

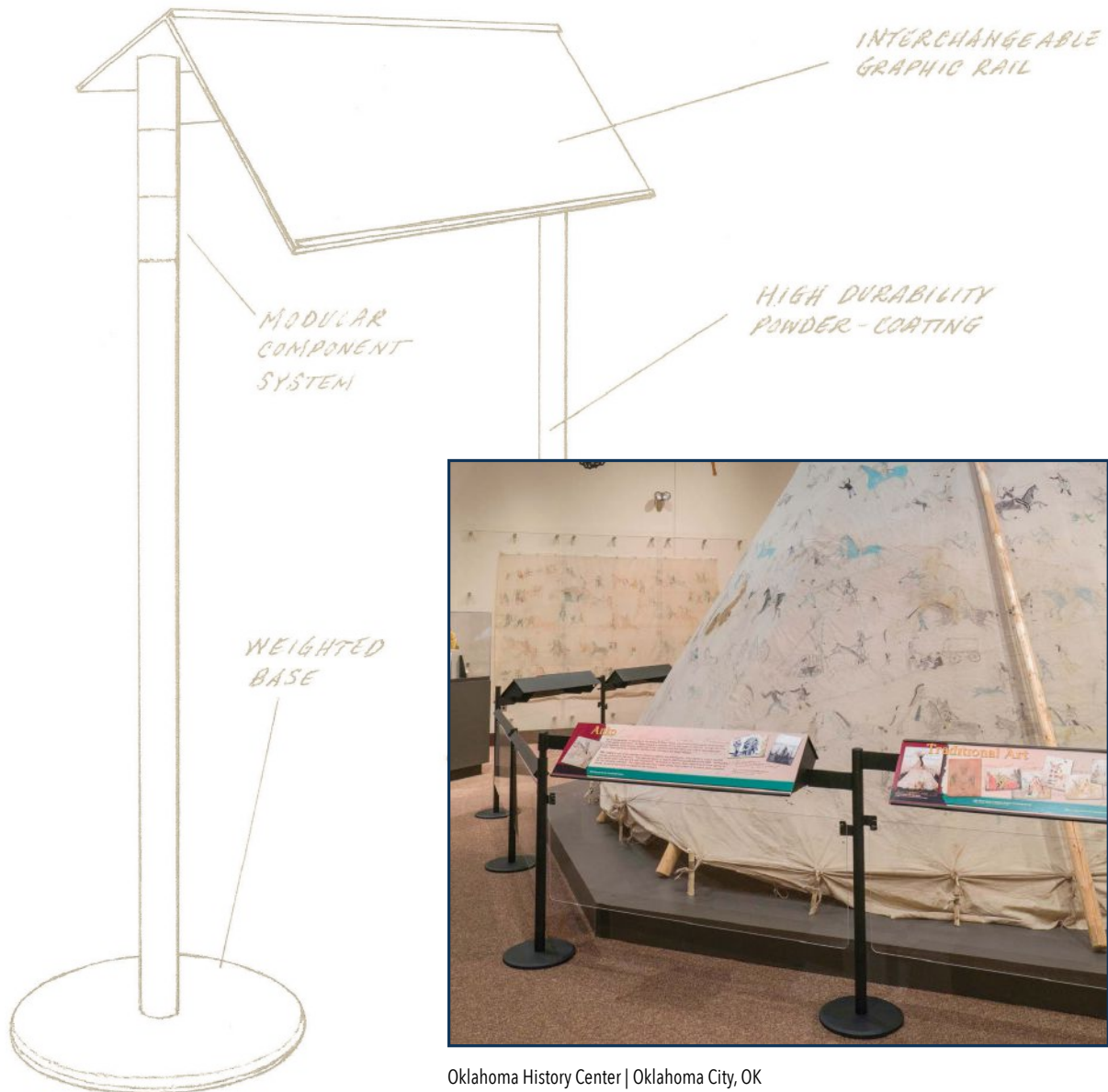
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JANUARY  
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ISSUE

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Cover: Avgust Avgustus/  
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# Equity and Excellence

**Like society at large**, the museum field is at a pivotal moment of reflection and rebuilding. As the collective museum community, our choices in the coming months and years about *what* and *how* to rebuild will set our field's course for decades. It is a time for deep introspection, active and inclusive listening, and bold steps to help build a more just and equitable world.

AAM is poised to bring the broad museum field together, inspire leadership at all levels, rebuild a strong and sustainable sector, and ensure AAM's programs and operations model our values. Informed by you—our valued members—the 2022–2025 Strategic Framework will guide our next steps and the future of our field by focusing on four priorities: Social & Community Impact; Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) & Anti-racism; The Museum Community; and The Way We Work.

In our Audience Survey of over 7,000 people last spring, you told us that you care most about contributing to community building, learning, and supporting people in becoming better world citizens. You care about transforming museums into more equitable and just places. And you look to AAM to provide the leadership, professional development, and connections to fellow professionals to help you advance these goals.

We are humbled by the opportunity to serve you in this way—and excited by our important and refreshed mission to “champion equitable and impactful museums by connecting people, fostering learning and community, and nurturing museum excellence.”

What does excellence in museums mean in 2022 and beyond? What steps should we take to ensure that an excellent museum is synonymous with an equitable one? What does social and community impact look like in excellent museums?

In the years ahead, we will work with Alliance members to answer these questions, review the Accreditation and Excellence Programs, and embed DEAI into every aspect of them, from the Code of Ethics for Museums to the peer-reviewer site visits for the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) and Accreditation.

On page 38 of this issue, you'll find an article from AAM Senior Director of Equity and Culture Andrew Plumley introducing our capstone report, *Excellence in DEAI*. The report expands on the recommendations from our Excellence in DEAI Task Force, a component of *Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion* led by Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie Bunch and Elizabeth Pierce, president and CEO of the Cincinnati Museum Center. It begins to establish a set of core concepts for excellence in DEAI work. The report identifies key indicators—measures of success—for each core concept that can help you benchmark your museum's work and measure progress. These core concepts and key indicators allow museums to approach DEAI work from many angles based on their needs, resources, and entry points while giving our field a common language to support our ability to share, learn, and move forward together.

There is much work left to be done and many opportunities to get involved. Join us in continuing to take steps toward a more equitable and excellent museum field.

12/1/21



---

Laura L. Lott is the Alliance's president and CEO. Follow Laura on Twitter at [@LottLaura](https://twitter.com/LottLaura).

# Reaching New Heights

**15%**

Percentage of accredited museums with 5 or fewer staff.

**25%**

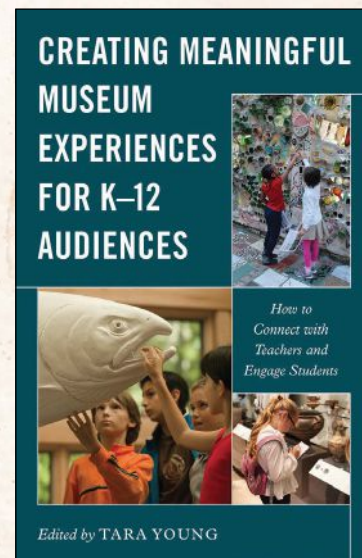
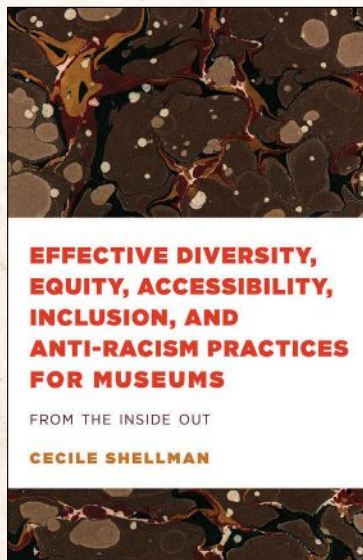
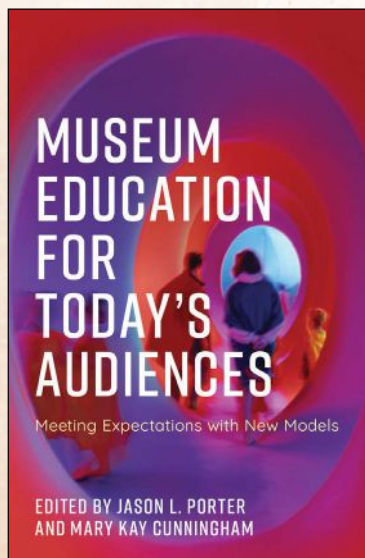
Percentage of museums in America that have participated in the Museum Assessment Program.

**1,502**  
Number of active volunteer peer reviewers.

**148**  
Number of museums that have been continuously accredited for 50 years.

Sources: Accreditation: [aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/accreditation-by-the-numbers/](https://aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/accreditation-by-the-numbers/);  
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By Cecile Shellman

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### The Center for Art & Public Exchange at the Mississippi Museum of Art

The Center for Art & Public Exchange (CAPE) at the Mississippi Museum of Art has released two publications: *CAPE Toolkit* and *Compassion, Art, People, and Equity: The Story of the Center for Art and Public Exchange at the Mississippi Museum of Art*. They are intended to serve as road maps for other art museums grappling not only with how to enact pledges to demonstrate diversity, equity, access, and inclusion during national awakenings regarding anti-racism and social justice but also how to authentically serve their communities.

**Location:** Jackson, MS

**Learn more:** [msmuseumart.org/cape/](http://msmuseumart.org/cape/)

### Frist Art Museum

Nashville-based artist LeXander Bryant's debut solo museum exhibition "Forget Me Nots" addresses themes of perseverance amid adversity, family structures and bonds, economic inequality, community activism, and more. The centerpiece of this multimedia exhibition is a suspended cracked concrete slab out of which blue forget-me-not flowers bloom, referencing the late rapper Tupac Shakur's poem *The Rose that Grew from Concrete* and honoring survival despite seemingly impossible circumstances.

**Location:** Nashville, TN

**Dates:** Jan. 28–May 1

**Learn more:** [fristartmuseum.org/exhibition/lexander-bryant/](http://fristartmuseum.org/exhibition/lexander-bryant/)

### Denver Art Museum

The Denver Art Museum's Martin Building, with its seven-story silhouette, is one of the first high-rise art museums and the only completed building in North America by Italian modernist Gio Ponti. For its 50th anniversary, the Martin Building has been fully restored and renovated throughout, which includes realizing Ponti's original vision for the seventh floor to span both towers, expanding gallery space, and offering visitor access to stunning city and mountain views.

**Location:** Denver, CO

**Learn more:** [denverartmuseum.org/en/martin-building-project](http://denverartmuseum.org/en/martin-building-project)

### What's New at Your Museum?

Do you have a new temporary or permanent exhibition, education program, partnership/initiative, or building/wing? Tell us at [bit.ly/MuseumNewsAAM](http://bit.ly/MuseumNewsAAM), and it might be featured in an upcoming issue.

The Center for Art & Public Exchange at the Mississippi Museum of Art; LeXander Bryant; *Wash Away My Fears*, 2020, courtesy of the artist © LeXander Bryant; Martin Building and Sie Welcome Center; photo by Eric Stephenson



P. Smallwood, *Going Home*; Shikō Munakata, *Self-portrait with Hudson River* (detail), 1959, photograph by Nicholas Knight, courtesy of Japan Society, Harvard Museums of Science & Culture

## The Butler Institute of American Art

Painter P. (Philip) Smallwood is known for his signature watercolor paintings *Lifescapes*, a powerful form of portraiture and visual narrative. In these works, featured in “Dialogues with Reality: Paintings by P. Smallwood,” the artist portrays the subject within their natural environment, carefully manipulated to evoke an emotional connection with the viewer. Through composition, line, form, and finely finished surfaces, Smallwood creates compelling portraits that convey a feeling about how the subjects live their lives.

**Location:** Youngstown, OH

**Dates:** through Feb. 27

**Learn more:** [butlerart.com/portfolio-item/p-smallwood-dialogues-with-reality/](http://butlerart.com/portfolio-item/p-smallwood-dialogues-with-reality/)

## Japan Society Gallery

“Shikō Munakata: A Way of Seeing” presents nearly 100 path-breaking works by the celebrated artist organized from the Japan Society’s rare collection—the largest Munakata collection in the United States. Primarily known for his powerfully expressive woodblock prints, this exhibition reveals the breadth of Munakata’s oeuvre, which included prints, calligraphy, sumi ink paintings, watercolors, lithography, and ceramics.

**Location:** New York, NY

**Dates:** through March 20

**Learn more:** [japansociety.org/arts-and-culture/exhibitions](http://japansociety.org/arts-and-culture/exhibitions)

## Harvard Museums of Science & Culture

The Harvard Museums of Science & Culture (HMSC) reopened to the public on November 26, 2021. HMSC is a partnership of four museums designed to coordinate diverse programming for all ages, permanent galleries, and dynamic rotating exhibitions. The organization represents the Harvard Museum of Natural History, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East, and the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments, all of which had been closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Location:** Cambridge, MA

**Learn more:** [hmsc.harvard.edu/visit](http://hmsc.harvard.edu/visit)



# Why Does Accreditation Matter?

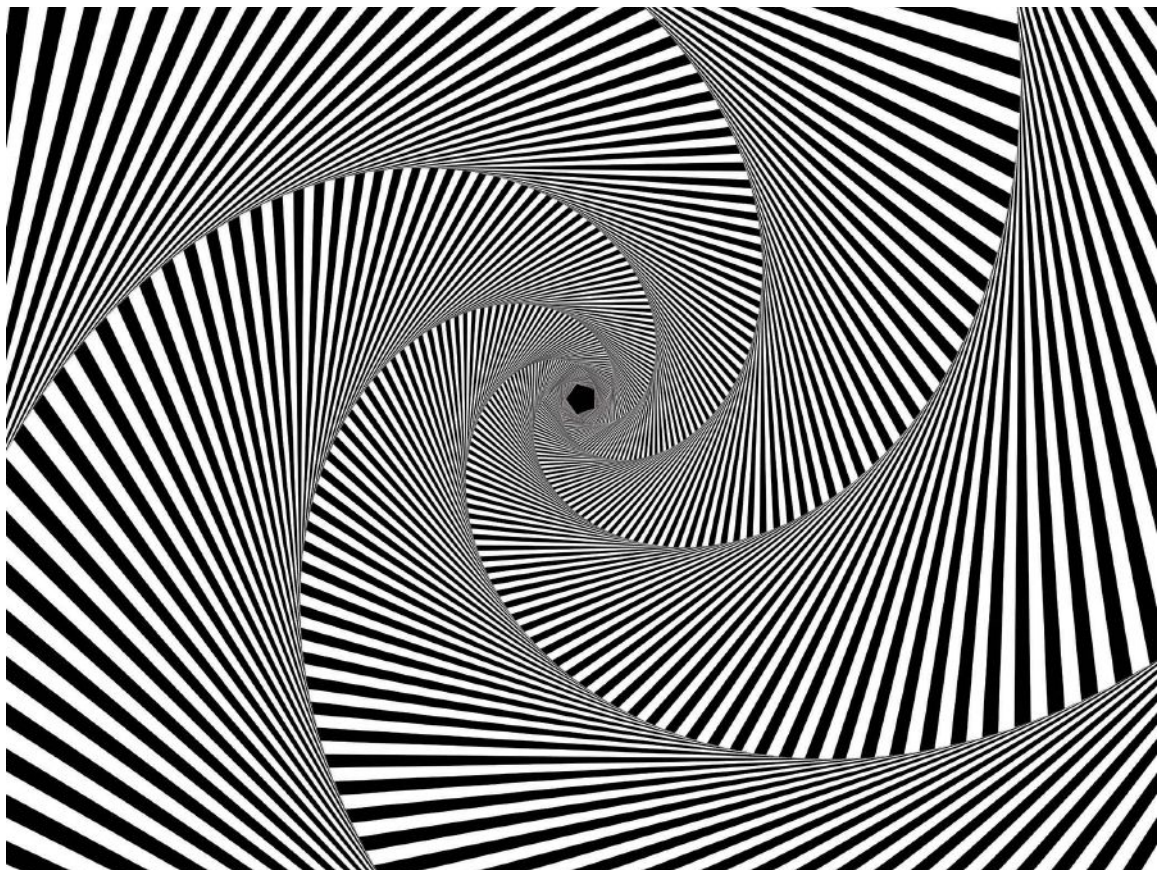
The stewardship of “excellence” by a diverse and dynamic coalition of museums can better equip the field to confront many of the most pressing issues of our time.

By Evans Richardson IV

**Over the past two years,** the dedicated commissioners and staff at the AAM Accreditation Commission have been thinking deeply about the role of accreditation during what

has been a profound moment of uncertainty, upheaval, and debate across the museum field. The landscape in which we undertake our work has been irrevocably altered.

From the disruptions brought on by the global pandemic to the social movements that have inspired a reevaluation of museums’ essential responsibilities, this moment has demanded we revisit



Zoonar GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

some of the core principles that have supported the Accreditation Commission's work for the past half century. "Why does accreditation matter?" and "What is its future?" are questions we have been challenged to confront with a renewed sense of urgency and collective responsibility.

### Our Brain Trust

When reflecting on the significance of the Accreditation Commission and its mission, I'm reminded of the example set by a young museum director at a culturally specific institution in the 1980s. This director assumed

leadership of a museum that, even before achieving the distinction of accreditation, had a clear sense of its own institutional ambition and direction. Along with her board, she understood how the work required to obtain accreditation might reflect the museum's commitment to its audiences and the objects in its care. She knew how important the accreditation effort would be as the museum signaled, to audiences across the globe, its dedication to pursuing the highest standards of museological practice.

That institution, The Studio Museum in Harlem, led at the

time by the visionary Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell, became the first culturally specific museum granted accreditation in the United States and would grow to become a preeminent site for art and artists of African descent. But even before that museum's reputation was cemented for a global audience, Dr. Campbell understood the incredible value a culturally specific organization such as the Studio Museum would bring to the network of accredited museums all over the country and our ever-evolving sense of what "excellence" should look like in the museum field.





Since that time, the accreditation community has grown. The Studio Museum is no longer the sole accredited culturally specific institution, and the number of museums participating in AAM's accreditation and excellence programs grows every year.

Here at the Accreditation Commission, we have a unique view into the many forms of cross-institutional support and ingenuity that have fed the resiliency of so many of our country's museums during this period of upheaval. We have seen, up close, how the field's collective wisdom has helped museums plan and shape their futures. The examples are abundant. The insight these institutions bring, not only to their own communities but to the field as a whole, is critical to understanding what will be required of our museums in the years and decades ahead.

These innovations will need to continue to guide and shape the standards, best practices, and ethical commitments that define our work. One of the things I find most inspiring about AAM's accreditation and excellence programs is the way they represent a brain trust—a repository of the field's hard-won wisdom. This creates ground coverage for further innovation in the field and ensures a sense of mutual accountability as we individually and collectively plan for our future.

The standards and best practices that are measured and articulated by the Accreditation Commission are the result of a growing community of experts

and institutions that will give us new insight into how to approach our work in a new century. As we learned in AAM's 2017 report, *Facing Change*, strong communities are strengthened by a firm commitment to meaningful diversity. By committing ourselves to the growth of a more diverse and equitable field—and, by extension, a more diverse network of accredited institutions—we are also making explicit our commitment to a more dynamic understanding of museological “excellence.”

### A Commitment to Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue

Museums, we all know, are central to the civic life of this country. They serve as stewards of history and critical sites of learning. Today, the pedagogical character of our work offers us a unique opportunity to bridge theory and practice.

In the next century, a museological practice grounded in diversity and reliant on intercultural dialogue will help us keep pace with the momentum of our country's progress and change. This work can no longer be thought of as an appendage to museological practice but rather a core animating principle that will make our museums smarter, more fair, and less hesitant when called upon to justify the public trust that has been placed in our hands.

Looking ahead, the museum field will need to maintain its commitment to accreditation and continue to invest in the processes by which we articulate our field's

core standards and best practices. These are the habits and beliefs that will remind us of our essential character.

The country's recent past has shown me and my colleagues at the Accreditation Commission that the stewardship of “excellence” by a diverse and dynamic coalition of museums can promote a greater sense of mutual accountability and better equip the field to confront many of the most pressing issues of our time. We still have work to do, but the Accreditation Commission is committed to expanding the body of accredited museums to better reflect the immense diversity and institutional excellence that exists among museums in this country.

There is a tension that lives at the heart of the accreditation: Why appeal to “standards” in a world that is changing almost as rapidly as we can perceive that change? Why commit to “excellence” if it remains a moving target? This tension, I believe, can be generative. It can fuel our work as innovators and museum professionals committed to a better world. It can, as Dr. Campbell understood, help us chart our collective future, while we signal to our public the immense value of their trust.



**Evans Richardson IV** served as chief of staff at The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, for nine years. He is currently chair of the AAM Accreditation Commission.

Now Available

# From the Ground Up: A Toolkit for Starting a Museum

Are you, or colleagues you know, looking to create a new museum from the ground up? Start with this new resource!

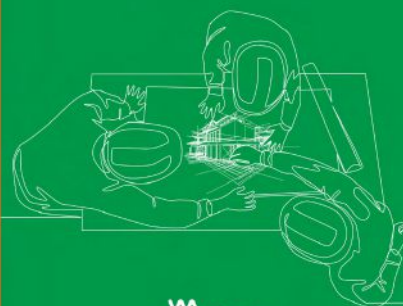
Museums are created for many different reasons—sharing their passion with others, preserving treasured objects for future generations, or influencing public opinion or behavior.

No matter the circumstances, **starting a museum from the ground up is a tremendous amount of work.** Our new toolkit can help you along the way, providing a comprehensive guide to creating, launching, and operating a sustainable museum.

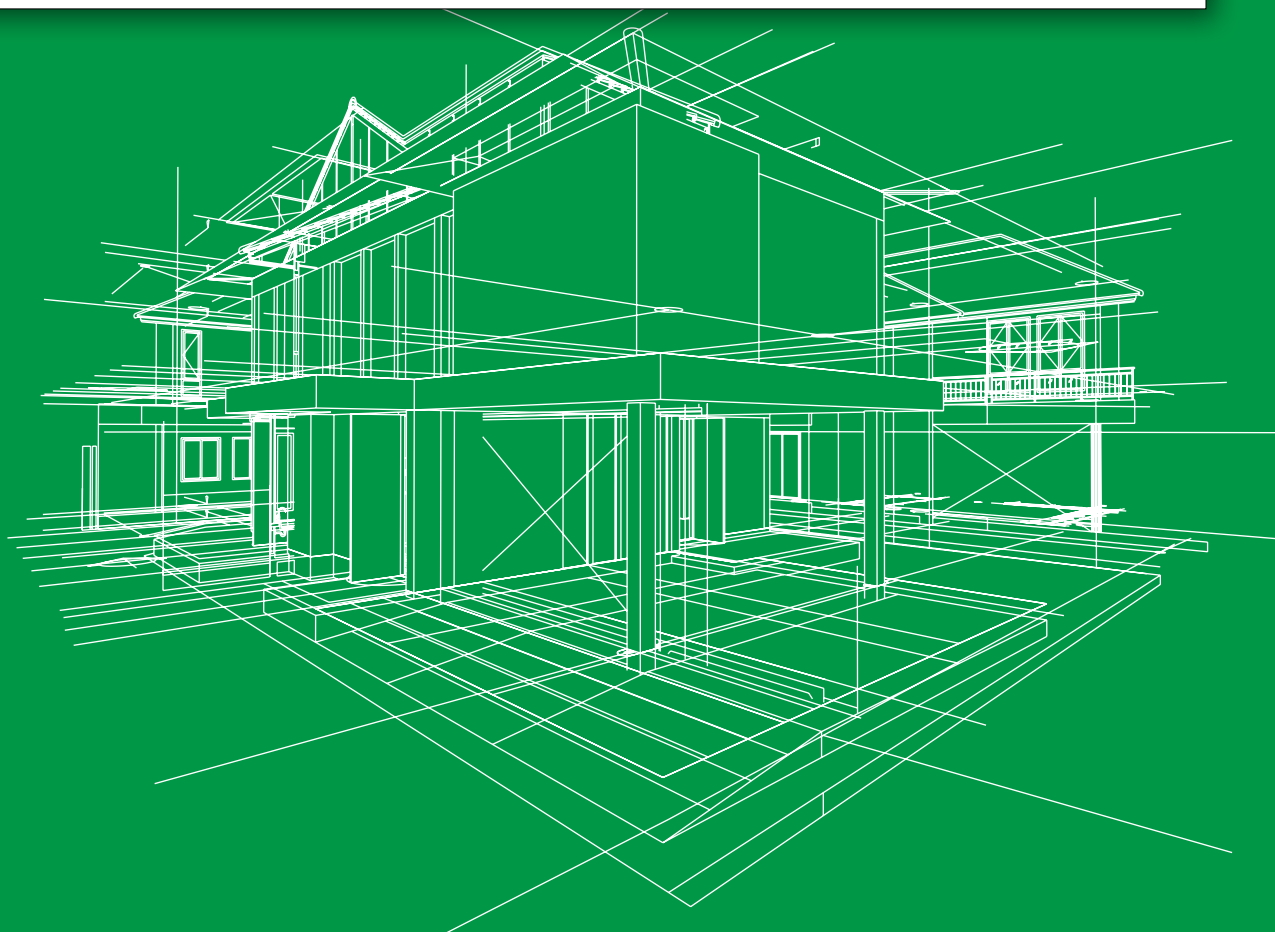
Purchase your digital toolkit today through the AAM Bookstore.

[aam-us.org/toolkits](https://aam-us.org/toolkits)

## From the Ground Up: A Toolkit for Starting a Museum



 American  
Alliance of  
Museums





Clockwise from top: Charles Buckley, Weldon D. Frankforter, and Richard Grove in a working session of the Accreditation Committee of 1968–1970; Todd Smith, Evans Richardson, James Gilson, Amy Bartow-Melia, C.J. Roberts, Rebekah Beaulieu, Jill Hartz, Kenneth Schutz, and Lourdes Ramos in 2019; Arthur H. Wolf, Thomas Livesay, Lonnie Bunch, James Peterson (front), Kinshasha Holman Conwill, Jessie Otto Hite, Martin Sullivan, and James Welu in 1999; James Welu, James Peterson (back), Arthur H. Wolf, Leslie Bowman, Martin Sullivan (front), and Irene Hirano in 2002.



# celebrating 50 years of museum excellence

AAM's Accreditation Program and Museum Assessment Program demonstrate the field's commitment to growth and improvement.

By Julie Hart

**In June 1971**, 16 museums became the first institutions to be granted accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums. This was the culmination of almost five years of study and development but also a milestone in a process that had begun in 1906. That year museum directors gathered at the American Museum of Natural History in New York to found AAM and initiate what has become a more than century-long discussion about developing museum standards and measuring museum performance.

Today, 50 years later, 1,095 museums are accredited, and the Accreditation Program—stewarded by AAM on behalf of the field—continues to serve as the nation's primary vehicle for quality assurance and self-regulation in museums of all sizes and types.

AAM Museum Accreditation is a widely recognized seal of approval that acknowledges museums for their commitment to excellence, accountability, and high professional standards. It indicates that a museum fulfills its mission and public trust responsibilities, has shown itself to be a good steward of its resources, and is committed to excellence in museum operations and continual institutional growth.

From its inception, the Accreditation Program has maintained several important features:

- It assesses how well each museum achieves its own stated mission and goals and meets the standards and best practices within the context of its type, resources, and other unique factors.
- It employs a standardized process of self-study and peer review that incorporates multiple perspectives to ensure balance and fairness.
- It draws on the collective wisdom of the museum field, including participating museums, peer reviewers, and the Accreditation Commission.
- It is voluntary, collaborative, and confidential.
- It is accessible and applicable to a diverse range of museums.

## 1967–1971: From Idea to Reality

The creation of accreditation and standards by which to evaluate museums was driven in part by the fear that if the museum field did not do this for itself, some other entity would—a far less desirable situation. The field needed to define its own measures of success. This premise was captured in a statement in *Museum Accreditation: A Report to the Profession*, published by AAM in 1970:



Accreditation—the establishment and maintenance of professional standards and the qualitative evaluation of organizations in the light of those standards—has long been recognized as proper for professional associations. Thus, a profession is judged by criteria selected by its own members, rather than requirements imposed by some outside force; and thus, institutions large or small, formative or long-established, are provided with carefully considered guidelines for judging their own success. It is through accreditation, therefore, that ethical and conscientious institutions may be identified.

... A principal reason for accreditation, therefore, is to make crystal clear to the public that museums recognize and accept their common goal and that they seek to achieve it by adhering to attainable professional standards of quality and performance.

Plans for museum accreditation began in earnest in 1967 when U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson asked the U.S. Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities to conduct a study of the status of American museums and recommend ways to support and strengthen them. The council enlisted AAM's assistance, and in 1968 it established a committee to study an accreditation program for museums.

Based on AAM's input, on November 25, 1968, the council issued *America's Museums: The Belmont Report*, which stated, "It is urgent that the American Association of Museums and its member institutions develop and agree upon acceptable criteria and methods of accrediting museums."

One year later AAM approved a resolution authorizing an Accreditation Committee to define the methods for establishing an accreditation program. On June 4, 1970, the committee presented *Museum Accreditation: A Report to the Profession*, which outlined the basic principles and framework for AAM's museum accreditation program.

Based on all the previous studies, the program was created to:

- Ensure self-regulation and quality assurance
- Develop public confidence in museums by the public, policy makers, and donors/funders
- Advance the argument that museums are bona fide educational organizations deserving of public support
- Give private donors and governmental agencies an expert opinion as a basis for qualitative judgment in approving requests for support
- Certify professional standards being met
- Increase professionalization of museums and staff
- Recognize excellence ("Promote institutional self-confidence and professional pride")
- Strengthen professional respect and cooperation among museums

### 1972–1985: Creating, Growing, Adjusting

The next 10–15 years of the program focused on growth and refining and developing administrative processes and policies based on lessons learned in the early years. The majority of museums that are accredited today entered the program in this period.

For museums not yet ready or eligible for accreditation, AAM created the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) in 1981 to help museums evaluate themselves without judgment in order to strengthen their operations and better meet standards. In the past 40 years, nearly 7,000 assessments have helped over 5,000 small and midsize museums of all types benchmark themselves against standards and best practices; identify their strengths and weaknesses; and better align their activities, mission, and resources. Even some accredited museums choose to participate in MAP before reaccreditation to get a "checkup" or focus on a particular issue.

Since its inception, MAP has been administered by AAM and funded by the Institute of Museum and

Library Services (IMLS). “The partnership between IMLS and AAM to implement the MAP program was groundbreaking when it began 40 years ago and has now become a foundational experience for supporting individual museums’ operational excellence and setting benchmarks for the field,” says Laura Huerta Migus, deputy director of the IMLS Office of Museum Services. “Beyond the incredible number of museums participating in MAP over four decades, another significant achievement of the program has been its responsiveness and adaptability—both in the development of new modules to better meet the ever-evolving capacity needs of museums and in innovations in delivery of the experience. The broad reach and continued vibrancy of the MAP program validates IMLS’ long investment in this partnership and in the field.”

MAP started out with one assessment that covered all areas of museum operation. Over the years, it has added and eliminated others and today offers five types of assessments, which are discussed later in this article.

### 1986–2006: A Focus on Standards

By 1990 the fast growth of the Accreditation Program’s first two decades began to level off. But one significant change happened in 1995 when noncollecting institutions became eligible for accreditation.

Meanwhile, accreditation standards were formally (and for the first time) articulated in 1996 as the Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum. These were strongly influenced by AAM’s 1992 landmark report, *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums*, and emphasized that museums are educational entities, not just places where collections were displayed and stored.

In 1990, AAM also launched the MAP Public Dimension Assessment, whose development ran parallel to that of Excellence & Equity. (Over the past 20 years this assessment evolved into today’s Community & Audience Engagement Assessment.) MAP continued

to grow, and in 2002 the Governance Assessment was introduced.

The standards used in accreditation were revised in 2005 and renamed the Characteristics of Excellence to impress that they were not exclusively for accredited museums but for all museums. These revised standards put additional focus on public trust and accountability (including transparency and ethics), risk management, financial sustainability, and community engagement. Shortly thereafter, the AAM Board of Directors approved them as the Standards and Best Practices for US Museums. Today, they are known as Core Standards for Museums.

### 2007–2017: Evaluating and Improving

As the Accreditation Program was approaching its 40th anniversary, it underwent a thorough self-assessment. Feedback from the field indicated that the process had grown cumbersome in terms of the time and volume of work required. However, the field felt strongly that the Accreditation Program should maintain its core structure of self-assessment and peer review, and that any changes should not reduce the standards or the rigor of the program.

In 2013–2014, after five years of “reinvention,” many program improvements were implemented, including a substantially shorter self-study for first-time applicants and a separate and shorter self-study for reaccreditation applicants. The overall length of the process was reduced by up to 50 percent, and the entirely paper process was replaced by a fully online submission.

### 2018–2021: Changes to MAP and COVID-19 Pivots

While the Accreditation Program was implementing the new changes to extremely positive feedback, MAP began one of the periodic self-evaluations that is part of its Cooperative Agreement with IMLS. Based on data gathered from prior participants to assess both



## OTHER EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS

The Accreditation Program and Museum Assessment Program are part of the larger Continuum of Excellence that includes the following AAM and non-AAM supporting and pipeline programs that have been developed over the past decades.

- Core Documents Verification: [aam-us.org/core-documents-verification/](https://aam-us.org/core-documents-verification/)
- Core Standards for Museums: [aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices](https://aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices)
- AAM Code of Ethics for Museums: [aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices](https://aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices)
- Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (administered by American Association for State and Local History): [aaslh.org/professional-development/steps/](https://aaslh.org/professional-development/steps/)
- Collections Assessment for Preservation (administered by the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation): [culturalheritage.org/resources/collections-care/cap](https://culturalheritage.org/resources/collections-care/cap)
- Association of Zoos and Aquariums Accreditation Program: [aza.org/accreditation](https://aza.org/accreditation)

satisfaction with MAP as well as its impact on museums over the short and long term, AAM spent more than a year updating the MAP Self-Study Workbooks and related program materials and resources for both museums and peer reviewers. For example, the assessment workbooks and activities now give more attention to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI), and more points of engagement with the peer reviewer were built into the process.

The Organizational, Collections Stewardship, and Community Engagement assessments all underwent this review and refresh—and the latter was renamed the Community & Audience Engagement Assessment. And the Governance Assessment, which had been on hiatus since 2010, was completely overhauled to change its focus from governance basics to looking at the board from three perspectives—people, work, and culture. Rebranded the Board Leadership Assessment,

### RESOURCES

Museum Accreditation Program  
[aam-us.org/accreditation](https://aam-us.org/accreditation)

Museum Assessment Program  
[aam-us.org/map](https://aam-us.org/map)

its goal is to help museums identify opportunities to move beyond surviving to thriving.

In addition, the first brand new assessment in 17 years was developed: the Education & Interpretation Assessment was offered for the first time in 2019. Follow-up visits were also formalized, reuniting museums with their original peer reviewer to support implementation of their previous assessment recommendations.

As with the Accreditation Program retooling, the updated MAP maintained its hallmark structure of guided self-assessment plus a site visit by a peer reviewer. However, when COVID-19 struck in March 2020, the Accreditation Program and MAP had to quickly pivot like the rest of the museum field. To maintain museums' momentum in these processes, the programs shifted to virtual site visits. This was a big deal because in-person site visits have been an integral and critical aspect of both programs since their inception.

While not ideal, there were some positive aspects that emerged that have already been adopted to add efficiency and value to the in-person experience. For example, doing some Zoom meetings with staff or the board either ahead of the visit or after leaving the site, or virtually attending a staff or board meeting or program, can lighten the load and intensity of the days on-site for everyone and offer peer reviewers additional opportunities to get to know the museum.

### What's Next?

In alignment with AAM's new strategic plan and to help museums address the issues they are facing, the excellence programs and their underlying standards and ethics are being evaluated with a diversity and equity lens. This DEAI focus will also extend to skill-building for the peer reviewers who conduct the MAP and accreditation site visits.

A rising tide lifts all boats. When museums commit to striving for operational excellence in mission fulfillment, the field demonstrates its professionalism and integrity—and the public and policy makers deem them worthy of their support and trust.

**Julie Hart** is senior director of museum standards & excellence at AAM.

# WHY DO MUSEUM BOARDS VALUE ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums is a wonderful testament to the work and life of Pearl S. Buck past, present, and future. This high-profile peer validation supports the credibility and value of Pearl S. Buck International and our mission. It fosters our organization's growth by bringing national recognition and prominence to the historic grounds of Pearl S. Buck. Today more than ever, we need to communicate and deliver on Pearl's mission of equality, diversity, and inclusion. By bolstering our public view and incorporating the AAM accreditation into our branding strategy, we expect to further strengthen and expand the reach of our programs and services to existing and new audiences.

— **Statement from Pearl S. Buck International Board of Directors**

Since the museum's inception, it has been a priority of the Long Island Children's Museum (LICM) Board of Trustees to maintain a high standard of excellence in everything we do. Becoming accredited demonstrates to our visitors, our funders, our community, and our peers that we follow best practices and work hard to be an exemplary museum. The accreditation process enabled both board and staff to take a deep look at our institution and address areas that needed work; it was a wonderful way for board members to learn more about LICM and brought board and staff together.

— **Roni Kohen-Lemle, Chair Board of Trustees Long Island Children's Museum**

Museums are an essential part of American life and continue to play a critical role in their communities. It is of central importance to us as trustees to know that we are meeting the best practices and standards of the field in fulfilling our commitment to our communities and our public accountability to excellence. Accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums provides us with this knowledge. There is no higher or more meaningful standard.

— **Kathy Dwyer Southern, President Board of Trustees, Biggs Museum of American Art**

In 2018, the Filoli Board of Directors launched a new strategic vision to ensure we provided our community and visitors with broad and equal access to our organization. One of the tenets of this plan is "organizational excellence." Accreditation through the American Alliance of Museums not only requires us to be transparent in our processes and operation through peer reviews, but it helps us to ensure we are accurately representing and living up to our intentions. AAM verification also helps to inspire the confidence in our membership to recognize Filoli as a leader in the museum industry.

— **Statement from Filoli Historic House & Garden Board of Directors**

The McFaddin-Ward House represents a substantial investment in our community—demonstrated by serving and culturally enriching this region of Texas. AAM's Accreditation Program has provided our museum with the performance standards and best practices to measure on an ongoing basis the quality of our operation. We are grateful for the insightful reporting and supportive AAM staff that provides our board the assurance of continued national recognition and success.

— **Leslie Wilson, President McFaddin-Ward House**



Two students look at art in the Janet Turner Print Museum's National Print Competition.



By Laura Nice

# assess for SUCCESS

The AAM Museum Assessment Program inspired the Janet Turner Print Museum to expand its programming, collection, and collaboration with campus and community groups.



Chico State students collaborating in the Janet Turner Print Museum.

## At the Janet Turner Print Museum

at California State University Chico (the Turner), we have recently updated the mission statement, created a strategic plan, made significant progress digitizing the collection, built an acquisitions endowment focused on diversifying our permanent collection, and received approval for a full-time curator position. The catalyst for these significant and deliberate strides toward museum excellence? Our participation in AAM's Museum Assessment Program (MAP) Organizational Assessment in 2017–2018 and a follow-up visit with our peer reviewer in fall 2020.

MAP is a national, voluntary program that helps museums strengthen operations, plan for the future, and meet standards through self-study and a consultative site visit from an expert peer reviewer. The program offers several assessment types that focus on multiple aspects of museum operations, allowing participants to work on various methods of self-improvement. The Organizational Assessment is a basic strategic and holistic assessment that helps a museum look at its operations primarily from the perspective of how well activities, resources, and the mission align with each other and with professional ethics, practices, and standards.

The Turner was created in the early 1980s with a significant donation of prints from late emeritus professor and artist Janet Turner as well as several donor-funded operations endowments. The Turner is led by an advisory board of directors, the dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts at California State University Chico, a director of special projects, a part-time curator, a collection manager, and student assistants and interns. Over the years, the museum had been housed in several non-museum-designed spaces on campus. In 2016, after significant fundraising and advocacy, the Turner moved into a brand-new campus building with a large and museum-specific gallery, a professional archive to house the more than 4,000 prints in the collection, and a library.

This move has been transformative and motivated our application for an MAP Organizational Assessment. We now have spaces designed specifically for the needs of our art museum and archive, including research, exhibition, and collection management spaces with appropriate temperature control and security. Further, the museum is now located at the gateway of campus and downtown Chico, which has provided exciting opportunities to expand our programming, collection, and collaboration with



campus and community groups and to refocus on our museum leadership and strategic plan.

### Improving Through the Process

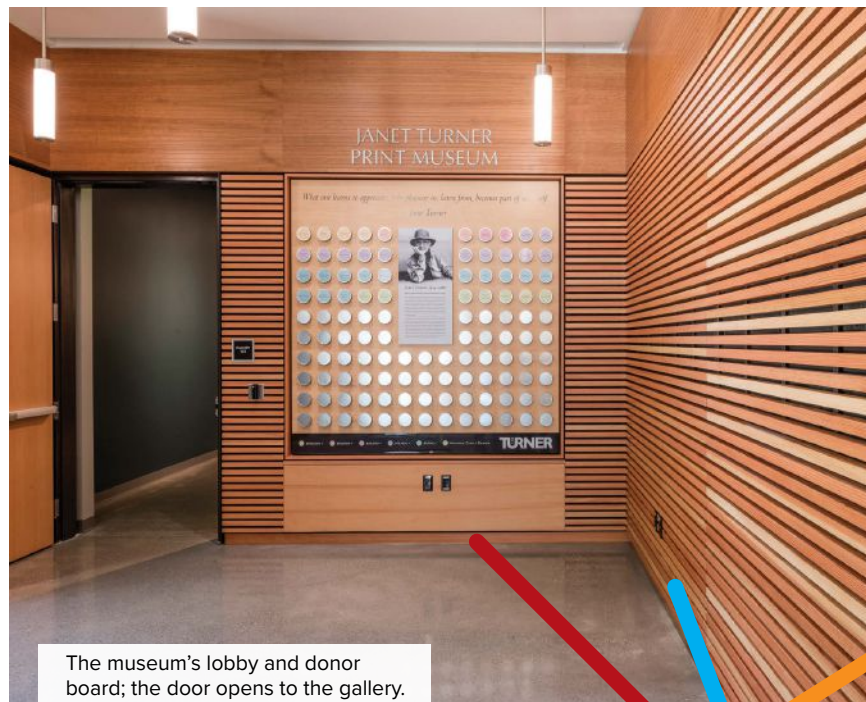
The MAP process includes a workbook and activities, which required our stakeholders to come together to reflect on our current program and governing structure and allowed our advisory board and university leadership to clearly see the strengths, challenges, and goals of our institution. This process improved the overall communication among stakeholders as well as our ability to explain our significance to a larger audience of university and community members.

In particular, the in-depth site visit by our peer reviewer, Lisa Tremper Hanover, retired director and CEO of the James A. Michener Art Museum and then interim director of operations at Berman Museum of Art at Ursinus College, provided the Turner with a detailed road map of the next steps to professionalize our practice and lead the museum to greater prominence. Tremper Hanover's generosity and enthusiasm, combined with her insightful knowledge of similarly sized university museums, helped us articulate and begin to achieve our goals. For example, she made several recommendations to help our museum qualify for AAM accreditation: drafting a strategic plan to achieve our mission; hiring a full-time curator; securing other stable funding sources; expanding the membership, diversity, and fundraising capacity of the advisory board; and utilizing AAM membership to access key resources, such as the Core Document Verification program.

Based on the recommendations contained in Tremper Hanover's final report, the Turner began to address the key report findings, beginning with the approval of an updated mission statement and five-year strategic plan. The new strategic plan focuses on the museum's collection, program, organization, community, and identity with clear commitments and priorities. For example, we are working to enhance the diversity of our permanent collection, and we have renewed the commitment of museum founder Janet Turner to honor the full scope of printmakers' voices and techniques. We are also focused on investing in the care of the collection and expanding access and education by completing a digital archive, for which

we have received a \$100,000 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation.

Additionally, with a fresh sense of purpose, the board of directors has spearheaded efforts to build an acquisitions endowment that will sustainably expand the collection in the future. In the past few years, the Turner has intentionally acquired the work of socially engaged and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people



The museum's lobby and donor board; the door opens to the gallery.

of color) artists. In 2021–2022, the Acquisitions Committee is committed to purchasing prints by contemporary Native American artists. We have also doubled our efforts to work collaboratively with local museums, such as the Museum of Northern California Art; the Chico Area Museum Alliance; and our campus galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAM) to build stronger community partnerships and invite diverse perspectives to enrich interpretation of, and experience with, the collection.

Further, the conclusions of the MAP Final Report contributed to the Turner's successful request to increase the curator position to a 12-month, full-time position. This will help the Turner achieve its

The Janet Turner Print Museum Strategic Plan  
[adobe.ly/3lQqRzG](https://adobe.ly/3lQqRzG)

The Janet Turner Print Museum, Museum Assessment Program Organizational Assessment Final Report  
[csuchico.edu/turner/\\_assets/documents/omap-report.pdf](https://csuchico.edu/turner/_assets/documents/omap-report.pdf)

AAM Museum Assessment Program Application  
[aam-us.org/map](https://aam-us.org/map)

Impact & Benefits of MAP  
[aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/impact/](https://aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/impact/)

potential, providing the museum with appropriate staffing and leadership for years to come.

**The Benefits of MAP**

An unexpected benefit of the Museum Assessment Program was how much the process assisted our transition online when COVID-19 forced the closure of our physical gallery space from March 2020 until our reopening in June 2021. Having a clear sense of our mission, priorities, and messaging streamlined our ability to redirect resources toward virtual

exhibitions and engagements, including the creation of online exhibitions and artist talks and working with community partners to widen the impact and relevance for our audience.

In making this pivot to virtual programming, we expedited our strategic priority to increase access to the collection, resources, and programming. Prior to the pandemic, we hosted more than 1,000 K–12 students per year for personalized visits to our physical gallery and archive. During the closure we moved quickly to partner with another museum in our area



Interior of the Janet Turner Print Museum gallery.

Photo by Jason Halley, Chico State staff photographer

to produce take-home art kits and provide online activities and resources for teachers and families. Tracy Butts, dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, notes, “While the Janet Turner Print Museum temporarily closed its physical gallery due to the pandemic, it continued its mission unabated throughout 2020 and 2021, creating outstanding virtual exhibitions, hosting significant public events, and sharing its collection with new audiences on social media.”

The MAP process has given us a clear sense of goals and priorities, which has helped the museum secure internal and external funding and support donor-cultivation efforts. For example, we successfully applied for an emergency grant from the federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) by showing our connection to the university’s priorities of equity, diversity, and inclusion and our strong commitment to provide access to the museum collection for a wide and diverse audience. With HEERF support, we will be able to purchase upgraded equipment to continue our digital archiving and a 360-degree camera to provide high-quality and freely available online versions of all exhibitions. This will permanently institutionalize our commitment to increase access and opportunity for diverse audiences, ensuring that we can maintain the best aspects of our COVID-19-inspired virtual events and exhibitions.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on so many arts organizations. Being able to effectively tell our story—and what our museum provides to the community—has been a crucial factor in our ability to innovate and connect with new audiences during this time, including artists and alumni who do not live in Chico and schools throughout Chico State’s vast and rural service region. Many of the initiatives identified in the MAP process had been long-term goals, but the in-depth consultation and analysis that occurred through the process have helped us better see the holistic connections between our mission and program aspirations and then develop a plan to achieve specific goals.

### Next Steps

We are a stronger organization after completing the MAP process, and we continue to benefit from more effective communication with museum stakeholders.



The Turner is driven to make our collection and exhibitions welcoming and accessible for diverse audiences of all ages in our local community and beyond. We are proud to acknowledge our progress as well as the work we still need to do to fully realize this goal.

The Turner is now working toward AAM accreditation, which is, as Tremper Hanover notes, “a pinnacle achievement for museums. It signals a high standard of operation recognized by peers, collectors, donors, and funding agencies, among other constituents.” We have more steps to take on this journey, but this lofty aspiration feels possible after the work we have done during, and as a result of, the Museum Assessment Program. The Turner is highly motivated to continue progressing along the continuum of excellence to increase the impact of our programming and collections and reach our full potential.

**Laura Nice** is director of special projects at the Janet Turner Print Museum at California State University Chico.

The Arts and Humanities Building on the Chico State campus at sunset.

An F-117 stealth fighter, Hill Aerospace Museum's most recent collection addition, being moved into the second gallery.





# trust the process

By Aaron Clark

Hill Aerospace Museum's accreditation journey put museum stakeholders on the same page, improved operations, and strengthened community connections.

## Today, Utah's Hill Aerospace

**Museum**, a field museum of the US Air Force that houses aircraft from the national collection, is a center of the community. For all programs—education, restoration, collections, and more—the museum engages with the community before implementing any major changes. Community involvement, however, did not always occur.

About eight years ago, the Hill Aerospace Museum was at a crossroads: incredible and passionate stakeholders—federal staff and foundation members—kept the museum afloat, but the community no longer seemed to need the institution. Care for and focus on the collection had languished, and community involvement was nearly nonexistent. Bottom line, the museum seemed to be taking but not giving back. Senior leaders began discussing the possibility of closing the museum's doors.

How does a museum that is so far lost recalibrate? For us, it began with the development of a strategic plan, the operational cornerstone for any museum, which eventually matured into the commitment to go down AAM's accreditation pathway. Most people in our field consider accreditation the highest recognition of a museum's commitment to public service, professional standards, and excellence in education.

We knew that we needed to address these elements and more in our own museum.

At the beginning of our accreditation journey, and throughout the process, many asked us the same question: "Why do it?" Some asked this question because endorsement is not required of Air Force field museums. Some asked it because they knew the resource constraints of museums, especially Air Force field museums, and they wondered why we would use what little we had on a certification. Some asked the question because they saw no value in the status.

In the end, we found tremendous value in the accreditation program and the process. Because of the accreditation journey, the Hill Aerospace Museum did not have to close its doors and is a thriving institution today.

### Why Accreditation?

I believe that everyone and everything can be improved at any time. Hill Aerospace Museum stakeholders feel the same, and we try to integrate this perspective into museum practice. Our institution's vision is to "Become the premier Air Force field museum—leading the way for others to follow."

One of my biggest fears as a director is that the Hill Aerospace Museum will become the antithesis of a museum—instead of educating and inspiring, always groveling for donations and resources and becoming a burden to our communities.

In his 1859 lecture "Self-Made Men," American abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, "Inaction is followed by stagnation. Stagnation is followed by pestilence, and pestilence is followed by death." His words capture our viewpoint perfectly. If we do not work to develop ourselves and our institution—if we cease to be relevant—we become a burden to our community (and, in our case, also the US Air Force), and the museum will ultimately die.

After reviewing the AAM accreditation process in detail, and the preparatory path known as the Continuum of Excellence, we decided that it would be one of the primary steps that the Hill Aerospace Museum

The museum's robust education program offers the community unique lessons and experiences related to aviation.





Located in Northern Utah against the Wasatch Mountains, the Hill Aerospace Museum has been open since 1984.

would take to breathe life back into our walls, our collection, our staff, our guests, and our communities—and not die by way of stagnation.

### Building Our Foundation

At the heart of accreditation are core documents, and this is where our journey began as our team worked to get them verified when evaluated against a set of required standards. Core documents should not be unfamiliar to any museum, especially Air Force field museums. In fact, these foundational, guiding resources are expected by our Air Force instructions. For accreditation, AAM requires a mission statement, institutional code of ethics, strategic institutional plan, disaster preparedness and emergency response plan, and collections management policy. We had each of these documents before we began the accreditation process. However, after working closely with AAM staff and using their provided resources, it became apparent we had *a lot* of room to improve.

As we addressed our shortfalls, all stakeholders began to benefit from the accreditation process. For example, we lacked documented, sustainable, and repeatable processes for all facets of museum operations. Therefore, we got to work building the structure for all major institution processes with local operating instructions. Furthermore, we integrated more stakeholders into our strategic planning process, voices that were absent before.

This is not to say we, as a team, did not work well together before. In fact, all stakeholders—federal, foundation, and community—seemed in lockstep prior to this journey. Good things were happening. However, the accreditation process required a higher level of participation from everyone, sometimes to the point of discomfort. I believe discomfort can be helpful in life—and it was beneficial in the accreditation process. Hereafter, I will refer to our discomfort as “opportunity.”

Our new opportunity forced the staff and board to be thoughtful about past, current, and future practices

as we adopted new strategic processes. We all gained a clearer sense of purpose and understanding of the museum’s strengths, goals, priorities, and mission—and, most importantly, our

weaknesses. We initially met weekly, and now meet monthly, to review our core documents, and every month we find ways to improve or adjust. Recently, we recognized and explored opportunities to partner with local educational entities to benefit the community and the museum collection. We have since signed an agreement with a local technical college to conduct composite manufacturing courses in the museum in which students will have the opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom (located on our campus) to aircraft in the collection.

Recognition by AAM depends on your institution’s ability to develop and implement the five core documents that should align operations with seven categories of standards that reflect the pillars of a professional institution and promote stability and viability. These Core Standards encompass public trust and accountability, mission and planning, leadership and organizational structure, collections stewardship, education and interpretation, financial stability, and facilities and risk management.

After approximately 18 months and a great deal of work, our team obtained AAM Core Documents Verification—making us eligible to apply for accreditation. As we strove to demonstrate our commitment to excellence, we were developing into a healthier institution with improved staff morale, streamlined program scheduling, increased transparency across all museum programs, improved customer communication models, strengthened sentiment analysis, increased volunteer offerings, enhanced collection care, and much more. Everyone felt it and saw it. Nevertheless, the hard part had yet to begin.

### Being Tested Through the Process

The next two steps of the accreditation process were the true test of our institution’s commitment to professionalism. Over the next year, we conducted an in-depth institutional self-study that inspired edifying self-reflection and opportunity. Most challenging, though, was upholding our new processes

and standards to create and instill this radical level of professionalism, focus, efficiency, and competence as we prepared for our future site visit by AAM peer reviewers.

Settling into our new behaviors was painful—at times, very painful. Resistance came from all aspects of museum life: event space users, guests, volunteers, board members, contractors, and collection care. Many had become accustomed to what I would call the previous “Wild West” approach to museum operations and fought the new disciplined approach every step of the way. Stakeholders could no longer do what they wanted, when they wanted, however they wanted. Everything had a purpose and had to align with our objectives.

At times, I wanted to stop the agony by pulling the accreditation plug, going back to our Air Force instructions, and looking nowhere else for direction. I was tired. The team was tired.

I firmly believe, however, that it is through challenges, not contentment, that we grow and experience satisfaction—which is why we did not give up. Testing our limits exposes strengths we never knew we had personally or as a team. Our path to accreditation proved this point. This intensive journey created many opportunities (remember, I mean discomfort) that were already improving our institution, displaying what we could become, and exposing hidden talents.

All of this opportunity brought the team closer together as we prepared for our AAM site visit.

Finally, our day of reckoning arrived in November 2019. Similar to dreaded Air Force inspector general visits, or at least we initially thought, AAM sent two peer reviewers to our institution as the last step in the accreditation process to review our operations. AAM selects peer reviewers “matched to museums based on type/discipline and size,” as well as “their experience and expertise with a particular governance structure or type of institutional challenge.” These are professionals with extensive museum experience and skills. These individuals review self-assessment materials, conduct the site visit, and write the final report on the institution and its ability to meet the necessary standards.

Both AAM representatives had a considerable amount of museum experience from backgrounds that aligned closely with our operations. For two and a half days, they closely scrutinized our operations, met all stakeholders (including a state senator), provided brilliant feedback and insight, and left team members feeling a sense of accomplishment about what they had established and produced over the past three years. Four months after the visit, we received accreditation.

### Other Benefits

From AAM’s accreditation process, we had created a myriad of new and realistic goals and objectives,

Throughout the year, the museum partners with the community to provide unique experiences. Here, the Ogden Concert Band plays at a museum Open Aircraft Day.





streamlined or created a number of standard museum processes (19 local operating instructions that covered environmental monitoring, collection care, volunteer management, community internships, and more), tactically integrated ourselves into the community, matured our strategic plan, strengthened our educational offerings, eliminated waste, and bolstered the limited resources already at our disposal.

What's more, our relationship with our stakeholders greatly improved, and dormant relationships with many patrons or volunteers were revitalized through the endeavor. For example, our military leadership, already tremendously supportive, became excited about becoming accredited. They spoke about our effort to community and military leaders and constantly asked how they could help—and they did. It wasn't long before our community partners and local and state representatives also wanted to support the institution more.

Some of this support came by way of grants and donations from the state, the county, a foundation, and the private sector for exhibits and operations. Most recently, the state allocated \$12 million to the expansion of our museum, an achievement I directly attribute to the changes brought about by our accreditation journey. Lastly, individuals who were once museum volunteers came back as they started to see the changes being made on our campus and within the organization. By the time we received accreditation, engagement was at an all-time high with all stakeholders, and two years later, this trend has continued and grown.

I also attribute additional benefits, ones I think all in our field can appreciate, to our accreditation journey. For example, we saw annual visitation increase by approximately 23 percent before we closed in 2020 due to COVID-19, and we are now on a healthy visitation rebound since we've reopened. A direct benefit of increased visitation is gift shop sales, which have increased by 14 percent since before we began our accreditation journey—with the two highest-grossing months on record occurring in 2021. And, for the first time, our educational offerings have been booked at approximately 95 percent of capacity both during the summer and school year. I attribute these improvements to our AAM accreditation trajectory and the museum's incredible team.

## ACCREDITATION TIPS

**Communicate well.** Top to bottom, ensure you talk to your team (this includes AAM) every step of the way.

**Involve everyone.** All stakeholders should participate in the process, regardless of their position or place on the team.

**Build a routine.** Meet often as a team to review your guiding core documents, explore your position in the journey, and solicit feedback.

**Set realistic goals.** You are wasting everyone's time if your goals are unachievable, and it will only frustrate the team and process.

**Be patient.** Take your time (we sure did!). Good things come to those who work hard and wait.

**Make changes.** Do not hesitate to make changes, even if they go against the institution's deeply rooted culture or traditions. They're probably needed.

**Have fun.** Even though the accreditation process can be difficult, you and your team should be having fun looking for ways to improve the institution.

**Be grateful.** Make sure you thank your team every step of the way for all they are doing to improve themselves and the institution.

In addition to building a more solid foundation for growth and organizational maturity to meet our strategic objectives, we now have a closer-knit, more active stakeholder team that includes the community; improved staff experience, operations, collection care, and visitor experience; and a more focused mission.

The biggest benefit of accreditation, however, came simply from the process, a journey that allowed us to improve ourselves and our institution. Our ability to give back to our community is now stronger than ever and continues to grow.

**Aaron Clark** is the director of Hill Aerospace Museum on the Hill Air Force Base in Utah.



The Dayton Art Institute adapted to the pandemic with a variety of experiences for families, ranging from at-home art projects to in-person experiences like the recent exhibition “Changing Times: Art of the 1960s,” shown here.



By Michael Roediger

# from surviving to thriving

The Dayton Art Institute’s journey to accreditation has helped the institution become more financially stable and inclusive.

Photo by Kate Edstrom

**“We want you to turn a ship around in a bathtub”** was what Interim Director Linda Lombard said to me when I was hired to lead the Dayton Art Institute (DAI) in October 2011. The museum was in crisis and was financially sinking, and the building was suffering from years of deferred maintenance. The collection had seen little in the way of recent conservation, and the staff felt broken.

The museum also had made the difficult decision, after maintaining accreditation for 39 years, to step out of accreditation earlier that year due to the situation it found itself in. But 10 years, one

pandemic and a successful accreditation process later, the DAI is a museum revived and thriving.

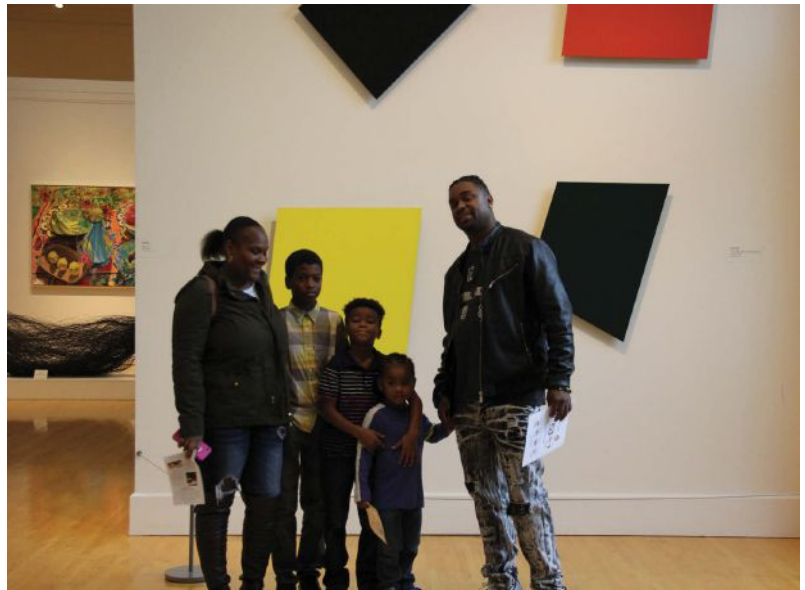
The process of accreditation allowed us to get our house in order and our proverbial ducks in a row. We set goals for what we needed to accomplish, update, and document. We had deep leadership and board conversations. Had we not committed to becoming accredited nearly 10 years ago, we likely would not have made the progress we have, and the ship would have remained stuck in the bathtub.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let me start with a little history for context.

### A History of Financial Trouble

The DAI, one of the nation’s finest midsize art museums, was founded as a school in 1919 as the Dayton Museum of Arts. Originally occupying an impressive home in downtown Dayton, Ohio, the museum quickly outgrew its first location. Julia Shaw Patterson Carnell, a prominent community leader, pledged \$2 million to endow the museum and to raise the funds needed to construct a new museum building.

Construction began in 1928, and on October 29, 1929, the stock market crash started the Great Depression. All of the benefactors pulled from the



Clockwise from top: The recently restored Grand Staircase is a focal point of the DAI’s historic museum building, which opened to the public in 1930; the DAI is committed to enriching the community by creating meaningful experiences with art that are available to all; the cornerstone was laid for a new Dayton Art Institute museum building in May 1928.



Clockwise from top: photo by Eric Brockman, photo by Ken Miller, photo courtesy of the Dayton Art Institute

project, leaving the museum unfinished. Carnell worked with the board of trustees to use the funds she had given for the endowment to complete the construction of the Italian Renaissance-style structure, which opened on January 7, 1930. Although the community was delighted with the new world-class museum, the DAI was left with little to no endowment and has been chronically underendowed ever since.

In September 1994, the museum announced its largest ever capital campaign to fund a major renovation and expansion. The DAI reopened in June 1997 with more than 35,000 square feet of additional exhibition space and completely renovated permanent collection galleries. This again delighted the community, but it came at a cost of \$16 million in bond debt. Two more market recessions left the DAI with no way in sight to cover the debt that was to come to maturity in 2022, and, out of necessity, the museum was drawing 8–10 percent annually from the endowment.

### Righting the Ship

Fast forward to 2011. “Run Michael, don’t walk. We have not time to waste.” That was the sound advice of then-Board Chair Rob Connelly. And run we did. We first attacked the leaking roof with a mini campaign to repair it and develop an annual roof maintenance program. We then tackled the debt by establishing a “Fund the Debt” savings account, so as not to tap into the already low endowment. We raised funds and diverted \$300,000 from every unrestricted estate gift above \$500,000 until we were less than \$1 million in remaining debt, and we paid it off.

Within that first year we reduced the draw to 6 percent and have averaged a 5 percent draw every year following. We then strategically looked at our upcoming major milestone: 2019 marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the DAI. This was our moment to make transformational change through renovations to the building and to grow the endowment through the Centennial Campaign.

In 2020, we began our second century, and the year started out bright. We had raised more than \$16 million during the campaign, with the



Michael R. Roediger has served as Dayton Art Institute director and CEO since 2011, overseeing many initiatives to stabilize museum finances and renovate the historic 1930 museum building.

endowment growing from \$16 million to more than \$28 million. The museum was going through a nearly complete renovation of the building’s exterior along with the historic front hillside, the museum galleries, and the education floor. We were continuing to present world-class exhibitions, educational programs, and community events. We were thriving, not just surviving, and then our world closed on March 13 due to the pandemic.

Like most museums, we moved quickly to determine how we could still serve our community while being closed. Fortunately, we were already a lean team, so we were able to keep all full-time staff on and furlough only part-time employees other than security and facilities, who have remained on-site throughout. Our curatorial and education teams produced brilliant new digital content. Our marketing and events teams presented meaningful virtual events, and our development team worked hard to continue to raise funds and inspire our members to stay with us. Our leadership team not only led their departments, but also served as leaders for crisis management.

To use that overused term of 2020, we “pivoted.” We figured out what we could do to keep the staff engaged while working from home. We fought isolation through virtual happy hours and dance parties at the end of all staff meetings with a surprise song such as “I Will Survive.”

In 2021, COVID concerns along with social and racial unrest made for difficult and evocative dialogues and reflection. The DAI and all museums faced a reckoning of who and what we want to

be going forward. The DAI had been working on diversity and inclusion for several years, and 2020 confirmed that we needed to be intentional and committed to making more transformational change. In October, the board of trustees voted unanimously to establish a new standing IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility) Committee and make our IDEA work part of everything that we do, from art acquisition, exhibitions, and programs to staffing, volunteers, board representation, and vendors, as well as how we reach and welcome new audiences to the museum and create a sense of belonging.

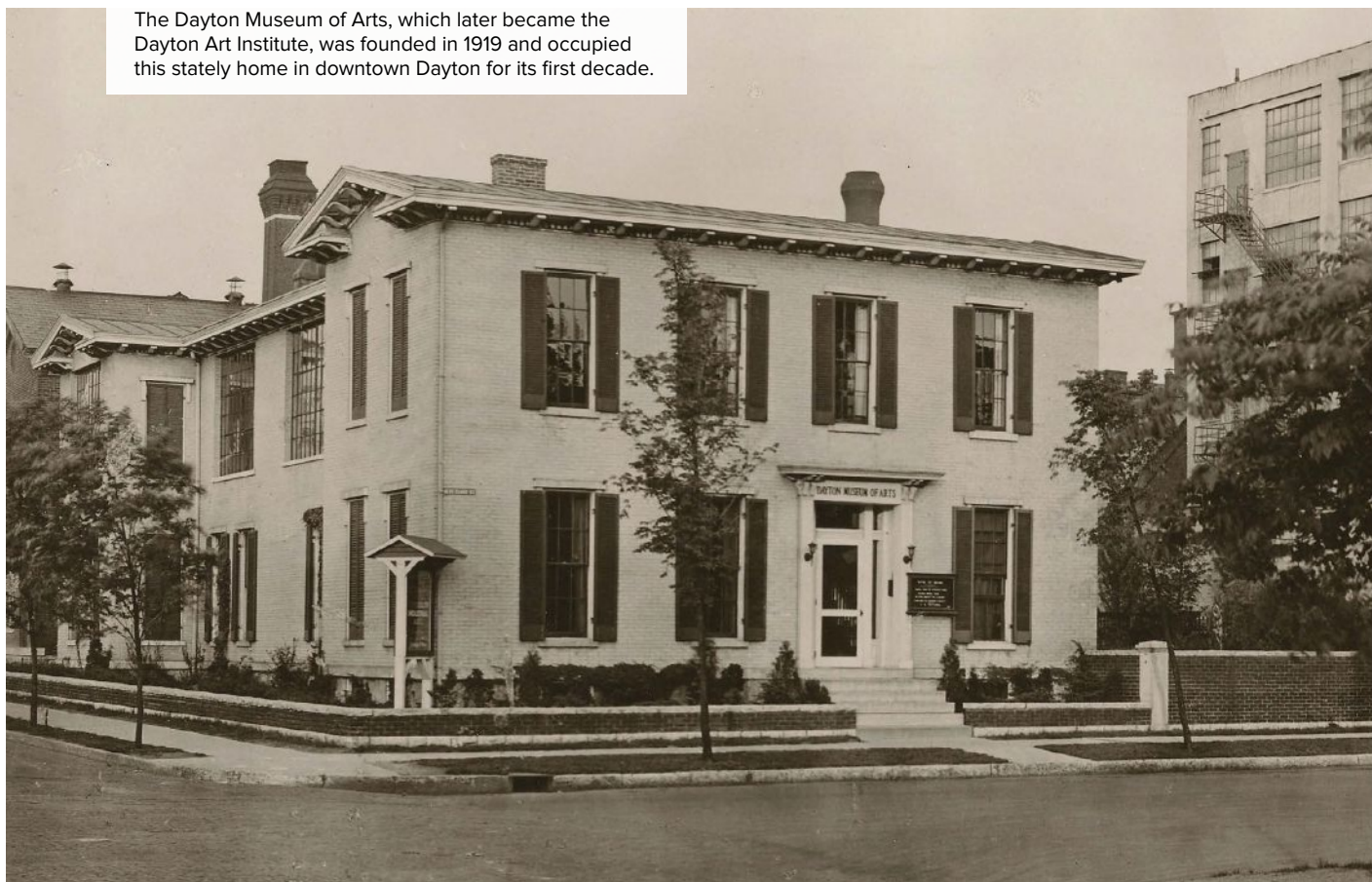
### The Role of Accreditation

Pursuing accreditation helped set us on the path to continued fiscal solvency now and into the future. Through the accreditation process, we took a hard look at our financial responsibilities and goals. That

introspective reflection allowed a meaningful dialogue between the leadership team and the board of trustees about preventing the museum from taking on significant debt again while also growing our investments and investing in the DAI team.

We now make decisions and plans by asking ourselves, “How will this affect our accreditation status?” For example, we now raise funds for capital projects and do not proceed until the funds are committed and generally near completion of payment. We have also established a Provision for Plant Replacement, Renewal and Special Maintenance (PPRRSM) fund to ensure the DAI can fund major capital projects identified by leadership and the Facilities and Finance committees. In addition, we continue to be committed to increasing our endowment and reducing our endowment draw to ensure a healthy future for the DAI.

The Dayton Museum of Arts, which later became the Dayton Art Institute, was founded in 1919 and occupied this stately home in downtown Dayton for its first decade.





Educational programming and school tours have been a core part of the Dayton Art Institute since the museum's founding in 1919.

In the end, we decided to face accreditation of the museum head-on during the pandemic. What better time—right? Despite the challenges that posed, and having to pivot from the usual in-person site visit to a virtual one, today the DAI is once again proudly AAM accredited. Through the hard work and dedication of our accreditation team, led by Janice Goodrich, assistant to the director; Jerry Smith, chief curator and director of education; and Monica Walker, human resources and administration director, and with input from nearly every member of the museum team, we received accreditation with flying colors.

### What's Ahead

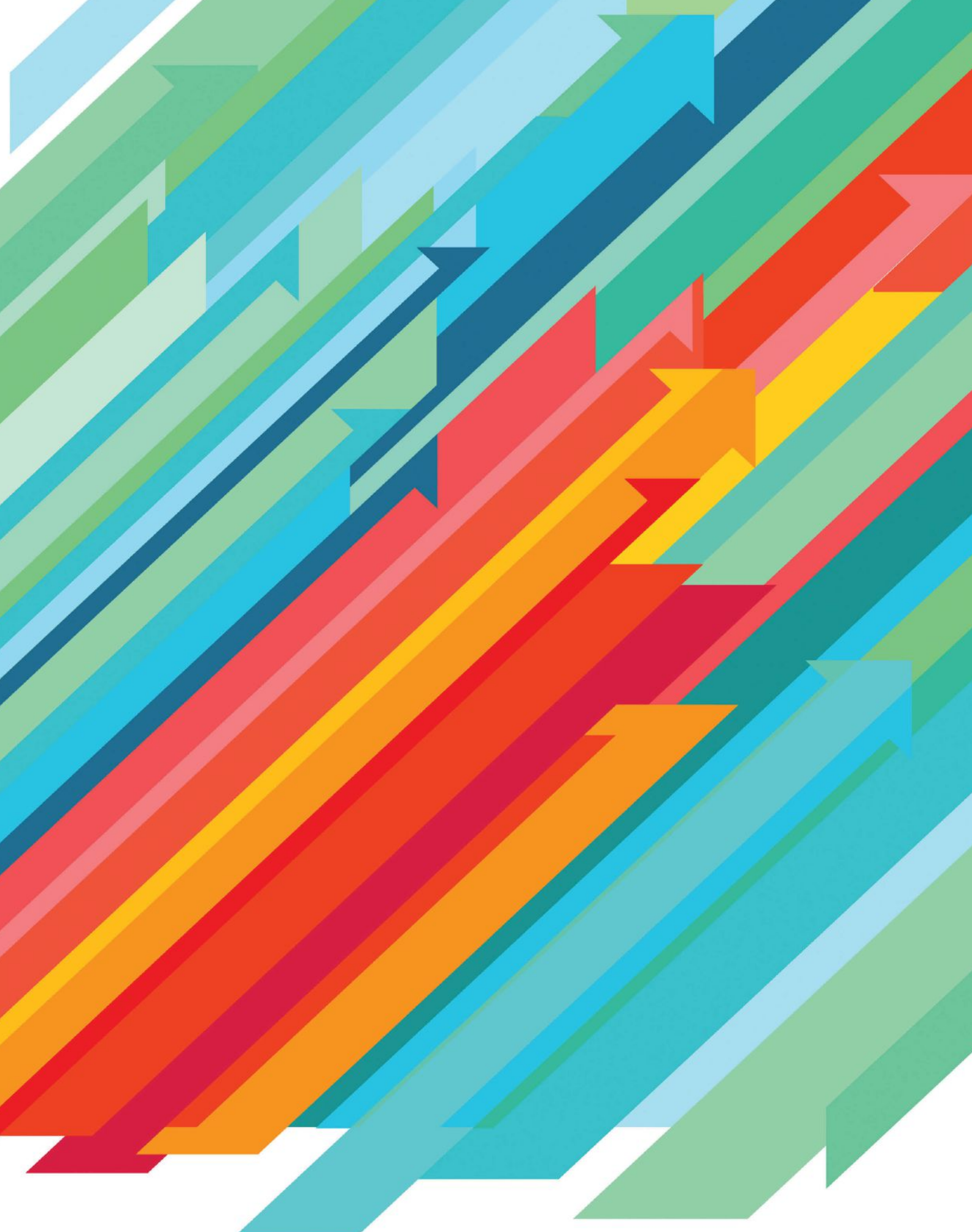
As I look to the future, it is still bright and still challenging. In fact, 2022 and 2023 promise to be as financially difficult as when I first started 10 years ago, just in a different way. We are preparing for how we come out of the pandemic positioned to live our IDEA and organizational missions while also stabilizing our budget, growing our investments, and taking care of our talented DAI team who have

worked so hard to make all of the magic happen during one of the most difficult times in the museum's history.

We are now positioned to move forward, not in crisis but strategically. We are focused on continual growth of our endowment and reducing the endowment draw to 4 percent or below. We have begun to raise funds for the PPRRSM fund so that we can be proactive instead of reactive to future capital needs, and our board of trustees has committed to working with the leadership team to make the investment needed to attract and retain talented and diverse staff. Our journey to accreditation acted as the palette while we painted the canvas of our financially more stable, inclusive, and artistic future.

As the song says, we “will survive.” No, make that “We will thrive!”

**Michael R. Roediger, MSLD, CFRE**, is director and CEO of the Dayton Art Institute in Ohio.







# meeting the moment

With its forthcoming report, *Excellence in DEAI*, AAM seeks to help museums achieve excellence in diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

By Andrew Plumley (with a special thanks to the members of the 2019 DEAI Task Force)

scusi/Alamy Stock Photo

**The museum field** is incredibly diverse. It includes all-volunteer museums with no staff and those with more than 1,000 staff members. Museum budgets range from just a few hundred dollars to hundreds of millions annually. And museums of all types cover the spectrum of disciplines—from art museums to zoos—including historic sites and houses, history museums, science centers, children’s museums, nature centers, botanic gardens, natural history museums, and aquariums.

Museums are stewards of our culture, hold deep public trust, and strive to promote understanding and education. As such, our standards of excellence must expand to celebrate and honor what is beautiful about all of us, not just a select few. They must center equity in museum culture, strategy, processes, policy, and practice to ensure all our communities’ voices, perspectives, and experiences are represented in the field.

In 2017, AAM published *Facing Change: Insights from the American Alliance of Museums’ Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Working Group*, which reinforced how DEAI is integral to excellence in museum practice and marks another step in a decades-long commitment to build a stronger, more representative, and inclusive community for all. The report explicitly called out DEAI as a core tenet of the standards of excellence in the museum field.

In 2019, as a component of *Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion*—an unprecedented national initiative to diversify museum boards and build inclusive museum cultures backed by the Andrew W. Mellon, Alice L. Walton, and Ford foundations—AAM assembled a task force of museum leaders with expertise and experience with the Continuum of Excellence in a range of museum disciplines and sizes. The task force was charged with developing recommendations to embed DEAI more deeply into the Alliance’s standards and excellence programs, including accreditation.

Then 2020 hit our field with force: COVID-19 closed many museum doors, and the murder of George Floyd sparked protests across the nation. Amid that social, political, and cultural polarization, and clear evidence of structural racism in the United States and around the world, AAM, with support from AAM’s Excellence in DEAI Task Force

recommendations, needed to produce a statement report that met this particular moment in our nation’s history—to support the field in building alignment and understanding of DEAI in concrete ways.

The report, *Excellence in DEAI*, is intended to be a starting point for spurring conversation and action that advances excellence in DEAI in the museum field. No matter where they are starting in this process, *all* institutions, not just some, need to come together as a collective in order to move DEAI work in the museum field forward. In addition to offering institutional-level guidance to help museums do this, the report is also AAM’s launching point for a process to reexamine and embed DEAI best practices into our excellence and accreditation programs.

## How to Use the Report

While not an exhaustive “how-to” that fully addresses the unique circumstances of each museum, the report lays the groundwork that allows our field to establish a common set of **Core Concepts** and **Key Indicators** of excellence in DEAI. The Core Concepts outlined in this article and the report serve as overarching themes of excellence in DEAI, while the Key Indicators are the tactical practices indicative of progress within each Core Concept.

These are broad indicators because AAM understands there is no one-size-fits-all approach to DEAI work. We believe that every museum should use these as guiding principles rather than a prescriptive checklist. Some museums will have progressed further along certain Core Concepts than others, while others will have specific DEAI challenges they need to prioritize.

The Core Concepts and Key Indicators were developed from the task force’s research and recommendations; broad input obtained during listening sessions held during the 2019 and 2020 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo; feedback from multiple AAM stakeholders, including the Accreditation Commission; and direct input from AAM staff. The report notes areas for further exploration within AAM’s Framework for Museum Excellence, including a stronger, more explicit integration of DEAI into both the AAM Code of Ethics for Museums and Core Standards in the years to come.

## The Core Concepts and Key Indicators

To make progress in DEAI, the museum field must acknowledge that transformational institutional and collective culture change is absolutely required. The Core Concepts and Key Indicators below are AAM's attempt at building a fieldwide understanding and alignment around what museums, no matter where they are in their journey, should be considering when thinking about their DEAI work. They are not listed in particular order as all of them hold equal significance.

### Core Concept: DEAI is an ongoing journey without a fixed endpoint.

As with AAM's excellence continuum, DEAI work is an ongoing journey. Transforming organizational culture and operationalizing equity must be a permanent, cross-functional element of museum management and administration.

### Key Indicator: Take a holistic approach, integrating DEAI into all aspects of the museum's operations through a process of assessment, reflection, capacity building, iteration, and measurement.

Whether a museum is just embarking on this journey or has started this work already, it is essential that it do its DEAI work relative to its size and resources and scale up as it builds momentum and capacity along the way.

Adaptability is a key characteristic of this progression. Museums today operate in a dynamic

and complex world. Museums that practice DEAI excellence exhibit an orientation toward flexibility—an ability to constantly adapt by incorporating feedback from their community, peers, the field, and other sources into their programming and space. Adaptability requires vulnerability, meaning that museums must be able to take in hard truths and act on them. Effectively doing so creates opportunities for different people to have a voice and enables the museum to more proactively and effectively respond to external stimuli.

### Key Indicator: Publicly commit to the ongoing work of transforming organizational culture and dismantling systems of inequity within individual museums and the communities they serve, the museum sector, and society broadly.

Museums are the most trusted institutions in the United States. Our commitment to this DEAI work is a moral imperative because museums have the power to shape culture in broader society. Systemic oppression of all forms, including racism, is embedded into the fabric of our society. Museums are not immune to this fact, so it is on us to make sure we are committed to this work in the long term.

### Core Concept: DEAI demands an ongoing commitment of resources.

Resource allocation decisions, especially demonstrated in a budget, reflect a museum's values and priorities. To operationalize equity cross-functionally and

## RESOURCES

AAM, *Excellence in DEAI*  
Forthcoming in early 2022

AAM, *Facing Change: Insights from the American Alliance of Museums' Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Working Group*, 2017

[aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AAM-DEAI-Working-Group-Full-Report-2018.pdf](https://aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AAM-DEAI-Working-Group-Full-Report-2018.pdf)

AAM Accreditation & Excellence Programs

[aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/](https://aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/)

Framework for Museum Excellence

[aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/](https://aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/)

sustain excellence, museums must commit significant financial and human resources to the effort. The importance of the work should be reflected in the museum's annual budget as well as within the scope of responsibilities of all museum staffers, each of whom should have explicit goals for the operationalization of equity within the scope of their role and function.

**Key Indicator: Provide financial resources for staffing, capacity building, and internal or external DEAI expertise.**

Depending on its size, type, and structure, a museum should have at least one of the following: a dedicated staff person whose scope of work is devoted exclusively to the operationalization of equity and the coordination of this cross-functional body of work across the museum; and/or a board committee assigned such responsibility; and/or access to consultants who have the knowledge, expertise, capacity, and positional power to drive and measure change.

**Core Concept: DEAI is the responsibility of the entire organization.**

In order to both drive and sustain DEAI work, it must be reflected in all aspects of museums, including the individuals, organizational culture, policies, and processes. This work must not rely solely on the people of color, LGBTQ+ community, or disability community within your museum, and the HR function should not be solely responsible for it.

The work around DEAI is everyone's responsibility, from the board and c-suite to middle managers, junior staff, and volunteers. The importance of the work should be reflected within the scope of responsibilities of all museum staffers, each of whom should have explicit goals for the operationalization of equity within their role and function.

**Key Indicator: Adopt equity as a cornerstone of the museum's mission, strategy, values, management, and culture.**

In order for the museum field to make and sustain measurable progress toward DEAI, museums must adopt equity as a cornerstone of their missions, strategies, values, management, and culture. Equity


work, or the mitigation of identity-based disparities both within the museum and in the broader community, must permeate everything that a museum believes and works toward. The closer a museum can align its mission and strategy toward achieving more equitable outcomes, the better positioned it will be in creating a culture that supports DEAI more consistently.

**Key Indicator: Embed responsibility and accountability for implementing DEAI policies and process into operations, job descriptions, and performance reviews at all levels of the institution, from the board of directors and c-level executives to senior leaders, middle managers, junior staff, and volunteers.**

Building on the work codified in *Facing Change: Insights from the American Alliance of Museums' Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group*, museums must contend with the pivotal role of boards and leadership in marshaling DEAI in their institutions. Without strong executive leadership and governance buy-in and support, the intentional process to operationalize equity cross-functionally and prioritize DEAI goals cannot be initiated or successfully sustained. Although excellence is a responsibility shared among all members of a museum community, the power and responsibility for organizational direction-setting lies with those at the top.

**Core Concept: DEAI work must be measured and assessed.**

Today, equity—the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by identity—has become a pillar of AAM's work on behalf of the field. Equity requires deliberate attention to internal metrics tied to recruitment, hiring, compensation, promotion, and retention. But in order for the museum field to move its collective equity work forward, we all must align around the fact that working toward equity means narrowing identity-based disparities, both within our museums and in the communities we serve.



**Key Indicator: Define the museum's equity goals as the elimination of identity-based disparities.**

As museum professionals and as organizations, we are either actively working to mitigate identity- and ability-based disparities or we are perpetuating them. Due to the nature of structural oppression, a museum does not need overt bigotry and oppression to take place for those things to exist within its walls. We need only look at the racial leadership gap within the field to know that structural inequity is embedded in the systems and culture of our field.


**Key Indicator: Measure progress by disaggregating data by identity over time.**

Transparent and consistent measures of accountability are essential to DEAI work, particularly in aligning institutional efforts across the organization. As individual museums and as a collective field, we must normalize the collection and measurement of demographic information internally and externally and disaggregate that data by identity. By using longitudinal outcomes data—in which participant outcomes are collected at multiple intervals—we can narrow identity-based disparities both within individual museums and within the field broadly.

**What's Next**

Over the next several years, AAM will release complementary assessments, toolkits, and resources to support museums in working toward the outlined Core Concepts and Key Indicators. Each Core Concept and Key Indicator has a specific focus and intention, so documents, examples, and resources will be designed to expand on the high-level recommendations outlined throughout this report.

We know the journey toward excellence in DEAI is always ongoing. We all come to conversations regarding DEAI from different starting points, and we each possess unique visions for success. Our individual and institutional processes for achieving excellence may vary, but the need for progress has never been more urgent.

 **Andrew Plumley** is senior director of equity and culture at AAM.



### MAP Application Deadline February 1

In a recent AAM blog post, Rachel Goldberg, programs coordinator at the Manassas Museum, described how the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) helped the museum become more engaged with its community, attract more diverse audiences, and gain new supporters. “Participating in these MAP assessments has been incredibly rewarding for our staff. ... We firmly believe that our work with the MAP program, and the meaningful feedback we received from our peer reviewers, put us in the position to move forward into the future.” If your museum is looking for a low-cost and consultative experience to help build institutional stability, sustainability, and relevance, mark your calendars for February 1, 2022—the next deadline for the Museum Assessment Program. For more details, visit [aam-us.org/map](https://aam-us.org/map).

### AAM 2022–2025 Strategic Framework Announced

We are proud to share AAM’s 2022–2025 Strategic Framework, which aims to support transformative fieldwide work in partnership with our members, partners, and allies. We will

bolster our Alliance’s role in supporting, celebrating, and convening the broad scope of the museum community and rigorously examine ways we model best practices in the fieldwide programs we administer and our internal operations. The Strategic Framework focuses on four priorities: social and community impact, DEAI and anti-racism, the museum community, and the way we work. Learn more about these four priorities, our goals, and how you can join us at [bit.ly/aam-strategicframework](https://bit.ly/aam-strategicframework).

### Join Us for Museums Advocacy Day Virtually!

Together, our advocacy efforts have protected the Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Endowment for the Arts, and National Endowment for the Humanities from severe cuts and even repeated threats of elimination and have spurred action resulting in billions of dollars in financial relief that enabled many museums to survive, saving thousands of museum jobs. In 2022, we must keep making the case for museums. Join us for this invaluable opportunity to further this work for our field and hone your own advocacy skills.

We’ve made updates this year, with your feedback in mind, to

help you shape your Museums Advocacy Day 2022 experience.

- **We heard you.** The programming on day one is robust and can feel like a lot of information to manage! This year get self-paced access to preparation resources and weekly webinars throughout February as well as the February 28 virtual programming, including legislative updates, plus all the essentials for virtual congressional meetings on March 1.

- **New registration options** for those who want access to advocacy skill-building resources and programming without participating in congressional meetings and the option to register to participate in virtual congressional meetings scheduled by AAM.

Visit [aam-us.org/programs/museums-advocacy-day/](https://aam-us.org/programs/museums-advocacy-day/) for additional schedule-at-a-glance information and registration details.

Participating in Museums Advocacy Day is just one way to speak up for museums. Visit the Advocacy Resources page of AAM's website to access advocacy tools, including:

- Economic Impact Statement
- Educational Impact Statement
- Getting to Know Your Legislators
- Engaging Your Board in Advocacy
- Creating a Year-Round Advocacy Plan

## TRIBUTES AND TRANSITIONS

### New Jobs



**David Breeckner,**  
*Executive Director, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson*



**Jennifer Kleven,**  
*Senior Development Officer, The Neon Museum, Las Vegas, NV*



**Katlyn Heusner,**  
*Executive Director of Development, UCI Institute and Museum of California Art, Irvine*



**Sally Pietsch,**  
*Chief Financial Officer, Dallas Museum of Art, TX*

### WHAT'S YOUR CAREER NEWS?

Tell us your news at  
[bit.ly/CareerNewsAAM](https://bit.ly/CareerNewsAAM).

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## 2022 Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo

May 19–22 | Boston

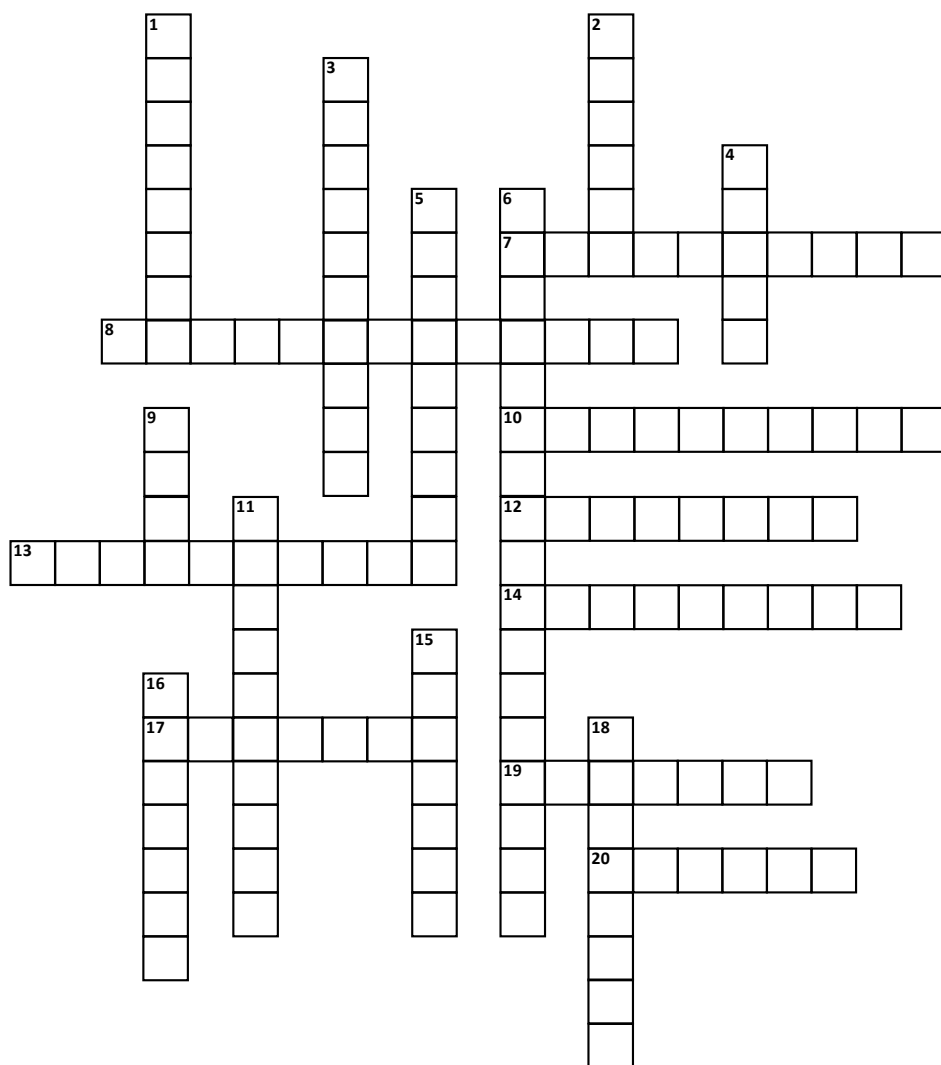
Customize an #AAM2022 experience that's right for you by diving into the four key focus areas, getting hands-on with new session formats, reconnecting with colleagues at NeighborHubs, and more. Visit: [annualmeeting.aam-us.org](https://annualmeeting.aam-us.org)

▶ **Be a part of #AAM2022!**



# #AAM2022 Crossword

Get excited for #AAM2022 by challenging your crossword puzzle skills.



## Across:

7. Creative ingenuity inspires \_\_\_\_.
8. Observable effects of temperature and weather
10. Group of artifacts, archives, or specimens
12. Promoting interest of a group or cause
13. Display or a demonstration
14. State of being comfortable, healthy, happy
17. Complex concept surrounding understanding
19. Group of people connected by profession
20. Slang you'll hear at a cool Boston museum

## Down:

1. Formal plan or suggestion
2. City where 342 chests of tea were dumped
3. Imaginative and spontaneous idea-sharing
4. Become better suited for this environment
5. Provides valuable learning experiences
6. Employment and growth depend on \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Equitable access for all; acronym
11. Branch of knowledge
15. Responsible for a memorable speech
16. To be sustainable museums must generate \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Guardians of culturally significant objects

## ► The next step:

Ready to print this page or check your answers? Visit: [bit.ly/aam2022-crossword](https://bit.ly/aam2022-crossword)

You can also discover what's new at #AAM2022, see the schedule at a glance, register, and more from the menu.

## REFLECTION



The painter's eye follows relation out.  
His work is not to paint the visible,  
He says, it is to render visible. ...

He borrows, to begin with, mental things  
Chiefly, the abstract elements of language:  
The point, the line, the plane, the colors and  
The geometric shapes. ...

And when in this the visible world appears,  
As it does do, mountain, flower, cloud, and tree, ...  
The accident is of design. It is because  
Language first rises from the speechless world  
That the painterly intelligence  
Can say correctly that he makes his world,  
Not imitates the one before his eyes.

Excerpted from *The Painter Dreaming in the Scholar's House* by Howard Nemerov  
in memory of the painters Paul Klee and Paul Terence Feeley

We champion  
the museum  
field so you can  
champion these  
moments.



AAM has been championing the museum field and providing timely recovery resources to keep **you** inspired and in the know about what matters most. Museums received billions of dollars of Federal relief funding through our advocacy efforts, saving countless museum jobs and closures. **Together, we can keep this momentum going in the new year.**

Membership dues cover only a small portion of our work. **Your donation, of any amount, counts.**

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*This year, AAM was awarded a **Platinum Seal of Transparency**, the very highest level attainable from Guidestar. We hope this transparency gives you added confidence in our mission, accomplishments, and commitment to you.*



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If you are interested in making a planned gift to AAM, please contact Jennifer Calvert Hall at 202-289-9120 or [jcalverthall@aam-us.org](mailto:jcalverthall@aam-us.org).



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Arlington, VA 22202

A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE  
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# MUSEUMS ADVOCACY DAY 2022

**Join us virtually on  
February 28–March 1**

## Registration is open!

Over the course of the pandemic, our field generated unparalleled levels of advocacy for museums. You sent more than 62,000 messages to Congress, created the largest Museums Advocacy Day yet, and spurred action resulting in billions of dollars in financial relief that enabled many museums to survive and saved thousands of museum jobs. **In 2022, we have the chance to capitalize on this energy for museums advocacy.** Join us for Museums Advocacy Day 2022, taking place virtually on February 28–March 1.



### Choose your registration package:

- Advocacy Program *Without* Congressional Meetings
- Advocacy in Action: Advocacy Program and Congressional Meetings

**Register today!**

*Registration closes January 21.*

 [aam-us.org/museums-advocacy](https://aam-us.org/museums-advocacy)



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