Barton Institute
Pathway Program and Stakeholder Engagement Summary
April 19, 2024

The Barton Institute for Community Action recently partnered with Point b(e) Strategies on a community engagement process designed to support the organization in developing a programming pathway to engage and support social change leaders and community entrepreneurs with historically marginalized identities.

Point b(e) Strategies gathered qualitative data to understand the challenges and needs facing the social change sector, the successes, challenges, and experiences of social change sector leaders, and to identify opportunities to support leaders with marginalized identities into the future. This process included two efforts:

- **Focus Groups.** Point b(e) Strategies facilitated five focus groups that were held in-person and virtually through Zoom. In total 43 leaders participated in the sessions.
- **Interviews.** Point b(e) Strategies conducted five interviews with current or former Barton Institute program partners.

Key Learnings

Key learnings that emerged through these engagements are as follows:

- Leaders with marginalized identities are longing for connection and support.
- Leaders with marginalized identities are burnt out.
- Leaders with marginalized identities experience white supremacy and white supremacy culture within their work and in the sector.
- Funding is a significant barrier, specifically:
  - Pandemic-era funding appeared rapidly and is disappearing, causing challenges with scaling up and down with the availability of resources.
  - Funders are less committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion-centered efforts and in the growth and stability of leaders with marginalized identities.
  - Funding rarely acknowledges intersectionality and the nuanced experiences of people and communities with marginalized identities.

Needs

Four distinct needs and next steps arose from these conversations as opportunities for the Barton Institute to support leaders with marginalized identities in the future.

1. **Space and time for community and connection.** Leaders overwhelmingly shared the value of and need for spaces where they can connect with other leaders with marginalized identities, and where they can build community, heal, learn from each other, and find support.
2. **Hyper-individualized, intensive, identity-based mentorship.** Leaders shared the need for mentorship and coaching, both at the start of their leadership journeys and ongoing. They also expressed a desire for mentors and coaches with shared identities and experiences who understand and can relate to the challenges they face as leaders.
3. **Organizational capacity building & sustainability.** Leaders discussed the ongoing need for investments in organizational capacity building and support to ensure sustainability, specifically related to supporting leadership development and with the pervasive challenges with funding in the sector.
4. **Sector-wide education and coaching.** Leaders discussed the importance of philanthropy, system change partners, and boards of directors in providing intentional and ongoing support for leaders with marginalized identities. This was particularly poignant in conversations about longevity within the sector and as a necessary buffer for burnout.