Linda Gibbs, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, City of New York

When you’re in the motion of working in government, running the stuff at the same time that you’re trying to facilitate change, you don’t sit down and sort of write down what the operational manual is. And, so, I thought about breaking it out into what I think are really concrete pieces of being sort of a constantly innovating, reforming, changing organization. And so part of that I think is really the leadership voice of saying that you want to encourage new thinking, you want to create opportunities for people to be creative and that’s really promoting risk taking and tolerating failure and having your language be that we want to constantly be on the cutting edge. And then sometimes if you’re there, coming up with the crazy ideas is the easy part and then the question is which crazy idea do you actually move forward with and how do you get the organization onboard? And is it I think what Uma talked about in the opening tape and what she’s very passionate about, how do you actually take the desire at the top for reform and change and how do you get the entire organization, two-thirds of them, which are probably opposed to any kind of change, how do you actually get the organization to move?

My experience and I think there are many different models. I’m not the burn the ship person. I actually have taken a very big tent approach of getting everybody at the table and in a planning and engagement process and that includes people who are my worst enemies, better to get them in the room and then see whether or not they actually hold the majority voice and if they do, well, I better smarter up or if they don’t, then to sort of have them experience and have others experience the reality that they’re just the one naysayer.

And so big tent, but the more important aspect of big tent is just to make sure you’re hearing it all, that you’re getting all the voices. And it’s
an important part of buy-in from my perspective for the actual then implementation and institutionalization of the work. So having everybody and the key to me is to get past differences is to – somebody said it already this morning maybe on the tape, to find the core shared values. Maybe we’re all fighting, maybe you’re the government and I’m the labor union and you’re the non-profit and we’re all fighting. But if you actually get people, in my experience, talking about why they’re all in the work together, then suddenly new opportunities open up.

So big tent organization and lots more to be said about that, but I think that’s the key to me.