Service Delivery Area 5
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary April 29, 2020

View the recording of this meeting here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxl0lB93nmg

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 Mary Cundiff 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: Mary Cundiff, Debra Gaetano, Ann Feldhaus, Jamie Madigan, Shantay Blackman, Sue Ragains, Jessica Greulich, Terry Green, Della Micco

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. Mary summarized the feedback/recommendations made by the Council in February related to the Help Desk, I-SAT, Town Square, and other miscellaneous recommendations.
      i. Question: If we have completed the prerequisite training (*Preparing for Program Assessment)* on I-Lead, what happens next?
         1. Answer from Mike: You should have received an email outlining next steps to complete the I-SAT. Between May 1-15 the RAC members and members of the focus group will have ten opportunities to complete the I-SAT (via a live webinar). SPARK will provide you a step by step guide on how to complete the I-SAT. Opportunities to complete the I-SAT will be available to the public starting May 18th.
      ii. Question: How often can programs take the I-SAT?
         1. Answer from Mike: Programs can take the I-SAT as frequently as they like as their program development needs change.

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. (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. SPARK asked for feedback as to whether this data should be shared publicly. SPARK is aiming to be transparent and communicate better with both providers and partners.
   a. RAC members thought it would be helpful for people to see SPARK's increased reach. Since Facebook has been a successful communication tool, it may be best to share snippets of this data through that platform as a marketing tool. SPARK should use the data to highlight successes and generate excitement.
2. SPARK should consider which target audiences may engage and use the different communication channels. For example, schools and superintendents may be more likely to use Twitter than home providers. This consideration can help SPARK plan for targeted messaging to specific audiences.

    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: 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 shared that the Confirmation Checklist looks easier that what has been used in the past.
2. Question: In the observation checklist that raters will use, it references an interview. Is this interview with the director or teaching staff?
   a. Answer from Mike: The interview questions are asked when something cannot be observed. It will depend on what standard they are observing.
3. Question: When does the Confirmation Checklist come out?
   a. Answer from Mike: SPARK will send it via email 45-60 days before your rating expires.
4. Question: Will the Readiness Checklist be available online for providers to view?

a. Answer from Mike: We plan to make the Readiness Checklists and other tools available on Indiana Learning Paths sometime in May. In the meantime, programs can request these documents by reaching out to PTQ@indianaspark.com.

5. Mike asked for feedback about how best to disseminate this information and introduce/promote this procedure:
   a. Participants found the visual to be very valuable.
   b. SPARK should consider requesting a read receipt on emails promoting this content so they can see how many received and read it.
   c. A video would be helpful to outline the procedure in a format that providers could revisit.
   d. It would be helpful to have a dropdown list that allows viewers to see each step, associated tools, and a short video.
   e. SPARK should offer this information in different formats (video, downloadable documents, etc.).
   f. SPARK should promote this information on social media.
   g. SPARK should emphasize that programs need to request their own rating.

d. 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 are excited to see this type of coaching offered. It's an area that there has not been enough support offered in the past.

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. 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. 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.

g. 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 today, 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.

h. Questions/suggestions from RAC members and public:
  i. Question: Is there going to be guidance or a recommendation around small group sizes?
    1. Answer from Nicole: Our current guidance recommends having no more than 20 children in a space. Through the survey, we're trying to understand from providers what you all are considering in terms of group sizes and the cost implications that may be associated.
    2. Comment from RAC member: I'd like to reduce my group sizes, but I still need more than one adult with each group because we need increased supervision to ensure sanitation and hand washing. I'm concerned about reducing group sizes, while also maintaining that supervision.
  ii. Comment: There is some information out there around cleaning options and machines that we'll need to know more about.
    1. Answer from Nicole: We have a scientist on our team leading research around COVID-19. She has been looking into child care related issues over the last couple weeks, like cleaning practices. She will present that research back to us. That research will inform our guidance.
  iii. Question: For providers who have closed, is there a process they should follow when reopening?
    1. Answer from Nicole: Some of the phased recommendations from the federal government don't apply to Indiana since we didn't close down daycares. Make sure you tune into the Governor's press conference to understand opening guidance. OECOSL will release additional guidance in early May. Make sure to communicate with your licensing consultant to let them know you are reopening and let us know what your needs are.

6. **Public Comment**
  a. Question: Can we be held liable for someone getting the virus from our center?
    i. Answer from Mike: We would recommend that you speak to legal counsel when you have those types of questions or ask your licensing consultant how best to prepare for opening.
    ii. Comment from members: Members whose programs have remained open shared that their parents have been cooperative with the rules and expectations (not to send children in when they've been sick, etc.). They've modified drop off and pick up procedures and put other policies in place to promote health and safety. Others have created a post-pandemic team to plan for reopening.

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 highlight pieces of the communication data in Facebook posts to promote SPARK's communication successes and create engagement.
    ii. PTQ Rating Procedure Update
      1. SPARK should promote this procedure using email and request a read receipt or track open rates.
      2. SPARK should highlight this process on social media.

3. When sharing this information on Indiana Learning Paths, it would be helpful to have a dropdown list that allows the viewer to see each step, the associated tools, and a short video.
4. In messaging around this process, SPARK should emphasize that programs need to request their own rating.
   iii. Business Management Support
      1. No recommendations or agreements at this time.

8. **Future Meeting Schedule**
   a. Wednesday September 9th 6:30pm-8:30pm (Evansville, Exact location TBD)

9. **Adjournment**