



**Service Delivery Area 3
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary August 10, 2021**

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

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, Camelia Smith, Jessie Pike, Starla Haggard, and Tikila Welch.

3. Reviewed Old Business

- a. Diane informed attendees that updates on old business items could be found in the [slide deck](#) posted on the SPARK website. Past meeting minutes, recommendations, and related action plans for each Service Delivery Area (SDA) can also be found on the SPARK website: <http://indianaspark.com/regional-advisory-councils/>.

4. New Business

- a. RAC Membership Updates
 - i. Diane and SPARK Project Director Mike Bachman acknowledged that several RAC members are completing their two year membership term this month. They thanked the members for their contribution to the RAC and SPARK Learning Lab.
 - ii. RAC Coordinator, Margaret Smith, provided an update on the RAC membership application process.
 1. SPARK released an application in June for individuals interested in serving as RAC members.
 2. 72 applications were received from across the state.
 3. 25 applications were received in SDA 3.
 4. New RAC members will be notified in mid-August.
 5. SPARK will facilitate two virtual orientation sessions for new and returning members in September.
- b. SDA 3 Updates
 - i. Alexandra Hall, SDA 3 RAC Vice Chair, discussed the decrease in attendance and engagement that the RAC has seen over the last few months. The SDA 3 RAC would like to make the meetings more interactive by making the agenda items more discussion based. The RAC would like to give attendees a chance to engage in a dialogue and discuss the issues and topics that are most important to them. This meeting's agenda and structure are reflective of this desire.
- c. Staffing Issues
 - i. In April, RAC members shared that many programs in their area are having trouble recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff.
 - ii. Diane and Alexandra introduced this topic for further discussion and posed the following questions to attendees:
 1. What staffing issues are you currently facing?
 2. What factors do you think are contributing to this issue?
 3. What supports/resources do you need related to staffing?
 4. How can we collectively promote ECE as a career pathway?

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- iii. Attendees provided the following comments:
 - 1. Programs need more access to funding resources like the recruitment and retention grant that was available last year.
 - 2. There needs to be more efforts system-wide to promote ECE as a career pathway. This communication is currently lacking.
 - a. Mike shared the [Indiana Early Childhood and Out of School Learning Career Pathways Resource](#), developed by the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC).
 - b. Krystal Robinson from the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL) shared that the Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKCs) are being revised, which will also lead to a revision of the current career pathway.
 - 3. Members shared that providers need more training and guidance about making business decisions (how to improve salaries, benefits; how to budget, etc.).
 - 4. Members also expressed that programs need access to more affordable benefit options.
- d. Moving forward from COVID
 - i. Diane introduced several topics for the RAC to consider and discuss how the ECE system moves forward following COVID and what providers need in terms of the following:
 - ii. Family Engagement
 - 1. Diane and Alexandra posed the following questions to attendees:
 - a. How has COVID impacted how you engage families?
 - b. What is working well and what isn't in terms of family engagement?
 - c. What resources and supports does your program need to help you engage families?
 - 2. Attendees provided the following comments and feedback:
 - a. Programs are starting to loosen protocols and allow parents to come into the building for drop off and pick up.
 - b. Many attendees shared that they are using apps and virtual communication methods to connect with families, which has made a big difference.
 - c. Attendees asked if SPARK could explore providing a statewide app/solution for programs to use to support family engagement. This could provide programs with a platform at a lower cost than what is currently available. Members specifically mentioned Procure and examples of other states that have piloted using it system wide.
- iii. Networking, Convening, and Peer Learning
 - 1. Diane and Alexandra posed the following questions to attendees:
 - a. What was happening pre-COVID that worked well to convene providers that we need to bring back?
 - b. What are your program's and your personal needs for networking and learning?
 - c. Are you ready to convene in person for networking and peer learning opportunities? What conditions would need to be present for you to feel safe?
 - 2. Attendees provided the following comments and feedback:

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- a. Attendees shared that people in their area are ready to convene in person if it is in a large space or outside.
 - b. Members shared that some events they've been to have offered attendees colored wristbands that can be used to show what they are comfortable with in terms of contact (wave, handshake, hug, etc.).
 - c. Attendees suggested that SPARK establish clear safety protocols for any in person events.
 - d. Mike shared that SPARK has had to cancel 70% of in person trainings because not enough people have signed up. He asked members what would get them to attend an in person event. Members shared that people have gotten used to the convenience virtual meetings/events have allowed. In general, networking opportunities would compel them to attend an event in person.
- iv. Supporting Staff Well-being
1. Diane and Alexandra posed the following questions to attendees:
 - a. What does this look like post-COVID?
 - b. What do staff need?
 2. Attendees provided the following comments and feedback:
 - a. Attendees shared examples of staff appreciation gifts parents have given providers (providing a catered lunch, candy, coffee, etc.).
 - b. Staff members are at their limit. More staff is needed to support staff well-being.
 - c. Krystal referenced the Indiana Department of Health Educator Wellness Toolkit, which can be found [here](#).
 - d. Attendees suggested that SPARK could survey staff to ask what they feel they need to promote well-being.
- e. Update on PTQ Incentives
- i. Last year SPARK received feedback from multiple RACs that the system should reconsider the PTQ cash and non-cash incentives and provide better options for programs to choose from. Over the last year, SPARK and OECOSL have embarked to discover how this might be possible and what this might look like.
 1. Krystal presented on the changes OECOSL is considering, which include adding more social emotional learning kits, art consumables, and professional association memberships. More information can be found in the meeting [materials](#).
 2. Krystal asked for feedback from attendees on whether or not these changes make sense and better meet the needs of programs. Attendees shared the following feedback:
 - a. Attendees liked the art consumables and professional association memberships.
 - b. One member suggested adding a National Afterschool Association executive membership to the professional association membership list.
- 5. Public Comment**
- a. Question: How is it being tracked when programs complete the Fundamentals of Business training?
 - i. Answer from Mike: Through the I-LEAD platform we can track the program that users are connected to and track participation accordingly.



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6. RAC Updates from Around Indiana

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

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 shared that providers need more training and guidance about making business decisions (how to improve salaries, benefits; how to budget, etc.).
 - ii. Members also expressed that programs need access to more affordable benefit options.
 - iii. Attendees asked if SPARK could explore providing a statewide app/solution (like Procure) for programs to use to support family engagement.
 - iv. Attendees suggested that SPARK survey staff to ask what they feel they need to promote well-being.
 - v. Members suggested OECOSL add a National Afterschool Association executive membership to the professional association memberships that are offered as PTQ Incentives.

8. Future Meeting Schedule

- a. To be determined
 - i. Next year's meeting scheduled will be determined during the RAC orientation sessions in September.

9. Agenda Items for November

- a. Members asked if there is data available to show how many programs closed due to COVID within the SDA and did not reopen. They would like to explore this further.
 - i. Mike shared that this information can be found on the ELAC COVID Impact dashboard [here](#).
- b. Further agenda items will be identified during the RAC orientation sessions in September.

10. Adjournment