

ballinger | leafblad

www.ballingerleafblad.com

EXECUTIVE POSITION PROFILE



GRAYWOLF
PRESS

ORGANIZATION

Graywolf Press

POSITION

Executive Director and Publisher

APPLICATION DEADLINE

April 15, 2022

COMPENSATION

\$150,000 - \$160,000

BRIEF

Ballinger | Leafblad is pleased to conduct the search for Executive Director and Publisher at Graywolf Press in Minneapolis, Minnesota

CONTACT

Lars Leafblad, lars@ballingerleafblad.com

Marcia Ballinger, marcia@ballingerleafblad.com



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Considered one of the nation's leading independent, nonprofit literary publishers, Graywolf Press publishes books that foster new thinking about what it means to live in the world today. From its headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Graywolf publishes an annual list of thirty to thirty-five new titles and organizes around two hundred local and national events featuring its authors each year.

[View Graywolf's recent titles](#)

Graywolf operates with a \$4.5 million annual budget, of which \$1.3 million is raised from individual donors and institutional funders.

Graywolf is more than a publisher of books. Its programs are guided by a broad strategic plan with multipronged objectives that bring together a community of authors, readers, critics, booksellers, educators, and donors who are united by a shared love of innovative literature.

Graywolf is governed by a twenty-member Board of Directors based primarily in the Twin Cities, and a larger advisory National Council with around 50 members across the United States.

2021

at-a-glance

28

New Titles
Published

740K

Readers

\$3.6 million

Sales
Revenue



HISTORY

Graywolf Press was founded in 1974 in Port Townsend, Washington, by Scott Walker and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 1984. Since then, Graywolf has come to be known as a preeminent literary press, and has advanced the careers of many world-class writers, including Elizabeth Alexander, Percival Everett, Leslie Jamison, Carmen Maria Machado, Maggie Nelson, Per Petterson, Claudia Rankine, and Tracy K. Smith.

In 1985, thanks in part to generous support from the National Endowment for the Arts and from local philanthropic organizations, Graywolf moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, and then to Minneapolis in 2009. Fiona McCrae has led Graywolf as Director and Publisher since 1994.

Graywolf has been recognized with multiple prizes, including the Sally Ordway Irvine Award for vision, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofit's Excellence Award, and the AWP Small Publisher Award. In recent years, Graywolf books and authors have received significant national and international recognition, including the Nobel Prize for Literature, the Pulitzer Prize, the Booker Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the National Book Award. The organization has earned major grants from the Mellon Foundation, the Bush Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the Lannan Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and many other foundations and cultural institutions.

"No other independent press, never mind a 41-year-old nonprofit, has come so far so fast. It didn't happen by accident."—**New York magazine's *Vulture*, September 2015**

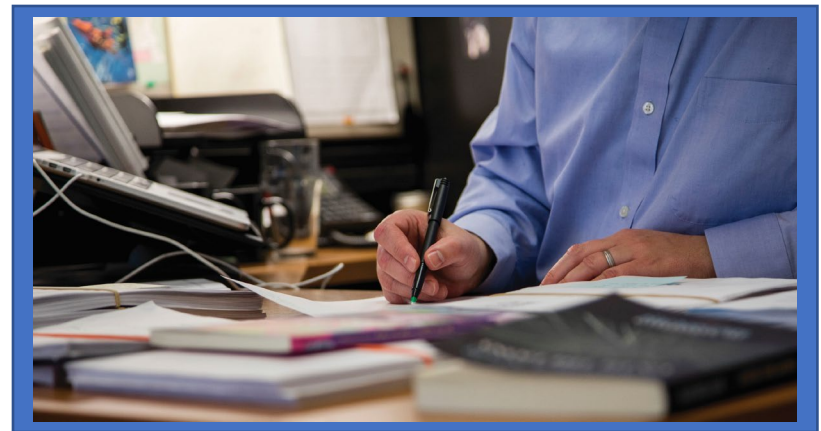
"I've watched with admiration and astonishment as they have turned an independent, nonprofit press with countercultural roots into a major literary institution."—**Vijay Seshadri, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for 3 Sections**

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Graywolf Press acknowledges that creating a healthy organizational culture is an ongoing process, and no set of static policies can completely account for it. The organization is committed to maintaining a culture in which the following values can flourish:

- Trust and respect;
- Agency, initiative, and participation;
- Open, straightforward, and reciprocal communication;
- Assumption of good intentions, with attentiveness to any unintended effects of our actions;
- Experimentation and risk-taking;
- Responsiveness and flexibility;
- Personal and organizational accountability;
- Integrity across operations and the publishing program;
- Inclusion and belonging for all staff, no matter their identity, background, or position within the organization.

Staff members describe the culture at Graywolf as being mission-centric and "authors first." The workplace environment encourages openness, inclusion, collaboration, transparent decision-making, and risk-taking and trust that come from a collective spirit.



MISSION

Graywolf Press is a leading independent publisher committed to the discovery and energetic publication of twenty-first century American and international literature. We champion outstanding writers at all stages of their careers to ensure that adventurous readers can find underrepresented and diverse voices in a crowded marketplace. We believe works of literature nourish the reader's spirit and enrich our broader culture, and that they must be supported by attentive editing, compelling design, and creative promotion.

VALUES

- Singular thought and innovative expression
- Inclusivity and diversity
- Engagement and conversation
- Integrity

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Every work of literature is in dialogue—with the form, with its time, and with the human condition. Graywolf Press will publish singular contemporary writers who find new language to address abiding themes and define urgent questions of our time.

IMPACT

Graywolf Press publishes books and produces author programming in an effort to introduce new ideas and fresh language to readers and the broader culture. The goal is to support and amplify a wide range of stories (and the people who tell them) because they are an essential way to understand contemporary life. Through its publishing program, Graywolf hopes to inspire people to be reflective, creative, and compassionately engaged with others regardless of their cultural origins.



STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2017, Graywolf embarked on an ambitious ten-year plan with a trajectory designed to make the organization a destination press for talented, experimental, and underrepresented voices from the United States and abroad, with media, reviewers, booksellers, and readers all looking to Graywolf as a source for exceptional writing and fresh ideas.

In 2020, after three years of successful implementation, the strategy was refreshed, in light of changing times, to provide guidance and goals for the next two to three years.

Highlights of the updated strategic plan

Organizational Priorities for 2020-2022:

- Focus on activities that create positive change in ourselves, the organization, the publishing field, and our culture.
- Prioritize diversity goals by expanding the Citizen Literary Initiative.
- Protect, support, and empower staff at all levels.
- Support and empower Graywolf's authors as their books are promoted.
- Help protect the vulnerable within the literary ecosystem.
- Generate conversation and imagine a future world for readers across the country.
- Operate remotely as effectively as possible until it is safe to return to a shared office.

Organizational Guiding Principles prioritize initiatives that:

- Reinforce Graywolf's intention to be visionary, forward-looking, and daring;
- Reflect an integrity of purpose across all practices, from the internal organization to the books published and the way they are published;
- Align with the resources and capacity of the organization in terms of time, finance, and skills;
- Respond proactively to the current moment and beyond;
- Include local, national, and international efforts.

FUNDING INITIATIVES

The **New Chapter Campaign** is a \$3 million funding initiative designed to strengthen Graywolf's publishing program through investments in the editorial program, audience development and engagement, and infrastructure. This campaign was started in 2017 with the intention of increasing Graywolf's annual budget from \$3.5 million to \$5 million by 2023. Support provided by the New Chapter Campaign enables Graywolf to publish singular writers, expand its commitment to inclusivity, engage readers, stimulate conversations, and strengthen operations for the next five to seven years. The campaign, which was successfully completed in 2021, supports the following initiatives:

Editorial Investment

A strong Acquisition Fund provides editorial resources that enable Graywolf to acquire the best manuscripts and allow time for ongoing and rigorous dialogue with editors who are committed to finding new voices and supporting authors over the course of their careers. The seasonal lists the editors construct are guided by interlocking concerns:

- Publishing writers of and for the twenty-first century;
- Prioritizing work that engages with contemporary issues and new thinking;
- Lifting up voices, stories, and genres that are underrepresented in commercial publishing;
- Balancing returning Graywolf authors and writers new to the list each season.

Graywolf African Fiction Prize

To respond to a new generation of writers coming from a continent that is growing in global influence, Graywolf established a biennial prize for the best first novel by an African writer residing in Africa. The first winner was published in October 2021; the second winner will be published in April 2022; and the third winner has recently been selected.

FUNDING INITIATIVES (cont.)

Citizen Literary Initiative



The **Citizen Literary Initiative** was created in 2016 with the intention to further Graywolf's commitment to intercultural competence, diversity and inclusion, and community engagement. Graywolf is proud to publish writers who are Asian American, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx. Additionally, many of Graywolf's authors explore their experiences as first or second-generation immigrants to this country in their work.

Recognizing racial inequality as a defining issue of our time, the Citizen Literary Initiative aims to expand the astonishing impact of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* through outreach, marketing, book donations, and a paid publishing fellowship.

International Publishing

A robust International Fund allows Graywolf to continue to discover, publish, and share world literature with American readers and to foster global conversations and understanding. Graywolf will publish international voices from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, Egypt, France, Kenya, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe in the next three years.

Graywolf Lab

The Graywolf Lab will explore artistic possibilities and facilitate literary work that takes advantage of digital platforms and is created to be experienced digitally.

LITERARY RECOGNITION OF GRAYWOLF AUTHORS

Authors whose groundbreaking works have garnered considerable national and even international attention in recent years include Anna Burns (*Milkman*), Tsitsi Dangarembga (*This Mournable Body*), Natalie Diaz (*Postcolonial Love Poem*), Percival Everett (*Telephone* and *The Trees*), Carmen Maria Machado (*Her Body and Other Parties* and *In the Dream House*), Maggie Nelson (*The Argonauts* and *On Freedom*), Claudia Rankine (*Citizen* and *Just Us*), Marieke Lucas Rijneveld (*The Discomfort of Evening*), Danez Smith (*Don't Call Us Dead* and *Homie*), Tracy K. Smith (*Wade in the Water* and *Such Color*), Layli Long Soldier (*WHEREAS*), and Esmé WeiJun Wang (*The Collected Schizophrenias*), among many others. Recognition for these Graywolf titles includes the Pulitzer Prize, the Booker Prize, the International Booker Prize, National Book Critics Circle awards, and long and/or shortlistings for National Book Awards. The success of titles like these has begun to redefine, even for the larger houses, what literary impact looks like.



SUMMARY

The Executive Director and Publisher is a leader of prominence and integrity, serving as the chief executive of Graywolf Press and a leader in the greater publishing sector. The Executive Director and Publisher provides direction and oversight for all aspects of the organization (editorial, marketing, human resources, fundraising, finance), builds Graywolf's reputation as a leading independent press with thirty to thirty-five new titles each year (poetry, fiction, and nonfiction), works with a committed board of twenty trustees, and represents Graywolf to the industry nationally and internationally. The new leader will follow Fiona McCrae, who has led Graywolf as Director and Publisher for twenty-seven years and plans to retire in June 2022.

ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The position reports to the Board Chair, and works closely with all board members as well as Graywolf's National Council. The Executive Director and Publisher is a committed and sophisticated leader of people. Roles reporting directly to the Executive Director and Publisher include Associate Publisher, Editorial Director, Executive Editor and Director of Poetry, Director of Marketing and Engagement, and Director of Advancement and Operations. A total of nineteen dedicated full-time staff work at Graywolf Press, supported by two interns. The staff is primarily based in Graywolf's Minneapolis office, working in a hybrid home/office model, but there are also fully remote staff members in California, New York, and Hawaii.

Organizational Leadership and Management

- Embody the values of Graywolf Press. Ensure integrity around diversity, equity, and inclusion, in systems, conversations, and actions.
- Provide nuanced professional leadership to the organization. Set an example of managerial excellence by communicating and acting with collaboration, transparency, and respect.
- Recruit, lead, coach, develop, and retain Graywolf's senior management team and other staff. Lead with a collaborative spirit.
- Ensure Graywolf's staff resources are used in the best and most effective way to achieve the organization's mission.
- Define, refine, manage, create, and direct growth, for the organization, the staff, and the authors.

Strategic Planning

- With the Board of Directors, oversee the strategic direction of the press; provide visionary input to the creation of strategic plans.
- Be an inspirational voice that can explain the organization's strategy to staff, authors, and external stakeholders.
- Bring a wide lens, an openness to many voices, and a positive commitment to the ongoing impact of the press.
- Operate at the "growing edge" of Graywolf. Scan the horizon for opportunities and challenges in the culture and society at large, and guide Graywolf through this changing landscape.
- Focus on reaching new audiences for Graywolf and deepening engagement with its readers.
- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes and impact of Graywolf's plans and objectives. Assess and recommend changes to the strategy and plans as needed.

Publishing Program

- Guide the organization's editorial policy, program, and initiatives.
- Assure that Graywolf's authors are supported, valued, and appreciated.
- Acquire and edit new books for the list (as needed).
- Act as ambassador for Graywolf to media, bookstores, and other parts of the literary world.
- Contribute as needed to title marketing, engagement and outreach, and marketing of Graywolf as a whole.

External Relations and Community

- Seek and maintain connections and relationships in the publishing industry; learn and engage as an active leader in the sector.
- Represent Graywolf broadly and further the organization's reputation as a leading literary press.
- Seek opportunities to partner with individuals or organizations to increase Graywolf's reach and impact.
- Provide thought leadership in the arena of arts and literature locally, nationally, and internationally.

Fundraising and Development

- Shape the organization's development strategy and initiatives; actively contribute to grant proposals and reports, cultivation events, and other development programs.
- Cultivate high-capacity donors and development contacts through in-person meetings, phone calls, and other means.
- Set and reach fundraising goals per an annual fundraising plan with regular assessments.
- Lead fundraising for special campaigns, annual gifts, sponsorships, government, corporate, and private foundation grants, and other strategies.

Board Relations

- Work with the Board Chair to oversee effective operation of the Graywolf board, its committees, and the National Council.
- Help recruit new board members.
- Ensure that the board is informed about and engaged in the work of Graywolf.
- Help recruit, sustain, and involve the National Council.

Fiscal Responsibility

- Oversee the financial health of the organization; balance and manage risks and understand tradeoffs.
- Develop appropriate annual and long-term financial objectives; lead Graywolf in consistently achieving these objectives, including a balanced annual operating budget.
- Manage the budget to strategically grow earned and contributed revenue for the organization and implement growth plans.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- A passion for literature (poetry, fiction, and nonfiction) and a belief in the transformative possibilities inherent in a literary press.
- Deep experience and recognized leadership in publishing or a related field; ability to play a significant role in the publishing world and have credibility in the literary community.
- Strategic planning, visionary thinking, and operational implementation experience.

- Management expertise, including past experience leading a staff of a similar size to Graywolf, developing and mentoring people, building teams, and fostering a mission-centric, collaborative organizational culture.
- Meaningful experience in fundraising and related activities, with a demonstrated ability to raise money from individuals and philanthropic sources.
- Familiarity with marketing, publicity, and sales; comfortable with new media engagement.
- Interest in Graywolf's mission as a nonprofit literary organization and past experience with community outreach.

DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Gravitas, humility, good humor, and kindness.
- Unwavering, demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion. Familiarity and experience with the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).
- Bold, creative, strategic thinking; able to engage a broad array of voices in the collective work at Graywolf.
- Engaging, open manner of communication that welcomes and encourages others to pursue their own growth.
- Comfortable in the role of ambassador for the organization with authors, agents, media, donors, and funders, in local, national, and international settings.
- Creative and dynamic; comfortable with risk; nimble and savvy.
- Excited by possibilities; interested in systems change, innovation, and evolution.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The starting salary for the Executive Director and Publisher is \$150,000-\$160,000. Graywolf's comprehensive benefits program includes generous paid time off; health, dental, and life insurance; short-term and long-term disability insurance; paid parental leave; and a transit subsidy. Graywolf employees are eligible for retirement benefits after one year of service.

TRAVEL

This position requires regular travel to attend conferences, meetings, and events as a representative of Graywolf.

LOCATION

This position is located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Graywolf is in the process of moving into new offices located in the North Loop neighborhood of Minneapolis.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

The Twin Cities metro area includes Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and the surrounding suburban area; with a population of 3.2 million, it is the fourteenth largest metropolitan area in the country. Both urban cores boast a thriving business atmosphere. Minneapolis is the larger and more commercial of the two cities. Saint Paul, as the state capital, is home to state government and has a historic feel.

Outside of the central downtowns, both cities have several distinct neighborhoods, where a small town atmosphere combines with the conveniences and cultural hallmarks of a big city. Many residents identify more with their individual communities than with the larger cities as a whole. The area has a diverse range of neighborhoods and homes.

Separated by the Mississippi River, both cities share a common root of being river towns—and the great outdoors are a major attraction for residents and visitors alike. There are over 100,000 acres of parks, walking and bike paths, and other outdoor spaces.

The Twin Cities offer something for everyone, from a vibrant theater and arts scene to six professional sports teams. There is a thriving “foodie” culture offering award-winning restaurants (several chefs have been regional James Beard Award winners), seasonal farmers markets, and a robust cooperative grocery community. There are over 30 theater venues, including the award-winning Guthrie and Penumbra theaters, 10 dance companies and a vibrant music scene throughout the region.

Organizations like Graywolf Press, the Loft Literary Center, Milkweed Editions, Coffee House Press, Rain Taxi, the Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library and Friends of the Hennepin County Library, and several flourishing independent bookstores form a vibrant literary arts community. There are more than 60 museums in the area, nationally ranked music venues of all sizes, and cultural celebrations including Cinco de Mayo, the Dragon Festival, the Selby Jazz Fest, and the Little Mekong Night Market. Nearly every weekend there are outdoor events for participants and spectators, displaying the seasons.

RESOURCES

MeetMinneapolis | <https://www.minneapolis.org/>

Saint Paul | <https://www.stpaul.gov/>

Greater MSP Partnership | www.greatermsp.org

Saint Paul Convention & Visitors Bureau | <https://www.visitsaintpaul.com/>

Minnesota Compass | www.mncompass.org



60+ Museums in the Metro Area



300 Parks



1,750 Regional Lakes



1,000+ Miles of Bike Trails