

ACCREDITATION COMMISSION POLICY

Mergers and Other Organizational or Physical Changes at Accredited Museums

In order to best fulfill their missions, remain viable, and stay relevant to their audiences and communities, accredited museums may find it necessary to make significant changes to their organizational structure, mission, and identity. This can include:

- » merging or consolidating with another accredited or non-accredited museum
- » separating into one or more new entities
- » entering into a management agreement with another organization
- » changing the museum's governance type or structure (e.g., municipally governed museum becoming a private nonprofit)
- » dramatically changing the museum's mission
- » joining, leaving, or creating a museum system
- » moving to an entirely new facility and/or location

It is the responsibility of each accredited museum to inform the Alliance's Accreditation Commission and program staff of such changes. The Accreditation Commission and program staff will then assess each situation on a case-by-case basis. Potential changes in a museum's accredited status as a result of large-scale institutional changes will depend on whether the museum still exists as essentially the same entity that the Commission originally accredited.

Circumstances will determine how or if accredited status is affected and the timing of the museum's next scheduled review. Museums in the process of seeking accreditation for the first time that undergo a

merger, consolidation, or separation, are required to withdraw from participation in the program and re-apply as the new entity(ies).

It is generally true that:

- » Accreditation is not automatically transferable: when an accredited museum and a non-accredited museum merge, consolidate, or engage in some other type of arrangement, accreditation is not automatically “inherited” by the non-accredited entity.
- » Change by itself does not necessarily affect accredited status—what matters is the degree to which:
 - the museum still resembles the organization as it was last reviewed by the Commission, and
 - the museum continues to meet Accreditation Program’s eligibility criteria and the Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum.

Areas of Consideration:

The Accreditation Commission and program staff will examine whether the museum is still essentially the same entity that was accredited before the changes occurred or whether it has changed so much that its accredited status needs to be re-evaluated. To ascertain the effect of the changes, the Commission and program staff consider the nature of the changes, their impact, and to what degree they changed the following:

- » Mission
- » Name and public identity
- » Location and physical facility
- » Programming and services
- » Governance, including, resulting governing authority(ies), status and composition of the governing authority, and any changes to legal incorporated status
- » Increase or decrease in the size of budget, collections, staff, or facilities
- » Addition or deletion of a discipline (science, art, history, etc.)
- » Leadership, management, and staffing structure



- » Internal operations and administration (e.g., what services are shared/centralized, how budgets are managed)
- » Ownership of and stewardship responsibilities for collections

Examples of possible outcomes:

Depending on the results of this review, the entity that was originally accredited may:

- » retain its status as long as some changes are made (e.g., the rest of the museum system enters the Accreditation Program)
- » retain its accredited status, which will be assessed at the next regularly scheduled accreditation review date
- » be required to undergo a subsequent review earlier than originally scheduled
- » be required to provide selected materials and information to the Accreditation Commission or program staff to confirm the museum still meets program eligibility criteria and/or the Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum
- » be asked to update its Self-Study Questionnaire and resubmit documents (if in an active review)
- » be required to include newly acquired sites in its next review cycle
- » lose accreditation--the new entity(ies) may reapply to the Accreditation Program

The program policy requiring previous participants to wait one year before being eligible to reapply will be waived for museums that lose their accredited status as a result of the above circumstances. Depending on the situation, the new entity(ies) applying may also be exempt from having to go through the interim approval process required of new applicants.