

The AAM Accreditation Program Presents:

The Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum...in Plain English

This “translation” of the Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum from program-speak into “plain English” is intended as a lighthearted way to demystify Accreditation Program standards by showing that they are not “extra work” or unattainable, but all things that any well run museum and nonprofit should be doing anyway. Please visit www.aam-us.org/accred for the official version of the Characteristics and to learn more about accreditation standards.

Public Trust & Accountability

Accountability

- Be good
- No really—not only be legal, but be ethical
- Show everyone how good and ethical you are (don’t wait for them to ask)

Community engagement

- Do good for people
- Know which people
- And to be on the safe side
 - Be nice to everyone else, too
 - Especially if they live next door

Diversity and Inclusiveness

- Avoid cloning
- Look something like the people you are doing good for
- And maybe a bit like your neighbors
- Let other people help decide what games to play
- And what the rules are
- Share your toys

Mission and Planning

Mission

- Know what you want to do
- And why it makes a difference to anyone
- Then put it in writing
- Stick to it

Planning

- Decide what you want to do next
- When you are deciding what to do, ask lots of people for their opinion
- Put it in writing
- Then do it
- If it didn’t work, don’t do it again
- If it did work, do

Leadership and Organizational Structure

- Make sure everyone is clear about who is doing what
 - The board knows it is governing

- The director knows she is directing (and the board knows it too)
- The staff know they are doing everything else
- And have it in writing

Collections Stewardship

- Know what stuff you have
- Know what stuff you need
- Know where it is
- Take good care of it
- Make sure someone gets some good out of it
 - Especially people you care about
 - And your neighbors

Education and Interpretation

- Know who you are talking to
- Ask them what they want to know
- Know what you want to say (and what you are talking about)
- Use appropriate language (or images, or music)
- Make sure people understood you
- And ask them if they liked it
- If not, change it

Financial Stability

- Put your money where your mission is
- Is it enough money?
- Will it be there next year, too?
- Know when you will need more \$
- Know where you are going to get it from
- Don’t diddle the books

Facilities and Risk Management

- Don’t crowd people
- Or things
- Make it safe to visit your museum
- Or work there
- Keep it clean
- Keep the toilet paper stocked
- And if all else fails, know where the exit is (and make sure it is clearly marked)