



FACT SHEET

LANGUAGE ENABLED AIRMAN PROGRAM (LEAP)

LEAP is an Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) volunteer program open to Regular Air Force and Space Force officer and enlisted service members in most career fields. LEAP sustains and enhances the existing foreign language skills of service members. The objective of LEAP is to develop language-enabled, cross-cultural scholars who can operate seamlessly with partner nation military forces and civilians around the world. With these skills, service members can better support the application of air and space power 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 and Space Force cannot simply “contract out” ... it must be invested over the course of careers in willing and able uniformed service members. 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 General Purpose Force who need language skills for unexpected, short-notice requirements.

LEAP conducted its first selection board in 2009 and was established as a program of record in FY13. To become a LEAP Scholar, service members 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 service member’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 course that connects service members anywhere in the world with native-level language instructors 24/7, 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 makes them eligible for Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus pay and other language-related opportunities. Force managers use the LEAP SEI to match service members with language dependent assignments, deployments, and TDYs, with roles that include international affairs, military personnel exchange program, security cooperation, mobility advisory, and special operations.

LEAP is comprised of approximately 3,400 scholars in 94 strategic languages.

For more information, see <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/Language-studies>, or e-mail AFCLC.LEAP.Admin@us.af.mil.