Leaders Encouraging Airmen Development (LEAD)

**Background:** The United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) offers a limited number of opportunities for our most qualified enlisted Airmen who meet the criteria to enter the commissioned ranks. The Leaders Encouraging Airmen Development (LEAD) Program is an on-going effort to give our best and brightest Airmen the opportunity to excel by offering them appointments to the USAFA in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The program, initiated in 1995, delegates authority to Unit Commanders to nominate highly-qualified Airmen to attend the Academy. This authority is delegated to the first commander in an Airman’s Chain of Command and is intended as an endorsement for the commander who has first-hand knowledge of the Airman’s character, leadership potential and potential to successfully complete this commissioning program.

Commanders and supervisors are asked to encourage their sharpest Airmen to apply for the USAFA LEAD program. Each year, approximately 65 Airmen are offered appointments to USAFA, either directly or through the Preparatory School.

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**QUALIFICATION**

USAFA LEAD seeks young, talented Airmen with leadership potential who meet the USAFA entry qualifications and demonstrate outstanding character.

Each applicant must meet the following minimum eligibility qualifications:

- Not passed their 23rd birthday on July 1 the year they will enter USAFA or not passed their 22nd birthday on 1 July the year they enter the Preparatory School
- Have no dependents (i.e. be unmarried and bear no legal obligation to support a child or other individual)
- Be a U.S. citizen (or be able to obtain citizenship prior to USAFA entry)
- Meet eligibility criteria IAW AFI 36-2013, Officer Training School and Enlisted Commissioning Programs, Table 1.1.

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**LEAD PROGRAM TIMELINE**

- **March - January 31:** AF Form 1786 submitted
- **NLT December 31:** Submit Pre-Candidate Questionnaire
- **NLT January 31:** Completed Candidate Packages Due
- **Throughout April:** Selected Airmen receive offers of appointment for direct entry to USAFA or the Preparatory School
- **Through May 1:** Airmen accept or decline offers of appointment

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**HOW AIRMEN ARE EVALUATED**

Airmen, like any other USAFA candidate, are evaluated based on the whole-person concept. Leadership potential is evaluated through records of participation in athletic activities, including team or individual sports and nonathletic activities, such as class offices, public speaking, Civil Air Patrol or scouting. This may also include participation in organizations while on active duty.

Transcription from high school and any preparatory school or college attended after high school are used to determine academic potential.

We will also consider an Airman’s performance on active duty and recommendations from supervisors.

**Selection Criteria**

We consider all candidates (regular or reserve) on a competitive basis for all opportunities to the Academy and the Preparatory School. Examination results and previous performance determine selections.

We typically notify Airmen of their qualification and selection status by the end of April. Airmen not accepted for direct entrance into the Academy are automatically considered for the Preparatory School.

**Additional Information:** For more information, search for “LEAD” on the Air Force Portal or visit the Air Force Academy website at: https://www.academyadmissions.com/admissions/advice-to-applicants/enlisted-airmen/