

# Initial Interview

Once museums are accepted into the program, they receive their CAP packet containing

- information about CAP
- a list of possible assessors along with their Assessor Information Sheets (AIS) and résumés
- a list of every assessor in their region

Assessors will be contacted by a museum to discuss an assessment. Listen carefully to the museum's goals to see if they are feasible within the assessment's format and your own expertise. Be sure to explain the limitations and benefits of this type of assessment. It is very important that both the museum's and assessor's expectations be realistic.

During this initial interview, be sure to talk about the following information:

- *Overview of the institution*  
Discuss the type and governance of the institution, its history and development, and the building(s), their date(s) of construction, and use. Also ask about other surveys, reports, or plans they have, such as a Museum Assessment Program (MAP) Institutional Assessment, a MAP Collections Management Assessment, Historic Structures Reports, institutional long-range plan, and any future plans, such as plans for expansion or improvement of environmental conditions.
- *Institutional goals for the assessment*  
Discuss the institution's goals for participating in CAP. Are they preparing to renovate or expand? Are they seeking to treat an object or part of the collection? Are they striving to become more professional in their operation?
- *Tentative timetable for site visit and report*  
Discuss the museum's timetable for the site visit and report and think realistically about how it fits with your schedule. Museums have one year to complete CAP.
- *Staff participation and coordination*  
Discuss the staff (how many are full-time, how many are part-time, and what is their background and training?), volunteers (what are their roles and activities?), and board (how is it organized, and are they aware of

or involved in preservation and conservation issues?). Also discuss who will be responsible for and involved in the process, including volunteers, board members, and consultants.

- *Assessor's philosophy/approach to CAP*  
After determining the museum's needs and expectations, assessors must explain exactly what services they offer and what the client can hope to achieve from an assessment of the collections and physical plant.
- *Professional fee and estimated expenses*  
Discuss your professional fee, per diem, travel, lodging, meals, and any additional expenses (such as telephone calls, duplicating, postage, and photography). The allocation is not expected to cover all assessment costs, and any amount over the allocation is the museum's responsibility. Whether or not you consider your fees negotiable, you must be up front and clear about your charges. If the total cost of the assessment is below the museum's allocation amount, the remaining funds will be used toward funding additional museums for CAP.

After the discussion, you should be able to determine whether you are an appropriate assessor for the institution, and can proceed to developing an agreement with them. If you feel another assessor would be more appropriate, recommend him or her. After all, the CAP report will guide the fund-raising for and implementation of conservation activities for several years to come. The institution deserves the best match possible for such an important endeavor.



**TIP:** Historic structure assessors may encounter a museum that wants only a collections assessment and is not really interested in the historic structures assessment, but was assigned one by CAP staff because of the age of their buildings. This situation will require extra effort on your part to help them see the benefit of assessing building conditions. It is important to stress the relationship between building conditions and collections care and to collaborate with the collections conservator.