



June 21, 2019

IRWA North Star Chapter 20
Education Conference
Portland 2019

Reg. Chapter 20 Scholarship Conference Attendance Response

Dear Chapter 20,

I want to extend my sincere thanks for the opportunity to attend the IRWA Education Conference in Portland, OR, because of the Chapter 20 Scholarship awarded to me. I was a first-time attendee, and it was a fantastic experience for which I am so grateful.

Attached, please find my After-Conference Report per the requirements of the scholarship.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Faye M. Gillespie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end.

Faye M. Gillespie

WSB

612-246-9695

fgillespie@wsbeng.com

1. What educational sessions did you attend? I attended the following Items:
 - o The Region 3 Caucus and Opening Ceremony
 - o The Following Educational Sessions:
 - a. Clear as Mud
 - b. Getting Started! The Do's and Don'ts for Starting Your Young Professional's Chapter or Region Level Group
 - c. How One State Uses Incentive, Resources, and Tools for Project Progression
 - d. Practical Project Management for Right of Way Professionals
 - e. International: Acquisition of Right of Way in Nigeria for Power Infrastructure
 - f. Protect Your Prime Asset – Field Staff Safety Procedures in the Modern Age
 - o SR/WA Recognition & Awards luncheon
 - o Plenary Session Speaker
 - o Volunteered at the 2020 Conference Booth
 - o Volunteered at the YP Booth

What did I learn/what were my takeaways?

I learned a lot, both through the session regarding acquisition in Nigeria, and through speaking with International Attendees, about the major differences in how land is acquired in other countries. It's fascinating to me the differences in land rights between countries and the admirable efforts of our International counterparts to change the way land is owned, and subsequently acquired for projects.

I also really enjoyed learning about the incentives that TX is using to incentivize settlements and encourage project timeliness. We have utilized "signing bonuses" on utility projects, and we have found success there, but nothing as extensive or systemic as the process TX is using. Obviously here, we have a quick take process, and I do not believe that TX does, so that is a major difference – but offering an incentive seems very enticing to me. If we utilized more incentives, a lot of those folks who are "on the fence" might be more likely to move forward. Very interesting course.

Finally, after taking the safety course, that really hit home for me. The focus was more on urban safety, which of course is essential and often more blatantly necessary to the casual observer. But I went straight from the conference in Portland to a very rural, remote area of MN the next week. I often did not have cell service. The idea of having some kind of safety app, or something of that nature was pretty appealing. We do not work in partners, though we often have multiple agents around on a project. Taking this course really made me more conscious of inputting information into my calendar with specific addresses of where I was scheduled to be and who I was meeting with. It definitely made me more aware of what kinds of situations I was putting myself into.

2. What did I volunteer for? What did you learn? Who did you meet as a volunteer?

I volunteered for both the YP Booth and the 2020 Conference Booth. I loved being in the 2020 booth, inviting people to come to our conference and answering questions about MN. I was able to meet folks from Guam, the United Kingdom, Australia, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia, along with folks from pretty much every State as well. I encouraged them to let us know what they liked and didn't like about the conference so we would be able to take some of those lessons into the planning of our conference.

3. What was your overall impression of the conference? Have you attended before?

I thought there were definitely some logistical challenges with the site of the conference, but I thought Portland was a very welcoming, walkable, easy to navigate City. I thought the energy was great, there were some great educational sessions, and the networking opportunities were excellent. As a first-time attendee, I was impressed by the level of professionalism I experienced and by the efforts that had gone into the planning of such a large event.

4. I think the City of Portland was a great venue for the conference. The blocks were short, there were many great restaurant options within walking distance, it's a beautiful area and you could go a short distance to reach some beautiful views. I think everyone was on the same page as far as some of the challenges we experienced with the physical site of the conference. The main issues I heard at the booth from attendees were that the rooms were too small, the sessions overlapped too much. It was a little hard to navigate the hotel with one of the session rooms way up on the higher floor and the slow elevators. I think a more structured session schedule would be really helpful – 50-minute sessions OR 2-hour sessions – if they need more time. Structuring it more like the MnDOT conference would be a great improvement.

**feel free to steal my pics!*



