



The Art of Getting Things Done in Government

SET THE STAGE

The Government Productivity Paradox



- High public expectations + competing priorities + limited capacity.



- Success is not doing everything; it is delivering the right public value.



- **Today: MINDSET → PARTNERSHIPS → TECHNOLOGY → LEARNING → FOCUS**



MINDSET

1 | Mind over matter ≠ toxic positivity

- Name the constraint honestly; separate facts from assumptions.
- Shrink the work: define the next meaningful deliverable.
- Celebrate small wins and remove one obstacle each week.
- Protect capacity: escalate impossible trade-offs early.



3-MINUTE PRACTICE

Exercise | Turn a mountain into a milestone

- Scenario: a new reporting mandate arrives; no new staff or funding.
- In the chat, define the smallest useful deliverable due in 10 days.
- Identify one activity to stop, simplify, or defer.
- Finish: “By Friday, I will deliver ____ to enable ____.”



COLLABORATION

2 | Negotiate for shared outcomes

- Start with interests, not positions: “What result matters most?”
- Map the network: decision owner, subject expert, implementer, end user.
- Trade resources: expertise, data, access, sequencing, or visibility.
- Document decision rights, commitments, and next check-in.



USE THIS TOMORROW

A Four-question collaboration script

- 1. What outcome are we both accountable for?
- 2. What bottleneck can each of us remove?
- 3. What can we share without new spending?
- 4. Who owns the next action, and by when?



TECHNOLOGY

3 | Five Microsoft 365 time-savers

- Outlook Quick Steps: process recurring emails with one action.
- Teams + Loop: maintain a shared, live action-item list.
- Excel Flash Fill (Ctrl+E): clean patterned data quickly.
- Teams Workflows / Power Automate: route routine notifications.
- Planner: assign owners and deadlines rather than chasing email.

Microsoft Support documentation; availability varies by license and agency policy.



HANDS-ON PRACTICE

Live demo | 5-minute efficiency sprint

- Email: make a Quick Step to categorize and move a routine message.
- Data: split “Last, First” into columns using Flash Fill.
- Teamwork: create one Loop task list with owner + due date.
- Measure: count clicks or minutes before vs. after.



CONTINUOUS LEARNING

4 | Make continuous learning a habit

- Choose one skill tied to a real service-delivery bottleneck.
- Use “learn → apply → teach”: 15 minutes, one experiment, one share-out.
- Build peer demonstrations and cross-agency communities of practice.
- Reward lessons learned, not only flawless outcomes.



TIME MANAGEMENT

5 | Protect focus when morale is low

- Choose one mission-critical outcome before opening your inbox.
- Reserve 25–30 minutes for a single task; silence nonurgent alerts.
- Batch messages; use visible team norms for urgent interruptions.
- Acknowledge morale concerns; do not confuse focus tactics with fixing burnout.



PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK

The “3–2–1” workday reset

- 3 priorities: identify the three highest-value outcomes.
- 2 focus blocks: protect two interruption-light sessions.
- 1 partnership: ask one person to remove a blocker.
- End the day: record one small win and one next action.



TAKEAWAY

Your 48-hour action card

- I will STOP: one low-value habit or meeting.
- I will START: one practical productivity technique.
- I will CONNECT: one person who can remove friction.
- I will MEASURE: one outcome, not just activity.



FURTHER LEARNING

Recommended reading | Books

- Amabile & Kramer (2011). The Progress Principle. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Fisher, Ury & Patton (2011). Getting to Yes, 3rd ed. Penguin.
- Edmondson (2018). The Fearless Organization. Wiley.
- Dweck (2006). Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. Random House.
- Newport (2016). Deep Work. Grand Central Publishing.
- Allen (2015). Getting Things Done, revised ed. Penguin.



SOURCES

Research and practical sources

- Harvard Kennedy School (2025): What Helps and Hinders Cross-Sector Collaboration in Cities?
- Harvard People Lab (2026): Public Servant Pulse — survey launched; results should not be assumed.
- Harvard People Lab: Public Servant Burnout Study (2020 survey).
- Stanford CTL: Improving Focus; Stanford Be Well: Letting Go of Distractions.
- Stanford d.school: Team Design & Psychological Safety reading guide.
- Microsoft Support: Outlook Quick Steps; Loop Tasks; Excel Flash Fill; Teams Workflows.



CLOSING REFLECTION

Getting things done is a team sport

- Progress over perfection.
- Partnerships over silos.
- Systems over repetitive effort.
- Learning over stagnation.
- Public value over busyness.

