



Responsibilities for USAID's Foreign Language Program

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 459

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Responsibilities for USAID's Foreign Language Program

The purpose of USAID's Foreign Language Program is to strengthen the ability of USAID's Foreign Service (FS) Officers to implement programs as mandated by Congress. The Program objectives are to ensure that: 1) overseas language-designated positions are staffed with employees who meet position language requirements; and 2) employees meet language requirements for tenure. FS employees must meet foreign language proficiency requirements for tenure and for Language-Designated Positions (LDPs) before departure for assignment to post.

The purpose of the language tenure requirement is to ensure that FSOs are capable of communicating in languages used in countries where USAID carries out its mission. FS Officers are expected to satisfy their foreign language proficiency requirement for tenuring prior to being posted overseas.

To meet language tenure requirements, career candidates must have an FSI-tested proficiency of S-3/R-3 if the language is French, Spanish, or Portuguese. For tenuring in other languages on USAID's tenuring languages list, career candidates must have an FSI-tested proficiency of S-2/R 0-1. (see Mandatory Reference [414maf, USAID Tenuring Languages](#).)

Mission Directors or principal USAID officers must designate overseas FS positions for which language proficiency is essential for effective job performance. LDPs must not be designated above the S-3/R-3 or below the S-2/R-0 level. The Office of Human Resources, Foreign Service Personnel Division (OHR/FSP), in consultation with the appropriate geographic Bureau, places language designations on new positions, as applicable.

Changes to LDPs: Modifications to established requirements must reflect significant changes in circumstances, duties, and responsibilities. The Mission recommends changes to existing LDPs by requesting the geographic Bureau to submit to OHR/FSP/FSS an SF-52-B, Request for Personnel Action, that includes a statement justifying the changes. Language requirements should not be changed to avoid delays in recruitment, assignment, or language training.

OHR/FSP will assign FS career candidates to training in a USAID-useful language until the tenure requirement is achieved or the allotted training time is exhausted.

OHR/FSP will determine the appropriate duration for Language training dependent upon the specific language Proficiency requirement for tenure and/or language designated position.

Language training for tenure for all Foreign Service Career Candidate Officers (DLI, Mid-level or other) should not be postponed, curtailed or interrupted. Tenure language training must be completed before departing for the initial assignment overseas.

Requests for curtailment or postponement of other (mid-level) FS career candidate's language training must be submitted by the Assistant Administrator (AA) of the geographic Bureau of assignment to the Director of the Office of Human Resources for approval.

Requests much include the following:

1. Specific programmatic reasons for the curtailment or postponement;
2. Proposal for an alternate, Mission-funded plan for providing language training (this should include a detailed description of the post language plan that must be compelling);
3. Mission Director's, AA's, or USAID/W Office Director's certification that if the necessary language proficiency is not reached at the end of the first tour of assignment, the employee will remain in USAID/W, following home leave, until the required proficiency is achieved; and
4. A statement signed by the employee indicating agreement with the requested alternate training plan, and acknowledgement of possible consequences including separation from the Foreign Service for failure to meet language requirements to become tenured.

Regarding FS Career Employees and USAID/W reassignment and Home Leave: Employees transferring to LDPs from USAID/W, from home leave transfer, or from home leave return to post, without the required proficiency will be enrolled in language training before departure from post.

Regarding FS Career Employees and Direct or Mid-Tour Transfer: Employees reassigned to LDPs through a direct or mid-tour transfer without the required proficiency will be enrolled in language training at post, if available. If the required proficiency is not documented at post through an FSI-approved tester, the employee must be tested during USAID/W consultation and scheduled for training in connection with home leave.

Language Training Waivers

Mission Directors, Principal USAID Officers, or Assistant Administrators must provide detailed written justification to support a request for a waiver of language training for an LDP. OHR reviews the Request for Waiver of Language Training and makes an action recommendation to the Director, OHR. OHR informs the post or the appropriate Bureau/Independent Office of the waiver decision. Foreign language proficiency cannot be waived for purposes of tenure.

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