Smart Strategies

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S.M.A.R.T. goals turn general intentions into actionable strategies. They ensure goals are structured, aligned with broader objectives, and trackable. Each element pushes leadership to focus on results, timelines, and alignment with agency priorities.

S — Specific

The goal should clearly state what will be accomplished, who will be responsible, and where or how the work will occur. Avoid vague or broad objectives.

✗ Improve processing time.

✓ Reduce case processing delays for SNAP applications in urban regions.

M — Measurable

Include quantifiable criteria or metrics to evaluate progress and success. Data should show whether the goal is on track or completed.

✗ Make things faster.

✓ Reduce average SNAP processing time from 22 days to 15 days.

A — Achievable

The goal should be realistic based on staffing, resources, systems, and timelines. Ambition is good, but it must be feasible.

✗ We'll do it somehow.

✓ By reallocating 2 FTEs to intake support and launching a new workflow.

R — Relevant

The goal must connect directly to agency priorities or strategic plans. It should address a current issue or emerging need.

✗ Because we've always done it.

✓ Support Goal 3 in the agency strategic plan: improving timely access to benefits.

T — Time bound

Set a clear deadline and any key milestones. Without time constraints, priorities often shift or lose momentum.

✗ Eventually.

✓ By December 31, 2025

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Turn All Goals into Smart Goals

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S.M.A.R.T. goals provide structure and clarity, making it easier to take meaningful action and track progress. Each component ensures the goal is purposeful and actionable:

S — Specific
What do I want to accomplish?

M — Measurable
How will I know when it is accomplished?

A — Achievable
How can the goal be accomplished?

R — Relevant
Does this seem worthwhile?

T — Time bound
When can I accomplish this goal?

Go to the next page to put it all together!

Create Your Final Draft

Combine your answers from the first page into a clear, one-sentence summary following this template:

"By [insert deadline], [insert who/team/office] will [insert specific action] in order to [insert intended impact], as measured by [insert measurable result], made possible by [insert resource/support], and aligned with [agency priority]."

Example: By December 31, 2025, the State Eligibility Operations Team will reduce the average SNAP application processing time from 22 days to 15 days in urban counties by implementing a redesigned intake workflow and reallocating 2 full-time eligibility staff to high-volume offices. This will be measured through monthly processing time reports generated from the eligibility system and supports Strategic Priority 3: improving timely access to public benefits.

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