Family Councils Ontario 2019 Needs Assessment Survey (FC 360) Report

Contents

Family Council 360 Survey 2019 Results

Executive Summary

A total of 233 surveys were completed by Council Members (n = 158) and Staff (n= 75). Most respondents were Family Council Members, from medium sized LTCH. French the most popular language other than English for the delivery of services, followed by Italian and Chinese. When examining the current status of Family Councils, 79% of Family Councils have been established for five years, with 37% of family members being active members of their Family Council for more than five years.

Results highlight each long-term care home as a micro community, guided by unique values and goals. Staff and family members' responses reflect the strong sense of community within each home. Family Councils play a key role in fostering this sense of community by welcoming new families, supporting programming as volunteers, taking pride in the home through fundraising, and through regular initiatives for staff appreciation. Councils play a key role on the quality of life of residents through their internal advocacy through on-going efforts to be informed about the roles of departments within the homes and desire to promote two-way communication between staff and the Council. Accordingly, 78% agree that Family Councils are successful in fulfilling their role. Council growth, advocacy, education events and improved relationships with staff among the greatest achievements of their Family Council in 2019. Councils were also met with several key challenges in 2019 including issues with attendance at meetings, communication with the Administrator, trust with home staff and the prominence of negative attitudes during meetings.

Councils were open to exploring the use of technology to support them and their work. Family members revealed that e-mail served as the most popular technology used to promote virtual participation in council meetings and support communication about family council activities. Unfortunately, limited comfort with technology served as a barrier to the use of technology in Council meetings. While Councils recognized technology as a potential solution to improve attendance/participation, they also recognized the challenge of managing behaviours during a virtual meeting. Accordingly, 17% of family members sensed the benefits of incorporating the use of technology outweighed the risks.

Results highlight several popular FCO resources including the FCO Handbook, In-person Presentations, the FCO e-Bulletin and FCO website. Accordingly, 86% agree that current FCO methods for the delivery of resources are appropriate to supporting them and their work. Families and staff called on FCO to improved awareness of FCO as an organization and requested better communication of the FCO resources available to support them. Both groups recognize FCO as a trusted source for information and expressed their desire to see FCO create resources to support them and their advocacy. With the growing number of Family Councils in Ontario, Councils and staff expressed the need for FCO to support Networking between Councils in the same community and region. Over the next 2 years, families and staff want to see FCO to vary the location of FCO events throughout Ontario to support opportunities for in-person networking between local Family Councils and Staff.

Introduction and Background

Family Councils Ontario (FCO) is a charitable, not-for-profit organization funded by the Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care. FCO's mission is to lead and support families in improving quality of life in long-term care. To carry out this mission, FCO has three primary goals:

I. **Cultivate Effective Family Councils**

   - Build the capacity of Family Council members to develop and nurture strong and effective councils
   - Promote a collaborative and effective relationship among Family Councils, Long-term care homes and community partners

II. **Advance Public Policy & System Planning**

   - Seek opportunities to inform policy to improve the quality of life in long-term care
   - Foster partnerships and relationships to increase impact

III. **Mobilize Knowledge Exchange**

   -Engage sharing of information, experience, ideas and expertise
   -Engage in research and knowledge exchange
   -Create tools and resources which empower families

As part of an ongoing process to achieve these goals, FCO developed and conducted a Needs Assessment Survey (FC 360). This needs assessment was made available to all Family Council members and long-term care home staff supporting the work of Family Councils in Ontario. The purpose of this Needs Assessment was to collect data from Family Councils and long-term care home staff across Ontario to identify and understand any gaps or opportunities for improvement in the services provided by FCO. The information collected in this Needs Assessment is both qualitative and quantitative and will be used by the FCO team to inform their work.

About Survey Respondents

Geographic Diversity of Responses

Respondents were located from geographically diverse regions in Ontario, including Large Urban (i.e. Ottawa/Toronto) and smaller rural communities (i.e. Niagara on-the-Lake, Little Current). The following series of tables list the locations of responses from family members and staff, as well as the number of responses associated with each city in Ontario.

Table 1- Number of Responses by City (Family Members)

Number of Responses	City in Ontario
1	Athens
1	Belleville
3	Burlington
1	Brampton
1	Brantford
1	Bourget
1	Cobourg
1	Cambridge
2	Carleton Place
1	Cassleman and Limoges
1	Dundas
2	Essex
1	Etobicoke
1	Fort Erie
1	Forest
1	Georgetown
1	Guelph
4	Hamilton
1	Hearst
1	Harriston
1	Ingersoll
1	Jasper
1	Kingston
1	Kenora
1	Kitchener
3	Lion's Head
1	Little Current

1	Lindsay
3	London
3	Markham
2	Milton
5	Mississauga
1	Nepean
1	Newmarket
1	Niagara Falls
1	North York
2	Oakville
6	Oshawa
14	Ottawa
1	Orleans
3	Paris
1	Parry Sound
2	Picton
1	Port Perry
1	Pembroke
2	Peterborough
2	Renfrew
1	Richmond Hill
2	Strathroy
1	Stouffville
11	Sudbury
1	Sarnia
1	Salut St. Marie
1	Shelbourne
1	Sarsfield
3	Scarborough
2	Sturgeon Falls
1	Simcoe
1	St. Catharines
16	Toronto
3	Thunder Bay
2	Timmins
1	Trenton
1	Tillsomburg
3	Woodbridge
1	Whitby
1	Welland
1	Walkterton
1	Vaughan

3	Val Caron
3	Vineland

Figure 1- Map Outlining the Geographic Diversity of Responses (Family)
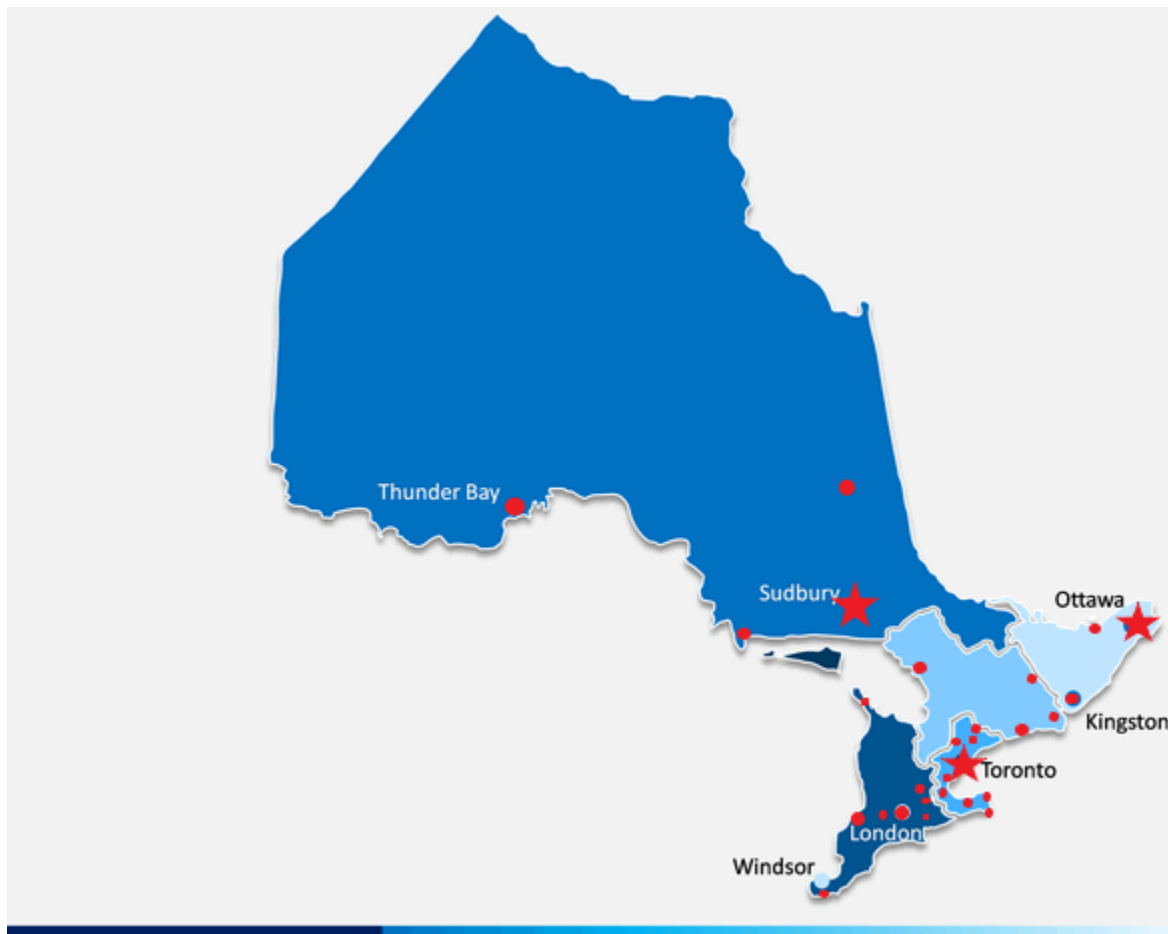
Table 2- Number of Responses by City (Staff)

Number of Responses	City in Ontario
1	Barrie
2	Belleville
2	Brampton
1	Brantford
1	Burlington
1	Bolton
1	Brockville
1	Chatham
1	Carleton Place
1	Courtland

1	Elmira
1	Forest
1	Fort Erie
1	Georgetown
1	Gravenhurst
1	Grimsby
1	Hamilton
1	Harriston
1	Kirkland Lake
2	Kitchener
1	Kingsville
1	Lindsay
2	London
1	Mississauga
1	Midland
2	Northbrook
1	North York
1	Norwood
2	Newmarket
1	Niagara Falls
1	Niagara On the Lake
1	Peterborough
1	Pembroke
1	Port Perry
1	Richmond Hill
3	Sarnia
2	Simcoe
2	Sudbury
1	Shelburne
1	Seaforth
1	Southwood
1	Southhampton
3	Stouffville
1	Stratford
1	Trenton
2	Tillsonburg
3	Toronto
3	Thunder Bay
1	Thessalon
1	Welland
3	Whitby
1	Woodbridge

1	Vineland
2	Val Caron

Figure 2- Map Outlining the Geographic Diversity of Responses (Staff)
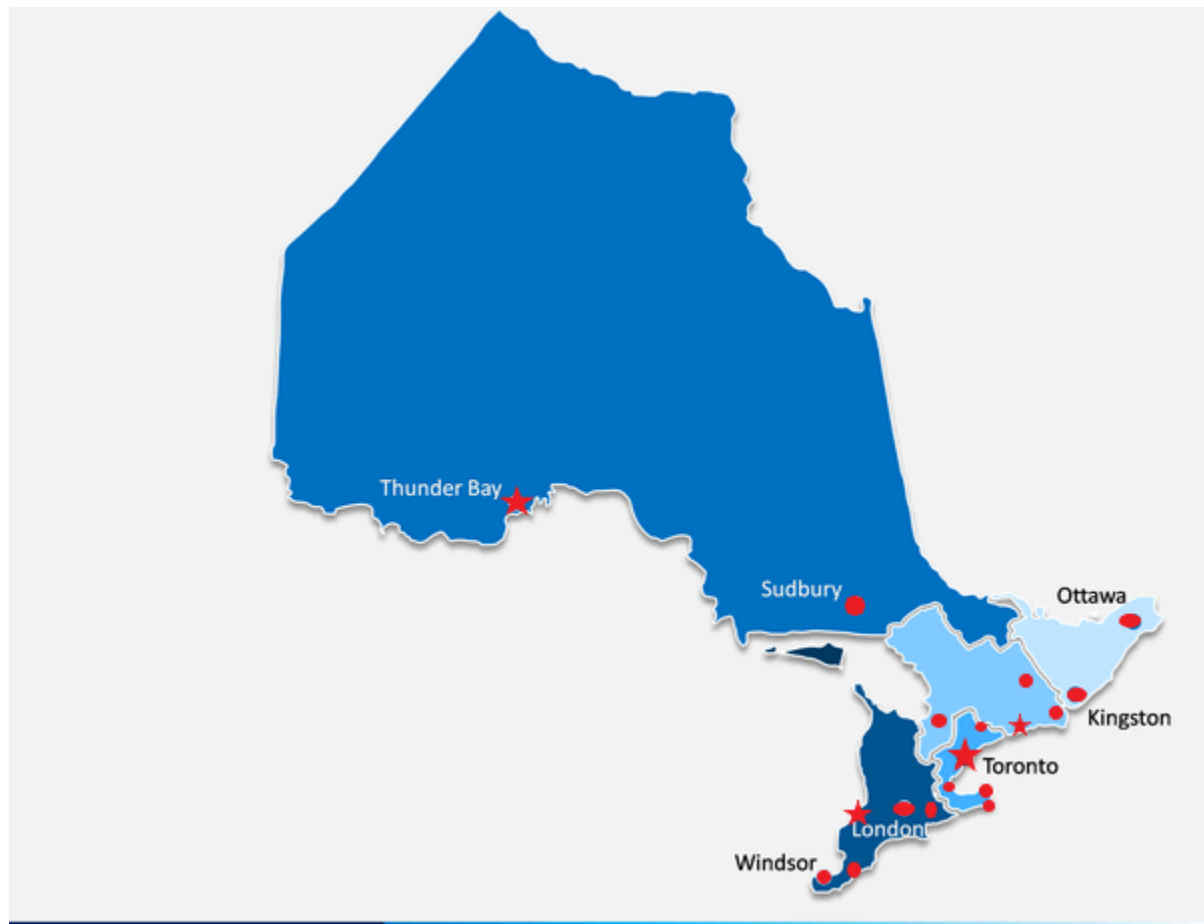
Size of Homes

One difference noted between family and staff survey responses are the size of the homes. Most family responses represent perspectives of Councils in medium & large long-term care homes, while most staff completing the survey represent small & medium homes.

Table 3- Responses by Home Size (Family)

Home Size	Number of Responses
Small (under 96)	33
Medium (97-160)	44

Large (161 +)	64
Unknown	8

Figure 3- Responses from Family by Home Size

Home Size	Number of Responses
Small (under 96)	24
Medium (97-160)	32
Large (161 +)	18
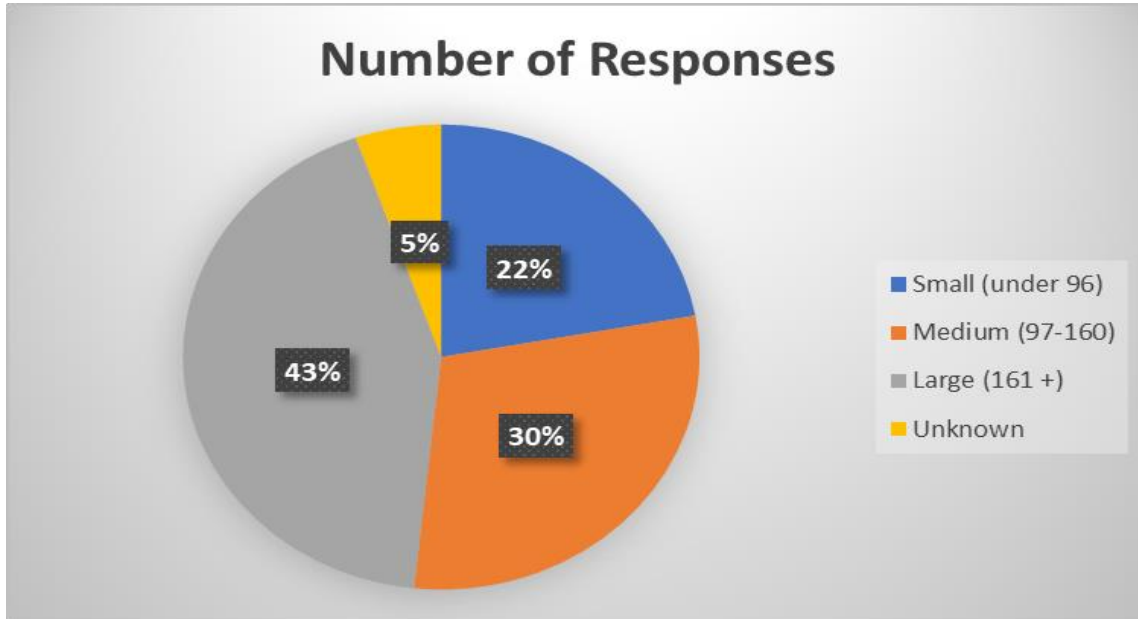
Table 4- Responses by Home Size (Staff)

Figure 4- Responses from Staff by Home Size

Number of Responses

- Small (under 96) — 33%
- Medium (97-160) — 43%
- Large (161 +) — 24%
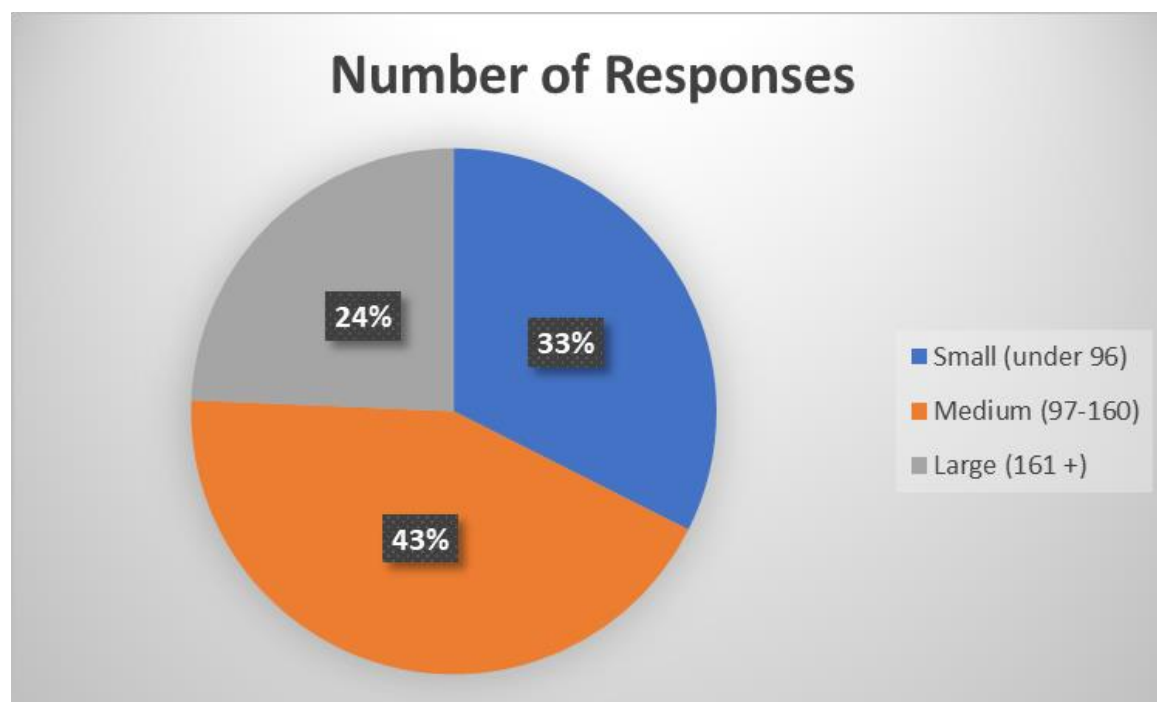
Languages

Families and staff noted that most homes (50%) do not offer services in other languages. When services are provided in other languages by the home, French is the most common secondary language noted by staff and families. Other popular languages include Italian, Dutch and Chinese. Additional languages mentioned reflect the growing diversity of residents: Ojibway, Finnish, Yiddish, German, Polish, Hindi, Punjabi, Russian, Portuguese, Arabic, Spanish, Serbian, Romanian and Hebrew.

Staff shared in their appreciation for multi-cultural nature of their homes and how diversity of front-line staff were an important resource promoting communication with residents in a secondary language.

Staff Quote: "*We are very fortunate to have multi-cultural diversity in our home. We have many staff members from different parts of the world, therefore the staff that speak other languages can communicate with the residents*."

"*We are very fortunate to have multi-cultural diversity in our home. We have many staff members from different parts of the world, therefore the staff that speak other languages can communicate with the residents.*"
Long-term care home staff member

Family noted the important role of volunteers as an additional support to providing services to residents in additional languages.

Family Quote: "*I have heard staff members converse with residents in their language*"

Family Quote: "*They accommodate residents and families in other languages through staff, community members*."

About Family Councils

Role in Family Council or Long-term Care Home

Most responses from families came from family members who were actively involved with the Family Council (35%), followed by the Chair/President of the Family Council (33%). Most responses from staff were provided by staff assistants (61%), followed by Administrators (19%). There were some Administrators who are also serving as the staff assistant for Family Councils (7%).

Length of Time Involved with Family Council

Most family members have been involved with their Family Councils for **more than 3 years** (79%), with 25% involved 3-5 years and 34% involved for more than 5 years. Efforts to recruit and engage new family members as members of the Council were also evident in the survey responses, with 23% involved for less than 1 year and 4% involved for less than 1 month.*[1]

Most staff have served in their role supporting Family Councils for **more than 3 years** (58%), with 20% involved for 3-5 years, and 38% involved for more than 5 years.

Length of Time the Family Council has been Established

Most Family Councils have been active for more than 5 years (77% staff; 80% families), followed by 6% being active for 3-5 years. Staff noted that 7% of their Councils have been established for under 1 year, while 10% of families note their Councils have been active for less than a year.

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[1] This survey was conducted in the Fall of 2019, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Figure 5- Council Age (Family Responses)

Age of FC (Families)

6%
5%
3%
6%
80%

Under 6 months
under 1 year
1-2 years
3-5 years
over 5 years
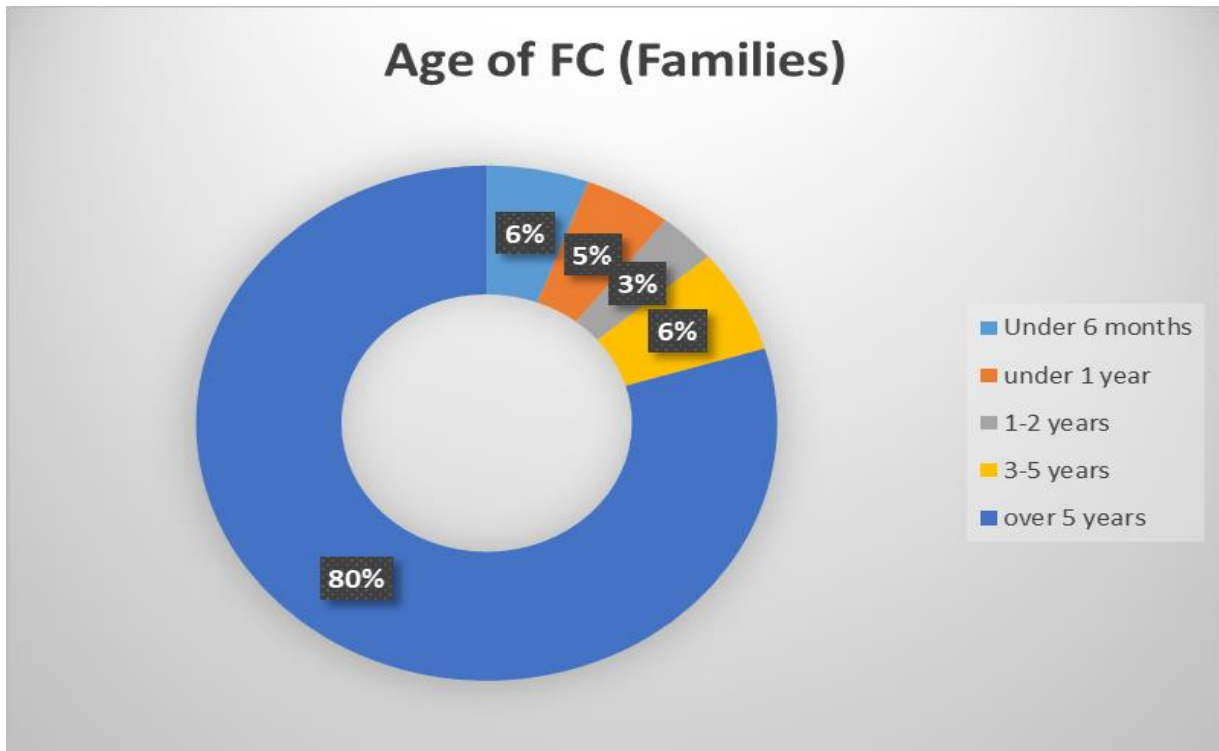
Figure 6- Council Age (Staff Responses)

Age of FC (Staff)

3%
5%
9%
6%
77%

Under 6 months
under 1 year
1-2 years
3-5 years
over 5 years
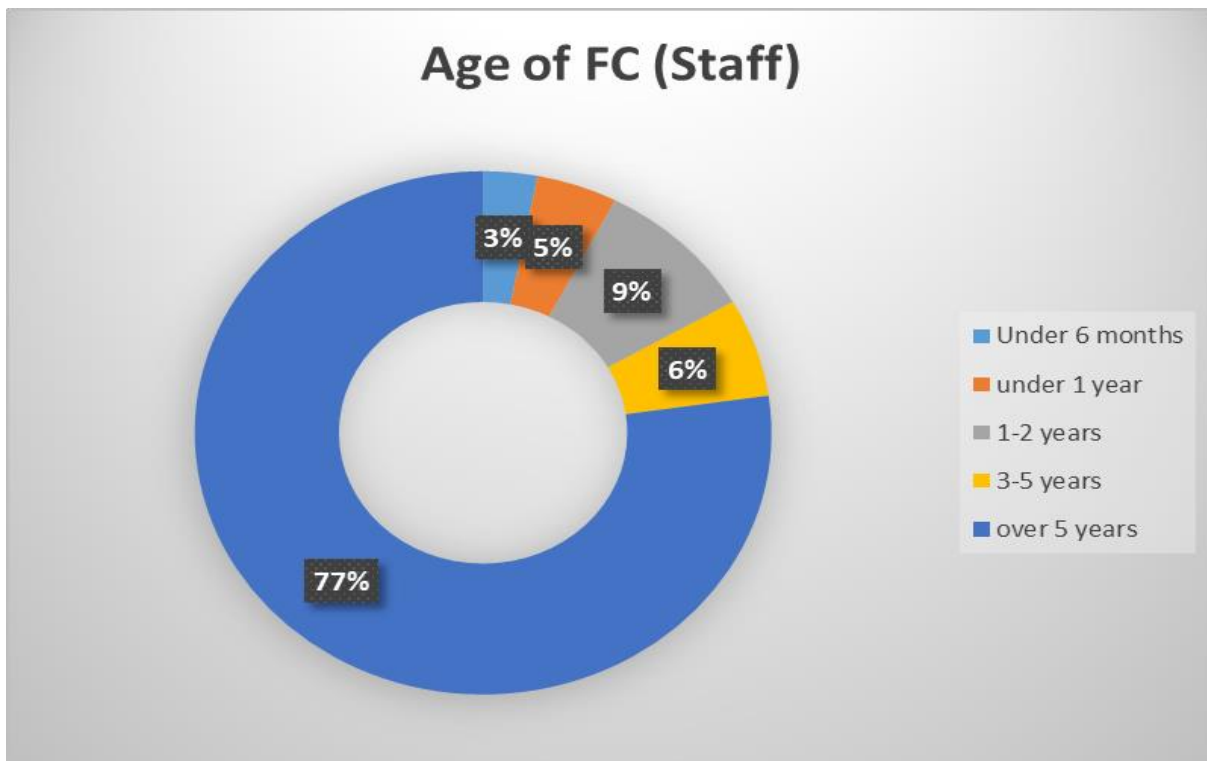
Frequency of Attending Council Meetings (Staff)

Staff noted that Council preferences held an impact on the frequency of their presence at Council meetings, with *36% attending when invited by Council executive* and *35% attending meetings each month*.

Figure 7- Frequency of Staff Presence at Council Meetings
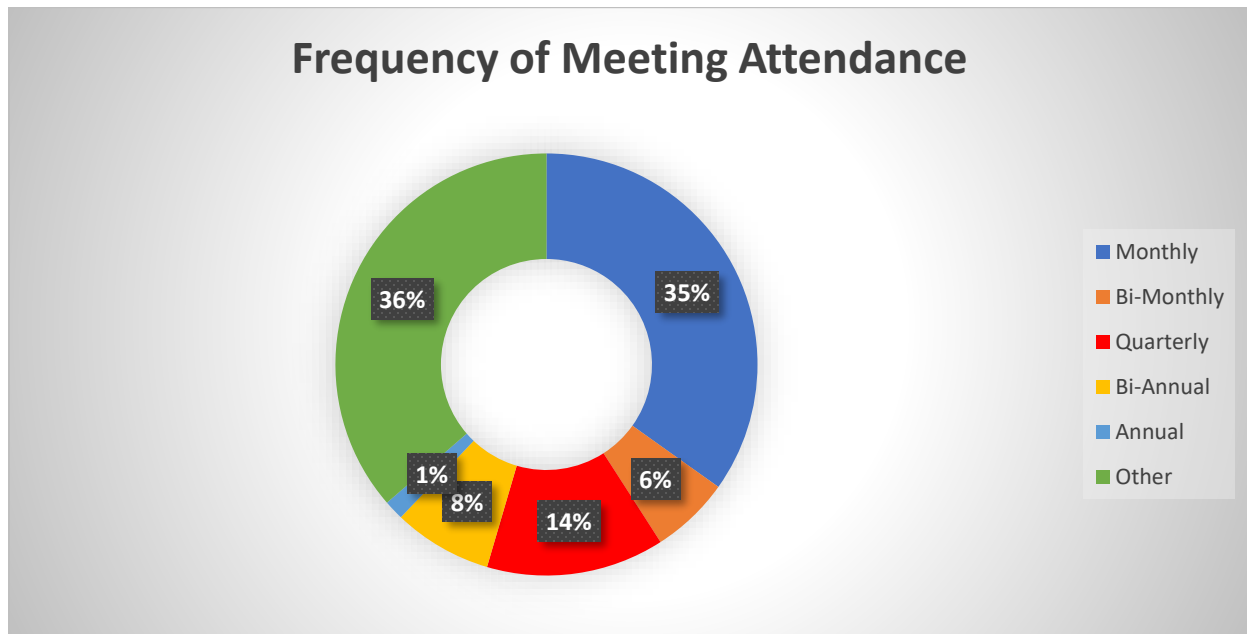
Duration of Staff Participation at Council Meetings

If invited, or playing a role in supporting the Council, 58% of staff note they are present for the entire meeting. When staff attend meetings, they will answer questions and provide updates about policies, staffing or on issues raised in previous meetings. Some staff noted they play an active role in supporting Councils during meetings either by taking meeting minutes (12%) or moderating/facilitating the meeting (13%).

Figure 8- Duration of Staff Participation in Council Meetings
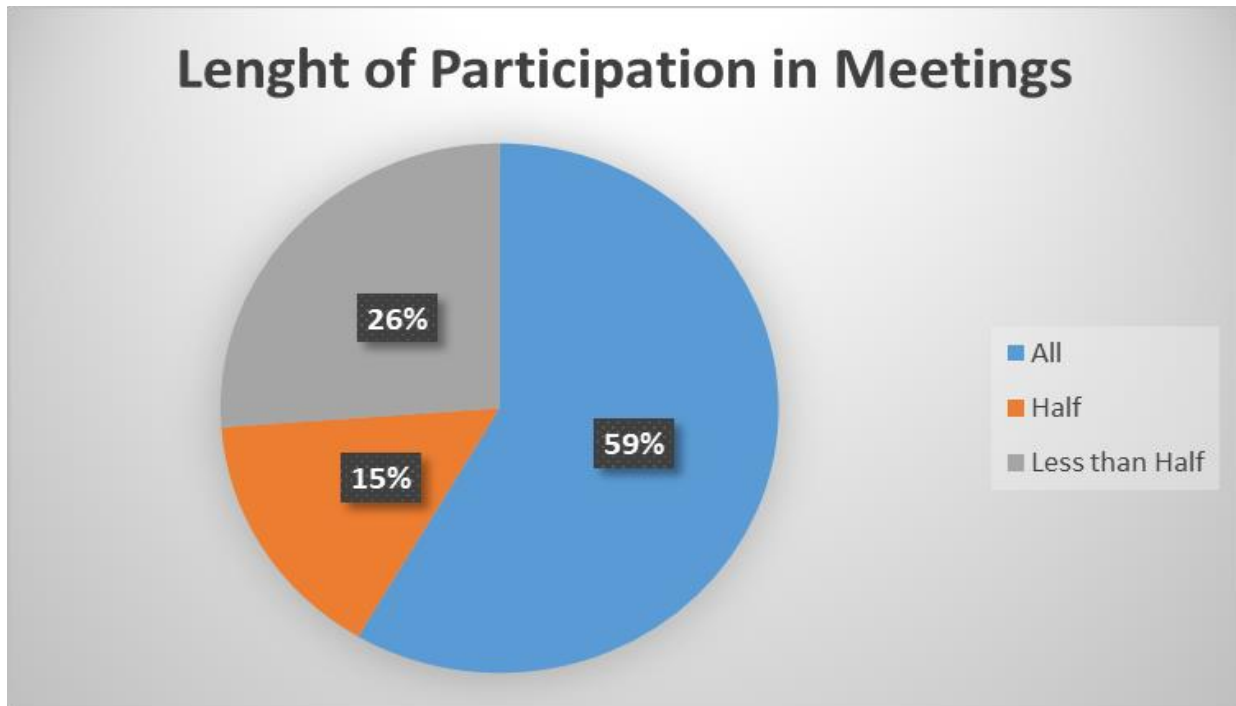
Council Meeting Attendance (Family)

Survey responses demonstrate the broad range in size/number of active participants in Family Councils ranging from 2 to 30+ members. Many ***respondents indicated their Councils were small (43%) with 6-10 members attending meetings***.

Figure 9- Responses from Family Councils by Size

FC Size

- XS 22%
- Small 43%
- Medium 30%
- Large 5%
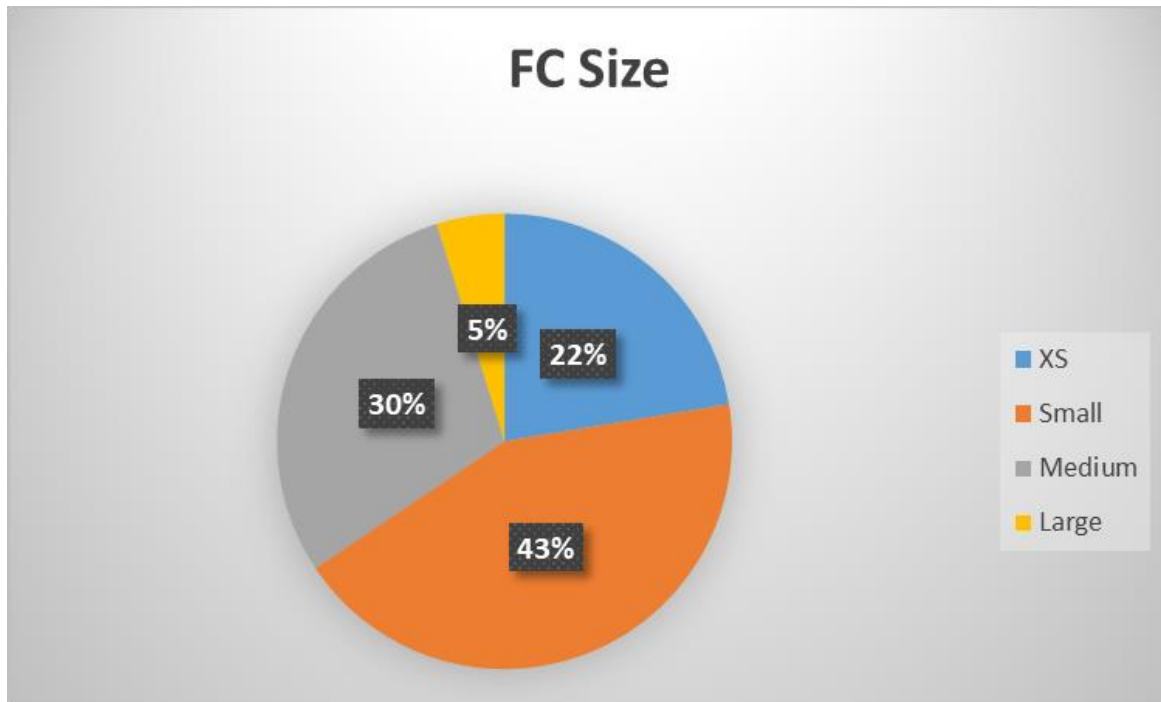
Frequency of Council meetings (Family)

Majority of Councils are highly active, meeting monthly (63%). Many Councils note they take a break from meetings in the summer and in December (37%).

Figure 10- Frequency of Family Council Meetings
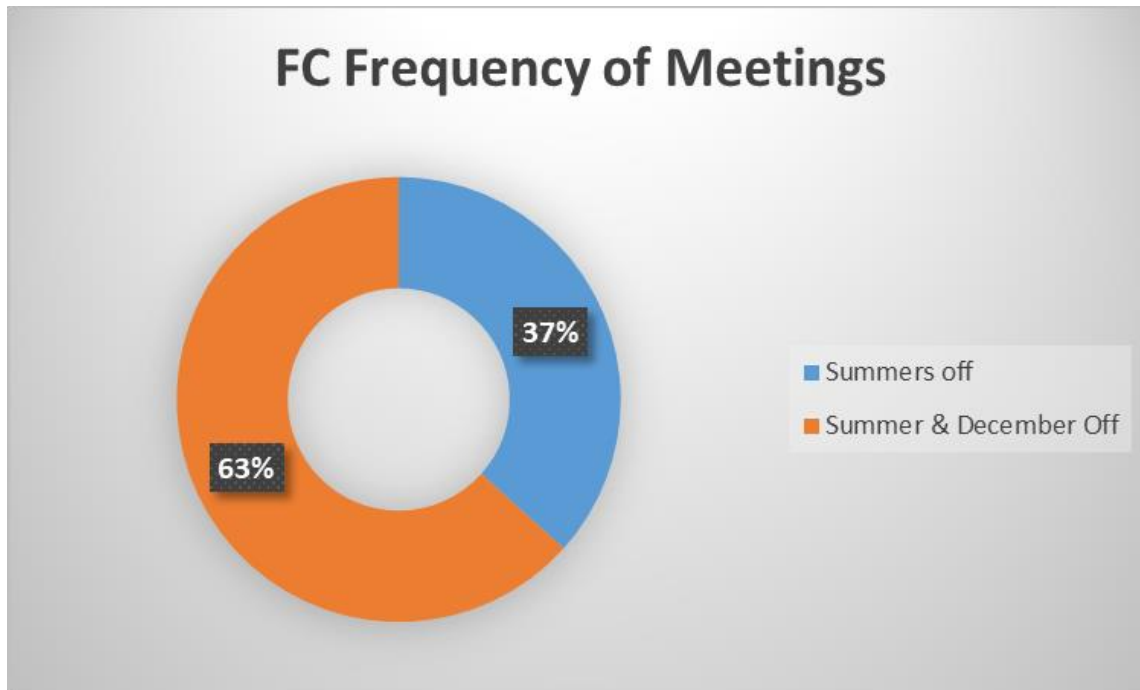
Level of engagement on the Council

Most family members completed revealed they are active members of their Councils (73%). *Attending a Family Council meeting was the most frequent form of engagement revealed by family members* (43%). When attend meetings, family members noted they make an active contribution to discussion and serve as a peer mentor to those families who are new to the Council or home as shared by one respondent "*I attend the meetings and when I can I share some of my experiences with new members*". Another popular strategy for engagement revealed by family members was to *serve as a member of the Council executive* (40%), taking on diverse responsibilities from leading/facilitating the meeting, taking minutes to promoting/recruiting the Family Council. *Family members cited the timing/schedule of meetings as a barrier to their active participation in Council meetings*.

Figure 11- Participation in Family Council
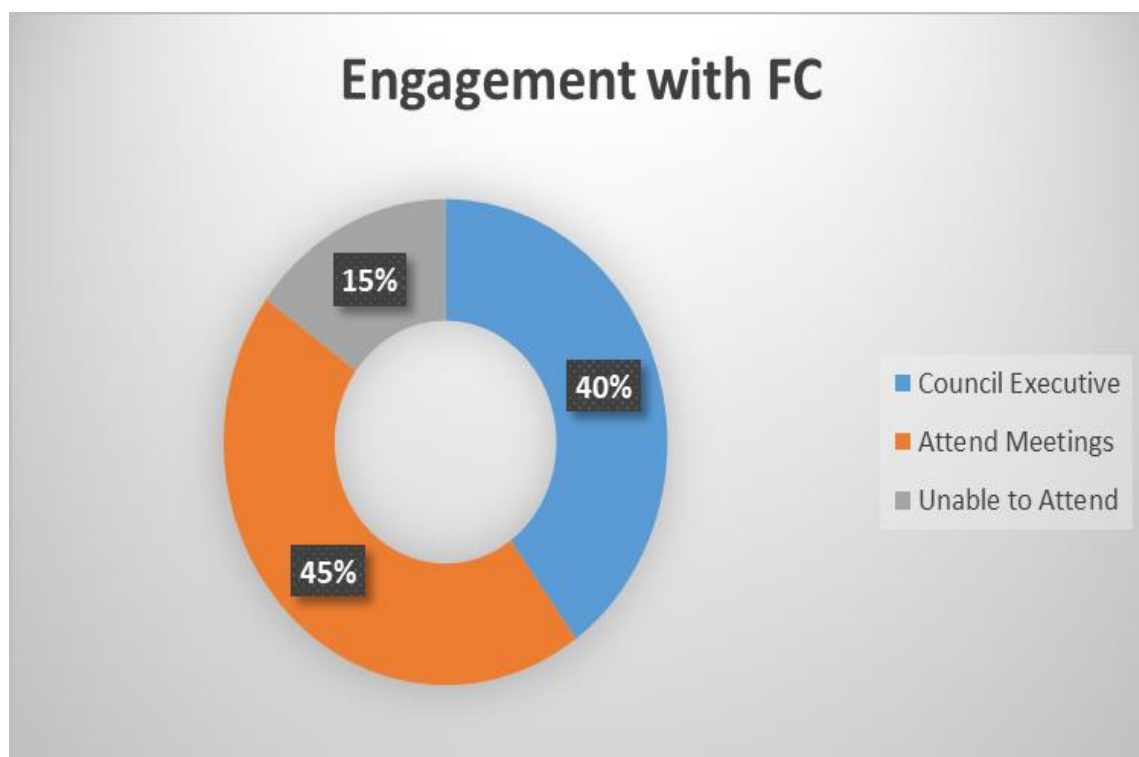
Activity outside Council meetings

 Most family members are active outside of Council meetings (79%). Family members revealed **serving on committees as the most common activity outside of Council meetings** (28%). Examples of committee work includes the operational/strategic planning committee, Long-term Care advisory committee, local Council on Aging, and regional Family Council Network.

Members of the Council executive spend time outside of meetings preparing and planning for the next Council meeting or recruiting new members (24%). As revealed by a family member "**I find prizes for fundraising, develop flyers for meetings, send e-mails of information to regular attendees, keep a minutes boom, meet quarterly with administration and keep up our Council website and more**". Family members outlined the efforts required to prepare for meetings sharing that in between meetings they "**Liaise with staff, communicate with members, organizing meetings and find guest speakers**".

"I write our politicians and visit their local offices concerning the crisis in lack of PSW's in the home and low wages paid and huge turnover because of this"

Family Council Member

Families revealed **advocacy** as another popular activity outside of Council meetings as stated, "***I write our politicians and visit their local offices concerning the crisis in lack of PSW's in the home and low wages paid and huge turnover of staff because of this***". Family members engage in advocacy at the local/municipal and provincial level.

Figure 12- Level of Family Council Activity Outside of Meetings
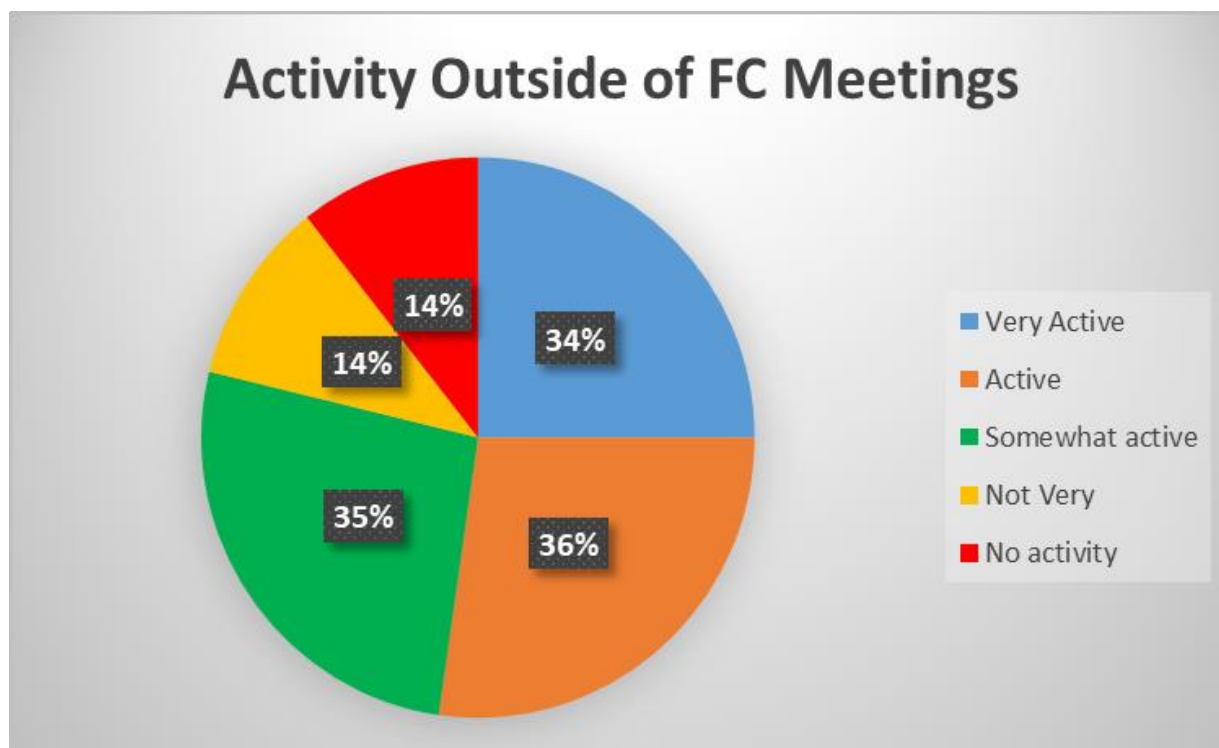
Figure 13- Types of Family Council Activities Outside of Meetings
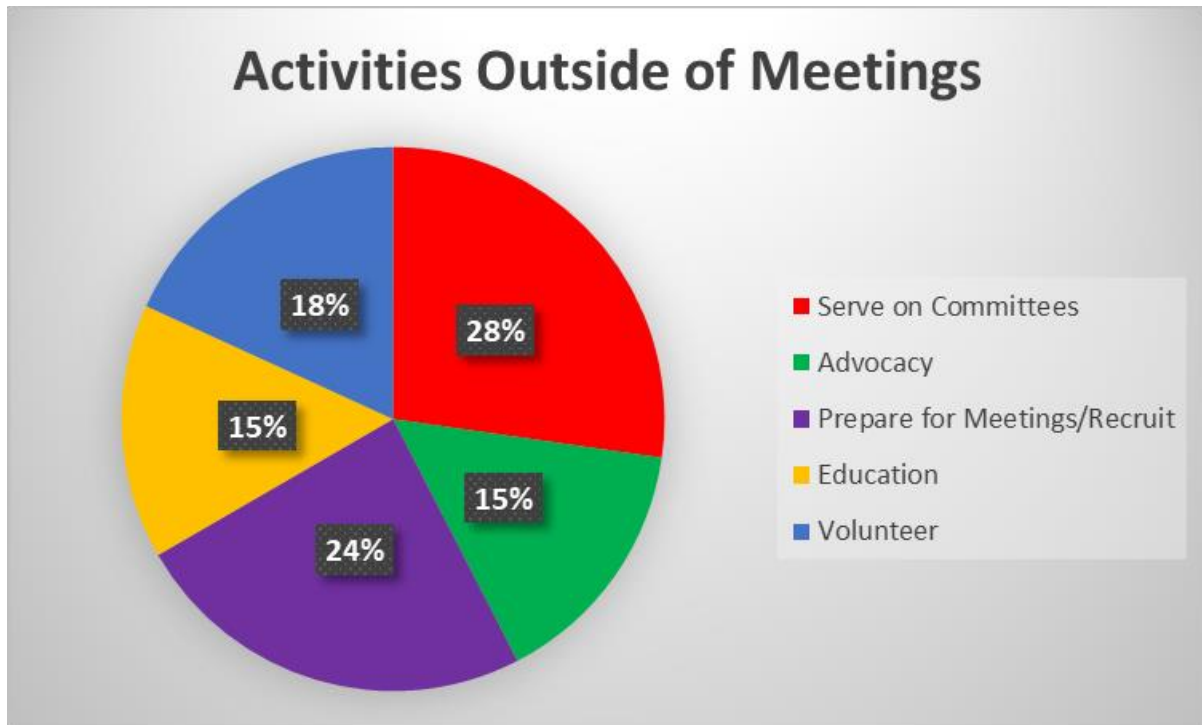
Time Spent on Council Activities

The most common setting for interactions between council members is during a Council meeting. Family members spend 1-5 hours of their time to attend Council meetings. Outside of formal Council meetings, members of the Council executive spend 1-5 hours planning for the next meeting.

Figure 14- Council Member Use of Time for Family Council Activities
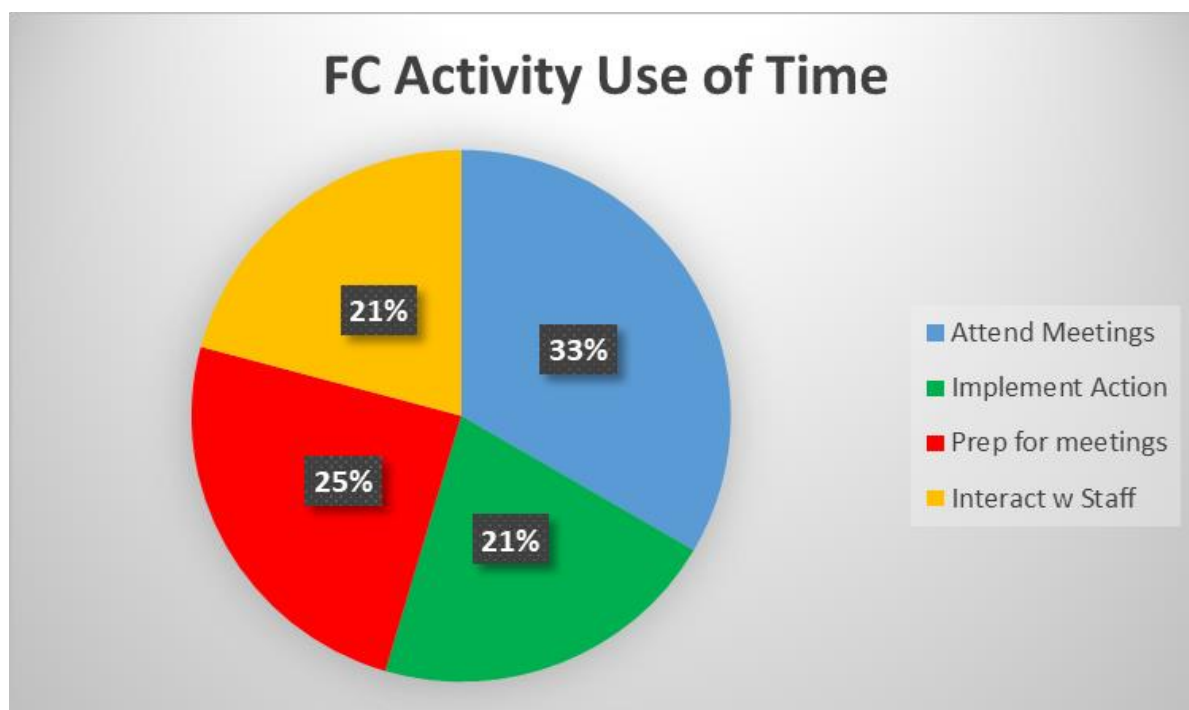
Understanding of the Role of Family Councils

Family members identified **advocacy** (40%) as the main role of the Family Council. **Advocacy** efforts of Council members were both internal (home-specific issues) and external (system-wide/culture change). Family members expressed their role in advocacy as and opportunity to be "***Partners in Driving Change***", within their homes by speaking on behalf of residents and working to "***improve the quality of life for residents.***" Family members noted that internal advocacy took the form of asking questions and raising issues regarding their loved ones to improve service and care. Internal advocacy required that Councils establish strong relationships with administrators/staff of the home to promote discussion. As one family member described "***being an advocate for our loved ones living in long-term care, their voice, hands, ears, eyes to ensure that our loved ones live their lives with dignity, safety and care.***"

> *"being an advocate for our loved ones living in long-term care, their voice, hands, ears, eyes to ensure that our loved ones live their lives with dignity, safety and care."*
>
> **Family Council Member**

Families also noted that Family Councils served as a **liaison** (22%) with staff, promoting on-going, two-way communication between families and staff/administrators. Accordingly, family members sensed that Councils served "***to be the bridge between a residents' family and the homes/staff***", promoting a coordinated response and implementation of an action plan to address concerns and issues.

Families also believed that both **education** (16%) and **peer support** (16%) were additional roles of Family Councils. Family members revealed Councils as a key source of information about the LTCH policy and programming. They appreciated the educational opportunities presented through the Council to develop a better understanding of staff roles, accreditation, how LTCH address health/safety/quality improvements. Families also noted that Family Councils play a key role in welcoming new families and "***to aid and assist families navigate the role of LTC. Answer their questions and concerns families have about the care of a resident***". Councils play a key role in providing peer support by listening and sharing information "***to help families and residents adjust to living in LTC.***" Through both education and peer support Councils serve to help develop a sense of community within the LTC home.

Like families, staff noted **advocacy** (30%) as the main role of a Family Council. Staff sensed that advocacy efforts of councils played a valuable role to "***be the voice of the families of residents in the home***", and "***advocate for the residents.***" Further, they responded that Family Councils played an important role in LTC presenting an opportunity for **peer support** (22%) for families, noting that Council meetings served as a space for family members "***to be able to communicate with other family members to feel that they are not alone***", meetings serve as a "***space to discuss common issues, provide support to each other.***"

> *"to be able to communicate with other family members to feel that they are not alone."*
>
> **Long-term care home staff member**

Figure 15- Family Members Understanding of the Role of Family Councils
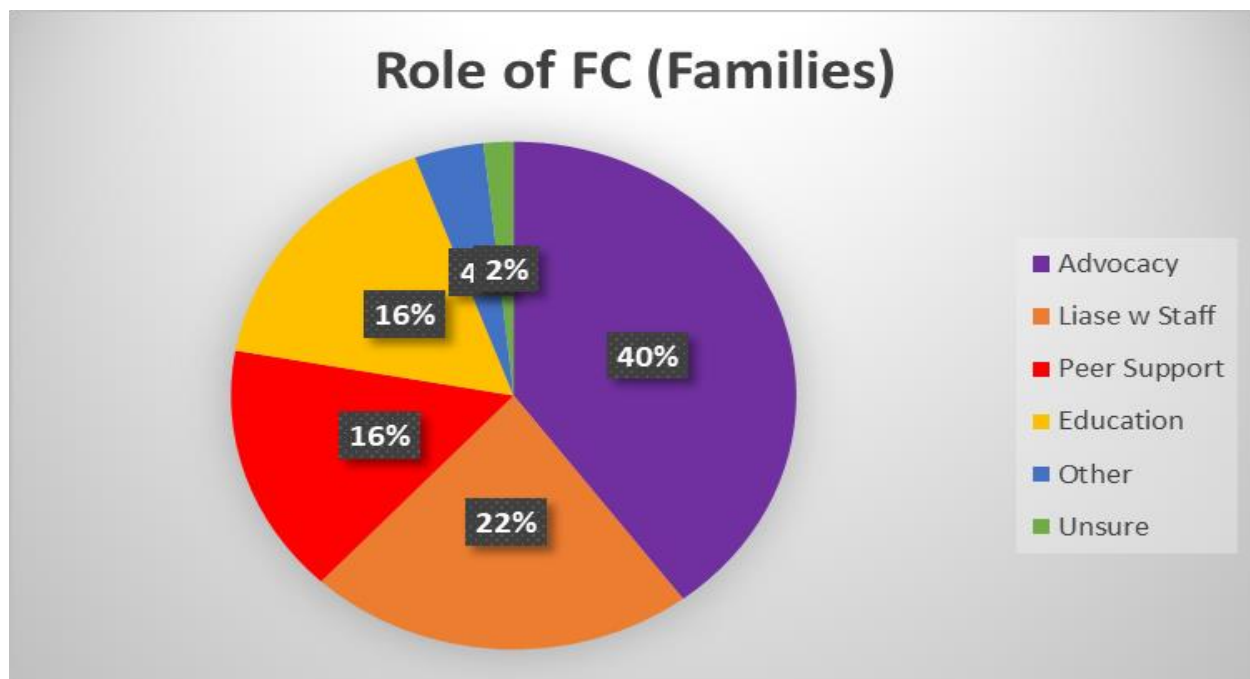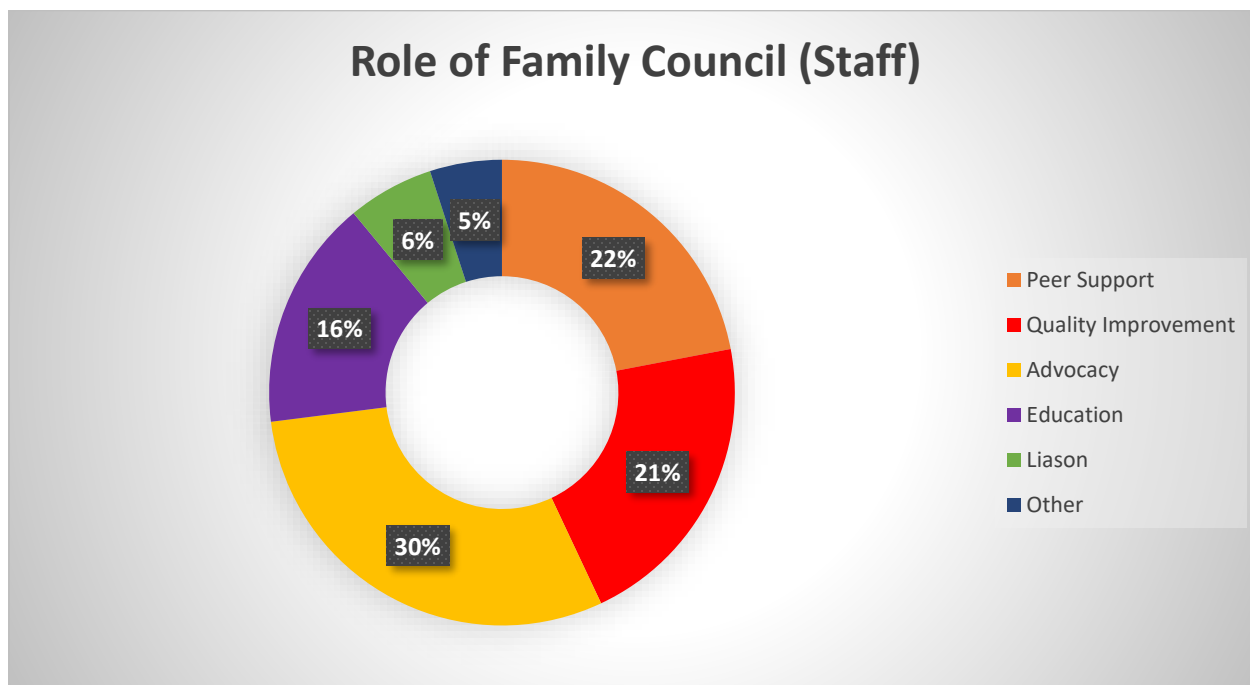

Figure 16- Staff Understanding of the Role of Family Councils

Do Family Councils Accomplish their Role?

Families (77%) and staff (75%) agreed that Family Councils are successful in fulfilling their role in LTC. Council members gauged success by their efforts in advocacy, followed by their ability to recruit and engage members of the Council. Families sensed they were proactive with their efforts for advocacy, acting as soon as they identified a potential issue. They noted their success was shaped by nurturing and maintaining a positive relationship with the home administrator/management team. One family member noted that "***as a council, we have pushed for changes that positively impacted policy and made getting information to caregivers easier.***" Families also sensed their efforts for advocacy were heard and taken seriously, as one Family Council member shared "***over the years, the home has changed processes, purchased equipment and addressed behaviours (staff/residents) based on concerns raised by council.***"

> *"as a council, we have pushed for changes that positively impacted policy and made getting information to caregivers easier."*
>
> **Family Council Member**

Staff also recognized Family Councils' success in advocacy, as one staff member shared "***the families have advocated and been successful in achieving positive change.***" Such success in advocacy was in part via the actions of the family council chair/president or executive to help "***ensure that any concerns brought forward are concerns of the group and not concerns of a single individual.***" Staff recognized the key role Family Councils played in the ecosystem of LTC. Staff agreed that Family Councils are effective in their advocacy efforts, playing a key role to improve the quality of life of residents. Staff shared "***I feel that our chair is excellent at ensuring that any concerns brought forward are concerns of the group and not concerns of a single individual.***" To support their efforts in advocacy, staff noted that Family Councils were successful in fundraising to purchase equipment to help enhance the care provided to residents.

> *"I feel that our chair is excellent at ensuring that any concerns brought forward are concern of the group and not concerns of a single individual."*
>
> **Long-term care home staff member**

While most staff felt that most Family Councils were successful, not all agreed: 25% of staff felt that Family Councils are not successful in performing their role within LTC. Staff attributed family members' negative attitudes as the key barrier preventing a Family Council from fulfilling its role, sharing that some families "***use it as a complain process and focus on individual concerns.***" While Family Council meetings are an

important place to bring concerns, focusing too much on complaints and individual issues can reduce the ability of a Council to resolve problems that will have the greatest impacts on residents.

Attitude matters: Staff expressed a sense of discomfort during meetings when dominated by an adversarial attitude. One respondent noted that "***families believe that this is the time they can bring all their complaints to management. Mostly complaining about the looks of the home, complaining about staff members. It is awful to sit in these meetings, it is one of the worst parts of my job.***" They also felt that limited interest in active participation by family members on the Family Council and issues with recruiting Council members as another key area in which Family Councils failed to perform their ole within their long-term care homes. Recruitment was recognized as an issue faced by newly formed Councils as well as more mature Family Councils. One staff member shared that it was "***hard to maintain membership of this self-governing group.***"

Benefits of membership in a Family Council

Family members shared several benefits tied to their active membership in a family Council. They recognized being a member of the Family Council provided them with an on-going **opportunity to learn and receive regular updates and information** to help them navigate long-term care. Family members noted the presence of an active Council provided them with multiple modes of communication (in person meetings, e-mail) to receive updates. Through regular participation in Council meetings, **family members received support and the opportunity to connect with other families/friends** of residents in the home. Families sensed that Councils played a key role to include diverse perspectives/voices on issues which in turn led to innovative solutions to issues/concerns. Families also sensed that an active Council served as a regular presence within the long-term care home. The supportive presence and communication channels were identified as key benefits for families and align well with the Council goals of support and communication.

Reasons Family members do not get involved with Family Councils

Family members recognized several barriers to active participation with a Family Council. **Time** was the most prominent barrier to involvement. Family members were ***unable to attend the Council meeting when it was scheduled*** as they were held during their work hours. Family members also sensed that it was more important for them to spend their time caring for their loved one than to attend a Council meeting. Competing demands are a key barrier to participation.

Again, attitude matters. The overall tone and attitude of the Family Council served as another barrier to family members attending a meeting. Family members recognized that "***meetings are overly negative***", often because family members choose to raise concern over an individual

rather than a collective concern. Family members also noted some **meetings were extremely disorganized**, and limited organization of meetings served as a barrier to their interest in on-going participation with the Council. When meetings are poorly organized, family members noted that "***issues are not resolved,***" and sensed that the Council had "***no goals or priorities.***" Without goals to inform their actions, councils failed to accomplish anything outside of their meetings. And without accomplishments, involvement is unattractive.

Do Family members feel their voices are heard because of their participation in a Family Council

Like any group, feeling heard is important to a Family Council. ***72% of family members felt that their voice was heard*** because of their involvement as a member of a Family Council. Most family members sensed that getting involved with the Family Council in their home helped their voices be heard by the home administration/staff (53%). Most family members thought that active participation in a Family Council served to provide them with regular interactions with management who were always accessible, cooperative, and supportive of families. Through on-going communication with staff, families noted that "***we spoke up and it made a difference.***" On-going communication makes a difference in families' ability to be heard.

Council involvement can also help make a difference beyond their local home. Some family members (13%) also sensed their role with the Family Council helped their voice be heard externally by other organizations and politicians. As one family member shared "***our home is owned municipally... We have been successful in raising public awareness and gained support we are non-confrontational but when necessary we raise the issues up the line to obtain action and reach a solution.***" Family Council involvement can improve the ability of families to share their needs, knowledge, and solutions more broadly.

> *" our home is owned municipally… We have been successful in raising public awareness an gained support we are non-confrontational but when necessary we raise the issues up the line to obtain action and reach a solution".*
>
> **Family Council Member**

Figure 17- Stakeholders that Hear the Voice of Family Councils
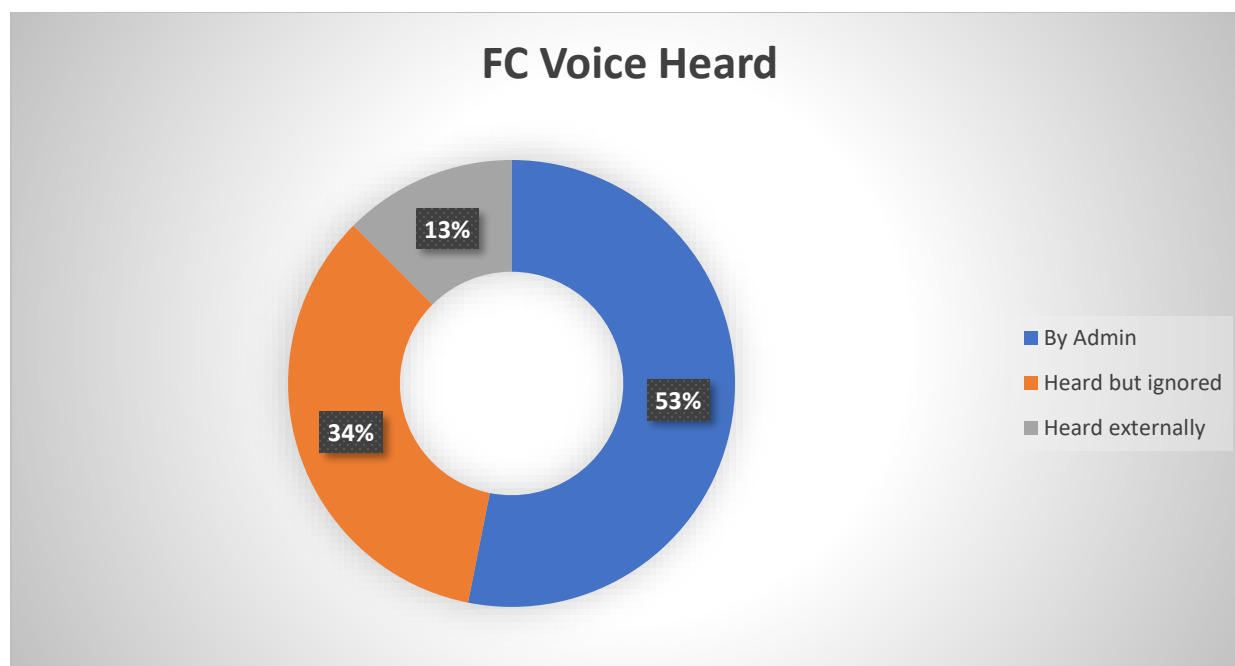
Strategies Family Councils Use to Communicate

Families noted that communication is a key Family Council activity. Families identified **e-mail as the most common mode of communication between Family Council members (37%)**, followed by in-person communication during meetings (26%) and flyers (16%). Family Councils identified two prominent modes of communication with **staff**, **including e-mail and in-person (31%),** followed by phone and flyers (13%). Family members revealed that **in-person communication was the most common method Family Councils use to communicate with the Residents' Council**. Depending on the audience, Family Councils identified different communication modes as the most common and, likely, appropriate.

There are barriers to effective communication. Family members noted the home's privacy policy served as a major barrier to communication with other families outside of Council meetings. As one family member shared "*from a privacy perspective, we don't communicate directly with family members unless we're at a meeting. We aren't provided contact information.*" Having contact information for families was identified as a key barrier to being in communication. After all, you can't communicate with someone if you can't contact them.

> *"from a privacy perspective, we don't communicate directly with family members unless we're at a meeting. We aren't provided contact information."*
>
> **Family Council member**

Figure 18- Strategies Family Councils Use to Communicate with Stakeholders

Communication w Stakeholders

Legend: Staff · Resident Council · FC Members · Familys Don't attend FC · Other
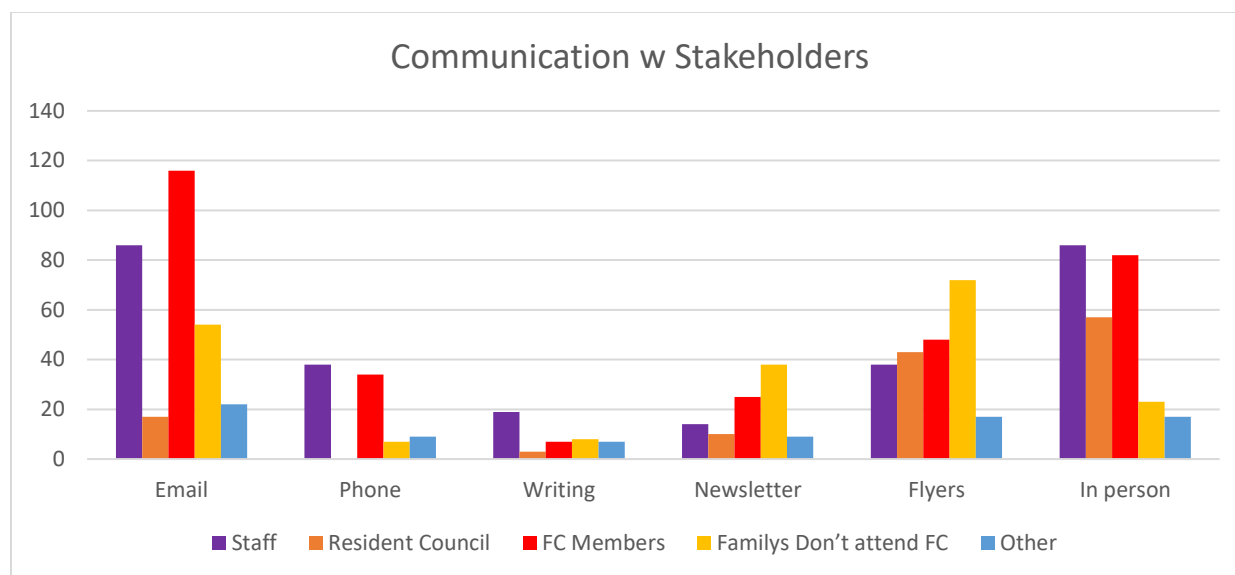
Status of Family Council Relationships with Stakeholders

Family Councils do not exist in a vacuum. Other home stakeholders (staff, Residents' Councils, active, and inactive family members) have relationships with the Family Council. Most Family Councils have a positive, productive relationship with the administrator, staff assistant, and other home staff. Families reported they have the strongest working relationship with their staff assistant, with **60% of Councils report a positive relationship with their staff assistant**. Strong relationships with the staff assistant can make an impact on council effectiveness.

The relationship with Residents' Council is a different matter. Unlike their relationship with staff and staff assistants, most Family Councils (**55%) report they do no have an on-going relationship with the Residents' Council**. The limited relationship between these groups is evidenced through family statements like "*we seem to be two separate entities*" and "*The family council tries to help the resident council chair. We aren't allowed to sit in their meetings even as non-verbal attendees. At times the chair is told not to speak to us.*" While Family and Residents' Councils are distinct groups, it's worth considering the relationship between the two Councils.

## Status of Family Council's Relationship with Home Staff

Staff assistants are often the primary staff point person for the Family Council. Overall, **staff assistants viewed their relationship with Family councils as excellent/good (80%)** and productive. This was evidenced through effective communication between Councils and staff. Staff who expressed that they have a "*good, two-way working relationship"* with Family

Councils noted that working with a Family Council has been "*a very positive experience to work collaboratively for the well-being of residents.*" Again, relationships can have a large impact on effectiveness.

> "*a very positive experience to work collaboratively for the well-being of residents*".
>
> **Family Council Member**

Figure 19- Status of Family Council Relationship with Home Staff

Figure 19- Status of Family Council Relationship with Home Staff
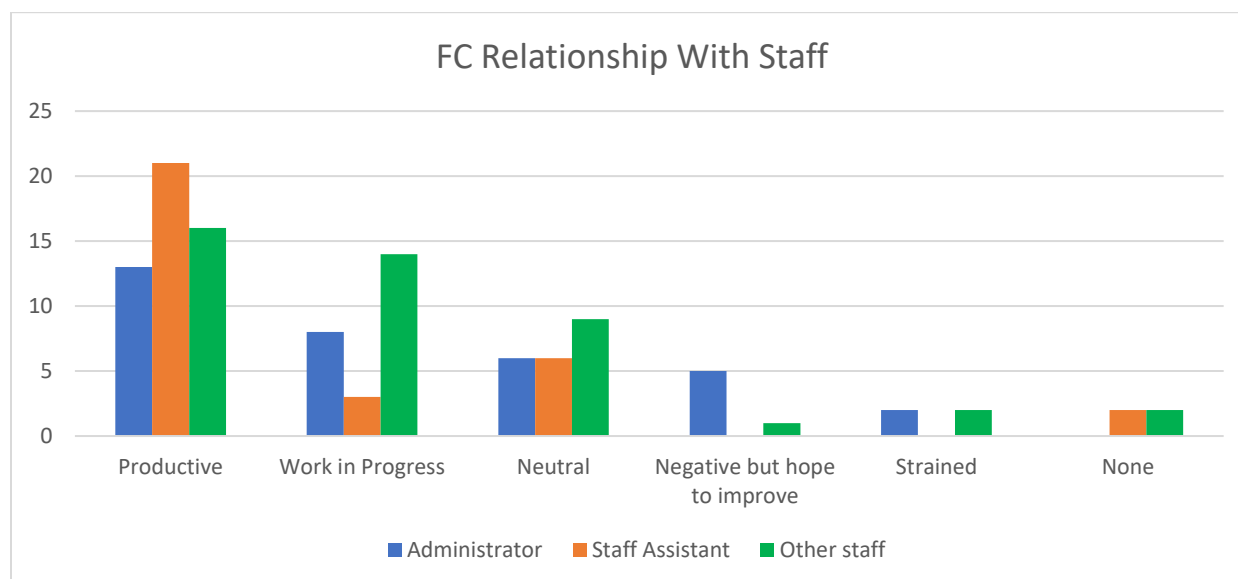
Family Council Activities

Families noted they were involved in several activities outside of meetings, including getting **involved as a volunteer in the home (37%).** Family members are involved in supporting 1:1 visits, activity programs, outings, and social events (BBQs/Pub nights). Volunteer opportunities for some Family Council members tied to holiday events, serving holiday dinner, and wrapping holiday presents for residents. Opportunities to play an active role in the culture of the home served to generate a sense of pride for family members and further motivated their active participation with the Family Council.

Families identified **internal advocacy (28%)** as another popular activity for Family Councils. Family Councils engaged in internal advocacy by making suggestions and recommendations to improve the quality of life for residents. Council members were invited to serve on the home's quality support committee and provide input on home policy and changes to the building

(interior or exterior). Family Councils played a key role in spear heading staff appreciation events (9%). The range of activities Council members undertake is broad.

Figure 20- Types of Family Council Activities

FC Activties in the Home

- 14% Fundraising
- 28% Advocacy
- 9% Staff Appreciation
- 37% Volunteer w Programs
- 12% Education
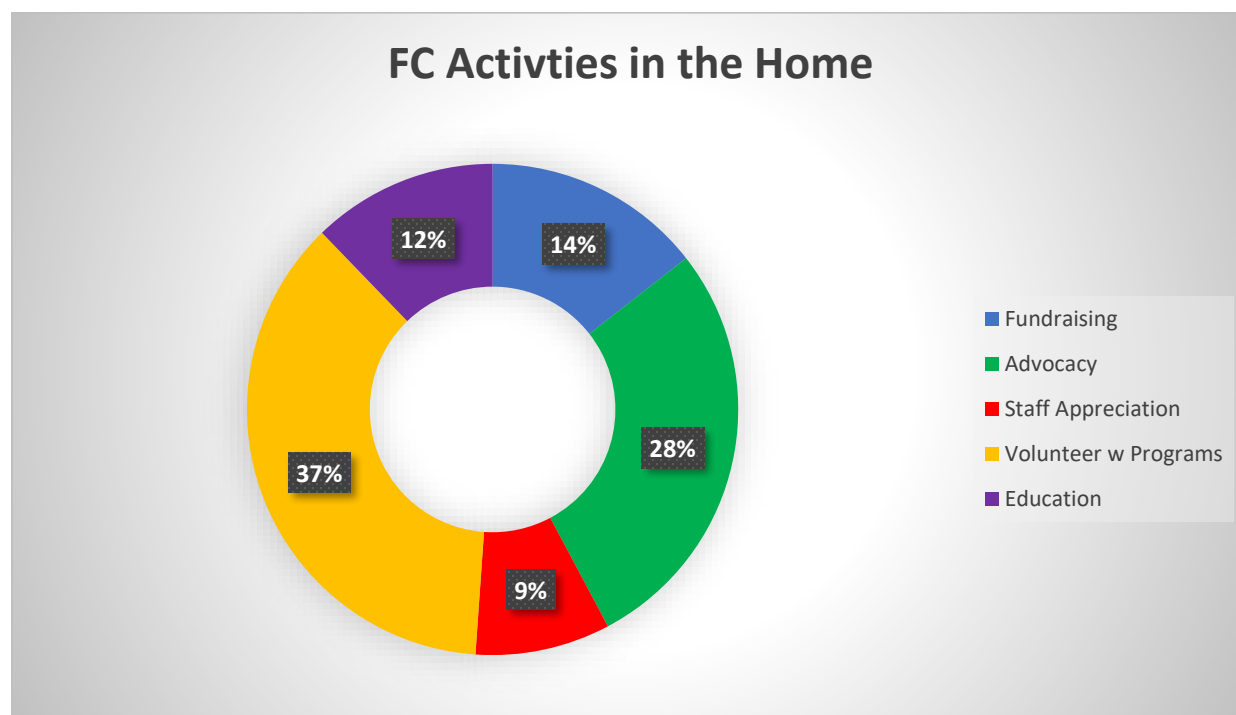
Staff Understanding of Family Council Activities in their Home

There is a slight difference between how staff and family members view Family Council activities within their long-term care homes. While advocacy and volunteerism are both ranked highly, staff felt that **advocacy was the #1 activity of Family Councils within their homes (26%).** Staff noted advocacy was focused on efforts to improve the quality of life for residents and feedback on home policies and procedures. Staff shared that Family Councils are "*concerned about the quality of life for residents…. I feel the council is the eyes and ears of the home.*" Another staff member echoed this sentiment sharing "*they work on problem-solving or getting answers to any concerns expressed by their loved one living in the home.*"

> "*concerned about the quality of life for residents….I feel the council is the eyes and ears of the home.*"
>
> **Family Council Member**

Figure 21- Types of Family Council Activities in the Home (Staff)

FC Activities in Homes

Legend:
- Fundraising
- Programmming
- Advocacy
- Complaining
- Education
- All aspects
- Staff appreciation

Values: 15%, 21%, 26%, 7%, 12%, 16%, 3%
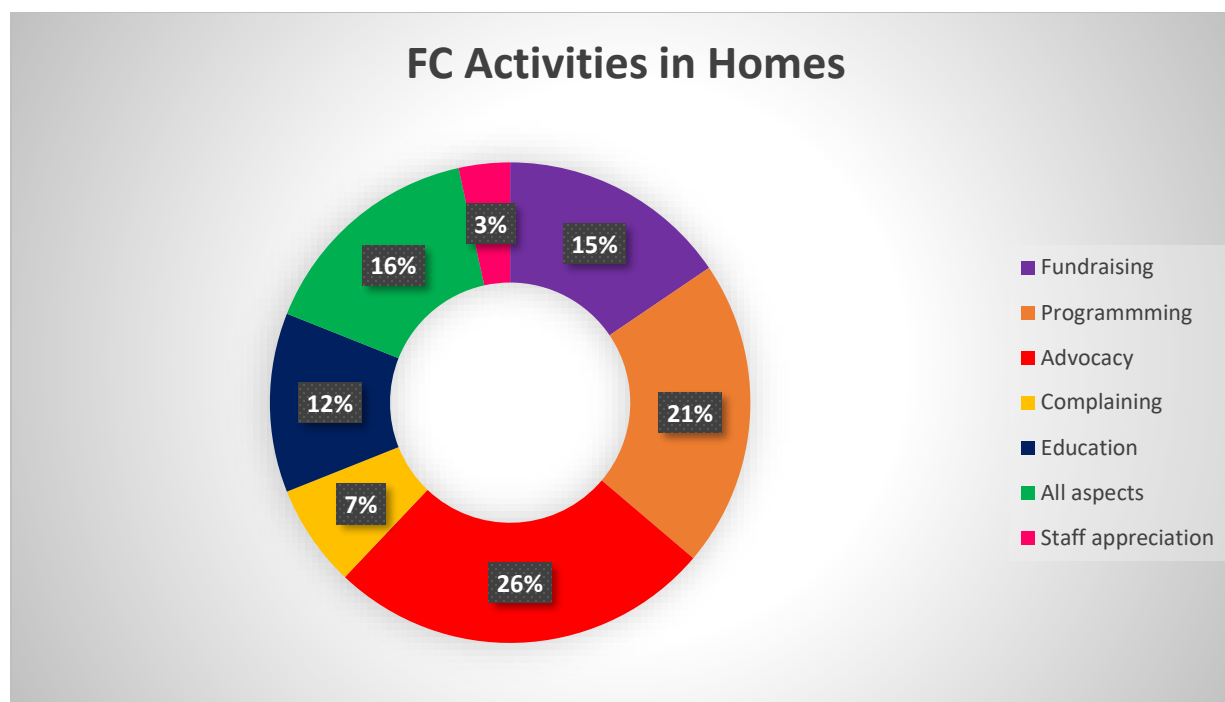
Perceived Importance of Family Council to the Long-term Care Home-

When asked to share how important they believed the Council was to the overall operation, culture, resident care/safety, staff experience and ensuring family concerns and ideas were heard, family members responded that the presence of an active Family Council was important to ensure that family concerns and ideas were heard by the administration/staff at the home (66%). Families also sensed that Family Councils are extremely important to resident care and safety (57%). Staff shared a similar understanding to family members when it came to the importance of a Family Council within their long-term care homes. Staff noted that Family Councils were important to ensure family concerns and issues were heard by the administration in the home (58%). Staff agreed with families that Family Councils play an extremely important role in resident care and safety (45%) within their long-term care homes.

Figure 22- Family Members Assessment of the Importance of Family Councils in their LTCH

IMPACT OF FC IN LTCH (FAMILY)

Legend: Operation of LTCH, Culture of LTCH, Care and Safety of Residents, Esure Conserns of Family Heard, Staff

(Bar chart with categories: EXTREMELY, FAIRLY, SOMEWHAT, MINIMAL, NOT AT ALL; y-axis from 0 to 90)
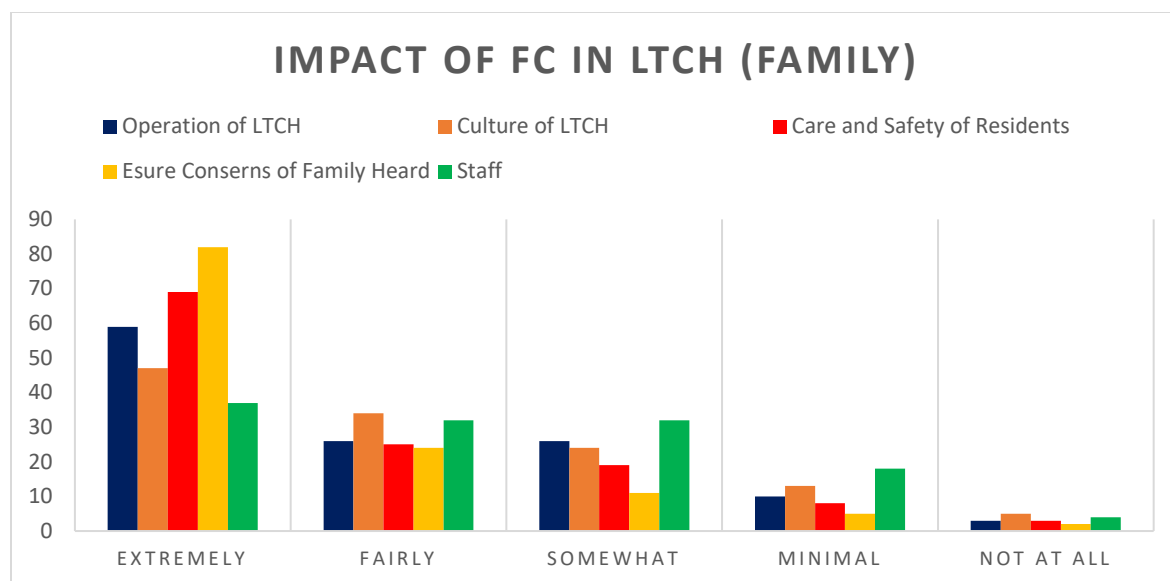
Figure 23- Staff Assessment of the Importance of Family Councils in their LTCH

IMPACT OF FC IN LTCH (STAFF)

Legend: Operation of LTCH, Culture of LTCH, Care and Safety of Residents, Esure Conserns of Family Heard, Staff

(Bar chart with categories: EXTREMELY, FAIRLY, SOMEWHAT, MINIMAL, NOT AT ALL; y-axis from 0 to 40)
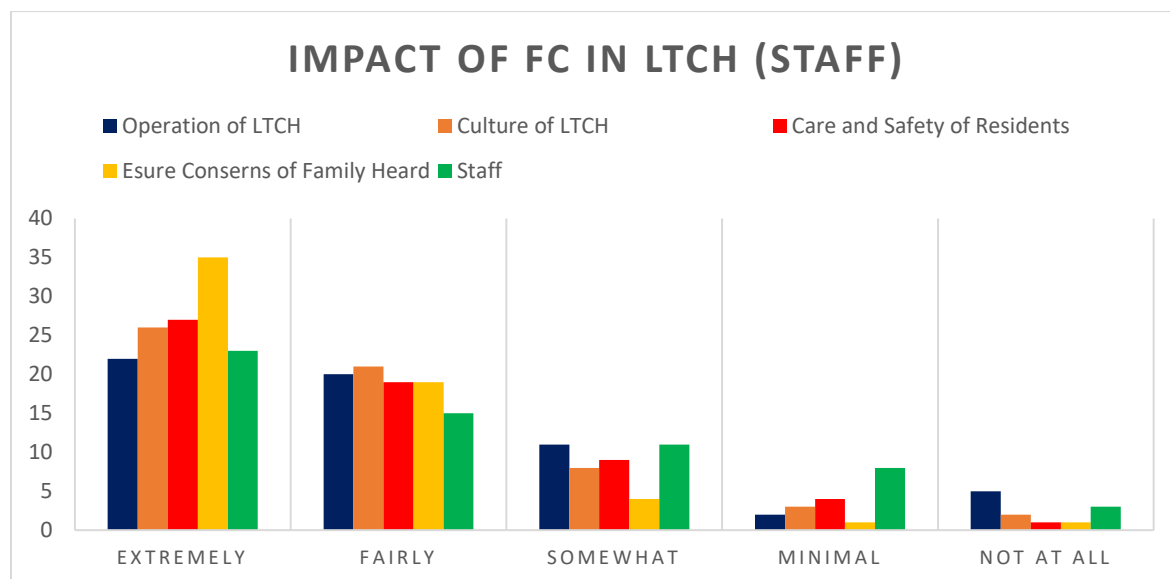
Council Activities over the Last Year

The most common activity of Family Councils over the last year were **educational initiatives (28%)**. Examples of educational activities of Family Councils include:

- Arranging guest speakers to provide families with opportunities to learn about topics of interest
- Inviting politicians to get involved in town halls
- Holding an annual symposium for staff/families

Sharing information about the Family Council and Family Council policies (25%) was another prominent activity of Family Councils recognized by family members. Family Council members were involved in:

- The home accreditation process
- Updating the council's terms of reference
- Creating a welcome letter
- Connecting with new families
- Working to improve the relationship between the council and the administrator/managers

Fundraising to purchase equipment or support a specific project in the home was another common activity for Family Councils (17%). Family members noted they raised funds to pay for specific events. Family Council fundraising efforts were evident through the following activities in their long-term care homes:

- Birds of Prey Presentation
- SMILE Theater
- Cultural Dancers
- Umbrellas and Stands for the Patio
- Weighted Blankets
- Record Players
- Kobo Readers

Family Councils were also focused on staff appreciation (11%). Families planned programs to recognize staff in the home who went above and beyond to assist family members and residents. Examples of staff appreciation initiatives led by Family Councils include:

- Pianist to entertain in the Main lobby
- Gifts (Flowers, chocolates, printed pens, book marks)
- Balloon arrangements placed at the Nursing Stations
- BBQ for Staff
- Programs to recognized team members who go above and beyond to assist family or residents

Staff held a different view of the common Family Council activities within their long-term care home. Accordingly, staff noted these activities are most common:

- Fundraising (20%)
- Education (20%)
- Volunteering for programs in the home (20%)

Staff recognized diverse fundraising initiatives in their homes led by Family Councils, including 50/50 draws, silent auctions and sales (baked goods, poinsettias, books). Staff members noted

that Family Councils were involved as volunteers in several areas in the home, including their work to support the recreation department with programs and events (BBQ, social events) and yard work. Staff also commented that Family Councils played a key role in promoting opportunities for education arranging presentations by guest speakers on various topics (Culture Change, Medical Cannabis) as well as by organizing town hall meetings within their long-term care home.

Figure 24- Family Members Understanding of 2019 Family Council Activities
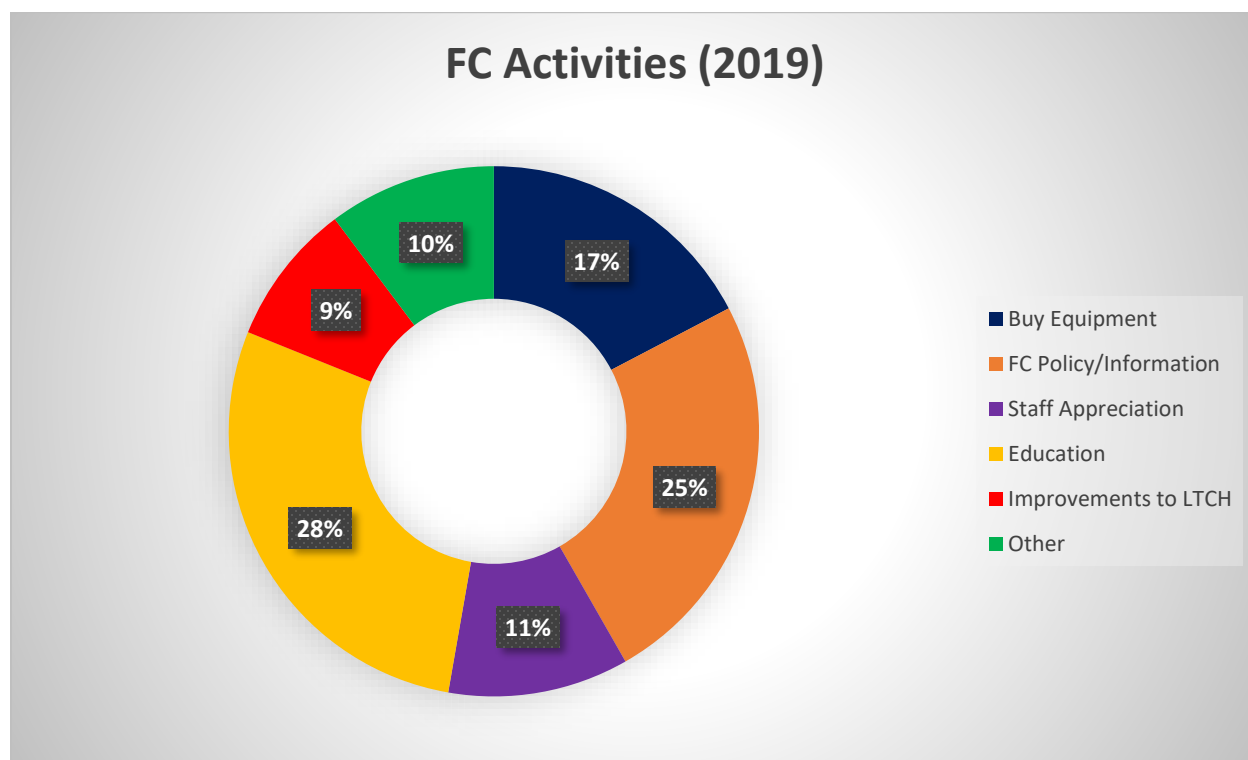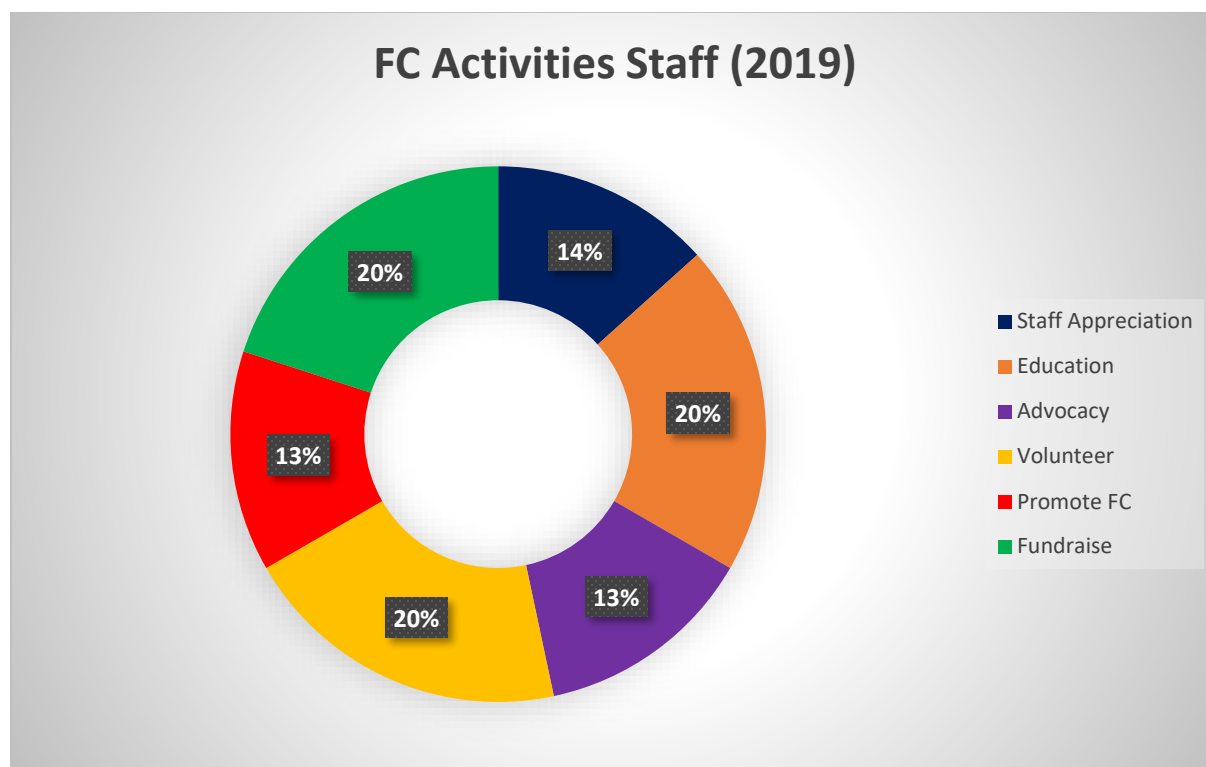
Figure 25- Staff Understanding of 2019 Family Council Activities

FC Activities Staff (2019)

- Staff Appreciation
- Education
- Advocacy
- Volunteer
- Promote FC
- Fundraise

14%, 20%, 13%, 20%, 13%, 20%

Greatest Accomplishments of Family Councils in 2019

There were noted differences between staff and family members in recognition of the Family Council's greatest accomplishment for 2019. **Family members felt that advocacy (30%) was the greatest accomplishment, whereas staff felt that recruitment/increasing the size of the Family Council (46%) was the greatest accomplishment**. **Family members** also recognized their Council's **success in recruiting new members/increasing the size of their Council (22%).** In times of turmoil, maintaining the group can be a major achievement in and of itself.

Building relationships can also be an accomplishment. **Families also recognized improved relationships between the Council and home administrator/staff (18%) as a major accomplishment in 2019**. Families noted that on-going communication with the administrator/staff played a part in this improved relationship. Family members recognized mutual respect and support as well as planning strategies to engage in staff appreciation helped to promote an improved relationship between the Council and staff within their homes in 2019. Communication and support can improve both internal and external council relationships.

Figure 26- Family Understanding of Family Council's Greatest Achievement in 2019

Greatest Achievement of FC in 2019 (Family)

- FC Growth & Development
- Improved Relationship w Staff
- Advocacy
- Volunteer/Purchase Equipment
- Education
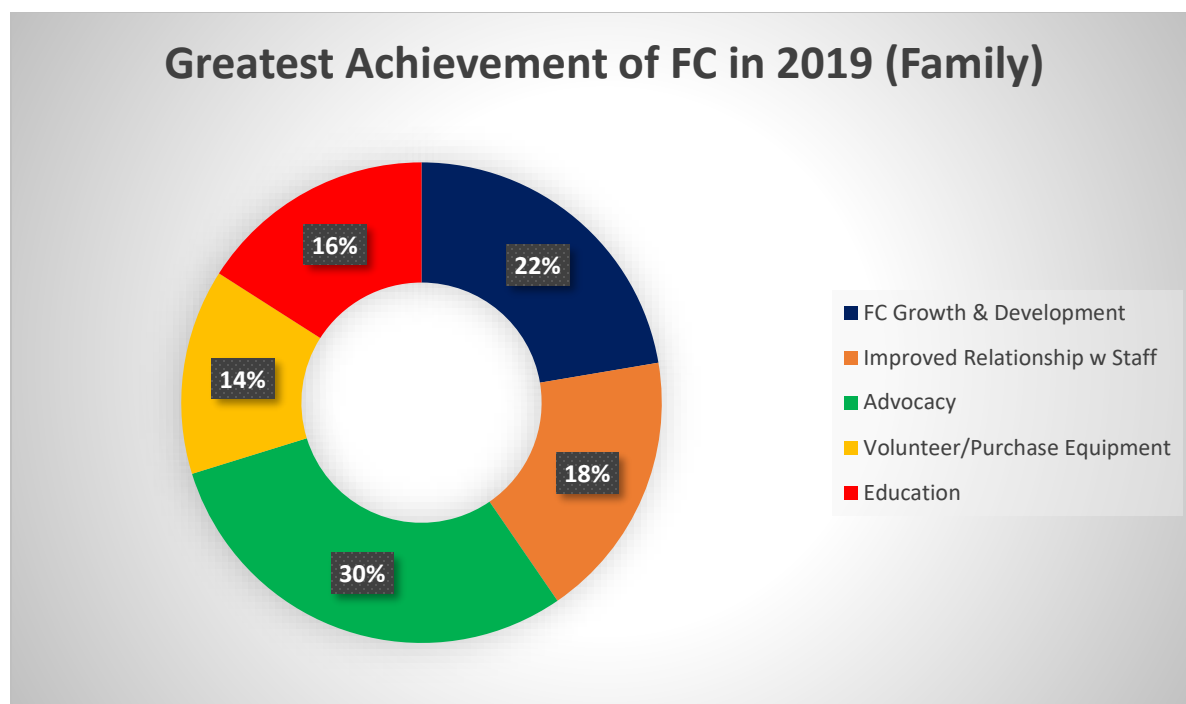
Figure 27- Staff Understanding of Family Council's Greatest Achievement in 2019

Greatest Achievement of FC in 2019 (Staff)

- Promote FC/Increased Size
- Event/Initatives
- Fundraising
- Education
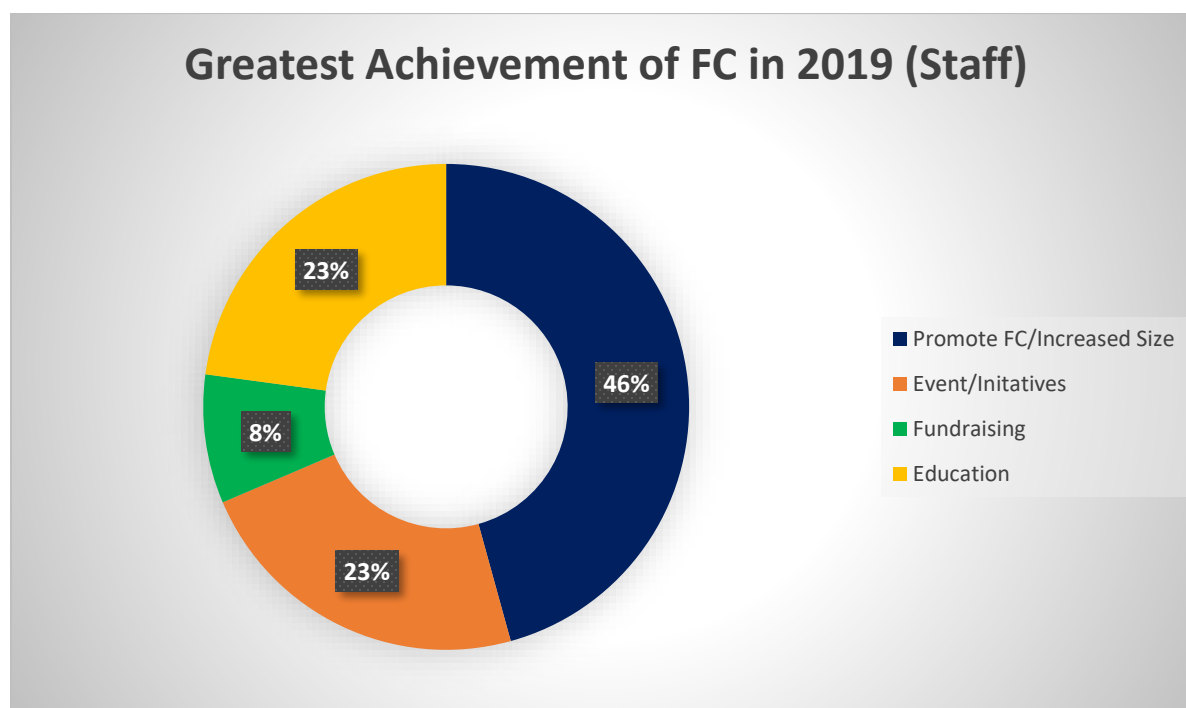
Greatest Challenges for Family Councils in 2019

Along with accomplishments, the survey asked stakeholders to identify their greatest challenges. **Families (45%) and staff (67%) shared in their recognition of recruitment and attendance at Family Council meetings as the greatest challenge of 2019**. Families noted they experienced a high degree of turnover in the Council leadership or home leadership team, which created an additional challenge to creating relationship with new families. Families struggled to engage family members who wanted to get involved with the Family Council for the 'right' reasons and with the right attitude. As one family member shared "*families are busy, often stressed so asking for even a few hours a month can be difficult.*" Staff shared similar struggles to get family members to take over and lead the Family Council. They were hopeful to recruit family members who wanted to get actively involved in the Council outside of their meetings. Recruitment remains an ongoing challenge for Councils.

> *"families are busy, often stressed so asking for even a few hours a month can be difficult."*
>
> **Long-term care home staff member**

Families and staff differed in the second-greatest challenge faced in 2019. Families noted communication with administration (21%), while staff noted the prominence of a negative attitude (18%) during meetings. There is more information about the challenges in Figures 28 & 29.

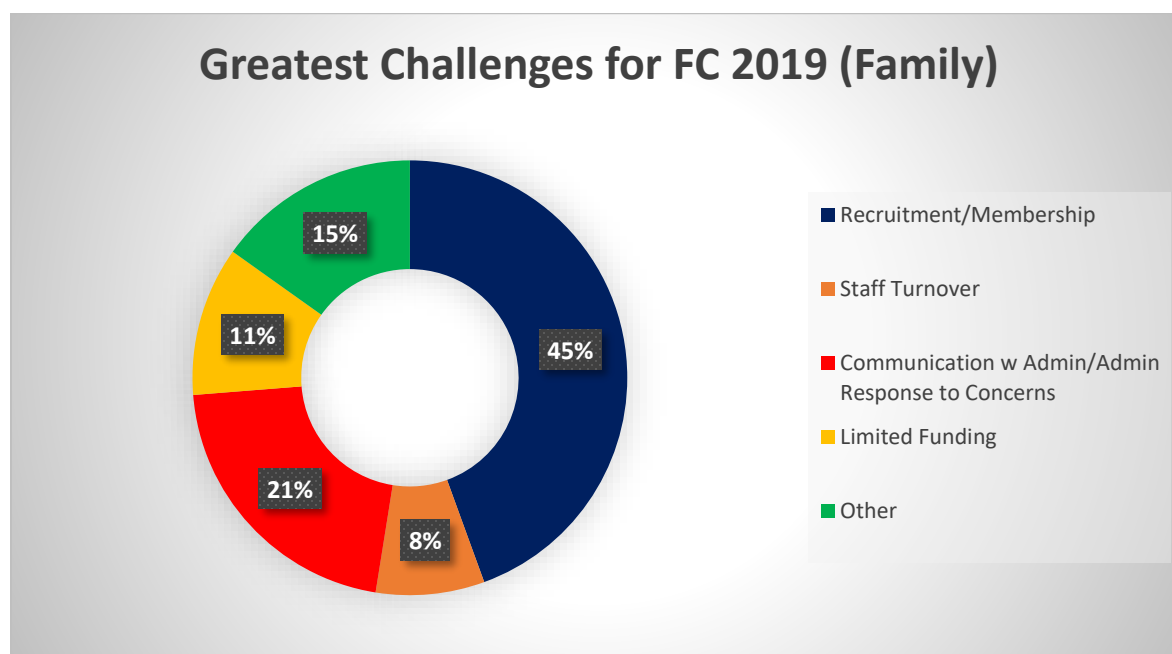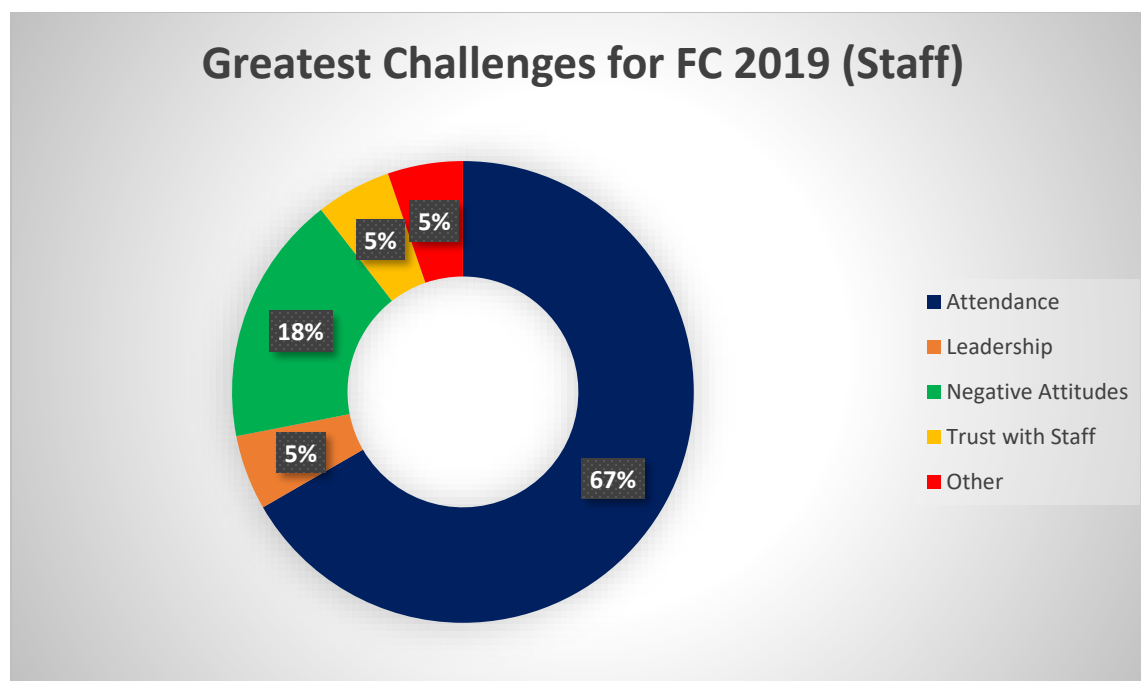*Figure 28- Family Understanding of the Greatest Challenges for Family Councils in 2019*

Greatest Challenges for FC 2019 (Family)

- Recruitment/Membership — 45%
- Staff Turnover — 8%
- Communication w Admin/Admin Response to Concerns — 21%
- Limited Funding — 11%
- Other — 15%

Figure 29- Staff Understanding of the Greatest Challenges for Family Councils in 2019

Greatest Challenges for FC 2019 (Staff)

Attendance 67%
Leadership 5%
Negative Attitudes 18%
Trust with Staff 5%
Other 5%

Legend:
- Attendance
- Leadership
- Negative Attitudes
- Trust with Staff
- Other

Barriers Staff Experience in Supporting Family Councils

Barriers exist for staff to support Family Councils. Staff noted three key barriers to working with the family councils at their long-term care homes:

- **Knowledge of the long-term care homes act (LTCHA) (35%)**
- **Attitude of Family Council members (35%)**
- **Attendance/recruitment (30%)**

Staff responded that Family Council members had little knowledge of the LTCHA and policy on funding. They also sensed that some Family Council members held misconceptions about the role of a Family Council or of the policy and procedures for their specific long-term care home. Staff noted that limited knowledge of policy was a barrier to an effective Family Council in their homes. They also noted how the attitude of select family members served as a barrier to working effectively with the Family Council in their home.

> *"one individual can be negative, affect the culture of the council."*
>
> **Long-term care home staff member**

While the negative attitude and challenging personalities were limited to select members of their Family Council staff recognized how "*one individual can be negative, affect the culture of*

the council." Staff recognized how when a specific family member brings their own agenda to the table, they created a barrier through their limited willingness to work with the home. This echoes the responses about accomplishments in that relationships are important success factors.

Figure 30- Barriers Staff Experience in Supporting Family Councils
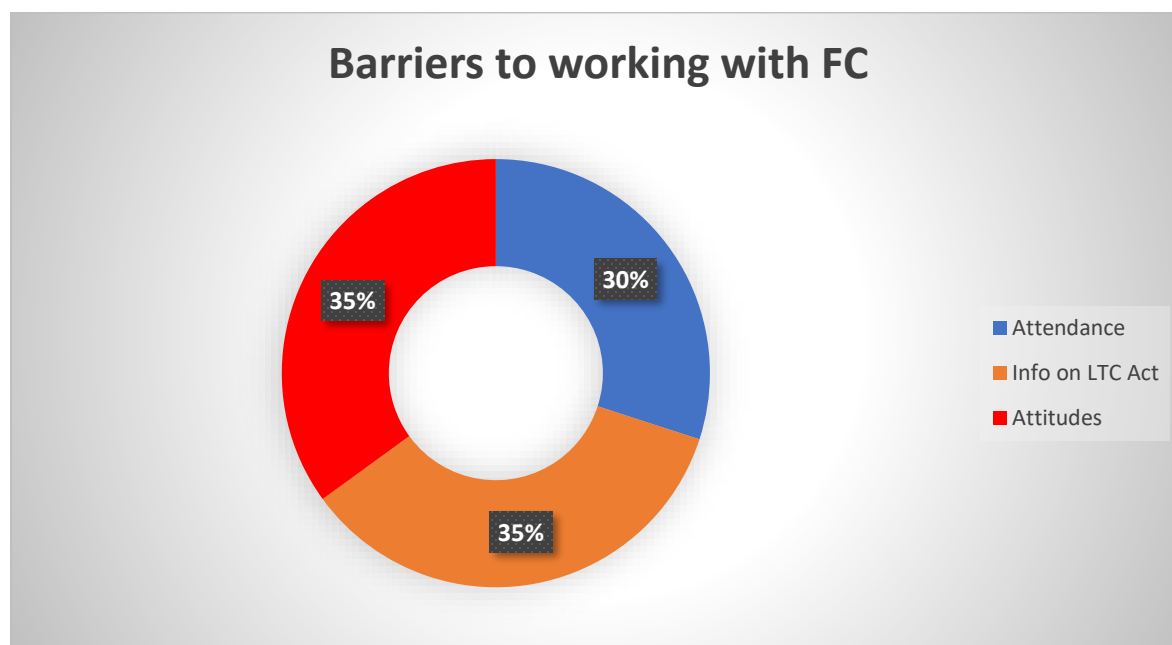
Resources Staff Need to Support Family Councils

Staff assistants felt the **need for more information about the role of Family Councils to help them be more effective in their role (37%).** They also wanted to see **resources to help them educate Family Council members to take more ownership, and transition from staff-led to family-led Councils (27%)**. Staff noted the need for resources to help them encourage family members to take the Family Council meeting minutes, create agendas, recruit new members and in facilitating meetings. As they were assigned to support Family Councils in addition to their other duties within the home, staff assistants also expressed the need for **more time to dedicate to supporting the family council in their home (9%)**.

Figure 31- Resources Needed by Staff to Support Family Councils
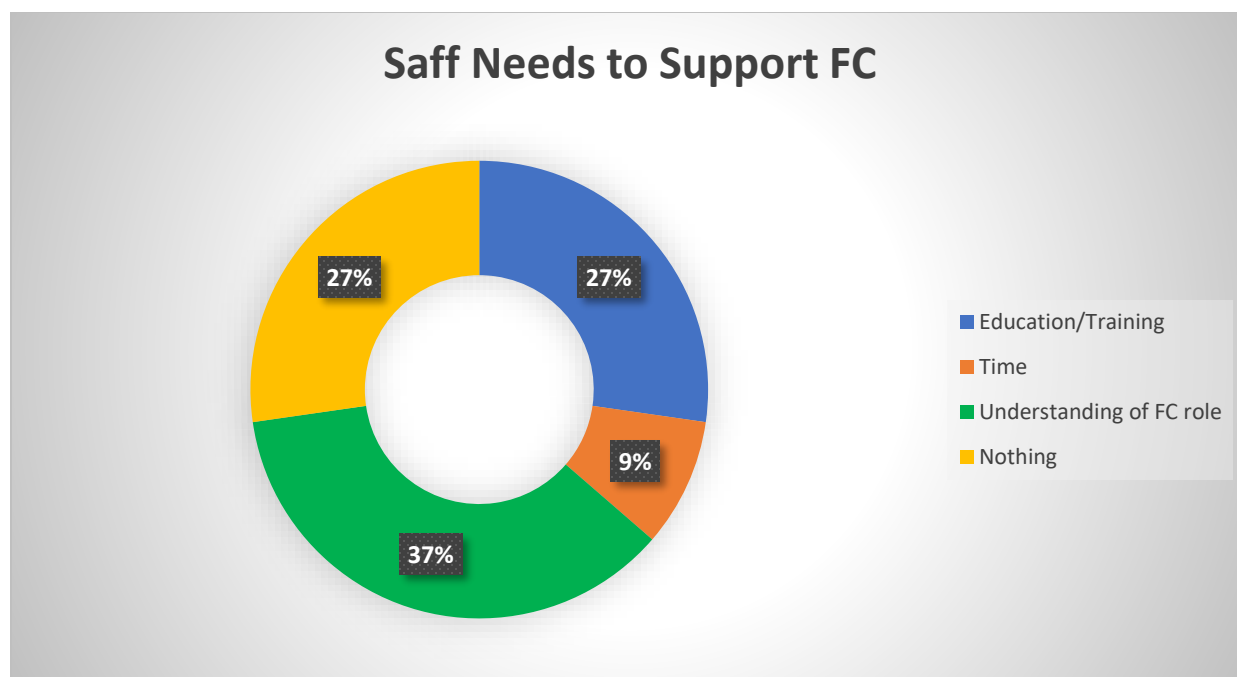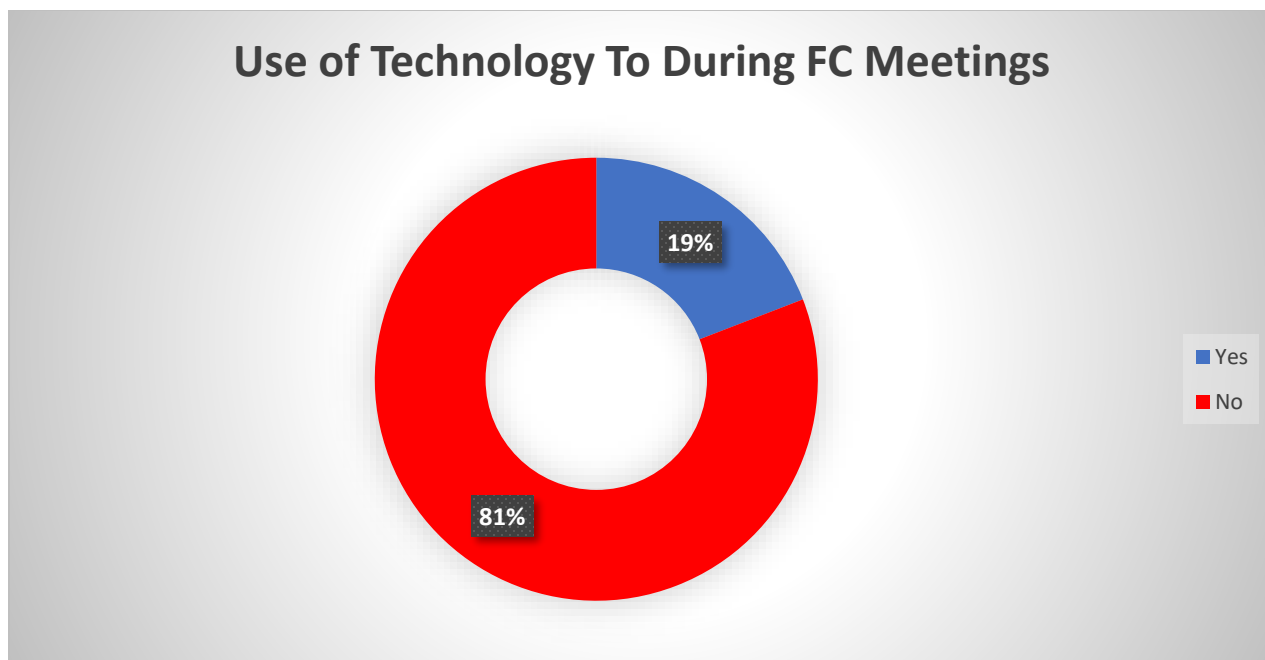

Use of Technology by Family Councils

Has your Family Council used Technology to facilitate a meeting?

Prior to COVID-19, **81% of Family Councils revealed they did not use technology for their meetings.** A small number of Councils (19%) have used technology as a strategy to promote participation in their Council meetings.

Figure 32- Use of Technology During Family Council Meetings

Use of Technology To During FC Meetings

19%

81%

Yes
No

Technology Family Councils Use to Facilitate Virtual Participation in Meetings

Prior to COVID-19, Family Councils used a variety of technology to promote virtual participation. **E-mail served as the most common technology used to promote virtual participation in Family Council meetings and Family Council activities (63%).** Councils revealed they have also used VoIP technology services like SKYPE/Google Hangouts (13%), Speakerphone (13%) and the home's teleconference line (7%).

Figure 33- Types of Technology Used by Family Councils
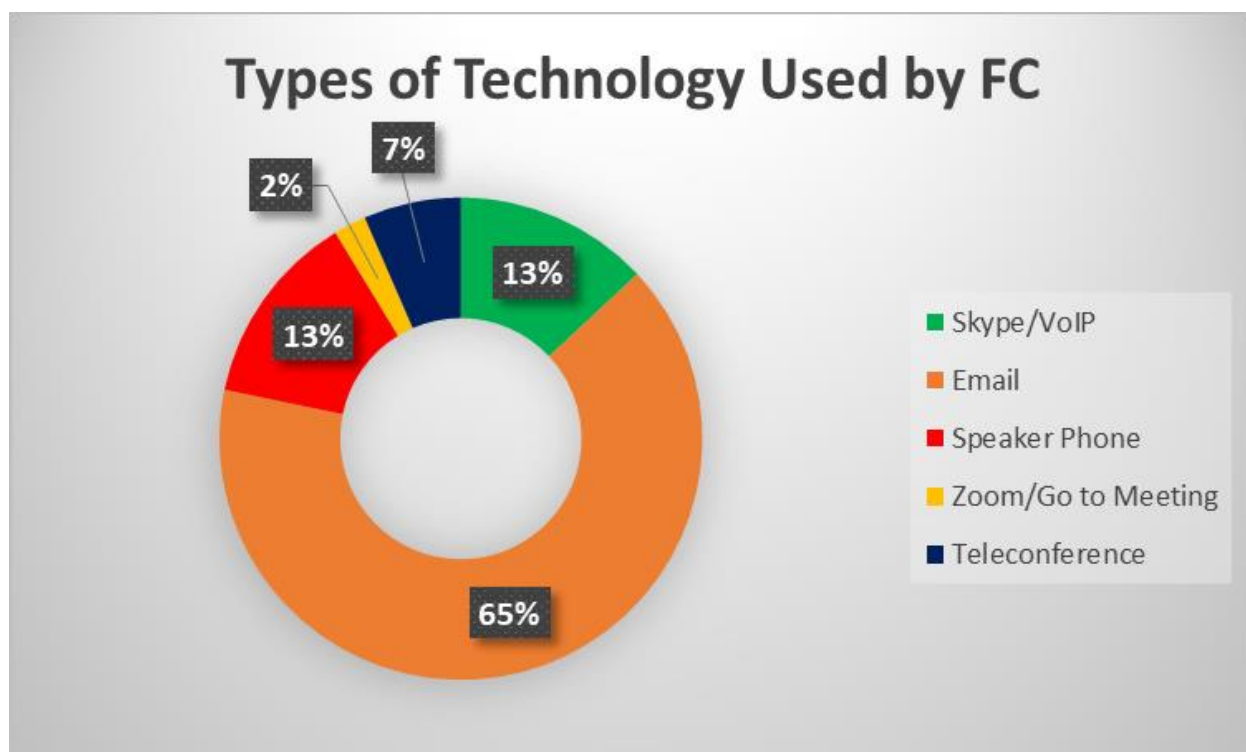
Barriers to Councils use of Technology

Family Councils outlined several barriers to their use of technology as a strategy to promote virtual participation in their meetings. **The most common barrier to future use of technology was the Council's comfort with the use of technology (39%).** Family members noted the varying levels of digital literacy, or skill to provide tech support to other members trying to join the session as a prominent barrier to future use for Council meetings. Families were also **hesitant to lose the opportunity for face-to-face interactions (31%)** transitioning from in-person to virtual meetings. The final barrier to the use of technology for meetings noted by Councils **was access to equipment/technology (30%).** They noted they relied heavily upon the long-term care home to provide them with access to equipment, as well as to help them with access to the internet (Wi-fi/hard wired connection).

Figure 34- Barriers to Use of Technology by Family Councils

Barriers to Tech Use by FC

- 39% Comfort in Using Tech
- 31% Loss of Face to Face Interactions
- 30% None Available to FC
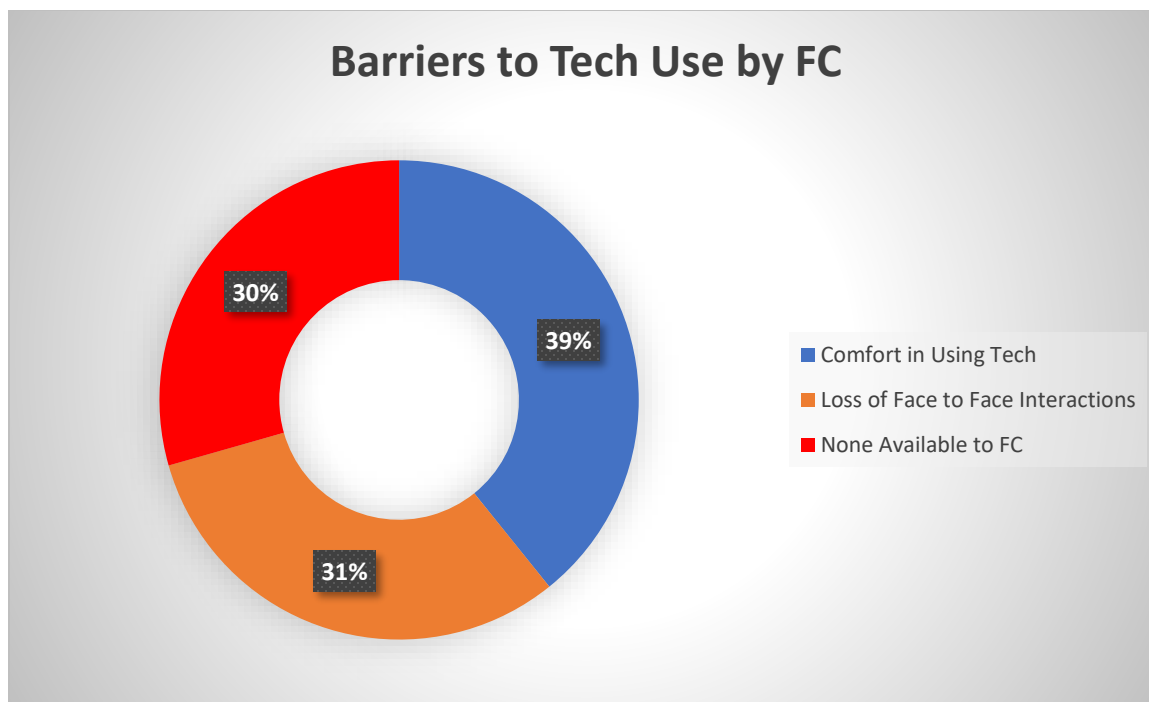
What technology is available for Councils to Use

The most common type of technology available for Councils to use is e-mails (68%). Most family Councils do not have access to VoIP, synchronous, online meeting platforms and teleconferencing technology.

Figure 35- Types of Technology available to Family Councils

Types of Technology available to FC

Legend: Available, Not Available, Unsure
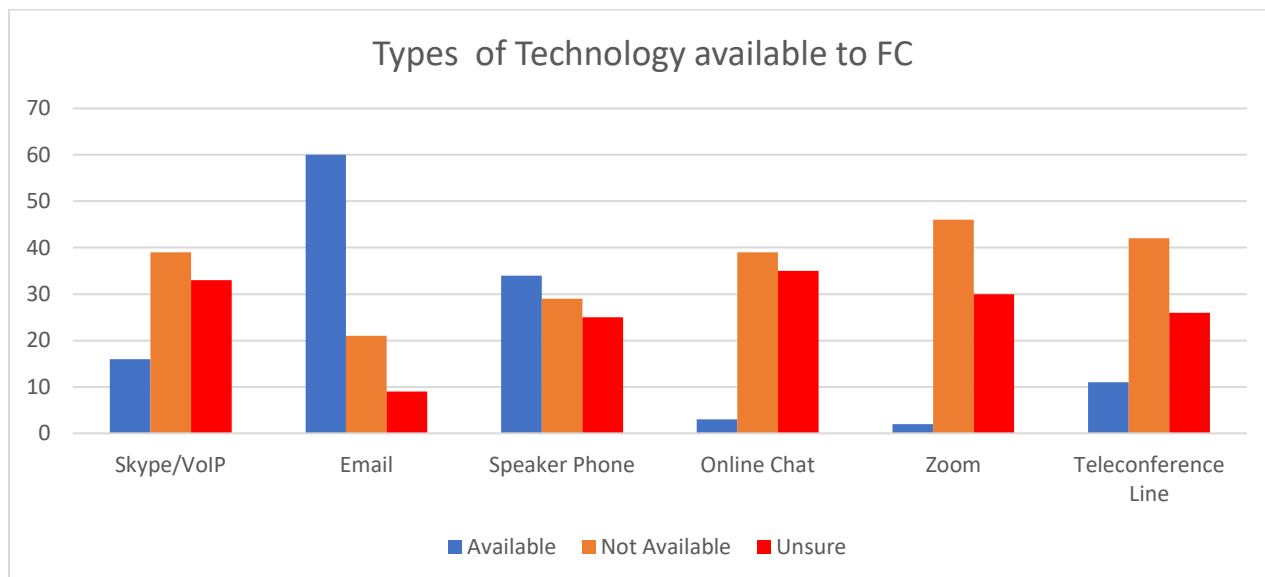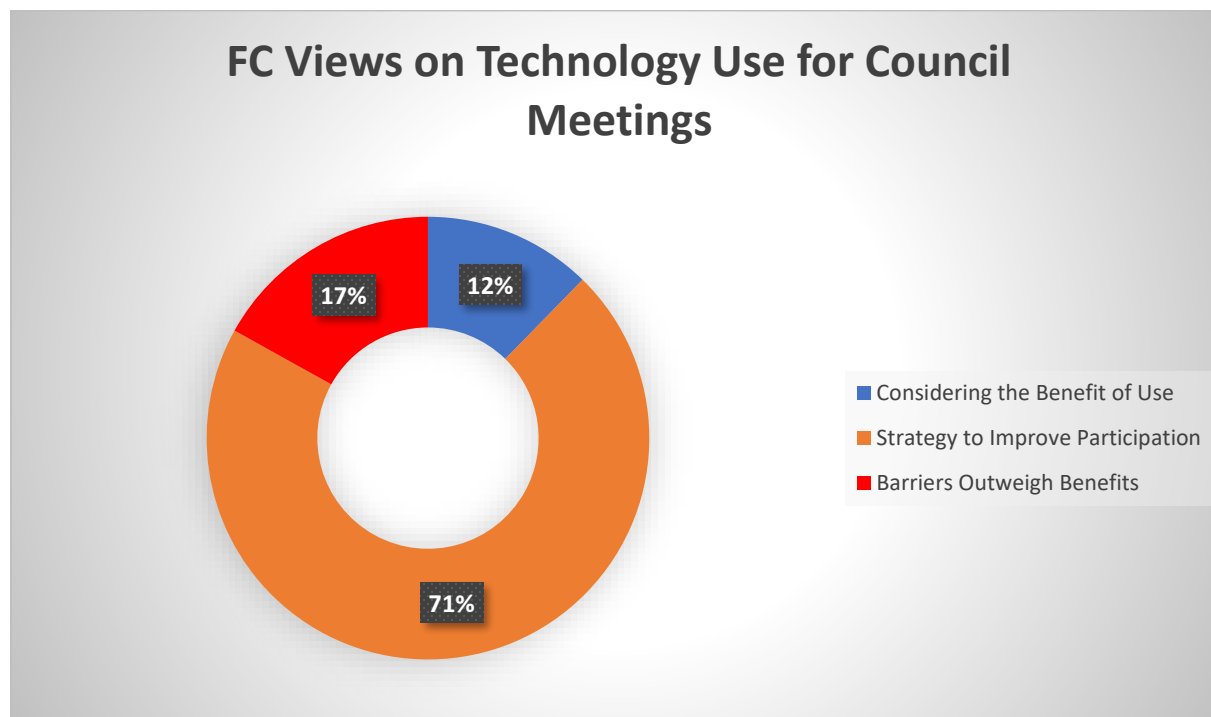
Benefits of technology use for family councils

Family Councils were open to the use of technology in their meetings. **Most Councils recognized technology as a strategy to improve participation/attendance at meetings and improve communication between family members (71%).** Family members saw the main benefit of using technology was to include family members who live further away from the home, as well as provide an opportunity to participate for those who normally could not attend Council meetings in person. Providing flexibility in the mode of participation was viewed as one way Family Councils could improve attendance at meetings.

Councils also saw the use of technology to help to engage diverse perspectives and feedback. While families were aware of the risks tied to the use of technology, they still sensed the benefits of use outweighed the risks (17%). Technology is readily available; however, it can only be used by those members who have access to the resources needed as homes are unable to support Councils in providing resources to include all families in meetings. Council members recognized the challenges in managing behaviours during in-person meetings and sensed that there would be additional complications tied to behaviour during virtual meetings.

Prior to COVID-19, 12% of family members noted their Councils were considering the use of technology to promote engagement in their meetings. Council members felt optimistic and viewed technology held the potential to be helpful. One family member shared they felt that using technology was a "***great idea for those who don't mind using technology***", while another council member revealed how this question has "***given them something to think about.***"

Unfortunately, when Councils were meeting in-person within the long-term care home family members noted the support of staff/administration played key role in the process of incorporating technology into their meetings. Family members were honest in sharing how they would be open to using technology for their meetings but "***only if the home is willing to support set up and use.***" Council members have varying levels of comfort with technology and would need to consider the time and skills needed to ensure the use of technology was beneficial to their meeting. As one family member shared "***I work in IT and distance technology used in meetings is very difficult to monitor and maintain during a meeting situation. It also adds a lot of time to the delivery of a meeting. People have to weigh the time/effort of delivering distance tech meetings with the amount of people participating in a meeting.***" In other words, if the Council is small and only a few people were going to attend the meeting then there are few benefits to the use of technology when it is possible for Council members to continue to meet in-person.

Figure 36- Family Members View on Using Technology for Council Meetings

FC Views on Technology Use for Council Meetings

- Considering the Benefit of Use
- Strategy to Improve Participation
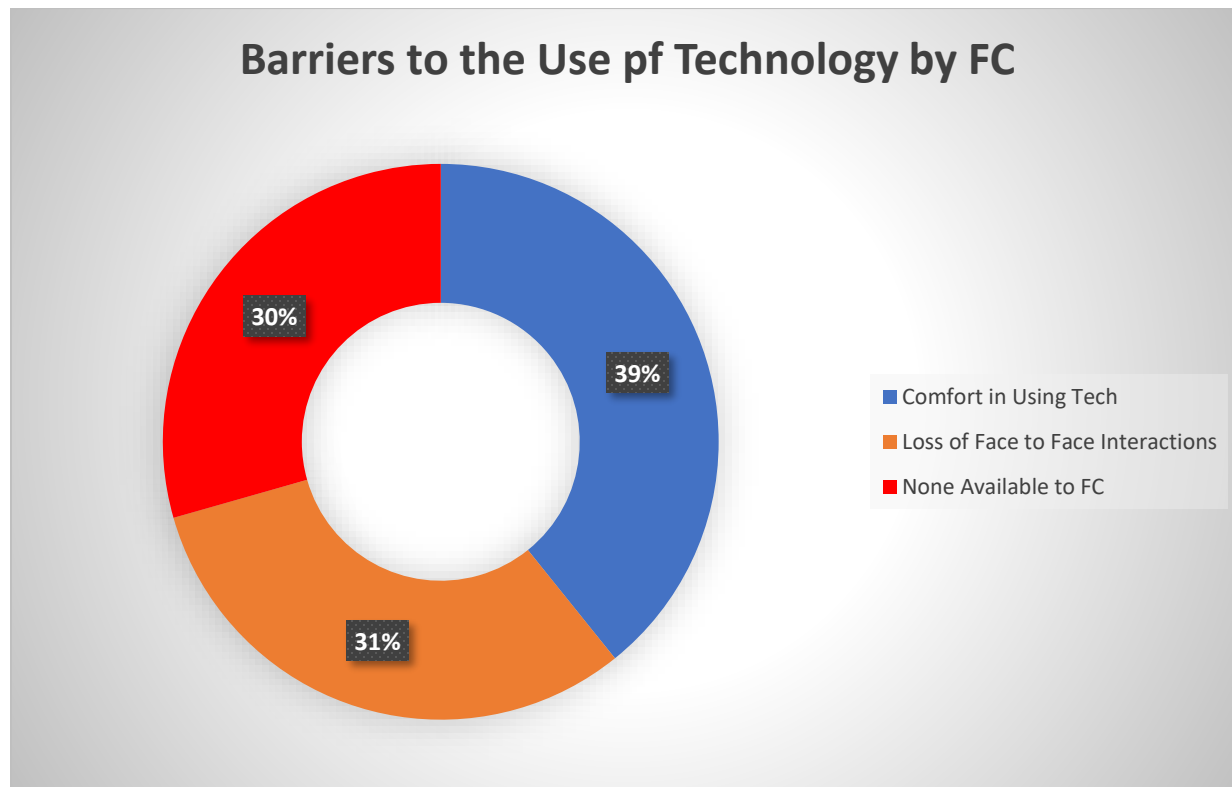- Barriers Outweigh Benefits

12%
17%
71%

Perceived Barriers to Using Technology in Council Meetings

While family members are open to the use of technology in meetings, they also recognized barriers exist to the use of technology. Most Family Councils and family members noted their **level of comfort with technology/skill in using technology (digital literacy) as the main barrier to implementation of technology in their Council meetings (39%).** Family members noted that age played a role in comfort with technology, noting the range of digital literacy in Council members. They also recognized the potential for concerns about security and the ability to maintain confidentiality during meetings. One family member shared "***some people are apprehensive of technology and 'who' may be listening. Meeting face to face is always preferable.***"

Privacy of what is shared during meetings by family members was also tied to the expressed preference for face-to-face interaction**. Families overwhelmingly supported the benefits of meeting face to face (31%), and felt the loss of the in-person discussion would lead to a decrease in attendance/family member engagement with the Family Council**. Council members felt it would be challenging to develop relationships between members in a virtual environment and increased the risk of miscommunication and misunderstanding between Council members.

Family members revealed limited availability/access to technology was another prominent barrier to the use of technology during Family Council meetings (30%). The cost of technology was also recognized as a potential barrier. Family members recognized that technology could also create an additional distraction during virtual meetings, with poor quality connections creating issues with video/sound.

Figure 37- Perceived Barriers to Use of Technology by Family Councils

Barriers to the Use pf Technology by FC

- Comfort in Using Tech
- Loss of Face to Face Interactions
- None Available to FC

39% · 31% · 30%

Family Council Interest in Webinar on using Technology

Prior to COVID-19, **67% of family members were interested in a webinar focused on the use of technology to facilitate a Family Council meeting**.

Figure 38- Interest in a Webinar on Technology & Family Council Meetings

Interest in Webinar on Technology & FC Meetings

33%

67%

- Yes
- No
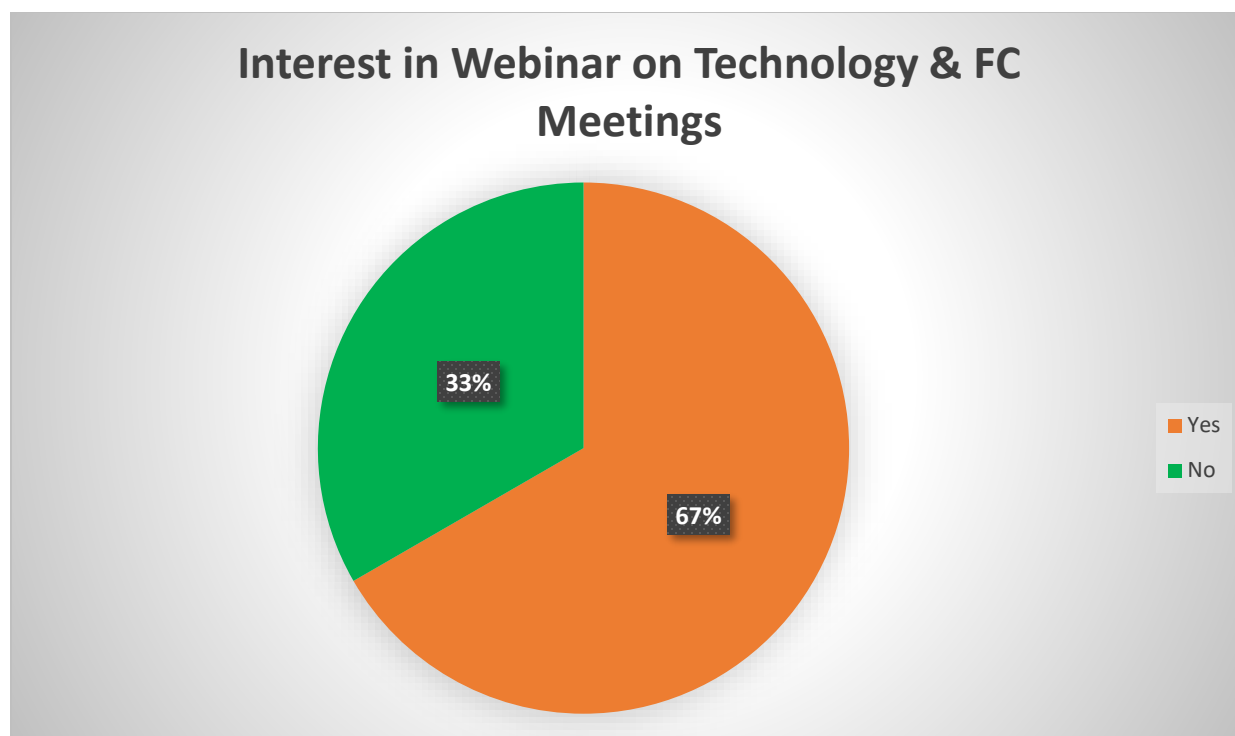
Current Family Council Ontario Education and Training Resources

Knowledge of Current FCO Resources

Staff and family members shared in their awareness of where and how they could access FCO resources. Most staff (89%) and Family Council members revealed that they know where and how they can access FCO resources (73%). A small fraction of staff (11%) family members don't know how to access FCO resources (27%). Despite the overwhelming knowledge of where FCO resources can be found, **family members (65%) and staff (68%) occasionally access these resources for their work.**

Figure 39- Level of Family Member Awareness of How to Access FCO Resources
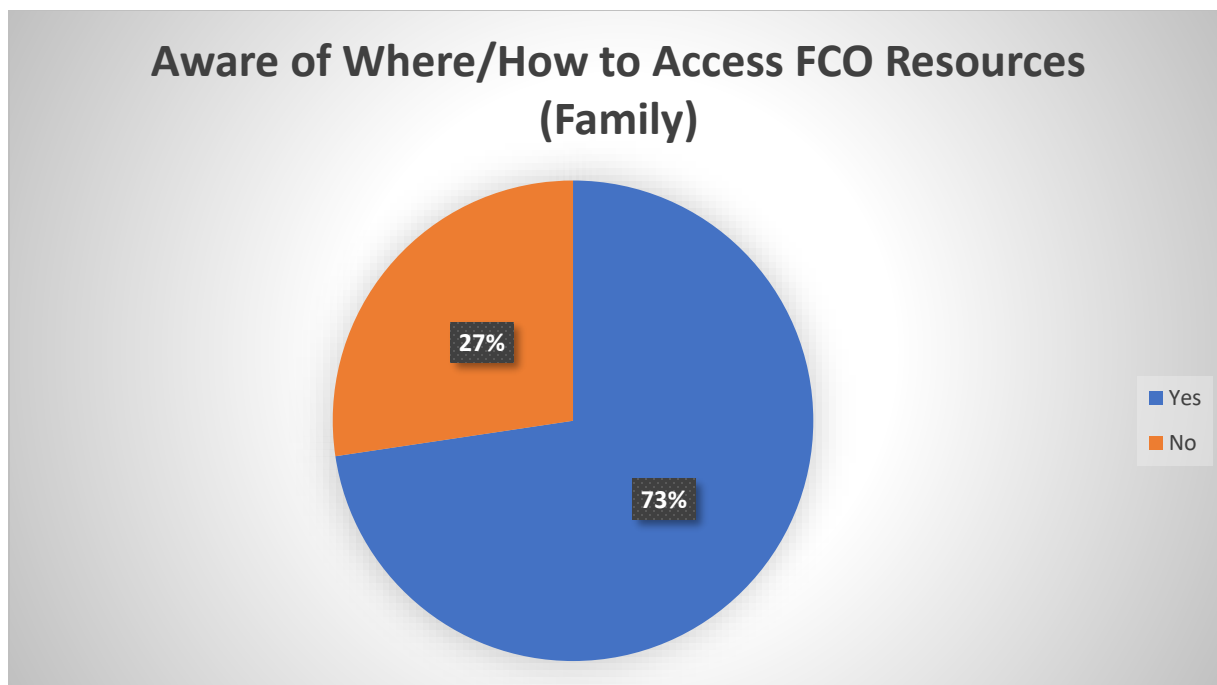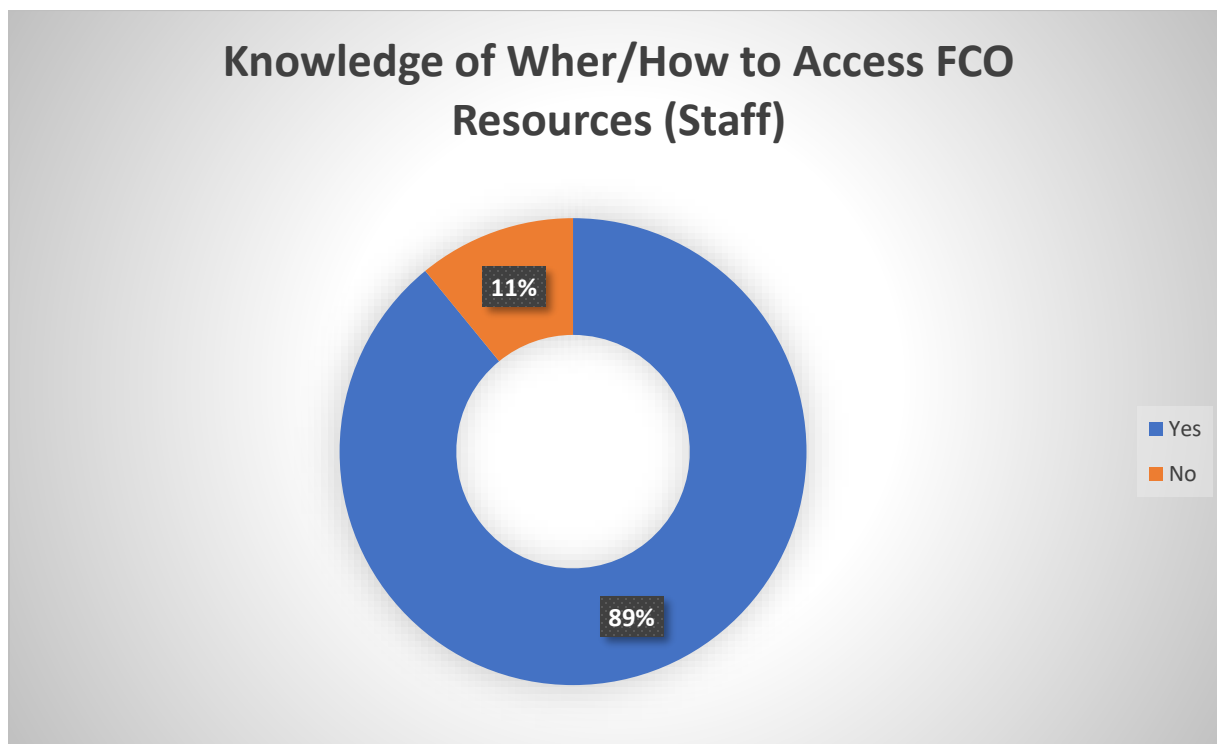

Aware of Where/How to Access FCO Resources (Family)

- Yes
- No

Figure 40- Level of Staff Awareness of How to Access FCO Resources

Knowledge of Wher/How to Access FCO Resources (Staff)

- Yes
- No

Barriers Use of FCO Resources

Family members cited limited knowledge as the main barriers to use of FCO resources. Accordingly, **70% of family who completed the survey revealed they did not know that FCO offered resources to support family members and Family Councils**. Being a new member of the Council, or a newly formed Council were some of the reasons why family members were unaware of FCO resources. Like families, staff also cited limited knowledge as the main reason why they did not access FCO resources (68%). Staff also noted limited time to explore FCO resources as a barrier to their use (13%).

Extent Current FCO Resources Meet Family Council Needs

Staff and Family Councils agreed that current FCO resources are successful in meeting their needs. Accordingly, **65% of family members and 85% of staff felt that the resources FCO offers are helpful in meeting the current needs of Family Councils**.

Families and staff shared in their recognition that limited knowledge of FCO resources that exist was the main reason why current FCO resources failed to meet the current needs of Family Councils. Families also noted the need for virtual options for education, as they are often hesitant to drive to Toronto for in-person sessions, they also expressed interest in additional training and resources focused on supporting the creation of Family Council regional networks/networking between Councils.

Which FCO Resources are Useful?

Families (73%) and staff (81%) identified the FCO website as the most useful resource. The FCO handbook "Your Guide to Starting and Maintaining a Family Council" was identified by family members (62%) and staff (68%) as another popular resource. Families also found the e-bulletins (59%), FCO fact sheets (36%) and webinars (33%) as useful resources to support them and their work. Staff found the e-bulletin (64%), FCO webinars (40%), fact sheets (39%) and phone/ e-mail consultations (33%) as additional resources that were useful to them.

Surprisingly, **prior to COVID-19, survey results for both staff and families indicates that many of the available FCO resources are underutilized**. Accordingly, 79% of family members and 85% of staff have not used the FCO blog. Unfortunately, 76% of family members noted that they have not used FCO social media or attend in-person workshops offered by FCO. Similar to families, 81% of staff noted they have never participated in an FCO workshop and 80% of staff note they do not follow FCO on Social Media.

Figure 41- Family Member's Use of FCO Resources

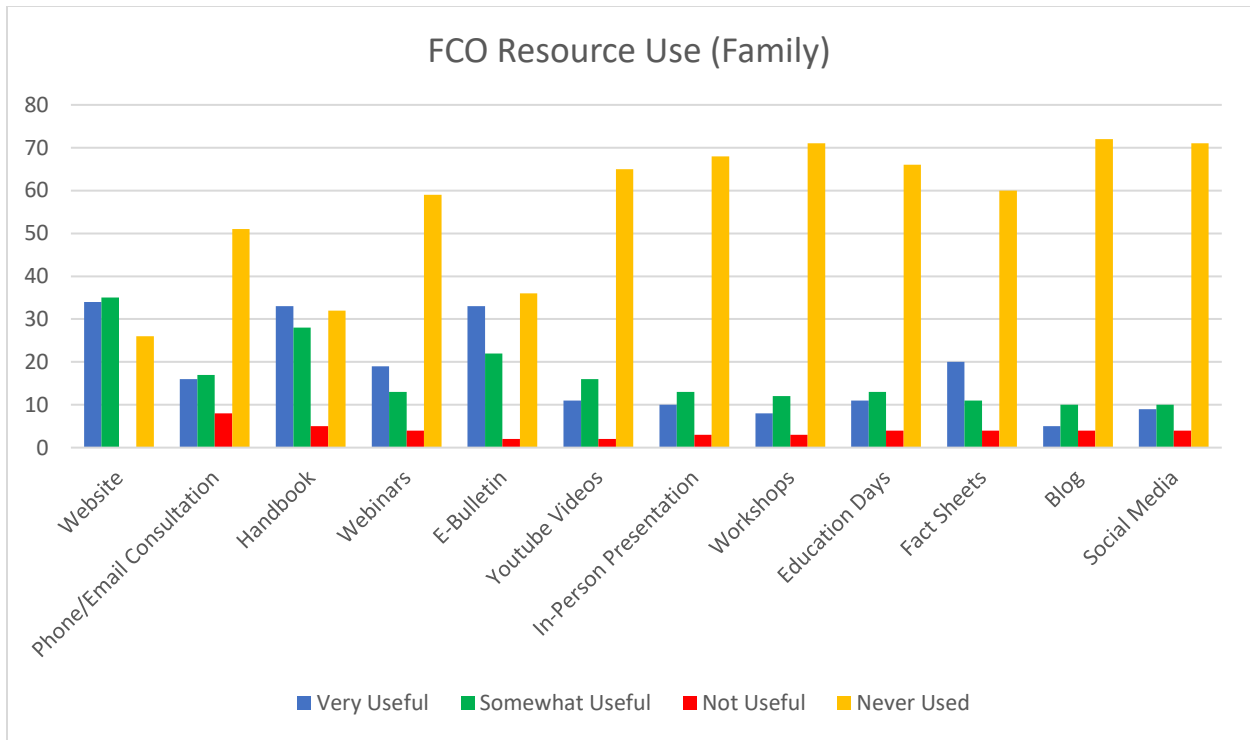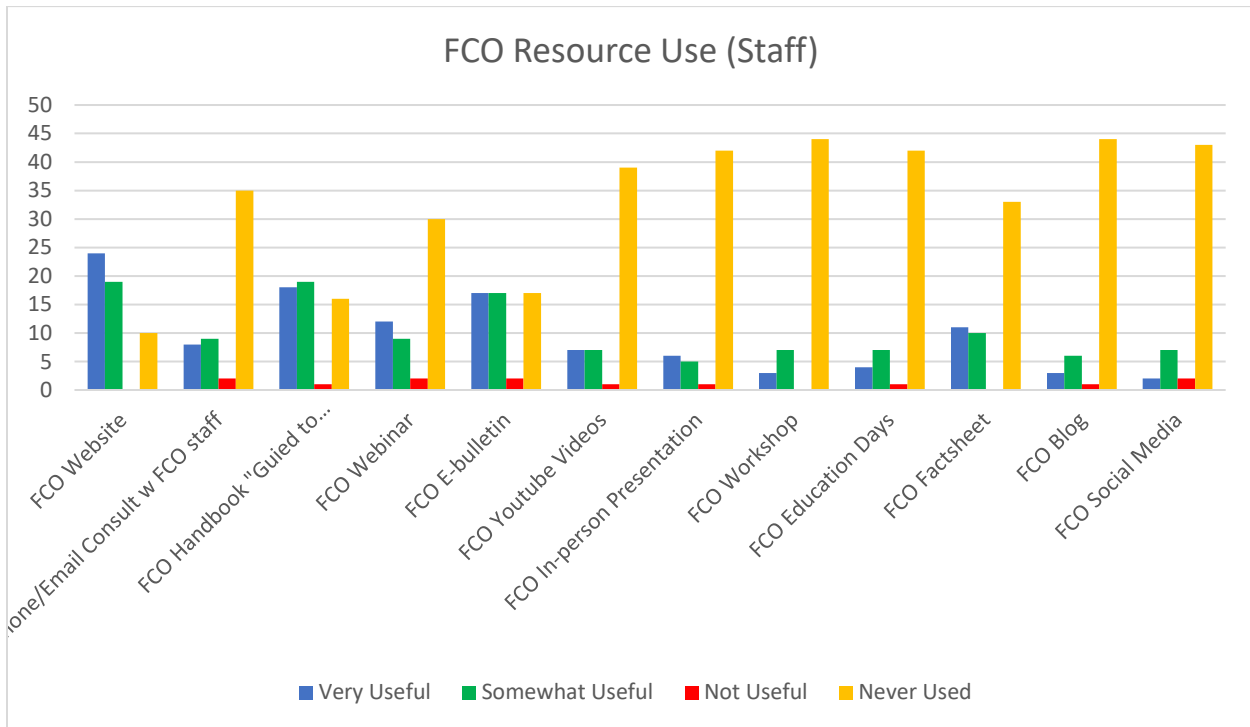

FCO Resource Use (Family)

Legend: ■ Very Useful ■ Somewhat Useful ■ Not Useful ■ Never Used

Figure 42- Staff Member's Use of FCO Resources

FCO Resource Use (Staff)

Legend: ■ Very Useful ■ Somewhat Useful ■ Not Useful ■ Never Used

Stakeholders Rating of Current FCO Resources

We asked survey participants to rate current FCO resources on a scale of 1 to 5 stars, with 1 being low and 5 being the highest possible score. Both family and staff scores reveal that FCO is effective in supporting stakeholders through the resources we provide. Overall, **65% of staff felt FCO resources were effective.** Accordingly, 35% of staff would give a rating of 4 stars, and 28% of staff would give a rating of 5 stars. Staff had a slightly higher average of 4/5 stars than family with an average score of 3/5 stars. Accordingly, **40% of families felt FCO resources were effective in supporting Family Councils**. Overall, 23% of family members would give a rating of 4 stars, and 17% would give a rating of 5 stars.

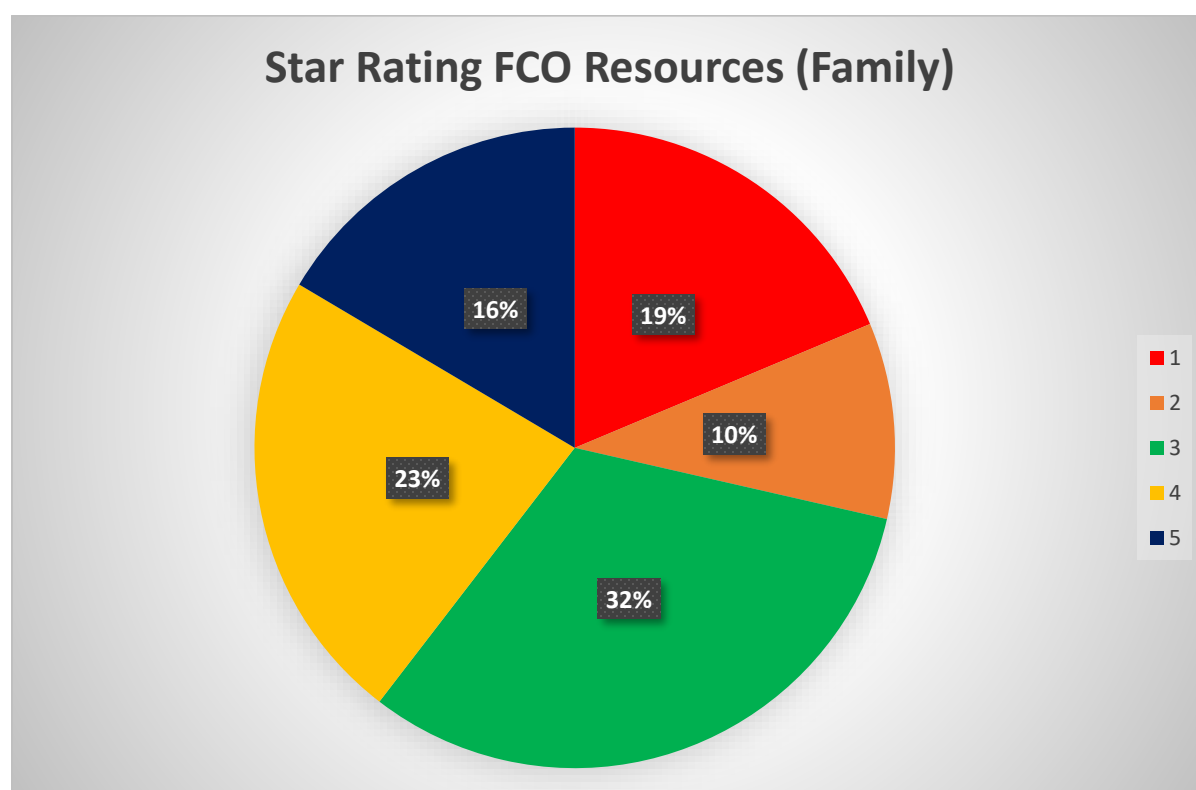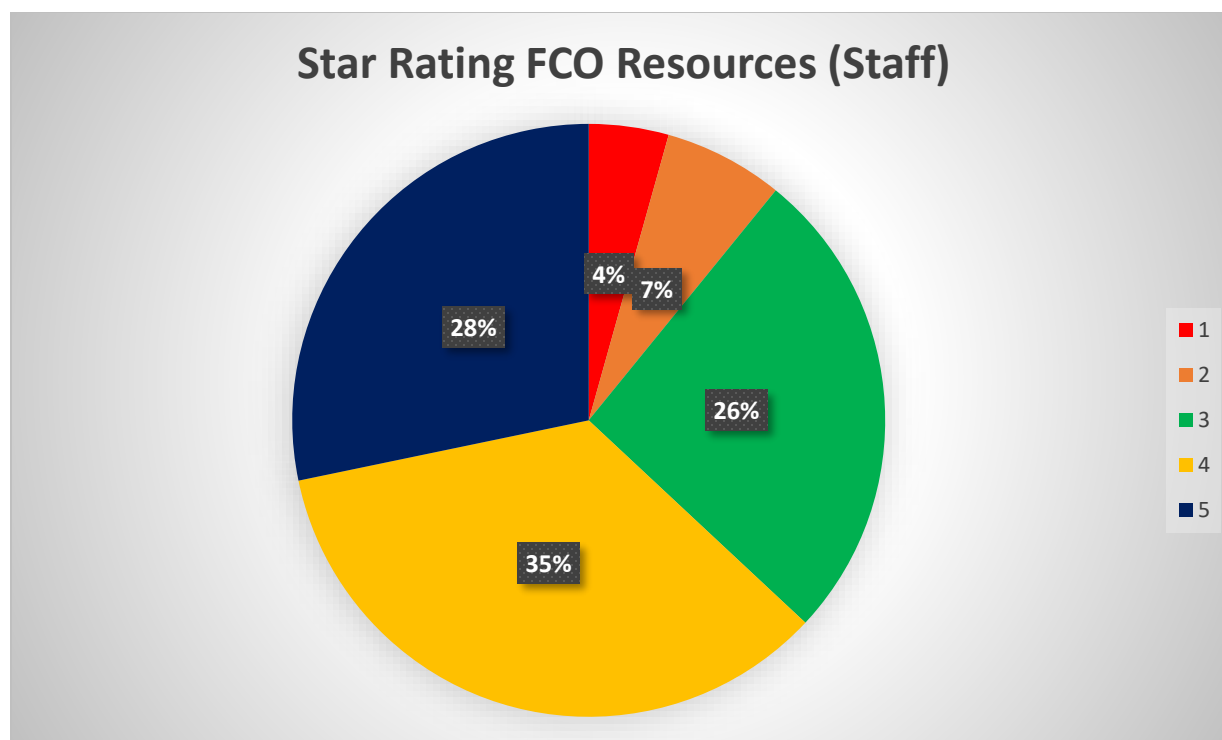*Figure 43- Family Rating of Current FCO Resources (Out of 5 Stars)*

Figure 44- Staff Rating of Current FCO Resources (Out of 5 Stars)

Which FCO Resources Benefit Stakeholders?

Family members and staff differed in their recognition of the resources that they sensed have been most beneficial to them and their work with Family Councils. **Overall, 33% of family members felt they have not directly benefitted from FCO resources.** This answer may reflect the limited awareness of FCO resources shared by family members in an earlier answer. Of the resources that family members have used, **27% of family members felt that presentations were the FCO resource that have the greatest benefit to them and their Council.** Additional resources family members felt have helped them and their Councils include:

- The FCO handbook (20%)
- FCO website (12%)
- E-bulletins (8%)

In contrast to families, **47% of staff felt that e-mails and e-bulletins from FCO were the resource that has been the most beneficial to them and their role**. Additional resources that staff sensed were helpful to them in their role were the FCO handbook (29%), FCO website/webinars (12%) and FCO workshops (6%).

Figure 45- Family Member's Understanding of the Best FCO Resources

Beneficial FCO Resources (Family)

- Presentation — 27%
- Handbook — 20%
- Website — 12%
- Newsletter — 8%
- Other — 33%
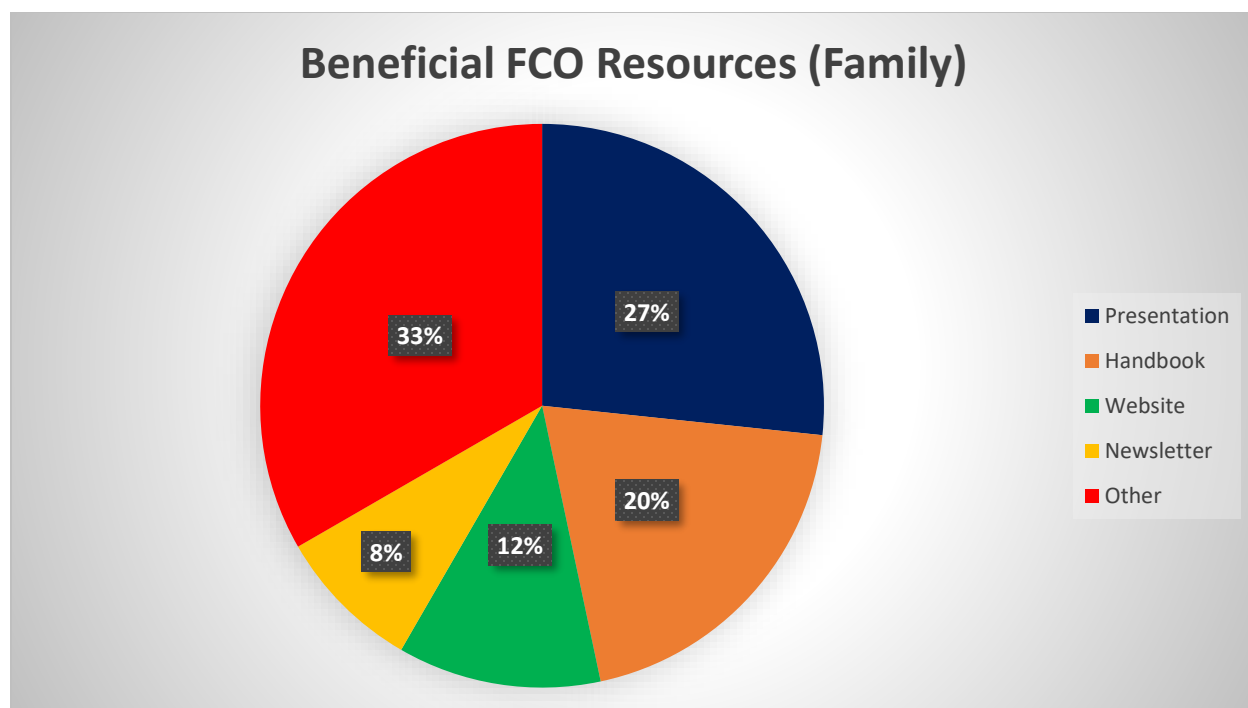
Figure 46- Staff Understanding of the Best FCO Resources

Beneficial FCO Resources (Staff)

- Handbook — 29%
- Webinars — 12%
- E-bulletins — 47%
- Workshops — 6%
- Presentations — 6%
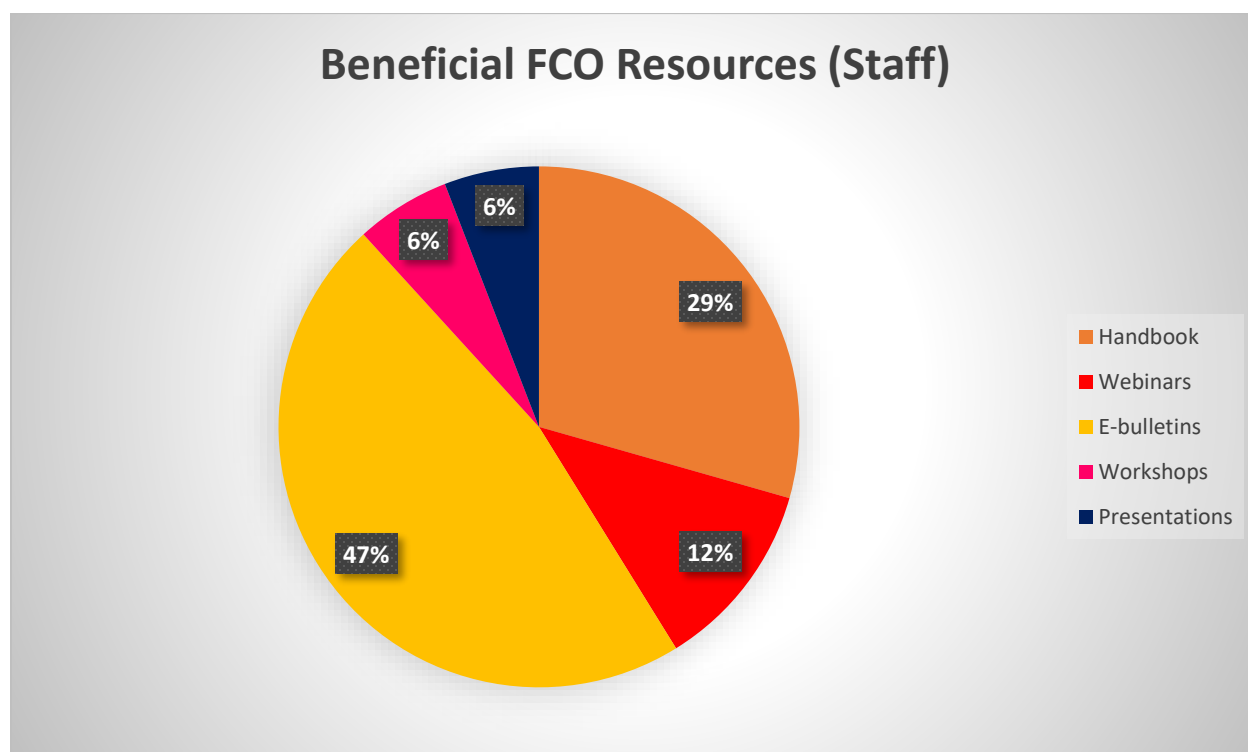
Does Location impact FCO Resource Availability?

Staff and family members agreed that the location of their long-term care home was not a factor shaping the availability of FCO resources to support them and their Family Council. Accordingly, **62% of family members and 58% of staff answered "No"** that location does not impact the service and resources available to them through FCO. While most staff and families recognized that the location of their home did not impact their service or the resources available to them, 38% of families and 42% of staff felt that location did play a role in FCO resource availability.

Many families felt that the distance to get to Toronto was a barrier to accessing FCO resources (46%). Families sensed that FCO conferences and workshops are too focused on the greater Toronto Area and expressed a desire for greater geographic diversity for in-person events. One family member shared "***There is more focus on areas that have higher population density like Toronto, Ottawa, London than in Northern Communities.***" This observation was echoed by staff, who shared that many of the Family Council members they support were not interested in traveling to Toronto for events, most notably for Council members located in Northern Ontario.

The cost to attend FCO events was recognized by family members as another prominent barrier to accessing FCO resources. Accordingly, 18% of family members sensed the cost to register and travel to events outside of their community was a key barrier to attending in-person events. One unique barrier to using FCO resources noted by staff was their preference for hard copies of FCO resources (i.e. Handbook).

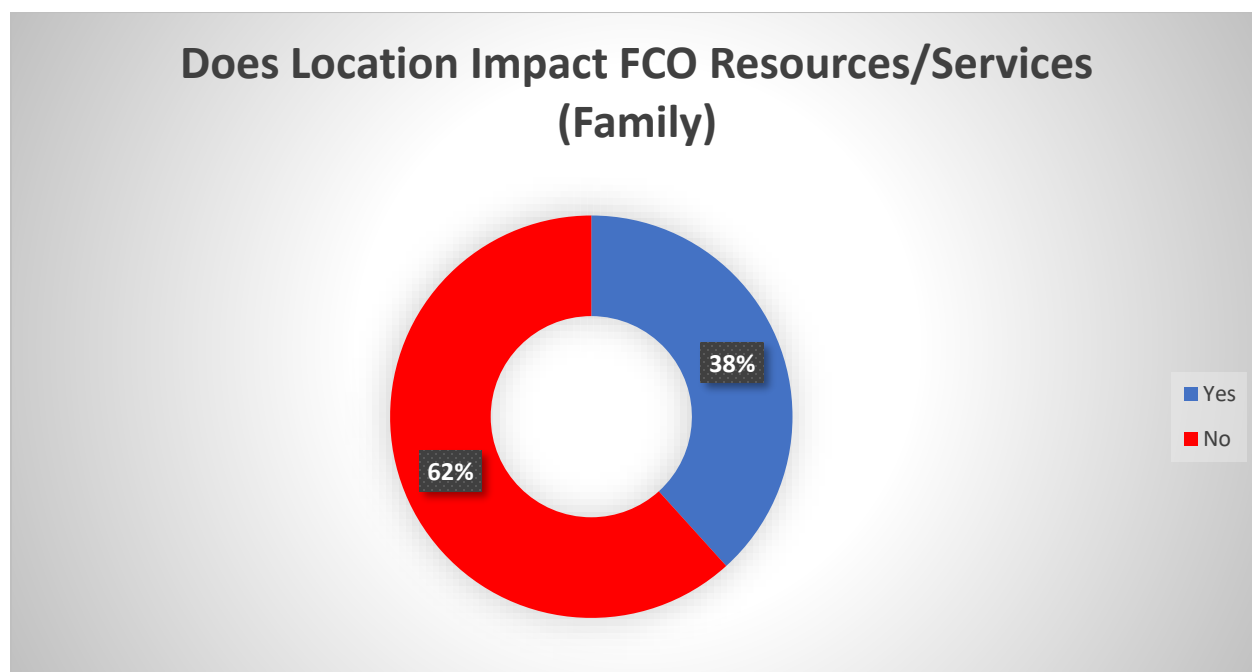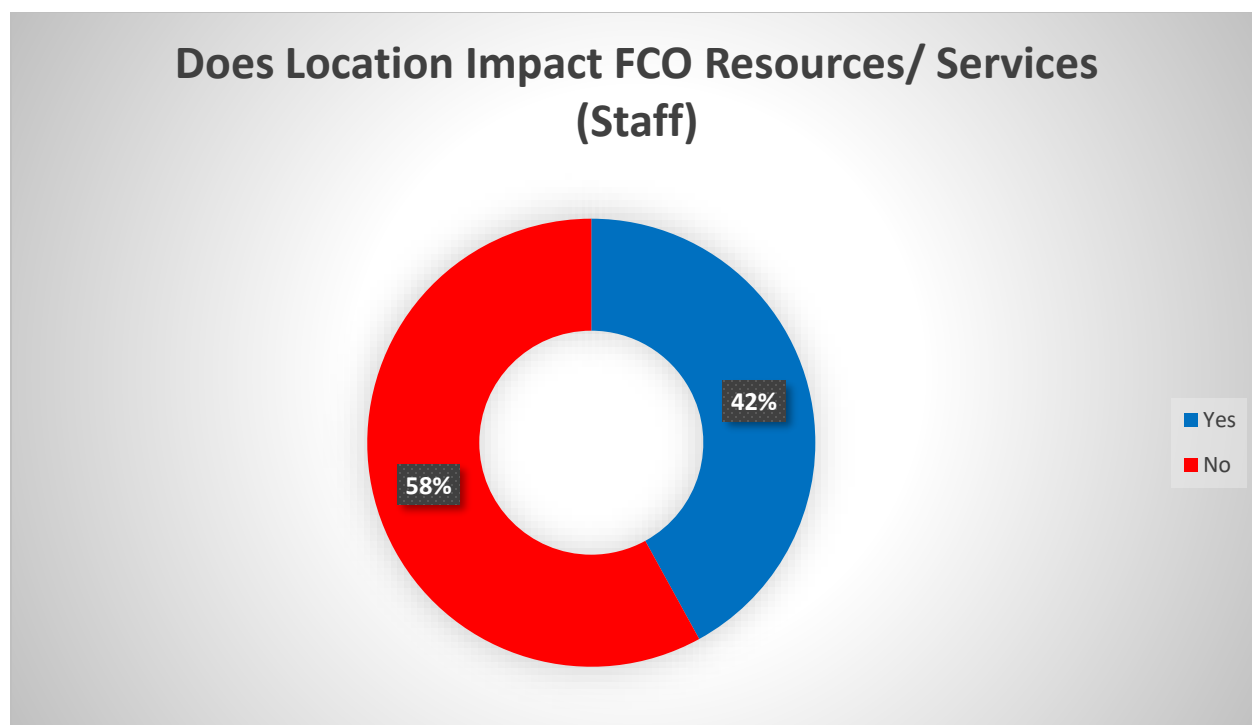*Figure 47- Family Perception of how Location Shapes Access to FCO Resources/Services*

Does Location Impact FCO Resources/Services (Family)
- 38% Yes
- 62% No

Figure 48- Staff Perception how Location Shapes Access to FCO Resources/Services

Are FCO resources easy to understand?

Families and staff agreed that most FCO resources are easy to understand. Accordingly, 87% of family members and 94% of staff felt that FCO resources are easy to understand. While most family members felt the resources were easy to understand, 13% of family members noted they felt it was challenging to understand current FCO resources. While FCO designs resources for a broad audience, some family members find the resources to be "***too easy, some are simple and seem aimed at grade level and not the dynamics of older adults with over 50 years of experience through which they filter.***" Some family members sensed the resources were not easy to understand as they have not made use of the resources available to them through FCO. Family members also expressed a preference for hard copies over digital copies of resources.

What can FCO do to make resources more accessible and user friendly?

Families agreed regarding the **need for improved communication about resources from FCO (44%)**, specifically when new resources are made available to families as well as **improved communication telling family members where they can find FCO resources and what services/supports/resources are offered to them by FCO (28%).** As one family member noted, FCO could improve communication by making "***contact with all chairs and ensure they have all the necessary information***" about where/how to find FCO resources. Some additional

suggestions from family members to help improve accessibility of FCO resources was to vary the location of in-person events/education days (17%) and to provide FCO resources in additional languages like French or Chinese (11%).

Like families, staff were in agreement about the need for improved awareness that FCO resources exist (57%). Such awareness was possible through improved communication, with staff indicating their preference for e-mails (29%) as the method used to share updates about FCO resources.

Figure 49- Family Suggestions to Improve Access to FCO Resources/Services
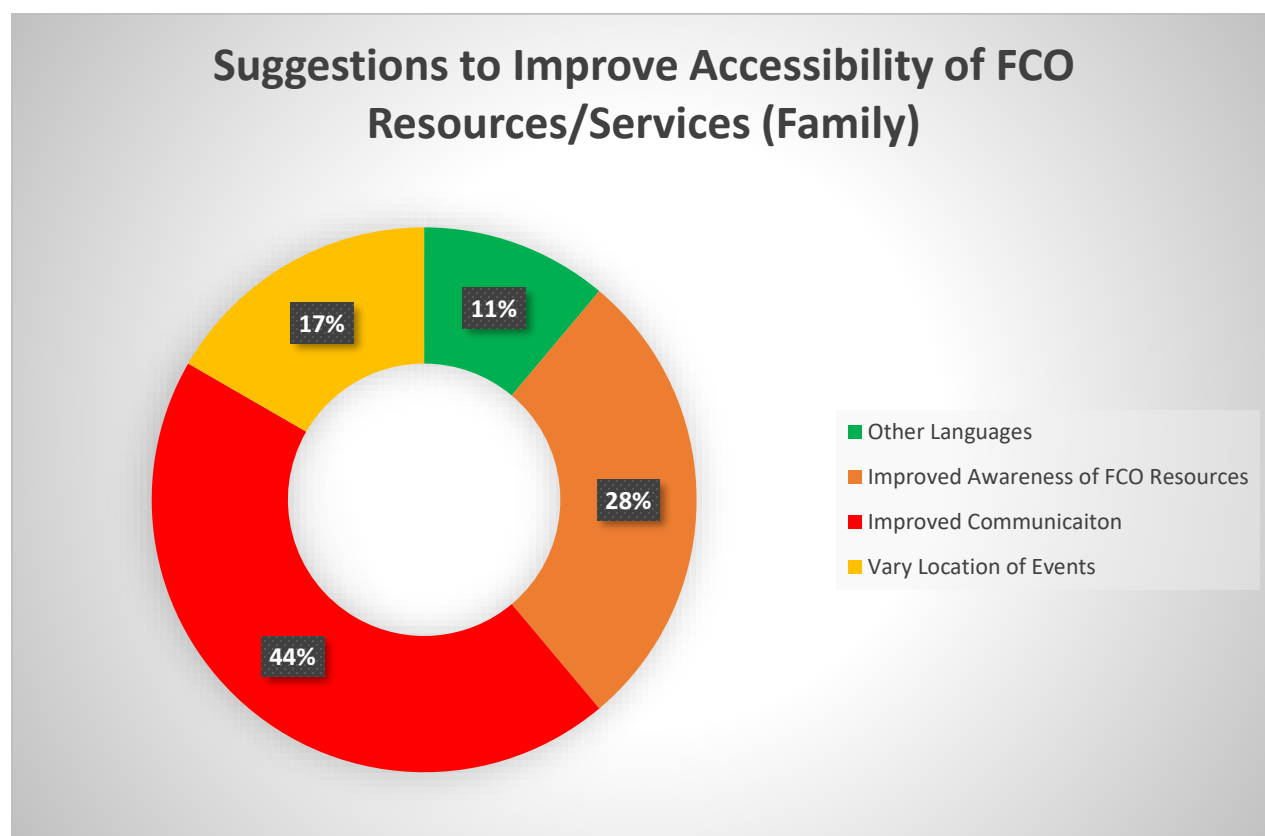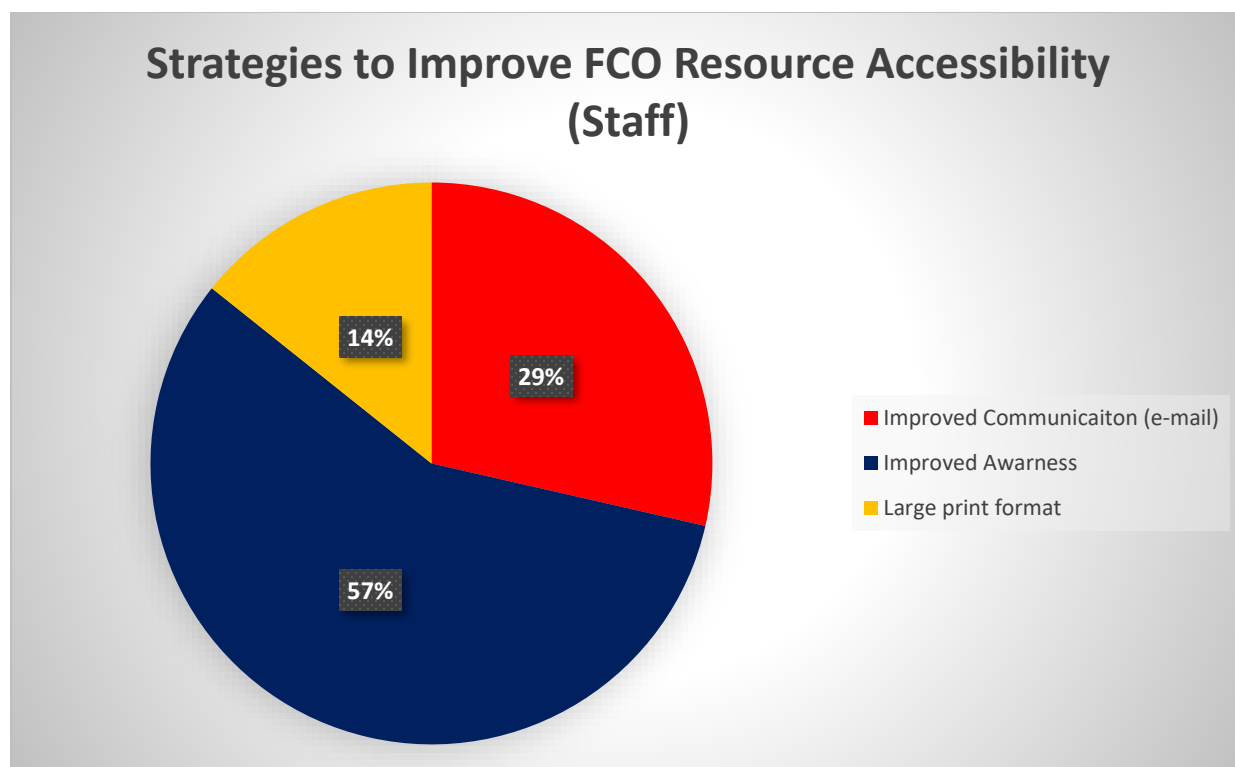

Suggestions to Improve Accessibility of FCO Resources/Services (Family)

- 11%
- 17%
- 28%
- 44%

Legend:
- Other Languages
- Improved Awareness of FCO Resources
- Improved Communicaiton
- Vary Location of Events

Figure 50- Staff Suggestions to Improve Access to FCO Resources/Services

Preferred Method of Delivery for FCO Resources

Families (86%) and staff (91%) expressed their overwhelming support that the current methods for FCO to apply to deliver resources were appropriate.

Family members (29%) and staff (26%) expressed their preference for Fact Sheets. This type of resource was highly valued by family members as they are easy to download and quick to read and find information. While families preferred hard copies of resources (23%), staff revealed they preferred webinars (21%) as the secondary method of delivery for FCO resources.

Figure 51- Family Members Preferences for Delivery of FCO Resources/Services

Preferred Mode of Delivery (Family)

- 13% Webinars
- 12% Youtube Videos
- 29% Fact Sheets
- 23% Hard Copy of Resources
- 23% In-Person Presentation
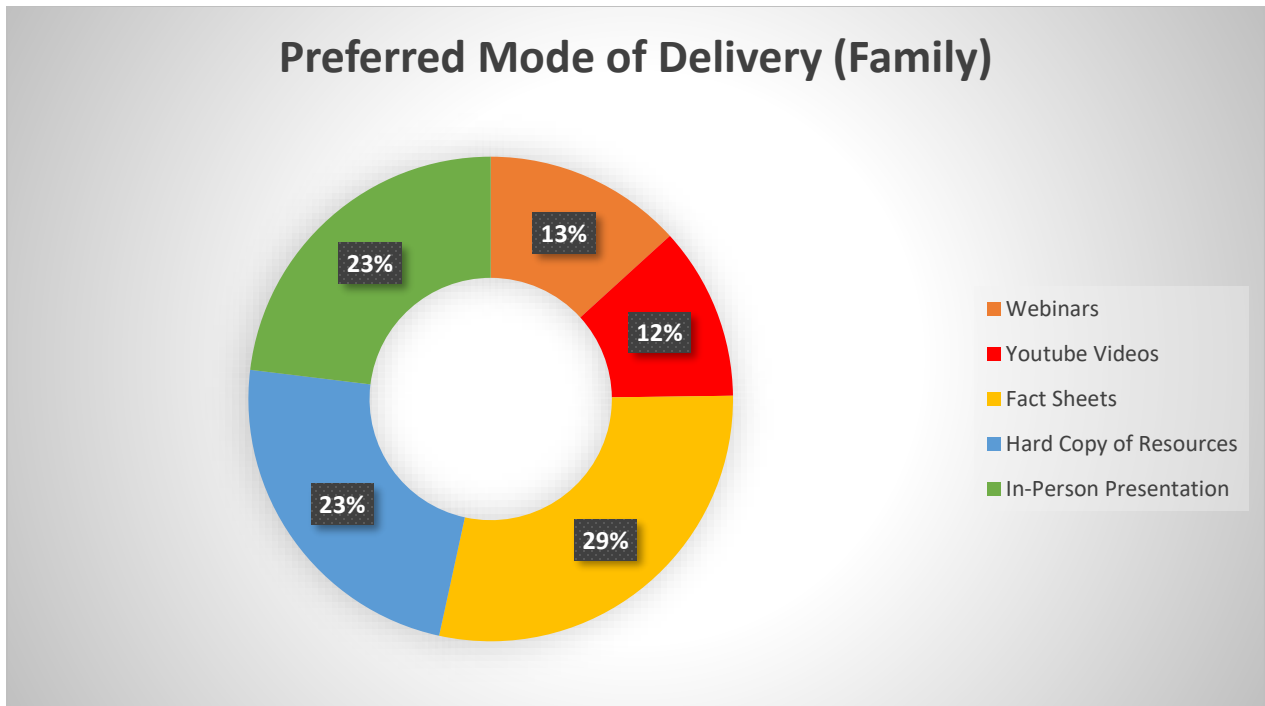
Figure 52- Staff Preferences for Delivery of FCO Resources/Services

Preferred Mode of Delivery Resources (Staff)

- 21% Webinars
- 15% Archived Webinars
- 26% Fact Sheets
- 19% Hard Copy Resources
- 19% In person workshops
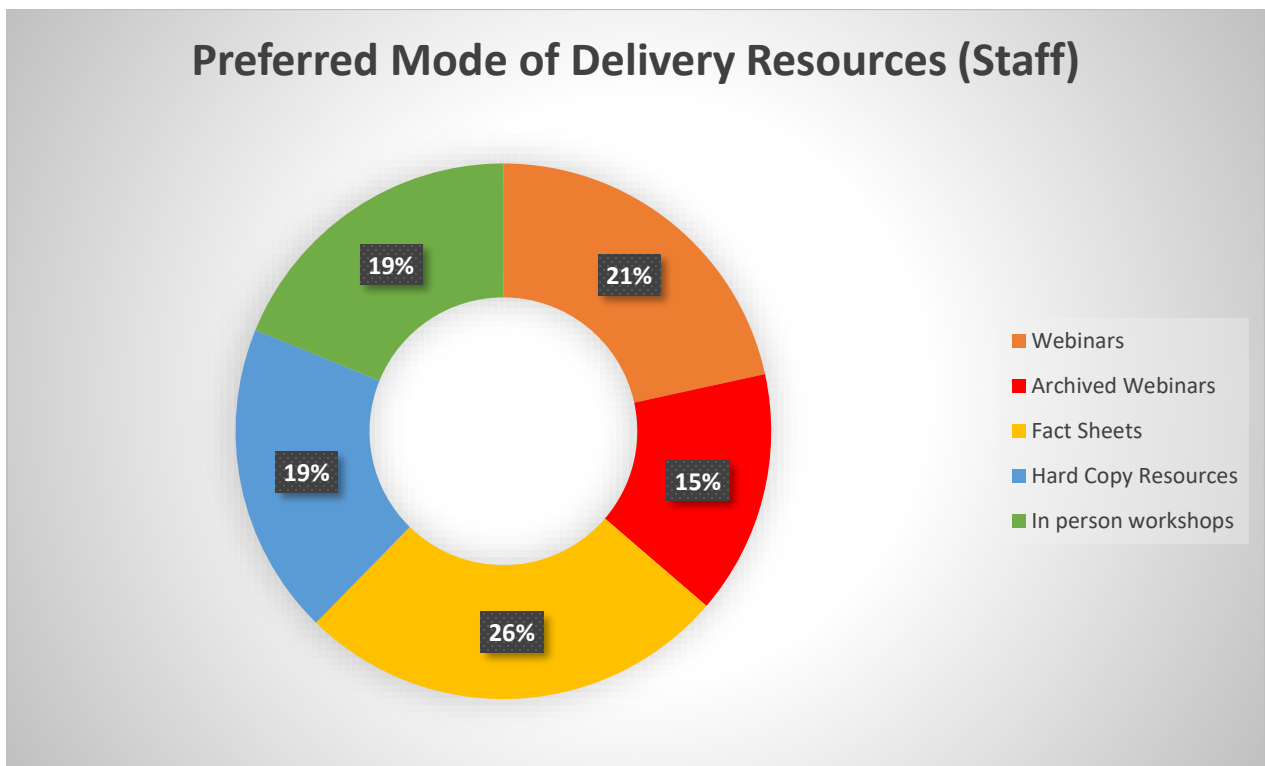
What FCO Does Well

Differences were noted between families and staff regarding what FCO does well with delivery of services and resources. Accordingly, **families responded that the FCO website served as the top resource, allowing FCO to support their work (42%).** Families sensed that the website was helpful because it was "***clear, concise and factual.***" They also noted that the website was "***easy to access***" a variety of resources, especially if the person using the FCO website was "tech savvy." Families responded that e-mails/e-bulletins (23%) and phone calls (22%) were additional forms of support/services done well by the FCO team. Families appreciated that e-bulletins were "***consistently delivered***" to them, and served as a reliable "***source of frequent updates.***" Families appreciated phone calls from the FCO team, especially when they were "***stumped and didn't understand the consequences of the questions they asked***." They appreciated the availability of bi-lingual staff, and felt that phone calls allowed them to ask "***specific questions and receive advice***."

Staff offered a different perspective on what FCO does well, with differences noted in their survey responses. Accordingly, they **appreciated how FCO offered information in a variety of formats (37%).** Staff praised the wide variety of formats used to share information with stakeholders. One staff member shared their appreciation of the use of "***varied techniques to share information, appeal to different audiences (family, staff)***." Staff found both the fact sheets, webinars, workshops and presentations were helpful resources that were done well by FCO. **Staff were also appreciative of the e-bulletin (25%) and FCO website (21%) as useful resources to them and their work**. Staff noted that the e-bulletin was "***widely read***" by the members of their home's Family Council and felt the e-bulletin was "***a way to learn about what other Family Councils are doing.***"

Figure 53- Family Understanding of What FCO Does Well

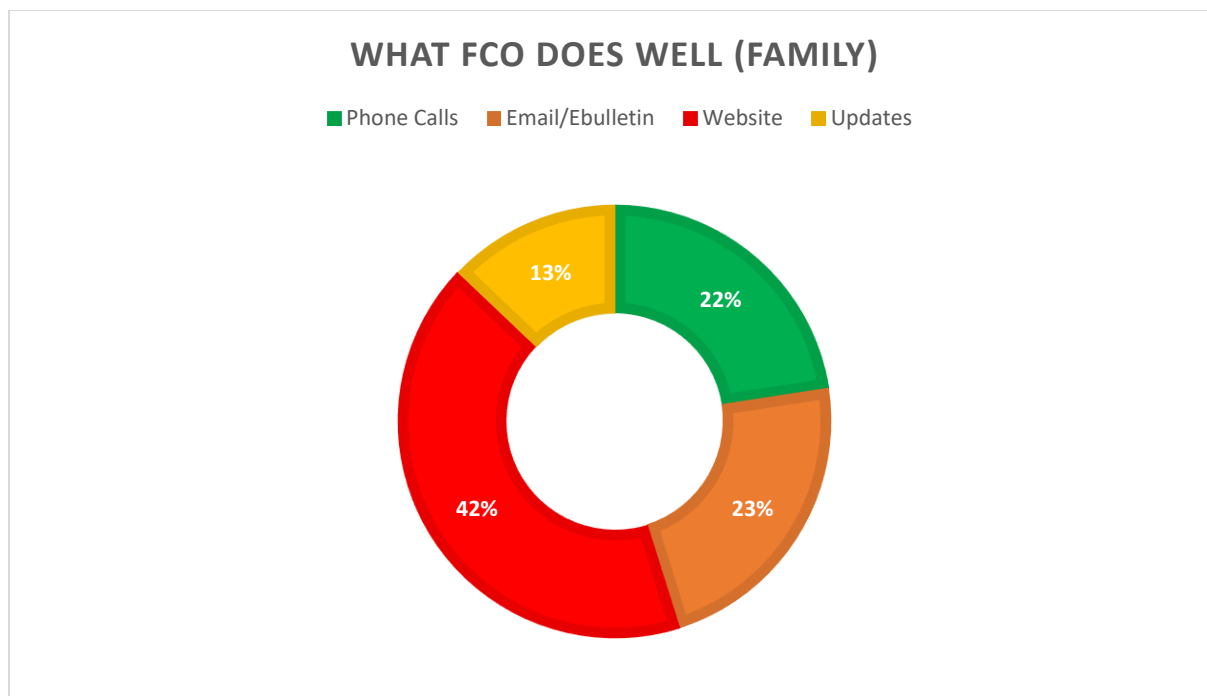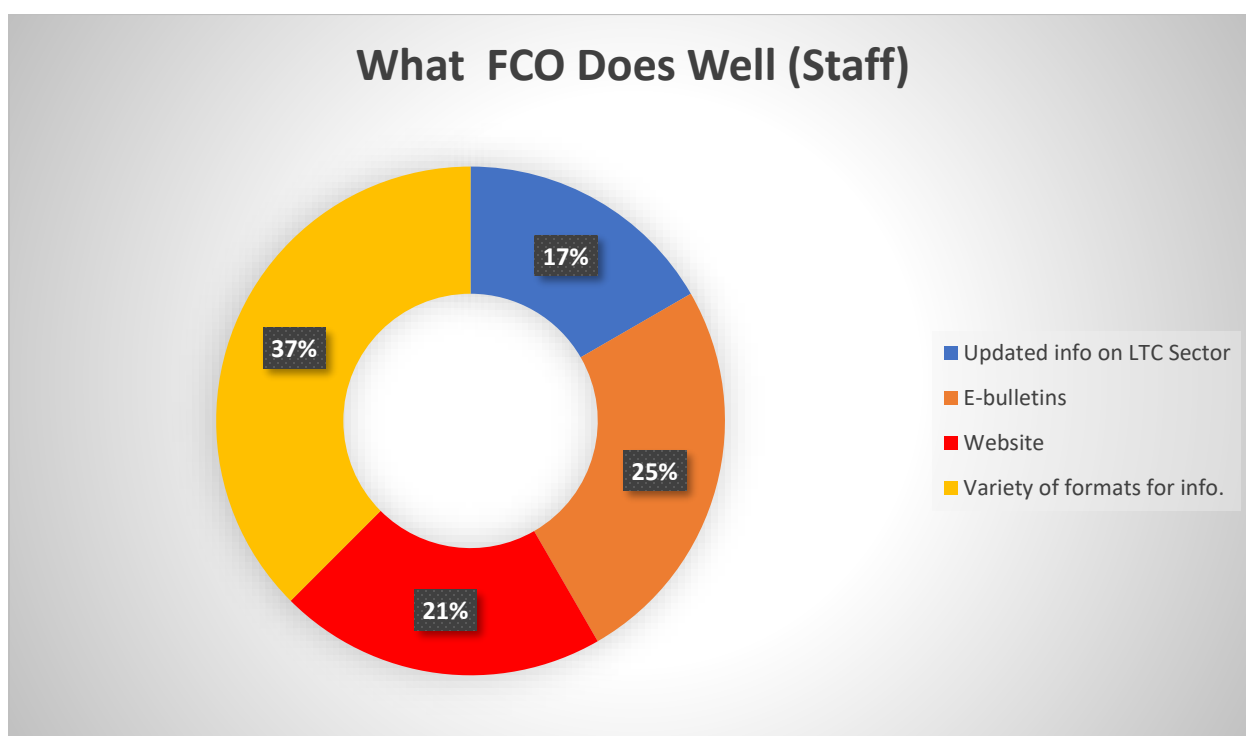**WHAT FCO DOES WELL (FAMILY)**

■ Phone Calls ■ Email/Ebulletin ■ Website ■ Updates

Figure 54- Staff Understanding of What FCO Does Well

What FCO Does Well (Staff)

■ Updated info on LTC Sector
■ E-bulletins
■ Website
■ Variety of formats for info.

Differences appeared between what staff and families identified as areas where FCO could improve in delivery of services and resources. **Staff responded that there was a need for more resources and support from FCO to help improve their correspondence between Family Council members and helping Family Councils in the same area network with each other (33%).** Staff also noted they would appreciate a specific e-mail to staff from FCO to notify them when new resources are made available (33%). A greater role in advocacy (17%) and improving awareness of FCO (17%) were some additional areas for improvement of FCO services/resources shared by staff in their survey responses.

Families responded that the most important area for FCO to improve delivery of resources and support was improved awareness of FCO and of Family Councils as an element of the current ecosystem within long-term care (45%). One family member offered the suggestion to improve awareness by "*involving FCO/local Councils in the introduction and pre-registration process when families are previewing homes they are considering*" for their loved ones. Families expressed a desire for FCO to "*have a stronger presence to families and Council members*" and felt this would be possible though "*more personal and regular contact.*"

Family members want to see more FCO events offered outside of the GTA (26%). As Family Councils exist throughout the province, family members wanted to see FCO events cover more areas of Ontario. They recognized the time to travel as well as the cost of registration and of accommodations as potential barriers to participation in FCO events/workshops. As one family member suggested "*offering workshops in areas closer to ours so we don't incur the cost of accommodations, in addition to financial support so small Family Councils can send representative to attend FCO events.*"

Family members recognized **advocacy as another area where FCO could improve the delivery of resources and services (23%)**. While they did not specific that FCO needed to be active in advocacy, families did outline how FCO could be a source of information to help support their own Family Council's efforts for advocacy. Family members wanted FCO to play a role in helping local Family Councils connect with other councils in their community and help them develop on-going communication to share ideas. Family Councils wanted FCO to provide some examples of "*typical problems in the LTC sector*" and how these specific concerns have been resolved in other countries/communities. Family members expressed an interest in more resources about culture change, person-centered care, and how they could effectively engage in advocacy for both. Families agreed that FCO could provide sector information with specific details on the number of family councils in Ontario, the types of Family Councils (structures) and the key activities of these Family Councils.

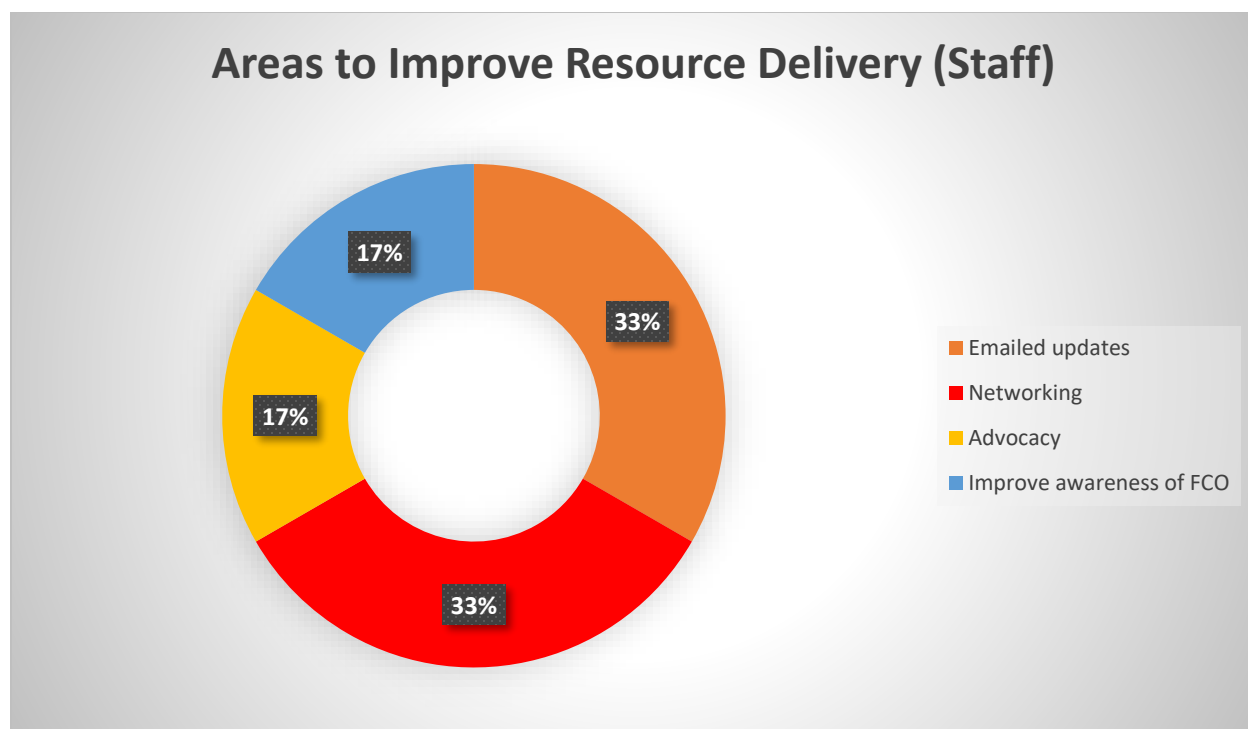*Figure 55- Staff Suggestions for Improvement in FCO Resources/Services*

Areas to Improve Resource Delivery (Staff)

- 33% Emailed updates
- 33% Networking
- 17% Advocacy
- 17% Improve awareness of FCO

Figure 56- Family Suggestions for Improvement in FCO Resources/Services

Areas to Improve Resource Delivery (Families)

- 45% Improved Awareness of FCO/FC's
- 26% Events outside of GTA
- 23% Advocacy
- 3% Strategy to Improve FCO Support
- 3% Conflict Support
- Hard copies of resources
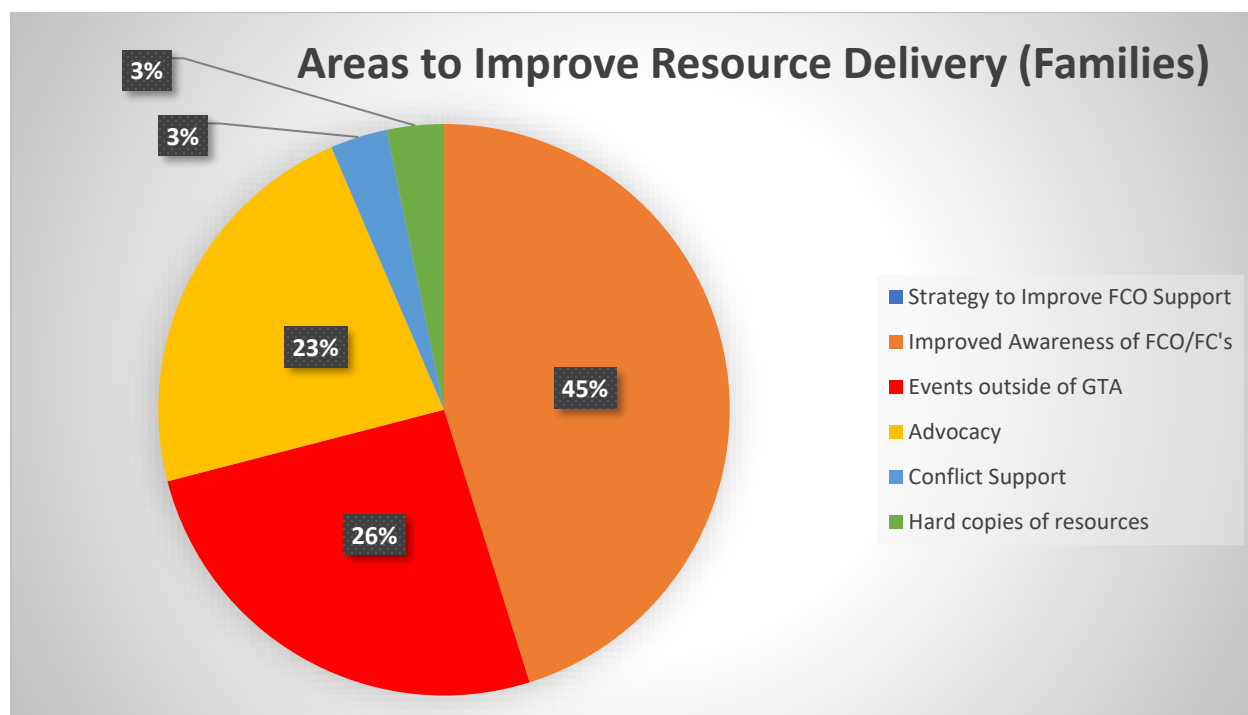
Distance willing to Travel for FCO Events

A new question asked in this survey was "*how far are you willing to travel to attend FCO events in hours of travel time?*" The most popular response from family members and staff for attending FCO event in-person was for a 2-hour FCO event. The survey results demonstrate a noted difference in the willingness of family members and staff to travel to attend FCO events in person. Accordingly, **55% of family members would drive 1 hour, while only 50% of staff would drive the same distance to attend a to attend a 2-hour FCO event.**

When traveling to attend an FCO event in the same city, 23% of family members and 32% of staff indicated they would be able to attend a 2- hour event. Unfortunately, 14% of staff noted they would be unable to attend a 2- hour FCO event in person.

Differences were also noted in the distance that staff and families willing to travel to attend a 1-day FCO event (See Figure 59 & 60). Accordingly, 46% of staff would drive 2 hours to attend a 1-day FCO event, while only 33% of families would drive 2 hours to attend the same event. Most families (43%) revealed they would drive 1 hour to attend a 1-day FCO event.

As demonstrated by Figures 61 and 62, staff are willing to drive further distances than family Council members to attend a 2-day FCO event. Accordingly, 39 % of staff would travel 2 hours, 16% would drive 3 hours, and 16% would drive 4 or more hours to attend a 2- day FCO event. Only 28% of family members completing the survey indicated they would drive more than 1 hour and 23% would drive over 4 hours to attend a 2-day FCO event.

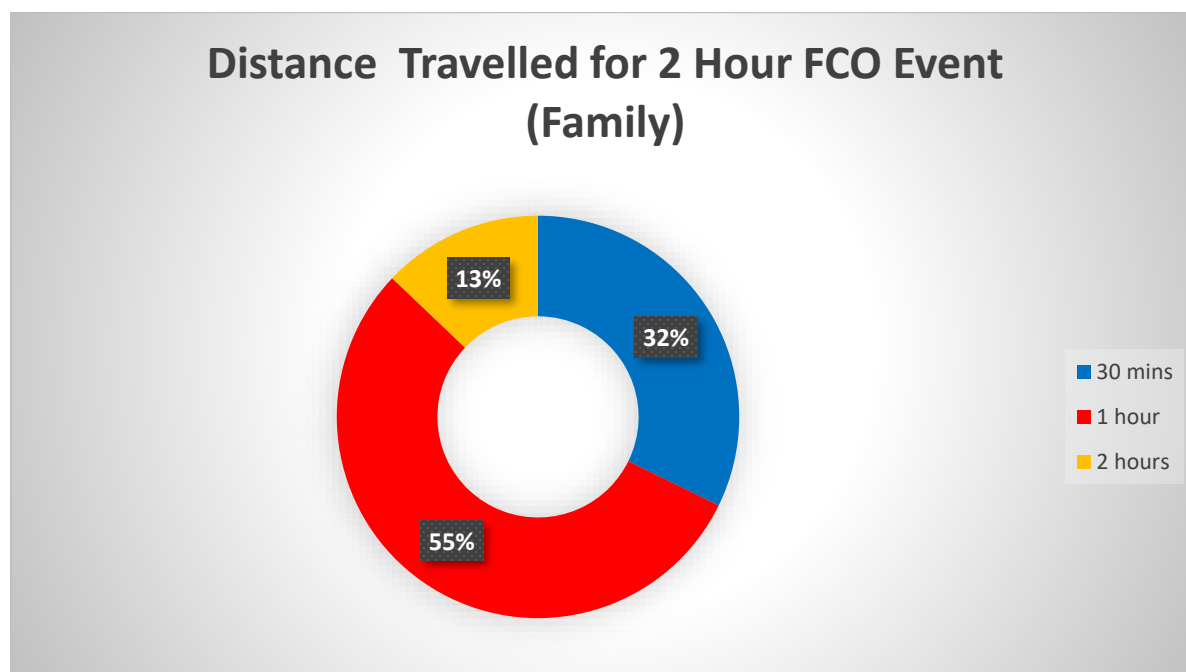*Figure 57- Distance Family Willing to Travel for a 2-hour FCO Event*

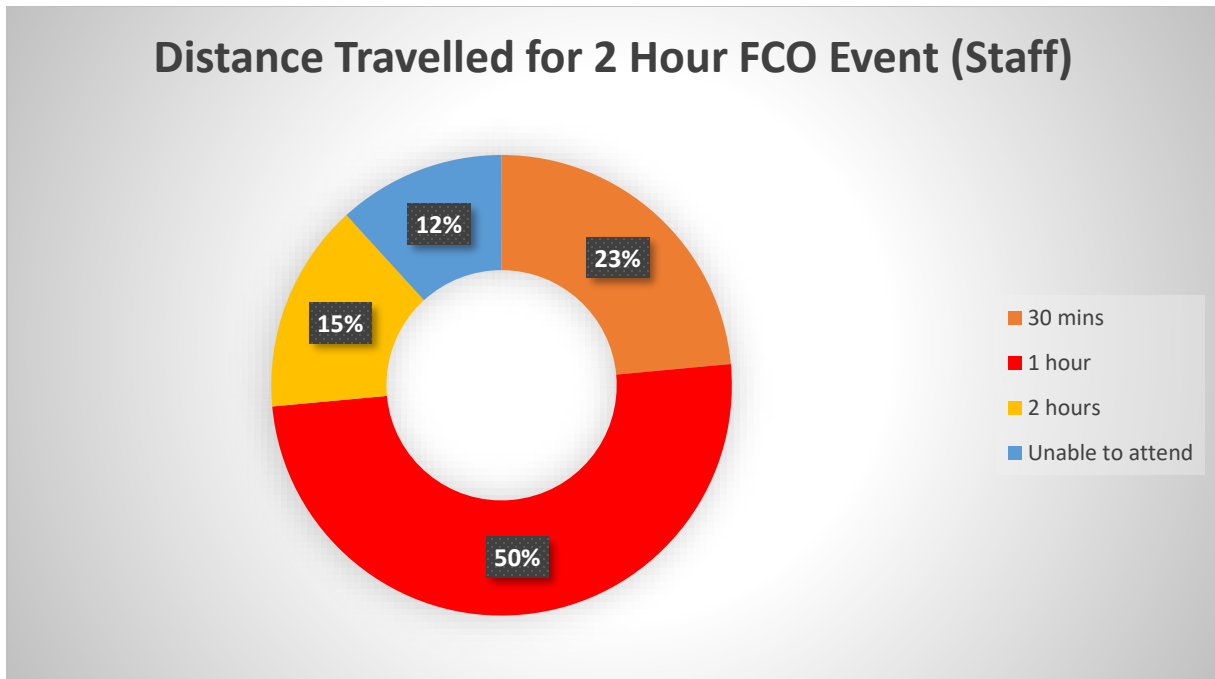*Figure 58- Distance Staff Willing to Travel for a 2-hour FCO Event*

Figure 59- Distance Family Willing to Travel for a 1-day FCO Event
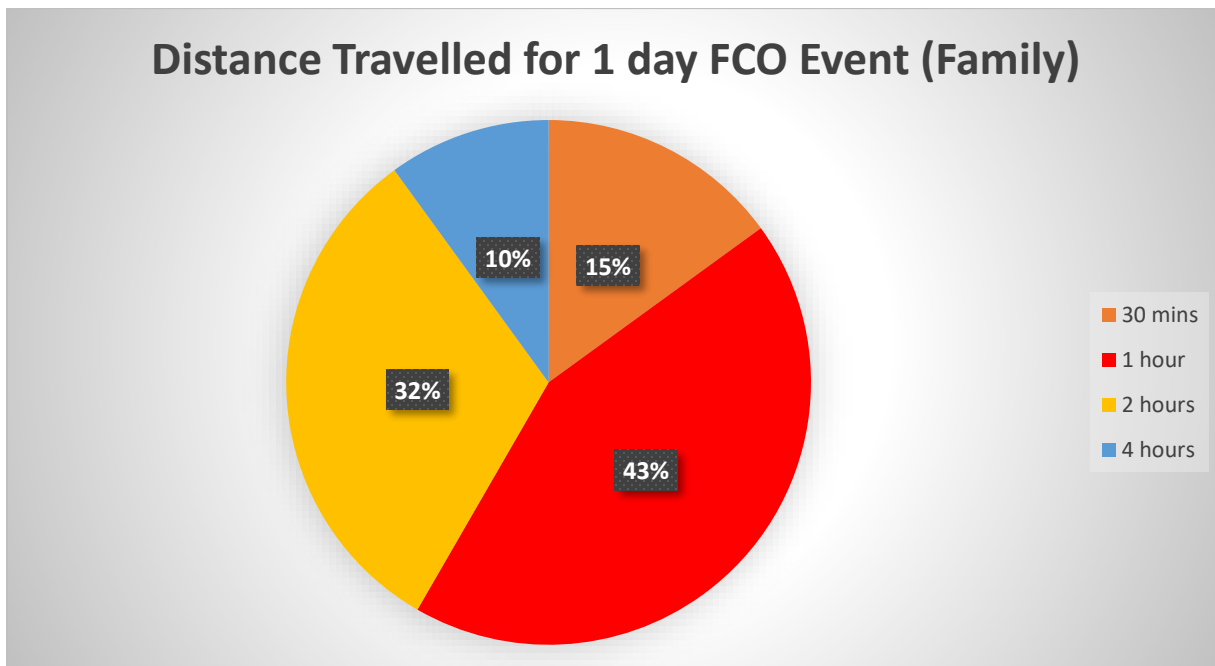
Figure 60- Distance Staff Willing to Travel for a 1-day FCO Event

DistanceTravelled for 1 Day FCO Event (Staff)

- 9%
- 33%
- 46%
- 12%

Legend:
- Same Town
- 1 Hour
- 2 Hours
- 3 + Hours
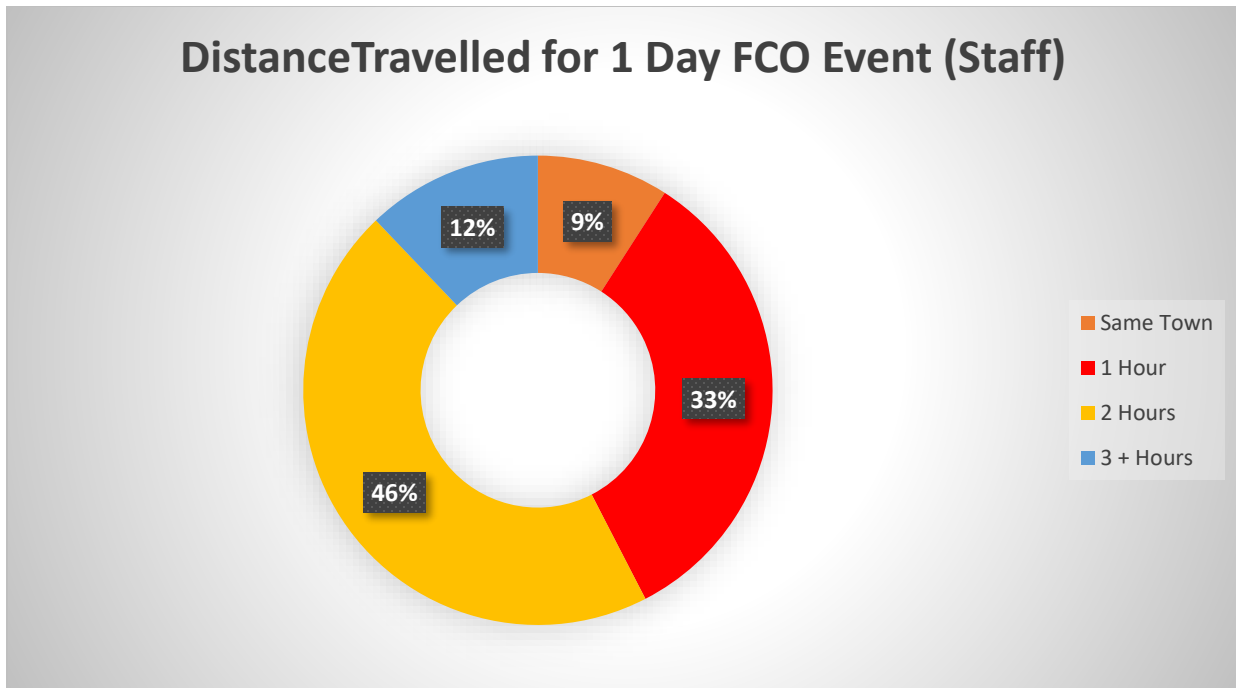
Figure 61- Distance Family Willing to Travel for a 2-day FCO Event

Distance Travelled for 2 Day FCO Event (Family)

- 13%
- 28%
- 18%
- 18%
- 23%

Legend:
- 30 min
- 1 hour
- 2 hours
- 3 hours
- 4 hours
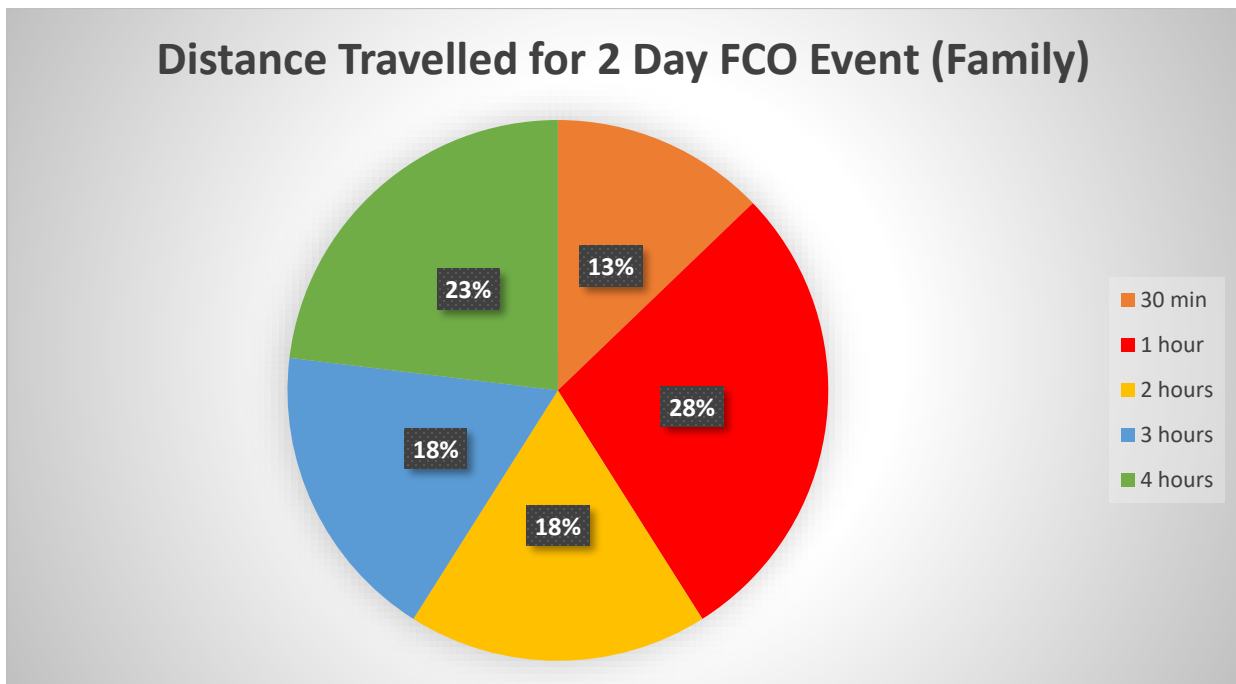
Figure 62- Distance Staff Willing to Travel for a 2-day FCO Event

Distance Travelled for 2 Day FCO Event (Staff)

- Same Town
- 1 Hour
- 2 Hours
- 3 Hours
- 4+ Hours
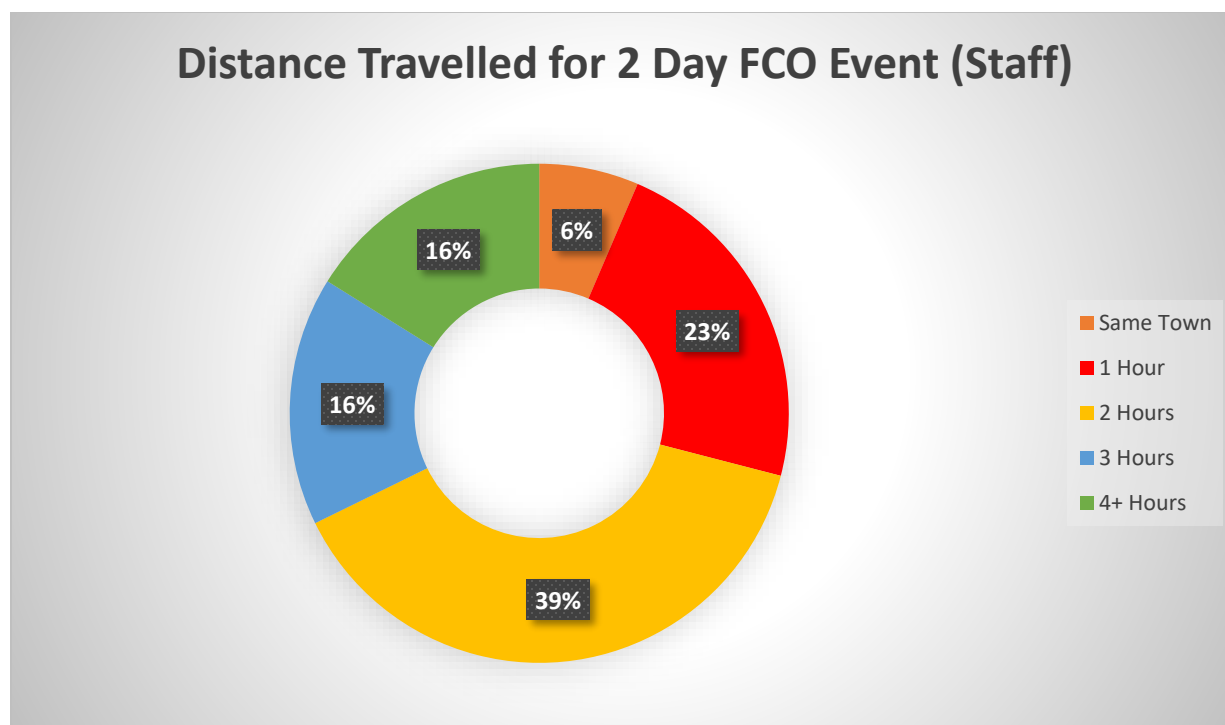
Barriers to Attending FCO Events

Staff and families revealed several barriers that impact their ability to attend FCO events (See Figure 63 & 64). **For both staff (46%) and families (34%), time was identified as the greatest barrier to attending FCO events in person**. Staff revealed their other workplace obligations would make it a challenge for them to attend FCO events in-person. Their recognition of the benefit of such opportunities was evident as they shared, they would need to attend FCO events during "***their own time.***" As well, families had limited time to attend as some family members work full-time jobs, while other family members expressed limited time as they were too busy providing support to their loved one in long-term care. One family member noted the value of their time sharing that they are "***looking for what makes the greatest impact on the care of their family member in the shortest amount of time.***"

The distance needed to travel to attend in-person FCO events was also recognized as a prominent barrier for both staff (28%) and families (29%). Costs associated with attending FCO events was another notable barrier to participation identified by staff (15%) and family members (20%). Staff revealed that they would need their supervisor's approval to attend and pay the fee to participate in FCO events. Families revealed that many of them were on a fixed income and had limited financial resources to cover the cost of travel, registration, and accommodations to attend in-person FCO events. As one Council member shared they are

"*often spending way more money on donations, activities, raffles and draws*" and other Family Council led fundraising initiatives.

Figure 63- Barriers Staff Identify to Attending FCO Events

Barriers to Attending FCO Events (Staff)

- Time — 46%
- Distance — 28%
- Cost — 15%
- Awareness — 7%
- Not applicable to me — 4%
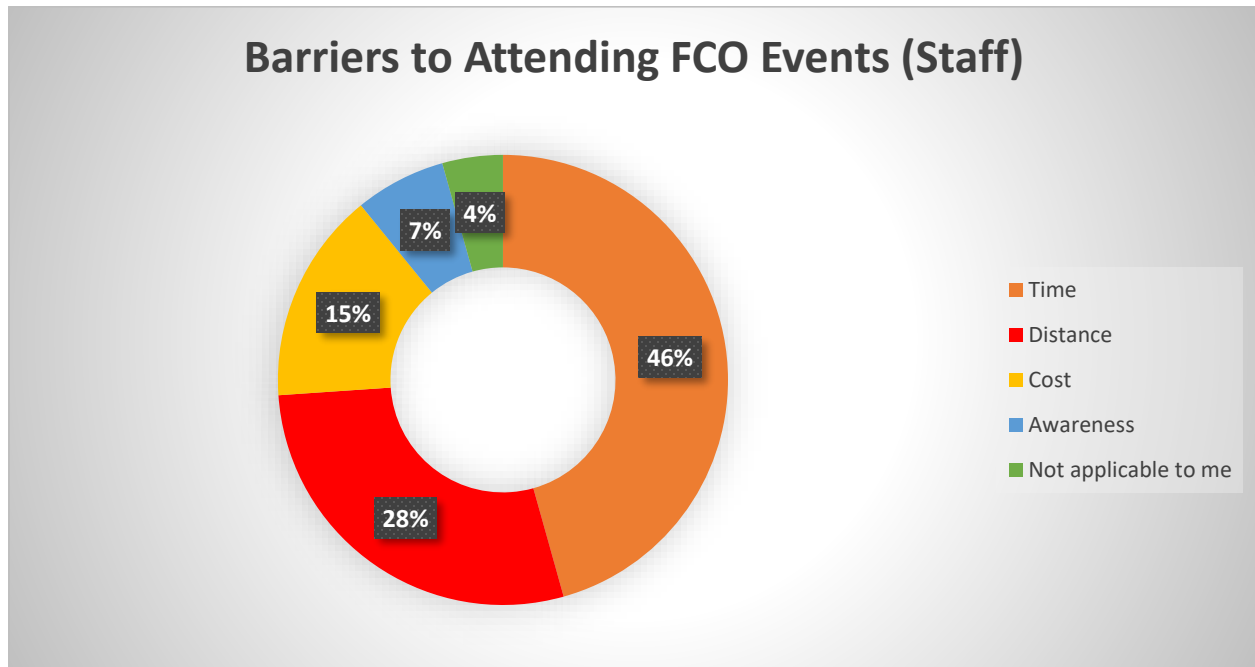
Figure 64- Barriers Family Members Identify to Attending FCO Events

Barriers to Attending FCO Events (Family)

- Cost — 20%
- Distance — 29%
- Time — 34%
- Awareness — 9%
- Weather — 1%
- Other — 7%
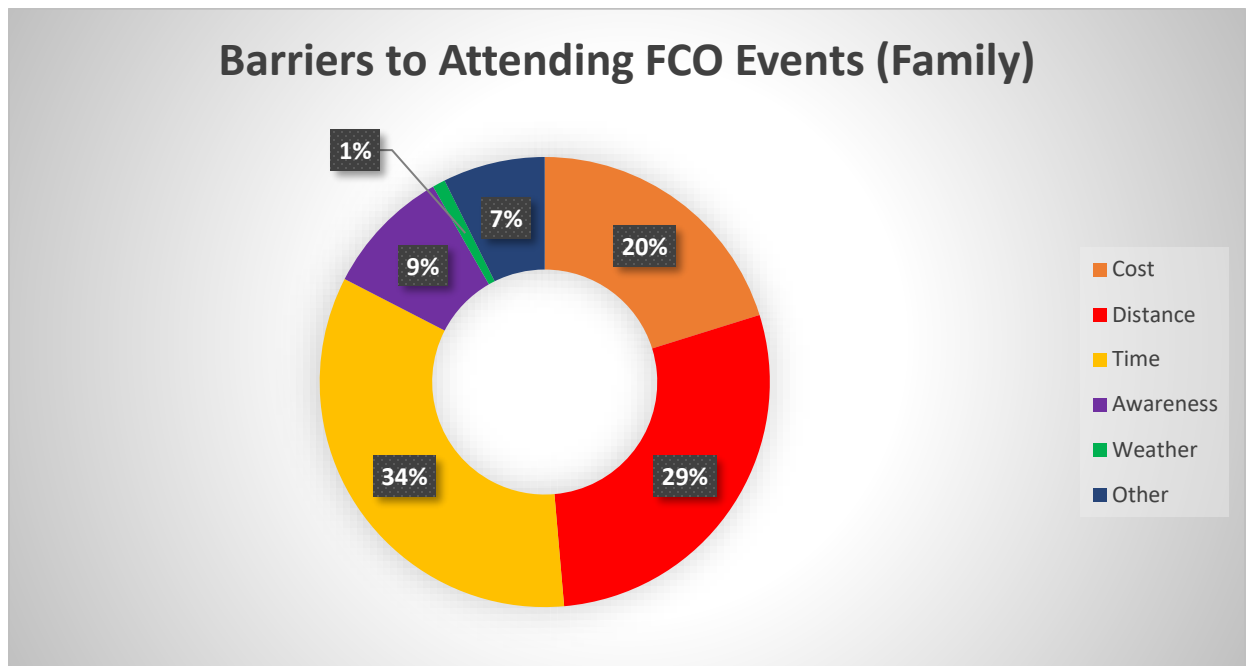
Perceived Gaps in FCO Resources

Staff and families identified differing gaps in current FCO Resources. Staff revealed there is a need for **resources to help them evaluate the effectiveness of their home's Family Council (43%).** They also identified the need for resources and education focused on sharing **information about current trends in long-term care in Ontario (29%).** Recognizing that family members may express an interest in remaining engaged with Family Councils after their loved one(s) have passed away, staff shared they saw a need for **information and resources to outline strategies to provide these family members a meaningful role in their Family Council (14%) as well as how to recruit new Family Council members (14%).**

Figure 65- Gaps in FCO Resources Identified by Staff
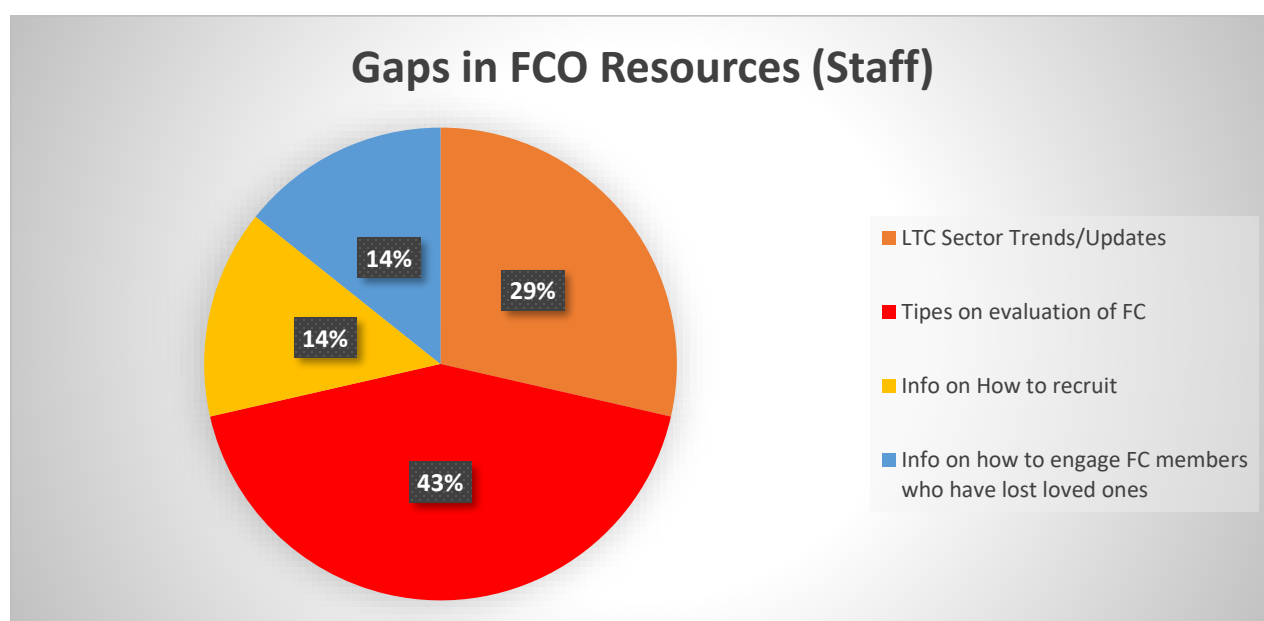
Family members expressed their desire for **more in-person presentations and in-person visits from FCO staff (27%)**. Family members wanted FCO to provide in-person services to Family Councils beyond the GTA. They noted in-person visits were especially important for newly formed Family Councils "as they are getting started." Families also express a desire for FCO to provide them with **opportunities to network with other Family Councils (21%)**. Accordingly, families wanted opportunities to get to know the other Family Councils in their own community, as well as with other Family Councils across the province. Such insight would provide them with information about the provincial picture of Family Councils and their activities. One family member shared they wanted to "***step outside of their area to meet with other Family Councils. Within our own area, out of the 4 long-term care homes we are the only one with a Family Council.***" Opportunities to network within their local community may support other family members and their efforts to form a Family Council.

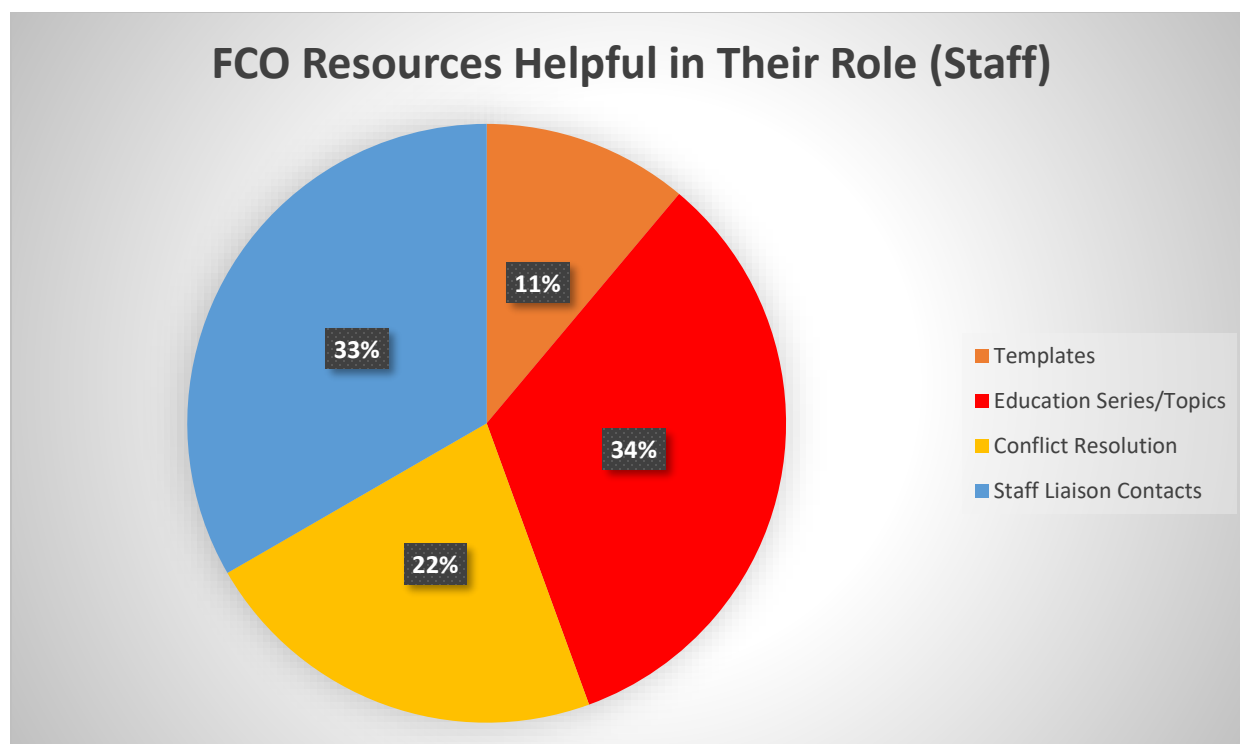*Figure 66- Gaps in FCO Resources Identified by Families*
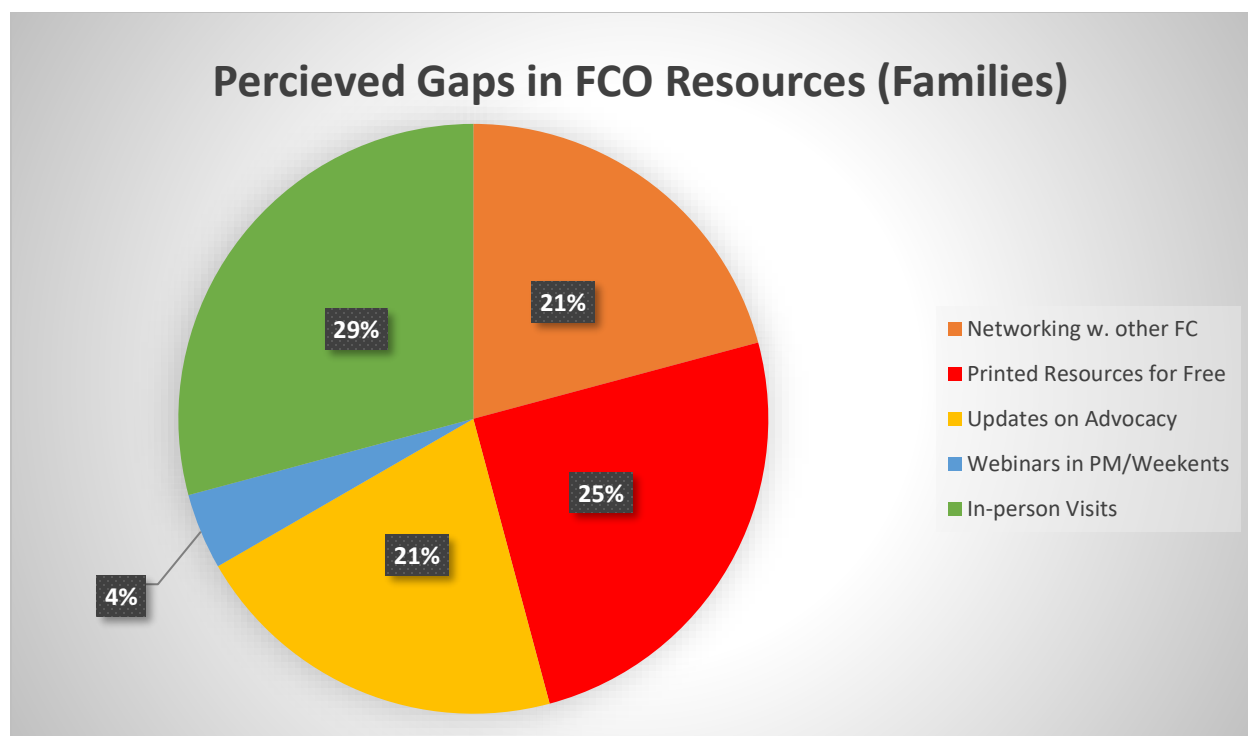
Suggestions to Address Gaps

Most staff would like to see FCO lead an educational series on various topics related to long-term care (34%) as a strategy to address the gaps they identified in current FCO resources. Staff wanted to see FCO offer training for families to support them on the transition into long-term care, as well as sessions outlining how staff can support families through the Family Council in their home. They sensed that there would be a benefit for them in their role, as well as for Family Council members if FCO provided education focused on the various options for leadership structures of Family Councils. They also wanted FCO to offer a monthly educational series on relevant topics (i.e. the Long-term care homes act).

Staff recognized that FCO had an online registry for Family Council members which supports their ability to network and communicate with each other. **Staff expressed an interest in FCO creating a directory for staff liaisons/staff assistants (33%)** so they could connect with each other. Staff recognized conflict between family members as a key barrier to the success of their home's Family Council and expressed the **need for FCO to provide them with resources focused on conflict resolution (22%)**. As staff wanted to support families in taking a more active role in their home's Council, they sensed that templates for meeting minutes and agendas would help support Councils in taking more ownership over their Council meetings (11%).

Figure 67- Staff Suggestions to Address Existing Gaps

FCO Resources Helpful in Their Role (Staff)

Legend:
- Templates
- Education Series/Topics
- Conflict Resolution
- Staff Liaison Contacts

Pie chart values: 11%, 34%, 22%, 33%

Future Directions for FCO Services/Resources

Staff and families offered different suggestions on the future direction of FCO resources and supports over the next 2 years (See Figures 68 & 69). **Accordingly, staff felt that over the next 2 years they want to see FCO provide more educational resources (45%),** including Fact Sheets/brochures, more webinars and educational days. Staff have also expressed a pressing need for FCO to **vary the location of workshops in geographically diverse regions of Ontario (33%)**. Ideally, in the next 2 years FCO will offer more in-person workshops in the Northern Regions of Ontario for Northern homes. Such proximity will help address prominent barriers of time and cost and create additional opportunities for staff to participate in FCO workshops. Staff also express a need for FCO to engage in more outreach over the next two years (11%). This outreach may encompass opportunities for FCO to partner with other organizations with similar mandate to increase our advocacy efforts (11%).
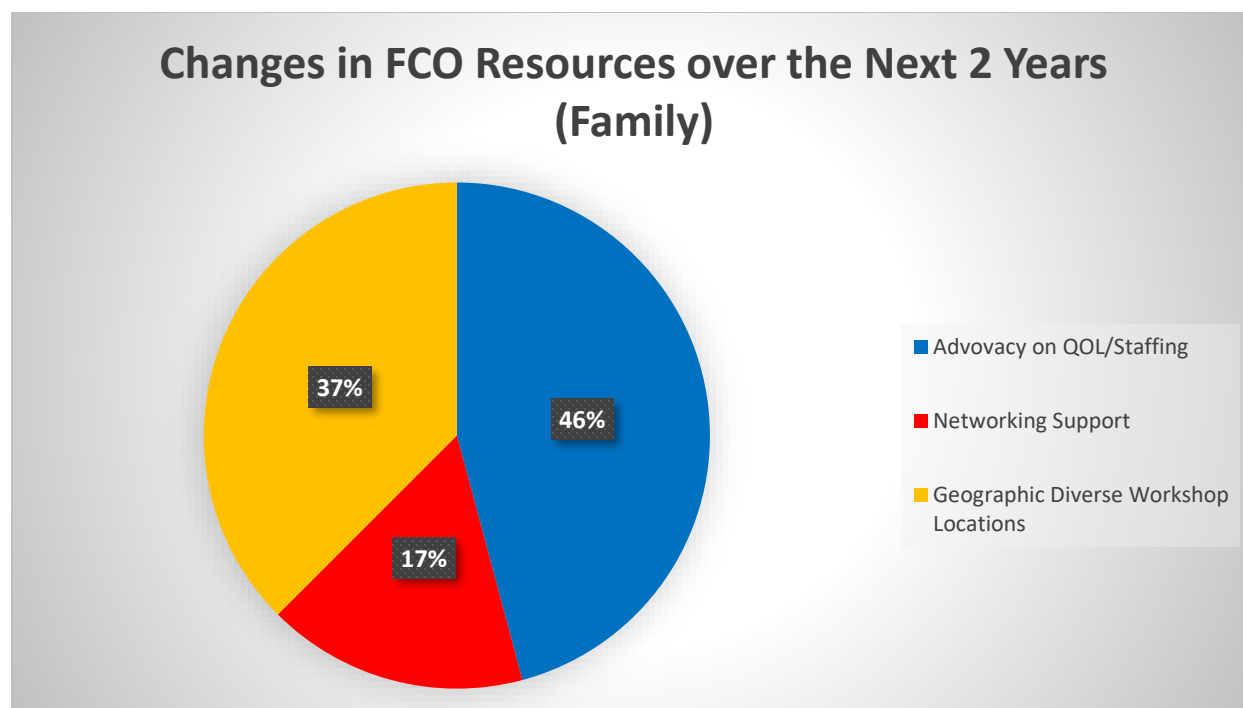
Figure 68- Suggestions from Staff for FCO Resources over the Next 2 Years
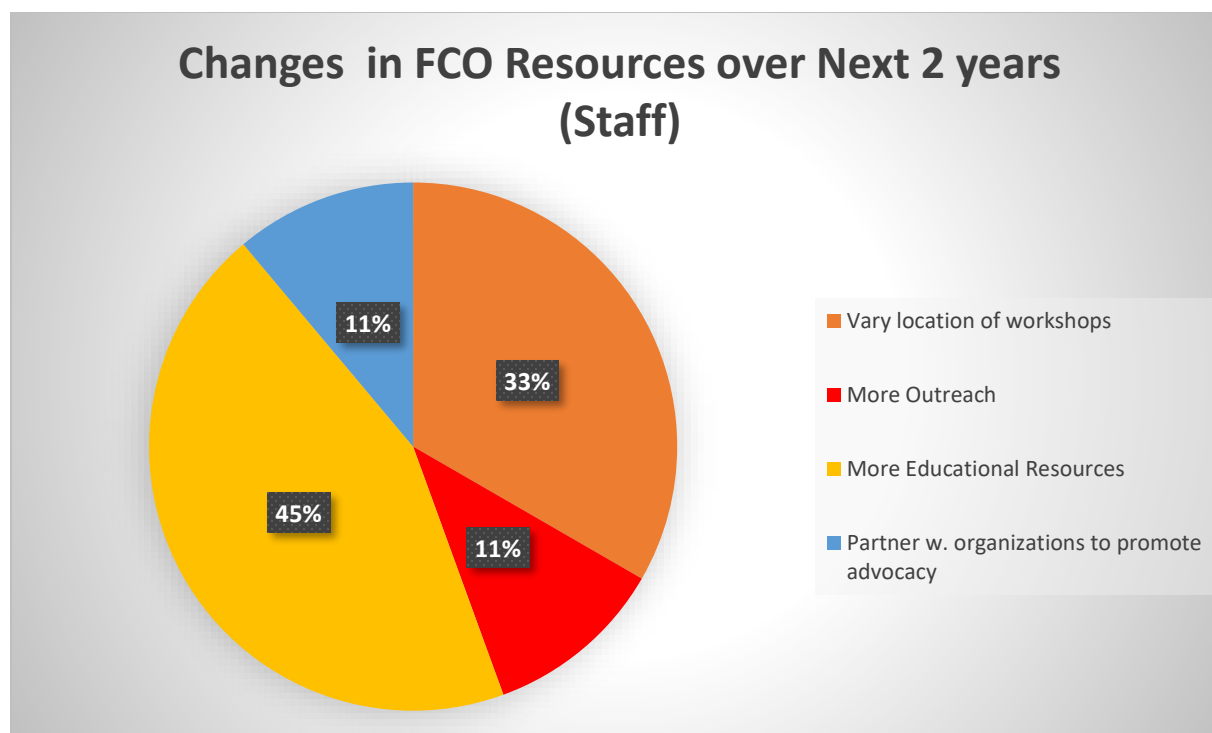
Family members expressed a strong interest to see more FCO resources created to support them in their advocacy efforts (46%). Accordingly, family members look to FCO as a trusted source of information and would like to see FCO share examples of best practices for advocacy, specifically advocacy focused on improving the quality of life for residents in homes as well as advocacy to address the issue of staffing shortages. As one family member shared they would like to see resources "*focused on the largest issues impacting quality of care, resources and training for home staff, and funding.*" Family members saw these resources could play a key role in helping their Family Council "*advocate for positive change*", as well as strategies to help Family Councils "*lobby the Ministry for budget allocations to long-term care.*"

Offering workshops in diverse geographic regions of Ontario (37%) was another area requiring FCO attention in the next two years. Family Councils expressed an interest in face-to-face interaction with FCO staff. As one family member shared, they "*would like to see you come to us.*" They would like to see FCO staff visit each home in person and want to see an increase in the frequency of in-person and direct contact between FCO staff and Family Councils.

Figure 69- Suggestions from Family for FCO Resources over the Next 2 Years

Changes in FCO Resources over the Next 2 Years (Family)

- Advocacy on QOL/Staffing
- Networking Support
- Geographic Diverse Workshop Locations

46% / 17% / 37%

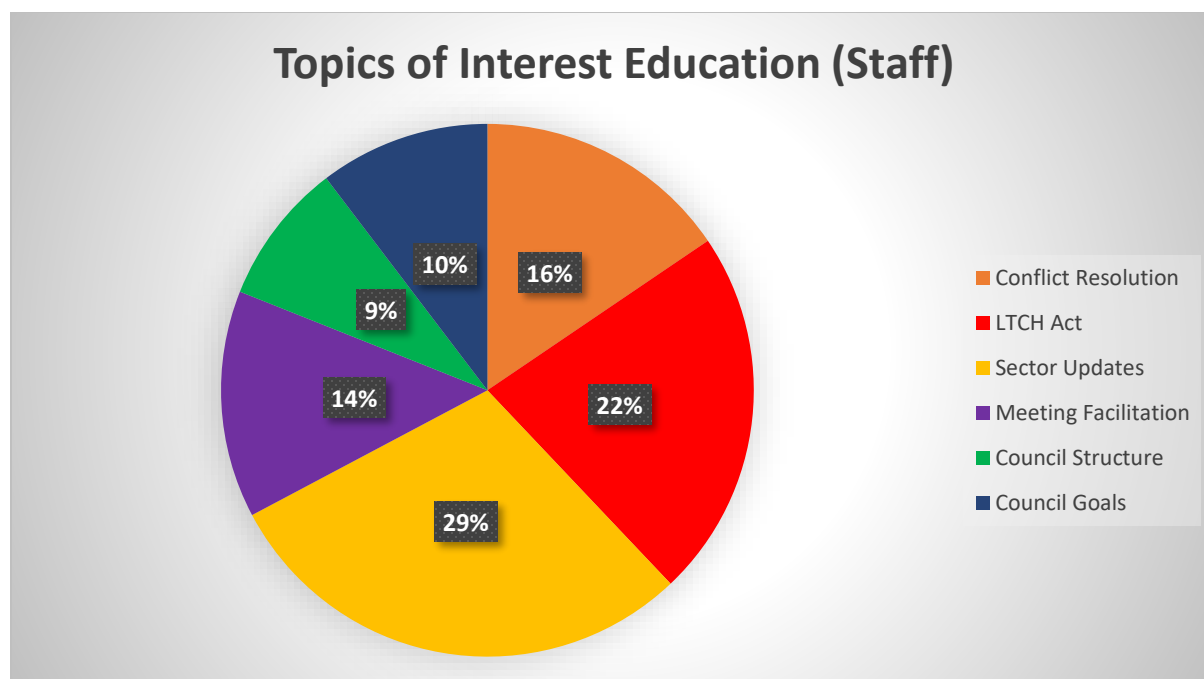## Future Topics of Interest for FCO Resources and Workshops

Family members expressed the **greatest degree of interest in FCO resources/workshops to help them learn about policy, specifically the Long-Term Care Homes Act and updates on funding for the long-term care sector (30%)**. Examples of specific resources shared by family members includes information on where/how to get a copy of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, Ministry Standards and interactions with the Ministry of Long-Term Care regarding inspection reports. Given the growing number of residents in long-term care with dementia, families expressed the need for **more resources and workshops focused on sharing information about dementia (21%)**. Families remained aware of the impact of conflict on their Family Council and relationship with the home administrator/staff. Families expressed a strong interest in additional FCO resources and workshops focused on developing their skills in **conflict resolution (21%).**

Figure 70- Suggestions from Family for Future FCO Resources
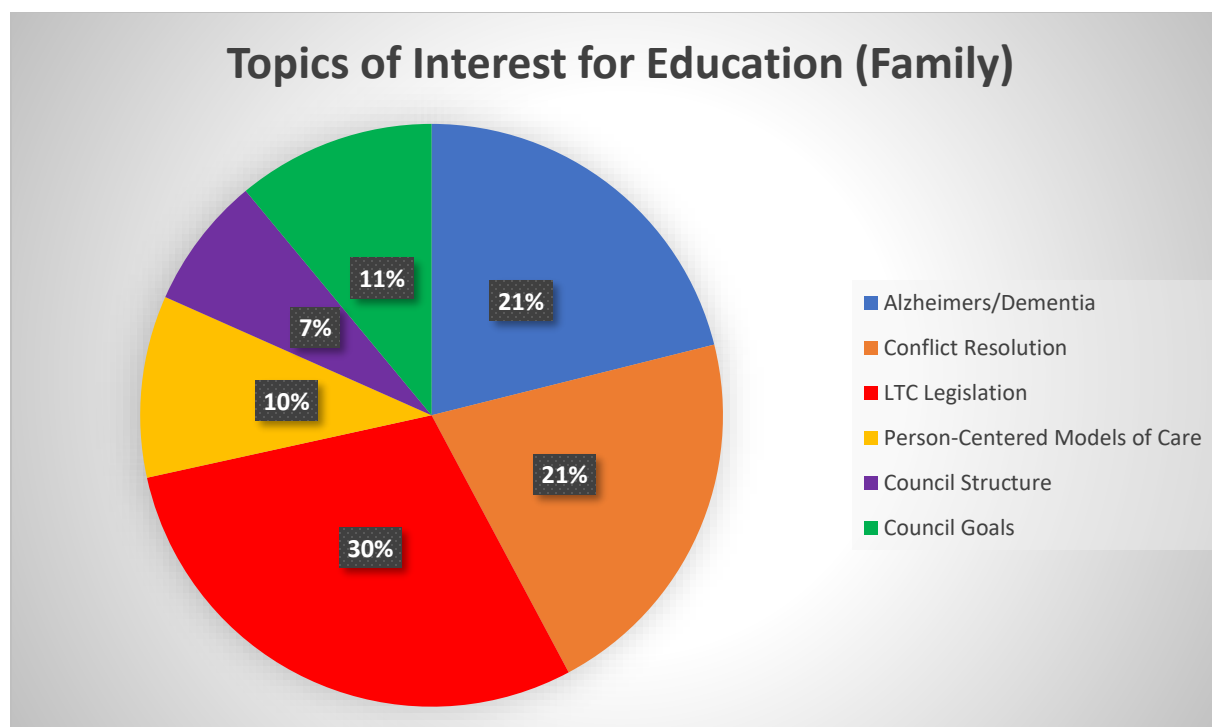
Staff expressed the need for FCO to continue to **create more resources that share sector updates (29%).** Given the focus on promoting culture change within long-term care, staff felt that FCO could create resources sharing information about current issues within the sector. To support the on-going transition between old and new family members as loved ones enter and leave the home community, staff expressed the need for **resources focused on sharing information about the Long-Term Care Homes Act (22%).** Staff recognized the impact of conflict on their Family Council and the influence of conflict on their relationship with family members/Council members. Staff expressed a strong interest in additional FCO resources and workshops focused on developing their skills in **conflict resolution (16%).** While staff assistants were content to support Family Councils, they expressed the need for FCO resources to help family members and Council leadership transition from staff-led to family-led models. Staff felt families could feel confident in making the transition to family-led councils with additional FCO resources focused on **facilitating meetings (14%), Council goals (10%) and leadership models/Council structure (9%).**

Figure 71- Suggestions from Staff for Future FCO Resources

Topics of Interest Education (Staff)

Legend:
- Conflict Resolution
- LTCH Act
- Sector Updates
- Meeting Facilitation
- Council Structure
- Council Goals

Pie chart values: 16%, 22%, 29%, 14%, 9%, 10%

Additional Suggestions for FCO Services and Supports

Families shared some additional suggestions for FCO services and supports. Accordingly, family members expressed the **need for FCO resources to help support Family Councils to build capacity (44%).** Council members outlined the need for resources to support them as they transition from staff-led to family-led models. One family member shared:

> *"Our Family Council is deteriorating because of lack of support from staff assistants. The home is more concerned about their surveys, their online presence and stock holders more than the residents. They do not show concern for certain needs of residents and have no option or solutions that they give according to what they advertise and offer. Many families are frustrated, misled …."*

Recognizing the on-going turnover in Council membership, Family Councils expressed the need for resources to share ideas about how to recruit and bring in new family members as active members of the Family Council. Families saw the need for resources and supports to help them develop their ability to advocate for positive change and system-wide changes. Family members also express a growing need for resources with information about alternative models of care (28%), such as the Butterfly Home Model for person-centered care.

Through their time spend in the long-term care home, families were aware of the issues around staffing. Families revealed the need for FCO resources to help them address staffing concerns

within the long-term care sector (22%). Families wanted FCO to create resources to help raise awareness of staffing issues, specifically wages of front-line staff and the differences in pay between regular home staff and agency staff.

Figure 72- Family Suggestions for Additional Topics for FCO Resources and Supports
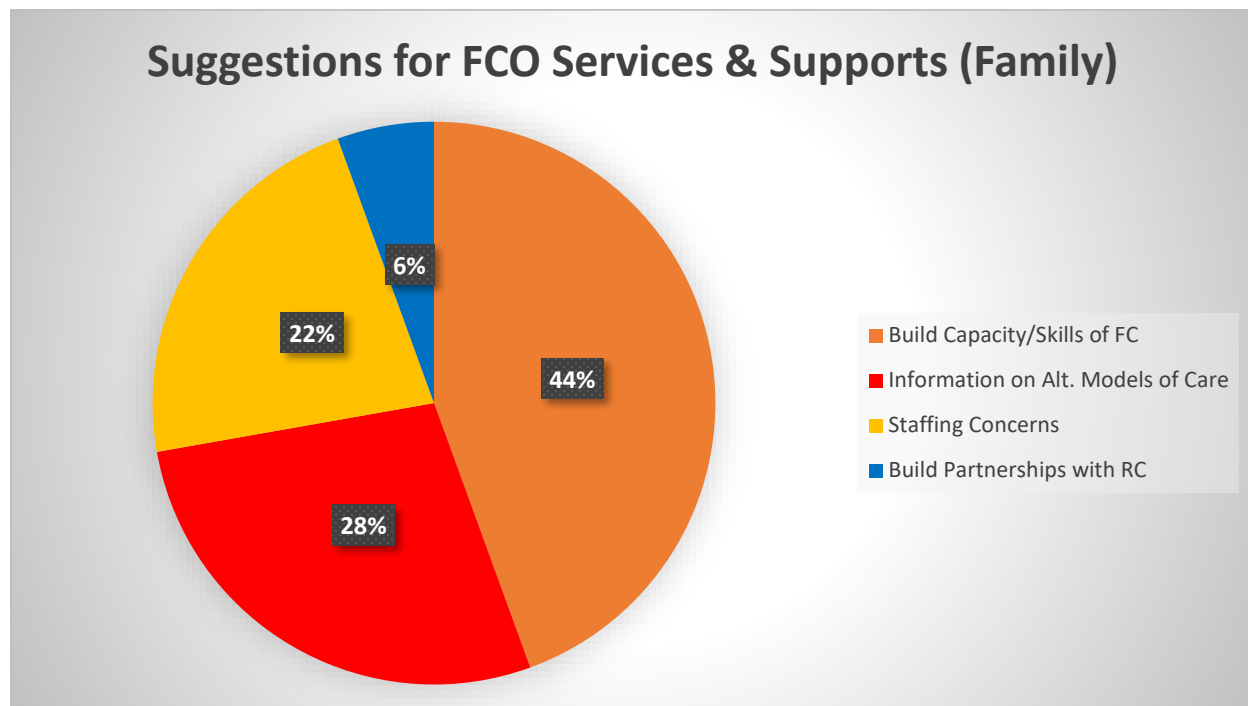
Discussion

Between October 2019 to January 2020, FCO gathered information to understand the current needs of Family Councils and staff supporting the work of Family Council in Ontario. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through an online survey (Survey Monkey) to provide insight on the current status of Family Councils in Ontario, understand the role of Family Councils within the current ecosystem in long-term care, common activities for Family Councils and use of FCO resources to support Councils and their work.

Overall, the majority of Family Councils in Ontario have been established for 5+ years, with most family members or staff actively engaged with the Family Council in their home since the Councils were established. Family and staff agreed that Councils are successful in fulfilling their role. In terms of how stakeholders felt location impacted access to FCO resources, 60% of respondents felt that their location did not impact their access to FCO resources. This reflects the popularity of current FCO digital resources, which can be used by family and staff regardless of their geographic location in Ontario. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that current FCO resources met their needs. Specific resources they found useful were:

- FCO Handbook "Your Guide to Starting and Maintaining a Family Council"
- In-person presentations
- E-Bulletins
- Website

In terms of suggestions for improvement over the next two years, families and staff noted the need for improved awareness of FCO as an organization and of FCO resources available to support Family Councils and staff supporting the work of Family Councils. To address current gaps in FCO resources and supports, families and staff offered the following suggestions:

- Vary the Geographic Location of FCO Events/Workshops throughout Ontario
- Create additional resources to support Council Advocacy efforts
- Provide opportunities for Networking (between local councils/staff assistants)

The team at FCO and members of the FCO Board of Directors are aware of the current gaps and remain committed to exploring ways to deliver services and resources to better address the needs of Family Councils and staff supporting the work of Family Councils in Ontario.

Conclusion

While we used a separate survey for family and staff, the results indicate similarities in what participants think FCO does well, and in outlining areas of growth. It is notable to recognize that most Family Councils and most individuals completing the survey have been engaged with the work of a Family Council for over 5 years (see Demographics). While they agreed (90%) that current FCO resources were easy to understand, they identified time as the key barrier to making use of FCO resources to support their work. Limited knowledge of available FCO resources and supports serves as the main barrier to their use for both families and staff.

Prior to COVID-19, respondents noted that many FCO resources and supports were underutilized, including the FCO Blog and FCO Social Media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin). Families and staff agreed that the FCO website and e-bulleting were recognized as examples of what FCO does well. They also agreed regarding the need for improved communication from FCO regarding the available resources and supports available to support them and their work.

Summary

Based on the information and analysis of the data shared by family members and staff supporting the work of Family Councils, we offer the following recommendation for FCO:

I. Continue to develop resources to support digital literacy (skill and comfort with using technology) to support the use of technology to support Family Council meetings and Family Council Activities.

II. Improve awareness of FCO as an organization in Ontario, as well as of the resources and supports available to support family members and staff supporting the work of Family Councils.

III. Expand resources to support opportunities for networking among council members ant staff supporting Family Councils in the same community/region.

IV. Continue to vary the location of FCO events and workshops. Where possible, opportunities to join in-person events/workshops through technology. Offer online resources to supplement the desire for information on the following topics of interest:
- LTCHA/Legislation
- Conflict Resolution
- Dementia
- Council Goals and Structure

V. Develop resources to support advocacy led by Family Councils

*An important limitation of these recommendations is that they must be achievable within Family Council Ontario's current Mission, Vision, goals, human and financial resources.