



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
THIRD-SECTOR RESEARCH

2025 Annual Report

In 2025, the global engagement of researchers and practitioners across remained central to advancing the organization's mission to strengthen knowledge and understanding of the third sector worldwide.

Researchers working in this field are navigating increasingly difficult conditions, including declining support for research and growing restrictions on academic freedom. In this environment, participation in the ISTR community remains an important source of connection, collaboration, and optimism.

In this context, the ISTR community continues to play a vital role in fostering collaboration, intellectual exchange, and mutual support among scholars and practitioners around the world. The dedication of our members—through their time, expertise, and commitment—enables the work of our small Secretariat and allows the organization to sustain its programs and initiatives despite an increasingly complex global landscape.

The past year also marked an important period of organizational transition and development. The Secretariat established a new operational home in Seattle, providing a renewed base for the Society's administrative activities and collaboration. At the beginning of the year, Megan Haddock assumed the role of Executive Director, joined by two new staff members, Alexis Semeraro and Beth Lovelady. ISTR has also benefited from the leadership of a newly elected Board of Directors, whose guidance and strategic insight have been instrumental in supporting the organization through this period of transition and continued growth. Operationally, ISTR continued its regular member communications and support with this report including highlights from the ISTR 2026 year.

The following is a summary of ISTR's activities in 2025 in support of advancing the objectives in our strategic plan.

Strategic Plan Objective #1:
Motivating excellence in Third Sector research and promoting impactful dissemination and utilization of that knowledge.

Activities

The Publications Committee and *Voluntas* editors supported the journal's transition to open access with Cambridge University Press.

In 2025, ISTR announced a new publishing agreement for *Voluntas* with Cambridge University Press (CUP) which begins January 2026. With this transition, all articles published from 2026 onward will be open access, while ISTR members will retain free access to the journal's archive of pre-2026 articles.

After careful analysis over two years, ISTR selected CUP because of its strong academic reputation, its alignment with the organization's mission, and its commitment to equitable access to knowledge. As a nonprofit publisher, CUP offers personalized support while helping expand the journal's global reach.

The journal is expected to fully transition to a Gold Open Access model by 2027, with publication fees waived or covered for unfunded authors. Although this shift will modestly reduce ISTR's annual revenue, the anticipated benefits, including greater visibility, increased citations, and broader international engagement, are expected to strengthen the journal's long-term impact.

New Voluntas cover design



Regional academic and host committees delivered excellent conferences.

Asia Pacific Conference

The 13th ISTR Asia-Pacific Regional Conference was hosted by the Center for Leadership, Citizenship and Democracy at the National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines Diliman, and held in Cebu City from April 23–25, 2025. The University of the Philippines Cebu generously hosted the event on its campus with the support of faculty, staff, and students.

The conference brought together more than 125 participants from 20 countries, including scholars, practitioners, and sector leaders. More than 80 papers were presented through panels, roundtables, and individual sessions. The call for papers encouraged participation from independent researchers and civil society leaders, helping foster dialogue between research and practice. The result was a dynamic exchange among participants from academia, government, civil society, and the private sector. Conference report [available here](#).



Latin America and the Caribbean Conference

From July 2–4, 2025, Anáhuac University, the School of Social Responsibility, and the Mexican Center for Philanthropy (Cemefi) co-hosted the 14th ISTR Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean in Mexico City. The event was held in conjunction with Cemefi's 22nd Congress of Research on the Third Sector.

The conference theme—*Governance, Innovation and New Collaborative Forms for the Common Good in Latin America and the Caribbean*—reflected the increasing hybridization of the sector and the growing importance of partnerships across sectors.

A total of 176 participants from 20 countries attended the conference, presenting more than 100 papers alongside roundtables, a book presentation, and a Data Walk hosted by GivingTuesday. Discussions highlighted new research on governance, innovation, volunteering, philanthropy, teaching, and sustainability while strengthening connections between theory and practice.

Conference report [available here](#).



The 2026 International Conference Co-Chairs created an innovative call for contributions, and 160 reviewers and track chairs supported the peer-review process for a record number of abstract submissions.

During 2025 significant work was undertaken towards ISTR's 2026 International Conference, to be hosted in Lisbon. The 2026 conference theme is "Imagining the Next Generation: Strengthening the Foundations of the Third Sector." In an increasingly polarized world, communication, collaboration, and understanding are essential. Third sector organizations play a vital role in building and sustaining communities, yet the environment in which they operate is becoming more challenging.

Across many countries, legal and policy spaces for civil society research are narrowing, academic freedom is under pressure, and universities and nonprofits are facing declining funding. At the same time, influential research is increasingly being produced outside traditional academic institutions by foundations, think tanks, and independent organizations.

The 2026 conference will explore how the next generation of third sector research and practice can respond to these changes. By building bridges between disciplines, cultures, sectors, and technologies, the conference aims to strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing across the global research community.



The Research Center Directors Network inspired ISTR to undertake a new Comparative Third Sector Research Project.

In response to discussions within the Research Center Directors Network, ISTR has launched the Comparative Third Sector Project (CTSP) in partnership with Giving Tuesday and Civicus, a global initiative to create an open-access and globally governed data platform supporting comparative analysis of third sector organizations worldwide that is accessible, reliable, objective, and comparable.

Building on earlier work conducted at Johns Hopkins University, the project seeks to map existing data sources, produce national reports, and support cross-country research. Led by Executive Director Megan Haddock and Board Liaison Bernard Enjolras, the initiative aims to strengthen global data infrastructure and expand collaboration across the third sector research community.

A first step was initiated at the end of 2025 to participate in funding proposal submission to the Canadian Social Sciences Research Council for a partnership grant involving 40+ country teams derived from the ISTR community. We remain hopeful that the grant will be approved in 2026.

Strategic Plan Objective #2: Supporting research-informed teaching.

Dedicated mentors offered guidance to students and emerging scholars.

The ISTR Mentoring Program continues to connect early-career scholars with experienced researchers around the world. In 2025, the program supported **32 mentoring pairs**, providing guidance on research development, academic careers, and professional identity.

Reflections from mentees highlight how mentoring relationships help scholars refine research ideas, strengthen methodological approaches, and navigate the challenges of academic life. Mentors similarly emphasized the collaborative nature of these partnerships, which often lead to joint research projects, publications, and long-term professional relationships.

Excerpt from ISTR PhD Seminar Newsletter Article

Beyond professional development, the program fosters a sense of belonging within an international scholarly community, strengthening connections across generations and regions. The Mentoring Experience

Both mentors see collaboration as the heart of effective mentorship. Dr. Appe emphasizes working through shared research interests rather than focusing only on dissertation chapters. “It’s about helping mentees see how their dissertation expertise can evolve into future research threads,” she explains. Her partnerships have led to book chapters, journal articles, and even a creative film review project. “Variety keeps the collaboration fresh and builds confidence,” she adds.

For Dr. Hommerová, mentoring quickly became hands-on. After meeting her mentee at the 2024 ISTR Conference in Antwerp, they co-authored a monograph chapter that same summer. “From the very beginning, I wanted to offer everything that might help—advice, contacts, and encouragement,” she says.

Both mentors highlight the rewarding moments: from co-writing papers to sharing milestones. Dr. Hommerová fondly recalls her mentee’s email announcing a successful dissertation defense. “It was wonderful—a moment of real pride,” she says.

The Mentee Experience

Although both mentees participated in the same program, their mentoring experiences took shape in different ways, reflecting their research trajectories and needs at the time they joined.

For Shiqi, mentoring became a recurring part of her doctoral journey from an early stage. Seeking insights and networking beyond her home institution, she was first matched with Professor Katsunori Sato, Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Management in Kagawa University. His research focuses on the possibility of Social Business in developed countries. As a first-year doctoral student, Shiqi maintained a good mentoring relationship primarily online, lasting about a year. Later, Shiqi was matched with Professor ChiaKo Hung, assistant professor in the School of Social Policy and Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on nonprofit financial management, social entrepreneurship, philanthropy, fundraising management, and collaborative governance. This mentoring relationship has been maintained primarily through regular online conversations, complemented by encounters at international conferences, and has continued for more than 2 years. Over time, discussions evolved from specific research questions to broader reflections on academic development.

For Maria, mentoring entered her doctoral journey at a point when she was seeking clarity rather than technical supervision. Joining the program while refining the scope of her dissertation, she experienced mentoring primarily as a reflective space. Her mentoring meetings, conducted online, focused on moments of decision-making, such as preparing conference submissions and considering how different dissertation papers fit together. Rather than offering prescriptive advice, her mentor provided an external and objective perspective. This mentoring relationship, initiated in late 2025, is ongoing and continues to develop as her doctoral work progresses.

Faculty members led PhD Seminars in Cebu and Mexico City, serving participants from around the world.

PhD Seminars held in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific and Latin America conferences provided doctoral students with valuable opportunities to receive feedback on their research, connect with senior scholars, and engage in professional development discussions.

In Cebu, fifteen doctoral students from seven countries participated in the seminar chaired by Hui Li of the University of Hong Kong. Sessions included dissertation discussions, workshops on publishing international research, and a field visit to a local NGO working with farmers and disadvantaged communities.

In Mexico City, fourteen doctoral students from across the Americas participated in the seminar chaired by Adriana Reynaga of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Participants presented their research, received feedback from faculty mentors, and attended professional development sessions on navigating doctoral studies and publishing academic work.

Both seminars concluded with a Three-Minute Thesis competition, highlighting innovative doctoral research and providing students with the opportunity to present their work to the wider conference community.

Three-Minute Thesis Award Winners



Alya Sutrisno

“Environmental Justice and Energy Transition in Sumatra, Indonesia”



Viridiana Ulloa Bobadilla

“The ‘care society’ as a pillar of justice and gender equity in Latin American civil society.”

PhD Seminar alumni continued producing their special newsletter.

PhD Seminar alumni continued to strengthen their community by producing three in-depth newsletters during the year. Articles explored topics such as the transition from doctoral study to academic careers, the use of AI in qualitative research, and theoretical approaches such as critical realism in third sector studies.

The newsletters also shared job announcements, calls for papers, and opportunities for collaboration, helping connect emerging scholars across regions and disciplines. ISTR is grateful to the editorial team and contributors who make this publication possible.

The Teaching and Learning Affinity Group helping to build a global repository of teaching cases that reflect the global diversity of the sector.

Reflecting the need to provide more locally relevant teaching materials, the Teaching and Learning Affinity Group launched teaching case studies as a new format for conference submissions. These cases present real-world scenarios that encourage students to engage in complex decision-making processes and apply theoretical frameworks in practice. ISTR's global and interdisciplinary membership is well placed to develop and utilize this information.

Each case includes a narrative of real events, an instructional dilemma, and a teaching guide outlining learning objectives, theoretical concepts, discussion questions, and suggested approaches for classroom use. For the first time in 2026, teaching case studies will be presented at the International Conference.

Strategic Plan Objective #3:
Fostering inclusive networking and learning.

Affinity Groups organized online events and kept their networks engaged.

ISTR's Affinity Groups continued to play a central role in fostering collaboration and intellectual exchange among members. Throughout the year, these groups hosted webinars, conference sessions, and collaborative projects.

Several groups expanded partnerships with external organizations, developed research initiatives, and contributed to publications and conference discussions. Together, these activities help sustain vibrant scholarly networks across disciplines and regions.

Highlight: The Research for Practice Affinity Group, in collaboration with the *Journal of Nonprofit Innovation (JoNI)*, released a special issue titled “*Research for Practice*” in September. The special issue is [available here](#).

Regional networks in Asia, Latin America, and Africa published newsletters and events. We are looking forward to a new MENA newsletter.

ISTR's regional networks continued to strengthen connections among members through newsletters, events, and collaborative initiatives across Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Building on this momentum, the organization will launch its first newsletter for the Middle East and North Africa region next year, further expanding opportunities for engagement across the global community. ISTR is grateful to the editorial team and contributors who make this publication possible.

Thank you Pablo Marsal Baraldi for four years of service as Editor of the LAC Newsletter



Pablo Marsal Baraldi will be stepping down from his role as editor of ISTR LAC Regional Newsletter at the end of the year. In his four years as Editor, Pablo significantly expanded the readership of the LAC newsletter. He increased the frequency of publication to twelve issues a year, expanded the online content, introduced Portuguese content, and introduced ISTR's Spanish and Portuguese social media presence.

We are grateful to Pablo's for his dedication to producing a newsletter with so much information connecting research and practice and his commitment to sharing information with ISTR members in the region. Thanks also to Damian Cram, main technician and webmaster, and Monique Lemos, Editorial Assistant and Portuguese translator. Pablo's last issue will be shared later in December.

Welcome Andrea Pineda as next LAC Newsletter Editor

Andrea Martini Pineda will succeed Pablo as the next LAC Editor. Andrea is a postdoctoral researcher in the Science Support Models Study Group (Gema Filantropia) at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Sao Paulo (IEA), researching the convergence between philanthropy and science. She holds a PhD in Public Administration and Government from Fundação Getulio Vargas, graduated in Social Communication, and holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics, both from PUC-SP. She has worked for over 20 years in public education, the third sector, and private social investment and has published articles in academic journals and media outlets.



She is the Alliance Magazine representative in Brazil. She has been a member of ISTR since 2019. We look forward to reading her first newsletter in 2026!

Strategic Objective #4:
Ensuring ISTR's resilience and good governance.

ISTR's Board of Directors provided strong governance and strategic guidance throughout the year, helping the organization navigate a period of transition and evolving global challenges. Key activities included supporting the Executive Director in all aspects of the transition and hiring of new staff, establishing timelines and protocols for the regular review of ISTR policies, representing ISTR to external partners. Special thanks go to the Executive Committee and Transition Committee for their close support of the Secretariat. The Finance Committee also played an essential role in reviewing financial policies, overseeing the annual budget, and ensuring that ISTR continues to operate responsibly and sustainably on behalf of its members. A financial accounting of ISTR operations follows.

Gifts

The newly established Margery Daniels Legacy Fund will build an endowment securing the future of the PhD Seminar and Mentoring Program in honor of Margery Daniels, ISTR's first Executive Director. Three foundational gifts give us a start to raise the balance needed toward our \$100,000 goal.

- **Virginia Hodgkinson**, United States (\$10,000). Virginia was integral to the founding of ISTR by advocating for its formation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, raising the initial funding needed, serving as a voluntary executive director in 1992, and Board President from 2001-2002. We are grateful for her continued support of the society with this gift.
- **Stanley N. Katz**, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, United States \$5,000. Stan has been a member since 2009. He delivered the ISTR Prize Lecture at our 2016 International Conference in Stockholm. We are grateful for this important support.
- **The Maecenta Foundation**, Germany \$2,000. The Maecenta Foundation has been a longstanding partner and friend to ISTR. We are grateful for this generous gift.

Thank you to these ISTR members for their gifts to the ISTR General Fund and ISTR Global Participation Fund

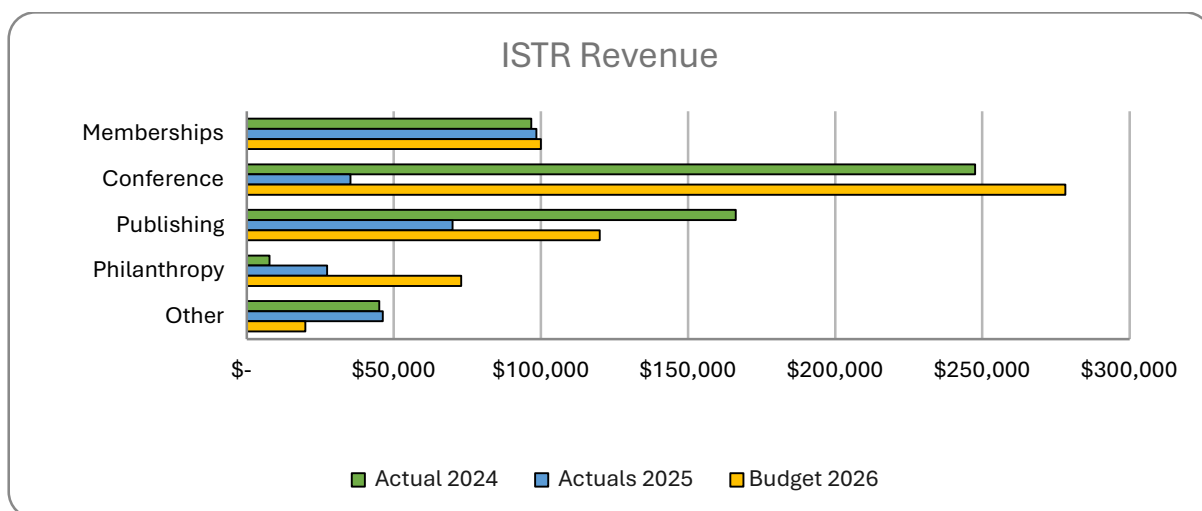
- Hans Peter Schmitz, United States
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Treasurer's Report

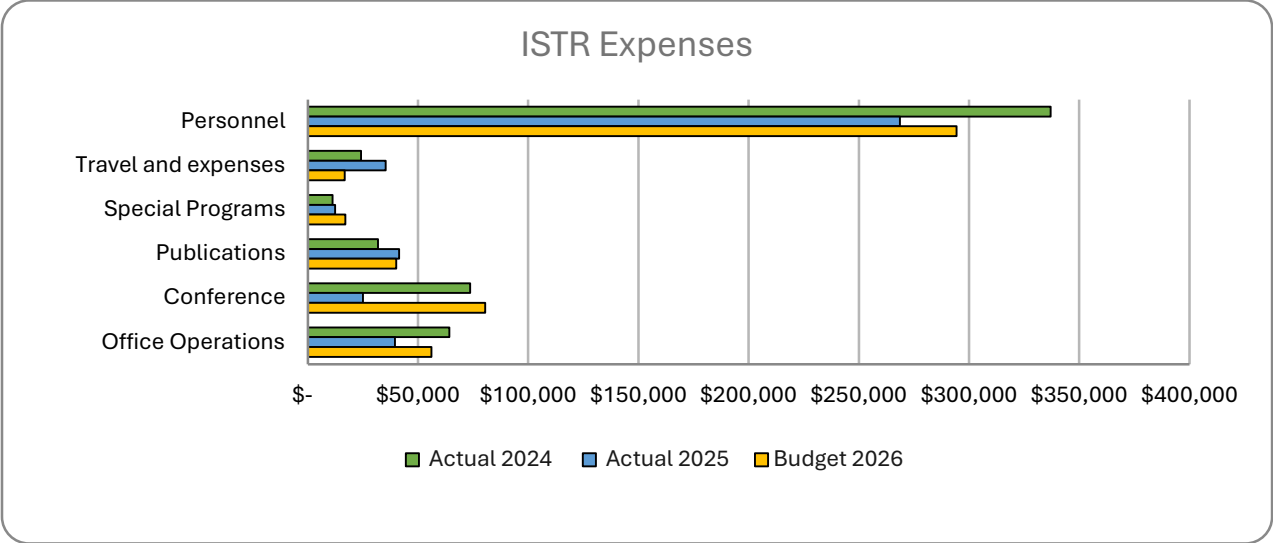
This report presents the financial results for 2025. ISTR's regulatory Form 990 for 2024 is available online. For the year ending December 31, 2025, ISTR had a deficit of US\$66,233 (compared to a surplus in 2024 of US\$118,573). The budget for 2026 predicts we will again have a surplus of 86,230 which we hope might be even larger if investment returns continue to be positive.

As can be seen in the bar charts below and accounts following for 2024 and 2025 (plus the budget for 2026), ISTR's revenues are mainly from four sources. Publishing (including *Voluntas*) is a key income stream. Income from our publisher, Springer, dropped between 2024 and 2025 due to a change in their business model; beginning in 2026 *Voluntas* is published by Cambridge University Press and revenues are expected to rise compared to 2025. Membership revenues are very important, especially when one also includes revenue from members attending conferences. This year revenue has come from registration generated by regional conferences in Latin America and Asia. A steady growth in membership has been very good news for the association. Beginning in 2022, two-year memberships are purchased on a rolling basis and thus future revenue for memberships which extend into 2026 and 2027 appear as liabilities in 2025.

ISTR has also depended on philanthropic revenues for a significant share of its budget. We received direct support from the Ford Foundation to cover registration subsidies for the Mexico conferences, and support from the Rockefeller Archive Center and Indiana University for the upcoming international conference in Lisbon. We are grateful to the local sponsors who supported our regional conference hosts in Mexico and Cebu directly.



ISTR’s expenditures are quite diverse as shown in the bar graph below for 2024 and 2025 (with the budget for 2026). We continue to support special programs in the regions and PhD seminars. We have a small staff to cover the needs for the management of ISTR and the delivery of member services. With the retirement of Margery Daniels, Megan Haddock has become Executive Director. We have hired a new Program Manager, Beth Lovelady, and part-time Administrative Coordinator, Alexis Semeraro.



The investment market has been quite favorable during 2025. ISTR has invested its capital with Vanguard Asset Management Ltd in both the money market and socially responsible funds in accordance with ISTR Investment Policy. Our portfolio has had positive returns in 2024 (\$97,000) and 2025 (\$81,526). We are invested for the long term, however, and the Finance Committee continues to monitor investment performance. In 2025, the Board also adopted a Reserves Policy.

I am grateful to the support of the 2025 Finance Committee members: Nathan Grasse (Carleton University Canada), Lesley Alborough (UK), and Domenico Carolei (University of Stirling, UK), with Carolyn Cordery (President) as ex-officio. Megan Haddock as Executive Director also attended the meetings and assisted us greatly.

Submitted by Elizabeth Bloodgood, Concordia University, Canada, ISTR Treasurer

	Actual 2025	Budget 2026	Budget 2027
Income			
A. Memberships	\$ 98,491	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
B. Conference	\$ 16,271	\$ 278,200.00	\$ -
C. Regional Conferences	\$ 19,100		\$ 25,000.00
D. Publishing	\$ 70,047	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 110,000.00
E. Philanthropy and Grants	\$ 27,420	\$ 73,000.00	\$ 83,000.00
F. Other	\$ 46,273	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Total Income	\$ 277,602	\$ 591,200.00	\$ 338,000.00
Expenses			
A Personnel	\$ 268,570	\$ 294,323.30	\$ 309,242.67
B Travel and expenses	\$ 35,316	\$ 16,800.00	\$ 44,500.00
C Special Programs	\$ 12,336	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 17,000.00
D Publications	\$ 41,415	\$ 40,200.00	\$ 37,200.00
E Conference	\$ 9,296	\$ 80,500.00	\$ -
F Regional Conferences	\$ 15,781		\$ 11,100.00
O Office Operations	\$ 39,582.84	\$ 56,146.00	\$ 47,533.84
Total Expenses	\$ 425,360	\$ 504,969.30	\$ 466,576.51
Net Operating Income	\$ (147,759)	\$ 86,230.70	\$ (128,576.51)
Gain (Loss) on Investments	\$ 81,526		
Net Income	\$ (66,233)	\$ 86,230.70	\$ (128,576.51)

Thank you to ISTR's volunteers

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