

Appendix A: Workshop slides

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT – FINDING YOUR WHY

Emory Health Professions Readiness
Education Program (HealthPREP)

June 24, 2024

AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Pre-survey
3. Objectives
4. Purpose of the Personal Statement
5. Crafting your Why
6. Formatting the Personal Statement
7. Proofreading (and other important tips)
8. Conclusion
9. Post-survey

INTRODUCTIONS



PRE-SURVEY

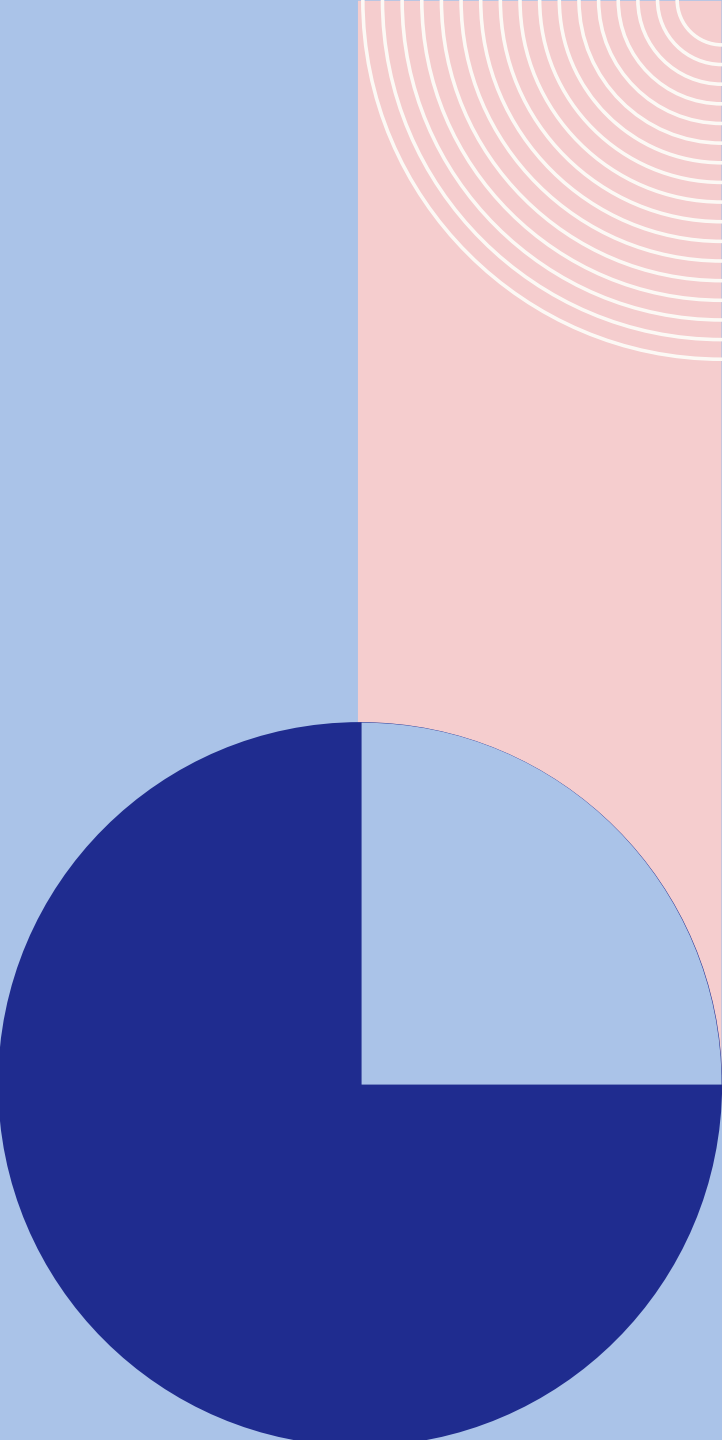
Thank you so much for filling out this survey! The results from this survey (and the post survey) will be used to enhance the session for future students.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, learners should be able to

1. Describe the purpose of the personal statement
2. Understand the importance of using their experiences to connect with the reader and future patients
3. Incorporate their story and experiences to answer why they are interested the program of choice
4. Understand how the personal statement should be formatted based on the program of choice
5. Understand the importance of extensively editing their personal statement
6. Identify at least 3 people who can proofread their personal statement



THE PURPOSE OF THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

PURPOSE: SOME ADVICE...

"Use your personal statement as an opportunity to talk about what you would like for them to know about you."

You're a multifaceted individual, so...

- What side(s) of you do you want the people assessing you to be aware of?
- What experiences or stories in your life speak to the core of who you are?

You can think outside the box a little here – the answers to these questions don't have to be directly related to medical experiences, so long as they speak to your values

PURPOSE (CONTINUED)

Answering the questions on the last page (below)—as in literally jotting down a bulleted list of stories and experiences that spoke to who I am—really helped me figure out exactly *how* I wanted to tell my story

- What side(s) of you do you want the people assessing you to be aware of?
- What experiences or stories in your life speak to the core of who you are?

PURPOSE (CONTINUED)

My scattered thoughts before doing that exercise:

- I wanted to be a doctor and I wanted to help people
- I liked science
- I thought I'd be good at it
- I had a myriad of experiences that confirmed for me that I would enjoy the clinical setting
- I'd had a career outside of healthcare and didn't find it as rewarding
- I had an interest in community health, global health, and health policy
- I think physicians are uniquely positioned to be able to affect change in those arenas
- The list goes on...

PURPOSE (CONTINUED)

I couldn't figure out which of those ideas to focus on in my writing, until I asked myself:
Medicine aside, what do I want these people to know and understand about me?

PURPOSE (CONTINUED)

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Medicine aside, what do I want these people to know and understand about me?

For me, I wanted them to know my heart—exercising compassion is one of my most core values. Once I answered that question, the rest of the statement flowed from there:

For example, I talked about:

My compassion as a child for my grandmother who went blind, because it was a formative life experience for me →

spoke about poor healthcare access disabling her →

how I wanted to change that, and that led me to medicine →

how I've had the chance to work with physicians who are doing that work and they inspired me →

more on my aspirations for my medical career, etc.

PURPOSE (CONTINUED)

Medicine aside, what do I want these people to know and understand about me?

I talked about:

My love for the stories, culture, and history my dad would tell me about growing up in Nigeria – especially those that pertain to healthcare

My interest in the medical culture and history surrounding historically neglected groups in the U.S.

Role that physicians played in creating that initially dangerous culture surrounding medicine but also how they have the power to lead in changing that - I want to be part of that

Experiences I had with physician mentors and in clinical settings

Excitement for learning and what a future in medicine could hold for me

PURPOSE: ACTION ITEM

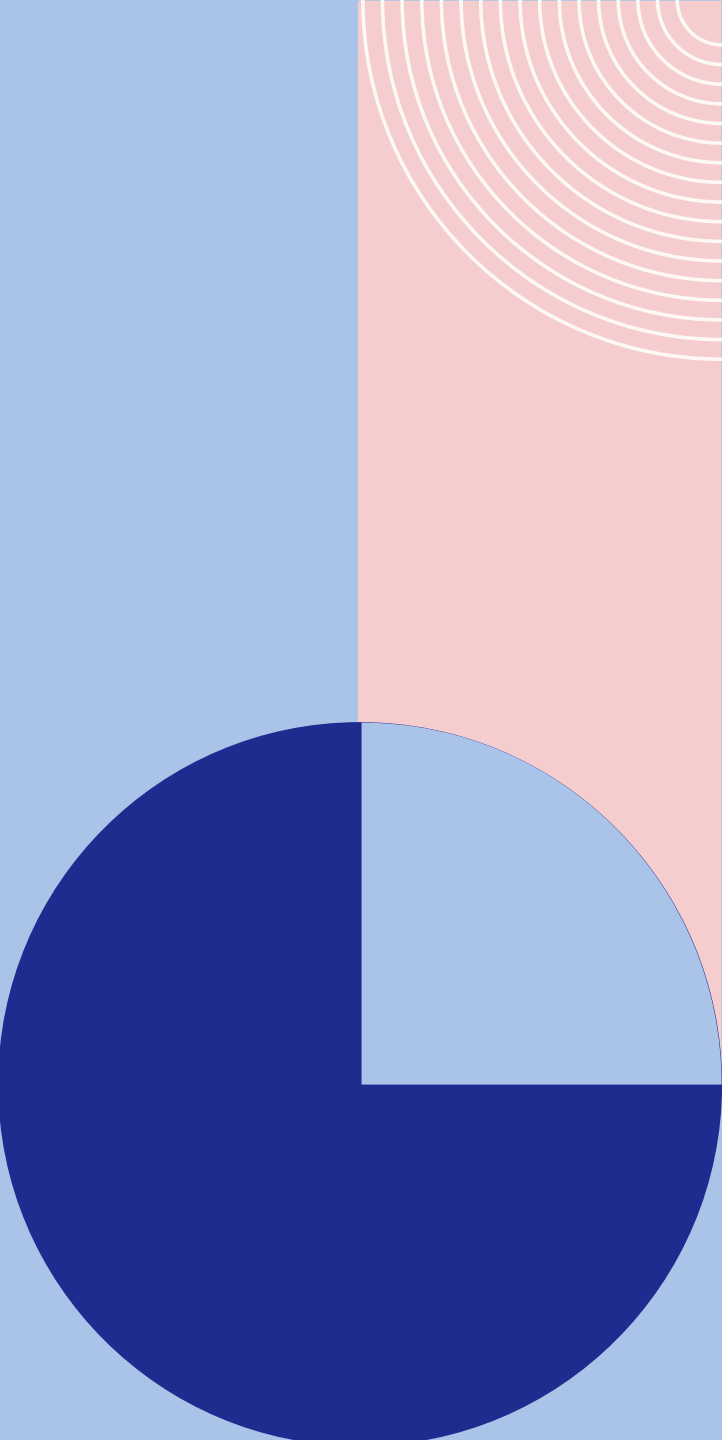
Take 2 minutes to jot down some answers to the questions:

- Who are you and what are your values?
- What experiences or stories in your life speak to the core of who you are?
- What side(s) of you do you want the people assessing you to be aware of

As you list examples, reflect on how that story or experience might relate to your views on Medicine or what you hope to be like as a physician

Or it might not directly relate! And that's okay, it may still be a story worth telling!

There's no wrong answers here



CRAFTING YOUR W.H.Y.

W: WHAT WAS YOUR AHA MOMENT?



- A critical part of your personal statement is letting your reader know "why medicine."
- Every applicant has a different story to tell but one thing that remains consistent is the presence of a "why."
- What was the moment you decided you wanted to begin to pursue a career in medicine?



H: HOW DID THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?



- What sets you apart as an applicant is how you reflect and apply your experiences.
- Important questions:
 - What have I learned from this experience?
 - How has this prepared me for medical school/ a career in medicine?
 - What skills did this experience reinforce and/or teach me?
- Use your experience here with Emory Health Prep as an example.

Y: YOUR STORY



- What experiences have shaped you into the person you are today?
- Many applicants appear the same on paper: meet the same prerequisites, achieve similar grades, and often participate in comparable extracurriculars activities.
- So, what personal experiences can you highlight in your application that are uniquely yours?

ACTION ITEMS

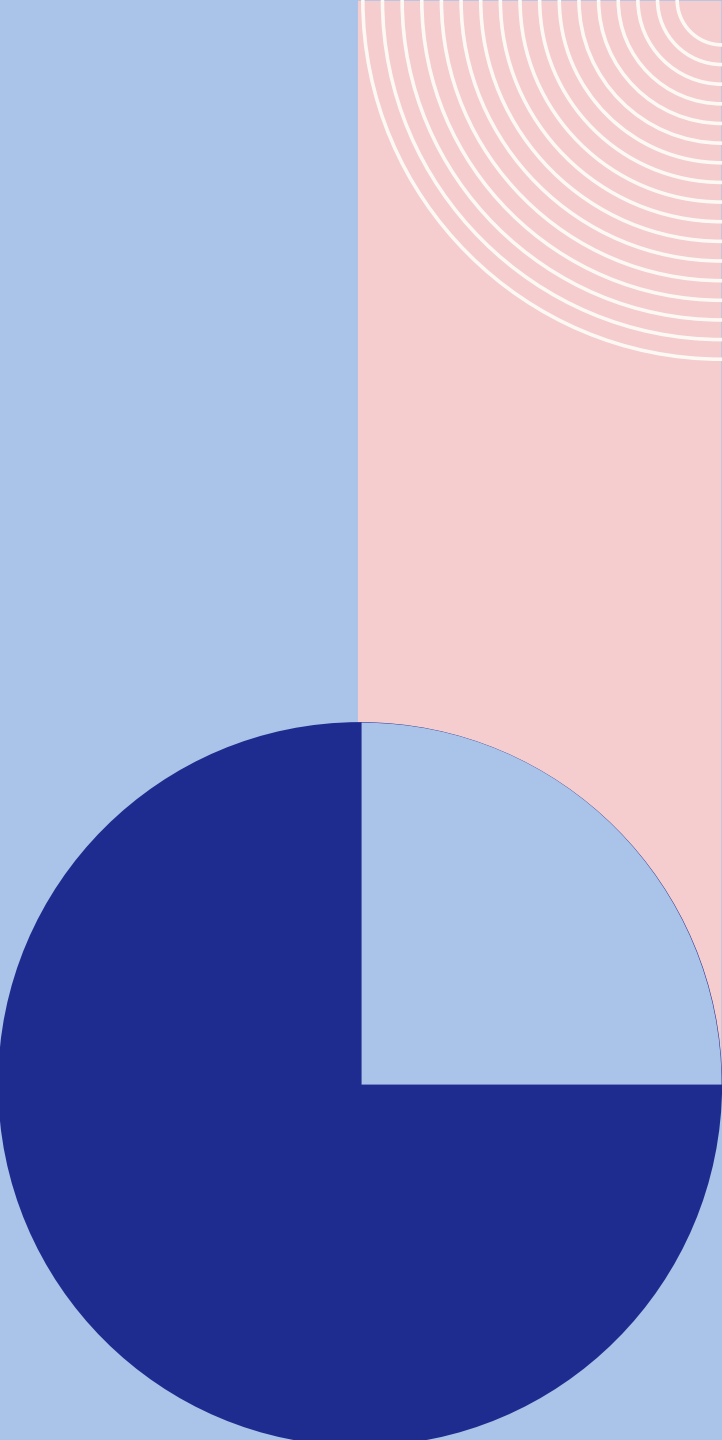
- Consider starting a journal dedicated to writing about your experiences.
 - For each experience, reference the W.H.Y. acronym to compile the most important takeaways
- Reflect on the question "tell me about yourself" and write 3-5 things that are a salient part of who you are
 - Be sure to elaborate on the experiences that made you who you are today



REMINDER

**THIS JOURNEY ISN'T ABOUT OUTSHINING OTHERS;
IT'S ABOUT ILLUMINATING YOUR OWN UNIQUE
STRENGTHS AND POTENTIAL. FOCUS ON BEING THE
BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF AND LET YOUR
AUTHENTICITY AND PASSION SHINE THROUGH.**





FORMATTING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

FORMATTING—YOUR THREE PRIORITIES:

1. Clarity
2. Clarity
3. "Sauce"

1. CLARITY

You need to accomplish a few things with your structure of your statement

- Introduce the **idea** that you want the reader to gain from reading your statement
- Elaborate on the **idea** that you introduced
- Wrap up in a way that reiterates how everything you discussed is related/why those things are relevant to your story

2. CLARITY

Smoothly transitioning between topics ensures the reader doesn't get lost or confused

- How do you make sure your transitions are coherent?
 - Ask yourself *"Is the first sentence of my new paragraph related at all to the ideas discussed in the prior paragraph?"* — Ideally, it should be!



CLARITY IS KEY! It's difficult for someone to appreciate your beautiful story if they can't follow what you're talking about

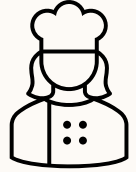
3. "SAUCE"

Your statement's "sauce" comes from your answer to the question (that we answered in the Purpose section): *What all do I want the person reading this to know about me?*

- Refer back to your list, and let them know!
- You can incorporate whatever it is through anecdotes, storytelling, quotes, whatever makes sense.

Of course, these details, stories or quotes should relate directly to the main idea

PUTTING IT ALTOGETHER



Think of your personal statement as a recipe with three ingredients:

- **Introduction:** introduce your main idea
- **Body:** elaborate on your main idea
- **Conclusion:** reiterate your main idea

The "sauce" is what brings all the ingredients together!

- Your "sauce" should be incorporated throughout your statement.
- Why?
 - Adds depth/personality which will keep the reader engaged
 - Ensures that your thoughts are cohesive
 - Makes your statement "visually appealing" --> remember to show, not tell!

WORD & CHARACTER COUNTS

	Medicine	Physician Assistant	Anesthesiology Assistant	Genetic Counseling	Physical Therapy	Public Health
Character Count	4,500-5,300	5,000	4,500	Varies*	4,500	---
Word Count	---	---	---			1,500

*word count varies depending on program
Character count includes spaces!

PROOFREADING & OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS

IMPORTANCE OF PROOFREADING

- To ensure that errors in grammar, spelling, and vocabulary do not distract the reader from the story you are trying to tell
- To ensure that your story is coming across in the way that you intend for it to come across
- To show that you have the technical skills required for a career in health care

WHO SHOULD PROOFREAD YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT?

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- Take 2 minutes to write down the names of 3 people who you would want to proofread your paper.
 - English Teachers
 - Academic Advisors
 - Medical Students
 - Health Professionals
- What do these people have in common?
 - These are trusted adults who know you, know your story and can help you better articulate your story.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF PROOFREADING

- **DO** make a new document every time there are changes made to your personal statement
 - This allows to you track the growth of your personal statement.
- **DO** use a software that allows your proofreader to suggest edits
 - A proofreader should not make edits directly.
- **DO NOT** rely solely on grammar and spelling checkers.
- **DO** read your personal statement aloud.
 - This can help catch errors that are glossed over when reading
- **DO NOT** feel as though you must accept all suggested changes to your personal statement.
 - This is YOUR story. Make sure it stays that way.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

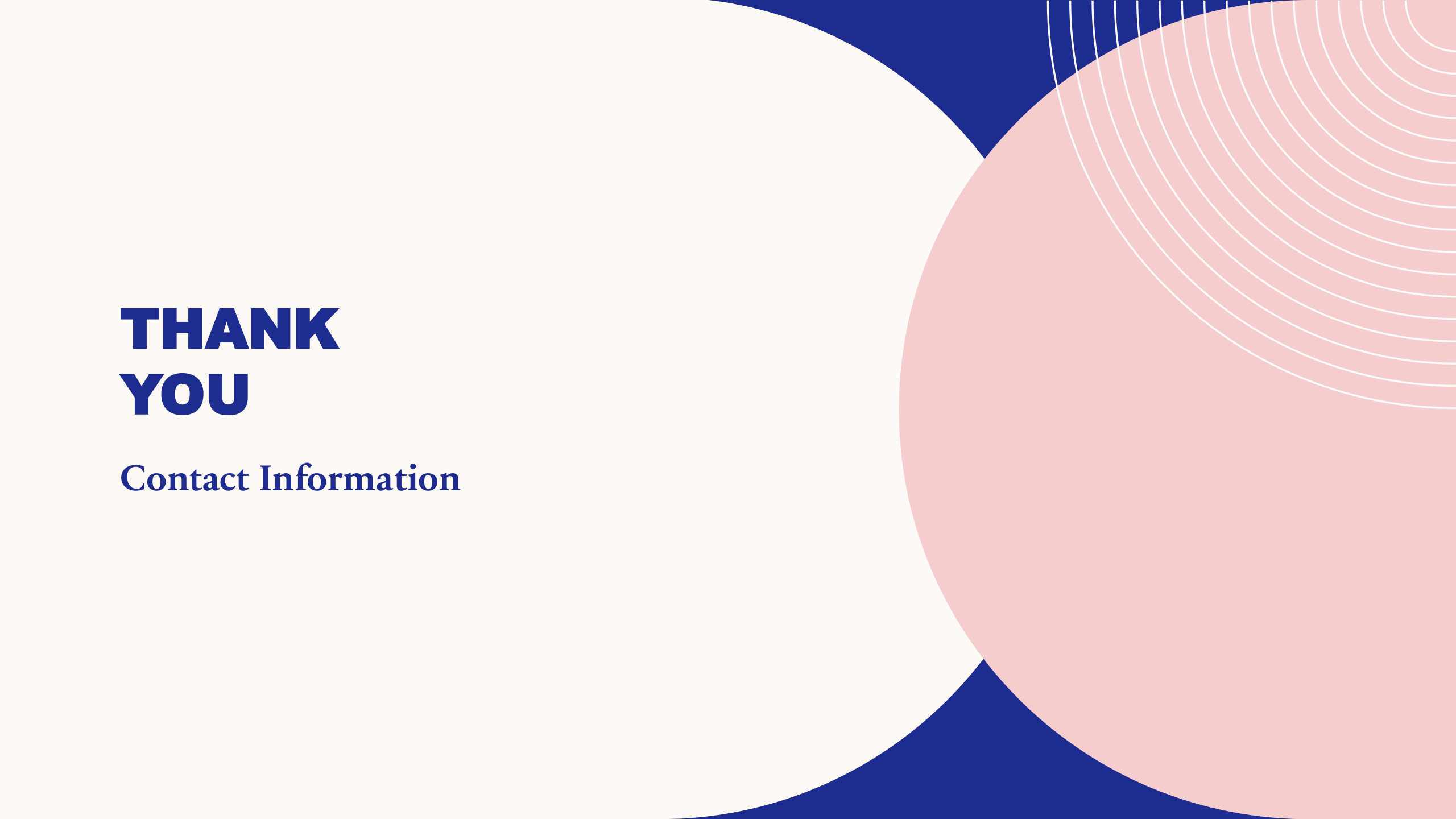
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THANK YOU

Contact Information