



**Service Delivery Area 2
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary, November 10th, 2021**

View the recording of this meeting here: https://youtu.be/tV_xTTUq_7I

1. Call to Order and Meeting Overview

- a. SDA 2 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 the meeting systems and procedures.

2. Introductions

- a. Members introduced themselves by sharing their names and professional role.
- b. Members present included: Natalie McIntire, Todd Deckard, Madi McCloskey, Allison Hillis, DiDi Buggs, Sherry Crisp- Ridge, Brad Hand.

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.
 - i. Chair and SPARK Project Director, Mike Bachman, summarized the feedback/recommendations made by the Council related to SPARK program data, PTQ recommendations. In addition, Mike shared updates related to the action plan identified for each recommendation.
 - ii. 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/>.
 - iii. No additional comments or feedback was provided from the RAC Members while reviewing the old business recommendations.

4. New Business

- a. Grant Stabilization Updates and Resources: RAC Members were presented with the following discussion questions around the strengths and weaknesses of the stabilization grant application process.
 - i. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the stabilization grant process up to now?
 1. SPARK provided additional information about the [Build Learn Grow Stabilization](#) grant opportunity.
 2. RAC Members provided the following comments;
 - a. A RAC Member shared they could continue to serve and could keep operating.
 - ii. What are the challenges of the stabilization grant process so far?
 1. RAC Members provided the following comments;
 - a. A RAC Member commented that the eligibility of the grant presented some challenges.
 - i. SPARK commented that the eligibility and the language used throughout this process could be



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confusing. SPARK expanded on eligibility requirements:

1. A provider could have completed the eligibility standards for CCDF and not have or actively accepted CCDF children to be eligible.
 2. There are a lot of exempt programs around the state that are exempt because they need to 6 exemptions by law, but unless you've gone through the process to become certified, you are not eligible.
 3. Providers must be known and in some way regulated by OECOSL to apply for the grant.
 4. SPARK will continue to help our partners clarify in future communications
- iii. Grant Resource Information: SPARK Grant Support contact the help desk at 1-800-299-1627, live chat at indianaspark.com, or email at Help@indianaspark.com.
- iv. SPARK discussed the following grant support training opportunities:
1. Option A: Offer in-person regional events that connect grant recipients and financial experts.
 - a. SPARK discussed hosting local/ regional events in the epicenters, where we have seen the most significant number of grant applications submitted.
 - b. These events will be hosted or partnered with local entities such as CCRRs, coalitions, or United Ways in your local community.
 - c. 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.
 - d. These are around 2-hour events strategically placed throughout Indiana and the SDA regions.
 - e. SPARK asked for feedback:
 - i. A RAC Member agreed this was an excellent opportunity to partner with other peers and the local experts.
 - ii. A RAC Member asked if there would be any virtual options for local events or if there would be a state-wide virtual option provided.
 1. The local partners will help establish the meeting options that best fit their community.
 2. SPARK will take back the recommendation of hosting a state-wide virtual meeting option for those who could not attend a more local site.
 2. Option B: Require 10 person virtual learning cohorts that leverage



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peer learning connects grant recipients to experts and business coaches and is segmented by geography, program type, award amount, and chosen expenses.

- a. 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.
 - b. SPARK has several goals for these learning cohorts. The first is to provide opportunities for providers to leverage industry knowledge and promote peer learning.
 - c. The second is to partner with other experts to build and offer support to providers such as [All Our Kin](#), [First children's Finance](#), and [Indiana CPA Society](#) to support these cohorts.
 - d. SPARK plans to offer these cohorts based on geography, program type, award amount, and various chosen expenses identified at the end of the application.
 - e. These cohorts are looking to start in early January of 2022 potentially. These meetings are about a 3-month time frame and would meet every other week for about an hour.
 - f. SPARK is looking for feedback from RAC members:
 - i. A RAC Member asked to clarify the requirements and apply to their professional development hours.
 1. SPARK commented coaching does not count towards the training hours. However, the cohorts could provide training hours for external presenters who come to support.
 - 2.
3. 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](#)
- b. Mental Health Support Initiatives
 - i. SPARK, Mike Bachman, gave a brief update on two upcoming mental health initiatives. Currently, 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.
 1. Mental Health Support Initiatives
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. A licensed clinical social worker group of about 10 to 15 of



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- 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.
- d. The LCSW can also help support or refer any individual who needs additional support than can be provided within the group.
- 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 and PreK. 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/> for more information.
 2. SPARK asked for comments and feedback:
 - a. A RAC Member asked if there were trends in the topics and areas of support that SPARK could create resources for the entire community.
 - i. SPARK believes there is potential for collaboration in this area. Mike will be meeting with the LSCW during this pilot program. However, both parties will not deluge and private or personal information. SPARK also plans to use any feedback to steer the creation of additional ever-green resources moving forward for providers.
 - b. A RAC Member asked if a person could attend the support group and the mental endorsement tracks.
 - i. SPARK said that would consider allowing an individual to enroll in both options.
 - c. A public member asked if this was a part of the stabilization funding or if this going to be different and additional support.
 - i. SPARK, this will vary for each program. These options are meant to support programs for those who might not have access to these types of options.
 - ii. SPARK sent the information out to all individuals who have an I-LEAD account. The pilot opportunity of 30 individuals was fulfilled within hours.
 - d. A public member asked how SPARK will help destigmatized mental health services.
 - i. SPARK is proactively working with partners, RAC Members, and resources created to craft a message around mental health.
 - iii. Discussion Questions
 1. What are some of the mental health needs of early childhood and out-of-school time professionals now?
 - a. RAC Members provided the following comments:
 - i. A RAC Member stated that they are seeing many child behaviors within their programs.
 - ii. A RAC Member stated the ongoing pressure of COVID and the staffing crisis being so ongoing, and there seems to be no relief.



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2. If you could have any mental health support service, what would it be?
 - a. RAC Members provided the following comments:
 - i. Paid mental health day.
 - ii. Mandatory 8-hour workdays would be ideal.
 - iii. A phone number they can call to get immediate support.
 - iv. A floating staff member could be available to fill in for staff and provide regular "work-days."
 - v. Build in mental health breaks throughout the day and provide short-term relief.
 - vi. Increasing reimbursement of the quality of food for programs and mental correlation.
 - b. SPARK will take this information and continue to figure out how to help providers utilize grant dollars or provide additional resources.
- c. Staffing Crisis:
 - i. How is the state of Staffing within your program?
 1. A RAC Member stated that the school systems could provide additional benefits that programs cannot offer. Currently, the provider indicated that they do not receive hardly any applications.
 2. A RAC Member stated that one of the biggest challenges is a staff member has their children at home doing e-learning due to quarantine.
 - ii. Discuss Substitute Teacher Pool Concept
 1. SPARK stated that several communities are looking to address this issue locally. At the state level, there have been discussions around a certification process that would allow
 2. A RAC member stated that they were having difficulty finding substitute teachers within the school system.
- d. PTQ Feedback Request
 - i. OECOSL creates 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?
 1. RAC Members provided information in the following comments:
 - a. A RAC Member stated one of the benefits was having someone mentor them through the process.
 - b. A RAC Member mentioned the professional development form and requirements.
 - c. A RAC Member was able to prepare staff about the rater's questions. In addition, they were able to provide a trial run for the interview questions.
 - d. A RAC Member stated that having a coach available was very helpful during the rating process.
 - e. A public member stated there needs to be more clarity on the waiting periods between level advancement and the option for a waiver and advance quicker due to experience.
 2. Members can email RAC@indianaspark.com with additional information.
- e. Future Meeting Schedule
 - i. Confirm the following meeting dates:



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1. February 9, 2022
 2. April 13th, 2022
 3. September 14, 2022
- ii. Meetings are held from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- iii. Finalize February Meeting Details of offering in-person or virtual meeting only.
1. RAC Members stated the virtual meeting seems to be working the best currently, but many are open in person.
 2. The past meetings were held in Kokomo and provided the best location for the entire SDA.
 3. SPARK will always offer a hybrid option for RAC meetings.
 4. RAC agreed to host a virtual meeting option only for February. And to discuss April as a potential in-person meeting.

5. Think Tank

- a. RAC Members did not have any additional topics to discuss.

6. Public Comment

- a. A public member commented that the program was denied the grant funding because of back dues or a repayment plan. The program did not have any understanding of this issue. The SPARK help desk was unable to provide support for this issue.
 - i. OECOSL does provide an inquiry email:
OECOSLproviderinquiry@fssa.in.gov

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. SPARK consider a state-wide virtual option for the Build Learn Grow Stabilization community events.

8. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- a. SDA 2 will need to finalize the April in-person meeting location.

9. Adjournment