Instructions for using Education Commission of the States' Internal Search Engine
2/8/2021

This document offers instructions for using ECS's internal search engine: **https://www.ecs.org/searchtool**. This tool searches the following materials:

- All reports and other documents on ecs.org, including archived reports and information requests that have become public
- All blog posts on ednote.ecs.org
- All pages on the AEP website
- All internal information requests housed on Salesforce

How to Search

Search using keywords

Keyword searches are powerful, because they search all our published and internal information requests, publications, and blog postings. They search information requests in Salesforce, attachments to those Information requests, PDF reports on the website, HTML text on the website, 50-state comparisons and blog postings.

The keyword search box appears at the top left of the page:
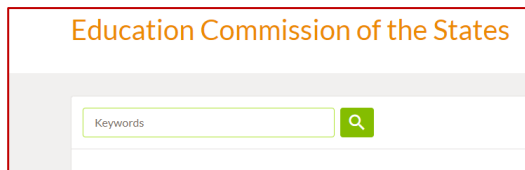
How to expand or limit your results using keyword searches

Keyword searches are quite straightforward:

- This is a responsive search, so you don't have to hit "Enter" to get results. The tool will start returning results a few seconds after you start typing
- The search function is *not* case-sensitive.
- It will search only for the exact term or terms you enter. Unlike Google, it will not search for grammatical variants of the terms you enter, nor will it try to correct terrible spelling.
- It will respond to Boolean searches. This **brief overview** of Boolean searches can help you improve your search results.
- To search for an *exact phrase*, enter that phrase in quotation marks.
- To find all documents that contain two or more words, then enter the words. For example, if you enter *formative assessment*, it will return all documents that contain both words, whether together or separated by lots of other text. It will not return documents that contain the word *formative* but not *assessment*, or *assessment* but not *formative*.
- If you enter more than one word separated by *OR* in all caps, the tool will return all documents that contain either word, or both words together. (OR must be in all caps for this to work.)
- Clear your keyword search by selecting the "X" in the keyword search bar.

How does this work in practice? A search for the phrase *"formative assessment"* (with quotation marks) returns 16 results—all of which contain that exact phrase. A search for *formative assessment* (without quotation marks) returns

75 results—all of which contain both words, though not necessarily together. A search for *formative OR assessment* returns 2524 results—every document in which either word appears.

Don't limit your search unintentionally

By using keywords carefully, you can expand the list of relevant results. Before you begin your search for a given topic, think of the different ways in which people can refer to that topic.

For example, don't just search for the phrase *"formative assessment"* (with quotation marks). As noted above, that returns only 16 documents. Search instead for *"formative assessment" OR "formative assessments" OR "formative tests"* (using quotation marks and capitalization as shown). This second method returns 44 results, including many potentially useful documents you may have missed with a simpler search.

Search using filters

You can search for documents by applying filters. Please note that your results in this case will only be as good as the filters ECS has applied (more on that challenge below.) Current filters include:

- Issue
- Sub-Issue (Appears only after you select an issue from the Issue filter)
- State (Identifies documents that mention the state or states you select)
- Requesting state (Identifies the state that requested an internal information request. Appears only after you perform a keyword search or select other filters.)
- Education Level
- Year

Choosing filters

Choose filters by selecting the green button ("Add Filter") at the top right of your search screen. The dropdown list will display available filters. You can select as many filters as you want.
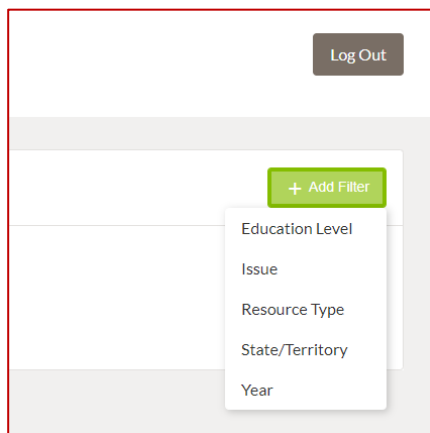
After you select your desired filter or filters, they will appear in the light green bar below the keyword search. For example, this is what you see if you select "Year," "Resource Type," and "State/Territory":
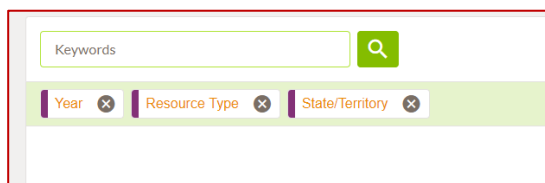
To apply the filters to your results, you still need to click on each filter to refine your selection. Each filter will show you a drop-down list. For example, this is what you get when you select "Resource Type":
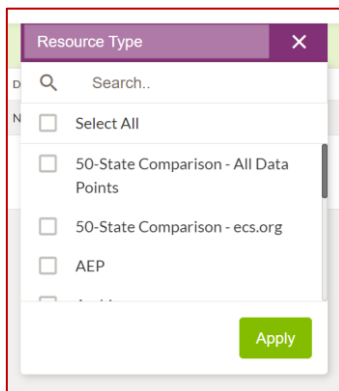
Select all the topics you want, and click "Apply." Some of the drop-down lists are very long, so you can quickly find what you need by entering your desired term in the "Search" area at the top of the drop-down list. Don't forget to hit "return" after entering your desired term, or nothing will happen. Remember, the more filters you enter, the fewer results you will get.

You can clear any individual filter by selecting "X" on the purple filter heading. You can also clear all filters by selecting "Clear Filters" right beneath the green "Add Filter" button.

A special note about archived documents under the "Resource type" filter
This filter allows you to see archived documents that are no longer publicly available on the ECS website. If you select only "Archive" from the dropdown list under the "Resource type" filter, you will see only the archived documents. If you select "Archive" and another resource—"Policy report," for example—you will see only those policy reports that have been archived. Please note that this is the only item in the "Resource type" filter that behaves this way. If you select both "Blog" and "Policy report," for example, you will see all blog postings AND all policy reports.

In your search results, the "Resource type" column will indicate whether a report is part of the archive, and the corresponding document titles will contain "(archive)" at the end:


Remember, if you select Archive, you will immediately exclude any resource types—like internal information requests or blog posts—that were never published on ECS.org.

A special note about the "Issue" and "Sub-issue" filters
The "Sub-issue" filter will become available only after you select one or more topics from the "issue" filter. After you select topics under the "Issue" filter, you will be able to select sub-issues associated with those topics. For example, if

you select "Accountability" under the "Issue" filter, the "Sub-Issue" filter will become available in the drop-down list under the Green "Add Filter" button at the top right of the field. If you add the "Sub-Issue" filter, you can then select from a drop-down list of topics associated with Accountability.
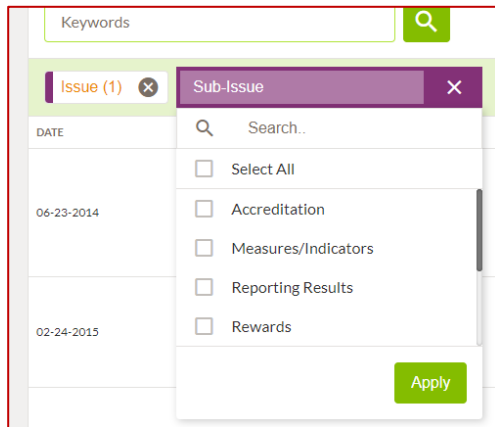

Not every issue will have associated sub-issues.

A special note about the "Requesting state" filter

This filter allows you to see internal information requests by the state that requested them. If you apply this filter, you will exclude any other kind of document. This filter becomes available only after you have already conducted a search—whether by keyword or filters.

To filter by requesting state, you could first apply the "Internal information requests." Returning to the main list of filters, you could then select "Requesting State" and then choose your desired state or states. If you select, "AZ," for example, you will see a list of the internal information requests we have completed for Arizona since 1996.
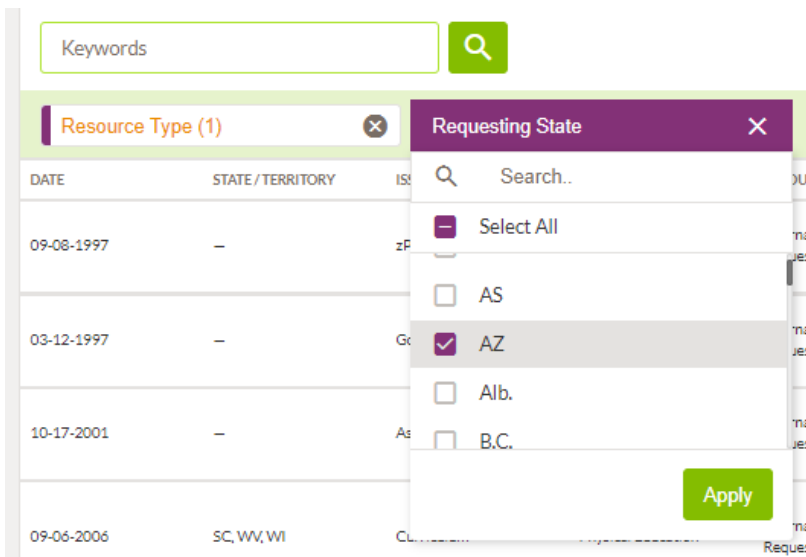
Understanding the limits of search filters

The limits of ECS's current taxonomies will affect the quality of search results. Our filters reflect existing ECS taxonomies, and no taxonomy applies to every type of ECS document. For example, many Issue filters – and all sub-issue filters – apply only to internal information requests. If you select one of those filters, you will not get any results from the website or blog.

As the table below demonstrates, the "Education Level" filter (Early education, High school, K12, etc.) applies only to publications on the ECS website and blog, whereas the "State" and "Year" filters apply to all types of documents.

Resource Type (source)	Issue	Sub-Issue	State	Ed Level	Year	Requesting State
Internal Information Request (salesforce)	x*	x	x		x	x
Blog (ednote.ecs.org)			x	x	x	
All others (ecs.org)	x*		x	x	x	

* Many issues apply only to internal information requests.

As a result, the "Sub-issue" and "Requesting state" filters may exclude at least as much as they find. If you select "Education Level," for example, your results will not include Internal Information Requests. Even though some topics under the "Issue" filter apply to documents on the website, many do not. None of this is a problem if you want to search only one Resource Type. Use the table above to understand which filters you should employ under which circumstances.

Remember: if you apply a filter after you enter keywords, you will remove search results from resource types not associated with that filter.

How to Understand your Search Results

Search results will appear on your screen as you enter keywords and select filters. Each result will appear in a row, in order of relevance. The results will include columns representing:

- The date the resource was created
- States or territories mentioned in the resource
- Any issues associated with the resource
- Any sub-issues associated with the resource
- The type of resource (Blog post, internal information request, etc.) This column will also indicate if a document is part of the archive on ECS.org.
- Any education level associated with the resource)
- The Title of the resource and an excerpt from the resource.

Click on any row, and it will take you directly to the resource in question, whether a publication on ecs.org, a blog posting or an internal information request in Salesforce. (You may have to log in to Salesforce before you can see internal information requests.)

Using the "Title and Excerpt" column

The "Title and Excerpt" column can help you determine whether the resource is worth investigating. If you search using filters, the excerpt will show the first 25 or so words in a document. If you search using keywords, the excerpt will show the keywords as they appear in a document. If you search for the phrase "formative assessment," for example, you might get Title and Excerpt results like these:

Sorting your results

You can sort your results by selecting any column heading. For example, select the "DATE" column heading to sort results by most recent to oldest. Select it again to sort by oldest to most recent.

NOTE: You must select "Clear Sort" if you want results to sort by relevance again. If you do not, the search engine will remember your sorting preference and stick to it, even after you enter new filters or keyword search terms.

Questions?

Please don't hesitate to contact Claus (**cvonzastrow@ecs.org**) or JoAnne (**jwilkins@ecs.org**) if you have any questions.