American Alliance of Museums

INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

Museum Assessment Program (MAP)

Education Assessment Convening Report

The opportunity to participate in this convening, sharing thoughts and learning from colleagues--a pleasure and privilege!

May 2019

We are pleased to continue our partnership with IMLS to actively nurture museum excellence and expand museums' capacities to serve their communities. -- AAM President & CEO Laura Lott

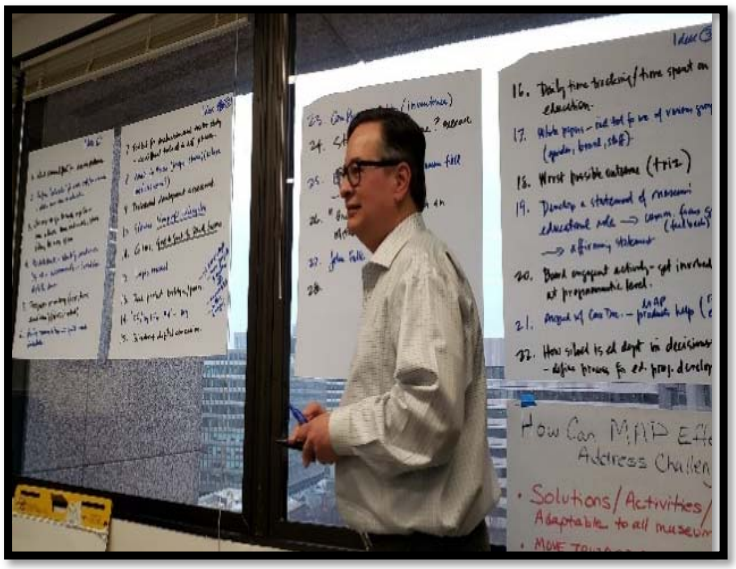
The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) is pleased to share the results of one component of our initiative to strengthen and re-envision the Museum Assessment Program (MAP), which has served more than 5,000 museums since its inception in 1981, in partnership with the Institute of Museum & Library Services (IMLS). The Museum Assessment Program makes it possible for small and mid-sized museums to perform at higher levels of professionalism, and to get recognized for it.

In early March 2019, IMLS and AAM signed a new two-year (2019-2020) cooperative agreement to fund enhancements to the three current MAP assessments being offered (Organizational, Collections Stewardship and Community Engagement) and for the creation of two new MAP assessments (Education and Board Leadership). [i]

About the Event

Consulting a cohort of museum professionals was identified as a key element in the process of developing the new Education assessment new MAP Education Assessment. On March 21-22, 2019, AAM brought together thirteen subject matter experts on museum education for a professionally facilitated exploration of trends, needs, and opportunities. The main goal of the Convening was to inform the MAP staff's design of the new assessment and how content, scope, approach, and structure of the assessment could have maximum impact for the museum and the Peer Reviewer.

All participants (see last page) were MAP Peer Reviewers who also belonged to AAM's relevant Professional Networks: Education Committee (EDCOM), National Association of Museum Exhibitions (NAME), and Committee on Audience Research and Evaluation (CARE). They represented a wide mix of museum sizes, types and governance systems from all regions of the country employed in a variety of museum positions. The convening was facilitated by Max van Balgooy, an independent consultant and long-time MAP Peer Reviewer.



Attendees expressed great satisfaction with both the outcomes and the Convening process. They enthusiastically affirmed the new assessment and the new framework for all MAPs, and remarked that the stimulation of debating suggestions, theories, approaches, tools and ideas contributed greatly to their own professional development.

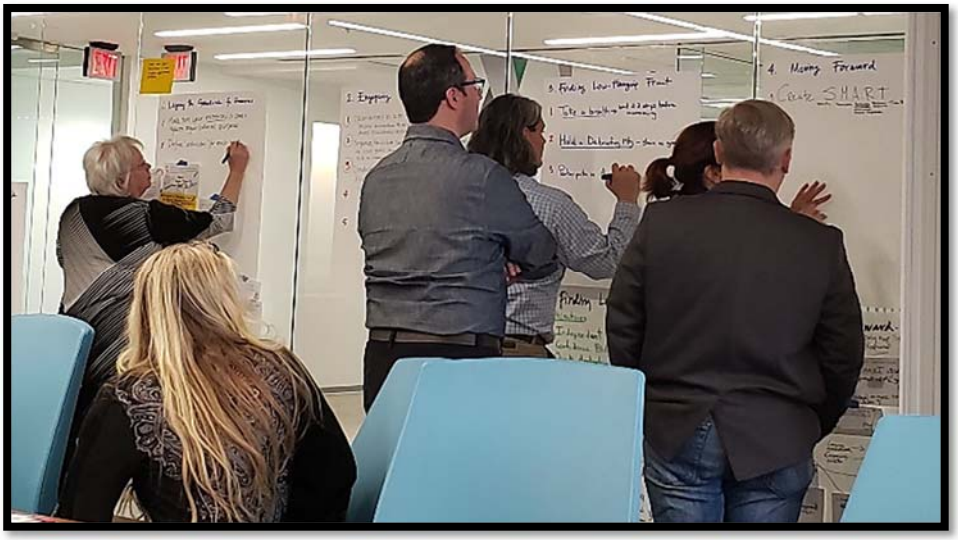
…I found it to be a great professional development experience with a tremendously collegial group. I look forward to seeing how the new MAPs develop.

Discussion Highlights and Key Findings

Convening participants brainstormed a list of challenges and barriers they felt faced todays museum education field, which fell into two broad categories of perception of museum function and issues related to capacity. Attendees felt that museums (especially boards) need to understand the internal value of education, and that it is not a program, it is a function. At the same time, participants agreed that museums need to accept their own limitations, clarify their audience and understand their relevance. As one person commented: "We need to do one thing and do it really well, strategically."

Other top challenges identified were that "education should be mission driven, not revenue driven"; and that museums need help creating organizational structures that support the education role and foster alignment rather than silos.

Participants universally approved of a revised framework created by MAP staff to apply to all assessments. Participants commented that this new approach of dividing up the process into four parts during which the museum and Peer Reviewer are both engaged – rather than two compartmentalized phases – meant the final MAP report would no longer be just a snapshot of what is observed during a site visit; more action by the museum and more engagement by the peer reviewer along the way would create a more complete process.



A combination of small group work and full group discussions structured the gathering, and robust conversations generated pages of ideas, activities, resources and tools which could be incorporated into the revised MAP framework.

They were also highly supportive of embedding DEAI components throughout all five MAP assessments, expanding the self-study workbook and increasing assigned activities throughout the year long MAP process. They felt strongly that aligning core standards to each workbook section transparently would support museums internalizing standards and that two especially important tools to use would be an institutional life cycle model and a logic model.

Attendees came up with great ideas for breaking down concepts and creating threads that would continue through multiple phases of MAP, with scaffolding to allow museums to focus on one step at a time. Scalability for smaller museums was a theme during the convening.

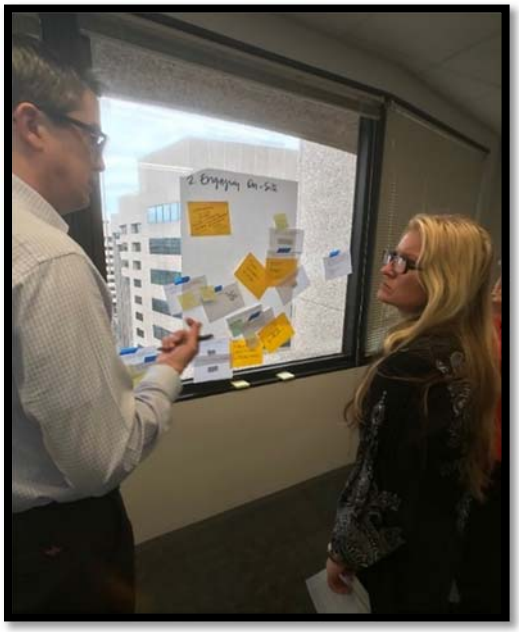
Other concerns included the expanded workload for both the museum and the Peer Reviewer, and that the IMLS agreement timeframe meant there was no opportunity for any alignment with the EDCOM project currently exploring a possible Education and Interpretation Core Document.

Time was also devoted to exploring the expanded role of the Peer Reviewer in the new MAP framework and what would help reviewers be successful within the proposed model. Participants told staff they would need very clear expectations, training in areas such as facilitation skills, DEAI and change management. Attendees liked the idea of an online portal for training.

Next Steps

- This report will be shared with the field and disseminated. Two blogs for the AAM website will be written by two different Convening participants.
- MAP staff will use the Convening results to inform the development of the Education Assessment materials over the next few months, seeking further input from Convening participants and others in the field as they are refined.
- In response to feedback during the Convening, the assessment name has been changed to Education & Interpretation Assessment, from Education Assessment.
- The insights and ideas from this Convening will also inform development of learning modules in the MAP Portal for museums and for Peer Reviewer training.

Equally exciting is the participant feedback that continuing to be a part of the development and implementation of the Education Assessment is important to them, and their Convening experience was enriching and stimulating. In short, the Convening exceeded expectations for all parties involved, and we are all delighted by the outcomes.



It is an honor to be involved with the visioning for a new Education MAP … I felt that the sessions were inspiring due to the thoughtfulness of the participants, time devote to thinking through how to improve the field and passion for our work. The other panelists were a pleasure to speak with throughout our time together.

Thank You to the Convening Participants!

- **Dina Bailey** - International Site of Conscience, Director of Methodology and Practice
- **Greta Brunschwyler** - Briar Bush Nature Center, Executive Director
- **George Buss** - Minnetrista, Director of Experience & Education
- **Rod Cofield** - Historic London Town & Gardens, Executive Director
- **William Crow** - Lehigh University Art Galleries, Executive Director
- **Lisa Eldred** - Denver Botanic Gardens, Director of Exhibitions, Art & Interpretation
- **Robert Forloney** – Museum Consultant
- **Amy Killpatrick Fox** - Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Museum Educator
- **Joseph Imholte** - Science Museum of Minnesota, Vice President, Visitor Experience
- **Ian Kerrigan** - National September 11 Memorial & Museum, Senior Vice President, Exhibitions
- **Sunnee O'Rork** - i.d.e.a. Museum, Executive Director
- **Donna Sack** - Naper Settlement, Vice President, Community Engagement and Audience
- **Tania Said**- David Owsley Museum of Art, Director of Education

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www.imls.gov

For more information about MAP:

map@aam-us.org
202-289-9118
www.aam-us.org

[i] https://www.imls.gov/news-events/news-releases/imls-funds-new-and-improved-assessment-program-small-mid-sized-museum
https://www.aam-us.org/2019/04/01/american-alliance-of-museums-announces-exciting-changes-to-map/