

**100**  
1925 • 2025

**VHA Home HealthCare**  
Creating More Independence for Over 100 Years

**Client**

**Voice**

**2025**

**Impact  
Report**



# From Insight to Impact: Client Voice in 2025

In 2025, client partners continued to play a vital role in guiding and informing VHA's quality improvement initiatives that shaped how care is planned and delivered.

The impact of client partners was felt across all areas of VHA. They contributed to the development of the Client and Family Declaration of Values, helping establish principles and actions to guide care. Their insights also informed innovation, research, and ethics reviews. They participated in award committees and hiring panels, ensuring choices reflected client priorities. Through governance discussions, workshops, and symposiums, their lived experiences shaped planning and practice, keeping care focused on what matters most.

Client partners bring a voice that transforms care. Their perspectives remind us of what truly matters, shaping plans, policies, and innovations to reflect

the needs of the people and families we serve. By working alongside staff and leadership, they helped VHA stay centred on those receiving care.

Their impact in 2025 reflects a shared commitment to quality and compassion that will continue into the year ahead.



**Sandra Li-James**

Vice President, Quality,  
Practice & Client Experience  
and Chief Nursing & Health  
Professions Officer

I want to express my sincere thanks to our client and family partners for their outstanding contributions this year. From co-designing adjustments to the Client Experience Survey, to participating in our Interprofessional Symposium, their perspectives and experiences have strengthened our work and guided important decisions. I am grateful for their dedication and insight and deeply value the trust and commitment they bring to every conversation. I would like to extend a special thank you to Sonya Lockhart for her dedication, leadership and tireless energy as Co-Chair of our Client and Carer Advisory Council over the past two years.

**Dr. Kathryn Nichol**  
President and CEO





Client partner Linda Lallouz is seen here participating in VHA's symposium, Collaboration in Action: Advancing Interprofessional Excellence in Home Healthcare.



## Year in Review

In 2025, VHA saw major growth and change, with client partners at the centre. Their involvement shaped decisions and improved outcomes, ensuring progress aligned with VHA's commitment to people-centred care.

### 2025 Interprofessional Symposium

Three client partners joined the symposium with VHA professionals fully participating in plenary and breakout sessions. Integrated at tables with staff and providers, they ensured discussions reflected the realities of those receiving care. A featured client video story created collaboratively with a client partner, their family, and care team offered a powerful narrative on the impact of interprofessional collaboration in home healthcare, reinforcing the importance of client voices in shaping care.

### Staff Recognition Awards

The Client Choice Award Selection Committee and the Leadership Awards Selection Committee engaged our client partners in reviewing shortlisted nominations. Our client partners identified and presented their selections to the Committees. They also participated in the final voting process to determine the winners and honourable mentions, which included 10 Client Choice Awards and four Leadership Awards.

### Hiring Panels

Client partners participated in up to six executive hiring panels for senior roles and Board members. Their collaboration brought valuable expertise, strengthened inclusion, and helped select candidates who reflect our values and aims.

### Ethics Committee

One client partner serves on VHA's ethics committee, attending quarterly meetings and contributing to additional projects. These include an organization-wide event on the IDEA Ethical Decision-Making Framework and a continuing review of policies that may cause unintended moral distress, such as limits on scope of practice. This work is ongoing through the use of a Community Ethics Network Organizational Ethics resource.

## Client Experience Survey

Each year, VHA collects more than 2,500 client satisfaction survey responses to inform and improve our services. In May, three client partners participated in a thorough review of our two primary surveys, helping identify the most important areas to collect feedback. The updated survey was launched in July and ensures we are measuring what is most meaningful.

## Client Care Plan

This year, client partners reviewed and refined the care plan template to improve clarity and make it easier to use. With their input, we updated the design and language to better support collaboration between our care providers, clients and their families.

## Client Partner Sharing at the Board

Client partners made a significant impact by sharing lived experiences with VHA's Board of Directors. Their authentic stories revealed opportunities for growth and innovation, inspiring steps to better align strategies with real-world needs. By bringing the client perspective forward, they deepened understanding and connection, helping shape the organization's vision with compassion and purpose.

Photo: client partner Paul Morse

## Governance Webinar

In June 2025, Governance Professionals of Canada hosted a governance symposium with VHA. The event covered key topics, including patient engagement at the board level. Sonya Lockhart, Co-Chair of the VHA Client and Carer Advisory Council joined as a panelist and shared her perspective in a fireside chat. Healthcare leaders and board members from across Canada attended the session.

## The Innovation Advisory Committee (IAC)

Client partners attended IAC meetings, sharing lived-experience insights, helping to evaluate the impact of proposed innovations and strengthen implementation strategies. Their feedback often highlighted practical considerations that informed priorities and improved project outcomes. During the IAC Summer Session, they actively participated in discussions and breakout activities, ensuring conversations about emerging technologies stayed focused on how changes affect clients and families in daily life, keeping care centered on what matters most.

# VHA Home HealthCare Client & Caregiver Declaration of Values

At VHA, we believe that care should be shaped by the voices of those who receive it. That's why we're co-designing a *Client and Family Declaration of Values* with the insight of our clients and their families. This declaration outlines how they want to experience care, and how our staff and service providers can bring these values to life.

This work is grounded in the voices of our clients and families. We identified and defined five core values based on over 2200 comments from clients and families:

- **Compassion**
- **Respect and Dignity**
- **Transparency**
- **Accountability**
- **Partnership**

Now, we're in the final phase of defining the actions that will carryout these values. We're working closely with our client partners, staff and service providers to explore what these values look like in action. So far:

- **Nearly half of our client partners have participated in comprehensive discussions.**
- **We've engaged with over 100 staff and service providers to ensure the actions are realistic and supported by the right resources.**
- **We received 22 responses to our Declaration of Values survey from clients, family members and client partners.**

The tremendous input we've received from contributors across VHA is helping our declaration take its final shape.

This solidification of our commitment to quality and compassionate care, made possible through collaboration with our client partners, is estimated to launch in Spring 2026. Stay tuned!

## Client Partner Liliana is Helping Shape VHA's Client & Caregiver Declaration of Values

Liliana first began her relationship with VHA 23 years ago when her daughter needed care. As a mother and legal guardian to her daughter, her experiences learning to navigate how best to advocate for her daughter, and for herself, have given her a unique and powerful understanding of what excellent home care truly means. It's this experience and knowledge that inspired her to volunteer and join VHA as a client partner.

As one of the client partners who has contributed to our *Client and Family Declaration of Values*, Liliana plays a vital role in ensuring that care is shaped by the voices of those who receive it. With a background in social work, values like social justice and inclusion have always been a high priority for her.

"I believe in removing barriers," says Liliana. "I often think about the many people who don't always have the tools or skills to remove barriers on their own."

When she was given the opportunity to contribute to the development of VHA's new Declaration of Values as a client partner, she jumped at the chance.

Photo: client partner Liliana Diaz

"Liliana lives her values," says Brydne Edwards, Manager, Client Experience at VHA and co-lead of the declaration's development.

"She knows the declaration needs to be more than just a document with boxes to check off. They're a commitment to safety and quality made by every single person at VHA. They're about taking real feedback from our clients and their families, applying the experience and guidance of client partners, and understanding what our values look like in action."

Liliana's resolve and insight are undeniable and have been instrumental as we move towards the expected launch of our Client and Family Declaration of Values.



**Values are more than just pretty words on a page. They're the beliefs that we put into practice. They're how we provide safety and well-being through care.**



# Client Partner Kelly Akerman helps build Emotional Intelligence in Palliative Care

In 2023, the Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA) launched the [eiCOMPASS Project](#) to integrate emotional intelligence (EI) into palliative care practice. VHA became a key partner in implementing this initiative, aiming to help Personal Support Workers manage emotionally complex situations with empathy and confidence.

One outcome of this initiative was a workshop titled *Emotional Self-Awareness and Mindfulness: Developing the Attitude to Provide a Palliative Approach to Care*, which offered practical tools and strategies for staying present, managing stress, and improving communication.

**Emotional intelligence** is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions while responding effectively to the emotions of others.

The project was co-developed by Akil Ade and Joyce Umoren, both VHA Palliative Care Best Practice Supervisors, along with Tanan Karro and Lilly Li, both VHA Personal Support Coaches and EI Champions.

Early on, the team recognized the importance of including client voices in the development process, and Kelly Akerman, whose mother receives palliative care with VHA, became that voice.

“From day one, Kelly was incredibly hands-on,” says Akil. “He came into the project with so much enthusiasm and trust. He communicated clearly, gave helpful direction, and shared ideas that really strengthened the workshop.”

What stood out most were the stories he told about his mother, like her love of food, her social connections, and her spiritual values. He explained how those details shaped her care, and that openness gave us insights you'd never find in a textbook.”

On the day of the workshop, Kelly joined the team in demonstrating emotional intelligence in practice. For many in the audience, this was a rare opportunity to see care through the eyes of a client's family member. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Participants said they gained a better understanding of EI and valued learning in a setting that felt authentic. The workshop's recording has since been shared

with several teams and was featured at the CHCA's Capstone Event as evidence of implementation and outcomes.

Kelly's contribution extends beyond a single workshop. His involvement demonstrated that emotional intelligence is not only a professional skill but also a way of listening and creating care experiences that reflect what matters most to clients and families.

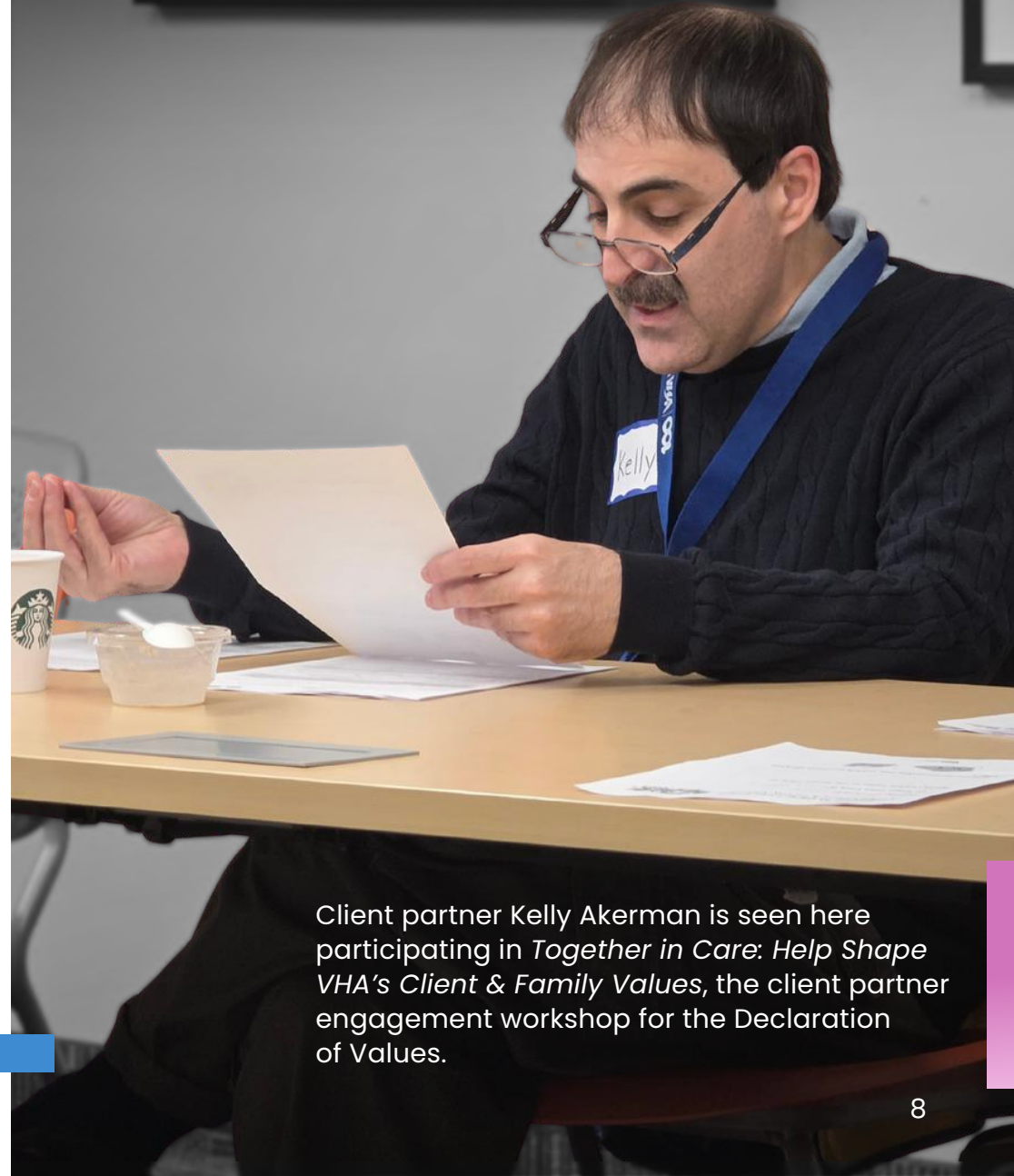
"The opportunity to serve as a client partner has proven to me that my voice matters," says Kelly, reflecting on his experience. "What I have to contribute counts and has value. I'm not cast aside. I matter."

The workshop was Kelly's first experience as a client partner with VHA. He has since volunteered in other initiatives, including the VHA Client and Family Declaration of Values, Client Care Plan, and most recently, the People-Centred Care Best Practice Guidelines project.

Kelly's role is a reminder that the most effective care strategies begin with the voices of those who embody them.

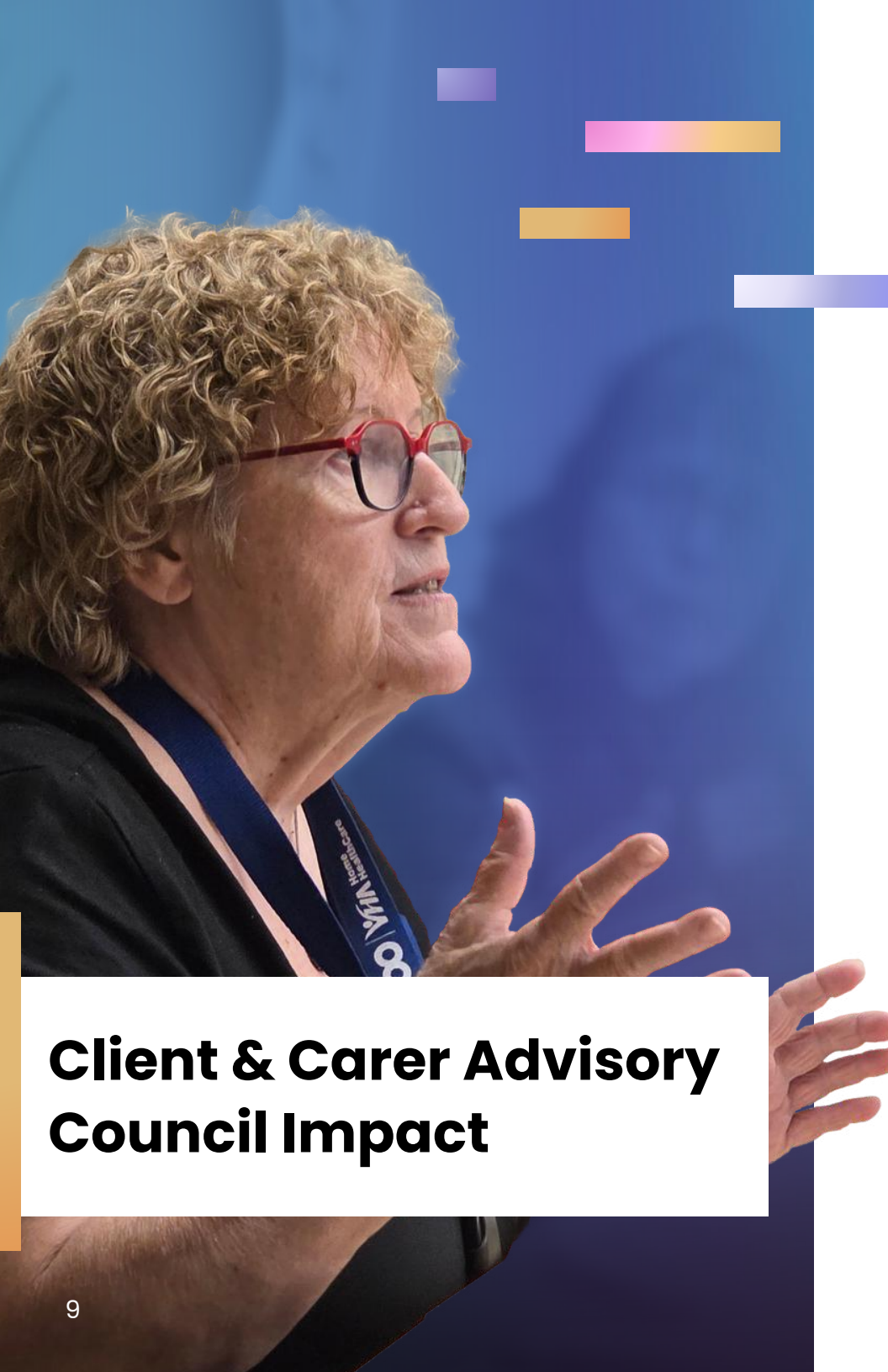


**The opportunity to serve as a client partner has proven to me that my voice matters.**



Client partner Kelly Akerman is seen here participating in *Together in Care: Help Shape VHA's Client & Family Values*, the client partner engagement workshop for the Declaration of Values.





## Client & Carer Advisory Council Impact

The Client and Carer Advisory Council played an essential role in shaping VHA's operations in 2025. They worked closely with the organization to design policies, develop programs, and guide initiatives. Their involvement extended across multiple areas, ensuring that decisions reflected the perspectives and priorities of those they represent. This year the Advisory Council's involvement led to several notable advancements including:

### **Revised Client Experience Survey for Active and Discharged Clients**

The Advisory reviewed the final proposed adjustments to the Client Experience Survey. Initial changes were co-designed with 3 client partners ahead of the council meeting and these changes were implemented in our surveys.

### **myVHA Client Portal**

Input was provided on potential new features for the myVHA client portal, such as notifications and user preferences, which guided the development process. Additionally, the council contributed valuable feedback on the upcoming AI chatbot assistant, ensuring it aligns with client needs.

Photo: Sonya Lockhart, client partner and Co-Chair of the Client and Carer Advisory Council.

## VHA Preceptorship Program

The Advisory Council provided key feedback on the Preceptorship Program, helping improve learner experience and communication for clinical placements. Their input led to structured feedback loops and clearer role expectations. The initiative continues with regional collaboration and a focus on building a stronger community of practice.

## Client Safety: Incident Reporting at VHA

The Advisory explored VHA's incident reporting process, focusing on how incidents are analyzed and used to drive improvements to prevent recurrence. We value the contributions of our client partners on the Client Safety Committee and look forward to continuing this work in 2026, including implementing Accreditation Canada's new safety standard 'Partnering with clients to improve safety'.

## VHA's 100th Anniversary

Early in the year, the Advisory was consulted on VHA's [centenary\\_yearbook\\_project](#). Discussions focused on the importance of including client stories as part of VHA's history. Following this input, the communications team worked with three client partners to write featured articles, which were published in the yearbook.

## Exploring Business Development

The Advisory reviewed business development ideas from the Strategic Solutions and Partnerships team, confirming alignment with home care trends. Discussions focused on two areas: primary care expansion and involvement in Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities.

## Champions of Change

The Advisory offered feedback for the Champions of Change's project work on "What Makes a Good Schedule." The ideas raised will guide ongoing efforts to capture what matters most in how schedules are built and communicated, an organizational goal for 2026.

## Acknowledgement

VHA thanks client partner and Advisory Council Co-Chair Sonya Lockhart. In 2025 she completed her two-year term as Co-Chair. She has been a steady collaborator on key initiatives, sharing unique insights from lived experience and making a lasting impact. Though stepping down from the Co-Chair role and the council, Sonya will continue to serve as a client partner, and the team looks forward to working with her in the year ahead.

# Embracing People-Centred Care with the Support of Our Client Partners

One of the many ways we continue to reaffirm our commitment to quality is through our designation as a [Best Practice Spotlight Organization](#) from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. The designation recognizes healthcare and academic organizations for their sustained commitment to implementing, evaluating, and embedding evidence-based best practice guidelines to improve the quality of care and outcomes. The designation requires the adoption of two new Best Practice Guidelines for each redesignation cycle. As part of our latest cycle, VHA is embracing the latest standards for people-centred care.

People-centred care is an approach that prioritizes genuine partnerships between care providers, clients, families and caregivers. This approach supports shared decision-making by showing respect for unique needs, values and lived experiences. People-centred care is grounded in respect, collaboration and open

communication, recognizing that better health outcomes emerge when all participants feel informed, valued and actively engaged in their care decisions.

This approach pairs perfectly with VHA's Client and Family Voice Program. Joining us in our planning is Kelly Akerman, client partner for this exciting project. His insight is helping us infuse real-world client experience directly from the gap analysis stage through to implementation.

"Clients and their families need to be directly involved in designing and implementing care plans because they have the detailed insiders' knowledge of how healthcare is experienced from day-to-day at home," says Kelly.

"To my mind, it makes little sense to offer forms of personal support, nursing, and rehabilitation therapy, as documented in a care plan, without actively seeking the contributions of those who will receive these services."

As VHA's Client Experience and Engagement team continue to implement evidence-based recommendations from the guideline to advance people-centred care, including client partners, like Kelly, helps us truly embrace the collaborative nature of the project. Client co-design at every stage means that our clients' voices are deeply embedded in how we provide care.

# Client Partners in Action



Client Partner Paul Morse (centre) seen with Jordan D'Souza, Head of Innovation (left) and Philip Woode Research and Innovation Associate (right) at *Camp Innovate*.



Client partner Linda Lallouz seen with Innovation Intern, Sandra Al Ali, at *Camp Innovate*.



Client partners Kathleen Hall and Peter Morfitt (left photo) and Michael Harrison (above) are seen participating in *Together in Care: Help Shape VHA's Client & Family Values*, the client partner engagement workshop for the Declaration of Values.

# Client and Caregiver Engagement by the Numbers

Check out how client partners powered our progress in 2025! 36 deeply committed clients and caregivers generously shared 409 hours of experiential insights and forward-looking ideas. Their voices inspired innovation and strengthened our work. See their impact at a glance!



**409** contributed to inform and advance change  
**hours**

**70%** of time dedicated to councils, committees and working groups, with a major focus on facilitating a hoarding support group

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to overlapping categories and multiple counting.

# 45%

of client partners engaged in co-design, with a major focus on developing our Client and Family Declaration of Values



# 36

unique client and family voices represented

# 7%

of client partners voices amplified through communications, articles and speaking activities

# 29%

of client partners advanced research and innovation activities, most notably by guiding new digital pilot projects



# 9%

of client partners enhanced our organization through recruitment, participating in interview panels for executive roles



If you are interested in learning more about participating as a VHA client partner, please contact [QualityFeedback@vha.ca](mailto:QualityFeedback@vha.ca) or visit [vha.ca/for-clients/client-voice](http://vha.ca/for-clients/client-voice)



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