



**Service Delivery Area 1
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary November 3rd, 2021**

View the recording of this meeting here: <https://youtu.be/fGR36ukB8qw>

1. Call to Order and Meeting Overview:

- a. SDA 1 RAC Chair, Betsey Hostettler, 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 names and professional role.
- b. Members present included: Erika Watkins, Brittany Lockard, Gary Branch, Jackie Allison, Nina Burton, Jami Hubbard, Pat Joyner, Betsey Hostettler, Binti Shah, Gail Jamora, Linda Curly, Lisa Timmerman, and Sherry Searles.

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.
- b. 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/>. In addition, you can find more information about these recommendations and updates on the [SDA 1 website](#) and in the meeting slide deck. Discussion/Questions/feedback from RAC members and the public:
 - i. Engagement Strategies: RAC members discussed engagement and attendance strategies for members. SPARK will attempt to conduct focus groups before our next quarterly meeting and share the findings with RAC members.
 1. RAC Member Old Business Comments or Questions: RAC council provided no additional comments.
 2. Public Comment:
 - a. Carla Gadson: Encourages program directors and supervisor staff to invite their teaching staff to the next RAC meeting. These meetings are a great way to start developing leadership.
 - b. Betsy Hostettler agreed with Carla's comments about utilizing RAC meetings to help develop leaders and build advocacy within your program and the ELC industry. Additionally, she challenged SDA 1 members and attendees to bring one additional guest to the next RAC meeting.
 - ii. RAC Meeting Engagement: RAC members recommend reviewing the meeting structure to provide more interactive and engagement opportunities.
 1. SDA 1 RAC Members and Leadership Council discussed this request during the September 2021 orientation sessions and reviewed ways to change the meeting format moving forward.
 2. SPARK will support SDA 1 Leadership and continue to look for ways to engage RAC members.
 3. No comments or questions by the RAC or public.



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- iii. SPARK Ambassadors: Members recommend that SPARK continue to pursue outreach and marketing opportunities. Additionally, members requested that SPARK provide resources to assist them in being ambassadors within their local communities.
 - 1. SPARK will continue reviewing requests and investing in outreach and marketing opportunities statewide. In addition, SPARK is interested in additional feedback from RAC members on ambassador resources and tools.
 - 2. RAC Member Old Business Comments and Questions:
 - a. A RAC Member requested links to all of SPARK's social media accounts to share information from their pages:
 - i. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/indianasparklearninglab>;
 - ii. SPARK Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/indiana_spark/;
 - iii. SPARK Twitter: https://twitter.com/indiana_spark
 - iv. SPARK could reach out to and grow engagement: through SPARK groups features and other known industry workgroups.
 - v. SPARK could utilize direct mail and send out a postcard, flyer, or magnet for the year's meeting schedule for all staff and parents.
 - vi. SPARK could review their industry partner list and send direct mail pieces reminding them of the purpose of RAC and the schedule.
 - vii. The RAC Members and attendees were reminded how important it is to invite individuals to the RAC meetings personally.
 - viii. RAC members and SPARK discussed changing up "roll call" or attendance at each meeting by introducing who they brought to the meeting.
 - ix. SPARK could look for ways to engage with the local colleges, universities, and other professional development groups.
 - x. SPARK is encouraged to continue to educate others on the services provided by SPARKS and continue to promote the RAC and the ongoing accomplishments when conducting outreach.
 - xi. SPARK should consider providing more information to providers on what topics and agenda items for each meeting.
- iv. Think Tank Recommendations: Members recommend that SPARK invite Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana's Secretary of Education, to a RAC meeting. Members also recommend that SPARK continue with Nicole Norvell on the CCDF market rate study and learn more on how providers can access this funding.



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1. SPARK is reviewing the Think Tank requests and will continue to look for opportunities to partner with key experts within the early learning industry.
2. SPARK did reach out to Dr. Katie Jenner to request attendance at a RAC meeting. Unfortunately, SPARK did not get a response from her office. SPARK is committed to leveraging other industry partners to connect with her and the office of Education.
3. RAC Member Old Business Comments and Questions:
 - a. RAC Members encouraged members to sign up for OECOSL Monday's Must Know Text messages.
 - i. Text Message:
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/INOECOSL/subscribe/new>.
 - ii. You can find the text message option by using the email drop-down option and choosing the text/SMS option.
 - b. SPARK reviewed the upcoming changes to the payment of the CCDF reimbursement rates.
 - i. CCDF Reimbursement Rates:
<https://www.ingov/fssa/carefinderprovider-reminders/>
- v. Old Business Comments and Questions:
 1. A RAC Member requested that the THINK TANK discuss the current staffing crisis for the industry. Additionally, the member wanted information about the future of employees or those graduating with education in the early learning space.
 2. RAC Member Betsy Hostettler offered to present data and trends on workforce development.

4. New Business

- a. Grant Stabilization Updates and Resources: RAC Members were presented with the following discussion questions:
 1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the stabilization grant process up to now?
 - a. A RAC Member in the Kosciusko County reflected that the providers in their area have been pleasantly surprised at how easy the application process has been for the grant. Providers have been so thankful to receive the funds.
 - b. A RAC Member stated that the process was straightforward. They thought there would be a lot of prep work for the application. Yet, their process took around 15 minutes to complete. In addition, the follow-up for the application with questions or issues was also quick.
 - c. A RAC Member from the LaPort area had the same experience. However, many of the providers in the area had fears that it was almost too easy.
 - d. SPARK asked for feedback around the resources provided for the Build Learn Guide:



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- i. SPARK Facebook Videos were great. They answered the majority of the questions.
 - ii. A RAC Member used and reviewed the grant materials in case programs were contacted.
 - iii. RAC Member stated the resources were easy to read and use. They agreed that the videos were very informative. And they used the materials in conjunction with actively applying for the grant.
 - e. RAC Chair asked if any providers have received their grant dollars?
 - i. SPARK stated that 847 programs had received their grant funding.
 - ii. SPARK corrected misinformation: Originally, payment for the CCDF providers was going to come on the opposite week of your CCDF payments. However, It turns out that the intermediary making the payment electronically cannot do them on the opposite week. So providers will be receiving them on the same week as their CCDF payment.
 - f. RAC Member the grants were available to programs that were not PTQ or CCDF. So I thought that was this strength and would go a long way in stabilizing all of those much-needed programs.
 - g. A member stated SPARK allowable expenses worksheet was very helpful.
 - ii. What are the challenges of the stabilization grant process so far?
 - 1. RAC members stated they didn't get the approval screen after they applied. The provider hadn't heard anything for three weeks. Not sure why there was a delay or if there was supposed to be communication about when they would receive payment.
 - a. SPARK commented that the communication process had been updated. The technology can now immediately issue an email to programs going through the application process. In addition, programs getting approved should get an email communication letting them know when they will receive their payments. The programs that applied in the first three to four weeks did not receive the same communication. We apologize for missing this piece during the initial launch.
 - 2. RAC Member has been a little disappointed as they missed the eligibility cut-off date. The member asked if there were any plans to revise the eligibility date in the future? And why was that date chosen originally?
 - a. SPARK commented that March 11, 2021's eligibility date would not be changed as written into federal law. The date was written into law when the bill was passed; therefore, Indiana has no latitude and can not change the date. www.buildlearngrow.com
 - b. SPARK continues to monitor the Build Back Better plan that is being discussed. Unfortunately, at this time, nothing has been passed.



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- c. SPARK stated that the ever-evolving information and keeping up to speed on the federal guidelines for the grant have been complex. For example, SPARK has given guidance on a topic several times and then received information that completely changes the guidance.
 - d. RAC Member stated keeping up with the changes and staying abreast of the information can be difficult.
 - e. A RAC Member asked for clarification on the grant requirement regarding staff wages and benefits. SPARK confirmed that 25% of your grant award needs to be used to increase staff wages and benefits.
 - f. Last week, RAC members participated in a meeting, and Nicole Norvell did a stabilization Grant update for Indiana AEYC members. She did speak to the eligibility start date, stating that there will potentially be a grant for those that started after the eligibility date. This grant would be funded differently amount-wise for programs. Additionally, the member wanted to remind everyone that this is only round one of the stabilization Grant. There was an indication of two additional funding rounds distributing in 2022.
- iii. Grant Resource Information:
- a. SPARK Grant Support contact the help desk at 1-800-299-1627, live chat at indianaspark.com, or email at Help@indianaspark.com.
 - i. SPARK has received over 1000 calls in the first three weeks.
 - b. SPARK discussed the following grant support training opportunities:
 - i. Option A: Offer in-person regional events that connect grant recipients and financial experts.
 - 1. SPARK presented on hosting local/ regional events in the epicenters, where we have seen the most significant number of grant applications submitted.
 - 2. These events will be hosted or partnered with local entities such as coalitions or United Ways in your local community.
 - 3. The in-person event goal is to connect local providers and grant recipients with professional experts regarding financial planning, accounting, lawyers, human resources, and other identified experts to answer critical business questions and make strategic recommendations on utilizing these grant dollars.
 - 4. These are around 2-hour events strategically placed throughout Indiana and the SDA regions.
 - 5. SPARK asked for feedback:
 - a. RAC Member asked if these meetings would be open to those who didn't receive the funding but were interested in connecting with professionals for business planning support?
 - i. SPARK, yes, this is an excellent opportunity for programs to attend. The event goal will be targeted to programs that have received the funding. Also, programs that could receive funding have not yet applied for the grant funding and encouraged them



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- To apply. And, finally, an invitation to all known programs.
- b. A RAC Member asked if there would be a virtual meeting option? Because of COVID, location of meetings, and various providers' schedules.
 - 1. SPARK hopes to build the capacity within the local entities to offer the events.
 - 2. SPARKS' role is to support and co-host the event and provide financial support.
 - 3. The local partners will establish the event logistics that best serve their community.
 - ii. Option B: Require 10 person virtual learning cohorts that leverage peer learning, connect grant recipients to experts and business coaches, and are segmented by geography, program type, award amount, and chosen expenses.
 - 1. SPARK stated that one of the requirements for receiving the grant funding is that programs agree to participate in required technical assistance as deemed appropriate by the Office of Early Childhood Education. As a result, this grant requirement will connect programs to coaching with the SPARK Learning Lab for grant implementation and documentation support.
 - 2. SPARK has several goals for these learning cohorts. The first is to provide opportunities for providers to leverage industry knowledge and promote peer learning.
 - 3. SPARK will partner with other experts to build and offer support to providers such as [All Our Kin](#), a national family child care support training agency, First [children's Finance](#), and [Indiana CPA Society](#) to bring in some heavy hitters to support programs in these cohorts.
 - 4. SPARK plans to offer these cohorts based on geography and could be in person. Also, based on program type, award amount, and various chosen expenses identified at the end of the application.
 - 5. These cohorts are looking to start in early January of 2022 potentially. SPARK is looking for feedback from RAC members:
 - a. A RAC Member stated that this is needed And that SPARK is on the right track. However, many providers have not yet gotten to this point of identifying and implementing these funds. Most programs are focused on the application and are living in the excitement of receiving the support, but they will be moving into the next phase soon, and these options would be helpful for those who want to participate.
 - b. A RAC Member likes the virtual learning cohort model. Several programs in their area have already participated in the PTQ cohorts and found them very helpful. The cohort model is good and is working. It provides the right amount of structure for programs that want to participate in the group but can not attend these types of opportunities when they are in person.
 - c. A RAC Member asked for more information on the business coaches?
 - i. SPARK said many of them will be employees or



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- Contractors of SPARK. The business coach job description is posted on the Shine Early Learning website. In addition, they will be looking to hire coaches that can provide the business administration guidance for programs.
- ii. SPARK will continue to put together options for those programs that do not need this level of support. Some providers have the resources and structures already in place for the grant. SPARK understands that not all providers need to be involved at this level.
 - iii. A RAC Members stated that human resources and benefits are a key topic to consider for support.
 - d. A RAC Member stated that SPARK should conduct round table focus groups and discussions before these opportunities are launched.
6. Grant Resource Information and a master list for Key Resource Links:
- a. Allowable Expense Guide English and Spanish
 - b. Grant Worksheet English and Spanish
 - c. Grant Guide English and Spanish is not yet available
 - d. Grant Requirements English and Spanish

iv. Mental Health Support Initiatives

- a. SPARK, Mike Bachman, gave a brief update on two upcoming mental health initiatives. First, SPARK is working with the Office of Early Childhood out-of-school learning and thinking about how to best support the mental health and wellness of the early childhood community.
 - i. Mental Health Support Initiatives
 - 1. SPARK wants to partner with educational institutions and provide in-person observations for classrooms and teachers struggling with managing certain behaviors or any kind of special needs children. SPARK hopes that these agencies will be able to provide screening when screening is necessary and build and implement a Behavior Support plan with that teacher to help meet the educational outcomes.
 - 2. Support program leaders on how to best support the families and conduct conversations around the child needing additional support.
 - 3. A licensed clinical social worker group of about 10 to 15 of their peers has the space to talk about their struggles. The groups will last about three months and meet every other week for about 60 to 90 minutes.
 - ii. Professional Mental Health Endorsement Opportunities
 - 1. The mental health endorsement track will be offered to a teacher or a program leader to obtain a nationally-recognized endorsement in either infant and toddler or preschool. This endorsement is through a process called reflection supervision—infancy Onward, Indiana's Mental Health America chapter, at <https://www.infancyonward.org/i-ecmh-endorsement/>



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- for more information.
 - 2. SPARK understands that sometimes an individual needs help beyond what we can provide. SPARK will possibly bring an employee assistance program (EAP) to all Early Childhood Professionals in the state, so anyone an early childhood professional would have access to continued assistance.
 - b. RAC members discussed the following questions:
 - i. What are some of the mental health needs of early childhood and out-of-school time professionals now?
 - 1. A RAC Member talked about how quarantine has affected teachers' mental health. The disruption that is experienced for teachers, the students, and the classroom can be very challenging. The ECE community needs to continue discussing and supporting the return to work transition.
 - 2. RAC Members discussed how staff, kids, and families are experiencing anxiety about getting sick.
 - 3. SPARK commented that there is still a stigma around mental health support and recognizes there is still a need for ongoing dialogue and support for many individuals around the mental health support in general.
 - 4. A RAC Member discussed the ongoing effects of the staffing crisis. Programs are doing their best to keep classes and sites open, yet the classrooms have a lot of new teachers or staff filling in for others who are out. Additionally, the team worries about the vaccine mandate and how that will impact them personally, their class, and overall program operations. There is a lot of uncertainty and instability that individuals are experiencing, causing a great deal of anxiety. The longevity of the pandemic and the ongoing implications to the ECE community has been very challenging, and teachers are looking for the next level of strategies moving forward.
 - ii. If you could have any mental health support service, what would it be?
 - 1. This question was posted in the chat due to meeting times and the remaining agenda items left to cover. RAC Members offered the following comments in the chat:
 - a. Allow for planned time off, offer therapy, monthly wellbeing check-ins with mental health providers, change the message from self-care to community care.
- v. Early Foundations Update
- a. Timeline Updates
 - i. Undergoing minor revisions since July 2022 with one new foundation released. They are in the final stages. The first public release is planning for the November ELAC meeting on Tuesday, November 16th, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. ET. With the large-scale rollout, either November or December of 2021.
 - b. Professional development opportunities
 - i. The recorded Webinar will be available towards the end of November, with a live webinar on December 1st, 2021. Additional resources will be rolled out from DOE and SPARK through the summer of 2022. The ELAC
 - c. Other questions or comments from the RAC and/or public.
 - i. A RAC Member asked if the ELAC meetings were recorded?
 - ii. Yes, the meetings are public, and the information can be found on the



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website:

<http://www.elacindiana.org/about-elac/elac-workgroups/elac-minutes-and-agendas/>

vi. PTQ Feedback Request

- a. OECOSL is creating a PTQ Policy Resource document (FAQs) for programs before their rating visit. What are the 1 or two things you wished you had known before your PTQ rating visit?
 - i. RAC Members provided information in the chat: Which classes on transcripts qualify. Clarifying and guiding programs on the best way to ensure training hours will be accepted.
 - ii. Members can email RAC@indianaspark.com with additional information.

vii. Future Meeting Schedule

- a. Review future meeting schedules by confirming proposed dates.
 - i. The RAC members reviewed the following dates: February 2, 2022, April 6th, 2022, September 7th, 2022
 - ii. The RAC members did discuss the April meeting being around spring break time for many schools. Additionally, the group wanted to work around Easter in late April, and May has a lot of end-of-school and graduation activities. No official change was made to the proposed schedule.
 - iii. SDA 1 leadership and SPARK will change the April date and follow the changes.
- b. Confirm that the council wants to continue meeting from 7:00- 9:00 pm (EST).
 - i. The RAC Members confirm the 7:00- 9:00 pm EST moving forward.
- c. Finalize Meeting Type
 - i. The RAC Members discussed a hybrid meeting option in February.
 - ii. The SDA will need to finalize a location for the next meeting. There were no formal comments made from members about these options.

6. Think Tank

- a. During this time, RAC members will speak about ideas and topics compiled among council members.
 - i. RAC Members want to continue to discuss staff recruitment, professional development, training, and the future of the ECE workforce development at large.
 - ii. Rachael Grissom (rgrissom@inaeeyc.org) shared a nonformal CDA course registration open.
 - iii. RAC Members want to continue strengthening program quality and grants on human resources and benefits.

7. Public Comment

- a. Invite public comments and questions that have not been covered by an agenda item. Attendees are encouraged to enter comments/questions into the Zoom chat if they are more comfortable.
 - i. A public member commented that it is vital for SPARK, RAC, and the larger ECE community to advocate and bring awareness to those outside the industry.

8. Agreements and Action Items



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- 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 requested that SPARK assess and evaluate RAC materials and look into creating an Ambassador Toolkit. The RAC members encouraged SPARK to continue to share the highlights of what the RAC has accomplished.
 - ii. RAC Members requested that Betsy Hostettler present updated information and ECE higher education workforce development data.
 - iii. RAC Members requested SPARK conduct round tables or focus groups around additional grant resources to create for providers. Also, to help provide SPARK with the key elements and agenda topics to cover in the upcoming community events.
 - iv. RAC Members requested that SPARK create materials to best support staff and return to work.
 - v. SPARK will finalize the meeting schedule for SDA 1. Additionally, SDA 1 Leadership and SPARK will finalize the meeting location for the February meeting.

9. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- a. The RAC members had no additional comments or agenda items for the next meeting.
- b. Stay Connected with SPARK
 - i. Sign up for SPARK newsletter: <http://indianaspark.com/>
 - ii. SPARK Group Features
 - iii. Follow SPARK on social media!
 - 1. [Facebook](#)
 - 2. [Twitter](#)
 - 3. [Instagram](#)
 - iv. Email RAC@indianaspark.com with questions

10. Adjournment