

**Service Delivery Area 3  
Regional Advisory Council  
Meeting Summary April 13, 2021**

View the recording of this meeting here: <https://youtu.be/Cd8kznQHdWM>

**1. Call to Order and Meeting Overview**

- a. Diane Pike, SDA 3 RAC Chair, made welcoming remarks orienting attendees to the purpose of the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) meeting, called the meeting to order, provided an overview of the agenda items and meeting goals, and discussed meeting systems and procedures.

**2. Introductions**

- a. RAC members introduced themselves by sharing their name and professional role.
- b. Members who were present included: Diane Pike, Alexandra Hall, Lisa Cordle, and Tikila Welch.

**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. You can view past meeting minutes, recommendations and their related action plan for each Service Delivery Area (SDA) on the SPARK website: <http://indianaspark.com/regional-advisory-councils/>.
- b. Diane summarized the recommendations made by the Council in February, with the help of SPARK Project Director Mike Bachman and RAC Vice Chair Alexandra Hall.
- c. Recommendation: SPARK will ask partners about how programs can get more information on the process for consent forms.
  1. SPARK's response: OECOSL is launching a communications campaign to support programs with both the Consent and Fingerprinting process in the spring of 2021. For more information, be sure to opt-in for OECOSL's text messaging service by sending the text message "Updates" to INKIDS or 4653437. Providers can email [qualification.review@fssa.in.gov](mailto:qualification.review@fssa.in.gov) with questions about consents, fingerprinting, or background checks.
- d. Recommendation: SPARK will ask OECOSL if users can start changing/updating their email addresses in I-LEAD.
  1. SPARK/OECOSL's response: An email which is used to create an I-LEAD account and then log-in thereafter cannot be changed. An email that is located in the contact information of a staff person can be changed at any time. If a user has multiple accounts under multiple email addresses, the training records in Indiana Learning Paths for the various accounts can be merged under one account. To have this done, please contact the Early Learning Indiana Solution Center using the Brighter Futures Hotline at 1-800-299-1627.
- e. Recommendation: Create a short video explaining the Manager feature in ILP. Send an email blast to program directors and partners promoting this, and other, video resources.
  1. SPARK's response: SPARK's new Leadership & Development Specialist will work on this. SPARK expects short tutorial videos and supporting content to be developed and deployed by the end of 2021.
- f. Recommendation: Explore ways to make titles more user-friendly, perhaps making it say "Module 1" up front instead of the way it reads now, perhaps numbering all trainings, and perhaps removing the tiles so the titles go across the screen which would make it easier to read.
  1. SPARK's response: SPARK is continuing to explore how to make their learning opportunities more accessible. There are many implications to changing the title of

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a training that must be considered due to multiple databases talking to each other and using the data in various ways. SPARK understands the concern and hopes to find a way to address the issue.

- g. Recommendation: Create a SPARK Partner cheat sheet or “map” that shows which early childhood education system partners (SPARK, ELI, CCR&R, etc.) providers should go to for different needs/questions.
  - 1. SPARK’s response: This request has been submitted to the Leadership & Development Specialist and it has been added to her queue for creation. SPARK will provide an update on development at the August RAC meeting.

**4. New Business**

- a. Networking and Learning
  - i. During the February meeting, RAC members raised the concern that many in-person conferences and networking opportunities have been cancelled over the past year due to COVID.
  - ii. SPARK is currently working with partners to plan in-person or hybrid learning and networking opportunities. SPARK requested feedback from the RAC about how they can fill the current learning and networking gap.
  - iii. Alexandra and Mike posed the following questions to attendees for feedback:
    - 1. What does networking look like in this “in-between” stage of COVID?
    - 2. What are your program’s and your personal needs for networking and learning?
    - 3. Are we ready to come together in-person? What conditions would need to be present for you to feel safe?
    - 4. Would it be beneficial to add 30 minutes of networking time to the beginning or end of in-person learning opportunities?
  - iv. Attendees provided the following feedback:
    - 1. An outdoor gathering/event that allows for social distancing may be a good option during this “in-between” time.
    - 2. SPARK should take agency rules into account. Agencies that are operating remotely may not allow their employees to attend in-person events.
    - 3. Some members indicated that a virtual option is more convenient as it allows people from across the state to join without travelling.
    - 4. Members have found that socializing and networking is something that is missing since conferences have been cancelled. They suggested that SPARK build networking time into learning opportunities, at the beginning or end. This could be done during virtual and in-person events.
    - 5. A hybrid approach may be the most ideal situation for learning and networking events so people who are comfortable coming in-person can do so, but people can also join via Zoom if they prefer.
      - a. A hybrid approach may also accommodate the learning styles and training preferences of multiple generations and a wider group of providers.
    - 6. Members expressed that the purpose of the gathering impacts whether it should be in-person or virtual. If it is a basic meeting, virtual is fine and convenient. However, if the purpose is networking and socializing, it may need to be face-to-face.
    - 7. Overall, attendees suggested providing options for learning and networking events (virtual, in-person, hybrid, recorded webinar, etc.).

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- a. When discussing recorded webinars, Mike shared that SPARK does not currently offer training credits for recorded webinars, since SPARK cannot assess if participants are walking away with the skills needed for practice. Mike asked for feedback on whether this policy is appropriate.
  - b. Attendees proposed options such as having an assessment at the end of the webinar, needing to submit notes, completing a survey or reflection form in order to get a certificate.
- 8. Members suggested that SPARK send out a poll to better understand:
  - a. Agency restrictions on meeting in-person
  - b. Personal comfort level in convening in-person
  - c. Preferences between in-person vs. virtual
- b. New Discussion Board Feature (Groups)
  - i. At the February RAC meeting, SPARK introduced the new Groups feature in My SPARK Learning Lab, which will provide peer-to-peer discussion board opportunities. SPARK invited RAC members to participate in the user testing process in March.
  - ii. Kim Hodge, Deputy Director of Operations & Strategic Initiatives, summarized the feedback SPARK received during user testing.
    - 1. Twenty total RAC members from across the state participated in testing, in addition to SPARK staff members.
    - 2. All RAC members and SPARK staff reported that Groups is easy and user-friendly.
    - 3. 60% of RAC members indicated that they were likely to use it over a similar tool, like Facebook, for connecting professionally with peers.
    - 4. The overall satisfaction rate of participants was 78%, with 100% from RAC members.
    - 5. When asked if they would recommend Groups to friends/colleagues, there was a net promoter score of 67. SPARK typically aims for anything over 40 or 50.
    - 6. One of the questions SPARK asked during testing was how they should set up Groups access at initial rollout to users. The majority (71%) indicated that some Groups should be open to all, and some should require users to be invited or meet specific criteria to participate.
    - 7. Participants also provided feedback on how Groups should be used (i.e. peer mentoring, general updates from SPARK, continued collaboration after professional development etc.)
  - iii. Kim also provided an update on the timeline for rolling out Groups:
    - 1. During the first half of April, SPARK is determining the best use of Groups.
    - 2. During the second half of April, SPARK will design Groups and load them into My SPARK Learning Lab.
    - 3. Groups will be visible to participants in My SPARK Learning Lab in May.
  - iv. Kim encouraged RAC members to participate in Groups and promote the feature within their networks.
  - v. Questions and comments from RAC members and the public:
    - 1. Members suggested that emerging providers would be a good audience to target with this tool, because they often have a lot of questions.
- c. Partner Cheat Sheet
  - i. During the February meeting, RAC members suggested that SPARK create a cheat sheet or partner map that shows which ECE system partners (SPARK, Early Learning Indiana, CCR&R, etc.) providers should go to for different needs/questions.

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- ii. Diane presented a slide that showed an image that is currently available and used to illustrate the different supports offered in the ECE system and gave an overview of the key partners.
  - iii. Mike shared that this image is a couple of years old, and SPARK is wondering what a better flowchart or visual would look like.
  - iv. Diane posed the following questions to attendees for feedback:
    - 1. How can we make this image more user-friendly and usable?
    - 2. How can we better support your understanding of what services are available to you?
    - 3. What are the aspects of the system that you are unsure who is responsible?
  - v. Attendees provided the following feedback:
    - 1. Members wondered if there was a way to send a survey to programs to better understand what questions they still have and what information they need.
      - a. Mike suggested that SPARK could ask the Help Desk and Solutions Center for their top questions and see how that information might be relevant in determining the content.
    - 2. Attendees also discussed looking at the top resources accessed in My SPARK Learning Lab to inform the visual.
    - 3. Members suggested doing a poll in Groups on this topic, once Groups is launched.
- d. COVID-19
- i. Diane and Mike shared information about initiatives related to COVID.
  - ii. On March 25th, OECOSL presented on Indiana's plan for the use of Coronavirus Response and Relieve Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Funds. The [recording](#) of this presentation includes information on related initiatives, as well as increased CACFP reimbursements, waived co-pays, Child Care Closure Grants worth up to \$40,000 per closure, a workforce recruitment campaign, waived background check fees and hiring stipends for new employees, a timeline for all of these initiatives and so much more!
  - iii. The Emergency Relief Grants
    - 1. Provides a 20% increase for active CCDF vouchers through August 27<sup>th</sup>. On My Way Pre-K is also included in the 20% increase.
    - 2. Tracking of attendance began March 28<sup>th</sup>, so the first tracking period was March 28<sup>th</sup>-April 11<sup>th</sup>. Payments are made two weeks after the tracking period, so the first payment will be made April 28<sup>th</sup>.
    - 3. All active CCDF vouchers, both birth to five and school-age, will begin receiving payments, but as a requirement to receive those payments you must complete *SPARK! Fundamentals to Business Sustainability Collection* by August 27<sup>th</sup>.
    - 4. Once you register and begin, there is a checklist of items you need to complete the training. The training is worth seven clock hours and attendees will receive a certificate after completion. It includes some on demand training, recorded webinars, and tools. Programs can find this training by searching for the title in Indiana Learning Paths.
    - 5. Question: Who from a program should take the *SPARK! Fundamentals to Business Sustainability Collection* training?
    - 6. Answer from Mike: We recommend that whoever is responsible for the business decisions take the training.
  - iv. Essential Frontline Families Scholarships

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1. Beginning in May 2021, scholarships will be available to pay for 80% of tuition for families of frontline workers, with family responsibility at 20% based on program policy.
2. *Frontline* is defined by the Governor's Executive Order. Mike noted that child care workers are considered frontline workers. If program staff who have children enrolled fall within the income requirements, they would be eligible for a scholarship.
3. The scholarships will be available through at least October 2021.
4. SPARK, in partnership with Early Learning Indiana, Indiana Afterschool Network, and OECOSL will offer a pre-requisite information session that includes a readiness assessment.
5. Question: What would a readiness assessment look like?
6. Answer from Mike: At the end of all our on-demand session, we do a check for learning to make sure the participant has acquired the knowledge needed. We'll have some questions about the application, claims, and eligibility process to make sure participants have the knowledge they need to go through the process successfully.
- v. Mike shared that there is now a [website](#) that details all of the COVID related relief initiatives. FAQs will be available soon.
- vi. Contact [oecoslproviderinquiry@fssa.in.gov](mailto:oecoslproviderinquiry@fssa.in.gov) with any additional questions.
- e. Stories of Success During COVID-19
  - i. Diane invited attendees to share stories of success they had experienced during COVID. Examples shared included the resiliency attendees have seen in kids and the responsibility they have shown for their communities and themselves.
- f. Open Brainstorming Session
  - i. Attendees expressed the concern that finding staff continues to be an issue for programs. The group discussed the question of how to make sure the workforce supply is meeting the demand while maintaining a quality system. Are there new solutions or concessions the system could implement? Members would like to see this on the next agenda.
    1. Attendees noted the support OECOSL is currently providing, such as waiving the cost for fingerprinting and \$400 new hire stipends for programs.
  - ii. Programs have had difficulty with parent partnership/engagement. Programs are wondering how to ease back into that, whether it is hybrid or virtual. Members would like this topic included on the next agenda.
  - iii. A member asked about adding CYC-P as a qualifying credential for PTQ.
    1. Mike shared that this has been added. SPARK has added resources on this topic to My SPARK Learning Lab for practitioners who are working with school agers.

**5. Public Comment**

- a. No additional public comments.

**6. RAC Updates from Around Indiana**

- a. Alexandra shared a summary of agenda items from the RAC meetings in the other 4 SDAs. Meeting agendas and summaries for the other SDAs can be found on SPARK's website: <http://indianaspark.com/regional-advisory-councils/>

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**7. Agreements and Action Items**

- a. Based on what was presented, RAC discussion, and public comment, the RAC brought forth the following recommendations/agreements for SPARK Learning Lab and/or partners to consider:
  - i. Members suggested that SPARK build networking and/or socializing time into learning opportunities (both virtual and in person).
  - ii. SPARK does not currently offer training credits for recorded webinars, since SPARK cannot assess if participants are walking away with the skills needed for practice. Attendees proposed SPARK consider options such as having participants complete an assessment at the end of the webinar, submit notes, or complete a survey or reflection form in order to get a certificate.
  - iii. Members suggested that SPARK send out a poll to better understand:
    - 1. Agency restrictions on meeting in-person
    - 2. Personal comfort level in convening in-person
    - 3. Preferences between in-person vs. virtual

**8. Future Meeting Schedule**

- a. August 10, 5:30-7:30pm EST
  - i. SPARK will send a poll to RAC members in July to assess their preference and comfort level in meeting in-person or virtually.

**9. Agenda Items for August**

- a. Staffing concerns
- b. Family engagement/partnership
- c. Update on I-SAT Enhancements: SPARK will provide an update on enhancements they are planning/implementing to make the I-SAT more user friendly.
- d. SPARK Annual Report Updates: This last year, SPARK's overall goal was to help known programs become safer and higher quality. SPARK set seven objectives to help them assess progress towards this goal. Mike provided a brief update on these objectives. SPARK will provide further updates in August and solicit additional feedback.

**10. Adjournment**