

# Introduction

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Peer review is a critical component of both the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) and the Accreditation Program. While their backgrounds are varied, all peer reviewers demonstrate a certain level of knowledge and experience. However the two programs approach peer review in distinctly different ways.

## Surveyors

Those of you who work with the Museum Assessment Program are called Surveyors. More than 800 museum professionals work as Surveyors on AAM's behalf, representing museums of all disciplines and governance types. You hold professional-level positions and participate in day-to-day operations at your institutions. In addition, you have worked in the field in a professional capacity long enough—generally at least five years—to develop an understanding of museum operations.

## Visiting Committee Members

Those of you who work with the Accreditation Program are called Visiting Committee Members. More than 400 museum professionals serve on visiting committees on AAM's behalf, representing museums of all disciplines and governance types. You serve as the “eyes and ears” of the Accreditation Commission by conducting site visits and writing reports that describe and analyze the conditions and operations of the participating museums.

A great deal is asked of you as a peer reviewer. For every review, you must apply your broad knowledge of museum practices, stay aware of and remain committed to the highest standards of performance, and willingly engage in an intensive dialogue about best practices.

This manual is a primary reference for conducting reviews for AAM's MAP and Accreditation programs that

- guides you through every step of a visit
- provides a reference for important policies
- includes tools, tips, and hints for conducting a review
- answers frequently asked questions
- features a list of resources and a glossary

However, it does not:

- include information on specific standards and best practices other than MAP and Accreditation program criteria. Information on current museum standards can be found in *NEWStandard: A Resource for AAM Peer Reviewers*, the peer review section of the AAM Web site: [www.aam-us.org/peer-review](http://www.aam-us.org/peer-review), AAM's Professional Education seminars, and other professional activities.
- address specific circumstances that may arise during a visit. The tools and policies included here should guide you through most situations. You also can ask AAM's peer reviewer manager, MAP or Accreditation program staff, and your fellow peer reviewers or rely on your professional judgment to help navigate through the situation. The peer reviewer manager can put you in touch with other peer reviewers.
- write the report for you. You can always discuss any challenges or concerns with the peer reviewer manager or MAP or Accreditation program staff, or submit a draft to them for review and comment. Additional support is available on the peer review section of the AAM Web site.

As the museum field and peer review program are constantly changing, updates will be provided. We recommend that you keep this manual in a binder so that you can easily include any updates you receive.

If there are topics or policy areas that are not addressed here, please contact the peer reviewer manager at [peer-review@aam-us.org](mailto:peer-review@aam-us.org).

## Finding What You Need

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This manual has been designed with several features to help you find what you need, when you need it.

### Appendices

Policies and other core program documents have been placed in the appendices and also are referenced in the main text. If you are seeking a specific policy or position statement, check the appendices first.

### Hierarchical Structure

The manual is organized hierarchically, beginning with broad tasks and narrowing down to specific actions or questions. If you are looking for guidance on a specific component of a review or the peer review program, check the table of contents first.

### Icons

Throughout the manual, pieces of information may be highlighted as:

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*Good practices* 

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*Tips* 

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*Things to Remember* 

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*Evaluation Criteria* 

—which refers to elements from the Evaluation Rubric used to assess peer reviewer performance. These criteria describe AAM's expectations of you as a peer reviewer. (See Peer Reviewer Performance Evaluation Rubric in the Appendix.)

### Glossary

A glossary of common terms used by the MAP and Accreditation programs is included to help AAM staff, peer reviewers, and participating museums in communicate consistently.