

The 2023 Ripple Effect Report

Community Projects Supported by Rural Iowa Broadband Providers



Check out this project supported by Ripple Effect

Photo courtesy of Conrad Development Corporation and Final Draft Films

Ripple Effect, sponsored by Aureon and implemented by Iowa Area Development Group, helps independent broadband providers become catalysts for advancing the economic vitality of rural Iowa.



Heart of Community, Heart of Iowa

Heart of Iowa Communications Cooperative (HICC) not only offers services geographically in the heart of Iowa, but the company is also integral to local efforts that represent the heart of each community they serve. Bryan Amundson and the HICC team have maintained a standing tradition of providing economic development support over the years. During the aftermath of the 2019 tornado that struck Marshalltown, HICC teamed up with several utility and economic development partners to provide low-interest revolving loan fund support for small businesses devastated by the disaster. The company has also played a fundraising role in various projects, such as attracting a dentist to the county in 2020 through Iowa's FIND program and supporting a hotel feasibility study in Eldora.

This year, HICC provided the community of Conrad Ripple Effect funds to help develop a promotion video for a new housing development (see QR code in the cover photo). The video showcases the community, discusses the great quality of life residents experience in Conrad, and encourages viewers to consider Conrad as their place of residence. HICC also sponsored a 0% interest, \$502,800 USDA REDLG loan to help a local vet clinic expand its footprint, allowing a critical small business to add employees and grow its customer base. The project included the construction of a 3,648 sq. ft. building to serve as a storage facility for medications, vaccines, and equipment; and a large animal haul-in facility to provide preventative care for cattle and other livestock. The project also included adding a conference room and office space with technology upgrades for client and employee education and training, video consultation, and patient documentation.

It is projects like these that showcase why Heart of Iowa is exemplary of what many rural broadband providers in Iowa do for the cities they serve. CEOs, general managers, staff members, and board of directors go above and beyond providing broadband and embrace their role as a critical piece to the heart of the communities they serve. Through the Ripple Effect program, Aureon is proud to be a part of their success.

Featured Projects

Alpine Communications
Cascade Communications
Colo Telephone
Dunkerton Communications
East Buchanan Telephone
FMTC – Stanton
GRM Networks
Lone Rock Cooperative
LPC Connect
Marne Elk Horn
Minburn Communications
Minerva Valley Companies
Premier Communications
Stratford Communications
Templeton Telecom
Titonka-Burt Communications (TBC)
Van Buren Telephone
Webster-Calhoun Cooperative Telephone (WCCTA)
Western Iowa Networks (WIN)
Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Assn.(WCTA)

2023 Total Impact

38 Ripple Effect Projects
\$ 3M Direct Grant & Loan Support from ITCs
\$ 105,000 Direct Support from Aureon
\$ 21.9M Outside Dollars Leveraged
\$ 25M Total Investment



641-442-5275 www.rippleEffectIowa.com

Childcare is Community

Rural communities across the state are experiencing severe childcare shortages. From expanding centers to building new ones, and getting creative with multi-use spaces, Iowa broadband companies are doing their part to prove that there is no “community” without adequate access to childcare. The following financial support was provided for childcare projects, paired with a match from Aureon of up to \$5,000:

Alpine Communications granted \$1,000 to Clayton County Development for a Childcare Community Assessment in partnership with the state of Iowa. When completed, the assessment will provide data and analysis to determine specific needs and solutions for childcare services in the area.

LPC Connect matched Aureon with \$2,500 to help cover the costs for a site plan and architectural drawings to construct the Little Knights Learning Center in La Porte City. The new center will be a sister facility to the Little Knights Learning Center in Dysart.

Webster-Calhoun Cooperative Telephone (WCCTA) contributed \$5,000 for pre-construction costs associated with the expansion of the “The Kid’s Spot” in Lake City. The Kid’s Spot was also awarded an Iowa Child Care Grant and successfully garnered local fundraising support, which will help add more childcare space in their expanded facility.

Titonka-Burt Communications (TBC) offered a \$1,500 contribution to help the We Care Childcare Committee in Titonka pay for architectural drawings needed for remodeling an existing space into a childcare center.

“With the funding from Aureon (and) Titonka Burt Communications we are close to our goal of obtaining architectural drawings to share with our local community. When local companies give back to their communities, great things can be made possible.” - Laurie Lee, We Care Childcare

Western Iowa Networks made a massive donation of \$100,000 to East Mills Child Care Solutions for design and construction management fees needed to construct The Lakin Foundation Child Development Center of East Mills. The Center will have space for 120 children and will serve communities in eastern Mills County.

“East Mills Child Care Solutions is ... extremely appreciative of the generous support of our project by Western Iowa Networks, Aureon, and Ripple Effect. Their investment in local broadband infrastructure has already made our communities a better place to live, work and play, and their partnership in this project will have a lasting impact on children and families.” - Kate McGann, EMCCS Vice President



Woodward Gets a BOOST & Perry Economic Development is Selected for USDA Business Development Grant

Minburn Communications plays a strong economic development role in the communities they serve. Minburn Communications, Woodward Economic Development Association, and Ripple Effect collaboratively authored a BOOST application for the city of Woodward. Iowa Economic Development Authority’s BOOST (“Building Ownership & Organization by Strengthening Teams”) program is designed to strengthen rural areas through community planning and organizational processes, paired with a \$10,000 grant award, to help shape a city’s future trajectory. Woodward was successfully selected as one of two pilot communities for BOOST and is currently participating in the stages of the program.

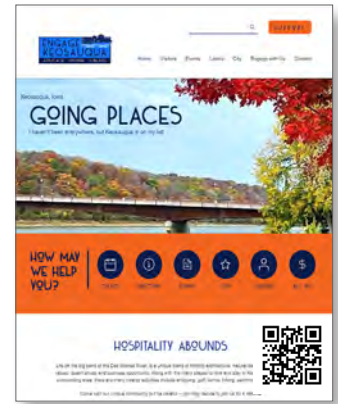
Minburn Communications has also played an active role in the success of the certified industrial park located in Perry. A USDA Rural Business Development Grant was authored in collaboration with Ripple Effect to assist with funding architectural and engineering costs to expand the park. Perry Economic Development was awarded \$34,000 from the USDA for the project, which will likely be completed in 2024.

Strategic Planning | Van Buren and Minerva Valley

The community of Keosauqua has undergone strategic planning to refocus, streamline, and create a map for its future. **Van Buren Telephone** matched Ripple Effect funds to support the planning effort, which will combine the activities and functions of the Keosauqua Chamber of Commerce and Engage Keo into a single development organization to serve the community. The shortlist of identified priorities included a new website, which has since been completed (see image), updating the design of a pocket park, planning for a summer

concert series and Fall Festival, a housing development program, and Catalyst Grant projects for downtown revitalization.

In September, **Minerva Valley Companies** conducted internal strategic planning to assess how the organization can continue to support their communities. Economic Development was identified as one important piece to their longer-term success, and they are excited to incorporate new growth strategies.



Economic Development Loans Advance Local Projects

Colo Telephone Company provided a \$2 million pass-through loan from the USDA REDLG program to support the expansion of Mid-States Material Handling and Fabrication, Inc., a metal manufacturing company founded in 2010. Located in Nevada, the company manufactures grain handling systems for the ag industry, and structural metal supports for towers, catwalks, balconies, and various other facilities. The company is expanding its headquarters in Nevada, which includes the construction of a 15,000 sq. ft. addition to its current 100,000 sq. ft. facility. The new addition will include space for 29 offices and 2 conference rooms. The REDLG loan is a huge undertaking by Colo, led by General Manager Shane Bellon, which showcases their tremendous support for the community and will undoubtedly return major dividends for the local economy.

Country Maid and **Northwest Communications**, with participation

from Aureon through Ripple Effect, closed on two loans in May, totaling \$100,000. These low-interest loan funds will support an expansion project and equipment upgrade. Country Maid is a leader in the frozen food manufacturing industry and primarily offers its products through local fundraisers. Country Maid and its dealer network have helped thousands of groups raise over \$280 million for local causes.

Winnebago Cooperative Telecommunications Association (WCTA) teamed up with local partners in Forest City to help fund an infrastructure project for a new housing development. The infrastructure will support homes in town, providing much needed space for increasing housing demand. WCTA offered a \$180,000 low interest loan to build out the infrastructure.

Premiere Communications offered a low interest, \$225,000 loan to assist

Promise Community Health Center (PCHC) with a recent expansion. PCHC, located in Sioux Center, is undergoing a multi-level addition for behavioral health therapy rooms, exam rooms, IT and maintenance rooms, patient meeting spaces, administrative offices, and call center. This expansion will allow PCHC to increase capacity, integrate patient services, and improve overall medical care. Completion is expected to be late Spring 2024.

East Buchanan Telephone (EB) have used their existing USDA awarded Revolving Loan Fund to support several impactful projects in their community over the years. Most recently, EB offered a \$140,000 low interest loan to assist Fat Chef Catering LLC with purchasing a local grocery store that was in danger of closing. Since then, the store has been rejuvenated, added more employees, and continues to flourish.

Tourism in Dunkerton, Wayne County, and Lone Rock

GRM Networks granted the Wayne County Development Corporation matching funds in support of the annual Walldogs Mural Festival. The festival, which took place August 30 to September 4, 2023, transformed eight rural towns in Wayne County, hosting 150+ artists from 26 states and 5 countries to paint 16 murals featuring highlights from Wayne County's past and present. In recognition of the festival's 30th anniversary, an online "Mural Trail" was created and implemented in tandem with the event. The online Mural Trail is a digital guide created to help visitors discover the murals that have been painted and permanently installed in each community.

Dunkerton Communications offered Rippled Effect matching funds to the Dunkerton Historical & Tourism Association, who are are constructing the Queen Dunkerton Grinnell Educational Village. The Village, which help preserve history and promote tourism, will feature two one-room schoolhouses, a Chicago Great Western Train Depot, and a small chapel – all preserved to their original design. Educational events will be hosted at the Village in an

outdoor amphitheater. Funding was used to complete site planning and preparation for the attraction.

City leaders and Lone Rock Depot Volunteers received a combined total of \$10,000 in Ripple Effect funding from **Lone Rock Cooperative**.

The community is in the process of making major improvements to the Lone Rock Depot site, and the funding will be allocated towards

soft costs for site improvements. The depot, located next to the actual "lone rock" that originated the city's name, represents the heart and soul of how Lone Rock has come to be. In August of 2024, the city will be celebrating its 125th Anniversary, and the newly remodeled depot site will be the centerpiece of the celebration.



Small Loans, Big Impact

Stratford Communications

is not just keeping rural Iowa connected, they are breathing life into local businesses, one small loan at a time. The broadband company's USDA awarded Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) has been a powerful tool that has had remarkable success. Facilitated by Marketing Director Darcy Runestad, Stratford has deployed thousands of dollars in low-interest revolving loan funding to support entrepreneurs in the communities they serve. From farm supply stores to coffee shops, to local repair shops and contractors, the average loan size is between \$20,000 and \$100,000. Each loan helps create jobs, boost local spending, and fosters a sense of pride from seeing the community thrive. Athens Woods Estates, a local assisted living establishment, was the first recipient of RLF funding from Stratford in the late 90s and continues to offer senior living and event space for the community. It is projects like the construction of Athens Woods that are a testament to the power of community-driven development paired with low interest loan funds.

"If there's one thing we've learned in our 120 years in business it's that we thrive when our communities thrive. A diverse business district is such a necessity for the rural communities we serve and the RLF has been incredibly useful in helping bolster our small local businesses. Making a major difference in your community doesn't have to take half a million dollars; sometimes a few thousand dollars to buy new equipment or get a business plan off the ground is all it takes to jump start a new service that benefits the entire community. Small loans can make a big impact!" Darcy Runestad

Stratford's RLF has seen tremendous success over the years. Currently, the company is supporting 7 active loans to small businesses. Stratford's efforts using their RLF show that a little money, driven by local leadership, can make a huge difference. It is a reminder that many independent broadband providers across Iowa are small-town champions like the team at Stratford.

Constructing Community Facilities

Templeton Park Facility

Templeton Telecom (TCC) and Ripple Effect partners contributed to the construction of a new ballpark facility in Templeton. The facility opened in 2023 in time to host the summer substate baseball tournament. The park will host youth baseball, slow-pitch and fast-pitch adult league softball, and community events. Amenities include an open covered patio with Wi-Fi capabilities, concessions, restrooms, and storage. The ballpark facility, a project spearheaded by local volunteers, will be a benefit to the community for years to come.

New Hoffman Park Shelter House

Western Iowa Networks (WIN) awarded the City of Westside \$10,000 through Ripple Effect. The contributions will be allocated towards soft costs needed for the construction of a new shelter house community facility located at Hoffman Park. The new building will be essential to the vitality of the community, providing a safe space for adults and children to congregate, relax, play, and host events such as birthday parties, school functions, graduation parties, business meetings, and more.

Elk Horn Pool Facility

Through Ripple Effect, Aureon and **Marne Elk Horn** donated \$10,000 to the City of Elk Horn for the city's swimming pool house project. The donations will go towards the engineering costs of constructing a new ADA-compliant, family-friendly pool

house facility. The new pool house will include a concession stand, additional employee areas, and covered restrooms. At the time of the grant award, the city was over two-thirds of the way to its goal, with over \$200,000 fundraised for the new pool house.



Cascade Library and Community Center

The City of Cascade and **Cascade Communications** are leading the charge for the construction of a new library and community center facility. With funding support from several partners, the city has made tremendous progress towards the \$3.4M project. The 7,300 sq. ft. facility will house the library and provide the community with educational space, meeting areas, workspace for entrepreneurs, and technology space. Ripple Effect funding will be allocated towards planning and design costs, with construction expected to begin in Spring 2024.

Stanton Visualization Tools

The Stanton Community Foundation and local leaders, including **FMTC – Stanton**, created marketing and visualization tools to support business development efforts for the new Stanton Technology Park. 3D renderings and an aerial video showcase the Tech Park and its capabilities, a new community trail and other local amenities. These tools will complement other marketing initiatives and play an important role in attracting prospective companies to consider Stanton for their location. The community of Stanton, with major support from FMTC, has also begun construction on the Stanton Childcare Resource Center. This facility will be the first project in the new Technology Park, will sit at the center of the park, and will provide childcare services to Tech Park businesses.

Interested in Participating in Ripple Effect?

Independent broadband providers across the state already invest a tremendous amount of time, money, and effort to make sure their communities thrive. Ripple Effect helps these companies leverage their community support even further with funding support from Aureon and the economic development expertise from IADG.

Questions or interest in Ripple Effect?

Contact:
Ethan Pitt
Ripple Effect Program Director
epitt@iadg.com
RippleEffectIowa.com



Aureon is a premier business solutions provider with expertise in IT services, consulting, and customer care. For details, please call 800-469-4000 or visit www.Aureon.com for more information.