



## The Accreditation Commission's Expectations Regarding Delegation of Authority

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The Accreditation Commission's expectations reflect the evolving nature of standards and practices in museums. During its review of over 100 institutions a year, the Commission discusses how current practices in museums relate to the existing eligibility criteria and Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum. These Expectations support and elaborate on the Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum. Periodically, after thorough deliberation, the Commission revises its expectations to stay current with evolving standards. The Commission focuses on presenting desired outcomes rather than on prescribing methods by which these outcomes must be achieved.

### **What are the Accreditation Commission's expectations regarding delegation of authority?**

Eligibility requirements stipulate an accredited museum have a full-time **director**<sup>2</sup> to whom authority is delegated for day-to-day operations. (There must also be at least one paid professional staff with museum knowledge and experience. While this is usually also the director, is does not necessarily have to be the director.)

All accredited museums are required to submit documentation that the **governing authority** has formally delegated to this position the full responsibility for the operation and management of the museum. This position functionally is the chief executive officer with responsibilities including, but not limited to, hiring and firing staff, executing the budget, implementing policies, and managing programs and staff.

Furthermore, per the Characteristics of An Accreditable Museum, the Commission looks for evidence that the governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

See also the Accreditation Commission's Expectations Regarding Governance ([www.aam-us.org/accred](http://www.aam-us.org/accred)).

### **Why does the Commission consider delegation of authority important?**

Having clear delegation of authority means that the governing authority understands the main areas of its responsibility. Those areas are to collectively determine mission, set

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<sup>1</sup> First issued by the Accreditation Commission in March 2000. This revised version supercedes the 2000 version.

<sup>2</sup> See Glossary at the end for definitions of bolded terms.

policies for operations, ensure that charter and bylaw provisions are followed, plan for the institution, approve budgets, establish financial controls, and ensure that adequate resources are available to advance the museum's mission.

### **How does delegation of authority lead to effective leadership and organizational structure?**

When there is clarity about the distinct roles of governance and management, each can focus on the work they need to do. There is communication and collaboration, but no duplication of effort. Delegation of authority creates this clarity of roles. Since the governing authority has hired a director (or equivalent position) with the expertise to run the museum, it should allow the director to perform his or her responsibilities without interference.

An unencumbered line of authority allows the institution to achieve more. It promotes good use of resources, including time. The director has the authority to act independently and oversee the day-to-day operations while the governing authority uses its time to make decisions that steer the institution. Staff at all levels should be clear about the chain of command.

### **What does the Commission consider documentation of delegation of authority?**

Documentation of the delegation of authority may be found in the bylaws of the institution, the formally approved job description of the director (or equivalent position), and, to apprise all staff, is often stated in the institution's staff handbook.

### **Glossary**

**Director:** The individual who is delegated authority for the day-to-day operations of the museum and allocated resources sufficient to operate the museum effectively. Functionally, this position is the chief executive officer with responsibilities including, but not limited to, hiring and firing staff, executing the budget, implementing policies, and managing programs and staff. May be called CEO, Museum Administrator, Site Manager, Curator, etc.

**Fiduciary:** Of or relating to a holding of something in trust for another: a fiduciary heir; a fiduciary contract; of or being a trustee or trusteeship; held in trust.

**Governing Authority:** The body with legal and **fiduciary** responsibility for the museum. Unless delegated to another body or through a chain of command, also responsible for approving museum policy. Names of the Governing Authority include but are not limited to: board of commissioners, board of directors, board of managers, board of regents, board of trustees, city council, commission.