Module 8: Operational Planning, Performance & Continuous Improvement

Running a facility well takes more than good instincts. It takes a framework—a set of tools, policies, and practices that turn daily decisions into a coherent management system. Module 8 is the capstone of this course. It pulls together the knowledge from the seven modules before it and shows how facility managers put that knowledge into structured, measurable practice.

This module covers two major topic areas. Topic 8A examines how facility managers develop policies and procedures, track performance through key indicators, and gather occupant feedback. Topic 8B explores the methods teams use to improve over time—from structured improvement cycles to energy management programs to managing change when new occupants, upgrades, or regulations reshape the work.

By the end of this module, facility managers will know how to build a management framework that is not only reactive to daily demands but forward-looking and grounded in data. That combination is what separates good facility management from great facility management.

8A: Operational Policies, Performance & Satisfaction

A well-run facility does not happen by chance. Behind every clean building, every comfortable workspace, and every prompt service response is a set of decisions made in advance. Topic 8A covers three pillars of performance management: writing the policies and procedures that guide daily work, measuring that work through key performance indicators, and listening to the people the facility serves. These three elements—structure, measurement, and feedback—form the foundation of a high-performing facility program.

8.1 Developing Operational Policies & Procedures

Every facility team makes hundreds of decisions each week. Without written policies and procedures, those decisions depend entirely on whoever happens to be on shift. Written policies bring order to that process. They set clear standards for how the facility is run, protect the organization during audits and incidents, and give staff a reliable guide when situations arise. This subtopic explores why those policies matter, how to write them well, and how to make sure they are actually used.

Why Policies Matter in Facility Management

A facility manager once walked into a mechanical room and found three different technicians performing the same task three different ways. None of them was wrong,

exactly—but none of them matched the equipment manufacturer's guidance either. The result was uneven wear on the equipment and three separate records in the **CMMS** that made trending nearly impossible. That scene plays out across facilities every day. Without clear written policies, even experienced teams drift.

Policies in facility management serve three core purposes. First, they set performance standards. A policy that defines acceptable response times for work orders gives staff a clear target and gives managers a baseline for evaluation. Second, they protect the organization. When an incident occurs—a slip-and-fall, a compliance audit, a service complaint—written policies show that the facility team had a plan and followed it. Third, they enable growth. As teams expand, new staff can reach full productivity far faster when the rules of the facility are written down.

The difference between a policy and a procedure is worth noting here. A **policy** states what the organization requires—for example, "All contractors must check in at the security desk before entering mechanical spaces." A **procedure** explains how to carry it out—the specific steps a contractor follows from arrival to sign-out. Both are necessary. Policies set the standard. Procedures define the method.

Facility managers who build strong policy programs also protect their teams. When a technician can point to a written procedure they followed, they have a clear record in any dispute about the work. That kind of clarity benefits everyone—the technician, the manager, and the organization.

Standard Operating Procedure Format

A **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** is a written, step-by-step guide for completing a specific task or process. Good SOPs share a common structure that makes them easy to follow and easy to update. Every effective SOP includes five core sections, each with a defined role (Table 8.1).

Section	Purpose	What It Must Include
Purpose	Explains what the SOP covers and why it exists	2–3 sentences; scope of the task; reason the procedure is required
Scope	Defines who the SOP applies to and when	Job roles covered; conditions that trigger the procedure
Materials & Prerequisites	Lists everything needed before work begins	Tools, permits, access credentials, PPE requirements
Procedure	Provides step-by-step task instructions	Numbered steps; decision points; safety notes at relevant steps
Records	Defines documentation requirements	What to log, where to record it, and how long entries must be kept

TABLE 8.1 | STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE: CORE SECTIONS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Two common mistakes weaken SOPs in practice. The first is writing them too long. A procedure that runs fifteen pages will not be read by anyone under time pressure. Good

SOPs for routine tasks fit on one to three pages. The second mistake is writing them without input from the people who do the work. A supervisor drafting an SOP from memory often misses steps that experienced technicians take for granted. Building SOPs with the front-line team produces more accurate documents and builds buy-in at the same time.

SOPs also need a scheduled review cycle. A procedure written three years ago may no longer match current equipment, regulations, or staffing. Building a review date into every SOP—typically annual for high-frequency tasks—keeps the library current and useful. Without that discipline, even a well-written SOP becomes a liability.

Key Policy Areas in Facility Management

Not every facility will have the same policy library, but most well-managed facilities share a core set of policy areas. These areas cover the decisions that come up most often and carry the most risk when handled without clear guidance. Table 8.2 outlines four policy areas that form a strong starting point for any FM program.

Policy Area	Decisions It Governs	Key Risk Managed
Temperature & Lighting Controls	Setpoint standards; adjustment request process; authority to change BAS settings permanently	Energy waste; occupant complaints; unauthorized system overrides
Access & Key Control	Who may enter which spaces; credential issuance; procedures for lost keys or departing employees	Security breaches; unauthorized access; audit and insurance findings
Equipment Use & LOTO	How staff and contractors interact with building systems; energy control procedures	Serious injury from hazardous energy; OSHA compliance exposure
Contractor & Vendor Site	Check-in procedures; permit requirements; PPE standards on site	Contractor-related incidents; liability during all work activities

TABLE 8.2 | CORE FM POLICY AREAS AND KEY RISK COVERAGE

These four areas are a starting point, not a complete list. Each facility adds policies based on its specific use, occupancy type, and regulatory environment. The goal is coverage—making sure that the decisions most likely to cause problems are already answered before the problem occurs.

Getting Policies Used: Communication and Training

Writing a policy is only half the job. A policy that sits in a shared drive and never gets read has no value. The real work is making sure the right people know the right policies and can apply them correctly when it counts.

Distribution is the first step. Policies should live somewhere easy to find—a shared intranet folder, a CMMS document library, or a physical binder in each work area for teams without

reliable digital access. New staff should receive a policy overview during onboarding. Contractors should receive site-specific policies before work begins, with signed acknowledgment collected to confirm receipt.

Training goes beyond handing someone a document. For high-stakes tasks—LOTO, confined space entry, chemical handling—formal training with a skills check is required. For lower-risk policies, a team meeting or brief walkthrough may be enough. Matching the training depth to the risk level keeps the process practical without cutting corners where it matters.

Managers should also track acknowledgment by name. A simple log showing who received which policy and when gives the organization a clear record. This matters most when something goes wrong—knowing whether a staff member was trained on the relevant procedure is essential.

Finally, policies need revision when things change. New equipment, a regulatory update, or a pattern of near-misses all signal that a review is due. Assigning a named owner to each policy area ensures those reviews actually happen.

REFLECTION QUESTION

> A newly promoted facilities supervisor finds that two technicians have been handling after-hours emergency work orders in completely different ways—one follows a detailed procedure, the other relies on experience. No major incidents have occurred, but records are incomplete and occupant complaints have increased. What steps should the supervisor take to address this gap, and what policy elements would help prevent it going forward?

8.2 KPIs & Performance Measurement

Knowing how a facility performs takes more than a gut feeling. It takes data—collected regularly, tracked against clear targets, and shared with the people who need it. **Key performance indicators** give facility managers a structured way to measure their work and make the case for resources and investment. This subtopic covers the frameworks that support performance measurement in FM, the most important indicator categories, and how to bring results to organizational leadership.

FM Performance Frameworks

A **key performance indicator (KPI)** is a measurable value that shows how well an operation is meeting its goals. In facility management, KPIs are not invented from scratch. They come from established frameworks that give managers a common language and a way to compare results with other organizations.

BOMA—the Building Owners and Managers Association—publishes widely used benchmarks for building costs, energy use, and space efficiency. These benchmarks let facility managers compare their results against similar buildings. A manager who can say "our cost per square foot is 12 percent below the BOMA regional average" is speaking a language that executives and finance teams understand and respect.

The **Balanced Scorecard** approach, adapted for FM, sorts performance into four areas: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth. This framework prevents a common trap—improving one area at the cost of another. A facility team that cuts costs by deferring maintenance may look strong on a financial KPI while quietly building a backlog that will cost far more to fix later. Table 8.3 maps each perspective to a concrete FM application.

BSC Perspective	FM Focus	Example KPIs
Financial	Cost efficiency and return on FM investment	Cost per square foot; maintenance budget variance; deferred maintenance ratio
Customer	Occupant experience and service quality	Satisfaction score; work order response time; complaint resolution rate
Internal Processes	Operational reliability and process effectiveness	PM compliance rate; first-time fix rate; system uptime
Learning & Growth	Team capability and program development	Training hours per technician; SOP currency rate; staff retention

TABLE 8.3 | BALANCED SCORECARD PERSPECTIVES APPLIED TO FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Setting baselines before choosing targets is essential. A KPI without a baseline is just a number. Managers who know where they are starting from can show real progress over time, even when results are still below industry norms. Progress is a story worth telling—and leadership notices when it is told clearly.

Not every KPI needs to be tracked at the same frequency. Some indicators—like energy consumption—are best reviewed monthly. Others—like open work order counts—are worth checking weekly. Matching the review cycle to the pace at which the indicator changes keeps reporting useful without creating unnecessary work.

Building Reliability KPIs

Building reliability KPIs measure how well the facility delivers the physical environment its occupants depend on. Three indicators form the foundation of any building reliability program (Table 8.4).

KPI	What It Measures	Typical Target	What a Negative Trend Signals
Uptime (System Availability)	Percentage of time key building systems are fully operational during occupied hours	Facility-specific; tracked against established baseline	Recurring failures; aging equipment; gaps in the maintenance program

KPI	What It Measures	Typical Target	What a Negative Trend Signals
PM Compliance	Percentage of scheduled preventive maintenance tasks completed on time	90% or higher	Reactive backlog crowding out scheduled work; staffing or prioritization problems
Mean Time to Repair (MTTR)	Average time to return a failed system or component to full service	Tracked against baseline; lower is better	Parts shortages; technician skill gaps; work order process delays

TABLE 8.4 | BUILDING RELIABILITY KPIS

Reviewing all three indicators together is more useful than watching any one of them in isolation. A team with strong PM compliance but a rising MTTR, for example, may be completing scheduled tasks but not resolving failures when they occur. That combination points to a different problem than either indicator shows alone.

Service Responsiveness Metrics

Building reliability tells part of the story. Service responsiveness tells the rest. These KPIs measure how quickly and effectively the facility team responds to the needs of the people it serves. Three metrics give managers the clearest view of that performance (Table 8.5).

KPI	What It Measures	Typical Targets	What a Negative Trend Signals
Work Order Response Time	Time from request submission to first technician action	Emergency: minutes; Urgent: 2–4 hrs; Routine: 1–2 business days	Helpdesk or dispatch process failure; staffing coverage gaps
Work Order Completion Rate	Percentage of open work orders closed within the target timeframe	Facility-defined; tracked against baseline	Backlog growth; team capacity stretched too thin; eroding occupant trust
First-Time Fix Rate	Percentage of work orders resolved in a single visit with no return trip	Tracked against baseline; higher is better	Parts inventory gaps; incomplete work order data; technician skills mismatch

TABLE 8.5 | SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS KPIS

Responsiveness metrics matter because occupants experience them directly. A facility can have excellent building systems and still earn low marks if service requests go unanswered or drag on without resolution. These metrics also give managers a practical way to spot staffing gaps and training needs before those gaps begin showing up in satisfaction scores.

Reporting to Organizational Leadership

Measuring performance only creates value if the results reach the people who can act on them. Facility managers who report their KPIs clearly and on a regular schedule build credibility with leadership and strengthen the case for the resources they need.

Effective FM reporting starts with knowing the audience. Executives and finance leaders want to see cost performance, risk exposure, and strategic value. Operations leaders want to see reliability and service results. Tailoring the report to the audience—rather than sharing a spreadsheet of raw data—makes a real difference in how the information lands.

A simple one-page dashboard works well for most leadership audiences. It should show current performance against target for each key indicator, a trend line covering the past several reporting periods, and a short note on any major variance. Color-coded status markers—green, yellow, red—give a fast visual summary before the reader looks at the numbers.

Reporting should also tell a story. Numbers rarely speak for themselves. A facility manager who presents a rise in MTTR alongside a parts supply issue—and outlines the steps being taken to fix it—shows the kind of informed leadership that builds lasting trust with senior teams. Regular reporting also creates a record over time—one that shows how the facility program has matured and where it is headed.

FIGURE 8.6 | FACILITY MANAGER PRESENTING KPI DASHBOARD TO LEADERSHIP

KEY POINTS

- KPIs give facility managers a structured, data-driven way to measure performance and justify resources.
- BOMA benchmarks let managers compare building costs and energy use against industry peers.
- The Balanced Scorecard prevents over-optimizing one area by tracking financial, customer, process, and growth results together.
- Uptime, PM compliance, and MTTR reveal the health of the building reliability program.
- Service responsiveness KPIs measure occupant experience directly and surface staffing and training gaps early.
- Effective leadership reports pair KPI numbers with a brief narrative that explains variances and corrective actions.

REFLECTION QUESTION

A facility manager has been tracking work order response times and PM compliance for six months. Response times have improved steadily, but PM compliance has dropped from 91 percent to 78 percent over the same period. Leadership has noticed the service improvement but is unaware of the PM decline. How should the facility manager present this situation in the next leadership report, and what does the data suggest about how resources may need to be reallocated?

8.3 Occupant Satisfaction Measurement

Building systems can run flawlessly, work orders can close on time, and energy costs can stay well below budget—and still, occupants may feel that the facility is not serving them well. Performance data tells facility managers how the operation is running. Occupant satisfaction data tells them how it feels to the people inside the building. Both matter. This subtopic covers how to design surveys that capture useful feedback, how to track complaints and compliments, how to connect satisfaction data to real process changes, and how to benchmark results against industry standards.

Survey Design for FM Operations

A well-designed occupant survey is one of the most useful tools a facility manager has. Done right, it surfaces problems before they become complaints, confirms what the team is doing well, and gives leadership a clear picture of how the facility is experienced day to day.

The first step is deciding what to measure. FM surveys typically cover four core areas: thermal comfort, lighting quality, cleanliness, and service responsiveness. These are the conditions occupants notice most and comment on most often. A survey that tries to cover everything ends up measuring nothing well. Keeping the question set focused—ten to fifteen questions at most—produces higher response rates and cleaner data.

Question design matters as much as question selection. Rating scale questions—asking occupants to score their experience from one to five—are easy to complete and easy to

analyze over time. Open-ended questions at the end of the survey give occupants a chance to raise issues that the rating scales may have missed. Both types have value, but the rating scales should carry the most weight in trend analysis.

Timing and frequency also shape the results. A survey sent right after a major renovation will capture reactions to the change, not the steady-state experience. Most facility teams survey occupants once or twice per year, with shorter pulse surveys sent after significant events or changes. Matching the survey schedule to the rhythm of the facility keeps the data relevant and actionable.

Complaint and Compliment Tracking

Surveys capture a snapshot. Complaints and compliments capture the ongoing stream of occupant experience between survey cycles. Both types of feedback are valuable, and both deserve a structured tracking process.

Every facility needs a single, easy channel for occupants to submit feedback—a helpdesk portal, a dedicated email address, or a simple form posted in common areas. When feedback arrives through multiple untracked channels, patterns get lost. A complaint that comes in three times from three different people should trigger a response. That only happens when all three are captured in the same place.

Complaint tracking should record the date, the location, the nature of the issue, and the resolution. Over time, this log reveals patterns that individual complaints never show. A steady stream of thermal comfort complaints from the same floor, for example, points to a zone control issue that the maintenance team needs to investigate—not just a personal preference.

Compliment tracking is just as important and often overlooked. When occupants take the time to say something went well, that information tells the team which practices are worth keeping and which staff members are delivering standout service. Sharing compliments with the team also builds morale and reinforces the behaviors that drive satisfaction.

Linking Satisfaction to Operations

Satisfaction data has no value if it sits in a report and goes no further. The real purpose of measuring occupant satisfaction is to drive changes in how the facility operates. Closing that loop—from feedback to action to follow-up—is what separates a high-performing FM program from one that simply goes through the motions.

When survey results or complaint trends point to a specific problem, the facility manager's job is to trace it back to an operational cause. Low scores on cleanliness in a specific area may mean the cleaning schedule needs adjustment, or that a new area was added without updating the contractor's scope. Low scores on service responsiveness may mean work order priorities need recalibration, or that after-hours coverage has a gap.

Once a cause is identified, the fix should be documented and the timeline tracked. Occupants who submitted feedback—especially those who filed formal complaints—should receive some form of acknowledgment that their input led to a change. This closes the loop for the occupant and builds trust that the facility team is listening.

Tracking satisfaction scores alongside operational KPIs also reveals connections that neither dataset shows alone. A drop in PM compliance often precedes a drop in comfort scores by several weeks. Seeing that pattern early gives managers the chance to act before occupants feel the impact.

Benchmarking Satisfaction Results

Knowing that 72 percent of occupants rated the facility as satisfactory or better is useful. Knowing that the industry average for similar buildings is 81 percent makes it actionable. Benchmarking puts satisfaction scores in context and gives facility managers a credible target to aim for.

BOMA and several FM research organizations publish occupant satisfaction benchmarks by building type, region, and industry sector. These resources let facility managers compare their scores against a relevant peer group rather than an abstract ideal. A score that looks modest in isolation may be strong for a particular building type—or it may confirm that real improvement is needed.

Internal benchmarking is just as valuable. Tracking satisfaction scores across survey cycles builds a trend line that shows whether the facility program is improving over time. A team that raises its overall satisfaction score by five points over two years has a concrete story to tell leadership—one that connects FM investment to measurable outcomes for the people in the building.

Benchmarking should also extend to individual survey categories. A facility that scores well on cleanliness but poorly on thermal comfort knows exactly where to focus next. Category-level benchmarks give that kind of precision and prevent the team from spreading improvement efforts too thin.

Reflection Question

A facility manager reviews the latest occupant satisfaction survey and finds that overall scores are holding steady, but thermal comfort ratings have dropped significantly in one building wing over the past two survey cycles. No formal complaints have been filed through the helpdesk. What steps should the facility manager take to investigate the root cause, and how should the findings be communicated to both the maintenance team and building occupants?