

Call for Research Papers



IAVE World Volunteer Conference

المؤتمر العالمي للتطوع

الرياض 2027 Riyadh

IAVE World Volunteer Conference 2027

Reimagining Volunteering for Greater Social
Impact through Innovation and Transformation

The International Association for Volunteer Effort ([IAVE](#)) and our conference partner [Ghadan](#) invite researchers, scholars, practitioners, policy specialists, and thought leaders to submit research papers for consideration as part of the IAVE World Volunteer Conference 2027. The conference is to take place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in late 2027 and will bring together volunteer leaders, civil society organisations, public institutions, businesses, academics, and community innovators from around the world to examine the evolving role of volunteering in advancing social impact, sustainable development, social cohesion, and community resilience.

Under the conference theme, **Reimagining Volunteering for Greater Social Impact through Innovation and Transformation**, this Call for Research Papers seeks high-quality, evidence-informed contributions that deepen understanding of volunteering, strengthen policy and practice, and contribute to the global knowledge base on volunteer action in diverse cultural, social, economic, and political contexts. The focus of this call is on **secondary research**: papers should draw on existing evidence, published research, policy literature, programme evaluations, datasets, reports, case studies, and other credible sources rather than presenting new primary data collection. The research reviewed should primarily cover the period **2022 to 2026**, ensuring that submissions reflect recent evidence, current debates, and emerging trends in volunteering.

Purpose of the Call

The purpose of this call is to identify rigorous, relevant, and forward-looking research that can inform dialogue at the conference and support IAVE and Ghadan's commitment to advancing volunteering as a powerful force for good. This includes raising awareness of the [Call to Action for the Future of Volunteering](#) commitments, a global shared agenda to recognise, support, and safeguard volunteers and to strengthen the enabling environments in which volunteering can thrive. Selected papers will contribute to conference sessions, knowledge exchange, and wider reflection on how volunteering can respond to contemporary global challenges while remaining inclusive, ethical, impactful, and locally grounded. The papers will also support the exchange of knowledge, evidence, and debate as part of pre-conference engagement from January to October 2027.

Research Topics

The following topics and questions identify priority areas of inquiry that will add value to the conference by deepening understanding of key issues in volunteering and stimulating evidence-informed debate about its future. They are aligned with the main conference themes and reflect the commitments set out in the Call to Action for the Future of Volunteering.

Selected papers are expected to provide opinion-shaping analysis of research evidence, demonstrate thought leadership, deepen understanding of volunteering, and generate practical insights for policy, infrastructure, funders, organisations, communities, and volunteers themselves.

Submissions may address one topic or combine several where this strengthens the analysis.

A maximum of seven final papers will be selected and funded.

Conference theme 1: *Investing in Volunteering as a Strategic Asset in Delivering Social Progress*

The first research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Volunteerism and social cohesion: Volunteering is frequently associated with building trust, solidarity, belonging, intergenerational connection, pride in place, peacebuilding, crisis resilience, and community cohesion. Papers may explore the extent to which volunteering contributes to social capital and sustainable communities, particularly in a world shaped by disruption, polarisation, inequality, and changing civic behaviours.

- Is volunteering sufficiently recognised as a contributor to social capital, trust, and community resilience?
- What role does volunteering play in addressing global disruption, deepening inequalities, and division?
- What emerging challenges or opportunities affect volunteering's impact on more socially cohesive communities?

The second research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Policy and enabling environments: Laws, national strategies, public policy, infrastructure, funding, and institutional arrangements can either strengthen or constrain volunteering. Papers may examine how enabling environments are created, how policy commitments translate into practical support, and what changes when governments recognise volunteers as a strategic asset for social progress and sustainable development.

- How large is the gap between government policy commitments and sustained support for volunteering infrastructure?
- Where are there strong examples of government commitment to practical investment in volunteering?
- How can governments be influenced to recognise and resource volunteers as a strategic asset?
- If volunteers are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, how should this be reflected in policy, funding, and accountability frameworks?

The third research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Investment in volunteering: Volunteering is often wrongly perceived as cost-free or an optional add-on, yet volunteers are central to communities and sustainable development. Papers may explore how financial investment, infrastructure support, philanthropy, corporate leadership, and public funding models can better recognise, resource, and sustain the value created through volunteering.

- Where has direct financial investment in volunteering maximised social outcomes?
- What needs to change for volunteering policy to be supported by appropriate budget funding?
- What role can corporates and philanthropy play in recognising and funding volunteering as a strategic asset?
- How can funding models better recognise and support the value of volunteer involvement?

The fourth research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Equity, inclusion, and access: Volunteering is not equally open or accessible to all. Papers may explore the financial, logistical, cultural, institutional, and social barriers that prevent participation, particularly among marginalised communities, and consider how volunteering ecosystems can become more inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive.

- How detrimental are financial, logistical, cultural, or organisational barriers to volunteer engagement?
- Do volunteer-involving organisations recognise when their culture, systems, or practices are exclusionary?
- What is required to embed inclusive and culturally responsive practice across volunteering ecosystems?

Conference theme 2: *Engaging Future Generations in Volunteering*

The first research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

The future of volunteering needs people: Volunteering depends on people choosing to give time, skills, care, and energy. Papers may examine how demographic change, technology, artificial intelligence, foresight, changing lifestyles, and new civic behaviours affect motivation and involvement, particularly among younger and future generations of volunteers.

- How will demographic change, technology, artificial intelligence, and changing civic behaviours affect the next generation of volunteers?

- What are young people currently looking for, and what motivates them to volunteer, is there, for example, demand for opportunities that are more purpose led and include community co-creation?
- Are organisations still designing roles and expectations that do not reflect the needs or aspirations of future volunteers?
- What is working well with young people today, and what trends suggest further change is needed?

The second research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Volunteering supporting wellbeing and enhanced livelihoods: Volunteering is often associated with friendship, confidence, belonging, connection, skills development, and work experience. It is also increasingly recognised for its potential contribution to physical health, mental wellbeing, social connection, confidence, and life chances. Papers may consider how the benefits of volunteering for individuals, particularly future generations, can be better understood, communicated, and measured.

- Do organisations communicate the benefits of volunteering effectively when recruiting volunteers?
- Can volunteering help address emerging issues such as isolation, loneliness, or reduced human connection?
- How can volunteering maximise value for young people seeking to enhance life chances and livelihoods?
- How can mental, physical, social, and practical benefits be better recognised when measuring volunteer impact?

The third research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Innovation in volunteer engagement: Volunteering is changing as societies, expectations, technologies, and lifestyles evolve, focusing attention on how volunteering is evolving in practice is important. Papers may examine emerging models such as digital, hybrid, micro, youth-led, skills-based, episodic, informal, and cross-sector volunteering, and consider whether volunteer-involving organisations and infrastructure are adapting quickly and effectively enough.

- How effective are new models of volunteering in responding to the expectations of existing and potential volunteers?
- Is volunteering infrastructure at risk of changing too little, too late?
- What innovations are likely to shape future volunteer engagement, and what do they mean for policy and practice?

Conference theme 3: *Driving the Social Impact of Volunteering through AI and Digital Transformation*

The research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Artificial intelligence and digital transformation: Artificial intelligence and rapid digital transformation are reshaping workplaces, daily life, organisations, and civic participation. Volunteering is not immune to these changes. Papers may examine the current and potential impact of AI and digital tools on volunteer roles, engagement, safeguarding, inclusion, infrastructure, ethics, and the future volunteering ecosystem.

- What are the risks and negative implications of AI for volunteer involvement and future volunteer roles?
- What are the current and potential benefits of AI and digital transformation for volunteering?
- How are AI and digital developments reshaping volunteering ecosystems, infrastructure, and practice?
- How can AI be used responsibly, inclusively, and securely to help volunteering thrive?

Conference theme 4: *Adding Value to Volunteering through Partnership and Collaboration*

The first research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Working together to make a difference: Partnership is essential to unlocking the full potential of volunteering. When organisations, sectors, communities, and volunteers work around a shared purpose, they can combine knowledge, resources, skills, and networks to achieve greater collective impact than any one actor could deliver alone. Papers may examine how intersectoral, cross-sectoral, and cross-border collaboration strengthens volunteer involvement and impact, and how volunteers themselves can be meaningfully involved in co-creating solutions to community and global challenges.

- What forms of partnership and collaboration are most effective in strengthening the reach, quality, and impact of volunteering?
- How can cross-sector and cross-border partnerships mobilise shared resources, skills, infrastructure, and networks to enable more people to volunteer?
- What conditions are needed for partnerships between governments, civil society, businesses, communities, and volunteers to be equitable, sustainable, and mutually beneficial?
- How can volunteers be meaningfully involved in co-creating partnership-based solutions to local, national, and global challenges?

The second research topic aligned with this conference theme focuses more broadly on corporate and employee volunteering, which includes the role of partnership and collaboration in strengthening engagement and impact.

Corporate and employee volunteering: Employer-supported volunteering has expanded over recent decades and is increasingly linked to corporate social responsibility, business objectives, skills-based volunteering, partnership working, and impact measurement. Papers may explore how corporate citizenship is evolving, the trends and how these will impact the future of employer supported volunteering.

- How are businesses and employer-supported volunteering programmes evolving?
- What trends are shaping the future role of corporate citizenship and employer-supported volunteering?
- Will skills-based volunteering become a stronger priority for corporates, employees, and partner organisations?
- How can collaboration and co-creation between businesses, communities, and civil society organisations become more common practice?

Conference theme 5: *Increasing Recognition for Volunteering and Rethinking Volunteer Measurement*

The research topic aligned with this conference theme is:

Making the invisible visible — communicating the value and benefit of volunteering:

Volunteering creates significant social, economic, civic, and human value, yet much of this contribution remains under-recognised, under-measured, or hidden from public view. Papers may examine how the value of volunteering can be more effectively understood, evidenced, communicated, and recognised by governments, funders, organisations, communities, and the wider public. This may include exploring new approaches to measuring volunteer impact, capturing the lived experience and contribution of volunteers, and making visible the benefits of volunteering for individuals, communities, institutions, and society as a whole.

- How can the social, economic, civic, and human value of volunteering be more effectively measured, evidenced, and communicated?
- What approaches best capture the lived experience, contribution, and impact of volunteers across different communities and contexts?
- Why does much of the value created through volunteering remain under-recognised or invisible to governments, funders, organisations, and the wider public?
- How can measurement frameworks better reflect both the benefits of volunteering for individuals and its wider contribution to communities, institutions, and society?

Who Should Submit

We welcome submissions from academics, independent researchers, postgraduate researchers, research institutes, civil society organisations, volunteer-involving organisations, public agencies, corporate volunteering programmes, and cross-sector partnerships. Collaborative papers that bring together research and practice perspectives are strongly encouraged.

Submission Requirements

There is a two-stage submission and selection process.

First Stage: Applicants are invited to first submit an abstract of **no more than 350 words** for a proposed research paper based on **secondary research**. The abstract should clearly describe the focus and purpose of the proposed paper. It should include:

- the **proposed title** of the paper;
- the **background and context** for the topic;
- the main **research aim, objective, or question**;
- the **rationale** for the paper, including why the topic is important or timely;
- the proposed **method or analytical approach** for reviewing and interpreting the existing evidence;
- the key **themes, issues, or debates** the paper is expected to explore;
- the anticipated **contribution** of the paper to knowledge, policy, and practice; and
- how the paper aligns with the **purpose of the call for papers**.

Following submission of the abstract by the specified date a review will be carried out by the conference research committee. This review will be based on the information provided against each of the points set out above. All applicants will receive feedback on their submission and those selected will go forward to the second stage of the selection process.

Second Stage: Successful first stage applicants will be invited to submit a full research paper in English, based on the abstract they submitted. Final submissions should clearly demonstrate relevance to the conference theme, apply critical thinking and systematic analysis to the chosen topic, indicate the secondary research approach used, the evidence base reviewed, key findings, and implications for volunteering policy and/or practice. The evidence reviewed should primarily be drawn from sources published or made available between **2022 and 2026**. Papers should not depend on new interviews, surveys, focus groups, experiments, or other primary data collection unless such material has already been completed, ethically approved, and is being analysed as part of an existing evidence base.

Final Research Paper Format

To support consistency, quality, and comparability across submissions, authors are encouraged to structure their full research papers using the following format. The format is intended to support robust secondary research and may be adapted where appropriate to suit the nature of the paper.

- 1. Title page:** Include a concise and descriptive paper title, author names, affiliations, country or region, corresponding author contact details, and three to five keywords.
- 2. Abstract:** Provide a concise summary of up to 350 words outlining the purpose, approach, findings, and implications of the paper for volunteering policy and/or practice.
- 3. Introduction and context:** Set out the topic being examined, explain its relevance to the conference theme, and describe why the topic matters and how the findings and conclusion contribute to existing knowledge of volunteering and social impact.
- 4. Research aim and questions:** State the overall aim of the paper and identify the specific research question or questions guiding the review and analysis.
- 5. Methodology and evidence base:** Explain the secondary research design, including search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, types of sources reviewed, geographical scope, databases or repositories consulted, and any limitations in the available evidence. Authors should specify how they identified and selected research, policy literature, evaluation reports, datasets, and other credible sources published or made available between **2022 and 2026**.
- 6. Analysis and synthesis:** Present the approach used to organise, compare, interpret, or synthesise the evidence. Authors should explain how themes, patterns, gaps, contradictions, or lessons were identified across the sources reviewed. This may include policy analysis, comparative review, desk-based case studies, or practice-based review of existing evidence.
- 7. Findings:** Set out the main findings clearly and logically. Findings should be grounded in the reviewed evidence and, where relevant, should distinguish between global, regional, national, organisational, and community-level insights.
- 8. Discussion:** Interpret the significance of the findings, connect them to wider debates on volunteering and social impact, and consider implications for different stakeholders as appropriate, including volunteer-involving organisations, policymakers, funders, businesses, communities, and researchers.
- 9. Practice and policy implications:** A key component of the paper is to identify practical lessons, recommendations, or areas for action that could strengthen volunteering ecosystems, improve inclusion, enhance impact, or support more enabling environments for volunteer action.

- 10. Limitations:** Acknowledge limitations in the evidence base, methodology, scope, data quality, comparability, language coverage, or generalisability of conclusions.
- 11. Conclusion:** Summarise the paper's contribution and highlight the most important insights.
- 12. References:** Include a complete and consistent reference list using **APA 7th edition** as the preferred style. Harvard referencing may be accepted where it is the standard required by an author's institution, provided it is applied consistently. Authors should ensure that all sources are credible, accurately cited, and appropriately attributed.

Second Stage Review and Selection Criteria

Final submissions will be reviewed by the conference research committee against the following criteria, with particular attention to the quality and transparency of the research approach:

- Relevance to the conference theme and to current issues in volunteering and social impact.
- Clarity of research purpose, question, or argument.
- Quality, transparency, and appropriateness of the research methodology, including the evidence base, search approach, and limitations.
- Robustness of the synthesis, including how clearly the paper compares, interprets, and draws insights from existing sources.
- Strength of findings, evidence, or contribution to knowledge.
- Practical implications for volunteer leadership, policy, programme design, or community impact.
- Originality, innovation, and potential to stimulate dialogue among conference participants.
- Attention to ethical considerations, inclusion, and cultural context.

The final full paper must be submitted by the deadline given, this will be reviewed and a selection made. Following selection and reviewer feedback a revised version (as appropriate) will be finalised.

Important Dates

Milestone	Date
Call for Research Papers opens	August 11, 2026
First Stage Abstract submission deadline	September 18, 2026 (17:00 BST)
Notification of First Stage selection outcome	October 8, 2026
Second Stage submission deadline	November 19, 2026 (17:00 BST)
Notification of final selection outcome	December 17, 2026
Global Webinar Series	January to October 2027
IAVE World Volunteer Conference 2027	Late 2027, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Submission Process

First and second stage submissions should be uploaded to [this link](#) by the stated deadline. Only complete submissions received by the deadlines specified will be considered. Authors may submit more than one proposal; however, each submission should be made separately.

Remuneration

The fee for each paper will be 5,000 USD payable upon final completion and acceptance of the paper submitted. IAVE and Ghadan intend to allocate a unique DOI (Digital Object Identifier) number to each selected and published paper, subject to completion of the necessary publication and registration arrangements. Attendance and presentation at the World Volunteer Conference will also be offered, where appropriate, to accepted authors, including travel and accommodation support.

Presenter Expectations

Accepted authors will be expected to present as part of one global webinar to take place between January and October 2027. Authors are also expected to participate actively in the World Volunteer conference programme and, where appropriate, contribute to

dialogue with practitioners, policymakers, and volunteer leaders. Presenters should prepare accessible, engaging presentations that communicate research findings clearly to a diverse international audience. Selected authors may also be invited to contribute to post-conference knowledge products, proceedings, blogs, or related dissemination activities.

Ethics, Accessibility, and Inclusion

IAVE and Ghadan are committed to inclusive, respectful, and ethical knowledge exchange. Although this call focuses on secondary research, submissions should still reflect appropriate research ethics, including responsible use of existing data, accurate citation, respect for intellectual property, data protection where relevant, safeguarding considerations, and responsible representation of communities and volunteers. Authors are encouraged to consider accessibility, plain-language communication, and the relevance of their work across diverse cultural and regional contexts.

Ownership and Use of the Material

IAVE and Ghadan will have the right to use, publish, reproduce, translate, adapt, and disseminate selected papers and related materials for conference, educational, policy, and knowledge-sharing purposes. Authors will retain full attribution for their work and will be credited in any publication or dissemination. Specific copyright and usage arrangements will be confirmed with selected authors as part of the commissioning agreement.

Contact

For questions about the Call for Research Papers, submission requirements, or the review process, please contact Wendy Osborne OBE, IAVE Senior Consultant wendy@iave.org.



About IAVE

Since 1970, IAVE has nurtured and grown volunteer leaders across the world, guided by the mission to create a more just and sustainable world by enabling the leaders, organizations, and environments that empower volunteers. Our network spans volunteers, governments, NGOs, businesses, academics, and volunteer leadership organizations in over 100 countries.

Learn more at iave.org.