

Similarities and Differences: Programs

The Museum Assessment and Accreditation programs are tools that museums can use to:

- assess their operations in light of their mission and resources
- compare themselves to other similar institutions at a national level

- evaluate themselves using the standards and best practices in the museum field

Both programs use a process of self-assessment and peer review. However, there are significant differences in their purposes and outcomes.

Program Differences

MAP

The purpose of the program is to:

Provide collegial, consultative feedback that the museum can use to set priorities and identify needs for change.

The purpose of self-assessment is to:

Help museum staff and members of the governing authority share information, test assumptions, and try new ways of operating, as well as inform the MAP Surveyor.

The purpose of peer review is to:

Provide the museum with information about how its operations measure up to standards and best practices in the field, with ideas on how it might address its current challenges and which resources might aid that effort.

The outcome of the program:

Museums completing MAP have two new resources—their self-study and an Assessment Report from their Surveyor(s)—to help them engage in planning and identify opportunities for improvement.

Accreditation

The purpose of the program is to:

Recognize museums for their excellence and high professional standards, public service, leadership and educational role. Promote quality and public accountability; certify that a museum operates according to the current best practices.

The purpose of self-assessment is to:

Provide a framework for an overall evaluation, catalyze strategic planning, and engage staff and board to focus on mission/goals; provide the Visiting Committee and Accreditation Commission with in-depth information about the museum's operations.

The purpose of peer review is to:

Confirm to the Accreditation Commission that the museum operates as reported in its self-study and meets the program requirements, and provide the museum with an outside perspective on its strengths and weaknesses. The Visiting Committee members' role is not to provide specific recommendations to the museum on how to improve operations or rectify problems.

The outcome of the program:

Museums that apply for accreditation are either:

- granted accreditation,
- tabled for the purpose of clarifying information or correcting deficiencies
- denied accreditation



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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do museums have to participate in MAP before applying for accreditation or subsequent accreditation?

A: Museums are not required to complete any of the MAP assessments before they apply for accreditation. However, many museums do use MAP to identify and correct deficiencies prior to applying for accreditation, as a means of preparing for accreditation, and between accreditation reviews.

Q: Our museum received a glowing Assessment Report from our MAP Surveyor. Does this mean we will definitely be accredited?

A: A positive review from a MAP Surveyor does not mean that your institution will be granted accreditation. However, it is likely that a MAP Surveyor will notice and comment upon a museum practice that could become an issue during the accreditation process.

Q: What's the best way to use MAP to prepare for accreditation?

A: In your application to the program and your MAP Self-Study Workbook, tell the MAP staff that you'd like to use MAP to prepare for applying for accreditation. The staff will match you with a Surveyor who is familiar with accreditation requirements. In addition, read *Museum Accreditation: Criteria and Characteristics* and the Accreditation Commission's Expectations (all available on the AAM Web site) before you complete your self-study and incorporate that information into your assessment of your operations.

Q: My museum has submitted an application for accreditation, and now we want to do MAP at the same time. Is this permitted?

A: Museums may engage in the MAP and Accreditation Programs separately or at the same time, as best serves their needs. However, a considerable amount of staff time is needed to complete the self-study portion for either program. It may help to evaluate your goals to pursue one or the other and then reassess your needs. Contact the MAP and/or Accreditation Program staff to discuss your options.