



**Service Delivery Area 5
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary, November 9th, 2021**

View the recording of this meeting here: <https://youtu.be/OOc8XSRsKdQ>

1. Call to Order and Meeting Overview

- a. SDA 5 Co-Chair Christina Angel-Smith 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: Sharon Tankersley, Christina Angel-Smith, Debbie Beeler, Tara Meachum, April Pagel, Stacey Malone, Rebecca Jones, Maria Wynne.

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. Christina and SPARK Project Director, Mike Bachman, summarized the feedback/recommendations made by the Council related to engagement, annual report, PTQ incentives. 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. While discussing old business, SPARK and RAC Members shared the following information;
 1. SPARK requested additional feedback from the RAC members around the best way to market and communicate with providers and RAC members in SDA 5.
 - a. RAC Members shared the following information; Sending an email to the entire SDA 5 list. Facebook post, access to groups feature within SPARK, flyers, magnets, postcards.
 - b. RAC members receive an email when posted to social.
 - c. Preferred communication schedule of communications 2-5 days before the meeting.
 2. Annual report follow-up and discussion around critical referral process and increase in program participation. How can SPARK grow the number of programs accepting technical assistance?
 - a. RAC Members discussion points;
 - i. Continued education and awareness around the role and goal of SPARK for programs.
 - ii. Build relationships with programs before there are violations.



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3. RAC Members requested that SPARK add goals and objectives for advanced program levels. COVID and limitations on in-person offerings still limit SPARK. SPARK is looking for additional insights into how they could provide a virtual format option and provide services for advanced learners.
 - a. No additional comments or feedback was provided.
4. OECOSL heard PTQ Incentives and recommendations in the previous meeting. OECOSL can provide updates as decisions are made.
 - a. RAC Members provided no additional comments or feedback.
 - b. Krystal Robinson from OECOSL is hoping for updates in January 2022.

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. Several RAC members requested more information on the grant opportunity and had not heard a lot about the grant.
 - b. A Member stated this grant was life-changing and very grateful for the money. The process was simple and provided the funds needed for facility and program improvements.
 - c. A Member commented that the money could provide staff wages and increase. The staff and program are so thankful for this boost in morale.
 - d. Several programs on the
 - ii. What are the challenges of the stabilization grant process so far?
 1. RAC Members provided the following comments;
 - a. A RAC Member stated that several programs that had been in business but moved recently were unable to apply for the grant.
 - i. SPARK and the Office of Early Learning have heard about this issue. The eligibility requirements are a part of federal law. To receive the grant funding, programs had to be licensed and registered or certified exempt by the March 11th, 2021 eligibility date. When programs move, open a new site, or expand, they are subject to a new license number and are not eligible because they were not licensed by March 11th. These concerns have been heard,



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- and there are discussions around how to address these types of issues moving forward.
- 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 CRCRs, 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 placid throughout Indiana and the SDA regions.
 - e. SPARK asked for feedback:
 - i. RAC Members agreed these events would be beneficial.
 - ii. Members were not opposed to in-person events as long as COVID producers followed the area and facility.
 2. Option B: Require ten-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.
 - 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.
 - f. SPARK is looking for feedback from RAC members:
 - i. A RAC Member stated they had already received



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- information regarding this opportunity.
- ii. Members felt it was a positive opportunity.
- v. Grant Resource Information and a master list for Key Resource Links:
 - 1. Allowable Expense Guide English and Spanish
 - 2. Grant Worksheet English and Spanish
 - 3. Grant Guide English and Spanish is not yet available
 - 4. 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 Initiative:
 - 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.
 - 2. Professional Mental Health Endorsement Opportunities
 - a. 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/> for more information.
 - i. A RAC Member stated they were currently going through the endorsement process track. The training has been an incredible training opportunity. Additionally, it has provided real-time support from peers and e space for her not to feel so alone.
 - 3. Discussion Questions
 - a. What are some of the mental health needs of early childhood and out-of-school time professionals now?
 - i. RAC Members provided the following comments:
 - 1. Support and continued focus on the staffing crisis for the ECE community plays a vital role in mental health.
 - b. If you could have any mental health support service, what would it be?
 - i. RAC Members provided the following comments:
 - 1. A RAC member recommended that programs should offer mental health days for staff.
 - a. SPARK responded that this is



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happening in other programs with the use of the stabilization grant funding. Programs are providing mental health days that are scheduled and planned so that this benefit doesn't add any additional staffing crisis.

- b. A RAC Member that works for a headstart program that has some built-in structure and opportunity to provide day-offs. Another option is providing in-person counseling opportunities for staff. Staff can not get time off to and there is a shortage of therapy services. But, having the capacity to send staff to see a therapist.

c. PTQ Feedback Request

- i. 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?

1. RAC Members provided information in the following comments:

- a. Training staff on how to approach the visit and what to expect during the rating visit.
- b. Reviewing and completing the checklist guide for each PTQ level is a current option for programs.
- c. Learning how to present and organize the requested documentation before and during the visit is an ongoing discussion point for many programs.

2. OECOSL Representative, Krystal Robinson, clarified the questions to create additional engagement and feedback from the group. Krystal asked what are tips did you receive from others or what are tips you would give another program moving forward?

- a. A Member shared to reassure programs and staff that if you stick with the process and program that happens on the daily basis.
- b. A Member shared to prep staff that students will act up and that the PTQ rater understands that this is a common issue and not necessarily a reflection of the teacher or staff. The rater knows that having a new person observing and in the classroom can cause disruption for the students. The rater is looking for how the staff handles the child's behavior.
- c. A RAC Member shared that PTQ is a strength-based approach, not a licensing or certification review. Therefore, this process is the most helpful for providers.
- d. A SPARK Staff asked the following question: Of all the PTQ process standards which standard is the most confusing to understand, or provide evidence to meet? Typically, programs talk about training and education requirements.

- i. RAC Members did not have any additional comments.



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3. Members can email RAC@indianaspark.com with additional information.

d. **Future Meeting Schedule**

i. Confirm the following meeting dates:

1. February 8 at 6-8 ET / 5-7 CT
2. May 10 at 7-9 ET / 6-8 CT
3. September 13 6-8 ET / 5-7 CT

ii. Finalize February Meeting Details of offering in-person or virtual meeting only.

1. RAC Members discussed the meeting options. RAC Members voted to keep the meeting virtual on zoom.

5. Public Comment

a. No public comments were provided.

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. No formal recommendations from the RAC members.

7. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

a. There were no formal recommendations or suggestions for the next meeting agenda.

8. Adjournment