

Webinar Summary
How to Write Your Winning *Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools* Award Application

Time: Thursday, June 26, 2008 at 2:00pm ET

Speakers:

- Jennifer Lemon
U.S. EPA, Indoor Environments Division
- Frank Sever
Mayfield City School District, Mayfield Heights, Ohio
- Jeff Moquin
The School Board of Broward County, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

I. Welcome and Introductions – Jennifer Lemon, *U.S. EPA, Indoor Environments Division*

Jennifer Lemon welcomed participants and described the goals of the Webinar to:

- 1) Give participants an overview of the *IAQ TFS* Awards Program;
- 2) Discuss how to tell the story of your IAQ management program in your award application;
- 3) Hear about the process previous award winners followed to complete their applications and the components of their programs they focused on when completing the applications; and
- 4) Answer participants' application-related questions answered by previous award winners and EPA.

Jennifer then introduced the guest speakers: Frank Sever from Mayfield City School District, Mayfield Heights, Ohio, and Jeff Moquin from The School Board of Broward County, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

II. Overview of the *IAQ TFS* Awards Program and the Framework for Effective School IAQ Management: Six Key Drivers – Jennifer Lemon, *U.S. EPA, Indoor Environments Division*

Jennifer reviewed the various award levels—noncompetitive: Great Start and Leadership; and competitive: Excellence and Model of Sustained Excellence. She mentioned a number of resources for schools to draw on when deciding which award to apply for and how to apply: the *IAQ TFS* 2008 Awards Flyer www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pdfs/awards/awards_flyer.pdf and the Table of Key Elements of the Awards www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pdfs/award_program_matrix.pdf.

Jennifer gave an overview of *Envisioning Excellence: Framework for Effective School IAQ Management: Six Key Drivers of Success*. The Framework is a deep knowledge base built on the learning of more than 1,000 schools and years of research on IAQ program success that led to the formation of a clear program Framework that underlies successful school IAQ management programs. The Framework is comprised of Six Key Drivers that describe

strategies and actions school districts can adopt to build and sustain effective programs. Any school, regardless of size, location, or budget, can apply the Framework to launch or strengthen an IAQ management program.

The Framework is based on the Six Key Drivers of Success:

- **Organize for Success:** This driver describes how to create a mission-driven program; apply a systematic approach to integrate facility management practices; convene an empowered and effective leadership team; secure senior-level buy-in; recruit program champions; and more.
- **Assess Your Environments Continuously:** This driver describes how to monitor facilities in order to prevent IAQ problems and presents innovative ideas about using technology, standard maintenance and custodial practices, empowering leaders in each facility, etc., to help get the job done.
- **Plan Your Short and Long-Term Activities:** This driver makes clear the importance of naming, codifying, and planning for the accomplishment of your IAQ program's goals and determining which goals you can accomplish in the short-term and which are more long-term objectives.
- **Act to Address Structural, Institutional, and Behavioral Issues:** This driver emphasizes the need to say what you're going to do to improve IAQ, doing it, and following-up on your actions to tell your community what you have done and why. It also suggests ways to use education, training, and root cause analysis to address challenges to IAQ posed by occupant behaviors or school district policies.
- **Evaluate Your Results for Continuous Improvement:** This driver addresses how and why to measure your program's impact by monitoring, for example, the number of IAQ complaints; the cost of IAQ-related repairs; the change in school nurse visits, attendance, and student test scores over time; and how to use your evaluation results to drive long-term program strategy.
- **Communicate with Everyone, All the Time:** This driver discusses the importance of sharing your IAQ program's intent, activities, results, and next steps with your entire school community and how to engage your community as participants and program supporters.

The *Framework for Effective School IAQ Management* is related to each award level in the following ways:

The **IAQ TFS National Great Start Award** is for U.S. schools and districts that are in the initial stages of implementing the *IAQ TFS* Program. To qualify, schools must establish an IAQ team or designate an IAQ Coordinator—this is the first step in the Key Driver: Organize for Success.

The **IAQ TFS National Leadership Award** is for U.S. schools and districts that have shown significant progress in implementing an IAQ management program. To qualify, schools must meet the minimum criteria for the Great Start Award and should be in the process of *putting in place* the Framework for effective programs outlined in the Six Key Drivers: organize, assess, plan, act, evaluate, and

communicate. This includes showing progress toward completing IAQ assessments for schools that are participating in the program and demonstrating action to address IAQ issues and prioritizing IAQ repairs and upgrades.

The **IAQ TFS National Excellence Award** recognizes U.S. school districts with exemplary IAQ programs that have shown exceptional commitment to IAQ management. Applicants must demonstrate how the school district has **successfully implemented** the elements associated with effective programs such as those outlined in all of the Six Key Drivers: Organize, Assess, Plan, Act, Evaluate, and Communicate.

The **IAQ TFS National Model of Sustained Excellence Award** is presented to U.S. school districts that show *ongoing* exceptional commitment and achievement in maintaining healthy educational facilities while institutionalizing comprehensive IAQ management practices. Recipients of this award must be past National Excellence Award recipients which shows that they have **already successfully implemented and are sustaining** the actions associated with effective programs outlined in the Six Key Drivers. To win the Sustained Excellence award, applicants must demonstrate that they have sustained an effective IAQ management program, established long-term IAQ management goals, tracked the results of their IAQ management program, and, through communication and policy, have institutionalized their programs so that healthy IAQ will always be a priority in their District.

The National Excellence Award and the National Model of Sustained Excellence Award winners are selected through a highly competitive process. Awards will be presented to the selected school districts at EPA's Annual *IAQ TFS* National Symposium, held in Washington, D.C., on December 4-6, 2008.

Polling Question:

Which of the following awards do plan to apply for this year? (41 attendees voted)

- National Great Start (39%)
- National Leadership (17%)
- National Excellence (29%)
- National Model of Sustained Excellence (15%)

Jennifer briefly described the process of application review. The criteria used to evaluate the National Excellence and National Model of Sustained Excellence Award applications are available online. The new electronic fill-in forms make it easy to apply by e-mail. Visit the Awards Web site at www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/awards.html for full details on submitting your application by the deadline, **Friday, September 12, 2008**.

Polling Question:

What prompted your involvement in the *IAQ TFS* Program? (45 attendees voted)

- Senior district leadership (9%)
- Interested in green/healthy learning (24%)
- Mold (33%)

- Had an existing IAQ program (13%)
- Other (20%)

III. 'How to Tell Your IAQ Story' – Award Winning Programs

Previous award winning programs described the following:

- 1) How they told the story of their IAQ management program in their award application; and
- 2) The process they followed to complete their application, as well as the components of their programs they focused on when completing the application.

National Excellence Award Winner – Frank Sever, IAQ Coordinator and Supervisor of Buildings, Grounds, and Equipment, *Mayfield City School District, Mayfield Heights, Ohio*

In writing our Excellence application, the first thing we did was look at our background information. I would advise anyone to apply for the Great Start Award as well as Leadership Award so they could receive the initial recognition for their efforts. These awards helped us to initially form our program.

We are a small school district, and therefore, it was essential to get the teachers and custodians involved in the *IAQ TFS* Program. Getting the teaching staff involved with a series of discussions on IAQ and increasing their awareness greatly helped us in conducting our walkthroughs and checklists. The custodians performed the checklist, and then we took the appropriate actions. Our approach was very systematic.

As we moved up the award levels, Great Start to Leadership, our program continued to improve as well. We further trained our custodians and teaching staff. Two areas in particular that required additional training were the products that teachers would bring into their classrooms that the custodians would have to remove, and integrated pest management. To be successful, we needed to ensure we were effectively communicating and cooperating with everyone involved in the IAQ program. This communication also extended to the architectural firm with which our school district works.

When we were building our program, we looked to see how we could put a program in place that would be sustainable, so that no matter who was in the driver's seat, the program would continue. We then decided to apply for the Excellence Award. However, when we initially looked at the data, we didn't think we had a chance. But, after we pulled together our information and went step-by-step through the application, we realized we had a comprehensive program. One thing to note is that we do this for legitimacy, and the overall goal for us is to create safe and healthy indoor environments in all of our schools.

To write the application, I took the Six Key Drivers and aligned our program with them to see that we were on the right road. In Part 1 of the application, we input our school district information. Part 2 of the application was the 'meat and potatoes' of our program and told our story in the Six Key Drivers Framework. We described how we implemented our integrated pest

management program (IPM) and then integrated the other areas of indoor air quality management into our program. I recommend putting the Six Key Drivers in an outline form and insert the story of your program first and then see what other areas you need to fill in. In Part 3, we included materials to supplement the story we told in Part 2. Lastly, we had several people review the application before we submitted it, and I recommend that you do the same.

One of the reasons our story is so strong is because we feel that our IAQ program is the right thing to do; it is not the “flavor of the month;” it is the way we conduct business. Although we are constantly evolving and improving our program, it is already paying off. For example, we recently indentified that carbon monoxide levels were too high in one area of a school. We were able to catch this and proactively remediate the situation before it became a big problem.

The EPA has done a marvelous job with the *IAQ TFS* Program and with the Awards Program. The process is easy with all of the readily available forms online. And the Action Kit is also available online.

The legitimacy winning the award has brought us has allowed us to obtain additional funding and add additional environmental protection policies in our schools. For example, we passed a school anti-idling policy and collaborated with the Ohio Radon commission to have all of our schools tested for radon. We were one of the first schools in Northeast Ohio to have a green cleaning program. We were also able to obtain funds to develop a recycling program. This all stems back to becoming initially involved in the *IAQ TFS* Program.

My advice to other schools would be to apply for the Great Start and Leadership Awards first. This allows you to establish an IAQ team and to start implementing the checklist activities. These awards are the ‘low-hanging fruit’ and will allow you to establish a strong base from which to grow your program into a ‘National Excellence’ program.

Reviewing the following documents may help you with the application process.

National Excellence Award Application and Helpful Tips

www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pdfs/awards/excellenceaward_application.pdf

National Excellence Award Evaluation Criteria

www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pdfs/awards/excellenceaward_evalcriteria.pdf

National Model of Sustained Excellence Award Winner – Jeff Moquin, Director of the Risk Management Department, *The School Board of Broward County, Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

Our relationship with the *IAQ TFS* Program began in 2002. We had a tremendous amount of adversity due to a construction boom in the 1990’s, which due to poor construction led to several mold crises in our schools. This is when we reached out to EPA.

We submitted our first National Excellence Award application in 2004. Because we didn’t have what we needed in the application, we were not successful the first year. As a lesson to anyone who has previously submitted an award and was not selected, you shouldn’t let this setback be indicative of the long-term success you may have for your IAQ management program.

After 2004, we implemented a strategic plan and then realized that the Six Key Drivers were in line with our strategic plan. The Six Key Drivers can really be used to look at any business or organization system. So, for our next application, we aligned our program with the Six Key Drivers and were awarded the National Excellence Award in 2005. For example, to demonstrate how we ‘Organize for Success,’ we described how we involved various stakeholders in the process, such as parents and architects. In ‘Assess Your Environments Continuously,’ we described our two-prong approach in which we use proactive online surveys as well as have corrective action plans in place to evaluate concerns that pop up throughout the year. Our size sometimes works against us, so we rely on technology to help keep our program organized and running smoothly.

For the National Model of Sustained Excellence Award application, the process wasn’t the same as the process we used for the National Excellence Award. When you go through the application process for the National Model of Sustained Excellence Award, you have to demonstrate your commitment of the *IAQ TFS* Program and speak to the sustainability of your program, as well as the leadership role your program may have, such as mentoring other school districts. You must be able to show you have the policies and procedures in place to sustain an effective IAQ management program over time. Frank previously described how he organized his program so that anyone can step into his role, and the program will continue successfully. This aspect of institutionalizing the program is important to us as well.

I also agree with Frank that it is important to have a number of people review your application. For first one I wrote, I didn’t have anyone else review it, and therefore the union didn’t feel that they had been involved or their contribution to the success of the IAQ program was credited. Therefore, my advice for others is to involve multiple stakeholders in your IAQ program, as well as the award application process.

In general, make sure your organization has the right motivation in applying for the award: We wanted to have a safe and healthy learning environment and, because the award aligned with our mission, it was easy to write the application. For us, “The *IAQ TFS* Program is not a diet, it is a lifestyle.” For Broward, organizationally, this is part of the way we do business and the culture that we have. We have an ongoing commitment, and we aren’t becoming lax because we won an award.

Reviewing the following documents may you with the application process.

- National Model of Sustained Excellence Award Application and Helpful Tips
www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pdfs/awards/sustainedexcellenceaward_application.pdf
- National Model of Sustained Excellence Award Evaluation Criteria
www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pdfs/awards/sustainedexcellenceaward_evalcriteria.pdf

Wrap-up Discussion – Jennifer Lemon, *U.S. EPA, Indoor Environments Division*

Frank and Jeff, thank you for sharing your experiences in writing successful award applications. For those considering applying for any of the four awards, along with using this information you

learned today, I also encourage you to reach out to your EPA Regional Contacts as they have helped many schools navigate the application process and can answer questions you may have. Please visit www.epa.gov/iaq/wherelive.html for their contact information.

IV. Questions and Answers:

Question 1: If your budgets were slashed, would you still be able to do your IAQ management program?

Answer: (Jeff) Florida, as a whole, is undergoing major budget issues; we are 50th out of 50 in terms of educational funding. Although we have had many budget cuts, our IAQ management program continues to go strong. Reclassification of existing work is going on. Our program is set up to put more emphasis on prevention which saves us money by limiting the number of major remediation projects needed.

(Frank) I agree with Jeff. The *IAQ TFS* Action Kit and information is free. So in our program, we have used these free resources to increase staff awareness to help custodians and teachers become more aware of and prevent problems. It is important to make the time commitment to it and identify your champions.

Question 2: How much is too much for the National Mode of Sustained Excellence application supplemental materials?

Answer: (EPA) For the supplemental materials, try to focus on pieces that highlight key parts of your story and that are easily scanned into PDF to send to us electronically. Good examples include: flyers from PTA meetings with an IAQ focus, a few pages of a handbook addresses IAQ, or newspaper articles. If you have any questions about appropriate supplemental materials, please call us for more information at (202) 343-9608.

Question 3: How would an agent, such as an architectural firm fill out an application?

Answer: (EPA) You could partner and work with the school district to fill out their application or the portion of the application that you contribute to in their program. We also realize that many American Lung Association chapters work with and partner with school districts. It would be great to have as many partners as possible help in putting together and reviewing the application.

Question 4: Does this just apply to centralized school districts? Are preschools also eligible?

Answer: (EPA) The *IAQ TFS* Program and the Awards Program is specific to K-12 schools. However, let your EPA Regional Representative know of your efforts in working with preschools, and there may be a way to recognize these efforts.

Question 5: I would like additional information on the air quality meter used for initial assessments.

Answer: (Frank) We just purchased a Fluke 975 air meter last year, and it has a log that we use for our reports. You can download the information back to your computer or you can use the standard template. The data is very reliable and has allowed us to identify and remediate the problems proactively.

(Jeff) We use temperature, relative humidity, and carbon dioxide as the three measures to give us the information we need to prevent problems. We also use a moisture meter.

(EPA Regional Representative) Instruments are great, but *IAQ TFS* is about basic maintenance and prevention.

Question 6: What type of staff members do the two school districts have to help complete your district's IAQ program?

Answer: (Frank) I am the point person. I am training two other staff people who showed a high interest in IAQ on how to do the assessments.

(Jeff) We have an IAQ assessment team. We have them go to the *IAQ TFS* National Symposium with us to get more training on IAQ issues. One of the best ways to assess IAQ is to use the *IAQ TFS* Kit, common sense, and talk to people about what they are experiencing.

Question 7: Have there been any lessons learned that have been applied to new construction in your schools?

Answer: (Jeff) Yes, we have learned a lot. Our district-level IAQ Subcommittee reports and identifies the issues and then talks with the people implementing new construction projects. Most of our problems came about when our significant growth occurred in 1990's; we had water intrusion and before we knew about it, we had already replicated the design for a number of buildings. Now, before we reuse any design, we have to use the facility for 1.5 years without problems. I would also recommend that you keep it simple: we wanted ascetically pleasing schools, but they were problematic.

(Frank) We are a smaller school district, so we make sure we openly communicate with the architect and engineer to make sure IAQ issues are addressed. I have also heard of independent companies that can check the ventilation requirements to make sure the new building is performing as it should be.

Question 8: If we already have a Great Start Award, are we eligible to compete for an National Excellence Award or do we have to have a Leadership Award first?

Answer: (EPA) You do not need to have a Great Start or Leadership Award before applying for a National Excellence Award. The only award that requires a previous award is the National Model of Sustained Excellence Award.

Question 9: Do you provide the *IAQ TFS* Kit on CD?

Answer: (EPA) Yes, you can order CDs free of charge at <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pubs.html>. They are document number EPA 402-C-05-001.

V. Conclusion – Jennifer Lemon, *U.S. EPA, Indoor Environments Division*

Thank you to everyone for taking the time to join us this afternoon. Now is the best time to get started on your applications. Call me at (202) 343- 9608 as you work through your awards application process, and have a great rest of the day. Thank you.