

# An Integrated Partner in Broadband Expansion



## The Situation

When South Central Electric Cooperative (SCEC) first began negotiations with a regional telecommunications operator to expand broadband service to its community, then-Operations Manager Colby Wells did not yet know the full scope of challenges it would bring. The co-op was eager to expand high-speed service to new consumers, but they were already in the throes of an organizational shake-up. In the midst of restructuring to include a new telecommunications arm called South Central Connect (SCC), they were also on the hunt for a new CEO. When Wells himself was named to the role in 2020, he knew he wanted to find an expert partner who could support him both as a new executive and as the head of a rapidly-changing company.

## The Challenges

After 15 years at the co-op, Wells' training was largely in the electrical space – and he needed someone who could help him anticipate and navigate the unique challenges of expanding into the broadband arena. As both SCEC and SCC evolved, he was concerned that necessary organizational changes and potential rate increases could leave staff and consumers discouraged. At the same time, he had to find a way to handle the logistical elements of expansion, like infrastructure, product strategy, staff training, and more: "For electrical cooperatives entering the broadband space, there is often much focus on the engineering and construction components, but not as much on the operational and product plan, organizational design, and long-term strategic planning. We needed all of it – and that's what Leverage Broadband Strategies brings to the table."

## The Solution

From the get-go, Leverage became an integrated partner for Wells and his team, helping them build a strategic rollout plan for their new and updated services. This included everything from a new organizational plan for SCEC and SCC to mentoring new executives on creating effective goals and objectives for their teams. Throughout the entire process, says Wells, they worked hand-in-hand to build plans that were customized to the SCC team and their subscribers: "They embraced our ideas about what the company should look like, while coupling that with decades worth of knowledge about broadband to help us make the right decisions." With expansion came a necessary rate increase, and with Leverage's help SCC was able to create tiered packages that turned a potential risk into a benefit for consumers,

allowing them an option to stay at a lower rate while also expanding service options. Leverage also helped SCC define key consumer satisfaction metrics and find new ways to track and quantify subscriber feedback.

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## The Results

Leverage has helped Wells and his team realign resources, redefine roles for clarity, provide critical training, streamline operations, and strategically place themselves in a growing broadband market. As a new CEO, Wells has also found them invaluable to helping him make informed decisions about restructuring and communicate those decisions to his team: "Without their outside perspective, we could have been at a real risk of losing key team members because of such rapid growth. Instead, we've seen a massive boost to team morale."

SCC has seen the benefits in incremental new subscriber rates as well. When they began their expansion, their goal was to reach a 30% subscriber rate within 3 years; after a year of partnership with Leverage, they've reached 41%.

Leverage Broadband Strategies continues to work hand-in-hand with the SCC management team: "They have provided a depth and breadth of experience that helps us get to the right answers more quickly. They are much more than just a consulting firm – we consider them to be an integral part of our executive team."



South Central  
Arkansas Electric  
Cooperative