

## ATIC PLATFORM STATEMENT

### DIGITAL DIVIDE

Access to and the ability to use modern communications services and the Internet has evolved from a novelty to a convenience to a requirement for productive participation in today's society. The digital divide refers to the gap between those who use those services productively and those who do not. To illustrate the complexity of the problem, the divide is often broken down into three categories: those who *have* or *do not have* access to robust broadband communications, those who *can* and those who *can-not* utilize such communications infrastructure, and finally those who *will* and those who *will not* use such capabilities. Our main concern is with the *haves* and *have-nots*, an issue of access, and the *can's* and *can-not's*, an issue of ability.

The availability and affordability as well as the ability to use modern communications services and the Internet varies widely between and among urban areas, small rural communities, Indian reservations, demographic groups, and private and public entities. Communities that persist on the "wrong side of the digital divide" will face ongoing disadvantages in educational opportunities and economic development potential.

In order to effectively bridge the digital divide, Arizonans require public policies that encourage wide-scale deployment and effective use of communication services and information technologies. This includes infrastructure deployment, applications development, content creation, technology-enabled education, workforce development and providing communities with a reason to bridge the divide. Such actions in turn will help to ensure economic prosperity for the Arizona community, expand the region's global competitive advantage, enable continued educational advancement, and support an enhanced quality of life.

Specifically, the following policies can help to bridge the digital divide:

- Encourage state and local government to act as "anchor tenants," and thus a catalyst for, deployment of broadband networks throughout the state.
- Urge state, county, and municipal Agencies to promote and participate in TOPAZ (Telecommunications Open Partnerships for Arizona).
- Adopt regulatory policies that expand the state universal access program and rural broadband network incentives.
- Maintain and expand opportunities for public access to communications services.
- Support public/private partnerships to develop content to make the Internet more meaningful and useful to all communities, and to promote technological literacy within our communities.