benefits
- ISO/IEC 17021-11:2018 Competence requirements certification of Facility MS

Management System Standard
The ISO 41000 series comprise a management standard. What is that? ISO expresses the management systems idea this way, “A management system is the way in which an organization manages the inter-related parts of its business in order to achieve its objectives.” (https://www.iso.org/management-system-standards.html)
If this elementary explanation is sufficient – and it is - why have more than one standard? This is justified by genuine differences among areas of work – organization and practices. Before coming to FM in the early 2000s, I was familiar with the concept of a management systems standard. The ISO 9000 series concerning quality systems came into use in the 1980s. It is now widely applied, with certifications required and earned, a figure of merit, often proclaimed proudly on an building façade, website, or stationary. Other management systems standards include, for example, the ISO 55000 series for asset management, which is closely related to FM.
In the quote above, “…inter-related parts of its business…” signifies that distinct fields and disciplines, in their roles and functions, warrant separate management systems standards. There are not many. They require solid justification and cooperation as an ISO technical committee to develop and vet. I learned about the existence of ISO 41001 when it was already close to release. I purchased the standard, studied, and think that it will bring large and prolonged benefits to FM and FM stakeholders. It is doing so already. Next, we outline the form and surroundings of ISO 40001 and how consultants can bring speed, economy, and confidence to FM organizations when they find interest and reason to adopt the standard.

Thorough and Essential

Let’s look. The table of contents and crucial introduction are here (English version): [https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:41001:ed-1:v1:en](https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:41001:ed-1:v1:en). The main topics and details shown will be familiar to FMs. The standard is thorough yet limited to essentials. Adoption of the components is adaptable and scalable. Printed one side of A4 or 8 ⅓ x 12, the standard weighs 250 g, or about 9 oz. It fits on fewer than 50 pages. What is inside?

- Introduction to ISO and standards development and use
- Introduction of a process approach to FM system implementation and performance, to meet requirements and to enhance customer satisfaction.
- A simple diagram showing all operational clauses (major headings) of the standard and the role of plan-do-check-act, employing plan–do–check–act concludes the introduction.

The preceding points are key, to be read carefully, in full. The next four enumerate implementation.

- **Scope**, **Normative** references, and **Terms and definitions**.
- Seven pages specify foundations: Context of the organization, Leadership, Planning, and Support, where support encompasses both capabilities and resources.
- Seven more pages complete the standard, addressing planned Operations, Performance evaluation, and Improvement, working from an FM Policy.
- An annex, Guidance on the use of this document, elaborates the clauses.

How could so brief a document not be trivial, or too general, to be useful?

ISO 41001 can guide implementation and operations of any FM organization of any size in a satisfactory way, at any stage. To start, the standard refers formally to FM Organization, an organ of any enterprise which makes use of facilities, the Demand Organization. The FM Organization supports core business strategies of the Demand Organization, forming, accommodating, reforming, and always following a responsive FM policy as the basis for performance. All well performing FM organizations do this.
Implications for FMs and FM consultants

My reaction when I encountered the ISO 9000 series in the 1980s was what value could this have? It was and still is just a few pages long, lacking technical content? But I came around. So did many others. ISO 9001 took hold all over, providing a well understood environment for quality in a way that could be shared.

ISO 41001 is well timed for the state of FM as a worldwide industry. I and others encounter international client interest in the standard. Full ISO 41001 implementation projects will become more numerous, and consulting help with them. That is not the sole opportunity for consultants to furnish value at this stage. Small projects, not closely related to one another or directly to FM Policy, can draw from and thereafter reflect the ISO 41001 structure and provisions. This frames the work at hand and documents the results, setting the stage toward later ISO 41001 certification. The Annex or the standard, “Guidance on the use of this document” explains and lists specific points about the FM organization to assign and assess. For example, control of operations involves “delivering prescribed, measurable results”, “achievement through scheduled, consistent and replicable planned mechanisms”, and “providing documented reporting of results...” How these elements come about, the specifics of why, what, when, and how - the standard does not offer, only that they must demonstrably fit the needs. Each solution is different, but the universal framework, we hold in common.

ISO standards catalog:  https://www.iso.org/store.html
Multiple currencies acceptable. Default delivery is electronic.

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David Reynolds is a founding partner in the FM consultancy Global Facility Management Alliance and an independent Facility Management consultant located in Jackson, Mississippi, U.S. He has a lifelong interest in how people experience the built environment and how the built environment hosts organizations and advances their purposes. His principal interests are in FM organizational problem solving for continuous improvement in performance – whether from financial, customer, internal process, or learning and capability point of view.
He holds degrees in science, engineering, and allied health areas. His pro bono work concerns safe and healthy housing, workplace safety, environmental health, and key process design and measurement.
David joined IFMA in 2003, became an FMP in 2005, and CFM in 2014. In addition to FMCC, he is active in support of programs of the IFMA OMHS Community of Practice.

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