



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

LANGUAGE ENABLED AIRMAN PROGRAM

The Language Enabled Airman Program, or LEAP, is a career-spanning, volunteer program open to officers and enlisted across all general purpose force (GPF) Air Force specialties to sustain and enhance the existing foreign language skills of Airmen. The objective of LEAP is to develop language enabled, cross-cultural Airmen who can operate seamlessly with air forces and populations around the world. With these skills, Airmen can better support the application of airpower through meeting the National Defense Strategy pillars of strengthening partnerships and interoperability.

LEAP was founded on a core belief that language is a capability the Air Force cannot simply “contract out” ... it must be invested over the course of careers in willing and able uniformed Airmen. Numerous studies have documented the need for U.S. military personnel with greater foreign language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC) proficiency. CJCSI 3126.01, Language and Regional Expertise Planning identified foreign language and regional abilities as “critical warfighting skills,” stating that these should be integrated into future operations “to ensure that combat forces deploy with the essential ability to understand and effectively communicate with native populations, local and government officials, and coalition partners when in theater.” This requirement applies to both military language professionals as well as the GPF who need language skills for unexpected, short-notice requirements.

LEAP is managed by the Air Force Culture and Language Center at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala. The first selection board was conducted in 2009; LEAP was established as a program of record in FY13. To become a LEAP scholar, Airmen must already possess some level of proficiency in a foreign language specified on the Air Force Strategic Language List (SLL), then apply to the selection boards for further review. Selection boards consider each applicant’s military and academic record, previous LREC exposure, commander’s endorsement, and potential for further language development and utilization. The Air Force Senior Language Authority determines final selection based on the SLL and language-coded billets.

The AFCLC uses a two-part education and training system and tracks Airmen’s progress with a goal of achieving and maintaining an Interagency Language Roundtable skill level of 3 in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The first part, eMentor, is an online synchronous language program that connects Airmen anywhere in the world, 24/7 with native language instructors at times that work with their schedules and mission ops tempo. The second part, Language Intensive Training Events, or LITEs, are periodic TDYs averaging 30 days that place scholars in culturally complex settings to enhance their LREC skills.

LEAP scholars who demonstrate language proficiency at an “enabled” level may receive the LEAP Special Experience Identifier (SEI) upon meeting eligibility criteria, which could give them special consideration for Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus pay and other language-related opportunities within the Air Force. The LEAP SEI is used by force managers to match Airmen with language dependent assignments, deployments, and TDYs, with roles that include international affairs, security cooperation, mobility advisory, and special operations.

LEAP is comprised of approximately 3,200 Airmen in 85 languages.

For more information, see <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/> or e-mail afclc.outreach@us.af.mil or call the LEAP Helpdesk at 334-953-8440.