
Chairperson's Message: Setting the Tone for 2026



The most powerful strategic work doesn't start on January 1st—it starts with the conversations we choose to have *now*. As we wrap up the year and approach the holiday season, many teams are already beginning to reflect and prepare for what's next. It's not just "fresh start" energy—it's **choice** energy, and the decisions made over the next few weeks will profoundly shape 2026.

Not because we run meetings. Not because we make agendas. But because we help groups do the hard, honest work of aligning: What are we doing? Why does it matter? Who owns what? What are we avoiding? What needs to be said out loud?

The January problem: speed without clarity

Many organizations start the year with urgency—new targets, new initiatives, new “must-haves.” The pace picks up quickly. But urgency without clarity produces predictable outcomes: circular debate, quiet resistance, rework, and the slow drain of morale that

comes from decisions that never truly land.

Facilitation is the antidote. Not flashy. Not complicated. Just disciplined.

If you're looking for a practical way to bring facilitative leadership into the first quarter, here are three moves I've seen make the biggest difference—whether you're facilitating a leadership retreat, a project kickoff, or a recurring weekly meeting.

Three facilitation moves to set the tone for 2026

1) Replace “updates” with alignment.

January meetings often become a parade of status reports. You can feel the room drifting: lots of information, little direction. Try this simple shift: every agenda item ends with one alignment question.

- “What decision are we making—or not making—today?”
- “What does ‘done’ actually mean here?”
- “What are we asking people to stop doing so this can succeed?”

It's a small change that forces clarity to surface, not just activity.

2) Make the invisible visible—gently, but directly.

Most teams carry an unspoken list into the new year: unresolved tension, unclear ownership, mixed expectations, or a decision that “everyone agreed to” but no one actually committed to. January is the best time to name these things because people are already primed for reset.

A facilitative way to do this without creating defensiveness is to normalize it:

“Before we set new goals, let's clean up what's still unclear from last year.”

Then use a quick prompt:

- “What's one thing we should clarify now so we don't pay for it later?”
- “Where do we keep doing the same loop?”
- “What's one conversation we've postponed that would reduce friction immediately?”

This is where trust is built—through practical honesty.

3) End with commitments that have traction, not theater.

We've all seen the meeting that ends with a long list of “next steps” that quietly evaporates by the following week. Real momentum comes from *designed accountability*—clear owners, clear timing, and clear proof.

Try closing with:

- Owner: “Who is accountable for moving this forward?”
- Timing: “When will we see the next observable milestone?”
- Proof: “What will be true when this is done?”

It's not punitive. It's respectful. It tells the group: we mean what we say.

A January invitation to our community

As facilitators, we don't just help groups "get along." We help them *get real*—with purpose, with one another, and with the work. That's a rare and deeply needed skill right now.

So here's my invitation for January:

- Facilitate one conversation you've been tempted to avoid.
- Ask one question that brings the room back to meaning and direction.
- Design one moment of clarity that saves your team weeks of rework.

And if you're feeling rusty—or simply ready to go deeper—stay close to INIFAC this quarter. Our community exists for exactly this reason: to strengthen the craft, elevate the standard, and support the people who do the hard work of helping groups think together.

Wishing you a strong start to the year—full of courageous conversations, clean decisions, and the kind of progress that actually holds.

Warmly,

Diana Mastel Gurwicz

Chair of the Board

INIFAC – Institute for International Facilitation



INIFAC
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR FACILITATION

The True North Skill: Why a Facilitator's Core Value is Found in Clarity, Not Agendas

In 2026, the leader who masters the art of demanding clarity, and the facilitator who masters the skill of creating it, will be the ones who truly outpace their competition.

[Read Blog](#)



Happy Holidays!

Wishing you a joyful holiday season filled with peace, warmth, and happiness. May the New Year bring health, success, and new opportunities.





Watch Reel

Charge More, Guarantee It: The CMF® Advantage

How do you instantly establish yourself as a leader among the best? Become one of the fewer than 65 people globally to achieve the CMF® credential.

This designation doesn't just open doors; it elevates your entire rate structure. I charge as much as 30% more and have the confidence to guarantee my performance. When you're a Certified Master Facilitator®, client satisfaction is a promise, not a hope. Zero refunds so far.

Are you ready for that level of professional assurance?



STAND OUT AS A MASTER FACILITATOR

Do you lead impactful sessions and want to be recognized for your mastery in facilitation? The Certified Master Facilitator® (CMF®) credential from INIFAC is the gold standard for professionals who demonstrate excellence across all core competencies of facilitation.

WHO SHOULD BECOME A CMF®?

BENEFITS OF BECOMING A CMF®

- ✔ Experienced facilitators who lead in-person, hybrid, or virtual sessions.
- ✔ Professionals who demonstrate advanced proficiency in facilitation core competencies.
- ✔ Those ready to be assessed by expert evaluators and committed to upholding the highest standards of the field.

- ✔ Gain international recognition as a top-tier facilitator.
- ✔ Validate your expertise through a rigorous, competency-based evaluation process.
- ✔ Enhance your professional credibility and career opportunities.
- ✔ Be featured as a CMF® on INIFAC's website and social media platforms.

YOUR JOURNEY TO CERTIFICATION:

- Serve as the primary facilitator for 30 distinct facilitated sessions over the prior 3 years
- Submit 5 reference letters
- Complete and submit written work
- Record and submit simulated facilitated video session

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

SET YOURSELF APART AS A CERTIFIED MASTER FACILITATOR® WHO DELIVERS IMPACT AND PROFESSIONALISM.



www.inifac.org

[Learn More](#)

Our Certified Facilitator Community is LIVE!

Welcome to our new Certified Facilitator Community! As an INIFAC Certified Facilitator, you now have access to our new community. In order to log in, you will need to use the email that INIFAC has on file for you, and the password: INIFAC2024@)

Once you are inside the community, you will be able to change your password. We look forward to seeing you on the inside!

[LOG IN](#)

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL:

Want to lead meetings that inspire action and get results? Follow INIFAC on social media for insider tips, expert advice, and practical tools to elevate your facilitation game.



Copyright (C) 2025 International Institute for Facilitation. All rights reserved.
You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website.

Our mailing address is:

International Institute for Facilitation 215 S Paddock Loop Fayetteville, AR 72701-4548 USA

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)