

# Blue Water Theatre Company

Executive Director / CEO

EIN 260707663  
 MN · NTEE A600  
 FY ending 2024-09-30  
 June 9, 2026

This analysis benchmarks the total compensation of **Lela Olson, Executive Director / CEO** (\$55,000) against **every comparable organization** that fit the selection criteria — **146** in total — drawn systematically from IRS Form 990 filings, not a hand-picked subset.

Compensation sits at approximately the **62<sup>nd</sup>** percentile of comparable organizations within the typical range

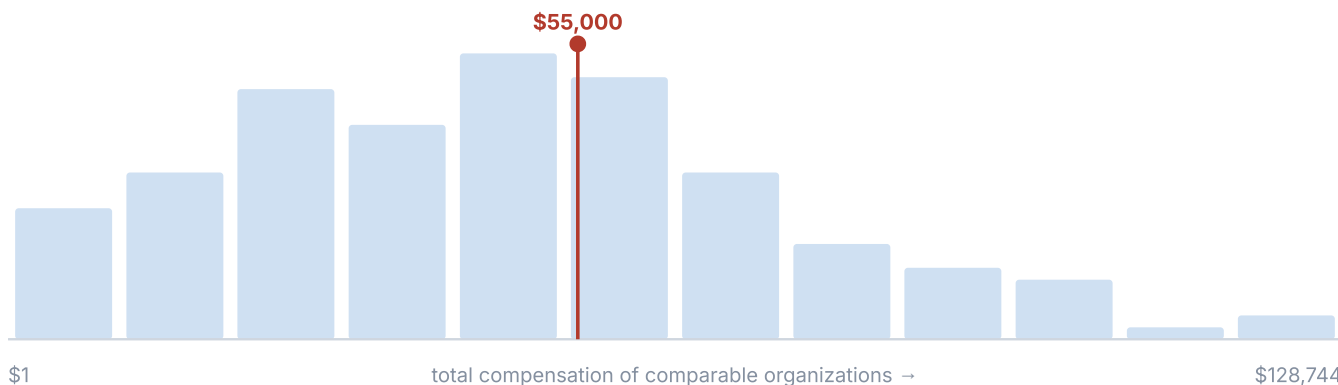
**Benchmarked executive:** Lela Olson — reported title “MANAGING DIRECTOR”, a **direct title match** to the Executive Director / CEO role.

## How comparable organizations were selected

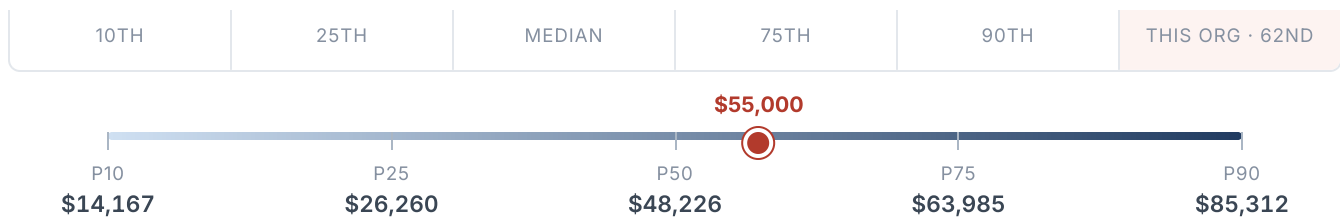
SECTOR	Organizations sharing the subject's NTEE classification (A600).
BUDGET	Total revenue between \$228,176 and \$510,843 — 0.67x to 1.50x the subject's \$340,562 (the band tightens as size grows).
GEOGRAPHY	Same NTEE sector (A60), nationwide + budget 0.67–1.5x revenue.

**146** organizations qualified on sector, size, and geography → **146** within the band form the benchmarked peer set.

## Distribution of comparable compensation



\$14,167	\$26,260	\$48,226	\$63,985	\$85,312	\$55,000
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## ■ Comparable organizations

Each figure is Form 990 Part VII columns D + F (reportable pay plus other compensation and benefits; column F may include amounts from related organizations), normalized to MN cost of living (BEA RPP, 2023) and to its filing year (CPI-U); the reported amount is on each linked 990.

ORGANIZATION	STATE	REVENUE	MATCHED TITLE	COMP (REPORTED)	COMP (ADJUSTED)	FY
<a href="#">Newport Opera House Association</a>	NH	\$340,825	Executive Director	\$53,500	<b>\$49,994</b>	2024
<a href="#">Authentic Community Theatre Inc</a>	MD	\$339,283	President	\$33,950	<b>\$33,071</b>	2023
<a href="#">Ztp</a>	MN	\$337,220	Executive Artistic Director	\$62,150	<b>\$63,986</b>	2023
<a href="#">Chelsea Music Festival Corporation</a>	NY	\$344,365	Director	\$10,000	<b>\$9,145</b>	2024
<a href="#">The Stars Of Tomorrow Project Inc</a>	NY	\$344,741	Director	\$69,000	<b>\$63,100</b>	2024
<a href="#">Forces Of Nature Inc</a>	NY	\$336,324	President	\$24,400	<b>\$21,739</b>	2025
<a href="#">7th Street Theatre Association</a>	WA	\$335,673	Prior Manager	\$18,601	<b>\$17,351</b>	2023
<a href="#">Danceast Collective</a>	TN	\$334,000	Executive Director	\$1	<b>\$1</b>	2025
<a href="#">Aloha Performing Arts Company</a>	HI	\$347,681	Past Preside	\$77,666	<b>\$72,450</b>	2023
<a href="#">Arcadia Performing Arts Inc</a>	PA	\$348,016	Executive Director	\$39,800	<b>\$40,167</b>	2024
<a href="#">Little Globe Inc</a>	NM	\$348,773	Co-director	\$50,250	<b>\$56,312</b>	2023
<a href="#">Cleveland Arts Prize</a>	OH	\$350,187	Executive Di	\$43,896	<b>\$47,052</b>	2024
<a href="#">Impact Arts Inc</a>	TX	\$350,870	Chief Operating Officer	\$17,500	<b>\$18,239</b>	2023
<a href="#">Texan-french Alliance For The Arts</a>	TX	\$329,894	Executive Director	\$83,999	<b>\$87,548</b>	2023
<a href="#">Staibdance Inc</a>	GA	\$328,628	Admin Director	\$40,000	<b>\$40,703</b>	2024
<a href="#">North Bay Theatrics Inc</a>	CA	\$328,366	President	\$64,408	<b>\$57,948</b>	2023

ORGANIZATION	STATE	REVENUE	MATCHED TITLE	COMP (REPORTED)	COMP (ADJUSTED)	FY
<a href="#">Crossroads Creative &amp; Performing Arts</a>	OR	\$327,878	Executive Director	\$63,167	<b>\$61,120</b>	2023
<a href="#">Sino Us Performing Arts Organization</a>	CA	\$327,781	Secretary	\$62,699	<b>\$56,410</b>	2023
<a href="#">Odyssey Opera Of Boston Inc</a>	MA	\$327,762	Executive Director	\$106,167	<b>\$99,403</b>	2023
<a href="#">Sc New Play Festival Inc</a>	SC	\$354,165	Executive Artistic Director	\$30,000	<b>\$30,858</b>	2025
<a href="#">Unison Learning Center Inc</a>	NY	\$326,868	Executive Director	\$63,000	<b>\$59,315</b>	2023
<a href="#">Shakespeare At A Nj Nonprofit Corporatio</a>	NJ	\$355,121	Artistic Director	\$18,958	<b>\$17,130</b>	2024
<a href="#">Studio 1</a>	NC	\$356,006	Executive Dir.	\$60,100	<b>\$62,846</b>	2024
<a href="#">Rocky Mountain Ballet Theatre</a>	MT	\$324,315	Associate Dir.	\$30,000	<b>\$32,727</b>	2024
<a href="#">Amazing Things Arts Center Inc</a>	MA	\$357,744	Executive Director	\$67,234	<b>\$61,144</b>	2024

**Comp (reported)** is the figure on each organization's Form 990 (columns D + F); **Comp (adjusted)** normalizes it to MN cost of living and 2024 dollars. Click any organization to verify the figure on ProPublica.

## ■ Methodology

Comparable organizations were drawn from electronically filed IRS Form 990 returns and matched on sector (NTEE code), budget (a size-adaptive revenue band that tightens as the organization grows), and geography (same-state first, broadening only when too few peers qualify); every organization within the band forms the peer set. To compare fairly across regions and years, peer compensation is normalized to MN cost of living (BEA Regional Price Parities, 2023) and to the subject's filing year (CPI-U). The figure benchmarked is Form 990 Part VII, Section A, columns D + F — reportable pay plus other compensation, benefits, and deferred amounts (column F may include amounts from related organizations) — with the chief executive matched by role. Related-organization amounts (column E) and institutional trustees are excluded. Full methodology: [peerbasis.org/methodology](https://peerbasis.org/methodology).

## ■ Sample, role match & sensitivity

**PEER COUNT** 146 organizations. Compensation range \$1–\$128,744; filing years 2023–2025.

**SIZE BASIS** Matched on total revenue (\$340,562); for reference, expenses \$364,546 and assets \$659,348.

**ROLE MATCH** Lela Olson, reported title "MANAGING DIRECTOR", benchmarked as Executive Director / CEO. The title maps directly to this role.

RELATED-ORG PAY	2 peers report related-organization compensation (column E), which the D + F benchmark does not fully capture; review where material.
OUTLIERS	2 peers fall outside 1.5× the interquartile range — consider whether any reflect one-time payments (severance, deferred-comp payouts).

Sensitivity — the subject's percentile under alternative compensation definitions:

BASIS	SUBJECT PERCENTILE
Total compensation (D + F), cost-of-living + inflation adjusted — the PeerBasis default	62 <sup>nd</sup>
Total compensation (D + F), as reported (no adjustments)	60 <sup>th</sup>
Reportable pay only (column D), adjusted	62 <sup>nd</sup>
All sources (D + E + F), adjusted	61 <sup>st</sup>

If the percentile moves materially across these definitions, the result is sensitive to methodology choices, and the board should weigh which basis best fits its facts.

### ● Rebuttable presumption of reasonableness · 26 CFR 53.4958-6

Compensation paid by a tax-exempt organization is presumed reasonable — shifting the burden to the IRS — when three requirements are met. This report supplies the comparability data for the second. The board should record the following in its minutes *concurrently* with its decision:

#### Draft board minutes – executive compensation

1. The compensation of the Executive Director / CEO (Lela Olson) was approved in advance by [the Board / Compensation Committee], composed of members with no conflict of interest with respect to the arrangement.
2. Prior to its determination, the authorized body obtained and relied upon appropriate comparability data, namely the PeerBasis Compensation Comparability Determination dated June 9, 2026, comparing compensation against 146 similarly situated organizations (Same NTEE sector (A60), nationwide + budget 0.67–1.5× revenue).
3. The authorized body determined that total compensation of \$55,000 is reasonable (approximately the 62<sup>nd</sup> percentile of comparable organizations) and documented the basis for this determination concurrently, on [date], by a vote of [\_\_ for / \_\_ against].

Sources: IRS Form 990 e-file data (apps.irs.gov); IRS Business Master File (NTEE classification). Every figure traces to an original public filing — click any organization above to verify it on ProPublica. PeerBasis is a service of Prismind Analytics; its [methodology is published](#), was commissioned for independent adversarial review, and discloses its own limitations. This report is comparability data to support a board's good-faith determination under IRC 4958; it is not legal or tax advice. Generated by PeerBasis on June 9, 2026.