

# Best Practices for Success

## *1. Understand the capabilities of the community current system.*

A community must have a plan for providing high quality, affordable water service to their residents. For many communities, the cost of building, maintaining and upgrading water systems is becoming simply too expensive. Communities must invest in new wells, new equipment, repairs, continuous monitoring and testing to meet the ever-increasing quality standards. Many small systems are unable to achieve the economies of scale necessary to achieve operational, maintenance, and compliance costs. Cities must be open to exploring all options and be creative in seeking solutions to this challenge.

Regional water systems are an option that many communities need to consider when maintenance and operating costs help these local communities meet the drinking water and wastewater treatment standards deemed necessary by the federal and state government.

## *2. Developing a relationship with communities in your growth area*

Overcoming a community's reluctance to purchase service from an external water provider is critical. Fortunately, regional water providers may offer several options that can help communities and their residents to access services and water quality necessary for public health, economic development, and convenience at the most reasonable cost.

Before working with a community to provide services, it is critical that communication and trust be established. Trust does not happen overnight and frequently takes years of interaction and communication. It is a difficult decision for community leaders to "give up" providing any service. However, by providing community leaders – elected and appointed - with information and ideas about local water issues can create future opportunities.

The "marketing" of rural water should be designed to educate and establish confidence in customers and potential customers with services provided by regional water. Developing a relationship with city councils and community leaders in advance of any expansion plans is necessary to avoid potential conflicts and achieve the common goal of providing quality service.

It is important that regional water systems minimize the challenges presented by any expansion plans by investing in open communications with the community. Through news releases, public speaking engagements, member newsletters, and community action, rural water can educate and establish positive relations with local leaders. These activities are intended to promote understanding of regional water products and services and promote goodwill toward you.

Working with a community to provide the latest information, education and technical assistance as the community discusses options for future water and wastewater services is critical. Remembering the common goal of providing high quality, affordable water service will help outline the options available for growth.

### *3. Working together –Iowa Incentives*

Rural water and neighboring cities may offer operational and administrative contract services. Licensed water and wastewater operators offer maintenance, construction, inspection and compliance services to their members. Rural water also provides customer billing, customer service, and monthly reports to the city council.

Some rural water operators have been able to provide additional incentives to encourage communities to purchase service. Depending on the services sought, one rural water system agreed not to change the current water rates until such time as an overall increase is established to the remaining service area.

One rural water operator has agreed to assume complete responsibility for principal and interest due on water revenue bonds and outstanding notes. The rural water operator assumed complete responsibility for all payments due. These covenants can be useful in overcoming reluctance to give up local control of water and wastewater in a community.