IFMA IT Community

Data Center Facilities Management Working Group

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & CHARTER

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1. MISSION STATEMENT

The IFMA Data Center Facilities Management Working Group exists to advance the practice of facilities management within data center environments by developing industry-relevant guidance, sharing practitioner knowledge, and producing thought-leadership content that bridges the gap between traditional FM competencies and the specialized demands of mission-critical infrastructure.

We are committed to fostering a collaborative community of facilities professionals who recognize that data centers represent one of the most technically demanding and rapidly evolving sectors in the built environment. Through structured inquiry, best practice development, and peer-driven knowledge sharing, this working group will serve as a resource for current and aspiring data center FM practitioners while strengthening IFMA's position as the authority on facilities management across all facility types.

2. VISION

To be recognized as the premier professional community advancing the intersection of facilities management and data center operations, equipping FM professionals with the knowledge, frameworks, and career pathways needed to lead in this critical sector.

3. SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

This working group operates at the intersection of traditional facilities management and the specialized requirements of data center environments. Our scope encompasses the full lifecycle of data center facilities, from design and construction through operations, maintenance, and eventual decommissioning.

3.1 Primary Objectives

- Develop best practice guidelines tailored to data center facilities management that complement existing IFMA competency areas.
- Produce white papers, case studies, and educational content that positions IFMA as a thought leader in data center FM.
- Identify and address knowledge gaps in FM education as they relate to mission-critical and high-availability environments.
- Create a forum for cross-pollination between data center operators, FM professionals, engineers, and technology providers.
- Attract data center industry professionals to IFMA membership through the demonstrated value of working group outputs.

3.2 Out of Scope

- Direct IT operations, network architecture, or software-layer management (unless directly impacting the physical facility).
- Vendor product endorsements or procurement recommendations.
- Certification or credentialing programs (though the group may recommend topics to IFMA's education programs).

4. BEST PRACTICE PILLARS

The following seven pillars define the core areas of focus for this working group. Every topic, white paper, panel discussion, and research initiative should be categorized under one or more of these pillars. This framework ensures comprehensive coverage of the data center FM landscape while eliminating ambiguity about where a given topic belongs.

Pillar	Description & Working Group Focus
Safety & Security	Occupational health and safety protocols, electrical safety, confined space procedures, emergency response planning, physical access control, surveillance, perimeter protection, and coordination with cybersecurity teams on converged threat models. This pillar unifies the protection of people, physical assets, and facility access under a single framework.
Resiliency & Operations	Uptime assurance, redundancy planning, fault tolerance, preventive and predictive maintenance programs, business continuity, disaster recovery, vendor management, and SLA performance. This is the "keeping it running" pillar—everything that ensures continuous, reliable operation of the physical facility and its critical systems.
Sustainability & Energy	Energy efficiency and optimization (PUE, CUE, WUE), water conservation, carbon reduction strategies, renewable energy integration, responsible disposition and lifecycle management of physical assets, circular economy practices for hardware, and environmental impact management including waste and chemical handling.
Regulatory & Compliance	Adherence to building codes, industry standards (ISO, ASHRAE, NFPA), government regulations, environmental mandates, zoning and permitting requirements, audit readiness, documentation practices, and emerging policy developments impacting data center operations. This pillar covers everything the facility must adhere to.
Technology & Innovation	Emerging infrastructure technologies and their FM implications: liquid and immersion cooling, AI-driven compute loads and their impact on power and thermal design, modular and prefabricated deployments, edge computing facilities, evolving facility form factors, and the integration of smart building systems and digital twins into data center management.

Workforce & Education	Recruitment and retention of data center FM talent, professional development and training programs, career pathway development, competency mapping for FM professionals at all levels, identification of curriculum gaps in existing FM degree and certification programs, and recommendations for educational institutions and IFMA's own credentialing programs.
Community & Industry Engagement	Knowledge sharing and peer networking within the working group and across IFMA chapters and councils, collaboration with external industry organizations, outreach to attract data center professionals to IFMA, event programming, and development of content that demonstrates IFMA's relevance in the data center sector.

4.1 Using the Pillars

When a new topic or initiative is proposed, the working group should identify the primary pillar it falls under and any secondary pillars it touches. This tagging system will help us track coverage across all seven areas, identify gaps in our body of work, and ensure that no single pillar dominates the group's output at the expense of others.

Most real-world topics will span multiple pillars. For example, a discussion on liquid cooling in data centers would primarily fall under Technology & Innovation but would also touch Sustainability & Energy (efficiency gains), Resiliency & Operations (maintenance implications), and Regulatory & Compliance (code and permitting considerations). The primary pillar determines where the topic is filed; secondary tags ensure cross-referencing.

5. RELEVANT INDUSTRY STANDARDS REFERENCE

The following standards represent the industry benchmarks that inform data center design, operations, and management. Working group members should be familiar with these frameworks as they form the technical foundation for many of our discussions and publications.

5.1 Data Center Infrastructure Standards

These standards are considered the industry gold standard because they focus on the physical infrastructure and engineering of the facility.

ISO/IEC 22237 — Data Centre Facilities & Infrastructures

The comprehensive international standard (equivalent to European EN 50600) covering site construction, power distribution, telecommunications cabling, environmental control, and security systems. This is the all-in-one reference for data center physical infrastructure.

- Part 31 (New for 2026): Introduces specific Key Performance Indicators for Resilience, enabling operators to objectively measure how well a facility handles faults.

ISO/IEC 30134 — Data Centre Key Performance Indicators

Focused on operational efficiency metrics, this standard defines the widely used KPIs that measure data center performance:

- PUE (Power Usage Effectiveness) — measures total facility energy vs. IT equipment energy.
- CUE (Carbon Usage Effectiveness) — measures carbon emissions relative to IT energy consumption.
- WUE (Water Usage Effectiveness) — measures water consumption relative to IT energy consumption.

5.2 Operations & Business Continuity Standards

Data centers are expected to deliver "five nines" (99.999%) uptime. These standards focus on maintaining operations and recovering from disruption.

ISO 22301 — Business Continuity Management

The standard for disaster recovery and continuity planning. Certifies that a data center can maintain operations or recover quickly during power outages, natural disasters, or cyberattacks.

ISO/IEC 20000-1 — IT Service Management

Ensures the quality and consistency of IT services delivered from the facility, verifying that hosting and management services meet customer SLAs.

5.3 Sustainability & Energy Standards

Data centers are among the largest energy consumers in the built environment. These certifications are increasingly required by government contracts and sustainability-conscious clients.

ISO 50001 — Energy Management

Focused strictly on energy efficiency, this standard provides a framework for data centers to systematically reduce their power consumption and optimize energy performance.

ISO 14001 — Environmental Management

A broader environmental standard covering waste management (including decommissioned server hardware), chemical management (cooling system fluids), and overall environmental impact reduction.

Standard	Primary Focus Area
ISO/IEC 22237	Complete data center physical infrastructure (construction, power, cabling, security)
ISO/IEC 30134	Operational efficiency KPIs (PUE, CUE, WUE)
ISO 22301	Business continuity and disaster recovery
ISO/IEC 20000-1	IT service management quality and SLA compliance
ISO 50001	Energy management and efficiency
ISO 14001	Environmental management (waste, chemicals, impact)

6. WORKING GROUP STRUCTURE & OPERATIONS

6.1 Membership

The working group is open to IFMA members and invited industry participants with relevant experience in data center facilities management, operations, engineering, or related disciplines. Membership is voluntary, and active participation in discussions and content development is encouraged.

6.2 Meeting Cadence

The working group will establish a regular meeting schedule to maintain momentum and ensure consistent progress on our research agenda. Meeting frequency, format (virtual, in-person, or hybrid), and scheduling will be determined by group consensus.

6.3 Content Development Process

All published content (white papers, guides, case studies) will follow a structured development process:

1. Topic proposal and alignment to one or more best practice pillars (primary and secondary).
2. Research and drafting by a volunteer author or subcommittee.
3. Peer review by working group members.
4. Final review and approval by working group leadership.
5. Publication and distribution through IFMA channels.

6.4 Decision-Making

The working group will operate on a consensus-driven model. Where consensus cannot be reached, decisions will be put to a simple majority vote of active members present. Working group leadership reserves the right to make procedural decisions between meetings.

7. DELIVERABLES & SUCCESS METRICS

7.1 Target Deliverables

- White papers addressing key research questions identified by the working group (see Appendix A for the initial set).
- A best practice guide for FM professionals entering or operating in data center environments.
- Educational recommendations for IFMA certification and academic FM programs.
- Presentations and panel content for IFMA conferences, chapters, and webinars.
- An evolving glossary and reference library of data center FM terminology and standards.

7.2 Success Metrics

- Number and quality of published white papers and guides.
- Working group meeting attendance and active participation rates.
- New IFMA memberships attributed to data center FM content and engagement.
- Engagement metrics on published content (downloads, views, citations).
- Feedback from IFMA leadership and the broader FM community on working group impact.

This is a living document.

The guiding principles and structure defined in Sections 1–7 represent the stable governance framework for this working group. The research agenda in Appendix A is maintained separately and will evolve as new questions emerge.

Last updated: March 2026

APPENDIX A: INITIAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions represent the working group's founding research agenda. These driving inquiries are intended to shape our earliest white papers, panel discussions, and educational content. Each question is mapped to the relevant pillar(s) to demonstrate how the categorization framework (Section 4) applies in practice.

This appendix is a living supplement to the charter. New questions should be added as they are identified, and completed topics should be marked accordingly. Unlike the guiding principles in the main document, this list is expected to grow and change with each meeting cycle.

A.1 Asset Lifecycle & Disposition

Primary: Sustainability & Energy | Secondary: Regulatory & Compliance

What are the best practices for the disposition of retired data center assets? As hardware refresh cycles accelerate and sustainability expectations grow, FM professionals need clear frameworks for decommissioning, recycling, data destruction, and responsible disposal of physical assets.

A.2 Diverse Operating Models & FM Standards

Primary: Resiliency & Operations | Secondary: Regulatory & Compliance

Different data centers drive different FM standards. Colocation, hyperscale, enterprise, and edge environments each present unique challenges for FM practitioners. The working group will explore how operating models influence maintenance programs, staffing models, vendor management, and compliance requirements.

A.3 Defining the Data Center of Today and Tomorrow

Primary: Technology & Innovation | Secondary: Resiliency & Operations, Community & Industry Engagement

What is a data center today, and what will that look like in the future? From traditional raised-floor environments to modular deployments and edge computing, the physical form factor of the data center is evolving rapidly. This question challenges the working group to establish a working definition that remains relevant as the industry transforms.

A.4 FM User Journeys & Competency Mapping

Primary: Workforce & Education | Secondary: Community & Industry Engagement

What are the user journeys of various Facilities Managers, and how do we back-track from their daily realities to determine what they need to know? By mapping the experiences of FMs at different career stages and within different data center types, we can identify critical knowledge areas and build more targeted educational content.

A.5 Career Value Proposition

Primary: Workforce & Education | Secondary: Community & Industry Engagement

What's in it for me and my career? This working group must articulate a compelling value proposition for FM professionals considering a focus on data centers. We will explore career trajectories, compensation benchmarks, transferable skills, and emerging roles at the intersection of FM and mission-critical operations.

A.6 Future FM Education

Primary: Workforce & Education | Secondary: Technology & Innovation, Regulatory & Compliance

The future Facilities Manager will be managing a highly technical space. Is there something missing from current FM education that we could advise on? This inquiry will examine curriculum gaps in existing FM degree and certification programs and produce recommendations for IFMA and academic institutions.