



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

**Engineer and Scientist Exchange Program (ESEP)  
Frequently Asked Questions**



**Q: What is the Engineer and Scientist Exchange Program (ESEP)?**

**A:** The ESEP is a career-enhancement program administered by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD[A&S]) to promote international cooperation in military research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E), as well as acquisition, through the exchange of defense scientists and engineers (S&E). It provides on-site working assignments for US military and civilian engineers and scientists in allied and friendly governments' organizations and the reciprocal assignment of foreign Ministry of Defense (MoD) engineers and scientists in US defense establishments. The ESEP offers USAF S&E personnel the opportunity to work alongside foreign partner engineers and scientists to become well-versed in international program management, realize new approaches to RDT&E, and help the USAF build international cooperation through promoting interoperability and identifying future areas of technical cooperation.

ESEP is implemented through formal bilateral international agreements, in the form of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), concluded pursuant to Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 5530.3. ESEP currently has concluded 16 MOUs with the following countries:

- Australia
- Canada
- Chile
- Czech Republic
- France
- Germany
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Singapore
- Spain
- United Kingdom

**Q: What are ESEP's objectives?**

**A:** The ESEP is an International Armaments Cooperation (IAC) Enabling Program whose objectives include:

- a. Improving insight into foreign military RDT&E techniques and acquisition processes
- b. Facilitating the exchange of ideas and new techniques within the RDT&E community
- c. Enabling the USAF to incorporate best practices that are developed offshore
- d. Enhancing the professional stature and effectiveness of participants strengthening USAF research and development programs
- e. Identifying and cultivating new areas of technical cooperation

**Q: Who can apply?**

**A:** The ESEP is available to both USAF military and civilian personnel within the S&E Career Field. Permanent, full-time Air Force civilians in the General Schedule (GS) grades GS-12 through GS-13 (or equivalent in other pay systems) and Active Duty military rank 1<sup>st</sup> Lt through Major are eligible to apply. A master's or doctorate degree in a science, engineering, or mathematics field and a minimum of 3 years R&D experience is required. Applicants in the process of completing a graduate degree must include current transcript and anticipated date of graduation when applying.



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**NOTE:** USAF Civilian applicants must have a current Career Development Plan on file with their Career Field Team (CFT). Please contact your CFT to learn more.

**Q: Do I have to speak a foreign language?**

**A:** Proficiency in a foreign language, especially in the host nation of your choice, is preferred and will make your application more competitive. However, it is not required. Candidates who speak a foreign language must include their [Defense Language Proficiency Test \(DLPT\)](#) proficiency rating in their applications. A 3 or higher is required to be exempt from attending the Defense Language Institute (DLI).

All candidates, regardless of language proficiency, must show a score of 100 or more on the Defense Language Aptitude Test (DLAB), demonstrating an ability to learn a new language. Candidates assigned to a non-English speaking country without the requisite language skills will attend the DLI for approximately 24-26 weeks prior to starting his/her assignment.

**Q: How do I register to take the DLPT or the DLAB?**

**A:** Contact your facility Training and Education Office to inquire about testing schedules for the DLPT and DLAB. Visit the [DLI website](#) for study guides and general information about the DLPT.

**Q: I am scheduled to meet my Major's board soon. Am I still eligible to participate?**

**A:** Yes. However, you need to consider some other factors. When you meet your board, you will also be competing for Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE). If you are not selected for promotion to Major, you will compete for IDE selection for the next three years. It can be difficult to get the support you need to compete effectively if you are far from the office that will be writing your PRF/3849/etc. If you do not have a strong desire to attend IDE in-residence, or are satisfied with completing IDE by correspondence, we would be happy to accept your application.

**Q: How do I apply?**

**A:** The ESEP Call for Applications is sent once a year via an Air Force MyPers automatic message to all S&E civilian (GS-12/13 or equivalent) and military (1st Lt-Major) personnel and contains program information, requirements, and application suspense information. These announcements are released at different times, through disparate routes. For example, the civilian solicitation is released under the Civilian Developmental Education (CDE) Call for Nominations. Please contact your Career Field Team (CFT) Lead (civilians) or Capt Taylor Youtsler at [taylor.youtsler.2@us.af.mil](mailto:taylor.youtsler.2@us.af.mil) (military) for specific timelines relating to each academic year. The application template and supporting documentation can be found on MyPers, as well as the [Air Force International Affairs](#) website.

**Q: How are candidates selected?**

**A:** A selection panel at the Headquarters Air Force in Washington, DC reviews each completed application. Selection panel members include, but are not limited to:

- Secretary of the Air Force, International Armaments Cooperation Division (SAF/IAPC)



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- Secretary of the Air Force, Acquisition (SAF/AQ)
- Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR)
- Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL)
- Additional agencies as available

Currently, due to available funding, the ESEP selects approximately six candidates a year. Selected participants are assigned a country of placement based on current Air Force Science and Technology (S&T) Priorities, the candidate's country of preference list defined in the application, current pol-mil activity, the research and development capability/relationship with the U.S., and the participant's scientific and engineering background. The selection panel strives to marry Air Force S&T priorities with a selectee's country preferences, but the overarching goal of the ESEP is to enhance the effectiveness of USAF personnel in accordance with USAF S&T goals and objectives.

### **Q: How do I set myself apart from other candidates?**

**A:** The USAF ESEP selection panel is looking for motivated, personable individuals who will take advantage of this opportunity to not only increase his/her skillsets and professional stature, but also those who demonstrate an understanding of, and dedication to, providing a return on investment to the USAF. The ESEP is integral to defining new avenues of cooperative agreements, data/information exchanges, and enhancing the USAF and United States' interoperability with allied and friendly nations. Candidates who seriously consider and articulate how their overseas assignment will augment and enrich USAF S&T priorities, in addition to his/her personal career goals, will set themselves apart during the selection process.

### **Q: What is the duration of the tour?**

**A:** Each USAF overseas ESEP tour is for two years with the possibility for an additional year extension. Year extensions are predicated on a case-by-case basis.

### **Q: Will I incur an additional service obligation for participating in ESEP?**

**A:** Yes. USAF Civilian participants will incur a service commitment of 3 years after completion of the ESEP tour. USAF Military participants will incur a 3 year service commitment post ESEP if they attend DLI for language training; otherwise, military participants will only incur a 1 year service commitment post-ESEP tour if returning to the U.S.

Leaving the program before completion can result in a monetary pay back to the USAF. This will include the costs for overseas move and language training (if applicable).

### **Q: Will my unit receive a backfill for my position while I am in the program?**

**A:** No. It is imperative that your home organization/sending agency commander (or equivalent) understand your position will remain vacant on the organization's Unit Manning Document (UMD). The ESEP Application requires a memorandum signed by the home organization/sending agency commander (or equivalent) acknowledging that your position will remain within your organization.



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**Q: Who will be my Reporting Senior/Supervisor while on assignment overseas?**

**A:** Your primary supervisor will be from your home organization/sending agency. You will also be affiliated with the ESEP Program Office within SAF/IAPC, DLI (if applicable), military/government support offices, the in-country embassy team, and your host facility overseas.

**Q: Do I still receive an Officer Performance Report (OPR) or Civilian Appraisal?**

**A:** Yes. OPRs and civilian appraisals will still be written/signed by the supervisor from the ESEP participant's home organization. All ESEP participants are encouraged to copy their home organization's supervisor while submitting the bi-monthly activity report to SAF/IAPC.

**Q: How do you decide where to send selectees?**

**A:** Currently there are 16 ESEP MOUs in place with the following countries: Australia; Canada; Chile; Czech Republic; France; German; Israel; Italy; Japan; Korea; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Spain; Singapore; and United Kingdom. The host country must be able to place the ESEP person in a government facility. We are open to suggestions from the candidates about potential placements in countries, organizations and facilities, but we balance the goals of the DoD, USAF, host nations, and other entities. All placements are carefully executed to ensure the exchange is rewarding both personally and professionally. As such, when the host organization submits the position description to SAF/IA, the participant and supervisor review it to ensure it is a good match before the final acceptance is sent.

**Q: How are selected personnel assigned to a country?**

**A:** Upon selection notification, each participant is required to send SAF/IAPC a memorandum confirming their acceptance of placement in the assigned country, along with his/her USAF biography, a current photo, resume, and career objectives. Upon receipt, SAF/IAPC coordinates directly with the Ministry of Defense in the foreign country to define a position within the host nation's government research labs or facilities. The proposed position depends on the selectee's skillsets, experience, as well as the host nation's discretion of available projects/assignments. Selectee's must understand that the initial country of placement may change if a suitable position cannot be defined.

**Q: How do I get from my home organization to DLI then to my country?**

**A:** The process to enroll in DLI/move overseas does not begin until the candidate has accepted and SAF/IAPC has approved the host nation's proposed position description.

Per the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), military selectees will execute an initial Permanent Change of Station (PCS) to the DLI, then execute a second PCS to their overseas destination. Orders are required prior to each PCS.

Civilian selectees will execute a Temporary Duty Assignment to the DLI.



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**Q: Do I need a Visa?**

**A:** Possibly, yes. It is recommended that ESEP participants review the [Foreign Clearance Guide](#) upon your acceptance of your ESEP host nation's position description to determine passport/visa requirements. A representative from the AFRL International Affairs Directorate (XPPI) will coordinate with each selectee and the appropriate USAF units to initiate PCS/TCS orders, as well as overseas travel/living requirements.

All ESEP participants will require an official or diplomatic passport. Spouses/dependents of ESEP participants will require a no-fee passport. A copy of PCS/TCS travel orders is needed for a no-fee passport/visa. Contact your local official passport office for assistance with submission.

The Foreign Clearance Guide and consular offices will clarify requirements.

**Q: Will I have access to USAF email/accounts while overseas?**

**A:** ESEP participants are NOT to bring any government issued computers or cell phones from the US to their overseas assignment. The host nation will provide you with hardware on which to conduct your day-to-day ESEP assignment work.

If selected, it is imperative all participants meet with their home organization/sending agency IT support team to ensure your USAF e-mail, profile, and accounts are not closed while overseas. Policies will differ depending on your home organization/sending agency, but you may be required to have your account classified as status: TDY to ensure it does not close/expire. ESEP participants will be able to log into their USAF email via webmail (through the Air Force Portal or your home organization/sending agency IT support team can provide a link). Participants will need to renew their military IDs (if applicable) prior to departure. Once you arrive overseas, you will receive an international CAC. This will enable you to access the US Embassy or nearest USAF base in your host country, both of whom will have US government issued systems/computers you may use.

**Q: Who pays for me to participate (language training, PCS/TCS costs, salary, etc)?**

**A:** For active duty military members, pay and PCS costs come out of the Military Manpower budget; there is no expense to the home organization/sending agency.

For USAF civilians, the home organization/sending agency continues to pay his/her salary. Instead of paying locality pay during the two-year assignment, the home organization/sending agency pays the Post Allowance (PA) and Living Quarter Allowance (LQA) for the ESEP selectee—it usually comes close to an even trade. SAF/IAPC pays for TCS costs and language training.

All International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) (i.e., US Embassy support) costs are paid by SAF/IAPC.



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**Q: Will I get Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) or other assistance with housing costs?**

**A:** Military members receive an overseas housing allowance and a COLA. Civilians receive a PA and LQA (not taxed) in lieu of their locality pay.

**NOTE:** Active duty military and civilian allowances vary greatly from country to country and from city to city within a country. SAF/IAPC and AFRL/XPPI will coordinate with each selectee on his/her cost/allowance requirements.

**Q: What program funding and financial allowances can I expect?**

**A:** ESEP participants will receive various forms of financial allowances and reimbursements before, during, and after their tour. These allowances will slightly differ for military and civilian participants. All allowances, regardless of rank, must be listed in a set of orders. The [Defense Travel Management Office's Joint Travel Regulations \(JTR\)](#) and the [US Department of State Office of Allowances](#) offers guidance/policy regarding living overseas, as well as PCS/TCS entitlements. Be sure to read the OPM guidance regarding living overseas.

**Q: Can my Spouse and Dependents accompany me on my ESEP assignment?**

**A:** Yes! The ESEP allows dependents to accompany their sponsor (you) and pays for travel expenses to and from the country, as well as ICASS support. The ESEP will not assist in finding schools for children or job opportunities for a spouse. As part of the cultural emersion, it is the responsibility of the ESEP participant to find schooling for their child, research job opportunities for their spouse, etc. The ESEP will provide a memorandum, if required, to a school stating the purpose of your presence in country and duration of stay. The UK, for example, often requires this memo for record. Please visit the [Department of Defense Education Activity \(DODEA\)](#) website for assistance finding schools in your host nation.