Consolidated Response to USSS Public Comments
Approved by the ANSI Board of Directors, December 9, 2020

Introduction and Historical Perspective
During 2020, ANSI managed the fourth 5-year revision of the *U.S. Standards Strategy*. Comments were solicited from ANSI members during the period April-June 2020. A first draft of the revision to the 2015 *U.S. Standards Strategy* was posted for public comment on July 27. The public comment period closed on September 8, 2020. Thirty-two organizations, companies, government agencies and individuals provided input on the draft revision. A small number of comments received addressed issues outside of the scope of the Strategy. In scope comments and suggested edits were consolidated and a final draft of the *U.S. Standards Strategy 2020* prepared.

The final draft and this consolidated response to comments received will be presented to the ANSI Board of Directors for their consideration and approval of the 2020 *U.S. Standards Strategy* at the December Board meeting.

The National Standards Strategy was first published in 2000. The strategy was renamed the U.S. Standards Strategy in 2005. As in previous revisions, this cycle is informed by the history of the NSS/USSS and USSS Committee deliberations. The USSS Principles and Strategic Initiatives form the core of the Strategy. Thus, preference has been given to retaining the Principles section largely as it was originally worded. References to the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO TBT) Agreement have also been retained throughout the Strategy. These references have been updated to explicitly reference the 2000 WTO TBT Committee Decision on International Standards.

The 12 Strategic Initiatives contained in the Strategy have been retained with minor editorial changes. These initiatives were agreed by the USSS Committee in 2000 as a result of two years of deliberations. Language has been updated as needed. Recommendations related to tactical initiatives – to add, delete, and/or recast – were considered as outlined below in detail.

Sections I and II, and IV of the Strategy – Introduction, Imperatives for Action, and Our Strategic Vision – have been updated and substantially streamlined, in response to comments received.

Throughout the USSS, many references are made to "standardization activities." The principles and elements that underlie "standardization activities" are defined and explained in the USSS itself and derive in large part from ANSI's original incorporation documents, including the ANSI By-Laws, Article I (Purposes).

General Themes
Careful analysis of comments received identified six general themes. These are outlined below. Changes were made where relevant to specific sections of the USSS to address these themes and ensure consistency throughout the document.

- Ensure consistency of references to "international standards" throughout text
    - Reference TBT Committee decision – "globally accepted principles for [international] standards development"
    - Deprecate terms such as "globally relevant" and "multiple path;" "innovative and technically superior"

- Retain USSS focus on voluntary consensus standards
- Ensure USSS tracks with WTO TBT provisions and principles (including TBT Committee decision)
- Ensure continued consistency with OMB Circular A-119 (where relevant – focus on government use)
- Ensure balanced treatment in IPR references throughout the USSS (balance rights of IPR holders and
- Clarify references to "government" (US – national, state, local) (Globally – governments)

Strategic Initiative 1: Strengthen participation by government in the development and use of voluntary consensus standards through public-private partnerships

One commenter recommended the addition of a specific numerical target for increased government participation in the development of voluntary consensus standards (VCS). No target is currently specified in law or policy. Given that federal agency missions differ significantly and therefore their participation rates also differ, it was deemed preferable to leave decisions on level of participation to individual agencies.

Several commenters recommended making the text more action-oriented; an effort was made to respond to these recommendations. Two commenters noted the importance of including professional organizations in the list of stakeholders in the standards development process. This addition was included. Commenters expressed differing opinions regarding references to OMB Circular A-119 in this section. One commenter supported the inclusion of the A-119 reference to other than VCS also being considered by government agencies, and recommended adding more Circular text for clarification. A second commenter suggested deleting this reference absent further clarification. The referenced text was clarified. References to VCS throughout the tactical initiatives, which had been deleted, were also restored in response to comments received. One commenter recommended adding specific language to tactical initiative six outlining specific ways to make standards, or portions of standards, more accessible. As this could be interpreted to be both prescriptive and limiting, the general language was retained.

Strategic Initiative 2: *Continue to address the environment, health, safety, and sustainability in the development of voluntary consensus standards*

Several commenters recommended that references to VCS in the 2015 Strategy be restored. This was done throughout the Initiative text. Two commenters recommended the inclusion of a reference to professional organizations among active participants in the development of VCS. This addition was noted. Suggested editorial changes to specific tactical initiatives were also accepted. One commenter recommended the addition of "energy efficiency" to the list of VCS attributes. This recommendation was not accepted: energy efficiency is a contributor to environmental sustainability and is thus already covered.

Strategic Initiative 3: *Improve the responsiveness of the standards system to the interests of consumers*

Several editorial changes were made in response to comments. These include replacing "views and needs" with "interests," adding "interoperability" after "compatibility," and deleting "authenticity" since it is not defined. Minor wording changes were also accepted in tactical initiatives one through three, to clarify the intent of these initiatives.

Strategic Initiative 4: *Actively promote the consistent worldwide application of internationally recognized principles in the development of standards*

A new tactical initiative was added in response to comments received: "The U.S. government should support the integrity of the international standards system through leadership roles and strengthen the rules-based processes of relevant organizations." Editorial changes were made as recommended to streamline the text.

Strategic Initiative 5: *Encourage common approaches by governments to the use of voluntary consensus standards as tools for supporting regulatory needs*

A new tactical initiative was added to this section in response to comments received: "Governments should create mechanisms to incentivize the adoption and use of standards to achieve the functional objectives of regulations, rather than citing specific standards in regulatory text, when possible." One commenter also noted that, "This is missing a more actionable tactic that the United States Congress can take by setting a priority on the use of voluntary consensus standards." Since the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act (NTTAA), referenced elsewhere in the Strategy, represents the sense of Congress on this point, no additions were made in response to this comment.

Strategic Initiative 6: *Work to prevent standards and their application from becoming technical-trade barriers to U.S. products and services*

References to conformity assessment activities were deleted, to ensure consistency with the stated focus of the Strategy on standards. Several commenters noted that wording regarding specific criteria that are not relevant to determining whether a standard is an international standard was too detailed and open to misinterpretation. These statements were also deleted.

Strategic Initiative 7: *Strengthen international outreach programs to promote understanding of how U.S. voluntary, consensus-based, market-driven standards can benefit businesses, consumers, and society as a whole*

The introduction was reworded to be more consistent with the title of the strategic initiative. The wording of tactical initiatives 2 and 3 was revised to clarify that both government and private sector outreach efforts are included, and that standards developing organizations should encourage remote/virtual participation in standards development activities.

Strategic Initiative 8: *Continue to improve the tools for the efficient and timely development and distribution of voluntary consensus standards*

Clarifying language was added to the introduction to this initiative in response to comments received. Two new tactical initiatives were added, targeting actions by standards developers and by ANSI.

Strategic Initiative 9: *Promote cooperation and coherence in standards activities*

A reference to the importance of discouraging duplication, where it does not add value, was inserted in response to comments received. Tactical initiative wording was streamlined. A reference was added to tactical initiative 2 to recognize the value of formal agreements as appropriate.

Strategic Initiative 10: *Promote and encourage a standards-literate workforce by building standards awareness and competence among various communities*

Commenters recommended the addition of "technical and trade schools" to tactical initiatives 1 and 3. These additions were included.

Strategic Initiative 11: *Respect diverse funding models for the U.S. standards system*

Revisions were made to tactical initiatives 2 and 4 in response to comments received. Several comments focused on the promotion of voluntary commitments and licensing policies that balance the interests of both intellectual property holders and implementers. Tactical initiative 2 addresses the protection of intellectual property contributed in the standards development process. A suggestion was made regarding the addition of a new tactical initiative focusing on tax credits: "Government should incentivize companies such as through tax credits to support standards professionals and to ensure long term U.S. leadership in standardization." Taxation is a Congressional responsibility and is thus out of scope for the Strategy.

Strategic Initiative 12: *Address the need for standards in support of emerging national priorities*
Wording in the section was streamlined to convey the importance of emerging national priorities without locking in a specific list of priorities, which will change over time.