



Nova Southeastern University  
**NSUWorks**

---

All HCAS Student Capstones, Theses, and  
Dissertations

HCAS Student Theses and Dissertations

---

1-2-2021

## A Genre Analysis of National Endowment for the Humanities Nonprofit-Project Grant Proposals

Jeffrey M. LaPointe  
*Nova Southeastern University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hcas\\_etd\\_all](https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hcas_etd_all)

 Part of the [Rhetoric Commons](#), and the [Technical and Professional Writing Commons](#)

## Share Feedback About This Item

---

### NSUWorks Citation

Jeffrey M. LaPointe. 2021. *A Genre Analysis of National Endowment for the Humanities Nonprofit-Project Grant Proposals*. Master's thesis. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from NSUWorks, . (33)  
[https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hcas\\_etd\\_all/33](https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hcas_etd_all/33).

This Thesis is brought to you by the HCAS Student Theses and Dissertations at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in All HCAS Student Capstones, Theses, and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

---

# Thesis of Jeffrey M. LaPointe

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

## Master of Arts Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media

Nova Southeastern University  
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences

January 2021

Approved:  
Thesis Committee

Thesis Advisor: Molly Scanlon, Ph.D.

Thesis Reader: Eric Mason, Ph.D.

A GENRE ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES  
NONPROFIT-PROJECT GRANT PROPOSALS

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media

Jeffrey M. LaPointe

Halmos College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Communication, Media, and the Arts

Nova Southeastern University

January 2021

© 2021 by Jeffrey M. LaPointe

All Rights Reserved

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I researched grant proposals because I love nonprofit organizations. And, I would like to thank several individuals who helped me undertake research that nonprofit professionals will eventually find practical: Molly Scanlon, who not only advised me as a new scholar, but who also inspired me to study nonprofit grant proposals *as a genre*; Eric Mason, whom I had asked also to read my thesis because I had witnessed as a master's student his observational and critical skills, and who initially also both suggested that I could study nonprofit grant proposals and recommended that I specifically consider studying National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) proposals; Caitlin Cater and other NEH staff who helped me obtain the set of NEH grant proposals that I examined; and my M.A.-scholar and program faculty colleagues who, as I progressed through Nova Southeastern University's Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media program, supported my efforts.

## CONTENTS

Introduction: An Analysis of National Endowment for the Humanities Nonprofit-Project Grant Proposals Through the Lens of Genre .....	1
A Review of Literature: A Survey of Genre Ideas and of Studies of the Grant Proposal Genre(s).....	3
<i>Genre and Genre Perspectives</i> .....	3
<i>The Grant Proposal as Genre</i> .....	8
<i>Other Considerations</i> .....	14
Method Statement: A Look at Previous Researchers' Methods and at the NEH Investigator's Method .....	16
<i>Introductory Remarks About the Method of Investigation</i> .....	16
<i>Genre Analysis and Move Analysis: Previous Scholarship</i> .....	17
<i>Analysis Specific to Grant Proposals: Previous Scholarship</i> .....	22
<i>Methods Specific to this Study</i> .....	28
<i>Pre-Coding Before Selecting and Examining the Sample Proposals</i> .....	33
<i>Development of the Final Coding Schema</i> .....	37
<i>Proposal Sample Selection Process</i> .....	44
<i>Coding the Sample Proposals</i> .....	46
<i>Comparison of the New Research to Previous Scholarship and A Look at the New Research's Limitations</i> .....	46
<i>Methodological Limitations to the Study</i> .....	49
Results: A Look at the Study's Final Data.....	52
<i>Overview</i> .....	52
<i>Frequencies of Rhetorical Moves in the NEH Proposals</i> .....	53
<i>The Grant Proposal Authors' Behaviors as Writers</i> .....	55
<i>Incidences of Pairs of Complementary Moves</i> .....	56
<i>The Numbers</i> .....	57
Discussion: An Assessment of What the Grant-Proposal Investigator Found .....	60
<i>Previous Research Compared to This Study</i> .....	60
<i>NEH Guidelines and the 23 Rhetorical Moves</i> .....	66
<i>Future Research</i> .....	68
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	69
Notes .....	77
Appendix of Tables: Tables 1–6.....	78
Works Cited .....	85

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Part A: Frequencies of Rhetorical Moves Made by Writers to Persuade National Endowment for the Humanities Grant Proposal Readers .....	78
Table 1. Part B: Frequencies of Rhetorical Moves Made by Writers to Persuade National Endowment for the Humanities Grant Proposal Readers Single Instances of Rhetorical Moves Versus Multiple Instances .....	79
Table 2. Writers' Behaviors in Writing Narrative Sections of National Endowment for the Humanities Grant Proposals .....	80
Table 3. Complementary Primary and Secondary Moves .....	81
Table 4. "Most Common" Rhetorical Moves Made by Writers to Persuade National Endowment for the Humanities to Award Grants.....	82
Table 5. Comparison of Moves Between Connor and Upton 2004 and NEH Datasets ...	83
Table 6. Rhetorical Moves that Match Requirements/Recommendations from NEH Guidelines for the 16 Study Proposals.....	84

## **Introduction: An Analysis of National Endowment for the Humanities Nonprofit-Project Grant Proposals Through the Lens of Genre**

This genre analysis aims to elucidate how writers craft grant proposals that win grants for nonprofit organizations. The research asked: How do writers craft effective proposals for non-academic nonprofit humanities projects (excluding academic research)? While grant-proposal writing may be more of an art than a mechanical process, some common persuasive features may, in general, underlie proposals. The research proposed here found such common features in humanities proposals by studying nonprofit grant proposals as a genre (it cannot, however, necessarily be considered a definitive study that no future research could add to nor discover still more “new” kinds of rhetorical moves that writers use in nonprofit grant proposals). Specifically, it employed genre analysis and studied federal National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant proposal authors’ rhetorical moves. But why should the research examine NEH proposals specifically? Why would NEH proposals be good candidates for study? First, although grantmakers (funders) and grant applicants are not subject to any kind of regulations or outside standards for how they either create or judge humanities grant proposals, the NEH is a national agency that reviews humanities grants. As such, when the NEH judges a humanities grant proposal, its judgments might possibly be deemed as marks of quality or as a quality standard or as a mark of distinction for the humanities field and for humanities projects (this is only a supposition by the researcher). Second, when applicants propose projects to NEH, they are competing for funding. NEH’s grant proposal review process is not merely a formality. For example, NEH evaluates approximately 5,700 proposals in a fiscal year for 40 grant programs (“NEH’s Application Review Process”). In a single fiscal year, about



900 NEH proposals are awarded grants (“NEH's Application Review Process”). Depending on the particular NEH grant program, this represents a grant application success rate of about 6% to 40% (“NEH's Application Review Process”), and it represents an overall success rate of 16% (“NEH's Application Review Process”). The NEH’s application process is also managed by program officers who, mostly, have earned advanced degrees in humanities or related fields, according to the NEH (“NEH's Application Review Process”).

## **A Review of Literature: A Survey of Genre Ideas and of Studies of the Grant Proposal Genre(s)**

### *Genre and Genre Perspectives*

In the U.S., researchers and nonprofit organizations propose research and other undertakings to foundations and other nonprofit agencies, corporations, and government agencies as they seek funding for their activities. As they seek funds by submitting their proposals, academic researchers and nonprofit agencies compete. Typically, to fill unmet research needs, academic researchers, for example, try to win financial grants to conduct specific research projects. As they pursue their official missions, nonprofit agencies apply for grants to win funds to carry out social or arts projects and activities. In either case, researchers and agencies need not repay these grants, although the funders, or “grantmakers,” will normally expect the researchers and agencies to use such grants to achieve the purposes they previously declared. Furthermore, to persuade funders to award them grants, researchers and nonprofit agencies normally write and submit grant proposals.

One might wonder, therefore, about a practical question regarding grants: How do writers craft effective grant proposals to persuade funders? To answer this question, this paper examines “effective” proposal writing specifically for *nonprofit* grant proposals (excluding academic research proposals).<sup>1</sup> Thus, the paper’s research question asks, “How do writers craft effective grant proposals to help nonprofit organizations win funds?” So far, however, academic scholars have examined the grant proposal in only a few studies. But these scholars have indeed mainly researched the grant proposal as a *genre*. And a scholar would perhaps answer the question as to how writers craft effective

grant proposals *also* by examining grant proposals as a genre. After all, one can understand a *genre* as a typical type of communication that both takes on a certain specific form and fulfills a specific purpose to respond to a particular kind of recurring situation. And nonprofit grant proposals themselves can be understood so. As part of a purposeful genre, for example, individual nonprofit grant proposals would each be intended to meet their purposes to persuade prospective funders to award grants to particular nonprofit organizations. As this paper will show, the author of any particular nonprofit grant proposal could manage to persuade a prospective funder by writing his or her proposal in such a way that he or she will end up making some particular textual “moves” (or, “rhetorical moves”) that would facilitate the nonprofit organization’s attempt at persuasion. Furthermore, when scholars research particular genres, they typically identify which moves authors have made in sample texts that help comprise the genres that scholars are studying. Essentially, such genre scholars often examine some of a genre’s own members to uncover how that genre’s members achieve their purposes (through the rhetorical moves that the texts’ authors made). Therefore, to answer the basic research question as to how nonprofit proposal authors write effective proposals that can persuade funders, the investigator will operationalize the research question as “What rhetorical moves are most often used in nonprofit grant proposals?”

But how can we arrive at such an understanding of grant proposals in terms of genre and the possibility that scholars could study grant proposals as texts that make rhetorical moves? Or, how can we more fully understand grant proposals *as* a genre? First, we must understand better what a genre is. In their text “Genre Analysis,” Christine Tardy and John Swales quote systemic functional linguist James Martin as they discuss

how the fields of pragmatics and genre analysis relate. Martin explains that genres are how people accomplish (particular) things when they accomplish them through the use of language (qtd. in Tardy and Swales 165). Shortly after, when Tardy and Swales orient their readers to genre theoretically and historically, they indicate that, traditionally, outside of literature, scholars have studied genre in three separate ways: the ideas of the systemic-functional, or “Sydney,” school; the ideas of scholars interested in English for Specific Purposes; and the ideas of the school of New Rhetoric (165–66). Each of these three schools study genre through a distinct analytical approach. However, Tardy and Swales note that, recently, scholars have crossed between these areas and integrated them (166). Therefore, their scholarship has “blurred and complicated” the traditional approach (Tardy and Swales 166). Furthermore, Tardy and Swales claim, everyone studying genre has also “been influenced” by scholar Carolyn Miller, who defined genres as “typified rhetorical actions” that address recurring situations (qtd. in Tardy and Swales 166). Miller has concluded that a genre’s members “are discourses that are complete” (159) if “we understand genres as typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (159). To answer the question about how writers craft effective nonprofit grant proposals, one should first realize that a text in this genre is always an attempt by the text’s authors to meet a certain common, recurring purpose that nonprofit agencies generally face. The rhetorical moves that are most often used in nonprofit grant proposals must also, therefore, be moves that proposal authors make *to fulfill nonprofit grant proposals’ particular, specific purposes*. A proposal author’s rhetorical moves are the means by which the author’s nonprofit grant proposals addresses a particular, specific situation that

faces a particular nonprofit. Such a situation is always a real instance that matches the common, recurring purpose that nonprofit grant agencies generally face.

Under Miller's influence, most who define genre understand that genres "carry out actions and purposes" (Tardy and Swales 166). According to Tardy and Swales, people work in genres to communicate, and their specific communicative purposes "may" be the key to how we categorize different "discourses" into genres (166). In "Move Structure," Betty Samraj explains "move structure" itself and the role that moves analysis plays in genre studies, stating that Swales defines a genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (qtd. in Samraj 386). In Swales' view, then, to justify a particular kind of communication as a genre, scholars must show that it embraces a group of similar communicative events. Furthermore, scholars must show that these events each enable people to achieve a particular identifiable purpose or a particular identifiable set of purposes. Askehave and Swales, however, also tell scholars that not every genre has a "single" communicative purpose that can be identified "clearly" (qtd. in Samraj 386). When a genre does lack a single communicative purpose, scholars may be able to determine a genre's communicative purpose by closely considering, "early" in any study of the genre, the discourse community that creates that genre (Samraj 386). Askehave and Swales call this an "extensive text-in-context inquiry" (qtd. in Samraj 386). Apparently, then, scholars normally should be able to establish that a particular kind of communication is a genre. However, when she discusses Askehave and Swales, Samraj is careful to state that those two scholars "suggest" that for unclear cases scholars "*might*" be able to inquire about texts in context to determine the texts' communicative purpose (Samraj 386). This seems

to imply that there may possibly be some unclear kinds of texts that might be intractable to genre analysis (assuming scholars want to be careful in establishing that such texts do in fact constitute a genre). Overall, though, to study a particular type of text as a genre, scholars should establish that the texts in question truly are a genre by showing that they all fulfill the same identifiable communicative purpose, since people choose to create texts in the form of particular genres to fulfill such purposes.

Besides fulfilling a particular purpose or similar purposes, the texts of a particular genre will also each possess a particular form (constituted by certain formal features) in common and fit into a particular type of social context (a rhetorical situation). According to Miller, again, for example, genres are “typified” (159) and, according to Tardy and Swales, users of a particular genre will “recognize [an action or genre action] as a common or conventional form” (167). Tardy and Swales themselves explain that a particular genre’s users will recognize the genre because it features such formal characteristics as particular “lexis, grammar, organizational patterns, topics, and even [particular] document format and associated visuals” (167). In *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*, Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff explain, however, that a genre is more than simply a category for a text. Rather, genres connect different “kinds of texts” to different “kinds of social actions” (18). Indeed, genres are ways to recognize, to respond to, to act “meaningfully and consequentially within,” and to help “reproduce recurrent situations” (18). One example of a genre that may fit Miller’s ideas, for instance, would be the “cover letter” that applicants typically write to apply for jobs. Accompanying an applicant’s resume, a cover letter typically is presented really as a letter, which often may include a postal address of the prospective employer, a

greeting, a salutation and applicant signature, and a body of text displayed between the letter's opening and closing that normally should introduce the job applicant, should perhaps explain the applicant's motive for his or her interest in the job, and definitely should share with the reader why the applicant would fit the job he or she is applying for. These are, of course, typical formal features of cover letters. The recurring social situation that is relevant to cover letters is an employer's prospective ability to hire and an applicant's attempt to interest the employer or interest hiring officials into looking at the applicant's accompanying resume or otherwise into offering to interview the applicant. Such a situation may even be reproduced at least partly (or fully in cases in which employers have not already decided to look for someone to hire) by the creation and dispatch of the cover letter along with a resume. Other everyday examples of genres include, of course, job applicants' resumes themselves and curricula vitae (CVs).

#### *The Grant Proposal as Genre*

Grant proposals are a common, conventionally recognized means to carry out a recurring communicative purpose, namely for users to apply for grant funding for academic research or for nonprofit activity. Grant proposals are the conventional means by which researchers, nonprofit organizations, or civic entities attempt to persuade grantmakers to fund research, projects, and/or activities. They typically address, for example, social needs or problems that need to be tackled, research gaps, or organizational missions. They either make for a single, coherent genre together or they might be a group of closely related but still separate genres or subgenres. In the case that grant proposals might indeed be either separate genres or subgenres, these separate genres or subgenres might

be distinguished as research, nonprofit, and other grant proposals defined by a community or by individual grant seekers.

Since 1999, a few studies have been published that regard grant proposals as a (implicitly single) genre. Connor and Mauranen's "Linguistic Analyses of Grant Proposals: European Union Research Grants" studied *research proposals* (not nonprofit proposals) that Finnish scientists wrote in English and submitted to the European Union, aiming to describe these proposals' "language and rhetoric" (49–50). Their ultimate goal was to elucidate how a writer writes "a good proposal" (Connor and Mauranen 48), which is similar to one of this paper's own research questions about how writers craft nonprofit grant proposals.

The two researchers specifically studied a sample of 34 research proposals from four EU research programs: industrial and materials technologies, environmental issues, human capital and mobility, and mobility and training (Connor and Mauranen 50–51). They explain, following Swales, that "a move in a text is a functional unit used for some identifiable rhetorical purpose, and normally contain[s] at least one proposition," and "exhibit[s] some internal coherence" (Connor and Mauranen 51). After having described specifically how they found the moves, finally, Connor and Mauranen reveal the ten regularly appearing moves that they found in their sample of proposals, including:

1. The establishment of a research proposal's "territory" (53)
2. The research "gap" in the territory (54)
3. The "goal" of a proposed study (54)
4. The "means" by which a "goal will be achieved" (55)
5. The "reporting" of "previous research" or references "to earlier research" (56)



6. A proposal's "achievements," or the "results, findings, or outcomes" that its proposed research anticipates (57)
7. A study's "benefits," or its "intended or projected outcomes" or its "usefulness and value to the world outside" (57)
8. A "competence claim" that "introduces the research group" and conveys that the group is "well qualified, experienced, and generally capable of carrying out" its research tasks (58)
9. An "importance claim" for either a proposal's research field or for the "real world" (58)
10. A "compliance claim" that explains a proposed research project's "relevance to [the objectives of the research sponsor or funder—this paper's author]"<sup>2</sup> (59)

Connor and Mauranen state that four of these moves differ from other persuasive genres' moves, namely, the moves of sales letters and job applications: the achievements, benefit, importance, and compliance moves (60). Connor and Mauranen suggest that the rhetorical moves they found do represent how a writer writes a good proposal. To summarize, Connor and Mauranen's study seems to show that Swalesian move analysis (a type of genre analysis) can be applied to grant proposals. Their study demonstrates that we can learn something about how writers write grant proposals through genre analysis.

"Genre Analysis of Research Grant Proposals," by Haiying Feng and Ling Shi, for example, reports on a genre analysis of nine successful academic research grant proposals that were submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (8). The two researchers' study illustrates the methods of Swalesian move

analysis and ultimately includes their identification of the moves in the research proposals' main texts and in the proposals' summary sections (Feng and Shi 9). In addition, the study also illustrates the examination of academic grant proposal writers' rhetorical strategies (Feng and Shi 16, 22–27).

Feng and Shi's study found ten moves in their sample research proposals' main texts (the most similar part of Feng and Shi's research grant proposals to this study's NEH proposal narratives):

1. "Establishing a real-world research territory" (20)
2. "Indicating a niche in terms of a research gap or a real-world problem" (20)
3. "Outlining general or specific objectives or research questions" (20)
4. "Describing method" (20)
5. "Claiming anticipated achievements" (20)
6. "Discussing the value of research or benefits" (20)
7. "Claiming competence using one's own track record" (20)
8. "Claiming importance of the topic" (20)
9. "Reporting anticipated audience and means of communication of results" (21)
10. "Introducing content organization using meta-discourse" (21)

Feng and Shi's study also—uniquely for moves-analysis research on grant proposals—identified three rhetorical strategies in their sample research proposals' main texts:

1. "Setting the scene for the reader" (22)
2. "A niche-centered tide-like structure" (24)
3. "Mixing moves to serve promotional purposes" (25)

Feng and Shi found the ten moves and the rhetorical strategies to both determine the “generic structure of the summary and the main text” of each of their nine sample research grant proposals and to determine exactly which “rhetorical patterns or strategies” proposal authors “employ [to achieve] the communicative purposes of the [research grant proposal] genre” (12). Feng and Shi sought to describe and explain the features of the “rhetorical strategy” of the academic research grant proposal genre. They did not, however, provide a general definition or explanation for a “rhetorical strategy.” Rather, they merely describe each of the rhetorical strategies that they found. The strategy of mixing moves, for example, seems to refer to the embedding of one move in a text inside another piece of text that performs another kind of move (Feng and Shi 25–26). Feng and Shi comment upon rhetorical strategies in terms of how they are employed in their own study genre (academic research grant proposals). Specifically, they assert that their study sample’s proposal authors employed rhetorical strategies to address their audiences, to promote their aims (“to achieve the promotional purpose”) to “sell [their] proposed research,” to set context and “make...proposed research accessible” to readers who are not disciplinary experts, or to lessen the potential for “interpersonal” problems between proposal authors and readers (Feng and Shi 16, 19, 23–27). Overall, however, Feng and Shi conclude that in the “rhetorical strategies” that they found, they uncovered rhetorical features that “distinguish the genre of research grant proposals from other academic genres such as research articles” (27).

For their research, Feng and Shi also found the recurrence frequencies of moves by section (“Introduction,” “Method,” etc.) in their study proposals’ main texts (22). They also found the amount of space that each main-text move represented in their study

proposals collectively (Feng and Shi 21). In the end, Feng and Shi asserted that they now “see clearly not only the overall organization and the functional units of the genre but also the grant writers’ underlying discursive intentions” (27). They assert, furthermore, that they “focused on the rationale behind the communicative complexity” (Feng and Shi 27). Finally, they assert that their study revealed their study proposals’ authors’ “intention to promote their proposed research as well as themselves...to get funding” (Feng and Shi 27). Feng and Shi add, too, that their study may have “implications for both move analysts and grant proposal learner writers [sic]<sup>3</sup>,” although they do not explicitly state or address the (possible) implications for proposal-writer learners (28).

Like the Connor and Mauranen and the Feng and Shi reports, Ulla Connor and Thomas Upton also studied grant proposals. Specifically, the study identified the Swalesian rhetorical moves of a corpus of 68 nonprofit grant proposals by examining “the linguistic and rhetorical features of promotion and persuasion” in these proposals (Connor and Upton 236). To pursue this, they relied on the set of moves that had already been identified in Connor and Mauranen, which had analyzed Finnish researchers’ EU grant proposals (239). Finally, Connor and Upton also evaluated text features by “applying corpus linguistic techniques” for a “multidimensional analysis” that evaluated the “common linguistic features of specific moves” in the nonprofit proposals. All of this was meant to determine how the genre of nonprofit grant proposals distinguishes itself and to describe the genre more accurately and in more detail (Connor and Upton 236–237), although the study does not explicitly address any notion that perhaps nonprofit grant proposals might be a distinct genre from academic research grant proposals.

Connor and Upton found the following seven moves for nonprofit proposals

(242):

1. Territory
2. Gap
3. Goal
4. Means
5. Competence Claim
6. Importance Claim
7. Benefits

*Other Considerations*

A question that scholars have not addressed is the question of whether the different kinds of grant proposals, including academic research proposals, nonprofit proposals for social or other projects, or proposals by individual writers and other artists to support their own individual works, together necessarily constitute a single genre or, rather, are each perhaps distinct genres or subgenres. Likewise, scholars may also not have discussed whether the answer might even matter to either scholars or proposal writers. Perhaps these questions are unaddressed because scholars who have treated grant proposals find that it is inherently evident that the different types of grant proposals must indeed all be members of a single genre, or perhaps because the answer to the question would make no difference to studies of grant proposals. One reason why it could matter might be that any possible ramifications for scholars' ideas either on what genres really are or on how scholars can identify and separate different texts as distinct genres. Finally, A matter that scholars have written about and that might also possibly bear on the aforementioned

question about different kinds of grant proposals and on the possibility of their distinctness as genres is the idea that “genres arise within social contexts [and are] carried out for social purposes” (Tardy and Swales 166). Further, “genres both shape and are shaped by the communities and contexts in which they exist, including communities’ practices and their communities’ values, beliefs . . . epistemologies [and] shared knowledge and experience” (Tardy and Swales 166). One might wonder whether, say, “the nonprofit community” outside of academia might be a different community than academic *researchers*, with significantly different values, beliefs, and so on. And, if they are, would that also mean that the different kinds of grant proposals are perhaps distinct genres? However, we might address this overarching inquiry about the grant proposal as a genre, and thus, this paper will focus on *nonprofit project* grant proposals (excluding academic research proposals, even those of nonprofit universities or colleges) —that is, it will focus on grant proposal narratives written by nonprofit organizations that are requesting funding from the federal National Endowment for the Humanities. And thus, the inquiry then becomes: What rhetorical features characterize the narrative sections of nonprofit grant proposals? The specifics of this inquiry will be described in a more detailed way in the Methods section in terms of the idea of rhetorical moves and more. Perhaps some of the answer(s) to the research question may not ultimately be permanent features of nonprofit grant proposals over time, but for the present the answer(s) might have practical implications for contemporary nonprofit proposal writers who wish to craft effective (funded) grant proposals.

## **Method Statement: A Look at Previous Researchers' Methods and at the NEH Investigator's Method**

### *Introductory Remarks About the Method of Investigation*

This study aims to elucidate how writers craft grant proposals that win grants for nonprofit organizations' projects. The research asks: How do writers craft effective proposals for nonprofit humanities projects? While grant proposal writing may be as much of an art as it is a mechanical process or even more so an art, there are common features that contribute to persuasiveness that generally underlie proposals; grant proposals are a distinct genre. The research here will try to find the common grant proposal features in humanities proposals by studying nonprofit grant proposals as a genre. To analyze grant proposals as a genre—through the lens of Rhetorical Genre Studies—an investigator will need to study grant proposals' rhetorical moves. This study, therefore, aims to operationalize its basic research question by addressing this question: What are the most common rhetorical moves that grant proposal writers employ to craft nonprofit project proposals that win grants from the United States NEH? To answer this question, the study will examine a sample of successful grant proposals that described nonprofit projects that NEH agreed to fund. It will treat non-academic-research nonprofit grant proposals, such as NEH proposals, as a communicative *genre*.

To understand genres, genre users, and genre uses, scholars analyze genres in various ways. Tardy and Swales try to show this in "Genre Analysis." Tardy and Swales specifically describe how researchers commonly proceed when they study genres and describe such researchers' goals (167). To study genres, researchers analyze genres textually (they do "text analysis"), analyze move structures (they do "move analysis"),

compare genres, analyze genres diachronically, or critically, study genre systems or genre and (authors') identity, and, for communications activities that include non-textual modes, do multimodal/visual analysis (Tardy and Swales 167–74). Tardy and Swales also claim that, realistically, most researchers blend multiple methods of genre analysis (167).

*Genre Analysis and Move Analysis: Previous Scholarship*

Tardy and Swales assert that a genre move analysis (or a “move structure analysis”) searches a text to find the parts that perform rhetorically distinct purposes (168). These parts of a text are “rhetorical moves” (Tardy and Swales 168). Such rhetorical moves are “communicative stages” (Tardy and Swales 168). They are “rhetorical categories” independent of grammatical categories. As explained previously, they may be covered by a clause, by a paragraph, or by a larger portion of the text examined. They may even be achieved multimodally, such as through diagrams, photographs, or tables (Tardy and Swales 168, 173). Finally, a particular move may include sub-categories known as “steps” (Tardy and Swales 168). Any steps included in a move, if a move includes such steps, help to achieve, or “realize,” the move (Samraj 387). Such steps may also be referred to as “sub-moves” (Samraj 387).

Tardy and Swales identify four stages in the genre move analysis process:

1. The analysts gather a corpus of texts that should represent the genre they are going to analyze.
2. The analysts “may,” Tardy and Swales state, read through the texts multiple times to “develop initial move categories” that arise out of a general pattern.
3. The analysts find each individual text’s own moves.



4. The analysts “may,” Tardy and Swales state, determine which of the genre’s moves seem obligatory and which seem optional. Any optional moves would be moves that were employed only at the discretion of a text’s authors (this author’s observation). (Tardy and Swales 168).

Regarding stage 3, Tardy and Swales seem to mean both the detection of rhetorical moves and the observation of which portions or parts of a text constitute each move that an analyst finds. At different points, they refer to analysts determining moves, identifying moves, and making decisions about move boundaries. Throughout their work, recognition of a move seems to mean both that an analyst has somehow detected a distinct communication stage, or, that is, detected a move, and that the analyst has figured out where that move lies in the text examined, or where the move begins and ends (the *boundaries* of that portion or those separate portions of a text that performs or perform the move). Tardy and Swales state that scholars have differed on how analysts should proceed in finding rhetorical moves (168). Some analysts, they assert, search for linguistic clues, such as switches in tense or such authors’ cues as, for example, a phrase like “in this paper, we . . .” (Tardy and Swales 168). Other analysts examine the content of a text’s discourse (though Tardy and Swales provide no example of this) (168). Tardy and Swales also point out that an analyst could study a text eclectically and check for all evidence of moves (168–169). To study moves eclectically, the kind of move analysis which Tardy and Swales themselves prefer, the various evidence can reinforce an analyst’s decisions about what moves are present in a genre (Tardy and Swales 169).

Referring to the entire move analysis process—the four steps outlined earlier—Tardy and Swales also explain that move analyses often seek insight into a genre’s

rationale, or insight into the genre's purposes. This study, however, expects that the grant proposal genre's evident purpose is accurate: to persuade grantmakers to award funds to nonprofits to use for projects that further their missions. Therefore, this study does not intend to investigate the *purpose* of the nonprofit grant proposal genre. Rather, it seeks insight into how proposal writers can craft effective proposals that will succeed at persuading funders to fund nonprofit projects.

In "Move Structure," Samraj discusses key genre studies whose authors have analyzed genre by use of move structure analysis, as well as the structures of genres and the ordering of moves in genres and rhetorical moves' constituent steps (385). Samraj begins her study by quoting a definition of moves from Swales: a "discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function" (qtd. in Samraj 385). She also says at the start of her study that "the analysis of discourse within genre frameworks in English for Specific Purposes commonly includes [move structures analysis]" (Samraj 385). However, she does *not* seem to claim that move analysis is a technique that is either specific to or makes sense only for English for Specific Purposes.

Shortly after, Samraj also claims that Swales says that "the move is a functional unit"—not a formal unit—and she claims that a move's rhetorical purpose "contributes to the communicative purpose of" a genre (Samraj 386). Earlier, Samraj makes a two-part claim about Askehave and Swales 2001: first, she states that Askehave and Swales (2001) had referred to Swales 1990's definition of a genre as "a class of communicative events [whose members] share some set of communicative purposes" (qtd. in Samraj 386). Second, she claims that Askehave and Swales (2001) stated that this definition suggests that "the communicative purpose of a genre . . . shapes the genre and provides it with an

internal structure—a schematic structure” (qtd. in Samraj 386). The rhetorical structures of genres, Samraj indicates, are described in terms of moves (386). Earlier, shortly after Samraj opened her article on move structure, she observes that “move structure has been used to characterize the way in which different genres accomplish their communicative purposes” (385). According to these four latter remarks together, Samraj seems to imply that moves are at least part of a particular genre’s internal structure, if she does not mean that the structure of the genre’s moves *are* the genre’s internal structure. She also seems to imply that a genre’s communicative purpose shapes the genre’s (“internal,” as quoted above from Samraj) structure, *including rhetorically*, as manifested in the genre’s moves. The genre’s moves, in turn, determine (or “characterize”) how the genre achieves its communicative purpose. Samraj does not explicitly identify genres’ rhetorical structures *as* their move structures, nor does she explicitly identify their internal structures as either their rhetorical structures or as their move structures or as perhaps being something larger that includes one or both elements, along with something more that she does not describe.

Samraj also summarizes the components of researchers’ genre move analyses in the academic literature. These components include the identifying of linguistic features (Samraj 386); corpus-based methodologies (Samraj 387); the identifying of steps, or sub-moves within moves, which, like moves themselves, are also functional units; and, hence, the use of dual-level schemes (Samraj 387); the determination of frequencies of different moves; as well as the determinations of both obligatory moves and of different moves’ respective importance, each of these latter two determinations being based on frequencies of occurrence (Samraj 387, 388); calculations of the amount of space that is occupied by each of different moves in texts; and the observation of the sequences in which moves are

used or in which moves tend to appear in texts, which determines how a genre is organized overall (Samraj 388). The components also include the identification of “sub-steps,” as well as the identification of moves that may be embedded in other moves (Samraj 389). The latter are typically known as “embedded moves” (Samraj 389).

In “Genre Analysis and the Identification of Textual Boundaries,” Brian Paltridge examines how genre analysts determine the locations of the textual boundaries of specific, individual “structural elements” in the texts that analysts study (288–289). Such structural elements include moves and steps (Paltridge 288). Paltridge does not examine any genre analysts himself, but he discusses previous scholars’ claims about the criteria that genre analysts use to determine the boundaries of a structural element in the text. Paltridge concludes that genre analysts determine such boundaries through their *cognitive* “sense” rather than through “linguistic sense” (295). A linguistic sense would include, for example, lexical analyses, such as searches for “patterns of lexical cohesion, reference, and the [sic] generic structures of texts” (Paltridge 289). A genre analyst’s use of his or her cognitive sense would include searching “for *cognitive* boundaries in terms of *convention*, *appropriacy*, and *content*” (Paltridge 295). Paltridge does not explain the three latter terms, however, except that he also refers to “content” as “semantic attributes” or semantic properties (289). Paltridge also tells his readers that previous genre analysts, such as Swales, had “essentially” drawn upon “categories based on *content* to determine textual boundaries, rather than on the way in which the content is expressed *linguistically*” (295). He explains, furthermore, that such boundaries “are often *intuitive*” (Paltridge 295). Finally, Paltridge warns his readers that not “everything that can be said about language use must relate to observable textual phenomena” (297). Alternatively, he

explains slightly earlier that “problems arise [. . .] when attempts are made to relate perceptual categories, such as the perception of textual boundaries, to textual components; that is, to the actual language of texts” (Paltridge 297).

*Analysis Specific to Grant Proposals: Previous Scholarship*

Scholarly literature includes at least four previous studies that have employed move analysis to study grant proposals as a genre. Three of these studies examined research proposals. Only one focused on non-research nonprofit project grant proposals.

The oldest genre analysis of grant proposals that this author found is Ulla Connor and Anna Mauranen’s “Linguistic Analysis of Grant Proposals: European Union Research Grants,” which studied a set of grant proposals that Finnish scientists had written in English and submitted to the European Union. The study aimed to describe the EU proposals’ “language and rhetoric” (Connor and Mauranen 50) and elucidate how a writer writes “a good proposal” (Connor and Mauranen 48). Using the notion of moves that Swales developed, the researchers did this by analyzing the grant proposals’ rhetorical moves. The identification of moves, a process that Connor and Mauranen also explain, involves researchers first determining the various texts’ rhetorical objectives (or, that is, the examined *genre*’s rhetorical objectives [this author’s own clarification]) and then dividing an examined text “into meaningful units, especially on the basis of linguistic cues” (Connor and Mauranen 51). This process enables a researcher to analyze moves by finding function indicators and boundary indicators (Connor and Mauranen 51). Connor and Mauranen also assert that “moves can vary in size” and “normally contain at least one proposition” (51). Connor and Mauranen themselves analyzed rhetorical moves in their own dataset by using EU grant proposal guidelines to find the “likely” rhetorical

functions in the proposals they studied. Further, they recognized moves by looking for divisions in the proposals, such as section boundaries, and for linguistic clues, such as tense and modality changes (Connor and Mauranen 52). As they explain processes for move identification, Connor and Mauranen provide additional details (although they do not describe every aspect of their procedure explicitly). When an analyst has determined a genre's rhetorical objectives, the analyst will be able to analyze texts in the genre to see how such texts relate to these genre objectives (Connor and Mauranen 51). The genre's rhetorical objectives, once revealed, will guide the analyst in determining the significances of the various function indicators and boundary indicators observed in each sample text examined (this author's own interpretation of Connor and Mauranen's move analysis procedure). The analyst must determine where in the text a text's distinct and several moves each lie and must try to understand how they each relate to the rhetorical objectives of the text's genre (this author's own interpretation of Connor and Mauranen's move analysis procedure). And, of course, the analyst must tabulate the most common moves across the genre's sample study texts.

So, for example, Connor and Mauranen explain that the "overall goal" (or the rhetorical objectives) of a *research grant proposal* is to get funding for a research project, which Connor and Mauranen state is "given in the very definition of a grant proposal" (51). Connor and Mauranen seem to rely on what is a customary and commonly held idea of the purpose of grant proposals. Having established the rhetorical objectives of the research grant proposal genre, Connor and Mauranen next read the guidelines published for the EU research proposals that they were studying, which afforded Connor and Mauranen a rough idea of the likely functions they would find in their sample texts and,

therefore, their texts' rhetorical structuring comprised of these functions (51). Next, Connor and Mauranen proceeded to find meaningful sub-units in their sample texts. They achieved this by both searching the texts for typographical devices (section boundaries, such as numbering and subheadings, and paragraph divisions) and examining the texts for linguistic changes, such as "metatextual signals" (for example: "consequently," "to sum up," or "firstly"), the introduction "of new lexical references" (for example, the phrase "training individuals"), and "simultaneous changes" in these or in any other "indicator" (Connor and Mauranen 52). Finally, the two researchers discovered their texts' function indicators by searching for such linguistic clues as lexical or phrasal clues (for example: "the aim of this project is . . .") (Connor and Mauranen 52).

Finally, Connor and Mauranen also explain how they achieved *validity* for their study and how they determined that their results were *reliable*. To achieve validity, Connor and Mauranen "adopted the steps recommended by Yin (1984) for case study research" (50–51) and discussed and "reviewed each other's analysis" and consequently redefined and reformulated the moves they had identified multiple times (51). This procedure ensured that their conceptions of various moves they had found were *valid* in the sense that they had developed "a sufficiently operational set of measures" (Connor and Mauranen 50). They also ensured that their study's results were reliable by continually asking an assistant to test and apply their identified moves to all their sample grant proposals, over the course of the study (Connor and Mauranen 51). As needed and according to their assistant's findings, Connor and Mauranen would redefine their moves (51). Then, finally, using the move definitions that Connor and Mauranen had devised, Connor and Mauranen and a third researcher each independently analyzed three of their

sample proposals. The three researchers ended up agreeing completely about the occurrences of moves within the three proposals, although they found “slight discrepancies” in the move boundaries they had found for a few moves (Connor and Mauranen 51).

Ulla Connor, in “Variation in Rhetorical Moves in Grant Proposals of US Humanists and Scientists,” studied 14 complete research grant proposals written by two humanities professors and three professors of the natural sciences, all in five disciplines altogether (4). Three of the professors were men and two were women. Connor analyzed the research proposals not by doing original move analysis, but rather, by searching the 14 proposals for the moves already discovered in European Union grant proposals in the move analysis described and defined in Connor and Mauranen 1999 (Connor 5). Connor, therefore, relied upon a set of pre-defined types of moves, which they looked for in the U.S. proposals. Connor’s research also compared the five U.S. proposal writers’ “perceptions” about their own proposals, as gathered via interviews of the writers, to the moves that Connor and one other researcher had together found in the writers’ 14 proposals (4). This comparison aimed to find how well the writers’ own perceptions agreed with the moves that Connor and her colleague had found in the writers’ proposals. Connor and her colleague, therefore, interviewed the proposals’ authors to discover each author’s *intentions* while writing his or her proposal and to compare all of the authors’ intentions to Connor’s earlier findings about moves. Additionally, Connor sought to find out whether any moves would need to be added to the list of already pre-defined moves “to account for all the [sic] content of the [14] proposals” (4). She also aimed to learn about proposal writers’ experiences in learning to write. Finally, Connor compared the



proposal writing styles of the men and the women writers. Connor, therefore, relied upon both an initial move analysis (based on pre-defined categories of moves from previous research, though) and interviews with the five proposal writers, after the analysis. She also studied *complete* grant proposals, which Connor emphasizes because most previous move-analytical genre studies had examined only *sections* from texts of the genres examined (3, 22).

By the end of her research, Connor found that the five proposal writers responded “overwhelmingly” positively to the moves that she had found (14). This means that Connor’s detected moves agreed with how the five proposal writers perceived their own writing and perceived how they had crafted their own grant proposals. Connor also ended up adding one new move (a move called “research question” or “hypothesis”) to her list that had not been on the pre-defined list of moves, since it had seldom been used for Connor and Mauranen’s 1999 study that provided the pre-defined moves that Connor relied upon in studying the 14 U.S. proposals (Connor 18).

Connor and Upton’s “The Genre of Grant Proposals: A Corpus Linguistic Analysis” illustrates both Swalesian moves analysis and multidimensional (linguistic) analysis on a set of (non-academic) nonprofit grant proposals, rather than studying academic research grant proposals. Connor and Upton’s study, however, did not perform Swalesian moves analysis on its sample of nonprofit proposals but instead relied on the Swalesian moves that Connor and Mauranen had earlier identified for a sample of research proposals. In this way Connor and Upton’s 2004 article is similar to Connor’s 2000 article.

Feng and Shi’s 2004 “Genre Analysis of Research Grant Proposals,” details how

Feng and Shi examined the moves and steps (“smaller functional unit[s] under the move to help realize the communicative intention of the move”) in nine successful academic research grant proposals that were submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (8–9). Feng and Shi explain several aspects of their investigation’s move analysis:

1. Their coding of moves and steps in five of the proposals, which the two of them each did separately and independently at first (13).
2. Cross-reviews by the two researchers of each other’s independent codings and their discussions of differences in their findings until the two researchers agreed over the various moves and steps and could refine their coding schema (13).
3. The application of their new list of moves and steps to a final search for moves and steps in the remaining four texts that were still not analyzed (13).
4. Calculations of the frequencies for each of the moves and calculations of the percentage proportions of document word counts that each of the moves represented for each of the nine proposals (13, 17). These quantitative measures were also used “to identify rhetorical patterns” in the nine proposals’ summaries and main texts (13).
5. “Discourse-based interview[s]” of each of the proposal authors to get insights on the authors’ “rationales behind [their] linguistic or rhetorical choices” (13).
6. The detection of recurrences of moves (“move recurrences”) within individual proposals, both inside each one of the proposal’s four main sections (such as the “Introduction” and “Context” sections) and *across* each proposal’s four

sections (22).

7. The detection of the mixing of moves with each other, or the embedding of moves within other moves (25, 26).

#### *Methods Specific to this Study*

Given the above overview of previous scholars' grant proposal research methods, it is important to compare their methods to the current study's approach. Connor and Mauranen studied European Union scientific research grant proposals by specifying what they believed was the "overall goal" of a research grant proposal and reading the published guidelines for the EU proposals. These steps prepared the two scholars to determine their first ideas for the rhetorical moves that were present in the EU proposals, which they proceeded to determine by finding typographical devices and linguistic clues in the proposals' texts. After they had found the proposals' moves, they revised these moves and ensured their validity when they each reviewed the other's moves analysis. And, finally, a third researcher analyzed a sample of Connor and Mauranen's EU proposals, relying on the move definitions Connor and Mauranen had devised. This final step demonstrated their move analysis' reliability.

Connor and Mauranen's 1999 study, therefore, relied on a *subjective* methodology. The study was subjective because the researchers relied on their own interpretations of the EU proposal guidelines and on their own findings for the moves that proposal authors had made, although they also checked that these findings were reliable.

In 2000, Connor took two main steps to study the moves in a set of complete research grant proposals. First, Connor searched these proposals for the moves discovered by Connor and Mauranen in 1999 in the EU grant proposals. Connor did not,

therefore, perform an original move analysis. For the second step, Connor interviewed the proposal authors themselves. Connor, therefore, employed a methodology that included a subjective aspect and an empirical aspect. Its moves search was, of course, subjective, and the interviews of the proposal authors were empirical (from the perspective of the researcher).

In 2004, Connor and Upton also searched for moves in a set of nonprofit grant proposals, rather than in a set of scientific research or academic research proposals, using the moves that Connor and Mauranen had found in the EU research proposals. Connor and Upton, therefore, like Connor and Mauranen, employed a subjective methodology.

Feng and Shi's 2004 study looked at a set of nine successful academic research grant proposals' moves and steps, first, by doing move analyses on the summary sections in the set that were original and doing move analyses on the main texts in the set that were only *partly* original. Second, Feng and Shi studied the set also by reviewing each other's move analyses until they had refined and agreed on their final moves schema (similarly to Connor and Mauranen in 1999), applying their final moves schema to the remaining unexamined proposals, calculating measures such as moves frequencies in the proposals, interviewing the proposal authors, and finding both recurrences of moves and embedded moves in the study proposals. All these tasks were based, at least ultimately, on Feng and Shi's own observations and decisions about the study proposals, except for their interviews of the proposal authors. Feng and Shi, therefore, relied upon a methodology that included both subjective observations and empirical observations (of proposal authors' testimonies).

This study itself will engage the method of move analysis. That is, it will examine

grant proposals' narrative sections to find common "rhetorical moves." Such so-called rhetorical moves are "the parts of a text that carry out distinct rhetorical functions" and "can vary in size from a clause to a paragraph or upwards," or they "may even be realized through non-verbal means" (Tardy and Swales 168). Accordingly, this study will treat any common non-textual visual features of proposals, such as tables or pictures, if the sample proposal narratives include such elements.

The other analytical methods cited by Tardy and Swales fall outside this study's scope. Rather than studying proposals submitted to a variety of funders, for example, this study will examine only NEH proposals. It could not, therefore, study a genre system of proposals and distinct sets of proposal guidelines written by diverse funders. Nor will it, for example, compare the project proposals to academic research proposals. Altogether, this study will examine two aspects of the grant proposal sample. It will not only examine rhetorical moves but also rhetorical strategies. Rhetorical strategies, according to scholars Feng and Shi, "can be seen as strategies grant writers tend to employ to achieve [a grant proposal's] promotional purpose as well as to address the audience" (16).

This study will perform such move analysis on the nonprofit grant proposals genre. A researcher could characterize the nonprofit grant proposal genre generically by considering the grant proposals model established by the *Program Planning and Proposal Writing* guide. The original edition of this guide "changed how grantseekers and grantmakers approach their work," according to the Foreword of the book's 2014 updated edition (Kiritz *ix*). And, it "has had an enormous impact in the U.S." and "has positively changed the direction and effectiveness of countless organizations" in the U.S. and abroad (Kiritz *ix*). The book, according to the new edition, "lays out" a model for

planning nonprofit programs and writing grant proposals for them that “is the accepted standard in the [nonprofit] field” and that “has been adopted throughout the world by grantmakers to establish grant proposal guidelines and by grantseekers to write grant proposals” (Kiritz 4). The guide’s 2014 edition details eight “sections” to a grant proposal, the first seven of which are “the [proposal’s] narrative” (the eighth section is the “budget”) (Kiritz 13). A proposal’s seven narrative “sections,” therefore, according to the 2014 *Grantsmanship: Program Planning and Proposal Writing*, are the “Summary, Introduction to the Applicant Organization, Problem, Outcomes, Methods, Evaluation, and Future Support” (Kiritz 14). This researcher considers these seven *Grantsmanship* narrative sections to represent the basic features of a nonprofit grant proposal. Since grantmakers are not bound to abide by any kind of conventions or standards when they ask nonprofit agencies for grant proposals, however, this researcher also considers these narrative “sections” to be generic concepts that might vary in name, presentation, or form across grantmakers when these funders set expectations for nonprofit applicant grant proposals. Considering how the *Grantsmanship* guide explains each of the seven narrative “sections,” a generic nonprofit grant proposal should provide these features:

1. an “overview” of the proposal that sets a context for the proposal’s reader (Summary)
2. a description of the applicant nonprofit that would include the nonprofit’s mission and services and its qualifications and that would demonstrate the nonprofit’s “credibility” (Introduction to the Applicant Organization)
3. a description of what is motivating the nonprofit applicant to apply (“the situation”; that is, the Problem)

4. a specification of “the measurable improvements” by which the “the proposed” project (“program”) will improve “the situation” (Outcomes)
  5. a description of how the nonprofit agency will respond to “the causes” of the problem and how the agency justifies its proposed response, as well as “a detailed plan” to implement the agency’s proposed project (Methods)
  6. a description of “how the applicant [agency] will assess whether” the project is succeeding according to expectations (Evaluation)
  7. a description of how the applicant agency will sustain either the proposed project or its “benefits” after any awarded grant will end (Future Support).
- (Kiritz 14)

Together, these seven features may be considered as seven aspects that characterize the nonprofit grant proposal genre, since the *Grantsmanship* guide’s model is the standard for grant proposals among nonprofit agencies and grantmakers (that is, according to the *Grantsmanship* guide itself). These seven aspects together are what make grant proposals a unique persuasive *genre*, along with the *Grantsmanship* model’s eighth “section,” the Budget section. They make for a genre which only one previous study—Connor and Upton—has employed rhetorical move analysis to examine. That study also did not perform an *original* move analysis on the nonprofit proposals genre itself (see the later discussion of Connor and Upton). Hence, this particular study was motivated by the lack of previous studies that had done original move analysis to study nonprofit grant proposals as a genre.

This study, therefore, examined its chosen NEH grant proposal narratives themselves to find their rhetorical moves. In preparing to undertake such an examination,

the researcher excluded any academic research projects or strictly academic research grant programs that were found (academic research proposals had already been studied through rhetorical moves genre analysis). Thus, the researcher proceeded to examine non-academic-research nonprofit proposal narratives that the NEH made available online either as part of its list of its responses to Freedom of Information Act Requests from the public or as sample narratives listed on its various grant-giving program webpages. The NEH provides weblinks to each of these proposals.

#### *Pre-Coding Before Selecting and Examining the Sample Proposals*

To identify moves categories in a pre-coding step the researcher examined two successful NEH proposal narratives that he had chosen non-randomly: The Presbyterian Historical Society's *Digitizing the Religious News Service Photographs: A Planning Project* and The Long Island Museum of American Art, History and Carriages' *Interpretive Plan for "A World Before Cars" Gallery*. The *Digitizing* project was from NEH's Humanities Collections and Reference Resources grants program and the *Interpretive Plan* was from NEH's Public Humanities Projects grant program. For the pre-coding step the researcher read these two proposals and found different functions (moves categories) performed by different parts of the texts, such as descriptions of Immediate Benefits of proposed projects or the Ultimate Tasks that the projects aimed to accomplish (when they were detected in the two pre-coding proposals, though, these two moves may initially have been named differently and defined differently than they were finally). These moves categories were listed together as a coding schema. Afterwards, the full, large sample of proposals was examined to detect and locate these moves in each of the sample study proposals. Most of the moves categories were initially detected, identified, and defined



during the pre-coding. Several move categories, though, were later renamed and/or reassessed and their definitions were sometimes revised during the regular coding of the large proposals sample.

For the pre-coding, after the researcher had reviewed previous scholarly literature on the rhetorical moves concept, the researcher devised move categories through these means:

1. The researcher took marginal notes as he observed characteristics and features or discerned functions in the two pre-coding proposal narratives.
2. The researcher drew on pre-existing knowledge of nonprofit organizations and of nonprofit grant proposals. For example, the *Digitizing* proposal included a key paragraph on its first page that stated a problem and described details of the problem. Since the researcher knew already that grant proposals propose solutions to solve particular problems, he recognized the problem statement and its importance (despite the proposal text not itself using any language that explicitly referred to the problem as either a problem or a need). And the researcher realized that this was a prospective common rhetorical function that merited the creation of a rhetorical move category, which the researcher named “A Problem or Need” in his coding schema.
3. The researcher allowed himself to remain open to new discoveries, and therefore, the pre-coding proposals’ language or content sometimes inspired his ideas for additional move categories. For example, the researcher saw a group of three consecutive paragraphs in the *Digitizing* proposal (on the first page) whose contents combined with the three-paragraph “structure” alerted

him that these three paragraphs provided a summary of project procedures. Specifically, besides that the proposal author(s) had divided this chunk of text into three consecutive paragraphs, the author opened each of the paragraphs by citing one of three consecutive project time periods and a project action or step (for instance: “From May through November 2018 PHS staff will work with a scholarly advisory panel to test the rating system and digitization workflows”). His observations there prompted him to create a “Procedures” category for his moves coding schema.

4. The researcher refrained from relying on section headings as prospective moves categories. Because, even in the pre-coding stage, the researcher had anticipated that the section headings might be standard headings across NEH proposals (actually, different grants programs each had standardized sets of proposal section headings). Additionally, the researcher believed that the section headings would not necessarily reflect all the moves that a proposal writer might have made. Even if a heading might accurately reflect a particular rhetorical move, still other moves be embedded in that portion of the text that were not indicated by any heading or subheading. Additionally, any particular heading might also not necessarily represent the best way of categorizing a particular possible rhetorical move. For example, the *Digitizing* proposal’s separate headings “Significance” and “History, scope, and duration” could both be considered separate instances of one kind of rhetorical move. Rather than having conceived two separate move categories that would have corresponded to the two headings, the researcher considered the

matching portions of the text to both be instances of a single move category called “Background for a proposed project,” or “Context,” which I would later rename this category, recognizing that the two portions of the text likely performed similar rhetorical functions. This decision also helped minimize the number of move categories the researcher would create and helped him avoid a long list of categories. Ultimately, either while the researcher did pre-coding or after he had started to do the full coding of proposal moves across the entire full proposals sample, the researcher saw that he had anticipated accurate move categories.

5. The researcher consulted the section headings to confirm, at least partly, that he had identified rhetorical moves appropriately. The headings motivated him because some of them typically matched some of his coding schema’s pre-defined move categories, although the researcher did not rely upon the headings to establish the presence of moves. Rather, the researcher relied upon them either as extra confirmations or as alerts that particular moves might be upcoming imminently in a proposal.
6. The researcher reviewed his coding schema with his thesis research advisor, and the two discussed the researcher’s proposed move categories and exchanged ideas. The researcher revised his move categories accordingly.

For the pre-coding, the researcher also devised two “qualifiers,” which for the final coding schema were ultimately listed as “A distinct statement” and “Embedded.” Three other qualifiers were created initially but were ultimately dropped during the full-coding process. The researcher found his “indirect” qualifier to be too vague and, therefore,

impractical. The researcher also eventually devised the “distinct statement” qualifier to replace two other qualifiers that were dropped: one that had indicated a less-detailed, non-specific, or brief statement and another qualifier that had indicated a more detailed, specific, or longer statement about the same subject matter. The researcher found the latter two eventually defunct qualifiers to be cumbersome, time-consuming, and impractical to check and track during the coding.

#### *Development of the Final Coding Schema*

To perform the final codings for the full sample of proposal narratives, these means were employed to identify moves:

1. The researcher often considered the proposal authors’ work similarly during the pre-coding performed on the *Digitizing* and *Interpretive Plan* proposal narratives. However, the researcher had already devised a coding schema through the pre-coding process. Therefore, the researcher also always checked for instances of the coding schema’s pre-defined move categories and noted these on hardcopies of each proposal narrative examined. He also continued to refine and develop his coding schema while doing the full coding, especially during the first full coding review (the full coding included two separate reviews of each sample proposal). To refine and further develop his ideas about his move categories, the researcher relied upon the methods that he had performed when he pre-coded move categories with the *Digitizing* and *Interpretive Plan* proposal narratives, whether he devised a few new rhetorical moves, eliminated or replaced some, or refined his definitions for each move category.

2. The researcher continued to discuss the coding schema and the full-coding with his thesis advisor as questions arose.

The final coding schema included the move categories and qualifiers below.

#### Codes for Qualifiers Applied to Grant Narrative Genre Analysis Codes:

These codes may be attached to any main codes that matched particular instances of the rhetorical move categories.

1. A distinct statement

A rhetorical move that is being made again but whose contents differ from previous instances of the move. A distinct statement does not only provide more details, and it is not merely a more detailed statement than previous instances of a particular move.

2. Embedded

An instance of a rhetorical move that has occurred inside the boundaries of a different move. Such instances are known as “embedded moves.”

#### Grant Narrative Genre Analysis Codes:

1. Request to the Grantor

A statement of what an applicant is asking a grantor for funds for.

Note: The applicant need not necessarily need to be asking for funds for the project’s ultimate accomplishment since some projects may be merely either stages or pieces of a greater intended ultimate accomplishment, such as the example below.

Example: A statement that requests funds to aid the applicant in planning for the digitization of historical photographs.

## 2. A Problem or Need

A statement of a troublesome challenge or of a social lack that a proposed project will address.

Example: A statement about researchers' difficulty in trying to access photographs in an archive.

## 3. Context

A statement that describes circumstances or background information about a proposed project or the project's applicant that are independent of the proposed project.

Note: The statement should not convey information about something that relies on the proposed project itself but should address something that is not a part of the project. It should emphasize something whose "existence" does not depend upon the project. Circumstances may be past, present, or ongoing.

Example: A statement describing relevant history leading to the motivation for a project.

## 4. Ultimate Accomplishments

A statement of the "physical" end actions, activities, other outputs, or results that a proposed, immediate project is working towards and that will (eventually) be achieved either by the immediately proposed project or after a future project or stage.

Example: A statement that a project will (ultimately) digitize historical news photographs.

Note: The Ultimate Accomplishment category should override move category 23.

Proposal Project Task if a particular move would otherwise describe both an ultimate accomplishment and the proposed task for a particular project.

#### 5. Immediate Beneficiaries

A statement that indicates who will be helped directly by or will benefit directly from the proposed project's task or from its ultimate accomplishments if these are the same as the proposal project task(s).

Example: A statement about researchers, teachers, or others who will use historical photographs.

#### 6. Immediate Impacts

A statement of the direct, intended (proximate) results that will arise out of a project's ultimate accomplishments other than for a project applicant itself.

#### 7. Access

A statement that indicates how a project's immediate beneficiaries will receive any of the immediate impacts that will arise out of the project's ultimate accomplishments.

Examples: Users will be able to access digitized historical photographs online.

Users could search for digitized photographs by topic, by date, etc.

#### 8. Remote Impacts

A statement of results that will arise out of a project's ultimate accomplishments and that involve additional beneficiaries of a project beyond the immediate

beneficiaries, not including results or benefits that benefit the proposal’s applicant or its partners.

#### 9. Significance or Importance

A statement of a purely abstract idea that describes the ultimate ramifications that will ensue from a project’s ultimate accomplishment. In other words, such a statement explains the ramifications of the immediate and remote impacts of a proposed project.

Example: A statement that “historic [RNS] news photographs offer an immediacy and perspective on past events.” Such a statement explains significance and importance indirectly.

#### 10. Support for a Grantor’s Mission

A statement about something that a project will do or achieve that will align the proposed project with the grantmaker’s own mission or purposes.

Example: “*A World Before Cars . . .* will emphasize the following humanities themes . . .”

#### 11. Establishment of a claim

A statement that presents evidence for an assertion.

#### 12. Specialists

A statement that *introduces* one or more identified individuals who have special knowledge, education, or skills and who will aid or have already aided a proposed project.

Note: Genre analysis category 17. Biographies may include instances of the Specialist category (as embedded moves).



### 13. Specialists' roles.

A statement that describes one or more specialists' work, activities, or contributions specifically intended to aid a proposed project.

Note: Such activities either may have already been done previously or will be done for the project in the future.

### 14. Resources and Tools

A statement that cites one or more trusted sources—other than particular individual specialists—that will either aid or support a proposed project, such as scholarly works or reliable sources or organizations that have either expertise or information or data that a proposed project is relying or will rely upon. These may include even vendors and consultants.

Example: A statement such as “the American Medical Association has reported...”

Note: A statement may both cite resources and/or specialists and establish a claim.

### 15. Related projects.

A statement that cites either an applicant's own relevant completed projects, relevant future projects, or relevant supportive projects that are ongoing, including previous stages.

### 16. Partnerships

A statement that introduces organizations that will fully participate in a proposed project or organizations that *have* participated in the project in the past or that will *be invited to* participate. These should not include a project's funders.

Note: The organizations might include current (when the proposal is submitted), future or expected, or past partnerships. They might include even partnerships related to projects that have already been finished. Organizations or individuals that receive or will receive payment for services from an applicant should not be considered partners and, therefore, are not the focus of a Partnership move.

#### 17. Biographies or Profiles of Organizations (such as vendors)

A statement that presents bios of specialists, staff, or perhaps others who are involved with an applicant's proposed project. Or, a statement that describes an organizational authority or partner.

Note: Bios should be coded only as Biographies—not as, for example, both Biographies and Specialists, if a specialist is introduced via a bio. However, references to specialists could be coded as Specialist moves embedded in a Biographies move.

#### 18. Procedures

A statement that describes either processes or a series of tasks that will be executed to achieve the applicant's proposal project task.

#### 19. Individual steps

A statement about a single task in a procedure or about a small group of tasks presented in an applicant's proposal separately from the rest of the procedure.

#### 20. Other funders or funds

A statement that alerts the grantor to other sources of funds that are supporting or will support a proposed project or that will be sought to support it.

#### 21. Distinctions

A statement about how a proposed project will distinguish itself from other projects or efforts or from what already exists or has already been done.

#### 22. Evaluation

A statement that presents how an applicant will determine the effectiveness of a proposed project's immediate results.

#### 23. Proposal Project Task

A statement of the “physical” end actions, activities, other outputs, or results that an immediately proposed project will achieve.

#### 24. Indeterminate

A portion of a text for which the rhetorical function was not apparent.

### *Proposal Sample Selection Process*

Before beginning to code the proposals sample, the researcher checked the online descriptions of NEH's major offices (such as the Division of Public Programs or the Office of Digital Humanities) and checked each office's grant-giving programs. If a particular office had included at least one grant-giving program that presented six or more successful proposal narratives, that office was included in this study. It was included because grant-giving programs that had made available fewer than six successful proposal narratives online (including both offices' “sample” proposal narratives and their proposal narratives listed on the FOIA Response webpage, together) were ultimately eliminated as candidates for this study when they came up as random selections later. That is, any particular grant-giving program, or grant program, must have made available publicly at least six grant proposal narratives to be eligible to be included in the full sample of proposals later. Otherwise, only five or fewer proposal narratives would have

amounted to too few for the selections that the study would choose randomly later (since 5 proposal narratives would be chosen later for any grants program that the study would finally include in the full proposals sample). Therefore, if a particular office had included not even one grants program that presented at least six proposals, that office would not be included in this study. In the end, one NEH office was eliminated because none of its grant programs met the threshold of more than five available proposal narratives.

Additionally, one more office, the Office of Federal/State Partnership, was eliminated because it conducts no grants programs. The study proceeded with five NEH offices remaining with each having one or more grants programs that met the desired threshold.

These five NEH offices presented altogether 12 grants programs. One at a time, a program was selected randomly from these using an electronic hand-held calculator's random number function. Whenever a program was selected, before the next program would be selected randomly, the currently selected program was isolated for examination of its own available grant proposals. For this currently selected program, available proposals were selected one at a time and checked for its authoring agency's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status using a federal Internal Revenue Service online public database. Authoring agencies that were found to lack 501(c)(3) status were eliminated from eligibility consideration for this study, since the study aims to examine proposals for nonprofit agencies only (not proposals for, for example, state public universities that are not private nonprofit schools). If and when at least five proposals were randomly selected for a particular parent grants program, these five proposals were put into the study's full proposal sample as one of three groups each identified by their own separate parent grants programs. After enough grant proposals were randomly selected for a particular

grants program such that the researcher could determine that fewer than five proposal narratives were eligible for examination (because of nonprofit status), that grants program (and its proposals) was eliminated as a prospect to be included in the study's full sample of proposals. In the end, three grants programs survived these procedures, as previously planned, along with at least five proposal narratives for each of the three parent grants programs (one grants program ended up with six proposals): Public Humanities Projects, Digital Projects for the Public, and Institutes for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities.

#### *Coding the Sample Proposals*

After selecting 16 proposal narratives, the researcher examined each proposal to code it for its rhetorical moves. That is, he read each proposal to identify its moves that matched the coding schema's pre-defined moves categories. As he found each matching move, he also determined its boundaries in the text (that is, its start and end points). He found such start- and endpoints by determining which portion of a text that surrounds or includes a particular move constitutes a logically related and cohesive text. Such start- and endpoints would not necessarily be restricted to a portion of text lying inside of a single section marked between two section headings. As with identifying a move, it should also be noted, determining a move's boundaries might be subjective and dependent upon which individual researcher is analyzing a text for moves.

#### *Comparison of the New Research to Previous Scholarship and A Look at the New Research's Limitations*

The generic rhetorical study of humanities grant proposals relies on a methodology with both subjective steps and empirical steps. A single researcher has examined NEH

proposals by himself and defined, identified, and located each proposal's rhetorical moves. This is subjective as far as a different researcher might have defined, identified, and/or located any given proposal's rhetorical moves differently. This study's researcher assumed that the overall goal, or the rhetorical objective, of a nonprofit project grant proposal is to persuade (or convince) a funder, such as NEH, to help fund the proposed project. This is similar to Connor and Mauranen, who made a similar assumption about research grant proposals. When the researcher examined the first two "test" proposals to establish most of the prospective rhetorical moves that he might find in the other sample members, his assumption about the proposals' common rhetorical objective would have naturally influenced him as he devised prospective rhetorical moves. Unlike Connor and Mauranen, though, this study's researcher did not read any proposal guidelines before he devised and defined prospective moves. However, the researcher did observe the uniformities presented by proposals in each of the three NEH grants programs that provided proposals, respectively. These uniformities appeared as similar or identical headings. NEH appeared to have either required or advised proposal authors to include these headings and to thereby address certain NEH questions or concerns. Therefore, NEH proposal guidelines may have influenced the researcher indirectly by means of the uniform headings. However, in practice, during the study these uniform section headings seldom aided the researcher in any significant way as he searched for instances of the prospective rhetorical moves.

The researcher was also influenced by his previous knowledge of nonprofit grant proposals as he sought and devised prospective rhetorical moves. For example, the researcher's previous knowledge of nonprofit organizations and their grant proposals

likely inspired him to recognize the prospective move “Immediate Beneficiaries” as he studied the two initial test proposals. He did, therefore, operated under some kind of “guidelines” and influences outside of the grant proposals themselves (as Connor and Mauranen had operated with the aid of EU proposal guidelines).

This humanities proposal study differed from Connor and Mauranen in two more ways, besides only that the researcher did not read any NEH guidelines before he started examining the NEH proposals sample. First, the researcher did not include any step to ensure that his prospective, devised moves were valid (“validity” steps), as had Connor and Mauranen. Second, the researcher also did not check that the findings were reliable (which, again, Connor and Mauranen had done by having asked an assistant to independently apply their identified moves to a research grant proposals sample) (Connor and Mauranen 51). Nor did the researcher test his final research results by interviewing the sample proposals authors, as did Connor in 2000 and Feng and Shi in 2004. These three checks on validity, reliability, and authorial intent fell out of the scope of this study. The researcher relied largely on his own analysis, which was influenced by his prior understanding of nonprofit projects and grant proposals, besides possibly by indirect influences from NEH recommendations or requirements for grant applicants.

Finally, this study differed in a fourth way from Connor’s approach. Connor had studied *complete* grant proposals. This present study, as had most other previous move-analytical genre studies, examined only one particular section of sample texts from its study genre. This study examined, namely, only the narrative parts of the NEH sample proposals. It did not examine, for example, proposals’ budget sections or any appendices that included project participants’ resumes, CVs, or design documents (the Digital Giza

and Hudson Valley Slavery projects include the latter). NEH's publicly posted sample proposals mostly included only the proposals' narrative portions, as designated by NEH. Other proposals obtained as already publicly posted responses to other people's Freedom of Information Act requests included complete proposals—not only the proposals' narrative sections.

#### *Methodological Limitations to the Study*

Some of these points about this new study might raise questions about possible research limitations. For example, could the researcher's prior assumptions about or knowledge of nonprofit grant proposals' purposes, which seemed "evident" or obvious, have somehow influenced his observations and conclusions as he examined NEH grant proposals? Might his previous nonprofits and grant-proposals knowledge have inhibited him from making original observations or interfered with some of his analysis? Might his knowledge possibly have obscured some possible original identifications of different kinds of moves? Certainly, the researcher could not have avoided naturally and automatically anticipating moves that reflected common generic ideas about nonprofit grant proposals.

As for the first three differences from previous studies that this paper previously described, these differences certainly did limit this study. To recap, they included this study's lack of any step to ensure validity (or, at least, to get closer to achieving validity), its lack of a step to ensure that its analyses were reliable, and its lack of any check that its findings matched authorial intentions. The fourth difference described above, however, may or may not have been a research limitation. Some might wonder, for example, whether the researcher may have missed discovering possible moves that he might have otherwise identified in budget sections or in other proposal sections that he did not



examine outside of the sections that the NEH had designated as the “narrative” parts. Alternatively, even if the researcher had examined other, non-narrative, sections and found other kinds of moves, might the nature of these other sections perhaps have reduced the validity of any other such moves? After all, such non-narrative sections would have likely been written by different individuals than those who had written the NEH proposals’ narrative sections or multiple authors. Different authors than the narrative authors may have decided what kinds of moves to make in these non-narrative sections, or even many different authors may have decided or chose what kinds of moves to make. For example, a particular proposal’s budget section could potentially have been created by someone different from the proposal’s narrative author in a nonprofit organization’s financial office. Or, an appendix of staff or others’ resumes or CVs might have been written by *many* different individuals, each resume or CV having perhaps been written by the respective individual. Considering these points, the fourth difference may have been a limitation in this study.

Another limitation is that this study did not consider the role of the 16 proposals’ individual titles as possible rhetorical moves. Such titles (for example, one of the 16 NEH study proposals is titled “Slavery In The North Website Project”) may seem rhetorically neutral, yet may deserve scrutiny as prospective rhetorical moves. A grant proposal title might perhaps, for instance, present one or more propositions implicitly (note Connor and Mauranen point that a rhetorical move normally contains at least one proposition) (51).

Finally, this study featured a rare “innovation,” although it did not innovate purely, in the sense that it is the first to have examined grant proposals as a genre by such an innovative means. However, it appears to be the first study to examine *nonprofit* grant

proposals in an alternative way. When Connor in 2000, Connor and Upton in 2004, and Feng and Shi in 2004 examined nonprofit grant proposals, they proceeded differently than Connor and Mauranen had in 1999. Unlike the latter study, the three other studies did not perform original moves analyses but, instead, relied upon the moves categories that Connor and Mauranen had defined. This study, though, followed Connor 1999 by also performing original moves analyses. Thus, this study is the first this researcher knows of that has done an *original* moves analysis for *nonprofit project* grant proposals.

## **Results: A Look at the Study's Final Data**

### *Overview*

This study examined the frequencies at which 23 defined rhetorical moves were employed in each one of the 16 NEH grant proposals examined that comprised the study dataset. Other main findings that are related to these individual proposal frequencies include calculations of the total frequencies for each kind of move across the 16 proposals; the numbers of proposals that included each kind of move and the percentage proportions of the dataset that included each move; and the average frequencies for each move per proposal (for moves with non-zero frequencies only). Related to the frequencies of rhetorical moves, this study also found the counts for frequencies that either were each exactly 1 or were each 2 or higher; the percentage proportion of the frequencies that were exactly 1 and the proportion that were 2 or higher; and the proportion of the frequencies that were each zero.

This study has also examined the “behaviors” of grant-proposal authors as authors. Such behaviors are illustrated by calculations such as how often each proposal writer had made any particular kind of move; the average numbers of moves made per proposal page; the numbers of distinct moves made by each proposal writer; and ratios of distinct types of moves made by proposal authors to the respective numbers of pages in each of the 16 proposals’ narrative sections.

Finally, this study determined subjectively which pairs of the 23 kinds of defined rhetorical moves relate to each other closely (so-called pairs of “primary” and “secondary” complementary moves). The study examined the previously mentioned frequency counts for rhetorical moves by proposal to find measures for how likely any

particular primary move would “cause” or would appear in a particular proposal along with any one of its own secondary moves. Averages for these measures, by primary rhetorical move type, were also calculated and an overall average measure was found that indicates the general likelihood that a particular primary move would “cause” or would appear along with one or more of its own secondary moves.

*Frequencies of Rhetorical Moves in the NEH Proposals*

Through the methodological frame of rhetorical genre studies, 22 of 23 defined, distinct rhetorical moves were identified in 16 successful nonprofit NEH grant proposals whose project grant periods ranged from 2008 to 2020 (the 23rd “missing” move—“Establishment of a claim”—was initially found in at least one of the two test proposals but was not found later in the full dataset of 23 proposals).

In the Appendix of Tables, table 1—Frequencies of Rhetorical Moves Made by Writers—displays frequency counts for these 23 defined move categories and displays figures for several other counts and calculations that elucidate these frequencies. Each of the frequencies were tabulated from the 16 sample NEH grant proposals.

These frequencies show us how often each rhetorical move was made in each of the 16 full sample proposals respectively (the number of “instances”). Other figures show how many times *total* each move was made across the 16 proposals as a dataset, counts of how many proposals included any of the 23 kinds of moves (proposal counts), and the other main calculations as described previously in the overview. Highlights for the proposal counts include the data about which proposals commonly include particular moves and which moves were uncommon for any particular proposal. For example, we can see from part A of table 1 that the Context, Biographies/Profiles, and Ultimate

Accomplishments moves were each made for every one of the 16 proposals. The Establishment of a Claim move, however, was made for none of the full sample proposals. And A Problem or Need, Individual Steps, Remote Impacts, and Project Proposal Task were each included in very few or few proposals. Context, Ultimate Accomplishments, Immediate Impacts, and Resources and Tools each also occurred most frequently *on average* across the proposals. That is, these moves averaged more occurrences, or more “instances,” per proposal than the other moves (excluding zero frequencies). Biographies/Profiles, however, averaged second to last (averaging 1.1 instances), tying with Evaluation (A Problem or Need averaged the “worst,” at 1.0 average instances). This result is no surprise, since a group of biographies seems to have been inspired by NEH’s requirement (via NEH grant proposal guidelines) that proposal authors should discuss consultants or others that match this study’s Specialists move. Most of these specialists were described in biography sections that were organized under such headings as, for example, “Staff” or “Scholars”). Normally, any bio would have needed to appear only once on any particular proposal—in the standard biography section (which would match this study’s own Biography move, with Specialist and Specialists’ Roles moves considered as moves embedded in the Biography move). Other kinds of figures, finally, can also be examined in part A of table 1.

Table 1, part B reveals a couple of facts about the 231 table 1 frequencies that were each 1 or higher. These 231 frequencies of course each match to some non-zero frequency of instances. And part B of table 1 shows facts about those 231 frequencies that each represent the occurrence of rhetorical moves (the remaining 137 frequencies, of course, are each zero). One of these facts is that 57% of the 231 non-zero frequencies

were each exactly 1. That is, 132 frequencies each represent exactly a single instance of a particular rhetorical move that appears in a particular proposal. Part B's other main fact concerns the remaining non-zero frequencies of 2 or higher. In table 1, part A, 43% of the 231 non-zero frequencies each represented *multiple* instances of a particular move that appear in a particular proposal.

*The Grant Proposal Authors' Behaviors as Writers*

Table 2 displays facts about the 16 proposal authors that were derived from table 1, part A. Given that 14 of the 16 proposals (nearly all) were each submitted to NEH for different organizations with different projects, it was assumed that the 16 proposals' authors were all distinct individuals (two of the proposals were submitted for the same organization for two different components of one greater project). The table shows, first, how often each of the 16 writers began to make another rhetorical move in "his" or "her" proposal. These figures include any repeated instances of the same kinds of moves, and they range from 15 to 52. If we ignore the large outlier 52, they range from 15 to 37. The table also shows, secondly, the average numbers of new moves (or newly begun moves) that each writer made per page for each of the 16 sample proposals (where any *instance of a move is another move*). These averages ranged from less than one new move made per page (0.9) to 3.5 new moves made per page. If we ignore the large outlier of 3.5, the remaining averages ranged from 0.9 to 2.0 and 2.1. Most any page in a proposal was devoted to a single move and up to part of one other move. The table also shows the number of distinct types of moves each proposal writer made in "her" or "his" proposal. These numbers ranged from 11 distinct types of moves in a single proposal to 18 distinct types, with none of the numbers standing out as an exceptional outlier (large or small).

All but three of the proposal writers each made more than half of the 23 defined moves. Finally, the table shows, as either fraction or decimal ratios, how many distinct move types were made by any particular proposal writer per number of pages in the writer's proposal. These ratios range from 0.55 to 1.40, and all but two proposal writers each made either close to one or one or more distinct kinds of moves per proposal page (if the two exceptions are ignored, the ratios range from 0.73 to 1.40).

#### *Incidences of Pairs of Complementary Moves*

For this research a particular proposal's use of a "primary move" was hypothesized to heighten the chance that another, specific, related "secondary move" would also have been employed in the same proposal. Such pairs of complementary primary and secondary moves were determined subjectively by the researcher's own examination of the 23 defined moves and their individual meanings. For example, the Access move (move 7) was determined to be a secondary move related to the Immediate Beneficiaries move (move 5). Why? Because it was reasoned that since any immediate beneficiaries would need some means of accessing the benefits of a particular project, if a particular proposal should include a move to explicitly identify the project's beneficiaries, the proposal would likely also include a move meant to describe how beneficiaries would access project benefits.

Table 3, Complementary Primary and Secondary Moves, displays ratios for each of several primary-secondary move pairs that each indicate the number of proposals out of the 16 study proposals for which the relevant secondary move had been made (the ratio numerator) compared to the number of proposals for which the relevant primary move had been made. For example, for the primary move Immediate Beneficiaries (move

5), two possible secondary moves could possibly have been made across the 14 proposals that had included Immediate Beneficiaries, as table 3 indicates: “6. Immediate Impacts” and “7. Access.” The two ratios displayed indicate that the Immediate Beneficiaries move was made in 14 proposals (the denominator for each of the two ratios displayed is 14). And, as the two respective numerators indicate, the Immediate Impacts move was made in 8 proposals out of the same 14 proposals examined (the numerator is 8 for Immediate Impacts) and the Access move was made in 14 proposals. Hence, for 14 proposals that included the primary move “5. Immediate Beneficiaries,” secondary move Immediate Impacts was made “only” (or, perhaps “as many as,” depending on one’s perspective) in 8 proposals. But secondary move Access was made in 14 proposals, as many proposals as the primary move Immediate Beneficiaries was included in. Access also matched a requirement from three main sets of the NEH guidelines (see table 6 on Rhetorical Moves That Match Requirements/Recommendations from NEH Guidelines).

### *The Numbers*

Table 1, parts A and B, allow these conclusions:

1. Whenever a move was employed (that is, the frequency was non-zero), in a majority of instances, any particular move was employed only once in a particular proposal (see table 1, part B). However, this majority was not overwhelming, and when a move was employed, in 43% of instances the move was employed at least twice.
2. For all but two moves, few of the proposals included multiple instances of any particular move (see the rightmost column of table 1, part A). Individual moves do seem to typically have each been employed sparingly for any



particular proposal.

3. More than half of moves were employed an average of fewer than two times per proposal, even excluding proposals that reported zero instances of these moves (see the second rightmost column of table 1, part A). All but two of these moves, however, each still averaged more than 1.0 instances per proposal. Four large outliers among these moves were the Context, Ultimate Accomplishments, Immediate Impacts, and Resources and Tools moves.
4. Six particular moves were included in every proposal, even though none of these were required or recommended by all of the NEH guidelines relevant to this study. One of them—the Biographies move—probably was inherently spurred by the NEH requirements that matched this study’s Specialists and Specialists’ Roles moves.
5. Seventeen moves were employed on half or more of the 16 examined proposals.

Table 1, part A also reveals a few facts that surprised the researcher:

1. The move A Problem or Need was found on only a single proposal. This is surprising because the “demand” that a grant proposal should explicitly describe a problem or need that needs to be solved or met has always seemed canonical.
2. Only half of the proposals included the move Immediate Impact. Again, the need for a proposal to include such a move had always seemed necessary to the researcher because such immediate impacts should include the expected benefits that beneficiaries would receive from a proposed project.

3. Six proposals each did not make a move to demonstrate Distinctions, or to demonstrate what would distinguish “their” projects from other efforts. Although not as extreme a surprise as observations 1 and 2 above, the researcher expected all or nearly all proposals to make a case that their projects do differ from either all or most others.
4. Five proposals each did not make the Evaluation move, a move that seemed to the researcher like one that grantmakers might potentially start expecting universally or almost universally. However, projects in the relevant NEH grant program (Humanities Collections and Reference Resources) might perhaps inherently be ill-suited to either process or project evaluations.

## **Discussion: An Assessment of What the Grant-Proposal Investigator Found**

### *Previous Research Compared to This Study*

To inform the theoretical lens as well as the methodology, a range of previous scholarship was consulted and used to inform the study's design and analysis. Four previous studies—Connor and Mauranen (1999), Connor (2000), Connor and Upton (2004), and Feng and Shi (2004)—found some similar moves made by grant proposal authors and some moves that were similar to some of those devised and identified by this study.

Connor and Mauranen's study, however, is the only one of the four previous studies that performed wholly original move analysis. Connor and Mauranen examined academic, scientific research proposals and found several rhetorical moves that each of the other three previous studies also found subsequently in their own sample proposals. The three latter studies mainly searched their respective sample proposal sets for the kinds of moves that Connor and Mauranen devised and found in its own sample proposals. Feng and Shi, however, while examining the main texts of their dataset, also found two new kinds of moves that Connor and Mauranen had not. Feng and Shi's move analysis, therefore, was partly original. Connor and Upton's study is the only one of the four that examined nonprofit grant proposals rather than academic research proposals. But again, their study also searched for rhetorical moves that Connor and Mauranen had devised, finding only moves that Connor and Mauranen had by examining scientific research proposals, although it also dropped three of Connor and Mauranen's moves from its own final schema, reporting previous research, achievements, and compliance claim (Connor and Upton 241).

This study is the first known to this researcher that has examined *nonprofit* project

grant proposals by means of an original move analysis that did not rely on rhetorical moves devised by any previous study. Thus, this study agrees with and “verifies” some of the kinds of rhetorical moves identified by previous studies as “typical” grant proposal moves (including by Connor and Upton’s study that specifically examined *nonprofit* grant proposals), and it has verified them affirmatively. In this process, this study also found not only some similar kinds of rhetorical moves in its own dataset of proposal narratives, but it also found several other kinds of rhetorical moves that the previous studies had not.

Connor and Upton seem to have produced the only previous study that has applied move analysis to the *nonprofit* grant proposals genre. This study bears some similarity to their work in terms of the rhetorical moves these studies have found in common. These similar moves in common were determined by an examination of both Connor and Upton’s list of nonprofit proposal moves and by considering a real but short sample grant proposal that Connor and Upton had provided to illustrate these moves. The similar common moves between the two studies are as follows:

1. Connor and Upton’s rhetorical move “Territory” matches this study’s move category “A Problem or Need.”
2. Connor and Upton’s “Means” matches more than one of this study’s moves: “Request To The Grantor,” “Procedures,” and “Evaluation.”
3. Connor and Upton’s “Competence Claim” matches this study’s “Context,” “Other Funders Or Funds,” “Specialists,” and “Specialists’ Roles” moves.
4. Connor and Upton’s “Importance Claim” matches this study’s “Significance Or Importance.”
5. Connor and Upton’s “Benefits” matches this study’s “Immediate Impacts.”

6. Connor and Upton's "Goal" matches this study's move "Ultimate Accomplishment" (Connor and Upton 241–43).

Only one of Connor and Upton's rhetorical moves did not match any of this study's rhetorical moves: Connor and Upton's move "Gap," a move that "indicates the problems or specific needs which *the organization in question* faces" (242, emphasis added). This study's own move, "A Problem or Need," represents a problem or need that a nonprofit will try to solve or meet on behalf of some particular population or populations—not the problems or needs of a nonprofit grantseeker itself. As an example, consider a social services nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the lives of either homeless men and women who live in a particular U.S. city or the recently homeless there. Suppose that the nonprofit is starting a project that will help homeless citizens who have recently gotten hired for jobs to be able to more easily reach their new work sites even when these sites are far away from where they reside as homeless citizens (perhaps even work sites that are in outer suburban areas near or around the city in question). If part of this program might be to create a public transportation voucher program for homeless citizens who are trying to work, obstacles to get to work would be the problem faced by the city's homeless that the nonprofit is trying to solve or to meet. For this study, such an issue is called the "Problem or Need." This label matches Connor and Upton's own rhetorical move category that they themselves call "Territory." Suppose now, however, that the nonprofit organization faces its own problem that would interfere with its efforts to solve homeless citizens' transportation obstacles. The nonprofit might, for example, be suffering a severe computer technology problem that would prevent it from properly transmitting data on its homeless clients to the city's bus agency. The bus agency might

need such data about homeless citizens to honor these citizens' transportation vouchers, which the nonprofit would perhaps subsidize. Under this scenario, such a problem would be indicated in the nonprofit's grant proposal where the proposal author would make a rhetorical move that Connor and Upton would call a "Gap" move. This so-called "Gap" move would bring to proposal readers' attention a particular problem that the nonprofit organization itself suffers and that the nonprofit would need to remedy to be able to solve their homeless clients' own transportation problem in turn. But their homeless clients' transportation problem itself would, again, be presented by what Connor and Upton would call a "Territory" move and by what *this* study would call a "Problem or Need" move. For the imaginary case of the homeless clients, the nonprofit would propose to prospective funders to solve its clients' transportation problem, which would be the "real," or key, (social) problem that the nonprofit would propose to solve. Perhaps the nonprofit might ask prospective funders to help them fix it (the "problem or need," or Connor and Upton's "Territory") by funding the nonprofit's effort to design a new computer system that would fix the nonprofits' own internal issue (Connor and Upton's "gap," which, again, does not match to any of this study's own rhetorical move categories). For Connor and Upton's 2004 publication, however, readers should realize that one should avoid confusing the rhetorical move called "Gap" with a traditional research gap that an academic scholar would describe when preparing to pitch a research project to a prospective funder.

Besides the issue of the one move ("Gap") that Connor and Upton found that did not match any of this study's own rhetorical move-category findings, we must also consider moves that were also found *for the NEH proposals* that did *not* match any of the

moves that Connor and Upton found. These moves were the 11 moves: Immediate beneficiaries, Access, Remote impacts, Support for a grantor's mission, Resources and tools, Related projects, Partnerships, Biographies or organization profiles, Individual steps, Distinctions, and Proposal project task. Previous research did not uncover *all* possible moves that nonprofit grant proposals might employ. Researchers cannot assume that any already existing research results are comprehensive of the options that grant-proposal writers may employ. This study may not necessarily have uncovered all of the possibilities, or all of the possible types of moves that proposal writers might make. Such possibilities might even depend upon what kinds of nonprofit organizations are writing proposals or what kinds of projects proposal authors are pitching to funders. Over time, writers might also innovate still more new kinds of moves, so this study is certainly not some kind of a "last word."

Additionally, this study found rhetorical moves that were similar to or different from the types of moves found by previous studies. This study's own analysis otherwise proceeded differently than the other four studies. Besides having examined NEH proposal narratives for the identified rhetorical moves, frequencies of incidence were counted for each move type in each one of the sample NEH proposal narratives, and additional data were derived from these frequencies that were not considered by the previous studies.

For example, besides the many kinds of calculations that tables 1 and 2 present, this study also has determined the "most common" rhetorical moves for nonprofit grant proposals based on the 16 NEH sample proposals. The data indicate the percentage proportions represented by each move for the dataset and the average frequencies per proposal for each move (based upon non-zero frequencies only; all in table 1, part A).

The “most common” types of rhetorical moves for nonprofit grant proposals are “3. Context,” “4. Ultimate Accomplishments,” “17. Biographies and Profiles of organizations,” “10. Support for a Grantmaker’s Mission,” “7. Access,” “1. Request to the Grantmaker,” “5. Immediate Beneficiaries,” “18. Procedures,” “14. Resources and Tools,” and “15. Related Projects,” and “22. Evaluation” (see table 4, which is sorted by the dataset proportions column and the average frequencies per proposal column).

Finally, table 3 innovates on the findings of previous studies. Table 3 aims to show for how many proposals any one of the so-called secondary moves had been made compared to the number of proposals for which its complementary primary move had also been made. That is, it indicates whether the presence of a particular primary move necessarily means that its complementary secondary move also had been made for the same relevant proposals. The averages displayed in table 3’s rightmost column also each indicate the average of all of the relevant ratios for a particular primary move. For primary move Immediate Beneficiaries (move 5), for example, the ratios average to 0.79 for the two secondary moves (“6. Immediate Impacts” and “7. Access”) together. For the primary move Immediate Beneficiaries, thus, its two corresponding secondary moves were also made on average for almost exactly 80% of 14 relevant proposals whenever that primary move (Immediate Beneficiaries) had been made across these 14 proposals (14 is the number of proposals that included the Immediate Beneficiaries primary move). Table 3 also displays a “Total Average” for all of the table’s individual ratios averaged together: 0.80. This figure indicates that, on average, whenever a particular primary move was included in one of the 16 proposals examined by this research, its complementary secondary move or moves were also included in the proposal for 80% of instances of the



primary move. Hence, complementary moves occurred together and in tandem generally across this study's dataset at a high rate. In grant-proposal writing, therefore, we can see that writers may frequently employ pairs of closely related rhetorical moves. Or, one may observe also, many grant proposal moves will not often be employed independently of each other. To a high degree, some moves may be "dependent" upon each other.

However, table 3 also indicates which secondary moves also match requirements from NEH guidelines, and the table also displays a second average that excludes these secondary moves that might have been inspired by NEH requirements or recommendations. This second figure (0.71) is a little lower than the main average.

#### *NEH Guidelines and the 23 Rhetorical Moves*

Table 6 displays the rhetorical moves that match requirements or (in one instance) recommendations that NEH outlined in the main sets of guidelines that NEH published for this study's 16 study proposals' applicants. One may ask how the NEH requirements (we will regard the one NEH recommendation as one of NEH's requirements from now on) might bear upon this study's findings. To consider the possible answer, here are a few relevant facts about the moves that were either "mandatory" or recommended by NEH for the 16 proposals:

1. Thirteen (13) of this study's rhetorical moves matched NEH guidelines requirements, as table 6 shows.
2. Only two rhetorical moves were required by NEH for all of the 16 proposals. Specialists (move 12) and 13. Specialists' Roles each matched NEH requirements stipulated in each of the four main sets of relevant NEH guidelines.

3. Four of the table 2 moves each matched to requirements in only one of the main sets of NEH guidelines (see the table 2). Otherwise, four other moves each matched to requirements in three of the main sets of proposals, and three other moves still each matched to requirements in two of the main sets of NEH guidelines.
4. Regarding proposals for NEH guidelines that did not stipulate any requirement that matched one of the 13 particular moves displayed in table 6, almost all of the relevant proposals still included instances of moves that did not match NEH guidelines requirements. For example, table 6 shows that almost all 13 displayed moves matched NEH requirements for only *some* of the four main sets of NEH guidelines. So, for instance, move 1 (Request to the Grantmaker) matched requirements only for the guidelines for proposals 9 and 10. Therefore, authors of the other 14 proposals did not need to include move 1 in any of these proposals, unless they chose to. However, as table 6 also reveals, 12 of these proposals did include move 1, regardless that NEH had not mandated such a move through matching requirements for any of these 12 proposals. Many instances of the moves displayed in table 6, therefore, were implemented by many of the proposal authors freely when their nonprofit agencies applied to NEH grants. Even though table 6 illustrates that moves matched some of NEH's guidelines requirements, one cannot conclude that these moves would be made by proposal writers only if asked to by NEH or by another grantmaker.

Likewise, if a grantmaker advises or recommends that a grant proposal writer should

resort to a particular rhetorical function as a grant applicant, we do not necessarily need to conclude that the text devised will incorporate that function as a rhetorical move. Or, if a proposal writer knows that a particular grantmaker expects a grant application to include certain kinds of rhetorical moves, we certainly can consider it as no less of a rhetorical move just because that particular grantmaker mandated it. After all, we can certainly imagine that some other grantmakers may perhaps *not* stipulate that grant proposals include the particular rhetorical moves in question. And in such case, if at least one grantmaker has deemed particular moves as significant or important, why should not writers be able to employ such moves to help persuade even some grantmaker that has not explicitly either mandated it or recommended it or, say, cited it as part of a list of “tips” for good proposals?

Having considered these last points and this study of NEH proposals specifically, one could hypothesize how many of the 16 NEH proposal authors might have made a particular rhetorical move even if NEH had not provided guidelines with requirements that matched that rhetorical move. Still, given that many of this study’s proposal authors did employ many of the 13 moves displayed in table 6 even when they were not required to by “their own” relevant NEH guidelines, one probably could conclude that most of these 13 moves still would have moderate to even high frequencies among the 16 proposals even if NEH had not provided guidelines for the proposals.

#### *Future Research*

Additional genre study of nonprofit non-research grant proposals might include interviews of grant proposal authors to compare researchers’ *determinations* about rhetorical moves made by proposal authors to the proposal authors’ own notions of how

they had written their proposals and their own rationales about *why* they had crafted their proposals in the ways in which they had chosen to craft them. Similar interviews were conducted by Connor 2000. However, a further step could perhaps be taken. Future researchers might also arrange to interview grantmaker officials themselves to investigate or to confirm how grantmakers (or those who may review proposals on behalf of grantmakers) perceive or react to the rhetorical moves that proposal authors make before they submit their nonprofit agencies' proposals to the grantmakers. Explanations of how writers truly craft grant proposals and explanations derived empirically about how proposal reviewer experience might result in concrete ideas or advice for how writers might better craft nonprofit grant proposals.

### *Conclusion*

This study of NEH nonprofit project grant proposals sought to elucidate the rhetorical generic moves that are present in effective proposals. The motive was to propose concrete recommendations for writers who write grant proposals on behalf of nonprofit organizations. This study operationalized the question about rhetorical generic moves by addressing the inquiry: What are the most common rhetorical moves that grant-proposal writers employ to craft U.S. NEH nonprofit proposals that win NEH grants? Ultimately, it did not settle for checking which of its identified rhetorical moves were merely the most frequently employed in the NEH dataset, but, rather, it examined, in conjunction, the proportions (out of 16 proposals) that it found for each identified rhetorical move represented in the dataset and the average frequencies per proposal for each of those identified rhetorical moves. Thus, the study found not simply the moves most frequently resorted to in the NEH dataset (ranked by the total frequencies of each of the types of

moves) but also the overall “most common” moves that proposal authors used. This study intends “most common” to refer to those moves that rank highest by dataset proportion first and then by average frequency per relevant proposal second (an irrelevant proposal for a particular move is one for which that move was never found). This notion of common moves was not cited in the previous known genre analyses for grant proposals, whether nonprofit project proposals or research grant proposals. The previous studies also had not counted frequencies of moves by proposal (although Feng and Shi’s did find frequencies for moves across all of their dataset, by the different kinds of sections that proposal main texts had been divided into, such as “Introduction” and “Context” sections). Because this study found counts by proposal, it could also compute several other items, such as the average number of moves per page found in each of the 16 NEH dataset proposals and other items that represent proposal writers’ “behaviors” when they wrote their NEH proposals. This study’s data on proposal writers’ individual “behaviors” is another innovation. An additional conclusion found in this study (see table 2) is that most of the NEH dataset’s proposal writers had behaved similarly as proposal writers when they prepared their materials for NEH. For example, almost all writers each had made more than 10 distinct types of moves in their proposals, ranging from 12 distinct types made by an individual writer to 17 types, excluding the two that made only 10 each. Hence, the NEH proposal authors almost all each made more than half of the 23 moves that this study found and defined when it had studied its two test proposals. All but three authors did so. No proposal author, though, had made as many as 20 different distinct moves (the highest page count for any proposal author’s NEH proposal narrative was 21 pages).

Finally, this study also examined closely related pairs of so-called complementary “primary moves” and “secondary moves.” Secondary moves may be viewed as “dependent” upon their complementary primary moves. They would be dependent in the sense that when a particular primary move is present in a proposal, its complementary secondary move would be likely to also be present (in the researcher’s own subjective sense of the likelihood). This study found a high degree of such “dependency, which matters because awareness of such dependencies might help proposal writers. At the least, perhaps such awareness might make proposal writers (more) conscious that some of their rhetorical moves may call for them to also make certain other particular moves.

The study’s basic research question about the most common NEH proposal rhetorical moves is answered by the study’s identification of different types of moves, its search for instances of each of those 23 moves, and its determination of the most common moves (at least, based upon the dataset of 16 successful NEH proposals). Recommendations for nonprofit grant proposal authors could be made by presenting the list of the kinds of moves that the NEH dataset authors had made, by highlighting which of these moves were the most common in the dataset, and by noting any moves that might not be obvious to proposal writers. For the dataset’s most common moves, if these are assumed to also represent accurately (or not too inaccurately) the most common moves made in humanities nonprofit project proposals, these common moves might be recommended to nonprofit proposal writers. Realistically, however, this study’s dataset was a limited dataset of only 16 proposals that pitched nonprofit projects in a particular area of endeavor (the humanities) and for a single particular agency. Furthermore, the study was also conducted by a single researcher. Any individual researcher may have

idiosyncratic ideas for different moves to identify and may identify moves differently than another researcher might identify them. Therefore, when this particular study has found that a particular move is one of the study dataset's most common moves, that finding should perhaps best be recommended as a move that proposal writers should consider consciously when they craft grant proposals. That is, we should not take this study's findings necessarily as paramount recommendations. These findings should not be viewed as a set of "rules" that proposal writers should necessarily follow to craft effective proposals. One should not consider it "bad" for a proposal author to not make some particular move or moves that this study found to be "most common." Likewise, when this study found that a particular move was less common in the study dataset, one should avoid automatically assuming that that move would not be worthy of a writer to consciously consider adopting as he or she writes proposals. A less common move might simply be less often considered to be a worthwhile move to make in grant proposals.

Genre move analysis offers a systematic means by which one may examine grant proposals and consider possibilities for how a writer might craft a proposal. It is a means to observe and to generate ideas based upon grant writers' concrete work—grant proposals themselves. It may also be an idiosyncratic means whose results may vary among individual move analysts, as well as among study samples or among nonprofit areas, possibly. Again, it is a means of generating ideas and recommendations for writers to consider or learn from. This is how genre move analyses might contribute to how writers can craft grant proposals. Such move analyses could be performed not only by academic researchers but also by nonprofit agencies or by individual proposal writers, either with nonprofit agencies' own past proposals or perhaps with other grant proposals that might

be available. For any genre, a move in a text should perform a particular rhetorical function that will contribute to the success of the purpose of the genre. Likewise, of course, when a grant proposal writer makes a particular kind of move or creates an instance of a move, that move should contribute to persuading a grantmaker to offer a grant for a particular project. Anybody interested, therefore, might try analyzing the moves of grant proposals to generate ideas for crafting future proposals that will persuade.

They might also consider at least two possible main approaches to genre move analysis. One method would be to do an original move analysis on a dataset of proposals (as Connor and Mauranen did with research grant proposals). Another would be to perform a move analysis that would apply a previously determined move schema to a new dataset (as Connor and Upton did with nonprofit proposals). The first approach, though, would potentially better help an analyst generate new ideas for moves. It would help an analyst look at study proposals more freshly and with less influence from a previously already devised moves schema. The second approach might indeed save some labor and time since an analyst would not need to spend time identifying possible types of moves that might be found in a dataset. However, this second approach's main purpose would seem to be to verify previously devised moves schema with a new dataset or proposal. The second approach would seem to be more helpful for an academic researcher who is studying the grant proposals genre. The first approach would seem to better suit an analyst whose purpose is more practical such as a proposal writer trying to generate ideas for crafting future proposals. Alternatively, though, one might employ the second approach to genre move analysis without adhering too slavishly or strictly to the



previously devised moves schema that the researcher is relying upon (such as with Feng and Shi).

Considering these main approaches to genre move analysis also relates to the question about whether research grant proposals and non-research nonprofit project proposals might perhaps be distinct genres. One way one may look at this question is to consider what might be the best approach that this study could have taken as it did move analysis for its nonprofit proposals dataset. The previous study by Connor and Upton 2004, which applied Connor and Mauranen 1999's move schema to a dataset of nonprofit agency proposals, did adjust the 1999 move schema for the purposes of its findings about nonprofit agencies. It did so by dropping three of the moves that had been found for research proposals by Connor and Mauranen (the Connor and Mauranen schema's "achievements," "compliance claim," and "reporting previous research" moves) (Connor and Upton 241). This adjustment alone seems to indicate that research proposals may indeed differ from non-research nonprofit proposals in their rhetorical moves. Why, therefore, should not a researcher examine non-research nonprofit proposals by means of an original move analysis instead of by applying previously devised moves schemas? Fresh original move analyses may be more likely to uncover differing nonprofit proposal moves than move analyses that employ schema derived from previous analyses of research proposals. The first approach would better ensure that an analyst was not overly influenced by previous findings for research proposals, which may not necessarily be entirely consistent with non-research nonprofit proposals (even when *humanities* research proposals might perhaps be compared to nonprofit proposals for humanities projects). To assume that non-research nonprofit grant proposals might not necessarily be (exactly) the

same genre as research grant proposals seems justified. Otherwise, why should this study then have examined its own dataset with an original analysis? Instead of simply having, say, relied upon Connor and Mauranen's previously devised moves schema in order perhaps only to verify the previous schema for this study's non-research nonprofit dataset? The possibility that perhaps the two types of proposals might really differ as genres justifies examining nonprofit proposals via original move analyses to determine what rhetorical features characterize the narrative sections of non-research nonprofit grant proposals.

One final point about the prospective contribution of genre move analysis to nonprofit grant proposals, genre move analysis does not seem to lend itself to determining how well any instance of a particular move might be executed. To determine the effectiveness of a particular move or the effectiveness of an instance of some moves, one might probably need to study the effects of particular proposals on study subject readers. Such research would require an empirical study. In any case, move effectiveness was not considered even by the previous scholarship examined in this study.

Considering everything that this study examined, at last, one could perhaps help model grant-proposal writing for nonprofit writers by sharing effective proposal writers' "behaviors," by presenting to them some of the past most common grant-proposal rhetorical moves, and perhaps by advising writers about rhetorical move "complementary dependencies"—not dependencies in the sense that a "secondary" move should be employed in a particular proposal only when its complementary "primary" move has been employed but in the sense that when a writer has employed a particular move in his or her proposal, this writer might want to consider that that move might call for the writer

to consider strongly whether he or she should also employ one or more of the primary move's secondary moves, as well.

## Notes

1. Only in hindsight would a grant proposal be deemed “effective.” A particular grant proposal would be an “effective” proposal if it succeeded in winning a specific nonprofit organization a grant after the proposal was submitted to a prospective funder. However, the notion of “effectiveness” does not preclude the possibility that even some potentially effective grant proposals do not necessarily win funds when they are submitted to prospective funders. Possibly, other factors might influence funders’ decisions that either proposal writers or their nonprofit organizations might be incapable of either addressing or controlling when they craft proposals. In any case, this paper describes a study of a sample of *successful* proposals rather than referring much to “effective” proposals (a “successful” proposal, of course, is a proposal that was submitted by a nonprofit organization to a prospective funder and that won from the funder a grant for a project that the organization had been pursuing).
2. Specifically, Connor and Mauranen state that one of the moves they found is a compliance claim that explains a proposed research project’s “relevance [. . .] to EU objectives” (59). Later in their paper, they generalize this finding to relevance of a research project to the project’s “sponsor,” its funder (60).
3. By “learner writers [sic]” Feng and Shi mean those who are new to the art of crafting grant proposals.

## Appendix of Tables: Tables 1–6

Table 1. Part A: Frequencies of Rhetorical Moves Made by Writers to Persuade National Endowment for the Humanities Grant Proposal Readers

Code	Rhetorical Move    Proposal #-->	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total Separate Instances of A Particular Move Across Proposals (Total Frequencies)	Number of Proposals That Included Zero Instances of A Particular Move	Number of Proposals That Each Included A Particular Move	Percentage Proportion of Dataset That Included A Particular Move	Average Frequency Per Proposal For A Particular Move (for non-zero frequencies)	Number of Proposals That Each Included Multiple Instances of A Particular Move
1	Request to the Grantmaker	3	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1		21	2	14	88	1.5	5
2	A Problem or Need																1	1	15	1	6	1.0	0
3	Context	7	2	5	1	5	5	2	3	5	4	2	2	1	1	2	4	51	0	16	100	3.2	13
4	Ultimate Accomplishments	7	4	3	4	3	3	2	2	3	1	4	2	1	2	2	1	44	0	16	100	2.8	13
5	Immediate Beneficiaries	1	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	1		2		1	1	2	19	2	14	88	1.4	4
6	Immediate Impacts	5		1		1	5	1		3					1	5		22	8	8	50	2.8	4
7	Access	3	1	1	1	2	5	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24	0	16	100	1.5	4
8	Remote Impacts					1		1								2		4	13	3	19	1.3	1
9	Significance or Importance	5	2	3		1			1	1	1				1			15	8	8	50	1.9	3
10	Support for a Grantmaker's Mission	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	24	0	16	100	1.5	6
11	Establishment of a claim																	0	16	0	0	Not Applicable	0
12	Specialists (excluding instances embedded in 17. Biographies move)	2	2	2						2	1			1			3	13	9	7	44	1.9	5
13	Specialists' roles (excluding instances embedded in 17. Biographies move)	2	4		3					1	1			1			3	15	9	7	44	2.1	4
14	Resources and Tools	5	3	3		6	5	2	5	4	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	44	1	15	94	2.9	8
15	Related projects			1		1	1	4	2	5	2			1	1	4	1	23	5	11	69	2.1	5
16	Partnerships							1	3	1	1	2		2	1	1	1	13	7	9	56	1.4	3
17	Biographies / Profiles of Organizations	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16	0	16	100	1.0	0
18	Procedures	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	23	0	16	100	1.4	5
19	Individual Steps														2			2	15	1	6	2.0	1
20	Other Funders or Funds	2	2	1		1		1	2		1	1	1	1				13	6	10	63	1.3	3
21	Distinctions	4		1	1	1		2	1	2			2			2	1	17	6	10	63	1.7	5
22	Evaluation	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1						12	5	11	69	1.1	1
23	Proposal Project Task						1	2		1	2			2		1		9	10	6	38	1.5	3

Specialists instances embedded in 17. Biographies move: 228

Specialists' roles instances embedded in 17. Biographies move: 127

Table 1. Part B: Frequencies of Rhetorical Moves Made by Writers to Persuade National Endowment for the Humanities Grant Proposal Readers Single Instances of Rhetorical Moves Versus Multiple Instances

(Note: numbers were adjusted to keep out instances of 12. Specialists or 13. Specialists Role moves that are embedded in move 17. Biographies)

Number of Frequencies of At Least 1 (Nonzero-Frequencies; Frequencies By Proposal)	231
Number of Frequencies of 2 Or Higher (Frequencies By Proposal)	99
Percentage of Nonzero Frequencies That Each Represent Multiple Instances of A Particular Move for A Particular Proposal	43
Percentage of Nonzero Frequencies That Each Represent Only A Single Instance of A Particular Move for A Particular Proposal	57
Number of Frequencies Excluding "Outlying" Moves 2, 11, and 19 (but including zero frequencies)	320
Number of Zero Frequencies, Excluding "Outlying" Moves 2, 11, and 19	91
Percentage of Zero Frequencies, Excluding "Outlying" Moves 2, 11, and 19	28

Table 2. Writers' Behaviors in Writing Narrative Sections of National Endowment for the Humanities Grant Proposals

(excluding Specialists and Specialists' Roles embedded in 17. Biographies move)

Proposal #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
How Often The Proposal Writer Made A New Move (of Any Type)	52	30	27	19	30	32	28	29	37	24	19	17	17	15	27	23
Average No. of Moves Made Per Page	3.5	2.1	1.7	1.3	2.0	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.9	1.3	1.3	0.9	1.7	1.2	1.8	1.5
Pages In A Proposal's Narrative Section	15	14	16	15	15	20	21	18	20	18	15	20	10	13	15	15
Distinct Types of Moves Made By The Proposal Writer* (from the 23 defined move categories)	16	14	16	11	16	13	17	15	18	17	11	11	14	13	15	14
Fraction-Format Ratio of Distinct Move Types to Number of Pages in Narrative Section	16/15	14/14	16/16	11/15	16/15	13/20	17/21	15/18	18/20	17/18	11/15	11/20	14/10	13/13	15/15	14/15
Ratio of Distinct Move Types to Number of Pages in Narrative Section	1.07	1.00	1.00	0.73	1.07	0.65	0.81	0.83	0.90	0.94	0.73	0.55	1.40	1.00	1.00	0.93

\*Table 1-part A's frequencies represent the numbers of times each proposal writer made a move in each of the 23 defined move categories

Table 3. Complementary Primary and Secondary Moves\*

(gray shading indicates which of the secondary rhetorical moves are among NEH's requirements/recommendations)

Primary Code	Primary Rhetorical Moves	Secondary Moves-->	4 Ultimate Accomplishments	5 Immediate Beneficiaries	6 Immediate Impacts	7 Access	8 Remote Impacts	10 Support for a Grantmaker's Mission	13 Specialists' roles (excluding Specialists' Roles embedded in 17. Biographies move)	21 Distinctions	22 Evaluation	Average
4	Ultimate Accomplishments			14/16	8/16	16/16	3/16	16/16		10/16	11/16	0.70
5	Immediate Beneficiaries				8/14	14/14						0.79
6	Immediate Impacts			8/8		8/8					6/8	0.92
10	Support for a Grantmaker's Mission		16/16									1.00
12	Specialists (excluding Specialists embedded in 17. Biographies move)								6/7		5/7	0.79
18	Procedures										11/16	0.69
23	Proposal Project Task			5/6		4/6					4/6	0.72
<b>Total Average</b>	0.80											
<b>Average Excluding Secondary Moves Required By NEH</b>	0.71											

\*Use of a "primary move" in a particular proposal is hypothesized to heighten the likelihood that another, specific, "secondary move" would be employed in the same proposal.



Table 4. “Most Common” Rhetorical Moves Made by Writers to Persuade National Endowment for the Humanities to Award Grants

(more common moves at the top to least common move at the bottom)

Code	Rhetorical Move	Total Frequency of The Move Across Proposals	Average Frequency Per Proposal For The Move (Excluding Proposals With Zero Frequencies)	Percentage Proportion of Dataset That Included The Move
3	<b>Context</b>	51	3.2	100
4	<b>Ultimate Accomplishments</b>	44	2.8	100
7	<b>Access</b>	24	1.5	100
10	<b>Support for a Grantmaker's Mission</b>	24	1.5	100
18	<b>Procedures</b>	23	1.4	100
17	<b>Biographies / Profiles of Organizations</b>	16	1.0	100
14	<b>Resources and Tools</b>	44	2.9	94
1	<b>Request to the Grantor</b>	21	1.5	88
5	<b>Immediate Beneficiaries</b>	19	1.4	88
15	<b>Related projects</b>	23	2.1	69
22	<b>Evaluation</b>	12	1.1	69

Table 5. Comparison of Moves Between Connor and Upton 2004 and NEH Datasets

<b>Connor &amp; Upton 2004 Rhetorical Moves*</b>	<b>NEH Rhetorical Move</b>	<b>NEH Move's Proportion of NEH Proposals</b>
Territory	A Problem or Need	6
Means	Request To The Grantmaker	88
Means	Procedures	100
Means	Evaluation	69
Competence Claim	Context	100
Competence Claim	Other Funders or Funds	63
Competence Claim	Specialists	44
Competence Claim	Specialists' Roles	44
Importance Claim	Significance or Importance	50
Benefits	Immediate Impacts	50
Goal	Ultimate Accomplishment	100
Gap	no equivalent	N/A
no equivalent	Immediate Beneficiaries	88
no equivalent	Access	100
no equivalent	Remote Impacts	19
no equivalent	Support for a Grantor's Mission	100
no equivalent	Resources and Tools	94
no equivalent	Related Projects	69
no equivalent	Partnerships	56
no equivalent	Biographies or Organization Profiles	100
no equivalent	Individual Steps	6
no equivalent	Distinctions	63
no equivalent	Proposal Project Task	38

\*From 68 nonprofit grant proposals (60 in Health & Human Services organizations; the remainder in the Environment, Community Development, and Arts & Culture fields)

Table 6. Rhetorical Moves that Match Requirements/Recommendations from NEH Guidelines for the 16 Study Proposals

(gray shading indicates which of the listed rhetorical moves are among the "most common" determined by the study)

Rhetorical Move For This Study Required or Recommended By Listed NEH Grant	1. Request to the Grantmaker	3. Context	7. Access	10. Support for Grantmaker's Mission	12. Specialists	13. Specialists' Roles	14. Resources & Tools	16. Partnerships	17. Biographies & Organization Profiles	18. Procedures	20. Other Funders or Funds	21. Distinctions	22. Evaluation
Proposals----->													
<b>proposals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5</b>			x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x
<b>proposals 6, 7, 8, 11</b>		x		x	x	x	x						x
<b>proposals 9, 10</b>	x	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x
<b>proposals 12, 13, 14, 15, 16</b>			x	x	x	x				x	x		
<b>no. of proposals that had NOT been required or recommended by NEH to include the move</b>	14	10	4	2	0	0	7	11	14	4	9	14	5
<b>No. of proposals that included a rhetorical move without having been mandated by NEH</b>	12	10	4	2	N/A	N/A	7	9	14	4	7	9	2

### Works Cited

- Askehave, Inger, and John M. Swales. "Genre Identification and Communicative Purpose: A Problem and A Possible Solution." *Applied Linguistics*. vol. 22, 2001, pp, 195–212.
- Bawarshi, Anis S., and Mary Jo Reiff. *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*. Parlor Press, 2010.
- Connor, Ulla. "Variation in Rhetorical Moves in Grant Proposals of US Humanists and Scientists." *Text*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2000, pp. 1–28.
- Connor, Ulla, and Anna Mauranen. "Linguistic Analysis of Grant Proposals: European Union Research Grants." *English for Specific Purposes*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1999, pp. 47–62.
- Connor, Ulla, and Thomas A. Upton. "The Genre of Grant Proposals: A Corpus Linguistic Analysis." *Discourse in the Professions: Perspectives from Corpus Linguistics*, edited by Ulla Connor and Thomas A. Upton, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004, pp. 235–255.
- Feng, Haiying, and Ling Shi. "Genre Analysis of Research Grant Proposals." *LSP & Professional Communication*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2004, pp. 9–32.
- Kiritz, Norton J. *Grantsmanship: Program Planning and Proposal Writing*. The Grantsmanship Center, 2014.
- Martin, James R. "Process and Text: Two Aspects of Human Semiosis." *Systemic Perspectives on Discourse*, Vol. 1, edited by James D. Benson and William S. Greaves, Norwood, 1985, pp. 248–74.

- Miller, Carolyn R. "Genre as Social Action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 70, 1984, pp. 151–67.
- "NEH's Application Review Process." *NEH*, [www.neh.gov/grants/application-process](http://www.neh.gov/grants/application-process). Accessed July 20, 2020.
- Paltridge, Brian. "Genre Analysis and the Identification of Textual Boundaries." *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 15, no. 5, 1994, pp. 288–299
- Samraj, Betty. "14. Move Structure." *Pragmatics of Discourse*, edited by Klaus P. Schneider and Anne Barron, De Gruyter, 2014, 385–405.
- Swales, John M. *Aspects of Article Introductions*. The University of Aston, Language Studies Unit, 1981.
- . *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- . *Research Genres: Explorations and Applications*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Tardy, Christine M., and John M. Swales. "6. Genre Analysis." *Pragmatics of Discourse*, edited by Klaus P. Schneider and Anne Barron, De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 165–187.
- Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. SAGE Publications, 1984.