Newcomer Onboard Toolkit for Early-Career ITSS members

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Welcome to the IEEE Intelligent Transportation Systems Society (ITSS)! As a new member, you are joining a global community advancing transportation technology for the betterment of humanity . This guide will help you navigate your first year in ITSS with practical steps, timelines, and goal-oriented advice. We'll start with getting your membership set up, then break down activities in an "if you want X, then do Y" structure – covering everything from attending conferences and publishing papers to networking and volunteering. Let's get started on making the most of your ITSS membership!

Getting Started as an ITSS Member

BECOME AN ITSS MEMBER:

If you haven't already, your first step is to join IEEE ITSS. You can add ITSS to your existing IEEE membership (annual add-on fee is US$18 for professionals or US$9 for students) or join as an ITSS-only affiliate member. To join, use the **Join ITSS Now** link on the ITSS website, which takes you to the IEEE membership portal. (If you're not an IEEE member, you can join IEEE and select ITSS as one of your societies in one process.) Membership signup is straightforward – you'll just need to create an IEEE account, fill in your details, and pay the dues. *Tip:* If you join mid-year (March through August), IEEE offers half-year dues for new members , so you can start at a reduced rate.

ACCESS MEMBER BENEFITS:

Once you're an ITSS member, a wealth of resources becomes available. You'll get online access to **IEEE ITSS publications** – including the ITS Magazine and journals like T-ITS and T-IV – and member pricing for conferences and workshops. You can participate in **local ITSS chapters** worldwide for networking, and tap into **educational programs** such as training courses and certification programs. Make sure to explore the **ITSS Membership Benefits** page for a detailed list of perks. For example, as an ITSS member you can *"discover the latest breakthroughs… with access to diverse ITSS magazines, journals and conferences"* and *"connect and collaborate through networking opportunities… with chapters around the world."* Take advantage of these by logging into the IEEE ITSS website and browsing the Members-only content.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS:

If you graduated with your first degree within the past 15 years, you automatically count as an IEEE **Young Professional (YP)** – no extra fee or sign-up needed . The ITSS YP community is an affinity group that offers additional support for early-career members. YPs in ITSS have access to exclusive opportunities like the annual **ITSS Young Researcher/Engineer Award** (more on awards later) and often enjoy special networking and career-development events. Make sure to follow the **ITSS Young Professionals** news and consider reaching out to the YP Committee (email: **yp@ieee-itss.org**) to introduce yourself. They can connect you with upcoming YP activities and maybe even pair you with a peer mentor. Being active in the YP group is a great way to find support from others who are also in the early stages of their ITS careers.

With your membership set and these benefits in mind, you're ready to dive into ITSS activities. The next section provides a month-by-month roadmap for your first year, followed by detailed guides for specific goals you might have.

Early-Stage Onboarding Roadmap

To give you an overview, here's a rough timeline of what your first year in ITSS could look like, with key milestones and actions:

GET CONNECTED

Complete your IEEE ITSS membership enrollment and set up your IEEE web account if you haven't already. Right after joining, update your communication preferences: subscribe to the **ITSS Newsletter** (IEEE ITSS publishes newsletters quarterly) and follow ITSS on social media (LinkedIn, X/Twitter, etc.) for news. Browse the ITSS website—pay special attention to the Membership section and see if there's a **local ITSS Chapter** near you . If a chapter exists in your region, reach out to the chapter chair or join their next meeting (chapter contact info is listed on the **Chapters** page). Introduce yourself on any member forums or the IEEE **Collabratec** community for transportation – a simple hello can put you on the radar of local members. This first month is all about plugging in: you want to be informed about upcoming events and start meeting people.

LEARN AND PLAN

With the basics in place, immerse yourself in ITSS content to get up to speed on the field. Read recent issues of **IEEE Transactions on ITS** or **Intelligent Vehicles** to identify research trends and topics that interest you. Attend any online **webinars or distinguished lectures** that ITSS advertises – for example, if there's a Distinguished Lecture this quarter (ITSS often hosts them; in June 2025 there was one on "From Big Data to Smart-Data" at IV 2025). These talks are usually free for members and a great way to learn cutting-edge topics. Also, check the **Educational Activities** on the ITSS website: you can enroll in a free **introductory ITS online course** or watch a recorded **webinar series** like "Industry Meets Academia" . This is a good time to identify a few key events you might want to attend or contribute to. Look at the ITSS **Conferences** page for the dates of the flagship conferences – typically, the annual **ITSC (Intelligent Transportation Systems Conference)** is in the fall, and the **IV (Intelligent Vehicles Symposium)** is in late spring/early summer. For instance, **ITSC 2025** will be Nov 18–21, 2025 (Gold Coast, Australia), and **IV 2025** is in June 2025 (Montreal, with a paper deadline Feb 1, 2025) . Mark down the submission deadlines if you aim to submit a paper, or at least the conference dates if you plan to attend. By the end of month 3, you should have a clearer idea of which activities (conference, webinar, chapter, etc.) you want to focus on in the coming months.

TAKE YOUR FIRST ACTIONS

In this phase, move from planning to participating. If you're doing research, **prepare a paper** for submission to a conference or journal – many paper deadlines (like ITSC's) will fall in this

window. If you're not ready to publish yet, no problem: consider contributing in other ways. For example, volunteer to **review papers** or join the new **Young Reviewers Program** that ITSS launched in 2024 to train early-career reviewers (this not only helps the community but also sharpens your own writing skills). You can also get involved by **joining a Technical Committee (TC)**. Browse the list of ITSS Technical Committees (topics range from Autonomous Driving to Human Factors) on the ITSS website under Technical Activities. Find one that aligns with your interests and reach out to the TC chair (email addresses are usually listed on the committee page). Most TCs are very welcoming to new members – for instance, the Automated Mobility in Mixed Traffic committee explicitly *"welcomes new members to join and support its initiatives"* . By joining a TC, you might start getting invitations to monthly calls or chances to help organize a special session. Meanwhile, see if your **local chapter** or university IEEE student branch needs help with an ITS-related event. This could be anything from a tech talk to a student design competition. Volunteering locally is a low-barrier way to build your reputation (and looks good on your CV). In short, by mid-year you should be actively **doing** something in ITSS – whether it's submitting a paper, helping with an event, or contributing to a committee project.

IMMERSE AND NETWORK

By this time, you'll likely experience your first major ITSS **conference or event**. If you submitted a paper and it got accepted – congratulations! Prepare your presentation and travel plans. (Don't forget to apply for travel grants if eligible – see the "If you want to get funding" section below.) If you're attending a conference like IV or ITSC, register early to catch early-bird discounts and sort out accommodations (IEEE conferences often have hotel blocks reserved). Take full advantage of the conference: attend sessions beyond your own niche to broaden your knowledge, and approach speakers or authors to ask questions. Introduce yourself as a newcomer – the ITS community is friendly, and this is how connections start. Most conferences have specific **networking events** for students and young professionals; for example, IV 2025 features a joint Young Professionals/Women in ITS reception where newcomers can meet experienced members in an informal setting. Go to these! It can be as easy as, "Hi, I'm new to ITSS, I work on [your interest]. What did you think of the keynote?" – and you've started a conversation. Around month 9, reflect on your growing network and follow up with people you met (connect on LinkedIn or send a quick email saying it was nice to meet them and maybe suggesting keeping in touch about common interests). Also, if you volunteered for something earlier (say you helped a committee or at a conference), this is a good time to **ask for feedback** or even a letter of recognition – it can help solidify what you've learned and how you contributed.

REFLECT AND SEEK ADVANCEMENT

As your first year winds down, take stock of all you've done. You should renew your IEEE/ITSS membership for the next year (most memberships run on a calendar year, so renewal season is in the fall). More importantly, plan how to **level up** in year two. For example, if you mainly attended events this year, perhaps next year you'll aim to **organize** one (like serve as a session chair or help run a workshop). IEEE ITSS has an annual call for new initiatives – in late 2024, members were invited to propose new projects (with up to $40k funding) for 2025 . If you have an idea to improve the society or start a cool project, don't

assume "I'm too new" – team up with a mentor or senior member and submit a proposal. Similarly, ITSS elections for the Board of Governors (BoG) happen around this time (usually due by May for the following year's term) . While you likely won't run for BoG as a first-year member, you *can* get involved by knowing the candidates and even volunteering to help a candidate's campaign or the elections committee. End of the year is also **awards nomination season**. Look out for calls to nominate people for ITSS awards (more on awards later) – you might not win one yet, but you could nominate a mentor or at least see what the award criteria are, to guide your own career goals. Finally, consider writing a brief reflection for the ITSS Newsletter or your own blog about your first year experience. Sharing your story can inspire other newcomers and also get you a bit of visibility. By month 12, you'll transition from "newcomer" to an engaged member with a plan for what's next.

Next, we delve into specific scenarios – **"If you want to do X, then do Y"** style – so you can get detailed guidance tailored to your particular goals.

If You Want to Attend a Conference

Attending an IEEE ITSS conference is one of the best ways to immerse yourself in the intelligent transportation community. Here's how to make it happen, whether you plan to simply attend sessions or present your own work:

IDENTIFY THE RIGHT CONFERENCE(S)

ITSS sponsors several conferences – the flagship ones are the **ITSC** (Intelligent Transportation Systems Conference) and **IV** (Intelligent Vehicles Symposium) each year, plus others like IEEE **FISTS** (Forum on Integrated and Sustainable Transportation Systems) and more specialized meetings (rail transportation, intelligent vehicles, etc.). Early in the year, decide which event aligns with your interests and schedule. If you're a student or researcher, see where your peers are publishing. For example, ITSC covers a broad range of ITS research (traffic systems, automation, sensing, etc.) and moves to different locations annually; IV focuses on vehicle technology (autonomous driving, perception, etc.). Check the **ITSS Conferences** page or each conference's website for dates and location. In 2025, IV is in June in Montreal, and ITSC is in November in Australia – very different locales and times! Also note the **submission deadlines** (if you might submit a paper) and the **registration costs**. Put the important dates in your calendar now. If travel cost is a concern, target conferences where you might also have other business or cheaper travel. Also consider local or regional ITS conferences (for instance, IEEE chapters or Sections might host an "ITS workshop") – these can be easier for a newcomer to attend as a first conference experience.

SUBMIT YOUR WORK OR REGISTER AS AN ATTENDEE

If you aim to **present a paper**, this is when you'll be submitting it. Follow the official Call for Papers: download the template (usually IEEE conference template), ensure your paper meets length and format requirements, and submit by the deadline. It's wise to have a mentor or colleague review your paper before submission to improve its chances. If you're not submitting a paper, you can usually register to attend once registration opens (typically 3-4 months before

the conference). Take advantage of **early-bird registration** rates, which can be significantly cheaper . For example, if registration opens in March with a discount until April, try to commit within that window. This might mean convincing your employer or school to fund the fee early; use the conference's acceptance rate or prestige as justification if needed. Around this time, also look out for **calls for volunteers**. Many conferences seek student volunteers to help on-site (in exchange for free registration). Roles might include assisting session chairs, managing microphones during Q&A, or staffing the help desk. These calls are usually posted on the conference website or via email to authors. If you can commit the time at the conference, **apply to be a volunteer** – it can save you money and get you behind-the-scenes access. Additionally, if travel is a barrier, remember to apply for **travel grants** as discussed in the previous section (most deadlines for grants are around this time, a few months ahead of the conference).

PREPARE AND ATTEND THE EVENT

As the conference approaches, make sure you're prepared to get the most out of it. If you'll be **presenting**, practice your presentation multiple times. Aim to finish your slides at least 2 weeks before travel, so you can get feedback and still have time to refine. (Nothing is more stressful than tweaking slides at 2 AM the night before your talk!) Also finalize any visa or travel arrangements; if it's an international trip, check if you need a visa invitation letter from the conference (organizers can usually provide one on request). When you attend, **plan your schedule** but stay flexible. Skim the program in advance: pick the sessions and talks you don't want to miss, but also leave room for serendipity (sometimes the most interesting session is one you wander into by chance). Attend keynotes and plenaries – they often give a big-picture view that's useful for newcomers. And definitely join social events: receptions, banquets, poster sessions, etc. These are prime networking times. Don't be shy about striking up conversation with fellow attendees – you can start with "Is this your first time at this conference?" or "What did you think of that last session?" If you're a student, there may be a **student poster competition** or a networking lunch with experts; go to those. If you meet someone whose work you admire (say, an author of a paper you cited), introduce yourself and mention what you found interesting about their work – academics especially love to hear that feedback. Pro tip: keep a notebook or use a notes app during the conference to jot down ideas, names of people you meet (and what you discussed), and any opportunities that arise ("Prof. X invited me to visit their lab" – write that down so you can follow up). Also, if you're in a new city for the conference, enjoy the experience! Often the tours or social activities (like a group dinner or local excursion) are as valuable for bonding with colleagues as the technical sessions.

FOLLOW UP AND LEVERAGE THE EXPERIENCE

After the conference, don't just return to daily life and forget everything – this is a crucial time to **follow up**. Send a quick email or LinkedIn message to people you met: it can be as simple as "Great to meet you at ITSC. Let's stay in touch – maybe we can collaborate on XYZ." People appreciate this courtesy, and it keeps the door open. If you presented a paper, consider **extending your work** – maybe you got good feedback that you can incorporate into a journal version. Also, update your CV and online profiles to include your conference presentation or participation (e.g., "Presented at IEEE IV 2025"). It shows involvement and can spark conversations if someone notices it. Internally, share what you learned with your lab mates or colleagues. You could give a brief informal talk about key takeaways from the conference.

This not only reinforces your own learning, it also positions you as someone plugged into the latest developments. Finally, think ahead: did this conference inspire a new idea? If so, maybe that's the seed for your next paper or project – start planning it now. And if you enjoyed the experience, plan to attend again next year and maybe take on a larger role (organize a special session, or serve on the student volunteer committee). Each conference can be a stepping stone to deeper involvement in ITSS.

If You Want to Publish Research

Publishing your work in ITSS venues is a fantastic way to contribute to the field and build your reputation. It can be daunting at first, but IEEE ITSS provides support and high-quality outlets for your research. Here's how to go about publishing, from idea to paper to publication:

SURVEY AND FIND YOUR NICHE

Start by reading extensively. Explore recent papers in the **IEEE ITSS journals**: the flagship journals are *IEEE Transactions on Intelligent Transportation Systems (T-ITS)* and *IEEE Transactions on Intelligent Vehicles (T-IV)*, and there's also the *IEEE Open Journal of ITS (OJ-ITS)* for open-access papers, and the more general *IEEE ITS Magazine* for overview articles. By reviewing the literature, identify what topics are trending and where the gaps are. Ask yourself: What problems are researchers trying to solve? What methodologies are becoming popular (AI, simulation, robotics, etc.)? Also look at recent **conference proceedings** (ITSC and IV from last year) – conference papers often represent work in progress or emerging ideas. This survey will help you pinpoint a topic that is both of interest to you *and* relevant to the community. Once you have a potential research idea, try to refine it into a question or hypothesis that you can address. It's okay if it's a small extension of existing work (everyone starts somewhere). If you have an academic advisor or a senior colleague, discuss it with them. If not, consider reaching out to a researcher whose papers you found interesting – you can introduce yourself and mention you're a new ITSS member looking for some guidance on research directions. Some may not respond, but others might give you a pointer or two that could be invaluable.

EXECUTE THE RESEARCH AND SEEK MENTORSHIP

This is the phase to delve into **research and experimentation**. Set up that simulation, run that experiment, or gather that dataset – whatever your work entails. Manage your time so that you have results by the end of this period. Simultaneously, don't work in isolation. ITSS offers resources to enhance your research skills. For example, join the **ITSS Young Professionals Webinar Series** on career skills – they've hosted talks on how to write papers, how to peer review, etc. Also, IEEE has an **Author Lab** and tutorials on writing (check out the IEEE Author Center online for tips on technical writing and avoiding plagiarism). Another great opportunity is the **ITSS Young Reviewers Program** (YRP) launched in 2024 . If you sign up for YRP, you'll be mentored through reviewing a few papers for an ITSS conference or journal. This experience teaches you what reviewers look for – which in turn helps you write better papers. To find out about YRP, keep an eye on ITSS announcements or contact the Young Professionals committee. During this time, you could also attend an **ITSS summer school or**

workshop if available. Summer schools (like the 2023 "Emerging Mobility Systems for Smart Cities" program) let you dive deep into a topic and often involve project work that could spark publishable ideas. By the end of month 6, aim to have a first draft of a conference paper (maybe for ITSC or IV) or at least an extended abstract.

WRITE, SUBMIT, AND ITERATE

Focus on **writing your paper** in earnest. Use the IEEE template and follow all formatting guidelines (margins, reference style, etc. – conferences will desk-reject if you ignore these). A good structure for an ITS paper is: Introduction (what's the problem and why it matters), Literature Review (what's been done before), Methodology (your approach), Results (experiments or analysis), Conclusion (what it means and future work). Be sure to highlight what's novel in your work – reviewers will look for this. Before submission, get feedback. If you have a mentor or advisor, ask them to critique it. If you made friends or found a mentor in ITSS (say from that technical committee or webinar), don't hesitate to request a quick review – many will oblige. Revise accordingly. When ready, submit the paper via the conference or journal's submission portal (for journals it's typically ScholarOne or IEEE's Manuscript Central). **Important:** If it's a journal, be prepared for a longer timeline – first decision can take a few months. Conferences will give you a decision by the notification date listed (often ~2-3 months after submission). Once submitted, leverage your waiting time by maybe starting on another project or, if your paper is accepted, preparing the presentation. If the paper comes back with **reviews** (either accept with minor edits, revise and resubmit, or even reject), address them diligently. For a conference, you may only have minor edits – fix those for the camera-ready version. For a journal revise-and-resubmit, take every comment seriously: respond with a detailed document explaining how you fixed each point. If you get rejected, don't be disheartened – almost every researcher has faced rejection. Use the reviews to improve the work. You can always submit to another venue, or incorporate the feedback and try again at the next conference. Remember, persistence is key in publishing.

ENHANCE VISIBILITY AND PLAN FURTHER RESEARCH

If your paper got published or accepted for presentation, **promote it**! Share the publication on LinkedIn or Twitter, and tag IEEE ITSS if appropriate. The society might even reshare notable member publications. Also, consider giving a talk about your work at a local chapter meeting or to an IEEE student group. This not only hones your presentation skills further, it also marks you as an active researcher in the community. Another aspect to consider now is **collaboration**. Through the year, you've met people and seen other presentations – is there someone whose expertise complements yours? Maybe you met a student working on a related problem at the conference. Reach out and propose collaborating on a paper or project. Many successful research projects in ITSS are multi-university or industry-academia collaborations. Additionally, reflect on the **bigger picture** of your research. What could be the next step? Perhaps your conference paper could be extended to a **journal article** by adding more experiments or deeper analysis. Plan that out and start working on it, so you can submit in year two. Finally, keep an eye on calls for **special issues** or **competitions**. ITSS journals often have special issue calls (e.g., a special issue on Connected Vehicles might be announced – these have specific deadlines and themes). Also, some conferences have student competitions (like a data analysis or autonomous driving challenge). If you want to really stand out, participating

in a competition is great – even if you don't win, you learn a ton. By the end of the year, you ideally have one publication under your belt (or on the way) and a roadmap for what research questions you'll tackle next. Publishing is a cycle of continuous improvement – each paper leads to new questions, new ideas, and the next paper.

If You Want to Enhance Your Skills and Knowledge (Courses, Webinars, etc.)

As a newcomer, you might want to build your technical knowledge in intelligent transportation beyond your day-to-day work or studies. IEEE ITSS offers many **educational resources** to help you learn new topics, tools, and technologies in ITS. Here's how to take advantage of them:

EXPLORE THE ITSS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES LIBRARY

The ITSS **Educational Activities** committee has put together an online library of courses and materials, free for all users (membership not required, just an IEEE login) . Visit the **Educational Activities page** on the ITSS website. You'll find a list of **online courses** on various topics: e.g., *Introduction to Intelligent Transportation*, *Vehicular Robotics Modeling*, *Traffic Simulation*, security in vehicular networks, etc. Pick a course that interests you and click **Enroll Now**. If you haven't already, you'll be prompted to **create a free IEEE account** or log in . (Remember: creating a web account is free and not the same as being a paid IEEE member – but you're already an ITSS member now, so you're set.) In these first few months, aim to **complete at least one course**. These are self-paced modules with video lectures and sometimes quizzes. For instance, the "Introduction to Intelligent Transportation" course can give you a broad overview of the field's history and key concepts. Set aside a few hours on a weekend or some evenings to go through it. Taking these courses will bolster your fundamentals and maybe spark ideas for research or career interests.

ATTEND LIVE WEBINARS AND RECORDED TALKS

ITSS regularly organizes **webinars** that are open to everyone . Topics range from technical deep-dives to career development. Two noteworthy series in recent years have been the *Industry Meets Academia* webinars (where industry experts and researchers discuss cutting-edge developments) and the *Career Path* webinars focusing on professional growth . Keep an eye on the Educational Activities page or ITSS social media for announcements of upcoming webinars. These are often live on Zoom or WebEx and free to join – you typically just click a link at the scheduled time, or register to get a reminder. **Pro tip:** Don't just watch passively; prepare one question to ask. Webinars almost always have a Q&A segment. Asking a thoughtful question (even as simple as "What do you foresee as the biggest challenge in deploying this technology?") engages you more and also puts you on the speakers' radar. If the webinar is recorded and you miss it live, you can watch the recording later on the ITSS site – the "Continue Study" links under past webinars will play the video . Around this time, also look for any **Distinguished Lecture Series (DLS)** talks. ITSS Distinguished Lecturers are experts who give talks on visionary topics, sometimes via webinars or at chapter events. For example, in June 2025 during IV, ITSS hosted a hybrid Distinguished Lecture on Big Data

analytics . If one is announced, make sure to attend – DLS talks are often inspiring and can broaden your perspective on where ITS is headed in the next 5-10 years.

JOIN WORKSHOPS, TUTORIALS, OR SUMMER SCHOOLS

Mid-year is often when ITSS **summer schools** or special workshops take place. For instance, ITSS has organized summer programs like the 2023 "Road to Emerging Mobility Systems for Smart Cities" summer school . These events might be in-person or virtual and usually involve a series of lectures plus interactive sessions (sometimes even projects or lab exercises). If a summer school is announced, you might need to apply (they sometimes have limited slots). Applications could require a short statement of interest or a recommendation letter. Keep your eyes on the ITSS news or Educational Activities page for any calls around spring. Similarly, many conferences host **tutorials** that are open to attendees. Even if you're not going to the full conference, sometimes tutorial sessions are live-streamed or later made available to ITSS members. In 2024, for example, IV had tutorials on autonomous racing platforms, and ITSC often has half-day tutorials on topics like machine learning for ITS. If you're attending the conference, definitely join a tutorial or two – they're like condensed training sessions. If you're not attending, see if the materials or recordings are posted on the ITSS site (under the Tutorials section of Educational Activities) . By actively engaging in these, you can gain practical skills (imagine learning how to simulate traffic flows in a hands-on workshop – that's directly applicable to many ITS problems). Plus, you'll meet other participants who are learning, which is a nice way to network academically.

APPLY YOUR NEW SKILLS AND PLAN CONTINUED LEARNING

As the year concludes, think about how to leverage what you've learned. Did those courses or webinars give you ideas that you can apply at work or in your research? Perhaps you can start a small side project – for example, if you took a course on traffic simulation, maybe simulate a scenario for your city and share the insights on a blog or with your local transit authority. Using your skills in a project will cement the knowledge and show others the value of these ITSS resources. Also, provide **feedback** or even contribute back to educational programs. If you particularly enjoyed a course, email the Educational Activities Committee or the course instructor (often their contact is in the course materials) to thank them and maybe suggest improvements or topics you'd love to see in the future. They'll appreciate it. Toward the end of the year, set learning goals for next year. The tech world changes fast – maybe you want to learn about V2X communication or ethics in AI for transportation next. Keep an eye out for ITSS launching new courses (the committee frequently adds content). Additionally, consider **mentoring others** with what you've learned. Are there undergraduate students or other newcomers who could benefit from a study group? You could organize a small weekly discussion to go through one of the ITSS online courses together. Teaching others is one of the best ways to deepen your own understanding. By the end of year one, you should feel that you've grown your ITS knowledge significantly – and have a habit of continuous learning via the resources at your disposal. Intelligent transportation is a multidisciplinary and evolving field, so committing to ongoing education will pay off throughout your career.

If You Want to Build a Network

Networking is a critical part of any professional society, and IEEE ITSS is no exception. Building a strong network will open doors to collaborations, job opportunities, and friendships. Here's how to actively expand your professional network within ITSS:

START LOCAL (AND ONLINE)

Begin with what's close to you. Does your city or region have an **IEEE ITSS Chapter** or an IEEE section chapter that focuses on vehicular technology or transportation? Check the **ITSS Chapters** list for your area. If there is a chapter nearby, attend their next event. Even if you're not a member yet, chapters often welcome guests at technical talks or meetups. When you go, don't be a fly on the wall – introduce yourself to the chapter chair or a senior member and mention you're new to ITSS. They'll likely take you under their wing, as local chapters thrive on new volunteers. If there's no chapter local to you, leverage **online platforms**. IEEE has a platform called **Collabratec** (collabratec.ieee.org) with communities you can join – search for Intelligent Transportation or related technical communities. Join the IEEE ITSS community on Collabratec or any active forums. Also join the conversation on **LinkedIn**: follow the IEEE ITSS page and comment on posts occasionally. For example, if ITSS shares an article about autonomous vehicles, you might comment your perspective – people notice those who engage thoughtfully. On X (Twitter), the ITSS account and many members share news; consider creating a professional Twitter account to follow relevant tags like #IntelligentTransportation. In these initial months, simply aim to **meet at least 2-3 people** (even if virtually) who share your interests. This could be as simple as emailing someone whose blog about ITS you read, or chatting with a fellow student in a webinar's Zoom chat. Those small connections are seeds for a larger network.

EXPAND THROUGH COMMITTEES AND EVENTS

By now, you should be regularly attending some ITSS-related events (webinars, chapter meetings, etc.). A great way to expand your circle is to join an **ITSS Technical Committee (TC)** or a special interest group. Earlier we mentioned contacting TC chairs to participate. Once you're on a TC mailing list or Slack/Teams (some committees use forums or groups for communication), **participate actively**. Join the meetings, and when they ask for volunteers or input, speak up. For instance, if the Connected Vehicles TC is planning a workshop, you could say, "I'd be happy to help with publicity" – even if it's a small task, now the whole committee knows you. Through the TC, you'll naturally network with experts in that sub-field. Concurrently, keep attending larger events like conferences if possible. If you're at a conference, take advantage of the built-in networking sessions: many have a **Welcome Reception** for all attendees – go there and mingle. If you're a student, there might be a **student luncheon** where they put students and senior folks at mixed tables; attend it. A pro networking tip: if there's someone specific you want to meet (say a renowned researcher or an industry leader), try to find a mutual connection who can introduce you. This is where your local chapter or committee connections help – someone might say, "Oh, you should meet Prof. Y, let me introduce you at the coffee break." Don't neglect **social networks** either: after you meet someone, send a LinkedIn connect request with a short note ("Great to chat with you at IV

2025 – let's keep in touch."). Building a network is as much about **maintaining** contacts as making new ones, so keep track of who you meet.

TAKE ON A ROLE AND INCREASE VISIBILITY

One of the fastest ways to grow your network is to be in a role where you interact with many people. In this period, look for a small leadership or service role. For example, you might volunteer to be the **social media coordinator** for your local chapter or the Young Professionals group. Suddenly, you'll be talking to many members to collect content, and they'll know you as "the person who runs our LinkedIn" – instant visibility. Or perhaps you become the **webmaster or secretary** for a Technical Committee; you'll correspond with all members for meeting notices, etc. These roles are often not very time-consuming but put you at the center of communications. Another avenue is organizing a local **tech workshop or seminar**. Maybe your university's transportation club (or IEEE student branch) can host a mini-symposium and you invite a couple of ITSS members as speakers (many professors are happy to give talks). By organizing, you'll network with the speakers and attendees, and you'll appear as a connector in the community. During this time, also deepen connections with peers. If you met fellow students or young pros at a conference, create a small peer network – maybe a WhatsApp or WeChat group where you casually chat about research or job hunting. Sometimes these peer groups end up proposing a conference special session together or collaboratively studying for certifications, etc. One thing to note: **diversify** your network. ITSS is global, so connect with people from different regions. You'll find ITS challenges can be quite different across the world (traffic issues in Europe vs Asia, for example), and having international contacts can open opportunities (maybe an internship abroad, or a joint project). By month 9, you should feel that if you have a question or need (say you're job searching, or need advice on a technical problem), you know at least a few people in your network you could reach out to.

CULTIVATE AND SUSTAIN RELATIONSHIPS

Networking isn't only about making contacts; it's about turning contacts into **relationships**. As the year closes, do a quick review: who were the most interesting or helpful people you encountered? Make an effort to reach out to them in a meaningful way. For example, shoot an email to a mentor figure you met, updating them on your progress ("Since we talked at the workshop, I submitted my first paper. Thank you for the encouragement!"). Academics and professionals are busy, but they appreciate hearing that their time with you had an impact. If you promised to follow up on something (like sending your draft paper to someone who agreed to look at it), now is the time to do it – it shows you're reliable. Also consider **giving back** even at your level. Maybe you can connect two people in your network who didn't know each other but should – that's a pro networker move (e.g., "Alice, I recall you're working on traffic safety. I met Bob who's doing similar work in another city – I've cc'd him here, I think you two would have a great conversation."). By facilitating others' connections, you become known as someone at the center of a network. Additionally, leverage IEEE-wide communities: there are IEEE Young Professionals groups, Women in Engineering (WIE) affinity groups, etc., which intersect with ITSS. If you fit those categories, join their events and you'll cross-pollinate your network with folks from other fields who have interest in transportation. By the end of the year, you should have a solid base of connections: some senior, some peers. Make sure to **maintain** them – even a "Happy New Year" message to your new contacts keeps the

relationship warm. As you head into your second year, your network will start bearing fruit – perhaps someone will invite you to collaborate, or you'll hear about a job opening informally through these connections. Networking is one of those skills that compound over time, so keep at it consistently, and IEEE ITSS will soon start to feel like a close-knit community.

If You Want to Join Standards Development or Working Groups

Are you interested in the **standards** side of technology – ensuring interoperability, safety, and consistency across the industry? IEEE ITSS plays an active role in developing standards for intelligent transportation (often in collaboration with the IEEE Standards Association). Getting involved in standards as a newcomer is a fantastic way to work closely with industry professionals and contribute to real-world impact. Here's how to jump in:

LEARN THE LANDSCAPE OF ITS STANDARDS

First, understand what's out there. Intelligent transportation has numerous standards – e.g., communication protocols like **IEEE 802.11p/WAVE** for vehicle communications, or standards for traffic data formats, autonomous vehicle testing, etc. Visit the ITSS **Standards Activities** page on the website for an overview of what the ITSS Standards Committee is focusing on . You'll find that ITSS has identified areas like *cooperative driving*, *multi-modal mobility*, and others as current priorities. It might list some active IEEE working groups (WGs) related to ITS. Also familiarize yourself with how IEEE standards development works in general. (In a nutshell: a working group is formed, they have a Project Authorization Request (PAR) approved, then they meet regularly to draft the standard, eventually balloting on it.) The IEEE Standards Association (IEEE SA) has tutorials – consider watching an IEEE SA introductory webinar on standards development to grasp the process. Knowing the basics will help you integrate more easily when you join a group. If possible, identify a **specific standard or working group** that interests you. For example, are you into connected car communications? Then standards like IEEE 1609 (WAVE) or IEEE P2020 (automotive image quality) might be up your alley. Or if you care about data, IEEE might be working on a standard for traffic data exchange. You can search the IEEE SA website for active projects in the transportation domain. Make a short list of things you might want to work on.

REACH OUT AND SIGN UP

Now it's time to express interest formally. The ITSS Standards Committee *"encourages active contributions from interested individuals."* They mean you! On the Standards page, there is likely a link or info on how to join. In fact, the ITSS site has an invitation titled **"Participate in IEEE ITSS Standards Activities"** . Clicking that leads to a form where you provide your details and interests . Go ahead and fill out that **Standards Participation Form**. In the form, you'll mention if you're an IEEE member (likely yes) and ITSS member (yes), and what technical areas you're interested in contributing to. They also ask if you have prior standardization experience or if you have ideas for new standards – don't worry if you don't, it's fine to say you're new but eager to learn. Submit the form. Additionally, you can directly email the leaders of the Standards Committee. In 2025, the ITSS VP for Standards Activities

is **Dr. Meng Lu** (Chair of the Standards Committee), and the committee's Secretary is **Ayesha Choudhary** . The Standards page provided contact info (for instance, Ayesha's email is listed as ayeshac@jnu.ac.in). You might send a brief, polite email: introduce yourself as a new member, express your interest in joining standards efforts, and ask about the next meeting or call. They will likely be very happy to hear from a young professional – standards work benefits from fresh perspectives and willing contributors. By the end of this period, you should be on the mailing list for the Standards Committee or at least have received confirmation that you'll be included in their activities.

ATTEND MEETINGS AND CONTRIBUTE ACTIVELY

Once you're in the loop, you'll start getting invites to **Standards Committee meetings or Working Group meetings**. The ITSS Standards Committee typically meets a few times a year (often virtually, and sometimes in person at conferences) . Mark your calendar and attend these meetings. At first, you might mostly listen – and that's okay. You'll hear about the status of current projects (e.g., "We're working on IEEE P2846 for autonomous vehicle safety"), updates on industry roundtables , etc. Take notes and absorb the jargon. Don't hesitate to ask questions if something isn't clear – e.g., "I'm new to this, could someone clarify what stage the Pxxxx standard is at?" This shows engagement. In parallel, if you joined a specific Working Group (say you signed up for a WG on a new standard), attend those working calls regularly. **Consistency** is key in standards work – show up, and people will start recognizing you. Look for small ways to help. Maybe volunteer to be a scribe (taking minutes) for a meeting – that's a quick way to earn goodwill and also forces you to pay close attention. Or if the draft needs input, you could offer to research how another standards body did a related standard, etc. Meanwhile, make an effort to connect personally with members of the group. Standards groups often include industry engineers, government folks, and academics. It's a networking opportunity as well (many of these people may not be at regular ITSS conferences). For instance, if there's an industry roundtable event (ITSS has held Industry Roundtables on connected and automated vehicles), volunteer to help organize or at least attend and chat with participants. You might meet someone from a company working on exactly what you're interested in, which could lead to a mentorship or job talk down the line.

GROW YOUR ROLE AND CONSIDER IEEE SA MEMBERSHIP

As you become more comfortable, look to deepen your involvement. One formal step is to join the **IEEE Standards Association (IEEE SA)** if you haven't – IEEE SA membership (which has a separate fee unless you're already IEEE Life member or something) allows you to **ballot** on standards. Balloting is the process of voting to approve a draft standard. Even without SA membership, you can contribute to drafting, but if you want a say in final approval, being an SA member helps. Discuss with your standards group whether it's worth joining at this stage; they might have an upcoming ballot you can participate in. Also, consider taking on a **leadership role in the working group** when the opportunity arises. Perhaps you could be an editor for a section of the draft, or lead a subgroup on a particular topic. By end of year one, you're probably not chairing anything (that usually comes with more experience), but you could be, say, the go-to person for "Section 5: Definitions" or coordinating inputs from academic members, etc. Additionally, you might start an initiative to **recruit more people** into ITSS standards. For example, you could write a short article for the ITSS Newsletter about

why standards matter and invite others to join the effort – this would both raise awareness and bolster your standing as a champion of standards. Reflect on what you've learned: standards work teaches consensus-building and technical writing in a very different way than research does. These skills are valuable in any engineering career. As a final note, keep an eye on **funding opportunities** for standards projects. The ITSS news sometimes posts about the IEEE Technical Activities Board's Committee on Standards (TCoS) offering seed funding for new standards ideas . If you, say, notice the need for a standard (perhaps something like "Standard for AI Ethics in Traffic Management") and can find some experienced members to support it, you could even propose a new standards project – that's an ambitious goal, but not impossible. In any case, by the end of the year, you'll be one of the rare newcomers who can say you're helping *write the rules* of the future of transportation, not just follow them.

If You Want to Find Mentors or Career Guidance

Navigating the early stages of your career (or a new field) is much easier with mentors to guide you. IEEE and ITSS offer formal and informal mentoring resources that you, as a newcomer, should tap into. Here's how to find mentors and get professional development advice through ITSS:

CONNECT WITH AFFINITY GROUPS AND EXPRESS INTEREST IN MENTORING

IEEE ITSS has committees specifically aimed at supporting members' development. One is the **Women in Intelligent Transportation Systems (Wi-ITS)** committee (sometimes called Women & Underrepresented Groups in ITS) and another is the **Young Professionals (YP)** committee . These groups often host mentorship events. For example, Wi-ITS and YP jointly run an annual workshop & forum at the ITSC conference focused on career development and diversity . Even if you don't fall into a particular demographic, many of their events are open to all who support inclusivity. Make yourself known to these groups: send a message via the contact emails on the ITSS site (Wi-ITS might be via the "Women & Underrepresented Groups" page , and YP we already have contact for). Say you're a new member looking for guidance and ask if there are any mentoring programs or contacts you should know. Also enroll in the general **IEEE Mentoring Program**. IEEE has a platform (through IEEE Collabratec) that matches mentors and mentees across IEEE. As an IEEE member, you can sign up on the **IEEE Mentoring Program** site – fill out your profile (mention your interests in transportation, what guidance you seek). The system can match you with an experienced IEEE member (even if they're not in ITSS, they could still provide valuable career advice). In these first months, you might also find "near peer" mentors: perhaps a senior student in your lab or a colleague who's been in ITSS for a couple of years. Don't overlook them – a peer mentor can give you day-to-day tips and introduce you to others. Essentially, early on, cast a wide net: join mentoring webinars, sign up on platforms, and let people know you're open to mentorship.

ATTEND MENTORING EVENTS AND SEEK ONE-ON-ONE CONNECTIONS

Around this time, you may have opportunities to attend more structured mentoring sessions. For instance, ITSS Young Professionals often organize **career webinars** (topics like "How to

transition from academia to industry" or "Building leadership skills as an engineer"). Attend these and actively participate in Q&A. Additionally, if you go to a conference, look for any **speed-mentoring** or "Meet the Experts" sessions. Some ITSC editions have done informal mentoring circles during lunch, etc. If something like that is available, join and soak up the advice. Now, beyond these events, try to establish a **one-on-one mentoring relationship** with someone in ITSS. Who counts as a mentor? It could be a professor whose work you admire, an industry professional in a role you aspire to, or an active volunteer who seems to have a career path you find interesting. How to ask? It can be as straightforward as sending a polite email: "Dear Dr. Smith, we spoke at the ITS webinar last month about traffic data. I'm early in my career and would greatly value having a mentor to guide me in the ITS field. Would you be open to having a call once or twice a quarter so I could ask for your advice on my career development? I'd be very appreciative of any guidance." Not everyone will have time, but many will say yes – people generally like to help, and they remember when they were starting out. Another approach: some ITSS committees (like Wi-ITS) might have formal mentoring pair programs – inquire if they do. If you get a mentor, treat your interactions seriously: come prepared with questions or topics, listen to their suggestions, and follow up on their advice. For example, if they suggest "why not try a short course on machine learning?", do it and later let them know how it went. This shows you value their input.

DEEPEN THE MENTORSHIP AND EXPAND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As you work with a mentor, you'll gain more clarity on your career goals. Now is the time to seek **specific guidance**. If you're job hunting, ask your mentor to review your resume or do a mock interview. If you're considering grad school vs. industry, discuss pros and cons. Mentors can provide the perspective of hindsight, which is incredibly useful. Also, continue to leverage IEEE-wide resources: IEEE regional YP groups (e.g., IEEE USA for those in the U.S.) host a lot of career workshops – like how to negotiate a salary, or how to present effectively. Attend those webinars (often free for members). Check out the **IEEE Job Site** and career boards for the kind of roles you might want, and bring those to your mentor for discussion ("Do you think I qualify for these? What should I improve to be a stronger candidate?"). Around this time, ITSS might also host an **"Industry Panel"** webinar or an "Ask Me Anything" with a prominent figure. For example, an Industry Roundtable might indirectly serve mentoring purposes by letting you ask questions to seasoned industry folks. Use these opportunities to get answers to big-picture questions (e.g., "How do you see the role of transportation engineers evolving with AI?" – these insights can guide your skill development). If you have more than one mentor (say one through IEEE and one informal through ITSS), that's fine – different mentors for different aspects is often beneficial. Just manage your commitments so you're not overwhelming yourself or them. Continue being a mentor yourself in small ways: perhaps you're the junior person, but you could mentor an undergraduate or a newer member on things you've learned (even if it's how to navigate IEEE's website or how to write a conference abstract). Teaching and mentoring others will sharpen your own understanding and empathy.

SOLIDIFY MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS AND BECOME A MENTOR TO OTHERS

By the end of the year, hopefully you've developed a good rapport with at least one mentor. Discuss with them your progress over the year: what do they think you've done well, where could you improve? This feedback is gold – it can shape your plans for next year. Express your

gratitude clearly. A heartfelt thank-you note or acknowledgment goes a long way. You might even mention your mentor in appropriate forums, e.g., if you win an award or even just in conversation with others ("I've been fortunate to have Dr. Smith mentoring me this year, it's been incredibly helpful."). This also signals to others that mentorship is valued, and perhaps they should take on a mentee. Now, consider formalizing any informal mentor relations – if you had a series of chats with someone, you might ask, "Would you be open to continuing as my mentor next year? I really value your guidance." This sets expectations moving forward. On the flip side, **step up as a mentor** for newcomers following behind you. Maybe your university gets a new grad student in ITS – you can mentor them on joining ITSS (you now know a lot!). Or join an outreach program: IEEE has volunteer opportunities to mentor high school robotics teams, for instance. ITSS also has initiatives like the Diversity and Leadership Fellowship where selected young members mentored even younger participants at a forum . Watch for those; you could volunteer to be part of the support team. By becoming a mentor (even in a small capacity), you reinforce what you've learned and start building your leadership skills. As you conclude year one, you should have mentors you can rely on for honest career advice, and you should feel confident that you know where to turn when you face a career decision. This guidance network will be one of the most valuable assets in your professional life. Keep nurturing it, and remember to pay it forward.

If You Want to Volunteer and Build Visibility

Volunteering within IEEE ITSS not only helps the society but also significantly boosts your profile in the community. It's often said, "the more you put into the society, the more you get out of it." By taking on volunteer roles, you demonstrate leadership and make connections naturally. Here's how to get involved as a volunteer and make a mark:

SCOUT OUT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Start by learning about the different ways one can volunteer in ITSS. The society runs on volunteer efforts in areas like **conference organization, publications, chapter leadership, technical committees, member outreach**, and more . On the ITSS website, check out the **Volunteer Opportunities** page (found under the "About IEEE-ITSS" menu) – it often outlines broad areas where help is needed. Also read through the **Member Activities** or **Standing Committees** pages to see who's doing what; it might spark ideas on where you could pitch in. Think about your skills and interests: Are you good at writing or editing? Then maybe the **Newsletter or social media** team could use you. Do you enjoy event planning? Then helping with **conference logistics** or **chapter events** could be a fit. Are you passionate about student outreach? Maybe the **Educational Activities** or **Student Activities** sub-committees would be your place. At this stage, you might not know exactly what's available, so don't hesitate to reach out. Send a note via the Contact form or directly to the VP of Member Activities (currently Xiao Wang, per the website) expressing that you're a new member eager to volunteer and asking how to get started. They can connect you to the right people. Additionally, sign up for the **IEEE Volunteer Portal** at **volunteer.ieee.org** – you can browse opportunities across IEEE. Filter by "Transportation" or simply see if any ITSS-related postings exist. Even if you find something in another society that interests you (say, a general IEEE outreach event), volunteering there can build skills and be fun.

TAKE ON A SMALL ROLE

By now, hopefully you've identified an area to contribute and have contacted the relevant chair or organizer. Volunteer roles can range from one-time tasks to ongoing positions. Don't be afraid to **start small**. For example, you might volunteer to be a **Session Chair** at an upcoming conference (helping to run one technical session). Or offer to assist the **Publications Committee** by proof-reading an issue of the ITS Newsletter before it's released. If your local chapter is dormant, you could coordinate with IEEE to **restart the chapter** (that's a bigger task, but if you have a few peers it's doable – IEEE can guide you through petitioning to form or reactivate a chapter). Another concrete role: become a **reviewer** for ITSS conferences/journals. Actually, when you sign up for the Young Reviewers Program as mentioned earlier, you're volunteering your time to review papers – that counts, and it gets your name known among the publications team. If you lean towards education, volunteer to **moderate a webinar** (sometimes they need someone to introduce the speaker and manage Q&A). Essentially, say "yes" to opportunities that come up. One strategy: in any committee or meeting you attend, listen for tasks that are mentioned. If you hear "We need someone to update the website with the new award winners," consider raising your hand for that if you have the know-how. It might take a couple hours of work, but suddenly you're on the Awards Committee's radar as "the person who helped update the site." During this period, make sure you deliver on whatever you commit to. Reliability is everything. If you volunteer to do something, follow through by the deadline. This builds trust and often leads to being asked to take on larger roles (because people trust you to get things done).

STEP UP AND LEAD INITIATIVES

Now that you have some experience and have proven yourself in small tasks, you can aim for larger projects. Perhaps you helped with a workshop as a volunteer – next time, you could co-organize it. For instance, if you were part of a conference's student volunteer team this year, maybe volunteer to be the **Student Volunteer Chair** for next year (working under the conference organizing committee). If you have an idea for a new activity, propose it. Earlier we discussed the New Initiatives call (for funding projects up to $40k) – even if that's too big, you can propose smaller-scale initiatives through the Member Activities Committee. For example, you might suggest starting an ITSS **Podcast** if you notice there isn't one, and volunteer to host or coordinate it. Or propose a **student design competition** and offer to help run it. ITSS leaders are generally receptive to new ideas, especially if you're willing to put in effort to realize them. In these months, you should also publicly contribute in ITSS forums – maybe write an article for the **ITSS Newsletter** about something (it could be a conference report, an interview with a notable member, or a tech trend piece). Publications always need content, and as a volunteer writer you'll get credit in the publication. This visibility means every ITSS member sees your name and contribution. If writing isn't your thing, maybe volunteer to **present at an IEEE Section meeting** about ITSS – this helps ITSS's membership development and shows your leadership. As you take on these roles, you'll start to interact with the ITSS leadership (Board of Governors, committee VPs). This is great for networking and also for mentorship – many leaders will take the time to advise enthusiastic volunteers, which further accelerates your growth.

EARN RECOGNITION AND PLAN FUTURE INVOLVEMENT

As your first year ends, take pride in what you've contributed. Volunteering often comes with recognition: you might get a formal thank-you letter or certificate from ITSS for your service. These are not just tokens – they can be part of your portfolio (save them, list the roles on your LinkedIn/CV). More importantly, you've built a reputation as an active member. In the latter part of the year, many committees start planning for the next year's activities. This is a prime time to express interest in **joining a committee** officially for the coming year. For example, if you helped the Membership Development chair this year, you could be appointed as an official member of the Membership Committee next year (or even vice-chair). Let the current chairs know you're interested and ask what the process is (often, committee memberships are by appointment or volunteering, there's no election needed except for top positions). Also, consider "graduating" to bigger IEEE roles beyond ITSS. IEEE has a program called **Volunteer Leadership Training (VoLT)** that trains volunteers for higher positions in IEEE – keep it in mind for year two or three; having ITSS volunteer experience will help your application to that. Lastly, reflect on which volunteering gave you the most joy or impact. Focus on those moving forward. If you loved working with students, maybe aim to become an ITSS Student Activities Chair eventually. If you found conference organizing thrilling, perhaps you'll work towards being a Technical Program Chair in the future. The beauty of volunteering is that it can shape your career in unexpected ways: you gain leadership, project management, teamwork, and public speaking skills, all while contributing to a cause you care about. By the end of this year, you've gone from newcomer to **active contributor**, which is a huge transition. The ITSS community will see you not just as a member, but as a colleague. Keep that momentum into the next year by maybe taking on one notch higher responsibility, and don't forget to bring other newcomers along – encourage them to volunteer too, just as you did.

If You Want to Get Funding or Travel Support

One common goal, especially for students and early-career researchers, is to secure **financial support** for participating in ITSS activities (like attending conferences or workshops). IEEE ITSS and IEEE at large have several funding opportunities that newcomers can tap into. Here's how to pursue them:

LEARN ABOUT AVAILABLE GRANTS AND ELIGIBILITY

Early on, familiarize yourself with the ITSS funding programs. As an ITSS member, you qualify for **Travel Grants** to ITSS flagship conferences. These are competitive grants (up to $1,000 USD per person) offered to authors of accepted papers who demonstrate need . Importantly, **ITSS membership must be current at the time of application** – yet another reason to join ITSS first! Check the **Flagship Conference Travel Grants** page on the ITSS site for details. Typically, the page will list the grant application deadlines for each conference and the criteria. For example, for IEEE IV 2025, applications were open until April 20, 2025, with decisions by April 22 . Also, see if your IEEE region or other IEEE societies offer conference travel scholarships that you could apply for. Begin to budget as well – know that grants may be **reimbursements** (you pay upfront and get paid back later) and often won't cover all costs, so you might need some co-funding from your school or employer.

PREPARE AND APPLY FOR GRANTS

Once you have a paper accepted or plan to attend a particular conference, get your **application in early**. Most ITSS travel grant applications require filling out an online form (through the ITSS website) where you provide your paper info, a statement of why you need funding, and sometimes a letter from your advisor. Pay attention to the **selection criteria** that ITSS uses: financial need, paper quality, and diversity factors are key considerations . In your application, clearly state the impact of attending on your career (how presenting at the conference will help you, etc.) . A great example of an additional program: in 2024 the ITSS Young Professionals committee launched a **Travel Support Program for Fostering Diversity** to help members attend ITSC 2024. They offered tiered reimbursements – $300 for travelers from the Americas, $700 for Europe/Africa, $1000 for Asia/Oceania – to broaden participation . The application was a simple Google form with a deadline of August 16, 2024 . Keep an eye on the ITSS news for any similar special programs in the future (the **ITSS Young Professionals news** is a good place to watch). If you meet the criteria, apply to all relevant funding sources – ITSS, IEEE region scholarships, etc. It never hurts to try, and even a partial grant helps. Make sure your IEEE profile is updated and that you have a **faculty reference or supervisor** ready to provide a supporting letter if needed.

USE FUNDING WISELY AND SEEK BROADER OPPORTUNITIES

If you received a travel grant or support, congratulations! Be sure to follow any instructions from the award committee. Typically, ITSS travel grants are reimbursed after you attend – so you'll need to save receipts and submit an expense report in the IEEE system (called **Concur**/NextGen) following the **IEEE Expense Reimbursement Guidelines** that they will send you. During the conference, perhaps drop by the ITSS booth or find the volunteer who coordinated the grants to say thank you in person – it's a nice gesture and they'll remember you. If you did *not* get a grant you applied for, don't be discouraged; these are competitive with limited number given . Often the rejection is simply due to budget limits. You can politely ask if there were any specific shortcomings in your application, but usually it's about the pool of applicants. Meanwhile, look beyond ITSS for other funding: Does your university have a student travel award for conference presenters? Many institutions do. Also, consider industry sponsorship – occasionally companies exhibit at conferences and have programs for student support (for instance, some tech companies sponsor diversity travel grants at IEEE conferences). Another angle in this period is IEEE-wide grants. The **IEEE Standards Association** sometimes offers seed grants for standards-related travel or projects, and IEEE **Technical Activities Board** has initiatives funding (which ITSS taps for those new initiatives proposals). These might be beyond a first-year member's scope, but if you have a mentor in ITSS, ask them to keep you informed of any such opportunities.

PLAN FOR NEXT YEAR'S FUNDING AND GIVE BACK

In the last part of your first year, start planning for any big ticket items in year two. If you know you'll be aiming for a conference in the next year, note when its travel grant applications will open (set a calendar reminder a month before the deadline to prepare documents). Also, think about **helping others** once you've benefited. Could you volunteer to review travel grant applications next year? (This is often done by more senior members, but expressing interest

shows goodwill.) Perhaps you can share your experience in the ITSS Newsletter – e.g., write a short piece "My experience at ITSC 2025 thanks to the ITSS Travel Grant." This not only acknowledges the support you got, it also adds to your accomplishments. Financial support in IEEE is a two-way street: they invest in you, and later you might contribute back as a volunteer or even donor. If you didn't receive any formal funding this year, you still gained the experience of applying – use that to refine future applications. And remember to renew your ITSS membership; the cost is low (especially for students) compared to the value of being eligible for these programs. In summary, always keep an eye on announcements (subscribe to the ITSS **News feed**) and don't hesitate to apply for support – ITSS *wants* newcomers to get involved and they allocate budget every year to help make that possible.

Conclusion

Your early stage in the IEEE Intelligent Transportation Systems Society will be an exciting journey of learning, connecting, and growing. We've covered how to join and make use of ITSS membership benefits, laid out a month-by-month roadmap, and given specific action plans for various goals – from attending conferences and publishing your first paper, to getting travel grants, improving your skills, networking, contributing to standards, finding mentors, and volunteering. That may seem like a lot, but remember: **you don't have to do everything at once.** Pick the areas that align with your personal goals and start there. The key theme is to **be proactive**. Opportunities abound in ITSS, but it's up to you to seize them.

By following this guide, you'll quickly go from a newcomer to an active, visible member of the ITSS community. In doing so, you'll not only gain knowledge and advance your career, but you'll also be contributing to a society whose mission is to transform transportation for the betterment of humanity. And the best part is, you won't be doing it alone – you'll be making friends and colleagues around the world who share your passion for intelligent transportation.

So, dive in! Join that webinar, email that committee chair, submit that nomination, volunteer for that event. A year from now, you might be the one mentoring the next batch of newcomers, telling them how getting involved in ITSS was one of the best decisions you made. Welcome to IEEE ITSS – we're thrilled to have you, and we can't wait to see how you'll shape the future of transportation. **Good luck on your journey in ITSS!**