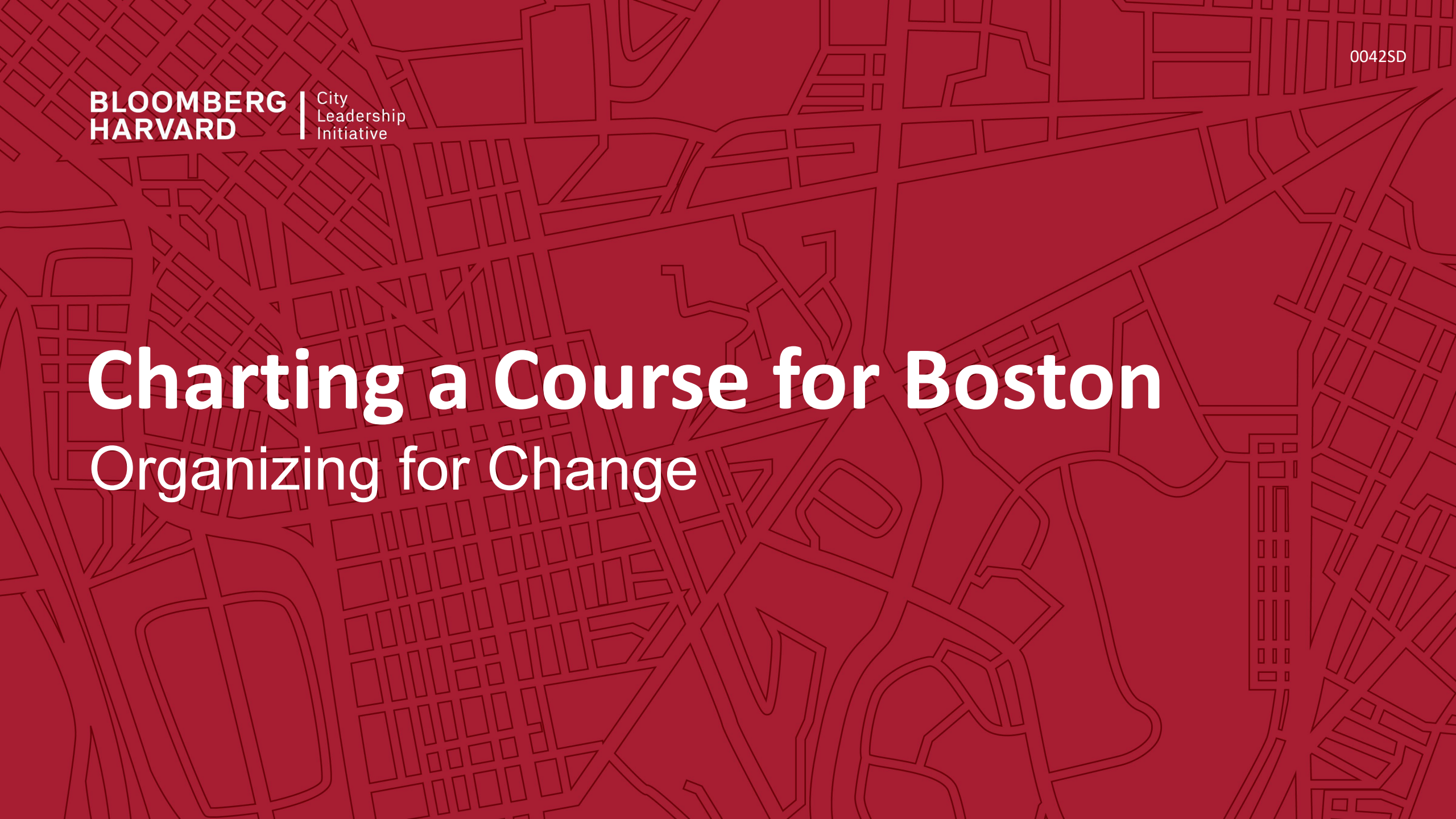


The background of the entire slide is a dark red color with a white line-art map of Boston overlaid. The map shows the city's street grid, including the harbor and surrounding areas.

**BLOOMBERG
HARVARD**

City
Leadership
Initiative

0042SD

Charting a Course for Boston

Organizing for Change

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives

To know how to:

- Organize for “cross-x” change (where “x” might be cross-agency, cross-jurisdiction, cross-sector, etc.).
- Evaluate alternative organizational structures.
- Gain exposure to tools for getting organized.

Introduction

Victory Speech

Clip: Mayor Wu's
victory speech



Source: "FULL SPEECH | Michelle Wu Speaks on Election Night in Boston, MA," YouTube, posted to Michelle Wu, November 2, 2021, https://youtu.be/aUENBbJWZts?si=yhyq6LkLk16P1_08&t=295, accessed March 2024.

Promises

“We are ready for every Bostonian to know that we don’t have to choose between generational change and keeping the streetlights on; between tackling big problems with bold solutions and filling our potholes; to make change at scale and at street level. We need, we deserve, both. All of this is possible. ...We said these things are possible. And today, the voters of Boston said all these things are possible, too.”

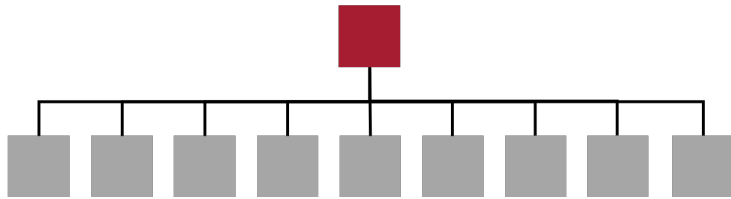
. . . but how do you do it?

Source: “FULL SPEECH | Michelle Wu Speaks on Election Night in Boston, MA,” YouTube, posted to Michelle Wu, November 2, 2021, https://youtu.be/aUENBbJWZzs?si=yhyq6LkLk16P1_08&t=295, accessed March 2024

Discussion

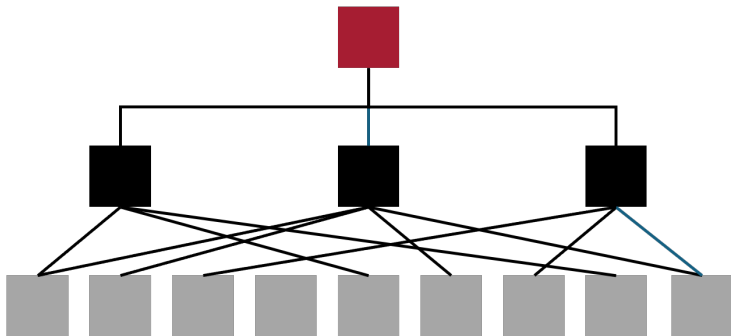
Mayor Wu is considering two models

Model 1: Mayor and Cabinet Heads



- Model 1 is essentially the setup she inherits. (See Case Appendix 1.)

Model 2: Mayor, Senior Advisors & Cabinet Heads

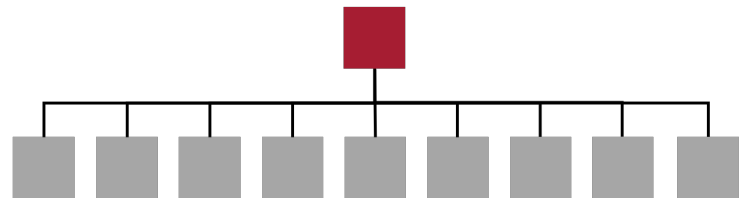


- Model 2 means creating senior advisors for each of her primary initiatives and re-organizing the cabinet heads under them.

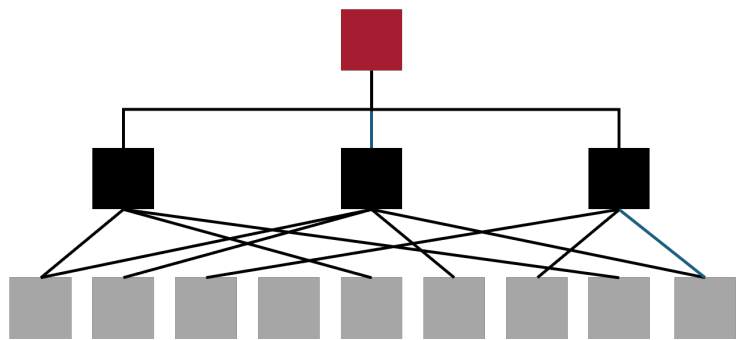
Two models (cont'd)

Possible benefits of each?

Model 1: Mayor and Cabinet Heads



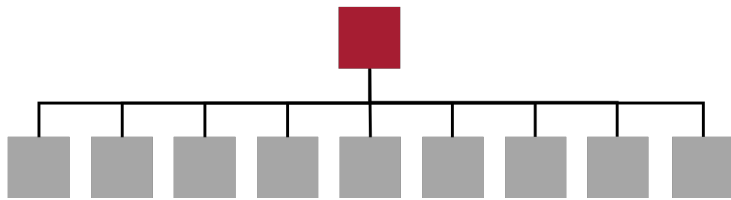
Model 2: Mayor, Senior Advisors & Cabinet Heads



Two models (benefits)

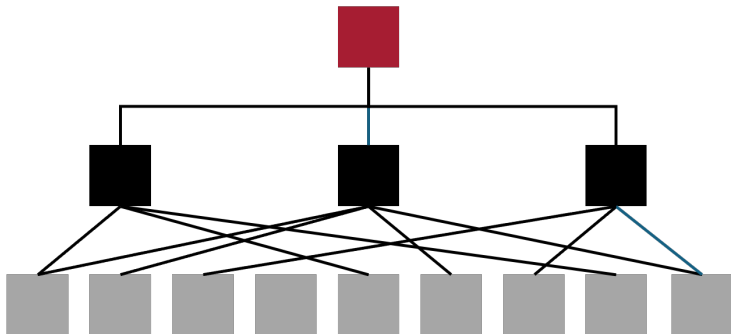
Possible benefits of each?

Model 1: Mayor and Cabinet Heads



Clarity
Efficiency
Economy

Model 2: Mayor, Senior Advisors & Cabinet Heads



Coordination
De-confliction
Cross-x innovation

Mayor Wu's 3 Values

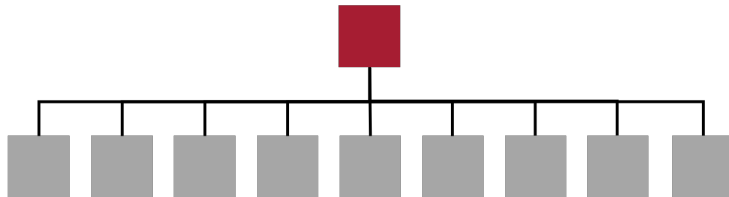
1. having both street-level impact and impact at scale;
2. getting staff out of city hall to be more connected to the city; and
3. embracing possibility over status quo.

. . . can you overlay values with organizational models?

Mayor Wu's 3 Values (cont'd)

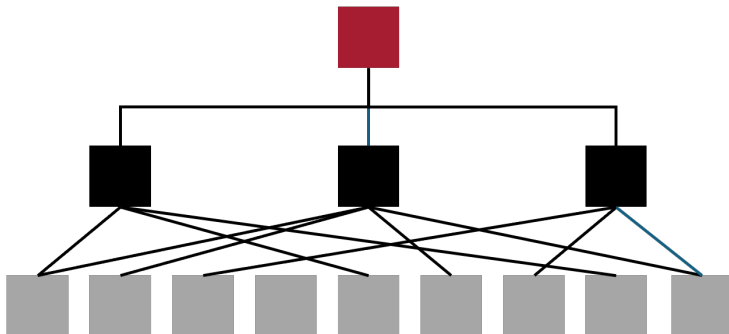
Overlaying values with models:

Model 1: Mayor and Cabinet Heads



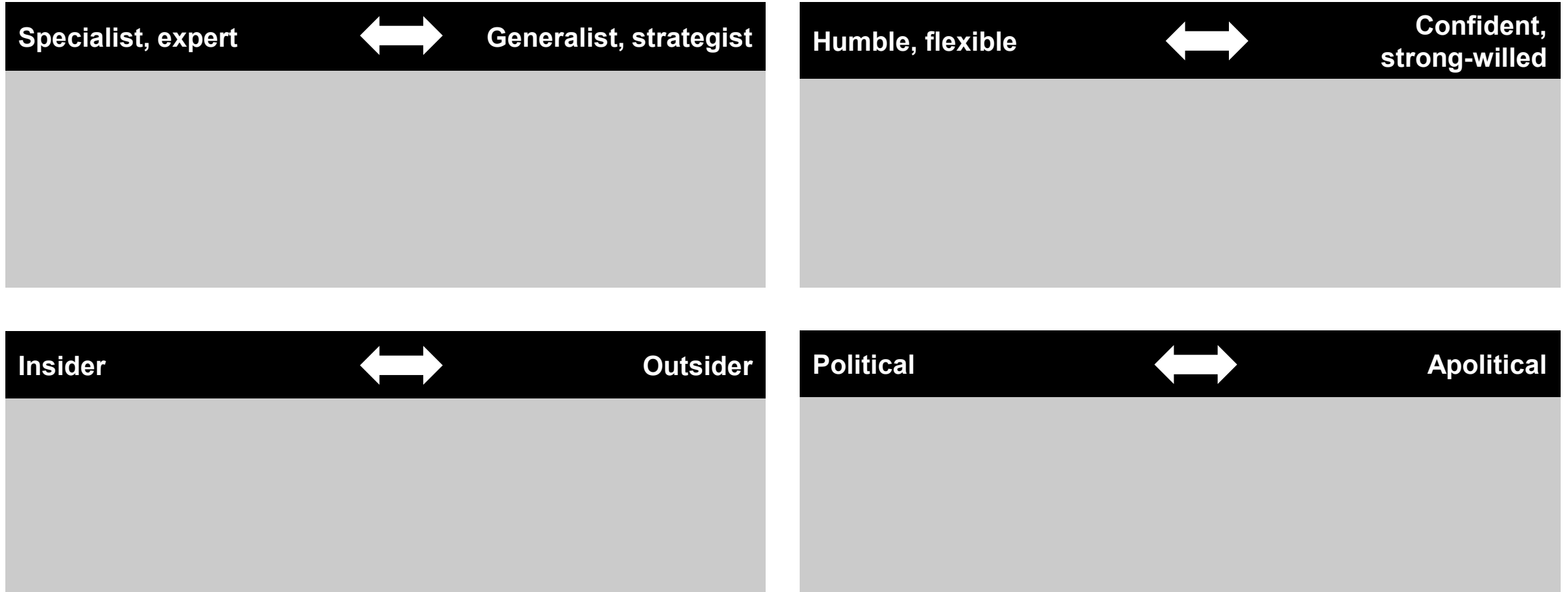
	Value 1. Street Level & Scale	Value 2. Getting City Hall out of City Hall	Value 3. Embracing Possibility
Pros:	- Sight over day-to-day - Money and people	Closest to people	More agile
Cons:	Siloed view	Too bogged down day-to-day to be in the community	Traditional models might lead to traditional thinking

Model 2: Mayor, Senior Advisors & Cabinet Heads

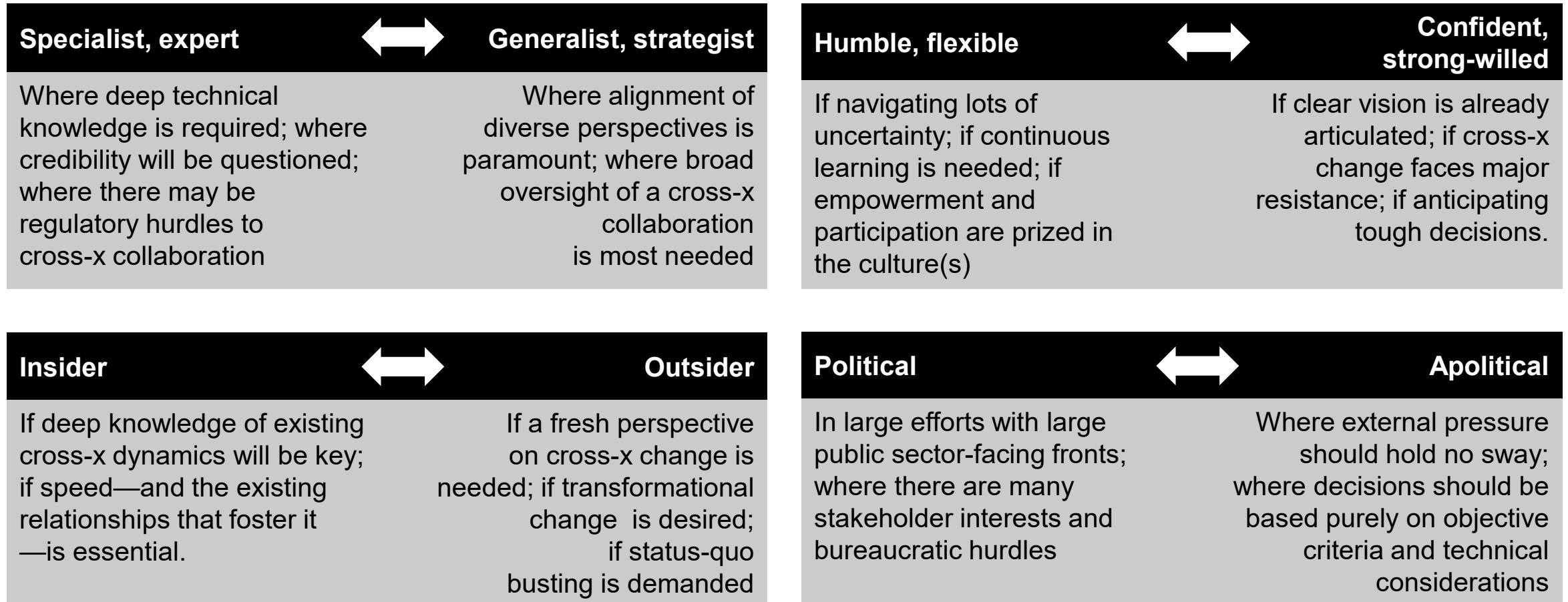


	Value 1. Street Level & Scale	Value 2. Getting City Hall out of City Hall	Value 3. Embracing Possibility
Pros:	Cross-sector purview/seeing beyond silos	- Time to be in community - Community problems don't fit into silos	- New advisers = new thinking? - Not as linked to day-to-day status quo - Not as fearful
Cons:	Senior advisors not close enough to the ground	Further removed from her cabinet heads who were eyes/ears in the community	More people involved = more potential for vetoes

Sr. Advisor Characteristics



Sr. Advisor Characteristics (cont'd)

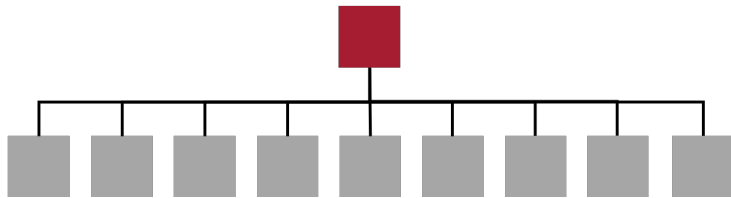


Source: Compiled by Mitchell B. Weiss with assistance from ChatGPT, model 4.0, June 2023

Diagnosis

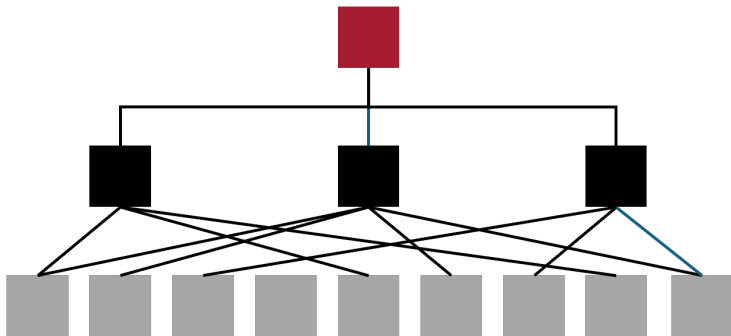
Possible benefits?

Model 1: Mayor and Cabinet Heads



Clarity
Efficiency
Economy

Model 2: Mayor, Senior Advisors & Cabinet Heads



Coordination
De-confliction
Cross-x innovation

**There is
no “perfect”
org. chart.**

Diagnosis (cont'd)

- One instinct is to organize “horizontally” instead of vertically.
- Note though, vertical silos can emerge.



Source: Silage bales image by Richard Webb, <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2647362>. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>



Source: Wagner Farms image by Corey Coyle, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wagner_Farms_-_panoramio_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wagner_Farms_-_panoramio_(1).jpg). Licensed under CC BY 3.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

Diagnosis (wrap-up)

- The organizational chart is but one piece of a four-piece system:
Organizing = structure + people + culture + process.
- Settling on roles (and even who to fill them) will not resolve the conflicts and tradeoffs.
- There is no “perfect” org. chart.
- Wu’s story tells us that deciding how to institute big promises of reform while bringing along the organization is more interesting than simply asking, “Do we locate something in the mayor’s office or in a department?”

Tools and Application

Doing the Work

- *No matter which model you choose, how will you get things done?*

CITY Tool

#	MAYORAL COMMITMENT
1	Accelerating Decarbonization
2	A Justice Audit and Framework
3	Easing Upfront Costs of Clean Energy Infrastructure
4	Green Workforce Development
5	Divesting from Harmful Industries and Reinvesting in a Clean, Just Future
6	An Urban Climate Corps

1. List commitments down the left. (See case Appendix 2 for Wu’s Green New Deal commitments.)

Source: Case Appendix 2



CITY Tool (cont'd)

#	MAYORAL COMMITMENT	Mayor	Chief of Staff	Chief Of Policy	Chief, New Urban Mechanics	Chief of Operations	Chief Communici Office
1	Accelerating Decarbonization						
2	A Justice Audit and Framework						
3	Easing Upfront Costs of Clean Energy Infrastructure						
4	Green Workforce Development						
5	Divesting from Harmful Industries and Reinvesting in a Clean, Just Future						
6	An Urban Climate Corps						

1. List commitments down the left. (See case Appendix 2 for Wu's Green New Deal commitments.)
2. List stakeholders across the top.

Source: Case Appendix 2

CITY Tool (acronym)

C	I	T	Y
CREATES the plan; will make the final recommendation	INPUTS into the plan; these could include advice and resources from people who will have to complete the work or from others, including community	Needs to be TOLD ; does not have veto rights to the plan, but needs to be alerted about it	Owens the “YES” ; will need to provide final approval for the plan

Source: Mitchell Weiss, 2022

1. List commitments down the left.
(See case appendix 2 for Wu’s Green New Deal commitments.)
2. List stakeholders across the top.
3. Assign “decision-roles” for every commitment.

CITY Tool Exercise

#	MAYORAL COMMITMENT	Mayor	Chief of Staff	Chief Of Policy	Chief, New Urban Mechanics	Chief of Operations	Chief Communici Office
1	Accelerating Decarbonization	Y		I	I	C	T
2	A Justice Audit and Framework	Y	I	C			T
3	Easing Upfront Costs of Clean Energy Infrastructure	T	I	I	I	Y	T
4	Green Workforce Development	Y	I	I		I	T
5	Divesting from Harmful Industries and Reinvesting in a Clean, Just Future	Y	I	C			I
6	An Urban Climate Corps	T	I	Y		I	I

1. List commitments down the left.
(See case appendix 2 for Wu's Green New Deal commitments.)
2. List stakeholders across the top.
3. Assign "decision-roles" for every commitment.

Note: For exercise purposes only. Not a primary source. Not actual role assignments.

Update and Wrap-Up

Update

1. Wu selected “Model 2” and appointed six senior advisors to focus on key policy priorities. Among them was the senior advisor on early childhood (March 2022) and the Green New Deal director (August 2022).
2. She re-organized several cabinets and established new ones around her priorities. New or newly arranged cabinets included: Economic Opportunity, People Operations, Worker Empowerment, Equity and Inclusion, Community Engagement, Public Health, and Human Services. Some changes brought departments together under one umbrella; others were split up.
3. The team began using a set of tools including OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) and MOCHA (Manager, Owner, Consulted, Helper, Approver) to organize and manage the work.
4. Mayor’s office and cabinet retreats were focused on articulating and amplifying culture, particularly around Wu’s 3 values: small + big, city hall out of city hall, and possibility.

Source: Case writer interviews

Wrap-Up

- For any new leader of a large organization, an organizational chart may be an early priority. However, it is only one piece of the puzzle.
- It helps when leaders realize that “silo-busting” isn’t as easy as it sounds. While tempting, given the need for cross-departmental work, alternate structures might simply trade one set of silos and challenges for another.
- Identifying a tool to organize cross-cutting work can help leaders make progress with their teams. There is nothing scientific about CITY or any other similar tool; they all have strengths and weaknesses.
- Even in its brevity, this discussion highlights just how much city change (and government change) is systemic, cross-cutting change. Any strategy for elevating cities today should take into account systems-level thinking and tactics.

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City Leadership Initiative

This slide deck accompanies the case study “Charting a Course for Boston: Organizing for Change.” It serves solely as a basis for class discussion through the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, a collaboration between Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Business School, and Bloomberg Philanthropies. It is not intended to serve as an endorsement, source of primary data, or illustration of effective or ineffective management. HKS Case No. 2181.5. Copyright © 2024, 2026 President and Fellows of Harvard College.



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