B.1 Applicant Organization

Organization's History

Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. (AZACS) was organized as a non-profit corporation in February 2012 by Diana Diaz, Ron Harrison, Gregory Torrez, Josephine Torrez, Mary McEvilly-Hernandez and Leo Valdez. In March of 2012, Joseph Gentry, Ph.D., BCBA-D was added as a board member. This is a newly formed organization with no other current operations. AZACS's articles of incorporation have been filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission as well as the amendment to add Joseph Gentry as part of the initial directors.

The initial members of this board came together because they all have children or family members affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and have faced many challenges in obtaining a high quality education for their loved ones on the autism spectrum. This group is united by their unwavering desire to improve the educational options for children with autism in Arizona by creating a school that will serve as a model for best practices in educating this growing sector of our population. According to the latest Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) statistics, the rate of autism cases in Arizona is higher than in most other parts of the nation with **one in every 64** children affected by this disorder in our state.

This board possesses expertise in educating children with autism and in implementing best practices in schools. In addition, the AZACS team has the leadership skills, knowledge of business and finance, entrepreneurial expertise and community outreach background to successfully operate a school and ensure its sustainability. The board shares a commitment and history in advocating for children with autism and has joined forces to create a high-quality educational option for these students.

Diana Díaz serves as the board President and Authorized Representative for the charter school. As the mother of a child with autism and activist in the autism community, Diana is well aware of the gaps in services for children with autism and their families and is committed to offering solutions to the Phoenix metro community by offering a high quality education for this population.

Currently, Diana is a Senior Communication Strategist specializing in the Hispanic Market for Salt River Project (SRP). As a member of SRP's corporate communications team, Diana is committed to delivering top quality information to SRP's Hispanic customers. Her duties include overseeing all Spanish language communications pieces, creating original, culturally competent materials, as well as implementing short and long term communications strategies to engage SRP's Latino customer base. Diana can also be seen weekly on Telemundo, where she serves as a guest reporter delivering news segments on energy efficiency and community resources. In addition, Diana is also a spokesperson for SRP with English language media outlets and in the community. Prior to joining SRP, she served as Communications Director and Public Information Officer for the Arizona Lottery.

Diana possesses a unique combination of experience in broadcast media, public relations, and education. In 1999, she came to the Phoenix market to serve as Univision 33's lead anchor and reporter focusing on education and medical news. Beginning in 2003, she began freelance

reporting for the Telemundo Network and producing Spanish medical segments for the Mayo Clinic, which were released across Latin America by CNN Español.

As the mother of two children, one of which is diagnosed with autism, Diana has also been an advocate and resource for the Hispanic community affected by autism. From 2007 to 2009, she served as Hispanic Community Relations Strategist for the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC). In this role, she brought autism awareness to the forefront of the Hispanic Community by working with Univision television and radio to produce weekly news segments on this widespread developmental disability. In October of 2009, Diana was recognized with an Emmy nomination for her news reports on autism. While working at SARRC, Diana conducted multiple trainings to teach educators about the "red flags" of autism and strategies to connect parents to early intervention services. Today, Diana continues work as a volunteer advocate helping further SARRC's Hispanic outreach efforts.

This year, Diana was approached by the leadership of the non-profit Pima Partnership, to help promote the launch of their new charter school, Arizona Collegiate High School. Diana developed and executed a successful media campaign that helped promote the school and fill it to capacity in its first year.

Also this year, Diana received a "Spotlight" recognition at Valle del Sol's Profiles of Success event. In 2008, she was recognized as one of Arizona's "40 Hispanic Leaders Under 40" by the Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and is part of Valle Del Sol's Hispanic Leadership Institute's 2008 Alumni class.

Although Diana has had many professional experiences in media and public relations, she is an educator at heart. In 1991 she graduated with a Master's degree in Education from The Claremont Graduate University in California and served the community as a bilingual school teacher from 1991 to 1998. Her goal is to use her professional and personal experience to open an exemplary charter school focused on meeting the needs of children with autism. Diana's work in the autism community has led her to work with the most renowned professionals in the field of autism in Arizona. Now many of those experts are part of the AZACS founding team, advisory council and circle of friends and are at the board's disposal for consultation and support.

Once the charter is approved, Diana will continue to promote AZACS and continue to serve as lead founder and Board President. She will use her experience in serving families affected by autism, strategic planning skills she has acquired in the corporate business sector and marketing and promotion skills to lead the AZACS team in delivering the best possible education for children with autism. Diana has been the key leader in assembling the team of community leaders and autism education experts that has become the AZACS Corporate Board and she will continue to build and lead the team that will operate the school. Diana's most important role will be to ensure the school has all the resources it needs to run efficiently so that the team of experts can impart the best education possible for this special population. Diana will use all the resources at her disposal including the Arizona Charter Schools Association and mentors in the charter school community as well as the autism service provider community. Her love and passion for helping students with autism achieve their full potential through a high-quality education will create a positive and invigorating school culture that will place students with autism first.

Joseph Gentry, Ph.D., BCBA-D serves as a Director on the AZACS board. He is one of the key founding members and brings a wealth of expertise to the team by serving as the board's main educational and autism consultant. Dr. Gentry obtained his doctoral degree from Illinois State University, specializing in developmental disabilities. He has expertise in the areas of assessment, consultation and behavioral therapies and the implementation of those practices in educational settings. He completed his pre and post-doctoral fellowships at The May Institute in Massachusetts, where he served as an educational and behavioral consultant, providing comprehensive, evidence-based services to children and adults with autism, brain injury, mental retardation and other childhood disabilities.

Dr. Gentry has been working with children with cognitive disabilities such as autism, ADHD, anxiety and other behavioral challenges for the past 9 years and has presented his research nationally on topics related to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), social skills and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). As a certified school psychologist, Dr. Gentry has extensive knowledge of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and the IEP process, assessment of student strengths and deficits and the ability to assess the learning environment.

He also holds a Board Certification in Behavioral Analysis (BCBA) and uses applied behavior analytic methodologies (ABA) to teach positive behaviors to children with autism and other cognitive disabilities in school settings.

Once the charter is approved, Joseph will transition to the school's executive team, serving as Curriculum and ABA Supervisor/Consultant to ensure curriculum strategies are optimal for students at AZACS.

Leo Valdez serves as a Director on the board. Leo is Senior Vice President and the manager for the Phoenix office of the investment banking firm Hutchinson, Shockey, Erley & Co. He has over 20 years of experience in municipal finance in Arizona and the southwest, including extensive experience in industrial development authority bonds, sales tax (excise tax) revenue bonds, infrastructure finance, school districts, multi-family housing, single-family housing, hospitals, and special needs revenue bonds. Leo also has experience with rating agency and insurance company presentations. Prior to working in the investment banking industry, Leo worked for the United States Department of Agriculture. He was a specialist loan officer under the Business & Industry Loan Note Guarantee Program in Washington D.C. and later became the Chief for the program in the State of Arizona. He still implements government programs to assist issuers and companies obtain financing in the form of government loan guarantees and grants. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture Business from New Mexico State University and a Master of Science degree in Finance from American University, Washington, D.C. He is a board member of the Arizona Lottery Commission, a former board member of the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center (SARRC) and a current board member of the United Cerebral Palsy (UCP).

Leo has been a long-time advocate for children with disabilities and is the father of a deceased daughter with autism. He has dedicated himself to improving the life of children with autism in his daughter's honor. In 2008 he received a Profiles of Success award from the non-profit Valle del Sol for his role in passing legislation that requires insurance companies to cover autism related treatments and therapies. Leo is well aware of the struggles parents face when trying to improve the educational

opportunities for their children with autism and is a committed member of this board, offering his expertise in the area of finance, acquisition of grants and business administration.

Leo has been instrumental in providing his financial expertise to create the start-up and three-year operational budgets for AZACS. Once the charter is approved, Leo will remain on the board to assist in all aspects of the financial aspects of AZACS.

Mary McEvilly-Hernandez serves as Vice President of the AZACS board. She has had over 30 years of experience in Hispanic media, public relations and community outreach. Her most recent title was General Manager of Univision Radio and as such, operated one of the most successful media conglomerates in the Phoenix market. As the mother of a 20-year-old son with autism, Mary is well aware of the challenges faced by families living with this condition, especially when trying to advocate for a better education for their children. Her love and passion for helping underserved communities have led her to champion many initiatives that have raised needed funds for charitable causes. She is a former board member of the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center (SARRC) and has received numerous accolades for her role in promoting the Arizona Walk for Autism since 2009. Her desire to give families a better educational option for children with autism has led her to join the AZACS board and use her community outreach and media expertise to advance the board's mission.

Upon charter approval, Mary will remain on the board and will use her expertise in media and promotion to help promote AZACS in the community and to prospective families.

Gregory Torrez serves as a Director on the AZACS board. He brings to the board an expertise in business and community involvement. He and his family have a long and rich history of involvement in the local community. The foundation of his business experience has its roots with one of his current businesses, Azteca Wedding Plaza. Azteca is a family owned and operated enterprise with its beginnings in the 1940's, operating in the heart of downtown Phoenix where it still does business today.

In addition, Gregory is a supporter of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and the surrounding community that it serves. He recognized the vital role that this facility plays in the economic engine of America's 6th largest city. Gregory has been instrumental in the transformation of Sky Harbor from a single terminal hub to a three terminal national destination for international flights, commerce and shipping. He served as Founding Chairman of the Support Sky Harbor Coalition and is also a partner in Paradies Phoenix Joint Venture, which operates retail stores and transportation businesses at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

Gregory has combined his years of experience as a working employee, active manager and owner and partner in his business ventures to develop skills and expertise that have been an asset not only to his businesses but to the community. He uses this wealth of knowledge and experience to promote positive change in local educational organizations, neighborhoods, nonprofit and business organizations. He has spearheaded many programs that have been powerful assets in educating, training and empowering groups of children to better their lives and realize their dreams. He currently serves on seven other Boards around the Valley but his

work on the AZACS board is near and dear to his heart due to his first grandchild being born with autism. His personal experience with his grandson helped Gregory understand the need for more champions on behalf of children with autism and their education. His decision to be a part of the AZACS Board and founding team was without question.

When the charter is approved, Gregory will remain on the board of directors and use his expertise in business management and community engagement to ensure the success and financial sustainability of AZACS.

Ron Harrison serves as Treasurer of the AZACS board. He possesses a unique combination of experience in corporate environments, promotion of non-profits and small business planning and administration. Over the last 19 years, he has been a creative leader at Salt River Project (SRP) having managed hundreds of video and on-line communications projects to promote SRP programs and services. In addition to his full-time work at SRP, Ron also runs an independent production company providing services for small businesses and non-profits. Ron also manages investment properties via his own property management company. He holds an MBA in Business Management earned in 2005 from Western International University and has won several awards including two Emmy Awards for his documentary projects featuring the legacy of the Theodore Roosevelt Dam. In addition, he has received several Telly awards for promotional videos, commercials and Public Service Announcements.

In the last few years, Ron has been touched by autism through his step-son, and has become familiar with the challenges parents face in advocating for the education of their autistic children. He is eager to use his business and communications background to launch a charter school for children and families living with autism.

Ron will remain on the board upon charter approval. He will use his expertise in small business management to assist the AZACS board and founding team in making sound financial decisions that promote the economic well-being of the school.

Josephine Torrez serves as secretary of the AZACS board. She brings a wide-range of experience in managing, consulting and educating. Josephine began her professional career in 1985, working in her family's business, Azteca Wedding Plaza (AWP). At the age of 13, she was already mastering her customer service skills and successfully built and managed a strong customer data base. In 1995, she was one of the youngest managers at the family business and managed two divisions and a team of 15 employees. As a single mother, Josephine was working full time and pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Education at ASU as a full time student. In the summer of 2000, she graduated from ASU's College of Education and remained a manager at AWP.

Josephine started Universal Consulting Services, L.L.C in 2007, planning and coordinating many weddings, company events and facilitating several customer service training classes. In 2010, Josephine left AWP and pursued her passion in working with children at Lowell Elementary School in Phoenix. During this time she also began her part-time career as a habilitation specialist for Arcadia Health Care. Josephine provides services for her 18 year old nephew with autism, teaching him the necessary skills to be a productive citizen. This experience has given Josephine extensive insight into the challenges faced by individuals with autism, which has motivated her to obtain training in best practices for individuals with this condition.

Currently, Josephine works with her father Gregory Torrez in their consulting firm, Torrez International L.L.C. This branch of their family business helps privately owned companies contribute to the betterment of our communities. Josephine's attention to detail and organizational skills have been an invaluable asset to the AZACS board.

All board members have been trained in the AZACS mission, vision, instructional programs, roles and responsibilities as board members and Open Meeting Laws. Members of the founding team have also participated in the Arizona Charter Schools Association Charter Starter Program, which has given invaluable instruction on appropriate governance for charter schools.

Upon charter approval, Josephine will remain on the board and continue to lend her expertise in data base management and small business administration.

Collectively, the AZACS board of directors has made it a priority to create a public charter school with a focus on children with autism and to offer parents an educational option that is currently not available in our state. A 2008 report commissioned by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs and authored by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education says that at that time, there were at least 20 other charter schools in 13 states focused on children with autism. AZACS has researched some of these schools including South Florida Autism Charter School, New York Center for Autism Charter School, Foundation School for Autism in Texas, Autism Academy of Learning in Ohio, Spectrum Charter School in Pennsylvania and Lionsgate Academy in Minnesota. This report reflects a growing trend in the charter school movement that is recognizing the need for high quality charter schools with a focus on children with autism. AZACS' research confirms that schools that are grounded in Applied Behavior Analysis methodologies are in high demand by parents of children with autism.

AZACS is committed to bringing this valuable option to the state of Arizona and to give parents of children with autism the opportunity for school choice. Our organization and school's mission is to educate children with autism using best-practices and to help these students reach their full potential to become fulfilled, contributing members of our community.

AZACS has secured the services of the Condos Law Office, PLC to ensure compliance with non-profit law and obtainment of 501 (c) 3 status. AZACS received approval of its Articles of Incorporation from the Arizona Corporation Commission in February 2012. AZACS is a non-profit corporation with the initial purpose of promoting education and social welfare by forming and maintaining a charter school to benefit, improve, and educate the youth of Arizona. AZACS is in the process of obtaining an Employer Identification Number. The application to the Internal Revenue Service for 501(c) 3 status for AZACS will be submitted along with payment to the U.S. Treasury. AZACS will also file Form 1023, Application for Recognition of Exemption Under Section 501(c)(3) along with Form 2848, Power of Attorney and Declaration of Representative, in order to claim Tax-exempt status.

Role and Responsibility of the Organization

The Corporate Board of Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. will serve a leadership role in

ensuring the organization's mission and vision are upheld in all decision making and will be the governing body for the charter school. The organization is newly formed and has no existing operations. The Principals of the AZACS board have not been involved in the operations of any current or prior charter school. In addition, this applicant organization has no subsidiary relationship to any other organizations.

All board members are required to attend board meetings and contribute to the decision making processes that will further AZACS' mission. Roles and responsibilities based on member titles (i.e., president, secretary, etc.) are explained in detail in the by-laws. The permanent governing board of Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. will be responsible for the charter school's operations, policies, and performance. The Board will act to assure compliance with Arizona Charter School Law, the Sponsor's written policies, and the terms of the Charter entered into between the Board and the Sponsor. The board is ultimately responsible for all organization activities and governing responsibilities for the school(s) it is authorized to operate. AZACS is working hard to establish itself as a non-profit high-quality educational institution focused on meeting the needs of students with autism. All meetings will be conducted in accordance with the Arizona Open Meeting Law.

Establishing Additional Principles

AZACS Board Members will continuously be seeking and identifying potential additional board members that can contribute by providing expertise and resources to ensure the corporation complies with its charter and moves its mission forward. In general Board Members shall serve without compensation. The method for selecting members of the Board of Directors is designed to place those persons on the Board who are qualified in terms of training, education, and experience, and who are also those persons having utmost credibility and respect. The members shall reflect the diversity of the community and be qualified in terms of training, education, and experience.

Per the bylaws, the board will always have at least seven members. The AZACS board currently has seven members therefore it will transition to function as the school governing board once the charter is approved in January of 2013. The Board Members shall serve staggered terms of three (3) years. If a vacancy occurs, the vacancy will be filled by the Board of Directors for the unexpired portion of the term. The Board of Directors will begin the election process as soon as possible and begin to identify potential new members from the Advisory Council, parents and community.

The current members of this board have varied professional backgrounds and experiences in the fields necessary to get the Arizona Autism Charter School off the ground and operating in a way that is consistent with excellent best practices for children with autism. The members of this board are united in their passion to improve the quality of life for children with autism by offering them an exceptional education. As vacancies occur on the board remaining members will seek to fill them with individuals committed to the education of children with autism.

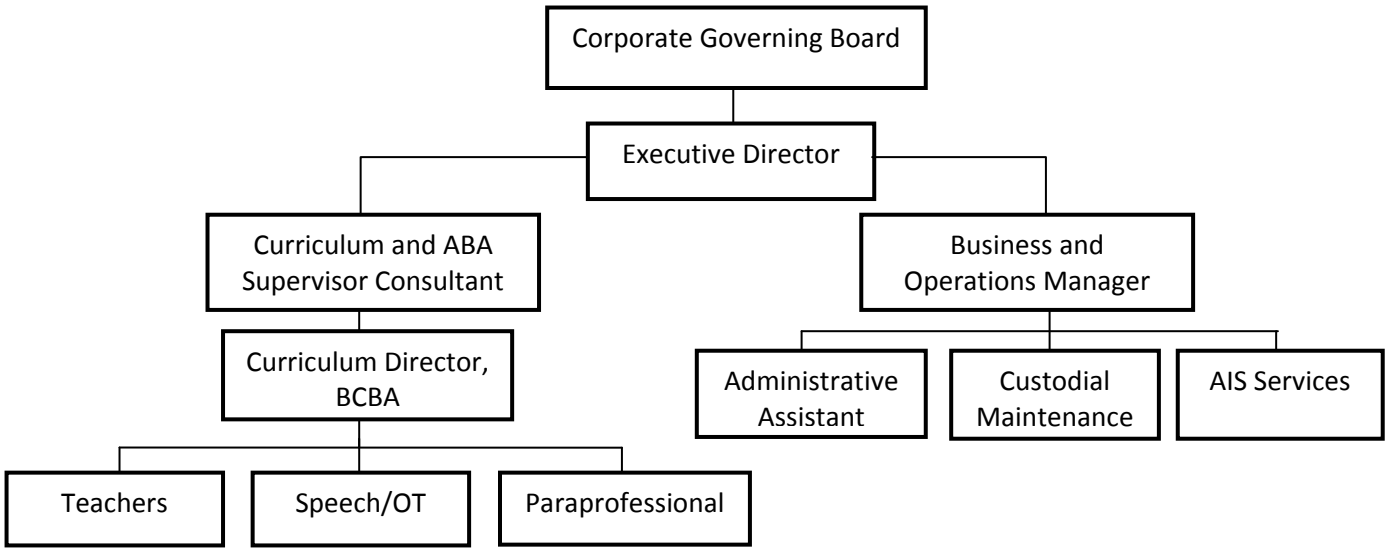
Reporting Structure and Organizational Chart

The Corporate Board will serve full fiduciary responsibilities as the holder(s) of the charter contract but will entrust the day to day management of AZACS to the Executive Director. The

Executive Director will oversee school staff and provide policy consistent with the school's mission and will set policies which ensure the school's programs and operations are aligned with the charter school contract.

The Executive Director will be responsible for overseeing the work of the school's education team which will include a Curriculum and ABA Supervisor/Consultant and a Curriculum Director. The Curriculum and ABA Supervisor/Consultant will be a board certified doctorate level expert in Applied Behavior Analysis (BCBA-D) and will collaborate with the Curriculum Director, a Master's level Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) to ensure the school's curriculum is in line with Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) methodologies and best practices for students with autism. The Curriculum and ABA Supervisor/Consultant will be hired as a part-time consultant while the Curriculum Director will be at the school full time. Teachers, Paraprofessionals and the contracted Speech and Occupational Therapists will report to the Curriculum Director.

On the business side of the school, the Executive Director will oversee the work of the Business and Operations Manager who will be responsible for school budgets, student records and daily facilities management. The Business and Operations Manager will be the main contact for Diamond Financial Services, the contractor AZACS plans to hire to manage attendance reporting through the SAIS system, Title grant management, payroll services and other "back office" responsibilities. An Administrative Assistant and a part-time Custodian will also report to the Business and Operations Manager.

The organizational structure will remain the same in years two and three with the exception of an additional teacher being added each year as well as two paraprofessionals being added each year.

AZACS Three Year Organizational Chart