

# **FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

## **Strategic Plan 2015-2018**



## Message from the Chairman

It is my great pleasure to introduce the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Strategic Plan as revised for fiscal years 2015 to 2018.

In the past, three network-related technological developments -- the printing press, the railroads, and the telegraph -- revolutionized the world's commerce and culture. This millennium has seen the advent of a fourth, and arguably the most transformative, technological development, the marriage of computing and connectivity known as the Internet. High-speed broadband networks have revolutionized our access to the world around us. The virtually limitless sources of information, education, and entertainment these broadband networks carry can erase the disadvantages of geographic isolation and economic and educational disparities. In combination with the broadcast, cable and satellite video services that have for decades and continue today to contribute so much to our society, they will have incalculable influence on the future of America.

All these revolutions have produced fundamental changes in the way people lived their lives. What sets the broadband network revolution apart, however, is how quickly it was deployed and the unabated speed with which it continues to evolve.

It is from the history of these network revolutions -- their struggles, their successes and their lessons -- that we derive four overriding principles that I believe should guide our work at the FCC:

- **Promoting Economic Growth and National Leadership** -- Telecommunications networks are a vital component of technological innovation and economic growth, helping to ensure that our nation remains a leader in providing its citizens opportunities for economic and educational development. Competition drives these networks to develop improved transmission technologies and to offer new services at competitive prices, and consumers can benefit from these fruits of competition. The FCC has a responsibility to promote the expansion of these networks and to ensure they have the incentive and the ability to compete fairly with one another in providing broadband services.
- **Protecting Public Interest Goals** -- A change in technology may require us to review and revise our rules, but it does not change the rights of users or the responsibilities of network providers. This civil bond between network providers and users includes consumer protection, competition, universal service, public safety and national security. The FCC must protect and promote this Network Compact.
- **Making Networks Work for Everyone** -- Because broadband networks are essential to our national wellbeing, it is not enough for the FCC simply to promote their development. We must also ensure that all Americans can take advantage of the services they provide to enjoy 21st century educational systems, health care, communication capabilities for our first responders, and accessibility for Americans with disabilities, and to assure innovation without artificial impediments.
- **Promoting Operational Excellence** -- The FCC should be a model for excellence in government by effectively managing its resources and maintaining a commitment to transparent and responsive processes that encourage public involvement and decisionmaking that best serves the public interest.

The connective technology of broadband networks defines the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it is the job of the FCC to ensure that these networks help facilitate innovation in the provision of education, health care, and safety of life and property. That is why I believe that the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy begins here. And that is why it is vitally important for us to clearly state our goals and objectives to ensure that we consistently and energetically pursue them.

I look forward to working closely with Congress, other federal, state, and local agencies, as well as other external stakeholders as the FCC implements its strategic plan. I believe the strategies outlined in this plan will allow the FCC to address the challenges we face now and those we will face in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Wheeler', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission

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## Mission

As specified in section one of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) mission is to "make available, so far as possible, to all the people of the United States, without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex, rapid, efficient, Nation-wide, and world-wide wire and radio communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges."<sup>1</sup> In addition, section one provides that the Commission was created "for the purpose of the national defense" and "for the purpose of promoting safety of life and property through the use of wire and radio communications."<sup>2</sup>

## Vision Statement

The FCC's vision is to promote the expansion of competitive telecommunications networks, which are a vital component of technological innovation and economic growth, and to protect and promote the network compact, including consumer protection, competition, universal access, public safety and national security - while ensuring that all Americans can take advantage of the services that networks provide.

## About the Federal Communications Commission

The FCC is an independent regulatory agency of the United States Government. The FCC is charged with regulating interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable. The Commission also regulates telecommunications and advanced communication services and video programming for people with disabilities, as set forth in various sections of the Communications Act.

The FCC is directed by five Commissioners appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate for five-year terms, except when filling the unexpired term of a previous Commissioner. Only three Commissioners can be from the same political party at any given time. The President designates one of the Commissioners to serve as Chairman.

The FCC is organized by function. There are seven Bureaus and ten Offices. The Bureaus and the Office of Engineering and Technology process applications for licenses to operate facilities and provide communications services; analyze complaints from consumers and other licensees; conduct investigations; develop and implement regulatory programs; and organize and participate in hearings and workshops. Generally, the Offices provide specialized support services. The Bureaus and Offices are:

- **The Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau** develops and implements consumer policies, including disability access and policies affecting tribal nations. The Bureau serves as the public face of the Commission through outreach and education, as well as responding to consumer inquiries and complaints. The Bureau also maintains collaborative partnerships with state, local, and tribal governments in such critical areas as emergency preparedness and implementation of new technologies.

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<sup>1</sup> 47 U.S.C. § 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

- **The Enforcement Bureau** enforces the Communications Act and the FCC's rules. It protects consumers, ensures efficient use of spectrum, furthers public safety, promotes competition, and protects the integrity of FCC programs and activities from fraud, waste, and abuse.
- **The International Bureau** administers the FCC's international telecommunications and satellite programs and policies, including licensing and regulatory functions. The Bureau promotes pro-competitive policies abroad, coordinating the FCC's global spectrum activities and advocating U.S. interests in international communications and competition. The Bureau works to promote a high-quality, reliable, globally interconnected, and interoperable communications infrastructure.
- **The Media Bureau** recommends, develops, and administers the policy and licensing programs relating to electronic media, including broadcast, cable, and satellite television in the United States and its territories.
- **The Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau** develops and implements policies and programs to strengthen public safety communications capabilities that assist the public, first responders, the communications industry, and all levels of government in preparing for and responding to emergencies and major disasters.
- **The Wireless Telecommunications Bureau** is responsible for wireless telecommunications programs and policies in the United States and its territories, including licensing and regulatory functions. Wireless communications services include cellular, paging, personal communications, and other radio services used by businesses and private citizens. The Bureau also conducts auctions of spectrum licenses.
- **The Wireline Competition Bureau** develops and recommends policies and licensing programs for wireline telecommunications, including telephone landlines, and fixed (as opposed to mobile) broadband, striving to ensure choice, opportunity, and fairness in promoting the development and availability of these services. The Bureau has particular responsibility for the Universal Service Fund, a public-private partnership that helps connect all Americans to communications networks.
- **The Office of Administrative Law Judges** is composed of one judge (and associated staff) who presides over hearings and issues decisions on matters referred by the FCC.
- **The Office of Communications Business Opportunities** promotes competition and innovation in the provision and ownership of telecommunications services by supporting opportunities for small businesses as well as women and minority-owned communications businesses.
- **The Office of Engineering and Technology** advises the FCC on technical and engineering matters. This Office develops and administers FCC decisions regarding spectrum allocations and grants equipment authorizations and experimental licenses.
- **The Office of the General Counsel** serves as the FCC's chief legal advisor.
- **The Office of the Inspector General** conducts and supervises audits and investigations relating to FCC programs and operations.
- **The Office of Legislative Affairs** serves as the liaison between the FCC and Congress, as well as other Federal agencies.

- **The Office of the Managing Director** administers and manages the FCC.
- **The Office of Media Relations** informs the media of FCC decisions and serves as the FCC’s main point of contact with the media.
- **The Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis** works with the Chairman, Commissioners, Bureaus, and Offices in strategic planning and policy development for the agency. It also provides research, advice, and analysis of complex, novel, and non-traditional economic and technological communications issues.
- **The Office of Workplace Diversity** ensures that the FCC provides employment opportunities for all persons regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, or sexual preference.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

As an independent rulemaking agency, the FCC regularly solicits comments on issues and conducts workshops, forums, and meetings with outside parties. The FCC receives thousands of comments from the public each year on its proceedings, and the FCC welcomes public feedback and input on its strategic goals as well.

## **Strategic Goals**

The FCC is responsible to Congress and the American people for ensuring an orderly policy framework within which communications products and services can be efficiently and effectively provided to consumers and businesses. Equally important, the FCC must also address the communications needs of public safety, health, and emergency operations; ensure the universal availability of broadband and telecommunications services; make communications services accessible to all people; and protect and empower consumers in the communications marketplace. The FCC, in accordance with its statutory authority and in support of its mission, has established four strategic goals. They are:

### **Strategic Goal 1: Promoting Economic Growth and National Leadership**

*Promote the expansion of competitive telecommunications networks, which are a vital component of technological innovation and economic growth and help to ensure that the U.S. remains a leader in providing its citizens opportunities for economic and educational development.*

### **Strategic Goal 2: Protecting Public Interest Goals**

*The rights of network users and the responsibilities of network providers form a bond that includes consumer protection, competition, universal service, public safety and national security. The FCC must protect and promote this Network Compact.*

### **Strategic Goal 3: Making Networks Work for Everyone**

*In addition to promoting the development of competitive networks, the FCC must also ensure that all Americans can take advantage of the services they provide without artificial impediments.*

### **Strategic Goal 4: Promoting Operational Excellence**

*Make the FCC a model for excellence in government by effectively managing the FCC's resources and maintaining a commitment to transparent and responsive processes that encourage public involvement and best serve the public interest.*



## **Strategic Goal 1: Promoting Economic Growth and National Leadership**

***Vision:** Promote the expansion of competitive telecommunications networks which are a vital component of technological innovation and economic growth, helping to ensure that the U.S. remains a leader in providing its citizens opportunities for economic and educational development.*

**Strategic Objective 1.1: Develop and implement flexible, market-oriented spectrum allocation and assignment policies, such as incentive auctions and unlicensed uses, which promote innovation, investment, jobs and consumer benefits.**

Performance Goal 1.1.1: Pursue spectrum allocation and license assignment policies to achieve the effective and efficient use of spectrum, including the implementation of incentive auctions.

Performance Goal 1.1.2: Ensure that all activities related to an incentive auction of broadcast television spectrum that repurposes a large swath of spectrum to more flexible uses, including mobile broadband, are managed effectively.

Performance Goal 1.1.3: Conduct effective and timely spectrum licensing and equipment authorization activities.

The FCC's allocation and assignment of spectrum must continue to evolve towards more flexible, market-oriented approaches to increase the opportunity for technologically innovative and efficient spectrum use and to ensure adequate spectrum is available for broadband and other purposes. Rulemaking proceedings will be conducted to allow more flexible ways to allocate and assign spectrum. The FCC will also evaluate and refine, where necessary, its spectrum assignment policies and procedures, including but not limited to its auction processes.

By rulemaking and other proceedings, as appropriate, the FCC will delineate the rights and responsibilities of spectrum users so that the potential for harmful interference can be minimized and opportunities for new spectrum uses, including both licensed and unlicensed uses, can be explored. The FCC will work closely with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), as well as regulators in Mexico, Canada, and other countries, to identify and resolve instances of harmful interference on an international basis and to avoid harmful interference in the future.

**Strategic Objective 1.2: Ensure effective policies are in place to promote and protect competition and remove barriers to investment.**

Performance Goal 1.2.1: Evaluate and report on the competitive environment for communications services, and act in instances where the data show that competition is threatened.

Performance Goal 1.2.2: Ensure expeditious and thorough review of proposed transactions to ensure they promote competition and serve the public interest.

The FCC will implement rules and policies that promote open and competitive entry by communications service providers to ensure that U.S. consumers benefit from competition. Our competition policy will take the "see-saw" approach: when competition is high, regulation can be low; when competition is low,

we will be willing to act in the public interest. In conformance with existing laws and policies, we will identify and eliminate market entry barriers for small entities. The FCC will seek to establish a consistent and transparent regulatory framework across all communications platforms to encourage competition. The FCC will continue to engage consumers through its outreach and education initiatives to facilitate informed choice in the competitive communications marketplace

The FCC will continue to expeditiously and thoroughly review applications for the transfer of control and assignment of licenses and authorizations that are included in proposed transactions and mergers between entities in the media and communications industries. The FCC's goal is a faster and more consistent review and analysis of applications while ensuring that the public interest would be served by approving the transaction. The FCC will ensure that its procedures and analysis of transactions are transparent and consistent across its various bureaus and offices.

***Strategic Objective 1.3: Promote interconnection of networks and terminal equipment on technically sound and economically efficient bases.***

*Performance Goal 1.3.1:* Employ strategies to encourage investment in networks and services by existing providers, while encouraging participation in broadband markets by new and non-traditional participants.

Our communications are rapidly transitioning to IP networks. We are witnessing the move from the circuit-switched networks of Alexander Graham Bell to the new broadband networks of the Internet: fiber, wireless, and bonded copper and coaxial cable. These transitions serve the public interest because IP networks are more efficient, providing consumers with better products, lower prices, and massive benefits.

***Strategies:***

- The FCC is using incentive auctions to help meet the nation's spectrum needs. Incentive auctions are a voluntary, market-based means of repurposing spectrum by encouraging licensees to voluntarily relinquish spectrum usage rights in exchange for a share of the proceeds from an auction of new licenses to use the repurposed spectrum. Congress authorized the FCC to conduct incentive auctions and directed that the FCC use this innovative tool for an incentive auction of broadcast television spectrum. The broadcast spectrum (600 MHz) incentive auction is planned for 2016.
- The FCC will employ rigorous and effective technical and economic analysis in developing policies that enhance research and development and spectrum access, management and use.
- The FCC will implement ongoing initiatives that will assist in spectrum policy planning and decision making, promote a robust secondary market in spectrum, and improve communications services in all areas of the United States, including rural, underserved and Tribal areas.
- The FCC will continue to collect and evaluate information on competition in the communications markets.
- FCC staff will continually review the FCC's rules to determine what rules need to be implemented, revised, or eliminated to achieve competition objectives effectively and efficiently.

***External Factors Affecting Achievement of This Goal:***

- New technologies are challenging existing regulatory structures domestically and internationally, while enabling consumers to have access to more services than ever before. Mobility and personalization are major trends in communications technology today. Both are dependent on growth and innovation in wireless service, as well as ease of interconnection with traditional networks. Although technological advances are making it possible to share spectrum more intensively, explosive growth in new technologies, particularly handheld and wireless devices, has increased demand for new spectrum.
- Increasing demand for spectrum requires new and innovative management techniques to allocate, assign, and use spectrum more efficiently and effectively. Methods for avoiding and mitigating harmful interference, and increasing opportunities for flexible use, require continued study.
- The FCC must conduct effective policy and technical analyses, have access to current and relevant data in developing competition policies and rules, and take enforcement action where necessary. The FCC must consult with industry and maintain ongoing relationships with regulators across the country and throughout the world. The FCC must provide expert guidance to other U.S. government agencies regarding communications policy and technology.
- Legislation could impact the FCC's spectrum management policies. Differences among international and domestic spectrum allocation policies may lead to disparity and inconsistency among U.S. and foreign licensing processes. Decisions in pending court cases may also affect FCC action in this area.

## **Strategic Goal 2: Protecting Public Interest Goals**

***Vision:** The rights of network users and the responsibilities of network providers form a bond that includes consumer protection, competition, universal service, public safety and national security. The FCC must protect and promote this Network Compact.*

**Strategic Objective 2.1: Protect and promote Internet openness for consumers, edge providers and all stakeholders.**

*Performance Goal 2.1.1:* Maintain a broadly available, fast and robust Internet that serves as a platform for economic growth, investment, innovation, free expression, and competition.

The Internet is America's most important platform for economic growth, innovation, competition, free expression, and broadband investment and deployment. The Internet has been, and remains to date, the preeminent 21st century engine for innovation and the economic and social benefits that follow. These benefits flow, in large part, from the open, end-to-end architecture of the Internet, which is characterized by low barriers to entry for developers of new content, applications, services, and devices, and a marketplace driven by consumer demand for their products. The Commission will craft rules to protect and promote an open Internet as a level playing field for all Americans.

**Strategic Objective 2.2: Facilitate the transition from circuit-switched networks to Internet Protocol (IP)-based networks in a way that preserves public interest goals.**

*Performance Goal 2.2.1:* Consider rule changes that promote investment in next generation networks in a manner that sustains competition, consumer protection, universal access, public safety and national security.

The "IP transition" is a multi-faceted revolution that advances as packets of IP-based communication replace the digital stream of bits and analog frequency waves. The impacts on networks have already begun and will be profound. Fiber networks are expanding. Bonding technology is showing interesting possibilities with regard to the nation's traditional copper infrastructure. IP-based wireless data services are increasingly prevalent with IP voice not far behind. Experiments will be conducted to assess the impact of the IP transition, and the FCC will collect data that will supplement the lessons learned from the experiments. The Commission will consider legal, policy, and technical issues to develop a game plan for efficiently managing the various adjudications and rulemakings that, together, will constitute the IP transition agenda.

**Strategic Objective 2.3: Protect the public interest through the promotion of competitive markets, and take action where competition is not sufficient to protect the public interest, including ensuring that consumers remain informed, protected and empowered while harnessing the benefits of networks.**

*Performance Goal 2.3.1:* Promote competitive choices for wireless, satellite, and wireline voice and data service providers, for domestic and international services and for multichannel video programming.

The FCC will seek to establish a consistent and transparent regulatory framework across all communications platforms to encourage competition, and will improve the data it collects to ensure it can

effectively evaluate the effect of its competition policies. The FCC will continue to engage consumers through its outreach and education initiatives to facilitate informed choice in the competitive communications marketplace

***Strategic Objective 2.4: Promote competition, localism, and diversity within the media marketplace.***

*Performance Goal 2.4.1:* Buttress diversity initiatives and improve existing data collection to better inform regulatory actions.

The FCC will continue to examine its current rules and make changes as required to accommodate the policy goals of competition, diversity, and localism within the evolving media landscape. Media plays a powerful role in the democratic process, as well as in shaping perceptions about who we are as individuals and as a nation. In order for broadcasters to best serve the public interest, we must preserve an avenue through which diverse voices can be heard and the interests of local communities can be served.

***Strategic Objective 2.5: Administer broadcast licensing policies that facilitate a vibrant local media marketplace.***

*Performance Goal 2.5.1:* Review transactions proposing to transfer the control of Commission broadcast licenses to protect public interest goals.

*Performance Goal 2.5.2:* Follow through on post-incentive auction repacking and reimbursement efforts for remaining broadcasters.

Increased competition, changing ownership patterns, converging markets and industries, and deployment of new technologies have challenged both the legal and economic foundations of the FCC's media regulation. The needs of the American citizenry are served when all consumers have access to a variety of sources for news, public service, and other media programming.

***Strategic Objective 2.6: Work with industry and government partners to enhance the cybersecurity of our nation's critical communications infrastructure.***

*Performance Goal 2.6.1:* Work with private sector stakeholders to create a new regulatory paradigm of business-driven cybersecurity risk management.

Communications providers also face threats to critical Internet infrastructures. The FCC will determine what safeguards may be needed to protect our nation's commercial communications infrastructure from cyberattack, and we will work with all levels of government and with industry to develop and implement solutions that promote confidence in the safety and reliability of IP-based communications.

***Strategic Objective 2.7: Promote access to effective public safety communications services across a range of platforms by public safety, health, defense, and other emergency personnel, as well as all consumers in need.***

*Performance Goal 2.7.1:* Enhance communications and media network reliability, including emergency preparedness and disaster management practices.

*Performance Goal 2.7.2:* Promote the deployment of nationwide, reliable, interoperable broadband public safety capabilities.

*Performance Goal 2.7.3:* Implement and enforce rules to ensure the nationwide availability of reliable and effective 911, E911, and NG911 service.

*Performance Goal 2.7.4:* During crises, work closely with our federal partners such as FEMA and the National Communications System to provide situational awareness data from the Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS) or data derived from the operation of Project Roll Call equipment.

The FCC is committed to ensuring the public's safety through the reliability of our nation's communications networks at all times, and especially during natural and manmade disasters. The FCC's leadership in the protection of the Nation's critical communications infrastructure includes working with public safety stakeholders to maximize the availability, interoperability, and reliability of communications. For example, the FCC has adopted rules to improve 911 communications networks nationwide by requiring 911 service providers to take reasonable measures to provide reliable and resilient 911 service.

***Strategies:***

- Appropriate FCC personnel will utilize technical knowledge of public safety, homeland security, and disaster management issues, including the impact of new or evolving technologies and of existing and proposed best practices for communications providers.
- Working in partnership with other federal agencies as well as state, local, and tribal governments, the FCC will facilitate discussions and share information among key constituencies to identify and establish best practices and coordinate efforts to protect America's safety and security.
- The FCC will take appropriate enforcement action to ensure compliance with the pro-competition provisions of the Communications Act and the FCC's rules.

***External Factors Affecting Achievement of This Goal:***

- Economic cycles may make it difficult for communications infrastructure providers to commit large sums of money to the wholesale improvement of network protection and redundancy in a challenging economy, and for state and local governments to fund next generation 911 services and public safety broadband capability.
- The FCC must continually update its understanding of national and international threats to communications technologies. The FCC must therefore maintain an experienced, educated, and knowledgeable technical and legal staff that stays abreast of technological and policy developments. The FCC must maintain ongoing, highly integrated relationships with the communications industries, other federal regulators, and state, tribal, and local regulators who are heavily involved in public safety matters.

## **Strategic Goal 3: Making Networks Work for Everyone**

***Vision:** In addition to promoting the development of competitive networks, the FCC must also ensure that all Americans can take advantage of the services they provide without artificial impediments.*

***Strategic Objective 3.1:** Maximize broadband availability and adoption by promoting affordability and removing other barriers to adoption by all Americans, including those with low incomes, older individuals, those in rural areas and tribal lands, and individuals with disabilities.*

*Performance Goal 3.1.1: Support and facilitate the development, deployment, and adoption of broadband services across multiple platforms.*

*Performance Goal 3.1.2: Work in partnership with state, local, and tribal governments, and consumer and industry groups, to promote broadband availability to all Americans, including consumers in rural and high cost areas, older Americans, and people with disabilities.*

Broadband for all Americans has gone from being a luxury to a necessity for full participation in our economy and society. In today's information economy, economic growth is built on the availability of high-speed Internet services provided by broadband telecommunications networks. Broadband empowers people by providing access to information and applications, and an increasingly affordable means to communicate within communities and around the world. The FCC must maximize the availability of broadband services, whether wired or wireless, and ensure that our rules allow broadband service providers to compete in the provision of these services regardless of whether they are offered on fixed or mobile platforms, or on a licensed or unlicensed basis. It is also incumbent on the Commission to successfully address the principal barriers to broadband adoption – affordability, lack of computer skills, and relevance to the lives of individuals such as older Americans and people with disabilities.

***Strategic Objective 3.2:** Ensure that universal service programs keep up with changing technologies and are well managed, efficient and fiscally responsible.*

*Performance Goal 3.2.1: Continue reform and modernization of the universal service programs to reflect technological developments and changes in the market.*

The FCC's Universal Service Fund (USF) programs, established in 1997, predated the development of broadband and historically have been used primarily to subsidize traditional telephone service provided over non-broadband networks. Moreover, because the cost of subsidizing telephone service has grown significantly over the years, voice consumers are increasingly bearing the burden of the USF which is increasingly being used to subsidize broadband connectivity. For these reasons, the FCC is implementing comprehensive USF reforms in order to ensure the USF programs are operating efficiently, and that they help accelerate broadband build-out to American consumers and schools, libraries and health care providers who currently have no access to robust broadband infrastructure.

***Strategic Objective 3.3:** Ensure that all schools and libraries have affordable access to modern broadband technologies through a well-managed, efficient and fiscally responsible E-rate program.*

*Performance Goal 3.3.1: Modernize the E-rate program to effectively meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and libraries.*

E-Rate has been a very successful program for almost twenty years, connecting nearly all schools to the Internet. However, the nature of connectivity in schools and libraries has changed dramatically in recent years. What was once provided through a dial-up modem now demands high-speed broadband and in-class WiFi. Only about half of the E-rate's funds today go for broadband connectivity, and far less than half of E-rate funds are used for the kind of 100 mbps and higher speeds necessary for today's learning environment. The FCC is undertaking a rulemaking to address and correct this reality, with a focus on three proposed program goals: (1) ensuring that schools and libraries have affordable access to modern broadband technologies that support today's digital learning tools and techniques; (2) ensuring E-Rate funds are distributed more equitably and cost-effectively; and (3) streamlining the administration of the E-rate program.

***Strategic Objective 3.4: Ensure that the benefits of networks are harnessed to address the needs of Americans with disabilities.***

***Performance Goal 3.4.1:*** Engage persons with disabilities through outreach and education initiatives to facilitate informed choice in the telecommunications and media marketplace.

Among the FCC's most important public interest responsibilities is ensuring that the benefits of telecommunications are available to all consumers. The FCC has a particular obligation to ensure that consumers with disabilities are not foreclosed from using these services. As communications networks and technologies become increasingly complex and essential to Americans' everyday lives, the FCC must be a vigilant watchdog. The FCC will ensure that its proceedings recognize consumer interests, and that consumer protection and empowerment policies apply consistently and reasonably to all consumers, including consumers with disabilities, and across all technologies and bureaus at the FCC.

***Strategies:***

- The Commission will employ rigorous and effective policy analysis as well as sound data-driven decision making in addressing policies regarding broadband deployment and adoption, including by people with disabilities.
- The Commission will continue to establish improved oversight and internal controls for its universal service and telecommunications relay service programs to improve management of those programs and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.
- The FCC will create and establish innovative, targeted outreach programs to overcome barriers to broadband adoption, including by people with disabilities.

***External Factors Affecting Achievement of This Goal:***

- Despite significant recent developments, broadband infrastructure is not yet universally deployed. In particular, lower incomes within the disability population prevent many in these communities from acquiring broadband products and services. As broadband infrastructure continues to develop, cost effective solutions must be sought to deploy high speed broadband to all Americans regardless of their abilities and disabilities or where they reside.



- Cost, availability, and accessibility are not the only barriers to broadband adoption. Other barriers include a lack of digital literacy among certain groups, apprehension concerning the Internet, and a belief by some non-adopters that the Internet is not relevant in their lives. The FCC must take a holistic approach to reducing all existing barriers in order to expand broadband adoption among Americans.

## **Strategic Goal 4: Promoting Operational Excellence**

***Vision:*** *Make the FCC a model for excellence in government by effectively managing the FCC's resources and maintaining a commitment to transparent and responsive processes that encourage public involvement and best serve the public interest.*

***Strategic Objective 4.1: Effectively manage the FCC's information technology, financial, and human resources to best achieve the FCC's mission.***

***Performance Goal 4.1.1:*** Improve Commission systems to make information readily available to agency management for decision making.

***Performance Goal 4.1.2:*** Upgrade and enhance technology and tools used by Commission staff to carry out the agency's mission.

***Performance Goal 4.1.3:*** Conduct a program of continuous review and evaluation to assure that all financial operations are helping control or contain costs, providing high quality customer service, and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Commission operations.

***Performance Goal 4.1.4:*** Develop targeted skills and competencies for FCC employees through appropriate career development aligned with the Commission's strategic goals.

Information technologies change rapidly in today's world. This requires organizations to put processes in place that provide for timely introduction, upgrade, or replacement of technologies. The FCC will continue to implement and revise its long-term vision for the strategic use of technology, while appropriately balancing the flexible introduction of performance-enhancing technologies with transparent and accountable management of all resources. The FCC will also seek to leverage newer technologies, such as cloud computing, to enhance our services to stakeholders. This will be balanced with continued adherence to a high level of information security standards.

With greater demands for transparency and accountability of expenditures of taxpayer dollars, sound financial stewardship is more important than ever. For nine consecutive years the FCC has obtained an unqualified or "clean" audit opinion on its financial statements, and we will continue the practices that made this possible. The FCC will routinely assess our financial internal controls and those of our reporting components, and develop and implement corrective action plans. We will also continue to make progress in eliminating and recovering improper payments.

Carrying out the mission of the FCC requires a highly trained, expert staff capable of assessing and understanding technological and industry trends and enforcing technical requirements. The FCC needs to make substantial investment in human capital to maintain an experienced, educated, and knowledgeable technical, legal, and economic staff that is able to keep pace with technological developments and trends, and promote the effective implementation of new initiatives and policies.

***Strategic Objective 4.2: Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of FCC operations in serving the American public.***

***Performance Goal 4.2.1:*** Implement process reform recommendations from internal and external stakeholders.

Americans should have an expectation that their government will take timely action, and the FCC is focused on that objective. Information and communications technology is fast-moving and constantly evolving, and we strive to be as nimble as the innovators and businesses we oversee. Even in the midst of tight budgets, infrastructure and process challenges, the FCC is reinventing itself to keep pace with the vibrant sector it regulates.

***Strategic Objective 4.3: Continuously review the FCC’s regulatory processes and significant regulations to achieve statutory objectives, while reducing burdens on industry and promoting innovation and job growth.***

*Performance Goal 4.3.1:* Eliminate or streamline outdated regulations within the FCC’s program areas.

*Performance Goal 4.3.2:* For each program objective, provide timely and accurate legal advice and representation regarding proposed and existing policies and rules within the FCC’s purview, and ensure that the Commission adheres to all legal requirements in its operations.

The FCC is committed to being a responsive, efficient and effective agency that harnesses and promotes technological and economic opportunities. Our extensive efforts to eliminate outdated regulations are rooted in our commitment to ensure that FCC rules and policies promote a healthy climate for private investment and job creation. This includes our commitment to act in accordance with President Obama’s Executive Order on Regulation and Independent Agencies, which is consistent with the values and philosophy we apply at the FCC. Each bureau at the FCC conducts regular reviews of rules within their areas with the goal of eliminating or revising rules that are outdated or place needless burdens on businesses. The FCC will continue on this regulatory reform track, thoughtfully and diligently conducting reviews of existing rules and taking other important steps to meet our statutory obligations and mission in a way that fosters economic growth and benefits all Americans.

***Strategies:***

- The FCC will seek to remove burdens on industry and promote innovation and job growth through an ongoing process of identifying and eliminating or amending outmoded or counterproductive rules.
- The FCC will identify ways to leverage and integrate technology in order to eliminate unnecessary redundancy, promote efficiency and effectiveness, and improve stakeholder satisfaction.
- The FCC will maintain a robust internal controls program that is risk-based, identifies and remediates critical vulnerabilities, and significantly reduces the potential for waste, fraud and abuse. This includes not only all FCC programs, but components of the FCC such as the Universal Service Fund, the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund, and the North American Numbering Plan.
- The FCC will continue to recruit and retain talented professionals, and will continue a robust training program to maintain proficiency among its professional staff.

***External Factors Affecting Achievement of Management Objectives:***

- Funding for the FCC to carry out its mission is always a significant determinant in meeting our strategic goals and objectives as expressed in this plan. The FCC relies on its annual appropriations and its authorization from Congress to implement its initiatives for the American people, overhaul its data systems and processes, and modernize and reform the FCC with 21<sup>st</sup> century communications tools and expertise.
- The FCC has many opportunities to improve stakeholder and employee satisfaction and affect mission accomplishment through the introduction of new or enhanced systems and processes. Ensuring that the FCC has access to the human resources necessary to properly plan, implement, and evaluate the use of these technologies is a complementary factor affecting the achievement of the FCC's organizational excellence goal. Recruiting, hiring, redeploying, training, motivating, and retaining such a staff is a challenge.

## **Planning and Performance at the FCC**

The FCC Strategic Plan is the pinnacle of the FCC's planning and performance process. It provides the framework around which the FCC determines its annual performance plan and budget requests. This performance budget, submitted to Congress, includes performance targets that stem from the FCC's strategic goals and objectives, and serves as the guide for implementing the Strategic Plan. After each fiscal year, an annual performance report is produced that compares the agency's actual performance to its targets. In addition, the FCC annually publishes a Summary of Performance and Financial Information to provide a citizen-focused summary of the FCC's progress in meeting its key challenges. Copies of these documents may be viewed at <http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/fcc-strategic-plan>.

## **Program Evaluations**

The FCC uses a variety of methods to evaluate its programs including audits from the FCC's Office of Inspector General (OIG) and reports from the General Accountability Office (GAO). The OIG, an independent oversight organization within the FCC, conducts audits, investigations, and reviews relating to the FCC's programs and operations. Information on the OIG's work can be found at (<http://www.fcc.gov/office-inspector-general>). The GAO, an independent organization established by Congress, conducts evaluations and analyses and makes recommendations to improve practices of the programs it reviews. GAO reports concerning the FCC's activities can be found at (<http://www.gao.gov/>).