

Frequently Asked Questions *for* New Accreditation Peer Reviewers

1. What does a peer reviewer for the Accreditation Program do?

The Accreditation Program could not exist without Visiting Committee Members, which is what peer reviewers who work with the Accreditation Program are called. Visiting Committee teams are comprised of two people, whose role is to act as eyewitnesses to verify a museum's operations, assess its performance against the program standards, and communicate their findings in a written report to the Accreditation Commission. Peer reviewers spend between 40 and 60 hours in total per visit to prepare, conduct the visit, and write the report (for more on time commitment, see #6).

2. What does this mean for me now that I am a peer reviewer for Accreditation?

When you become a member of the accreditation peer review roster, you join a community of distinguished museum professionals committed to fostering excellence in museums. Periodically—maybe once a year or so—you may be approached by accreditation staff about serving on a specific Visiting Committee team. While you are under no obligation to accept an assignment, we hope you will give it a try. With each site visit, you will have opportunities to network, learn about the operations of your peers, and be an active participant in the larger dialogue about museum standards and best practices.

3. What do I need to do next?

- You have already completed a short Peer Reviewer Profile so that we can identify site visits that would be a good match for your areas of expertise and experience, and offer you these opportunities. (See #12 for more about your profile data and #13 for information about how and when you might be asked to do your first visit.)
- You can visit our website for additional information: <http://aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/peer-review/accreditation-peer-reviewer-resources>

4. How do I access my Peer Reviewer Profile on-line?

1. Login to the Alliance website- www.aam-us.org. (Every reviewer already has a username and password. Please email us at peer-review@aam-us.org for yours. Do not create a new login as it will not recognize you as a peer reviewer.)
2. Click **Edit Profile** (in the gray box at the top of the webpage; this will take you to your overall AAM profile first).
3. On the first tab, called **Profile Overview**, click the link labeled **Edit Your Peer Reviewer Profile**.
4. Enter / update your data. The Peer Reviewer Profile is broken up into three web pages.
5. When done, on page three, check "Yes" to the Conflict of Interest agreement and click "Save and Submit changes".

A few guidelines:

- You can enter data all at once or enter some and return later as often as you like (even after you hit the “Save and Submit” button).
- Make sure to save often, especially before you exit. Inactivity after about 15 minutes will cause the system to time out and you will have to log back in; any unsaved data may be lost. To save, use the “Save” buttons at the bottom of each screen.
- You may find some of the fields are pre-filled with existing data; simply leave as-is if correct or overwrite to change.
- Some answers trigger additional questions or fields.
- The only section of the Profile you can’t change is the “Approved For” section. If you want to change what types of reviews you can do, contact the MAP or Accreditation staff at peer-review@aam-us.org.
- You must check “Yes” to agree to the Conflict of Interest statement each time you submit updated data.
- Availability answers for all three date ranges for all three years listed are required in order to proceed past page two. **This is very important information.** Don’t worry about being locked into any answer: you can always go back and change your availability answers any time; and saying that you are available does not obligate you to go on a visit at that time, it’s just your way of telling us you are open to offers.

5. What makes me qualified to be a peer reviewer for Accreditation?

That you are overseeing the operations of an accredited museum means you have a certain level of experience, have the wherewithal to see the big picture, and demonstrate a commitment to the highest ethical standards and level of professionalism. While the Alliance expects its peer reviewers to stay current on museum issues and best practices in the field, you are not expected to be an “expert” in all-things museum or all-things related to your position. You are expected to be a thoughtful, informed colleague. And you will be paired with another reviewer who is a good balance to your skills and experience.

6. Why would I want to be a peer reviewer for the Accreditation Program?

The benefits most frequently mentioned by the approximately 900 current peer reviewers are:

- Visiting other museums and seeing others’ operations first hand
- Finding new ideas to bring back to your institution
- The one-on-one opportunities to discuss current museum issues with colleagues
- Making new professional connections
- Learning and gaining experience through a unique form of professional development
- Helping other museums and giving back to the field

Plus, you get:

- The *Peer Review Digest*, an e-newsletter that covers a range of topics and resources relevant to both museum practice and peer review
- The opportunity to write articles for the newsletter and other Alliance publications

7. What is the time and cost to me?

There is no doubt that peer review is a commitment of time and energy. Each site visit involves several steps requiring your thought and attention. Most peer reviewers go on a site visit every one to two years.

Time:

We generally find that peer reviewers are able to complete their work in 40-60 hours, which includes the following components:

- Logistics: Set up the dates and develop agenda with the museum and team member
- Preparation: Read a self-study questionnaire and supporting documents
- Travel time
- On site: Most visits last 2 days
- Report: With your partner, complete the Site Visit Report (consisting of checkboxes, short answer responses, and a brief concluding narrative).

Money:

All your site-visit related expenses, including transportation, food, and lodging, are covered. There should be no cost to you associated with the visit. The Alliance reimburses you directly as soon as you submit your travel expense report when you return from your visit. (The Alliance will reimburse you for your air/train fare purchase in advance of the visit at your request.)

8. What if I am too busy?

The Accreditation Program cannot exist without the peer reviewers who support it. Currently, peer reviewers go on an average of one visit every one to two years. You may be approached periodically by the Accreditation Program staff with an opportunity to do a site visit. You are never under any obligation to accept a given assignment, but we hope you will give it a try.

You may feel you are not able to carve out this time from your busy schedule—and there may be times when you are unavailable due to existing travel or meeting commitments—but keep in mind that as more and more qualified museum professionals become peer reviewers, the overall demand on peer reviewers' time will decrease. Thus, your commitment to the program will help lighten the load on everyone!

But if you are too busy because of a project or something else taking up a large amount of time, you can indicate this on your online profile in the availability section. This way we will not even consider you for visits in this period.

9. What resources do I have to support my work as a Peer Reviewer?

- The peer review section of the Alliance website (<http://www.aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/peer-review>) covers all-things peer review, such as site visit help, downloadable forms, back issues of the *Digest* and more. Recordings of some past training events are here as well.
- The Alliance Peer Review Team – a staff team in place to support your orientation, training, and evaluation, to manage your information and availability status, and to answer your questions.
- Peer Reviewer appreciation events at the Alliance's Annual Meeting – allows you to network with other Peer Reviewers.

10. What happens if I leave my current institution for a museum that is not accredited?

You will not lose your place in the peer review roster if you move to another museum, whether or not it is accredited. As long as you tell us you want to keep going on reviews, you will be able to enjoy the benefits of being part of the peer review community for the rest of your museum career and into retirement. (Retired museum professionals are eligible to remain on the peer review roster for several years provided they remain active in or associated with the field in some way.)

11. Am I also a Museum Assessment Program (MAP) peer reviewer?

No, not unless you were already one before. If you are interested in also doing site visits for the Museum Assessment Program, contact MAP@aam-us.org. There are a number of differences between MAP and accreditation site visits and the reviewers' roles and responsibilities. For a summary, see <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/peer-review/about>.

12. How else will my profile data be used and accessed?

Only the Accreditation and Museum Assessment Program staff has access to your Peer Reviewer Profile data. While the data is primarily used to find appropriate site visit matches, it is sometimes mined (only) by these staff members to identify individuals who might be suggested for the Alliance board, committees, task forces, etc. Other Alliance staff comes to the Peer Reviewer staff for these suggestions. These other Alliance staff do not see your personal data or get profile details; they only receive your name if it fits certain criteria for which they were looking.

13. How and when might I get approached to do my first visit?

How: When you are being considered for an assignment, you will be contacted by Accreditation Program staff.

When: It could be in the first few months after you complete your Peer Reviewer Profile, or it could be a year or more (note: because of the Accreditation Reinvention and Cycle Extensions, there will be less visits than normal between 2010-2015, so you might not hear until 2015). It depends on your areas of experience and expertise and the types of museums that are currently coming up for site visits. If you haven't been called on and would really like to go on a visit, call Accreditation Program staff (contact information in # 15 below), who will work with you on this.

14. What happens when I go on my first visit?

The MAP and Accreditation Program staff are your support system. The staff will provide you guidance and the resources you need. And as a first-time peer reviewer, you will be paired with an experienced reviewer. We are also happy to provide you with some names of experienced reviewers who you can call to talk to for advice.

15. What do I do if I have questions?

The Peer Review Team is comprised of staff from the Accreditation and MAP Programs. You can visit the Peer Review web pages at www.aam-us.org/peer-review. The overall Peer Review Program e-mail address is peer-review@aam-us.org.

We are here to help, so always feel free to contact us!

- Accreditation Program officers (202) 289-9116 accreditation@aam-us.org
- Museum Assessment Program officers (202) 289-9118 map@aam-us.org