



# AGENDA MEMORANDUM

---

**DATE:** February 24, 2026

**TO:** Forest Preserve District Finance & Administration Committee

**FROM:** David Petschke, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer

**VIA:** Ben Haberthur, Executive Director

**SUBJECT:** Presentation and Approval of Professional Grant Consulting Services with The Ferguson Group, LLC from April 2026 through June 2029

---

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information for the Committee’s consideration and approval of a contract for grant consultant services with The Ferguson Group, LLC (TFG) for the period of April 2026 through June 2029. The contract includes a provision allowing either party to terminate the agreement with at least sixty 60 days’ written notice.

**BACKGROUND:**

Historically, the District maintained a long-standing engagement with an independent grant consultant through June 2021. That consultant played a significant role in securing nearly every major grant awarded to the Forest Preserve District, including funding through the Open Space Land Acquisition & Development (OSLAD) program, Recreational Trails Program (RTP), Park and Recreational Facilities Construction Program (PARC), Illinois Museum Program, Illinois Clean Energy Foundation, and Illinois General Assembly member initiatives. In fact, 20% of the lands protected by the District were made possible through state & federal grants.

Following the consultant’s retirement in June 2021, those responsibilities were redistributed amongst District staff. Departments assumed responsibility for identifying grant opportunities, preparing grant applications, and completing required financial reporting to ensure grant compliance. While staff have continued our tradition of success in receiving competitive grants, the District seeks to expand opportunities for new grant funding, streamline the grant management process, and strengthen relationships that support state and federal funding efforts.

In December 2025, the District issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for grant consulting services to support these objectives. Three grant consulting firms submitted proposals, with TFG identified as the most qualified firm offering the lowest cost. Staff subsequently negotiated the scope of services and contract term with TFG. TFG tailored its grant services approach and fee structure to align with the District’s core operational needs.

TFG’s proposal also included discounted rates for ancillary services. All hourly services are billed at \$255 per hour (normally billed at \$300 per hour), and if grant writing services are engaged, the estimated cost for each grant would be between \$5,100 to \$24,650 per grant, depending on the size and time involved. Under the proposed agreement, the District will retain primary responsibility for preparing grant applications, resulting in significant cost savings. Staff prefer this approach due to their direct knowledge of District projects. In addition, staff have strengthened grant application narratives by collaborating with engineers and architects when pursuing larger grant projects.

Specific services included in the TFG monthly retainer are:

- A dedicated team of grants experts supporting the District with grant consulting services directed at State and federal funding opportunities, and when applicable, Kane Forest Preserve Foundation funding opportunities.
- Monthly grant update meetings.
- Weekly grants updates and customized alerts based on the District's needs.
- Access to TFG's Grant Funding Hub – Online library of funding guides, grant profiles, and grant news.
- Access to TFG's Grant Showcase – Database of over 2,000 successful grant applications.
- Priority Project Tracker – Focused monitoring of key projects aligned with available funding opportunities.
- Project development and readiness.
- Grant application editing and review services.
- Grant Debriefs – Engagement with funding agency staff to discuss unfunded applications.
- TFG Grant Blueprint – Custom project-specific grant research for up to three projects annually.
- Post-award grant onboarding for any newly obtained grants.
- Post-award programmatic monitoring & reporting.
- Assistance with financial reimbursements and financial reporting.
- Provide timely support for any grant-related programmatic or financial modifications as they occur.
- Manage internal and external reporting procedures for any grant closeout.

TFG agreed to extend first-year pricing of \$4,000.00 per month for the remainder of fiscal years 2026 and 2027 (a total of 15 months) to align with the District's fiscal year. The monthly retainer will increase by 3% on July 1, 2027, and again on July 1, 2028. The monthly and annualized fees are as follows:

*Fiscal Year 2026 (Partial Year):* April 2026- June 2026 at \$4,000.00 per month, totaling \$12,000.00

*Fiscal Year 2027:* \$4,000.00 per month, totaling \$48,000.00

*Fiscal Year 2028:* \$4,120.00 per month, totaling \$49,440.00

*Fiscal Year 2029:* \$4,243.60 per month, totaling \$50,923.20

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The District budgeted \$55,000 for grant consulting services in fiscal year 2026 within the General Fund (Account 01-11-11-5180, Consulting Services), all of which remains available. The proposed cost for TFG's grant consulting services in fiscal year 2026 is \$12,000. Funding for future years will be included in the District's standard annual budget process.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the proposal and agreement with The Ferguson Group, LLC for grant consultant services as proposed in the grant consultant engagement letter from April 2026 through June 2029.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

*Exhibit A: Grant Consultant Engagement Letter including the fee schedule*