



Comments of the Telecommunications Industry Association
President's Council of Advisors on Science & Technology
September 7, 2012

The Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) is pleased to provide comments to the President's Council of Advisors on Science & Technology regarding the information and communication technology (ICT) research ecosystem, specifically with regard to the Networking and Information Technology R&D (NITRD) Program. Representing the manufacturers and suppliers of high-tech communications, TIA would like to thank this Council for the time and focus you provide in drawing attention to the critical importance of the NITRD program.

While the U.S. still boasts the strongest research ecosystem in the world, we are beginning to see signs of erosion as competing nations take strong steps to attract ICT research to build innovation-based economies. Maintaining U.S. leadership in the ICT sector will require active engagement by the federal government to create a framework to unlock private R&D investment, to direct federal funds to long-term ICT research in targeted areas, and to better coordinate and account for research efforts across federal research agencies. TIA strongly supports the mission of the NITRD Program as an important component of the U.S. ICT research ecosystem and makes the following recommendations:

Federal Funding for Basic ICT Research is Critical to the U.S. Research Ecosystem

As Congress and the Administration make difficult funding decisions in the midst of the current recession, TIA stresses the necessity of continued funding for ICT research as a national priority. Federal research dollars are critical to buffer and offset the decline of private research funding during periods of financial crisis. Decreasing federal R&D funding during a recession would only compound the damage to the ecosystem. Federal funding in ICT research is critical, particularly given the government's role in funding basic research. Private investment accounts for almost 70% of all research investment in the U.S., but basic research makes up a relatively small percentage of the research conducted by ICT companies. We are seeing a growing research gap in basic ICT research in the United States. If not remedied, this research gap threatens U.S. leadership and innovation in the ICT sector, with consequences for both the U.S. economy and national security. For federal ICT research dollars, it is critical for policymakers to know what federal investments in ICT research are actually being spent on ICT research and what investments are being used on ICT to support research in other fields.

Enhanced Coordination of Federal ICT Research Dollars Will Become Increasingly Important as ICT is Further Integrated in Different Sectors of the Economy

The more robust application of ICT to different sectors of the economy (smart grid, smart buildings, smart transportation, health IT, etc.) will result in the need for more active coordination from participating agencies as the various agencies will be addressing many similar issues ranging from cybersecurity to interoperability and reliability.

TIA has outlined our concerns with the ICT research ecosystem in detail and made specific recommendations in a white paper, the TIA ICT R&D Policy Report, available at: <http://www.tiaonline.org/sites/default/files/pages/TIA%20U%20S%20%20ICT%20RD%20Policy%20Report.pdf>. We are in the process of updating this report along with a Research Competitiveness Scorecard, which we will be releasing later this year. We look forward to the updated NITRD PCAST report as well and will continue to engage with efforts to strengthen the U.S. ICT research ecosystem.