

The image features four silhouetted figures in various stages of climbing a large, dark, tilted structure that resembles a giant ladder or a set of stairs. The background is a smooth gradient of purple and blue. The figures are positioned at different heights: one is at the top, another is mid-climb, a third is lower down, and a fourth is at the bottom, reaching up. The overall composition suggests a journey or a continuous effort towards a goal.

The Continuum of Excellence: How Your Museum Can Be Part of It!











Any of these sound familiar?

Too much focus on day-to-day

Lack of clear priorities—or too many priorities

Too many cooks spoil the broth

growth

success

pathways support

advocacy

awareness

resources

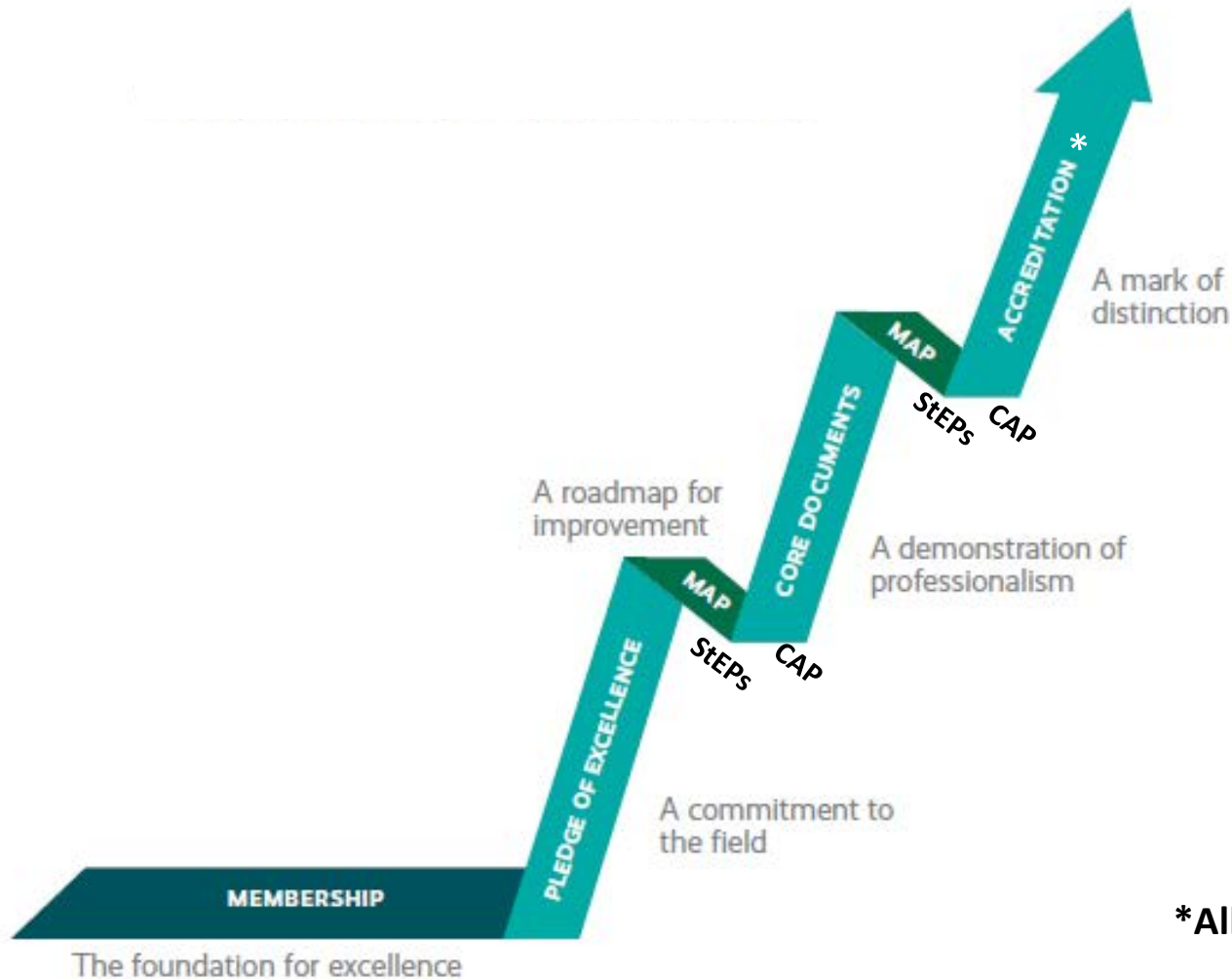
unity

help

guidance

teamwork

Continuum of Excellence



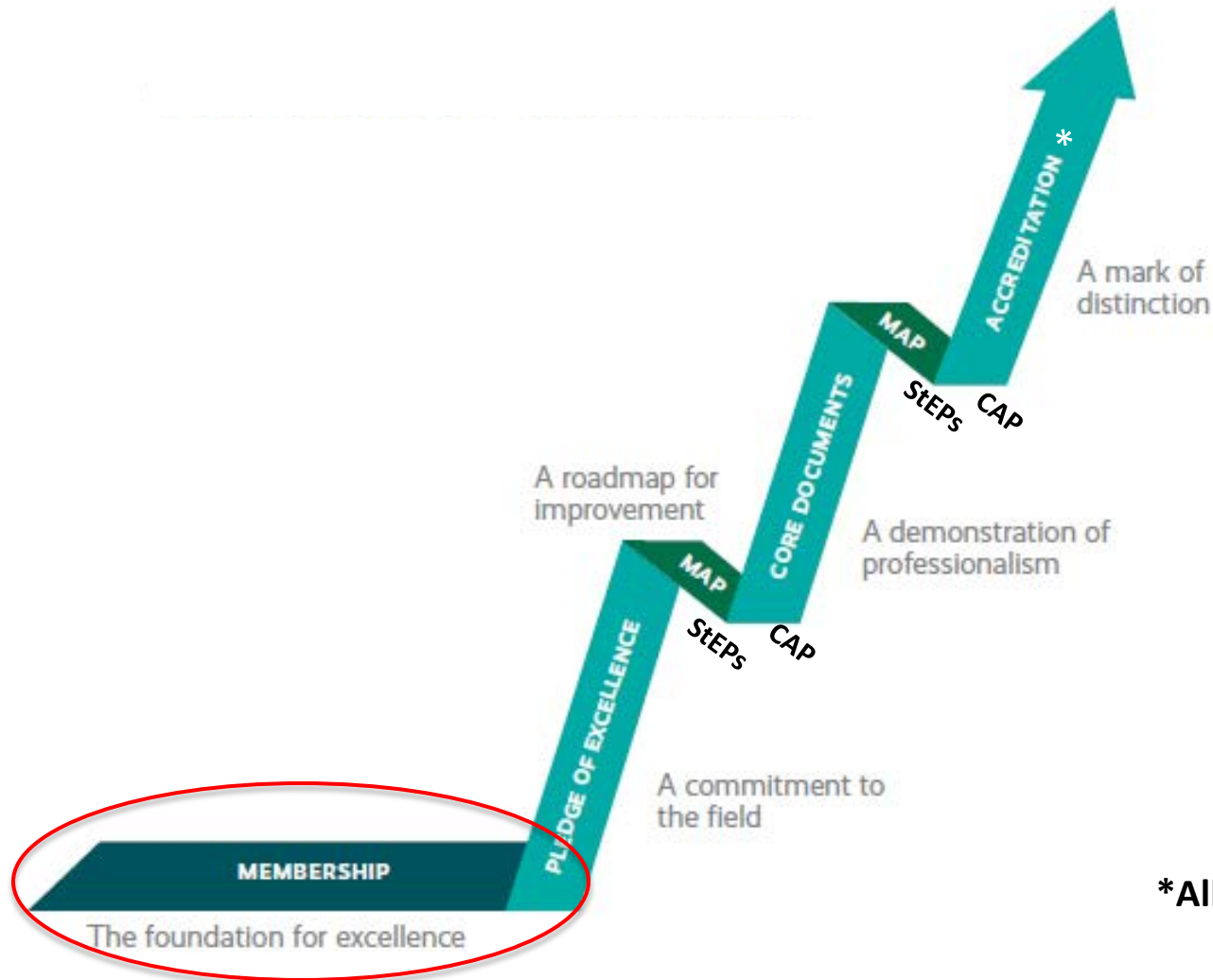
***Alliance, AZA**



“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.”

--Scott Carrlee, Alaska State Museum
StEPs Pilot Phase

Continuum of Excellence



Pledge of Excellence

My museum pledges it will
strive to operate according
to national standards and
best practices to the best of
its abilities & in accordance
with its resources

pledge@aam-us.org

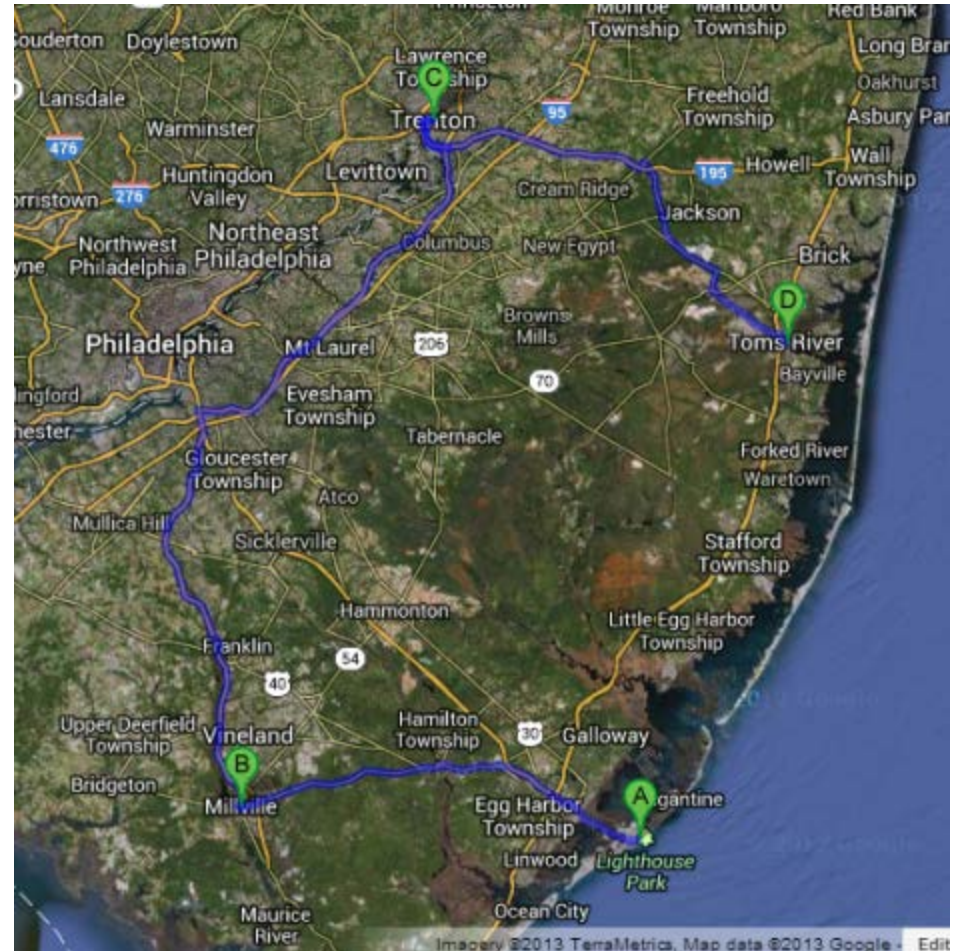


MAP, CAP, StEPs

A Roadmap for Improvement

MAP & CAP: expert peer feedback and consultation (site visit)

StEPs: self-paced self-study around tiered performance indicators



StEPs

Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations

A Program of the American Association for State and Local History



AASLH

American Association
for State and Local History

developed with funding from:



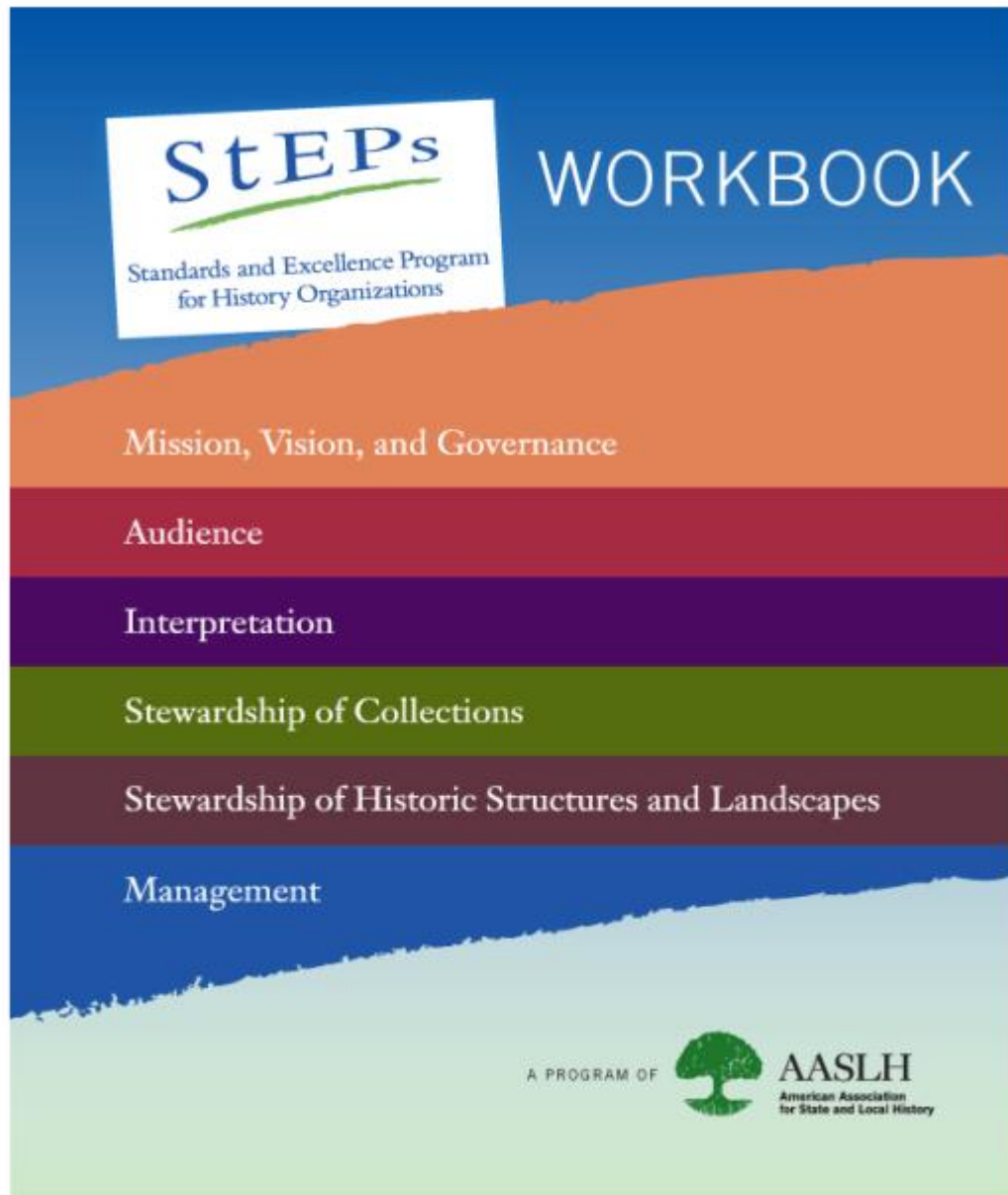
INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES

What is StEPs?



"We learned much about ourselves and we are confident our organization can make effective use of the program." George Squibb, Belfast Historical Society, Maine

- ✓ Self-study program
- ✓ Enroll any time
- ✓ All organizations eligible
- ✓ Primarily for organizations that do not feel ready for other assessment programs, but open to all



“StEPs spurred us to do a strategic plan which we had neglected for several years.” Sara Markoe Hanson, White Bear Lake Area Historical Society, Minnesota

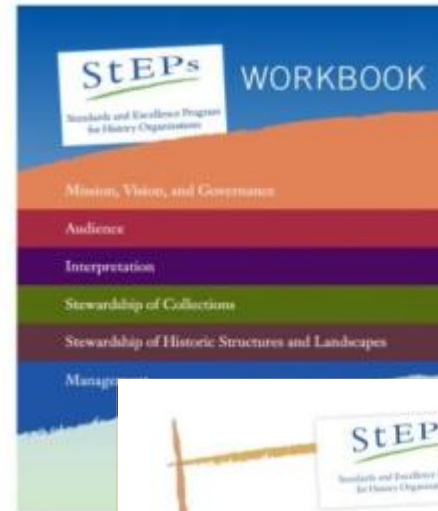
Workbook Sample

Standards	Self-assessment Questions	Performance Indicators
<p>MVG Standard 1:</p> <p>The institution has a clear understanding of its mission and communicates why it exists and who benefits as a result of its efforts.</p>	<p>A. <i>Does the institution have a mission statement?</i></p>	<p>Basic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The institution has a written mission statement that the governing authority, staff, and volunteers understand, remember, and can explain.</p> <hr/> <p>Good</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The mission statement is easily accessible (e.g., posted in the office, printed in the newsletter, and prominent in meeting materials for the governing authority), and the governing authority and staff frequently reacquaint themselves with it.</p> <hr/> <p>Better</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The institution reviews the mission statement every three to five years. The review may include members of the community.</p>



StEPs Enrollment

- One-time fee of \$175*
- Easy-to-use workbook
- Bronze, Silver and Gold certificates **
- StEPs website offering online version of workbook, sample forms, policies, job descriptions and more



*Non-members pay \$290, includes one-year membership

**Must maintain active institutional membership to receive certificates

StEPs



www.aaslh.org/steps

“StEPs has helped us restructure a failing organization with less than 5 months finances remaining into a successful, financially stable organization with a fully functioning Board.”

What is the Conservation Assessment Program (CAP)?

CAP is a non-competitive technical assistance program that provides a **general assessment** for small and mid-sized museums of all types, including those with living collections.

A **general assessment** is a broad study of policies, procedures, and environmental conditions affecting the care and preservation of collections and sites.

CAP Assessments

CAP assessments include:

- a **self-assessment** of the museum through the completion of the Site Questionnaire
- a two-day **site visit** conducted by a **professional conservator** a **report** with prioritized recommendations
- **follow up** from Heritage Preservation

Why participate in CAP?



Pictured: Marnie Leist, Registrar, Alutiiq Museum & Archaeological Repository

“The **recommendations** are nothing to be scared of or ashamed of – they have to be seen as an **opportunity. They help the museum to obtain funding.** Use your recommendations in your **long-range planning and grant-writing!** CAP is a great bang for the buck, a **great return for a small investment.**” – Amy Steffian, Deputy Director, Alutiiq Museum & Archaeological Repository.

Apply

December 2

cap@heritagepreservation.org

202-233-0800

www.heritagepreservation.org/cap

Museum Assessment Program



What is the Museum Assessment Program?

- Consultative
- Self-assessment
- Peer Review
- IMLS-funded

MAP Participation Includes

Over \$4000 worth of materials and benefits!

- Self-Assessment Materials
- Report with customized recommendations
- Travel expenses and honoraria for one peer reviewer
- MAP Bookshelf
- Access to Webinars and other Resources
- Access to a MAP Online Community
- Recognition and more!



Assessment Types

Organizational
Collections Stewardship
Community Engagement



“MAP helped the museum learn where it needed to **focus its energies**, started new an important conversations, and **laid a foundation** to begin implementing physical upgrades.”

- John Hawkins, Director,
Caldwell Heritage Museum

MAP Impact

Godwin – Ternbach Museum

Before

2 FT, 1 PT Staff

Old Strategic Plan

No Collections Management

Old HVAC, lighting, security system

2 Federal Grants Received

Budget - \$125,000

After

2 FT, 3 PT Staff

New Strategic Plan

New Collections Policy

Major renovation to all systems

4 IMLS Grants Received

Budget - \$374,000

Apply

December 1 or July 1

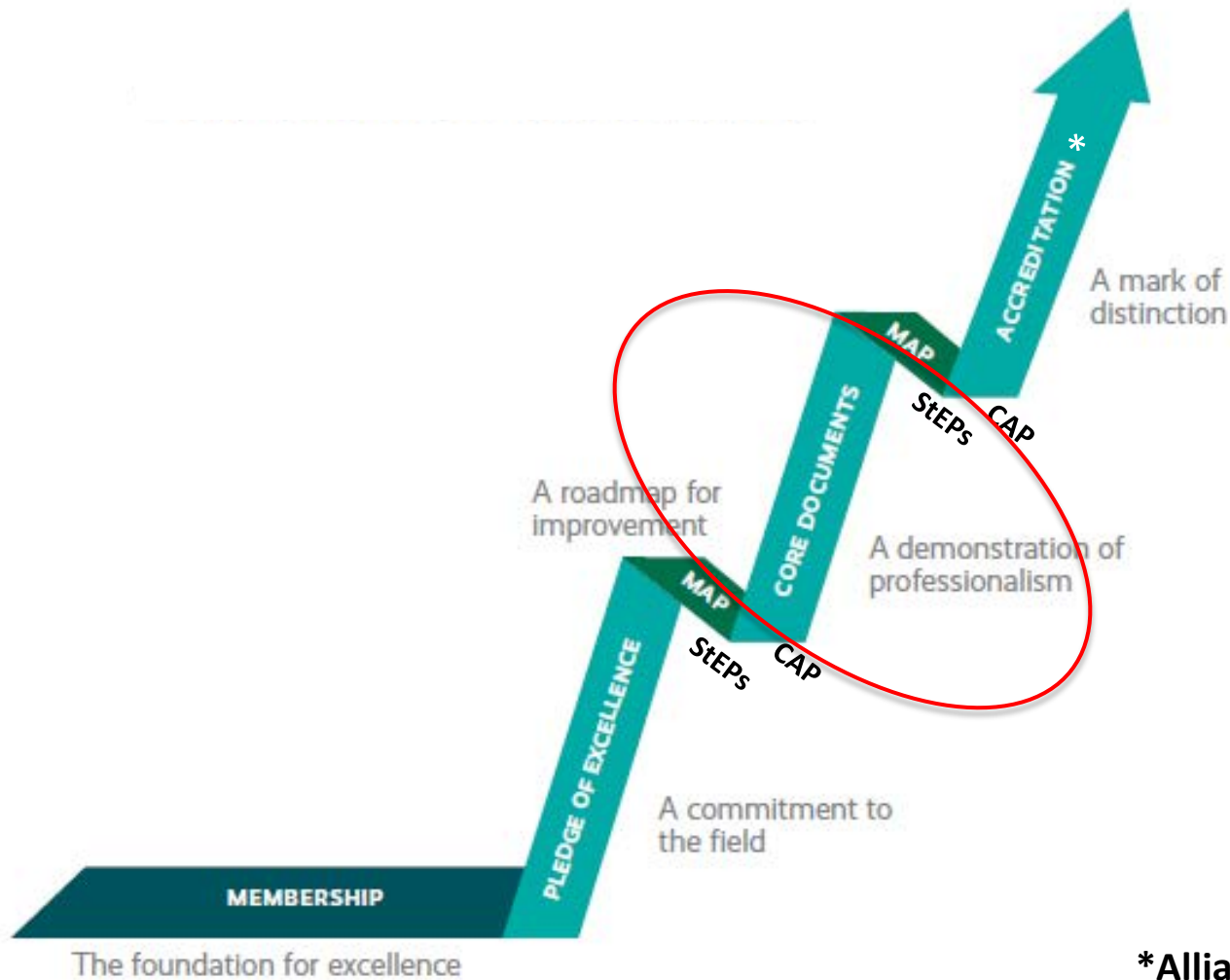
Lauren Silberman / Jill Connors-Joyner

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Continuum of Excellence



*Alliance, AZA

Core Documents



Educational Mission Statement



Institutional Code of Ethics



Strategic Institutional Plan

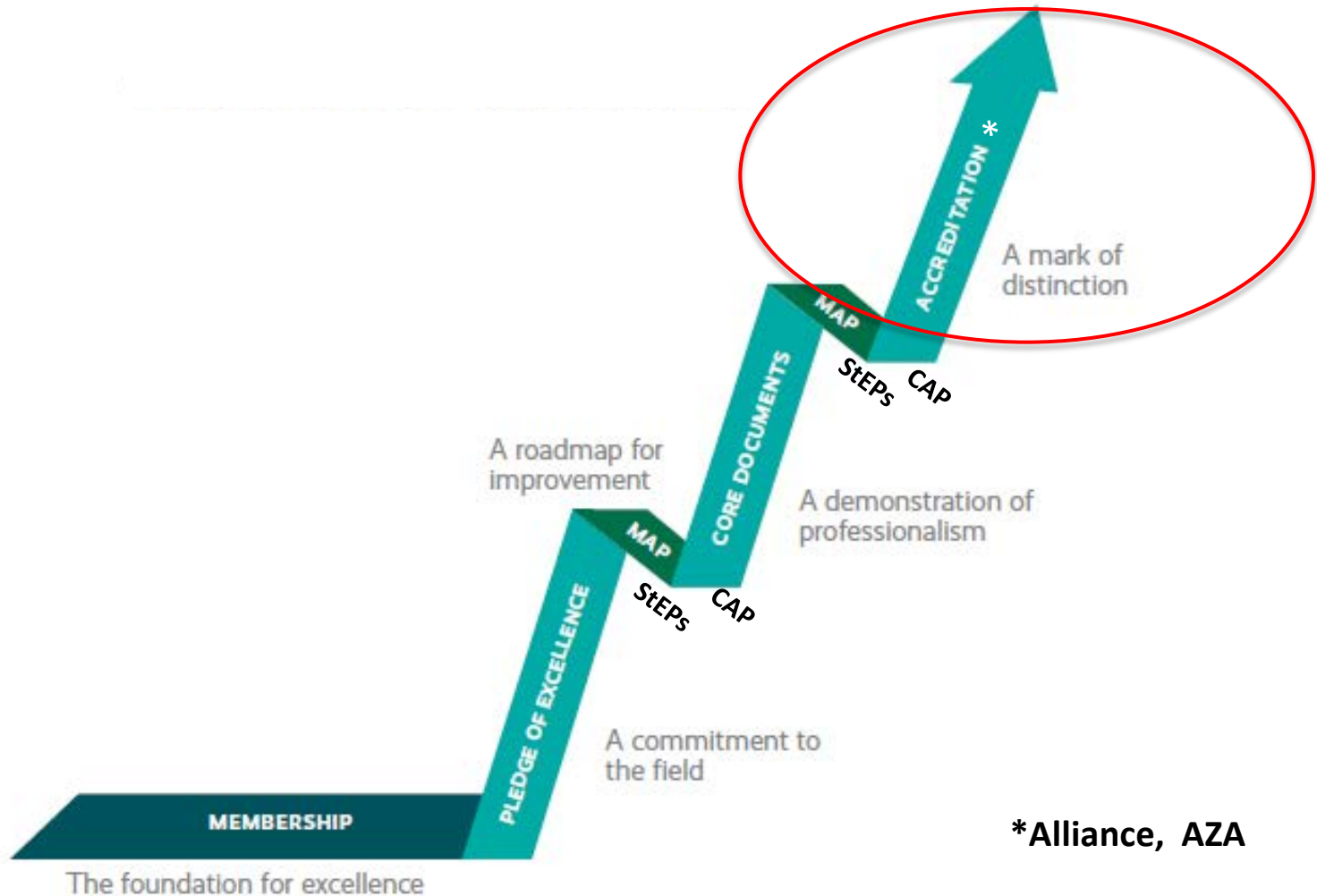


Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan



Collections Management Policy

Continuum of Excellence



Accreditation

A Mark of Distinction

Peer-based validation
that the museum is
meeting professional
standards for
education, public
service and collections
care



Why Did We Participate in the Continuum AFTER Having Been Accredited?

- It's components are applicable for everyone
- It is NOT a restrictive or daunting process
- It's more of a progressive form of self assessment with some peer based review steps included (MAP, Accreditation, etc.) and some self-directed steps
- Its: Accessible, Flexible, Efficient and Collaborative
- We decided to use its levels as a way to stay on track towards Re-Accreditation
- We committed to the Continuum to support the profession and to work towards a set of mutually understood and agreed upon professional standards

Pledge of Excellence & Core Documents

- They're both internal commitments/documents that we used for the inclusion of staff who had NOT been part of the accreditation process
- Used for buy in with our governance to show the continual commitment between accreditation and re-accreditation (15 years time)
- Core Documents – Internal tool that we used to initiate the conversations “around” these documents.
- Too often, these documents are not written, used or kept up-to-date
- Include all levels of staff with the processes

How We Saw the “Continuum” in Terms of Commitment (money, staff and time)

- **MEMB.** - Can either be “pay as you go” or Tier 3 (free for all staff of Tier 3 institutions, etc.). Takes just a few minutes and can include all staff
- **PLEDGE** – Costs nothing, takes maybe a half an hour to complete and you have a tangible instant result
- **MAP** – Likely takes 1 year to complete
- **Core Documents** – Could be zero dollars and a few hours to compile or it could take dedicated staff and resources to complete over years
- **Accreditation** – Costs could include travel, staff, consultants, etc. and the entire process could take years

Example of our Timeline

- Institutional MAP – 2004
- Collections MAP – 2009
- Visitors Count – 2004-2005
- Accreditation – 2005-2009
- StEPs – 2011-Present
- Conservation Assessment Program - 2012
- Pledge of Excellence - 2013
- Core Documents - 2013

