STEPS

**Standards and Excellence Program
for History Organizations**

Updated Edition!

WORKBOOK

Mission, Vision, and Governance

Audience and Community Engagement

Interpretation

Stewardship of Collections

Stewardship of Historic Structures and Landscapes

Management

AASLH — AMERICAN ASSOCIATION *for* STATE *and* LOCAL HISTORY

STEPS

Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations

WORKBOOK

Reaching excellence one step at a time.

MVG Mission, Vision, and Governance

AUD Audience and Community Engagement

INT Interpretation

COL Stewardship of Collections

HSL Stewardship of Historic Structures and Landscapes

MGT Management

AASLH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION *for* STATE *and* LOCAL HISTORY

The Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (STEPS)
is a self-paced assessment program offered by the American Association for State
and Local History (AASLH). Developed for small- and mid-sized history organizations,
STEPS presents a manageable approach to identifying opportunities for improvement,
planning for the future, and working incrementally toward meeting national museum
standards. This workbook, along with the companion STEPS Community online
site, are the program's core components. They guide historical societies, museums,
historic houses, and related institutions in assessing policies and practices at the Basic,
Good, and Better levels. Organizations that earn Bronze, Silver, and Gold progress
certificates receive national recognition on the AASLH website at aaslh.org.

About the American Association for State and Local History
Established in 1940, the American Association for State and Local History, a 501(c)3
nonprofit organization, is a national membership association serving those who
preserve and interpret history. AASLH provides leadership and resources to help the
history community thrive and make the past more meaningful to all people. From its
headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, AASLH conducts research and advocacy efforts,
publishes books, technical publications, and a magazine and maintains numerous
affinity groups and committees serving a broad range of constituents across the
history community. The association also sponsors online professional development
training, regional and national training workshops, and an annual meeting. For more
information, visit aaslh.org.

∴∴° AASLH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
for STATE *and* LOCAL HISTORY

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Foreword

When the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) first offered the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (STEPS) in 2009, it was groundbreaking. We have now updated the program workbook because of changes in expectations for the field in the areas of inclusion, equity, engagement, relevance, financial management, digital collections, and other areas. This new, enhanced version of STEPS is built upon the experiences of more than a thousand participating organizations and many advisors across the country.

At its core, STEPS offers specific recommendations for how history museums, historic houses, sites, and other organizations can not only improve daily management but also align their work with national standards. These recommendations, called performance indicators, answer the question, "How do we know when an organization is meeting a national standard?"

With this new edition, STEPS also assumes a special role within AASLH's extensive professional development program. Each of our webinars, workshops, and online courses, as well as our technical leaflets and other publications, is being aligned to the STEPS workbook content. Our expanding pool of targeted professional development offerings is a ready resource for you and your organization.

I urge you to find out if there is a STEPS group in your area or within your state that your organization can join. Participation in a STEPS group offers the perfect opportunity for networking and shared learning. Moreover, progress in self-study programs like STEPS typically increases when participants have the benefit of accountability to a group. If there is not a STEPS group in your area or state, talk with your state humanities council, state museum association, or field service office if your state has one. Or champion the cause and start one using our *Guide to STEPS Groups* available at aaslh.org.

Stronger organizations do not happen overnight. With STEPS, you have a road map to help your organization realize success. AASLH will be here to celebrate with you with each progress certificate earned!

John R. Dichtl
President & CEO
American Association for State and Local History

Introduction

Welcome to STEPS! The American Association for State and Local History is excited your organization has chosen to take part in this valuable program. The Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (STEPS) offers a practical, self-study format that helps your organization assess its operations using a series of questions and performance indicators. You will learn much during the process: strengths, opportunities for improvement, and where your organization is on the path to not only meeting national museum standards but reaching new heights in serving its audiences and local communities.

What's new in the 2020 edition? If your organization is transitioning from the earlier workbook edition to this one, you will notice that what were once called "overarching statements" are now more aptly labeled as standards. They are included in each of the six workbook sections, therefore truly serving as the umbrella we originally envisioned for them. The 2020 edition also includes new content the museum and history fields recognize as essential including accessibility, inclusion, equity, ethics, staff support, financial management, digital collections, technology, environmental sustainability, and other topics.

In the STEPS program, a **standard** is defined as "**a generally accepted level of attainment that all organizations are expected to achieve.**" Performance indicators measure the degree to which standards are being met. They are cumulative from one level to the next.

Your goal is to plan and complete projects that move your organization up the **Basic**, **Good**, and **Better** performance indicator ladder in each of the six program sections. As your organization progresses by meeting all Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators within a section, you earn **Bronze**, **Silver**, or **Gold certificates**. Remember, you can work one step at a time, at your own pace.

To begin the program, first read this introduction and then thoroughly review the "How to Use the STEPS Workbook" section.

How Your Organization Can Benefit from STEPS

As your organization uses STEPS to identify its strengths and opportunities for improvement, you will discover these benefits:

- **Education and awareness** about operating a history organization for staff and volunteers, members of the governing authority, and your community.
- **Valuable opportunities to make the case for improvement** to funders and other stakeholders for staffing, training, materials, and equipment.

- **Increased credibility** with funders, your community, and stakeholders.
- **Improved policies and procedures.**
- **Clear direction** for future improvement and long-term sustainability.
- **Meaningful progress** as you identify, articulate, and measure your organization's accomplishments.
- Easier and more meaningful **budgeting** and **planning**.
- **Preparation for participation** in other programs including the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Museum Assessment (MAP) and Accreditation Programs.

Program History

As in 2009 when STEPS was first introduced to the field, the following core principles guided the STEPS Enhancement volunteers and AASLH staff as they worked to update the program in 2018-2020:

1. Offer a program that is voluntary and presents a **manageable approach** for improvement.
2. Allow participants to work toward excellence **one section at a time**.
3. **Focus** on the needs of **small- and mid-sized history organizations**.
4. Promote and advance **awareness of national standards**.
5. Build a program that **encourages improvement** and **rewards progress**.
6. **Invite** state, regional, and national **service providers** to help in the delivery of program services to their constituents.
7. **Complement rather than compete** with programs offered by other associations including AAM's Museum Assessment (MAP) and Accreditation Programs.
8. Use standards already employed by AAM to create a seamless structure of improvement in the museum community while recognizing that AASLH would need to add standards to its program to reflect **issues specific to history organizations**.
9. Recognize that the standards will need periodic **review and revision**.

The STEPS program traces its beginnings to work done by the AASLH Historic House Museums Committee and other organizations. In 2002, AASLH and the National Trust for Historic Preservation convened a meeting at the Pocantico Conference Center on the grounds of Kykuit, the historic estate of the Rockefellers, near Tarrytown, New York, that brought together twenty-seven representatives of house museums along with staff from the National Trust, AASLH, AAM, IMLS, and state and regional organizations. While the purpose of the meeting was to address critical issues facing

historic house museums, the discussion quickly evolved to include issues relevant not only to house museums, but to small history organizations in general.

From that meeting, AASLH formed a task force to explore the creation of a program to raise awareness of national standards and help small organizations achieve those standards in an incremental manner. In 2005, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded grant funding to AASLH to develop a standards program for small- to mid-sized history organizations. After four years, and an incredible number of hours contributed by 130 enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers, the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (STEPS), was launched to offer small- to mid-sized institutions an incremental approach to meeting national standards.

In its first ten years, the STEPS program not only reached more than 1,000 community organizations but also provided field service programs, state humanities councils, and other service providers a valuable tool they could use and recommend to their constituents. With the 2020 edition, AASLH continues its support for small- and mid-sized history organizations. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been severe and many of these organizations will likely struggle for some time. It is the Association's hope that STEPS can assist them in rebuilding by offering a structure that reveals opportunities for expanding their role within their community.

Relationship to Other Assessment Programs

STEPS participants may want to know how the program relates to the MAP and Accreditation Programs offered by AAM. AASLH and AAM share many of the same national standards (standards specific to AASLH are noted) so advancing from STEPS to AAM's programs is a smooth transition. AASLH believes each organization that takes part in STEPS should consider whether advancing to MAP and Accreditation is appropriate for its situation. AASLH does not, however, have the expectation that all STEPS participants will advance to one or both of those programs, nor does it conversely offer STEPS as an "accreditation-lite" alternative.

Every organization must evaluate its ability to participate in assessment programs while at the same time balancing that decision with the acknowledgment that it has a responsibility to work toward achieving standards set by the field. As one person wisely observed in one of the early STEPS meetings, "The standards are the standards. Our focus must be to improve America's museums instead of getting sidetracked by questioning whether organizations should or should not take part in STEPS, MAP, or Accreditation." It is a challenge for history organizations, particularly small ones, to work toward meeting national standards but it is a necessary task if we are to have healthy and vibrant museums, historic houses, historical societies, and sites that can preserve and interpret history and serve their communities for many years to come.

Other Standards in the Field

History organizations as a group operate, reside in, care for, and preserve a broad range of components including archives, historic structures, living collections, art collections, museum stores, and more. As such, in addition to standards used by AASLH in the STEPS program and by AAM in its programs, there may be other standards and professional practices that apply to your organization including those issued by:

- American Alliance of Museums, including standards issued by AAM standing professional committees
- American Institute for Conservation
- Association of Art Museum Directors
- Association of Zoos and Aquariums
- Museum Store Association
- National Association for Interpretation
- National Recreation and Park Association
- Oral History Association
- Society for American Archaeology
- Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections
- Society of American Archivists
- U.S. Department of the Interior (specifically the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and National Park Service's standards and guidelines)

Certificates vs. Certification

Earning STEPS certificates is a valuable way for program participants to show their stakeholders, community, and perhaps a parent agency they are participating in an assessment program and working toward meeting national standards. AASLH cautions participants, however, in how they communicate the good news about the certificates they earn. While the words "certification" and "certificate" are sometimes used interchangeably, there is a significant difference as far as STEPS is concerned. Organizations that report they are meeting Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators are eligible to receive Bronze, Silver, and Gold certificates. Since STEPS is a self-study program, AASLH does not require evidence in the form of policies and other materials to support an organization's claim it is meeting performance indicators. The program operates on the honor system, although the approval of an organization's board president or governing authority official is required when certificate forms are submitted to AASLH. The Bronze, Silver, and Gold certificates acknowledge completion of one phase of the self-study program. They do not grant

or constitute a seal of approval, endorsement, certification, or accreditation. Make sure your organization accurately represents its achievement in news releases and other communications.

Acknowledgments

To AASLH staff and to the almost two hundred project volunteers, both those who helped with the initial project and the more recent Enhancement project ones, I thank you for your enthusiasm and input. Supported by the hard and creative work of many hands, the STEPS program was created and updated by the field, for the field. A complete list of volunteers follows this introduction.

Also, without grant assistance from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the creation of the STEPS program would not have been possible. My thanks to IMLS for funding the initial project in 2005.

For this updated edition, I want to especially thank Nina Zannieri, Paul Revere Memorial Association Executive Director, who served as chair for both the original and Enhancement projects. I am grateful you agreed to travel this path a second time with me. Also, John Dichtl, AASLH President and CEO, for his support and always thoughtful advice; my AASLH colleagues including Alex Collins for creating the new STEPS Community site and assisting with other details, and Aja Bain for her proofreading skills; Jenny Angell, Project Manager for Accessibility Excellence, an IMLS-funded project of PA Museums and the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, for her collaboration on accessibility content; Max van Balgooy of Engaging Places who wisely recommended we adopt a learning taxonomy for the performance indicators; Scott Wands, Connecticut Humanities, who has never turned down my request for help or advice; and Gerri Winchell Findley of Go Design in Nashville for her creativity and expertise. Finally, I dedicate the 2020 edition of this workbook to my daughters, Amy and Mari, who have watched Mom work on "the book" off and on for much of their lives. You have grown into amazing young women and I love you both so much!

STEPS is intended to help history organizations not only improve their policies and practices but strengthen the very foundation upon which they are built. I believe everyone involved in the creation of STEPS sees great potential for the program to have a positive, long-term impact on the field of state and local history. Whether your organization takes two years or ten years to make its way through the program, my personal hope is that it finds STEPS to be a valuable tool for positive change and institutional advancement.

Cherie Cook

Cherie Cook
STEPS Workbook Editor

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How to Use the STEPS Self-Study Workbook

The STEPS workbook is divided into the following sections:

1. How to Use This Workbook

2. Mission, Vision, and Governance

3. Audience and Community Engagement

4. Interpretation

5. Stewardship of Collections

6. Stewardship of Historic Structures and Landscapes

7. Management

8. Glossary

9. Index

The workbook uses a learning taxonomy of action verbs to align the **Basic**, **Good**, and **Better Performance Indicators** and to help your organization anticipate expectations. Here are explanations of the learning taxonomy used at each level:

Basic Performance Indicators

At this level, organizations may encounter new concepts. Action verbs like "recognize" ask them to reflect on and become familiar with these concepts. Governing authority members, staff (paid or unpaid), and/or volunteers may also be asked to "describe" or "explain" examples related to a performance indicator. Group discussions at the Basic level are very important.

Example:

☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe past and present barriers to more diverse representation within the institution.

However, in situations where a federal law or ethics code must be followed, a Basic performance indicator goes beyond recognition or awareness.

Example:

☐ The institution complies with all applicable state and federal laws related to financial management including financial reporting (e.g., employment, benefits, unrelated business income tax (UBIT), sales tax; filing state nonprofit and IRS Form 990 if required).

Good Performance Indicators

Action verbs at this level help your organization apply critical, practical, or creative thinking skills to identify how to make decisions, reach out to stakeholders and members of the communities it serves, take action, and/or develop new capabilities. Commonly used verbs include "plan," "prioritize," "develop," and "create."

Examples:

☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers identify and discuss topics of violence, oppression, and other traumas in their institution's interpretive story; they develop a plan for presenting these topics in ethical and empathetic ways and correcting possible long-held misrepresentations the institution has presented to its audiences.

☐ The institution prioritizes deferred maintenance projects.

Better Performance Indicators

Action verbs at this level help your organization commit to continued improvement, strengthen its relationship with stakeholders and the communities it serves, and demonstrate leadership skills within its community or region. Commonly used verbs include "commits" and "serves as a model."

Examples:

☐ The institution commits to raising funds specifically for collections-related projects including preservation, digital preservation, and conservation.

☐ The institution serves as a model and advocate in its community for hiring and promotion of paid staff and interns based upon scope of work rather than gender, age, race, or other characteristics.

Step One:
Access the STEPS Community and Choose Self-Study Method

This workbook is designed to be a self-study tool. The STEPS Community online site offers supplemental resources including pdf copies of workbook sections for downloading; cross-referenced content (e.g., performance indicators by level, self-assessment questions by level); sample policies, forms, and other helpful materials; and program announcements. You will find the link for the STEPS Community in the welcome letter sent when your organization enrolled in the program. If you do not have a copy of the welcome letter, log in to your organization's dashboard in the AASLH Resource Center at learn.aaslh.org and look under your STEPS enrollment. (Be sure you are logged into your institutional member profile, not individual profile.) Your institution receives unlimited access to the STEPS Community so be sure to share the link with governing board members and others involved in the assessment process.

To begin your organization's STEPS assessment, choose one of the following methods for making your way through the workbook: 1) section by section, or 2) by performance indicator level, i.e., start with the Basic indicators across all six sections, then move to the Good ones in all sections, and then finally address the Better performance indicators across all sections.

If you choose option one, follow the recommended steps below. If you choose the second option, go directly to Step Three, making minor adjustments throughout the remaining steps when the instructions specify "a section" since this option works across multiple sections.

Step Two:
Identify Which Section to Address

Although you can begin with any of the six sections, AASLH highly recommends starting with "Mission, Vision, and Governance" (MVG) for two reasons: first, policies and documents addressed in MVG form a solid foundation for the other sections, and second, it is critical that your board of directors or other governing entity along with staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers have a clear understanding of their roles as your organization makes its way through the workbook. After answering the self-assessment questions in MVG, we recommend moving on to the Management section because it is a bookend to MVG; the two sections share some common assessment questions and topics, but often from different perspectives (governance vs. day-to-day management).

Step Three:
Answer Self-Assessment Questions

1. For the section you have chosen to address, designate one person as the section leader.

2. Assemble a group of three to seven paid or unpaid staff, governing authority members, committee members, or others who will work with the section leader to answer the self-assessment questions in the chosen workbook section.

3. More than one meeting may be needed to allow the section leader and group members to track down documents and policies and obtain other information the group may need to answer all self-assessment questions. Plan to also allow time for group members to meet with people outside the group whenever their input is needed to accurately answer the self-assessment questions.

4. In advance of the first meeting, the section leader may want to distribute photocopies of the chosen workbook section to all group members. Group members can also download a pdf copy of the section from the STEPS Community site.

5. The section leader should gather forms, policies, and other documents addressed in the section that your organization already has in place, make photocopies, and assemble those copies in a notebook. While your organization is not required to submit these materials to AASLH as proof of completion of the section, it is recommended these materials be compiled in a notebook since they will be needed for the group's work and possibly again in another workbook section.

6. At the first meeting, the group should review these instructions and the other materials found in the **Introduction** and **How to Use This Workbook** sections.

7. The group may want to use the STEPS Case Study for the Middletown Historical Society available in the STEPS Community as an icebreaker and group activity. The section leader can download the Middletown Historical Society introduction and the episode recommended for the workbook section being addressed and distribute photocopies to the group. Members of the group read the story in advance and prepare for a discussion using the follow-up questions provided at the end of each episode.

8. It is also recommended that group members review together or separately the list of **Unacceptable Practices** found at the beginning of the section.

9. The group can now begin answering the self-assessment questions related to each standard by choosing performance indicators (Basic, Good, or Better) that best describe your organization's current policies and practices. The section leader should check the corresponding box for each performance indicator that the group believes the organization is currently meeting. If your organization is not meeting any of the performance indicators, leave all boxes blank. The process of answering the self-assessment questions may take more than one meeting to complete.

10. If your organization finds that it is operating at a level below Basic, do not get discouraged. Set your sights on achieving the Basic indicators. Pat yourselves on the back! You are now armed with information about where your organization is in terms of meeting national standards in that workbook section. Shining the light on something that may need some repair or change is much more helpful than continuing in the dark. Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to operating a museum or historic site!

Step Four:
Identify Projects That Move Your Organization Closer to Meeting Standards

1. Most organizations will likely find there is work to be done within the section being addressed. AASLH recognizes that reaching the Good or Better levels for some organizations is going to take time, possibly years. Do not let that discourage you. Focus on completing one level at a time.

2. Once the group has made its way through the self-assessment questions, it can begin discussing projects it believes your organization should undertake to satisfy the unchecked boxes at either the Basic, Good, or Better levels. Keep in mind that performance indicators are cumulative. If you are meeting the Good performance indicators for a given self-assessment question, then you should also be meeting the Basic ones. If not, then address those first.

3. Recognize that most projects recommended in the STEPS program require far more communication and consensus building than money.

4. Remember, this is a self-study program. Feel free to use highlighters, flags, sticky notes, etc., to adapt the workbook to fit your organization's planning style.

5. Once the group has identified projects it believes will help your organization move closer to achieving standards, the section leader may need to prepare a brief report or photocopy the completed workbook pages and present the materials to your organization's lead staff person (paid or unpaid), the governing authority, or a committee charged with undertaking the STEPS program.

6. The section leader should also make sure that both the workbook and the notebook containing copies of policies, plans, and other documents are returned to the organization's office or kept in another safe place.

Step Five:
Project Planning

Now it is time to address the section group's assessment and consider how it will be included in your organization's planning activities. Whether this step begins at the staff, committee, or governing authority level will vary from organization to organization. If your organization does not currently engage in any type of planning process, AASLH encourages it to start now with some projects identified from the STEPS program. The following general steps and notes can be adapted to fit your organizational structure:

1. The lead staff person and the governing authority will want to review the group's assessment results and project recommendations. They can then choose which projects will be added to the organization's goals and short- or long-term planning.

2. Staff and governing authority members will need to determine which projects require formal governing authority approval, which ones need funding allocated from the annual budget, and which projects will require that funds be raised before the project can start.

3. The order in which projects can be undertaken and the estimated completion time also need to be addressed. The length of completion varies from project to project, of course. The drafting and approval process for a relatively simple policy may take only a month. Review and revision of bylaws may take six months, while improving collections storage may take a year. Other projects may take even longer.

4. Consider how you might obtain information to guide your organization. The STEPS Community has sample policies, forms, and plans but you may need to find books, technical leaflets, or other resources to help you gain the information needed to successfully complete some projects.

5. Asking questions and sharing information with other organizations is another way to help you plan and complete projects. The STEPS Community offers a discussion forum that is open to all organizations taking part in the program.

Step Six:
Identify Training and Information Needed to Undertake Projects

1. Before starting any project, it is very important to determine whether someone in your organization has the knowledge and skills needed to correctly undertake and complete the project.

2. Allow time for staff or volunteers to research the correct way to approach each project. It may be necessary for someone in the organization to take part in a webinar or online course. If you do not find the training program you need on the AASLH website, ask our staff for ideas of other sources for training.

3. Also check with your local, state, or regional museum associations to inquire about training programs, publications, and other programs and services they offer. Some states also have field service programs that offer individualized assistance such as telephone and onsite consultations.

4. Visiting other museums and historical societies in your area is a great way to gain knowledge and see good examples of collections storage, interpretive exhibitions, historic structure restorations, and other possible projects. Your state or regional association or field service program (if your state has one) may also be able to provide recommendations of organizations in your area that are good examples for the project you are planning to undertake.

Step Seven:
Completing Projects

1. By focusing your organization's improvement efforts on projects identified in its STEPS workbook, AASLH believes you will find planning more meaningful and more productive. Not only does it offer a way to justify why each project is necessary, but it also helps you document and measure progress while at the same time keeping everyone involved in the organization on the same path.

2. Consider the possibility of hiring a consultant to guide your organization in planning and/or completing some projects. Service organizations, including state and regional associations and humanities councils, may have suggestions for consultants and grant programs. Once again, if your state has a field service program it may be available to help or suggest a consultant.

3. It is worth repeating that most projects recommended in the STEPS program require far more communication and consensus building than money.

Step Eight:
Collect Your Progress Certificates!

1. Once projects are completed that help your organization check off all Basic boxes in the section being addressed, your organization is ready to receive a **Bronze Certificate** for that workbook section. The same goes for the Good and Better boxes and corresponding **Silver** and **Gold Certificates** when you have achieved performance indicators at those levels. Your organization is eligible to receive a total of 18 certificates (six sections multiplied by three certificates). Reminder: your organization must maintain an active institutional membership in AASLH to earn certificates.

2. To receive your certificate, go to the STEPS Community (refer to Step One if you need information on how to access the site). Once in your institution's dashboard, navigate to the Certificates tab. Open the appropriate certificate level (Bronze, Silver, or Gold). Complete the certificate request by confirming your organization meets the program terms. Your certificate will then be available to download.

3. Frame your certificates and exhibit them in your lobby or another prominent place. Proudly show visitors and your community that your organization is working its way toward meeting national museum standards!

4. Important note: the STEPS self-study program is based on the honor system. While supporting documentation is not required as evidence of your organization's accomplishments, all certificate requests must be submitted by your board president or governing authority official.

5. Each time your organization earns a certificate, celebrate the accomplishment! Remember to increase your institution's credibility by announcing your exciting news on social media and other places. Celebrations motivate everyone to continuing making improvements and building a bright future for your organization. Pass out cupcakes at the next governing authority, volunteer, or staff meeting or stage an Olympics-style Bronze, Silver, or Gold medal ceremony—don't forget the music and the medals! Understand, however, that under no circumstances should STEPS certificates be used to promote or imply that your organization has been granted or awarded endorsement, certification, accreditation, or a seal of approval from AASLH or any other association. **Certificates recognize your organization's progress in completing one part of the STEPS self-study program.** When announcing or discussing certificates earned do not use the terms "certification" or "accreditation."

6. Organizations that earn all six Gold certificates (or less if your institution doesn't own or manage any historic structures/landscapes or collections) are recognized as a STEPS Graduate during the annual AASLH Leadership in History Awards ceremony.

Step Nine:
Repeat the Steps

1. The timing of when to begin the process again with another section will vary from organization to organization.

2. Once you are ready to address another workbook section (or level of performance indicators if your organization Is moving horizontally across all six sections), start again with Step One.

Important Notes and Reminders

1. Be sure to review the "How to Use" section of this workbook before answering assessment questions.

2. AASLH recommends including a variety of staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members in the assessment process. STEPS is a valuable educational tool to help everyone within an organization learn more about operating a history institution.

3. You will notice that some sections include related or repeated standards, questions, or performance indicators. Duplication is intended to reinforce the importance of some topics or present them from more than one perspective. For example, a Code of Ethics is addressed in Mission, Vision, and Governance as well as the Management and Stewardship of Collections sections. Duplication may also be necessary at times so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign individual sections to different groups of people. Use the Index provided at the back of the workbook to locate related information about policies, plans, and other topics.

4. Remember the STEPS Community is an online site open to all institutions enrolled in the program. The STEPS Community offers sample policies, forms, and other helpful materials, plus program news and discount codes. The link can be found in your STEPS welcome letter which is always accessible in your institutional profile on the AASLH website. Your institution receives unlimited access so be sure to tell volunteers, governing board members, and staff (paid or unpaid) about the STEPS Community.

5. If you encounter a situation where the entity responsible for a task described in a performance indicator is not appropriate for your institution's governance structure, draw a line through the entity's name and write in the name of the entity that is responsible for the task. So long as the *intent* of the performance indicator is met, it is okay to modify a question or performance indicator.

6. AASLH recognizes that many small institutions operate solely through the generosity of volunteers. The term "staff (paid and unpaid)" is used because there are often volunteers within history institutions who hold considerable responsibilities, much like a paid staff person. The terms "lead staff person" or "management staff" can also refer to a volunteer.

7. Throughout the workbook, STEPS uses the term "institution" when referring to museums, historical societies, historic houses, historic sites, and other organizations.

8. The governing entity for most private, nonprofit history institutions is called a board of directors or board of trustees. For non-traditional institutions, the

governing entity might be a department within city, county, state, federal, or tribal government. It may also be part of a park agency, corporation, or college or university department. The term "governing authority" is used throughout the workbook to refer to the entity or entities that have ultimate responsibility for an institution.

9. Non-traditional institutions may see the need to create policies separate from their parent agency. For example, the Mission Statement for a parent agency that operates many parks but only one historic site may not refer to history at all. As a result, the historic site may find it beneficial and necessary to create its own Mission Statement.

10. Be sure to review the list of unacceptable practices in every section. Their importance should not be overlooked.

11. In the STEPS program, a standard is defined as "a generally accepted level of attainment that all institutions are expected to achieve." Unless otherwise noted, all STEPS standards are common to AASLH and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).

12. Performance indicators (Basic, Good, Better) are benchmarks to help your institution measure the degree to which it is meeting a standard. Performance indicators are cumulative from one level to the next.

13. The purpose of the self-assessment questions and performance indicators is to divide the standards into manageable portions so your institution can work incrementally toward meeting them.

14. Words in bold are defined in the glossary found at the back of the workbook.

15. Once your institution is meeting all Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators in a section, it is eligible to receive the corresponding Bronze, Silver, or Gold certificate. See the instructions for applying for certificates located on page xv.

SECTION ONE

Mission, Vision, and Governance

The **MVG** section addresses:

- Bylaws and Other Enabling Documents
- Committees
- Compliance with Laws, Codes, and Regulations
- Environmental Sustainability
- Ethics and Public Trust
- Financial Management, Accountability, and Transparency
- Fundraising
- Governing Authority
- Inclusion and Equity
- Mission, Vision, and Values
- Personnel Hiring, Compensation, and Performance Evaluation
- Planning
- Support Groups
- Technology
- Volunteers

MVG Standards

The standards listed below are addressed in the Mission, Vision, and Governance section. From one workbook section to another you may notice related or repeated standards, self-assessment questions, or performance indicators. This duplication is intended to reinforce the importance of a concept across multiple sections. Duplication is also necessary at times so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign workbook sections to different groups of volunteers, committee members, staff (paid and unpaid), governing authority members, and/or other participants.

Standards marked with an * are common to all workbook sections. A compilation of self-assessment questions and performance indicators for each of these overarching standards can be found on the STEPS Community online site.

All standards are common to both the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) unless otherwise noted.

MVG Standard 1*

The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.

MVG Standard 2*

The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.

MVG Standard 3*

The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.

MVG Standard 4*

The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.

MVG Standard 5*

The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

MVG Standard 6

The institution has a clear understanding of its mission and communicates why it exists and who benefits from its efforts.

MVG Standard 7
All aspects of the institution's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.

MVG Standard 8
The institution's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the institution.

MVG Standard 9
The governance, staff, and volunteer structures and processes effectively advance the institution's mission.

MVG Standard 10
The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

MVG Standard 11
There is a clear and formal division of responsibilities between the governing authority and any group that supports the institution, whether separately incorporated or operating within the institution or its parent institution.

MVG Standard 12*
The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and institute resiliency efforts at the level appropriate for its capacity. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

MVG Standard 13*
The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

Progress Certificates

In the STEPS program, certificates are earned when your institution can check off all boxes for Basic (Bronze), Good (Silver), or Better (Gold) performance indicators. Your institution is eligible to receive a total of 18 certificates (three certificate levels in each of six sections).

To complete and submit your certificate form, follow the directions found on page xv.

Reminders

1. Be sure to review the "How to Use" section of this workbook before answering assessment questions.

2. AASLH recommends including a variety of staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members in the assessment process. STEPS is a valuable educational tool to help everyone within an organization learn more about operating a history institution.

3. You will notice that some sections include related or repeated standards, questions, or performance indicators. Duplication reinforces the importance of some topics or present them from another perspective. For example, a Code of Ethics is addressed in Mission, Vision, and Governance as well as the Management and Stewardship of Collections sections. Duplication may also be necessary so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign individual sections to different groups of people. Topics addressed in multiple sections are indicated with cross-reference notes found below an assessment question. The Index is helpful with cross-referencing.

4. Remember that the STEPS Community is an online site open to all institutions enrolled in the program. The STEPS Community offers sample policies, forms, and other helpful materials, plus program news and discount codes. The link can be found in your STEPS welcome letter which is always accessible in your institutional profile on the AASLH website. Your institution receives unlimited access so be sure to tell volunteers, governing board members, and staff (paid or unpaid) about the STEPS Community.

5. If you encounter a situation where the entity responsible for a task described in a performance indicator is not appropriate for your institution's governance structure, draw a line through the entity's name and write in the name of the entity that is responsible for the task. So long as the intent of the performance indicator is met, it is okay to modify a question or performance indicator.

6. AASLH recognizes that many small institutions operate solely through the generosity of volunteers. The term "staff (paid and unpaid)" is used because there are often volunteers within history institutions who hold considerable responsibilities, much like a paid staff person. The terms "lead staff person" or "management staff" can also refer to a volunteer.

7. Throughout the workbook, STEPS uses the term "institution" when referring to museums, historical societies, historic houses, historic sites, and other organizations.

8. The governing entity for most private, nonprofit history institutions is called a board of directors. For non-traditional institutions, the governing entity might be a department within city, county, state, federal, or tribal government. It may also be part of a park agency, corporation, or college or university department. The term "governing authority" is used throughout the workbook to refer to the entity that has ultimate responsibility for an institution.

9. Non-traditional institutions may see the need to create policies separate from their parent agency. For example, the Mission Statement for a parent agency that operates many parks but only one historic site may not refer to history at all. As a result, the historic site may find it beneficial and necessary to create its own Mission Statement.

10. Be sure to review the list of unacceptable practices in this section. Their importance should not be overlooked.

11. In the STEPS program, a standard is defined as "a generally accepted level of attainment that all institutions are expected to achieve."

12. Performance indicators (Basic, Good, Better) are benchmarks to help your institution measure the degree to which it is meeting a standard. Performance indicators are cumulative from one level to the next.

13. The purpose of the self-assessment questions and performance indicators is to divide the standards into manageable portions so your institution can work incrementally toward meeting them.

14. Words in bold are defined in the glossary found at the back of the workbook.

15. Once your institution is meeting all Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators in a section, it is eligible to receive the corresponding Bronze, Silver, or Gold certificate. See instructions for applying for certificates on page xv.

Unacceptable Practices

While many appropriate policies and procedures are described in STEPS standards and performance indicators, there are unacceptable practices that may occur within history institutions that require special attention.

Individuals who serve on a governing authority are responsible for overseeing the institution's activities. The following list addresses governing authority practices that are unethical and, in some cases, illegal.

Human Resources

Governing authority members who are responsible for hiring and promotion of paid staff or interns should base such decisions upon scope of work to create an equitable workplace. It is unacceptable or illegal to:

- Hire and promote people based upon race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disability.
- Base decisions about compensation and benefits on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disability.
- Offer compensation and benefits that are lower than those provided for comparable positions in the community or area (e.g., library).
- Omit the amount or range of compensation from position announcements for paid staff or interns.

Information

As charitable institutions, museums and related institutions operate within the public trust. Abuse of information, and therefore, trust by any governing authority member or the full governing authority is unacceptable. This includes:

- Lying, concealing information, or providing misleading or disrespectful information on any subject, to anyone including donors, governing authority members, press, volunteers, staff (paid and unpaid), and the public.
- Disclosure of confidential information except where required by law.

Leadership

Decision-making by the full governing authority or its individual members that is motivated by personal benefit or gain rather than the institution's or public's best interests is unacceptable. This includes:

- Asking staff or volunteers to run personal errands or complete other tasks that are not related to work.
- Using institutional property for direct profit or personal activities (e.g., parties, business events, side jobs).

A governing authority member's failure to disclose or address a clear conflict of interest or even the appearance of a conflict of interest is unacceptable. This includes:

- The existence of a business relationship with a fellow board member or staff member.

- Not recusing oneself from a governing authority decision related to an outside source (government agency or funder) when that action guarantees a favorable result for the institution.

Finances

Use of institutional funds, collections, or other resources (supplies, staff, equipment) by a governing authority member or the full governing authority for personal gain is unacceptable. This includes:

- Use of institutional funds for personal purchases or mixing institutional and personal funds.
- Use of grant funds or other restricted or donor-designated funds in a way other than directed.
- Paying governing authority members for work performed without public disclosure.
- Monetary loans to a governing authority member, staff (paid and unpaid), or volunteers.

Collections

Collections are held in the public trust. The governing authority should make the final decision on any loans of collection items to non-museum entities. Loans to non-museum entities are unacceptable if they:

- Jeopardize the level of care provided to the item.
- Limit public access to the item.

A governing authority's decision to treat collections as financial assets is unacceptable because it endangers the institution's ability to freely manage its collections and use them for public benefit. Treating collections as financial assets can take several forms including:

- Capitalization, which is an accounting practice that records the value of the collections as part of an institution's assets on financial statements. Capitalization may be done to inflate an institution's or parent institution's financial worth, hide financial difficulties, help a parent agency seek favorable bond ratings and interest rates, or help a parent agency or institution resolve financial difficulties.
- Encumberment, which is using collections as collateral for a loan or bond. Encumberment jeopardizes collections and therefore is unacceptable because the lending institution can foreclose on the collections and seize them if the institution or its parent agency defaults on the loan.

- Deaccessioning, which is the permanent removal of an object from an institution's collection, when done to provide funds for operating expenses or resolve financial difficulties for the institution or its parent agency is unacceptable. Deaccessioning as a collections management practice is acceptable as long as proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned objects are used to acquire new items for the collection or for the direct care of remaining collections. For more information about ethical deaccessioning, consult the AASLH Statement of Standards and Ethics and its position paper, "Valuing History Collections."

Due Diligence

A governing authority's failure to exercise due diligence for the safety and security of the institution and the public associated with it is unacceptable. This includes:

- Inattention to governance duties, including failure to attend meetings regularly and to prepare adequately for board discussions and decisions.

- The governing authority has the fiduciary duty to oversee the institution's assets by guarding against overspending, misuse of funds by staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, or members of the governing authority, or other risks by approving an annual budget, reading and studying financial reports, establishing control mechanisms to prevent fraud (e.g., policies for signing checks, handling cash, and credit card use), and choosing an auditor or independent reviewer.

- Governing authority failure to make sure facilities meet building codes, are repaired and maintained properly, and equipped with basic life-safety provisions such as first aid materials and fire extinguishers.

- Failure to provide ADA standard access (see Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines for historic structures).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# MVG Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.**	**A.** *Do governing authority members understand the institution's **public trust** responsibilities and work to uphold them?*	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority members can describe or explain what **public trust** means for museums and related nonprofit institutions as well as the governing authority's role in maintaining public trust. ☐ Governing authority members recognize that **public trust** responsibilities apply to all museums and related institutions in the United States regardless of budget size, governance structure, or staffing (including all-volunteer institutions). ☐ Governing authority members understand that **public trust** and other legal and ethical responsibilities of museums and related institutions are outlined in **codes of ethics** from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and any specialty organizations whose code of ethics applies to the institution's collections or programs. **Good** ☐ The institution communicates its commitment to upholding **public trust** responsibilities by including copies of **codes of ethics** from AASLH, AAM, and applicable specialty organizations in orientation materials for governing authority members. **Better** ☐ The institution helps governing authority members stay current on issues and discussions related to **public trust** and other ethical obligations for museums and related institutions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 2: The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.	A. *Do actions of the governing authority, individually and as a group, reflect the institution's mission?*	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority members recognize that an institution's mission should guide decision-making and actions. **Good** ☐ Governing authority members demonstrate a strong awareness of the institution's mission by using its **Mission Statement** as the starting point for decisions involving new projects and initiatives. **Better** ☐ Governing authority members commit to using the **Mission Statement** as the filter for all decision-making and planning.
	B. *Does the institution have a separate and distinct **Code of Ethics** that has been approved and adopted by the governing authority?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that a **Code of Ethics** is a core document for museums, historic sites, and related institutions. ☐ The institution creates a written, governing authority-approved **Code of Ethics** with content that is consistent with codes of ethics from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and any specialty organizations whose code of ethics applies to the institution's collections or programs. ☐ The institution's **Code of Ethics** includes a statement that specifically states it "applies to members of the governing authority."

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	B. *continued*	☐ The institution's **Code of Ethics** is a stand-alone document, not a reference to other documents or compilation of documents. ☐ The institution's **Code of Ethics** includes a governing authority-approved **Conflict of Interest Statement** applicable to all governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers receive a copy of the institution's **Code of Ethics** prior to joining the institution. **Good** ☐ Each governing authority member annually completes a form disclosing all real and potential conflicts of interest. ☐ The institution communicates its commitment to its **Code of Ethics** in a variety of mediums (e.g., newsletter, news articles, social media, **web presence**). **Better** ☐ The governing authority reviews the **Code of Ethics** every five years, updating as necessary.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	C. *Is conflict of interest understood and regulated by the governing authority?*	**Basic** ☐ Real and potential conflicts of interest held by potential governing authority members are communicated to the Nominating Committee and/or governing authority prior to election or appointment. ☐ Governing authority members can explain or describe the **Conflict of Interest Statement**'s position prohibiting personal collecting that competes with the institution's mission, acquisition of deaccessioned collection items, and other real or potential conflicts that may result in personal gain or benefit other organizations. **Good** ☐ From its **Code of Ethics** and **Conflict of Interest Statement**, the institution creates a **Conflict of Interest Policy** that outlines procedures for identifying and resolving conflict of interest situations and applies to all governing authority members. ☐ Governing authority members continue to share their real and potential conflicts of interest with the governing authority as situations arise. **Better** ☐ Governing authority members annually complete a form that discloses to the governing authority all real and potential conflicts of interest.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	D. *Is the governing authority committed to financial accountability?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution complies with all applicable state and federal laws related to financial management including financial reporting (e.g., employment, benefits, **unrelated business income tax (UBIT)**, sales tax; filing state nonprofit and IRS Form 990 if required). ☐ The governing authority works with staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers to identify procedures for increasing financial accountability and reducing the possibility of internal theft and fraud by eliminating the practice of one person overseeing financial management (e.g., incorporating **best practices** such as multiple people reviewing original copies of monthly bank and credit card statements; multiple people monitoring transaction records involving petty cash, admissions, museum store, and special events; more than one person having login information for online systems and accounts). ☐ The governing authority recognizes that relying on trust is not an adequate substitution for policies and procedures intended to prevent internal theft and fraud. ☐ The institution keeps financial statements and updates them, at a minimum, quarterly. ☐ The governing authority reviews a financial report at every meeting. ☐ The governing authority recognizes the importance of protecting financial information collected from transactions for memberships, donations, sales, and other revenue.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	D. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The governing authority approves a Financial Procedures Manual that provides specific instructions for staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members when conducting financial transactions involving money received, spent, saved, and/or invested. ☐ The governing authority communicates the expectation that staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers are trained according to the Financial Procedures Manual on appropriate handling of personal and financial information collected from memberships, donations, sales, and other support. ☐ The governing authority examines and analyzes an annual financial report and balance sheet. ☐ The institution trains or seeks training for staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers about online financial security (e.g., online pay systems, hacking). ☐ The governing authority seeks financial advice/ expertise from a **qualified professional** when needed. ☐ The institution follows recommended and legal procedures for background and other checks on all new staff hires and volunteers involved with finances.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	D. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The governing authority commits to an annual independent financial review or audit. ☐ An audit committee manages the institution's relationship with the independent accountant(s) who performs the annual financial review or audit. ☐ The governing authority is aware that while an independent financial review or audit is important and necessary, neither procedure reduces the institution's need for attention to fraud prevention. ☐ The institution commits to having a governing authority member who has finance credentials. ☐ If the institution has investments, the governing authority creates an Investment Policy that addresses, among other details, whether investments will be managed by the governing authority (or one of its committees) or an outside professional. ☐ The institution is aware of the need to stay current on trends regarding online security. ☐ The institution develops procedures for gathering, storing, maintaining, and protecting personal information gathering from donors, members, and others. ☐ The institution develops a **Donor Privacy Policy** that addresses the sale, trade, or exchange of donor information with other institutions or individuals.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	E. *Is the governing authority committed to* **transparency** *in financial matters and other areas?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority recognizes the importance of being honest when soliciting monetary or other donations and truthful and clear with donors about how their gift will be or was used. ☐ If required to file an IRS Form 990, the institution makes its three most recent ones, along with its annual financial report, available to **stakeholders** and the public. ☐ The governing authority records financial management and other decisions in meeting minutes and makes those minutes available to **stakeholders** and the public. **Good** ☐ The institution publicly identifies members of its governing authority by publishing an up-to-date list of names in its newsletter, on its **web presence**, and in other communications. ☐ The institution publishes an annual list of donors in its newsletter or other communications. **Better** ☐ The institution shares its annual independent financial review or audit with **stakeholders** and the public.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators

MVG Standard 3:

The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.

A.

*Does the institution value **inclusion** and **equity** within the culture, policies, and procedures of its governing authority?*

Standard 3 reflects the need for institutions to address the many issues related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion known by the acronym **DEAI.**

In the STEPS program, we focus on equity and inclusion because they are the ultimate goals of DEAI: to make our organizations and society more fair and just. Inclusion is the means, equity is the end.

Inclusion is defined as "the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes."

Equity is defined as "the fair and just treatment of all members of a community."

Basic

☐ Governing authority members can describe how **inclusion** and **equity**, or the lack thereof, affects the institution's culture; they can identify examples of policies, procedures, or practices that help or hinder inclusion and equity (e.g., Nominating Committee's recruitment practices for new governing authority members; hiring, compensation, and promotion practices; process for choosing vendors or contractors).

☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers compare the institution's governance policies, procedures, and practices with other institutions or recommended models; they identify ways the institution may improve or advance **inclusion** and **equity**.

Good

☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers consult a diverse cross-section of **stakeholders** and communities served to identify how the institution's governance culture, policies, and procedures can be more inclusive and equitable.

☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers create goals, priorities, and values around **inclusion** and **equity** and revise applicable policies and procedures to reflect them.

☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers regularly communicate the institution's goals, priorities, and values for **inclusion** and **equity** through a variety of mediums (orientation materials, training, newsletter, **web presence**).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers include **inclusion** and **equity** goals, priorities, and values in the institution's **Vision Statement**, **Values Statement**, and **Strategic Plan**. ☐ Collaborating with **stakeholders**, the governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers review the **inclusion** and **equity** goals, priorities, and values every three to five years. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers advocate for **inclusion** and **equity** in other organizations that serve their community.
	B. *Does the institution communicate its **equity** and **inclusion** efforts to governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution's leadership recognizes that regular communication to governing authority members, staff, and volunteers about **equity** and **inclusion** goals, priorities, and values will strengthen the institution's commitment in these areas. **Good** ☐ The institution regularly incorporates **equity** and **inclusion** goals, priorities, and values into meeting agendas and institutional plans. ☐ The institution strives to hire vendors who are members of underrepresented communities. **Better** ☐ The institution encourages the governing authority, along with staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers, to work toward greater **cultural competency** through training, dialogue, and reflection. ☐ The institution has an **equity** and **inclusion** affinity network, advisory group, or task force.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	C. *Are governing authority members knowledgeable about the institution's origin story (e.g., how it began, with whose money, on whose land, with whose collections, historic structures, and/ or landscapes) and committed to sharing it internally and externally?*	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority members can describe and explain important elements of the institution's origin story. ☐ The governing authority recognizes the importance of honestly and accurately sharing its origin story internally and externally. **Good** ☐ The institution's origin story is widely communicated to its governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers through orientation materials. ☐ The institution's origin story is widely shared with **stakeholders**, audiences, and communities served through a variety of mediums (e.g., newsletter, **web presence**). **Better** ☐ The institution identifies sources and resources to provide more information and research about its origin story. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers commit to ongoing dialogue about the institution's origin story by engaging with communities it serves, outside experts, and others in a variety of ways (e.g., exhibits, programs, blog posts, newsletter articles, social media).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 4: **The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.**	A. *Do the institution's governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers reflect and share demographic identities with current and potential audiences and communities served?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers should reflect and share demographic identities with current and potential audiences and communities served. **Good** ☐ The institution develops a plan for working toward governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers who reflect and share demographic identities with current and potential audiences and communities served. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to having governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers who reflect and share demographic identities with current and potential audiences and communities served.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
## MVG Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	## A. *Does the governing authority follow procedures stated in its* **Bylaws** *or other enabling document?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority recognizes its obligation to follow the institution's **Bylaws** or other enabling document (e.g., Articles of Incorporation). (Some institutions affiliated with a parent agency such as a park system, tribe, or university may be covered under the parent agency's **enabling document**. Institutions such as corporate museums may not have any enabling documents.) ☐ If the institution is governed by **Bylaws** or another enabling document, it maintains easy access to the document's most current version. **Good** ☐ The institution communicates the importance of its **enabling documents** by including them in governing authority orientation materials. **Better** ☐ The governing authority reviews its **Bylaws** or other enabling document every five years; more frequently if needed. ☐ The governing authority compares the institution's **Bylaws** or other enabling document with those from similar institutions or recommended models.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	B. *Can governing authority members access materials they need to make legal, ethical, and effective decisions?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to prepare and distribute reports and materials in advance of governing authority meetings, so members have time to adequately review them. **Good** ☐ The institution makes its policies, governing authority and committee meeting minutes, and other materials easily available for review and research by governing authority members and staff (paid and unpaid). **Better** ☐ The institution offers a password-protected online location where governing authority members can access **enabling documents**, meeting minutes, and other materials; the online location is updated regularly.
	C. *Do governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) treat the institution's human resources ethically and as a high priority?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) can describe or explain their **roles and responsibilities** in making sure all staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and interns are treated fairly and ethically. ☐ Staff in management positions and governing authority recognize that paid staff and interns must receive paychecks on time and at the level promised. ☐ The institution is committed to promoting paid staff to higher level positions fairly and without bias regarding gender, age, race, or other characteristics.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	C. *continued*	**Good** ☐ All people working or volunteering for the institution have up-to-date job descriptions. ☐ The institution creates a governing authority-approved **Personnel Policy** that is provided to all paid staff upon hire and whenever revisions are made; the Policy contains up-to-date and comprehensive information about staff responsibilities, benefits, institutional policies and expectations, and other necessary information. ☐ The institution creates a governing authority-approved Volunteer Manual that is provided to all people who donate their time and expertise on a regular basis; the Manual offers up-to-date and comprehensive information about **unpaid staff** and volunteer responsibilities, benefits, institutional policies and expectations, and other necessary information. ☐ The institution creates a governing authority-approved Whistleblower Policy that encourages staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers to report illegal, dishonest, or unethical activity; the Policy directs the whistleblower to the person or persons to whom such information should be reported. **Better** ☐ The institution reviews its Whistleblower and Personnel Policies, and its Volunteer Manual every three to five years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	D. *Are hiring practices for paid staff and interns legal, transparent, inclusive, and equitable?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution complies with local, state, and federal employment laws including anti-discrimination laws. ☐ To attract a diverse group of applicants, the institution identifies a wide variety of ways to announce and circulate position announcements. ☐ The institution commits to always including a compensation range in announcements for paid staff and intern position openings. --- **Good** ☐ Before posting a position announcement, the institution assesses the content to identify and remove gendered language. ☐ The institution also assesses position announcement content to replace credential-based qualifications with skill-based qualifications. ☐ The institution shares its **inclusion** and **equity** values and expectations in position announcements and job descriptions. ☐ The institution's application and/or interview process includes a way for candidates to demonstrate skills. ☐ The institution uses the same script of questions for each job candidate interviewed. --- **Better** ☐ The institution uses a blind hiring practice whereby the name, gender, and location of applicants is not known to the search committee.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	**E.** *If the institution has paid staff or interns, are decisions about compensation, benefits, and promotion free of gender, racial, disability, and other stereotypes and biases?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) recognize that compensation, benefits, and promotion for paid staff and interns should be based upon scope of work instead of gender, race, age, or other characteristics. **Good** ☐ The governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) commit to ensuring that paid staff and interns receive fair compensation, benefits, and promotions in relation to other paid staff and interns. **Better** ☐ The institution regularly conducts a compensation audit to ensure that paid staff are receiving fair compensation and benefits in relation to each other. ☐ The institution serves as a model and advocate in its community for hiring and promotion of paid staff and interns based upon scope of work rather than gender, age, race, or other characteristics.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	F. *If the institution has paid staff or interns, does it offer compensation and benefits at levels comparable to related positions in the community, and is it transparent about compensation and benefits?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that paid staff should receive compensation and benefits comparable to other related positions in the community or area (e.g., library, chamber of commerce, other nonprofits). ☐ The institution recognizes that interns should be paid a fair wage (whether by the institution, grant funds, or an external entity). ☐ The institution discloses compensation range and benefits when advertising position openings for paid staff or interns. ☐ The institution discloses a compensation range and benefits in its written job descriptions. **Good** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) responsible for hiring research compensation and benefits (e.g., health, retirement, leave) for comparable positions, and offer accordingly. ☐ If the institution offers internship opportunities, governing authority and staff responsible for hiring are committed to making internships a paid opportunity (whether by the institution or an external entity). **Better** ☐ The governing authority is committed to offering competitive compensation and benefits for paid staff and interns. ☐ The institution serves as a model and advocate in its community for fair compensation and benefits for paid staff and interns of nonprofit institutions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	G. *Does the institution invest in training opportunities for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers so they can effectively perform their job duties?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers benefit from training about operating a museum, historic site, or related institution. ☐ The institution recognizes that governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers need access to information about operating a museum, historic site, or related institution. **Good** ☐ The institution creates a line item for purchase of training and technical assistance materials in its annual budget. ☐ The institution communicates its support for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers to participate in local, state, regional, or national organizations that serve history or nonprofit institutions. **Better** ☐ The institution commits financial support to encourage governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and/or volunteers to participate in local, state, regional, or national organizations that serve history or nonprofit institutions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	H. *Does the institution help staff (paid and unpaid) identify how they can improve their work habits and meet goals by conducting annual job performance evaluations?*	**Basic**

Basic

☐ The governing authority recognizes the importance of its annual performance review of the lead staff member (paid or unpaid).

☐ The governing authority recognizes the value in staff (paid and unpaid) completing an annual self-evaluation in addition to receiving a performance review from their supervisor.

Good

☐ The governing authority conducts an annual review of the lead staff member (paid or unpaid) that is based on the staff member's job description and mutually agreed-upon goals.

☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) receive an annual performance review from their supervisor that is based on their job description and mutually agreed-upon goals.

☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) are asked to reflect upon the institution's work towards **equity** and **inclusion** efforts as part of their annual self-evaluation.

Better

☐ The governing authority conducts an annual performance review of the lead staff (paid and unpaid) member that is based upon mission, planning, outcomes, and standards; the review also addresses expectations for that person's work plan and goals for the coming year.

☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) receive an annual performance review from their supervisor that includes expectations for their work plan and goals for the coming year.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 6: **The institution has a clear understanding of its mission and communicates why it exists and who benefits from its efforts.**	A. *Does the institution have a Mission Statement?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution creates a written **Mission Statement**. ☐ The governing authority approves any changes to the **Mission Statement**. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe or explain the **Mission Statement**'s main points. ☐ All applicable governing documents and policies have the same version of the **Mission Statement** and are updated when revisions are made by the governing authority. **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can explain why the mission is important and worthy of support. ☐ The institution communicates its mission by making the **Mission Statement** easily accessible both internally and externally (e.g., shared on the institution's **web presence**, posted in the office, printed in communications materials, and prominent on agendas or other materials for governing authority meetings). **Better** ☐ The governing authority reviews and re-evaluates the **Mission Statement** every three to five years. ☐ The governing authority collaborates with staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, a diverse cross-section of communities the institution serves, and **stakeholders** to review the **Mission Statement**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 6: **The institution has a clear understanding of its mission and communicates why it exists and who benefits from its efforts.**	**B.** *Does the **Mission Statement** clearly express what the institution does and for whom?*	**Basic** ☐ Through its **Mission Statement**, the institution communicates why it exists and who benefits from its work. **Good** ☐ The **Mission Statement** may also identify the institution's audiences. **Better** ☐ The **Mission Statement** focuses on outcomes, impact, and relevance, and not solely activities.
MVG Standard 7: **All aspects of the institution's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.**	**A.** *Does the institution make decisions based on its mission?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the importance of using the institution's **Mission Statement** to guide decision making. ☐ The museum store selects appropriate merchandise that supports the institution's mission. ☐ The institution understands that unrelated business income from sales of merchandise not related to its mission may be subject to taxation by the IRS. **Good** ☐ The **Mission Statement** guides much of the decision making by the governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to using its **Mission Statement** to guide decision making.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 7: **All aspects of the institution's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.**	B. *Does the institution outline its aspirations in a written* **Vision Statement?**	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to identify major mission-related aspirations it wants to accomplish over the next five to ten years including those related to **inclusion** and **equity**. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and **stakeholders** can describe or explain their five- to ten-year aspirations for the institution. **Good** ☐ The institution invites **stakeholders** and a diverse cross-section of audiences and communities served by the institution to express their aspirations, including those related to **inclusion** and **equity**, for the institution over the next five to ten years. --- **Better** ☐ A task force or committee comprised of governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, **stakeholders**, and a diverse cross-section of audiences and communities served by the institution review and refine aspirations submitted by a large cross-section of people. ☐ The task force writes a **Vision Statement** that lists measurable goals that, when accomplished, will help the institution achieve its aspirations; the draft statement is reviewed, refined, and adopted by the governing authority. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and **stakeholders** commit to using the **Vision Statement**, along with other **planning documents**, to inspire cooperation and inform decision making over the next five to ten years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 7: **All aspects of the institution's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.**	C. *Does the institution have a written* **Values Statement?**	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority recognizes the need to identify core values that express the institution's commitment to being effective, making a difference, and staying true to its mission. **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers discuss and reflect on potential core values for the institution including values related to **inclusion** and **equity**. **Better** ☐ A task force or committee comprised of governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers drafts a **Values Statement**. ☐ The governing authority reviews, revises if necessary, and approves the **Values Statement**. ☐ The institution communicates and shares its **Values Statement** with its audiences and communities served through a variety of mediums (e.g., newsletter, **web presence**).
	D. *Are fundraising strategies integrated into operations to advance the institution's mission and vision?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority recognizes its role in both soliciting funds and contributing to the institution. ☐ Thank-you letters, membership materials, and gift receipts for monetary and **in-kind donations** are sent in a timely manner and are consistent with IRS charitable giving guidelines. ☐ All gifts designated for specific programs or projects **(restricted gifts)** are directed for their intended use.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 7: **All aspects of the institution's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.**	D. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The governing authority solicits funds and contributes according to their means and abilities. ☐ The institution calculates actual and potential sources of income and seeks diverse funding sources. ☐ The institution actively recruits new members and promotes membership renewals by sending reminders. ☐ The institution conducts an **annual giving** campaign that solicits donations above and beyond supporters' membership contributions. **Better** ☐ The institution engages in a variety of fundraising tactics from diverse funding sources (memberships, **annual giving**, **major gifts**, grants, sponsorships, **planned giving**). ☐ The institution shares its **Vision** and **Values Statement** as part of fundraising appeals. ☐ Fundraising appeals are strategic and target prospective donors based on their relationship with the institution. ☐ The institution publicly acknowledges all financial contributions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 8: **The institution's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the institution.**	A. *Does the institution have a formally adopted budget?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) recognize that an annual budget helps the institution operate in a fiscally responsible manner by identifying anticipated revenue and expenses for the coming year. ☐ Management staff (paid and unpaid) and/or governing authority members prepare an annual budget and can explain budget figures. ☐ The governing authority reviews, revises if necessary, and approves the annual budget. ☐ The governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) review the budget at least quarterly, adjusting as necessary, to reveal early warning signs of possible financial stress. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and/or governing authority members develop an annual budget that anticipates revenue and expenses for activities outlined in the institution's annual goals, work plans, or other **planning documents**. ☐ The annual budget development process analyzes needs from all areas of operation (e.g., programs, education, collections and historic structures, fundraising, visitor amenities, maintenance, marketing, administration). ☐ As part of the budget development process, governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) calculate fundraising target amounts based on goals and anticipated revenue and expenses. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) manage the budget throughout the year to avoid overspending.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 8: The institution's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the institution.	**A.** *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution communicates a summary budget to **stakeholders** and the public. ☐ The institution develops multi-year budget projections based on the institution's goals or **Strategic Plan**.
	B. *Does the institution plan for future financial needs?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) review anticipated cash flow at least quarterly. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions can describe or explain the institution's primary financial needs for the next few years (e.g., maintenance and repair, technology, collections care, salaries and benefits). ☐ The governing authority recognizes the need to have a cash reserve fund. **Good** ☐ The governing authority creates a cash reserve fund to protect the institution in case of sudden loss of revenue or other financial emergencies. ☐ The governing authority recognizes the value in diversifying revenue sources (e.g., memberships, **annual giving**, **major gifts**, grants, sponsorships, **planned giving**). ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions analyze current revenue sources to determine percentages of each source in relation to total revenue. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions develop financial goals for the next few years based on the institution's goals and work plans.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 8: **The institution's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the institution.**	B. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The governing authority commits to developing a more diversified revenue stream (e.g., **major gifts**, memberships, **annual giving**, grants, sponsorships, **planned giving**). ☐ The governing authority explores the feasibility and appropriateness of an **endowment**.
	C. *Is there an institution-wide commitment to fundraising?*	**Basic** ☐ All prospective governing authority members are informed they will be expected to make an annual financial contribution to the institution according to their means and abilities. (Note: within some governing authority structures, such as a governmental or tribal entity, annual financial contributions may not be expected or appropriate. When a performance indicator clearly does not fit the institution's situation, it can be noted and skipped.) **Good** ☐ Institutionally approved fundraising strategies are used including solicitation of individual gifts, corporate and foundation support, and **in-kind donations** as appropriate. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers are involved in fundraising efforts. ☐ The governing authority solicits funds and contributes according to their means and abilities.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 8: **The institution's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the institution.**	**C.** *continued*	**Better** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers actively engage in fundraising. ☐ Governing authority members give financial contributions on a regular basis to demonstrate their support for the institution as their means allow. (Note: within some governing authority structures, such as a governmental or tribal entity, annual financial contributions may not be expected or appropriate. When a performance indicator clearly does not fit the institution's situation, it can be noted and skipped.) ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) create a fundraising strategy that identifies and pursues potential funding sources in support of its **Strategic Plan** and for major future expenses (e.g., special projects, capital expenses, deferred maintenance).
	D. *Does the governing authority work with staff (paid and unpaid) to identify annual or multi-year goals or plans?*	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority members (or one of its committees) and staff (paid and unpaid) identify annual goals that are realistic and based upon needs and opportunities as well as available resources. ☐ Governing authority members (or one of its committees) and staff (paid and unpaid) can explain how annual goals advance the institution's mission and reflect its values including those related to greater **inclusion** and **equity**. ☐ The governing authority reviews and approves annual goals and allocates adequate financial resources to achieve them.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 8: The institution's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the institution.	D. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) identify deadlines, funding sources, and fundraising projects for each annual goal. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) create work plans based upon annual goals. ☐ The institution shares its annual goals with its **stakeholders**. **Better** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) use the institution's **Mission**, **Vision**, and **Values Statements** to create a **Strategic Plan**. ☐ The **Strategic Plan** drives the institution and its undertakings. ☐ The **Strategic Plan** is made publicly available. ☐ Governing authority members work with staff (paid and unpaid) to monitor local politics, trends, and situations that may affect the **Strategic Plan**'s success.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 9: **The governance, staff, and volunteer structures and processes effectively advance the institution's mission.**	**A.** *Does the governing authority maintain the committee structure specified in its governing documents and adequate to advance the institution's mission?*	**Basic** ☐ Standing committees named in governing documents meet at regular intervals or as specified in the documents. ☐ The governing authority informs standing committees of the institution's annual goals. **Good** ☐ Work by standing and other committees is based upon the institution's annual goals and included in governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) work plans. ☐ Standing and other committees are familiar with the institution's **Vision Statement**. **Better** ☐ Committee work is based upon the institution's Strategic Plan. ☐ When applicable, committee work is informed by the institution's fundraising strategy.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 9: **The governance, staff, and volunteer structures and processes effectively advance the institution's mission.**	B. *Does the governing authority evaluate its performance and impact?*	**Basic** ☐ Through informal discussions, the governing authority identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement in its governance of the institution. ☐ Governing authority members privately reflect and identify how they as individuals can improve their service or participation. **Good** ☐ Governing authority members anonymously complete a survey rating the authority's performance in governing and guiding the institution. ☐ The institution identifies reading material or training to help governing authority members learn more about their **roles and responsibilities**. **Better** ☐ Governing authority members participate in an annual private self-evaluation along with a group review of the authority's performance using a survey or other method to collect **feedback** and ratings including opinions about the institution's **inclusion**, access, and **equity** efforts. ☐ From group **feedback** and ratings, the governing authority commits to making improvements in its performance.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 9: **The governance, staff, and volunteer structures and processes effectively advance the institution's mission.**	**C.** *Does the institution plan for future leadership within the governing authority and staff to ensure continued advancement of the mission?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority recognizes the need to fill its positions with members who attend meetings, who regularly volunteer, or at the very least, who are committed to the organization's mission. **Good** ☐ The governing authority, through a Nominating Committee, assesses its strengths/weaknesses and actively recruits new governing authority members with needed skills and who reflect the **diversity** of the institution's audiences and communities served. ☐ The governing authority assesses staffing needs and explores ways to recruit a diverse group of staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who reflect the institution's audiences and communities served. **Better** ☐ The institution creates a Succession Plan for staff (paid and unpaid), especially those in leadership roles or those who have been with the organization for a substantial amount of time. ☐ A leadership development committee is responsible for ensuring adequate governing authority leadership that meets its **inclusion** and **equity** goals currently and in the future. ☐ The institution's **Strategic Plan** and Vision and **Values Statements** provide a framework for leadership planning

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 10: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.**	A. *Do governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and interns have clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations that they understand, respect, and exercise?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution creates an organizational chart. ☐ The governing authority recognizes its role is to create policy while delegating authority for day-to-day implementation of policies to staff (paid and unpaid) or designated volunteers. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize and respect the governing authority's role to set policy, supervise the lead staff member (paid or unpaid), oversee the institution's financial and legal health, and guide planning. ☐ There is regular communication between staff (paid and unpaid) and the governing authority. ☐ The institution recognizes that internship opportunities it offers are different than volunteer work; internships are structured learning experiences. ☐ Governing authority members recognize the importance of making a personal financial contribution to the institution annually. (Note: within some non-traditional governing authority structures, such as a governmental or tribal entity, annual financial contributions may not be expected or appropriate. When a performance indicator clearly does not fit the institution's situation, it can be noted and skipped.)

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 10: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.**	A. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The institution defines staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteer responsibilities using written job descriptions. ☐ Internships offered by the institution have a written project description that outlines learning **objectives** and other important information. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers actively engage in fundraising strategies that have been approved by the governing authority. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize their responsibility to advocate for the institution when interacting with **stakeholders** and communities served. ☐ If the institution offers internship opportunities, it commits time and resources needed to offer a structured learning experience. ☐ Members of the governing authority make at least an annual gift and/or hold membership in the institution as their means allow. (See related note under Basic indicators.) **Better** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers regularly review job descriptions, roles, and responsibilities. ☐ The governing authority commits to actively fundraising to sustain the institution's goals and advance its mission. (See related note under Basic indicators.)

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 10: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.**	**B.** *Does the institution have a written **Personnel Policy** for paid staff?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies, records, and addresses personnel issues. ☐ The institution complies with local, state, and federal employment laws including anti-discrimination laws. **Good** ☐ The institution creates a **Personnel Policy** that provides up-to-date and comprehensive information about paid staff responsibilities, benefits, institutional policies and expectations, and other information. **Better** ☐ The institution reviews its **Personnel Policy** every three to five years or as needed. ☐ The institution seeks legal counsel to review its **Personnel Policy**.
	C. *Does the institution manage its volunteer corps in ways that are beneficial to the volunteers and to the institution?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies a structure for collecting volunteer contact information. ☐ The institution includes its volunteer corps on its organizational chart. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) can describe or explain jobs and duties that volunteers perform for the institution. ☐ Volunteers can describe or explain institutional policies and procedures they are obligated to follow.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 10: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.**	C. *continued*	**Basic** *continued* ☐ The institution holds its volunteers accountable for unethical or illegal actions. ☐ The institution communicates its appreciation and respect for is volunteers in a variety of ways (e.g., newsletter, **web presence**, appreciation events). **Good** ☐ The institution identifies a governing authority or staff member (paid or unpaid) to serve as its volunteer coordinator. ☐ The institution follows recommended and legal procedures for background and other checks on volunteers involved with children/youth programs and finances. ☐ The institution communicates its values for **inclusion** and **equity** by recruiting and accepting volunteers who represent the **diversity** of its audiences and communities served. ☐ The institution creates a Volunteer Manual that provides up-to-date and comprehensive information about volunteer responsibilities, institutional policies and expectations, and other information necessary for people who generously donate their time and efforts to the institution. ☐ The institution creates job descriptions for its volunteer positions to help volunteers understand their role within the institution and avoid misunderstandings.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 10: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.**	C. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution regularly communicates with its audiences and the communities it serves about available volunteer opportunities. ☐ The institution supports volunteer learning by providing reading materials and training opportunities. ☐ Volunteers assess their job performance through an annual self-evaluation that not only offers an opportunity for self-reflection but also provides valuable **feedback** to the institution about its programs, services, and management.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 10: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.**	D. *Does the institution provide orientation for governing authority members?*	**Basic** ☐ When the Nominating Committee recruits new members of the governing authority, it accurately describes the responsibilities and expectations of the position. ☐ Governing authority members recognize there are legal, ethical, and fiduciary obligations regarding their service on the governing authority. ☐ The governing authority is honest and transparent with new members about any legal and ethical issues the institution or authority is facing or faced within the past ten years. ☐ Governing authority members have access to the institution's **enabling documents** (e.g., **Charter**, **Bylaws**, or Articles of Incorporation). **Good** ☐ Copies of **enabling documents**, along with the **Mission Statement**, **Code of Ethics**, **Collections Management Policy**, and other policies and **planning documents** are provided to governing authority members. ☐ An annual orientation event is offered for new governing authority members. ☐ The institution helps governing authority members increase their knowledge of standards and **best practices** for history institutions. **Better** ☐ Annual orientation for governing authority members includes information about the institution's history, mission, audiences, communities served, values, and vision. ☐ The institution seeks nonprofit training opportunities, including those for fundraising, for members of the governing authority.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 11: **There is a clear and formal division of responsibilities between the governing authority and any group that supports the institution, whether separately incorporated or operating within the institution or its parent institution.**	A. *Does the institution have a clear and formal division of responsibilities between the governing body and any* ***support groups****?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies volunteer and community **support groups**, and regularly reviews the appropriateness and usefulness of these associations **Good** ☐ The institution creates written agreements with supporting institutions, community groups, and other partners that describe expectations, authority, and roles. **Better** ☐ The institution annually reviews written agreements with supporting institutions, community groups, and other partners, and has sought legal counsel on these agreements where appropriate.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 12: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	A. *Has the governing authority examined the alignment of the institution's mission and the environment?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority can describe and explain potential sustainability issues related to how fulfilling the institution's mission may impact the environment. **Good** ☐ The governing authority proposes projects that would enhance **environmental sustainability**. **Better** ☐ The governing authority creates projects and partnerships that enhance **environmental sustainability**. ☐ The institution participates in local, regional, or national efforts to help communities and cultural institutions address environment and climate issues.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MVG Standard 12: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	B. *How is the governing authority approaching socially responsible investing?*	**Basic** ☐ If the institution has an investment portfolio, the governing authority recognizes the possibility of socially responsible investing. **Good** ☐ If the institution has an investment portfolio, the governing authority assigns a portion of the portfolio to be invested in socially responsible choices. **Better** ☐ If the institution has an investment portfolio, the governing authority commits to socially responsible investing for much of the portfolio. ☐ The governing authority's commitment to socially responsible investing is stated in the institution's Investment Policy.
MVG Standard 13: **The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.**	A. *Does the institution use technology to further its mission and vision?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that different technologies can help communicate its mission and vision to more audiences (e.g., online exhibitions, social media). **Good** ☐ The institution uses technology to share its mission and vision with current and new audiences. **Better** ☐ The institution explores additional ways to use technology to further its mission and vision and plan for future initiatives.

Audience and Community Engagement

The **AUD** section addresses:

- Accessibility
- Accountability and Transparency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Marketing and Public Relations
- Physical and Intellectual Access
- Technology
- Visitor Experience
- Visitor Services
- Visitor Studies

AUD Standards

The standards listed below are addressed in the Audience and Community Engagement section. From one workbook section to another you may notice related or repeated standards, self-assessment questions, or performance indicators. This duplication is intended to reinforce the importance of a concept across multiple sections. Duplication is also necessary at times so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign workbook sections to different groups of volunteers, committee members, staff (paid and unpaid), governing authority members, and/or other participants.

Standards marked with an * are common to all workbook sections. A compilation of self-assessment questions and performance indicators for each of these overarching standards can be found on the STEPS Community online site.

All standards are common to both the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) unless otherwise noted.

AUD Standard 1*
The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.

AUD Standard 2*
The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.

AUD Standard 3*
The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.

AUD Standard 4*
The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the institution's mission and goals.

AUD Standard 5*
The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

AUD Standard 6
The institution identifies current and potential audiences it serves and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them

AUD Standard 7

Regardless of its self-identified communities, the institution strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.

AUD Standard 8

The institution demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the institution and its resources.

AUD Standard 9

The institution regularly promotes the institution and its activities and thinks strategically about how it shares information. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

AUD Standard 10

The institution is committed to providing a high level of basic visitor services to visitors and makes continual improvements to the delivery of its services. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

AUD Standard 11*

The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

AUD Standard 12*

The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

Progress Certificates

In the STEPS program, certificates are earned when your institution can check off all boxes for Basic (Bronze), Good (Silver), or Better (Gold) performance indicators. Your institution is eligible to receive a total of 18 certificates (three certificate levels in each of six sections).

To complete and submit your certificate form, follow the directions found on page xv.

Reminders

1. Be sure to review the "How to Use" section of this workbook before answering assessment questions.

2. AASLH recommends including a variety of staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members in the assessment process. STEPS is a valuable educational tool to help everyone within an organization learn more about operating a history institution.

3. You will notice that some sections include related or repeated standards, questions, or performance indicators. Duplication reinforces the importance of some topics or present them from another perspective. For example, a Code of Ethics is addressed in Mission, Vision, and Governance as well as the Management and Stewardship of Collections sections. Duplication may also be necessary so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign individual sections to different groups of people. Topics addressed in multiple sections are indicated with cross-reference notes found below an assessment question. The Index is helpful with cross-referencing.

4. Remember that the STEPS Community is an online site open to all institutions enrolled in the program. The STEPS Community offers sample policies, forms, and other helpful materials, plus program news and discount codes. The link can be found in your STEPS welcome letter which is always accessible in your institutional profile on the AASLH website. Your institution receives unlimited access so be sure to tell volunteers, governing board members, and staff (paid or unpaid) about the STEPS Community.

5. If you encounter a situation where the entity responsible for a task described in a performance indicator is not appropriate for your institution's governance structure, draw a line through the entity's name and write in the name of the entity that is responsible for the task. So long as the intent of the performance indicator is met, it is okay to modify a question or performance indicator.

6. AASLH recognizes that many small institutions operate solely through the generosity of volunteers. The term "staff (paid and unpaid)" is used because there are often volunteers within history institutions who hold considerable responsibilities, much like a paid staff person. The terms "lead staff person" or "management staff" can also refer to a volunteer.

7. Throughout the workbook, STEPS uses the term "institution" when referring to museums, historical societies, historic houses, historic sites, and other organizations.

8. The governing entity for most private, nonprofit history institutions is called a board of directors. For non-traditional institutions, the governing entity might be a department within city, county, state, federal, or tribal government. It may also be part of a park agency, corporation, or college or university department. The term "governing authority" is used throughout the workbook to refer to the entity that has ultimate responsibility for an institution.

9. Non-traditional institutions may see the need to create policies separate from their parent agency. For example, the Mission Statement for a parent agency that operates many parks but only one historic site may not refer to history at all. As a result, the historic site may find it beneficial and necessary to create its own Mission Statement.

10. Be sure to review the list of unacceptable practices in this section. Their importance should not be overlooked.

11. In the STEPS program, a standard is defined as "a generally accepted level of attainment that all institutions are expected to achieve."

12. Performance indicators (Basic, Good, Better) are benchmarks to help your institution measure the degree to which it is meeting a standard. Performance indicators are cumulative from one level to the next.

13. The purpose of the self-assessment questions and performance indicators is to divide the standards into manageable portions so your institution can work incrementally toward meeting them.

14. Words in bold are defined in the glossary found at the back of the workbook.

15. Once your institution is meeting all Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators in a section, it is eligible to receive the corresponding Bronze, Silver, or Gold certificate. See instructions for applying for certificates on page xv.

Unacceptable Practices

While many appropriate policies and procedures are described in STEPS standards and performance indicators, there are unacceptable practices that may exist within history institutions that require special attention. The following list addresses practices that are unethical and, in some cases, illegal.

Within the realm of audiences, efforts to misrepresent or exclude data related to or participation by any group is unacceptable. This includes:

- Active exclusion of, or resistance to, participation in an institution's activities by any person based on race, ethnicity, social status, gender, ability, or sexual orientation.

- Efforts to knowingly misrepresent attendance figures, demographics, or results of visitor assessment to hide bias or to overstate participation by a specific demographic.

- Prejudicial interpretation of visitor assessments (e.g., surveys) by selectively choosing which results to consider or present.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# AUD Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.**	## A. *Do governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers understand the institution's* **public trust** *responsibilities as they relate to audience and community engagement?*	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize they play an important role in helping the institution meet audience and community expectations for honesty and **transparency** in financial, collections, and other matters, and for accuracy in the history interpreted through exhibitions, publications, and other programs. **Good** ☐ Orientation for new governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers includes discussion about the importance of maintaining **public trust** and common ways that trust is eroded through conflict of interest issues and mismanaged finances or collections. **Better** ☐ The institution communicates its commitment to meeting audience and community **public trust** through a variety of mediums (e.g., traditional and social media, exhibitions, programs).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	**A.** *Is information about the institution's mission and operations easily accessible?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution explains its mission and lists contact information for key staff (paid or unpaid) and names of governing authority members in its newsletter and/or other communications. ☐ Responses to inquiries about the institution's mission and operations are timely, complete, and accurate. **Good** ☐ The institution's communications with members, **stakeholders**, and the public is regular, accurate, relevant, and reliable. ☐ The institution has a **web presence** (e.g., website, page on parent agency website, social media site) that provides accurate information about mission, key paid or **unpaid staff** contacts, governing authority members, hours of operation, and physical address. **Better** ☐ The institution maintains a **web presence** (e.g., website, page on agency or university website, social media site) that is updated regularly and provides a full range of content that demonstrates the institution's commitment to **transparency** about mission, governance, planning, financial accountability, and operations.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# AUD Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	## A. *Does the institution value* **inclusion** *and* **equity** *in its engagement with current and potential audiences and communities?*	**Basic**

Basic

☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can identify communities served by the institution.

☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can identify and describe in geographic and demographic terms current and potential audiences served by the institution.

☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe how the institution's programs, services, partnerships, and other activities help or hinder its ability to serve and engage with communities and audiences in inclusive and equitable ways.

Good

☐ The institution consults a diverse cross-section of **stakeholders** to identify and describe communities served by the institution and to ascertain the needs, interests, and motivations of current and potential audiences.

☐ The institution consults a diverse cross-section of **stakeholders** to assess how its programs, services, partnerships, and other activities help or hinder its ability to serve and engage diverse audiences and communities in inclusive and equitable ways.

Standard 3 reflects the need for institutions to address the many issues related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion known by the acronym **DEAI.**

In the STEPS program, we focus on equity and inclusion because they are the ultimate goals of DEAI: to make our organizations and society more fair and just. Inclusion is the means, equity is the end.

Inclusion is defined as "the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes."

Equity is defined as "the fair and just treatment of all members of a community."

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers align and prioritize **feedback** from **stakeholders** with the institution's Vision, Values, and **Mission Statements** in order to identify goals for its programs, services, partnerships, and other activities. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers create goals associated with programs, services, partnerships, and other activities. ☐ The institution widely and regularly communicates its goals and progress in serving diverse audiences and communities in inclusive and equitable ways to its **stakeholders**. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), **volunteers**, and **stakeholders** assess goals for **inclusion** and **equity** every three to five years.
	B. *Does the institution share its own origin story (e.g., how it began, with whose money, on whose land, with what collections) with audiences and communities it engages with and serves?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the importance of honestly and accurately sharing the institution's origin story with its audiences and communities. **Good** ☐ The institution's origin story is widely communicated to its audiences and communities served through a variety of mediums (e.g., newsletter, traditional and social media, **web presence**). **Better** ☐ The institution identifies sources and resources to provide more information and research about its origin story. ☐ The institution commits to an ongoing dialogue about its origin story with the audiences and communities it serves.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators

AUD Standard 4:

The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.

A.

Do governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers reflect and share demographic identities with the institution's current and potential audiences and communities served?

Basic

☐ The institution recognizes that governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers should reflect and share demographic identities with its current and potential audiences and communities served (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, people with disabilities).

☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe past and present barriers to more diverse representation within the institution.

Good

☐ The institution develops a plan for working toward governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers who reflect and share demographic identities with its current and potential audiences and communities served.

Better

☐ The institution commits to having governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers who reflect and share demographic identities with its current and potential audiences and communities served.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	A. *Does the institution provide services and accommodations that promote **accessibility** for all visitors and is responsive to staff and audience identification of barriers?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and offers alternatives that communicate an equivalent experience for physical spaces and programs that are inaccessible to some audiences (e.g., printed transcript of video for Deaf visitors). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can explain and describe accommodations the institution has created to provide a quality visitor experience to physical areas or programs that are inaccessible to some audiences. ☐ If the institution has a **web presence** other than social media (e.g., website, page on agency or university website), it recognizes the need for that web presence to be accessible to viewers with disabilities per the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).** **Good** ☐ The institution provides services and provisions to enhance **accessibility** as a standard of operation. ☐ The institution's **web presence** offers contact information for staff (paid or unpaid) who can assist visitors with **accessibility**-related questions (e.g., facility's policy on service animals). ☐ The **web presence** is regularly tested with **accessibility** tools (e.g., screen readers, color-blindness tests).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution commits to offering opportunities for all audiences by providing services and provisions that enhance **accessibility** as a standard of operation. ☐ The institution's **web presence** provides all available information about **accessibility**. ☐ The institution collaborates with community members who have relevant life experience to regularly evaluate its **web presence** using **accessibility** tools they utilize in their daily lives. ☐ The institution commits to conforming to current **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)** at the highest **compliance** level possible. ☐ The institution identifies resources for training staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers about **accessibility** awareness and audience needs.
	B. *Is **accessibility** considered in the planning and implementation of public programs and special events?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that it should, and in some cases must, make accommodations for physical and programmatic **accessibility** (e.g., ASL interpretation) for its programs and public events. ☐ The institution recognizes the value in using more than one interpretive technique (e.g., exhibit labels, demonstrations, electronic media) to present and explore a topic.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	B. *continued*	**Good** □ The institution develops plans for event **accessibility** based upon issues encountered and requests received at past programs and special events. □ The institution develops different levels of information for audiences of different ages and abilities. □ Exhibits and programs offer **multisensory** choices so visitors can learn from the presentation methods they prefer. **Better** □ All phases of program and event planning and implementation include considerations for **accessibility**. □ A staff member (paid or unpaid) acts as **accessibility** coordinator for programs and special events to make sure accessibility needs are met both in the planning process and in implementation. □ The institution commits to using **multisensory** techniques that support the different ways people learn (e.g., visual, auditory, reading/writing, kinesthetic) and is sensitive to the needs of neurodiverse visitors. □ The institution shares authority with members of community organizations with relevant life experience to create and evaluate learning, emotional, and behavioral **objectives** for its programs.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 6:	A.	**Basic**

AUD Standard 6:

The institution identifies current and potential audiences it serves and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them

A.

Does the institution actively collect and use information about current and potential audiences?

Basic

☐ The institution collects, stores, and manages basic audience numeric data (e.g., overall attendance, heaviest attendance days, visitor groups) and is transparent about how it uses the information.

☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe and explain the audiences they believe the institution serves well and those it should but is not currently serving.

☐ The institution identifies a variety of ways it can encourage current and potential audiences to add themselves to contact lists to receive future communication.

Good

☐ The institution has accurately identified the obvious audiences (families, special-subject buffs, elementary school-age children) it serves as well as communities and audiences it should but is currently not serving.

☐ It works with other entities (e.g., local social service agencies and nonprofits, local businesses, state tourism agency) to learn more about current and underserved audiences.

Better

☐ The institution collects and researches demographic information about current audiences (e.g., age range, zip code, race, gender, language, school grade levels).

☐ It explores audience information to determine trends and patterns (e.g., seasonal) and in interest (e.g., programs, exhibits, events).

☐ It regularly meets with a range of community groups and other entities to discuss how it can better serve underserved audiences.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 6: **The institution identifies current and potential audiences it serves and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them.**	B. *Does the institution study its audiences and collect **feedback** from them?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that studying who is and who is not visiting the institution or accessing its programs and services online or elsewhere helps them make informed decisions instead of relying on assumptions and/or inaccurate information. ☐ Informal audience **feedback** (e.g., anecdotal comments, observations) about the institution's programs and activities is reviewed by the governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers. **Good** ☐ The institution may conduct some type of formal **visitor studies** (e.g., surveys) to gather audience data and **feedback**. ☐ The institution monitors data and **feedback** from external sources (e.g., Trip Advisor, Google, Yelp). ☐ When possible, staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers make decisions about new programs, exhibitions, and other mission-related activities based on audience data and **feedback**. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers demonstrate knowledge of **visitor studies** methods through readings, training, and other learning opportunities. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and the governing authority understand the importance of establishing program outcomes to demonstrate impact of the institution's programs and activities. ☐ The institution commits to studying its visitors regularly and uses the data and **feedback** to guide decision-making about future programs and activities. ☐ When possible, the institution compares its visitor data and **feedback** to those of peer institutions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# AUD Standard 7: **Regardless of its self-identified communities, the institution strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.**	# A. *Does the institution know its neighbors (e.g. residents, businesses, and other individuals and entities in the general vicinity of the facility)?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution has identified its geographic neighbors. ☐ Its neighbors are aware of the institution and what it does. **Good** ☐ The institution can locate data (e.g., U.S. Census, Department of Education, chamber of commerce) that will help explain neighbors' demographics and needs. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers decide to interact with the institution's neighbors outside the facility's grounds and offer the facility for **neighborhood** activities and gatherings, when possible, in order to build meaningful relationships with the neighbors. **Better** ☐ The institution researches available data to help governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers understand and meet its neighbors' needs. ☐ The institution offers opportunities for its neighbors to interact and build meaningful relationships with each other.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 7: **Regardless of its self-identified communities, the institution strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.**	B. *How does the institution respond to major challenges, changes, or crises within its community or region?*	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), or volunteers can describe recent major challenges, changes, or crises in its community or region (demographic, economic, social, environmental, and/or political). **Good** ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), or volunteers assess how major challenges, changes, or crises in its community or region (demographic, economic, social, environmental, and/or political) affect the relationships the institution is building with its neighbors. **Better** ☐ The institution serves as a role model for responding appropriately to major challenges, changes, or crises in its community or region (demographic, economic, social, environmental, and/or political), and collaborates with other organizations and agencies when possible.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 7: **Regardless of its self-identified communities, the institution strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.**	C. *Does the institution work with other groups in the community (e.g., social service, civil rights, cultural, religious, youth, educational, fraternal)?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution can describe a few projects it has worked on with groups or organizations in its community. ☐ It can list other groups or organizations with which it would like to collaborate. **Good** ☐ The institution identifies opportunities for approaching other groups or organizations to discuss collaborating on a project that is mutually beneficial to both parties. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to practicing **shared authority** when working with other groups or organizations.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 7: **Regardless of its self-identified communities, the institution strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.**	D. *Does the institution allocate resources to serve the community and enhance quality of life?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution can describe ways in which it might make its resources (e.g., expertise, facility, money) available to the communities it serves. ☐ The institution can identify possible barriers to its programs and services for some members of communities it serves (e.g., cost, scheduling, location). **Good** ☐ The institution creates opportunities for it to support and serve its communities. ☐ It reduces barriers to its programs and services (e.g., cost, scheduling, location). **Better** ☐ The institution reduces barriers to its programs and services and, when possible, helps to reduce barriers to other community activities as well. ☐ It is a catalyst for community forums and provides historical resources which offer context for community dialogue. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers take leadership roles in local activities (e.g., serving on boards, sharing expertise, and attending community functions).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 8: **The institution demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the institution and its resources.**	**A.** *Does the institution offer a variety of opportunities for* ***physical and intellectual access*** *(e.g., onsite events, publications, digital content)?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to have regular and posted days and times it is open to the public; if it is open only by appointment, accurate contact information is posted. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers identify good communication practices including an updated voicemail greeting that allows callers to leave messages, an email address for general inquiries, and a process for checking and returning messages in a timely manner. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe a variety of ways the institution provides physical and **intellectual access** (e.g., events, programs, publications, digital content). **Good** ☐ The institution develops and regularly provides a variety of opportunities for physical and **intellectual access** (e.g., events, programs, publications, digital content). **Better** ☐ Institutional planning explores new ways to offer physical and **intellectual access**. ☐ The institution commits to increasing online access to collections and/or educational resources.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 9: **The institution regularly promotes itself and its activities and thinks strategically about how it shares information.**	A. *Does the institution actively promote its activities and resources?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution can give examples of how it makes its resources available to members, audiences, and communities (e.g., exhibitions, genealogical or research library, facilities for use or rental, speakers' bureau, K-12 school programs). ☐ It can describe several mediums it uses to promote its activities and resources (e.g., institutional newsletter, news articles, social media). ☐ The institution recognizes it must comply with the **CAN-SPAM Act of 2003** when marketing or promoting its activities and/or resources by email. ☐ The institution has identified a process for recording and storing contact information for members, donors, and other audiences to maintain a basic contact list for promoting activities and resources. **Good** ☐ A variety of methods (e.g., traditional and social media) are used to promote activities and resources to members, audiences, and communities. ☐ The institution manages its **web presence** by posting information about hours of operation, physical address, and a contact source. ☐ The institution uses a process and platform not only for recording and storing information about members, donors, and other audiences but one that also enables it to directly reach these groups to promote its activities and resources.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 9: **The institution regularly promotes itself and its activities and thinks strategically about how it shares information.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution promotes its activities and resources using targeted methods to reach specific audiences. ☐ The institution's **web presence** is updated regularly and provides not only basic information (hours of operation, physical address, and contact source), but also information about programs. ☐ An **integrated contact database** is used to track and cross reference how members, donors, and other audiences interact with the institution.
	B. *Does the institution's messaging communicate a consistent identity?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution has a few basic photos it can make available for press/publication use. ☐ The institution recognizes the need for basic promotional materials that carry its name and logo (e.g., stationery, business cards, newsletter). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can recite and explain the institution's mission. **Good** ☐ The institution can easily access a variety of current photographs for press and publication requests. ☐ Promotional materials exhibit consistency in appearance, identity, and messaging. ☐ The institution communicates changes in leadership and other news in a timely manner. **Better** ☐ The institution develops a style and branding guide (e.g., consistent use of specific colors and fonts).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 9: **The institution regularly promotes itself and its activities and thinks strategically about how it shares information.**	C. *Does the institution have a designated spokesperson or spokespeople?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies one or more people to represent it with traditional and social media and in the community, whether for regular or emergency-related communications. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can explain their role in directing inquiries from traditional and social media and the community to the institution's designated spokesperson or spokespeople. **Good** ☐ Designated spokespeople demonstrate current and appropriate knowledge of the institution's mission, governance, programs, goals, and other information. ☐ Designated spokespeople answer inquiries from traditional and social media and the community in a timely and professional manner. **Better** ☐ The institution develops a crisis communication plan.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 9: The institution regularly promotes itself and its activities and thinks strategically about how it shares information.	**D.** *Is there a plan for promoting the institution?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to not only promote its activities but other content as well (e.g., collections- and research-related stories and articles). **Good** ☐ The institution creates non-activity related content (e.g., collections- and research-related stories and articles) to broaden promotion of the institution. **Better** ☐ The institution develops a **public relations/ marketing plan** that includes targeted **media outlets** for each major activity, media outlets for different communities, a schedule for promotional activities, and strategies for identifying and pitching stories. ☐ The **public relations/marketing plan** explores new communication technologies. ☐ The **public relations/marketing plan** explores the possibility of producing some promotional materials in languages other than English. ☐ The institution commits to updating its **public relations/marketing plan** every three years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 10: The institution is committed to providing a high level of basic visitor services and makes continued improvements in the delivery of those services.	**A.** *Are basic amenities available to visitors?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to provide its visitors access to water, seating, and restrooms including accessible restrooms. **Good** ☐ The institution demonstrates proficiency in keeping its facility or facilities and equipment clean, well-kept, and functioning. **Better** ☐ The institution develops a regular cleaning and maintenance schedule that keeps the facility and equipment clean, well-kept, and functioning. ☐ Lighting, temperature, and sound levels are appropriate.
	B. *Do staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers receive guest service and hospitality training?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers should demonstrate good customer service practices. **Good** ☐ The institution trains staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers to provide a welcoming environment and resolve complaints to the visitor's satisfaction. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can describe or explain the institution's expectations for good customer service practices. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to ongoing hospitality training for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 11: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	**A.** *As a good neighbor and community member, does the institution take steps to reduce or eliminate negative effects on the environment?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can identify possible examples (e.g., recycling, reducing use of plastics, using renewable energy, using locally grown materials) of ways it can reduce or eliminate the institution's negative effects on the environment. **Good** ☐ The institution chooses a few examples of projects to implement that will reduce or eliminate its negative effects on the environment. ☐ The institution shares its **environmental sustainability** knowledge and experiences with the audiences and communities it serves. **Better** ☐ The institution evaluates its efforts to reduce or eliminate negative effects on the environment. ☐ It serves as an example in the community for reducing or eliminating negative effects on the environment.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
AUD Standard 11: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	B. *Do staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers understand they can engage the institution's audiences and communities in topics related to* ***environmental sustainability*** *and* ***climate change?***	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize they can use the institution's **environmental sustainability** practices (e.g., recycling, eliminating plastic bags from museum store sales) to help its audiences and communities better understand application and benefits of recommended practices. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and paid) and volunteers use history to help audiences and communities learn more about environmental and **climate change** issues. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can identify objects, stories, and information that provide local context for environmental and **climate change** issues.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# AUD Standard 12: **The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.**	# A. *Does the institution use technology to reach a wider audience and serve its communities in new ways?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that different technologies can help it engage with and serve new audiences and communities (e.g., virtual education programs, online exhibitions, captioning on video presentations). ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can give examples of how the institution might engage new audiences and communities. **Good** ☐ The institution experiments with technology to engage with and serve new audiences and communities. **Better** ☐ The institution explores additional technology uses to increase its reach with new audiences and communities it serves.

Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations

SECTION THREE

Interpretation

The **INT** section addresses:

- Accessibility
- Accountability and Public Trust
- Environmental Sustainability
- Inclusion and Equity
- Interpretation Content and Delivery
- Interpretive Planning
- Research
- Shared Authority
- Support for Staff and Volunteers
- Technology

INT Standards

The standards listed below are addressed in the Interpretation section. From one workbook section to another you may notice related or repeated standards, self-assessment questions, or performance indicators. This duplication is intended to reinforce the importance of a concept across multiple sections. Duplication is also necessary at times so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign workbook sections to different groups of volunteers, committee members, staff (paid and unpaid), governing authority members, and/or other participants.

Standards marked with an * are common to all workbook sections. A compilation of self-assessment questions and performance indicators for each of these overarching standards can be found on the STEPS Community online site.

All standards are common to both the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) unless otherwise noted.

INT Standard 1*
The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.

INT Standard 2*
The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.

INT Standard 3*
The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.

INT Standard 4*
The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the institution's mission and goals.

INT Standard 5*
The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

INT Standard 6
The institution asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.

INT Standard 7

The institution clearly states its overall educational goals, values, philosophy, and messages, and demonstrates that its activities are in alignment with them.

INT Standard 8

The institution understands the characteristics and needs of its existing and potential audiences and uses this understanding to inform its interpretation.

INT Standard 9

The institution's interpretive content is based on appropriate research which is conducted according to scholarly standards.

INT Standard 10

The institution uses techniques and methods that are accurate and appropriate to its interpretive and/or educational goals, content, audiences, and resources.

INT Standard 11

The institution demonstrates consistent high quality in its interpretive activities.

INT Standard 12

The institution assesses the effectiveness of its interpretive activities and uses those results to plan and improve its activities.

INT Standard 13*

The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

INT Standard 14*

The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

Progress Certificates

In the STEPS program, certificates are earned when your institution can check off all boxes for Basic (Bronze), Good (Silver), or Better (Gold) performance indicators. Your institution is eligible to receive a total of 18 certificates (three certificate levels in each of six sections).

To complete and submit your certificate form, follow the directions found on page xv.

Reminders

1. Be sure to review the "How to Use" section of this workbook before answering assessment questions.

2. AASLH recommends including a variety of staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members in the assessment process. STEPS is a valuable educational tool to help everyone within an organization learn more about operating a history institution.

3. You will notice that some sections include related or repeated standards, questions, or performance indicators. Duplication reinforces the importance of some topics or present them from another perspective. For example, a Code of Ethics is addressed in Mission, Vision, and Governance as well as the Management and Stewardship of Collections sections. Duplication may also be necessary so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign individual sections to different groups of people. Topics addressed in multiple sections are indicated with cross-reference notes found below an assessment question. The Index is helpful with cross-referencing.

4. Remember that the STEPS Community is an online site open to all institutions enrolled in the program. The STEPS Community offers sample policies, forms, and other helpful materials, plus program news and discount codes. The link can be found in your STEPS welcome letter which is always accessible in your institutional profile on the AASLH website. Your institution receives unlimited access so be sure to tell volunteers, governing board members, and staff (paid or unpaid) about the STEPS Community.

5. If you encounter a situation where the entity responsible for a task described in a performance indicator is not appropriate for your institution's governance structure, draw a line through the entity's name and write in the name of the entity that is responsible for the task. So long as the intent of the performance indicator is met, it is okay to modify a question or performance indicator.

6. AASLH recognizes that many small institutions operate solely through the generosity of volunteers. The term "staff (paid and unpaid)" is used because there are often volunteers within history institutions who hold considerable responsibilities, much like a paid staff person. The terms "lead staff person" or "management staff" can also refer to a volunteer.

7. Throughout the workbook, STEPS uses the term "institution" when referring to museums, historical societies, historic houses, historic sites, and other organizations.

8. The governing entity for most private, nonprofit history institutions is called a board of directors. For non-traditional institutions, the governing entity might be a department within city, county, state, federal, or tribal government. It may also be part of a park agency, corporation, or college or university department. The term "governing authority" is used throughout the workbook to refer to the entity that has ultimate responsibility for an institution.

9. Non-traditional institutions may see the need to create policies separate from their parent agency. For example, the Mission Statement for a parent agency that operates many parks but only one historic site may not refer to history at all. As a result, the historic site may find it beneficial and necessary to create its own Mission Statement.

10. Be sure to review the list of unacceptable practices in this section. Their importance should not be overlooked.

11. In the STEPS program, a standard is defined as "a generally accepted level of attainment that all institutions are expected to achieve."

12. Performance indicators (Basic, Good, Better) are benchmarks to help your institution measure the degree to which it is meeting a standard. Performance indicators are cumulative from one level to the next.

13. The purpose of the self-assessment questions and performance indicators is to divide the standards into manageable portions so your institution can work incrementally toward meeting them.

14. Words in bold are defined in the glossary found at the back of the workbook.

15. Once your institution is meeting all Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators in a section, it is eligible to receive the corresponding Bronze, Silver, or Gold certificate. See instructions for applying for certificates on page xv.

Unacceptable Practices

While many appropriate policies and procedures are described in STEPS standards and performance indicators, there are unacceptable practices that may occur within history institutions that require special attention. The following list addresses practices that are unethical and, in some cases, illegal.

Within the realm of interpretation, failure to be inclusive or allowing bias (unconscious or conscious) in the development and implementation of interpretive materials, narratives, and presentations (e.g., exhibits, tours, programs, living history presentations) is unacceptable. This includes:

- Use of white interpreters to portray enslaved or Indigenous people.

- Telling a group's history and stories without consulting with or sharing authority with them around the development of interpretive materials, narratives, and presentations. (**"Nothing about us without us."**)

- Using outdated, inappropriate, or inaccurate materials as sources, evidence, or examples.

- Giving false or fabricated information to visitors.

- Failure to provide training and support for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who work as guides, interpreters, and/or educators so they can effectively communicate the institution's story and content with consistency, clarity, and accuracy.

- Biased comments or behavior related to race, sexual orientation, ethnic background, gender, age, ability, economic status, or other personal criteria.

- Disregard for visitors' interests, abilities, knowledge, and preferences.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# INT Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.** Interpretation is a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource. Interpretation refers to all of the activities (physical and digital) that museums, historical societies, historic sites and houses, state and national parks, and other institutions or agencies use to help visitors make broader emotional and intellectual connections with the objects, images, processes, structures, landscapes, and other features they encounter at that site. Museums consistently rank amongst the most trusted institutions in American society. As such, it is critical that information presented in exhibitions, tours, publications, and other events is accurate and truthful.	# A. *Do governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers understand the institution's **public trust** responsibilities related to interpretation and work to uphold them?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the institution has a responsibility to uphold **public trust** as it relates to accurate interpretation of past events. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that **public trust** responsibilities apply to all museums and related institutions in the United States regardless of budget size, governance structure, or staffing (including all-volunteer institutions). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that **public trust** is addressed in **codes of ethics** from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM); also any specialty codes of ethics that apply to the institution's collections or programs should be reviewed (e.g., National Association for Interpretation). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that history institutions should be attuned to issues and ideas reflective of the breadth of the American experience, particularly those relevant to their local communities. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize they should avoid biased interpretation in the institution's exhibitions, education programs, publications, and other activities. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe examples of ways in which the institution may have previously presented an inaccurate interpretation of the past and/or failed to reflect the diverse communities it serves.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.**	A. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The institution creates a plan to assess its exhibitions, education programs, publications, and other programs to identify inaccurate and/or incomplete interpretation. ☐ The institution consults with appropriate community groups and **scholars** about resources for correcting inaccurate and/or incomplete interpretation in its exhibits and other programs. **Better** ☐ The institution corrects inaccurate and biased interpretation in exhibitions, education programs, publications, and other programs including public events held on its property. ☐ Governing authority members take responsibility for keeping current with discussions in the museum and history fields related to **public trust**, ethics, and **shared authority**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	**A.** *Does the institution understand the intersection between history interpretation and current events?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes connections between current events and its interpretation in exhibitions, tours, and other programs. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers help the institution gauge public reaction to current events directly or indirectly connected to its interpretation. --- **Better** ☐ The institution develops and communicates to staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers, especially those who present programs and interact with visitors, its plan for responding to current events that are directly and indirectly connected to its interpretation.
	B. *Does the institution consider the well-being of staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers, particularly those who present programs and interact with visitors, during a public relations incident related to interpretation?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that complaints and negative reactions to interpretation may be motivated by complex circumstances and do not necessarily reflect inappropriate behaviors on the part of staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers. --- **Good** ☐ The institution conducts an internal review before determining whether and/or how to respond to complaints and negative reactions to interpretation. --- **Better** ☐ The institution adopts policies that include protections for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers related to controversies around interpretive presentations.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	C. *Does the institution recognize its own possible historic role in negatively impacting people affected by marginalization, omission and/or misrepresentation in its interpretation?*	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe ways in which historic sites and museums in the United States have negatively affected groups of people by marginalizing, omitting, and/or misrepresenting them in exhibits, tours, and other interpretive programs. **Good** ☐ The institution conducts an internal evaluation to determine its own role in creating negative impacts on people affected by marginalization, omission and/or misrepresentation in its interpretation. ☐ If it has participated in marginalizing, omitting and/or misrepresentation of people's history through its interpretation, the institution identifies how it will address those actions. **Better** ☐ If the institution has participated in such practices it is transparent about the instances and commits to change. ☐ When presenting information about a group that has been historically marginalized, omitted, and/or misrepresented, the institution provides **shared authority** opportunities for members of that group to co-create the interpretation. (**"Nothing about us without us."**)

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	**A.** *Is the institution committed to sharing a broad range of perspectives and stories in its exhibitions and programs?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the need to share a broad range of stories and perspectives in its exhibitions and programs to provide a more accurate portrayal of history, strengthen its interpretation, and offer an inclusive and equitable experience for its audiences. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can give examples of how the institution might explore stories and narratives that have been excluded in its exhibitions and programs. **Good** ☐ The institution seeks training for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers in **interpretive planning** and presentation techniques. ☐ The institution develops interpretive goals that demonstrate its commitment to more inclusive and equitable interpretation in exhibits and programs. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to creating an **Interpretive Plan** based upon the goals it has identified for more inclusive and equitable interpretation in exhibits and programs.

Standard 3 reflects the need for institutions to address the many issues related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion known by the acronym **DEAI.**

In the STEPS program, we focus on equity and inclusion because they are the ultimate goals of DEAI: to make our organizations and society more fair and just. Inclusion is the means, equity is the end.

Inclusion is defined as "the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes."

Equity is defined as "the fair and just treatment of all members of a community."

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	B. *Does the institution engage a diverse cross-section of **stakeholders**, audiences, and communities in the development of exhibition and program interpretation?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that diverse input from **stakeholders**, audiences, and communities strengthens exhibition and program interpretation and offers a more inclusive and equitable visitor experience. **Good** ☐ A diverse group of **stakeholders** and community members is involved in helping the institution develop interpretive goals for programs (e.g., exhibitions, education programs), particularly goals directly related to their experience. ("**Nothing about us without us**.") **Better** ☐ A diverse group of **stakeholders** and community members is involved in helping the institution develop an inclusive and equitable **Interpretive Plan** for programs (e.g., exhibitions, education programs), particularly portions directly related to their experience. ("**Nothing about us without us**.") ☐ When telling a group's stories in programs, the institution provides **shared authority** opportunities for members of that group to co-create the interpretation. ("**Nothing about us without us**.")

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	C. *Are the institution's exhibitions and programs physically accessible to all audiences?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes its role as a place of public accommodation according to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its obligation to remove barriers; if barriers have not been removed, they have been evaluated and a plan is in place for removal. ☐ The institution recognizes its obligations for programmatic **accessibility** according to ADA (e.g., printed transcript of video for Deaf visitors). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can explain and describe both physical and programmatic accommodations the institution has created to provide a quality visitor experience in its exhibition and other interpretive areas. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers experiment with new ideas to create an equivalent experience when **accessibility** is not possible for programs, events, or specific areas of the facility.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	C. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution commits to offering opportunities for all audiences by providing services and provisions that enhance **accessibility** as a standard of operation (e.g., closed captioning on video presentations). ☐ The institution collaborates with community members who have relevant life experience to regularly evaluate its exhibition and other interpretive areas using **accessibility** tools they utilize in their daily lives. ☐ The institution helps staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers learn more about **accessibility** and audience needs through training and other resources. ☐ The institution endeavors to incorporate elements of **universal design** in exhibition and other areas for improved access for all. ☐ All phases of program and event planning include considerations for **accessibility**. ☐ A staff member (paid or unpaid) acts as **accessibility** coordinator for programs and special events to make sure accessibility needs are met both in planning and implementation.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 4: **The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.**	**A.** *Is the institution committed to* ***diversity*** *in its staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers, particularly those who present programs and interact with audiences?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that before it can achieve **diversity** within its governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers, the content of its programs (e.g., exhibits, publications, education programs) must reflect the diversity of people who were present in the history being interpreted. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe missing and excluded history in exhibits, education programs, and other interpretation that creates a barrier to attracting more diverse candidates for all areas of involvement in the institution. ☐ The institution identifies changes it can make to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds are able to succeed within their roles. **Good** ☐ The institution creates a plan to expand its interpretation to be inclusive of the people who are missing or excluded from history presented in exhibits, education programs, and other interpretation. ☐ The institution identifies approaches to recruitment that will increase **diversity** in its governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers. ☐ The institution identifies changes it can make to ensure that governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers from diverse backgrounds are able to succeed within their roles.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# INT Standard 4: **The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.**	# A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution implements its plan to expand its interpretation to be inclusive of the people present during its period of interpretive **significance**. ☐ The institution recruits using methods and means that will increase **diversity** in the applicant pool. ☐ The institution implements changes to ensure that governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers from diverse backgrounds are able to succeed within their role.
# INT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	# A. *Does the institution maintain a supportive working environment that ensures the well-being of staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who interact with visitors especially when program content includes **historical trauma**?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who present programs and/or interact with visitors need breaks away from the public. ☐ The institution recognizes possible negative impacts of current events on staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who present programs and/or interact with visitors and their ability to do their jobs with confidence and with a sense of safety. **Good** ☐ The institution creates schedules that allow staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers to take breaks away from visitors.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	A. *continued*	**Good** *continued* ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who present programs and interact with visitors receive appropriate training (e.g., harassment, anti-bullying, active shooter, self-care) for their own safety and well-being. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to including staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who present programs and interact with visitors in the decision-making process about interpretive content and delivery.
INT Standard 6: **The institution asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.**	A. *Does the institution provide meaningful and relevant interpretation and programs for a variety of* ***audiences****?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that as an educational institution it is responsible for providing learning activities for its audiences. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that all of the institution's public activities both onsite and in the community should be connected to its mission-focused educational role. **Good** ☐ The institution is aware that rentals and events coordinated by other entities but held on its property have the potential to negatively impact its credibility if perceived to be inauthentic and or offensive (e.g., wedding events at plantations). ☐ The institution creates exhibitions and programs that provide relevant, meaningful, satisfying, accessible, and engaging educational experiences for its audiences. ☐ The institution seeks financial opportunities to support interpretation (e.g., corporate sponsorships of education programs).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 6: **The institution asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution addresses community and other public needs through its exhibitions, programs, and facilities. ☐ It facilitates opportunities to co-create interpretive experiences with the communities it serves. ☐ Interpretive programs and exhibitions are learner/ visitor centered, varied, and attempt to make connections for audiences representing diverse cultures, ages, and abilities. ☐ The institution is involved in the current issues and activities of the communities it serves so that programs and presentations are relevant to them. ☐ To avoid harming its reputation and/or offending communities it serves, the institution assesses potential rentals and events coordinated by other entities but held on its property on a case-by-case basis. ☐ When telling a group's stories, the institution provides **shared authority** opportunities for members of that group to co-create the interpretation. (**"Nothing about us without us."**)

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# INT Standard 7: **The institution clearly states its overall educational goals, values, philosophy, and messages, and demonstrates that its activities are in alignment with them.**	# A. *Does the institution coordinate its activities and interpretation in a variety of areas (e.g., programs, publications, exhibitions, and development)?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies key interpretive topics for a variety of programs (e.g., education, publications, exhibitions, social media) and offers related activities that support its mission and the audiences it serves. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers have access to and can describe the key interpretive themes. ☐ The institution identifies its specific interpretive topics and themes in relation to other institutions in its geographical or topical area. **Good** ☐ A diverse group of **stakeholders** and community members is consulted to help the institution create written interpretive goals and guidelines, particularly for content that addresses histories directly related to their experiences. (**"Nothing about us without us."**) ☐ The institution's goals and guidelines ensure that interpretive design and presentation are consistent with each other and with the institution's interpretive goals. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize they are involved in conveying the interpretive goals to the public. ☐ The institution identifies its specific interpretive theme in relation to other institutions in its geographical or topical area.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 7: **The institution clearly states its overall educational goals, values, philosophy, and messages, and demonstrates that its activities are in alignment with them.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ A diverse group of **stakeholders** and community members is consulted to help the institution create an **Interpretive Plan** that states goals, themes, and techniques, particularly for content that addresses histories directly related to their experiences. ("**Nothing about us without us**.") ☐ With the help of a diverse group of **stakeholders** and community members, the institution reviews its **Interpretive Plan** every three to five years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 8: **The institution understands the characteristics and needs of its existing and potential audiences and uses this understanding to inform its interpretation**	**A.** *Does the institution identify the main characteristics and interests of its current and potential audiences and use this information to design exhibitions and programs that offer a more inclusive and equitable visitor experience?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can list and describe the types of audiences (e.g., families with children, senior citizens) who participate in and benefit from its programs (education, exhibitions, special events). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can also list and describe who is not visiting and benefitting from its programs (e.g., specific communities, age groups, and/or demographic groups in the area). **Good** ☐ The institution collects basic visitor information (e.g., zip codes) to better identify audiences that participate and those that do not. ☐ A diverse group of **stakeholders** and community members is consulted to help the institution plan and develop programs (education, exhibitions, special events) that offer a more inclusive and equitable visitor experience. **Better** ☐ The institution collects more detailed information about its audiences and uses it to identify new audiences not currently served by its programs. ☐ To promote **shared authority**, the institution commits to including its audiences and communities in the co-creation of programs; for example, by using an **advisory committee**. ☐ Program interpretation reflects and supports topics, themes, and issues emerging from public interest and community needs that can be supported through the collection. ☐ Program variety (e.g., education, exhibitions, special events) offers visitors choices in topics, artifacts, and formats they want to explore.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 9: **The institution's interpretive content is based on appropriate research which is conducted according to scholarly standards.**	A. *Does the institution keep up with current scholarship that relates to the institution's interpretation?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to use current scholarship and appropriate historical methods when it develops programs (education, exhibitions, presentations). ☐ The institution recognizes the need to avoid bias and inaccuracies by consulting more than one scholarly source for information used in programs. ☐ The institution recognizes that public memory is subject to inaccuracies. **Good** ☐ The institution conducts its own research using primary and **secondary sources** when developing programs. ☐ The institution is alert to the fact that local communities and cultural groups are authentic sources of information that should be consulted. ☐ The institution uses its interpretive programs (education, exhibitions) to help visitors understand local topics by connecting them to broader perspectives, historical themes, and contexts.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 9: **The institution's interpretive content is based on appropriate research which is conducted according to scholarly standards.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution seeks assistance from **scholars**, knowledgeable specialists, and members of relevant cultural groups to develop its programs. ☐ The institution consults local communities and cultural groups to access sources of information that previously may have been neglected, including oral histories, culturally specific **archives**, and other nontraditional sources. ☐ Whenever possible, the institution practices **shared authority** with local communities and cultural groups as it develops exhibitions, publications, and other programs. ☐ The institution updates and corrects inaccuracies to its programs as new information becomes available. ☐ The institution uses solid research to support its presentation of topics involving violence, oppression, and other traumas; these topics are presented in ethical and empathic ways.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 9: **The institution's interpretive content is based on appropriate research which is conducted according to scholarly standards.**	B. *Does the institution recognize the standards of, and follow the procedures for, scholarly research?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can explain the difference between primary and **secondary sources** and describe how to apply them to its interpretation. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize some primary materials contain bias and must be compared to related resources. **Good** ☐ The institution documents its findings and makes sources and evidence available. ☐ The institution integrates **primary sources** in its interpretation, gives visitors the opportunity to examine them, and uses them to communicate multiple stories about the past. **Better** ☐ The institution explores and uses a variety of **primary sources** including oral histories, collections, landscapes, and buildings. ☐ The institution explores **primary sources** from a variety of voices to ensure its interpretation includes diverse peoples and communities and respects their interpretation of these sources. ☐ The institution is alert to bias while conducting research that explores **multiple truths**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 10: The institution uses techniques and methods that are accurate and appropriate to its interpretive and/or educational goals, content, audiences, and resources.	**A.** *Does the institution use a variety of techniques (e.g., exhibit labels, printed materials, demonstrations, electronic media, performances, and educational programs) wherever education and interpretive programs occur to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of its audiences and to achieve its educational and interpretive goals?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the value in using more than one interpretive technique (e.g., exhibit labels, printed materials, demonstrations, electronic media, performances, and educational programs) to present and explore a topic. ☐ The institution identifies methods for making interpretation accessible (e.g., captions or transcripts are available for audio-based interpretation). **Good** ☐ The institution develops different levels of information for audiences of different ages and abilities. ☐ Exhibits and programs offer **multisensory** choices so visitors can learn from the presentation methods they prefer. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to using **multisensory** techniques that support the different ways people learn (e.g., visual, auditory, reading/writing, kinesthetic) and is sensitive to the needs of neurodiverse visitors. ☐ The institution explores options for touch/hands-on tours and American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation on a regular basis. ☐ The institution shares authority with members of community organizations with relevant life experience to create and evaluate learning, emotional, and behavioral **objectives** for its programs. ☐ It tests and refines innovative presentation techniques for its programs based on its **Interpretive Plan**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 10: The institution uses techniques and methods that are accurate and appropriate to its interpretive and/or educational goals, content, audiences, and resources.	**B.** *If the institution offers first- or third-person living history or costumed interpretation, including for tours, demonstrations, and special events, do the racial identities of interpreters accurately reflect the racial identities of the people being interpreted, especially at sites or museums interpreting* **historical trauma** *such as slavery or genocide?*	

Basic

☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the need for the racial identities of people conducting first- or third-person living history or costumed interpretation to accurately reflect the racial identities of the people being interpreted.

Good

☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers understand that not aligning the racial identity of living history and costumed interpreters with the racial identities of the people being portrayed is unethical and a willful misrepresentation and inaccurate interpretation of history.

☐ The institution suspends its living history or costumed interpretation program and provides non-living history and non-costumed interpretation until staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can accurately reflect the racial identities of the people being interpreted.

Better

☐ The institution consults with **stakeholders** and appropriate groups to evaluate the potential for reforming its living history or costumed interpretation program to meet an ethical and accurate representation of history.

☐ The institution develops a policy that commits it to ongoing ethical and accurate representation of racial identities of people being interpreted in living history or costumed interpretation.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# INT Standard 11: **The institution demonstrates consistent high quality in its interpretive activities.**	## A. *Does the institution provide training in content and interpretation, including written materials and techniques, for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that creating accurate and high-quality interpretive **content** for exhibits, tours, and programs is a learned skill so it needs to help staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who do this work to access training and reading materials. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers understand they need to develop their skills for creating accurate and high-quality interpretive **content**. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers complete initial training on an interpretation-related topic (e.g., ways to connect with visitors of different ages) and have access to reading materials on a variety of interpretation-related topics. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers identify and discuss topics of violence, oppression, and other traumas in their institution's interpretive story; they develop a plan for presenting these topics in ethical and empathetic ways and correcting possible long-held misrepresentations the institution has presented to its audiences.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 11: **The institution demonstrates consistent high quality in its interpretive activities.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ All staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers including maintenance and cleaning staff receive training on how to handle interpretation **content** queries they may receive from visitors. ☐ The institution commits to helping staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers regularly access training topics including **cultural competency** and disability etiquette. ☐ The institution explores the use of structured opportunities for coaching and **feedback** from supervisors, mentors, or peers on interpretation **content** and presentation strategies. ☐ The institution supports the plan for interpreting topics of violence, oppression, and other traumas in ethical and empathetic ways. ☐ The institution recognizes the value of helping staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers pursue certificate or certification opportunities through organizations like the National Association for Interpretation.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
## INT Standard 12: **The institution assesses the effectiveness of its interpretive activities and uses those results to plan and improve its activities.**	## A. *Does the institution **evaluate** the success and failure of its exhibitions, publications, and programs and use the results of those **evaluations** to improve and update new offerings?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the value of **evaluation** to help the institution make informed decisions and better serve its audiences and communities. ☐ The institution identifies methods it can use for informal **evaluation** of an exhibition, publication, or program (e.g., anecdotal comments, guest register comments, observation of visitor habits). **Good** ☐ The institution experiments with formal **evaluation** methods to gather audience **feedback** about an exhibition, publication, or program (e.g., surveys, interviews). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers analyze formal **evaluation** results and use them to improve exhibitions or programs. ☐ The institution is aware of and uses data available from online review platforms such as Google and Trip Advisor. ☐ The institution seeks out **evaluation** training or reading materials for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 12: **The institution assesses the effectiveness of its interpretive activities and uses those results to plan and improve its activities.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution recognizes the value in consistently using a variety of **evaluation** methods (e.g., surveys, questionnaires, **focus groups**) to plan and develop programs. ☐ **Evaluation** efforts also include input from community and cultural groups whose history is being shared by the institution. ☐ The institution recognizes the value in creating and tracking outcomes to better understand its audiences and measure the institution's impact on its audiences and the communities it serves. ☐ The institution tests innovative ideas to engage new audiences. ☐ The institution supports continued training for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers through readings, online webinars and courses, and other learning opportunities focused on **evaluation**. ☐ The institution explores **formative** and **summative evaluation** to refine interpretation in exhibitions and other programs.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 13: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	**A.** *Have staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers explored the institution's interpretive themes for alignment with environment and climate issues?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize there may be opportunities to align program and exhibition interpretation with historical and contemporary environment and climate issues. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers plan research projects to learn more about historical environment and climate issues that affected the communities the institution serves and the history it interprets. **Better** ☐ Through programs and exhibitions, staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers share research about historical environment and climate issues that affected the communities the institution serves and the history it interprets.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 13: The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.	**B.** *Do staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers understand they can include interpretation of the institution's practices to conserve resources and protect the environment in programs and exhibitions?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize there may be opportunities to include the institution's commitment to **environmental sustainability** practices (e.g., recycling, eliminating plastic bags from museum store sales) in programming and exhibitions. **Good** ☐ The institution experiments with creative ways to share information about its **environmental sustainability** practices with audiences and communities it serves. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can identify objects, stories, and information that provide local context for environmental and **climate change** issues. ☐ Staff (paid and paid) and volunteers use history to help audiences and communities learn more about environmental and **climate change** issues.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 14: **The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.**	A. *Does the institution use technology to make its interpretation more accessible?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that social media platforms can be useful interpretation tools. ☐ The institution is aware that the use of some technology such as virtual or augmented reality may not be appropriate for the delivery of sensitive content. ☐ The institution is aware of online platforms (e.g., Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube) that may be used to deliver interpretation remotely. **Good** ☐ The institution identifies appropriate social media platforms to deliver interpretive content. ☐ The institution identifies sensitive topics that may not be appropriate for certain types of technology. ☐ The institution determines appropriate forms of technology for interpretation based on interpretive goals, audiences, budget, subject matter sensitivity, and other factors. **Better** ☐ The institution develops and implements a comprehensive technology plan for delivering interpretation.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
INT Standard 14: **The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.**	B. *Is the institution aware of opportunities to use technology to deliver uniform content when staffing is impractical?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can identify and describe technology that could be used to deliver interpretive content (e.g., audio tours, information on iPads or tablets). **Good** ☐ The institution experiments with technology that could result in a better visitor experience through improved access and uniform content delivery. **Better** ☐ The institution develops an interpretive technology plan that promotes uniform content delivery and offers greater visitor access when staffing is impractical.

SECTION FOUR

Stewardship of Collections

The COL section addresses:

- Accountability and Transparency
- Collections and Mission
- Collections Care and Preservation
- Collections Management
- Compliance with Laws and Regulations
- Conservation Planning
- Deaccessioning and Disposal
- Digital Collections
- Emergencies and Disasters
- Environmental Sustainability
- Ethics and Public Trust
- Financial Resources for Collections
- Incoming and Outgoing Loans
- Inclusive and Equitable Collections Practices
- Institutional Archives
- Research
- Safety and Security
- Staffing
- Storage
- Technology

COL Standards

The standards listed below are addressed in the Stewardship of Collections section. From one workbook section to another you may notice related or repeated standards, self-assessment questions, or performance indicators. This duplication is intended to reinforce the importance of a concept across multiple sections. Duplication is also necessary at times so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign workbook sections to different groups of volunteers, committee members, staff (paid and unpaid), governing authority members, and/or other participants.

Standards marked with an * are common to all workbook sections. A compilation of self-assessment questions and performance indicators for each of these overarching standards can be found on the STEPS Community online site.

All standards are common to both the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) unless otherwise noted.

COL Standard 1*
The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.

COL Standard 2*
The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.

COL Standard 3*
The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.

COL Standard 4*
The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the institution's mission and goals.

COL Standard 5*
The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

COL Standard 6
The institution owns, exhibits, or uses collections that are appropriate to its mission.

COL Standard 7
The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.

COL Standard 8
The institution's collections-related research is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards.

COL Standard 9
The institution strategically plans for the use and development of its collections.

COL Standard 10
Guided by its mission, the institution provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.

COL Standard 11*
The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

COL Standard 12*
The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

Progress Certificates

In the STEPS program, certificates are earned when your institution can check off all boxes for Basic (Bronze), Good (Silver), or Better (Gold) performance indicators. Your institution is eligible to receive a total of 18 certificates (three certificate levels in each of six sections).

To complete and submit your certificate form, follow the directions found on page xv.

Reminders

1. Be sure to review the "How to Use" section of this workbook before answering assessment questions.

2. AASLH recommends including a variety of staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members in the assessment process. STEPS is a valuable educational tool to help everyone within an organization learn more about operating a history institution.

3. You will notice that some sections include related or repeated standards, questions, or performance indicators. Duplication reinforces the importance of some topics or present them from another perspective. For example, a Code of Ethics is addressed in Mission, Vision, and Governance as well as the Management and Stewardship of Collections sections. Duplication may also be necessary so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign individual sections to different groups of people. Topics addressed in multiple sections are indicated with cross-reference notes found below an assessment question. The Index is helpful with cross-referencing.

4. Remember that the STEPS Community is an online site open to all institutions enrolled in the program. The STEPS Community offers sample policies, forms, and other helpful materials, plus program news and discount codes. The link can be found in your STEPS welcome letter which is always accessible in your institutional profile on the AASLH website. Your institution receives unlimited access so be sure to tell volunteers, governing board members, and staff (paid or unpaid) about the STEPS Community.

5. If you encounter a situation where the entity responsible for a task described in a performance indicator is not appropriate for your institution's governance structure, draw a line through the entity's name and write in the name of the entity that is responsible for the task. So long as the intent of the performance indicator is met, it is okay to modify a question or performance indicator.

6. AASLH recognizes that many small institutions operate solely through the generosity of volunteers. The term "staff (paid and unpaid)" is used because there are often volunteers within history institutions who hold considerable responsibilities, much like a paid staff person. The terms "lead staff person" or "management staff" can also refer to a volunteer.

7. Throughout the workbook, STEPS uses the term "institution" when referring to museums, historical societies, historic houses, historic sites, and other organizations.

8. The governing entity for most private, nonprofit history institutions is called a board of directors. For non-traditional institutions, the governing entity might be a department within city, county, state, federal, or tribal government. It may also be part of a park agency, corporation, or college or university department. The term "governing authority" is used throughout the workbook to refer to the entity that has ultimate responsibility for an institution.

9. Non-traditional institutions may see the need to create policies separate from their parent agency. For example, the Mission Statement for a parent agency that operates many parks but only one historic site may not refer to history at all. As a result, the historic site may find it beneficial and necessary to create its own Mission Statement.

10. Be sure to review the list of unacceptable practices in this section. Their importance should not be overlooked.

11. In the STEPS program, a standard is defined as "a generally accepted level of attainment that all institutions are expected to achieve."

12. Performance indicators (Basic, Good, Better) are benchmarks to help your institution measure the degree to which it is meeting a standard. Performance indicators are cumulative from one level to the next.

13. The purpose of the self-assessment questions and performance indicators is to divide the standards into manageable portions so your institution can work incrementally toward meeting them.

14. Words in bold are defined in the glossary found at the back of the workbook.

15. Once your institution is meeting all Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators in a section, it is eligible to receive the corresponding Bronze, Silver, or Gold certificate. See instructions for applying for certificates on page xv.

Unacceptable Practices

While many appropriate policies and procedures are described in STEPS standards and performance indicators, there are unacceptable practices that may occur within history institutions that require special attention.

Individuals who serve on a governing authority are responsible for overseeing the institution's activities. The following list addresses governing authority practices that are unethical and, in some cases, illegal.

- Use of collection items by governing authority members, staff (paid or unpaid), volunteers or other individuals for personal use or gain (recognizing that a digital representation or digital collection item may fall under different rules).

- Dealing in collections related to the institution's mission for personal gain by staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, or governing authority members whether it is through buying, selling, and/or trading.

- Loan of collection items to non-museum entities when the loan jeopardizes the level of care provided to the items or limits public access to them.

- Performing irreversible cleaning, restoration, or other procedures on a collection item, such as applying an accession number in a permanently damaging manner, or mechanical or chemical cleaning, unless performed by a professionally trained conservator. Also, damage during the digital conversion or digitization process.

- Failure to establish clear ownership of a potential collection donation prior to acceptance into the collection.

- Inattention to national and international regulations with regard to collection items including, but not limited to, antiquities, Nazi-era loot, and Native American remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony.

- Providing **appraisals** to outside parties on items for any reason.

- Misrepresentation of a collection item's origin, history, or condition.

- Use of collections (beyond reasonable handling as part of collections processing and exhibition) in a manner that threatens their preservation unless designated as part of the **hands-on** or **teaching collection**.

- Selling deaccessioned collection items to staff (paid and unpaid), governing authority members, volunteers, or their representatives.

Moreover, treating collections as financial assets is unacceptable because it endangers an institution's ability to freely manage its collections and use them for public benefit. Treating collections as financial assets can take several forms including:

- Capitalization, which is an accounting practice that records the value of the collections as part of an institution's assets on financial statements. Capitalization may be done to inflate an institution's or parent institution's financial worth, hide financial difficulties, help a parent agency seek favorable bond ratings and interest rates, or help a parent agency or institution resolve financial difficulties.

- Encumberment, which is using collections as collateral for a loan or bond. Encumberment jeopardizes collections and therefore is unacceptable because the lending institution can foreclose on the collections and seize them if the institution or its parent agency defaults on the loan.

- Deaccessioning, which is the permanent removal of an object from an institution's collection, when done to provide funds for operating expenses, to resolve financial difficulties for the institution or its parent agency, or other non-collections related situations is unacceptable. Deaccessioning as a collections management practice is acceptable so long as proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned objects are used to acquire new items for the collection or for the direct care of remaining collections. For more information about ethical deaccessioning, consult the AASLH Statement of Standards and Ethics and its position paper, "Valuing History Collections"; also "Direct Care of Collections: Ethics, Guidelines and Recommendations" from the American Alliance of Museums.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.** Collections are defined as living or nonliving items that museums and related institutions hold in trust for the public. They may be physical or digital, and digital items may be surrogates of physical items or they may be "**born-digital.**" Some institutions designate different categories of collections (e.g., permanent, research, educational, hands-on, teaching, library) that receive different types of care or use. These categories and their ramifications are established in the institution's Collections Management Policy.	**A.** *Do governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers work to uphold the institution's **public trust** responsibilities as they relate to collections care and management?*	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that a primary aspect of working to uphold **public trust** and being a good steward of resources means striving to care for and manage collections according to national standards and **best practices** such as those outlined in the STEPS program. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that **public trust** and collections care responsibilities apply to all museums and related institutions in the United States regardless of budget size, governance structure, or staffing (including all-volunteer institutions). ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that **public trust** and collections care responsibilities of museums and related institutions are outlined in **codes of ethics** from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and any specialty organizations whose code of ethics applies to the institution's collections or programs. ☐ The institution develops a governing authority-approved **Collections Management Policy** that explains its policies regarding **acquisition**, preservation, **conservation**, **digitization**, lending, borrowing, **deaccessioning**, and **disposal** of collections.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.**	A. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The institution conveys its commitment to upholding **public trust** responsibilities related to collections by including copies of its **Collections Management Policy** and **codes of ethics** from AASLH, AAM, and applicable specialty organizations in orientation materials for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers. ☐ The institution creates an annual budget line item for collections care and management. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to raising funds specifically for collections-related projects including preservation, **digital preservation**, and **conservation**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.**	B. *Does the institution understand that loaning collections to non-museum entities may constitute a breach of its* **public trust** *responsibility and be perceived as inappropriate or unethical?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that loans of collection items to non-museum entities may jeopardize the level of care provided to the items. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers also recognize that loans to non-museum entities may limit public access to the collection items. **Good** ☐ Loans of collection items to non-museum entities are only made when the situation is appropriate to the institution's mission. ☐ The institution confirms that collection items loaned to a non-museum entity will receive the level of care and security at least equal to its own policies, procedures, and facility. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to loaning collection items to non-museum entities only in rare instances or not at all.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# COL Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	# A. *Is the institution transparent about collections* ***acquisition*** *and* ***deaccessioning****?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need for **transparency** and thorough record keeping regarding collection items acquired through donation, purchase, bequest, transfer, or loan. ☐ The institution recognizes the need for **transparency** and thorough record keeping regarding deaccession and **disposal** of collection items. ☐ The institution recognizes the need for **transparency** and thorough record keeping on the use of proceeds from the sale of a deaccessioned collection item. ☐ The institution recognizes that any proceeds realized from **deaccessioning** must be used exclusively for **acquisition** of new collection items or **direct care** of existing collections. ☐ The institution's policies regarding **acquisition**, deaccession, and other collections care and management responsibilities are described in a written **Collections Management Policy**. --- **Good** ☐ The institution creates a Collections Committee that reviews potential **acquisitions**, loans, and **deaccessions**; the committee forwards its written recommendations to the governing authority for review and a final decision. ☐ All **acquisition**, loan, and deaccession decisions by the Collections Committee and the governing authority are recorded in meeting minutes. ☐ The deaccession review process includes representatives from staff (paid or unpaid) and the governing authority.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution commits to full **transparency** about collections **acquisitions**, loans, and deaccessions and is willing to share such information with its members and others. ☐ The institution manages its collection records to maintain permanent records that document ownership and **intellectual property** rights.
	B. *Does the institution have a policy regarding exhibition of borrowed items?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that items borrowed for exhibition should have a clear connection to the institution's mission. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe and explain that the institution is obligated to review a lender's relationship to the institution to determine if there is a potential conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict, such as when the lender has a formal or informal connection to museum decision-making (e.g., governing authority member, staff, or monetary donor). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that if there is a conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict, the institution must be transparent about the situation and require the lender to recuse themselves from decision-making about exhibition of the borrowed item.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	B. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The institution demonstrates **transparency** by making public the source of funding when a lender of items for exhibitions is also funding exhibition costs. ☐ The institution demonstrates **transparency** by understanding that when a lender requests anonymity, the institution is obligated to refuse anonymity if it conceals a conflict of interest, whether real or perceived, for the lender or it raises other ethical issues. **Better** ☐ The institution creates a governing authority-approved policy regarding items borrowed for exhibition that addresses connection to mission, conflict of interest, **transparency**, and interpretation and presentation of the borrowed items. ☐ The institution demonstrates **transparency** by making its policy readily accessible to governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and the public. ☐ The institution commits to reviewing its policy regarding exhibition of borrowed items every three to five years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	**A.** *Do the institution's collections represent diverse histories, stories, and perspectives, both past and present?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the possible need to identify gaps in research and collections so the institution can offer a more accurate portrayal of history, strengthen interpretation in programs (e.g., exhibitions), and offer an inclusive and equitable experience for its audiences. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe or explain possible gaps in the institution's research and collections. **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers create a list of categories of items it collects (e.g., farming, military, family life) called a **Collections Scope** and add notations where additions are needed or not, including items needed for the collection to better reflect **inclusion** and **equity**. ☐ From notations made in the **Collections Scope**, the institution creates a **Collections Development Plan** that articulates strategies for adding and/or refining collections needed to fill gaps and better document and interpret the diverse stories, histories, and perspectives reflected in the communities it serves.

Standard 3 reflects the need for institutions to address the many issues related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion known by the acronym **DEAI.**

In the STEPS program, we focus on equity and inclusion because they are the ultimate goals of DEAI: to make our organizations and society more fair and just. Inclusion is the means, equity is the end.

Inclusion is defined as "the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes."

Equity is defined as "the fair and just treatment of all members of a community."

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	**A.** *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution commits to acquiring research and collection items that reflect the **diversity** of communities it serves, and making a conscious effort to interpret research and collection items to give underrepresented narratives agency in the main narrative of its programs (e.g., exhibitions, publications). ☐ The institution invites donors of research and collection items, and communities whose stories are being told, to co-create narratives used in exhibitions, publications, and other programs. ("**Nothing about us without us**.") ☐ The institution invites collaboration from diverse communities to fulfill its **Collections Development Plan**. ☐ The institution recognizes the value in adding strategies to its **Collections Development Plan** for **decolonizing** its collection and **repatriating** items taken without consent.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	B. *Does the institution understand that collections often look the way they do because of **bias**?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that museum collections are shaped by **conscious** and **unconscious biases**. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe, in general, examples of **conscious** and **unconscious bias** in the institution's collections. **Good** ☐ The institution adds specific strategies to its **Collections Development Plan** to help reveal biases in its collections. **Better** ☐ The institution shares its **Collections Development Plan** with the communities it serves and engages those communities in helping it begin the assessment. ☐ The institution engages the communities it serves in correcting biases found during the assessment process.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	C. *Are staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for research and collections knowledgeable about the institution's origin story (e.g., how it began; with whose money; on whose land; with whose collections, historic structures, and/or landscapes) and committed to sharing it internally and externally?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for research and collections can describe and explain important elements of the institution's origin story. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for research and collections recognize the importance of honestly and accurately sharing its origin story internally and externally. **Good** ☐ The institution's origin story is widely and accurately communicated in programs (e.g., exhibitions, publications). **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for research and collections identify sources and resources that can provide more information about the institution's origin story. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers responsible for research and collections commit to ongoing dialogue about the institution's origin story by engaging with communities it serves, outside experts, and others in a variety of ways (e.g., exhibits, programs, blog posts, newsletter articles, social media).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 4: **The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.**	A. *Has the institution designated at least one staff member (paid or unpaid, part- or full-time) who is responsible for collections, and who is knowledgeable about collections care and management?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies at least one staff member (paid or unpaid) whose responsibility includes collections care and management. ☐ The institution encourages collections staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers to network with professionally trained curators, registrars, **conservators**, and others to obtain knowledge regarding collections care and management. ☐ The institution recognizes that it benefits from collections-related training for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers and helps them access basic training opportunities. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers responsible for collections have some collections knowledge and are encouraged to obtain training. ☐ Job descriptions for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who work with collections include responsibilities for the care, preservation, management, and access of collections. **Better** ☐ The institution seeks collections staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who reflect the **diversity** of the institution's collections, audiences, and communities served. ☐ The institution allocates resources for collections staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteer training. ☐ The institution develops and maintains in-house training and orientation for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers working with collections.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	A. *Do governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers follow policies stated in the institution's* **Collections Management Policy***?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution describes its policies regarding **acquisition**, care and preservation, use, access, management, **conservation**, **digitization**, lending, borrowing, **deaccessioning**, and **disposal** of collections in its governing authority-approved **Collections Management Policy**. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers understand their obligation to follow all policies included in the **Collections Management Policy**. **Good** ☐ The institution is transparent about its collections-related policies by making its **Collections Management Policy** accessible to the public. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers responsible for collections advise the governing authority about updates and revisions needed in the **Collections Management Policy**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 6: **The institution owns, exhibits, or uses collections that are appropriate to its mission.**	A. *Are the collections appropriate to the institution's mission?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that collections should be appropriate to the institution's mission. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that items offered for donation or purchase that are unrelated to the institution's mission should not be accepted. **Good** ☐ The institution adds specific steps and strategies to its **Collections Development Plan** for refining its collections through deaccession. ☐ The institution begins to compile a list of collection items that are unrelated to its mission. **Better** ☐ The institution is committed to taking the necessary steps to deaccession collection items unrelated to its mission. ☐ The institution follows **deaccessioning** policies outlined in its **Collections Management Policy**. ☐ The institution is transparent about deaccession plans and actions with members and the public.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	A. *Does the institution have a written, governing authority-approved* **Collections Management Policy***?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution describes its policies for **acquisition**, care and preservation, use, access, management, **conservation**, **digitization**, lending, borrowing, **deaccessioning**, and **disposal** of collections in its governing authority-approved **Collections Management Policy**. ☐ The **Collections Management Policy** also includes a summary list of collection categories including but not limited to digital, structures, landscapes, living, institutional history, specimens, artifacts, and **archives**. **Good** ☐ The institution conveys its commitment to collections-related policies by including a copy of its **Collections Management Policy** in orientation materials for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers. ☐ The institution is transparent about its collections-related policies by making its **Collections Management Policy** accessible to the public. **Better** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) commit to reviewing the **Collections Management Policy** every three to five years. ☐ The institution initiates revisions to the policy as professional expectations and standards evolve.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	B. *Are governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers aware of laws and regulations regarding collections?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the importance of complying with local, state, federal, and international laws and regulations involving some collection items (e.g., antiquities; Nazi-era loot; Native American remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of **cultural patrimony**). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the importance of confirming the legal status of collection items (e.g., owned by the institution, on loan, **abandoned property**, "**found in collections**"). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers also recognize the importance of complying with federal **copyright** laws with regard to collections. **Good** ☐ The institution's **Collections Management Policy** conveys its commitment to comply with applicable laws and regulations including those that address **intellectual property** and **copyright**. ☐ The institution identifies specific collection items to which laws and regulations apply (e.g., antiquities; Nazi-era loot; Native American remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of **cultural patrimony**). ☐ The institution develops a system for identifying collection items for which no deed of gift, signed loan form, or other paperwork exists (i.e., "**found in collections**" or FIC).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	B. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution updates its **Collections Management Policy** as necessary to correspond with new legislation. ☐ The institution researches its state statutes regarding **abandoned property** to identify procedures it must take to determine the legal status of such items.
	C. *Does the institution recognize the role of **ethics** regarding collections?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes it has the ethical obligation to care for and manage its collections, including dedication of time and financial resources. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize there are ethical considerations regarding collections **acquisition**, access, care, use, preservation, deaccession, **disposal**, and valuation. ☐ The institution creates a written, governing authority-approved **Code of Ethics** that is aligned with national associations (e.g., AASLH, American Alliance of Museums), plus any applicable specialty organizations. ☐ The institution's **Code of Ethics** includes a **Conflict of Interest Statement** that addresses real or potential conflicts for governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers that may result in personal gain or benefit to other organizations (e.g., personal collecting that competes with the institution's mission; acquiring deaccessioned collection items).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	C. *continued*	**Good** ☐ Prior to serving as governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and/or volunteers, individuals share real and potential conflicts of interest with the governing authority. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers annually complete a form that discloses real and potential conflicts of interest. ☐ From its **Code of Ethics** and **Conflict of Interest Statement**, the institution creates a **Conflict of Interest Policy** for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers that outlines procedures for identifying and resolving conflicts of interest. ☐ Portions of the institution's **Code of Ethics** that apply to collections, including its **Conflict of Interest Statement**, are incorporated into its **Collections Management Policy**. **Better** ☐ The governing authority reviews the **Code of Ethics** every five years, updating it as necessary.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	# D. *Does the institution allocate financial resources for collections care and management?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to allocate funds for collections care and management. --- **Good** ☐ The institution creates a line item for collections care and management in its annual budget. ☐ The institution recognizes the need to raise funds for collections care and management. --- **Better** ☐ The institution explores the feasibility of applying for a grant-funded Collections Stewardship Assessment from the American Alliance of Museums to gain guidance on practical, ethical, and strategic activities related to the care and management of its collections. ☐ The institution is willing to allocate funds for professional **conservation** of a collection item identified as a candidate for **treatment** or stabilization. ☐ The institution raises funds specifically for collections-related projects including preservation, **digital preservation** activities, or **conservation**. ☐ The institution allocates funds to plan for and address new and emerging risks to the collection from **climate change**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	E. *Are there written criteria for accepting and refusing collections?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that decisions regarding acceptance or refusal of collections are based upon the institution's mission and **Collections Management Policy**. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe several reasons why the institution might refuse items offered for donation, purchase, transfer, or loan. ☐ The institution recognizes the importance of obtaining a signed deed of gift form for all items accepted into its collections. **Good** ☐ Policies for accepting or refusing collections include a formal Collections Committee review process with decisions documented in writing. **Better** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that decisions regarding collection development are based upon the institution's mission (purpose), **Collections Scope** (outline of what the museum collects), **Collections Development Plan** (goals for adding to the collection), and **Collections Management Policy** (policies for accepting collection items). ☐ The institution documents authenticity or **fixity** information upon creation or acceptance of any digital content.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	F. *Does the institution have a **registration** system to maintain records about ownership, identification, **documentation**, and accountability of collection items?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to establish a **registration** system that permanently records and organizes information about ownership (deed of gift), identification (numbering and marking), **documentation** (**accessioning** and **cataloging**), and accountability (tracking location and access) of each collection item. ☐ The institution's **Collections Management Policy** communicates its policies for maintaining a permanent collections **registration** system. **Good** ☐ The institution develops a **Collections Procedures Manual** that outlines specific steps for performing tasks to meet **registration** policies and other collections-related work. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers review and revise the **Collections Procedures Manual** as needed.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	G. *Is there a filing system for collections records?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the critical need for creating a file for each **acquisition** that includes records such as source information, **provenance**, gift agreement, **condition reports**, and other pertinent information; in the case of digital acquisitions, information about **intellectual property** rights and right to **reformat**. ☐ The institution identifies a system for maintaining collection records permanently. **Good** ☐ The institution lists specific procedures for organizing collection files records in its **Collections Procedures Manual**. ☐ The institution creates paper and/or electronic **backup** copies of collection records. ☐ If the institution only has paper **backup** records, two sets are kept securely offsite in different locations (e.g., bank vault). ☐ The institution backs up electronic records regularly. **Better** ☐ Electronic collections records are backed up nightly to an offsite server or **cloud**. ☐ Digital collections are backed up by making three copies, on at least two different media, and stored on geographically dispersed servers or in the **cloud**. ☐ The institution develops procedures for creating **metadata** for collections and includes them in the **Collections Procedures Manual**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	**H.** *Does the institution have a numbering system to identify collection items?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to create a numbering system to identify and track collection items. ☐ The institution also recognizes the need to only use safe, appropriate, and recommended techniques to apply numbers to collection items. ☐ The institution defines its policies regarding its numbering system in its **Collections Management Policy**. --- **Good** ☐ The institution develops specific procedures for assigning and applying numbers to collection items and includes them in the **Collections Procedures Manual**. ☐ The institution also develops procedures for assigning and applying numbers to other collections (e.g., hands-on or **education collection**). --- **Better** ☐ The institution reviews and updates its procedures for application of numbers on a regular basis, following professional recommendations.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	I. *Does the institution use a cataloging system to record detailed information about collection items?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that cataloging creates a system for finding information (e.g., physical description, **provenance**, history) about collection items, thus providing the institution with **intellectual control** over its collections so they may be used for research and interpretation. ☐ The institution's policies regarding the establishment and use of a cataloging system are outlined in its **Collections Management Policy**. **Good** ☐ The institution develops specific steps for cataloging and includes them in the **Collections Procedures Manual**. **Better** ☐ The institution uses **collections management system** (CMS) software or a hard copy **catalog** system to maintain **intellectual control** over its collections.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	**J.** *Are there written policies and procedures for borrowing and lending collection items?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the need to formalize policies and procedures related to borrowing and lending collection items. ☐ The institution obtains a signed **loan agreement** for each collection item borrowed or loaned. ☐ Incoming and outgoing **loan agreements** specify a specific duration with beginning and ending dates; the same process is followed when loans are renewed for an additional amount of time. ☐ The institution's governing authority-approved **Collections Management Policy** defines its policies for incoming and outgoing collection loans. ☐ The institution requires **condition reports** for all incoming and **outgoing loans**. ☐ **Outgoing loans** to non-museum entities are unacceptable if they jeopardize the level of care provided or limit public access to the collection item. **Good** ☐ The **Collections Procedures Manual** outlines specific procedures for implementation of the institution's incoming and **outgoing loan** policies. ☐ Incoming and **outgoing loan** policies and procedures include formal review and voting processes by the Collections Committee and governing authority which are fully documented in writing. **Better** ☐ The institution reviews its loan policies and procedures every three to five years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	K. *Are there written policies and procedures for* ***deaccession*** *and* ***disposal*** *of collection items?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) recognize the need to formalize policies and procedures related to deaccession and **disposal** of collection items. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that the use of funds realized from the sale of deaccessioned collection items is limited to the purchase of new collection items or the **direct care** of existing collections; funds may not be used for general operating expenses, debt repayment, and other non-collections related situations according to **codes of ethics** from AASLH and AAM. ☐ The institution's governing authority-approved **Collections Management Policy** defines its policies for deaccession and **disposal** of collection items. **Good** ☐ The **Collections Procedures Manual** outlines specific procedures for implementation of the institution's deaccession and **disposal** policies. ☐ Deaccession and **disposal** policies and procedures include formal review and voting processes by the Collections Committee and governing authority which are fully documented in writing. **Better** ☐ The institution is committed to **transparency** about **deaccessioning** and **disposal** by fully documenting such transactions, keeping the **documentation** in perpetuity, and making the information accessible to members and the public.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	L. *Can staff (paid and unpaid) or volunteers locate collection items in physical storage areas, on storage media such as servers, or on exhibit?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that good **collections management** practices means staff (paid and unpaid) or volunteers can physically locate randomly chosen collection items. **Good** ☐ Procedures for recording and/or communicating the movement and location of collections are outlined in the **Collections Procedures Manual**. ☐ The institution immediately investigates missing collection items. ☐ The institution immediately addresses degraded or lost digital content (e.g., online exhibition). **Better** ☐ The institution includes **inventory** procedures in its **Collections Procedures Manual** and conducts a physical collections inventory every five years. ☐ For electronic files, the institution creates written **inventory** procedures in its **Collections Procedures Manual** and conducts an inventory of **file formats** and **fixity or authenticity check** every eighteen months to verify that a digital object has not been altered or corrupted.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	M. *Does the institution have an* **institutional archives***?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the importance of systematically retaining board minutes, correspondence, financial records, grant records, publications created by the institution, photographs of exhibitions and programs, architectural plans, and other materials that document its history and activities. **Good** ☐ The institution maintains its institutional records of permanent value in a specified location within its collections storage space. ☐ The institution identifies staff (paid or unpaid) or volunteers who are responsible for maintaining its **institutional archives**. ☐ The institution develops procedures to regularly collect, organize, transfer to its **permanent collection**, preserve, and provide access to materials of enduring value that document the institution's history and activities. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to helping staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for its **archives** receive appropriate and ongoing training. ☐ The institution seeks help and advice from a trained archivist in the management and preservation of its records.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	**N.** *Does the institution take appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of collection items in its care?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to secure exhibition areas and monitor them on a regular basis. ☐ The institution identifies ways to secure collections storage areas. ☐ When not being accessed by appropriate staff (paid and unpaid) or volunteers, collections storage areas are locked and/or secured, and computer servers are monitored. **Good** ☐ The **Collections Management Policy** addresses access to collections storage and other secure areas by staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and others. ☐ The institution limits access to storage areas with security measures (e.g., strict control for keys and/or passwords). ☐ The institution assesses collections storage issues that need to be addressed (e.g., overhead water pipes; pests; temperature and humidity levels). **Better** ☐ The institution maintains daily records of persons accessing collections storage and other secure areas including digital collections. ☐ The institution commits to reviewing its procedures for access to collections and facilities on a regular basis. ☐ The institution protects collections exhibition and storage areas from issues that can cause damage.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	O. *Are there designated collections storage areas?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies designated storage areas for collections that are separate from administrative and other functions. ☐ Collections storage is separate from supply storage (e.g., maintenance, cleaning, and office supplies). **Good** ☐ The institution organizes its collections within designated storage areas. ☐ Other collections (e.g., education, exhibit props, hands-on) are stored separately from **permanent collections**. ☐ Digital collections are filed separately with restricted access to collections staff. **Better** ☐ The institution develops a plan for future collections storage growth. ☐ The institution identifies sufficient workspace for processing collections. ☐ The institution manages file storage for digital collections by determining whether they should be portioned and restricted to a minimum number of users.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	P. *Does the institution attempt to prevent and mitigate emergencies and disasters?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the importance of **emergency and disaster prevention and mitigation** practices (e.g., repairing a leaky roof, monitoring for pest infestation, implementing fire prevention practices). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe examples of prevention and **mitigation** practices that are especially important for the institution's facility. ☐ The institution identifies ways it can learn about additional sources of potential disasters or emergencies (e.g., visit from local fire department to identify possible issues; communicate with local officials about potential flood sources and patterns; work with an electrician to identify potential electrical hazards). ☐ The institution recognizes that fine arts insurance is available as a means of transferring risk for damage or loss of collections (taking into account some institutions, as part of a larger agency or entity, may be self-insured or may not have decision-making authority for insurance coverage). **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers develop a list of emergency and disaster prevention and **mitigation** procedures specific to the institution's facility. ☐ The institution completes visits with local officials to identify additional sources of potential disasters or emergencies. ☐ The institution evaluates its need and ability to purchase a blanket fine arts insurance policy for its collections.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	## P. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution integrates prevention and **mitigation** into its ongoing maintenance practices. ☐ The institution consults with local and regional agencies involved in projecting and preparing for **climate change** impacts as part of its prevention and **mitigation** work.
	## Q. *Does the institution prepare for potential emergencies and disasters?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need for emergency and disaster preparedness so it can quickly and properly respond to situations that threaten to damage collections (e.g.,biological pests, fire, water including broken pipes, loss of power, vandalism and other criminal acts, natural disasters like wildfires, severe weather like tornadoes). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe several procedures the institution has in place should emergency or disaster situations threaten the institution's collections and/or computer servers. ☐ The institution recognizes that while some emergencies, such as a pandemic, may not directly threaten collections, it should be prepared to ensure some monitoring of collections on exhibit and in storage and of computer servers during situations when the facility is closed longer than usual.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	Q. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The institution creates a written **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan** to help to it assess and manage risk, protect human life, and recover from natural and man-made disasters. ☐ The institution prioritizes the need for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and some volunteers to have offsite access to its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan** (e.g., hard copy kept at their homes). ☐ The institution's plan includes detailed procedures for collections and computer server monitoring during extended closures due to pandemic and other local, state, and national emergencies. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers, and governing authority members when appropriate, participate in **emergency and disaster preparedness** training. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to reviewing its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan** once a year by updating phone numbers and other contact information that may have changed. ☐ The institution shares and reviews updated plans with staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers. ☐ The institution identifies and maintains a list of priority collections to assist first responders.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	R. *Is the institution prepared for response and recovery from an emergency or disaster?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that emergency and disaster response and recovery is separate from prevention and preparedness and therefore must be planned for in advance (e.g., identify proper procedures for initial salvage of water-damaged paper collections). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe several reasons why quick and proper response to emergencies or disasters involving collections is critical for their survival. **Good** ☐ In its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan**, the institution has identified people who can participate as responders as well as sources of assistance for materials and services needed in a variety of emergency and disaster response and recovery situations. ☐ The institution locates relevant learning and training opportunities for responders either through readings, online learning, or in-person workshops. **Better** ☐ The institution develops a Continuity of Operations Plan as part of its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan**. ☐ The institution commits to reviewing its Continuity of Operations Plan annually; a more extensive updating process is completed every five years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	## S. *Does the institution use* **preservation** *measures to provide a safe* **environment** *for collections?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the importance of temperature and relative humidity monitoring and control, appropriate lighting, and prevention of insect and other pest infestations for collections preservation. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can identify measures (e.g., thermostat adjustment, fans, dehumidifiers, window shades) the institution uses or could use, as necessary, to maintain recommended environmental levels. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can describe problems with the institution's facility and equipment that causes difficulties in controlling the environment. ☐ The institution communicates pest prevention rules to the governing authority, committees, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers (e.g., no food, drink, or **plant materials** in collections storage or collections work areas; exhibition spaces where food, drink, and plant materials are allowed for special events only are thoroughly cleaned immediately after the event). **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) or volunteers consult larger museums in the vicinity, reading materials, and/or a professional conservator to identify recommended lighting and seasonal temperature and humidity levels for museums in the institution's geographic area. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) or volunteers regularly monitor light levels and environmental conditions in collections storage and exhibition areas using basic equipment (e.g., thermometer, light meter, and humidity indicator cards).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	## S. *continued*	**Good** *continued* ☐ The institution consults with local companies to identify possible solutions to environmental issues and associated costs; it identifies environmental issues that are not solvable due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., historic structure). ☐ The institution regularly monitors exhibition and collections storage areas for pests using easily accessible supplies (e.g., sticky traps). --- **Better** ☐ The institution commits to achieving recommended **environmental control** in all areas where collections are stored or exhibited including areas where equipment for online exhibitions and digital collections is housed. ☐ If the institution stores collections in a structure where **environmental control** is not possible, it commits to moving collections to a storage facility that offers better control. ☐ The institution researches energy efficient controls for natural and artificial light levels. ☐ The institution explores the feasibility of applying for a professional survey of its collections and environment to guide preservation planning (e.g., Collections Assessment for Preservation, aka CAP program). ☐ The institution creates and implements an **Integrated Pest Management Plan**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	T. *Does the institution use procedures, methods, and materials for storing and exhibiting collections that promote their preservation?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can give examples of basic collections care procedures for handling collection items (e.g., wearing cotton gloves when handling most collection items; keeping food and drink away from collections; providing safe and appropriate support when moving a collection item). ☐ The institution recognizes it should purchase appropriate supplies (e.g., acid-free tissue paper, folders, and boxes; shelving) to preserve collections while in storage; also special supplies for exhibition of collections. ☐ The institution recognizes there are appropriate practices and platforms for the creation of digital collections. --- **Good** ☐ The institution creates an annual budget line item for collections preservation supplies and equipment. ☐ The institution seeks collections care training for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers through readings, online learning, and/or in-person workshops. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers research appropriate exhibition methods before placing collections on exhibit to ensure items are not subjected to harsh conditions that cause damage and/or shorten their lifespan (e.g., sunlight causing fading). ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers have identified collection items requiring special care (e.g., nitrate film; animal mounts containing arsenic).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	T. *continued*	**Good** *continued* ☐ The institution explores the use of energy efficient and environmentally sustainable products and methods for collection storage and exhibition. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers identify safe techniques for handling, processing, storage, and exhibition of **born-digital** materials; they implement new procedures as recommendations change. **Better** ☐ The institution raises funds specifically for the purchase of supplies and equipment that advance the preservation of its collections. ☐ The institution commits to collections care training for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers on a regular basis. ☐ The institution commits to using, when possible, energy efficient and environmentally sustainable products and methods for collections storage and exhibition. ☐ The institution commits to managing its digital collections by securing and backing up master files and **metadata** records on designated computer storage systems.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	**U.** *Does the institution engage in conservation planning?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that in terms of collections care there is a difference between preservation and **conservation**. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that **conservation** of a collection item is only performed under the guidance of a professionally trained conservator; a list of professionally trained **conservators** is maintained by the **American Institute for Conservation**. --- **Good** ☐ If the institution identifies a specific collection item that warrants **conservation** treatment, it understands that the first step in planning the conservation project is to contact a professionally trained conservator. ☐ The institution recognizes that fundraising may be the initial phase of **Conservation Planning**. --- **Better** ☐ The institution commits to working with one or more professionally trained **conservators** to survey its collections and develop a **conservation plan**. ☐ The institution maintains detailed records of all **conservation** treatments.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# COL Standard 7: **The institution legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.**	# V. *Does the institution differentiate between regular facility cleaning and specialized* **collections housekeeping**?	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize there is a difference between regular cleaning and upkeep of public, administrative, and other facility spaces versus **collections housekeeping** in exhibition and storage areas. ☐ The institution identifies staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers to be trained in **collections housekeeping** procedures. **Good** ☐ The institution consults reading materials, examples from other museums, and/or training opportunities to develop a list of appropriate **collections housekeeping** procedures. ☐ The institution creates a written schedule for **collections housekeeping**. **Better** ☐ The institution creates a written a **collections housekeeping plan** that includes procedures, schedules, supply lists, and supply sources. ☐ The institution communicates the importance of adherence to its **collections housekeeping plan** to the governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# COL Standard 8: **The institution's collections-related research is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards.**	A. *Does the institution conduct research on the collections?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the critical importance of collecting documented **provenance** and other information from donors and other sources, writing the information down, and storing it in collection files. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and others who study and conduct research on collection items document their work and include the research in the collection files. ☐ While conducting research on collections, staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and others are alert to **conscious** and **unconscious bias**. ☐ The institution seeks input from diverse individuals and groups from within the communities it serves as it researches its collections, particularly culturally specific collections. **Better** ☐ The institution conducts and publishes scholarly research related to its collections.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 9: **The institution strategically plans for the use and development of its collections.**	A. *Do the institution's* **planning documents** *address collections?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that as they set annual goals for the institution, they need to include goals for improvement related to collections care, management, and scope (filling gaps in types and themes of collection items). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe or explain some improvements that are needed in collections care, management, and scope. **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers include some collections-related goals in the institution's annual goals or work plans. ☐ When collections-related goals include acquiring items that represent previously excluded communities or culturally specific items, members of those communities are consulted. ("**Nothing about us without us**.") **Better** ☐ The institution integrates goals from collections **planning documents** (e.g., **Collections Scope**, **Collections Development Plan**) into its **Strategic Plan**. ☐ The institution commits to offering previously excluded communities **shared authority** in achieving collections-related goals. ("**Nothing about us without us**.") ☐ The institution shares its plans for improving collections care, management, and scope with the public.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 10: **Guided by its mission, the institution provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.**	A. *Is the institution committed to providing public access to its collections?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that making its collections and collections **documentation** accessible, as appropriate, advances its mission and serves its communities and others. **Good** ☐ Within its **Collections Management Policy**, the institution addresses its policies for promoting public access to its collections while balancing preservation practices. ☐ Among other topics, the policy addresses **intellectual property**, fair use, and **rights and reproductions**. **Better** ☐ The institution offers and promotes multiple opportunities for access, use of collections, and collections-related research by the public. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers explore ideas for public access expansion as part of strategic planning.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 11: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	A. *Does the institution manage its collections climate (temperature and relative humidity levels) in sustainable ways?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution monitors energy use to provide appropriate conditions for collections while conserving energy use as much as possible. **Good** ☐ The institution conducts research on its options for purchasing renewable energy. **Better** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) explore the possibility of budgeting for renewable energy purchases for 50% of the institution's usage that is not generated renewably on site. ☐ The institution consults with a professional conservator on adapting its temperature and relative humidity levels as an energy saving measure.
	B. *Do staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers look for ways to conserve resources and protect the environment that are in line with recommended collections care practices?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes there may be opportunities to include the institution's **environmental sustainability** practices in collections care. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers create a plan for extending the institution's **environmental sustainability** practices to collections care. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to implementing its plan to use **environmental sustainability** practices in collections care.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
COL Standard 12: **The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.**	**A.** *Is technology used for **cataloging**, tracking, and storing relevant information about the institution's collections?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that technology can organize and streamline management of collections records. **Good** ☐ The institution assesses the feasibility of using an electronic **collections management system**. **Better** ☐ If the institution chooses to use an electronic **collections management system**, the system is upgraded as needed, and all collections records are maintained there.
	B. *If the institution has an electronic **collections management system**, is it backed up regularly?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the critical need to back up its **collections management system**. **Good** ☐ The institution creates a plan to back up its **collections management system** regularly by making two copies and keeping them at onsite and offsite locations. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to backing up its **collections management system** nightly to an offsite server or **cloud**.

STEPS

Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations

SECTION FIVE

Stewardship of Historic Structures and Landscapes

The **HSL** section addresses:

- Accountability and Transparency
- Care of Collections Housed in Historic Structures
- Care, Preservation, and Maintenance
- Compliance with Laws and Regulations
- Emergencies and Disasters
- Environmental Sustainability
- Ethics and Public Trust
- Inclusion and Equity
- Interpretation
- Mission
- Planning
- Public Access
- Research and Documentation
- Safety and Security
- Staffing
- Technology

Historic structures and landscapes can be considered the largest collection objects that many history institutions acquire, manage, interpret, and preserve. It is therefore appropriate that standards in this section mirror those in the Stewardship of Collections section.

While there are many terms that describe the built and natural environments, this program uses "historic structure" to include buildings, bridges, mills, smokehouses, barns, and other constructions. The term "landscape" includes plants, water features, rock formations, and contours of the earth that occur naturally or are shaped or constructed by humans. (STEPS considers cemeteries and burial sites part of the landscape category.)

Unlike conventional museum collections, historic structures and landscapes are not preserved in exhibits or storage areas with controlled climate, light, and access. They are open to outdoor environments, active use, and the direct impacts of climate change. Repairs, replacements, maintenance, and efforts to enhance environmental sustainability must faithfully maintain the historical integrity of the structure or landscape. Documentation and careful selection of materials and treatments are important elements of good stewardship. Active use of a structure or landscape must balance preservation, education, and recreational use while remaining true to the organization's mission.

HSL Standards

The standards listed below are addressed in the Stewardship of Historic Structures and Landscapes section. From one workbook section to another you may notice related or repeated standards, self-assessment questions, or performance indicators. This duplication is intended to reinforce the importance of a concept across multiple sections. Duplication is also necessary at times so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign workbook sections to different groups of volunteers, committee members, staff (paid and unpaid), governing authority members, and/or other participants.

Standards marked with an * are common to all workbook sections. A compilation of self-assessment questions and performance indicators for each of these overarching standards can be found on the STEPS Community online site.

All standards are common to both the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) unless otherwise noted.

HSL Standard 1*
The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.

HSL Standard 2*
The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.

HSL Standard 3*
The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.

HSL Standard 4*
The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the institution's mission and goals.

HSL Standard 5*
The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

HSL Standard 6
The institution owns or has legal responsibility for historic structures and landscapes that are appropriate to its mission. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

HSL Standard 7

The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

HSL Standard 8

The institution's research of its historic structures and landscapes is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

HSL Standard 9

The institution strategically plans for the maintenance, use, and development of its historic structures and landscapes. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

HSL Standard 10

The institution has identified and is implementing appropriate treatments of its historic structures and landscapes consistent with physical and documentary evidence, mission, and plans. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

HSL Standard 11

Guided by its mission, the institution provides public access to and interpretation of its historic structures and landscapes while ensuring their preservation. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

HSL Standard 12*

The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

HSL Standard 13*

The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

Progress Certificates

In the STEPS program, certificates are earned when your institution can check off all boxes for Basic (Bronze), Good (Silver), or Better (Gold) performance indicators. Your institution is eligible to receive a total of 18 certificates (three certificate levels in each of six sections).

To complete and submit your certificate form, follow the directions found on page xv.

Reminders

1. Be sure to review the "How to Use" section of this workbook before answering assessment questions.

2. AASLH recommends including a variety of staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members in the assessment process. STEPS is a valuable educational tool to help everyone within an organization learn more about operating a history institution.

3. You will notice that some sections include related or repeated standards, questions, or performance indicators. Duplication reinforces the importance of some topics or present them from another perspective. For example, a Code of Ethics is addressed in Mission, Vision, and Governance as well as the Management and Stewardship of Collections sections. Duplication may also be necessary so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign individual sections to different groups of people. Topics addressed in multiple sections are indicated with cross-reference notes found below an assessment question. The Index is helpful with cross-referencing.

4. Remember that the STEPS Community is an online site open to all institutions enrolled in the program. The STEPS Community offers sample policies, forms, and other helpful materials, plus program news and discount codes. The link can be found in your STEPS welcome letter which is always accessible in your institutional profile on the AASLH website. Your institution receives unlimited access so be sure to tell volunteers, governing board members, and staff (paid or unpaid) about the STEPS Community.

5. If you encounter a situation where the entity responsible for a task described in a performance indicator is not appropriate for your institution's governance structure, draw a line through the entity's name and write in the name of the entity that is responsible for the task. So long as the intent of the performance indicator is met, it is okay to modify a question or performance indicator.

6. AASLH recognizes that many small institutions operate solely through the generosity of volunteers. The term "staff (paid and unpaid)" is used because there are often volunteers within history institutions who hold considerable responsibilities, much like a paid staff person. The terms "lead staff person" or "management staff" can also refer to a volunteer.

7. Throughout the workbook, STEPS uses the term "institution" when referring to museums, historical societies, historic houses, historic sites, and other organizations.

8. The governing entity for most private, nonprofit history institutions is called a board of directors. For non-traditional institutions, the governing entity might be a department within city, county, state, federal, or tribal government. It may also be part of a park agency, corporation, or college or university department. The term "governing authority" is used throughout the workbook to refer to the entity that has ultimate responsibility for an institution.

9. Non-traditional institutions may see the need to create policies separate from their parent agency. For example, the Mission Statement for a parent agency that operates many parks but only one historic site may not refer to history at all. As a result, the historic site may find it beneficial and necessary to create its own Mission Statement.

10. Be sure to review the list of unacceptable practices in this section. Their importance should not be overlooked.

11. In the STEPS program, a standard is defined as "a generally accepted level of attainment that all institutions are expected to achieve."

12. Performance indicators (Basic, Good, Better) are benchmarks to help your institution measure the degree to which it is meeting a standard. Performance indicators are cumulative from one level to the next.

13. The purpose of the self-assessment questions and performance indicators is to divide the standards into manageable portions so your institution can work incrementally toward meeting them.

14. Words in bold are defined in the glossary found at the back of the workbook.

15. Once your institution is meeting all Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators in a section, it is eligible to receive the corresponding Bronze, Silver, or Gold certificate. See instructions for applying for certificates on page xv.

Unacceptable Practices

While many appropriate policies and procedures are described in STEPS standards and performance indicators, there are unacceptable practices that may occur within history institutions that require special attention. The following list addresses practices that are unethical and, in some cases, illegal.

Decisions about stewardship of historic structures and landscapes that are not in keeping with federal, state, and local preservation standards and do not align with principles for collections management are unacceptable. This includes:

- Failure to provide ADA standard access (see Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines for historic structures).

- Selling or transferring materials and artifacts from the site without pursuing appropriate deaccessioning or disposal procedures.

- Overuse of historic structures or landscapes through programs, rentals, poorly staged construction, events, or visitation levels that cause undue/imprudent wear and tear.

- Lack of appropriate monitoring and fire suppression equipment readily available when using open flames inside or near historic structures and landscapes.

An institution should always consult qualified professionals and publications for information on materials and actions that prolong the life and historic qualities of historic structures and landscapes and prevent damage to them. Disregard for the fabric or history of the property, and for its proper treatment, is unacceptable. This includes:

- Using materials or treatments (e.g., polishes, cleaners, chemicals, paints, or sealants) for maintenance, cleaning, repair, programs, or other activities without the advice of a qualified professional.

- Undertaking structural or cosmetic changes to a historic structure without consulting a qualified professional including replacing or repairing doors, windows, shutters, wall treatments, floors, porches, roofs and foundations, and chimneys, and the installation of utilities or systems (e.g., alarm, telecommunications, HVAC).

- Undertaking structural or cosmetic changes to a historic landscape without consulting a qualified professional including archaeological work, removal of or additions to plantings, and digging to replace or install utilities (note: many localities require notification of "Dig Safe" or a similar service before any work is started).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.**	**A.** *Do governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers work to uphold the institution's* **public trust** *responsibilities as they relate to care and preservation of its historic structures and landscapes?* (Note: non-traditional institutions that are part of a park, government, or other parent agency may find assessment questions such as this more challenging to answer because agency leadership and governing authority members are focused on larger and more prominent components. Perhaps the formation of an advisory committee to leadership and/or the governing authority can help educate them about responsibilities regarding historic structures and landscapes.)	**Basic** ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that a primary aspect of working to uphold **public trust** and being a good steward of resources means striving to care for and preserve historic structures and landscapes according to national standards and **best practices** such as those outlined in STEPS and other programs that specifically address structures and landscapes. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that **public trust** responsibilities apply to all museums and related institutions in the United States regardless of budget size, governance structure, or staffing (including all-volunteer). ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that **public trust** and other responsibilities that apply to all museums and related institutions are outlined in **codes of ethics** from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and any specialty organizations whose code of ethics applies to the institution's collections or programs.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.**	A. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The institution develops a long-term plan that addresses care and preservation of historic structures and landscapes it owns or manages. ☐ **Codes of ethics** from AASLH, AAM, and applicable specialty organizations are included in orientation materials for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers as a way of conveying the institution's commitment to upholding **public trust** responsibilities. **Better** ☐ The institution shares its long-term preservation plan with **stakeholders** and the communities it serves. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers review the plan every three to five years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	A. *Do the actions of governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers regarding care, preservation, and interpretation of the institution's historic structures and landscapes reflect its mission?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the institution's mission should guide decision-making regarding care, preservation, and interpretation of historic structures and landscapes it owns or manages. **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers demonstrate a strong awareness of the institution's mission by using its **Mission Statement** as the starting point for undertaking new projects and initiatives, setting goals, and other planning related to historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution is transparent regarding decisions and actions about historic structures and landscapes it owns or manages and publicly communicates the information with **stakeholders** and the communities it serves. **Better** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers commit to using the **Mission Statement** as the filter for all decision-making and planning related to historic structures and landscapes owned or managed by the institution.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	**A.** *Does the interpretation of the institution's historic structures and landscapes represent the diverse histories, stories, and perspectives, both past and present, of the site narrative?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe possible gaps in the institution's research and interpretation of its historic structures and landscapes that if filled would better reflect the diverse histories, stories, and perspectives of the communities it serves. **Good** ☐ The institution identifies strategies for connecting past to present and documenting the diverse stories, histories, and perspectives connected to its historic structures and landscapes and reflected in its **Mission Statement**. ☐ The institution commits to engaging communities for input while conducting research that reflects the **diversity** of its site and **Mission Statement** and gives underrepresented narratives agency in the main narrative. **Better** ☐ The institution creates an **Interpretive Plan** that states themes, techniques, and goals appropriate for the institution's historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The **Interpretive Plan** also articulates goals that reflect the institution's commitment to **inclusion** and **equity**. ☐ The institution invites members and communities whose stories are being told to assist with research and co-create narratives used in interpretation of its historic structures and landscapes. ("**Nothing about us without us**.")

Standard 3 reflects the need for institutions to address the many issues related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion known by the acronym **DEAI.**

In the STEPS program, we focus on equity and inclusion because they are the ultimate goals of DEAI: to make our organizations and society more fair and just. Inclusion is the means, equity is the end.

Inclusion is defined as "the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes."

Equity is defined as "the fair and just treatment of all members of a community."

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	**B.** *Is the institution aware that traditional interpretation of historic structures and landscapes can be inaccurate due to **bias**?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that stories and programs connected to its historic structures and landscapes are shaped by **conscious** and **unconscious bias**. ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can identify examples of stories and programs shaped by **conscious** or **unconscious bias**. **Good** ☐ The institution identifies strategies for connecting past to present and documenting the diverse stories, histories, and perspectives connected to its historic structures and landscapes and reflected in its **Mission Statement**. ☐ The institution is alert to possible missing structures or landscape features that represent all individuals who occupied the space. ☐ The institution commits to conducting research that reflects the **diversity** of its site and **Mission Statement** and gives underrepresented narratives agency in the main narrative. **Better** ☐ The institution's **Interpretive Plan** addresses elements of the original property and the site's history that reflect all individuals who occupied the space. ☐ The institution engages a diverse cross-section of its audiences and communities served in conversations about its **Interpretive Plan** to enrich its content, identify possible **conscious** and **unconscious biases**, and remove those biases.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 3: The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.	**C.** *Are staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for researching historic structures and landscapes knowledgeable about the institution's origin story (e.g., how it began; with whose money; on whose land; with whose collections, historic structures, and/ or landscapes) and committed to sharing it internally and externally?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for research and interpretation of historic structures and landscapes can describe and explain important elements of the institution's origin story. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for research and interpretation of historic structures and landscapes recognize the importance of honestly and accurately sharing its origin story internally and externally. **Good** ☐ The institution's origin story is honestly and accurately communicated internally and externally. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who are responsible for research and interpretation of historic structures and landscapes identify a diverse range of resources that can provide more information about the institution's origin story. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers responsible for research and interpretation of historic structures and landscapes commit to ongoing dialogue about the institution's origin story by engaging with communities it serves, outside experts, and others in a variety of ways (e.g., **focus groups**, programs, newsletter articles, **web presence**).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 4: **The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.**	**A.** *Has the institution designated at least one staff member (paid or unpaid, part- or full-time) who is responsible for its historic structures and landscapes and knowledgeable about their care and preservation?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies at least one staff member (paid or unpaid, part- or full-time) whose designated responsibility includes care and preservation of its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution encourages this staff member (paid or unpaid, part- or full-time) to network with professionally trained historic preservationists and others to obtain knowledge regarding care and preservation of historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution recognizes the importance of **historic preservation**-related training for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers and helps them access training opportunities. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers responsible for care and preservation of historic structures and landscapes are encouraged to continue participating in training activities. ☐ Job descriptions for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who work with historic structures and landscapes include responsibilities for their care, preservation, and management. **Better** ☐ The institution seeks staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who reflect the **diversity** of the institution's audiences and communities. ☐ The institution allocates funding for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers to take part in historic structure and landscape preservation training activities.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
## HSL Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	## A. *Does the institution effectively manage the impact of its interpretive and public programs on the historic structures and landscapes?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers annually review programs and activities to assess their impact on historic structures and landscapes owned or managed by the institution. ☐ The institution creates governing authority-approved policies to define appropriate use, capacity limits, and other restrictions for structures and landscapes for rental and social events, public access, programs, and special events noting that these may vary for different types of programs and for different conditions. ☐ While the institution may permit some degree of private function rentals, it does not become so dependent upon income from such events that it allows the structures and landscapes to be damaged, worn, or used up. **Good** ☐ The institution develops governing authority-approved policies and procedures to outline appropriate *access* to historic structures and landscapes for traditional and religious ceremonies and other active uses of the site (e.g., use of motorized vehicles, and active gardening, farming, or grazing of the land). ☐ The institution develops governing authority-approved policies and procedures to outline appropriate *management* of its historic landscapes (e.g., protection and **documentation** of burial and archaeological sites; historical and endangered plants, gardens, wetlands, and wild areas; view-sheds; religious artifacts; and underwater archaeological and botanical sites).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	A. *continued*	☐ The institution establishes a process for guidance in making changes to its public use policies and procedures. ☐ The institution reviews and updates these policies every five years. ☐ The institution considers the use of technology (e.g., audio or cell phone tours, video, and the internet) to provide programmatic access beyond the site's visitor capacity limits. **Better** ☐ The institution develops plans for service structures, visitor centers, and amenities to reduce the impact of visitors and public programs on historic structures and landscapes by providing high-use gathering spaces and spaces for activities not appropriate in historic structures or landscapes. ☐ Service structures, visitor centers, and other amenities are carefully positioned and designed so they do not obscure historic views or negatively affect historically or environmentally sensitive areas. ☐ The institution reviews and updates its historic structures and landscapes policies every three to five years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 6: **The institution owns or has legal responsibility for historic structures and landscapes that are appropriate to its mission.**	**A.** *Are historic structures and landscapes owned or managed by the institution appropriate to its mission?* (Note: non-traditional institutions that are part of a park, government, university, or other parent agency may see the need to have a Mission Statement specific to the institution since the larger agency's Mission Statement may not address history, collecting institutions, and/or historic structures and landscapes.)	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that all structures and landscapes owned or managed by the institution should be appropriate to its mission. **Good** ☐ The institution's **Mission Statement** addresses the basic relationship between the institution's mission and its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution does not purchase, accept for donation, or agree to manage structures and landscapes unrelated to its mission. ☐ The institution does not purchase, accept for donation, or agree to manage structures and landscapes without thorough review and discussion by the full governing authority and key staff (paid and unpaid). **Better** ☐ The institution creates written procedures that address how it will proceed in considering whether to purchase, accept for donation, or agree to manage a historic structure and/or landscape including persons and entities included in the discussion and decision-making process, mission considerations, financial considerations, care and maintenance considerations, staffing considerations, and other relevant factors. ☐ The institution consults **stakeholders** and a diverse representation of the communities it serves regarding historic structure and/or landscape initiatives including **acquisition** and deaccession or divestment.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	**A.** *Does the institution recognize the role of **ethics** in its policies and procedures regarding the use and care of historic structures and landscapes?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes it has the ethical imperative to care for, preserve, and manage its historic structures and landscapes, including dedication of time and financial resources. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize there are ethical implications regarding **acquisition**, access, preservation, use, maintenance, deaccession, **disposal**, and valuation of its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution recognizes that the original **fabric** and features of its structures and landscape are amongst its greatest resources and must be handled and treated according to professional guidelines. ☐ The institution recognizes that materials and artifacts from the site should not be removed, sold, or transferred without consulting professional ethics guidelines and pursuing a proper **deaccessioning** process. ☐ The institution creates a written, governing authority-approved **Code of Ethics** that is aligned with national associations (e.g., AASLH, AAM) and any applicable specialty organizations. ☐ The institution's **Code of Ethics** includes a **Conflict of Interest Statement** that addresses real or potential conflicts for governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers that may result in personal gain or be of benefit to other organizations.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	A. *continued*	**Good** ☐ Regarding deferred maintenance, the institution recognizes it has an ethical responsibility to prioritize repairs and maintenance that affect visitor safety and comfort. ☐ The institution educates maintenance workers about ethical care of historic structures and landscapes by including its **Code of Ethics** in maintenance policies and procedures. ☐ From its **Code of Ethics** and **Conflict of Interest Statement**, the institution creates a **Conflict of Interest Policy** for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers that outlines procedures for identifying and resolving real and potential conflicts of interest prior to the start of service and at regular intervals. **Better** ☐ Governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers annually complete a form that discloses real and potential conflicts of interest. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers identify resources to help them stay informed of current ethical issues regarding historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution reviews its **Code of Ethics** every five years, updating as necessary.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	**B.** *Does the institution have copies of, and understand all legal documents related to the properties it manages or owns?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies a secure location, known and accessible by designated governing authority members and key staff (paid and unpaid), for safe storage of original deeds, titles, and restrictions (easements) related to the structures and landscapes it owns and/or cares for, and it keeps reference copies available for easy access. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize and comply with laws and regulations regarding historic structures and landscapes including historic district participation, **National Register** listing information, local designations, **cultural patrimony**, and environmental protection. **Good** ☐ The institution keeps all legal documents up-to-date and reviews them periodically. ☐ The institution designates a staff member (paid or unpaid) or governing authority committee that is responsible for monitoring and managing legal issues related to structures and landscapes. **Better** ☐ The institution acquires legal counsel review of new and revised legal documents; all changes are dated and approved by the organization's governing authority.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
## HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	## C. *Is the institution committed to public accountability and* **transparency** *regarding capital fundraising initiatives?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution bases its capital fundraising on an honest appraisal of needs as they relate to its mission. --- **Good** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) develop capital budgets with appropriate expertise and **stakeholder** input. --- **Better** ☐ The institution shares its capital needs and fundraising goals with **stakeholders** and the communities it serves.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	**D.** *Does the institution allocate financial resources for maintenance, preservation, and capital improvements?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid or unpaid), and volunteers recognize that ongoing funding is needed for proper maintenance and preservation of historic structures and landscapes it owns or manages. **Good** ☐ The institution creates a line item in its annual budget for maintenance and preservation of historic structures and landscapes it owns or manages. ☐ The institution is aware of the need to plan for major capital expenses related to the historic structures and landscapes it owns or manages. ☐ The institution maintains a list of maintenance and capital needs. ☐ The governing authority commits to fundraising efforts, when needed, for maintenance and capital expenses. **Better** ☐ The institution prioritizes the list of maintenance and capital needs and assigns approximate costs to each project. ☐ The institution recognizes the value in creating a fund to cover capital improvements.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	# E. *Are collections within the historic structures and landscapes cared for in ways that promote the preservation of the structures and landscapes?* (Note: care of collections is covered in Section Four. This question addresses the intersection of caring for collections while also caring for the structures and landscapes that house them while on exhibit or in storage.)	**Basic** ☐ While taking steps to provide for safety and security of the collections, the institution also takes appropriate measures to ensure the safety of its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution is aware that because of the different and sometimes competing needs of materials and combinations of materials that make up collections, as well as structures and landscapes, there may be limitations on collections care within historic structures and landscapes. **Good** ☐ Collection items on exhibit or in storage within a historic structure do not exceed the carrying weight of the structure. ☐ The institution stores and exhibits **permanent collection** items in areas where environmental conditions will not accelerate their deterioration. ☐ The institution does not collect beyond its responsible storage capacity. **Better** ☐ The institution's **Collections Development Plan** takes storage capacity and quality into consideration. ☐ The institution uses sufficient separate and appropriate onsite or offsite storage to avoid stress on the historic structures and landscapes and to provide for proper collections care.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	F. *How well has the institution assessed its risk from a variety of **hazards** and **vulnerabilities**?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the importance of identifying potential **hazards** to its historic structures and landscapes (e.g., proximity to a river that may flood, explosion or fire at nearby industrial site). ☐ It also recognizes the need to identify areas of **vulnerability** (e.g., fragile structures or landscapes). **Good** ☐ The institution assesses its risk by considering probability of hazardous situations; it identifies which are more likely to occur than others. ☐ Of the most probable **hazards**, the institution assesses which would cause the greatest or most severe loss. ☐ The institution identifies ways to reduce probability and severity of hazardous situations through safety and security procedures and other measures. **Better** ☐ The institution initiates risk assessments from its local police and/or fire departments, its insurance company, or other professionals trained in risk assessment and management. ☐ The institution commits to regularly reviewing its risk assessment and management. ☐ It commits to regularly reviewing both operational security measures (e.g., key and password control) and physical security measures (e.g., fire detection equipment, security system or personnel).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	G. *Does the institution prepare for potential emergencies and disasters?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need for emergency and disaster preparedness so it can quickly and properly respond to situations that threaten to damage historic structures and landscapes (e.g., biological pests, water including broken pipes, vandalism and other criminal acts, natural disasters like wildfires or hurricanes). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe several procedures the institution has in place should emergency or disaster situations threaten historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution recognizes that while some emergencies, such as a pandemic, may not directly threaten structures and landscapes it should be prepared to ensure some monitoring of these areas during situations when the site is closed longer than usual.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	G. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The institution creates a written **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan** to help to it assess and manage risk, protect human life, and recover from natural and man-made disasters. ☐ The institution prioritizes the need for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and some volunteers to have offsite access to its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan** (e.g., hard copy kept at their homes). ☐ The institution's plan includes detailed procedures for historic structure and landscape monitoring during extended closures due to pandemic and other local, state, and national emergencies. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers, and governing authority members when appropriate, participate in **emergency and disaster preparedness** training. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to reviewing its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan** once a year by updating phone numbers and other contact information that may have changed. ☐ The institution shares and reviews updated plans with staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
## HSL Standard 7: **The institution ethically and effectively manages, documents, cares for, exhibits, and uses its historic structures and landscapes.**	## H. *Is the institution prepared for response and recovery from an emergency or disaster?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that emergency and disaster response and recovery is separate from prevention and preparedness and therefore must be planned for in advance (e.g., identify proper procedures for initial salvage of historic structures and landscapes). ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers can describe several reasons why quick and proper response to emergencies or disasters involving structures and landscapes is critical for their survival. **Good** ☐ In its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan**, the institution has identified people who can participate as responders as well as sources of assistance for materials and services needed in a variety of emergency and disaster response and recovery situations. ☐ The institution locates relevant learning and training opportunities for responders either through readings, online learning, or in-person workshops. **Better** ☐ The institution develops a Continuity of Operations Plan as part of its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan**. ☐ The institution commits to reviewing its Continuity of Operations Plan annually; a more extensive updating process is completed every five years.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 8: **The institution's research of its historic structures and landscapes is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards.**	**A.** *Are **qualified professionals** engaged to research and document the historic structures and landscapes?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution researches and refers to guidelines for appropriate discipline fields when selecting research contractors or staff (paid and unpaid) for projects. **Good** ☐ The institution develops ongoing relationships with appropriate professionals who know and understand the site's history or content area. ☐ The institution has pursued or is pursuing approval for its structures and landscapes to be included in local designation programs, its State Register of Historic Places, on the **National Register of Historic Places**, or as a **National Historic Landmark**. **Better** ☐ The institution offers training for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers about the site's history and content area. ☐ The institution pursues a **Master Plan** for the site that addresses the needs of neighbors and the surrounding community; local, state, and federal eligibility listings; research **documentation** of physical and intellectual history; a complete site plan that shows extant structures and **features** along with other significant elements lost to time such as outbuildings.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 8: **The institution's research of its historic structures and landscapes is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards.**	**B.** *Does the institution collect, store, and manage the* ***documentation*** *and research related to its historic structures and landscapes?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution organizes its **documentation** and research and makes it easily available to users. ☐ It organizes all documents and stores them in a secure place, with duplicate copies housed in a separate and accessible location. ☐ The institution works to build a file of maps of its site, structures, and landscapes. **Good** ☐ The institution has a written **inventory**, with descriptions, of its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution maintains and continually updates photographic **documentation** of its historic structures and landscapes. **Better** ☐ The institution conducts ongoing and prioritized research that guides the study of its structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution documents the **significance**, the history of human use, and evidence of change over time of its historic structures and landscapes.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 8: The institution's research of its historic structures and landscapes is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards.	**C.** *Does the institution have, and make readily accessible, appropriate information related to its historic structures and landscapes?*	

Basic

☐ The institution makes available to the public a written history of its structures and landscapes including a basic chronology of events, the history of people associated with the site, and uses and modifications made to the historic structures and landscapes.

Good

☐ The institution creates an annotated bibliography related to its historic structures and landscapes that may include oral histories, letters and manuscripts, printed material, and possibly video and film.

☐ The institution has a reference library and/or computer database of information related to its historic structures and landscapes that is accessible and functional.

☐ The institution shares research results with the public through a newsletter, **web presence**, or other means.

Better

☐ The institution has records from the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), and Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS), as available, for its properties.

☐ There is an **historic structures report** for each structure and an historic landscape report for the site.

☐ The institution shares its research findings with the scholarly community through appropriate means (e.g., conferences, publications, **web presence**).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
## HSL Standard 9: **The institution strategically plans for the maintenance, use, and development of its historic structures and landscapes.**	## A. *Do the institution's* **planning documents** *address its historic structures and landscapes?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution's budget and annual goals reflect a commitment to the care and preservation of its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ Annual goals for the use, maintenance, care, and preservation of historic structures and landscapes are developed using advice solicited from **qualified professionals**. --- **Good** ☐ The institution creates a long-term preservation plan for its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution prioritizes deferred maintenance projects. ☐ The plan identifies, describes, and defines the scope of the historic structures and landscapes. ☐ Other institutional plans complement the preservation plan and balance maintenance, public access, and preservation. ☐ The institution updates its preservation plan every five years to reflect new scholarship and discoveries pertinent to its historic structures and landscapes.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 9: **The institution strategically plans for the maintenance, use, and development of its historic structures and landscapes.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution's planning is supported by research, interpretive, furnishing, and **restoration** plans. ☐ The institution updates its preservation plan to reflect climate impact projections pertinent to its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The preservation plan includes fact-based explorations of estimated costs that are updated and confirmed as plans for specific projects move from discussion to execution. ☐ Possible fundraising strategies and tactics are included in the preservation plan and updated and approved as projects move from discussion to execution.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 10: The institution has identified and is implementing appropriate treatments of its historic structures and landscapes consistent with physical and documentary evidence, mission, and plans.	**A.** *Does the institution use appropriate professional* ***treatments*** *and materials in the care of its historic structures and landscape features?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the value of original **fabric** and the physical location and orientation of a structure or landscape. ☐ It consults **qualified professionals** before planning or beginning work on structures or landscapes. ☐ The institution adheres to professional **treatment** recommendations and documents all treatments. ☐ All site activities follow recommended **treatment** standards. **Good** ☐ Original structure and landscape materials are identified, cataloged, and, if removed, properly stored. ☐ Before any work begins on historic structures or landscapes, the institution identifies **qualified professionals** to provide any services that affect the **fabric** of the building or landscape. **Better** ☐ The institution consults with **qualified professionals** regarding any activity that may include alteration of a historic structure or landscape. ☐ The institution uses professional **treatment** recommendations for setting goals in its preservation plan or other **planning documents**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 10: **The institution has identified and is implementing appropriate treatments of its historic structures and landscapes consistent with physical and documentary evidence, mission, and plans.**	B. *Does the institution use preservation measures to provide a safe environment for its historic structures and landscapes?*	**Basic** ☐ All buildings and structures are inspected regularly including roofs, gutters, and foundations for evidence of leaks or water infiltration. ☐ The institution takes care to routinely clear plant growth and debris from roofs, gutters, and foundations to prevent rot. **Good** ☐ The institution uses integrated pest management for its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution identifies approved maintenance and management procedures for its historic structures and landscapes. **Better** ☐ The institution's maintenance procedures include daily, weekly, and annual care for historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution studies each historic structure and landscape it owns or manages and determines a **treatment** option using the **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings**. ☐ The institution takes a long view regarding potential **climate change** risks and impacts and incorporates science-based responses into planning.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 11: Guided by its mission, the institution provides public access to and interpretation of its historic structures and landscapes while ensuring their preservation.	**A.** *Does the institution ensure that public access to structures and landscapes is safe for visitors, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution calculates the carrying capacity of its historic structures and landscapes, noting seasonal fluctuations, and uses this information in all program planning. ☐ Through proper instructional signs, the institution takes steps to ensure that public use does not damage structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution regularly inspects historic structures and landscapes for safety hazards, and effects immediate repair or replacement. **Good** ☐ The institution posts sufficient, clear, and appropriate directional and restrictive signs to support the preservation and protection of structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution establishes an effective system for reporting and immediately resolving hazardous situations. **Better** ☐ The institution follows consistent design guidelines for signage on the property. ☐ Institutional planning may include plans for public access to areas considered interpretively significant but currently inaccessible.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 11: **Guided by its mission, the institution provides public access to and interpretation of its historic structures and landscapes while ensuring their preservation.**	**B.** *Are historic structures and landscapes that are open to the public physically accessible to all audiences?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes its role as a place of public accommodation according to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its obligation to remove barriers; if barriers have not been removed, they have been evaluated and a plan is in place for removal. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that while ADA allows "threaten or destroy" exceptions for historic structures, the goal is always to allow all people equal access (e.g., photographs or virtual tour of a space inaccessible to wheelchair users). **Good** ☐ The institution commits to offering opportunities for all audiences by providing services and provisions to enhance **accessibility** as a standard of operation. **Better** ☐ The institution collaborates with community members who have relevant life experience to improve **accessibility** by evaluating historic structures and landscapes using accessibility tools they utilize in their daily lives. ☐ The institution endeavors to incorporate elements of **universal design** in its plans for improved access. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers receive training about **accessibility** awareness and audience needs.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# HSL Standard 12: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	# A. *Does the institution respond to impacts that its historic structures and landscapes have on the environment?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize impacts the institution's historic structures and landscapes may have on the environment (e.g., loss of grass and vegetation from construction of parking areas or structures, encroachment on wetlands, issues with septic and sewer lines). **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers identify solutions to the environmental impacts. **Better** ☐ The governing authority addresses environmental impacts in the institution's **Strategic Plan** and in its plans for care and upgrades to the institution's structures and landscapes.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 12: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	**B.** *Does the institution respond to the potential impacts of* **climate change** *on its historic structures and landscapes?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize possible climate impacts on the institution's historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution has reached out to local authorities to determine if they have conducted studies of climate impacts for the area that would inform the organization's future planning **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers identify results of possible climate impacts. ☐ If local authorities have not begun to assess and collect data on potential climate impacts for the area, the institution encourages them to consider doing it. **Better** ☐ The institution addresses its response to climate impacts to its historic structures and landscapes in its **Strategic Plan** and in its plans for care and upgrades to its structures and landscapes.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 12: The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.	**C.** *Does the organization practice energy and resource* **conservation***?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize that sustainable practices can support both the financial health of the institution and preservation of its historic structures and landscapes. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers identify possible sustainable practices that are compatible with the **integrity** of its historic structures and landscapes (e.g., recycling, composting, reducing or eliminating chemical use, choosing sustainable materials). **Good** ☐ The institution completes a resource audit on its historic structures and landscapes (this is often easily accomplished with the help of local energy or lighting companies). ☐ If sustainable practices adopted by the institution are compatible with information presented in tours, exhibits, or other interpretation (e.g., historic practices, information about how structures and landscapes are currently being preserved), then the institution includes those sustainable practices in its interpretation. **Better** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers develop an action plan to respond to resource audit recommendations. ☐ The governing authority includes energy conservation and sustainable practices in its **Strategic Plan** and in its plans for care and upgrades to its structures and landscapes. ☐ The institution participates in its community's sustainability activities and assumes a leadership role where appropriate.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
HSL Standard 13: **The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.**	**A.** *Is the institution aware of technology that may be used or accessed to help it improve the quality, quantity, and type of data and information collected about its historic structures and landscapes?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that technology may help it gather useful information and data about its historic structures and landscapes to inform preservation and **restoration** efforts. ☐ Where possible, the institution uses programmable thermostats to help control energy usage. **Good** ☐ The institution inquires with its State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and other resources about possible available technology. ☐ The institution uses programmable thermostats and data loggers to keep a constant record of temperature and relative humidity. **Better** ☐ The institution works with its security alarm provider to add sensors that note moisture in locations susceptible to water infiltration and/or around HVAC systems. ☐ The institution explores the feasibility of remote access for control of HVAC and alarm systems. ☐ Staff (paid or unpaid) or volunteers responsible for historic structures and landscapes seek training opportunities that present information and ideas on how other institutions are using technology effectively.

SECTION SIX

Management

The **MGT** section addresses:

- Compliance with Laws, Codes, and Regulations
- Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan
- Environmental Sustainability
- Ethics and Public Trust
- Facility Care, Maintenance, and Space Allotment
- Financial Management, Accountability, and Transparency
- Fundraising
- Inclusion, Equity, and Accessibility
- Institutional Archives and Records Management
- Mission, Vision, and Values
- Personnel Hiring, Compensation, and Evaluation
- Planning
- Risk Management, Safety, Security, and Insurance
- Technology
- Visitor Amenities
- Volunteers

MGT Standards

The standards listed below are addressed in the Management section. From one workbook section to another you may notice related or repeated standards, self-assessment questions, or performance indicators. This duplication is intended to reinforce the importance of a concept across multiple sections. Duplication is also necessary at times so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign workbook sections to different groups of volunteers, committee members, staff (paid and unpaid), governing authority members, and/or other participants.

Standards marked with an * are common to all workbook sections. A compilation of self-assessment questions and performance indicators for each of these overarching standards can be found on the STEPS Community online site.

All standards are common to both the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) unless otherwise noted.

MGT Standard 1*

The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.

MGT Standard 2*

The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.

MGT Standard 3*

The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.

MGT Standard 4*

The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the institution's mission and goals.

MGT Standard 5*

The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

MGT Standard 6

The institution legally, ethically, and responsibly acquires, manages, and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances its mission.

MGT Standard 7
The institution operates in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability.

MGT Standard 8
The institution allocates its space and uses its facilities to meet the needs of collections, staff, audience, and community.

MGT Standard 9
The institution has appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of people, its collections and/or objects, and the facilities it owns or uses.

MGT Standard 10
The institution has an effective program for the care and long-term maintenance of its facilities.

MGT Standard 11
The institution is clean and well-maintained and provides for the visitors' needs.

MGT Standard 12
The institution takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.

MGT Standard 13
The institution complies with local, state, and federal laws, codes, and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.

MGT Standard 14
The institution engages in ongoing and reflective institutional planning that includes involvement of its audiences and community, and other stakeholders.

MGT Standard 15
The institution establishes measures of success and uses them to evaluate and adjust its activities.

MGT Standard 16
The institution appropriately manages its records both for current business needs and to maintain a permanent record of its activities. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

MGT Standard 17*

The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

MGT Standard 18*

The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities. (This standard is specific to AASLH.)

Progress Certificates

In the STEPS program, certificates are earned when your institution can check off all boxes for Basic (Bronze), Good (Silver), or Better (Gold) performance indicators. Your institution is eligible to receive a total of 18 certificates (three certificate levels in each of six sections).

To complete and submit your certificate form, follow the directions found on page xv.

Reminders

1. Be sure to review the "How to Use" section of this workbook before answering assessment questions.

2. AASLH recommends including a variety of staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members in the assessment process. STEPS is a valuable educational tool to help everyone within an organization learn more about operating a history institution.

3. You will notice that some sections include related or repeated standards, questions, or performance indicators. Duplication is intended to reinforce the importance of some topics or present them from more than one perspective. For example, a Code of Ethics is addressed in Mission, Vision, and Governance as well as the Management and Stewardship of Collections sections. Duplication may also be necessary at times so each of the six workbook sections can stand on its own since institutions may assign individual sections to different groups of people. Topics addressed in multiple sections are indicated with cross-reference notes found below an assessment question. The Index can also help with cross-referencing.

4. Remember that the STEPS Community is an online site open to all institutions enrolled in the program. The STEPS Community offers sample policies, forms, and other helpful materials, plus program news and discount codes. The link can be found in your STEPS welcome letter which is always accessible in your institutional profile on the AASLH website. Your institution receives unlimited access so be sure to tell volunteers, governing board members, and staff (paid or unpaid) about the STEPS Community.

5. If you encounter a situation where the entity responsible for a task described in a performance indicator is not appropriate for your institution's governance structure, draw a line through the entity's name and write in the name of the entity that is responsible for the task. So long as the intent of the performance indicator is met, it is okay to modify a question or performance indicator.

6. AASLH recognizes that many small institutions operate solely through the generosity of volunteers. The term "staff (paid and unpaid)" is used because there are often volunteers within history institutions who hold considerable responsibilities, much like a paid staff person. The terms "lead staff person" or "management staff" can also refer to a volunteer.

7. Throughout the workbook, STEPS uses the term "institution" when referring to museums, historical societies, historic houses, historic sites, and other organizations.

8. The governing entity for most private, nonprofit history institutions is called a board of directors or board of trustees. For non-traditional institutions, the governing entity might be a department within city, county, state, federal, or tribal government. It may also be part of a park agency, corporation, or college or university department. The term "governing authority" is used throughout the workbook to refer to the entity or entities that have ultimate responsibility for an institution.

9. Non-traditional institutions may see the need to create policies separate from their parent agency. For example, the Mission Statement for a parent agency that operates many parks but only one historic site may not refer to history at all. As a result, the historic site may find it beneficial and necessary to create its own Mission Statement.

10. Be sure to review the list of unacceptable practices in this section. Their importance should not be overlooked.

11. In the STEPS program, a standard is defined as "a generally accepted level of attainment that all institutions are expected to achieve." Unless otherwise noted, all STEPS standards are common to AASLH and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).

12. Performance indicators (Basic, Good, Better) are benchmarks to help your institution measure the degree to which it is meeting a standard. Performance indicators are cumulative from one level to the next.

13. The purpose of the self-assessment questions and performance indicators is to divide the standards into manageable portions so your institution can work incrementally toward meeting them.

14. Words in bold are defined in the glossary found at the back of the workbook.

15. Once your institution is meeting all Basic, Good, or Better performance indicators in a section, it is eligible to receive the corresponding Bronze, Silver, or Gold certificate. See the instructions for applying for certificates located on page xv.

Unacceptable Practices

While many appropriate policies and procedures are described in STEPS standards and performance indicators, there are unacceptable practices that may occur within history institutions that require special attention.

Institutional management may consist of one or more paid staff or volunteers serving as unpaid staff. Management is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the institution. The following list addresses practices that are unethical and, in some cases, illegal.

Human Resources

Governing authority members who are responsible for hiring and promotion of paid staff or interns should base such decisions upon scope of work to create an equitable workplace. It is unacceptable or illegal to:

- Hire and promote people based upon race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disability.

- Base decisions about compensation and benefits on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disability.

- Offer compensation and benefits that are lower than those provided for comparable positions in the community or area (e.g., library).

- Omit the amount or range of compensation from position announcements for paid staff or interns.

Information

As charitable institutions, museums and related institutions operate within the public trust. Abuse of information, and therefore trust, is unacceptable. This includes:

- Lying, concealing information, or providing misleading or disrespectful information on any subject, to anyone, including donors, governing authority members, press, volunteers, staff (paid and unpaid), and the public.
- Disclosure of confidential information except where required by law.

Leadership

Staff decision-making motivated by personal benefit or gain rather than the institution's or public's best interests is unacceptable. This includes:

- A staff member using access to influential board members for social or financial gain.
- Failure to disclose or address a conflict of interest or the appearance of one.

Finances

Using institutional funds, collections, or other resources (space, supplies, staff, materials, information) by staff (paid or unpaid) or volunteers for personal gain is unacceptable. This includes:

- Use of institutional funds for personal purchases or mixing institutional and personal funds.
- Use of grant funds or other restricted or donor-designated funds in a way other than directed.
- Paying governing authority members for work performed without public disclosure.
- Monetary loans to a governing authority member, staff (paid and unpaid), or volunteers.

Collections

Collections are held in the public trust. Management is responsible for presenting outgoing collections loan requests to the governing authority for debate. Loans to non-museum entities are unacceptable if they:

- Jeopardize the level of care provided to the items.
- Limit public access to the items.

Caring for collections is critical work, making collections misuse a serious violation.

Management is responsible for overseeing collections-related activities. Unacceptable practices include:

- Personal use of collection items by governing authority members, staff (paid or unpaid) or volunteers for their own personal gain or other individuals or groups asking to borrow collection items.

- Performing irreversible cleaning, restoration, or other procedures on a collection item, such as applying an accession number in a permanently damaging manner, or mechanical or chemical cleaning, unless performed by a professionally trained conservator. Also, damage during the digital conversion or digitization process.

- Individual use or dealing in collections by staff (paid and unpaid) or volunteers by gift, purchase, or loan for personal gain.

- Failure to establish clear ownership of a potential collection donation prior to acceptance.

- Inattention to national and international regulations with regard to collection items including, but not limited to, antiquities, Nazi-era loot, and Native American remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony.

- Providing appraisals to outside parties on items for any reason.

- Misrepresentation of a collection item's origin, history, or condition.

- Use of collections (beyond reasonable handling as part of collections processing and exhibition) in a manner that threatens their preservation unless designated as part of the hands-on or teaching collection.

- Selling deaccessioned collection items to staff (paid and unpaid), governing authority members, or volunteers.

Moreover, treating collections as financial assets is unacceptable because it endangers an institution's ability to freely manage its collections and use them for public benefit. Treating collections as financial assets can take several forms including:

- Capitalization, which is an accounting practice that records the value of the collections as part of an institution's assets on financial statements. Capitalization may be done to inflate an institution's or parent institution's financial worth, hide financial difficulties, help a parent agency seek favorable bond ratings and interest rates, or help a parent agency or institution resolve financial difficulties.

- Encumberment, which is using collections as collateral for a loan or bond. Encumberment jeopardizes collections and therefore is unacceptable because the lending institution can foreclose on the collections and seize them if the institution or its parent agency defaults on the loan.

- Deaccessioning, which is the permanent removal of an object from an institution's collection, when done to provide funds for operating expenses, to resolve financial

difficulties for the institution or its parent agency, or other non-collections related situations is unacceptable. Deaccessioning as a collections management practice is acceptable as long as proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned objects are used to acquire new items for the collection or for the direct care of remaining collections. For more information about ethical deaccessioning, consult the AASLH Statement of Standards and Ethics and its position paper, "Valuing History Collections."

Due Diligence

Management's failure to exercise due diligence for the safety and security of the institution, visitors, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers is unacceptable. This includes:

- Inattention to governance function including failure to ensure meetings are held regularly.

- Failure to provide timely and accurate information to the governing authority.

- Spending beyond the governing authority-approved budget and disregard for control mechanisms established to prevent fraud (e.g., policies for signing checks, handling cash, and credit card use).

- Management's failure to make sure facilities meet building codes, are repaired and maintained properly, and equipped with basic life-safety provisions such as first aid materials and fire extinguishers.

- Failure to provide ADA standard access (see Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines for historic structures).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 1: **The institution is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.**	A. *Do staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers understand the institution's* **public trust** *responsibilities and work to uphold them?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can describe or explain what **public trust** means for museums and related nonprofit institutions; as well as their individual roles in maintaining public trust. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize that **public trust** responsibilities apply to all museums and related institutions in the United States regardless of budget size, governance structure, or staffing (including all-volunteer institutions). ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers understand that **public trust** and other legal and ethical responsibilities of museums and related institutions are outlined in **codes of ethics** from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and any specialty organizations whose **code of ethics** applies to the institution's collections or programs. **Good** ☐ The institution conveys its commitment to upholding **public trust** responsibilities by including copies of **codes of ethics** from AASLH, AAM, and applicable specialty organizations in orientation materials for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers stay current on issues and discussions related to **public trust** and other ethical obligations for museums and related institutions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	**A.** *Do the actions of staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers reflect the institution's **mission**?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize that the institution's mission should guide decision-making and actions. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers demonstrate a strong awareness of the institution's mission by using its **Mission Statement** as the starting point for undertaking new projects and initiatives, setting goals, and other planning. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers commit to using the **Mission Statement** as the filter for all decision-making and planning.
	B. *Is **conflict of interest** understood and regulated by staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize that a written, governing authority-approved **Code of Ethics** is a core document for all museums and related institutions. ☐ The institution creates a governing authority-approved **Code of Ethics** that includes a **Conflict of Interest Statement** applicable to staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and the governing authority. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can explain or describe the **Conflict of Interest Statement**'s position prohibiting personal collecting that competes with the institution's mission, **acquisition** of deaccessioned collection items, and other real or potential conflicts that may result in personal gain or benefit other organizations.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	B. *continued*	**Good** ☐ Real and potential conflicts of interest held by potential staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers are communicated to management or the governing authority prior to hiring or volunteer service; staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers continue to share their real and potential conflicts of interest with the institution as situations arise. ☐ From its **Code of Ethics** and **Conflict of Interest Statement**, the institution creates a **Conflict of Interest Policy** that outlines procedures for identifying and resolving conflict of interest situations; the Policy applies to all staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members. **Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers annually complete a form that discloses to management or the governing authority all real and potential conflicts of interest.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	C. *Are staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers committed to financial accountability?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize their responsibility in making sure the institution complies with all state and federal laws/regulations regarding financial management and reporting (e.g., paying payroll taxes, **unrelated business income tax (UBIT)**, and any other applicable taxes; filing state non-profit and IRS Form 990 as required). ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers work with the governing authority to identify procedures for increasing financial accountability and reducing the possibility of internal theft and fraud by eliminating the practice of one person overseeing financial management (e.g., incorporating **best practices** such as multiple people reviewing original copies of monthly bank and credit card statements; multiple people monitoring transaction records involving petty cash, admissions, museum store, and special events; more than one person having login information for online systems and accounts). ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize that relying on trust is not an adequate substitute for policies and procedures intended to prevent internal theft and fraud. ☐ The institution keeps financial statements and updates them, at a minimum, quarterly. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who help develop materials for governing authority meetings are diligent in making sure a financial report is prepared for every meeting. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize the importance of protecting financial information collected from transactions for memberships, donations, sales, and other revenue.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	C. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The institution develops a governing authority-approved Financial Procedures Manual that provides specific instructions for staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members when conducting financial transactions involving money received, spent, saved, and/or invested. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers are trained according to the Financial Procedures Manual on appropriate handling of personal and financial information collected from memberships, donations, sales, and other support. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who develop materials for governing authority meetings are diligent in making sure an annual financial report and balance sheet is prepared. ☐ The institution trains or seeks training for staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers about online security (e.g., email fraud, hacking, online pay systems). ☐ The institution follows recommended and legal procedures for background and other checks on all new staff hires and volunteer involved with finances. ☐ The governing authority seeks financial advice/expertise from a **qualified professional** when needed.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	C. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution undergoes an annual independent financial review or audit. ☐ An audit committee manages the institution's relationship with the independent accountant(s) who performs the annual financial review or audit. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers understand that while an independent financial review or audit is important and necessary, neither procedure reduces the institution's need for ongoing attention to prevention of internal theft and fraud. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) stay current on trends regarding online security. ☐ The institution has policies in place to address how personal information about donors, governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and others is gathered, stored, maintained, and protected. ☐ If the institution has investments, management staff (paid and unpaid) work with the governing authority to ensure that practices outlined in its Investment Policy are followed. ☐ The institution has a **Donor Privacy Policy** that addresses the sale, trade, or exchange of donor information with other institutions or individuals.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 2: **The institution is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.**	D. *Are staff (paid and unpaid) committed to **transparency** in financial matters and other areas?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize the importance of being honest when soliciting monetary or other donations and clear with donors about how their gift will be or was used. ☐ If required to file an IRS Form 990, the institution makes its three most recent ones, along with its annual financial report, available to **stakeholders** and the public. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers understand their responsibilities related to making sure governing authority meeting minutes containing financial management decisions are available to **stakeholders** and the public. **Good** ☐ The institution publishes an annual list of donors in its newsletter or other communications. ☐ The institution publicly identifies members of its governing authority by publishing an up-to-date list of names in its newsletter, on its **web presence**, and in other communications. **Better** ☐ The institution shares its annual independent financial review or audit with **stakeholders** and the public.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	**A.** *Does the institution value* **inclusion** *and* **equity** *within its culture, policies, and procedures?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can describe how **inclusion** and **equity**, or the lack thereof, affect the institution's culture; they can identify examples of policies, procedures, or practices that help or hinder inclusion and equity (e.g., hiring, compensation, and promotion practices; volunteer recruitment; process for choosing vendors or contractors). ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers compare the institution's management policies and procedures with other institutions or recommended models; they identify ways the institution may improve or advance **inclusion** and **equity**. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers work with the governing authority to consult a diverse cross-section of **stakeholders** and communities served to identify how the institution's governance culture, policies, and procedures can be more inclusive and equitable. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers work with the governing authority to create goals, priorities, and values around **inclusion** and **equity** and revise applicable policies and procedures to reflect them. ☐ The institution's leadership (governing authority and paid or **unpaid staff**) promotes a work culture that demonstrates practices of **inclusion** and **equity** for all. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers regularly communicate the institution's goals, priorities, and values for **inclusion** and **equity** through a variety of mediums (job announcements, orientation materials, training, newsletter, **web presence**).

Standard 3 reflects the need for institutions to address the many issues related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion known by the acronym **DEAI.**

In the STEPS program, we focus on equity and inclusion because they are the ultimate goals of DEAI: to make our organizations and society more fair and just. Inclusion is the means, equity is the end.

Inclusion is defined as "the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes."

Equity is defined as "the fair and just treatment of all members of a community."

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 3: The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.	**A.** *continued*	**Better** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers work with the governing authority to include **inclusion** and **equity** goals, priorities, and values in the institution's **Vision Statement**, **Values Statement**, and **Strategic Plan**. ☐ Collaborating with **stakeholders**, staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority review the **inclusion** and **equity** goals, priorities, and values every three to five years. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers advocate for **inclusion** and **equity** in other organizations that serve their community.
	B. *Does the institution communicate its **inclusion** and **equity** efforts to governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution's leadership is aware that regular communication to governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers about **inclusion** and **equity** goals and benchmarks will strengthen the institution's commitment in these areas. **Good** ☐ The institution regularly incorporates **inclusion** and **equity** goals and benchmarks into meeting agendas and institutional plans. ☐ The institution strives to hire vendors who are members of underrepresented communities.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	**B.** *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution encourages staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers, along with the governing authority, to work toward greater **cultural competency** through training, dialogue, and reflection. ☐ The institution has an **inclusion** and **equity** affinity network, advisory group, or task force.
	C. *Are staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers knowledgeable about the institution's origin story (e.g., how it began; with whose money; on whose land; with whose collections, historic structures, and/ or landscapes) and committed to sharing it internally and externally?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can describe and explain important elements of the institution's origin story. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers recognize the importance of honestly and accurately sharing its origin story internally and externally. **Good** ☐ The institution's origin story is widely communicated to its staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority through orientation materials. ☐ The institution's origin story is widely shared with **stakeholders**, audiences, and communities served through a variety of mediums (e.g., newsletter, **web presence**).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 3: **The institution's culture, policies, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.**	**C.** *continued*	**Better** ☐ The institution identifies sources and resources to provide more information and research about its origin story. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and the governing authority commit to ongoing dialogue about the institution's origin story by engaging with communities it serves, outside experts, and others in a variety of ways (e.g., exhibits, programs, blog posts, newsletter articles, social media).
MGT Standard 4: **The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the institution's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.**	**A.** *Do governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers reflect and share demographic identities with the institution's current and potential audiences and communities served?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers should reflect and share demographic identities with its current and potential audiences and communities served. **Good** ☐ The institution develops a plan for working toward governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers who reflect and share demographic identities with its current and potential audiences and communities served. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to having governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers who reflect and share demographic identities with its current and potential audiences and communities served.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# MGT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	**A.** *Do governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) treat the institution's human resources ethically and as a high priority?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority and management staff (paid and unpaid) can describe or explain their **roles and responsibilities** in making sure all staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and interns are treated fairly and ethically. ☐ Staff in management positions and the governing authority recognize that paid staff and interns must receive paychecks on time and at the level promised. ☐ The institution is committed to promoting paid staff to higher level positions fairly and without bias related to gender, age, race, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. **Good** ☐ All people working or volunteering for the institution have up-to-date job descriptions. ☐ The institution creates a governing authority-approved **Personnel Policy** that is provided to all paid staff upon hire and whenever revisions are made; the Policy contains up-to-date and comprehensive information about staff responsibilities, benefits, institutional policies and expectations, and other necessary information. ☐ The institution creates a governing authority-approved Volunteer Manual that is provided to all people who donate their time and expertise on a regular basis; the Manual offers up-to-date and comprehensive information about **unpaid staff** and volunteer responsibilities, benefits, institutional policies and expectations, and other necessary information.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	**A.** *continued*	**Good** *continued* ☐ The institution creates a governing authority-approved Whistleblower Policy that encourages staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers to report illegal, dishonest, or unethical activity; the Policy directs the whistleblower to the person or persons to whom such information should be reported. **Better** ☐ The institution reviews its Whistleblower and Personnel Policies, and Volunteer Manual every three to five years.
	B. *Are hiring practices for paid staff and interns legal, transparent, inclusive, and equitable?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution complies with local, state, and federal employment laws including anti-discrimination laws. ☐ To attract a diverse group of applicants, the institution identifies a wide variety of ways to announce and circulate position announcements. ☐ The institution commits to always including a compensation range in announcements for paid staff and intern position openings. **Good** ☐ Before posting a position announcement, the institution assesses the content to identify and remove gendered language. ☐ The institution also assesses position announcement content to replace credential-based qualifications with skill-based qualifications. ☐ The institution shares its **inclusion** and **equity** values and expectations in position announcements and job descriptions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
## MGT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	## B. *continued*	**Good** *continued* ☐ The institution's application and/or interview process includes a way for candidates to demonstrate skills. ☐ The institution uses the same script of questions for each job candidate interviewed. --- **Better** ☐ The institution uses a blind hiring practice whereby the name, gender, and location of applicants is not known to the search committee.
	## C. *If the institution has paid staff or interns, are decisions about compensation, benefits, and promotion free of gender, racial, disability, or other stereotypes and biases?*	**Basic** ☐ Management staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority recognize that compensation, benefits, and promotion for paid staff and interns should be based upon scope of work instead of gender, race, sexual orientation, age, or other characteristics. --- **Good** ☐ Management staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority commit to ensuring that paid staff receive fair compensation, benefits, and promotions in relation to other paid staff. --- **Better** ☐ The institution regularly conducts a compensation audit to ensure that paid staff are receiving fair compensation and benefits in relation to each other. ☐ The institution serves as a model and advocate in its community for hiring and promotion of paid staff and interns based upon scope of work rather than gender, age, race, or other characteristics.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	D. *If the institution has paid staff or interns, does it offer compensation and benefits at levels comparable to related positions in the community, and is it transparent about compensation and benefits?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that paid staff should receive compensation and benefits comparable to related positions in the community or area (e.g., library, chamber of commerce, other nonprofits). ☐ The institution recognizes that interns should be paid a fair wage (whether by the institution, grant funds, or an external entity). **Good** ☐ The institution researches compensation and benefits (e.g., health, retirement, leave) for comparable positions in its area, and offers accordingly. ☐ If the institution offers internship opportunities, it commits to making internships a paid opportunity (whether by the institution or an external entity such as a university or granting agency). **Better** ☐ The institution commits to offering a competitive compensation and benefits package for paid staff and interns. ☐ The institution serves as a model and advocate in its community for competitive compensation and benefits for paid staff and interns of nonprofit institutions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# MGT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	# E. *Does the institution invest in training opportunities for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers so they can effectively perform their job duties?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes that governing authority members, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers would benefit from training to learn more about operating a museum, historic site, or related institution. ☐ The institution recognizes that governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers need access to information about operating a museum, historic site, or related institution. **Good** ☐ The institution creates a line item for purchase of training and technical assistance materials in its annual budget. ☐ The institution communicates its support for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers to participate in local, state, regional or national organizations that serve history or nonprofit institutions. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to financial support for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and/or volunteers to participate in local, state, regional, or national organizations that serve history or nonprofit institutions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	F. *Does the institution help staff (paid and unpaid) identify how they can improve their work habits and meet goals by conducting annual job performance evaluations?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority recognizes the importance of conducting an annual performance review of the lead staff member (paid or unpaid). ☐ The governing authority recognizes the value in staff (paid and unpaid) completing an annual self-evaluation in addition to receiving a performance review from their supervisor. **Good** ☐ The governing authority conducts an annual review of the lead staff member (paid or unpaid) that is based on the staff member's job description and mutually agreed-upon goals. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) receive an annual performance review from their supervisor that is based on their job description and mutually-agreed-upon goals. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) are asked to reflect upon the institution's work towards **inclusion** and **equity** efforts as part of their annual self-evaluation. **Better** ☐ The governing authority conducts an annual performance review of the lead staff (paid or unpaid) member that is based upon mission, planning, outcomes, standards; the review also addresses expectations for that person's work plan and goals for the coming year. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) receive an annual performance review from their supervisor that includes expectations for their work plan and goals for the coming year.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
## MGT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	## G. *Does the institution manage its volunteer corps in ways that are beneficial to the volunteers and to the institution?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies a structure for collecting volunteer contact information. ☐ The institution includes its volunteer corps on its organizational chart. ☐ Governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) can describe or explain jobs and duties that volunteers perform for the institution. ☐ Volunteers can describe or explain institutional policies and procedures they are obligated to follow. ☐ The institution holds its volunteers accountable for unethical or illegal actions. ☐ The institution communicates its appreciation and respect for is volunteers in a variety of ways (e.g., newsletter, **web presence**, appreciation events). --- **Good** ☐ The institution identifies a governing authority or staff member (paid or unpaid) to serve as its volunteer coordinator. ☐ The institution follows recommended and legal procedures for background and other checks on volunteers involved with children/youth programs and finances. ☐ The institution communicates its values for **inclusion** and **equity** by recruiting and accepting volunteers who represent the **diversity** of its audiences and communities served.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 5: **The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.**	G. *continued*	**Good** *continued*

Good *continued*

☐ The institution creates a Volunteer Manual that provides up-to-date and comprehensive information about volunteer responsibilities, institutional policies and expectations, and other information necessary for people who generously donate their time and efforts to the institution.

☐ The institution creates job descriptions for its volunteer positions to help volunteers understand their role within the institution and avoid misunderstandings.

Better

☐ The institution regularly communicates with its audiences and the communities it serves about available volunteer opportunities.

☐ The institution supports volunteer learning by providing reading materials and training opportunities.

☐ Volunteers assess their job performance through an annual self-evaluation that not only offers an opportunity for self-reflection but also provides valuable **feedback** to the institution about its programs, services, and management.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# MGT Standard 6: **The institution legally, ethically, and responsibly acquires, manages, and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances its mission.**	# A. *Does the institution acquire funds only through legal methods that are in agreement with its mission?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution follows all laws in its solicitation, management, and reporting of financial donations. ☐ The institution's fundraising efforts and allocation of financial resources are guided by its mission. ☐ The institution never sells collection items or historic properties to raise funds for general operating expenses. ☐ All gifts designated for specific programs or projects (**restricted gifts**) are properly directed for their intended use. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority members acquire, manage, and spend money for the institution in a manner consistent with its mission. ☐ The institution seeks advice from **qualified professionals** to ensure **compliance** with laws regarding fundraising. **Better** ☐ The institution provides clear communication with donors regarding use of gifts. ☐ The institution commits to responsible financial management through its annual independent review or audit. ☐ If the institution has investments, a governing authority-approved investment plan is updated regularly and disseminated to all governing authority members.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 6: **The institution legally, ethically, and responsibly acquires, manages, and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances its mission.**	**B.** *Is there an institution-wide commitment to fundraising?*	**Basic** ☐ All prospective governing authority members are informed they will be expected to make a meaningful financial contribution to the institution annually. (Note: within some governing authority structures, such as a governmental or tribal entity, annual financial contributions may not be expected or appropriate. When a performance indicator clearly does not fit the institution's situation, it can be noted and skipped.) ☐ The institution acknowledges all donations and other financial support in a timely manner through a thank-you letter and other means as appropriate. ☐ Thank-you letters and gift receipts are consistent with IRS charitable giving guidelines. --- **Good** ☐ Institutionally approved fundraising strategies are used including solicitation of individual gifts, corporate and foundation support, and **in-kind donations** as appropriate. ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers are involved in fundraising efforts. ☐ The governing authority solicits funds and contributes according to their means and abilities.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 6: **The institution legally, ethically, and responsibly acquires, manages, and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances its mission.**	B. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers actively engage in fundraising. ☐ Governing authority members give financial contributions on a regular basis to demonstrate their support for the institution as their means allow. (Note: within some governing authority structures, such as a governmental or tribal entity, annual financial contributions may not be expected or appropriate. When a performance indicator clearly does not fit the institution's situation, it can be noted and skipped.) ☐ The institution publicly acknowledges all financial contributions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 6: **The institution legally, ethically, and responsibly acquires, manages, and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances its mission.**	C. *Does the institution maintain donor records?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies a process for recording and storing basic contact information for members, donors, and other constituents (potential members/donors, volunteers, event attendees, funders, partners, community leaders); contact information is centrally located and accessible. ☐ The institution identifies a system that allows it to track relevant membership status information, as well as donor data, including donation amount, date, and purpose. **Good** ☐ The institution identifies a specific process and computer platform to capture and maintain consistent donor records. **Better** ☐ The institution uses an **integrated contact database** to track and cross reference how members, donors, and other constituents interact with the institution to better understand its supporters and identify donor prospects.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 7: **The institution operates in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability.**	A. *Does the institution have a formally adopted budget?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) recognize that an annual budget helps the institution operate in a fiscally responsible manner by identifying anticipated revenue and expenses for the coming year and providing early warning of financial stress. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions and/or governing authority members prepare an annual budget and can explain budget figures. ☐ The governing authority reviews, revises if necessary, and approves the annual budget. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions review the budget at least quarterly and adjust as necessary. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and/or governing authority members develop an annual budget that anticipates revenue and expenses for activities outlined in the institution's annual goals, work plans, or other **planning documents**. ☐ The annual budget development process analyzes needs from all areas of operation (e.g., programs, education, collections and historic structures, fundraising, visitor amenities, maintenance, marketing, administration). ☐ As part of the budget development process, governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions calculate fundraising target amounts based on goals and anticipated revenue and expenses. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) manage the budget throughout the year to avoid overspending.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 7: **The institution operates in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) collaborate to develop and maintain a balanced budget. ☐ The institution communicates a summary budget to **stakeholders** and the public. ☐ The institution develops multi-year projections based on the institution's goals or **Strategic Plan**, including initiatives to improve **inclusion** and **equity**.
	B. *Does the institution plan for future financial needs?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions review anticipated cash flow at least quarterly. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions can describe or explain the institution's primary financial needs for the next few years (e.g., maintenance and repair, technology, collections care, salaries and benefits). ☐ The governing authority recognizes the need to have a cash reserve fund.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 7: **The institution operates in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability.**	B. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The governing authority creates a cash reserve fund to protect the institution in case of sudden loss of revenue or other financial emergencies. ☐ The governing authority recognizes the value in diversifying revenue sources (e.g., memberships, **annual giving**, **major gifts**, grants, sponsorships, **planned giving**). ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions analyze current revenue sources to determine percentages of each source in relation to total revenue. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) in management positions develop financial goals for the next few years based on the institution's goals and work plans. --- **Better** ☐ The governing authority commits to developing a more diversified revenue stream (e.g., grants, memberships, **annual giving**, **major gifts**, sponsorships, **planned giving**). ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) create a fundraising strategy that identifies and pursues potential funding sources in support of its **Strategic Plan** and for major future expenses (e.g., special projects, capital expenses, deferred maintenance). ☐ The governing authority explores the appropriateness and feasibility of an **endowment**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
# MGT Standard 8: **The institution allocates its space and uses its facilities to meet the needs of collections, staff, audience, and community.**	## A. *Do staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority have a clear understanding of the relationship between facility use and institutional mission?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority recognize that the very nature of the institution's mission requires specific space needs (e.g., audience, collections, and staff). ☐ The governing authority considers short- and long-term facility rentals on a case-by-case basis. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority can describe or explain federal regulations regarding facility use and rentals for political purposes. **Good** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority recognize the importance of identifying facility needs (audience, community, collections, staff); they actively work to achieve balanced space allotment. ☐ All space use by the institution and by short- or long-term renters is appropriate to the institution's mission. ☐ The institution develops a Space Rental Policy. **Better** ☐ The institution's space usage is compatible with priorities outlined in its short- and long-term plans or **Strategic Plan**. ☐ The institution seeks input from its audiences and communities served about their space and facilities use needs and uses that **feedback** to help make space allocation decisions.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 9: **The institution has appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of people, its collections and/or objects, and the facilities it owns or uses.**	A. *Does the institution have policies and procedures to ensure the safety and security of people, collections, and facilities?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies due diligence issues regarding basic safety and security issues for staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, visitors, collections, buildings, and landscapes. ☐ The institution identifies basic emergency response procedures. ☐ Emergency response procedures are inclusive and promote the safety of all people (e.g., emergency evacuation procedures for people with mobility issues; supplements to emergency announcements for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing). ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers can explain or describe the institution's emergency response procedures. ☐ The institution creates a **Collections Management Policy** that addresses collections security including access to storage areas, loans, and recordkeeping. ☐ The institution identifies a secure offsite location where at least one copy of its **enabling documents** is stored.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 9: **The institution has appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of people, its collections and/or objects, and the facilities it owns or uses.**	A. *continued*	**Good** ☐ Written job descriptions for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers who work with collections include responsibility for the care, preservation, management, and access of collections. ☐ The institution creates a written **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan**. ☐ The institution prioritizes the need for governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and some volunteers to have offsite access to its **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan** (e.g., hard copy kept at their homes). ☐ There are regular training and drills for staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers. ☐ The institution practices strict **key control** for all facility access points and collections storage areas. **Better** ☐ The institution identifies a response team, chain of command, and communication plan. ☐ The institution integrates its training and drills with local emergency responders and community-wide preparedness plans. ☐ As part of its disaster preparedness training, the institution routinely offers tours, including behind the scenes areas, to first responders.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 10: **The institution has an effective program for the care and long-term maintenance of its facilities.**	A. *Does the institution have a plan for the care and long-term maintenance of its facilities?*	**Basic** ☐ The facility is cleaned on a regular basis using appropriate methods and materials. ☐ The institution identifies areas and aspects of its buildings and grounds that need seasonal inspections. ☐ It complies with appropriate building codes and applicable **historic preservation** standards (e.g. **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties** and state and local preservation ordinances). ☐ It identifies possible energy efficient systems and other environmentally sustainable features in its design and replacement of systems and buildings. **Good** ☐ The institution develops written cleaning and maintenance schedules, records, and manuals. ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) evaluate the need for a maintenance contingency fund. **Better** ☐ The institution creates a long-term maintenance plan and shares this information with its **stakeholders**. ☐ The institution commits to creating a maintenance contingency fund.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 11: **The institution is clean and well-maintained and provides for visitors' needs.**	A. *Are basic amenities, such as restrooms, water, and seating available to the public?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes its obligation to keep its facility and equipment clean, well-kept, functioning, and in good repair. ☐ The institution recognizes the need to provide visitors with access to seating and restrooms, including accessible restrooms. **Good** ☐ The institution implements a regular cleaning and maintenance plan that keeps the facility and equipment clean, well-kept, functioning, and in good repair. **Better** ☐ The institution uses appropriate lighting, temperature, and sound levels in its facilities (recognizing this may not be possible for some historic structures). ☐ The institution offers visitors opportunities to provide **feedback** on how well facilities and equipment are meeting their needs (e.g., comment cards, surveys).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 11: **The institution is clean and well-maintained and provides for visitors' needs.**	B. *Is the facility accessible to all people?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and offers alternatives that provide an equivalent experience for physical spaces and programs that are inaccessible to all audiences (e.g., printed transcript of video for Deaf visitors). **Good** ☐ The institution seeks input from members of the community and local organizations with relevant life experiences and/or disabilities to improve current access and comfort. ☐ It seeks that input in the early planning stages of new endeavors. ☐ The institution identifies **universal design** techniques that help provide physical and programmatic access for all audiences (e.g., captioning on videos instead of a printed transcript). **Better** ☐ The institution offers opportunities for visitors with disabilities to provide **feedback** on how well facilities and equipment are meeting their needs (e.g., **accessibility** task force or committee, comment cards, surveys). ☐ The institution implements **universal design** techniques to ensure greater physical and programmatic access to all audiences.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 12: **The institution takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.**	**A.** *Does the institution have internal controls for proper financial management and prevention of fraud?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority works with staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers to identify procedures for increasing financial accountability and reducing the possibility of internal theft and fraud by eliminating the practice of one person overseeing financial management (e.g., incorporating **best practices** such as multiple people reviewing original copies of monthly bank and credit card statements; multiple people monitoring transaction records involving petty cash, admissions, museum store, and special events; more than one person having login information for online systems and accounts). ☐ The governing authority recognizes that relying on trust is not an adequate substitution for policies and procedures intended to prevent internal theft and fraud. ☐ The institution keeps financial statements and updates them, at a minimum, quarterly. ☐ The governing authority reviews a financial report at every meeting. ☐ The governing authority recognizes the importance of protecting financial information it collects from transactions for memberships, donations, sales, and other revenue.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 12: **The institution takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.**	A. *continued*	**Good** ☐ The governing authority approves a Financial Procedures Manual that provides specific instructions for staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members when conducting financial transactions involving money received, spent, saved, and/or invested. ☐ The governing authority communicates the expectation that staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers are trained according to the Financial Procedures Manual for appropriate handling of personal and financial information collected from memberships, donations, sales, and other support. ☐ The governing authority examines and analyzes an annual financial report and balance sheet. ☐ The institution trains or seeks training for staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers about online financial security (e.g., online pay systems, hacking). ☐ The governing authority seeks financial advice/ expertise from a **qualified professional** when needed. ☐ The institution follows recommended and legal procedures for background and other checks on all new staff hires and volunteers involved with finances.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 12: **The institution takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.**	A. *continued*	**Better** ☐ The governing authority commits to an annual independent financial review or audit. ☐ An audit committee manages the institution's relationship with the independent accountant(s) who performs the annual financial review or audit. ☐ The governing authority is aware that while an independent financial review or audit is important and necessary, neither procedure reduces the institution's need for attention to fraud prevention. ☐ The institution commits to having a governing authority member who has finance credentials. ☐ If the institution has investments, the governing authority creates an Investment Policy that addresses, among other details, whether investments will be managed by the governing authority (or one of its committees) or an outside professional. ☐ The institution is aware of the need to stay current on trends regarding online security. ☐ The institution develops procedures for gathering, storing, maintaining, and protecting personal information gathering from donors, members, and others. ☐ The institution develops a **Donor Privacy Policy** that addresses the sale, trade, or exchange of donor information with other institutions or individuals.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 12: The institution takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.	**B.** *Do governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) understand which types of insurance coverage are required and which types are optional (taking into account some institutions, as part of a larger agency or entity, may be self-insured or may not have decision-making authority for insurance coverage)?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution has basic and necessary building, contents (non-collections), and liability insurance coverage. ☐ If the institution employs paid staff, the governing authority recognizes workers' compensation insurance is needed. ☐ The governing authority recognizes the potential need for **directors and officers liability insurance**. ☐ It also recognizes that fine arts insurance is available for collections. --- **Good** ☐ If the institution hosts rental events, such as weddings, it consults with a professional about whether increased liability coverage is needed. ☐ The institution evaluates its need and ability to purchase a blanket fine arts insurance policy for its collections. ☐ The institution evaluates its need and ability to carry **directors and officers liability insurance**. --- **Better** ☐ The governing authority and staff (paid and unpaid) annually reassess the institution's risks by reviewing incidents from the previous year, upgrades to the building and/or contents, and newly identified risks; coverage for workers and volunteers, business practices, building, contents, collections, and liability is adjusted accordingly.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 12: The institution takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.	**C.** *How well has the institution assessed its risk from a variety of* **hazards** *and* **vulnerabilities**?	(see below)

Basic

☐ The institution recognizes the importance of identifying potential **hazards** (e.g., proximity to a river that may flood and other natural catastrophes; vandalism and other crime; industrial disasters like fire, explosion, or structural collapse; civil disturbances; accidental damage) that could threaten health, safety, and security.

☐ It also recognizes the need to identify areas of **vulnerability** (e.g., fragile collections, structures, or landscapes).

Good

☐ The institution assesses its risk by considering probability of hazardous situations; it identifies which are more likely to occur than others.

☐ Of the most probable **hazards**, the institution assesses which would cause the greatest or most severe loss.

☐ The institution identifies ways to reduce probability and severity of hazardous situations through safety and security procedures and other measures.

Better

☐ The institution initiates risk assessments from its local police and/or fire departments, its insurance company, or other professionals trained in risk assessment and management.

☐ The institution commits to regularly reviewing its risk assessment and management.

☐ It commits to regularly reviewing both operational security measures (e.g., key and password control) and physical security measures (e.g., fire detection equipment, security system).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 13: **The institution complies with local, state, and federal laws, codes, and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.**	**A.** *Does the institution follow all legal requirements for a nonprofit institution (taking into account some institutions, as part of a larger agency or entity, may not have final responsibility for **compliance** nor have access to tax records or IRS filings, and may not be responsible for filing employment reports)?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution complies with federal, state, and local regulations. ☐ The institution files applicable IRS, employment, and other forms and reports completely and on time. ☐ The institution identifies a secure yet accessible storage location for its **enabling documents**, tax records, and other legal documents. ☐ The governing authority seeks legal counsel when necessary. **Good** ☐ The governing authority conducts periodic checks to ensure employment taxes are being paid on time. ☐ The institution evaluates the advisability of having a governing authority member who has legal expertise. **Better** ☐ The institution establishes a relationship (pro bono or fee based) with an independent source of legal advice.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 14: **The institution engages in ongoing and reflective institutional planning that includes involvement of its audiences and community, and other stakeholders.**	**A.** *Do staff (paid and unpaid) work with the governing authority to identify annual or multi-year goals or plans?*	(see below)

Basic

☐ Lead staff (paid and unpaid) work with governing authority members (or one of its committees) to create a list of annual goals including those related to **inclusion** and **equity**.

☐ The list of annual goals is realistic and based upon needs and opportunities, as well as available resources.

☐ Annual goals and associated projects advance the institution's mission.

☐ The list of annual goals is approved by the governing authority.

☐ The governing authority allocates adequate financial resources to achieve annual goals.

Good

☐ Both staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority create work plans based upon annual goals.

☐ Annual goals are shared with key **stakeholders**.

Better

☐ Staff (paid and unpaid) and governing authority members expand the list of annual goals to create a **Strategic Plan**.

☐ The **Strategic Plan** uses the institution's **Mission**, **Vision**, and **Values Statements** as its foundation.

☐ The **Strategic Plan** drives the institution and all of its undertakings.

☐ The institution shares its **Strategic Plan** with the public.

☐ The institution is prepared to adapt and revise its **Strategic Plan** based upon changes that occur during the lifespan of the plan.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 14: **The institution engages in ongoing and reflective institutional planning that includes involvement of its audiences and community, and other stakeholders.**	**B.** *Does the institution seek audience and community input as it identifies goals and plans strategically?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution has a general awareness of audience and community needs and it attempts to meet some of those needs. ☐ Planning considers how the institution's goals impact its community. --- **Good** ☐ The institution researches the needs and wants of visitors and of its community through surveys and other ongoing methods of collecting data and **feedback**. ☐ The institution uses visitor and community data and **feedback** to inform its planning. --- **Better** ☐ The institution develops its **Strategic Plan** based on research and with active participation from its community and **stakeholders**. ☐ The institution is prepared to adapt and revise its **Strategic Plan** based upon external changes that occur during the lifespan of the plan.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 15: **The institution establishes measures of success and uses them to evaluate and adjust its activities.**	**A.** *Does the institution have a set of criteria it uses to measure success?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies annual goals or other benchmarks which are then informally used by governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers to assess success. ☐ The institution identifies other criteria that may also help it measure success including staying within its annual budget, increasing visitation over the previous year, receiving positive **feedback** from visitors, and meeting or exceeding fundraising goals. **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers assess progress made in achieving goals and work plans. ☐ The institution uses the STEPS program to measure the success of its work towards meeting **national museum standards**. ☐ The institution consults with its **stakeholders** to gather their input on its impact and relevance within the communities it serves. **Better** ☐ The institution uses its **Strategic Plan** as its primary tool for measuring overall success since it drives the institution and all of its undertakings. ☐ The institution commits to establishing regular intervals (e.g., staff meetings, governing authority meetings) where progress made in achieving **Strategic Plan** goals is reviewed and assessed. ☐ The institution consults with its **stakeholders** and a diverse cross-section of the communities it serves to gather input on its value and impact. ☐ To successfully carry out its **Strategic Plan** and to meet standards, the institution may consult **qualified professionals** for advice and assistance.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 15: **The institution establishes measures of success and uses them to evaluate and adjust its activities.**	**B.** *Does the institution communicate its value and impact to its **stakeholders** and others?*	**Basic** ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members recognize the importance of advocating on behalf of the institution and communicating its value and impact to **stakeholders** and communities it serves. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members can describe or explain several examples of the institution's value to the communities it serves. **Good** ☐ The institution communicates its success to **stakeholders** and the communities it serves (e.g., newsletter, **web presence**, annual report). ☐ The institution maintains contact and distribution lists for advocacy purposes and for communicating value and impact to its **stakeholders** and others. ☐ Staff (paid and unpaid), volunteers, and governing authority members communicate with local, state, and federal elected officials about the institution's value and impact. **Better** ☐ The institution regularly communicates with its **stakeholders**, updating them about institutional value and impact, and advocating on its behalf (e.g., through in-person, electronic, and print communications and the media). ☐ The institution regularly communicates with its elected officials and invites them to events and programs.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 16: **The institution appropriately manages its records both for current business needs and to maintain a permanent record of its activities.**	**A.** *Has the institution created an* ***institutional archives?***	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies a specific location within its collections storage area or facility where records of permanent value are kept. **Good** ☐ The institution seeks information and advice from training sessions, reading materials, and/or a trained archivist on the management and preservation of its **archives**. ☐ The institution assigns management of its **institutional archives** to staff (paid or unpaid) and/or volunteers. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to funding training for staff (paid and unpaid) or volunteers who are responsible for management and preservation of its **institutional archives**.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 16: **The institution appropriately manages its records both for current business needs and to maintain a permanent record of its activities.**	**B.** *Does the institution have a **records management** program?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies records that need to be systematically retained (e.g., governing authority minutes; financial records; grant records; publications created by the institution; photographs of exhibitions and programs; architectural plans; other materials that document the history and development of the institution). ☐ The institution recognizes that some documents, such as IRS records, must, by law, be retained for a specific period. ☐ The institution determines whether it is required by IRS Form 990 to have a **Document Retention Policy**; if so, it creates the policy. **Good** ☐ The institution develops document retention schedules by seeking help and advice from its state **archives**, reading materials, training, or another institution. ☐ The institution develops a list and retention schedule for records that must be retained by law. ☐ The institution assigns responsibility for **records management** to a specific staff member (paid or unpaid) or volunteer. **Better** ☐ The institution develops retention schedules that apply to all records; the schedules ensure management of records needed for current institutional use while records appropriate for transfer to the institution's **archives** are preserved. ☐ The institution develops policies for the regular transfer of records to its **archives** when they are no longer needed for business purposes.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 17: **The institution is aware of issues associated with environmental sustainability and takes steps to conserve resources and protect the environment at the level appropriate for its capacity.**	A. *Does the governing authority understand and support sustainability for some institutional purchases?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority recognizes that staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers may factor life cycle costs and recycling options into decision-making about purchases. **Good** ☐ The institution develops a list of recommended products and vendors to simplify sustainable decision-making. **Better** ☐ The institution commits to prioritizing bids and businesses that manage their environmental impact.
MGT Standard 18: **The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.**	A. *Is the institution adequately equipped with technology to cover all areas?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution identifies its technology needs for basic administrative work. **Good** ☐ The institution consults with other nonprofit or history institutions to develop a plan for meeting the technology needs of a museum-type institution (e.g., administration, membership, programs, fundraising, collections, museum store). **Better** ☐ The institution develops a long-term plan to expand the use of technology in its various work areas (e.g., administration, membership, programs, fundraising, collections, museum store).

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 18: The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.	**B.** *Does the institution have an effective program for care and long-term maintenance of technological resources?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the need to regularly inspect technology in use to make sure it is in good condition and operating with up-to-date systems, hardware, and software. **Good** ☐ The institution creates a written schedule and manual for upkeep and replacement of technology. ☐ The institution considers energy efficient systems and other environmentally sustainable features when upgrading or replacing technology. **Better** ☐ The institution develops a long-term plan for technology upgrades and replacement.
	C. *Does the institution understand the need for security in all technology areas?*	**Basic** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers recognize the need for internet safety and security. **Good** ☐ The governing authority, staff (paid and unpaid), and volunteers understand the importance of data privacy (e.g., member and donor records, financial records). **Better** ☐ The institution commits to consistent and ongoing attention to securing all electronic information and data.

Standard	Assessment Question	Performance Indicators
MGT Standard 18: **The institution is aware that current and innovative technologies can help further its mission, and it employs technology at the level appropriate for its needs and responsibilities.**	D. *Does the institution back up its database and other computer files regularly?*	**Basic** ☐ The institution recognizes the critical need to back up database and other computer files.

Good

☐ The institution implements a system of backing up its database and other files regularly by making two copies and keeping them at onsite and offsite locations.

Better

☐ The institution commits to backing up its database and other files nightly to an offsite server or **cloud**.

Glossary

This glossary was compiled using definitions from a number of reliable sources including the American Alliance of Museums, American Institute for Conservation, MASS Action, Museum SOS from the American Museum of Natural History, National Association for Interpretation's Definitions Project, National Park Service, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, Society of American Archivists, and the Washington Conservation Guild.

Abandoned Property: Property to which the owner has relinquished all rights. When property is abandoned, the owner gives up the reasonable expectation of privacy concerning it. The person finding the abandoned property is entitled to keep it. Many jurisdictions have statutes that modify the common law's treatment of lost or abandoned property, and institutions should become familiar with the state laws that may impact the understanding of what constitutes abandoned property.

Accessibility: In its publication, "Facing Change: Insights from AAM's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group," the American Alliance of Museums defines accessibility as giving equitable (i.e., fair and just) access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings.

Accession: (1) An object, group of objects, or archival collection physically and legally transferred to an institution's permanent collection as a unit at a single time from one source; an acquisition. (2) To take legal and physical custody of an addition to an institution's collection, including establishing documentation for it. (3) To document the transfer of records or materials in a register, database, or other log of the repository's holdings.

Accreditation: In the museum field, accreditation refers to the program coordinated by the American Alliance of Museums that recognizes museums that have successfully met its Accreditation program criteria and have thus been awarded accredited status.

Acquisition: (1) An item acquired by an institution. (2) The method by which an institution acquires an item such as donation, bequest, purchase, transfer from another institution, exchange with another institution, or archaeological find.

Advisory Committee: A group of people with specific skills, knowledge, and interests that meet with the staff of an institution to make recommendations about programs and offerings.

American Institute for Conservation: Membership association for current and aspiring conservators and allied professionals who preserve cultural heritage. The association maintains a database of conservators qualified to provide advice or treatment for museum collections.

Annual Giving: Repeating gift programs seeking funds on an annual or recurring basis from the same constituency; income is generally used for operating budget support.

Appraisal: Evaluating an item's financial and/or historical value.

Archives: (1) Materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value of the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control; permanent records. (2) The division within an organization responsible for maintaining the organization's records of enduring value. (3) An organization that collects the records of individuals, families, or other organizations; a collecting archives. (4) The professional discipline of administering such collections and organizations. (5) The building (or portion thereof) housing archival collections. (6) A published collection of scholarly papers, especially as a periodical.

Audience: The people for whom the institution designs and delivers messages, programs, and services. Synonymous with visitors, learners, customers, users, recreationists, stakeholders, guests, buyers, consumers, clients, patrons.

Audience Research: (See Visitor Studies)

Audit, Environmental: Environmental audits include measuring and monitoring monthly use of energy (by type) and water, and production of waste (by type). The purpose is to identify where to make changes in practice or infrastructure to reduce inefficiencies and overall energy and water consumption, and waste production. Staff can conduct their own waste audits. Utilities can provide audits, or funding for audits, for energy and water.

Authentication: Evaluating an item's character and genuineness, such as its age, creator, or use.

Authenticity Check: (See Fixity Check)

Backup: (1) Used as a noun, a complete copy of a file that is stored and preserved for the purpose of replacing a master file in the case of catastrophic data loss. (2) As a verb, the process of creating a complete copy of a file.

Best Practice: A commendable action and philosophy that demonstrates an awareness of standards, successfully solves a problem, can be replicated, and that an institution may choose to emulate if appropriate to its circumstances.

Bias: (See Conscious Bias and Unconscious Bias)

Born-digital: Items produced in digital form rather than having been converted from print or analog equivalents. This term is used to differentiate them from either digital materials that have been created as a result of converting analog originals, or digital materials that may have originated from a digital source but have been printed to paper.

Bylaws: The rules for governance of an institution including the mission of the institution, the size of the governing authority, governing authority officers and subcommittees, terms of service, governing authority member and officer duties, requirements for financial contributions, and conflict of interest statements. Bylaws also include meeting requirements and procedures, delegation of authority to staff, and clarity about roles of governing authority members in finance and other activities.

CAN-SPAM Act of 2003: Legislation that established the United States' first national standards for the sending of commercial email to deter email that people did not sign up for. Emails sent by commercial or nonprofit entities that market products (gift shop items, books, T-shirts, or events, for example) must provide a clear and conspicuous opt-out opportunity in every email, among other requirements.

Capital Campaign: A carefully organized, highly structured fundraising program using volunteers supported by staff and/or fundraising consultants to raise funds for specific needs. The campaign occurs within a specific time frame and has a specific dollar goal. A capital campaign answers these questions: "What specific purpose does your organization need money for and what sum of money do you want to raise between the campaign's start and end dates to accomplish that purpose?"

Capital Expenditure: Acquiring, repairing, or upgrading a physical asset such as land, a building, or equipment. For the expenditure to be considered a capital expenditure the physical asset must have a useful life that extends beyond a year and the expenditure must meet the organization's capital expenditure guidelines.

Catalog: (1) The act of developing detailed records about an object's physical characteristics, provenance, and history as well as its physical location (e.g., storage location, exhibit location, or loan location) and thus providing an institution with intellectual control over its collections so they may be used for research and interpretation. (2) The process of arranging collections records into categories. (3) The reference tool created by arranging collections records into categories.

Character-defining Feature: (See Contributing Feature)

Charter: A type of enabling document that describes the institution's mission, location, and assets, and lists the founding incorporators/governing authority members. It also includes a statement about dissolution of the institution and the distribution of assets.

Climate Change: During the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, scientists began reporting increasing levels of carbon dioxide and other gases in the atmosphere that trigger rising global temperatures. That rise affects Earth's systems in ways that increase storm frequency and intensity, and create changes in heating and cooling of the air and the ocean that have adverse effects on plants and animals that threaten biodiversity and human health. Institutions are preparing and adapting to the impacts of climate change on their communities, institutions, and collections, limiting their contribution to the problems and creating solutions.

Cloud: A service model in which digital content is managed, backed up remotely, and made available to users over the internet.

Code of Ethics: Professional standards of conduct for staff, governing authority members, and volunteers carrying out the mission of the institution. Standards are of a higher nature than legal requirements. Codes are usually defined by professional associations and adopted by individual institutions.

Collection(s): Living or nonliving items that museums and related institutions hold in trust for the public. They may be physical or digital, and digital items may be surrogates of physical items or they may be "born-digital," the primary manifestations of a work. Some institutions designate different categories of collections (e.g., permanent, research, educational, hands-on, teaching, library) that functionally receive different types of care or use. These categories and their ramifications are established in the institution's Collections Management Policy.

Collections Development Plan: A plan that expounds on the Collections Scope and presents specific goals and guidelines for adding to and refining an institution's collection.

Collections Emergency and Disaster Response and Recovery Plan: A document specifically addressing collections, including historic structures and landscapes, in terms of identifying vulnerabilities, mitigation and preparedness, appropriate response by staff and volunteers, and recovery procedures.

Collections Housekeeping: The careful cleaning of spaces by appropriately trained staff (paid or unpaid) or volunteers where collections are stored or exhibited using methods, materials, and supplies compatible with preservation recommendations. The goal of collections housekeeping is preservation while the goal of regular housekeeping is usually aesthetics and the health and safety of visitors and staff.

Collections Housekeeping Plan: A written document outlining appropriate collections housekeeping procedures including locations, tasks, methods, supplies, equipment, frequencies, and the title of the person(s) responsible for performing the tasks.

Collections Housekeeping Schedule: A guide that reminds appropriately trained staff and volunteers when to do tasks, tracks and charts progress, and prevents tasks from being forgotten.

Collections Information System: (See Collections Management System)

Collections Management: Attention to not only the physical care of collection items but the proper recording and access of information related to each item including provenance.

Collections Management Policy: The primary policy document an institution uses to ensure that collections are acquired legally and ethically; are appropriate to and advance the institution's mission; and are properly managed, housed, secured, conserved, documented, and used. (From John Simmons in *Things Great and Small: Collections Management Policies*)

Collections Management System (CMS): Software used to organize and manage information about a museum's collections by tracking all information "related to and about" each item. Systems range from very basic to highly complex and may include the ability to track information related to provenance, history,

exhibition, conservation, loans, publications, and other details. In many cases, a CMS also plays a vital role in supporting an institution's goals of making collections available to the public electronically.

Collections Procedures Manual: Document containing specific steps staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers follow when performing collections management tasks such as processing new acquisitions, completing paperwork on incoming or outgoing loans, recommending items for deaccession, etc. The manual, which is typically developed and frequently updated by staff and volunteers, helps them meet the governing authority-approved policies contained in the institution's Collections Management Policy.

Collections Registration System: (See Registration)

Collections Scope: An outline of what an institution collects including a description of its existing collections and its collecting goals.

Compliance: That the institution pays attention to its responsibility to obey any laws and regulations, that it has identified laws and regulations appropriate to its operations, and that it enforces compliance with those laws and regulations among its staff and volunteers.

Condition Report: A written evaluation of an object's condition.

Conflict of Interest: Conflict between a person's private interests and those of an institution and its collections.

Conflict of Interest Policy: Policy prohibiting governing authority members, staff, or volunteers from engaging in activities that would benefit themselves over their allegiance to the institution and its mission.

Conscious Bias: Clear recognition of feelings and attitudes.

Conservation: (1) Maintenance and preservation of works of art, artifacts, or archival items; their protection from future damage, deterioration, or neglect; and the repair or renovation of works that have deteriorated or been damaged performed by a conservator. (2) The profession devoted to the preservation of cultural property for the future. Conservation activities include examination, documentation, and treatment supported by research and education. (See also Conservator)

Conservation Plan: A prioritized course of action for maintaining or improving the condition of collection(s).

Conservation Planning: Assessing the physical condition of collection(s) and developing goals for maintaining or improving that condition.

Conservation Survey: An assessment of a collection's current physical, storage, and exhibition conditions, resulting in a prioritized written report.

Conservator: A person who, through specialized education, knowledge, training, and experience, formulates and implements all the activities of conservation in accordance with an ethical code such as the American Institute for Conservation's Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

Constituency: All people who have in some fashion been involved with the institution including members, contributors, visitors and participants, and community members.

Contact Management: The act of storing, accessing, and using contact information, such as names, addresses, telephone numbers, emails, and social media handles. Software databases are used to manage the information. These databases, usually organized by the name of contact, generally provide an integrated approach to tracking information and communication activities linked to contacts.

Content: The facts and concepts you share with the public through interpretation. The way you provide the information is interpretive technique; what you provide is content.

Contributing Feature: A prominent or distinctive aspect, quality, or characteristic of a historic property that makes it significant in history, such as the roof, windows, siding, etc., including design, setting, or materials.

Copyright: Legal reproduction and exhibition rights to an object; these rights are separate from the right to physically possess the object.

Cultural Competency: The ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

Cultural Patrimony: An object having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to an Indigenous group (e.g., Native American, Hawaiian) or culture itself, rather than property owned by an individual of that group, and which, therefore, cannot be alienated, appropriated, or conveyed by any individual regardless of whether the individual is a member of the Indigenous tribe, community, or organization. Such objects shall have been considered inalienable by the Indigenous group at the time the object was separated from such group.

Deaccession: (1) An item that has been permanently removed from an institution's collection. (2) The formal process of permanently removing an accessioned item from an institution's collection.

DEAI: Acronym for diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. Each word is defined separately in the glossary.

Decolonize/Decolonization: To shift the institution's perspective and policies so that they reflect the diversity of people represented in its collections beyond that of the dominant cultural group. Many institutions in the United States have collections from donors who

benefitted from empires and colonizing efforts, particularly those that came at the expense of Indigenous culture. To decolonize is to share authority with Native people for documenting and interpreting their culture as represented by items in an institution's collection.

Development: The total process by which an organization increases public understanding of its mission and acquires financial support for its programs (acquiring financial support can take many forms including annual giving, special gifts, planned gifts, and public relations).

Digital Asset Management (DAM): Business process for organizing, storing and retrieving rich media and managing digital rights and permissions. Rich media assets include photos, music, videos, animations, podcasts and other multimedia content.

Digital Preservation: A series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary. Digital preservation refers to all of the actions required to maintain access to digital materials beyond the limits of media failure or technological change.

Digitization: The process of creating digital files by scanning or otherwise converting analog materials. The resulting digital copy, or digital surrogate, would then be classed as digital material and then subject to the same broad challenges involved in preserving access to it as "born-digital" materials.

Direct Care: Following guidance from the American Alliance of Museums, AASLH defines direct care as an investment that enhances the life, usefulness, or quality of a museum's collection. The investment ensures that the monetary proceeds from the disposal of a deaccessioned object are put toward a use that continues to benefit the public and not the institution or any individual.

Directors and Officers Liability Insurance: Insurance coverage for governing authority members for claims alleging mismanagement.

Disaster: An event or situation that results in significant loss, damage, or destruction, and that makes it impossible for an institution to carry on operations for an extended period of time.

Disposal: The method in which an institution removes a deaccessioned item from its collection, care, and responsibility; methods include transfer to another institution, sale, or physical destruction.

Diversity: (1) Understanding and valuing the characteristics and beliefs of those who demonstrate a wide range of characteristics. (2) Audiences whose members exhibit a variety of characteristics. In both definitions those characteristics include different ethnic and racial backgrounds, age, physical and cognitive abilities, family status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious and spiritual values, and geographic location. In its publication, "Facing Change: Insights from AAM's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group," the American Alliance of Museums defines diversity as all the ways that people are different and the same at the individual and group levels. Even when people appear the same, they are different. Organizational diversity requires examining and questioning the makeup of a group to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented.

Document Retention Policy: A policy that identifies which institutional records are retained and the length of time they are kept and preserved.

Documentation: (1) Permanent records and images (e.g., paper, photographic, electronic) about collections items such as: provenance, accession, and deaccession information; condition and conservation reports; before-and-after treatment photographs; deeds of gift;

sales receipts; correspondence; and exhibition, loan, and publication history. (2) A detailed record, in the form of a report or other written document, including photographs, maps, and drawings.

Donor Privacy Policy: A policy that describes how donor information is collected and used. Many institutions recognize the importance of including an "opt-out" statement in their policy that allows donors the right to specify that the institution will not share their name and contact information with other institutions, corporations, or individuals.

Earned Income: (See Earned Revenue)

Earned Revenue: The money an institution generates by selling goods and services including admission fees and museum store sales. Earned revenue stands in contrast to contributions, which is money, goods, or services freely given with no expectation of something returned in exchange.

Education Collection: A group of items for educational programs that can be used and handled. Also called hands-on or teaching collection.

Emergency: An event or situation that develops suddenly and unexpectedly and threatens people, property, or operations. An emergency may develop into a disaster if the proper immediate action is not taken.

Emergency and Disaster Mitigation: Planning and activities directed toward eliminating or reducing the probability of occurrence of an emergency or disaster or reducing the effects of unavoidable emergencies or disasters.

Emergency and Disaster Preparedness: A readiness to cope with an emergency or disaster so as to minimize loss of life and damage to property and collections, and to organize and facilitate timely and effective rescue, relief, and recovery.

Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Plan: A current, comprehensive plan to help an institution assess and manage risk, protect human life, and recover from natural and man-made disasters.

Enabling Documents: Documents that establish the founding of an institution including charter, bylaws, articles of incorporation, and statements of tax exemption from the Internal Revenue Service and the state where the institution was incorporated.

Endowment: A fund, the principal or corpus of which is maintained in a permanent fund to provide a specified amount of interest income for general or restricted use of an agency, institution, or program.

Energy Efficiency: Using only as much energy as absolutely necessary. This is most often achieved by sizing heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, and electrical systems to function according to real demand, not highest-possible demand; by using sensors and systems that turn off lights and electrical connections when they are not in use; and by using systems that minimize energy use by reducing demand through eliminating unnecessary features (e.g., opting to do without an electric stapler or pencil sharpener) and coordinating systems to share energy or offset energy uses (e.g., opening windows and using awnings to cool a building instead of turning on the air conditioner).

Environment: The atmospheric conditions surrounding an item: temperature, relative humidity, and natural and ultraviolet light levels.

Environmental Control: The use of appropriate housing, equipment, and materials to avoid or reduce extreme temperature and relative humidity fluctuations, excessive natural and ultraviolet light levels, and air pollution in order to preserve collections.

Environmental Sustainability: The World Commission on Environment and Development, in 1987, began using the concept of "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own." This translates into daily practice as using methods and materials, in all activities, which do not harm the environment: preferably using resources that are rapidly renewable and methods that do not create damage. Rapidly renewable resources include wood that re-grows quickly, and outside air and sunlight that are readily available instead of non-renewable resources like oil, coal, and fresh water which are available in finite quantities. Methods that cause damage include chemicals and toxins, such as bleach in paper production, formaldehyde to create plywood, clear-cutting in forests, etc. For small museums, sustainable practices most often include being thoughtful about the products its buys, sells, uses for special events, and in exhibits; water conservation through rain barrels, watering with drip-hoses, and planting native plants; considering energy and water efficient fixtures and systems when building new construction or renovating; and adopting the habits of reduce, reuse, and recycle to dramatically reduce its contribution to the waste stream.

Equity: In its publication, "Facing Change: Insights from AAM's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group," the American Alliance of Museums defines equity as the fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving specific goals. AAM attributes this definition to http://institutionaldiversityblog.com.

Ethics: Moral principles and standards of conduct.

Evaluation: (Front-End, Formative, Remedial, Summative) The careful appraisal and study of a process or program to determine its feasibility or its effectiveness at meeting its goals and objectives. Evaluation is typically divided into four temporal stages: Front-End, Formative, Remedial, and Summative Evaluation. Front-end evaluation provides background information for future program planning. It is typically designed to determine an audience's general knowledge, questions, expectations, experiences, learning styles, and concerns regarding a topic or theme. Formative evaluation provides information about how a program or process can be improved and occurs while a project is under development. It is a process of systematically checking assumptions and products in order to make changes that improve design or implementation. Remedial evaluation assesses how the parts of an interpretive media or program work together as a whole; like formative evaluation, the goal of remedial evaluation is to improve educational effectiveness and ensure achievement of goals and objectives. Summative evaluation, conducted after completion, provides information about the impact of that project. It can be as simple as a headcount of program attendance or as complex as a study of what individuals learned; what is assessed should be tied to project goals and objectives.

Fabric: In relationship to historic fabric, the material structure or substance of a historic property, such as the character-defining features.

FASB: Established in 1973, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) is the independent, private-sector, not-for-profit organization based in Norwalk, Connecticut, that establishes financial accounting and reporting standards for public and private companies and not-for-profit organizations that follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

Feature: (See Contributing Feature)

Feedback: A generic term for information from visitors in response to institutional performance. For example, this can be visitors' comments in the guest book, answers on formal surveys, verbal compliments or suggestions made by visitors to staff or volunteers, and comments in private communications.

File Format: A particular way that data is arranged in a file so that it may be read by computer software. Examples of file formats include JPEG, TIFF, and Word DOC.

Fixity Check: The process of ensuring that a digital file is what it is expected to be and has not been altered, corrupted, or damaged in any way.

Focus Group: A group of people selected to test and evaluate an idea, program, or product. Focus groups are typically small groups chosen to reflect diverse backgrounds and opinions.

Found in Collection (FIC): Undocumented items that remain without status after all attempts to reconcile them to existing records of permanent collection and loan objects are completed.

Front-line Staff: Staff or volunteers with regular and direct visitor contact.

Fundraising: The raising of assets and resources from various sources for the support of an institution or specific project.

Gift History: A current and cumulative record or history of a donor's contribution(s) to an institution.

Gift Record: (See Gift History)

Governing Authority: The executive body charged with fiduciary responsibility for the institution and for approving institutional policy; also the executive body to which the director reports if the institution has paid staff. Examples of governing authority names include board of directors, board of regents, board of trustees, advisory board, council, and commission.

Grant: Financial donation given to support a person, institution, project, or program. Most grants are awarded to nonprofit organizations by foundations, corporations, or government agencies.

Hands-on Collection: (See Education Collection)

Hazard: In emergency and disaster preparedness, a hazard is a factor such as proximity to a river or location within a hurricane prone area, that must be taken into account.

Historic Preservation: The process or program by which historic environments such as districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects, and landscapes are protected under laws and statutes. The act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials on a historic property.

Historic Property: Any prehistoric (pre-contact) or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places. It includes artifacts, records, and remains that are related to and located within such properties, and it includes properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to a Native American tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and that meets the National Register of Historic Places criteria.

Historic Structure Plan/Report: A formal plan or report that documents original and subsequent use, construction, alterations, and owners, identifying current conditions, and making prioritized recommendations for future work. Reports that include extensive historical documentation can be very valuable for developing interpretive plans and strategic plans.

Historical Trauma: Trauma experienced by a specific cultural, racial or ethnic group over time and across generations. It is related to major events that oppressed a particular group of people, such as slavery, the Holocaust, forced migration, and the violent colonization of Native Americans.

Inclusion: In its publication, "Facing Change: Insights from AAM's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group," the American Alliance of Museums defines inclusion as the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes. It also refers to the ways that diverse participants are valued as respected members of an organization and/or community. While a truly "inclusive" group is necessarily diverse, a "diverse" group may or may not be "inclusive." AAM attributes the definition to www.d5coalition.org.

Incoming Loan: Item(s) borrowed by an institution from an individual, entity, or other museum.

In-kind Donation: Contributions other than cash such as goods, services, expertise, or cash equivalent.

Institutional Archives: collection of historical or inactive records reflecting institutional operations, preserved for their enduring research value.

Institutional Documents: An overarching term that includes the institution's active enabling documents (bylaws, charters, and/or articles of incorporation), other legal documents such as a 501(c)3 letter of determination, and planning and operational policies.

Integrated Contact Database: Computer database containing information about an institution's members, donors, and other contacts. The database can be linked to other

software platforms enabling convenient and simultaneous use and the transfer of data between different programs.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM): A comprehensive approach to assessing the presence and impact of pests in a collection, removing existing pests, and deterring future pests.

Integrated Pest Management Plan: A plan outlining an institution's short-term and long-term goals for integrated pest management.

Integrity: The ability of a property to convey its significance through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Also, the authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic or prehistoric (pre-contact) period.

Intellectual Access: Access to collections documentation provided to the public.

Intellectual Control: A vital collections management component where an institution maintains and has access to detailed records about collection items' physical characteristics, provenance, and history as well as physical location (e.g., storage location, exhibit location, or loan location) so the collections can be used for research and interpretation.

Intellectual Property: Any product of the human mind that the law protects from unauthorized use by others, such as through copyright, trademark, or patent. Copyrights, for example, provide their owner with the ability to determine who can reproduce or distribute a work, publicly perform and display a work, or prepare derivative works.

Interpretation: (1) A communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource. Interpretation encompasses the

myriad ways that museums share their stories with visitors and staff. (2) The use of cultural, artistic, and scientific resources such as collections to illuminate the past.

Interpretive Activities or Offerings: Include exhibits, public programs, school programs, and written lesson and curricular materials; publications in print or electronic form; tours; and any communication with the public that communicates content and mission.

Interpretive Plan: A plan that guides the allocation of resources for interpretation (e.g., human, material and financial) and states the interpretive themes, techniques, and goals appropriate for the institution's interpretive work.

Interpretive Planning: The decision-making process that blends management needs and resource considerations with visitor desire and ability to pay to determine the most effective way to communicate the message to targeted markets.

Inventory: An itemized listing of collection items, including current location, for which the institution has either accessioned or accepted on loan. During the inventory process, each item must be physically located.

Key Control: The restriction of keys, security codes, and other means of access only to staff or volunteers whose job responsibilities require their presence in a specific area such as collections storage.

Landscape: A geographic area, which may include cultural, natural, or historic resources, typically associated with a historic event, location, activity, or person or exhibiting other visual values. A landscape can be designed by a professional or evolve by means of the people using the area.

Learning Styles: (See Multisensory)

Living History Collection: (See Education Collection)

Loan Agreement: A legal document signed by both lender and borrower that specifies the items to be loaned, the conditions of the loan, and the responsibilities of the lender and borrower.

Major Gift: A gift of significant amount (size of gift may vary according to institution's needs and goals); may be a one-time gift or repeated periodically.

Master Plan: A document that provides guidance in managing and protecting a historic property in its historic context. The plan should be a much-used reference tool that is regularly updated as circumstances warrant, but which ultimately keeps an institution administering the property in the right direction even as governing authority, staff, and volunteers change. Also called a Historic Site Master Plan.

Media Outlets: Publication or broadcast institutions (e.g., newspapers, magazines, digital media companies, radio, and television stations).

Membership: The exchange of a defined sum of money or service for inclusion in an organization or institution according to its policies; to receive benefits enumerated by the organization or institution.

Metadata: Cataloging information for digital collections. It is often highly structured and relies on a number of different schemes including administrative metadata (such as provenance, custodial history, rights to use and access); technical metadata (such as file size, authenticity and format); structural metadata (how the files are organized and how the parts relate to the whole); preservation metadata (tracks what happens to the digital file over time).

Mission: An institution's purpose; for the long term but may be altered by the governing authority. The mission is usually defined in the institution's enabling documents.

Mission Statement: The statement that expresses an institution's purpose and guides its activities.

Mitigation: (See Emergency and Disaster Mitigation)

Multiple Truths: People see, experience, and remember situations from different perspectives. Each person's truth is valid and comes from how they see or saw the situation.

Multisensory: Learning theory that individuals learn better if they are taught using more than one sense (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile).

NAGPRA: The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act passed in 1990 requires public and private institutions that have received federal funds to inventory Native American objects in their care, notify the appropriate cultural or tribal representatives, and return the objects if requested.

National Historic Landmark (NHL): A historic property evaluated and found to have significance at the national level and designated as such by the Secretary of the Interior.

National Museum Standard: (See Standard)

National Park Service (NPS): A bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages national parks, monuments, and historic sites; administers preservation programs; maintains the National Register of Historic Places; sets standards for preservation related activities; and provides technical preservation information and guidance.

National Register of Historic Places: Also known as the National Register, the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act: (See NAGPRA)

Neighborhood: The individuals, families, and entities in an institution's geographical area.

Neighborhood Profile: A comprehensive view of the individuals, families, and entities in the institution's geographical area. It should include analysis and demographic figures by age, family size, economic levels, and interest or activity categories.

Nonprofit Constituent Relationship Management (CRM): A means of organizing, analyzing, and strategically implementing communication strategies with nonprofit supporters to maintain and grow those relationships. Also known as a donor management system.

Non-traditional Institution: A museum, historic site, or other institution that operates within a different governance structure such as a park agency, tribe, college or university, or corporation.

"Nothing About Us Without Us": The idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy. This involves national, ethnic, disability-based, or other groups that are often thought to be marginalized from political, social, and economic opportunities. The slogan's use in contemporary times is traced to South African disability rights activists in the 1980s.

Objective: A statement of a specific, measurable, and observable result desired from an educational or interpretive activity or experience; a stated expectation about audience, behavior, condition, and degree that will result from a learning experience.

Outgoing Loan: Item(s) lent by an institution to another institution or entity.

Performance Indicator: In the STEPS program, a benchmark to help institutions measure the degree to which (i.e., Basic, Good, Better) they are meeting a national museum standard. Performance indicators are cumulative from one level to the next.

Permanent Collection: An institution's core collection of objects that supports and reflects its mission and which it preserves for posterity.

Personnel Policy: The institutional policy, adopted by the governing authority, which guides the management of personnel, including hiring, firing, compensation, benefits, and expectations.

Physical Access: Supervised access to collections provided to the public.

Planned Giving: A gift provided for legally during a donor's lifetime, but whose principal benefits do not accrue to the institution until some future time, usually at the death of the donor or their income beneficiary.

Planning Documents: Any documents created as plans for the institution. The plans may be strategic, long-range, or for collections, interpretation, investment, business, fundraising, emergencies and disaster preparedness, conservation, maintenance, environmental sustainability, etc.

Plant Materials: Any natural material, decoration, or plant that can pose a threat to collections objects. This can include (fresh or dried): flowers, plants, pine cones, branches or wood, leaves, birds' nests and/or eggshells, herbs, grass, liquids (such as water), tobacco, and foodstuffs.

Preservation: (1) The act of protecting collection items, historic structures, or landscapes by minimizing deterioration. (2) Identification, evaluation, recording, documenting, curating, acquisition, protection, management, rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, maintenance, research, interpretation, conservation, and education and training regarding the foregoing activities or any combination of the foregoing activities.

Primary Research: Research employing primary sources: materials and stories from the period being interpreted (e.g., diaries, letters, photographs, sheet music, newspaper articles, artifacts, oral histories, etc.).

Primary Sources: Original records created at the time historical events occurred, or well after events in the form of memoirs and oral histories by people directly involved in the event or who observed the event. Primary sources may include letters, manuscripts, diaries, journals, newspapers, speeches, interviews, memoirs, documents produced by government agencies, photographs, audio or video recordings, moving pictures, research data, and objects or artifacts such as works of art, buildings, and tools.

Provenance: The background and ownership history of a collection item.

Provenience: The location where an archaeological object was found when excavated.

Public Relations/Marketing Plan: A written description of how an institution intends to publicize, promote, sell, or advertise the institution or project to a specific group. It often includes a description of hours, tactics, money required, and a work timeline.

Public Trust: Society's expectation that in exchange for special status, a nonprofit or similar institution meets expectations for soliciting and receiving charitable contributions, exercising custody over assets for the benefit of society, using the organization's social capital for the public benefit, and fulfilling its mission.

Qualified Professional: An individual with a minimum education and experience required to perform identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment activities. Additional areas or levels of expertise may be needed, depending on the complexity of the task and the nature of the historic properties involved.

Records Management: The systematic and administrative control of records throughout their life cycle to ensure efficiency and economy in their creation, use, handling, control, maintenance, and disposition.

Reformat: The copying of information content from one storage medium to a different storage medium (media reformatting) or converting from one file format to a different file format (file reformatting).

Registration: The primary means by which an institution maintains records about ownership, identification, documentation, and accountability of all collection items.

Repatriation: The process whereby specific kinds of Native American cultural items in a museum collection are returned to lineal descendants and culturally affiliated Indian tribes, Alaska Native clans or villages, and/or Native Hawaiian organizations. Human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony are all materials that may be considered for repatriation. (From the National Museum of the American Indian)

Research: An active, diligent, and systematic process of inquiry aimed at discovering, interpreting, and revising facts.

Resilience: Refers to climate, economics, or social conditions. It most often refers to an organization or a community's ability to recover from a crisis quickly, and to perhaps become stronger as a result of the crisis and recovery.

Resources: The time, people, space, services, collections, and funds an institution applies to fulfilling its mission and realizing the goals articulated in its vision statement.

Restoration: Process of recovering the form of a building or object as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of removal of additional work or by replacement of missing later work.

Restricted Gift: A gift for a specific purpose clearly stated by the donor.

Right of First Refusal: A right that gives an institution the option to obtain object(s) before they are offered to any other party.

Rights and Reproductions: Laws and procedures regarding copyright, trademarks, and other rights related to the exhibition, publication, and reproduction of objects.

Risk Management: A program of risk analysis and control of an institution's visitors, staff and volunteers, collections, facility, and property. Risk management addresses insurance coverage, security and fire protection systems, safety policies and procedures, emergency and disaster mitigation for collections and operations, and architectural planning.

Roles and Responsibilities: The individual job titles, duties, authorities, and reporting relationships of the governing authority, staff, and volunteers.

Scholar: An individual with professional training and skills to critically analyze and synthesize data.

Secondary Sources: Documents that provide commentary upon, or analysis of, events, ideas, or primary sources. They provide historical context or perspective developed after events by people not directly involved in the events. Secondary sources include documentaries, textbooks, articles, etc.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings: The official principles to guide work on historic buildings. There are separate standards for acquisition, protection, stabilization, preservation, rehabilitation, restorations, and reconstruction.

Significance: The importance of a historic property as defined by the National Register of Historic Places in one or more areas of history relating to events, people, architecture, archaeology, craftsmanship, engineering, or culture.

Site: The location of a significant event, a prehistoric (precontact) or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archaeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure.

Sponsor: (1) To agree to assume the financial responsibility of all or part of the cost of a special event or a special program or activity. (2) To endorse an institution or cause. (3) A person, corporation, or other organization that sponsors. Also, sponsorship.

Staff (Paid and Unpaid): Term used in the STEPS program to include not only personnel who are paid for their work but also volunteers who hold considerable job responsibilities, much like a paid staff person.

Stakeholder: A person, group, constituency, or institution likely to affect or be affected by an institution, its plans, or projects. For some projects, stakeholders might be divided into internal and external.

Standard: A generally accepted level of attainment that all institutions are expected to achieve.

Stewardship: (1) An ethic of caring for, protecting, and responsibly managing resources. (2) In fundraising, the philosophy and means by which an institution exercises ethical accountability in the use of contributed resources and the philosophy and means by which a donor exercises responsibility in the voluntary use of resources.

Strategic Plan: A written document outlining an institution's goals for a specific time period (e.g., three years) and the actions it will take to meet those goals.

Support Groups: Stakeholder groups affiliated with the institution for specified purposes, such as a friends' group that raises money for institution projects, an advocacy group, or a group that provides volunteers. Depending on the institution's governing structure, support groups may or may not be separately incorporated nonprofits. They do not, however, have governing authority or fiduciary responsibility for the institution.

Sustainability, Environmental: Practices that meet "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This commonly refers to choices of materials, energy and water use that do not harm the environment presently or in the future, and do not consume more resources than can be regenerated. (See Environmental Sustainability)

Teaching Collection: (See Education Collection)

Training: The systematic process of developing knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes for current or future jobs through formal or informal learning experiences. Also referred to as professional development or continuing education.

Transparency: The widespread availability of relevant and reliable information about the performance, financial position, and governance of an institution.

Treatment: Applying measures generally focusing upon ongoing maintenance and repair of historic structures.

Unconscious Bias: Stereotypes, attitudes, or categorizations that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness and that often have an effect on their decision-making and behavior.

Universal Design: The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaption or specialized design.

Unpaid Staff: Volunteers who have responsibilities on the same level as paid staff.

Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT): From the U.S. Internal Revenue Code this is the tax on unrelated business income which results from an activity engaged in by a tax-exempt 501 organization that is not related to the tax-exempt purpose of that organization.

Unrestricted Gift: Gift of money or other resources to an institution or agency for whatever purpose officers or trustees choose.

Values Statement: A commitment statement that helps an institution be effective, make a difference, and stay true to its mission.

Vision Statement: As the long-term view of the institution, the vision statement outlines key results and positive impacts anticipated in the future. It often includes ambitious goals, describing ways to serve the public and to optimally care for and manage the institution's

assets. The time frame often ranges from three to ten years in the future.

Visitor Research and Evaluation Methods: Visitor research is the systematic gathering of information (descriptive, psychological, contextual) about audiences or visitors. (For Evaluation Methods, see Evaluation)

Visitor Services: Services and amenities that offer assistance and comfort to visitors.

Visitor Studies: In the *Encyclopedia of Science Education, Living Edition,* John Falk writes, "Although there is no uniformly accepted definition of visitor studies, it can be described as encompassing the broad range of research investigations conducted in order to better understand the behaviors, attitudes, interests, motivations, and learning of individuals who visit informal/free-choice educational settings such as museums, parks, nature centers, zoos, and aquaria. Another name often used as a synonym for visitor studies is audience research."

Volunteer: Someone who performs services for an institution for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation.

Vulnerability: Fragile collections, historic structures, or landscapes that must be taken into account in emergency and disaster preparedness.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG): Guidelines developed in cooperation with individuals and organizations around the world, with a goal of providing a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, organizations, and governments internationally. The guidelines explain how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities.

Web Presence: Internet location where an institution is represented such as a website, social media site, or a web page that is part of a larger entity's website.

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