



## Overview of Case Study

How NineStar Connect used Airlock Allowlisting to help pivot to a new working model while minimizing cybersecurity risks and maximizing productivity.

## About NineStar Connect

Founded 125 years ago, NineStar Connect is a non-profit cooperative that provides utility services such as power, water and internet to homes and businesses in east-central Indiana in the United States.



### Challenge

Improve cybersecurity while reducing the time to allow user-requested files and applications to run.



### Approach

The cooperative conducted an evaluation and selected Airlock Allowlisting (Airlock) based on its fit and superiority to its incumbent solution.



### Result

NineStar Connect now only allows preapproved, trusted files and applications to run in its environment, stopping infiltration by damaging malware, ransomware and unauthorized software executions.

The reliability and ease of use of Airlock is vital to our infrastructure and we're looking forward to extending its use further within our organization.

### Payden Boughton

Network Administrator, NineStar Connect

## The Airlock Digital Allowlisting Solution

With Airlock Allowlisting, NineStar Connect has:

- implemented comprehensive allowlisting to protect people, systems, and data
- reduced considerably the number of tickets related to application execution
- provided exemptions to enable users to access non-allowlisted applications and files in just 30 seconds

## About Airlock Digital

Founded in 2013 in Adelaide, South Australia, pure play allowlisting and application control solution provider Airlock Digital helps organizations keep ransomware and other malware out of their environments.



## The Customer

NineStar Connect is an innovative, community-minded communications, energy, water and sewer cooperative.

As a critical infrastructure provider that captures, stores and analyzes customer and corporate data, the organization applies rigorous cybersecurity policies and processes backed by proven technologies.

## The Challenge

When the pandemic struck, NineStar Connect was forced to transition quickly to a work-from-home model. “We were not ready as we still had desktops in the office, partly because many of our solutions were on-premises,” explained Payden Boughton, Network and Systems Administrator, NineStar Connect. “We needed a hybrid environment to get people home.”

Making this change meant upgrading the cooperative's cybersecurity capabilities to minimize the risk of ransomware and other types of malware infiltrating its environment and potentially compromising data, users and customers.

“We prioritized ease of use when evaluating tools to support our future operations,” explained Boughton. “This meant deploying an allowlisting product that met this requirement while being more secure, easier to maintain and easier to deploy than our incumbent solution.

“It also had to have deeper functionality, and work alongside our EDR (Endpoint Detection and Response) solution.”

## The Approach

NineStar Connect began testing Airlock Allowlisting (Airlock) and quickly achieved excellent results. “We immediately identified Airlock Allowlisting as so much better than our existing solution,” said Boughton. “Here we are still with it and we have no qualms or issues.”

The cooperative has implemented Airlock across its end user and server ecosystem.

NineStar Connect initially deployed Airlock in audit mode before transitioning to enforcement mode in just one month.

Nearly all NineStar Connect's user machines and most of its Windows servers now operate in enforcement mode to ensure only allowlisted applications can run. Airlock provides holistic coverage across user acceptance testing, pre-production and testing environments.

## The Result

Airlock in enforcement mode provides powerful ‘deny by default’ functionality while at the same time making allowlisting of files and applications extremely straightforward.

Airlock Digital's rapid and accurate responses to any tickets raised by NineStar Connect has also eased the process of deploying and running Airlock. Further, Airlock Digital's partnership with EDR provider CrowdStrike has enabled the cooperative to seamlessly implement holistic cybersecurity to protect its systems and data.

The effectiveness of Airlock is also borne out during annual penetration testing exercises.

With Airlock in place, NineStar Connect has seen a considerable fall in the number of tickets with application execution-related tags compared to its previous allowlisting product. The organization's allowlisting management effort has fallen considerably to about five hours a week (one eighth of an FTE).

Through one-time pad (OTP) functionality, NineStar Connect now provides exceptions that enable users to access non-allowlisted files or applications needed to perform their roles in just 30 seconds.

“The reliability and ease of use of Airlock is vital to our infrastructure and we're looking forward to extending its use further within our organization,” concluded Boughton.

Learn more about NineStar Connect by visiting [ninstarconnect.com](https://ninstarconnect.com)