



Frequently Asked Questions: *about the* Visiting Committee Selection Process and Completing the Potential Peer Reviewer Selection Form

The answers provided here are adapted from the following reference materials and aim to give you the basics. Please access these resources for other details.

- *Steps in the Accreditation Process* (www.aam-us.org/museumresources/accred/process.cfm)
- *What You Need to Know About: Getting Ready for the Site Visit and Next Steps* (www.aam-us.org/museumresources/accred/SiteVisit.cfm)
- *Frequently Asked Questions about the Site Visit* (www.aam-us.org/museumresources/accred/SiteVisit.cfm)
- “The Site Visit” chapter in *A Higher Standard: The Museum Accreditation Handbook* (pages 34-43)

If you do not have these already, or cannot access them on-line, call or e-mail the Accreditation Program staff for copies: 202-289-9116, accreditation@aam-us.org.

What is this form?

The Potential Peer Reviewer Selection Form is a list of names of individuals, selected by the Accreditation Program staff, as potential Visiting Committee team members for your site visit. The form provides you with the opportunity to indicate whether you think any of these people, if they served on the team, would give a biased review or would pose a real or perceived conflict of interest. It also gives you a chance to note general scheduling preferences for the visit.

How and why were the individuals listed selected?

The individuals are selected from a roster of vetted peer reviewers—several hundred museum directors and senior staff who have direct experience with the accreditation process and are conversant with standards and best practices. They meet established eligibility and performance criteria; receive training through printed materials, the AAM website, and the AAM annual meeting; and after each visit are evaluated on their performance by the museum, the Commission, and program staff. Each individual has gone through a formal application process and has been approved by the Accreditation Commission for accreditation visits. To read the eligibility and other performance criteria, visit www.aam-us.org/getinvolved/pr/index.cfm.

The Accreditation Program staff search a database for peer reviewers whose self-identified experience and expertise best match a combination of the museum’s:

- issues or concerns identified by the Program staff or the Accreditation Commission based on the museum’s Self-Study
- particular demographics (e.g., budget, type, governance structure), and
- special circumstances/criteria (e.g., location, unique discipline, life cycle stage, recent major change).

Because this is a complex matrix of criteria, you will find that some of the peer reviewers on your list, and the ones finally chosen as your team, may not currently work at a museum that is exactly like your museum. This is normal—you should not expect reviewers who are from museums exactly like yours in all respects. You may even get a reviewer from a museum outside your

discipline. Remember that there are two team members on each Visiting Committee and sometimes it is the combination of these people who will best serve your institution (such as for a university botanical garden, one team member may have garden experience and the other may be from a university art museum). It is also important to keep in mind that some reviewers will have broad experience and expertise in a range of museum operations, and others will have a more specialized background; both have the collective experience/expertise which the staff and Commission feel enables them to fully support the needs of the Program.

It is also important to note that some of the reviewers have more accreditation site visit experience than others. These individuals are often the reviewers we chose to be the Team Contact and may be at institutions slightly different than your own yet still have the appropriate experience or expertise to review the institution for accreditation. New or less experienced reviewers are usually considered for the Team Member position. In any event, we make every effort to provide the best balance and mix of expertise while rotating new and more experienced reviewers through reviews.

What are the attached professional profiles?

When an individual becomes a peer reviewer, s/he completes a questionnaire which gathers employment history, education and areas/levels of expertise. Key information from this is presented in the professional profiles you get for each potential peer reviewer. If you are unfamiliar with the person, their profile will give you a snapshot of their professional background. While the Peer Reviewer Manager and Program staff do their best to keep all profiles complete and up-to-date, it is the peer reviewer's responsibility to keep us informed of any changes.

Are my team members limited to the individuals listed on the form?

Yes. But you may also suggest names of other museum professionals whom you feel would be a good candidates to serve as Visiting Committee members for your site review. We will check to see if they are already on the approved peer reviewer roster, currently available, and appropriate for your site visit. If so, we will consider them in the pool of potential names when the time comes to select the actual team members.

Can I veto people on my list if I don't like them or don't know them?

Basically, no. You can eliminate a name only if there is a business or personal relationship with the proposed reviewer that would compromise their objectivity or create an actual or perceived conflict of interest. The most common examples of situations where this could happen are:

- you are/your museum is currently engaged in a significant business relationship with that person or their museum (excluding routine collection/exhibit loans); this includes paid or unpaid consulting within the past 5 years and long term collaborative agreements.
- you have/had a personal or close familial relationship with the person
- the peer reviewer is a candidate for a job at your museum, or they used to be your boss or vice versa.
- the peer reviewer worked at the institution within the past 10 years
- the peer reviewer served as an Accreditation or Museum Assessment Program (MAP) site visit team member for your institution in the past

It is not a valid reason to eliminate someone from the list merely because they are unknown to you or you don't think they are "the right match." To avoid abuse of the elimination option, you must provide a general reason for the elimination. If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to eliminate someone from the list, call the Accreditation Program staff at 202-289-9116.

The Program staff need a minimum of a dozen acceptable candidates to work from; with too small a pool of names, we will likely have difficulty in securing two reviewers for your team. This will mean your museum's accreditation review takes longer overall; and may also mean more work for you—because we may have to send you a supplemental list of names to review and/or ask you to substantially revise portions of your Self-Study that are now very outdated because the visit is delayed in being set up.

The Visiting Committee selection process enables you to have a complete outside perspective. Some Visiting Committee members have unique and interesting point of views that could prove beneficial to you. Technically, all reviewers are qualified to review the operations of any museum. Those that are selected from the roster for your museum are considered the most appropriate matches by the staff for the program's and museum's needs.

Can I contact the proposed reviewers directly?

Please do not contact the individuals listed on the form (including those you have suggested) to discuss their availability or willingness to conduct your museum's accreditation review. The Accreditation Program staff will make the asks and secure the team. Once someone has agreed to be the Team Contact, we let you know and give you their contact information. At that point, we encourage you to make direct contact with them to start planning the visit (they are also given instructions to contact you).

Can I pick the specific reviewers who will be on my Visiting Committee?

No. The Accreditation Program staff identify the person best to ask to be the Team Contact at the time you return your form, based on the pool of names deemed acceptable. The Team Contact, once in place, will secure the other team member from the same list of names (in select cases the Program staff may do this as well).

Can I pick the date for the visit?

You can indicate general seasonal scheduling preferences (e.g., June through October is best) or certain dates to be avoided (e.g., museum is closed December – February) in the next year. Remember to think broadly- no timespan shorter than two weeks should be noted. This information will help us match up the most appropriate people to be your reviewers and serve as a general guideline to inform prospective team members entertaining a request to perform your site visit. We will do our best to accommodate these requests but can't guarantee the visit will happen during the preferred times or by a certain deadline. Your team members will work with you directly to set the exact date. The visit should take place within a year of submitting the self-study.

What happens after I turn in this form?

1. Accreditation Program staff makes request to a person from the Potential Peer Reviewer Selection Form to serve as Team Contact.
2. Person accepts or declines (the Accreditation Program staff usually waits approximately 2 weeks before following up on any nonresponses)
3. If the individual declines, we make another request from the remaining names on the Potential Peer Reviewer Selection Form.
4. If the individual accepts, the Program staff will provide them with the museum's contact information and a list of individuals from the Potential Peer Reviewer Selection Form to contact as the other team member. The Team Contact is responsible for selecting the second team member and initiating contact with the museum to discuss the future visit.

Please note: the museum may receive additional names to review and approve, if we need to widen the pool of potential Visiting Committee members as the team selection process moves ahead.

How long will it take before the visit occurs?

While every effort is made to expedite the peer review selection process to maintain the momentum of the review, we ask for your patience and want you to have realistic expectations about timing. It can take anywhere from 6 to 12 months to get the team secured, a visit date set, and the visit accomplished. There are many variables—mostly related to the availability and responsiveness of the peer reviewers, who are busy museum professionals doing the visit on a volunteer basis.

The visit date is scheduled several months in advance for a time that is mutually agreeable to all parties including both team members, and the museum’s director and key members of the staff and governing authority. The museum is copied on key communications between the Program staff and Visiting Committee.

You can help speed up your site visit schedule by returning the list of potential members promptly and eliminating as few people as possible.

If you have any other questions, do not hesitate to contact the Accreditation Program staff at

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