



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

LANGUAGE ENABLED AIRMAN PROGRAM

The Language Enabled Airman Program is a career-spanning program to sustain, enhance and utilize the existing language skills of general purpose force Airmen. The objective of LEAP is cross-culturally competent leaders across all Air Force specialties with working level foreign language proficiency – leaders that can meet Air Force global mission requirements. LEAP is a volunteer program open to officers and enlisted Airmen in most Air Force Specialty Codes. To become a participant in LEAP, Airmen must already possess moderate to high levels of proficiency in a foreign language specified on the Air Force Strategic Language List. LEAP is managed by the Air Force Culture and Language Center, part of Air University's Spaatz Center at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

Numerous studies have documented the need for U.S. military personnel with greater foreign language, regional and cultural proficiency. In response, 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 members of the GPF, who need language skills for unexpected, short-notice requirements and expeditionary operations. The Air Force Culture, Region and Language Flight Plan was a recognition of this requirement.

A primary goal of LEAP is to develop a capability to communicate in one or more foreign languages in five to 10 percent of active duty Airmen across all Air Force specialties and careers. LEAP participants focus on languages from the Air Force's SLL. This helps meet Air Force requirements for language-coded billets within the GPF and increases the "bench" of language-capable Airmen for contingency operations.

LEAP administrators select qualified volunteers, provide them career-long language sustainment training, and track their progress, with a goal of achieving and maintaining an Interagency Language Roundtable skill level of 2+ in listening and reading and an ILR level of 2 in speaking. Selection is based on an Airman's existing language abilities and potential to achieve higher levels of language proficiency as well as Air Staff requirements for particular languages and language-coded billets. Board members look at an applicant's current language proficiency(ies), past performance in language courses, Defense Language Proficiency Test, Oral Proficiency Interview and Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) scores, previous foreign language exposure and performance in his or her Air Force duties. Participants commit to maintaining their language skills throughout their careers, while pursuing their normal operational assignments.

LEAP participants are provided opportunities to participate in immersive language training, Language Intensive Training Events, as well as live, on-line language cohorts where they practice their language skills with qualified language instructors and other LEAP participants—the eMentor program. Participants must take an annual DLPT and/or OPI to stay current in the program. Participants may also be eligible for award of the LEAP Special Experience Identifier (SEI) upon meeting LEAP SEI eligibility criteria, which could give them special consideration for Foreign Language Proficiency Pay and other language-related opportunities within the Air Force.

For more information, see culture.af.mil, e-mail afclc.outreach@us.af.mil or call 334-953-7729.