Service Delivery Area 3
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary, November 17th, 2021

View the recording of this meeting here: https://youtu.be/b7KvTS4CrxU

1. **Call to Order and Meeting Overview**
   a. SDA 3 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: Courtney Begema, Katie Lynch, Hannah Banks, Alexandra Hall, Diane Pike, Rosita Haga, Mistie Timmons.

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 training and support requests, health benefits, family engagement, PTQ incentives 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 Comments or feedback were 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 no comments.

      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 if the expenses were not accounted for correctly, there were issues with submitting the grant.

        b. A RAC member suggested that the administrator invite another account or additional user to apply for the grant. However, not all administrators are the ones who apply for the funds/grants, and the way it is tied to ILEAD, the administrator is the only one who can apply.

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 from RAC and the Public:

            i. A RAC Member suggested contacting Martin University as they are also looking into connecting with program providers. They could be a great local partner. They also have excellent training and educational options.

    2. Option B: Require ten-person virtual learning cohorts that leverage 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 stated that many programs would need help with documentation and preparation for audits. Therefore, they asked for a resource and tools to support programs for audit and documentation for this grant.

          ii. A RAC member also wanted additional information on how providers spent the grant money. They are supportive of the grant have technical support required to the funds.

          iii. A RAC member stated that requiring a cohort could be a barrier for providers accepting technical assistance and be offered. They also suggested years of services be additional criteria for the cohorts, as veteran members will have more in-depth questions. However, overall the member liked the option for providers.

              1. SPARK stated they would take the suggestion back to OECOSL that the learning cohorts be an option and not mandatory. However, OECOSL is the final decision maker as SPARK delivers the technical assistance.

          iv. A RAC Member stated that the cohorts are not the best structure for everyone, and would be other ways to offer cohorts?

              1. YES, there will be multiple resources will available through SPARK. However, what is required is determined through OECOSL.

   3. Grant Resource Information and a master list for Key Resource Links:

       a. Allowable Expense Guide <u>English</u> and <u>Spanish</u>

       b. Grant Worksheet <u>English</u> and <u>Spanish</u>

       c. Grant Guide <u>English</u> and Spanish is not yet available

       d. Grant Requirements <u>English</u> and <u>Spanish</u>

  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 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 Member asked about the pilot program.

        i. Currently, there are 30 people within 2 groups being options. All types of providers and staffing are represented. The groups will start this week. The cohorts meet via zoom and meet between 2-3 EST and around the naptime. The hours do not meet the PTQ professional development or licensing requirements. However, mental health Endorsement does have the opportunity to meet professional development.

        ii. A RAC Member stated they loved the options but are concerned about fitting this into the ongoing program demands. Also, many programs will not be able to pay overtime for an opportunity like this, but staff may attend on their own.

  iii. Discussion Questions

    1. What are some of the mental health needs of early childhood and out-of-school time professionals now?

    2. If you could have any mental health support service, what would it be?

      a. RAC Members provided the following comments:

        i. Providers are so short staff, which is the cause for most mental health issues across the board for staff.

        ii. Staff is burnt out, and mental health support is needed and the overall stress of dealing with life during the last two years.

        iii. A member stated we need help recruiting.

        iv. A Member talked about providing resources and tools around how to "love" their staff well. I am not a mental health provider. but there are ways to support or items to show support.

        v. Katie Lynch, IU School of Medicine is researching and producing a study on ECE stress, and the study would intersect with acts of kindness. She

invited programs to participate in the study. SPARK is looking forward to the information the study will provide.

     vi. A Member stated how excited she was to see these options as the need has been high for a long time.

    c. PTQ Feedback Request
       i. OECOSL creates a PTQ Policy Resource document (FAQs) for programs before their rating visit. What are the 1or 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, their first coach, went through the provider and gave mock inspections and feedback. The PTQ auditor is looking for routines and habits. Engage real-life mentors and assess and observe the program in action.
             b. A public member shared that bringing the interview questions to staff is a part of the checklist. Share the questions and practice how they would respond.
                i. SPARK will consider providing resources to program leaders and help leaders present the information and process to staff.
             c. A Member stated that program leadership educates staff and gets them on board for the PTQ process as critical stakeholders.
          2. Members can email RAC@indianaspark.com with additional information.
    d. Future Meeting Schedule
       i. Confirm the following meeting dates:
          1. February 16, 2022
          2. April 13, 2022
          3. September 21, 2022
       ii. Meetings are held from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
       iii. Finalize February Meeting Details of offering in-person or virtual meeting only.
          1. The February meeting will be virtual-only.
          2. RAC Members will evaluate each meeting every quarter on location and in-person options.

5. Public Comment
    a. No public comments were made.

6. 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. Build Learn Grow Grant Stabilization
          1. RAC Members asked that an administrator invite another participant through ILEAD for the application.
          2. RAC Members requested documentation and resources to support grant tracking and audits providers.

3. RAC Members asked SPARK to request that OECOSL not make the cohorts required grant technical support.
4. RAC Members asked SPARK to consider adding the length of the operation and field experience to the grant cohort.

  ii. Mental Health Initiatives
1. RAC Members requested that support groups be offered in the evening or weekend for individuals to attend outside of work hours.
2. RAC requested resources for program leaders to support and care for their staff during difficult times.
3. RAC requested resources for leaders on how to manage and cope with stress.

  iii. PTQ Incentives
1. RAC members requested toolkits and resources to prepare staff and operations for a PTQ rating visit.
2. RAC members requested resources to best engage and get staff on board for the PTQ process.

  iv. Future Meeting Schedule
1. February 16th,2022 at 12:30 to 2:30 EST virtual only.
2. SDA 3 will evaluate the next meeting in person and location at the next meeting.

7. **RAC Updates from around Indiana**
   a. SDA 1- Agenda Topics
      i. Stabilization Grant
      ii. Mental Health Support
      iii. IN Early Learning Foundations Update
      iv. OECSOL PTQ Feedback
      v. Think Tank
      vi. Future Meeting Schedule
   b. SDA 2- Agenda Topics
      i. Stabilization Grants
      ii. Mental Health Support
      iii. Staffing Issues (Substitute Teacher Pool)
      iv. OECSOL PTQ Feedback
      v. Future Meeting Schedule
   c. DA 4- Agenda
      i. Stabilization Grants
      ii. Mental Health Support
      iii. OECSOL PTQ Feedback
      iv. Future Meeting Schedule
   d. SDA 5 - Agenda
      i. Stabilization Grant
      ii. Mental Health Support
      iii. OECSOL PTQ Feedback

8. **Agenda Items for Next Meeting**
   a. SDA 3 will need to finalize the April in-person meeting location.

b. Learn about the PTQ incentives will roll out methods for the organizational incentives.

c. Suggestions for good training on foundations and early childhood.

     i. SPARK noted that the current foundations are under revision. A soft rollout after thanksgiving. There will be resources and training created to support the Foundations. In addition, they are adding a new Foundation.

9. **Adjournment**