

Paving the Way and Powering the Reservoir

IRWA's International Marketing and Membership Committee celebrates milestones and unlocks potential

BY STEPHANIE RILEY

An association is fundamentally a group of individuals united for a common purpose. For IRWA, that purpose is enhancing quality of life through infrastructure development, with its more than 7,500 members contributing to that purpose daily across various professions within the right of way industry. But who supports these dedicated members? Who enhances the quality of their membership experiences, knowledge and growth? Aside from the wonderful IRWA staff, the International Marketing and Membership Committee (IM&M), previously established, and recently revived, fulfills this very role. Over the past year, IM&M members have dedicated significant time and efforts to fulfill significant goals of the Association. Let's celebrate its achievements and explore how the committee has enhanced member value and advanced untapped resources through innovative and impactful marketing.



Opportune Outreach

In April last year, IM&M leadership gathered in Dallas, Texas, to discuss a 3-year strategic plan. Then, as a fresh leader of the IM&M Marketing Subcommittee and marketer by trade, I was excited to collaborate with everyone about the future of IRWA and member marketing. In the morning portion of the meeting, we all talked about our hopes and dreams for the Association and its membership. Some of us threw out big initiatives and extreme goals without limits because, as the saying goes, “go big or go home!” And later, after in-depth discussions about IRWA and its members’ ultimate needs, although the weather was cloudy, our minds were finally clear. IM&M’s long-term objective would be to have the SR/WA designation recognized as a prequalification requirement for federally funded projects. We all recognized that this objective increases member value, untaps growth potential and elevates the SR/WA designation and IRWA education.

“We spent a lot of time researching and planning what the need is,” current IM&M Chair Jake Farrell, SR/WA, said. “That need requires focused efforts to make sure any low-hanging fruit is addressed quickly, and we build a foundation for multiyear marketing ventures.” He added, “We are seeing goals and action items be accomplished that add member value and Association influence.”

In order to initiate IM&M’s objective, its leadership decided that the committee’s 3-year strategic plan would include meetings and engagement with U.S. state departments of transportation (DOT) (year one), electric and utility companies (year two) and oil and gas pipeline businesses (year three) would be instrumental to not only increase high-level recognition for the SR/WA but also engage three big industry disciplines and organically raise membership.

Statistically speaking, it’s working! Since the start of IM&M’s execution of its plan, two new DOTs have applied to join IRWA’s Partner Program, and another that joined earlier in 2024 has 38 of its 39-member roster being new members. Additional meetings have been scheduled, and more DOTs are being engaged to further increase IRWA’s presence in the transportation discipline.



Refreshed Resources

In tandem with IM&M’s first-year DOT initiative, the Marketing Subcommittee has been diligently updating marketing materials, including an SR/WA flyer and the “Convince the Boss” section of the annual conference webpage.

During discussions about a refreshed SR/WA flyer, IM&M members recognized the need for tailored marketing to meet both DOT/agency relevancy and provide existing IRWA members with information on the benefits of obtaining their SR/WA designations. As a result, two distinct flyers were created. These new circulars are available on IRWA’s website under the Member Resources (Leadership Resources > Region/Chapter > Region Toolkit/Chapter Toolkit) and aim to highlight the importance of right of way education and emphasize the value of the SR/WA designation.

Additionally, the Committee has refreshed the “Convince the Boss” section for the annual conference that contains refined details about session topics, continuing education credits and the benefits of attending for both the attendee and his or her company. You can find this newly updated material at www.irwavirginiabeach2025.org.

International Right of Way Association's (IRWA) Senior Right of Way Professional (SR/WA) is the highest and most prestigious designation for right of way professionals that can be earned from IRWA, the leading professional association for public and private sector infrastructure stakeholders.

SR/WA agents have:

- 5+** years of experience in right of way, infrastructure and/or real estate industry
- Education**
 - 4-year degree or comparable education via IRWA courses and industry experience
- 272** credit hours from numerous and diverse topics in the industry
 - Passed an intensive and comprehensive final capstone exam
 - Required continuing education and IRWA Ethics course

Over 87% of IRWA's Agency Partners and 75% of its Corporate Partners say agents with the SR/WA overall bring more value, skills and knowledge to the agency or company and its projects.*

- ✓ **Highest level of competency in the right of way industry**
- ✓ **Accepted by public agencies as proof of qualifications**
- ✓ **Held to highest of ethical standards of professional practice**

Agents holding the SR/WA designation bring unparalleled expertise and knowledge, ensuring projects stay on schedule and within budget. Their proficiency in navigating potential pitfalls and effectively communicating guarantees seamless project execution.

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*Data collected from survey sent July 2024 by IRWA via email to its members.




Gain prestige. Over 87% of IRWA's agency partners and 75% of its corporate partners say SR/WA agents overall bring more value, skills and knowledge to projects.*

Stay relevant. Required continuing education and ethics course every 5 years ensures SR/WA agents maintain the highest level of industry expertise.

WHY SR/WA ?

- ✓ Highest level of competency in the right of way industry
- ✓ Accepted by public agencies as proof of qualifications
- ✓ Held to highest of ethical standards of professional practice

"Credibility with benefits."

71% More than 71% of IRWA members who possess the SR/WA say that it has increased and enhanced their professional reputation in the industry.*

HOW IS IT EARNED?

Required: 5+ years in right of way or infrastructure real estate. Relevant experience and education may also qualify.

Plus: 4-year degree or 2-year degree + 128 IRWA credit hours or 2 years of right of way experience. Without a degree: 256 IRWA credit hours or 4 years of right of way experience. Contact IRWA's Credentialing Manager, Francis Vicent at vicent@irwaonline.org for more info.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	READY TO GET STARTED?
272 credit hours from various right of way disciplines and relevant subject matters, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics • Eminent Domain Law • Land Acquisition Negotiations • Dispute Resolution • Property Management • Environmental Contamination • Appraisal • Real Estate Engineering • Federal Relocation Entitlements 	

Capstone Exam — Intensive and comprehensive final assessment designed to ensure that participants have mastered and retained the critical knowledge and skills they've acquired while taking IRWA education courses.

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Future Focuses

Now, as short-term initiatives come to fruition, what's next? According to Godwin, who will become International President in June, "Marketing is key to letting the world know what IRWA is and what we stand for. Without proper marketing, we risk becoming a stagnant organization." While continuing its long-term goals, IM&M plans to actively seek out, engage with, and attend new opportunities to reach new members and encourage growth in the right of way industry. The committee agrees with Godwin that external marketing is crucial and plans for more outreach and presence at industry-related endeavors. Additionally, IM&M will track any new events that IRWA attends to ensure each one is efficient and effective.

Since, according to Jake, "the leadership and members of this committee are engaged and focused on long-term growth and success of IRWA," the future holds big things — additional execution of the current IM&M strategic plan, new certification pathways and/or updated education courses, refreshed and innovative leadership resources from the Leadership Subcommittee and more! Godwin hopes, "the committee will continue to challenge itself and push for new ideas to help improve the benefit that being a [IRWA] member offers," and as current IM&M vice chair, I'll personally guarantee we will do that and more to further elevate and advance the right of way industry. 🌟

Brand-New Benefits

Did you see ROWdy the Right of Way Shark last year at the Long Beach Conference? Since IRWA's annual education conference is its largest event of the year, the ROWdy campaign was created by IM&M to enhance conference-goer engagement — new and pro, young and old, member or not. We hope it encouraged you to expand your networking and activity at the Conference, and it will be a fun addition and benefit of attending each year. Don't worry because ROWdy has already committed to visiting Virginia Beach this year!

Additionally, and excitedly, IM&M is thrilled to announce that new membership loyalty pins will be distributed soon! The Membership Subcommittee has been dedicated to providing devoted IRWA members with a new pin for every five years of membership. The pins are color-coded and aim to recognize the dedication and commitment of our members. Each color represents a different milestone, celebrating the journey and contributions of our members over the years.

"I think the pins are fantastic! I love the idea and can't wait to see them," IEC President Elect Koby Godwin, SR/WA said. The IM&M hopes that these pins will serve as a symbol of appreciation and pride for all the hard work and loyalty shown by our valued members.



Stephanie Riley is the director of communications and marketing for Yasmin L. Stump Law Group, PC where she oversees the firm's business development and marketing initiatives, website, and social media. She is currently Vice Chair of IRWA's International Marketing and Membership Committee and heads its Marketing Subcommittee.