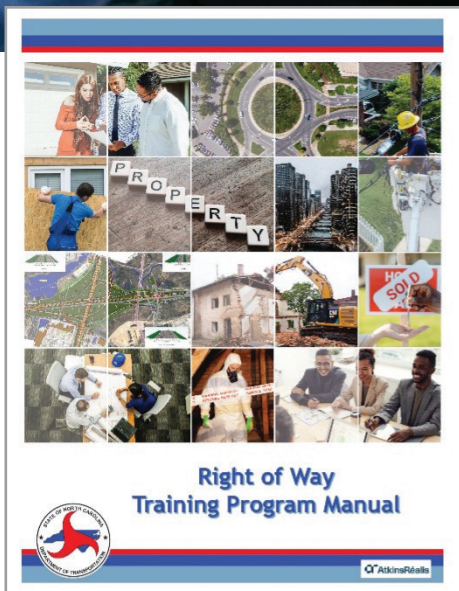


# NCDOT's Right of Way Training Program

Moving Forward



BY HEATHER FULGHUM AND FLORENCE GREEN, SR/WA, R/W-RAC

**R**ight of way professionals must be able to adapt to the everchanging practices in an evolving industry. Recognizing such, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Right of Way Unit embarked upon a mission to advance the resources to develop right of way professionals in North Carolina.

The Right of Way Training Program was launched in 2022 to facilitate the need to train right of way professionals. The development of the program entailed the collaboration and partnership of NCDOT with the International Right of Way Association (IRWA), a leading education resource, as well as other industry providers. These partnerships are an advantage to NCDOT, as developing courses and finding quality instructors on its own could be costly and time-consuming.

The IRWA courses, taught by certified instructors, provide a curriculum tailored to meet the needs of right of way professionals. Other courses in the program are developed to the specific needs of the NCDOT Right of Way Unit. These courses are available to NCDOT employees, consultants, local public agencies and other industry professionals, providing a comprehensive right of way educational program.

### Identifying the Need

NCDOT recognizes the need for a strategic training program that would provide learning opportunities. Right of way requirements are constantly changing and, at the same time, more right of way agents are retiring or choosing to leave the profession. Those professionals who remain are faced with a larger workload and a greater demand for their services. But the stakes are high in North Carolina because more money is being invested in right of way projects to keep up with the state's population explosion and the resulting increased development demands.

In 2022, North Carolina invested \$562 million in right of way projects. About 84% of that, or \$474 million, was applied to acquisitions, while another 8% was allocated to right of way appraiser/contractor fees. The remaining 8% was split between relocation expenditures and inspections, asbestos and demolition contractor fees.

Spending on real estate and right of way acquisition has increased over the past 10 years at NCDOT.

### Program Purpose and Objectives

NCDOT's primary purpose is to provide professional development and training for right of way personnel in NCDOT policies, procedures and processes related to the administration of the Right of Way Program. The objectives include developing professional competence, improving right of way processes and preparing employees for advancement.

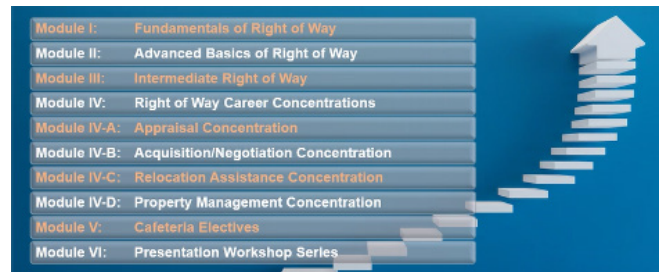
The training program provides compliance measures based upon federal guidelines as well as practical experience. Trainees work on current right of way parcels, gaining real-time experience and the opportunity to apply knowledge from the educational modules. Mentoring from supervisors and exposure to diverse thought and disciplines are key components of the program's success.

### Program Design

Trainees will be mentored by their immediate supervisors and other senior level staff.

The success of the program is based upon the trainee's continuous ability to pass courses and complete work units satisfactorily. Trainees are expected to be productive in their respective roles while participating in the program. The trainee will be evaluated in 6-month intervals. The training cycle is 24 months based upon the assigned courses or workshops within the modules. The program also includes assigned work tasks for the disciplines.

The program is comprised of six modules, as shown in the graphic below, focusing on all disciplines within the right of way profession. Participants gain a solid foundation in appraisal, real estate law and ethics. Later modules delve into advanced topics, leading to specialization in areas such as appraisal, property management or relocation assistance.



At the end of the 24-month cycle, participants may be required to participate in a presentation known as the "Hotseat," where they demonstrate their knowledge and expertise. This serves as an opportunity to assess proficiency and readiness.

### A Bright Future Through Education

As of the date of this publication, there have been 203 participants in NCDOT's Right of Way Training Program, and approximately 65 classes have been offered in a 24-month period. NCDOT's Right of Way Training Program is confident its partnership with the IRWA will produce a workforce that is progressive and ahead of the professional learning curve in a rapidly changing industry. 🌟

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