



CASE STUDY

MANY RURAL COMMUNITIES LACK A 21ST CENTURY UTILITY **BUT WHO WILL DELIVER BROADBAND?**

To plan a broadband deployment in rural Arkansas, Clarksville Connected Utilities' General Manager John Lester took inspiration from "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." "Begin with the end in mind," he quotes.

CCU initially looked into building a fiber network to connect its own infrastructure. By deploying the Internet of Things, the company could monitor and manage all its equipment in real time.

However, John soon realized that broadband was a new utility CCU could deliver to its customers. Like many rural communities, much of Clarksville lacked high-speed, reliable broadband internet access.

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We knew that there was a possibility that we could add value to the community at large by looking at the capacity of this network that we were going to build, and anticipating potential future [uses].

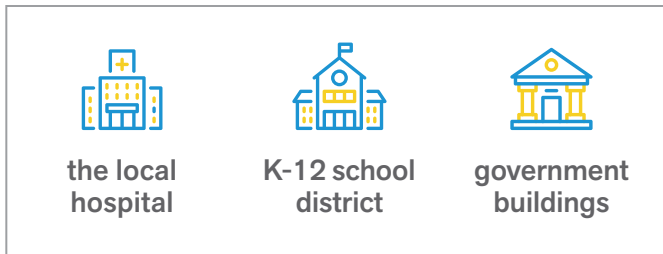
John Lester, General Manager
Clarksville Connected Utilities

Building a Network, Step by Step

CCU started by building a core network to connect critical infrastructure – like electric substations and water treatment plants – but included enough fiber to deliver service to the community at large.

The biggest cost of the network deployment, John explains, was the installation, not the fiber itself. It made the most sense to maximize capacity in the initial build and scale up service over time.

Next, CCU began connecting anchor institutions in the community, including



These large customers were the first to pay for service, generating revenue to offset the cost of the project's next phase – building out fiber to the home.

Graybar's Managed Services Help Simplify the Logistics of Delivering Broadband

One of the biggest challenges of this incremental approach was managing labor and materials over the lifetime of the project. Graybar was able to help CCU streamline its supply chain, starting with procurement.

Through its OMNIA Partners, Public Sector contract, Graybar was able to provide pre-negotiated best pricing so CCU could bypass the time-consuming bid process.

To help make sure contractors had the right materials at the right time, Graybar stocked trailers on jobsites, powered by Graybar SmartStock® inventory management services. CCU could track inventory levels in real time and reorder materials as needed, with customized weekly reporting through a software solution. Graybar's regional network of distribution facilities provided backup inventory, close at hand.

"They really worked hard to make sure the materials we needed were here when we needed them – and I only had one party to deal with when it came to those materials," John says.

Every week, the CCU and Graybar teams set up a phone call to review the status of the project together, spot potential problems and plan inventory.

"It's all about relationships. We had a good sales rep and a good manager [from Graybar] who really understood the value of what we were trying to do, and could see that this could be a model for others," John says.

Hands-on support from a dedicated team put the project on track to finish well ahead of schedule. While the build was originally expected to take up to three years, it was completed in just over a year. CCU has already secured 50% more orders for service than the original business plan required.

Broadband Helps Communities Adapt for the 21st Century

Instead of revenue, John prefers to highlight the broader benefits internet access brings to his community. "As a municipality, I don't have the profit motive that a typical cable company, phone company or ISP has – mine's more about community service, with a fair return," he says.

CCU recently partnered with the local housing authority to provide free internet service for almost 200 low-income households. They have also worked with the Clarksville School District to deploy wireless access points throughout the community so students can learn remotely.

Similar projects in rural areas have shown that broadband can bring new jobs, enable higher-quality healthcare through telemedicine and more.



It's not just about faster internet. There's a whole lot of things this network we're building can do for a community.

John Lester