

Accreditation Self-Study

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This pdf version of the new Accreditation Self-Study for first-time applicants is provided only as a reference document. All museums undergoing the accreditation process must submit their Self-Study online. Museums seeking first-time accreditation will be provided a URL after their formal application has been approved. To be eligible to apply, a museum must have passed the Core Documents Verification Program.

Museums undergoing a reaccreditation review use a different Self-Study.

This pdf contains all the possible questions that a museum might answer. In the online version, some questions may not appear depending on your answers; and phrasing and format may appear slightly different than you see here due to online functionality.

Questions? accreditation@aam-us.org

Organizational Profile

ⓘ = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources

1. Contact Information

- Organization Name
- Web Site
- Select Address Type
- Address
- City
- State
- Postal Code
- Country
- Phone
- Fax
- Email

Demographic Information

2. Primary Organization Type (select one)

- ☐ Aquarium
- ☐ Anthropology Museum
- ☐ Arboretum/Botanical Garden/Public Garden
- ☐ Art Museum/Center/Sculpture Garden
- ☐ Children's or Youth Museum
- ☐ Ethnically/Culturally/Tribally Specific
- ☐ General or Multi-disciplinary (several subjects)
- ☐ Hall of Fame
- ☐ Historic House
- ☐ Historic Site/Landscape
- ☐ History Museum
- ☐ Historical Society
- ☐ Military Museum/Battlefield
- ☐ Nature Center
- ☐ Natural History Museum
- ☐ Planetarium
- ☐ Presidential Library
- ☐ Science/Technology Center/Museum
- ☐ Specialized Museum (single topic/individual)
 - Name specialty:
- ☐ Transportation Museum (air/space, maritime, etc.)
- ☐ Visitor Center/Interpretive Center
- ☐ Zoo/Animal Park
- ☐ Other:

3. Additional Museum Type (select all that apply)
- ☐ Aquarium
 - ☐ Anthropology Museum
 - ☐ Arboretum/Botanical Garden/Public Garden
 - ☐ Art Museum/Center/Sculpture Garden
 - ☐ Children's or Youth Museum
 - ☐ Ethnically/Culturally/Tribally Specific
 - ☐ Hall of Fame
 - ☐ Historic House
 - ☐ Historic Site/Landscape
 - ☐ History Museum
 - ☐ Historical Society
 - ☐ Military Museum/Battlefield
 - ☐ Nature Center
 - ☐ Natural History Museum
 - ☐ Planetarium
 - ☐ Presidential Library
 - ☐ Science/Technology Center/Museum
 - ☐ Transportation Museum (air/space, maritime, etc.)
 - ☐ Visitor Center/Interpretive Center
 - ☐ Zoo/Animal Park

Museum Information

4. Governance
- ☐ College/University
 - Select your College/University's Governance Type (Government or Non-profit)
 - ☐ Corporate/For-Profit
 - ☐ Dual ⓘ
 - ☐ Government
 - Which level of government (city/municipal; county/regional; state/provincial; federal/ministerial; military)
 - ☐ Non-Profit
 - ☐ Tribal
 - Name of tribe
 - ☐ Other
5. Is the museum affiliated with U.S. institution of higher learning?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Does your museum have a parent? ⓘ
- ☐ Yes
 - Name of Parent Organization
- ☐ No
7. Legal name of museum (if different than listed in #1)

8. Is your museum part of a museum system (an operation with sites in more than one location)? ①
☐ Yes ☐ No
[if yes, the museum will answer additional questions about the system in Museum Overview]
9. On-site attendance (#) ①
10. Attendance year (for figure above)
11. Total paid staff size (#)
[additional questions about human resources are asked Operational Data]
12. Staff - Paid full-time (#) ①
13. Staff - Paid part-time (#) ①
14. Staff - Unpaid/volunteer (#)
15. Staff year (for figures above)
16. Budget (operating revenue) (\$)
[additional questions about finances are asked Operational Data]
17. Budget year (for figure above)
18. Indicate which of the following your museum offers (*optional*) ①
- ☐ Discounts on admission to Alliance members
 - ☐ Discounts in the museum store to Alliance members
 - ☐ Free admission to Alliance members
 - ☐ Free admission to the public

Museum Overview

① = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources

Mission

1. What is the museum's official, approved mission statement? ①
2. Date mission statement approved. ①
3. Under which provision of the IRS code is the museum (or parent organization) legally organized? ①
 - ☐ 501(c)(3)
 - ☐ 170 (B)
 - ☐ 509
 - ☐ For Profit
 - ☐ Other (describe):
[museums that are run by a government do not answer this question]

Collections

[additional collections questions appear in Operational Data]

4. Which best describes the status of the museum regarding collections ownership or use? ①
 - ☐ Own collections and/or manage collections belonging to others on an ongoing basis
 - ☐ Do not own or manage collections, but borrow and use collections for exhibits, education, or research
 - ☐ Neither own, manage, nor borrow collections--museum is not collections based
5. If the museum selected "Own collections and/or manage collections belonging to others..." what is the percentage of collections accessioned? ① *(minimum 80% accessioned required)*

Other Accreditations/Certifications

6. Is the institution accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)? ①
 - ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes to #6, answer # 7 and #8

7. What is the institution's last AZA accreditation date?
8. Does the zoo or aquarium also have non-living or botanical collections?
 - ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Is the museum's director a member of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD)?
[applies only to art museums]
☐ Yes
☐ No
 ○ Was the director a member while at another organization?
10. Is the museum certified by a state Standards of Excellence Program or other non-profit certification program?
☐ Yes
 ○ What is the name of the certification program and what level is the museum certified at (if applicable)?
☐ No
11. Is the museum LEED certified? ①
☐ Yes
 ○ what part of the facility is LEED certified and at what level?
☐ No

Accreditation Contacts ①

12. The institution must designate two contacts for the accreditation review process; **one must be the director**. Key correspondence and materials related to the steps in the process will be sent to the primary contact. If the director is not the primary contact person, s/he will not be copied on routine process related correspondence. However, all official Accreditation Commission correspondence (e.g., decision letters) will always be sent to the director and the head of the governing authority (via the institution) regardless of who is listed as the primary contact.
- a. Name, title, phone number, and email address of the Primary Contact
- b. Name, title, phone number, and email address of the Secondary Contact
- c. Name and title of the Head of the Governing Authority
- d. *If the museum has dual governance:* Name and title of the Head of the Other Governing Authority

Museum Systems

13. Is this an accreditation review of a whole museum system? ①
☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, answer #14-17

14. Indicate how the following functions are handled within the museum system. ①

	Centralized	By site	Customized for/at each site based on centralized model/policy	Does Not Apply
Mission				
Governance/ Board				
By-laws				
Planning				
Code of Ethics				
Budget				
Human resources				
Development				
Exhibit design/ Fabrication				
Exhibit research/ curation				
Conservation				
Security				
Facilities management				
Public Relations				
Marketing				
Legal counsel				
Membership				
Collections management				

15. If needed, please explain any relationships or aspects of the system structure which are not clear from answers provided above.

16. How are system-wide programmatic and budgetary goals and priorities determined?

17. List each museum/site in the museum system and provide the following information for each:

- city and state
- director/site administrator name & title

Operational Data

① = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources

Finances: Summary

1. Does the museum submit a 990? ①
☐Yes ☐No
2. If yes, is the 990 available on the museum's website?
☐Yes (list URL)
☐No
3. If the museum does not submit a 990, explain why it does not, and what, if anything, is submitted in place of it (to convey similar information).
4. Summarize the museum's financial position over the past five years.
For one fiscal year at a time—beginning with the most recent—provide the following information. ①

Fiscal Year	Total Operating Revenue	Total Operating Expenses	Net Surplus or Deficit (enter deficit with -)	Total Non-Operating Revenue	Total Non-Operating Expense	Market value of any institutional endowment

5. If the museum ran a deficit in the last fiscal year, please select the nature of the deficit.
☐ Planned/strategic
☐ Involuntary
☐ No deficit
☐ Not applicable
6. Explain any major changes, trends or variations in the figures in the grid above. Comment on any persistent or growing deficits or surpluses and explain what the museum is doing to address them.

Revenue

7. Give the date of the most recently completed fiscal year and complete the following Revenue and Expenses questions with data from this period.
8. Break out the museum's total operating revenue (income) for the most recently completed fiscal year, in the following categories. ①
 - Total Revenue from Public/Government Sources (\$)
 - Total Revenue from Private Sources (\$)
 - Total Revenue from Investments (\$)
 - Total Revenue from Endowment Used for Operational Expenses (\$)
 - Total Earned Revenue (\$)

Expenses

9. Break out the museum's total operating expenses (from the most recently completed fiscal year) into the following categories. ①
 - Museum-Related Activities (\$)
 - Management And General Expenses (\$)
 - Fundraising Expenses (\$)
10. What (approximate) percentage of the budget is allocated for the following activities/areas of operation? ①
 - Exhibition (%)
 - Collection storage/conservation related (including historic structures) (%)
 - Public/school programs (%)
 - Visitor services (%)
 - Administration (%)
 - Development/fundraising (%)
 - Maintenance/physical plant (%)
 - Generating earned revenue (%)
 - Other (%)

Grants and In-Kind

11. Describe additional support, including noncash contributions and in-kind services that are not reflected in the financial summary above. Please indicate who provides these resources.

Facilities

12. What is the interior square footage of the museum? ①
13. What is the total acreage of the developed exterior grounds? ①
14. Number of buildings:
15. Are any buildings historic structures? ①
☐Yes ☐No

16. Does the museum have off-site collection storage? ①
☐ Yes
 ○ What is the square footage of off-site collections storage?
☐ No
17. If any of the facilities are shared with another organization or serve a non-museum function, describe the situation.
18. What percentage of overall space is allocated to the following functions? ①
- Exhibitions (%)
 - Collections Storage/Conservation (%)
 - Public/School Programs (%)
 - Visitor Services (%)
 - Offices/Administration (%)
 - Development (%)
 - Generating Earned Revenue (%)
 - Mechanical Areas (%)
 - Other (%)

Staffing/Human Resources

19. Full-time paid positions (#) *[online version carries over entry from Organizational Profile]* ①
20. Part-time paid positions (#) *[online version carries over entry from Organizational Profile]* ①
21. Does the museum employ seasonal staff? ①
☐ Yes
 ○ How many seasonal staff does the museum employ?
☐ No
22. How many volunteers did the museum have during the last fiscal year? (#)
23. How many total hours were volunteered during the last fiscal year? (#)
24. What percentage of the staff are allocated to the following functions? ①
- Exhibitions (%)
 - Collections Storage/Conservation (%)
 - Public/School Programs (%)
 - Visitor Services (%)
 - Administration (%)
 - Development (%)
 - Physical Plant/Maintenance (%)
 - Generating Earned Revenue (%)
 - Other (%)

Attendance

25. Give number of hours open each year and describe other type of access the public has to the museum. ①

26. Give attendance figures for the last 5 years. ①

Fiscal Year	Total On-site Paid Attendance	Total On-site Free Attendance	On-site Attendance by K-12 in school groups

27. Explain any major changes, trends, or variations to attendance.

Collections

If the museum owns collection, or manages collections for others on an on-going basis, answer questions #28 and #29.

28. Please indicate the types of objects in the collection of the museum. Check all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aeronautics, space/airplanes | <input type="checkbox"/> Military, including weapons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animals, live | <input type="checkbox"/> Motion picture, audiovisual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animals, preserved | <input type="checkbox"/> Musical instruments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anthropological, ethnographic | <input type="checkbox"/> Numismatics (money) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeological | <input type="checkbox"/> Paintings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books | <input type="checkbox"/> Philatelic (stamps) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ceramics, glass, metals, plastics | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography, negatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documents, manuscripts | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography, prints |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Furniture/wooden objects | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical science projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geological, mineral, paleontological | <input type="checkbox"/> Plants, live |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic building | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant, preserved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic sites | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture, indoor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horological (clocks) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture, outdoor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape features, constructed | <input type="checkbox"/> Textiles and costumes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machinery | <input type="checkbox"/> Tools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maritime, historic ships | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys and dolls |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medals | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation, excluding airplanes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical, dental, health, pharmacological | <input type="checkbox"/> Works of art on paper |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe): |

29. What is the number of objects that fall into the following categories of collections? ①

- Permanent (#)
- Research (#)
- Hands-on/education (#)
- Other (description and #)

Educational Role

① = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources

Scope and Planning

1. Briefly describe what stories and messages the museum wants to convey; and the museum's interpretive philosophy, educational goals, and target audiences.
2. What policies/plans does the museum have that guide practice and decision-making about content delivery? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Collections Plan
 - ☐ Educational Master Plan
 - ☐ Exhibit Policy
 - ☐ Historic Interiors Plan
 - ☐ Interpretive Plan
 - ☐ Landscape Plan
 - ☐ Environmental Stewardship Policy
 - ☐ Other:
3. *If the museum owns collections but does not have a Collections Plan:* Describe the process of assessing the collections and planning for their use in educational and interpretive activities. Include who is involved, how and when plans are updated, how the museum gathers data to inform the content of collections, and how priorities are developed.

Informing Interpretive Content ①

4. Which of the following sources inform content, or drive decisions, for interpretation? Check all that apply. ①
 - ☐ Original research done by the museum *(if checked: answer question 11)*
 - ☐ Original research of collections done by the museum *(if checked: answer question 11)*
 - ☐ Applied research *(if checked: answer question 11)*
 - ☐ Pure / basic research *(if checked: answer question 11)*
 - ☐ Content of the collections
 - ☐ Scholarly publications (e.g., books/journals) published inside or outside the museum
 - ☐ Popular publications
 - ☐ Oral history research
 - ☐ School curriculum guides/State standards of learning
 - ☐ Academic courses
 - ☐ Learning theory or educational research
 - ☐ Staff expertise
 - ☐ Outside consultants/experts (volunteer or paid)
 - ☐ Advisory committee(s)
 - ☐ Public/user feedback

- ☐ Teachers/educators
 - ☐ Specialized community groups
 - ☐ Students
 - ☐ Docents/volunteers
 - ☐ Other:
5. How does the museum incorporate learning theory and educational research into practice? ①
6. Describe a recent exhibit or project in which you invited a diversity of voices and opinions from inside and outside the museum to contribute to the decision-making process about what content is delivered and how.

Delivery of Educational Role

7. What are the ways the museum carries out its educational role? Check all that apply. ①
- ☐ Permanent exhibits
 - ☐ Temporary exhibits organized by the museum
 - ☐ Traveling exhibits from other institutions
 - ☐ Mission-related public events (lectures, films, etc.)
 - ☐ Resource room(s)
 - ☐ Hands-on station(s)
 - ☐ Traveling trunks/Rental kits
 - ☐ Academic classes for credit
 - ☐ Art/Craft/Equipment demonstrations
 - ☐ Docent-guided tours
 - ☐ 1st-person interpreters
 - ☐ 3rd-person interpreters
 - ☐ Self-guided tours: signage and/or printed guide
 - ☐ Self-guided tours: personal audio device
 - ☐ School activities: at the museum
 - ☐ School activities: at schools or other sites outside the museum
 - ☐ Outreach to groups other than schools
 - ☐ Collections available for research
 - ☐ Archives or library available to public
 - ☐ Educational/Interpretive content on website
 - ☐ Published research results (published by the museum)
 - ☐ Published research results (in literature not produced by the museum)
 - ☐ Periodicals/scholarly journals (produced by the museum)
 - ☐ Research results presented at academic/professional conferences/meetings
 - ☐ Academic symposia organized by the museum
 - ☐ Take-away exhibit brochures/gallery guides
 - ☐ In-house use exhibit brochures/gallery guides
 - ☐ Audio recordings

- ☐ Catalogs
- ☐ Collections information on Web site (images, catalog information etc.)
- ☐ Other on-line databases on Web site
- ☐ Nonprint media (videos, CDs, DVDs, etc.)
- ☐ Use of multi-media in exhibits
- ☐ Theater (projections, live performance, etc.)
- ☐ Broadcasts (TV, radio, web)
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Original research (creating new scholarship and knowledge) *(if checked: answer question 11)*
- ☐ Scholarly research (of existing sources) *(if checked: answer question 11)*
- ☐ Field or laboratory research *(if checked: answer question 11)*
- ☐ Secondary research of existing scholarly sources *(if checked: answer question 11)*
- ☐ Teacher training
- ☐ Preserved, restored, or recreated historic interiors
- ☐ Access to high quality reproductions of works in the collection for study, teaching, and/or scholarly publications
- ☐ Other:

8. Which of the following methods does the museum use to help ensure its interpretive activities are intellectually and physically accessible to the widest possible audiences? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Tiered labeling written for a range of reading levels
- ☐ Exhibits designed to accommodate various learning styles
- ☐ Multiple formats (e.g., text-based, interactive, audio/video components, tablet, etc.)
- ☐ Foreign language translation
- ☐ Signage in multiple languages
- ☐ Tours/programs in multiple languages
- ☐ Special tours/program/time/space for audiences with cognitive challenges
- ☐ Braille labels or exhibit guides
- ☐ Audio tours
- ☐ Assisted-listening devices
- ☐ Large print-labels or exhibit guides
- ☐ Closed captioning on videos
- ☐ Sign language interpreters
- ☐ Special tours
- ☐ Accessible building design
- ☐ Videos or images of inaccessible public areas
- ☐ Wheelchairs available
- ☐ Wheelchair-accessible exhibit design
- ☐ Other:

9. Provide the URL(s) to the relevant page(s) of the museum's website that show the scope of its interpretive offerings (permanent and temporary exhibits, public programming, dissemination of research results, school programming, etc.) *If the museum's website does not contain this information, use the Other Documents entry in the Attachments section to provide this information.*

Research

10. Who uses the collections, archives, or facilities for original research?
- ☐ General public
 - ☐ Scholars
 - ☐ Staff
 - ☐ Students
 - ☐ Faculty
 - ☐ Other:
11. *If the museum uses research to inform content/drive decisions about interpretation, or uses research to carry out its educational role (see questions 4 and 7):* Describe recent types of research activity; how research priorities are selected; what drives/informs the research; how the museum works with experts and scholars; and how results are used and disseminated.

Evaluating Impact and Success

12. Based on the museum's educational goals what are its defined measures of success; how does it know when it's reached its goals (what metrics do you use)?
13. How does the museum evaluate the effectiveness and impact of its educational activities? Check all that apply.
- ☐ Comment forms/ books
 - ☐ Surveys
 - ☐ Evaluation forms for teachers/faculty
 - ☐ Evaluation forms for participants
 - ☐ Facilitated participant review sessions
 - ☐ Outside evaluators (peer or consultants)
 - ☐ Test groups for pilot programs
 - ☐ Anecdotal
 - ☐ Logic Models
 - ☐ Outcomes Based Evaluation (OBE)
 - ☐ Other:
14. Give a specific example of how the museum used evaluation feedback.

15. List one (or more) specific, measurable impact(s)/outcome(s) the museum's educational activities have had on its current or target audiences, or community. What was the indicator of this success?
16. Share a story about an instance where the museum feels it took a risk, did something innovative, or made a change that propelled it to the next level of fulfilling its educational role.

Public Service Role

① = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources

What the Museum Knows About the People It Serves

1. Who does the museum want to serve? In the description, use whatever demographics (e.g., age, economic status, education, etc.) your museum considers most relevant.
2. Who does the museum *actually* serve? In the description, use whatever demographics your museum considers most relevant.
3. Is there a gap between who the museum wants to serve and who it actually serves? If so, what is the museum doing to address it?
4. What are the needs, wants, and challenges of the people your museum serves or wants to serve? What is the museum doing to address them?
5. How does the museum gather information about who visits or engages with the museum and the quality of their experience? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Focus groups
 - ☐ Follow up evaluation after a visit (by phone, email, or mail)
 - ☐ Guest book
 - ☐ Informal observation by staff
 - ☐ Information from donor forms
 - ☐ Member surveys
 - ☐ Program registration forms
 - ☐ Ticket sales data
 - ☐ Visitor evaluation form on site
 - ☐ Visitor interviews
 - ☐ Visitor surveys
 - ☐ Zip code study
 - ☐ We do not collect data on who comes to the museum
 - ☐ We do not collect data on visitor experience
 - ☐ Other:
6. Give an example of how the museum used the information gathered from the sources you checked above.

How the Museum Reflects and Serves Its Community and Audiences

7. Which of the following is offered on your website? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Admission tickets
 - ☐ Admission prices
 - ☐ Audience research questions
 - ☐ Collections database

- ☐ Current exhibitions
- ☐ Current/upcoming events at the museum
- ☐ Curriculum guides
- ☐ Donations (financial)
- ☐ Forums on topics related to the museum
- ☐ Group tour information
- ☐ Hours of operation
- ☐ Images of collections
- ☐ Information for visitors with disabilities
- ☐ Information on collections
- ☐ Job openings
- ☐ Lesson plans
- ☐ Links to other virtual sites
- ☐ List of governing authority members
- ☐ Location information/directions
- ☐ Memberships
- ☐ Multimedia resources (games, video content, audio guides)
- ☐ News/current events
- ☐ Programs/service fees
- ☐ Purchase from gift/book shop
- ☐ Publications database
- ☐ Scheduled educational programs
- ☐ Staff list
- ☐ Virtual communities for users/fans
- ☐ Virtual exhibits
- ☐ Virtual tours
- ☐ Visitor guides
- ☐ Volunteer opportunities
- ☐ Webinars/distance learning programs
- ☐ Other:

8. If the makeup, resources, needs, or behaviors of the museum's geographic community or audiences have changed in the last three to five years, describe these changes, their impact on the museum, and how the museum has adapted/responded to them. ①
9. Does the makeup of the museum's staff, leadership, and volunteers reflect the makeup of the audience the museum wants to serve and its geographic community? If not, what is the museum doing to compensate for the gaps?
10. Give one or more examples that demonstrate the museum's geographic community values it and sees it as trusted resource and community partner.
11. Describe any opportunities that are in place to establish ongoing, two-way communication/relationships between the museum and its geographic community.
 - ☐ Advisory groups (e.g., teen panel, senior activities panel, teacher panel)
 - ☐ Annual meetings for members
 - ☐ Community open houses
 - ☐ Community curated exhibits
 - ☐ Focus groups
 - ☐ Onsite comment card boxes or kiosks

- ☐ Participation in membership-based organizations such as chambers of commerce, downtown development groups, or business improvement districts
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Text messaging
- ☐ Town meetings
- ☐ Visitor participation in program and exhibit design and implementation
- ☐ Website feedback options
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (describe):

12. Which of the following services does the museum provide? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Access to collections by appointment
- ☐ Community garden space
- ☐ Continuing education
- ☐ Event rentals
- ☐ Object identification
- ☐ Reference services
- ☐ Space for community meetings
- ☐ Teacher certification training
- ☐ Volunteer opportunities
- ☐ Other:

13. Which of the following services does the museum provide outside the museum walls? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Education kits for schools and other groups
- ☐ Exhibits installed in other spaces in the community
- ☐ Educational programming at other organization's events or sites
- ☐ Field trips led to other museums or similar venues
- ☐ Speakers Bureau
- ☐ Traveling exhibit bus/van
- ☐ Other:

14. Is the museum doing any of the following to be more accessible? Check all that apply. ⓘ

- ☐ Experimenting with alternative evening/weekend hours
- ☐ Facilities or dedicated spaces for groups with special needs
- ☐ Free admission days
- ☐ Free pass system at the local library
- ☐ Museum passport program with other local organizations
- ☐ Reduced admissions for military families
- ☐ Tailored programs and/or hours for groups with special needs
- ☐ Universal design
- ☐ Other:

15. Does the museum have strategic partnerships/relationships with any of the following entities? Check all that apply. ⓘ

- ☐ Government agencies
- ☐ Arts & culture organizations
- ☐ Social service/civic affairs community organizations
- ☐ Libraries/archives
- ☐ K-12 schools

- ☐ Institutions of higher learning
- ☐ Local businesses/chamber of commerce
- ☐ Local media
- ☐ Educational community organizations/associations
- ☐ Law enforcement/first responders
- ☐ Other:

16. If you indicated the museum has strategic partnerships/relationships/relationships, describe them.

17. How is the museum bringing in new audiences and sustaining their engagement?

Innovation and Impact

18. Share a story about an instance where the museum feels it took a risk, did something it considered innovative, or made a change that propelled it to the next level of fulfilling its public service role.

19. Overall, how has the museum been a good neighbor and community asset? Provide an example of how the museum has made a difference?

Collections Stewardship Role

① = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources

In the Museum Overview section you answered a question (#4) about the status of the museum's collections ownership or use. Your answer impacts which questions in the Collections Stewardship Role section that you answer.

If you chose this answer to the Museum Overview question: <i>"Which best describes the status of the museum regarding collections ownership or use?"</i>then answer these questions in the Collections Stewardship section
Own collections and/or manage collections belonging to others on an ongoing basis	All the questions
Do not own or manage collections, but borrow and use collections for exhibits, education, or research	Only these nine questions (denoted with a star ★ in the text) Compliance: #12-13 Conservation & Preservation: #16 Environmental Monitoring & Control: # 17-20 Documentation: #29 Innovation & Impact: #33
Neither own, manage, nor borrow collections--museum is not collections based	None of the questions . Skip this section entirely.

Acquisitions & Accessioning

1. What is the percentage of collections accessioned (80% minimum required)? ①
2. If the percentage accessioned is less than 100 percent, explain what the museum's plans for accessioning unaccessioned collections are.

Deaccessioning & Disposal

3. Has the museum deaccessioned objects in the last three years? ①
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Yes
 - Summarize the reason and method of disposal (do not itemize each item deaccessioned).

4. What does the museum allow funds from deaccessioning to be used for? Check all that apply. ⓘ
- ☐ Acquisition of new collections
 - ☐ Direct care of collections
 - ☐ Preservation (of collections)
 - ☐ Other:
5. *If you checked "Direct care of collections" in the question above:* Explain what the museum defines as direct care.

Loans

6. Does the museum lend objects from the collection?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Who has the museum lent to in the last three years? Check all that apply. ⓘ
- ☐ Non-profit museums
 - ☐ For-profit museums
 - ☐ Non-museum educational non-profit organizations
 - ☐ Non-museum for-profit organizations
 - ☐ Individuals
 - ☐ We made no loans in the last three years
 - ☐ Other:
8. *If you checked any options in question 7 other than "Non-profit museums":* Who did the museum lend to and why, what types of materials were lent, and how did the museum ensure the care, safety and security of these materials?
9. How does the museum record the return of a loan? ⓘ
- ☐ Not documented
 - ☐ Loan return receipt
 - ☐ Other:
10. Does the museum borrow objects?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Compliance

11. Is the museum currently in compliance with relevant laws and regulations regarding collections and collecting activities? ⓘ
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - Give details and describe what steps are being taken to rectify the situation.

12. ★ Does the museum own or have in its custody items that are/have (check all that apply)?
- ☐ Questionable provenance
 - ☐ Unclaimed loans
 - ☐ Undocumented origins
 - ☐ Outside mission scope
 - ☐ Incomplete title
13. ★ *If you checked any items in the question above:* Summarize the efforts to resolve their status.

Conservation and Preservation

14. Has the museum conducted a general conservation survey of collections and environmental conditions (e.g., via Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) or via private consultant)? ⓘ
- ☐ No
 - ☐ Yes
 - Provide the year of the most recent general conservation survey.
15. Describe your museum's collections conservation/preservation strategies. Explain how you assess and prioritize the collections conservation/preservation needs and your plans for addressing these needs.
16. ★ Does the museum own or manage historic structures?
- ☐ No
 - ☐ Yes
 - Describe the museum's preservation strategies for its historic structures.

Environmental Monitoring and Control

17. ★ Using the checklist below, indicate which measures the museum takes to protect museum collections (owned or borrowed) while on exhibition, in storage, on loan, and in transit (internal or external). Check all that apply and provide details where indicated.

Direct physical forces

Damage from handling/physical contact

- ☐ Training provided to staff
 - ☐ In-house (e.g. peer-to-peer; experts brought on-site)
 - ☐ Outside courses
 - ☐ On-site resources (manuals, videos, policies),
- ☐ Equipment (e.g., gloves, carts, packing materials)
- ☐ Signage to deter touching or climbing
- ☐ Guards/gallery monitors/docents
- ☐ Motion detectors
- ☐ Alarms
- ☐ Use of professional packers/couriers/shippers
- ☐ Other:

Natural disasters (earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, etc.)

- ☐ Section(s) devoted to collections in the emergency/disaster preparedness plan
- ☐ Training and drills
- ☐ Disaster response carts
- ☐ Special storage/display mounts or cabinetry (specify):
- ☐ Other:

Water

- ☐ HVAC system alarms
- ☐ Collections stored above ground level
- ☐ Water pipes not routed above exhibits or collections storage
- ☐ Water pipes not routed in exhibits or collections storage
- ☐ Water sensor alarms in storage areas
- ☐ Plastic drapes on vulnerable cases or shelving
- ☐ Other:

Pests (rodents; insects and other arthropods; mold, fungi, bacteria, and other microorganisms)

Monitoring

- ☐ Regularly-scheduled inspection of collections, storage, and exhibit areas
- ☐ Traps

Treatment of objects

- ☐ Heat
- ☐ Cold
- ☐ Anoxic environments
- ☐ Chemicals

Barriers

- ☐ Sealing building envelope
- ☐ Pest-resistant storage cases/packaging/storage furniture/object enclosures
- ☐ Design of landscaping
- ☐ Design of external lighting

Chemical treatment of building (or areas of building)

- ☐ Regularly-scheduled treatments
- ☐ On detection of infestations

- ☐ Integrated Pest Management program
- ☐ Prohibition of selected materials in collections/storage areas (e.g., food, flowers)
- ☐ Other:

Contaminants (dust, dirt, pollution, chemicals)

- ☐ HEPA filters on air handling system
- ☐ Regular (non-HEPA) filters on air handling system
- ☐ Regularly scheduled cleaning/replacement of filters
- ☐ Pollution-absorptive materials in exhibit/storage cases (e.g., silver cloth)
- ☐ Dust filters in display cases
- ☐ Regular dusting
- ☐ Dust covers on collections storage shelves
- ☐ Other:

Light (ultraviolet and visible)

- ☐ UV film or screens on windows and other natural light sources
- ☐ UV filters on fluorescent light sources
- ☐ Shades and drapes on windows and other natural light sources
- ☐ Maintain light levels appropriate to particular materials
- ☐ Highly light-sensitive objects rotated on exhibit regularly
- ☐ Lights kept off in storage areas when unoccupied
- ☐ Other:

Temperature and Relative Humidity

- ☐ Monitoring of temperature
- ☐ Control of temperature
- ☐ Monitoring of relative humidity
- ☐ Control of relative humidity
- ☐ Creating micro-climates
- ☐ Other:

Fire

Detection

- ☐ Fire alarm
- ☐ Fire detection
- ☐ Smoke detection
- ☐ Heat detection

Automatic fire suppression

- ☐ Wet pipe system
- ☐ Dry pipe system
- ☐ Pre-action system
- ☐ Water mist system
- ☐ Automatic gaseous system

- ☐ Portable fire extinguishers
- ☐ Other:

18. ★ Where are collections exhibited or displayed? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Galleries
- ☐ Period rooms
- ☐ Historic buildings/structures
- ☐ Throughout a natural or interpreted landscape
- ☐ Lobbies/lounges
- ☐ Hallways
- ☐ Stairwells
- ☐ Libraries
- ☐ Food service areas
- ☐ Classrooms
- ☐ Staff offices
- ☐ Board room
- ☐ Other common areas
- ☐ Other:

19. ★ *If you indicated that the museum displays collections in “historic buildings/structures”:*
Describe efforts to balance the conservation needs of the objects with the preservation needs of the historical structures.

20. ★ What are the museum’s greatest challenges in maintaining a stable environment for collections? What is the museum doing to address these challenges? ⓘ

21. List each of the museum's collections storage locations (both on-site and off-site) and briefly describe the types of items stored there and who has access.

Documentation

22. Generally describe the scope and depth of collections cataloging. ⓘ

23. What are the museum's short and long term goals for visually documenting of the collection and how close is it to reaching these goals? ⓘ

24. What information is captured during inventory? Check all that apply. ⓘ

- ☐ Location
- ☐ Condition
- ☐ Reconciliation of objects to records (or lots to box/container inventories)
- ☐ Reconciliation of records to objects (or box/container inventories to lots)
- ☐ Accessioning marking (present and legible)
- ☐ Other:

25. Explain the formal process and schedule for conducting inventories of the collection and provide the most recent dates.
26. What percentage of the collection has been inventoried in the past ten years?
27. If the collections have not been completely inventoried within the last ten years, what are the plans for inventorying them?
28. Is a duplicate set of collections records stored securely off-site? ⓘ
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - The museum must store a duplicate set of collections records off-site. Please explain your plans to do this.
29. ★ How is the movement of collections within and going in and out of the museum authorized, documented/tracked, and managed?

Insurance

30. How does the museum insure its collections?
- ☐ Commercial policy
 - ☐ Self-insured
31. *If the museum checked "Commercial policy":* What is covered under the museum's commercial policy? Check all that apply.
- ☐ Structures
 - ☐ Collections/exhibits on loan to museum
 - ☐ Collections owned by the museum
 - ☐ Transit
 - ☐ Terrorism
 - ☐ Other:
32. Has the museum gone through a risk assessment exercise to determine the probable maximum loss of collections in any one event (e.g., fire, flood, theft)? ⓘ
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

Innovation and Impact

33. ★ Share a story about an instance where the museum feels it took a risk, did something innovative, or made a change that propelled it to the next level of fulfilling its collections stewardship service role.

Planning

① = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources

1. What is the current status of the museum's institutional planning process? ①
 - ☐ Preparing to start new planning process
 - ☐ Working on a new plan
 - ☐ Just completed a new plan that is not yet approved
 - ☐ Engaged in a regular review and implementation of current plan
2. Describe the most recent institutional planning process, including: community, staff, board, and other stakeholder involvement; data and resources used. ①
3. Museum planning is most effective when it takes into account the forces that will shape the long-term future (i.e., twenty to fifty years out), not just the next few years. What are the trends (e.g., demographic, economic, cultural, ecological, political) most likely to have a profound impact on the museum and its community and region in the coming decades? How does the museum factor these trends, and their potential effects, into its planning? ①
4. Explain how and when institutional plans are reviewed, compared against measures of success, and updated if needed.
5. Provide an example of how strategic planning helped improve or transform the institution.
6. Which of the following indicators does the museum use to define success? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Attendance numbers (on-site, off-site, and/or virtual)
 - ☐ Repeat visitors
 - ☐ Membership numbers
 - ☐ Donations to collections
 - ☐ Number/value of financial donations
 - ☐ Audience satisfaction
 - ☐ Expanding audiences (increasing diversity)
 - ☐ Partnerships with community organizations
 - ☐ Ratings and engagement on social networking sites
 - ☐ Other:
7. A well-trained staff and an informed board are critical assets for guiding the museum in the present and preparing it for the future. What professional development opportunities has the museum provided in the last three years to ensure staff and board members stay current on standards, best practices, trends, and developments in scholarship? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ In-house training
 - ☐ Financial support for attending professional meetings
 - ☐ Financial support for attending workshops/seminars/short courses
 - ☐ Professional memberships
 - ☐ Field trips to other organizations
 - ☐ Flextime to accommodate professional development
 - ☐ Support for participation in community service organizations
 - ☐ Sabbaticals
 - ☐ Other:

Organizational Health

① = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources

Legal Compliance, Public Disclosure, Accountability

1. Confirm the museum is in compliance with (check all that apply): ①
 - ☐ Federal, state, and local laws
 - ☐ Legal, regulatory and financial reporting requirements
 - ☐ Sarbanes-Oxley requirement for a Board-approved document destruction/retention policy
 - ☐ Sarbanes-Oxley requirement for a Board-approved whistleblower protection policy
2. If you left one or more boxes about compliance unchecked, explain why the museum is not in compliance.

Transparency/Openness

3. Where does the museum make information about its operations (including its governance, finances, programs, and activities) available to the public? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Annual report
 - ☐ Website
 - ☐ Other:
4. If you checked "Annual report" in the question above, what information is included in the annual report? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Mission statement
 - ☐ Program activities
 - ☐ Summary statement of financial position
 - ☐ Summary statement of activities
 - ☐ Names of Board members
 - ☐ Names of management staff
5. Which items are on the museum's website? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Mission statement
 - ☐ Program activities
 - ☐ Summary statement of financial position

- ☐ Summary statement of activities
- ☐ Names of Board members
- ☐ Names of management staff
- ☐ 990 (If applicable)
- ☐ Link to request a copy of the 990 (if applicable)
- ☐ Institutional code of ethics
- ☐ Dashboard of key indicators
- ☐ Annual report(s)

Governance

6. How many people serve on the governing authority(ies)?
7. Are there limits on the number of terms members of the governing authority(ies) can serve? ⓘ
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - Explain how new perspectives and ideas, are brought to bear on governance issues and overall museum leadership. ⓘ

If you indicated (in Organizational Profile that the museum has dual governance, answer questions 8-10.

8. How many governing authority(ies) does the museum have?
9. List each governing authority's name and indicate its roles by using the checkboxes.

Name of Governing Authority #1: _____

- ☐ Selecting the director
- ☐ Supporting/Evaluating director's performance
- ☐ Determining director's compensation
- ☐ Institutional planning
- ☐ Setting fundraising goals
- ☐ Approving the museum's budget
- ☐ Controlling access to a significant source of the museum's financial assets
- ☐ Monitoring reserve funds/endowments, setting investment policy/strategy
- ☐ Approving personnel policies
- ☐ Establishing an appropriate level of care for the museum's buildings, grounds and facilities
- ☐ Ensuring that the museum's programs/services are consistent with mission
- ☐ Approving the museum's policies regarding collections
- ☐ Approving de/accessioning decisions

- ☐ Serving as ambassadors, advocates and community representatives for the museum to enhance its public standing
- ☐ Approving and ensuring compliance with the museum's ethical standards
- ☐ Assessing the museum's financial performance in relation to budget
- ☐ Periodically reviewing the overall salary structure for the museum
- ☐ Approving audit, if applicable

Name of Governing Authority #2 : _____

- ☐ Selecting the director
- ☐ Supporting/Evaluating director's performance
- ☐ Determining director's compensation
- ☐ Institutional planning
- ☐ Setting fundraising goals
- ☐ Approving the museum's budget
- ☐ Controlling access to a significant source of the museum's financial assets
- ☐ Monitoring reserve funds/endowments, setting investment policy/strategy
- ☐ Approving personnel policies
- ☐ Establishing an appropriate level of care for the museum's buildings, grounds and facilities
- ☐ Ensuring that the museum's programs/services are consistent with mission
- ☐ Approving the museum's policies regarding collections
- ☐ Approving de/accessioning decisions
- ☐ Serving as ambassadors, advocates and community representatives for the museum to enhance its public standing
- ☐ Approving and ensuring compliance with the museum's ethical standards
- ☐ Assessing the museum's financial performance in relation to budget
- ☐ Periodically reviewing the overall salary structure for the museum
- ☐ Approving audit, if applicable

10. Are there written agreement(s) documenting authorities' roles and responsibilities for the museum?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Are there any external, separately incorporated organizations or government entities that have or share key assets or responsibilities that are crucial to the museum's operations?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered "Yes" to having separately incorporated organizations or government entities that have or share key assets or responsibilities that are crucial to the museum's operations, answer questions 12-14.

12. List the number of other organizations.

For each other organization, complete question 13.

13. What key assets or responsibilities does the other organization have or share that are crucial to the museum's operations?

Organization name: _____

- ☐ Owns/manages building
- ☐ Owns/manages land
- ☐ Owns/manages collections
- ☐ Manages endowment or financial assets
- ☐ Provides money for general operations and/or particular activities
- ☐ Provides money for some or all staff salaries
- ☐ Provides money for capital and/or maintenance expenses
- ☐ Provides maintenance of building/grounds
- ☐ Provides volunteers
- ☐ Provides advocacy
- ☐ Other key assets or responsibilities:

14. Does the museum have formal written management agreements governing the(se) relationships? ⓘ

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Does the museum have any internal, non-governing groups that serve in an advisory capacity? ⓘ

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. If you answered "Yes" to having internal, non-governing groups that serve in an advisory capacity: provide the following information for each group:

- why it exists (purpose, function, roles and responsibilities)
- composition
- administrative relationship between the museum and the advisory group

17. What, if any, are the museum's main governance challenges/goals and how does the museum plan on addressing them?

Financial Stability

18. If any of the museum's funding sources that provide 20% or more of the operating income are not reliable/stable, describe how the museum mitigates against the potential loss of this income.

19. Describe the museum's financial challenges and priorities, and how it is addressing them.
20. Does the museum have unrestricted financial reserves? ⓘ
☐ Yes ☐ No
21. *If you answered "Yes" to having unrestricted financial reserves:* How many months of operating expenses would these reserves cover?
22. *If you answered "Yes" to having unrestricted financial reserves:* Has the museum changed or violated its endowment, reserves, or permanently restricted funds use/spending policy in the last three years?
☐ Yes
 ○ Explain the details. If the principal was invaded, or drawn down more than policy allowed, what are the museum's plans to pay it back?
☐ No
23. *If you answered "No" to having unrestricted financial reserves:* What is the museum doing to protect itself from sudden losses of income?
24. Has the museum (or, if applicable, its parent organization) been cited for any issues in audit management letters in the last three years?
☐ No
☐ Yes
 ○ Explain the concerns listed in the management letter and how the museum addressed them.
☐ Not applicable (museum does not do an audit)
 ○ In lieu of an audit, what professional review of the finances is done on an annual basis and what steps does the museum take to ensure that the proper financial controls are in place?
25. Describe the institution's fundraising successes and challenges, including special campaigns, in the past three years.

Staffing

26. Do all employees have current, written job descriptions? ⓘ
☐ Yes ☐ No
27. Do written performance evaluations of employees take place annually?
☐ Yes
☐ No
 ○ Explain why performance reviews do not occur annually, and how and when performance evaluations do occur.

28. Does the museum have a written personnel policy? ⓘ
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - Explain why the museum does not have a written personnel policy.
29. Does the museum currently have any key professional staff positions that have gone unfilled for more than two years?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
30. Describe any other staffing challenges, and how the institution is addressing them.
31. Has the museum used consultants/independent contractors to fulfill key staff functions in the last three years?
- ☐ Yes
 - Describe what functions they filled.
 - ☐ No
32. If the museum uses docents/volunteers, describe how they are recruited, trained, evaluated, and supervised.

Security, Safety, and Emergency Planning

33. Is the museum current on all fire and health/safety inspections?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
34. If the museum is not current on all fire and health/safety inspections explain the deficiencies and what is being done to address them.
35. What health and safety training is provided to staff and volunteers? Check all that apply.
- ☐ CPR
 - ☐ Automated External Defibrillator (AED)
 - ☐ Personal safety
 - ☐ Handling of toxic substances
 - ☐ Hazards Communication Act / Material Safety Data Sheets
 - ☐ First Aid
 - ☐ Emergency/disaster preparedness and recovery
 - ☐ Use of fire extinguishers
 - ☐ Other:
36. What types of emergency/disaster preparedness has the museum practiced in the past three years? Check all that apply. ⓘ

- ☐ Simulated emergency situation
- ☐ Fire drill
- ☐ Other drill (specify):
- ☐ Other:

37. By position title(s), who is responsible for security in the museum?

38. Which of the following security measures are used in the museum's facilities? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Automated alarm system
- ☐ Door and window contacts
- ☐ Motion detectors
- ☐ Glass breakage detection
- ☐ Alarms on cases/specific objects
- ☐ Central monitoring of alarms within the building
- ☐ Monitoring of fire and security alarms at an off-site location
- ☐ Closed-circuit television surveillance
- ☐ Videotaped surveillance
- ☐ Written key control procedures
- ☐ Written building access procedures
- ☐ Historic buildings/properties accessible only via guided tours
- ☐ Proprietary keyway
- ☐ Sign-in/Sign-out sheets
- ☐ ID badges
- ☐ Fencing of grounds
- ☐ Gates to grounds
- ☐ Staff supervision of researchers
- ☐ Bag check for visitors upon entry
- ☐ Bag check for visitors upon exit
- ☐ Bag check for staff upon entry
- ☐ Bag check for staff upon exit
- ☐ Security personnel in galleries
- ☐ Security personnel stationed at entrances and exits during open hours
- ☐ Patrol of premises by security personnel when open to public
- ☐ Patrol of premises by security personnel when closed to public
- ☐ Other:

39. Briefly describe how people performing security functions are recruited, screened, trained, and supervised. Cover all security personnel types.

Wrap-Up

An accredited museum is more than the sum of its parts. Tell us why your museum matters and what gives you the greatest pride. Describe for the Accreditation Commission why your museum is important, to whom it is important, and how it makes a difference.

Attachments

① = a Help entry is available for definitions, standards, and additional guidance / resources
Online: Upload and provide approval or last revision dates

Core Documents ① (all required unless otherwise noted)

1. Institutional Plan(s)
2. Collections Management Policy *(required only if the museum owns, manages or borrows collections)*
OR
Borrowing Policies *(required for institutions that do not own or manage collections, but borrow and use objects for exhibits, education or research)*
3. Institutional Code of Ethics
4. Emergency Response & Disaster Preparedness Plan

Financial, Governance, and Administrative Documents ① (all required unless otherwise noted)

5. Audit, including management letters, for the last two fiscal years
OR
End of year financial statements with balance sheet for the last two fiscal years *if the museum does not do an audit*
6. Current fiscal year's budget
7. Delegation of Authority to Director
8. Organizational chart
9. *If applicable:* Most recent IRS Form 990 *(required if a museum is subject to 990 filing requirements)*
10. *If applicable:* Documentation regarding the importance of the museum to the parent organization and expressing the parent organization's commitment to support the museum *(required if museum has parent organization, e.g., a university)*
11. Other documents *if/ as needed*

Other plans: submit if the museum has them ① (all optional unless otherwise noted)

12. Collections Plan
13. Conservation Plan
14. Interpretive Plan or educational master plan *(required for non-collections based institutions)*
15. Completed General Facility Report

Submit if accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums①

16. Completed AZA Accreditation Questionnaire *(only for first-time Alliance accreditation reviews)*
17. AZA Accreditation Visiting Committee Report
18. AZA Accreditation Decision Letter

The American Alliance of Museums may select your Self-Study attachments for inclusion in its Sample Documents Library. We will exclude your financial statements, 990, and budget attachment. We will not alter document content other than to redact proprietary security details or personally identifiable information. Unless you withdraw permission in writing, you are granting permission to the Alliance to distribute the remaining documents, in whole or in part, to Tier 3 Alliance members in electronic format via its website.

Self-Study Help

About the Self-Study Help

Self-Study Questions and Attachments that have a Help entry are indicated with ⓘ.

There are several categories of Help: Standard, Best Practice, Definition, FYI (guidance on answering the question), and Resource.

If you still need:

- Clarification about how to answer a question, email: accreditation@aam-us.org.
- More resources and information on best practices: all Alliance members can access the online [Resource Library](#).
- Sample documents and customized research assistance (Alliance Tier 3 museum members only): contact the Alliance Information Center at infocenter@aam-us.org.

Self-Study Help: Organizational Profile

Museum Information

4. Governance: Dual	Definition: Dual (aka "Joint") Governance is a governance structure in which two or more entities share governance of the museum. This involves dividing or sharing basic governance responsibilities such as determining mission and purpose; hiring, supporting, and evaluating the director; strategic planning; obtaining and managing resources; and monitoring the organization's programs and services. For example: a museum might be jointly governed by a city government (which owns the collections and the building and employs the staff) and a private nonprofit (which determines museum policy and operates the museum). Or a university may own and manage a museum, but delegate responsibility for determining programs and services to an advisory board. Dual governance does not automatically include museums that have separately incorporated "Friends" organizations, unless the Friends organization has significant responsibility for governance of the museum delegated to it in writing. In case of joint governance, representatives of all governing authorities should be involved in completing, reviewing, and approving the information in the self-study.
6. Does your museum have a parent?	Definition: A parent organization is a larger organization within which a museum operates. Examples of parent organizations include: colleges or universities; tribal, municipal, state, or federal governments; state historical societies supervising multiple sites/functions; corporate foundations, etc.
8. Is your museum part of a museum system?	Definition: A museum system is a museum operation that has a complex organizational structure and/or facilities in more than one location.
9. On-site attendance	FYI: There is no one, standardized way of counting attendance. Report using whatever figures your museum collects.
12. Staff - Paid full-time	FYI: The specific number of hours that constitutes a "full-time" designation is determined by a museum's human resource policies and state employment law. The number here is linked to the same question in Operational Data. Data entered here will update the field in the other form, and vice versa. <i>For museums seeking accreditation:</i> regarding the full-time director, the Accreditation Commission expects that the directorship is his or her primary employment and that s/he works sufficient hours to adequately administer the museum. The accreditation eligibility requirement for a full-time director (or equivalent position) cannot be met by combining the hours of more than one individual.
13. Staff - Paid part-time	FYI: The number here is linked to the same question in Operational Data. Data entered here will update the field in the other form, and vice versa.
18. Indicate which of the following [discounts] your museum offers...	FYI: Answering this question is optional and responses do not impact the accreditation process. Some museums choose to offer these discounts as a professional courtesy to Alliance members. This is a voluntary decision and is not required for Alliance membership or accreditation.

Self-Study Help: Museum Overview

Mission

1. What is the museum's official, approved mission statement?	<p>Definition: A statement approved by the museum's governing authority that defines the purpose of a museum—its reason for existence. The mission statement establishes the museum's identity and purpose, provides a distinct focus for the institution, and identifies its role and responsibilities to the public and its collections.</p> <p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Elements of a Mission Statement • AAM Standards Regarding an Institutional Mission Statement <p>Resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Reference Guide: Developing a Mission Statement
2. Date mission statement approved.	<p>FYI: This should be the most recent approval date. If the mission statement has been revised and/or reapproved, use the most recent approval date as opposed to the original approval date.</p>
3. Under which provision of the IRS code is the museum (or parent organization) legally organized?	<p>FYI: Museums that are not incorporated separately from a parent organization should answer this question as it applies to the parent's tax exempt status.</p>

Collections

4. Which best describes the status of the museum regarding collections ownership or use?	<p>Definition: Collections are objects, living or nonliving, that museums hold in trust for the public. Items usually are considered part of the museum's collections once they are accessioned. Some museums designate different categories of collections (permanent, research, educational) that functionally receive different types of care, use, and documentation. These categories and their ramifications are established in the museum's collections management policy.</p>
5. What is the percentage of collections accessioned (minimum 80% accessioned required)?	<p>Definition: Accessioning is: a) The formal act of legally accepting an object or objects to the category of material that a museum holds in the public trust. b) The creation of an immediate, brief, and permanent record utilizing a control number for an object or group of objects added to the collection from the same source at the same time, for which the museum has custody, right, or title. Customarily, an accession record includes, among other data, the accession number; date and nature of acquisition (gift, excavation, expedition, purchase, bequest, etc.); source; brief identification and description; condition; provenance; value; and name of staff member recording the accession.</p>

Other Accreditations/Certifications

6. Is the institution accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)?	<p>FYI: In an effort to streamline the Alliance accreditation process, AZA-accredited zoos/aquariums can substitute <i>some</i> of their AAM accreditation Self-Study with their AZA accreditation report and related materials. Per an agreement between the Alliance and AZA, institutions applying for or renewing their AAM accreditation must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide AAM with copies of their AZA application package, Site Visit Report, written response to that report, and final decision letter. • Provide AZA with written permission to share with the Alliance Accreditation Program information about the institution's last AZA review, current AZA accreditation status, and any concerns that may impact the AAM review (e.g., areas the Visiting Committee and Accreditation Commission should know about). Please provide this permission to AZA directly. <p>If needed, additional information and documents may be required at other points in the accreditation review process.</p>
8. Does the zoo or aquarium also have non-living or botanical collections?	<p>FYI: If an AZA-accredited institution has additional collections which were not covered as part of the AZA accreditation review, such as botanical or historical collections, the organization will need to answer some collections questions. The collections question will refer to these collections and not the living animal collections which were reviewed by AZA.</p>
11. Is the museum LEED certified?	<p>Definition: LEED is a third-party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council in 2000 through a consensus-based process, LEED serves as a tool for buildings of all types and sizes. LEED certification offers third-party validation of a project's green features and verifies that the building is operating exactly the way it was designed to. For more information, see the LEED program website. www.usgbc.org/LEED.</p>

Accreditation Contacts

12. Director	<p>Definition: For the purposes of accreditation, the director is the individual to whom the governing authority delegates authority for the day-to-day operations of the museum. This person's title may vary, e.g., director, president, CEO, Museum or Site Administrator, etc.</p>
12. Head of the Governing Authority	<p>Definition: In a private non-profit museum governed by a board of trustees, this is the board chair, president, or equivalent—the chief nonpaid officer. <i>For museums with a governance structure in which the museum director reports indirectly, through a chain of command, to the actual governing authority:</i> the head of the governing authority is considered to be the individual within the larger organization to whom the director reports. For example, for accreditation purposes, the head of the governing authority might be the dean or provost of a university, the director of parks and recreation for a city government, or the military post commander for a military museum.</p>

Museum Systems

<p>13. Is this an accreditation review of a whole museum system?</p>	<p>Definition: A museum system is a museum operation that has a complex organizational structure and/or facilities in more than one location.</p> <p>FYI: Depending on the organizational structure and size of the museum system, the system can seek accreditation as one entity as a whole, or selected individual sites can seek accreditation independently. If a museum system decides to undergo a review as a system, all museums/sites within it must be included in the review and, on the whole, the system must meet accreditation standards. When a museum system is accredited, each museum part of the system which can be independently identified by the public as a separate museum will appear on the list of accredited institutions. Parts of the system which are not museums can be included in the review if they are in support of the museum functions, but they will not appear on the list. Contact the accreditation program staff with any questions or assistance for determining if the system should come in as whole or only specific sites.</p>
<p>14. Indicate how the following functions are handled within the museum system.</p>	<p>FYI: These answers will help everyone reviewing the institution during the accreditation review process better understand how the system works. If the majority of functions, especially administrative, are handled by site, the sites in the system might need to undergo individual accreditation reviews. Contact Accreditation Program staff for assistance.</p>

Self-Study Help: Operational Data

Finances: Summary

1. Does the museum submit a 990?	Definition: Form 990 is an annual reporting return that certain federally tax-exempt organizations must file with the IRS. It provides information on the filing organization's mission, programs, and finances. To determine if the museum should be filing this, see the IRS website: https://www.irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits
4. Summarize the museum's financial position over the past five years. (Grid)	FYI: Enter information about revenue and expenditures the past five completed fiscal years. If your institution has dual governance, include the combined revenue from all sources as it directly relates to the museum.
4. Fiscal Year	Definition: A fiscal year (or financial year, or sometimes budget year) is a period used for calculating annual ("yearly") financial statements.
4. Total Operating Revenue	Definition: Operating revenue includes revenue from all sources used to support the museum's general operations in a given fiscal year. Revenue includes any portion of revenue from the endowment that is applied to operating expenses in a given year. It does not include capital expenditures.
4. Total Operating Expenses	Definition: Operating expenses include all expenditures supporting the museum's general operations in a given fiscal year, including exhibitions, education, conservation, collections management, collections acquisitions, research, training, development and administration.
4. Net Surplus or Deficit	Definition: The amount of revenue or deficit recognized after certain operating expenses have been deducted. The operating expenses include tax and dividend payments.
4. Total Non-Operating Revenue	Definition: Non-operating revenue is revenue attributed to temporarily or permanently restricted funds, such as endowment contributions and pledges, capital campaign contributions and pledges, all realized capital gains and losses that are rolled back into the principal and income from capital campaigns.
4. Total Non-Operating Expense	Definition: Non-operating expenses are expenses related to temporarily or permanently restricted funds, such as endowment contributions and pledges, capital campaign contributions and pledges, realized capital gains and losses that are rolled back into the principal and capital expenditures.
4. Market value of any institutional endowment	Definition: Endowments are funds with permanent or term restrictions placed upon them by a donor, other funder, or governing board. Usually, just the interest or an amount determined by some other formula, such as a five-year rolling average, can be transferred to the operating budget. Include endowments dedicated to the support of this museum, restricted or unrestricted, whether directly held by your institution or by others (such as a parent organization or separate foundation).

5. If the museum ran a deficit in the last fiscal year, please select the nature of the deficit.	Definition: A deficit is the amount by which expenses exceed revenues in a given fiscal year. Planned/strategic deficits are incurred as a means of investing in growth or improvements. Involuntary deficits are incurred when the museum is unable to balance the budget by generating sufficient income or controlling expenditures.
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Revenue

8. Total Revenue from Public/Government Sources	Definition: Funds from public/government sources are monies provided directly by federal, state, local, or tribal governments. If your institution's parent organization is a government entity (including a public college or university), include funding support from your parent organization in this category.
8. Total Revenue from Private Sources	Definition: Funds from private sources are monies provided by private individuals (through donations), private foundations, corporations, etc. If your parent organization is a non-government entity, include funding support from your parent organization in this category.
8. Total Revenue from Investments	FYI: Only include the portion of revenue from investments that was available to meet operating expenses. The portion of operating revenue derived from investments is typically determined by a museum's spending policy and may include capital gains, dividends, interest, etc.
8. Total Revenue from Endowment Used for Operational Expenses	FYI: Only include the portion of revenue from the endowment that was available to meet operating expenses. The portion of operating revenue derived from an endowment is typically determined by a museum's spending policy and may be just the interest or an amount determined by some other formula, such as a five-year rolling average.
8. Total Earned Revenue	Definition: Earned revenue is income from shop sales, sales via the internet, admission, food service, facility rental, memberships, etc. Revenue from contracts goes here.

Expenses

9. Museum-Related Activities	Definition: Museum-related activities are those activities for which the organization was created to conduct (i.e., mission-related activities), and that form the basis of its nonprofit status. For museums, this includes expenses related to exhibits, collections, programs, and other mission-related activities.
9. Management and General Expenses	Definition: Management and general expenses consist of expenses related to the day-to-day operation of an organization. Included are items such as personnel, accounting, legal services, general insurance, and office management (i.e., the sorts of things needed to run any kind of organization, regardless of the fact that it is a museum).
9. Fundraising Expenses	Definition: Fundraising expenses are the costs related to soliciting contributed revenue.
10. What (approximate) percentage of the	FYI: Your answer indicates where the museum's resources are being spent. Your figures must add up to 100%. They can be approximate and

budget is allocated for the following activities/areas of operation?	rounded-off.
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Facilities

12. What is the interior square footage of the museum?	FYI: Provide the total square footage of interior spaces, including offices, collections storage, exhibit space, museum store, etc. If there is more than one building at this physical location provide the sum of all buildings. If the museum exists within a larger, non-museum structure, report only the square footage occupied by museum activities.
13. What is the total acreage of the developed exterior grounds?	Definition: Report on the portion of the grounds that is developed and actively maintained by the institution, which may include parking lots, gardens, nature trails, etc. Your response should not include land that is not developed, maintained, or actively used by the museum.
15. Are any buildings historic structures?	Definition: Accreditation does not define what constitutes a historic structure—this is a determination we expect museums to make for themselves with the input of their neighbors and communities. Some museums in historic structures identify their building as something that they hold in the public trust and treat it as part of their collection. For a discussion of “what is historic?” see the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s web site http://www.preservationnation.org/
16. Does the museum have off-site collection storage?	Definition: Off-site collections storage is located at a different site than the staff responsible for care of the collections. For the purposes of accreditation, a separate, dedicated storage facility housing both collections staff and collections would not count as “off-site.” A museum owned/rented support building (warehouse, etc.) used for collections storage that does not house collections staff would count.
18. What percentage of overall space is allocated to the following functions?	FYI: Your answer indicates how the museum is allocating space. Your figures must add up to 100%. They can be approximate and rounded-off.

Staffing/Human Resources

19. Full-time paid positions	<p>FYI: The specific number of hours that constitutes a “full-time” designation is determined by a museum’s human resource policies and state employment law. The number here is linked to the same question in Organizational Profile. Data entered here will update the field in the other form, and vice versa.</p> <p><i>For museums seeking accreditation:</i> regarding the full-time director, the Accreditation Commission expects that the directorship is his or her primary employment and that s/he works sufficient hours to adequately administer the museum. The accreditation eligibility requirement for a full-time director (or equivalent position) cannot be met by combining the hours of more than one individual.</p>
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20. Part-time paid positions	FYI: The number here is linked to the same question in Organizational Profile. Data entered here will update the field in the other form, and vice versa.
21. Does the museum employ seasonal staff?	Definition: Seasonal staff means a worker who performs labor or services on a seasonal basis, such as interpreters hired for the summer or retail workers employed exclusively during holiday seasons.
24. What percentage of the staff are allocated to the following functions?	FYI: Your answer indicates how the museum is allocating personnel resources. Your calculations can be based on either staff numbers or time. Your figures must add up to 100%. They can be approximate and rounded-off.

Attendance

25. Give number of hours open each year and describe other type of access the public has to the museum.	<p>Definition: “Hours open” in a year means regular, published, predictable hours.</p> <p>FYI: Do not count the hours when the museum only accommodates tours for school groups; is only available by appointment; is rented out for special events; or used by other groups for non-museum/non-mission related activities. Include these types of usage of the museum, if any are applicable, in your description of other types of access the public has to the museum.</p> <p><i>For museums seeking accreditation:</i> if the museum is not open at least 1000 hours/year, contact Accreditation Program staff. This is an eligibility requirement for accreditation.</p>
26. Give attendance figures for the last 5 years.	FYI: There is no one, standardized way of counting attendance. Report using whatever figures your museum collects.

Collections

29. What is the number of objects that fall into the following categories of collections.	FYI: Collections are often classified into categories (e.g., permanent, teaching, research, reference) based on how they are acquired, cared for, made accessible, or used by the museum. These categories are usually defined in the collections management policy, which provides specifics on the museum’s policies regarding each category of collection. There are no standard definitions for different categories of collections, though there are some trends. For example, many museums use the term “teaching collection” to refer to material that is safe to handle, made accessible for hands-on use, and held to a lower standard of care. Many museums use the term “permanent collection” to refer to material that they intend to hold in perpetuity and for which they provide the highest level of care. Note that some categories of collections (notably teaching or reference) are designated as non-accessioned by some museums—the material is not held in the public trust, for example, and not subject to the museum’s policies regarding deaccessioning or use of funds resulting from disposition. These categories and their ramifications are established in the museum’s collections management policy.
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Self-Study Help: Educational Role

Informing Interpretive Content

Informing Interpretive Content	<p>Definition: Interpretation is media and activities through which a museum carries out its mission and educational role. Interpretation is a dynamic process of communication between the museum and its audience. It is the means by which the museum delivers its content. Interpretation includes, but is not limited to, exhibits, tours, classes, school programs, publications, and websites.</p>
4. Which of the following sources inform content, or drive decisions, for interpretation?	<p>Definition: Original research results in new knowledge, and goes beyond just compiling what others say. Original research is conducted from primary sources. For example, it might include scientific staff collecting and analyzing specimens, historians drawing conclusions from examining original documents, or art historians writing scholarly articles presenting original ideas. Using Wikipedia is not original research.</p> <p>Definition: Applied research is generally directed towards solving a specific problem (e.g. research of drugs to cure a disease).</p> <p>Definition: Pure or basic research is conducted to create new knowledge and not necessarily to solve a specific problem, e.g., anthropological research to further our understanding of cultural change.</p> <p>FYI: Original research in the museum's disciplines (e.g., art, anthropology, natural history, biology, zoology, geology, informal learning) that generates new knowledge may or may not be collections-based and is very important for informing museum exhibitions, programs, and publications.</p>
5. How does the museum incorporate learning theory and educational research into practice?	<p>Standard: Principle 3.2 of Excellence in Practice Museum Education Standards and Principles says to incorporate learning theory and educational research into practice. Base methods and design of interpretation upon museum and educational learning theories. Apply knowledge of cognitive development, educational theory, and teaching practices to the types of voluntary, personal, and life-long learning that occurs in museums.</p>
7. What are the ways the museum carries out its educational role? Check all that apply.	<p>Definition: see “Informing Interpretive Content” above.</p> <p>FYI: Original collections-based research that generates new knowledge is extremely important in collections-holding museums, but it is not the only kind of research that is done in museums. For example, research for exhibitions or publications often goes well beyond the collections to create a broader historical, cultural, or natural context.</p>

Self-Study Help: Public Service Role

How the Museum Reflects and Serves Its Community and Audiences

8. If the makeup, resources, needs, or behaviors of the museum's geographic community or audiences have changed in the last three to five years, describe these changes, their impact on the museum, and how the museum has adapted/responded to them.	Definition: Geographic community (e.g., neighborhood, academic campus, town, city, county, or region).
14. Is the museum doing any of the following to be more accessible?	Definition: Universal Design: The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.
15. Does the museum have strategic partnerships/relationships with any of the following entities?	Definition: A strategic partner is a party with which a long-term agreement is reached for sharing of physical and/or intellectual resources in achievement of defined common objective.

Self-Study Help: Collections Stewardship Role

Acquisitions & Accessioning

<p>1. What is the percentage of collections accessioned.</p>	<p>Standard: The museum must have at least 80% of its collection accessioned. This is an eligibility requirement for accreditation.</p> <p>Definition: Accessioning is : a) The formal act of legally accepting an object or objects to the category of material that a museum holds in the public trust. b) The creation of an immediate, brief, and permanent record utilizing a control number for an object or group of objects added to the collection from the same source at the same time, for which the museum has custody, right, or title. Customarily, an accession record includes, among other data, the accession number; date and nature of acquisition (gift, excavation, expedition, purchase, bequest, etc.); source; brief identification and description; condition; provenance; value; and name of staff member recording the accession.</p>
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Deaccessioning & Disposal

<p>3. Has the museum deaccessioned objects in the last three years?</p> <p>Summarize the reason and method of disposal (do not itemize each item deaccessioned).</p>	<p>Definition: Deaccessioning is the formal process of removing an accessioned object or group of objects from the museum's collection. A museum still owns a deaccessioned object until it disposes of it, but no longer holds it in the public trust. Removing the object from the museum's possession is commonly referred to as a disposal.</p> <p>Definition: Disposal/disposition is the formal transfer of items deaccessioned from the collections to another owner or, within the museum, for another use. Methods of disposal include: sale, exchange with another museum, donation, destruction, transfer within the museum to teaching or reference collections.</p>
<p>4. What does the museum allow funds from deaccessioning to be used for?</p>	<p>Standard: The AAM Code of Ethics for Museums states, with regard to funds resulting from the sale of deaccessioned material that, "In no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections." It also stipulates that such funds "are to be used consistent with the established standards of the museum's discipline." Accredited museums are also expected to abide by discipline specific standards especially regarding this issue, where there is some variation with the AAM Code.</p> <p>Please note that museums with directors that are members of the Association of Art Museum Directors are prohibited from using deaccessioning funds for any purpose other than acquisition of new collections (per <i>Professional Practices for Art Museums</i>).</p> <p>For additional information see:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAM Code of Ethics for Museums • AASLH Statement of Professional Standards and Ethics • AAMD Professional Practices in Art Museums
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Loans

7. Who has the museum lent to in the last three years? Check all that apply.	Best Practice: The Accreditation Commission recognizes that some museums may loan objects from their collection to non-museum entities. The appropriateness of each situation is looked at on a case-by-case basis in accreditation. For more information see: Standards on Loaning Collections to Non-Museum Entities .
9. How does the museum record the return of a loan?	Best Practice: To help protect against potential risk and loss, the issuance of a loan return receipt is a best practice that many insurance companies require to have on file.

Compliance

11. Is the museum currently in compliance with relevant laws and regulations regarding collections and collecting activities?	Standard: The Accreditation Program expects participating museums to comply with all applicable local, state, federal, and international laws, codes, and regulations, but the Accreditation Program representatives are not qualified to assess or certify such legal compliance. In areas of operation subject to legal or regulatory oversight (e.g., fire protection, occupational safety and health, food service, animal care) the Accreditation Program expects museums to arrange for appropriate inspections/certifications of compliance. For more information see: Standards Regarding Facilities & Risk Management
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Conservation & Preservation

14. Has the museum conducted a general conservation survey of collections and environmental conditions (e.g., via Collections Assessment for Preservation Program (CAP) or via private consultant)?	FYI: The Collections Assessment for Preservation Program (CAP) run by FAIC [formerly the Conservation Assessment Program run by Heritage Preservation] provides a general conservation assessment of your museum's collection, environmental conditions, and site. Conservation priorities are identified by professionals who spend two days on-site and three days writing a report. The report can help your museum develop strategies for improved collections care and provide a tool for long-range planning and fund-raising. Learn more: https://www.culturalheritage.org/resources/collections-care/cap
20. What are the museum's greatest challenges in maintaining a stable environment for collections? What is the museum doing to address these	Standard: There is not one set of standards regarding climate control and monitoring against which museums are assessed in accreditation. The Accreditation Commission and Visiting Committee examine the museum's climate control methods management of fluctuations, and monitoring in the context of your mission, resources, and the nature of the collections that you hold. A large art museum, for example, will be expected to have relatively sophisticated and effective climate control. For some historic houses, it may be

challenges?	inappropriate to provide humidity control normally considered optimal for collections, because it might damage the house itself. Small museums might provide climate control appropriate to their resources via relatively low-technology controls such as portable humidifiers, dehumidifiers, selective opening of screened windows, or layered barriers in collections storage (cases, bagging) to buffer against climate fluctuations. For more information see: Standards Regarding Collections Stewardship .
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Documentation

22. Generally describe the scope and depth of collections cataloging.	<p>Definition: Cataloging is the creation of a record of information specific to an item, assembly, or lot, and cross-referenced to other records and files, including identification and documentation of this material in some detail. The catalog record establishes the identity and significance of an item, and it often contains a photograph, sketch, film, sound, or electronic data. There is no universally accepted set of information that constitutes a catalog record. Each discipline and type of museum has its own conventions. Catalog records may be kept as hard copy, electronic data, or both.</p> <p>FYI: Scope refers to the type of information the museum captures in a catalog record. Depth refers to the comprehensiveness / completeness of the museum's catalog records. It's understood that cataloging is an on-going process that in a sense is never finished completely, though all records should have some minimal, basic information; and that completeness of catalog records can vary widely.</p>
23. What are the museum's short and long term goals for visually documenting of the collection and how close is it to reaching these goals?	<p>Definition: Visual documentation of collections is sketches, photographs, videotapes, or electronic images recording the physical appearance of an object at a point in time. Museums may create visual documentation to record condition, facilitate access and inventory, or support insurance records, or for other purposes.</p>
24. What information is captured during inventory? Check all that apply.	<p>Definition: Inventory is the creation of an itemized list of objects, assemblies, and lots that identifies each object's or lot's physical location; or the act of verifying existing records of location.</p> <p>Inventory can be done by individual object, by lot, container, box, etc. depending on the nature and size of the collections.</p>
28. Is a duplicate set of collections records stored securely off-site?	<p>Standard: AAM expects that a system of documentation, records management, and inventory is in effect to describe each object and its acquisition (permanent or temporary), current condition and location, and movement into, out of, and within the museum. And, that the museum ensures this important documentation is maintained and secured in an appropriate manner. Storing collections records off-site means that this vital information is kept safe from harm in an accessible location (e.g., not a staff member's home). Off-site</p>

	storage can be a server in another city or state. For more information see: Standards Regarding Collections Stewardship .
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Insurance

32. Has the museum gone through a risk assessment exercise to determine the probable maximum loss of collections in any one event (e.g., fire, flood, theft)?	Definition: Probable Maximum Loss is a property loss insurance term referring to the maximum loss expected at a given location in the event of an emergency at that location, expressed in dollars or as a percentage of total values.
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Self-Study Help: Planning

<p>1. What is the current status of the museum's institutional planning process? ⓘ</p>	<p>Standard: A current, written institutional plan is a required document for Accreditation. For more information see: Standards Regarding Institutional Planning.</p>
<p>2. Describe the most recent institutional planning process, including: community, staff, board, and other stakeholder involvement; data and resources used.</p>	<p>Standard: The Accreditation Commission expects that institutional planning is inclusive of all stakeholders. These can include staff, board and community representatives in different ways. For more information see: Standards Regarding Institutional Planning. [hyperlink:</p> <p>FYI: Examples of resources could be census data, surveys, trends reports, and market research in the community.</p>
<p>3. What are the trends (e.g., demographic, economic, cultural, ecological, political) most likely to have a profound impact on the museum and its community and region in the coming decades? How does the museum factor these trends, and their potential effects, into its planning?</p>	<p>FYI : Learn more about trends impacting museums and other resources to help your museum think about its long term future from TrendsWatch, blogs, weekly emails, and other reports issued by AAM's Center for the Future of Museums. Visit http://www.aam-us.org/resources/center-for-the-future-of-museums.</p>

Self-Study Help: Organizational Health

Legal Compliance, Public Disclosure, Accountability

1. Confirm the museum is in compliance with...	Standard: The Accreditation Program expects participating museums to comply with all applicable local, state, federal, and international laws, codes, and regulations, but the Accreditation Program representatives are not qualified to assess or certify such legal compliance. In areas of operation subject to legal or regulatory oversight (e.g., fire protection, occupational safety and health, food service, animal care) the Accreditation Program relies on museums to arrange for appropriate inspections/ certifications of compliance. For more information see: Standards Regarding Facilities & Risk Management
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Governance

7. Are there limits on the number of terms members of the governing authority(ies) can serve?	Best Practice: AAM does not require term limits for members of the governing authority, but this is one method traditionally employed by museums to cycle in new people and ideas; reflect the diversity of the communities they serve; provide opportunities for external input so that the governing authority is accountable to those communities; and ensure that members of the governing authority are evaluated on their performance and non-performing members are cycled out.
7. If no term limits: explain how new perspectives and ideas, are brought to bear on governance issues and overall museum leadership.	Standard: In lieu of term limits, the Commission expects that measures are taken to ensure board diversity and appropriate community representation and/or alternative opportunities for community input (e.g., advisory boards, task forces, committees). For more information see: Standards Regarding Governance
8. If you indicated (in Organizational Profile) that the museum has dual governance, how many governing authority(ies) does the museum have?	FYI: This count includes all of the museum's governing bodies.
10. Are there written agreement(s) documenting authorities' roles and responsibilities for the museum?	Standard: The Accreditation Commission expects museums with dual governance to have a written agreement documenting the roles and responsibilities in this relationship. Documentation of operational relationships could be memorandum of understandings, contracts, etc. For more information see: Standards Regarding Governance .
14. Does the museum have formal written management agreements governing the(se) relationships?	FYI: Examples of these documents would be management agreement, memorandum of understanding, contracts, etc.) between the organization and the museum.

15. Does the museum have any internal, non-governing groups that serve in an advisory capacity?	FYI: These groups are part of the museum itself, either as an informal association or by appointment of the governing authority. These groups serve at the pleasure of and under the direction of the museum's governing authority or its designee. These are not separately incorporated (i.e., are not legally separate organizations) though may have their own operating guidelines.
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Financial Stability

20. Does the museum have unrestricted financial reserves?	Definition: Financial reserves are liquid assets held by an organization in order to meet expected future payments and/or emergency needs. Reserves are normally built up from retained earnings (i.e. year end surpluses).
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Staffing

26. Do all employees have current, written job descriptions? ⓘ	Standard: AAM expects there to be formally approved position descriptions for all paid principal and professional administrative staff. Position descriptions often include: a general statement describing the responsibilities of the position and to whom the position reports (chain of command/communications within the organization) and other positions that the position supervises; an itemization of the position's key duties and level of responsibility; a summary of the qualifications, education, expertise, abilities, and related experience required to perform the duties.
28. Does the museum have a written personnel policy	Best Practice: Developing clearly written policies and procedures that are documented, updated, and followed brings structure to an organization and assists in the day-to-day decision-making processes. Policies and procedures need to be adaptable to the needs of the organization and enforced across the organization. Personnel policies provide several types of information that new and established employees need to know. New employees need to understand such factors as dress requirements, breaks and lunch practices, working hours, electronic equipment use, treatment of company property, and confidential information. All employees must understand policies in regards to vacation, sick time, leaving early, holiday pay, medical leaves, and benefits. Supervisors and managers have policies that explain discipline processes, coaching, and counseling employees.

Safety, Security, and Emergency Planning

36. What types of emergency/disaster preparedness has the museum practiced in the past three years? Check all that apply.	Standard: Museum are expected to have a regular schedule of practice of the emergency/disaster preparedness and recovery plans in order to ensure all staff and volunteers are familiar with the procedures if an emergency were to occur. For more information see: Standards Regarding Facilities & Risk Management
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Self-Study Help: Attachments

Core Documents

1. Institutional Plan(s)	<p>Definition: An institutional plan is a comprehensive plan that broadly delineates where the institution is going and provides sufficient detail to guide implementation. It sets priorities and guides important decisions that are oriented towards the future. Some museums split this into two parts: a multi-year big-picture plan that sets strategies, goals, and priorities (sometimes this is referred to as a strategic or long-range plan) and an operational plan that provides the details needed to implement the decisions in the strategic or long-range plan. The operational plan usually focuses on a short period of time and is typically geared to the museum's budget year (sometimes this is referred to as an implementation plan). There is great variability in how museums refer to these planning documents and divide particular functions between them.</p> <p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Elements of an Institutional Plan • AAM Standards Regarding Institutional Planning <p>Resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Reference Guide: Developing an Institutional Plan
2. Collections Management Policy	<p>Definition: A Collections Management Policy is a written document, approved by the governing authority, which specifies the museum's policies concerning all collections-related issues, including accessioning; documentation; storage; use and disposition. Policies are general guidelines that regulate the activities of the organization. They provide standards for exercising good judgment.</p> <p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Collections Management Policy is required for all institutions that own collections or manage collections belonging to others on an ongoing basis. • Required Elements of a Collections Management Policy • AAM Standards Regarding Collections Stewardship <p>Resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Reference Guide: Developing a Collections Management Policy
2. Borrowing Policies	<p>Standard: Required for institutions that do not own or manage collections, but borrow and use objects for exhibits, education or research.</p> <p>Definition: institutions that don't own or manage collections, but borrow and use objects for exhibits, education or research must have borrowing policies that articulate the museum's policies for borrowing objects lent by others (e.g., who the museum will borrow from, for what purpose, the loan approval process, authority, etc.). The policies should also address how the museum will care for the objects and meet the loan conditions (e.g., security, access, handling, monitoring and control of environmental conditions, housekeeping, records/loan documentation, etc.).</p> <p>FYI: Borrowing and care policies can be separate documents or combined.</p>

3. Institutional Code of Ethics	<p>Definition: A code of ethics is a written set of guidelines to help all members of an organization (including board, staff, and volunteers) conduct their actions in accordance with the museum's and the museum field's primary values and ethical standards.</p> <p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Elements of an Institutional Code of Ethics • AAM Standards Regarding an Institutional Code of Ethics <p>Resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Reference Guide: Developing an Institutional Code of Ethics <p>FYI: The date provided should be the most recent approval date. If the code has been revised and reapproved, use the most recent approval date as opposed to the original approval date.</p>
4. Emergency Response & Disaster Preparedness Plan	<p>Definition: An emergency response & disaster preparedness plan is a document that helps ensure the museum is in a state of readiness to minimize the loss of life, injury, and damage to property and collections resulting from a disastrous event. The plan should provide for the rescue, relief, rehabilitation, and stabilization of other services in the aftermath of the disaster and ensure the museum has the capability and resources to continue to sustain essential functions without being overwhelmed by the demands of the circumstances.</p> <p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Elements of an Emergency Response & Disaster Preparedness Plan • AAM Standards Regarding Facilities and Risk Management <p>Resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Reference Guide: Developing an Emergency Response & Disaster Preparedness Plan

Financial, Governance, and Administrative Documents

5. Audit, including management letters, for the last two fiscal years	<p>Definition: The management letter from an auditor identifies issues not required to be disclosed in the Annual Financial Report but represents the auditor's concerns and suggestions noted during an audit.</p>
6. Current fiscal year's budget	<p>Definition: A budget is a document summarizing planned income and expenses in a given year and is usually approved by the governing authority. Budget amounts often are divided into major categories, e.g., salaries, benefits, equipment, office supplies, conference registration, travel, etc. Museums sometimes write budgets by program area, showing expenses and income by department.</p>
7. Delegation of Authority to Director	<p>Definition: The delegation of authority is the written authorization through which the museum's governing body formally delegates authority for the management of the museum's day-to-day operations to the museum director (or equivalent paid staff member). The authority so delegated includes, but is not limited to, implementation of policy, management of all programs, and management and supervision of staff and volunteers (including hiring and firing).</p> <p>Standard: AAM Standards Regarding Delegation of Authority</p>

8. Organizational chart	Definition: An organizational chart is a diagram that shows the structure of an organization and the relationships and relative ranks of its parts and positions/jobs; the chart should include the museum's parent organization, governing authority, partner organizations, advisory boards, supporting organizations, staff, and volunteers, as applicable.
9. <i>If applicable:</i> Most recent IRS Form 990 (required if a museum is subject to 990 filing requirements)	Definition: Form 990 is an annual reporting return that certain federally tax-exempt organizations must file with the IRS. It provides information on the filing organization's mission, programs, and finances. For more information on who is required to file: http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/990.pdf .
10. <i>If applicable:</i> Documentation regarding the importance of the museum to the parent organization and expressing the parent organization's commitment to support the museum (required if the museum has a parent organization, e.g., a university)	Definition: If the museum has a parent organization, this documentation codifies and expresses the importance of the museum to the parent and its commitment to support the museum (e.g., resolution of permanence passed by parent; parent organization's by-laws or organizing documents; parent organization's institutional plan; memorandum of understanding or management agreement between the parent and the museum). Details are outlined in the Standard for Statements of Support from Parent Organizations. Standard: Statements of Support from Parent Organizations
11. Other documents	FYI: If you have any other documents that will give a better or more comprehensive view of the museum as a whole, please upload and describe here. The museum also may be asked to provide additional information as needed to complete the review.

Other Plans

12. Collections Plan	Definition: A collections plan guides the content of the collections and leads staff in a coordinated and uniform direction over time to refine and expand the value of the collections in a predetermined way. The plan is time-limited and identifies specific goals to be achieved. It provides a rationale for those choices and specify how they will be achieved. The plan also identifies who will implement the it, when implementation will happen, and what implementation will cost.
13. Conservation plan	Definition: A conservation plan is a strategy for the long-term care of the collection. It typically includes an analysis of the museum's setting and resources in terms of conservation requirements, identifies priorities, and sets specific strategies for implementation.
14. Interpretive plan or educational master plan (required for non-collections based institutions)	Definition: An interpretive plan outlines what stories and messages the museum wants to convey through a variety of media, such as exhibits, programming, and publications. It may include the institution's interpretive philosophy, educational goals, and target audiences. A museum may develop an interpretive plan for an individual component of its operation—for example, for its permanent exhibits or for one of its historic sites.

15. Completed General Facility Report	<p>FYI: The RC-AAM General Facility Report was created by the Registrars Committee of the AAM as a means of facilitating the exchange of information between museums about an institution's physical plant and its policies and procedures related to areas such as security, handling, and environmental controls. This report often is used by museums and insurance personnel to determine whether an institution has the ability to safely borrow, ship, handle, secure, and install objects requested for loan. It is not required for accreditation, but if you have completed it, it is very informative for the Visiting Committee and Accreditation Commission. How to get a blank copy: the General Facility Report is available for purchase from the Alliance bookstore.</p>
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AZA Accreditation

16-18 If Accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)	<p>In an effort to streamline the Alliance accreditation process, AZA-accredited zoos/aquariums can substitute <i>some</i> of their AAM accreditation Self-Study with their AZA accreditation report and related materials. Per an agreement between the Alliance and AZA, institutions applying for or renewing their AAM accreditation must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide AAM with copies of their AZA questionnaire (application) and/or Site Visit Report, written response to that report, and final decision letter. • Provide AZA with written permission to share with the Alliance Accreditation Program information about the institution's last AZA review, current AZA accreditation status, and any concerns that may impact the AAM review (e.g., areas the Visiting Committee and Accreditation Commission should know about). Please provide this permission to AZA directly.
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