

YES ADMISSIONS STUDIO

MPH Admissions Workshop Workbook

Saturday, February 28, 2026 · 1:00 PM EST

Hosted by Sarah J.M. Wang, MPH · Harvard Chan '25

4/4 Ivy MPH Admits

100% Client Acceptance Rate

3/3 Admitted to Harvard MPH

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Workshop Overview

Welcome! This workbook is your companion guide for today's workshop. Use it to take notes, work through exercises, and build your personalized MPH application plan. Keep it — it's yours to reference throughout the application cycle.

What We'll Cover Today

- 1 Building a Competitive MPH Application**
The core components admissions committees evaluate and how to strengthen each one.
- 2 School Selection Strategy**
How to build a balanced list of reach, target, and likely schools based on your profile.
- 3 Personal Statement Frameworks**
Proven structures for crafting a compelling narrative that stands out.
- 4 SOPHAS Optimization & Timeline**
How to navigate the centralized application system and manage deadlines.
- 5 What Admissions Committees Look For**
Insider perspective on how applications are reviewed and what tips the scale.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Follow along with each section during the workshop. Fill in the worksheets as we go — they're designed to help you start building your application plan today. The blank lines are for your notes and reflections.

Building a Competitive Application

MPH admissions committees evaluate your application holistically. Here are the key components and how to make each one count.

The 7 Core Components

- ☐ **Academic Record (GPA & Coursework)**
Strong GPA matters; an upward trend and relevant coursework can compensate.
- ☐ **Standardized Tests (GRE, if required)**
Many programs are now test-optional. Know which schools require it.
- ☐ **Personal Statement / Statement of Purpose**
Your most important essay. Shows motivation, clarity, and writing ability.
- ☐ **Resume / CV**
Highlight research, public health work, leadership, and community impact.
- ☐ **Letters of Recommendation (typically 3)**
Choose recommenders who know you well and can speak to your potential.
- ☐ **Relevant Experience**
Research, internships, clinical work, community health, policy, fieldwork.
- ☐ **Supplemental Essays & School-Specific Questions**
Show genuine fit — reference specific faculty, concentrations, or opportunities.

PRO TIP

The applications that stand out have a clear, authentic narrative thread connecting past experience to public health goals. Start identifying your thread now.

Self-Assessment: Rate Your Current Readiness (1–5)

COMPONENT	RATING (1–5)	NOTES / ACTION ITEMS
Academic Record		
Test Scores		
Personal Statement		
Resume / CV		
Recommendations		
Relevant Experience		

School Selection Strategy

A strategic school list balances ambition with realism. Aim for 5–10 schools across three tiers: reach, target, and likely. Consider ranking, concentration fit, location, funding, faculty research, and cohort culture.

Key Factors for School Selection

- ☐ Program ranking & reputation in your concentration
- ☐ Faculty whose research aligns with your interests
- ☐ Concentration / specialization options
- ☐ Practicum & field placement opportunities
- ☐ Funding, scholarships & assistantships
- ☐ Location & cost of living
- ☐ Cohort size & culture
- ☐ Career outcomes & alumni network

Your School List Worksheet

SCHOOL	TIER	CONCENTRATION	DEADLINE	WHY THIS SCHOOL?

TIER GUIDE

Reach: Top 5 programs or those where your stats are below the median. **Target:** Programs where your profile is competitive. **Likely:** Schools where you exceed the typical admitted student profile.

Personal Statement Framework

Your personal statement is the single most important piece of your application. It should answer three questions: Why public health? Why this program? Why you?

The 4-Part Framework

- 1 The Hook (1–2 paragraphs)**
Open with a specific moment, experience, or observation that sparked your interest in public health. Be concrete — not "I've always been passionate about health."
- 2 The Journey (2–3 paragraphs)**
Show how your academic and professional experiences built your understanding of public health. Connect the dots between your experiences and your evolving goals.
- 3 The Vision (1–2 paragraphs)**
Articulate your specific goals: What public health problem do you want to solve? What skills do you need? How will an MPH get you there?
- 4 The Fit (1 paragraph)**
Why this specific program? Name faculty, concentrations, practicum opportunities, or unique features that align with your goals.

Brainstorm Your Narrative

Use these prompts to start drafting your story arc.

What moment first drew you to public health?

What experience most shaped your understanding of health inequity?

What specific public health problem do you want to work on after your MPH?

SOPHAS Optimization & Timeline

SOPHAS (Schools of Public Health Application Service) is the centralized application for most MPH, MSPH, MHS, MHA, DrPH, and PhD programs. Understanding how it works gives you a strategic advantage.

SOPHAS Quick Facts

FEES

\$150 for first program
\$60 each additional program

PROCESSING

4–6 weeks for verification
Submit early to avoid delays

Application Timeline

WHEN	WHAT TO DO	YOUR DEADLINE
12+ months before	Research programs, take GRE if needed, build experience	
9–12 months before	Finalize school list, start personal statement drafts	
6–9 months before	Request recommendations, order transcripts	
4–6 months before	Create SOPHAS account, begin entering data	
2–4 months before	Finalize essays, submit SOPHAS for verification	
Deadline month	Submit supplemental applications, confirm materials	
After submission	Interview prep, follow up, waitlist strategy	

SOPHAS PRO TIPS

Submit your application at least 4–6 weeks before the program deadline to allow for SOPHAS verification. Enter your coursework exactly as it appears on your transcript. Use the "Academic Update" feature if your grades change after submission.

What Admissions Committees Look For

Having been through the process at four Ivy League programs, here's what I've learned about how applications are evaluated — and what separates admitted students from the rest.

The Evaluation Matrix

WHAT THEY EVALUATE	WHAT STRONG LOOKS LIKE	COMMON MISTAKES
Clarity of purpose	Specific goals tied to a public health problem	Vague statements like "I want to help people"
Relevant experience	Research, fieldwork, community health, or policy work	Listing experiences without connecting them to PH
Academic preparation	Strong quantitative coursework, upward GPA trend	Not addressing academic weaknesses
Program fit	Naming specific faculty, concentrations, opportunities	Generic "your program is prestigious" statements
Writing quality	Clear, concise, authentic voice	Over-writing, cliches, or trying to sound academic
Leadership & impact	Demonstrated initiative, not just participation	Only listing titles without describing impact

Your Competitive Advantages

List 3–5 unique strengths that set you apart from other applicants.

Areas to Strengthen Before Applying

Identify gaps in your profile and how you'll address them.

Your Action Plan

Workshop Notes

My Top 3 Action Items This Week

☐

1.

☐

2.

☐

3.

Ready for **personalized guidance?**

Work 1-on-1 with Sarah to build your strongest possible application.

FREE

Fit Call

15 min

\$250/HR

Strategy Session

Focused deep-dive

\$3,500

Application Architect

Full cycle, 5 schools

\$6,500

Full Admission Suite

White-glove, 10 schools

Book a Free Fit Call → sarahwangmph.com

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