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SD-WAN™

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

INDUSTRY
Healthcare

HEADQUARTERS
Anchorage, Alaska

KEY CHALLENGES
• Global health care crisis required rapid testing and care services at remote sites

• Inconsistent network services made it difficult to establish quality connectivity

• Demanding voice and health care applications degraded performance

BUSINESS RESULTS
• QoS support ensures quality for latency-sensitive applications

• VMware SD-WAN provides agile, repeatable model for popup sites

• VMware and GCSIT offer ongoing solution support

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium Speeds COVID-19 Testing Site Rollouts with VMware SD-WAN

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) is a non-profit health organization designed to meet the unique health needs of Alaska Native and American Indian people. In partnership with the more than 180,000 people that it serves, ANTHC provides a variety of world-class health services. Its offerings include comprehensive medical services at the Alaska Native Medical Center, wellness programs, disease research and prevention, rural provider training, and rural water and sanitation systems construction.

Accelerating testing ahead of a health care crisis

The 3,000 employees at ANTHC rely on the organization's infrastructure to support its most critical health care services, including electronic health records (EHR), telecommunications, telehealth, office productivity apps, and more. The health care provider serves its community through several remote offices around Anchorage, including one primary site where most employees are based. However, when the COVID-19 crisis emerged, ANTHC had to move fast to extend testing and other health care services out to new sites with limited or even nonexistent network connectivity.

"When March came around, COVID-19 impacted our community and the way we work," said Nick Perry, Network Telecommunications Manager at Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. "We were asked to set up a testing center at one of our buildings, but we had no known circuits there. We did not manage that building and didn't know the state of that building."

ANTHC needed a network solution that would enable it to quickly deploy popup testing sites whenever and wherever they were needed. To support its health care services, the infrastructure would need to be bandwidth-flexible, dependable, and be ready to scale up or down quickly when needs changed.

Extending health care-grade connectivity anywhere

ANTHC turned to its technology partner, GCSIT, for guidance in choosing, testing, and installing its solution. To deliver the performance and flexibility the health care provider required, GCSIT recommended VMware SD-WAN™. To connect sites with no Internet service, ANTHC uses the VMware SD-WAN Edge 510-LTE, with its integrated LTE modem, or AT&T mobile hotspot devices.

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"VMware SD-WAN made it so much easier to be able to set up remote sites, without having to worry about working with service providers to provide a circuit for us. Now we can say, 'this is how we're going to set it up'—and that's it."

NICK PERRY
NETWORK TELECOMMUNICATIONS MANAGER,
ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

With VMware SD-WAN, ANTHC can utilize its existing network and Internet transport to support application and data delivery at any site, from its headquarters to branch offices and remote sites. The solution provides the quality of service (QoS) and traffic shaping needed to support videoconferencing, voice communications, access to medical records, and other bandwidth and latency-sensitive health care applications. Together, VMware and GCSIT worked with ANTHC to get the solution up and running fast.

"Within a day, we were able to provide access back into the network using the AT&T MiFi devices," said Perry. "Employees were able to access the EHR, the phone, printing, and all our other services and applications from day one without any issues. We have designed it for our alternate care sites, just in case we have to deploy something out to one of those locations, as well as our testing centers that don't have a circuit available in the area."

The organization's headquarters runs on a full VMware infrastructure, including VMware Horizon for secure delivery of virtual desktops and apps across the hybrid cloud.

Maximum quality, with minimal hassle

VMware SD-WAN offers a nimble, repeatable model that lets ANTHC deploy popup sites for testing and other services wherever they are needed. Its QoS and traffic shaping features provide the granular control that ANTHC needs to ensure smooth, high-quality connectivity to any of its branch sites.

"When we deployed the solution to our primary remote site, we were able to use its default settings and prioritize voice traffic," said Perry. "Previously, users had experienced a lot of issues with voice quality coming back to the campus over the voice over IP system. VMware SD-WAN cleared it up, and we've had no complaints. People can access the files they need across the site's 100 Mbps link, as well as our EHR system and other apps."

After successfully setting up its first two remote sites, ANTHC can easily replicate its approach and provide health care services to new locations with consistent performance, regardless of the type of transport they are using.

"We were planning on pushing the solution out to other metro locations that have anywhere from five to 20 Mbps MPLS circuits," said Perry.

The SD-WAN solution also gives ANTHC the option of adding backup network connectivity to select sites, ensuring maximum availability for critical services like voice communications.

"Deploying a secondary service was a major benefit for us, since our company's telephone operators work from our large remote location," said Perry. "That needs to be up 24/7, regardless of service provider maintenance or other interruptions. Our VMware solution lets us support a secondary circuit and service provider out of that location."

GCSIT creates a blueprint for future solutions

The close collaborative partnership between GCSIT, ANTHC, and VMware was key to the solution's success. GCSIT brought its own extensive knowledge of the customer to the initiative, backed by support and deployment best practices from the VMware account team.

"The VMware team gets a lot of props on this one, because they helped every step of the way, from pre-sale to post-sale," said Jeremy Wherle, Account Executive with GCSIT. "They didn't just sell the solution and move on; they were there from the beginning through completion—and after."

GCSIT

GCSIT acts as a personal technology optimization team to create and maintain custom-built, agile infrastructures. The firm helps customers transition to the right technology solutions to ready them to be adaptive today, and handle complex, dynamic challenges tomorrow.

After driving the ANTHC SD-WAN successfully into production, GCSIT now has a proven solution that it can offer to customers with similar needs.

"Now we have a reference point for other health care organizations in Alaska that are VMware customers already, and may have the same issues," said Wherle. "There are a lot of companies in our region that that support multiple villages and don't have the type of connectivity they need. This initiative is a stepping stone that sets up conversations about how we could serve those potential customers."

Looking ahead

With its flexible, extensible VMware SD-WAN in place, ANTHC is confident that it can quickly scale its infrastructure to support health care services at most any location across the community it serves.

For more information about VMware SD-WAN, visit *sdwan.vmware.com*.