

Service Delivery Area 4 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Summary May 4, 2021

View the recording of this meeting here: <https://youtu.be/MmiRvGS-pWs>

1. Call to Order and Meeting Overview

- a. Mike Bachman, SPARK Project Director, facilitated the meeting in the place of the Chair and Vice Chair who had conflicts. Mike made welcoming remarks orienting participants 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. Members introduced themselves by sharing their name and professional role.
- b. Members who were present included: Angela Gick, Ashley Lenoir, Barb Newton, Jackie Bond, Kristi Burkhardt, Missy Modesitt, Elaine Brinson, Stephany (Finney) Stennis, and Jennifer Myers

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, recommendations, and their related action plans for each Service Delivery Area (SDA) on the SPARK website:
<http://indianaspark.com/regional-advisory-councils/>.
 - ii. Mike summarized the feedback/recommendations made by the Council in February related to communication, engagement, fingerprinting, and PTQ and provided updates on related action plans.
 - iii. Questions and comments from RAC members and the public:
 1. Question: I have a staff member who will be taking leave for a year, but then she wants to come back. Can I keep her as an educator?
 2. Answer from OECOSL: If she is taking leave and not keeping up on her education requirements and consents, she would need to fingerprint again when she comes back.
 3. Question: When staff are getting fingerprinted, does it matter if they mistakenly sign up under the wrong provider type (center vs. ministry, etc.)?
 4. Answer from OECOSL: It does not usually matter, but while the fingerprinting fee is being waved it does matter between licensed facilities and registered ministries. For example, a registered ministry who is not eligible for CCDF would not get their fingerprints paid for.
 5. Question: Can subs have I-LEAD accounts?
 6. Answer from Mike: Yes, they can.

4. New Business

- a. SPARK Annual Report
 - i. Mike provided an update on SPARK's Annual Report. The overall goal for the last year was to exceed expectations in supporting Indiana's identified early childhood education and care programs to become safer and higher quality.
 - ii. SPARK set seven objectives to help them track progress towards this goal. Mike provided an update on SPARK's performance on each objective to date.
 1. Objective 1: Maintain PTQ Enrollment (% of eligible)

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- a. SPARK's goal is to maintain the percent of eligible facilities enrolled in PTQ higher than 74.14%. SPARK is currently exceeding the goal, at 75%.
 - b. Indiana has seen a slight decline in the percent of enrolled homes and centers, so SPARK is watching that very closely to understand what is contributing to the decline.
2. Objective 2: Increase # of programs advancing in PTQ by 5%
 - a. SPARK is aiming for 177 programs to increase their PTQ level, which would be a 5% increase from the 169 programs that advanced in 2019-2020.
 - b. As of the beginning of quarter 3, SPARK has exceeded their quarter 3 target of getting 133 programs to advance. They are on track to meet the overall target as early as July.
3. Objective 3: Support 90% of non-compliant programs with Quality Improvement Plan
 - a. For this objective, SPARK is aiming for 90% of Critical Referrals, who accept SPARK services, to complete their Quality Improvement Plan within the agreed upon time frame.
 - b. SPARK is meeting this objective at 100%. However, it has been a struggle for SPARK to get referred programs with violations to accept their services. SPARK is continuing to look at how they are positioning their services to ensure they are seen as supportive rather than punitive.
4. Objective 4a: Refer 90% of those interested in increasing their education to IN AEYC
 - a. SPARK is working to refer 90% of those needing TEACH/Non-Formal CDA to INAEYC. SPARK is exceeding this benchmark at 100%.
5. Objective 4b: Deploy 12 resources or events that support degrees, credentials, and certificates
 - a. SPARK planned to deploy 12 unique promotion events and/or resources this year to support scholarship and credential models.
 - b. SPARK had already deployed 12 resources as of March of 2021, which was approximately six months earlier than the set timeline.
 - c. SPARK is working with INAEYC and plans to deploy additional webinars and resources about what is offered with the TEACH/Non-Formal CDA.
6. Objective 5a: Support programs with prior safe sleep violations, ensuring that 80% do not have a recurrence
 - a. The goal for this objective is to ensure 80% of providers with safe sleep violations do not have a recurring violation. Support was provided through safe sleep cohorts.
 - b. Currently, 97% of programs have not had recurring violations. SPARK is still considering how to support the 3% who have had recurrences.
7. Objective 5b: Deploy six resources or events that support best practices in safe sleep
 - a. SPARK planned to deploy six unique promotion events and/or resources targeting safe sleep knowledge and practice. All six of these resources have been deployed.
 - b. Examples can be found here: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)
 - c. These resources are available in English & Spanish.
- iii. Questions and comments from RAC members and the public:
 1. Question: For objective 1, are public schools tracked under centers?

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2. Answer from Mike: No. We are not tracking public schools who are going through the LLEP route. The current data management system used at the state level does not allow us to track them in the same way that we track the regulated licensed and registered programs. Because of those data limitations, we have not been able to track them this year.
 3. Question: Is there a plan to track the public schools in the future?
 4. Answer from Mike: It is something we plan to look into with our partners, but we are not sure it will be possible until a new data system is introduced in the next few years.
 5. Question: Are the safe sleep resources being included in Facebook posts and other communication channels? How will people know they are available?
 6. Answer from Darcy (Communications Manager): They are being highlighted in the newsletter, on Facebook, and as a banner in My SPARK Learning Lab. We have also sent out text messages through OECOSL's text service. SPARK did personal outreach to programs with safe sleep violations.
- b. PTQ Education Requirements
- i. Mike provided an update about the number of insufficiencies found in SDA 4 related to education requirements. Please reference the recording for more information.
 - ii. SPARK has been focused on trying to understand if the programs with education insufficiencies truly did not have the required education or if it was a documentation issue. They found that some had documentation issues, and some had not met the education requirements.
 - iii. Education is one of the top five insufficiencies for all four program types across the state. It continues to be an issue throughout the PTQ system.
 - iv. He asked for RAC member feedback on any recommendations they have for SPARK or other information/data they would like to see.
 - v. Questions/feedback from RAC members and the public:
 1. Comment: I have staff from other countries, and we do not have the required documentation for them, even though they have qualified education.
 2. Response from Mike: We do have a process in Indiana for reviewing international transcripts/degrees, when that documentation is available.
 3. Members suggested that SPARK and partners look at workforce issues, as programs are having trouble finding qualified employees. Other workforce data, such as salary amounts, may also be interesting to review.
 4. Members would like to see CPR for qualified team members from SPARK. A recertification link would be very helpful.
 5. SPARK is currently making referrals to INAEYC when they see staff are ready. Mike wondered if it would make sense for SPARK to analyze insufficiency data on a regular basis, identify programs with education insufficiencies, and make referrals to INAEYC when it is determined that they do not have the education requirements. Mike posed this possibility to the RAC for feedback.
 - a. Question: Where would the referral land at INAEYC?
 - b. Answer from Mike: That is a conversation we would need to have with the leadership team at INAEYC.
 - c. Members expressed that it is a good idea to develop further and consider. They expressed the importance of continuing to explore how to help providers meet workforce/ educational needs.

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- c. PTQ Cohorts
 - i. Erika Radford, SPARK's Deputy Director of Program Support, shared an update on the recent PTQ Cohorts.
 - 1. 83 programs completed the PTQ Cohorts in March 2021.
 - 2. 128 programs expressed interest in participating in a PTQ Cohort in April-June of 2021, with 98 currently enrolled.
 - 3. Current Cohorts include: PTQ Advancement, PTQ Maintenance, Making the Accreditation Decision, Accreditation Self-Study, and VCP (for Registered Ministries).
 - 4. The next round of cohorts will begin in July.
 - ii. Erika also shared testimonials of participants from recent cohorts.
 - iii. There were no questions or comments from RAC members or the public.
- d. New Discussion Board Feature (Groups)
 - i. At the last 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 provided an update on the timeline for rolling out Groups:
 - 1. During the first half of April, SPARK determined the best use of Groups.
 - 2. During the second half of April, SPARK designed Groups and began to 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. Comment from members who tested Groups: I found it really helpful to connect with other directors. We often see each other as competition rather than resources. This type of forum helps us see that this is not the case.

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- e. COVID-19
 - i. On March 25th, OECOSL presented on Indiana's plan for the use of Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Funds. The [recording](#) of this presentation includes information on increased CACFP reimbursements, waived family 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!
 - ii. These initiatives are branded as Build, Learn, Grow. There is a Facebook page, as well as a website: <https://brighterfuturesindiana.org/build-learn-grow>
 - iii. Build, Learn, Grow Emergency Relief Grants
 - 1. Provides a 20% increase for active CCDF vouchers through August 27th.
 - 2. Tracking of attendance began March 28th, so the first tracking period was March 28th-April 11th. Payments are made two weeks after the tracking period, so the first payment was made April 28th.
 - 3. All active CCDF vouchers, both birth to five and school-age, will begin receiving payments, but as a requirement to receive those payments programs must complete *SPARK! Fundamentals to Business Sustainability Collection* by August 27th.
 - 4. Once a program registers and begins, there is a checklist of items they 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: What is the timeline for completing the training?
 - 6. Answer from Mike: It must be completed during the Emergency Relief Grant period (by August 27th).
 - iv. Build, Learn, Grow Scholarships
 - 1. Beginning in May 2021, scholarships will be available to pay for up to 80% of tuition for families of frontline workers, with family responsibility at 20%, based on program policy. The income eligibility requirement is between 128%-250% of the federal poverty line.
 - 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 about the scholarship and requirements. All programs who want to accept this scholarship need to watch the information session in Indiana Learning Paths and complete a consent.
- f. Stories of Success During COVID-19
 - i. Mike invited attendees to share stories of success they had experienced during COVID. Examples shared included:
 - 1. Members have seen a decrease in the number of at home learners, as more return to the classroom.

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2. Programs shared success in having few staff, and no children, contract COVID.
3. Members have increased their virtual offerings and extended their volunteer programs.
4. The local CCR&R, Chances and Services for Youth, has seen enrollment increase and vacancies decrease in different areas across the SDA.
5. Mike gave a shoutout to PTQ raters and licensing consultants who have continued to do on site visits throughout the pandemic.

5. Highlights from the Field

- a. Mike invited RAC members to share what they are hearing from the field.
 - i. Members shared that private preschools in Columbus are not seeing as much enrollment now that there are preschool programs in the public elementary schools.
 - ii. Programs are still having issues with fingerprints coming back in time, which is causing issues in getting staff. Some programs have still had to wait a couple months for a fingerprinting appointment, or for everything to get processed.
 1. Response from OECOSL: They are aware that this is still an issue because the fingerprints are pending with the police for longer. They are trying to work towards a resolution.

6. Public Comment

- a. No additional public comments.

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. RAC members suggested that SPARK look at workforce issues and data to inform their work in addressing education insufficiencies.
 - ii. Members would like to see CPR for qualified team members. A recertification link would be very helpful.
 - iii. SPARK should explore how to better identify programs with education insufficiencies and make referrals to INAEYC when it is determined they do not have the education requirements.

8. Future Meeting Schedule

- a. September 7, 6:00-8:00pm ET
 - 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 Next Meeting

- a. SPARK Annual Report: Final progress update on this year's objectives and what SPARK is thinking about working on next year
- b. Employment and staffing issues
- c. Program engagement with SPARK data update
- d. PTQ insufficiency data update (top five reasons)
- e. PTQ enrollment data

10. Adjournment