



USCIB CROSSCUTTING POLICY BRIEF

Digital Transformation is Key to Effective COVID Response & Building Back Better

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The extent to which use of remote video-conferencing has become the norm for doing business and engaging in social interaction shortly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic puts in stark relief the importance of innovative technologies for economic and societal well-being. U.S. high technology companies – global leaders in this sector – have the potential to fuel resilience and recovery by creating new jobs and greater efficiencies across all sectors. This will mean greater employment for Americans and enhanced global business competitiveness as we recover from the pandemic.

The pandemic has highlighted the transformative power of cutting-edge, digital technologies; these technologies have:

- enabled real-time information exchanges
- facilitated the provision of critical medical services and real-time information exchanges about the virus
- channeled government financial support for business and individuals
- provided a means of continuing commercial and economic activity across many important sectors of U.S. business

The ability to connect online has served as a lifeline to literally millions of global citizens anxious for safe, social engagement and a way to continue their children's education. Even more importantly, digital technologies have the potential to shape a sustainable recovery from the pandemic, including accelerating the digitization of licensing, permitting, tax collection and procurement.

Key to realizing these benefits is a policy framework that creates an enabling environment for investment in technology innovation and deployment. Such policies may address economic, social/cultural, technical and governance issues, all of which are interlinked and cross-cutting. This holistic approach will best enable development of a secure digital infrastructural foundation to realize greater resilience and preparedness in the face of whatever natural or man-made challenge we may face going forward.

The economic, political and societal future of the United States is at risk unless policy makers in the Administration and Congress move expeditiously to embrace and implement a holistic approach in the near-term. This would constitute our best chance of a soft landing and solid return to commercial and economic activity, while at the same time conquering the pandemic through rigorous scientific means.

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND: WHERE USCIB BRINGS VALUE

USCIB is uniquely positioned to work directly with business, the Administration and key multilateral entities, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC), to shape economic, digital, educational, commercial, healthcare and other policies that will pave the way to economic recovery, job creation and pandemic mitigation and eradication.

Importantly, as the U.S. national member at Business at OECD (BIAC), USCIB provides its members with a seat at the table at the OECD and the ability to shape OECD policy recommendations that will impact digital transformation of the economy. Through its participation in ICANN, USCIB and its members work to ensure the safety, security, stability and resilience of the Internet domain name system, which in turn facilitates vibrant commercial activity, online education and social interaction at a time when many U.S. citizens are experiencing literal and virtual isolation.

Related to this, USCIB has leveraged its observer status in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and membership in the International Chamber of Commerce – which is a UN General Assembly observer – to provide key business inputs and perspectives to the UN Secretary General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, which will ensure that digital technologies may effectively be harnessed to realize many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These dual channels also have enabled business to advocate effectively in the UN International Telecommunication Union in collaboration with the U.S. Government to oppose top-down mandates on non-interoperable Internet protocols.

Through its participation at the OECD, vis-a-vis Business at OECD (BIAC), and as special business guest to the APEC Digital Economy Steering Group, USCIB has afforded its members an opportunity to shape core digital policies and principles, including on privacy, AI, connectivity, internet policy making and others, which optimize personal privacy protections and respect for human rights and maintain cross-border data flows and an open interoperable internet.

USCIB ENCOURAGES THE ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Incentivize investment in broadband technologies and streamline regulatory policies in order to facilitate broadband deployment, focusing on underserved areas. The economic and societal benefits of digital transformation can only be realized if there is adequate broadband infrastructure and spectrum.
- Facilitate the adoption of new technologies by creating and enabling environment for innovation, which emphasizes R&D investment incentives.
- Promote the global movement of data in trade negotiations and discourage practices that would adversely affect cross-border flow of data and cloud services. Enhanced access to data will drive digital innovation among people, firms and governments.
- Rally the international community around the need for a global internet infrastructure that is interoperable, secure, resilient and open, with governance that is transparent and based on multistakeholder approaches and democratic values.
- Build trust in the online environment by working with the global community to develop risk-based, interoperable privacy protections and digital security norms so consumers, businesses and governments will feel confident that the privacy and security of their personal data are respected and their online systems secure.
- Empower people with skills needed to succeed in the digital economy and society by taking aggressive steps to address technology utilization and digital literacy gaps.
- Work closely with business and other stakeholders to shape the development of emerging technologies, such as AI, in a human-centric manner that builds trust, respects human rights and democratic values and broadens deployment so we are poised to use it effectively to address economic societal needs, as well as tackle future global crises.