



Case Study

Hidalgo County Brings Free Public Wi-Fi to More Than 30,000+ Rural Students and Workers

The client

Situated in south Texas, Hidalgo County is home to more than 850,000 people, encompasses more than a dozen school districts, and hosts several collegiate institutions. Recent census reports have found that the county ranks among the poorest in the U.S., with upwards of one-third of families living below the poverty line.

The challenge: Narrowing the digital divide at a critical time

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread through the country, its impact on different regions and demographics varies. Federal aid has been provided to help where possible. Hidalgo County received such relief funds from the federal government that could be used for a variety of needs.

Hidalgo County worked with local school districts to identify pockets within the community where students had limited to no access to the internet. Data collaboration was essential to ensure that students in need had access to educational resources. With the pandemic continuing to wreak havoc, remote work is often required, as is distance learning. However, without proper internet access at home, earning a living and receiving an education are basic rights that are simply unattainable in the current environment.

Industry:
Government

Insight provided:

- Multilayered network design
- Planning and deployment of a reliable wireless network
- Electrical remediation services and tower construction
- Ongoing network monitoring and maintenance

Insight services:

- Professional Services

The solution: A multiphased approach and multilayered network with ongoing expert support

When Hidalgo County sought requests for a communitywide answer to connectivity, Insight proposed a solution for the strategy, design, and deployment of a free public internet access Wi-Fi network across several precincts. Insight, in collaboration with SmartWAVE, was selected to help the county with this large-scale and time-sensitive project.

In August 2020, the Insight services team began the multiphased project including: planning, design, electrical remediation, and tower construction and installation. Each phase addressed the core and access network and wireless network, including RF analysis and field site surveying. The new, multivendor network is comprised of Cisco, Palo Alto Networks, and Ruckus® wireless mesh.

Our team is also providing the county with three years of ongoing support services to respond to issues as they arise and maintain the network for peak performance. This includes monitoring, data analytics, optimization, software updates, and engineering support.

The benefits: Broad, free internet access to support education and remote work

Through working with Insight and SmartWAVE, Hidalgo County can provide free public Wi-Fi internet access to more than 30,000 students and teleworkers. The network design has built-in safety and compliance features to ensure user and business data and privacy are protected.

Our three-layer network design leveraged as much existing infrastructure as possible — water tanks, light and telephone poles — to expedite service delivery and control costs. Insight's engineering services will help the county continue to deliver reliable, secure internet access to residents in need for years to come.

Benefits:

Free public Wi-Fi access to
30,000+
students and remote workers



Secure, wireless
network design

Cost-effective solution
leveraging existing
infrastructure

Eliminates aspects of the
growing digital divide at an
important time

Well-maintained and
optimized network
through an expert
support team

