

Accreditation Peer Review

Accreditation peer reviewers assess museums undergoing an accreditation review, verifying how well their operations align with the [Core Standards for Museums](#). As members of Visiting Committees, which are typically two-member teams of museum professionals well-versed in the accreditation process, they read a museum's Self-Study and other documents, participate in a two-day visit to the museum, and collaborate on a Site Visit Report which informs the Accreditation Commission's decision-making. Reviewers are assigned using information in their peer review profile, which must be kept up to date by the reviewer.

Serving as a peer reviewer is an excellent professional development opportunity and a way to pick up new ideas, network, and actively participate in the Alliance's efforts to advance standards and best practices. A peer reviewer's service is the critical backbone to the success of this program.

Qualifications

Directors of accredited museums are automatically added to the accreditation peer reviewer ranks. Other museum professionals with experience in the accreditation process are encouraged to apply.

Accreditation peer reviewers have knowledge of basic, overall museum operations by having participated in one or more of the following situations:

- Holding a professional-level decision making role at a museum, participating in day-to-day operations of the institution.
- Having worked in the museum field in a professional capacity a sufficient length of time to develop an understanding of museum operations, generally at least five years.
- Demonstrating a breadth of experience with various museum operations, by:
 - Holding positions at more than one museum
 - Holding positions with different roles and responsibilities at the same museum
 - Growing within a position, as demonstrated by a list of achievements
 - Participating in museum and nonprofit-related activities outside the museum (board service, teaching, advising other institutions, etc.)
- Gained an understanding of various effective operational techniques used across the museum field by participating in at least one of the following professional activities:
 - Officer or committee member for a museum organization
 - Committee member for a museum organization
 - Grant reviewer for a federal or state museum agency (e.g., IMLS)
 - Member of a peer roundtable or other information-sharing program

Successful applicants demonstrate familiarity with the accreditation process in a direct, successful accreditation review of their current or former institution(s). They are current museum professionals, retired museum executives, or museum consultants.

Expectations

Accreditation peer reviewers must possess strong skills in oral and written communication, time management, critical thinking, and analysis. They must be professional, ethical, and diplomatic in dealing with the museum they are reviewing.

AAM expects peer reviewers to be:

- Well-informed about current standards and professional practices in the field
- Willing to familiarize themselves with the museum's Self-Study and attachments
- Able to assess museum operations against accreditation standards
- Broadly knowledgeable about institutions similar to the ones they review
- Objective, observational, professional, thorough, and diplomatic while visiting the museum and preparing the report
- Scrupulous in maintaining confidentiality about the review
- Collaborative with other visiting committee members

Accreditation peer reviewers are NOT expected to consult with the museum on how to improve its operations. The Visiting Committee's report is intended to guide the decision-making of the Accreditation Commission; while it may provide useful insights for the museum's leadership, staff, and governing authority, they are not its primary audience.

Responsibilities

The Accreditation Commission relies on peer reviewers to verify the accuracy of a museum's Self-Study and to observe the institution's operations to determine whether the museum is meeting the standards.

The steps peer reviewers take in order to fulfill this directive are:

1. **Read the Self-Study materials.** Become as familiar as possible with the museum and its operations prior to the site visit by reviewing and analyzing the Self-Study and attachments.
2. **Schedule the site visit.** Work with the museum and other Visiting Committee members to arrange a mutually convenient date and jointly develop an agenda for the visit. All Visiting Committee members must conduct their visits together as a team.
3. **Visit the museum.** Conduct the visit in a thorough, professional and objective manner. Review any updated materials the museum provides. Conduct an exit interview with the director. Discuss findings with fellow committee members.

4. **Complete the Site Visit Report.** The Commission needs a comprehensive, accurate, and impartial account of the Visiting Committee's observations. The report should not be consultative or include a conclusion regarding accreditation. Consider the museum in light of Accreditation's two core questions:
 1. How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals?
 2. How well does the museum's performance meet standards and practices as they are generally understood in the museum field?Submit the report by the due date assigned by the Accreditation Program Officer.
5. **Maintain confidentiality of the museum's circumstances and Self-Study materials.** To preserve the integrity of the program, the museum's disclosure of private information must also be handled discreetly. Treat all information acquired through the process as privileged. Reviewers do not talk or write about the proceedings, conclusions or any other information about the museum to anyone but Visiting Committee members and AAM staff, as appropriate. Peer reviewers may not identify the specific museums visited but can and should include participation as an Accreditation peer reviewer on their resume. Refer only to the time period of visits.

Time Commitment

AAM Accreditation Program Officers periodically ask reviewers to serve on a museum's Visiting Committee. Reviewers are free to say no if their schedule will not accommodate a visit during the required window of time. If a reviewer agrees, the Program Officer will connect him/her with the other reviewer(s) and the museum to work out the specific dates for the visit. At least one month before the visit, the Program Officer will also send the reviewers the museum's Self-Study and attachments and the Site Visit Report Form.

The time required for an individual to read those materials and, after the visit, work with the other reviewer to finish the report varies depending on each individual's work style and the complexity and size of the museum involved. We estimate that peer reviewers spend about 40-60 hours over a three-month period preparing, conducting the site visit, and completing the report.

A peer reviewer may be removed from the roster if they commit to an assignment and then do not fulfill that commitment in a timely fashion.

Please note all communications, trainings and transactions will be conducted electronically.

Compensation

Accreditation peer reviewers receive no compensation for their service. Expenses incurred by the peer reviewer for a Accreditation review will be reimbursed. This reimbursement is dependent on the reviewer following the Peer Review Travel Policy which is outlined [here](#).

In order to receive reimbursements, the peer reviewer must submit a completed [W9](#); to have funds electronically deposited, a [Direct Deposit Form](#) must also be completed.

More details will be shared when an assignment is offered.