

**Humanities Craftsmanship:**  
**A Study of 30 Years of Illinois Humanities Council Grant-making**

**A Report by the HULA Team**

**The Humanities and Liberal Arts Assessment Research Project**

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## **Executive Summary**

Controversy over the value of the humanities and liberal arts is central to current debates about educational policy. This debate affects the work of humanists in all contexts—K-12, higher education, and public humanities programming. The Humanities and Liberal Arts Assessment project (HULA) has developed new research methodologies for deepening our understanding of just how humanistic pedagogy works, what humanists expect it to accomplish, and what our methods for assessing it might be.

In this report, we present our analysis of an archive of works produced by professional humanists between 1981 and 2012: 92 grant proposals submitted to and awarded funding by the Illinois Humanities Council over that time period. This archive is neither complete, nor necessarily representative. Rather, the Illinois Humanities Council selected grants from across the full chronological range of its grant-making for the sake of a pilot project whose purpose was to ascertain whether the HULA research methods could shed useful light on the past practices of the IHC and its grantees. The IHC had the same executive director across the whole of this time range, suggesting some degree of continuity in its work.

The IHC did not establish parameters for the HULA study. Consequently, the effort of the HULA team was to ascertain what could be learned from the materials that had been shared with us. The goal was to use the learnings from the pilot phase to build more targeted and/or representative studies in the future.

In this report, we describe the group of proposals, which constitutes our “data” or “dataset” (section 2), our methodology (section 3), and the analytical results (section 4). We hope these descriptions will be informative and permit the Illinois Humanities Council to describe more concretely the nature of the proposed work that it has chosen to support over three decades.

In addition, we offer some summary observations about IHC’s grant program (section 5). Finally, we offer some reflections on further research that might be needed to maximize the value of the research that we have conducted on the IHC proposals (section 6).

Central findings concern basic program characteristics, elements of applicants’ humanistic craft practice (e.g. goals and methods), and the “learning theories” lying behind the work of grant applicants.

### *Basic Program Characteristics*

*--87% of the proposals engaged two or more disciplines in their programs, and there is a noticeable predominance of history as a discipline in these materials.*

*--Most programs aimed to reach a large audience of more than 22 people; with a very few exceptions the proposed programs were intended for a mixed ethnic audience; and only a handful proposals sought to reach an audience of low SES.*

*--Grantees generally preferred to use a mixture of media for the execution of their program and the majority of proposed program activities were also non-traditional and mixed in nature.*

### *The Elements of Humanistic Craft*

*--The goals articulated in the proposals can be categorized according to their temporal range and targeted level of impact: immediate goals include attending to various logistical matters (transportation & per diem support, promotion etc.); mid-range goals are goals achieved through the execution of a particular project (understanding and appreciation obtained through exhibits, conferences, workshops, documentary production etc.); and long-term goals are aspirations for farther reaching impacts, and tend to reveal the unique values and ideals of humanistic practitioners (individual growth, community building etc).*

*--Grantees collectively employ a dozen distinct methods in effecting their programs. The causal mechanisms used to explain why their methods are expected to work tend to turn either around the experience and expertise of the leading participants in the project (input mechanisms) or around key aspects of participating in the project itself (outcome mechanisms). This latter group of outcome mechanisms encompasses claims that the projects achieve their goals through methods that: (1) contextualize current understanding, (2) provide novel perspectives, (3) offer insights into complex subjects, (4) provide intersubjective opportunities, (5) use the arts to portray an analytic subject/analyze an artistic subject, or (6) provide opportunities to participate in a creative/analytic act.*

*--Overall, the proposals did not provide sufficient information about processes of program evaluation, nor about the content of evaluations or criteria for success.*

### *Humanistic Craft & Learning Theory*

*--The craft practices of humanistic disciplines implicitly convey learning theories.*

*--In this archive, the dominant learning theory emphasized “understanding” above other types of intellectual development, connected this emphasis to a focus on analytical cognition and on engagement with texts and words, and directed it toward a civic goal. This learning theory was strongly correlated with the discipline of history. The reliance on this learning theory aligns well with the stated goals of IHC.*

*--There appears to be a misalignment between the IHC’s vision of learning through the humanities and the way this vision is articulated in funded grants. On its website, the IHC describes itself as an educational organization dedicated to life-long learning. The council’s vision for how the humanities drive learning can be found in its definition of the humanities. In this definition the council articulates a vision where learning in the humanities occurs through 1) sharing stories and ideas and 2) engaging in discussion*

*with others. The grantees we evaluated focus most of their attention on the presentations that share stories and ideas and give less attention to the intersubjective interactions that might also play a role in what the public learns from engaging in IHC-funded programs. We offer this conclusion with some tentativeness, since the dataset that we analyzed was neither complete nor necessarily representative.*

Our analysis provides a comprehensive picture of what grantees were trying to do and provides a basis on which the IHC can evaluate how closely the aspirations of grantees align with their own aspirations. Our judgment is that in the set of grants that we evaluated, there was not a perfect alignment. More importantly, our study reveals that grantees generally have relatively weak tools for assessing their work against their own aspirations. The Illinois Humanities Council could strengthen its grant-making program in two ways. First, they could ask grantees to address more directly how their projects deploy intersubjective interaction to support learning through the humanities. Second, they could direct grantees toward assessment techniques that pertain specifically to the learning theory structuring the work of the grantee.

## 1. Introduction

Controversy over the value of the humanities and liberal arts is central to current debates about educational policy. This debate affects the work of humanists in all contexts—K-12, higher education, and public humanities programming. The Humanities and Liberal Arts Assessment project (HULA) has developed new research methodologies for deepening our understanding of just how humanistic pedagogy works, of what humanists expect it to accomplish, and of what our methods for assessing it might be.

The core idea behind HULA is that the humanities are best understood as an assemblage of crafts with distinctive goals, methods, and mechanisms that humanists employ to achieve their goals. Grading offers an example. When humanists grade writing, they apply implicit models of learning and evaluation that they have learned through master and apprentice relationships. A theory of desirable outcomes is built into the humanities instructor's goals for a student. Importantly, much of what humanists know about learning processes is implicit in their craft.

Once we recognize the humanities as consisting of craft practices with implicit internal logics, it becomes possible to foster a conversation about assessment on the basis of materials from the crafts themselves, rather than by importing assessment frameworks from other contexts. This presents a departure from the dominant approach, where strategies for assessment are often imported to the humanities from other fields. Yet before one can support a conversation about assessment that emerges organically out of the craft practices of the several humanistic disciplines, one has to make the logic of those craft practices explicit.

The HULA team has developed a coding framework for use in content data analysis to make explicit the learning theories that lie implicitly within humanistic craft practice. The project has been underway since the summer of 2012.

The purpose of this pilot study was to apply our methodology to a review 92 grant proposals funded by the Illinois Humanities Council between 1981 and 2012. We sought to test whether our method could succeed in making explicit the implicit craft of professional humanists, and to use our analysis to report back to the Illinois Humanities Council on the nature of the work it has been funding over the last three decades. Our job was “to turn on the lights in a dark room.” Humanists generally have an inductively-based set of shadowy intuitions about what the content of their work has been over time. We sought to shed light by providing a formal framework that permits testing the validity of those intuitions and having more certain knowledge of the nature of the work conducted by professional humanists in specific settings.

Our purpose was to answer the following study questions, in relation to the work of the grant applicants:

- (1) What are the predominant program characteristics of grant applications funded by the IHC?
- (2) What are the implicit logics of the humanistic craft practices in the funded grants?
- (3) Do the craft practices of humanists convey implicit learning theories?

- (4) What goals, methods, and mechanisms of causal efficacy structure humanistic craft practices in the funded grants?

According to its self-description, the Illinois Humanities Council is an educational organization dedicated to fostering a culture in which the humanities are a vital part of the lives of individuals and communities. Through its programs and grants, the IHC promotes greater understanding of, appreciation for, and involvement in the humanities by all Illinoisans, regardless of their economic resources, cultural background, or geographic location. Organized as a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1973, the IHC is now a private nonprofit (501 [c] 3) organization that is funded by contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations; by the Illinois General Assembly through the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; and by the NEH. The IHC did not establish parameters for the HULA study. Consequently, the effort of the HULA team was to ascertain what could be learned from the materials that had been shared with us. The goal was to use the learnings from the pilot phase to build more targeted and/or representative studies in the future.

In this report, we describe the group of proposals, which constitutes our “data” or “dataset” (section 2), our methodology (section 3), and the analytical results (section 4). In addition, we offer some summary observations about IHC’s grant program (section 5). Finally, we offer some reflections on further research that might be needed to maximize the value of the research that we have conducted on the IHC proposals (section 6).

## 2. Overview of the Data

We analyzed 92 IHC grant proposals that were submitted and funded between 1981 and 2012, 28% from the 1980s, 43% from the 1990s and 29% from the 2000s. We developed descriptors to describe the documents as a whole, capturing various types of information about each grant proposal such as document type, demographics of audience, major activity, discipline etc. The descriptors yielded valuable information about various aspects of the proposal grants individually and as a whole: for example, most programs aimed to reach a large audience of more than 22 people,<sup>1</sup> with a very few exceptions the proposed programs were intended for a mixed ethnic audience and only a handful of the proposals sought specifically to target an audience of low SES. Only a few proposals specifically targeted children or youth groups and most were either for a mixed or adult audience. Instead of relying on one form of media for the execution of their programs, grantees preferred to use a variety of media (64%) and also proposed a mixture of activities. Traditional in-classroom activities such as lectures, courses and workshops together made up only 26% of all proposed activities.

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<sup>1</sup> We chose 22 as the threshold number to indicate the size over which interactional dynamics change significantly. We selected this number based on an informal survey of the maximum class-size used by college and universities for courses whose purpose is seminar-style discussion.

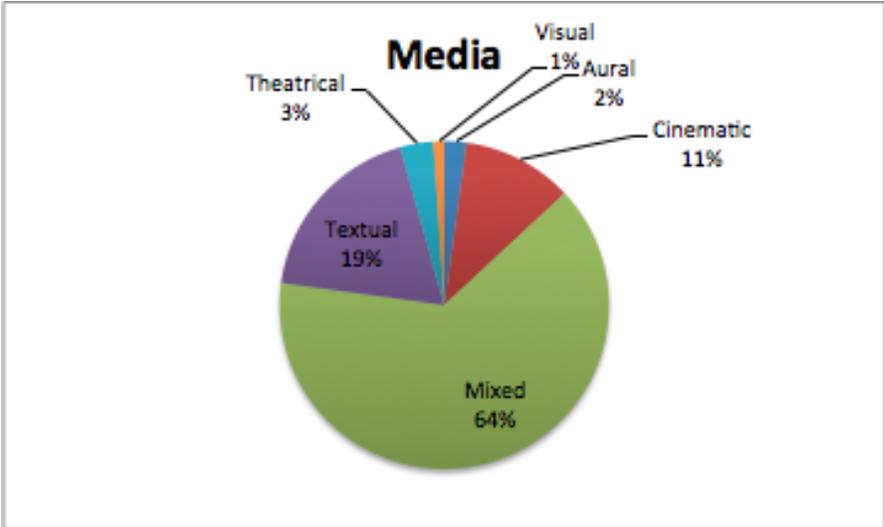


Figure 1. Distribution of types of media used in activities covered by IHC grant proposals

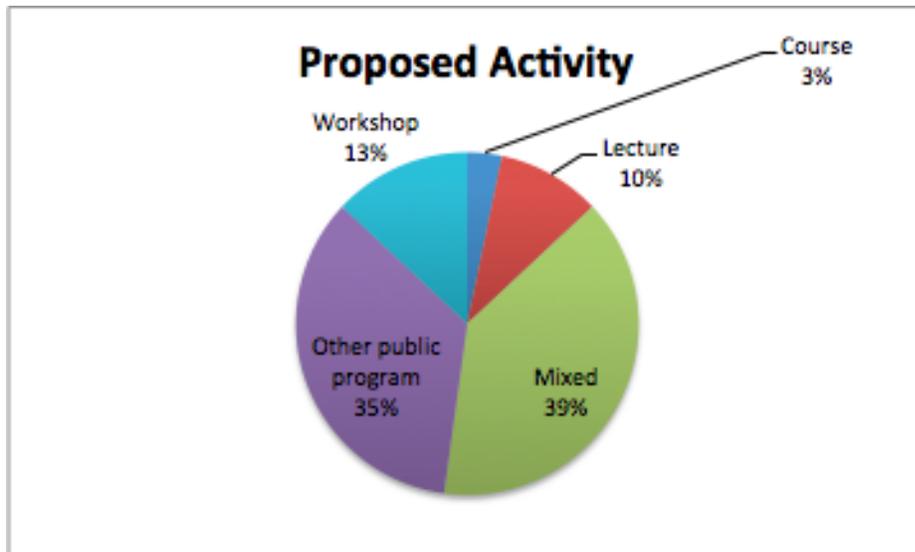


Figure 2. Distribution of types of activity used in projects covered by IHC grant proposals

Since many grantees used an interdisciplinary approach, we surveyed the various disciplines that the proposals represented. More than 87% of the proposals engaged two or more disciplines in their programs. The following chart shows the overall layout of the most dominant disciplines. A variety of disciplines is represented, with a noticeable presence of history as a dominant discipline among the grantees. Regardless of whether a discipline was listed first, second, third, or fourth on a grant proposal, the tally of total mentions shows history as being mentioned in 70% of the grant proposals. The next most commonly deployed discipline, English Language and Literature, occurs in only 33% of the proposals.

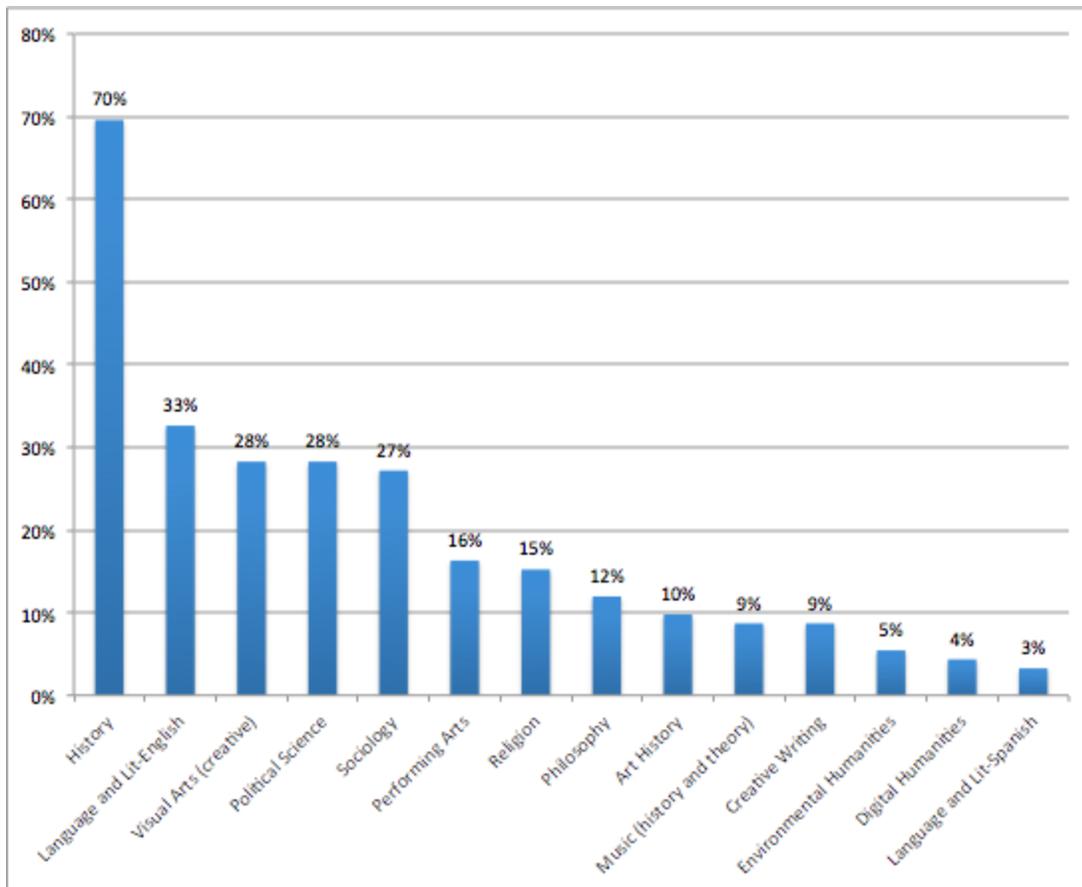


Figure 3. Percentage of IHC grant proposals in which a given discipline appears

As for access to the various programs, 46% of the proposed programs were free of charge, 20% charged for participation, and 16% were hybrid cases that charged for participation in certain modules of the program. 18% of the proposals did not specify whether they charged participation fees. “Inter-subjectivity” as a descriptor was meant to capture the nature of interaction facilitated by the program activities, and we determined whether grantees explicitly or only implicitly promoted interaction among the participants. There was no noticeable preference in either direction.

### 3. Methodology

The grant applications shared with HULA by IHC were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis that involved three phases: code development and team norming, initial open coding, and secondary analysis with selective coding.<sup>2</sup> Analysis of IHC grants began with the development and testing of a qualitative coding scheme to identify the goals, methods, and mechanisms in each proposal with regard to their relation to the perceptual domains engaged, psychological capacities deployed, types of intellectual development sought, and types of human development sought. (Intellectual development refers to the development of the human mind, specifically. Human development refers to the development of the whole person.) The team applied the initial coding scheme to a subset of grant proposals and used the results to refine the coding structure. Once the team was satisfied that the code structure effectively captured all relevant categories, the team normed on the finalized structure and tested inter-rater reliability. (See Appendix A for the finalized coding scheme).

During the second phase, the team applied the code structure to all grant proposals received from the IHC. This generated 3471 total excerpts.<sup>3</sup> After each document was coded, the coder created an analytic memo to highlight themes in the proposal and brought excerpts with uncertain code applications to the team for further consideration. The third phase of analysis began once the coding scheme had been applied to all documents. First, each proposal was tagged with the dominant perceptual domain engaged, psychological capacity deployed, type of intellectual development sought, and type of human development sought (as identified by code frequency). These tags were then used to identify “learning theories” in the data set – i.e. as defined by clusters of common dominant codes. This process identified three major learning theories (to be described in a following section). The goals, methods, and mechanisms within each learning

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<sup>2</sup>The team was trained in Howard Gardner’s Project Zero lab and modeled its research methods after the methods of that lab. The team also drew on the following texts:

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (1st ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (Third.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> This figure excludes excerpts on two IHC documents that provided guidelines to proposal writers.

theory set were then analyzed to identify and describe themes. For example, within each learning theory all excerpts coded as goal statements were gathered and analyzed together to determine themes in the goal statements made by grant applicants whose proposals fell into that learning theory set.

#### 4. Analysis

One of our most important analytical goals for this project was to identify the “learning theory” structuring the work of any given professional humanist submitting an application to the IHC. While “learning theory” has a technical meaning in the domain of educational psychology, focusing on different analyses of how learning itself takes place inside the “learner,” we use the phrase more loosely. By “learning theory,” we mean the view implied by a humanists’ work about how his or her goals, methods, and mechanisms are connected to particular aspirations for human development in a student, learner, audience member, or program participant. Any given learning theory, then, consists of a view about how a teacher’s attention should be focused. What sort of intellectual development should “master humanists” seek for apprentice practitioners? In seeking a particular kind of intellectual development, say “understanding,” what psychological capacities does the master engage in the apprentice, what perceptual domains are engaged, and how are these choices connected to a larger human development goal? We built our coding structure such that any given “learning theory” consists of answers to these questions. The “folk learning theories” that we identify in the data overlap in interesting ways with the formal “learning theories” that have been generated by educational psychology. The precise nature of this overlap is the subject of a separate study.

The first important result of our analysis, then, was confirmation of our hypothesis that the craft practices of humanistic disciplines implicitly convey learning theories. Our coding structure permitted us to identify the goals, methods, and mechanisms structuring the craft practices deployed in each applicant’s humanities project. The patterning in the choice of goals, methods, and mechanisms permitted us to group the proposals.

In this section, we present our general findings about the “folk learning theories” that we have identified in this data, as well as our findings about specific components of the craft practices deployed by applicants (their goals, methods, mechanisms, and approaches to assessment).

##### *4a. Distribution of “folk” learning theories*

For each proposal, we identified the dominant form of intellectual development sought, psychological capacity engaged, perceptual domain engaged, and human development goal sought.

Our first finding was that the craft practices of the humanists who wrote these IHC grants rely primarily on three “major” folk “learning theories,” one of which is far more dominant than the other two, and by far the most dominant within the set of proposals. There are also three additional “minority” learning theories. There are also some singleton cases, many of which appear to be a mishmash of a couple of the other six learning theories, and some of which appear

to be genuine outlier cases.<sup>4</sup> Finally, some grant proposals are really on the cusp between two proximate learning theories and might be classified in either category. In other words, there is some fuzziness to the boundaries that we describe here. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern some basic groupings.

We have named the six learning theories discerned as follows:

Major Learning Theories:

1. Cultivating Understanding through Analysis and the Verbal Arts for Civic Goals
2. Cultivating Understanding through Imaginative and Multi-media Engagement for Civic Goals
3. Cultivating Appreciation, by focusing on Motivation, for Civic Goals

Minor Learning Theories:

4. Cultivating Creativity through Imaginative engagement for Existential Goals
5. Cultivating Critical Thinking through Analysis and the Verbal Arts for Civic Goals
6. Cultivating Understanding through Analysis and Visual Engagement for Civic Goals

Across the body of the grant proposals, nearly every practitioner emphasized participants' civic development. Those proposals that focused instead on achieving existential development were a small minority (12 out of 92). This is not surprising insofar as grantees are applying to a public agency; we can expect that civic goals will be paramount. What is important, however, is the finding that, at least in the public humanities context, humanists are quite comfortable connecting their craft to civic ends. There does not appear to be strain in making that connection, and the diversity in the grants comes in with regard to how the grantees think about connecting their work to civic ends. The choices made among learning theories, in other words, identify multiple routes to the civic development of participants.

Those grant proposals that deployed the first, and indeed, most dominant, learning theory (Cultivating Understanding through Analysis and the Verbal Arts for Civic Goals) emphasized "understanding" above other types of intellectual development and connected this emphasis to a focus on analytical cognition and on engagement with texts and words. Understanding was defined in our codes as: "understanding the reasoning or creative work of another, grasping why particular problems or questions are worth the investment of time, and understanding the value of the reasoning or creative work."

Those grant proposals that deployed the second learning theory shared the emphasis on understanding but sought to develop these capacities through a focus on the imaginative aspect of cognition and a variety of media, engaging other forms of perception—the visual, the musical, and not only the textual.

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<sup>4</sup> The outlier cases show coding patterns where the dominant codes do not appear prominently in any other documents.

The third learning theory, which connects appreciation to the full range of psychic capacities, not only cognitive but also affective, is notable for focusing more directly on questions of motivation. We defined appreciation as being “not only to understand the reasoning or creative work of another, with regard both to how it works and what its value is, but also to take pleasure in it.” The “appreciation” concept is connected to affective responses to the experience being developed and the material to which participants’ are being exposed. Appreciation and positive affective responses are themselves expected to be supportive of positive civic outcomes. This is a very different path to the achievement of civic benefit than the path that focuses on analytical work and the verbal arts.

Researchers concerned with civic education could profitably explore the differences between these two learning theories and the grant proposals that instantiate them.

As one might expect, there was a close correlation between the learning theory being deployed and the humanistic discipline informing the grant. The discipline of history dominates in this archive, and it is closely connected to the learning theory connecting analytical cognition and the verbal arts to civic outcomes.

The “appreciation” learning theory was more closely connected to disciplines of literature and music, and the “understanding through multi-media engagement” learning theory was connected to the performing arts. In other words, the differences among disciplines appear in part to be in themselves constituted by the use of different learning theories. This confirms our hypothesis that the craft practices of humanistic disciplines implicitly convey learning theories.

#### *b. Analysis of Goals*

The proposals can be divided into two different groups according to their beneficiaries: one set connects its goals to a broad community, for instance, “the public,” or “youth,” etc. A second group of proposals has a more local focus (minority groups, specific organizations etc.).

For both groups, the grantees’ proposal goals, expressed both explicitly and implicitly, consist predominantly of successful execution of the program activities and the understanding and appreciation that are to be gained through those activities. Before the audience/participants gain such understanding and appreciation, however, they must have the opportunity to experience the humanistic practice. Exposure to the humanities therefore itself becomes a critical goal in the successful grant applications.

The goals articulated in the proposals can be categorized further according to their temporality and level of impact: immediate goals include attending to various logistical matters (transportation & per diem support, promotion etc.); mid-range goals are goals achieved through the execution of a particular project (understanding and appreciation obtained through exhibits, conferences, workshops, documentary production etc.); long-term goals identify aspirations for farther reaching impacts and tend to reveal the unique values and ideals of humanistic practitioners (individual growth, community building etc).

Understanding and appreciation as goals can be further grouped into different categories based on what the grantees want the audience/participants to understand or learn to appreciate. The

major categories are understanding of the humanities, understanding of local history/tradition through the humanities, understanding of the world through humanistic practice and appreciation of the humanities.

Some grantees express a pursuit of long-term goals that extends beyond the scope of the project. One such recurring theme is expression of a desire to build community or pride in a community. Sometimes the relevant idea of community is local; sometimes it is a broader idea of “humankind.” For example, grantees suggest that bringing community members together to learn about a shared past, cultural tradition, space or even a shared future will foster a sense of community and aid in community building. The grantees do not, however, further specify how “understanding” that is gained through participation in their programs will lead to community building.

### *c. Analysis of Methods Used*

Methods were the most frequently identified element of craft logic. In the data set, 2291 out of 3471 total excerpts were labeled with the “Method” code. As a result of the volume of methods codes, the team has not completed a full analysis of the methods data set. The findings reported here are the result of analysis of an initial sample of the methods data, pulled from approximately 10% of the full data set.<sup>5</sup> The analysis of this sample is being used to create the initial coding structure for analysis of the full set. As a result, the findings here might change after analysis of the full data set. This final analysis will also consider these methods in light of the learning theories identified by prior analysis.

The codes for the methods described in the IHC proposals broke into two major categories (see diagram in Appendix B). The first category identifies methods employed in the design and production of the proposed project. This includes recruitment of an audience (e.g. brochures, public service announcements, outreach to interest groups), the selection of humanists to be involved in the project (represented in descriptions of the expertise and experience of participating humanists), and bringing together humanists or organizations to be involved in project design (e.g. the creation of a panels of experts to advise on project design).

The second set of methods codes describes the methods employed within the proposed project. This includes:

- 1) Methods that expose the public to the products of humanist work. This includes lectures, exhibits, festivals, and screenings of films. The label “product” is not intended to indicate the presentation of a “final” product, but rather that the project consists of making available a product that is intended to be consumed by an audience (even if that is a stage in process of a larger project, as many lectures are). A significant subset in this code is methods that use the work of a humanist (often in the form of a lecture) as a means to enhance an artistic performance. For example, one project pairs musical performances with humanists with expertise in the time period or context in which the music was composed.

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<sup>5</sup> We initiated and tend to continue with saturation sampling.

- 2) Methods for the creation of products to be consumed by the public. Where some projects proposed to screen films, others proposed to produce them. The latter fit into this category.
- 3) Methods that expose the public to humanists as they practice their craft. While the first category exposed the public to a product, this category of methods aimed to “lift the veil” of humanist activity by bringing the public into contact with humanists as they work to create the products that might be displayed in the first code category.
- 4) Methods that involve the public in activities that are typically reserved for professional humanists. These methods include public history projects and involvement of an audience in a playwright’s process.
- 5) Methods that attempt cross-fertilization between the arts and humanities. Some projects specifically used the humanities to contextualize artistic performances while others used the arts to dramatize humanistic subjects or illuminate them from an artistic perspective.
- 6) Methods that seek to bring the public into conversation with humanists. These methods ranged in the depth of this engagement: from question and answer periods to “talkback” conversations with a playwright after the performance of a play to publicly available courses taught by humanists.
- 7) Methods that seek to put the public into conversation with one another. This included structured discussions, meetings focused on community decision making, and lectures that ended with time and space for conversation among the audience.

One method category cut across both major themes. This was the method of bringing together people with different perspectives. On the production side this included conscious efforts to bring together experts from a variety of backgrounds or fields in order to consult on program design. Sometimes this involves creating space for professional humanists to interact with members of the community and sometimes it involved creating space for humanists from different fields to interact. On the program side, this involved specific efforts to create space for people from different backgrounds to interact and opportunities for non-humanists to interact with professional humanists.

#### *d. Analysis of Mechanisms*

The mechanism code was used to tag statements that describe or implicitly capture the mechanisms that account for how the methods being deployed are expected to work. We sought excerpts that explained “what dynamics inside the audience or student or embedded in the experience of the audience or student explain why a given method or tactic is expected to bring about the stated goal.” We expected that these dynamics would most often be “learning mechanisms” but there are other kinds of mechanisms too, for instance, “enjoyment” or “pleasure” mechanisms, mechanisms that bring about enjoyment or pleasure in the audience.

In the sample of successful IHC grants we reviewed we did not identify sufficient mechanism codes within each learning theory set to merit analysis at the level of each learning theory. As a result, the findings described here identify themes in the mechanisms analyzed across all three major learning theories simultaneously.

We found that grantees’ claims about the mechanisms of their projects fall into two large categories. The first group of claims focuses on the *inputs* required to make projects successful. These claims explained how experience (a person or institution’s record of engagement in

similar projects or relevant practices) and expertise (a person or institution's mastery of a subject or discipline) play a role in the creation of a successful project (i.e. one where the grantee's goals would be achieved). These input claims also focused on explaining the mechanisms underlying methods for generating motivation to engage in the event or project.

The second broad group of claims focused on explaining the mechanisms underlying methods employed in the project that would lead to the accomplishment of the grantee's goals - these can be considered *outcome* mechanisms. These include claims that the projects achieve their goals through methods that contextualize current understanding, provide novel perspectives, offer insights into complex subjects, provide intersubjective opportunities, use the arts to portray an analytic subject/analyze an artistic subject, or provide opportunities to participate in a creative/analytic act. The relationships between all themes are illustrated in Appendix C.

To illustrate these findings, we describe the mechanisms found in a grant to support a project titled "History for the present" where high school history teachers supported projects in which high school students and elders in the community jointly completed life history project of local residents. The grantee made input claims that the project would be successful because of the expertise of the high school teachers involved,<sup>6</sup> the experience of the sponsoring organization in the community,<sup>7</sup> and capacity of the project to motivate participation from both teachers and students.<sup>8</sup> The grantee also made mechanism claims that are representative of three of the output themes. The grantee claimed that the perspectives of both youth and senior citizens would help to shift discourse around "inner city" communities by challenging preconceived notions of inner city communities.<sup>9</sup> The grantee also sought to build a positive sense of self among program participants. This was claimed to occur through the construction of relationships between youth and senior citizen participants.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, the grantee sought to empower youth and seniors in a community that is typically described and defined by outsiders by providing an opportunity for the participants to engage in an analytic act in which participants would use their own voice to

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<sup>6</sup> "Three sets of humanities professionals are vital to the success of this project, the most important being the humanities teachers at Austin Academy. These teachers bring years of experience in the classroom, a knowledge of and sometimes a frustration with the realities and limits of public high school education. They also bring their familiarity with humanities curriculum as it is being taught today, and what within this curriculum grabs students' attention."

<sup>7</sup> "WHA has developed close relationships with both Austin High School and local senior groups over the last two years, working to create science enrichment programs in the school and to develop a support group of seniors and students. This group has been active in training medical students from local universities in patient-doctor communication skills. This training explores issues of racial, class, and cultural barriers."

<sup>8</sup> "[the project] uses the methods and materials of humanistic research to bring social science classes to life, including youth in the teaching process and in bringing their interests to the forefront of learning." & "Seeing and working with students involved at this level in the learning process can not fail to inspire teachers."

<sup>9</sup> "The disciplines in the humanities all aim to record and interpret human experience in all its variety and complexity. Often unfortunately these interpretations remain distant from the people and experiences in question, with a researcher looking down from above onto his/her subjects. This project uses the methods of the humanities, especially of history, anthropology and qualitative sociology to empower community residents to challenge the dominant, and sometimes shallow interpretations that the media and even occasionally professional scholars put forward about inner city communities. This project brings humanities in action to inner city youth and seniors who are most often the subjects of research"

<sup>10</sup> "youth will begin to see their lives and their struggles as part of something larger than themselves, and the seniors will have a forum that allows them to see their struggle live on. By building relationships between youth and their elders, this project will be rebuilding community life."

describe and define their community.<sup>11</sup>

In the mechanism excerpts captured by our coding process, we mostly captured grantees *identifying* mechanisms; that is, they identified the cause to which they attributed the success of their methods. Only rarely did they also *explain* the actual causal structure or process of that mechanism. For example, some grantees claimed that their methods worked by providing multiple perspectives on a subject. However, grantees infrequently took the next step of explaining how the presentation of a variety of perspectives develops understanding or appreciation. The application described above is an example where the grantee did explain the mechanisms in greater detail, but this level of explicit mechanistic description was the exception rather than the rule.

#### *e. Analysis of Approaches to Assessment*

The grantees employed various methods of assessment include evaluation reports, surveys/questionnaires, on-site interviews, oral feedback, pre-completion screening, and third party recognition such as awards and funding. Surveys/questionnaires and evaluation reports, however, were the dominant form of evaluation, probably due to ease of execution and IHC requirements. Various groups of people participated in the evaluations -- outside evaluators, general audiences, participating professionals (scholars, artists, teachers etc.), program staff and the wider community (local partner organizations, media, funding organizations etc.). The two main agents of the evaluative process, however, were the participants (professional and non-professional) and program staff (outside evaluators hired by applicant organization & organization staff/leadership). The proposals rarely specified the content of the evaluations, but a few exceptions stated the following areas of interest -- humanities content/effectiveness of telling story, role of participating humanist, participant's intellectual enrichment and growth, increase in community spirit etc. As for criteria of success, attendance or turnout was by far the most frequently cited element. Other criteria of success that the grantees valued were: enrollment in future programs, various forms of support (volunteers, material support etc.), exposure in news media, continued support from IHC, local funding, longevity of program, successive growth in audience, increase in podcast downloads, email subscriptions, etc.

#### 5. Summary observations about grant program

On its website, the IHC describes itself as an educational organization dedicated to life-long learning. The council's vision for how the humanities drive learning can be found in its definition of the humanities. In this definition the council articulates a vision where learning in the humanities occurs through 1) sharing stories and ideas and 2) engaging in discussion with others.<sup>12</sup> This vision is captured in our coding scheme and our analysis revealed some interesting themes in how proposed projects engaged this vision.

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<sup>11</sup> "This project will involve senior citizens, high school students and humanities teachers in a collaborative process to collect life histories, examine their historical context and develop a method for community-based (generated) historical interpretation. Through this process, community residents will be empowered to write history together, developing intergenerational ties, youth and senior leadership and a model for school reform based on senior, youth, and humanities teacher collaboration."

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.prairie.org/grantguidelines>

The coding of the method and mechanism craft logic data indicates a strong tendency toward projects that provide platforms for professional humanists to share stories and ideas. Present, but less dominant, are projects that create platforms for members of the general public (people who are not professional humanists) to share stories and ideas. A number of projects place an emphasis on sharing stories and ideas from underrepresented groups, which fits with a strong emphasis on the need for this on the IHC site and grant description materials. Discussion was infrequently the center of project efforts and often given little attention in project descriptions. When discussions were described, a wide variety of intersubjective experiences were grouped under the label “discussion.” The majority of these instances focused on experiences like question and answer periods after a lecture and other forms of interaction that tend to be monologic rather than dialogic.

In the data related to mechanisms, four of the six identified themes are primarily focused on professional humanists sharing stories and ideas (perspective, context, arts/humanities interactions, insight into the complex). The fifth theme (public involvement) identified a smaller set of projects that were still focused on sharing ideas and stories, but involved high school students or community members in the generation of what would be shared. Only one theme in the mechanism data focused on discussions (intersubjective) and many of the mechanisms tagged in this group were implied rather than explicitly discussed.

This focus on professional humanists sharing stories and ideas seems to be related to a dominant pedagogy of presentation in the IHC proposals. Of the 92 grants reviewed for the method and mechanism analysis, 60 (65%) had presentation by a professional humanist as the main pedagogy.<sup>13</sup> While these projects often involved some form of discussion following the humanists’ presentation, the discussions were not the main focus of the grants, consisted mainly of question and answer periods, and were given very little attention in the grant proposals (often just a mention of a discussion to follow). On the other hand 9 (10%) proposals involved the public in the creation of stories or ideas to share and 7 (8%) used discussion as a main pedagogical tool. The majority of proposals that were not categorized as primarily involving presentation by a humanist were workshops (15 proposals, 16%). These were led by professional humanists but involved smaller groups receiving instruction and therefore were thought to involve a greater degree of discussion. This trend seems to illuminate an assumption that the presentation of stories and ideas is sufficient for learning. Evidence of this assumption is furthered through the analysis of the mechanisms describing how these methods function. Three major themes in the mechanism analysis involved claims that the project’s goals would be achieved because the projects would provide context for current understandings, exposure to different perspectives, and offer insights into complex issues in society. All these mechanisms rested primarily on presentations from professional humanists, indicating a belief that the humanist’s simple presentation would contextualize, provide perspective, and offer insights in ways that would alter the audience’s understanding of complex human experiences and social issues.

This finding is a significant first because it indicates a misalignment between the IHC’s vision of learning through the humanities and the way this vision is articulated in funded grants. (We note,

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<sup>13</sup> The majority of these projects involved lectures, exhibits, and the creation and screening of documentary media.

again, that our dataset was, however, neither comprehensive nor necessarily representative.) The grantees we reviewed focused most of their attention on the presentations that share stories and ideas and give less attention to the intersubjective interactions that might also play a role in what the public learns from engaging in IHC funded programs. The significance is further emphasized when attention is given to learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of intersubjective interactions in learning.<sup>14</sup> Our current understanding of how people learn indicates that presentation of stories and ideas is not enough for deep and enduring learning. This type of learning requires opportunities to actively engage with and explore new ideas. Discourse with others can be one site for the creation of such opportunities. All of this suggests that the IHC might consider a revision to the grant application process to explicitly request that proposals address the creation and facilitation of the intersubjective opportunities created by the proposed project.

We would also suggest directing greater attention to the topic of assessment. Overall, the proposals did not provide sufficient information about the evaluation process, especially about the content of the evaluation or criteria for success. It would be helpful for both planning and assessment purposes, if the grantees would lay out specific ideas about how they plan to assess critical aspects of the program and what those are. When it comes to project goals other than turnout or interest, there is currently no information on how the grantees are planning to measure their larger project goals.

In sum, our analysis provides a comprehensive picture of what grantees were trying to do and provides a basis on which the IHC can evaluate how closely the aspirations of grantees align with their own aspirations. Our judgment is that in the set of grants that we evaluated, there was not a perfect alignment. More importantly, our study reveals that grantees generally have relatively weak tools for assessing their work against their own aspirations. The Illinois Humanities Council could strengthen its grant-making program in two ways. First, they could ask grantees to address more directly how their projects deploy intersubjective interaction to support learning through the humanities. Second, they could direct grantees toward assessment techniques that pertain specifically to the learning theory structuring the work of the grantee.

## 6. Further work

Our study of the Illinois Humanities Council grant proposals was a pilot project to test a method for improving understanding of humanistic pedagogy and establishing a deeper research base from which to approach the question of assessment in the humanities. This pilot study has played a seminal role in providing us with a context for testing our theories about the humanities as bundles of craft practices. It has provided a “proof of concept” for our methodology to make the implicit logics of humanistic craft practices explicit. And it has allowed us to confirm our hypothesis that humanistic craft practices rest on implicit “folk learning theories.”

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<sup>14</sup> Bransford, J. D., Brown, A., & Cocking, R. (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press; Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (14th ed.). Harvard University Press.

We hope, too, that we have successfully “turned on the lights” for the Illinois Humanities Council so that IHC staff now have a clearer view of the nature of the work that they have been funding. We have made two recommendations to the IHC—that they ask grantees to address more directly how their projects deploy intersubjective interaction to support learning through the humanities; and that they direct grantees toward assessment techniques that pertain specifically to the learning theory structuring the work of the grantee. With further research, we could provide additional resources to support action on these recommendations.

Our own sense of where further work would be fruitful consists of the following projects:

- i. A review of grantees’ final reports and of the survey results from their assessments

In order to get a better understanding of the overall impact of the IHC funded programs we think it would be helpful to conduct further analyses of the final reports that were submitted by the grantees and also of the actual participant evaluation forms. An analysis of the participant evaluation forms and the final reports would be a valuable source for understanding the overall impact of the program, how grantees (final report) and participants (evaluation forms) assess the proposal goals and for locating possible discrepancies between the two.

Because we understand that the world of public humanities has a relative paucity of assessment instruments, we are now pursuing targeted studies of particular organizations that may have richer archives of assessment instruments. We do not expect that a comprehensive study of past practice on this front will be possible.

- ii. A comparison of the folk learning theories identified in the material to research-based learning theories

The “folk learning theories” that we have identified as implicit in the craft practice of the humanists conducting projects with Illinois Humanities Council grant funding have presumably been learned by the humanist practitioners in the master-apprentice relationships that formed the heart of their scholarly training. It would be useful to map these learning theories onto those which emanate from the disciplines of cognitive science and research-based learning theory. Such a mapping might permit us to identify the distinctive contributions of the humanities to theories of learning as well as permitting us to identify places where pedagogy could be improved with reference to similar or related learning-theories that have been developed in cognitive science.

- iii. A catalog of existing assessment tools that might be of use to IHC participants given the learning theories that they employ

A fuller understanding of the learning theories employed by IHC participants, and of their relationship to learning theories developed in the cognitive science literature, should permit us also to identify existing assessment tools that might

permit more precise analysis of whether any given grant program is in fact succeeding at the objectives it has chosen.

#### 7. Conclusion: steps in the direction of public humanities research

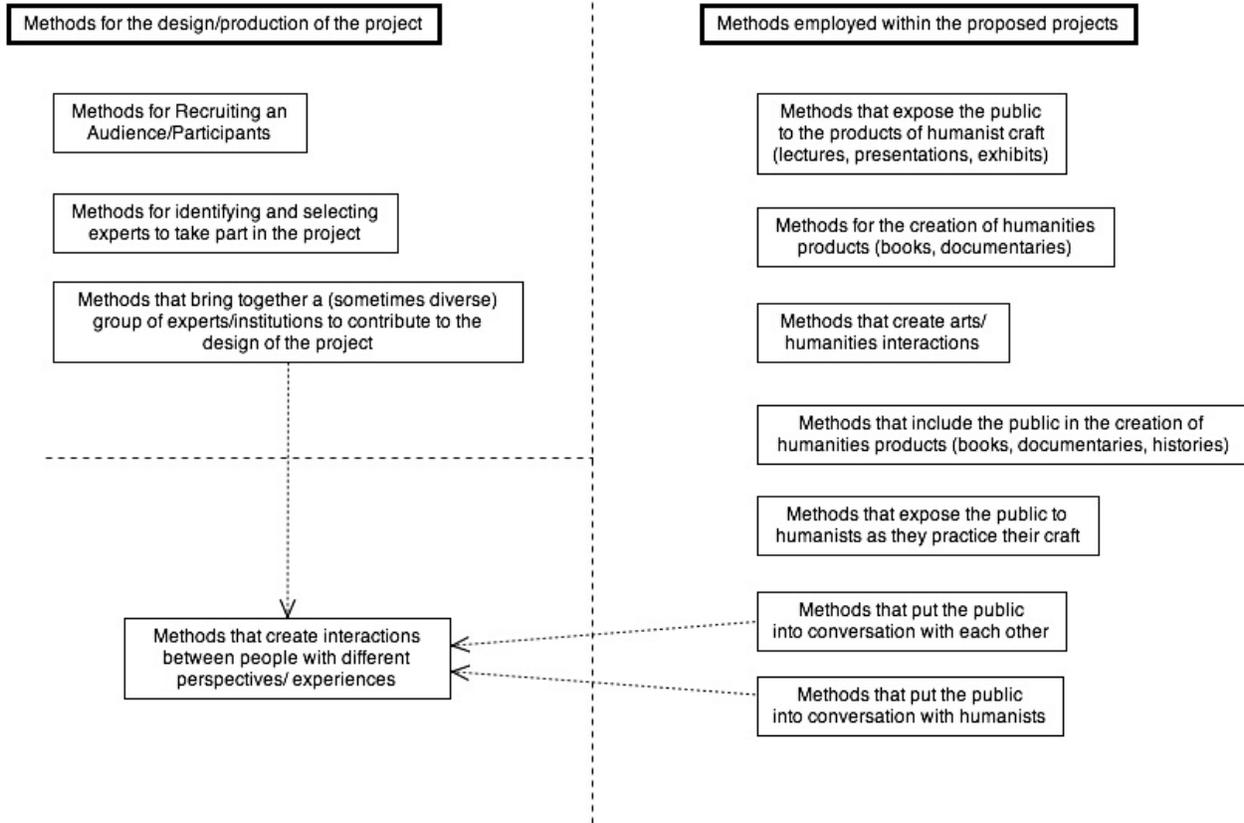
Our work on the Illinois Humanities Council grant proposals has shown that it is indeed possible to make the craft logic of humanistic practitioners explicit. Bringing that craft logic to the surface then permits one to provide a fuller description of precisely what sorts of pedagogic and developmental effects grantees are pursuing. Transparency on this front should permit the development of better targeted assessment instruments.

Because our first effort to develop a new methodology for researching humanistic pedagogy has been conducted with regard to an archive produced in the context of a public humanities program, we have also begun to lay the foundation for an expansion of research on the purposes, methods, and effects of public humanities programs. The ease with which humanistic practitioners connect their work to a civic goal is impressive and suggests that the study of public humanities programs would have much to yield for discussions of civic education more broadly.

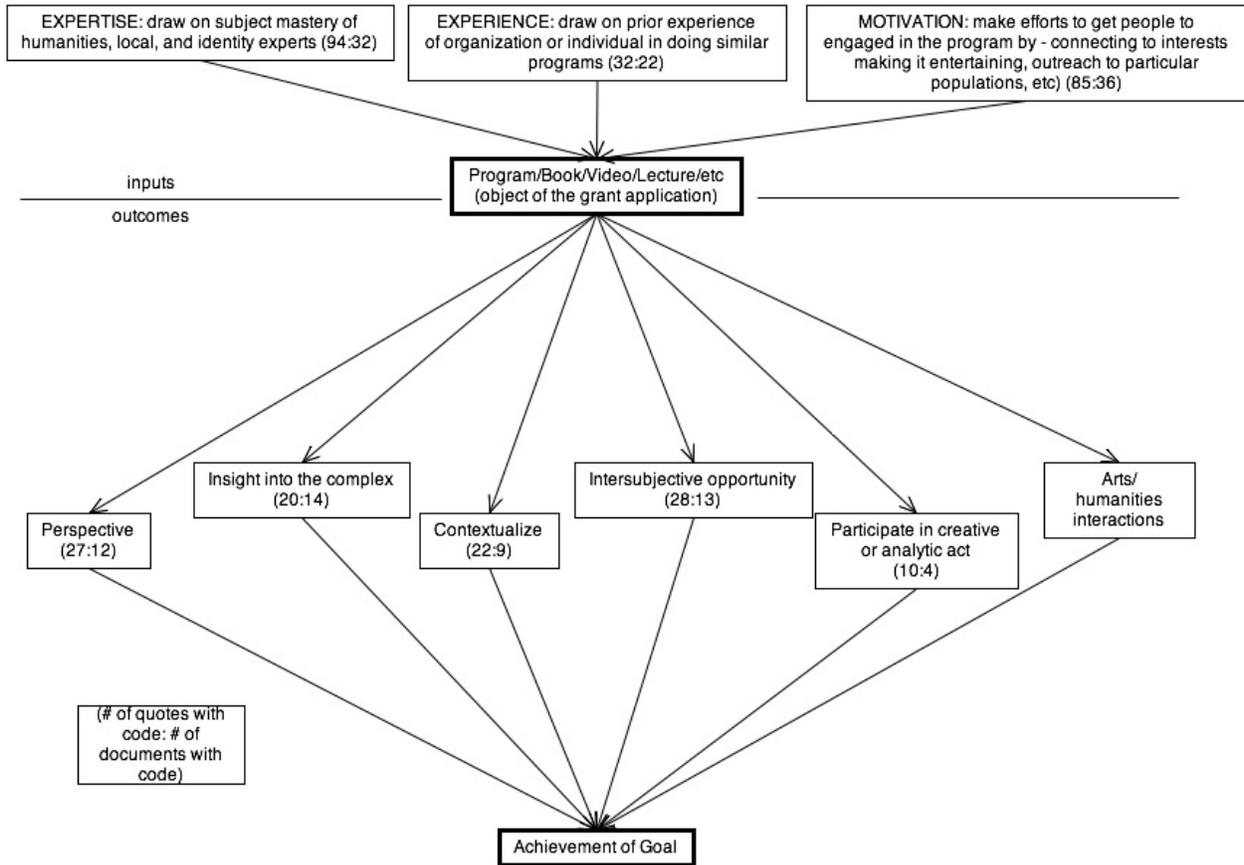
## Appendix A: Code Structure

- Craft Logic
  - Goal
  - Method
  - Mechanism (Explicit or implicit)
  - Assessment method
- Type of Intellectual Development
  - Basic Literacy
  - Practical Judgment
  - Creativity
  - Understanding
  - Critical Thinking
  - Appreciation
  - Communicative Skill
- Psychological Capacity Deployed
  - Affective Domains
  - Kinesthetic Domains
  - Cognitive (Imaginative) Domains
  - Cognitive (Analytical) Domains
  - Intersubjective Domains
- Perceptual Domain Engaged
  - Kinesthetic
  - Aural (musical)
  - Visual
  - Behavioral (modeling)
  - Verbal
- Type of Human Development
  - Vocational
  - Civic
  - Existential

## Appendix B: Methods Diagram



## Appendix C: Mechanism diagram



## Appendix D: Glossary

- Coding Terms:
  - Code: an identifier that is applied to an excerpt, which is often a sentence in length, from the grant application. Code sets include: Craft Logic, Perceptual Domain Engaged, Psychological Capacity Deployed, Type of Intellectual Development, and Type of Human Development. To each each excerpt, one craft logic code is applied and as many codes as are relevant from each other set are applied.
  - Craft Logic: the reasoning, or logic, of a given craft that consists of its goals, methods, understanding of the mechanisms that account for why its methods work, and its tools for assessing and evaluating the success of any given example of the practice.
    - Goal: an aspiration or desired outcome for the work being done; this is the strategic endpoint being aimed at.
      - *immediate goals*: might also be called “intermediate goals;” those goals that facilitate the achievement of overall project goals, e.g., attending to various logistical matters.
      - *mid-range goals*: goals achieved through the execution of a particular project, e.g., understanding and appreciation obtained through exhibits, conferences, workshops, documentary production. These commonly correspond to “Types of Intellectual Development.”
      - *long-term goals*: aspirations for farther reaching impacts; these tend to reveal the unique values and ideals of humanistic practitioners, e.g., individual growth, community building. These commonly correspond to “Types of Human Development.”
    - Method: any activity carried out in order to achieve the goals, or ends, of the craft project. Methods are the *tactics* used to achieve the *strategic* ends of the activity or project. Methods may include an open invitation to a public lecture advertised in fliers and email circulars and a discussion with the director and cast after the performance of a play.
    - Mechanism (explicit or implicit): the dynamics facilitated among participants or embedded in the experience of participants that explain *why* a given method or tactic is expected to bring about the stated goal. While all mechanisms are also methods, not all methods are mechanisms. Mechanisms may include a post-performance discussion of a play with the director and cast, but not advertisements of a public lecture; both are methods but only the former is a mechanism, as it involves facilitating dynamics among participants. Additionally, mechanisms are not only explicitly about learning but may also include tactics that bring about enjoyment or pleasure in the participants. For instance, the performance of a musical piece as well as a discussion session with the conductor following that performance are both mechanisms, even if participants who attend the performance do not stay for the discussion afterwards.

- *inputs*: the experiences and expertise in relevant areas that are brought to the project by professional humanists and participants, and that contribute to the achievement of the grantee's goals.
    - *outcome*: the mechanism's underlying methods employed in the course of the project that facilitate the accomplishment of the grantee's goals.
  - Assessment method: any practice described as being used to assess the outcome, including the accomplishment mid-range and/or long-term goals, of the project under study.
- Perceptual Domain Engaged: sensory, or perceptual, mode of intake by student or audience of the experience, which will then be processed by their psychological capacities.
  - Kinesthetic: any goal, method, or mechanism that depends prominently on physical movement on the part of audience or student for their intake of the experience offered to them by the humanist craftsman.
  - Aural (musical): any goal, method, or mechanism that depends prominently on the intake of non-linguistic sound by the audience, participant or student.
  - Visual: any goal, method, or mechanism that depends prominently on the intake of images or other visual stimuli by the audience, participant, or student.
  - Behavioral (modeling): any goal, method, or mechanism that depends prominently on the observation of behavior or human action by the audience, participant or student.
  - Verbal: any goal, method or mechanism that depends prominently on the intake of language by the audience, participant, or student.
- Psychological Capacity Deployed: those cognitive capacities, personality features, motivational features, and/or bodily capacities by which the materials are engaged and processed.
  - Affective Domains: Occasions when the craftsman's methods engage, or are intended to engage, the emotional and motivational make-up of the audience or student. The affective domain also captures intrapersonal personality traits, for instance, independence of judgment, self-confidence, attraction to complexity, aesthetic orientation, openness to experience, risk-taking.
  - Kinesthetic Domains: Occasions when the craftsman's methods engage, or are intended to engage, the physical habits of the student or audience.
  - Cognitive (Imaginative) Domains: thinking that may involve a greater degree of associative thinking, use of metaphor, lateral thinking, breaking of paradigms and rules, etc.
  - Cognitive (Analytical) Domains: Thinking and reasoning that depend on linguistic, mathematical, and visuo-spatial capacities to transform representations (e.g. perceptions and memories) via inference, induction, deduction, analogy, identification of similarities and differences, categorization, and the manipulation of concepts.
  - Intersubjective Domains: Occasions when the craftsman's methods engage, or are intended to engage, the psychological orientation of the audience or student to other people. The intersubjective domain captures issues of attunement and/or misattunement as well as interpersonal personality traits, for instance empathy and perspectival flexibility.
- Type of Intellectual Development: the type of intelligence that each craft project seeks to cultivate.

- Basic Literacy: the ability to engage cogently and effectively with relevant materials in a manner -- whether spoken, written, or otherwise -- that is conducive to the project's goals.
- Practical Judgment: the ability to reason soundly in answer to the question, "What should be done?"
- Creativity: the ability to develop novel and non-obvious ideas, solutions, objects, practices, and expressive works.
- Understanding: to understand the reasoning or creative work of another; to grasp why particular problems or questions are worth the investment of time, and to understand the value of the reasoning or creative work.
- Critical Thinking: capacity to reason effectively, especially using analytical cognitive capacities.
- Appreciation: Not only to understand the reasoning or creative work of another, with regard both to how it works and what its value is, but also to take pleasure in it or to otherwise emotionally comprehend its motivations and/or implications.
- Communicative Skill: any skills related to communication, e.g., preparing exhibits, slides, presentations.
- Type of Human Development: goals, methods, mechanisms, psychological capacities, and types of intellectual development pursued that work together towards more holistic development goals, pertaining to one of the three main areas of adult life: employment, citizenship, and personal fulfillment. These areas correspond to the three human development goals: vocational, civic, and existential.
  - Vocational: empowerment for success in one's chosen career, often bread-winning work.
  - Civic: empowerment for positive participation in the collective life of a community, including generation of a sense of ownership over a common world that includes strangers.
  - Existential: empowerment for success at creative self-expression and world-making; and for success at rewarding relationships in spaces of intimacy and leisure.
- Other Terms:
  - Descriptor: a category that describes the grant application as a whole or key elements that persist throughout the grant application, and generally focuses on demographic information. Descriptor sets include: socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, size of participant group, age of participants, geographic location, media generated or employed, disciplines represented, and activity. There are two descriptor categories that also appear in the codes:
    - *Intersubjective*: indicates whether the humanist expresses the involvement of person-to-person interaction implicitly or explicitly. The intersubjective code encompasses both implicit and explicit intersubjectivity, without distinguishing between them.
      - *implicit intersubjectivity*: person-to-person interaction, but not a self-conscious aim to develop or deploy intersubjective *capacities* or *practices* in the participants.
      - *explicit intersubjectivity*: humanists expressing a self-conscious aim to develop or deploy intersubjective practices or capacities.
    - *Civic*: projects that are free, and therefore, more readily accessible. This distinguishes it from the civic code, which indicates that the humanist aims to develop or directly engage civic-related attitudes or capacities in the participants.

- Craft Product: The result of a humanist's or a humanist team's efforts that is intended to be consumed by an audience, and designed to be pedagogically salient for propagating materials related to their fields of study and cultivating the aptitude of students and audiences to engage fruitfully with those materials, e.g., a lecture, a re-enactment of an historical event, a documentary film, a dance performance.
- Craft Practices: techniques and activities involved in preparation of a craft product. Implicit to craft practices are the learning theories through which the professional humanist has come to be a master of his or her field.
- Folk Learning Theories: the view implied by a humanist's work about his or her goals, methods, and mechanisms are connected to particular aspirations for human development. These are frequently derived from a humanist's own experiences of learning and teaching in multiple settings, and are often mentioned/described without reference to debates and findings within the disciplines of cognitive science and research-based learning theories. The HULA team has discerned six learning theories through analysis of the logic of the craft practices described by humanists (see section 4a. *Distribution of "folk" learning theories*).
- Master Humanists: humanists who have developed skills and aptitude within a major field of study in the humanities, such as history, and are dedicated to practicing their craft for the benefit of others and to cultivating the capabilities of apprentice practitioners, those pursuing excellence in the master humanist's field. For example, a high school history teacher; a youth orchestra director who instructs orchestra members on their instruments.
- Apprentice Practitioners: those who, under the direction of a master humanist, are developing fluency in the terminology of a given field of humanist study and adeptness in its craft practices (e.g., musical/dance performance, expository writing, creative composition).
- Master and Apprentice Relationships: any relationship in which the skills, concepts, and materials distinctive to a given field of humanistic studies are developed and cultivated by someone more experienced in that field in someone less experienced in that field.
- Professional Humanists: individuals who have completed undergraduate or graduate training in a discipline of the humanities or humanistic social sciences and who work professionally in a domain that permits them to deploy their training for ends related to those of the discipline in which they were trained.