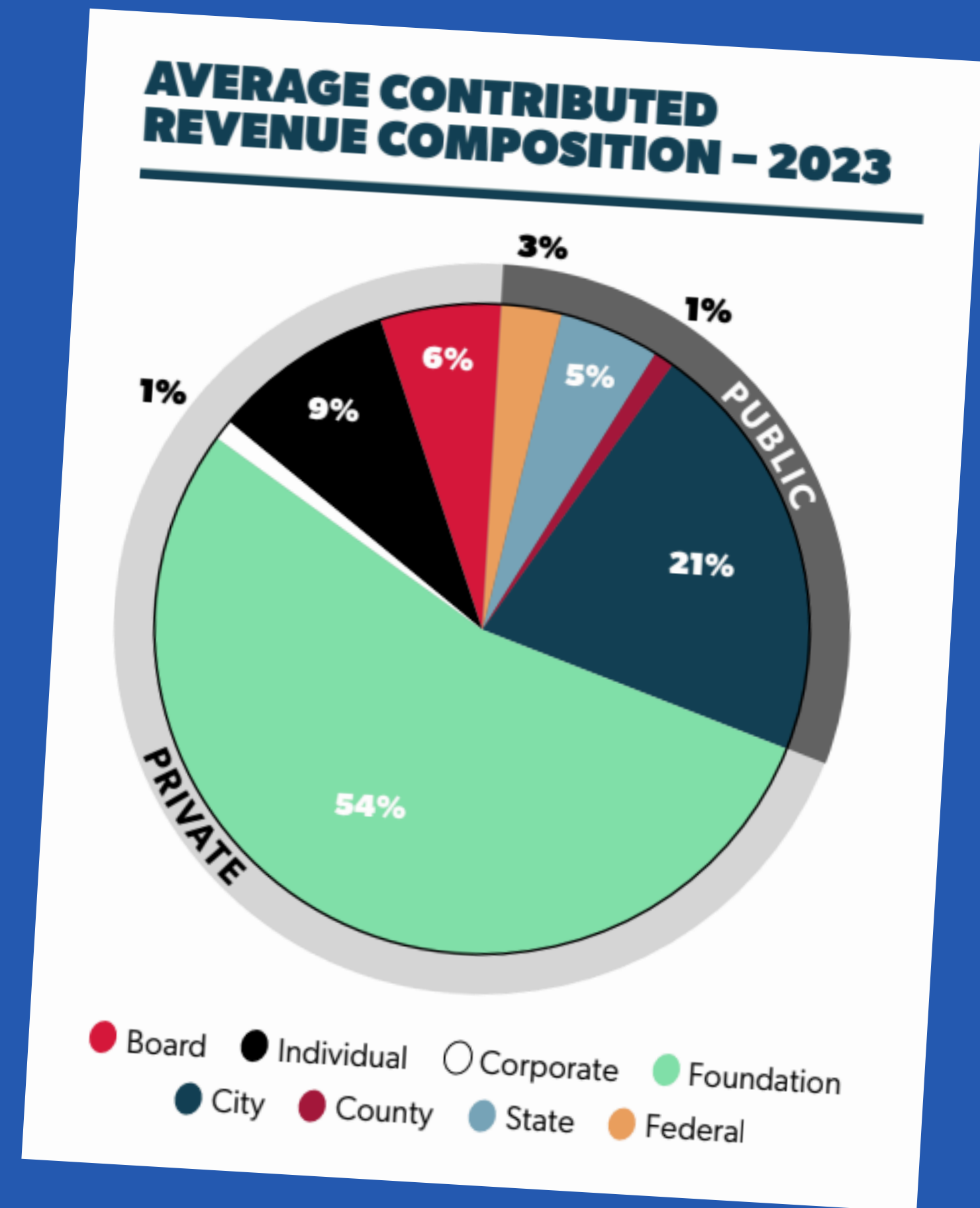


Make Your Data Sing

Managing the steps to create graphics that tell your story

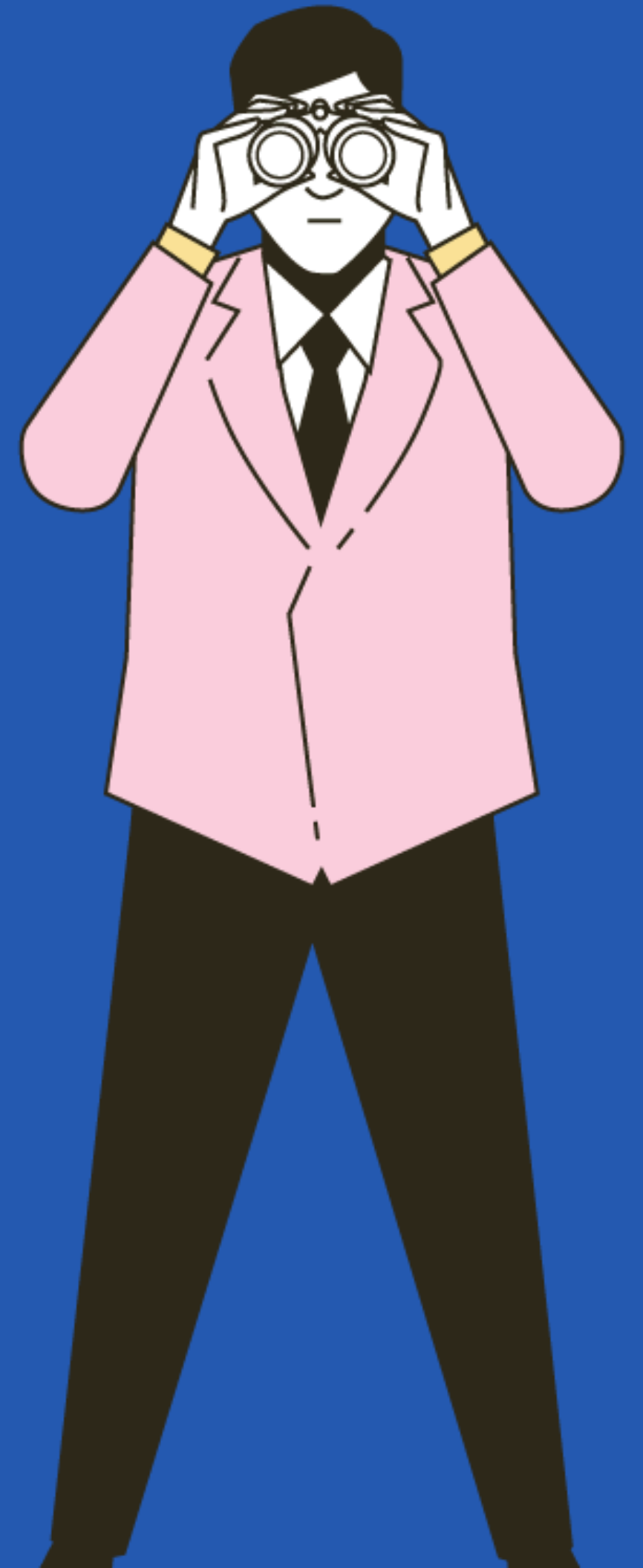


The Situation

You: A program officer, development specialist, or Jackie-of-all-trades.

Your task: Telling the story of your community, its needs, your challenges and successes. You want to use data to bring this story to life.

The challenge: How do you get from data tables to engaging, vivid infographics?



Make Your Data Sing

Before You Begin

1. Invest in thinking time before you invest money or dive into the visuals. Clarify your story. Who's your audience? What are the key insights you want people to remember? Answer these first.
2. Work with a professional designer if your budget allows. A pro is worth their weight in gold. Look for someone with experience in the nonprofit sector or knowledge of your program area + a portfolio of data visualization work.
3. Build your own skills strategically. You don't need to become a designer, but learning basic data visualization principles will help you communicate better—whether you're creating graphics yourself or briefing a designer.



Make Your Data Sing

Rules for Honest, Effective Graphics

Clean your data first.



Before making anything pretty, ensure your data is accurate, complete, and properly formatted. Fix duplicates, address missing values, and verify your sources. Bad data makes bad graphics, no matter how beautiful.



Make Your Data Sing

Rules for Honest, Effective Graphics



Choose the right chart for your message.

A pie chart, bar graph, and line chart tell different stories. Match your visualization type to what you're trying to show: comparisons, trends over time, parts of a whole, or relationships between variables.



Make Your Data Sing

Rules for Honest, Effective Graphics



Simplify ruthlessly... but don't oversimplify.

Remove unnecessary elements, but never sacrifice accuracy or context. Ethical data visualization means showing the full picture—including uncertainty, limitations, and data that complicates your narrative. Don't manipulate axes or cherry-pick timeframes to exaggerate effects.

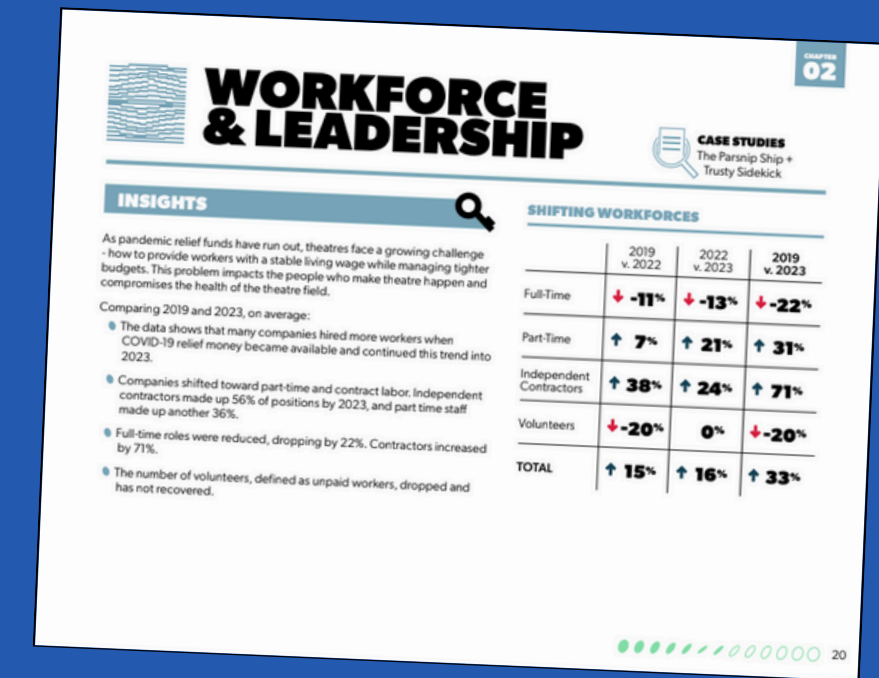


Make Your Data Sing

Putting It Into Practice

When A.R.T./New York needed to tell the story of NYC's theatre community through data, Skeleton Key Strategies led research planning and content strategy while designer Eric Emch brought the visuals to life.

The Health & Wealth Report became their go-to advocacy tool —creating new funder relationships and data-driven programs built on member needs. Together, we made their data sing.



Make Your Data Sing

Our role



Skeleton Key Strategies provides research planning and design, strategic communications, and developmental editing and content strategy. Through our data strategy work, we help nonprofits improve their data infrastructure and—when ready—move beyond basic reporting to sophisticated analytics that demonstrate impact and guide strategy.

Our analytics services are keyed to your nonprofit's level of data maturity and can include:

- **Impact measurement strategy and framework development**
- **Automated dashboards and custom reporting solutions**
- **Predictive analytics for areas like donor retention and program services**
- **Data visualization and storytelling for boards and funders**



Make Your Data Sing

Curious?

What evidence does your organization need to strengthen its case for support and match programming to your mission?

We'd love to explore this challenge with you.

Let's talk: greetings@skeletonkeystrategies.com.

