



EAB's Value Proposition Management System Implementation Guide

Use this guide to implement a dynamic value proposition management system within your school. This tool guides school leaders through EAB resources that will help their school's value proposition remain agile, market-aligned, and truly differentiated in ways that drive enrollment and long-term success.



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Dynamic Value Proposition Project Plan

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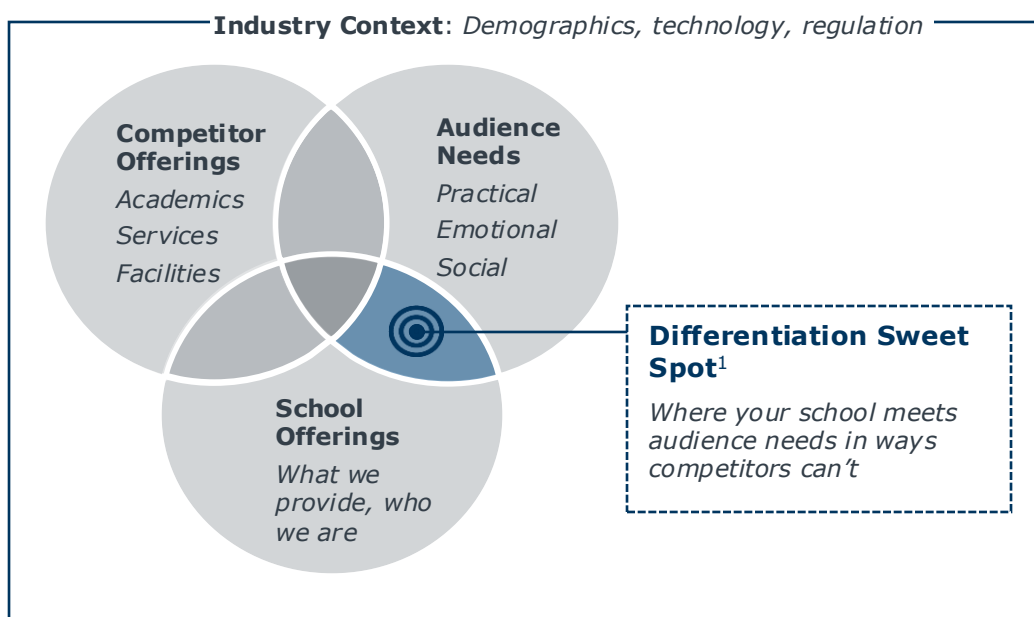
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Why A Differentiated Value Proposition is Crucial

In today's competitive and cost-conscious educational landscape, financial sustainability depends on more than just excellence—it requires clear, compelling reasons for families to choose your school over others. As families grow more discerning about how they invest in their children's education, independent schools must go beyond relying on tradition or internal accomplishments. Instead, they need to craft a differentiated value proposition: a focused, audience-centric case for why your school is uniquely suited to meet families' needs in ways competitors can't easily match.

Yet too often, schools fall into the trap of competing on the same points—offering slightly better versions of what others do—or failing to focus on what truly matters to families. The key to differentiation lies in the intersection of three things: what your audience values, what your competitors offer, and your school's unique capabilities. Drawing on Michael Porter's insights (a renowned expert in competitive strategy), success doesn't come from being *better* at the same things—it comes from being different in meaningful ways. Schools that find and articulate this differentiation "sweet spot" not only stand out but actually expand the appeal of an independent school education to more families. Differentiation, done right, is not just a strategy—it's your school's path to long-term relevance and growth.



Watch EAB's "Becoming a School of Choice" webinar before continuing to the next page

This webinar gives a comprehensive overview of the research behind the importance of creating a dynamic value proposition management system in today's independent school market. [Click here to watch.](#)

Source: Sheldon, R., [Unique Selling Point](#) (USP), TechTarget, 2022; Harvard Business Review, "[Stop Competing to Be the Best](#)", 2011; Porter, Michael E., *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, 1985; EAB interviews and analysis.

Introduction to EAB's 3-Step Dynamic Value Proposition

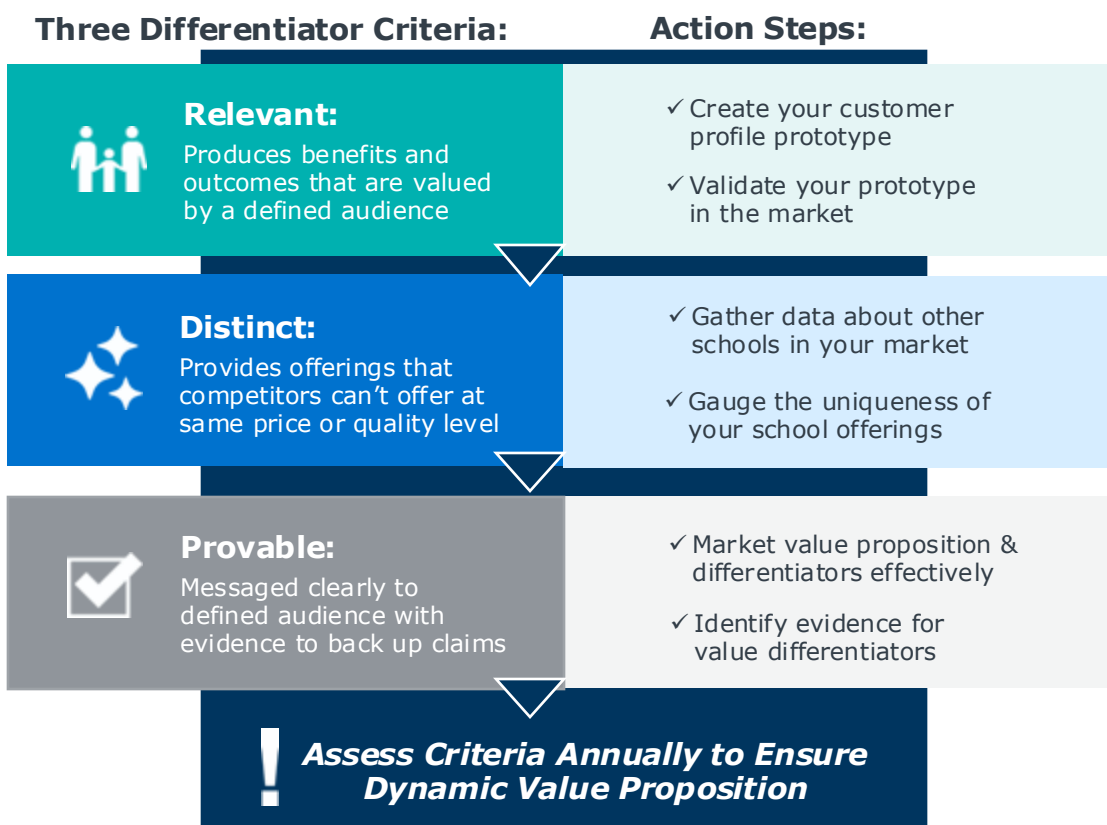
To remain competitive and compelling, independent schools must treat value proposition management as a strategic discipline—not a one-time messaging exercise. This means continuously aligning your programming, marketing, and strategy with the evolving needs and priorities of your target families. The goal is to identify and invest in offerings that your school does exceptionally well, that meet families' needs, and that stand apart from competitor options. These are the programs and services that should be a core part of your value proposition and differentiation strategy—and where your communications should be most focused.

To build and sustain a strong value proposition, schools should use this three-step framework:

- 1. Relevant** – Ensure your school's offerings deliver real value to families and students. If it doesn't matter to them, it won't move the needle.
- 2. Distinct** – Highlight what your school offers that competitors can't easily copy—whether it's how you do it, why you do it, or who delivers it.
- 3. Provable** – Back up your claims with clear, credible evidence that builds trust and confidence.

By consistently applying this approach, schools can remain agile, market-aligned, and truly differentiated in ways that drive enrollment and long-term success.

The Value Proposition Management System



Source: Sheldon, R., [Unique Selling Point](#) (USP), TechTarget, 2022; Harvard Business Review, "[Stop Competing to Be the Best](#)", 2011; Porter, Michael E., *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, 1985; EAB interviews and analysis.



EAB's Dynamic Value Proposition
Implementation Guide

Dynamic Value Proposition Project Plan

The following pages include a step-by-step guide to help school leaders determine which school offerings are relevant, which relevant offerings are distinct, and how to use social proof and marketing to make those offerings compelling.

TOOL

Evaluate Relevance

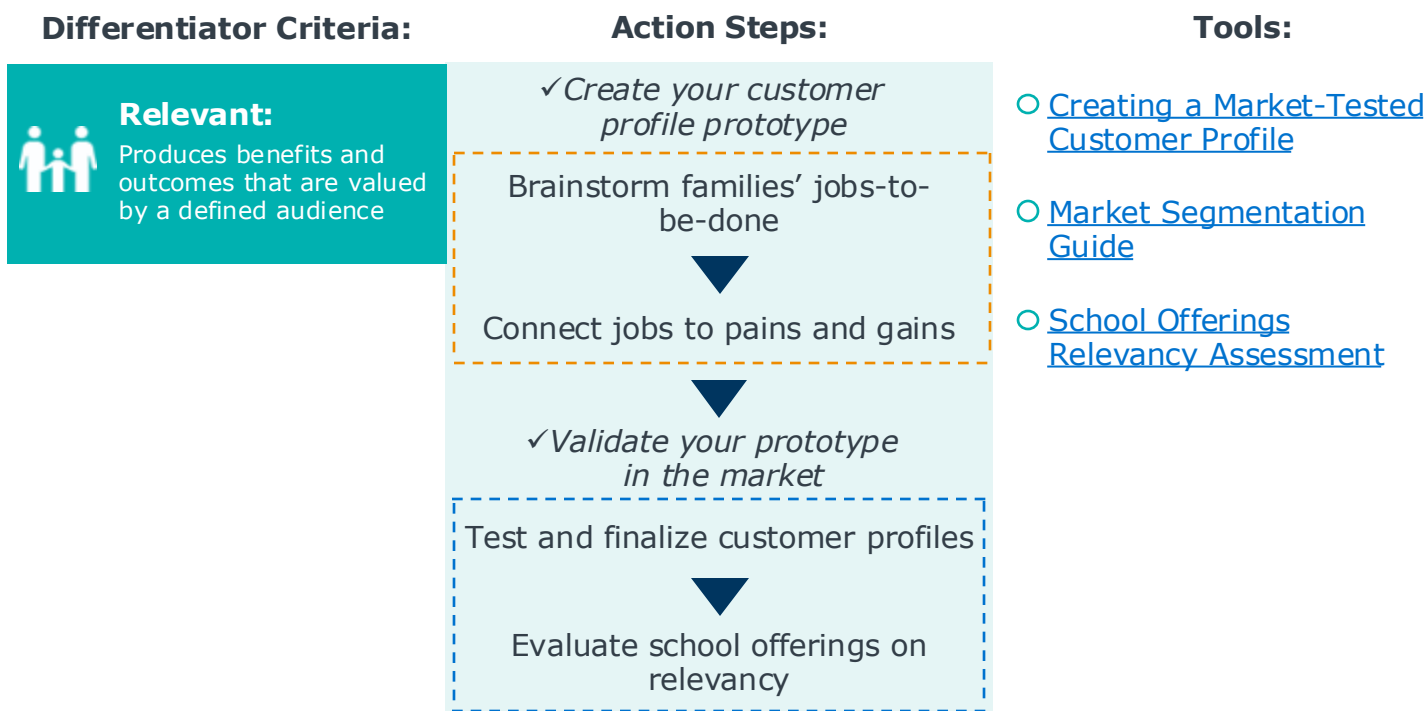
Great programs don't matter if they don't matter to your audience. Too often, schools invest in offerings without clearly understanding what families truly value. The first step to building relevance is developing a clear, data-informed customer profile that captures parent and student needs.

But many schools make three common missteps:

1. Relying on incomplete assumptions about families
2. Failing to validate those assumptions with real market data
3. Struggling to prioritize what matters most

EAB provides tools to help leaders build accurate customer profiles—and strategies to test and refine them—so schools can focus on what families actually care about.

The Value Proposition Management System: Step 1



Use **pages 8-9** to create an implementation plan for ensuring your value proposition and differentiators are truly relevant to your families.

Evaluate Relevance Action Plan Checklist

EAB has designed several supporting resources to help independent schools complete the first step toward developing a dynamic value proposition. Use this checklist to assign owners and due dates for each action step. Reference the supporting tools linked on the prior page (can also be found on the [Dynamic Value Proposition Resource Center](#)) to help complete suggested actions.

Action Steps	Complete?	N/A	Start Date	Due Date	Owner
Produce an initial list of your school offerings and capabilities as potential differentiators using the value differentiator brainstorming exercise.					
Identify independent school families' jobs-to-be-done using the writing guide and brainstorming worksheet.					
Identify pains and gains of current and prospective families using the writing guide, example, and brainstorming worksheet.					
Create a customer profile prototype(s) with the provided EAB template.					
Conduct market research with independent school families about their jobs, pains, and gains; refer to the EAB provided research guidance.					
Review data from your market research and synthesize into a market-tested Customer Profile of a typical independent school family using the customer profile analysis guide and the market-tested customer profile template.					

Evaluate Relevance Action Plan Checklist (cont.)

Action Steps	Complete?	N/A	Start Date	Due Date	Owner
Align pains and gains from the Customer Profile to school offerings using the school offerings tracker and guiding resources.					
Assess up to ten school offerings for relevancy using the school offering relevancy rubric and record each score using the score tracker.					
<i>Optional:</i> Review and synthesize data from 1-2 other customer segments into additional Customer Profiles; refer to the Market Segmentation Guide toolkit to brainstorm other segments. Then, follow the checklist starting with the 2 nd action step for the additional customer profiles.					

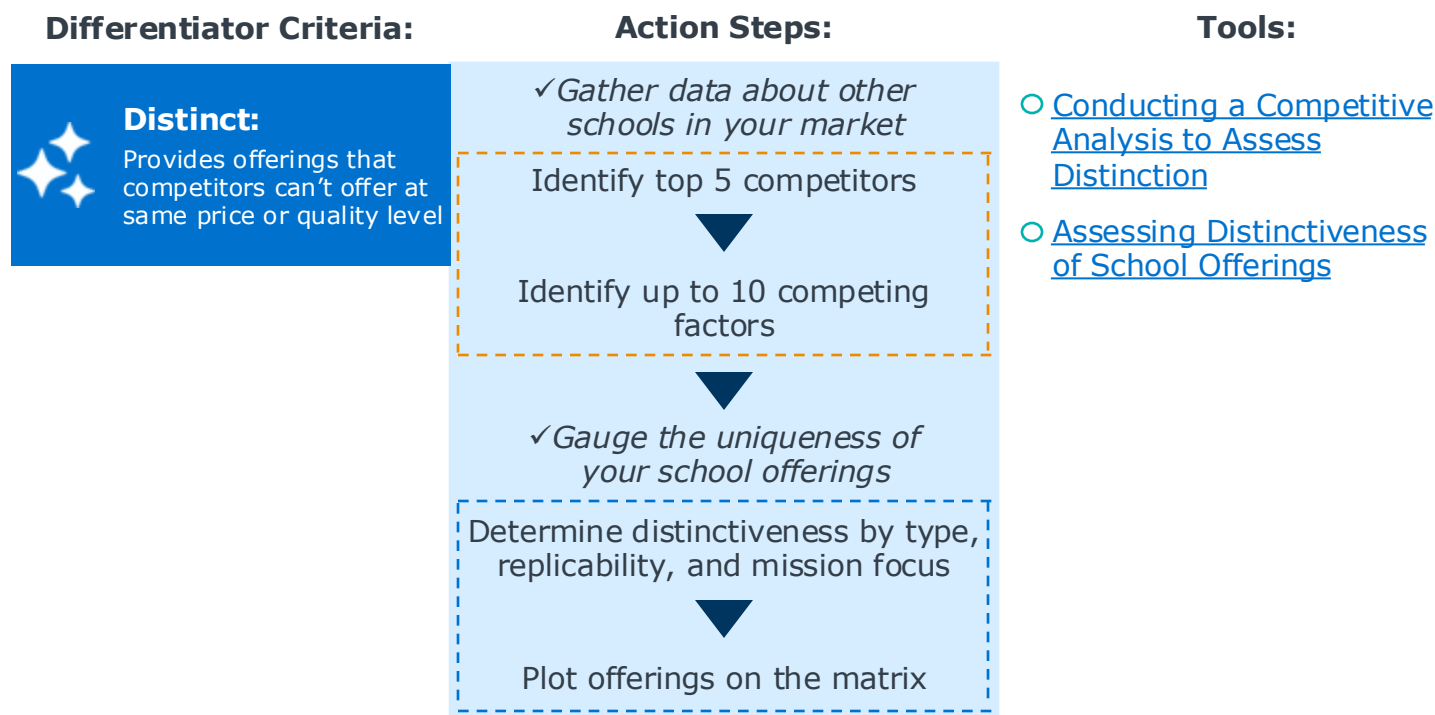
Assess Distinctiveness

Independent schools often fall into the trap of trying to be 'better' instead of truly different. Simply keeping up with competitors or offering marginal improvements won't attract more families—or set your school apart.

Again, true differentiation happens when your strengths directly address family needs (relevant) and do so in ways competitors can't easily match (distinct). That's the differentiation sweet spot.

EAB has created step-by-step tools and guidance to help schools analyze the competition and uncover which of their relevant offerings are also truly distinct. This will bring schools closer to a value proposition that stands out and drives enrollment.

The Value Proposition Management System: Step 2



Use **pages 11-12** to create an implementation plan for ensuring your value proposition and differentiators are truly distinct from the competition.

Assess Distinctiveness Action Plan Checklist

EAB has designed several supporting resources to help independent schools complete the second step toward developing a dynamic value proposition. Use this checklist to assign owners and due dates for each action step. Reference the supporting tools on the prior page (can also be found on the [Dynamic Value Proposition Resource Center](#)) to help complete suggested actions.

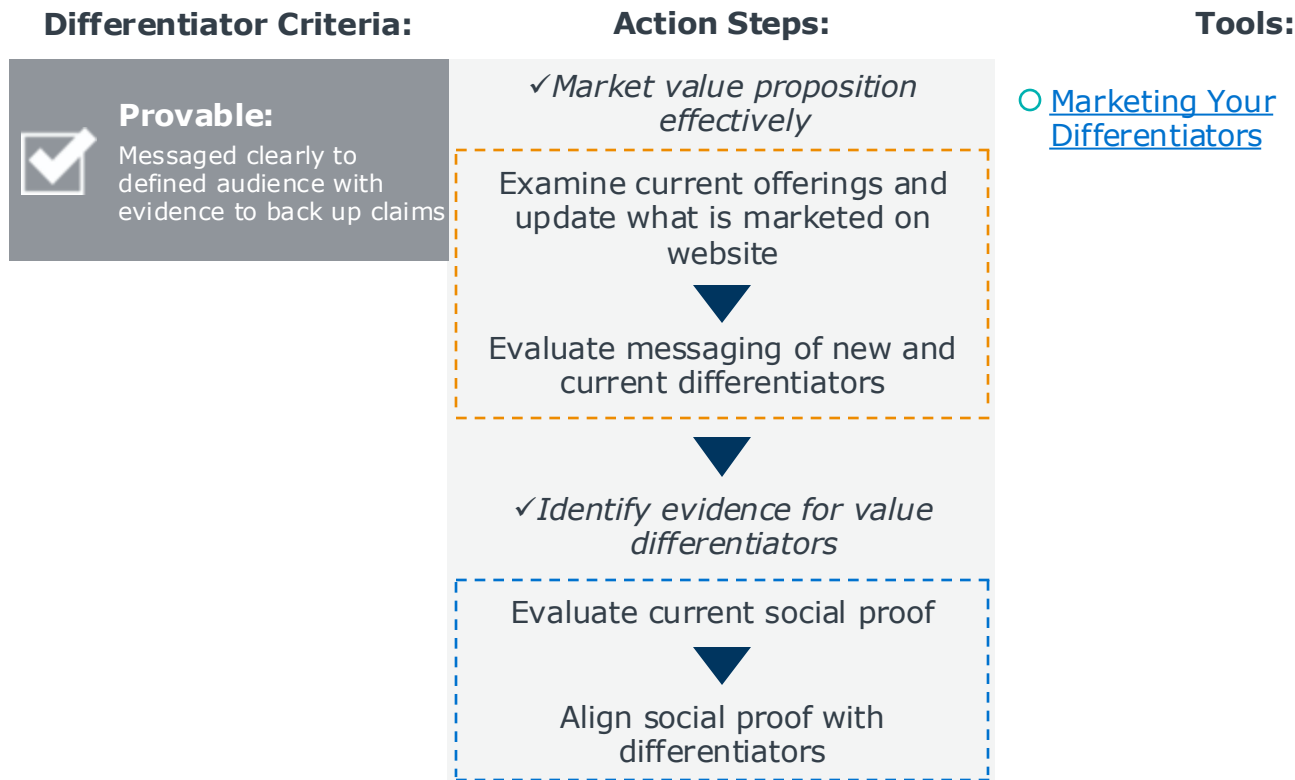
Action Steps	Complete?	N/A	Start Date	Due Date	Owner
Choose at least 5 competitors and up to 10 school offerings for the competitive analysis; use the EAB provided template to record this information.					
Conduct the competitive analysis using the EAB provided guide, cheat sheet, and instructions and record the information on the data collection template.					
Compute your relevant school offerings' distinctiveness score on the EAB provided rubric and record the scores on the score tracker.					
Use your offering's distinctiveness score and relevancy score to plot the offerings on the EAB provided matrix.					
Determine which offerings should be used as value differentiators using the EAB provided matrix key.					

Determine Provability

How an independent school markets and messages its differentiators can make the difference in whether a family decides to enroll their student. Yet many schools fall short with vague messaging and/or social proof misaligned to a school's key differentiations. To stand out, schools need clear, compelling messages backed by evidence—consistently showcased across all channels, especially the website homepage.

EAB has created step-by-step tools and guidance to help independent schools translate identified differentiators into compelling marketing messages that include evidence to support the claims.

The Value Proposition Management System: Step 3



Use **page 13** to create an implementation plan to ensure strong marketing of your identified value proposition and differentiators.

Determine Provability Action Plan Checklist

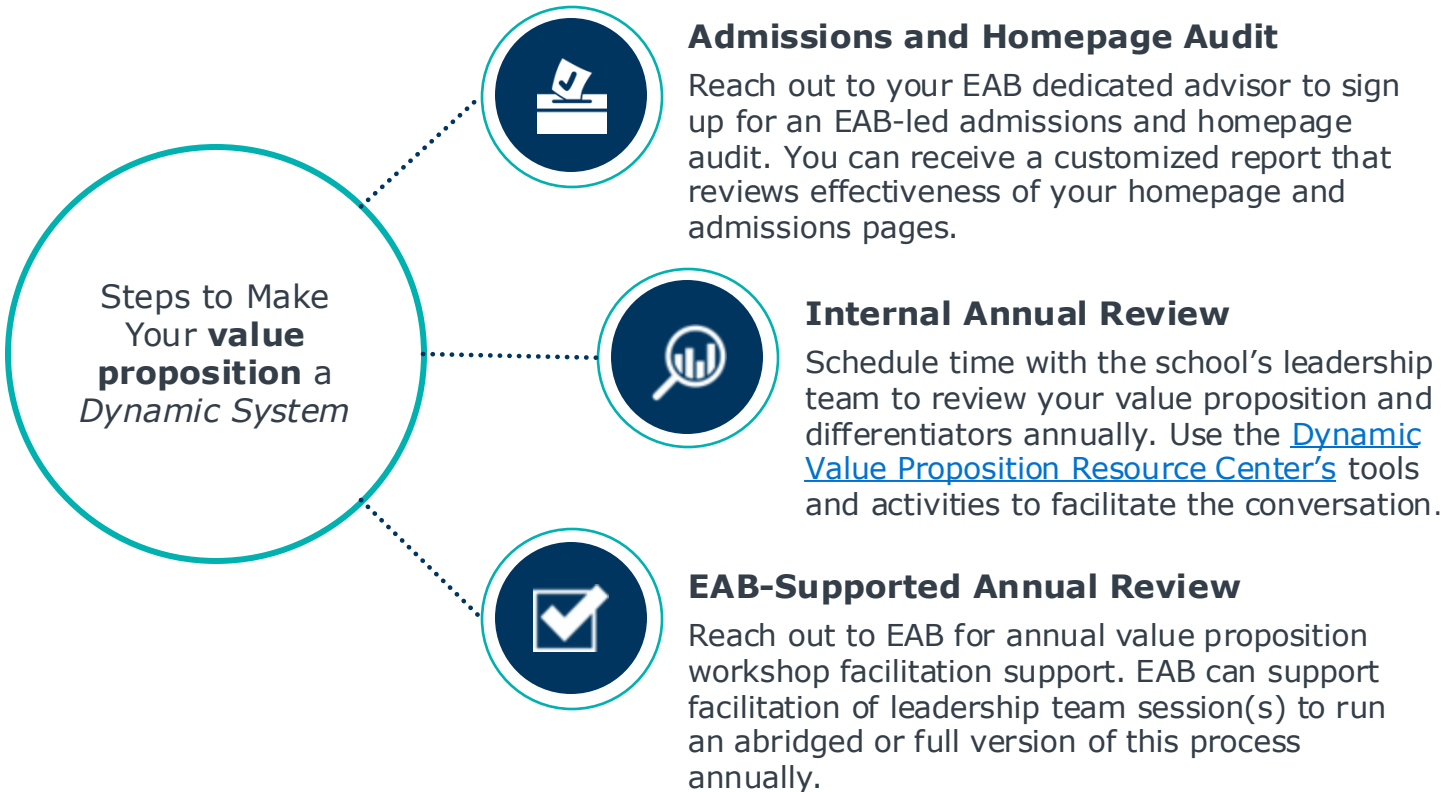
EAB has designed several supporting resources to help independent schools complete the third step toward developing a dynamic value proposition. Use this checklist to assign owners and due dates for each action step. Reference the supporting tool on the prior page (can also be found on the [Dynamic Value Proposition Resource Center](#)) to help complete suggested actions.

Action Steps	Complete?	N/A	Start Date	Due Date	Owner
Complete a mad lib on the provided EAB templates for each differentiator ranked highly in both relevance and distinctiveness in your matrix. Ensure these are offerings you are marketing and adapt marketing messages on social media, websites, etc., based on the context.					
Evaluate the messaging used for your offerings to make sure you're not using vague statements or language; use the EAB provided improving messaging resources.					
Identify ways to increase the provability of your marketing messages by using the EAB provided social proof sources and checklist.					
Determine any necessary next steps toward effectively articulating your value proposition by signing up for the EAB homepage audit.					

Plan for Permanence

Independent schools should think about the dynamic value proposition process as a system rather than a once and done effort. Schools need to assess their differentiators at least annually based on the criteria covered in this guide.

Review the below key next steps to ensure you implement a dynamic value proposition management as a system, and to understand ways EAB will continue to support this work. Use the table below to track your progress with these key next steps.



Action Steps	Complete?	N/A	Due Date	Owner
Sign up for an EAB admissions and homepage audit.				
Schedule time to do an internal annual review of your value proposition.				
Contact EAB for annual value proposition workshop facilitation support.				



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