



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

LANGUAGE ENABLED AIRMAN PROGRAM

The Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) is a career-spanning program to select, develop and increase Airmen's foreign language capability and cross-cultural competence. 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 targeting early-career Airmen most likely to take fullest advantage of career-long language learning.

Numerous studies have documented the need for US military personnel with greater foreign language, regional and cultural proficiency. In response, CJCSI 3126.01, Language and Regional Expertise Planning (11 Feb 2008) 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 general purpose forces, who need language skills for unexpected, short-notice requirements and expeditionary operations. The Air Force Culture, Region and Language Flight Plan (May 2009) 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 Strategic Language List. This helps meet Air Force requirements for language-coded billets within the general force, and increases the "bench" of language-capable Airmen for contingency operations.

LEAP administrators select qualified volunteers, provide them career-long sustainment language training, and track their progress, with a goal of achieving and maintaining an Interagency Language Roundtable skill level of two. Selection is based on an Airman's potential to achieve higher levels of language proficiency. Board members look at an applicant's past performance in language courses, Defense Language Proficiency Test and Defense Language Aptitude Battery scores, and previous foreign language exposure. Participants commit to maintaining their language skills throughout their careers, while pursuing their normal operational assignments.

LEAP participants undergo an initial Language Intensive Learning Event (LITE), and are then connected to a distance learning-based community of learners where they practice their language skills with guided instruction. Other language intensive learning opportunities are provided at scheduled intervals throughout an Airman's career. Participants must take an annual DLPT and are eligible for applicable foreign language proficiency bonuses.

LEAP is managed by the Air Force Culture and Language Center, part of Air University's Spatz Center at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

For more information, see www.culture.af.mil, e-mail afclc.pa@maxwell.af.mil or call 334-953-7729.