

MAP Surveyor Position Description

What is Peer Review?

Peer review is a collegial process of evaluation that is practiced by many professions as a means of quality control and certification. Peer review is premised on the idea that the professionals who develop and follow standards of excellence in their own everyday work are the best ones to evaluate the work of their colleagues. Within the museum field, peer review is used to evaluate grants, critique exhibits, and as part of the Museum Assessment and Accreditation programs at the American Association of Museums (AAM).

Peer review also benefits the profession by:

- Encouraging broad, active participation in the development of standards of excellence
- Increasing knowledge among peer reviewers about evolving standards

What is the Museum Assessment Program?

Purpose

The purpose of the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) at the AAM is twofold: to guide museums toward an understanding of the importance of continuing self-assessment and to advise museum staff on ways to best implement professional museum practices. The ultimate goal of MAP is to increase an institution's effectiveness in meeting its mission.

Process

MAP is a three-phase process of self-study, peer review, and implementation. After the museum completes its self-study document, one or two peer reviewers (called Surveyors in MAP) assess the museum's operations by reviewing the written materials, visiting the institution, and writing an Assessment Report. The museum uses the information resulting from these two phases to identify priorities, address issues, and engage in planning for the implementation phase.

Types of Assessments

MAP offers four assessments:

Collections Management Assessment focuses on collections policies, planning, access, documentation, and care within the context of the museum's total operations

Governance Assessment examines the structure, roles, responsibilities, and performance of a museum's governing authority

Institutional Assessment considers all aspects of the museum's management and operations

Public Dimension Assessment reviews the museum's public service role; focuses on public relations and marketing, exhibits, programs and services

What are the Responsibilities of a MAP Surveyor?

The Surveyor serves as a supportive colleague to assess a museum's operations and make useful recommendations for change.

The Surveyor's purpose is to:

- Review the museum's performance in the context of its mission and resources.
- Compare the museum's operations to standards and best practices as generally understood in the museum field.
- Provide recommendations to the museum on potential strategies for dealing with challenges.
- Share information about ways in which similar institutions operate.
- Identify resources the museum can use to reach its goals.

The Surveyor's responsibilities are to:

- Become as familiar as possible with the museum and its operations prior to the site visit. Read the self-study describing the museum's present situation. Request other documents as needed.
- Schedule the visit to the museum. Work directly with



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the museum to arrange a mutually convenient date for the site visit. Discuss with the museum what it hopes to achieve from participation in MAP. Jointly develop an agenda for the visit. Determine an appropriate length for the visit with the museum. Collections Management, Governance, and Institutional MAP visits should be at least one full day (8 hours); Public Dimension MAP visits should be at least two full days (16 hours). Any visit can be longer depending on the size and needs of the organization.

- Visit the museum. Conduct the assessment in a professional and objective manner. Discuss with governing authority and staff their plans to implement recommendations. Arrange follow-up contact with museum staff, if possible.
- Write an assessment report. Submit a comprehensive report of findings and recommendations to the MAP office. Review overall operations using the Critical Issues Checklist, address issues of major concern, and offer constructive suggestions for change. Professionalism is essential. Adhere to deadlines as established by the MAP Office.
- Stay in touch. Museum staff may wish to contact you during the first year of implementation to update you on their progress, talk through an issue, or ask for clarification on a recommendation. While not required, MAP encourages Surveyors to do so as their time allows.

What are the qualifications?

Museum professionals must demonstrate a certain level of knowledge and experience in order to be accepted as a MAP Surveyor. See the Peer Reviewer Qualifications for Service: Eligibility Criteria for details about how these criteria can be demonstrated. Surveyors must:

- Demonstrate knowledge of basic, overall museum operations
- Understand the professional nature of museum work and participate in the field-wide dialogue about museum operations, standards and best practices, and emerging issues
- Demonstrate interpersonal qualities needed to

conduct a successful site visit

- Demonstrate familiarity with museum-related resources

What are the Performance Expectations?

Surveyors must meet a certain standard of performance in order to be effective and to maintain MAP's credibility and accountability. See the Peer Reviewer Qualifications for Service: Performance Expectations for details about the measures used in evaluating performance of Surveyors.

- Participation: at least one peer reviewer activity a year, if asked
- Ethics: adheres to the highest standards of ethical behavior and maintain total confidentiality
- Professionalism: completes the work in a well-informed and professional manner
- Communications skills: demonstrates effective oral and written communication

What is the Time Commitment?

The time required depends on each individual's work style and the complexity and size of the museum involved. Surveyors report that they spend about 40 hours over a three-month period preparing, conducting the site visit, and writing the assessment report.

Surveyors receive an honorarium once the MAP office receives and approves the final report. The museum either pays directly or reimburses for all direct expenses (travel, meals, accommodations, and postage).

In addition, Surveyors twice yearly receive *NEWStandard*, a publication specifically for peer reviewers, and have access to the peer reviewer-only section of the AAM Web site.