



TFA

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IN THE NEWS

Setting Goals That Get Results: How the SMART Framework Can Help

By Arun Bains

Every successful project, initiative, or long-term vision begins with a well-defined goal. But in practice, goal setting can be challenging — especially when resources are limited (financial and human), priorities compete for attention, and teams are stretched across multiple responsibilities. Without clarity and structure, even the best ideas risk being derailed or never acted upon.

The **SMART framework** is a simple but powerful tool for making goals more effective and achievable. While originally developed for corporate management teams, it can be applied to anyone looking to move from broad intentions to specific, trackable outcomes. Whether managing a casino, building an economic development arm, expanding workforce training, or launching a youth program, applying the SMART framework increases the odds that you'll hit your targets.

What Is a SMART Goal?

The SMART framework says that every goal should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

Specific

A strong goal clearly defines what needs to be accomplished. Vague or generalized goals can lead to confusion or delays. Being specific means identifying exactly what you're trying to achieve and who it's intended to serve. By narrowing the scope, everyone involved knows exactly what success looks like.

Example:

- ☒ Vague: Improve access to healthcare.
- ☒ Specific: Open a new primary care clinic on the east side of the reservation.

Acorn Ridge Casino Build Begins After Long Struggle

6/06/2025 – playca.com

Federal Court confirms trust status for Scotts Valley Tribe

6/10/2025 – timesheraldonline.com

Maine Senate advances tribal online casino bill

6/20/2025 – completeigaming.com

California Gov. Newsom Announces \$15 Million in Grants to Support Tribal Economic Development and Job Creation

6/26/2025 – nativenewsonline.net

California bill targeting sweepstakes casinos draws tribal support, industry opposition

6/30/2025 – tribalbusinessnews.com

'The Everglades is our home': Native leaders, activists pushback on 'Alligator Alcatraz'

6/30/2025 – ictnews.org

OIGA Conference and Trade Show marks 30 years of industry growth

6/30/2025 – journalrecord.com

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Measurable

Goals should include concrete criteria for measuring progress and success. This means using numbers, percentages, or other clear indicators.

Example:

- ☒ Not measurable: Improve financial literacy.
- ☒ Measurable: Enroll 50 tribal members into financial literacy courses by June 2026.

Achievable

A goal should push the limits but still be within reach given current resources. If a goal is too far out of reach, it can drain motivation.

Example:

If your current capacity is to build 5 housing units per year, a goal to build 100 next year may not be realistic without new funding or partnerships. An achievable version might be:

- ☒ Build 15 new housing units over the next 3 years by leveraging grant funding.

Relevant

The goal should clearly connect to a larger mission or strategic priority. It needs to matter.

Example:

If economic development has been recognized as a top priority, a relevant goal might be:

TFA will be attending OIGA 2025 in Oklahoma City, July 14-16



If you will also be in attendance and would like to set up a meeting, please contact Kristi Jackson at kjackson@tfacp.com

- ☒ Launch and fund an economic development corporation in part staffed with members from outside of Tribal government that becomes cash flow positive within 5 years.

Time-bound

Every goal needs a timeline. Without a deadline, it's easy for progress to stall — especially in environments with many competing priorities. A defined timeframe makes the goal more actionable and gives everyone a shared target to work toward.

Example:

- ☒ Provide broadband internet access to every Tribal member on the reservation by October 2026.

Putting It All Together

Here's what a SMART goal looks like when all the elements are combined:

By December 2026, the Tribe will expand the existing health center to include a new 5-provider specialty care clinic to serve tribal members living on the reservation. The project will be funded through a combination of proceeds from a New Markets Tax Credit deal and a bank loan.

The SMART framework offers a practical way to bring focus, discipline, and accountability to the goal setting process. No matter the scale of the initiative — from launching a new enterprise to improving services — SMART goals help ensure that energy and investment translate into meaningful results. Give us a call anytime if you would like to discuss your project or if there is a specific goal which we can help you to define or attain.

TFA

201 Continental Boulevard
Suite 110
El Segundo, CA 90245
tfacp.com

KRISTI JACKSON
CHAIRMAN
310.341.2335
kjackson@tfacp.com

WILLIAM NEWBY
PRESIDENT
310.341.2796
wnewby@tfacp.com

DAVID HOWARD
CEO
310.341.2795
dhoward@tfacp.com

BRAXTON SATO
VICE PRESIDENT
310.341.2339
bsato@tfacp.com

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