Service Delivery Area 2
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary May 4, 2020

View the recording of this meeting here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=It7LdUXxy4k

1. **Call to Order and Meeting Overview**
   a. Chairperson Kathryn Singer called the meeting to order, made welcoming remarks, 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: Kathryn Singer, Jenni McQueen, Elizabeth Schlesinger-Devlin, Tristen Comegys, Anne Hough, Deborah Hughes, Louann Gross, Natalie McIntire, Kathryn Ziegler, Kacey Deverell

3. **COVID-19 Update from the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning**
   a. Nicole Norvell, Director of the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL), provided an update on the COVID-19 crisis.
   b. Friday, May 1st, Governor Holcomb announced Indiana's 5-phase approach to reopening Indiana's economy. Find more information at https://www.backontrack.in.gov/. Information will continue to be updated on this website if anything changes.
      i. This website includes the Governor's address and several descriptive documents. The website outlines each stage and provides additional guidelines.
   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. The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) is introducing a new series of Mental Health Check videos to support families during this crisis. Find the videos at Bewellindiana.com/video-resources/.
   e. SPARK Learning Lab, in partnership with FSSA, is offering support and resources. Through Indiana Learning Paths, providers can find resources and trainings, including Discussion Board topics, live webinar Learning Forums, and the Be Well Series.
   f. Another new support from OECOSL and SPARK is "Ask the Nurse" sessions. Email Nancy Ward with questions (Nancy.Ward@fssa.in.gov).
   g. 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.
   h. 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 sent a survey to providers last week, in partnership with the Indiana Afterschool Network, Early Learning Indiana, and Indiana United Ways. This survey aims to collect feedback from providers on their needs to help them plan on how to support programs and provide resources. This feedback will help inform guidance about summer camp and programming, as well as reopening. They have received over 1,000 responses so far.

i. Questions/feedback from RAC members and public:
i. Multiple RAC members expressed gratitude for the swiftness of the temporary assistance grants. Some were just a few weeks away from permanently closing before receiving the grant.
ii. Question: Is there a timeframe for when this grant will end?
1. Answer from Nicole: We don't know yet. After we make the next grant payment this weekend we'll have to look at how much of the CARES funding we have left. We will also look at the survey results to assess what support programs will need for restart and recovery.
iii. Question: Programs cannot use this grant and the Paycheck Protection Program Loan simultaneously, correct?
1. Answer from Nicole: Yes, that is correct. They cannot be used to cover the same weeks/time periods.
iv. Question: Do you have an idea of what guidelines will be given regarding group size?
1. Answer from Nicole: You should still follow your group size guidelines based on licensing. The only additional guidance we have given at this time is to try to limit it to 20 children in a space.
v. Question: Do you know when you will have guidance related to summer camp and programming?
1. Answer from Nicole: We hope to provide recommendations to the Governor's office by the end of this week for approval. We will be using the survey results to inform our guidance. We are also working with a team of researchers to review existing literature and CDC recommendations to inform our guidance. We hope to release something publicly in the next week and a half.
vi. Question: Will all children need to wear masks? Will we need to keep toddlers and other kids 6 feet apart?

1. Answer from Nicole: That is certainly the recommendation, but it may not always be possible or make sense. You need to consider what will work best for your program. Cleaning and handwashing will be really important.

vii. Question: Is there going to be any rule regarding the use of hand sanitizer?
1. Answer from Nicole: The current policy allows you to use hand sanitizer, as long as the children cannot get to it. This policy will continue.

viii. Question: When will recommendations around eating in classrooms vs. going to café/family style eating be available?
1. Answer from Nicole: I think it's going to be a while before we recommend going back to family style eating, possibly until July. We ask you to social distance while eating for the foreseeable future.

ix. Question: Will there be additional guidance about using playground equipment?
1. Answer from Nicole: Make sure you're sanitizing, but you can use it. You'll just have to think about how to keep kids apart to the best of your ability. It's also important to try to keep the same kids grouped together with the same teacher. This will help with contact tracing, so you can inform families if children have been exposed.

4. **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. Kathryn summarized the feedback/recommendations made by the Council in February related to the Help Desk, I-SAT, Communication, and other miscellaneous recommendations.
      i. Several RAC members participated in the perquisite training (*Preparing for Program Assessment*) for the I-SAT. Some found it intense and thought it may be overwhelming for small programs. It almost felt like SPARK is pushing people into the accreditation process. SPARK may want to explore how to break the training into smaller chunks.
         1. Response from Mike: Pushing them towards accreditation is not the intention. There are some similarities between the I-SAT and accreditation assessments, as they are both program-level assessments.
         2. Response from other members: Some other members expressed that they did not feel overwhelmed or pushed towards accreditation. It helped them feel like they had their ducks in a row and helped them prepare for the I-SAT.
      ii. There will be opportunities for the public to take the I-SAT beginning May 16th. All opportunities will be through a live webinar or in person session so that individuals can ask for help from SPARK staff. SPARK is also providing a program assessment guide to further help programs take the I-SAT.

5. **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. (Providers in Northwest Indiana may show up as being located in "Chicago" because that is the closest metropolitan area. The same may be true of providers in Southern Indiana showing up under Louisville.)

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. Question: Has SPARK made regular emails, phone calls, or sent mailings to providers?
    a. Answer from Mike: We send the SPARK Connect newsletter every Thursday for those who have gone to the website and given us their email address. The only outgoing calls are in response to people calling us. We have not done mass calls, text, or mailing at this time.

2. Members would like SPARK to focus their energy on looking at the type of content/information that people are accessing most frequently (information on training, etc.).

3. Members would also like to see emails that are target specific (Monday Mindfulness, Tuesday Trainings, etc.). This targeted communication will help draw providers to the website.

v. Upcoming events

1. All in-person non-essential training has been temporarily suspended. OECOSL is working with SPARK to create a plan around reintroducing in-person opportunities. They plan to send a survey to programs to better understand

what programs want at this time in terms of in-person professional development opportunities.
2. In the meantime, 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. Members shared that they are excited to see this type of support. Child care directors don't often have experience on the business side of running a program.

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. Question: How is this procedure being communicated to programs?
      a. Answer from Mike: We are planning a communication campaign for June. This information will go out through email and social media. We may also explore robocalls and other communication methods.
   2. Question: For programs who requested a rating before schools closed, will we be contacted before school starts again?
      a. Answer from Mike: Yes, we will reach out prior to school starting. PTQ policy requires that at least two children are present during a rating visit. We will need to check in with programs to determine when they expect to have children enrolled.
   3. Question: If a program's rating visit was suspended, how will training hours be affected?
      a. Answer from Mike: Your training hours are determined by the date that the rating visit was requested.
   4. In addition to the visual included in this presentation, Members suggested SPARK outline the procedure for providers using a simple, bulleted format.

6. **Public Comment**
   a. Question: We have a couple schools that were supposed to have their rating visit this Spring. Since we won't be in session until August, how will that effect our rating visit?
      i. Answer from Mike: Your rating will go into a freeze pattern at this time. You will maintain your level. Once you have at least two children present, we can make the rating request.

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. Old Business
    1. The *Preparing for Program Assessment* training may be intense and overwhelming for small providers. SPARK should explore how best to provide additional support or break it down into smaller chunks.
ii. Communication Update
    1. RAC Members recommended that SPARK focus their energy on looking at the type of content/information that people are accessing most frequently (information on training, etc.).
    2. Members would also like to see emails that are target specific (Monday Mindfulness, Tuesday Trainings, etc.). This targeted communication will help draw providers to the website.
    3. Members recommended that SPARK continue to explore other ways for SPARK to communicate with providers (snail mail, text, robocalls, etc.).
iii. Business Management Support
    1. No recommendations/agreements at this time.
iv. PTQ Rating Procedure Update
    1. RAC members recommended that SPARK push this information out in as many ways as possible (email, social media, robocalls, etc.)
    2. When sharing this information, SPARK should outline the process in a simple format (using bullets, visuals, etc.) so providers are not overwhelmed.

8. **Future Meeting Schedule**
    a. Monday September 14th 1:00-3:00pm (Kokomo, Exact location TBD)

9. **Adjournment**