

# Chesapeake Bay Watershed ELIT 2024

## Data Collection Guide

August 1, 2024

### ELIT Background: The Basics

#### What is the ELIT?

The Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool was developed to monitor public school districts' capacity and progress toward meeting the environmental literacy goal from the [2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#). The ELIT is designed to monitor district-level progress toward two outcomes:

- Student participation in MWEEs during the school year;
- District capacity to implement a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental literacy education.

The survey is conducted every two years. Past collections were in 2022, 2019, and 2017 (with a pause during COVID-19). **This year's collection is focused on the 2023-24 academic year.**

#### How is the ELIT used?

Results are reported to state stakeholders of the Watershed Agreement. In addition to region-wide analyses, each participating state will receive a report of findings from their state, a report detailing each district's individual responses, and access to raw data that can aid regional decision-making about strategies and priorities for future work with school districts.

Publicly, results of key indicators will be summarized on the Engaged Communities page of the [Chesapeake Progress](#) website, which shows state-by-state comparisons. Results may also be used in presentations at relevant conferences for education professionals.

You can review the questions in the 2024 ELIT [here](#).

### How States Support Data Collection

Within each state/jurisdictions, the state education agency will coordinate data collection. This is done to help increase response rates; **school district officials will be more responsive to requests from their state Department of Education** than an unknown national office or body. You will be able to make the most of your connections and relationships to encourage and support school districts to respond.

The Chesapeake Bay Program will oversee the overall data collection and analysis. The team and consultants are available to offer technical assistance and support to the state education agencies and individual school districts, as needed.

In the instructions that follow, we outline basic steps, tips, and offer template language for recruiting and encouraging participation in the ELIT.

#### Why does response rate matter?

When more school districts respond to the ELIT, our collective picture of environmental literacy activities becomes more accurate. These metrics are publicly available on the Chesapeake Progress website, showing a snapshot of status in a side-by-side comparison of the states.

If a state has a low response rate, its results may not show a clear pattern, may appear to vary wildly from year-to-year (depending on who responds), and it won't offer as much support for strategic decision-making.

## ELIT Timeline, Tips, & FAQs

**The 2024 ELIT will be open from August 1 through November 30, 2024.**

### Is the ELIT only for public school districts? What about charter schools?

**The ELIT's focus is on public school districts.** They should be your priority for recruitment and promotion. You do not need to include charter schools.

**You have the *option* to distribute the ELIT to charter schools.** Because some states have a interest in charter schools' responses. At the end of data collection, we will provide a raw data file to any jurisdiction that received ELIT responses from charter schools. These can be used for your state's analysis and planning. Summaries of those data will not be reported by the Chesapeake Bay Program.

### How should we invite school districts?

It is strongly recommended that **state leadership (e.g., State Science Supervisor) distributes the ELIT request to school districts.** Ideally, they will distribute the survey invitation to the district Superintendent *and* the person within the district most likely to have access to the needed data (e.g., an environmental literacy contact or content supervisor, if known). Receiving a clear request from the state Department of Education can be a stronger driving force to encourage superintendents and their staff to prioritize this task.

However, we know that states' organization of districts vary wildly! And different strategies may be more successful in one structure than another. Below are ideas for outreach pathways. Use as many as feel applicable to you. **Hearing about the importance of completing the ELIT through multiple channels and multiple times will help signal its importance within your state.**

#### Individual emails to LEA contacts

Whenever possible, use a personal email/request. The personal ask encourages people to respond. This tends to work very well in states with fewer LEAs and where the state agency has strong relationships with many/most individual districts.

Take time to update lists of names and contact information for each district: **1) Superintendent, and 2) the person best able to provide the ELIT information** (e.g., environmental literacy of content supervisor). While only one individual at each district should complete the ELIT, including two contact people in the email often encourages greater response.

Template email invitations are provided at the end of this document. Modify to suit your tone and voice. But always make sure the OMB Control Number remains in any email (and include the survey link!).

#### Distributing via networks of LEAs

States with hundreds of LEAs may need multiple message pathways to spread the word of the ELIT, emphasize its importance, and encourage responding. If there are official networks that connect and support LEAs (e.g., Intermediate Units in Pennsylvania), it may be beneficial to connect with their leadership to act as intermediaries to promote, encourage, and support completion of the ELIT.

For hard-to-reach districts, ideas of what you might do to make responding a bit easier, include:

- Suggest a universal or very common district role who is well-suited to complete the ELIT; this helps small districts route the request quickly.
- Emphasize that past responses are available; if they responded before, it may be a process of updating answers.
- Offer an outside person who can help answer questions for staff struggling to fill out the survey.

## Ask non-formal EE providers for support

Think about non-formal environmental education providers that serve districts in your state. **Many of these groups have relationships that directly support school districts toward ELIT objectives** – via curriculum, programming, or PD. Reach out to those non-formal EE providers and enlist them to further promote or support completing the ELIT.

For EE partners, this can be a way to highlight the value and importance of the services they provide, by helping districts directly tie their MWEE programming to the measurement of important statewide outcomes.

You could:

- Ask EE providers to directly **email the ELIT invitation to their district-level contacts**. EE partners could offer personal encouragement to complete the ELIT to represent the progress in their district.
- Ask them to **offer districts support in completing some/all of the ELIT**. If the EE partner has implemented MWEE initiatives, they could help a district answer questions about the extent and depth of those environmental education experiences by grade-band.

## How (and how often) should we remind school districts?

**We suggest sending monthly reminders.**

This year, the ELIT will be open for 4 months, around the start and through the first quarter of the new school year. In the past, fall has been the strongest time for ELIT responses.

Because the start of the school year is a busy time, we suggest monthly reminders and messages. The hope is to keep bumping it to the top of inboxes, knowing how busy district offices will be.

In November, more frequent reminders may be needed if progress is slow in your state.

## Can I find out how our state is doing on responses?

Yes! Our evaluation consultants will be monitoring the data collection from August through November.

**If you would like a status update of districts that have responded, email [ELIT@jsickler.net](mailto:ELIT@jsickler.net) with your request.** This can help you target messaging to just those districts who have not yet responded.

Jessica will email your up-to-date list of districts within 2 business days (and usually faster).

**If you would like that report regularly** (e.g., monthly), let us know and we will schedule it for you.

## Is there any help for districts in filling out the ELIT?

The Workgroup does their best to shorten and simplify ELIT questions each cycle, but we know it takes time and effort to complete. Some other advice:

- **Workbook:** We strongly recommend districts **download and make notes in the editable [Workbook of ELIT Questions](#)**. It will give them time to prepare responses, gather data, and check with colleagues for information they need. If they type everything in the workbook, they can copy/paste the data into the survey.
- **Email Assistance:** If a district has difficulty with the online survey or accessing past responses, **email [ELIT@jsickler.net](mailto:ELIT@jsickler.net) for assistance**. We will direct them and address any barriers we can.

- **View Past ELIT Responses:** If a district has completed the ELIT in 2017, 2019, or 2022, they can **access their past responses [here](#)**. If they've done the ELIT before, responding in 2024 can be a matter of "What's changed?", rather than starting from scratch.

**At the [linked archive](#):**

- ⇒ Search for documents labeled ELIT Response Summaries and your state.
- ⇒ 2022 Response Summaries include submissions from the 2022 ELIT
- ⇒ 2019 Response Summaries include combined submissions from 2019 and 2017.

## ELIT Survey Invitation Email

*Text may be modified by distributing State Education Agencies to personalize messages to respondents.*

Dear [NAME],

The Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool (ELIT) is a federally-directed effort to collect information from all public school districts in the Mid-Atlantic region every two years to monitor the status of environmental literacy efforts at a district level. The results from these data help the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup most effectively support local efforts to implement strategies that support students' environmental literacy.

**We request that you – or the appropriate district staff-person – complete the Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool (ELIT) by November 30, 2024.** This will provide critical information about district-wide environmental literacy curriculum and planning activities in your state. Results help the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup most effectively support local efforts to implement strategies that support students' environmental literacy.

Follow this link to the ELIT questionnaire: [ELIT 2024](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:  
[https://jsicklerconsulting.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1RHJPI6YW2ipMgK](https://jsicklerconsulting.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1RHJPI6YW2ipMgK)

**The ELIT takes an average of about 60 minutes to complete**, which includes the time to obtain needed information about district-wide activities. To review the questions ahead of time to help you find the information or identify the right staff person to complete the survey, click here: [PDF of ELIT Questions](#)

**If your district has previously completed the ELIT, you can look up and view past answers here** – search for documents labeled “Response Summaries”: [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/publications-archive/education\\_workgroup](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/publications-archive/education_workgroup)

These past responses can allow you to simply update any information changes since past ELIT surveys (2022, 2019, or 2017).

**Who should complete the ELIT for your district?** Only one person per district should complete the ELIT. The best respondent is someone who works at the district-level and is most familiar with environmental education activities across the district. If your district does not have a position similar to an environmental education coordinator, consider a science curriculum coordinator or similar role. Teachers, principals, or staff from just one school or grade-range would have difficulty completing these questions.

An editable Workbook of the ELIT questions (to complete before submitting the data) is also available here: [Workbook of ELIT Questions \(Word format\)](#)

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.** If you have any concerns, please contact either of the contacts below:

Name, State Education Agency  
[signature block]

Elise Trelegan, Coordinator  
Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup  
NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office  
elise.trelegan@noaa.gov  
204.628.4507

OMB Control Number: 0648-0753

## ELIT Interim Reminder Emails

*If sending monthly reminders, you can approach it as forwarding the original invitation – with a short message at the top indicating that it's a reminder.*

Hi [NAME],

I'm sure things are really busy at your district right now. I am just sending a quick reminder that **the 2024 Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool survey is collecting responses from now through November**. We want to get as many districts in [STATE] included as possible.

I know it's a busy time of year! I wanted to send a reminder now to bump this up your inbox.

If you have any questions or need assistance, let me know!

[Signature]

---Forwarded Message---

Dear [NAME],

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## ELIT Survey Final Reminder Email(s)

*Text may be modified by distributing State Education Agencies to personalize messages to respondents.*

Dear [NAME],

This is a final reminder that we need all districts' feedback on the Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool (ELIT) in [STATE NAME]. **We have not yet received a response from your district, and I want to encourage your district to complete this survey.**

The ELIT is a federally-directed effort to collect information from all public school districts in the Mid-Atlantic region every two years to monitor the status of environmental literacy efforts at a district level. The results from these data help the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup most effectively support local efforts to implement strategies that support students' environmental literacy.

**We request that you – or the appropriate district staff-person – complete the Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool (ELIT) by November 30, 2024**

Follow this link to the ELIT questionnaire: [ELIT 2024](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:  
[https://jsicklerconsulting.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1RHJPI6YW2ipMgK](https://jsicklerconsulting.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1RHJPI6YW2ipMgK)

**The ELIT takes an average of about 60 minutes to complete**, which includes the time to obtain needed information about district-wide activities. On the first page of the survey, you can download a complete copy of the questions to aid you in finding the needed information.

**If your district has previously completed the ELIT, you can look up and view past answers here** – search for documents labeled “Response Summaries”: [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/publications-archive/education\\_workgroup](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/publications-archive/education_workgroup)

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