



SENSES AWAKENED
PROJECT
Application for funding 2026

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Senses Awakened

Sensory Playground Project Proposal

Project Overview

This project was born from the collective vision of the team at Friends of the Care Project (FOTCP) during a brainstorming session focused on creating more opportunities to support the development and well-being of the children and adults we serve. We recognized the need for a dedicated space that not only encourages play and movement but also addresses the unique sensory needs of individuals who experience the world differently.

Our aim is to design and build an inclusive sensory playground that provides safe, meaningful, and therapeutic play experiences for children and adults with developmental and complex needs who attend FOTCP. Many of these individuals are unable to access mainstream education or employment opportunities due to the nature of their conditions, making access to purpose-built, supportive environments even more essential.

The playground will be a safe, welcoming, and stimulating environment that supports physical activity, sensory integration, social interaction, and emotional well-being for individuals of all ages and abilities.

The design will incorporate a variety of play structures and sensory elements tailored to support individuals at FOTCP living with conditions such as hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), sensory processing disorders, and other developmental challenges.

Proposed Features

The sensory playground will include:

- Tactile elements such as textured surfaces, sand play, and water play
- Auditory components including outdoor musical instruments and sound panels
- Visual stimulation through colourful contrasting designs and kinetic sculptures
- Movement-based equipment such as swings, spinners, and climbing structures
- Quiet zones for calming, emotional regulation, and sensory breaks
- Accessible pathways and adaptive equipment to ensure full physical accessibility

The project will be developed collaboratively, incorporating the knowledge and insight of the FOTCP team, parents, carers, and individuals with lived experience. This approach will help ensure that the playground is not only inclusive but truly responsive to the needs of those who will use it.

By creating a space that addresses a wide range of sensory and developmental needs, this initiative will foster an environment that is not only fun but also deeply supportive — a place where individuals with developmental challenges can learn, grow, and thrive through play.

Problem Statement & Community Needs Assessment

At Friends of the Care Project (FOTCP), we support children and adults in Antigua with complex developmental needs, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), ADHD, sensory processing disorders, learning disabilities, hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy, and other neurological and cognitive conditions. Many of these individuals face significant barriers to participating in mainstream education, employment, and recreational activities due to the nature of their needs.

One of the key challenges identified by our team and the families we support is the lack of accessible, sensory-friendly outdoor environments in Antigua where individuals with developmental needs can safely play, learn, and interact with others.

Currently, there are limited resources on the island that provide the kind of therapeutic and inclusive play spaces required by the children and adults who attend FOTCP, as well as many others in the wider community who would benefit from such services.

As a registered charity, we are experiencing a growing number of referrals from local clinics and hospitals from families seeking support for children and adults who would benefit from our services. However, our ability to continue providing comprehensive and well-rounded support is restricted by the lack of outdoor sensory spaces.

Establishing a purpose-built sensory playground will not only enhance our existing services but also enable us to reach more individuals across the island who require support in this area of development.

Identified Community Needs

Through consultations with staff, families, and individuals who attend FOTCP, a clear need has emerged for a sensory-informed and inclusive playground. The key gaps identified include:

- A lack of suitable outdoor spaces that provide both sensory stimulation and calming areas for individuals with developmental and sensory challenges
- Limited access to physical activity, particularly for individuals who rely on sensory input to regulate emotions and behaviour

- Social exclusion caused by environments that are not adaptable to different communication styles, physical abilities, or sensory needs
- Emotional and mental health challenges, with families reporting increased anxiety, frustration, and dysregulation among individuals who have no safe outlet for play and self-regulation

These needs have been confirmed through family engagement sessions, daily observations within FOTCP programming, and feedback from staff, parents, and carers. The consensus is clear: there is a critical need for more therapeutic, inclusive, and sensory-friendly outdoor spaces in Antigua.

Barriers to Inclusion in Existing Facilities

Many playgrounds and recreational spaces currently available in Antigua are not designed to accommodate the diverse needs of neurodivergent individuals and those with developmental disabilities.

Common barriers include:

- High noise levels and overwhelming sensory input from crowded environments
- Non-adaptive play equipment that excludes individuals with mobility challenges or low motor control
- A lack of quiet or calming spaces for emotional regulation
- Limited sensory elements such as visual, tactile, or auditory features essential for engagement and development

As a result, individuals with developmental needs are missing out on critical opportunities for social interaction, physical development, emotional regulation, and independent exploration.

Why This Project Is Needed Now

With increasing referrals and growing awareness of neurodiversity and complex needs in Antigua, there is an urgent need to provide equitable access to safe, inclusive, and therapeutic recreational spaces.

The creation of a sensory-informed, fully accessible playground at FOTCP will directly address this longstanding gap. It will allow us to expand our services, improve the quality of life for the individuals we currently support, and create a space where children and adults with developmental needs can thrive.

By providing a safe environment for play, movement, sensory exploration, and social connection, this project will have a lasting impact not only on the individuals we support, but also on their families, carers, and the wider community.

We are reaching out to philanthropists, businesses, and community supporters who can contribute to this worthy cause. Every donation, no matter how small, will help us move closer to building this much-needed resource for our community.

Contributions Will Support:

- Playground equipment and sensory play items
- Accessibility adaptations and inclusive features
- Safety surfacing and fencing
- Therapeutic and sensory resources
- Installation and site development costs
- Ongoing maintenance and sustainability of the space

Community Participation & Support

The project will be strongly community-led, with support from volunteers, local tradespeople, and community partners.

Community Contributions Will Include:

- Volunteers assisting with painting, planting, and equipment assembly
- On-site support from FOTCP maintenance staff during construction
- Oversight from a member of the Board of Directors to ensure effective project management
- Donations of building materials such as paint, gravel, timber, and plants
- Daily meals provided by FOTCP for workers and volunteers
- Professional support from carpenters, welders, electricians, and other skilled tradespeople contributing voluntarily or at reduced cost
- Use of locally available materials to create hand-made sensory panels, climbing structures, and seating areas

This project will also serve as an opportunity to educate and inspire future community initiatives focused on inclusion and accessibility.

The sensory and play area will support children and adults who require sensory input and therapeutic play opportunities, particularly individuals with autism and other sensory-driven needs. FOTCP also hopes to demonstrate how community-led initiatives can positively impact neurodivergent individuals and encourage wider collaboration with government agencies and stakeholders.

Through these contributions, the community will play an essential role in shaping and sustaining the sensory playground, ensuring its long-term success and impact.

Sustainability Plan

The sensory playground at Friends of the Care Project (FOTCP) has been designed not only as a short-term initiative but as a long-term community resource that will continue to benefit children and adults with disabilities, their families, and the wider community for many years to come.

To ensure sustainability beyond the initial support from donors and funding partners, FOTCP will implement ongoing maintenance plans, community involvement initiatives, and future fundraising efforts to preserve and enhance the space over time.

Budget Summary

To bring this vision to life, several specialist items will need to be purchased. However, we also plan to be resourceful by designing and building some features ourselves, helping to reduce overall project costs.

Examples of structures we plan to build in-house include a walk-in sensory tunnel and climbing frame, using materials such as timber, paint, and locally sourced supplies.

Proposed Playground Features Include:

- Sensory tunnel with interactive panels
- Climbing frame and slide
- Standard swings
- Basket swings
- Bolster swing
- Gazebo with sensory wall panels
- Shaded seating areas with sail canopies
- Accessible pathways
- Natural sensory and planting features

The final design will combine purchased equipment with creatively built structures to ensure the best use of funds while delivering a high-quality and inspiring environment for the children and adults we support.

Due to Antigua's climate, additional shaded structures will be necessary to protect individuals from excessive sun exposure, increasing the number of sail canopies and covered areas required.

Many items may be sourced from suppliers in the United States, and preliminary costing research has been conducted using online suppliers and sensory playground resources.

Our vision is illustrated in the image below



The prices of these items are approximate, and we are kindly seeking donors, sponsors, and community supporters to help purchase one or more of the items on our list. Every contribution, regardless of size, will play a meaningful role in helping us bring this important vision to life.

We are deeply and eternally grateful for every donation received. Your generosity will directly contribute toward creating a safe, inclusive, and sensory-informed environment where children and adults with developmental and complex needs can play, learn, grow, and thrive.

For many of the individuals we support, opportunities to access therapeutic and accessible recreational spaces are extremely limited. Through your kindness and support, we can begin to build a space that offers joy, comfort, sensory exploration, emotional regulation, social connection, and a true sense of belonging.

Every donation, whether large or small, brings us one step closer to creating a lasting resource for our community. Your support is not simply helping to fund playground equipment — it is helping to create opportunities, improve quality of life, support families, and bring hope to individuals who deserve safe and inclusive spaces designed with their needs in mind.

From the bottom of our hearts, we sincerely thank everyone who chooses to support this project. Your generosity, compassion, and belief in our vision will leave a lasting impact on the lives of many children, adults, and families within our community for years to come

Cost of the project

Category	Item / Description	Estimated Cost (XCD)
Construction & Materials	Paint and brushes	\$1,350
	Gravel and landscaping materials	\$6,750
	Timber and wood for climbing structures, swing supports, and seating	\$18,484
	Tools and hardware (screws, nails, fixings, etc.)	\$3,618
Play equipment	Swings and slide	\$4,517
	Wooden climbing frame	\$3,618
	Omni Spinner	\$27,000
	Trampoline	\$4,050
Sensory & Inclusive Equipment	Sensory panels and interactive equipment	\$2,700
	Musical instruments	\$11,070
Structures & Shelter	Gazebo	\$10,260
Ground & Safety Surfaces	Flooring (soft mats, rubber tiles, shade sails, astro turf)	\$7,560
Landscaping	Garden plants, shrubs, and trees	\$1,350
Total cost		\$102,327 EC dollars

Pictures of the items we would like to have

