Service Delivery Area 1
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary April 21, 2020

View the recording of this meeting here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4g1felFLdAU

1. **Call to Order and Meeting Overview**
   a. SPARK Project Director, Mike Bachman, made welcoming remarks orienting participants to the virtual platform and purpose of the Regional Advisory Council meeting.
   b. Chairperson Martha Rae called the meeting to order, provided an overview of the agenda items and meeting goals, and discussed meeting/Council systems and procedures.

2. **Introductions**
   a. Members introduced themselves by sharing their name, professional role, and stakeholder type (program, community partner, etc.).
   b. Members who were present included: Martha Rae, Clarissa Regula, Jackie Allison, Linda Curley, Joyce Dix, Paige Gramenz, Jeannine Hornback, Sara Miller, Jennifer Quartucci, Emily Syslo, and Lisa Timmerman

3. **Reviewed Old Business**
   a. At the beginning of each Regional Advisory Council (RAC) meeting, the Council reviews action items and recommendations from the previous meeting and discusses progress made.
      i. You can view past meeting minutes and recommendations for each Service Delivery Area (SDA) on the SPARK website: http://indianaspark.com/regional-advisory-councils/.
   b. Martha summarized the feedback/recommendations made by the Council in February related to the Help Desk, I-SAT, and Town Square.
      i. A couple Council members who had participated in the *SPARK! Preparing for Program Assessment* training provided feedback. They found it helpful and straightforward.
      ii. RAC members also provided input on the SPARK Learning Forums. They felt they were well structured and put together and found them helpful.

4. **SPARK Project Highlights**
   a. Each quarter, SPARK staff highlights SPARK features that have been implemented recently or will be launched in the upcoming quarter to gain insight, feedback, concerns, suggestions, and recommendations/agreements from the public and RAC members.
   b. Spotlight: Communication Update
      i. At previous RAC meetings, SPARK received several recommendations from the Council regarding outreach and communication methods. Mike provided an update on SPARK's communication activities as a follow-up on these recommendations.
      ii. Mike walked through the SPARK Learning Lab Communication Dashboard, which captures website, social media, and email traffic and activity. The data presented included SPARK's reach and activities since the beginning of the 2020 calendar year.
      iii. Highlights from the data presented include:
         1. Website sessions for 2020 have exceeded 5,000. The average duration of sessions (or the length of time that viewers spend on the website) has increased beyond the industry standard. SPARK's website bounce rate is within the industry standard range.
         2. The number of returning visitors to the website has increased over time. The number of new visitors has fluctuated with a slight increase in March.

3. The dashboard includes a heat map of where website users are geographically located. The top cities included Indianapolis, Chicago, Fort Wayne, Evansville, and Louisville.
   a. RAC members shared that some providers in Northwest Indiana may show up as being located in "Chicago" because that is the closest metropolitan area.
4. SPARK sends emails to two different distribution lists. Some emails go out to as many as 29,000 users, while a smaller number of individuals who signed up for the SPARK Connect newsletter get additional emails. SPARK is tracking how many people are opening the emails, as well as how many are clicking on links within the email. The unique open percentage (number of individuals who opened the email) has ranged from 37%-56%.
5. Facebook is the social media platform that SPARK has seen the strongest engagement (followers, number of individuals engaging with posts). SPARK is reaching an average of 8,000 people with every Facebook post they make.
6. SPARK also utilizes Instagram and Twitter. SPARK has more followers on Instagram than Twitter, but less engagement. SPARK has comparatively few followers on Twitter, but the posts are reaching more individuals as there are opportunities for followers to retweet.

iv. Questions/feedback from RAC members and the public:
1. Members found this information helpful overall.
2. Members pointed out that some of the geographic areas with low engagement may also have a lower number of providers.
3. Social media is one of the best ways to reach providers because of the mobile capabilities. Many individuals may not have access to email on their phone.
4. SPARK may be currently seeing less engagement because providers are so focused on addressing the COVID crisis.
5. In addition to looking at communication method (website, social media, etc.), RAC members suggested that SPARK look at the topics/content that is getting the most traction and activity.
6. RAC members suggested that SPARK could use social media to connect followers to the website and SPARK Connect newsletter by:
   a. Providing a link on social media for people to sign up for SPARK Connect. Explore if it would be possible for followers to sign up for SPARK Connect directly through the social media platforms.
   b. Provide links to the SPARK Connect content. Preview content in social media posts.
7. The Council members offered to help promote SPARK Connect and SPARK's other communication channels.
   a. Mike shared that SPARK has promotional resources on how to use and access the SPARK Connect newsletter and social media. SPARK could provide training to the RAC members.
8. SPARK would like to be as transparent as possible. SPARK asked for feedback regarding if RAC members thought SPARK should share some of this communication data publicly, and if so, how.
   a. Members said that sharing this data would help providers recognize the effort SPARK is making to connect and their desire to understand and meet the needs of providers.

v. Upcoming events
1. All in-person non-essential training has been temporarily suspended until at least May 1st. The Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL) will revisit this suspension and determine the timeline for offering in-person trainings soon.
2. During this time, SPARK is holding online trainings and virtual weekly Learning Forums for providers and partners.
c. Spotlight: Business Management Support
   i. SPARK's Business Management Specialist, Lisa Mettler, presented on SPARK's business management support.
   ii. SPARK chose to create this role because they recognize that programs need business resources and supports to be successful.
   iii. In addition to SPARK's business resources and supports, SPARK plans to build relationships with business stakeholders/coaching entities to educate them on the work of early childhood providers, so they have a better idea of how to support them.
   iv. SPARK business management supports will fall within four focus areas:
      1. Finances
      2. Marketing and Communications
      3. Internal Systems
      4. Human Resources/Workforce
   v. RAC members from all SDAs received a Business Needs Assessment survey at the beginning of April. Of the 60 RAC members who work directly for a program, 33 completed the survey. SPARK will use the feedback provided to inform the development of their business management supports.
   vi. SPARK has shared several business resources in Indiana Learning Paths under the resources tab. SPARK has also created a workgroup to identify the resources programs will need to operate or restart during this COVID crisis.
   vii. Questions/feedback from RAC members and the public:
      1. The focus areas are good, especially for providers who are experienced in education, but not with the business side of running a program. RAC members are excited to see these supports.
      2. Many directors are trained as teachers, but the business aspects are foreign. Lisa's role will be helpful for programs struggling to navigate the business side and identify who to reach out to with business questions.
      3. Many providers seem interested in marketing and communications. SPARK could explore the possibility of providing a training/webinar on this topic.
      4. Members of the public shared that they were having trouble finding some of the resources mentioned by Lisa. SPARK may need to incorporate a search bar on the SPARK website or better link to Indiana Learning Paths.
      5. Members suggested that specific resources for not-for-profit as well as for-profit programs would be beneficial.
d. Spotlight: PTQ Rating Procedure Update
   i. INAECY is currently conducting ratings. They can be contacted at PTQ@inaeyc.org. SPARK will take over ratings after July.
   ii. The Paths to Quality™ rating procedure SPARK will use is very similar to the current process INAEYC is using. SPARK's procedure will follow a 5 step process:
      1. SPARK sends Readiness Checklist (via email)
         a. Programs will receive an email 4-6 months prior to their expiration. They will receive another follow-up email 3 months prior to expiration.

      b.   These two initial emails will include standards contained in a set of documents called the Readiness Checklist. There is a Readiness Checklist for each program type (Centers, Homes, Ministries, Schools) and PTQ level. The standards are then divided again by age group and administrative/documentation. Programs will receive the appropriate set of standards 4-6 months and 3 months prior to expiration.

      c.   SPARK will send the readiness checklist within these emails. There are checklists for each program type (Centers, Homes, Ministry, Schools), PTQ level, age group, documentation (training certificate, education, etc.).

      d.   The checklists include the standard, guidance for understanding, required documentation, and examples.

2. Program assesses
   a. Programs will use the standards included in the Readiness Checklist to assess their readiness.
   b. If programs need help during this process, they can reach out to SPARK by email (PTQ@indianaspark.com) or phone (via the Help Desk: 1-800-299-1627)

3. SPARK sends Confirmation Checklist:
   a. SPARK will send a third email, with the Confirmation Checklist, 45-60 days prior to expiration.

4. Program returns Confirmation Checklist:
   a. Programs are asked to return the Confirmation Checklist at least 31 days prior to expiration.
   b. In returning the Confirmation Checklist to SPARK, a program is saying that they are ready for their rating visit. A completed checklist will provide SPARK with necessary information the rater will need to complete a rating visit (program's staff roster, education, and training).

5. SPARK requests the rating
   a. Once SPARK receives the Confirmation Checklist, SPARK will review and make the rating request.
   b. A rater will contact programs within two business days to schedule the rating visit.

   iii.   Questions/feedback from RAC members and the public:
1. Members who have gone through this process with INAEYC said the process was smooth and seamless.
2. Question: Are the same raters being used?
   a. Answer from Mike: Yes, the same vendor (TCC) is being used to conduct the rating visits.

5. **COVID-19 Update from the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning**
   a. Nicole Norvell, Director of OECOSL, provided an update on the COVID-19 crisis.
   b. Providers can stay informed about COVID-19 through the following resources:
      i. The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) website: http://www.in.gov/isdh
      ii. ISDH's 24/7 call center: 317-233-7125 (Monday-Friday from 8:15 am-4:45 pm) or 317-233-1325 (after business hours)
      iii. Email: epiresource@isdh.in.gov
      iv. Provider webcast recording available on the Indiana State Department of Health Video Center: http://videocenter.isdh.in.gov/videos
      v. Sign up for the Indiana Health Alert Network: https://www.in.gov/isdh/25862.htm

c. Access local supports through local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agencies. Programs can find and contact their local office at http://brighterfuturesindiana.org/local-help-for-finding-child-care2/ or call 1-800-299-1627.

d. SPARK Learning Lab is offering support in the following areas:
   i. Self-care and Wellness
   ii. Business Practices during COVID-19
   iii. Recovery and Restart Post-Pandemic

e. Temporary Assistance Grants: Funding Update
   i. In the first two weeks of the Temporary Assistance Grant, 1,172 programs were funded at a cost of $5,131,752.
   ii. The second two week period had 2,243 programs funded at a cost of $14,262,870
   iii. Total spent to date: $19,394,631 for a 4 week period
   iv. OECOSL received 78 million from the federal government from the CARES funding. They expect to spend half of that by the end of this first six week period.

f. Temporary Assistance Grants: Changes
   i. Maximum rates will be applied and overall caps on total amounts requested.
   ii. Maximum rates:
      1. Rates were calculated by taking all rates that currently exist in the CCDF system and taking the average by age group.
      2. If a program's weekly rate is lower than the maximum rate, that is the rate they will be provided.
      3. Programs may not raise their rate from their last grant submitted and their last application will be checked to ensure consistency.
      4. Overall grant amount caps: For programs that remain open, the overall grant amount requested cannot exceed $20,000 for the two week period. For programs that are closed, the overall grant amount requested cannot exceed $5,000 for the two week period.
   iii. Temporary Assistance Grant: Tips
      1. Check the website for updated links, they are updated every two weeks. Applications through Submitable are the only ones that will be accepted.
      2. Please check your junk email/spam as they may be where communication is going from Submitable.
      3. Applications must be submitted by the deadlines.
      4. CCDF is not allowed to be used to pay a family's co-pay and this grant should not be submitted for that purpose.
      5. Personal days should be used for any child that is being funded through subsidy, these children should not be counted as private pay and submitted with the grant. This grant Is for public pay children.
   iv. OECOSL will be working in the next couple of weeks to better understand the type of support programs need to re-open (pace, cost, other recruitment of staff, other needs) to determine how much of the CARES funding should go to restart and recovery.

g. Questions/suggestions from RAC members and public:
   i. Question: Where should providers go if they need supplies (i.e. cleaning supplies, thermometers, personal protective equipment)?
      1. Answer from Nicole: OECOSL will be sharing some guidance/resources in the next few days about where programs may be able to find protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and thermometers.

6. **Public Comment**
    a. No additional public comments.

7. **Agreements**
    a. Based on what has been presented, RAC discussion, and public comment, the RAC brought forth the following recommendations/agreements for SPARK Learning Lab and/or partners to consider:
        i. Communication Update
            1. SPARK should focus on social media and use it to connect people to the SPARK Connect newsletter (link SPARK Connect content, post "commercials" for SPARK Connect, explore if SPARK can let people sign up for the newsletter on Facebook).
            2. SPARK should promote on Facebook that SPARK resources are for families as well.
            3. RAC members would like to use their role on the Council as an ambassador to promote SPARK communications. SPARK should consider how to best prepare them to support this effort (provide training for RAC members to further promote SPARK, etc.)
            4. RAC members agreed that this communication data should be shared publicly in some way, possibly using a county by county comparison.
            5. In addition to looking at communication method (website, social media, etc.), RAC members suggested that SPARK look at the topics/content that are getting the most traction and activity.
        ii. Business Management Support
            1. SPARK may need to incorporate a search bar on the SPARK website or better link to Indiana Learning Paths, so that viewers can find resources more easily.
            2. RAC members would like to see business opportunities and resources for both for-profit programs as well as non-for-profit programs.
        iii. PTQ Rating Procedure Update
            1. The Council does not have any recommendations on the PTQ Rating Procedure at this time, but would like the opportunity to provide further feedback in the future.
        iv. Other agreements
            1. Going back to the Council's PTQ incentive discussion from February's meeting, members suggested that OECOSL consider offering a percentage or full coverage of a membership to local Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations as a PTQ enrollment incentive moving forward.
            2. The Council requests that mandatory trainings (Universal Precautions, CPR, etc.) be an agenda item for the next meeting. Council members have several ideas for how these trainings could be innovated in the future, that they would like to discuss further. Members also noted that some providers to not have access to affordable CPR trainings in their community.

8. **Future Meeting Schedule**
    a. Wednesday September 16th 6:30pm-8:30pm (LaPorte County, Exact location TBD)

9. **Adjournment**