

# Mary E. Costello

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## NOT-FOR-PROFIT EXECUTIVE, CHANGE AGENT AND INSTITUTION-BUILDER

***Over 20 years of non-profit leadership and capacity building/turnaround experience, with service as an independent consultant, President/CEO, fundraising professional, advocate, and program director.***

Passionate Social Worker and advocate. Dynamic, systems and results-oriented leader with a strong track record of success in turnaround and start-up/expansion environments. Capable of resolving multiple and complex issues in spite of limited financial and human resources. Superior interpersonal skills and a natural ability to win new friends, mend strained relationships, and mobilize teams to resolve organizational crises. Proudly introduce, foster, and preserve cooperative cultures built upon and sustained by mutual respect, shared ownership, and team-based commitment to the greatest good. Areas of expertise include:

- Board of Directors Support & Training
- Budget Development & Oversight
- Conflict Resolution & Consensus Building
- Contract Negotiations & Strategic Alliances
- Diverse Fiscal Development Plans/Pursuits
- Executive Coaching (Directors and Board)
- Government Regulation/Statute Compliance
- Grants, RFPs, Gov't Contracts Administration
- Highly Technical to Creative Writing
- Human Resources Management
- Marketing & Communications Plans/Tools
- Operational Systems & Process Tools
- Organizational Improvement/Strategic Growth
- Person-Centered Planning & Service Delivery
- Policies & Procedures Development
- Policy/Broad Knowledge of Social Justice Issues
- Program & Organizational Development
- Public Speaking & Community Outreach
- Start-ups, Expansions & Rebirths
- Strategy, Vision & Mission Planning
- Team Building, Supervision & Coaching
- Transitional Management/Leadership

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### **Independent Non-Profit Consultant**

*Creative Edge Consulting (dba) - Columbia, Maryland*

(P/T - April 2004) **February 2005 to Present**

I specialize in the tailored support of start-ups, in addition to the improvement, sustainability, and expansion of more established agencies. Heavy emphasis on program/organizational development and operational efficacy, increased impact and reach, visibility and effective communications/messaging, non-profit trends and best practices, and fiscal/programmatic accountability. Substantial work with non-profit Founders and Boards of Directors, which includes overall vision, strategy/direction/priorities, and organizational health, as well as Board member responsibilities and optimal functioning of the governing body as a whole.

Funding pursuits include foundation, corporate, city, county, state, and federal grants, plus public donations, Major Gifts, and corporate sponsorships. Fundraising advice is also offered regarding events, raffles, social media, donor engagement, etc. Over 55 non-profits have been served to date, with many clients more than doubling their previous fundraising outcomes after signing-on with me. Largest foundation grant award: 11 million dollars. Two largest governmental grants (since 2005): approximately 1 million dollars apiece. One 25-year old agency received two times the charitable gifts typically secured through their holiday plea letter.

**Director of Development****July 2013 – April 2014***Medical Education Institute, Inc. – Madison, Wisconsin*

Part-time (80%), remote role with this national organization that provides educational products and services related to chronic kidney disease. (This service was in addition to my continued consulting work.) Created press releases, and sponsorship packages and grant proposals for website development projects. Within my first full month of employ, helped MEI prepare and submit a 6.1 million dollar grant funding request to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for a Healthcare Innovation Award. (Not funded.)

Created a comprehensive, preliminary, 3-year Development Plan (focused beyond fundraising alone) that included all potential non-profit funding streams (all new to MEI except corporate monies), deep assessment of the organization's strengths and needs with suggestions for improved messaging to engage a broader audience, staff/departmental expansions needed to accommodate new fundraising areas and programmatic growth over time, sub-component plans (grants, sponsorships, communications), proposed new consumer advisory panel and fundraising arm, a Youth Action/Leadership Development effort, development internship program, and detailed organizational and project-specific budget projections spanning two years.

**Grant Writer/Fundraiser****April 2004 – February 2005***Norbel School – Elkridge, Maryland*

K-12 school for children with learning differences and language delays or disorders. Work focused primarily on foundation and corporate grants, as well as donor recognition activities for low-level gifts.

**Professional Singer/Songwriter & Small Business Owner****1994-2007***Acoustic Blue Productions (DJ & Karaoke) and Whistle While I Work (Residential Painting & Cleaning Services)  
Parkville/Owings Mills/Monkton, Maryland*

While I took a 10-year break from human services to pursue my more creative interests, I owned two small businesses. (Artistically, I am also an actor, artist/illustrator, and multi-genre literary writer.) In addition to performing as a vocalist for 20 years, I was a popular Karaoke Host/DJ and frequent MC/Host of non-profit fundraising events in the Baltimore area. Fun highlight: Partnered with Baltimore radio station, MIX106.5, for a series of American Idol-ish morning show singing contests, and served as an on-air personality/judge.

**Program Director****1993-1994***Center for Community Development – Capital Heights, Maryland*

Residential program for adults with developmental disabilities/mental health disorders. Also responsible for a congregate living facility for senior citizens. Supervised a dynamic team of 35+ employees and managed a budget of approximately 1 million dollars. Mobilized clinical staff to help resolve serious organizational crisis.

Within my first four months of employ, brought this troubled agency from the brink of program closure, due to what was cited by the State of Maryland as "deplorable conditions," to experience their first full licensing renewal in the 10-year history of the organization. In fact, no deficiencies could be detected by evaluators during this 3-day licensing review—which, to my knowledge, had never before been achieved by a Maryland residential provider. The undertaking involved massive overhaul of the program, clinically and operationally, as well as addressing the serious physical plant issues within each of the 15 residential homes that included a high degree of health and safety violations. Total cost of this organizational revamp—less than \$3,000.

**CEO/President/Founder****1992-1993***Creative Options, Inc. – Columbia, Maryland*

One of only three new Maryland residential providers accepted through a 1992 Request for Proposals (RFP). I wrote a comprehensive proposal package (that included a complete operations manual responsive to strict State regulations and individualized support plans for each prospective resident) resulting in negotiation and award of a 2.8 million dollar, 3-year grant contract with the State of Maryland to start-up/operate this new program. Under my leadership, this organization was highly respected for unique approaches to supporting persons with co-occurring diagnoses (developmental disabilities/mental health disorders, with often others) deemed "difficult to place" by the State of Maryland due to significant behavioral challenges and long-time histories of failure to successfully live in the community. At the time, the program had a solid reputation for its customized alternatives to State institutionalization while offering members of the *Knotts Class Action Suit* with a substantially higher "quality of life." Today, this agency has an annual budget of 11 million dollars.

**Developmental Disabilities Specialist****1991-1992***University of Maryland at Baltimore/Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration – Baltimore, MD*

Maryland State representative and disabilities advocate. The *Community Support & Access Unit* was a small, elite team of professionals that helped transform the way "business" is done in Maryland's developmental disabilities system. Introduced and modeled an innovative "person-centered" approach to supporting adults with disabilities (and "severe reputations") while substantially reducing State costs per client. Our team also facilitated services for special education students transitioning into adult services and returning home from costly out-of-state residential schools. Further, the Access team evaluated proposals from service providers and made placement/funding recommendations to the State. Consequently, Maryland helped pave the way for this *then*-progressive philosophy and support model to become a widespread national norm.

**Director of Maryland Operations****1990-1991***English & Condray, Ltd. – Silver Spring, Maryland*

Orchestrated the rapid development and launch of this start-up residential program designed to effectively support persons with dual diagnoses (developmental disabilities/mental health disorders) complicated by significant behavioral challenges and histories of repeated failure to successfully live in the community. Five residential homes officially opened and welcomed all their residents within a span of five weeks, and the full start-up process began only four months prior. I was also responsible for two congregate living facilities for seniors. Supervised 50<sup>+</sup> employees and managed an annual budget of approximately 1.5 million dollars.

**Program Director****1989-1990***United Cerebral Palsy Association – Bowie, Maryland*

Administration of residential and day (psychosocial educational/recreational) programs for persons with developmental/physical disabilities and/or medical conditions. Led moderate program improvement and group home program expansion. Supervised 55<sup>+</sup> employees and managed a budget of 1.5 million dollars.

**EDUCATION**

October 1987 – BA in Social Work, The Catholic University of America (Washington, DC)

*Honors, Senior Thesis – The Deinstitutionalization of the Chronically Mentally Ill from St. Elizabeth's Hospital*