

2026 EDITION · EMPLOYER DEEP-DIVE

The Full 16-Company FDE Deep-Dive

Deep profiles of Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks and 12 more forward deployed engineer AI companies — with total comp, interview notes, a per-company CFDE emphasis matrix, and where to apply by location.

Salary guide

Career roadmap

AI governance roles

Hiring trends

Inside: 16 full employer pages with TC + interview notes, a per-company CFDE module emphasis matrix, application priority by location (NYC / SF / Remote), and loop-timeline + offer-to-acceptance benchmarks. Compensation for the four frontier firms cited from Levels.fyi (May 2026) and Glassdoor (2026).

Published by **GSDC — Global Skill Development Council** | Certified Forward Deployed Engineer (CFDE)

CFDE · CERTIFICATION TRACK

START HERE

What's inside this deep-dive

Sixteen employers, profiled the way a candidate actually needs them: what they pay, how their loop differs, and what to over-prepare for each.

- ◆ **4 frontier full profiles** — Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks, with cited comp.
- ◆ **12 additional employer pages** — each with a TC band and company-specific interview notes.
- ◆ **Per-company CFDE module emphasis matrix** — which skills to prioritise for each employer.
- ◆ **Application priority by location** — NYC, SF and Remote target lists.
- ◆ **Loop timeline + offer-to-acceptance benchmarks** — how fast each moves and how much room you have.

HOW TO USE IT

Shortlist 5-7 employers, read their profiles, then use the CFDE emphasis matrix to focus your prep. The GSDC Certified Forward Deployed Engineer (CFDE) track builds those skills in the order these loops test them.

HIRING TRENDS

The FDE employer landscape

Demand is broad and growing: FDE postings rose ~800% year over year, and the supply of qualified candidates is nowhere near it. The employers split into four groups.

Group	Examples	What to expect
Frontier / pure-play	Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks	Highest comp, hardest loops, deepest eval focus
AI-native scaleups	Cohere, Scale AI, Sierra, Harvey, Glean, Writer	Faster loops, equity-heavy, founder-archetype ownership
Platform & cloud	Google Cloud, Adobe, Snowflake, Salesforce	Longer structured loops, stable equity, broad scope
Fintech / HR-tech	Ramp, Rippling	Integration-heavy, domain-specific complexity

THE MARKET SHIFT

2024–25 was 'AI FOMO'; 2026 pays for **proven ROI**. NYC has overtaken SF as the primary hub, as regulated industries (finance, defense, healthcare, legal) cluster on the East Coast.

Sources: Indeed/FT hiring analysis; public 2026 company statements and reporting.

READING GUIDE

How to read a company profile

Every profile has the same four parts so you can compare employers fast.

The stat strip

Total comp (2026), typical interview→offer timeline, and primary locations — the three numbers that shape your shortlist.

Role & focus

The exact title(s) to search and what the work actually is at that employer.

Interview notes

Company-specific signals — the rounds that decide the loop and the failure points to avoid.

How to stand out

The single highest-leverage thing to do in that loop.

A NOTE ON NUMBERS

The four frontier firms carry cited comp (Levels.fyi May 2026; Glassdoor 2026). The other twelve show modeled estimate bands — benchmarks to target, not guarantees.

[OFFER] 50% OFF

YOUR NATURAL NEXT STEP

16 employers, one shared bar: can you deploy?

Every loop in this deep-dive screens for deployment, evals and customer ownership. The GSDC Certified Forward Deployed Engineer (CFDE) builds and certifies exactly that — a verifiable signal across every application.

[**Explore the CFDE Certification**](#)

<https://www.gsdccouncil.org/certification-program/forward-deployed-engineer-companies>

Tap anywhere on this panel to open the CFDE enrollment page.

COMPANY PROFILE · 1 OF 16 · TIER 1 · FRONTIER

Palantir

PURE-PLAY

\$171K-\$415K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~21 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

NYC · DC · London

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Software Engineer (FDSE); Deployment Strategist (DS)

The original FDE shop — embed with government and enterprise customers to make the platform work inside fragmented, legacy, regulated environments. Median TC ~\$215K; staff+ clearing \$630K.

Interview notes

- ◆ The **decomposition case study** is the hidden filter — they grade how you break a problem down, not the tidy answer.
- ◆ Technical deep dive on a real project you owned end-to-end.
- ◆ Practical coding (data wrangling), not abstract algorithms.
- ◆ Values round on ownership, ambiguity, and pushing back on underspecified asks.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Open every problem with clarifying questions and a decomposition — never lead with a solution.

Cited: Levels.fyi (May 2026), Glassdoor (2026).

COMPANY PROFILE · 2 OF 16 · TIER 1 · FRONTIER

OpenAI

AI LAB

\$350K-\$550K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~21-28 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · NYC

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Engineer / Applied

'The deployment company' push — embed with Fortune 500 and federal customers, weighted to regulated industries. SWE ladder median ~\$555K.

Interview notes

- ◆ System design with **eval gates** and **cost-per-query** is the make-or-break round.
- ◆ A ~7-touch loop compressed into 3-4 weeks.
- ◆ RAG/agent design with real tradeoffs: chunking, vector store, p95 latency.
- ◆ Equity is now RSUs (converted from PPU in Jan 2026); negotiates moderately.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Bake eval gates and cost-per-query reasoning into every design answer.

Cited: Levels.fyi (May 2026), Glassdoor (2026).

COMPANY PROFILE · 3 OF 16 · TIER 1 · FRONTIER

Anthropic

AI LAB

\$300K-\$490K+

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~21-28 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · NYC

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Applied AI Engineer (Anthropic's FDE)

Embed with enterprises to make Claude solve real, high-value problems; scaling enterprise deployments aggressively. Benchmarked to research-engineer pay.

Interview notes

- ◆ The loop leans hardest on **reliability and safety** reasoning.
- ◆ Tests reasoning under ambiguity when the customer can't define 'good'.
- ◆ Design-for-failure: guardrails, evals, monitoring, escalation paths.
- ◆ Private RSUs (tender-offer liquidity); widely reported firm on offers.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Show how you design for failure and reason when success is undefined; negotiate level/grant, not base.

Cited: Levels.fyi (May 2026), Glassdoor (2026).

COMPANY PROFILE · 4 OF 16 · TIER 1 · FRONTIER

Databricks

DATA & AI

\$250K-\$450K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~21-30 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · NYC · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: AI Engineer, FDE / Customer-Facing Engineer

Productionize first-of-their-kind AI applications on the lakehouse across enterprise verticals. SWE ladder L3-L7
~\$246K-\$1.74M.

Interview notes

- ◆ Data-platform depth (SQL, Spark) is front and centre.
- ◆ Lakehouse + GenAI workload design for real customers.
- ◆ Customer scenarios and integration over puzzle coding.
- ◆ Strong RSU-weighted comp that climbs steeply at senior levels.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Lead with data-platform depth; the GenAI overlay sits on top of it.

Cited: Levels.fyi (May 2026), Glassdoor (2026).

[OFFER] LIMITED TIME

LIMITED ENROLLMENT WINDOW

Frontier loops are the hardest. Walk in prepared.

Palantir's decomposition filter, OpenAI's eval-gate system design, Anthropic's safety reasoning — CFDE drills all of them with mentored practice. The current intake is open for a limited time.

Claim Your CFDE Seat

<https://www.gsdouncil.org/certification-program/forward-deployed-engineer-companies>

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COMPANY PROFILE · 5 OF 16 · TIER 2 · CLOUD

Google Cloud

GENAI

~\$200K-\$450K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~30-45 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

NYC · ATL · London

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Generative AI Forward Deployed Engineer

Deploy GenAI solutions inside enterprise cloud customers; a global footprint spanning New York, Atlanta, London, Paris and Hong Kong. Base reported ~\$127K-\$183K + equity.

Interview notes

- ◆ Longer, structured big-company loop with standard SWE rounds.
- ◆ Cloud architecture and integration depth.
- ◆ Enterprise stakeholder management across long cycles.
- ◆ GenAI overlay on top of solid platform fundamentals.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Pair cloud-architecture depth with a crisp enterprise stakeholder story.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 6 OF 16 · TIER 2 · AI LAB

Cohere

ENTERPRISE

~\$180K-\$400K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~14-21 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · Toronto · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Engineer, Agentic Platform

Deploy purpose-built LLMs and custom agents in financial services, telco and healthcare. Regional roles (e.g. Montreal) sit lower on base.

Interview notes

- ◆ Agentic-platform and RAG design for enterprise use cases.
- ◆ Regulated-industry data handling (FS, telco, healthcare).
- ◆ Build-and-deploy custom agents end-to-end.
- ◆ First-principles problem solving under real constraints.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Show regulated-industry deployment chops and concrete agent design.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 7 OF 16 · TIER 2 · DATA INFRA

Scale AI

DEFENSE/GOV

~\$180K-\$500K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~14-21 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · DC · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Data Scientist / Engineer

Architect data solutions across defense, government and large enterprise; the team prizes 'ambiguity' and 'first-principles thinking.' Equity-heavy.

Interview notes

- ◆ First-principles structuring of ambiguous problems is tested hard.
- ◆ Data architecture for messy, real-world data.
- ◆ Defense/government context (a clearance can be a plus).
- ◆ Expect a take-home build against a mock dataset.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Demonstrate first-principles structuring of an ambiguous data problem out loud.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 8 OF 16 · TIER 2 · PLATFORM

Salesforce

AGENTFORCE

~\$200K-\$400K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~30-40 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · NYC · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: FDE 'pods' / Associate FDE

Pods of one deployment strategist + two FDEs, locked onto a single customer for ~3 months. Publicly committed to ~1,000 FDEs; a strong Associate-level entry path.

Interview notes

- ◆ The Associate FDE program is one of the best on-ramps for pivoters.
- ◆ Customer delivery and platform configuration over algorithms.
- ◆ Pod-based delivery model — collaboration matters.
- ◆ Lower base, larger services-influenced structure.

HOW TO STAND OUT

If you're pivoting in, target the Associate FDE program as your entry point.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

[OFFER] 50% OFF

BEST VALUE THIS INTAKE

Applying across tiers? One credential covers them all.

From frontier labs to fintech FDEs, the core skill set is the same. CFDE certifies it once and travels across every employer in this report — and for this intake it's half off.

Enroll at 50% Off

<https://www.gsdCouncil.org/certification-program/forward-deployed-engineer-companies>

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COMPANY PROFILE · 9 OF 16 · TIER 2 · FINTECH

Ramp

UNICORN

~\$200K-\$400K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~14-21 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

NYC · SF · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Engineer

Handle complex enterprise migrations and custom integrations for finance teams; Ramp's own engineering blog calls the role a 'strategic unlock for modern B2B.' Strong equity.

Interview notes

- ◆ Fintech-specific complexity: enterprise SSO, accounting integrations, close cycles.
- ◆ Real-world API integration questions.
- ◆ Custom data migrations under messy constraints.
- ◆ Fast, pragmatic shipping over architectural perfection.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Prep concrete API-integration and data-migration war stories.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 10 OF 16 · TIER 2 · HR-TECH

Rippling

PLATFORM

~\$200K-\$380K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~21-30 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · NYC · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed / Solutions Engineer

Deploy and customise workforce-platform automations for complex enterprise customers spanning HR, IT and finance systems.

Interview notes

- ◆ Complex multi-system enterprise migrations.
- ◆ Integration breadth across HR/IT/finance stacks.
- ◆ Systems thinking and onboarding judgement.
- ◆ Customer-facing delivery under real timelines.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Show breadth across messy, multi-system integrations.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 11 OF 16 · TIER 2 · AI-NATIVE

Sierra

AGENTS

~\$250K-\$500K+

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~14-21 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Engineer (agents)

Deploy customer-service AI agents for enterprises (founded by Bret Taylor and Clay Bavor). Early, equity-heavy, founder-archetype ownership.

Interview notes

- ◆ Agent system design is central to the loop.
- ◆ Customer-service-specific evals (what is a 'good' conversation?).
- ◆ Conversational system architecture.
- ◆ High ownership; comfort operating like a founder.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Bring an agent-eval mindset: how do you measure conversation quality?

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 12 OF 16 · TIER 2 · LEGAL AI

Harvey

VERTICAL AI

~\$250K-\$500K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~14-21 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · NYC · London

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Engineer

Embed with law firms and legal teams to deploy domain-specific AI in a high-trust, high-accuracy environment. Well-funded; equity-heavy.

Interview notes

- ◆ Domain rigor and a high accuracy bar.
- ◆ Eval design for legal correctness and citation integrity.
- ◆ Discretion with highly sensitive client data.
- ◆ Enterprise legal stakeholders and procurement.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Lead with rigor: how you guarantee accuracy and handle sensitive data.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

[OFFER] 48 HOURS ONLY

TIME-SENSITIVE

AI-native loops move in days. Be ready before they do.

Scaleups like Sierra, Harvey and Ramp run 14-21 day loops — there's no time to learn evals mid-process. CFDE gets you loop-ready now. This intake's pricing closes within 48 hours.

Lock In Before It Closes

<https://www.gsdccouncil.org/certification-program/forward-deployed-engineer-companies>

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COMPANY PROFILE · 13 OF 16 · TIER 2 · ENTERPRISE

Adobe

CREATIVE AI

~\$200K-\$400K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~30-40 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF Bay · NYC · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed AI Engineer (Firefly)

Deploy generative-AI creative tooling inside large enterprise customers and brands. Stable equity + bonus; senior packages competitive.

Interview notes

- ◆ Applied GenAI integration into creative workflows.
- ◆ Enterprise stakeholder management at brand scale.
- ◆ Structured big-company loop.
- ◆ Connect deployment to creative-workflow outcomes.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Tie GenAI deployment to measurable brand/enterprise creative workflows.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 14 OF 16 · TIER 2 · DATA CLOUD

Snowflake

PLATFORM

~\$220K-\$450K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~30-40 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

Bay Area · NYC · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed / Solutions Engineer

Help enterprise customers build AI and analytics workloads on the data cloud; deeper integration work and higher travel.

Interview notes

- ◆ Data modelling and SQL depth.
- ◆ Customer architecture for real use cases.
- ◆ Higher travel, deeper integration than lab roles.
- ◆ Productionizing analytics + GenAI on the platform.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Pair deep SQL/data-modelling with a customer-architecture narrative.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 15 OF 16 · TIER 2 · AI-NATIVE

Glean

ENTERPRISE SEARCH

~\$250K-\$500K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~14-21 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF Bay · NYC · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Engineer

Deploy enterprise AI search and assistants across large customers' internal knowledge. Late-stage, equity-rich.

Interview notes

- ◆ Retrieval/RAG over enterprise knowledge bases.
- ◆ Permissions and data security at scale.
- ◆ Fast startup loop with applied judgement focus.
- ◆ Customer adoption and rollout ownership.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Show secure, permission-aware retrieval design at enterprise scale.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

COMPANY PROFILE · 16 OF 16 · TIER 2 · ENTERPRISE GENAI

Writer

APPLIED AI

~\$200K-\$420K

TOTAL COMP (2026)

~14-21 days

INTERVIEW → OFFER

SF · NYC · Remote

PRIMARY LOCATIONS

Role: Forward Deployed Engineer

Deploy enterprise generative-AI writing and agents as a core go-to-market motion across large customers.

Interview notes

- ◆ Applied LLM deployment into enterprise workflows.
- ◆ Adoption and change management with stakeholders.
- ◆ Eval for content quality and brand safety.
- ◆ Fast, outcome-focused delivery.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Tie GenAI deployment to measurable enterprise workflow outcomes.

TC is a modeled estimate; not cited as verified.

[OFFER] 50% OFF

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

These pay bands dwarf the cost of getting loop-ready.

With frontier TC from \$250K to \$1M+ and scaleup equity on top, the CFDE is a rounding error against a single offer. Certify the deployment, eval and ownership skills that earn it.

Invest in the CFDE

<https://www.gsdouncil.org/certification-program/forward-deployed-engineer-companies>

Tap anywhere on this panel to open the CFDE enrollment page.

COMPARISON

16-company total-comp matrix

2026 total compensation bands across all sixteen employers. Frontier firms are cited; the rest are modeled estimates.

Company	Type	2026 TC band	Source
Palantir	Pure-play	\$171K-\$415K	Cited
OpenAI	AI lab	\$350K-\$550K	Cited
Anthropic	AI lab	\$300K-\$490K+	Cited
Databricks	Data & AI	\$250K-\$450K	Cited
Google Cloud	GenAI	~\$200K-\$450K	Est.
Cohere	Enterprise	~\$180K-\$400K	Est.
Scale AI	Defense/Gov	~\$180K-\$500K	Est.
Salesforce	Agentforce	~\$200K-\$400K	Est.
Ramp	Unicorn	~\$200K-\$400K	Est.
Rippling	Platform	~\$200K-\$380K	Est.
Sierra	Agents	~\$250K-\$500K+	Est.
Harvey	Vertical AI	~\$250K-\$500K	Est.
Adobe	Creative AI	~\$200K-\$400K	Est.
Snowflake	Platform	~\$220K-\$450K	Est.
Glean	Enterprise search	~\$250K-\$500K	Est.
Writer	Applied AI	~\$200K-\$420K	Est.

Cited: Levels.fyi (May 2026), Glassdoor (2026) for Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks. Other bands are modeled estimates that vary by level, location and equity — illustrative, not offers or guarantees.

PREP PLANNER

Per-company CFDE emphasis matrix

Where to concentrate your CFDE prep for each employer. **H** = high priority, **M** = medium, **L** = lower.

Company	Decomp.	Deploy & Integ.	Eval design	Customer/Stake.	Security/Gov.
Palantir	H	H	M	H	H
OpenAI	H	M	H	M	M
Anthropic	M	M	H	M	H
Databricks	M	H	M	M	M
Google Cloud	M	H	M	H	M
Cohere	M	H	H	M	H
Scale AI	H	M	M	M	H
Salesforce	M	H	L	H	M
Ramp	M	H	M	H	H
Rippling	M	H	L	H	M
Sierra	M	M	H	H	M
Harvey	M	M	H	H	H
Adobe	M	H	M	H	M
Snowflake	M	H	M	H	M
Glean	M	H	M	M	H
Writer	M	H	M	H	M

HOW TO USE IT

Pick your top employer, read its row, and front-load the **H** areas in your CFDE study plan. Decomposition is universal; eval design is the most common make-or-break at the labs.

APPLY BY LOCATION · NYC

Where to apply — New York

NYC is now the #1 FDE hub — regulated industries (finance, defense, healthcare, legal) cluster on the East Coast.

Priority	Targets in NYC	Why
Tier 1	Palantir, Ramp, Harvey	Strong NYC presence; finance/legal demand
Tier 2	OpenAI, Google Cloud, Databricks	Major NYC offices; F500 + federal pipelines
Tier 3	Anthropic, Rippling, Glean, Writer	Growing NYC footprints; remote-friendly

NYC PLAYBOOK

Lead with regulated-industry deployment experience and security/governance awareness. Finance and defense buyers reward engineers who speak compliance fluently.

Networking note: NYC FDE hiring runs heavily through referrals and targeted outreach — the roles are real but thinly advertised.

APPLY BY LOCATION · SF & REMOTE

Where to apply — SF & Remote

San Francisco Bay

- ✓ OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks
- ✓ Scale AI, Sierra, Glean
- ✓ Cohere, Writer, Adobe, Snowflake

Remote-friendly

- ✓ Databricks, Salesforce (pods)
- ✓ Ramp, Rippling, Glean, Writer
- ✓ Most labs: 50-70% remote + heavy travel

SF PLAYBOOK

The Bay still anchors the AI labs and AI-native scaleups. Lead with applied-AI depth (RAG, agents, evals) and a defensible flagship project.

REMOTE REALITY

Remote rarely means stationary — expect significant on-site customer time. Some employers geo-adjust pay; a scarce skill set or competing offer can hold you near the top band.

[OFFER] SEATS FILLING

COHORT SCARCITY

Know where to apply. Now be the one they shortlist.

A targeted list only helps if your loop performance backs it up. CFDE's mentored cohort drills the company-specific rounds in this report. Seats are limited and filling for this intake.

Reserve a Cohort Seat

<https://www.gsdouncil.org/certification-program/forward-deployed-engineer-companies>

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BENCHMARKS · VELOCITY

Loop timeline benchmarks

Typical interview→offer windows for prepared candidates. Faster loops reward readiness; you can't cram evals mid-process.

Employer group	Interview → offer	Notes
AI-native scaleups Cohere, Scale, Sierra, Harvey, Glean, Writer, Ramp	~14-21 days	Fast, applied-judgment loops; often a take-home build
Pure-play Palantir	~21 days	Decision-dense ~5-stage loop
Frontier labs OpenAI, Anthropic	~21-28 days	~7 touches compressed into 3-4 weeks
Data platforms Databricks, Snowflake	~21-30 days	Data-depth + customer scenarios
Big-co / platform Google, Adobe, Salesforce, Rippling	~30-45 days	Structured, multi-panel processes

COMMON EXTRA ROUNDS

Many loops add a **24-48hr take-home** (build against a mock customer dataset; the write-up matters as much as the code) and a **system-design-with-pivot** (requirements change ~20 minutes in).

Illustrative medians for prepared candidates; timelines vary by team, location and scheduling.

BENCHMARKS · OFFERS

Offer-to-acceptance benchmarks

Employer	Decision window	Negotiation room
Palantir	~5-7 business days	Negotiates for strong candidates
OpenAI	~5-10 days	Moderate (equity-weighted)
Anthropic	~5-10 days	Firm on cash; negotiate level/grant
Databricks	~5-7 days	Moderate; RSU-weighted
AI-native scaleups	~3-7 days	Flexible on equity; move fast
Big-co / platform	~7-14 days	Banded; level is the lever

- ◆ **Never accept on the call.** A day to respond is always available — and always worth using.
- ◆ **Run processes in parallel** so offers land within a 1-2 week window for leverage.
- ◆ **At firm-on-cash employers,** negotiate the **level** and the **grant**, not base.

Reflects public recruiter benchmarks (Levels.fyi, Exponent, 2026). Not financial advice.

STRATEGY

Tier-by-tier application strategy

Don't spray-and-pray. Run a portfolio of ~6-8 targets across tiers, sequenced for leverage.

- ◆ **2-3 reach (frontier).** Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks — hardest loops, highest comp.
- ◆ **3-4 core (scaleups/platform).** Match your background: data → Databricks/Snowflake; agents → Sierra/Cohere; fintech → Ramp.
- ◆ **1-2 momentum (fast loops).** AI-native scaleups that move in ~2-3 weeks — early offers create leverage everywhere else.

SEQUENCING TIP

Start the **fast** loops first so an early offer lands while your frontier processes are still running. A live competing offer is the cleanest leverage there is.

Entry path: if you're pivoting in, Salesforce's Associate FDE program and data-platform roles (Databricks/Snowflake) are among the most accessible on-ramps.

CHEAT SHEET

Cross-company interview cheat sheet

Employer	The round that decides it
Palantir	Decomposition case study — how you break it down
OpenAI	System design with eval gates + cost-per-query
Anthropic	Reliability/safety reasoning under ambiguity
Databricks	Data-platform depth + lakehouse/GenAI design
Scale AI	First-principles on an ambiguous data problem
Cohere	Agentic-platform + regulated-industry data
Ramp	Real-world API integration & data migration
Sierra	Agent system design + conversation evals
Harvey	Accuracy/eval rigor + sensitive-data handling
Glean	Permission-aware retrieval at enterprise scale
Google/Adobe/Snowflake	Architecture depth + enterprise stakeholder story

THE UNIVERSAL HABIT

Across all of them: clarify → decompose → MVP → iterate, thinking out loud. A narrated, slightly imperfect answer beats a silent perfect one.

[OFFER] BONUS BUNDLE

EVERYTHING INCLUDED

The profiles, the matrix, the cheat sheet — plus the credential.

This deep-dive is the intel. CFDE is the preparation: the roadmap, mentored mock loops tuned to these companies, an eval-driven capstone and a verifiable certificate recruiters recognise.

See What's Included

<https://www.gsdouncil.org/certification-program/forward-deployed-engineer-companies>

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ADJACENT CAREERS

AI governance roles across these companies

Most of these employers are also building a governance layer — a well-paid adjacent lane FDEs move into naturally.

Role	Where it's growing	Indicative TC
Responsible AI / Governance Lead	Labs, Salesforce, Google, Adobe	\$250K-\$500K
Eval & Assurance Engineer	OpenAI, Anthropic, Scale, Harvey	\$300K-\$600K
Deployment Risk / Security Eng.	Palantir, Glean, Ramp, finance-facing	\$250K-\$500K

WHY IT'S OPEN TO FDES

Eval design, governance and stakeholder trust — the same horizontal-bar skills the loops test — are exactly what these roles require. One skill set, two career doors.

Indicative bands modeled from adjacent engineering roles; illustrative, not guarantees.

CAREER ROADMAP

Which company for which stage

Career stage	Best-fit employers	Why
Breaking in	Salesforce (Associate), Databricks, Snowflake	Accessible on-ramps; transferable platform skills
Levelling up fast	Scaleups: Sierra, Harvey, Glean, Ramp, Cohere	Fast loops, broad ownership, equity upside
Maximising comp	OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks	Highest cited TC; research-benchmarked pay
Deep enterprise craft	Palantir, Google Cloud, Adobe	Hardest deployments; regulated, high-stakes

THE ARC

A common path: enter via a platform/Associate role, level up at an AI-native scaleup, then move to a frontier lab for peak comp — re-leveling at each switch. A recognised credential plus a defensible project shortens every jump.

METHODOLOGY

Sources & methodology

- ◆ **Cited comp (frontier four):** Levels.fyi (May 2026) — Palantir FDSE median ~\$215K (\$171K-\$415K); OpenAI SWE median ~\$555K; Databricks SWE L3-L7 ~\$246K-\$1.74M; plus Glassdoor (2026) and Blind.
- ◆ **Estimated comp (other twelve):** modeled bands from public postings, peer benchmarking and reporting; marked 'Est.' in the matrix.
- ◆ **Interview notes:** synthesised from public 2026 interview guides and reported candidate experiences (Exponent, company postings, industry write-ups).
- ◆ **Timelines:** illustrative medians for prepared candidates; they vary widely.

IMPORTANT

Estimated figures are **benchmarks, not verified offers**. Real comp and timelines vary by team, level, location and equity. Use this report to target and prepare — not as a promise.

Data attribution: Levels.fyi (<https://www.levels.fyi>). Glassdoor; Blind; public 2026 reporting. Company names referenced for market context only; no endorsement or affiliation implied.

WRAP-UP

Your next 7 days

- ◆ **Day 1-2:** Shortlist 6-8 employers across tiers using the profiles and TC matrix.
- ◆ **Day 3-4:** Read each target's CFDE emphasis row; front-load the 'H' areas.
- ◆ **Day 5-6:** Start the fast (scaleup) loops first to create early leverage.
- ◆ **Day 7:** Draft your flagship-project write-up and tailor it per target.

ABOUT GSDC

The Global Skill Development Council (GSDC) is a professional certification body. The Certified Forward Deployed Engineer (CFDE) program builds and certifies the deployment, eval and ownership skills these sixteen employers screen for — roadmap, mentored practice, a capstone and a verifiable credential.

Disclaimer: Educational resource. Comp figures for non-frontier companies are modeled estimates; all figures vary by level, location and equity and are not guarantees of any pay or outcome, nor financial advice. Cited data: Levels.fyi (May 2026), Glassdoor (2026), Blind. Company names referenced for market context only; no endorsement or affiliation implied.

[OFFER] 48-HOUR FLASH

FINAL CALL · THIS INTAKE

You know all 16. Now be the candidate they say yes to.

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Enrollment for this intake closes within 48 hours.

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Tap anywhere on this panel to open the CFDE enrollment page.