14th International Society for Third-Sector Research Asia-Pacific Regional Conference

Taoyuan City, Taiwan

Hosted by the Asian Institute for Impact Measurement and Management, National Central University

Conference: October 19-21, 2027
PhD Seminar: October 18-19, 2027

Reimagining Philanthropy and the Nonprofit Sector: AI, Inclusion, and Impact

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Submission Deadline: March 1, 2027

Scholars, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, funders, and rContrbepresentatives of philanthropy, civil society, and social enterprises are invited to submit abstracts for contributions to the 14th ISTR Asia-Pacific Regional Conference.

Founded in 1992, the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) is a global community dedicated to creating, discussing, and advancing research and knowledge about the Third Sector and its impact on civil society, public policy, and local communities. Its Asia Pacific Regional Network has grown steadily through online networking events and its biennial conferences.

ISTR defines Third Sector broadly as an umbrella concept, encompassing non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, voluntary associations, social economy organizations and enterprises, community organizations, self-help and mutual organizations, foundations, philanthropic and charitable organizations, and other local and global civil society forms such as volunteering, social movements and (virtual) networks, social forums, unions, religious organizations, co-operatives, and voluntary organizations.

Conference Theme

The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the world's most dynamic and contrasting philanthropic and nonprofit sector landscapes. Developed economies are witnessing robust growth in philanthropic giving, an accelerating shift toward strategic and venture philanthropy, and mounting pressures from aging

populations that are placing new demands on nonprofits and social service providers. Countries across Southeast Asia and Central Asia are experiencing rapid economic growth, vibrant and expanding populations, and an emerging domestic civil society sector with growing capacity for locally led development. Across the region, digital philanthropy and data-driven interventions are transforming how organizations design programs, mobilize resources, and measure social impact. Meanwhile, the accelerating adoption of AI and automation is introducing both opportunities and risks to the philanthropic, social, and nonprofit sector, reshaping service delivery, governance, fundraising, and the ethics of social innovation.

We focus on four key issues reshaping the philanthropy and nonprofit sector today:

1. **AI and Digital Transformation: Ethics, Responsibility, and Impact**
   Nonprofits, foundations, and civil society organizations are adopting AI and digital tools to transform service delivery, fundraising, governance, and impact measurement. We invite research and practice insights into the promises and risks of automation, algorithmic decision-making, and data-driven philanthropy—particularly issues of fairness, transparency, privacy, consent, and accessibility. Submissions may also examine the role of governments, regulators, and technology actors in shaping ethical and enabling digital ecosystems.

2. **Demographic Change, Social Infrastructure, and Community-Led Innovation**
   Demographic shifts, such as population aging, urbanization, and changing family structures, are reshaping social needs and the role of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. We welcome proposals on emerging models for elder care, community wellbeing, workforce and volunteer sustainability, and intergenerational approaches, including both established and innovative service delivery strategies. Attention to how different communities and contexts across the region co-produce solutions is strongly encouraged.

3. **Philanthropy, Development, and Global Civil Society**
   The landscape of giving and development engagement across the Asia-Pacific is evolving, from individual and corporate philanthropy to institutional, impact, and venture philanthropy. We invite comparative and thematic work on transitions from traditional aid-recipient roles to more domestically rooted development ecosystems, including the roles of diaspora philanthropy, cross-border collaboration, and transnational NGO networking. Submissions may also consider how digital platforms and new funding intermediaries reshape development agendas and accountability.

4. **Regulation, Governance, and Sustainability for Impact**
   The enabling (or constraining) conditions under which civil society operates are changing, including regulatory environments, civic space, governance models, and accountability practices. We invite proposals on compliance, legitimacy, and organizational resilience, as well as how philanthropic and nonprofit actors navigate diverse political and legal contexts while sustaining mission integrity. We also welcome work that connects governance and accountability to

long-term sustainability, climate action, and environmental justice, demonstrating how organizations define, measure, and learn for durable social impact.

Conference Tracks

This conference seeks submissions that advance evidence-informed dialogue and collaborative learning on how philanthropy and nonprofits can be reimagined amid profound social, technological, and institutional changes. We welcome submissions that address the conference theme broadly or that engage with one or more of the following thematic tracks in philanthropy and the nonprofit sector.

1. AI, Digital Technology, and Data Ethics
2. Governance, Leadership, and Management
3. Social Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Social Impact
4. Philanthropy and Financial Sustainability
5. Volunteering and Workforce Development
6. Community Engagement, Inclusion, and Co-production
7. Collective Action and Social Movements
8. Regulation, Public Policy, Politics, and Civic Space
9. Teaching, Learning, and Knowledge Exchange
10. Global Civil Society and Transnational Development
11. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Justice

Submission Guidelines

We welcome the following types of submissions:

1. **Individual paper proposals**: A single abstract (500 words) outlining the research question, how it links to prior studies, theoretical framework, methodology, and preliminary findings or contribution.

2. **Collective Panel proposals**: These are a coordinated set of approximately 3-4 papers on a particular topic or issue. Panel proposals require an abstract that identifies and justifies the panel theme (500 words), as well as individual abstracts for each panel paper (500 words each). This person submitting the panel proposal must be willing to act as the panel coordinator and ensure that all proposed paper presenters commit to attending the conference.

3. **Practitioner learnings and Case Studies for Teaching**: Practitioners and civil society leaders are invited to submit cases or experiences (500 words) that identify 1) innovative aspects of the work or experience and 2) the learnings obtained and recommendations for other organizations. Submissions should include a description of their context, problems or opportunities addressed, previous experiences considered and elements of project design or experiences, objectives and goals, stages in their development, results and conclusions, and teaching notes for teaching cases.

4. **Roundtables:** Roundtables encourage discussion and interaction among delegates, often on an issue of timely importance. The roundtable format offers short (max. 10 minutes) presentations around a common theme, with ample time for discussion. Proposals should include details on the theme or topic and its relevance, along with 3-5 names of organizers/participants. Please explain what each presenter is expected to contribute. Alternative formats will be considered, including World Cafes, demonstrations, and films. Please submit using the Roundtable type and provide a description of the content and format and how the session will function.

All submissions should be made through the online submission portal. The conference language is English.

Proposal Guidelines

Applications are welcome from academics of all levels, professionals in the sector dedicated to the generation of knowledge, active members of organizations ("practitioners"), and students of master's and doctoral programs dedicated to research or teaching.

Proposals must indicate in all cases:

1. Title
2. Conference track
3. Submission type (individual paper, collective panel, practitioner learning, case study for teaching, or roundtable)
4. Five (5) keywords to help easily identify abstract content
5. At least five (5) key bibliographic references that guide the paper to be presented
6. Short abstract of 200 words for use in the conference program if accepted
7. Is there anything in your findings you would like practitioners to know? (optional, not considered by reviewers)

Proposals are anonymous, so the submitted abstract must not include the name or identifying information of any author. The works to be presented may not consist of reports or summaries of institutional presentations or previously published papers.

Selection of Proposals

Proposals that meet all the requirements set forth here will be submitted to blind review and evaluation by two people from the academic community who are experts in topics related to the third sector.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Contribution to knowledge: Does it generate new knowledge that contributes to the understanding of the topics addressed?
2. Relevance: Is the topic presented relevant and pertinent to the audience and the conference themes?
3. Focus and clarity: Is the research question, or the purpose of the presentation, clearly articulated? Is the proposal clearly formulated and worded?
4. Relevance of the proposed methodology: Are the methodology and the design of the work (empirical, theoretical or practical) clearly articulated?
5. Conceptual anchoring: Does the work relate to the existing literature in relation to the topic presented and does it identify relevant bibliographic sources?

6. Results and implications: Are key theoretical and/or empirical findings summarized? Are the conceptual and practical implications of the results and conclusions anticipated?

The proposal must be submitted through the platform indicated below. To upload the proposal, it is necessary to register in advance; subsequently, you will receive an email verifying the opening of your account. Abstracts will not be accepted by other means.

The access link to the submission platform is:
https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/stages/81686/submitter

Presentation of Works

If the abstract is accepted, the article may have a maximum of 8,000 words. The text will be presented in Times New Roman, size 12 and 1.5 line spacing.

Papers submitted that meet the requirements will then be shared with conference attendees in advance of the conference

Presentations are expected in English.

Post Conference Publication Opportunities

Following the conference, you are encouraged to revise your paper in light of feedback received during the conference and prepare it for publication. Here are some publication options for you to consider:

1. **Voluntas**
   Papers can also be submitted to Voluntas, the peer reviewed official journal of ISTR. Authors should note that publication decisions are made solely by the journal's editorial team, and ISTR does not participate in or influence editorial decisions regarding submissions.

2. **ISTR Conference Working Papers Series**
   Conference working papers will be published on the ISTR website with a DOI. All submissions undergo editorial validation by a small committee to ensure that they meet the series' essential content and formatting requirements. This is an editorial validation process, not a blind peer review. Content and formatting requirements are available on the submission page. You will be required to log in with your ISTR membership credentials.

3. **ISTR Case Study for Teaching Series** (website in development)
   ISTR is developing a collection of teaching case studies to be published on the ISTR website, each with a DOI, as a resource for ISTR members. The Teaching and Learning Affinity Group is committed to supporting the development of case studies for publication. All submitted case studies will undergo editorial validation to ensure that they meet essential content and formatting requirements. This is an editorial validation process, not a blind peer review.

4. **Journal of Philanthropy**

ISTR has partnered with the Journal of Philanthropy to offer a new publication opportunity. Conference roundtable organizers are invited to develop their most engaging and thought-provoking discussions into Dialogues special issues. This format captures key insights from structured debates and makes them accessible to a wider audience. You can read the full call for contributions here.

Additionally, **Alliance Magazine** welcomes conference-related blog posts for publication on its website Here is the example from the #ISTR2026 conference. Blogs can be 300 to 800 words long and should be written in your voice This is a valuable opportunity to share your research findings and insights with a broader audience in the field. Posts written during the conference are preferred, but Alliance will also post any blogs received after the event. Some people end up doing several posts; others do just the one.

PhD Seminar

ISTR's PhD Seminars provide doctoral students at all levels with the opportunity to engage with senior scholars and peers in extensive intellectual and methodological discussion on their doctoral research, discuss the main theories and developments in the field, reflect upon publication and career strategies, and network within the international ISTR research community.

Central to the PhD Seminar are the **small group sessions**: each student is allotted time to discuss their doctoral research with and obtain feedback from peers and faculty in the group. Students do not prepare papers for the PhD Seminar.

Students accepted to the PhD Seminar must become members of ISTR and must register and attend the conference.

More information about the PhD Seminar is available here.
The PhD Seminar Application portal is available here.
Deadline to apply: March 1, 2027

Important Dates

Abstract submission deadline	March 1, 2027
PhD Seminar application deadline	March 1, 2027
Notification of acceptance/rejection	April 30, 2027
Presenter registration deadline	August 1, 2027
Conference programme announcement	September 1, 2027
PhD Seminar Dates	October 18-19, 2027
Conference dates	October 19-21, 2027

Academic Committee:

Hui Li, University of Hong Kong, Chair

Local Organizing Committee:

Chien-wen Shen, National Central University, Taiwan