The Power of Connection community grant program is an initiative of ITC Midwest and the Iowa Rural Development Council (IRDC). This innovative economic development program is designed to pair rural communities seeking assistance with IRDC resource teams. Those teams drive both community conversations and solution development for problems or projects. Ultimately, a grant of up to $5,000 may be awarded to rural communities for capacity building, strategic planning, studies or assessment.

**Objectives:** The Power of Connection community grant program has three major objectives:

- Provide technical assistance and the potential for grant funding to rural communities seeking to build capacity, drive new projects, expand leadership opportunities and plan strategically.
- Make use of existing resources to provide a broad portfolio of services to communities, filling a current need for this comprehensive review.
- Enhance under the umbrella of IRDC the coordination and collaboration of the 100+ entities who are members of the Council.

**The Program:** The Power of Connection will leverage the participation of the many members of the Iowa Rural Development Council, from federal and state agencies to educational institutions, associations, non-profits and for-profits. These organizations have a thorough knowledge of rural challenges and the variety of resources that exist to address them.

A rural community seeking Power of Connection support will be assigned an IRDC SWOT team, which will work with community leaders to consider issues/opportunities identified by the community. Once the SWOT team has completed its work in the community, local leaders can seek grant funds to help implement any new initiatives identified. Priority is given to requests that leverage other resources. For example, a community seeking to address a day care crisis could leverage a Power of Connection grant by aggregating a pledge from their community foundation, support from the school district and an Aureon Ripple Effect grant via a local telephone cooperative.

The Power of Connection grant allows a community to seize the opportunity identified by the IRDC SWOT team and make it a reality with actual dollars.

**Program Eligibility:** Communities eligible for the Power of Connection must have populations of under 10,000 and be outside of a metropolitan area. Power of Connection grant dollars cannot be used for construction, real estate or equipment.

For more information, contact IRDC Executive Director Bill Menner at director@iowardc.org or call 641-990-4757.