

CASE STUDY



Company

Fort Mojave Telecommunications, Inc.

Year Founded

1988

Company Type

Majority Tribal Ownership and Operations in Partnership with Third-Party Service Provider

Website

<https://www.ftmojave.com/>

Location

Mohave Valley, Arizona

Services

Internet, Streaming, Phone, Emergency Services

THE CHALLENGE

Fort Mojave Telecommunications, Inc. was founded in 1988 and was part of the original group of telcos that created the National Tribal Telecommunications Association (NTTA) after recognizing the need for tribal sovereignty in telecommunications. Their serving area covers territories in California, Arizona, and Nevada—and off-Territory towns and cities.

Prior to their creation, local providers had a monopoly on utilities in the region. Because the territory is checkerboarded, this created jurisdictional issues. It was a hindrance to have others come onto the lands, and they charged much higher prices than were sustainable for the reservation.

Originally, Fort Mojave focused on phone and emergency services. After they launched these initiatives, broadband emerged as a critical need. Several key spaces needed connectivity on the reservation: schools, cultural resources, social services, and casinos. Each required high-speed, reliable connectivity—and they didn't want to rely on outside companies. During the pandemic, this was highlighted even more, as students took to homeschooling via Zoom and telemedicine soared.

Fort Mojave Telecommunications knew they were the best group to provide this much-needed connectivity, as they understood their community and were invested more than any outside company could ever be. They also wanted to provide a state-of-the-art service, ensuring growth opportunities and access outside of the reservation.

While Fort Mojave Telecommunications wanted to retain majority ownership over their infrastructure and broadband business, they also recognized how an entity with expertise in broadband could bring significant value as they rolled out this project.

THE SOLUTION

They looked for a partner with deep expertise and experience in designing, building, and providing broadband services. This led them to a non-tribal entity, a third-party service provider. Together, they could effectively deploy broadband services more easily—as the third-party service provider could bring their knowledge to the table. In this partnership, the tribe maintains majority ownership.

Fort Mojave Telecommunications secured initial funding for their network, eventually building fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) along with wireless to accommodate hard-to-service areas in the region.

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We had to set our own destiny for this connectivity and how it would be accomplished. Our partnership enabled us to have the best of both worlds—bringing years of experience from a non-tribal entity to our majority-owned business model.



Nora McDowell
Board President
and Member

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Fort Mojave Telecommunications created a strategy that looked to the long-term sustainability of the business. A key component of their plan includes expansion off-reservation to nearby underserved towns and cities. This gives the tribe a new economic vehicle, allowing for new sources of revenue growth. They plan to keep expanding, as they have the best network in the area, and can help others access the broadband connectivity they need to preserve their communities. The tribe also developed a strategy for other utilities, including water, sewer, and electricity.

THE RESULTS

Today, Fort Mojave Telecommunications has an infrastructure and expansive broadband business with a strong partner who can bring critical insight to their network, everyday operations, and business strategy.

Additionally, they can invest in their youth and employees by creating new job opportunities through workforce development. This keeps local talent from leaving and encourages professional growth as management positions pass from generation to generation. No one knows what a community needs more than the people living within it—and it was integral for Fort Mojave Telecommunications that their own people lead this effort and guide the reservation into the next era of technology.

Fort Mojave Telecommunications is also invested in helping other tribes and offers three tips for those interested in broadband:

1. **Create a sustainable plan for your short-term and long-term vision.** Consider how you can expand the business beyond your reservation by serving nearby areas.
2. **Don't be discouraged by obstacles.** There are many ways to get around obstacles. You may integrate wireless into your plans to accommodate areas where it's difficult to lay fiber.
3. **Look for joint partnerships with trusted companies and other tribes.** There's a lot of experience out there—we can learn from other broadband experts and each other.

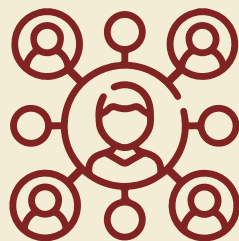
TO START YOUR BROADBAND JOURNEY, DOWNLOAD
**THE BROADBAND SUCCESS
PLAYBOOK FOR TRIBES**



**Services both reservation lands
and off-reservation with a mixture
of fiber and fixed wireless**



**Partners with a non-tribal entity
experienced in broadband
delivery to simplify deployment
and service while giving the tribe
majority ownership**



**Reinvests back into the local
community by providing high-
speed connectivity and workforce
development opportunities**

All images provided by Fort Mojave Telecommunications, Inc.