SPARCC Stark-Portage Area Computer Consortium

Continuous Improvement Plan

What is the status and progress of your continuous improvement plan for this past year?

There were compelling reasons that the OECN decided to change the format and content of the ITC Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). The goals section of the CIP tended to be statements of the day to day operations rather than a tool which would drive the organization to improve their services. This concern could certainly be applied to the SPARCC CIP and, as a result, changes needed to be made to the format and application of the CIP.

Given the aforementioned concerns regarding the CIP, the plan developed in previous years for the SPARCC ITC is deemed to be of little value in directing the behavior of our employees. Instead, an emphasis was placed on developing a new plan with fewer goals which are more likely to have a real impact on the operation.

Given this new emphasis, the initial task is to create a new mechanism by which to create goals and monitor the progress towards achieving these goals. In reviewing best practices from other ITCs and agencies, it was noted that many organizations have implemented a user satisfaction survey to determine the needs of their customers and track the responses over time.

In the spring of 2015, SPARCC created such a device and obtained responses from the member districts. The resulting information combined with the information obtained from other sources will be used to create goals for the SPARCC operation.

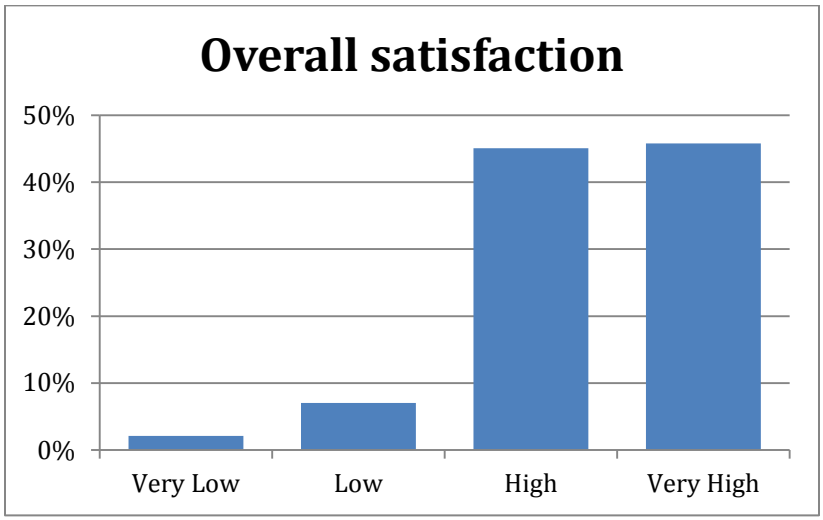
What are the key areas of improvement you plan to address this coming year? Provide an overview of the activities and professional development planned to address these key areas and describe what you hope to accomplish this year with those activities.

As discussed later in this document, there are multiple ways that SPARCC obtains feedback from our customers which in turn influences the goals to be set. It was decided that an online survey should be developed and used to better understand the needs of our member districts.

In mid-April 2015, school district employees were asked to complete an online survey indicating their level of satisfaction with services provided by SPARCC. A total of 140 responses were received. A breakdown of the count of responses by department is included below:

Department	Count	Percent
Student Data Services	46	32%
EMIS Support Services	25	18%
Fiscal Data Services	21	15%
Technology Integration Services	16	11%
Library Automation Services / INFOhio	12	9%
Web and Database Services	12	9%
Network Support Services	10	7%

Included below is a graph indicating the overall level of satisfaction across all respondents and all service areas:



Overall, we were very pleased with the results indicating that almost 90% of the responses indicated a high or very high level of satisfaction with our services. We reviewed the remaining items within the survey to gain a better understanding of our customers' opinions. Included below is a table listing the averages of the responses for each of the items by service area:

Service Area	Overall satisfaction	Skilled and knowledgeable	Responds timely	Training valuable	Communication valuable
EMIS Support Services	3.04	3.32	2.68	3.20	3.16
Fiscal Data Services	3.14	3.33	2.76	3.24	3.10
Library Automation Services / INFOhio	3.83	3.83	3.67	3.67	3.67
Network Support Services	3.30	3.50	3.20	2.90	3.00
Student Data Services	3.50	3.54	3.24	3.37	3.33
Technology Integration Services	3.56	3.63	3.63	3.56	3.63
Web and Database Services.	3.00	3.33	2.92	2.75	3.08
Overall	3.35	3.49	3.12	3.28	3.28

Again, the user satisfaction survey results indicated a high level of satisfaction across each of the items and service areas. The 'Responds Timely' item was rated lowest and there were two service teams (EMIS Support Services and Fiscal Data Services) that scored significantly lower than others. Given this, response time is an area for improvement for these two service areas.

In FY2015, a Site Review was performed by a team of individuals selected by the MCOECN and this team produced a report of their findings. The conclusions from their report are included below:

- Identify and implement services that enable increasing financial and operational efficiencies for districts. Examples might include virtual hosting; centralized backup; fiscal support, EMIS services, or technical staff augmentation; and business intelligence tools.
- Expand services supporting educational technology in the classroom through means such as hosted wireless, classroom management software, wide area networking, and online educational resources.
- Seek additional ways of improving the operational and financial efficiency of the ITC through shared services with other governmental entities and by participating in centralized services and resource programs of the MCOECN.
- Expand partnerships with the Ohio Department of Education for statewide projects and initiatives. Examples would include Roster Verification, eTranscript, and the Instruction Improvement System (IIS).
- Being ever mindful that service to your membership is paramount, continually strengthen the ITCs ability to provide the highest level of customer service to schools.

Using our survey results, notes from our district visits, conclusions from the Site Review report and information from other relevant sources, five goals were created for our organization. These goals are listed in the table included below:

Goal Description	*Action*	*Measurement*	*Success Indicator*
We will convert the Alliance, Brown, Streetsboro and Windham school districts to the eSchoolPLUS student information system software in the coming school year.	We will extract data from our current SIS and load it into eSchoolPLUS. We will provide regular training to district employees and provide continuing support for the software.	We will use results from the user satisfaction survey as our measure of success.	The average rating for Overall Satisfaction for Student Data Services will be greater than the current value as measured by the User Satisfaction Survey.
We will increase the amount of contracted Network Service to our member districts by 10% in the coming school year.	We will provide outstanding technical support to contracted districts. We will share our successes with contracted district administration and contact other districts to discuss their opportunities.	We will use the contracted hours for this service as our measure of success.	The contracted hours will increase by 10% over the current amount.
We will respond more quickly to questions and concerns regarding EMIS reporting presented by our member districts.	To achieve this goal, we plan to hire an additional staff member and incorporate this individual into our EMIS Support team.	We will use the data from our service desk software and the results from the user satisfaction survey as our measure of success.	The average rating for Responds Timely item for EMIS Support Services will be greater than the current value as measured by the User Satisfaction Survey. The mean time of resolution for tickets entered in the Cherwell Service Desk application

Goal Description	*Action*	*Measurement*	*Success Indicator*
			will decrease over the course of the year.
We will respond more quickly to questions and concerns regarding our financial software presented by our member districts.	To achieve this goal, we plan to hire an additional staff member and incorporate this individual into our Fiscal Support team.	We will use the data from our service desk software and the results from the user satisfaction survey as our measure of success.	The average rating for Responds Timely item for Fiscal Data Services will be greater than the current value as measured by the User Satisfaction Survey. The mean time of resolution for tickets entered in the Cherwell Service Desk application will decrease over the course of the year.
We will enhance and grow our technology integration service.	We will provide multiple face to face and virtual training sessions for our member districts. We will provide an annual technology conference. We will maintain and support an electronic system for sharing information and enhancing collaboration among our customers.	We will use the amount of participation in our training opportunities and the results from the user satisfaction survey as our measures of success.	The number of participants in our training opportunities will increase by 5%. The average rating for Overall Satisfaction for Technology Integration Services will be greater than the current value as measured by the User Satisfaction Survey.

How do you obtain input from customers, governing board, and staff in identifying the key areas identified in question #2?

We believe that the best way to obtain input is to speak directly with our customers and we do this by visiting our districts and holding meetings with selected groups of individuals. However, it is not possible to meet with every individual or even a majority of individuals within our member districts. Given this, we implemented a user satisfaction survey to obtain additional input. We believe that by obtaining information in multiple ways we have a better understanding of our member districts' needs which in turn help us to focus our conversations and form more purposeful goals.

The online survey contained 6 questions. The first question asked the respondent to choose the department they wished to evaluate. Options included the following:

- EMIS Support Services
- Fiscal Data Services
- Library Automation Services / INFOhio
- Network Support Services
- Student Data Services
- Technology Integration Services
- Web and Database Services.

The next item asked the respondent to rate their overall satisfaction with the department. Options included very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied.

The next 4 items were similarly structured and asked the respondent to rate their agreement with the following items:

- The department staff is skilled and knowledgeable in this support area.
- The department staff responds to your needs in a timely manner.
- Training provided by the department staff is valuable for you.
- Periodic communication from the department staff is timely and valuable

The options included the following:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The final item asked the respondents to provide any additional comments, questions, or suggestions.

In addition, this past school, a Site Review was performed by a team of individuals selected by the MCOECN. This review provided invaluable information which impacted the formulation of our goals. The site reviews occur no more than once every 5 years and will not be duplicated for several years. While this source will not be available every year, the report provided input from our customers and feedback from the team which influenced our thinking.

How does collaboration with other entities contribute to your ITCs continuous improvement?

SPARCC partners with multiple agencies which results in a mutually beneficial situation. Some of these agencies and the benefits of the partnership are listed below:

- The Stark County Educational Service Center (SCESC) provides service and support for many districts in northeast Ohio. The SCESC has always served as the fiscal agent for SPARCC since its inception providing office space, administrative support and many other services which enable SPARCC to function effectively. SPARCC, in turn, provides technology support, connectivity, web hosting, hardware, software and other services which enable the SCESC to function effectively. This mutually beneficial relationship enables both agencies to better meet the needs of their respective customers. SPARCC and SCESC work together on a continuing basis by jointly participating in meetings, professional development, grants, projects and other activities which benefit their school districts.
- The State Support Team (Region 9) is an arm of the Ohio Department providing support to school districts in Stark and Wayne counties for the purpose of improving instructional practice and student performance. Their office is located in the SCESC office building. SPARCC provides technology support, connectivity, web hosting and other services which enable the State Support Team to function more effectively. SPARCC partners with the State Support Team in meetings and professional development opportunities helping each agency achieve their respective mission.

- The Stark County Family Council is a partnership of local governmental entities, community agencies and families who work together to promote a system of care for families with children/youth ages birth through 21. SPARCC employees have been working with this agency to help them achieve their mission. This achievement helps SPARCC indirectly assist their member districts in improving the lives of their students.
- The Help Me Grow program is designed to ensure Ohio's children receive a healthy birth and the resources to warrant a healthy and productive start in life. Located in the SCESC office building, their work helps to prepare children for school resulting in increased student achievement. SPARCC provides technology support, connectivity, web hosting and other services which enable the Help Me Grow office to function more effectively. The SPARCC member districts benefit from the work of the Help Me Grow program.
- The Stark Education Partnership (SEP) provides support and service to public school districts by helping to secure grant funding, policy analysis and legislative outreach. The SEP needs data analysis to perform their functions and SPARCC provides human and technical resources to meet their needs. SPARCC has been able to obtain information about the activities and achievements of students who have recently graduated from Stark County school districts. This information is extremely valuable to the SEP and SPARCC and helps each to fulfill their respective mission.

Finally, SPARCC partners with other state and regional agencies to achieve their mission. SPARCC and other ITCs work with the Ohio Department of Education to make projects such as Roster Verification successfully run to completion. SPARCC is a member of the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network which is based on the notion of shared services. A good example is the INFOhio project which provides support for library automation to school districts across Ohio. SPARCC and other ITCs share a server which hosts the software used in this project. This partnership provides better service while reducing costs. These partnerships help SPARCC achieve its mission of providing valuable service to its member while holding expenses to a minimum.