Co-ops Deliver Big Benefits Other Companies Can’t Match

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October is National Co-op Month. While this is a good reason to celebrate, it’s also a chance to pause and consider why cooperatives continue to grow across America, decade after decade.

The cooperative model delivers benefits to members and communities you just won’t find in a typical business model. How does that translate to your daily life?

When you choose a cooperative, you get much more than the service you purchased.

Your interests are number one. Unlike how investor-owned companies function, cooperatives are owned by the members who use their services. What you want and need as a member informs the cooperative’s goals. Value is delivered to you, not to outside shareholders. At SRT, we make sure every innovation serves you, every decision considers your best interests, and every SRT employee comes to work each day ready to put you first.

You have representation where you live. Cooperatives don’t operate in a vacuum and don’t serve the interests of a few. They report to a Board of Directors that governs the direction of the co-op. All 12 members of SRT’s Board are democratically elected by fellow community members, representing four districts across our service area. That means every community, regardless of distance or population, has someone at SRT representing its residents.

Your voice matters. Those 12 Board members? You get to vote for them each year at SRT's Annual Meeting. And the "one member, one vote" formula of a cooperative gives every member equal say, so your vote carries real weight.

You get access to the best services. Cooperatives serve areas that other companies often overlook, filling gaps with high quality services such as electricity and telecommunications. Why? Because co-ops are committed to delivering what their membership needs. SRT bringing high-speed broadband to your community is a perfect example. As a telecommunication cooperative, we insist that everyone has access to the same quality service regardless of where they live – and we made it happen. Our track record of continually advancing our network — from landlines to wireless phones to copper to fiber — stands as a 75-year testament to delivering everything our membership deserves.

You get money back. Cooperatives return value to members through capital credits, also known as patronage dividends. This is money sent back to you. When a co-op earns more than what it costs to operate, that surplus returns to members based on their use of services — not to outside investors. In 2026, SRT distributed more than $4 million back to our valued members, including an extra $750,000 the Board approved to celebrate our 75th anniversary with our membership.

You get stability you can count on from a company you know. Cooperatives are not subject to pressure from stock markets and shareholders. And unlike many kinds of companies, where profits can flow to faraway shareholders, cooperative value stays in the membership community. As your co-op, SRT plans and operates with your future in mind. Your community isn't our latest business venture; we were born and raised here and are in it for the long haul. SRT invests methodically in local infrastructure so every town will always have access to the most advanced services available. The result is a stable cooperative you can count on.

You get a trusted resource for useful information. No other type of mainstream company embeds a commitment to member and community education in its founding principles. But co-ops do! SRT routinely provides technical how-to classes, cybersecurity tutorials and alerts, and one-on-one guidance to ensure our members are safe and getting the most out of their services. All education and training we provide is always free. As a member, you have 24/7 access to our technical experts. These experts live in the communities you call home and are always close by ready to help you.

Your community benefits, too. Much of what defines cooperatives boils down to the seventh cooperative principle — *concern for community* — which many co-ops fulfill

through community benefit funds, local sourcing, or charitable contributions. More than a service provider, SRT is a lifelong partner and neighbor in your community. SRT enjoys being a good corporate citizen to support growth, well-being, and economic vitality where you live. We have invested millions of dollars in the services, amenities, and community spirit that make hometowns across our service area special. Look around your own hometown to see what SRT has supported.

So when you're shopping for value, look no further than your local cooperative to make the most of your hard-earned money. You'll reap the rewards in more ways than one!