

Accreditation Commission Guidelines for the Visiting Committee: Conducting Site Visits to Institutions during Times of Transition

Background

Capital campaigns, construction projects, major renovations, other long-term projects, and leadership changes or operational/administrative changes are frequently undertaken by institutions pursuing accreditation. In fact, the Commission understands, and expects, to find that accredited museums are actively involved with efforts to improve their programs and operations. The continuous growth and development of accredited museums is supported and encouraged by the Commission if the institution has engaged in a thoughtful considered approach to that evolution. However, during such times, the Commission expects that the museum continues to address and maintain current standards and practices as applicable to its current operational situation.

Institutions usually have great concern over the effect such conditions will have on their on-site review, commonly assuming such situations will negatively affect their accreditation review. For example, a capital construction project or major renovation can often result in conditions and circumstances atypical of normal operations, such as restricted public access, the storage of all or some of the collection, and/or limited on-site programming. Therefore, museums are counseled by the Accreditation Office that these types of situations should not be viewed as a hindrance to a Visiting Committee's on-site evaluation and assured that the team will be given additional guidance (see below) for conducting the visit.

Special Instructions and Considerations

The Accreditation Office had developed the following supplementary guidelines for the on-site visit to ensure that the Visiting Committee is sensitive to the transitional nature of the current operations at the museum. Please consider the following—in addition to the standard instructions and evaluation techniques provided—when conducting the review, writing the report, and making the recommendation:

- Evaluate the museum within the context of whether it is maintaining current standards and practices as applicable to its *current operational situation*.
- Consider carefully the two core questions used for every accreditation review as the basis of your evaluation: *How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals; and, how well does the museum's performance meet standards and practices as they are generally understood in the museum field?*
- Explore in-depth the institution's plans for the future, especially how/how well the museum is meeting its planning goals.
- In your final assessment of the museum's operations for accreditation, take into consideration the institution's past accomplishments, due diligence in addressing and maintaining standards of excellence during periods of significant transitions, and the documentary evidence of the museum's plans for the future of the institution.