2021 PLAN OF WORK
The Nature Foundation of Will County

Long Range Planning Goals

Goal 1: Take action to ensure that The Nature Foundation of Will County continues to grow its operations.

Goal 2: Take action to create organizational sustainability.

Mission - We work to create a legacy of giving that supports and celebrates the preservation, conservation, educational and recreational priorities of the Forest Preserve District of Will County in perpetuity.

Vision - We envision a vital, dynamic and self-sustaining foundation that is committed to cultivating relationships and forging solid partnerships within our community that benefit and support the District’s ability to protect, conserve, enhance and promote Will County’s natural heritage for the educational, recreational, and environmental benefit of present and future generations.

Values - We believe in:
- Supporting and investing in high quality, mission-focused projects and programs
- Fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability in all endeavors
- Cultivating and maintaining positive, sustainable relationships with our donors and supporters
2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
The Nature Foundation of Will County

Successes
• Remaining present in the community in the midst of the pandemic
• Innovation with the online native plant, tree and shrub sales
• Salvaging our fundraising efforts
• Launching Serve Will County Youth Service Grants
• Funding so many Forest Preserve projects and programs
• Making connections with members of the business community

Strengths
• Flexibility and adaptability
• Collaboration and communication
• Cohesive planning documents
• Financial health and liquidity

Concerns
• Moving into next year still experiencing the pandemic and feeling its impacts
• Losing another year of fundraising
• Losing momentum

Priorities
• Staying connected to donors; increasing communications
• Remaining flexible and creative for fundraising events
• Broadening our approach to finding other funders and partners
• Increase revenue and revenue streams
• Spreading awareness about our organization
• Attracting corporate sponsors with green initiatives

Projects
Nature Education Program Supplies
I&M Canal Map Table at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center
Preserve the Moment Photo Contest
Willy'sWilderness.org
Nature Takes Flight Juried Art Contest at Plum Creek Nature Center
Bicycle Repair Stations at Centennial Trail and DuPage River Trail
Woods Walk Program
Native American Stereotypes Exhibition at Isle a la Cache Museum
Doggie Fire Hydrant & Shade Tree at Hammel Woods Dog Park
Goodenow Grove Wetland Restoration for Kirtland's Water Snake
Restore Will County Land Stewardship Small Grants Program
Serve Will County Youth Service Grant Program
FUNDRAISING & PROJECTS
The Nature Foundation of Will County

2021 Projects

Campaigns - Guide the development and execution of the annual schedule of campaigns. Continue to implement successful donor retention strategies and increase segmentation.

Fundraising Events - Expand the Bringing Nature Home Initiative and offer a suite of online native plant sales in the spring, summer and autumn months.

Community Partnerships - Continue to foster relationships and network with the business community to build support for events, programs, developments and initiatives. Develop a stewardship program and process for business community partners that expresses appreciation and shows the value of their support.

Donor Stewardship - When appropriate, reinstate donor appreciation gatherings and outings. Continue and expand current stewardship activities and create new donor benefits including a monthly newsletter and semi-annual progress report which thanks donors and demonstrates the impact of their support.

Nature Foundation Legacy Society - Guide the establishment of the legacy society, support the society and help to encourage membership during its inaugural year.

Native Plant and Seed Exchange - Offer a new Facebook group for the Foundation which encouraged the public to share native plant cuttings, plants and seeds as a way to further the Bringing Nature Home Initiative.

Significance

Fundraising is a primary mandate of the Foundation and it is essential for organizational stability, long term sustainability and for building the capacity to meet the needs and interest of its donors as well as its benefactor, the Forest Preserve District of Will County.

Benchmarks

1. There is a continual and diversified stream of funding from a variety of sources.
2. Donors are engaged and our donor base is ever-growing.
3. Donors are motivated to give planned gifts.
4. We provide significant funding to the Forest Preserve District for its programs, projects and initiatives.
Fundraising and Projects
2021 Projects, Continued

**Merchandise** - Consider adding and online storefront and offer select Foundation merchandise for sale.

**Outreach** - Attend appropriate Forest Preserve events, program and exhibitions.

**Donor Management** - Oversee the transition of donor records into the Flipcause CRM module.

**Communications & Marketing** - Guide the development and expansion of communications and marketing across all platforms as it pertains to the committee’s work.

**Significance**
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**Benchmarks**
1. There is a continual and diversified stream of funding from a variety of sources.
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4. We provide significant funding to the Forest Preserve District for its programs, projects and initiatives.
The presence of a fully engaged Finance Committee is a strong indication that an organization is committed to good stewardship and is actively building and preserving the financial resources necessary to support the accomplishments of its mission, both in the short and long term.

**Benchmarks**

1. There is a continual and diversified stream of funding from a variety of sources.
2. Our operating reserve ratio is 1.5 to 2 during the pandemic.
3. Our program expense ratio is 75%.
4. Our profit margin ratio is 10% to 25%.
2021 Projects

RECRUITMENT

Vacancies - Fill vacancies as needed and when feasible depending on the pandemic's status. Maintain an ongoing list of prospects.

Prospective Board Member Recruitment - Create a recruitment packet with cover letter, job description, committee descriptions, bylaws, annual budget and work plan, program overview, current financial statements, 990, and a board member directory and profiles. Update existing guidelines/policies regarding board member characteristics.

Director Agreement - Update and expand the agreement to be more explicit (state expectations, provide examples and options) in the duties and responsibilities of each board member.

Director Candidate Application - Update and streamline the application form and align components of the application with the expectations expressed in the revised Director Agreement.

HONORARY DIRECTORS & ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Honorary Directors - Develop guidelines and requirements for establishing honorary director positions and implement.

Advisory Committee - Develop guidelines, requirements and job description for membership in the Foundation's Advisory Committee. Formalize the committee and recruit members.

Significance

A diversified, vibrant and stable Board is critical for the Foundation to accomplish its mission. The Board Development Committee ensures that the operations of the Board are always high quality in meeting all of the responsibilities of a Board of Directors.

Benchmarks

1. Board members are diverse in terms of experience, interests and geographic representation.
2. Board members are engaged and active in their roles as directors, officers, committee chairs and committee members.
3. The committee is able to fill board member vacancies as needed.
4. Board members feel supported and valued.
Board Development 2021
Projects, Continued

ORIENTATION, TRAINING & GOVERNANCE

Onboarding for New Board Members - Develop and implement an orientation program for new board members which includes a training module, board buddy, board handbook and welcome gathering.

Annual Board Member Plan - Develop and institute an annual plan that outlines the actions a board member will take each year to conduct donor stewardship, cultivate donors and supporters, serve as an ambassador or make community connections that further the Foundation’s critical work.

Board Assessment - Develop and administer a survey tool to assess board function and Foundation management and progress either annually or biannually.

Executive Director Assessment - Develop and administer an annual performance review for the Executive Director.

Board Member Stories - Write board member profiles and stories for the website and orientation packet.

Significance

A diversified, vibrant and stable Board is critical for the Foundation to accomplish its mission. The Board Development Committee ensures that the operations of the Board are always high quality in meeting all of the responsibilities of a Board of Directors.

Benchmarks

1. Board members are diverse in terms of experience, interests and geographic representation.
2. Board members are engaged and active in their roles as directors, officers, committee chairs and committee members.
3. The committee is able to fill board member vacancies as needed.
4. Board members feel supported and valued.
Good governance is essential to long term sustainability. Donors are more likely to support organizations that have the capacity to make a difference and a commitment to good governance helps build organizational capacity, and has the ability to create a lasting legacy.

**Benchmarks**

1. The Foundation is modeling best practices in non-profit governance.
2. Daily administration and management creates a smooth-running organization.
3. Committees and work groups are self-guided and highly motivated to accomplish their goals.
4. The Foundation is trusted and respected among its donors, supporters and peer organizations.
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING
The Nature Foundation of Will County

2021 Projects

**Fundraising & Projects Support** - Support and market the events, projects and initiatives identified by Fundraising & Projects Committee and Board across all channels (digital, social and print), as needed to ensure fundraising success.

**Fundraising Campaigns** - Develop and execute campaign marketing efforts across all channels (digital, social and print) using current best practices to retain existing donors and garner support from new donors.

**New Features** - Design and develop new communication features to keep donors engaged. These include Board Member feature stories, photo galleries on Flickr, website Blog, monthly newsletter, expansion of resources for using native plants, and a native plant and seed exchange group on social media.

Significance

Well executed communications and marketing is essential in building awareness, garnering support, executing successful fundraising campaigns initiatives, gaining respect and trust, and recognizing its donors and supporters in meaningful ways.

Benchmarks

1. Promotional material directly supports and drives the success of the Foundation's fundraising efforts.
2. The Foundation utilizes current and effective messaging to garner support across a variety of platforms.
3. The Foundation's social and digital media audience grows.
4. Messaging results in a growing donor base.
Volunteerism
The Nature Foundation of Will County

2021 Projects

Event Support - Work with Volunteer Services to secure volunteer staff for appropriate Foundation events and programs.

Small Grants Programs - Continue to administer small grants in support of Volunteer Stewards through the Restore Will County Land Stewardship Grant program and of youth through the Serve Will County Youth Service Grant program.

Corporate Workdays - Collaborate with Volunteer Services to meet the needs and interests of the Foundation’s Corporate and Business Partners to provide community workdays for their employees as part of their support for the Foundation and Forest Preserve District.

Opportunity Expansion - Work with Volunteer Services to identify new volunteer opportunities with the Foundation.

Significance

The Foundation provides opportunities for the Forest Preserve District’s volunteers to expand their involvement and develop new skills. These volunteers are the Foundation’s best and most dedicated ambassadors. Their support and involvement builds trust and the Foundation’s capacity to meet its mission.

Benchmarks

1. There is a collaborative relationship with Volunteer Services.
2. Experiences with the Foundation are positive.
3. Volunteers seek out Foundation assignments, programs and projects.
4. Foundation opportunities enhance the Forest Preserve’s volunteer program.
APPENDIX
The Nature Foundation of Will County

Contents

2021 Calendar of Events
2021 Capital Projects
FY2021 Budget
## 2021 Calendar of Events*

### Board Meetings
- January 27
- March 24
- May 26
- July 28
- September 22
- October 27
- December 1

### Check Presentations
- February 11
- June 10
- August 12
- November - TBD

### Nature Foundation Fundraising Events
- Bringing Nature Home Online Native Plant Sale (March 13 - May 15)
- Summer Online Native Plant Sale (August - TBD)
- Oaktober! (October - TBD)

### Nature Foundation Programs
- Bringing Nature Home Native Plant Seminars (March - November)
- Bringing Nature Home Native Seed and Plant Exchange Group (March Launch)
- Restore Will County Land Stewardship Grant Program (March 2021 - March 2022)
- Serve Will County Youth Service Grant Program (January 1 - December 31)

### Campaigns & Marketing Initiatives
- Legacy Society Founding Member Promotion (January 1 - December 31)
- Summer Become a Donor Campaign (July 1-August 31)
- Year End Appeal (October - December)
- Thanks-for-Giving (November 13-24)
- Facebook Fundraising Campaign for Resident Reptiles (December 1 - December 31)
- Amazon Prime Day (TBD)
- Black Friday, Cyber Monday, #GivingTuesday (November 26, 29 and 30)

### Foundation-Supported Forest Preserve Programs
- Willy's Wilderness Website (January 1 - December 31)
- Found Objects Sculpture Trail (January 1 - March 31)
- Sculpting Wild Juried Art Competition (March 2 - April 2)
- Pollinators: Little Helpers, Big Results Exhibit (April 3 - May 30)
- Preserve the Moment Photo Contest (May 1 - December 31)
- Endangered Species Quilt Exhibition (June 19 - July 25)
- Don't Be a Zombie! Be Prepared Exhibition (September 1 - November 28)
- Woods Walk Challenge (September 1 - November 30)

*This calendar is subject to change.*
2021 Capital Projects*

Education
- Willy's Wilderness Website for Kids

Arts & Interpretation
- Sculpting Wild Art Competition
- National Park Service Endangered Species Quilt Exhibition
- Preserve the Moment Photo Contest
- Don't Be a Zombie Preparedness Exhibit
- Care & Feeding of Resident Reptiles
- All Person's Ability Trail at Four Rivers

Recreation
- Wood's Walk Program

Volunteer Program Support
- Restore Will County Land Stewardship Grant Program
- Serve Will County Youth Service Grant Program

*Funds allocated in the 2021 Budget. This does not include potential new requests from the Forest Preserve District which the Foundation anticipates in 2021.
# FY 2021 BUDGET

## REVENUE

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## EXPENDITURES

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Approved December 2, 2020