



**Preservation Foundation**  
of the Lake County Forest Preserves

**DATE:** February 9, 2022

**TO:** Nels Leutwiler, Chair  
Preservation Foundation Board

**FROM:** Rebekah Snyder  
Director of Community Engagement & Partnerships

**RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend approval of a \$19,000 grant from unrestricted funds to provide partial support to conduct a countywide attitude and interest survey in 2022.

**FINANCIAL DATA:** The requested funds will be paid in full in Spring 2022 and will be matched by \$20,000 in District funding.

As of December 31, 2021, the Foundation’s total of unrestricted funding was \$379,652.20. Grants payable from the unrestricted funds as of December 31, 2021, include:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Amount</b>
2022	\$131,406
2023	\$69,350
2024	\$12,000
<b>Total Grants Payable from Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>\$212,756</b>

**BACKGROUND:** For decades, the District has engaged an outside survey and market research firm to conduct periodic surveys of Lake County residents and their opinions on the Forest Preserves. In general, these surveys have been conducted every two or three years and provide insights into residents’ primary concerns, levels of trust in various units of local government, usage of the Forest Preserves and opinions what should be the Forest Preserves top priorities. The information is used in strategic planning, capital project planning, public communications, and fundraising.

The most recent surveys were conducted in 2015 and 2019. The latter took place just six months before the COVID-19 pandemic sparked a significant increase in Forest Preserve visits, as observed through traffic counters, website and online map usage data, and social media engagement. Based on these measures, staff estimate a 70% increase in Forest Preserve visits in 2020 compared to the previous year, and – in 2021 – a 43% increase over 2019.

A new survey of Lake County residents will provide insights into how the pandemic has influenced residents’ views, opinions, and use of the Forest Preserves. It will also provide an opportunity to measure changes in the public’s awareness of the Preservation Foundation – a question that was first asked in 2019 – as well as introduce new questions to test willingness to donate. The usage information and data on awareness of the Preservation Foundation and willingness to give will be valuable as we prepare for the public phase of the endowment campaign.

In addition to replicating key questions from the 2015 and 2019 surveys (to identify any shifts in opinion or priorities over time), a countywide survey in 2022 can provide insights into key issues, such as:

- Identify residents’ self-reported usage of District preserves and facilities (indoor and outdoor) during COVID over the past two years (e.g., used/visited preserves/facilities more often, less often, or the same amount as before COVID, and which locations specifically)
- Assess visitors’ perception of how the District handled safety protocols at these locations (is it appropriate, too strict, not strict enough, no opinion)
- Expected usage of District preserves and facilities in the next one to two years (will it be more/ less/the same compared to the past two years), and which locations specifically.
- Understanding changes in Foundation awareness as well as adding a generic question (non-solicitation) about one’s willingness to consider donating (after a brief description of the Foundation and its mission). This will allow us to identify the degree to which those reporting increased usage of District assets during COVID are likely to now consider giving, and which demographic groups are most/less likely to do so.

**Project Plan and Budget**

Jeff Andreasen has conducted previous District surveys over approximately two decades, first with Richard Day Research Group and – starting in 2015 – with his own firm, Evanston-based aQity Research & Insights. If funds are awarded, staff will seek District Board approval of a contract with aQity in March, with a goal of completing the survey by May and a final report by July 2022.

The estimated cost is \$39,000 for a sample of at least n=600 county residents, which is consistent with the 2019 survey scope and cost. Grant funding of \$19,000 will be matched by \$20,000 in District funds.

**REVIEW BY OTHERS:** Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Preservation Foundation Executive Director.

**PRESERVATION FOUNDATION BOARD:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  Roll Call Vote: Ayes: \_\_\_\_ Nays: \_\_\_\_\_

Voice Vote Majority Ayes; Nays: \_\_\_\_\_