

A CHR SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY

NO MEMBER LEFT BEHIND

CARROLL EMC AND SYNCGLOBAL WORK TOWARD 100% BROADBAND COVERAGE



PROFILE OF THE COOPERATIVE UTILITY

For years, members of Carroll Electric Membership Cooperative (EMC) expressed an urgent need for broadband. Many of their members live in rural areas of western Georgia that have been underserved or unserved for decades.

The lack of and desire for broadband internet calls to mind Carroll EMC's origins. Founded in 1936 during the time of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rural Electrification Administration, the fledgling organization—originally called Carroll Rural Electric Association—was told that bringing electricity to all of their members was too difficult and unprofitable.

But they prospered, bringing electricity to the first 344 residents in 1937 and, eventually, rolling out electric service to 100% of the homes, farms, and businesses in the seven counties they serve (now representing more than 53,000 electric meters).

BUSINESS DRIVER OF BROADBAND INVESTMENT

Since those early days, Carroll EMC has been committed to delivering what their members need. Since the early 2000s and into the 2010s, that need was simple: high-speed internet. As Carroll EMC's leaders began to contemplate how to address that need, their vision was as simple and audacious as that of their forerunners: bring broadband internet to 100% of their membership.

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CHALLENGES AND SURPRISES

The leadership of Carroll EMC knew, from the start, they wanted to work with a broadband partner that would understand and commit to their vision of 100% coverage. They found a company that matched their vision in SyncGlobal Telecom, a broadband service provider based in Bremen, Georgia. In 2018, their engineering partner, CHR Solutions, was brought in to conduct a feasibility study.

Tim Martin, President and CEO of Carroll EMC, describes what happened as a chain of listening: Carroll EMC listened to their members, SyncGlobal listened to Carroll EMC, and CHR listened to SyncGlobal (and then Carroll EMC). The listening and careful consideration were key to the success of the project—rather than Carroll EMC telling their members, “We can’t do that,” or SyncGlobal telling Carroll EMC, “That’s not doable,” or CHR telling SyncGlobal, “How could we get fiber to such remote locations?”, everyone understood the vision of 100% coverage and approached the project with positivity and possibility.



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

CHR used their financial modeling systems to determine expected costs and revenue with extended projects that showed what a partnership between Carroll EMC and SyncGlobal might expect, providing estimates as far as 30 years in the future. Satisfied that the bold project was achievable, Carroll EMC, SyncGlobal, and CHR Solutions moved forward with the planning and design of Phase 1 of the fiber network project, which will eventually bring high-speed connections to up to 10,000 homes and businesses. SyncGlobal, with the backing of Carroll EMC, secured its first federal grant in 2020 and broke ground on the network in 2021.

Carroll EMC's fiber network, built on top of their existing electric infrastructure, will roll out based on the areas served by their substations. Some companies, with profit foremost on their minds, might build their network to the most densely populated areas first. Instead, Carroll EMC decided to extend the customers at the farthest ends of the line first. "Those members had already waited twenty years for service," explains Tim Martin, "and they would have waited another three to five years if we didn't prioritize them."

This unique, need-centered approach means that some members have watched as construction crews passed their home and service was delivered to residents who lived farther out.

"It's the right thing to do, and our members understand that," Martin says.

It also means that the process of connecting customers closer to Carroll EMC's substations will be easier in the future, as they branch off from existing fiber lines.

In 2022, SyncGlobal branded the fiber internet service offered to Carroll EMC members as Crossbeam. Crossbeam is now serving hundreds of customers in western Georgia with internet speeds up to one Gig, with new customers being connected every day. The Phase 1 buildout is just over halfway complete, and Crossbeam is gauging interest from other communities to assess where they should build next.



WHY IS THIS CASE STUDY IMPORTANT?

The powerful, ongoing partnership among Carroll EMC, SyncGlobal Telecom, and CHR Solutions is an example of what can be accomplished with vision, careful planning, and a dedicated team. Crossbeam is changing the lives of residents of western Georgia.

What can you do for your members?



ABOUT CHR

CHR Solutions specializes in broadband engineering services, billing and business software solutions, cybersecurity and network monitoring services that address the operational and marketplace challenges faced by today's broadband service providers.

FIND OUT HOW CHR CAN HELP YOU

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