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## Local Leaders Seek to Enlist Community Participation in Achieving Broadband Expansion

**Des Moines, IA** – Today, Connect Iowa and the Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC) announced a new partnership to launch a statewide “Connected” community engagement program aimed at increasing broadband access, adoption, and use. High-speed Internet is the key to attracting quality jobs, improving education, putting people in touch with government services, and building an all-around better quality of life. In collaboration with Connect Iowa, members of the Iowa Association of Regional Councils are taking charge of expanding broadband’s reach in their communities.

Last week, staff of regional Council of Governments (COGs) from all over the state took an intensive weeklong Connect Iowa training and began forming teams of local leaders who want to help create the plan for broadband expansion in their community. These leaders arrived back home this week with a critical new mission: revive their communities through broadband expansion.

“Getting all of Iowa connected to quality broadband is vital to the economic development of our state. Iowa’s Councils of Governments, in conjunction with IARC, will be the driving force in getting the Connect Iowa initiative up and running in each of their regions,” says Iowa Association of Regional Councils Executive Director Nichole Warren. “They’ll be reaching out to their community leaders and asking them to join the local planning teams.”

Written by Jessica Ditto

Monday, 23 January 2012 13:18

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Last week, Connect Iowa [announced](#) the formation of a new broadband advisory committee that will help guide and oversee this new initiative.

“We are thrilled to be joining forces with IARC to begin working in the local communities,” says Connect Iowa Program Manager Amy Kuhlert. “Change happens at the local level and by drawing in our relationships with the providers and local leaders and combining that with the intelligence we’ve gathered through our maps and research, we can identify solutions that best fit the community.”

Connected is a community-based initiative to accelerate broadband access, adoption, and use. The certification process benefits communities through a process of assessment, benchmarking, and planning by helping participants identify their community’s technological strengths and challenges and helping community partners match up with local opportunities.

“Connect Iowa’s Connected community program is an amazing opportunity for towns and regions across the state to assess their broadband needs and find real solutions,” says Kuhlert. “The aim is to put the tools in the hands of the community, help them do a detailed assessment of what the true local needs are, and then construct an informed plan to get the community connected in the most efficient way possible. It could be updating a school’s network or getting access to an unserved community, but the best part is that each plan will be custom-tailored to each region’s own specific needs and landscape.”

Anyone with an interest in bringing better broadband to local homes and businesses is encouraged to join in the community planning effort. For more information on how to get involved, please contact Kuhlert at [akuhlert@connectiowa.org](mailto:akuhlert@connectiowa.org) or [515-421-2561](tel:515-421-2561).

Local COG leaders are listed below.

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**About Connect Iowa:** Connect Iowa is a subsidiary of Connected Nation and operates as a nonprofit in the state of Iowa to promote broadband access, adoption, and use. The Iowa

# Connect Iowa Joins Forces With Iowa Association of Regional Councils to Improve High-Speed Internet A

Written by Jessica Ditto

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Economic Development Authority (IEDA) is leading the initiative to increase broadband Internet access throughout rural Iowa. Connect Iowa was commissioned by the state to work with all broadband providers in Iowa to create detailed maps of broadband coverage and develop a statewide plan for the deployment and adoption of broadband. For more information visit: <http://www.connectiowa.org>.

Follow **Connect Iowa** on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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