



The Accreditation Commission's Expectations Regarding Institutional Mission Statements

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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.

Why does the Commission consider a mission statement important?

- ◆ Since the Accreditation Program's inception, the need for a clearly delineated mission statement has been emphasized.
- ◆ The Accreditation Commission uses the mission statement, as written by the museum itself, to evaluate the museum's performance. One of the Two Core Questions² underlying each accreditation review is: *How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals?*
- ◆ This emphasis acknowledges an effective and replicable practice: Museums that use clearly delineated mission statements to guide their activities and decisions are more likely to function effectively.

What are the Accreditation Commission's expectations regarding mission statements?

Per Program Eligibility Criteria:

- ◆ All accredited museums are required to have a formally stated and approved mission.

¹ First issued by the Accreditation Commission in July 1999. This revised version supercedes the 1999 version.

² A full version of the Two Core Questions is available at www.aam-us.org/accred.

Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum Related to Mission:

- ◆ The museum asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.
- ◆ The museum is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.
- ◆ The museum has a clear understanding of its mission and communicates why it exists and who benefits as a result of its efforts.
- ◆ All aspects of the museum's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.
- ◆ The museum's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the museum.

How does a clearly delineated mission statement guide museum activities and decisions?

- ◆ A mission statement describes the purpose of a museum—its reason for existence. It defines the museum's unique identity and purpose, and provides a distinct focus for the institution.
- ◆ A mission statement articulates the museum's understanding of its role and responsibility to the public and its collections, and reflects the environment in which it exists.
- ◆ Activities of the museum should support, directly or indirectly, the mission.

What makes a clearly delineated museum mission statement?

A mission statement should state what the museum does, for whom, and why.