

## What You Need to Know About: The Accreditation Annual Participation Fee

### ***Fee Details***

- All museums participating in the Accreditation Program—including applicants which have not yet been accredited and museums not currently in an active review—are required to pay the Annual Participation Fee. The fee is charged regardless of the museum's review status.
- This annual fee covers a portion of the administrative costs of operating a quality Accreditation Program. Non-payment may result in revocation of accredited status or application.
- The Fee is billed every January.
- The Fee is based on your museum's AAM Membership status at the time of billing: museums that are AAM **Institutional Members pay \$250; non-members pay \$575.**

The annual participation fee increased January 1, 2008. In the first increase to the member rate since 1996, AAM member museums pay \$50 more, for a total of \$250. The rate for non-members rose from \$500 to \$575, the first change to this rate since 2003.

- AAM membership is voluntary and is not required to become or remain accredited. The membership fee is billed separately, and is distinct from the Accreditation Annual Participation Fee.

### ***Fee Structure—Why Non Members Pay More***

Over 50% of the costs of the Accreditation Program are underwritten by AAM member museums, whether accredited or not, through their membership dues. (About 20% of AAM institutional members are accredited.) While AAM institutional membership is not required in order to participate in the Accreditation Program, accredited museums that are not AAM members benefit from this subsidy without contributing to the support of accreditation through member dues. AAM decided that accredited museums that choose not to be institutional members should pay at least the actual yearly costs associated with their participation in the Accreditation Program.

The budget for running the Accreditation Program for AAM's most recently completed fiscal year was \$462,636; Annual Participation Fees covered only \$200,258 of this expense. Divided among all accredited museums, the annual cost of supporting each museum in the program is approximately \$600 (still more than the fee currently charged).

AAM's mission includes supporting the work of all U.S. museums, members and non-members alike. Museums that choose to pay institutional membership dues support AAM's ability to serve the field through programs that are not self-supporting—Accreditation, the Museum Assessment Program, advocacy, and other programs that advance best practices in the field. AAM's membership reports that it values these resources, with 50% of institutional members rating the Accreditation Program as highly valuable in a recent member survey.

All AAM institutional members benefit from the Accreditation Program in several ways:

- Access to sample documents from accredited museums, via the AAM Information Center, which have been identified by peer review as exemplars of their type.
- Access to resources, data, and standards and best practices informed by the deliberations of the Commission, with input from field.
- Professional training and development by serving as Visiting Committee members.

Both Accreditation and AAM membership are voluntary, but are options that museums can use to professionalize and strengthen their operations. Visit [www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org) for a full list of a AAM member benefits. (over)

## **Member Status—**

### **How We Determine Whether a Museum is an AAM Member Museum for the Purposes of Accreditation Annual Participation Fee Billing**

Your accreditation participation fee will be calculated based on the museum's membership status as of January 1<sup>st</sup>. (The Accreditation Program annual participation fee is \$250 for AAM member museums, and \$575 for non-member museums.). For full details on membership categories and dues, or to join/renew go to <http://www.aam-us.org/joinus/>

You may consider your museum to be an AAM institutional member but for reasons outlined below, your museum may not be recorded as such in the AAM records. These situations may lead to your museum being incorrectly billed at the non-member rate. **If you feel this is the case, or have other questions about your museum's membership status, contact Membership Services at 202-289-9132.**

#### **Affiliate organizations**

If your museum's membership is being paid for by an affiliate organization (a freestanding, separately incorporated organization, e.g., foundation or friends group) the membership will be recorded in the affiliate's name unless it specifies otherwise. If not otherwise specified, the *museum* will remain coded as a non member; this will hamper its ability to access member benefits. If the affiliate organization is paying on behalf of the museum, the dues should be calculated on the museum's operating budget, including any financial support provided by the affiliate, not on the operating budget of the affiliate organization.

#### **Parent organizations**

If your museum is part of a larger organization or museum system, and your parent organization is an AAM institutional member, that membership will be recorded in the parent's name. If the parent organization also intends to pay for your museum's membership, or include the museum under its membership, it needs to include your museum's budget in calculating the total membership fee submitted, and specify that it is paying for the museum's membership as well as its own. If not so specified, the *museum* will be coded as a non-member and therefore have difficulty accessing member benefits.

#### **Lapsed membership**

Membership payments are due in the month in which the current membership lapses. If AAM has not received your museum's dues payment by the end of that month, the museum is counted as a nonmember starting the first day of the following month. So, for example, if your membership expires in December, and we have not received your dues payment by December 31, your museum will be billed for its accreditation participation fees as a non-member in January.

#### ***If you were charged the non-member rate but:***

- you intend to renew your museum's lapsed membership or join within 30 days of the billing date, contact Membership Services and your accreditation bill will be adjusted accordingly; or,
- you already sent your renewal payment but it has not arrived/been processed yet, note this on your accreditation bill and deduct \$300 from the total amount due.