



Case Study

How Empower Southwest Georgia and Mission Telecom are Bridging the Digital Divide



Problem: Residents in rural Southwest Georgia encounter significant obstacles to accessing reliable internet. These challenges stem from inadequate broadband infrastructure, low levels of digital literacy, and limited resources. As a result, many people struggle to fully engage in education, remote work, and economic opportunities. Young people are leaving these communities entirely, seeking opportunities that simply don't exist locally. This situation also deepens community skepticism toward external solutions.

Solution: Empower Southwest Georgia (ESWGA) partnered with Mission Telecom to access affordable, live hotspots for its digital literacy courses, targeting underserved communities that struggle with the cost of connectivity. The partnership has brought communities online and built trust through local engagement. School and community organizations continue to test how they can expand its application and impact.

Through collaboration with ESWGA, Mission Telecom is helping close the broadband gap in one of the most underserved regions of the state. From an initial deployment of 35 hotspots, the effort has evolved into a broader digital equity initiative that now supports students, parents, seniors, and faith-based organizations across 15 rural counties in Georgia.

Quick Facts

- **Mission Telecom supplied 35 hotspots**, which ESWGA deployed to students, families, and community organizations across Southwest Georgia.
- **Three school districts received hotspots** for student checkout programs in digital desert communities.
- **Non-profit-priced unlimited data plans at \$10/month per line**, making adoption easy for under-resourced communities.
- **Mission Telecom connected hotspots** kept state and local operations up and running during times when other Internet Service Providers' services went down.
- **Together, ESWGA and Mission Telecom strengthen Southwest Georgia's digital equity network** by providing reliable connectivity for the community.

Connecting a Hard-to-Reach Rural Population

ESWGA was created to address more than just connectivity; it tackles the broader digital, educational, and economic disparities facing rural communities. Southwest Georgia is a deeply rural region where large stretches of farmland create “digital deserts,” areas where broadband is unavailable, unreliable, or simply unaffordable.

The communities ESWGA serves carry challenges like limited economic development, deep-rooted skepticism of outside organizations, and a history of being underserved. For ESWGA, connectivity isn't just about internet access; it's the gateway to paying bills, applying for jobs, completing schoolwork, and participating in the modern economy.

Serving one of the least connected regions in the state, the organization focuses on creating pathways to opportunity by ensuring residents can access the tools needed for school, work, and long-term stability.

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I'm very proud of myself for wanting to learn. At age 70, most people wouldn't even touch a computer! My family is in Georgia, Alabama, and North Carolina, and now I can FaceTime with my siblings, grandchildren and friends. I even want to learn to make birthday cards for my grandkids!

– Sammie Jenkins
Retired Teacher, Dawson, GA

Digital Support that Meets People Where They Are

Mission Telecom quickly became a key ally for ESWGA as their first broadband partner, providing 35 high-speed hotspots at an accessible price point of \$10/month for service plus a \$58 device fee, tailored to fit the financial needs of the region. ESWGA then distributed the hotspots to school districts, community testing sites, and individual households in need.

Reaching Students, Seniors, and Those in Need

ESWGA distributed 18 of the 35 hotspots to Randolph, Clay, and Stewart County school districts for student checkout programs. Before the partnership, students were driving to McDonald's parking lots to access Wi-Fi or writing essays on cell phones. Mission Telecom connected hotspots gave them reliable internet at home for the first time.

The remaining hotspots went to single mothers and team members for ESWGA internal operations and to field test coverage across the region. For ESWGA staff working in areas with unstable connections, the impact was immediate – one team member reported finally being able to stay on Zoom calls without dropping off, which transformed her ability to participate fully in the organization's work.

Additionally, ESWGA runs digital literacy classes for seniors and adults 50+ to help them learn the technology skills needed for the digital age. As the retirement age rises and technology becomes increasingly essential to employment, bridging this gap is critical for older residents who risk being left behind economically. These classes are powered by connectivity from Mission Telecom when local venues lack adequate Wi-Fi.

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Taking the digital literacy class with ESWGA has truly been life-changing for me. I've gained the skills to use technology with confidence, from online communication to everyday tasks that make life easier. The gift of a laptop has been such a blessing here in rural Southwest Georgia, giving me access to resources and opportunities I never had before.

– Elaine Nealy
Preston, GA

Community-Centered Solutions, Made Possible by Partnership

ESWGA is working to expand hotspot access through faith-based organizations, the most trusted community organizations in the region, to create connectivity hubs that can serve dozens of residents at once.

Mission Telecom's flexibility and unwavering commitment – rare qualities in a region where well-funded organizations often fail to follow through – have made it an indispensable partner in advancing that mission.



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About Mission Telecom

Mission Telecom provides affordable and reliable best-in-class broadband to schools, libraries, and nonprofits, ensuring that connectivity is never a barrier to learning, innovation, or community development. With affordable plans, no data caps, and no overage fees, we empower mission-driven organizations with the reliable internet they need to serve their communities and maximize their impact.