

2026 EDITION · CAREER ROADMAP

# The Full 90-Day FDE Roadmap

Four personas. Four distinct 90-day plans. One CFDE credential. Week-by-week tasks, capstone briefs, an interview-practice schedule, and target companies for whichever engineer you are today.

Salary guide

Career roadmap

AI governance roles

Hiring trends

Inside: 4 persona-specific 90-day plans (Builder, Bridger, AI-Lab, Data), a week-by-week task checklist with LBD checkpoints, an interview-prep schedule per company (Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks), a resume + LinkedIn rebuild template, and a salary-negotiation script. Comp anchored to 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 roadmap

One destination — a signed FDE offer — with four routes, depending on where you start.

- ◆ **4 persona-specific 90-day plans** — Builder, Bridger, AI-Lab, Data — each with week-by-week tasks.
- ◆ **LBD checkpoints** — a concrete artifact every week so progress is provable, not vague.
- ◆ **Per-company interview schedule** — Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic, Databricks.
- ◆ **Resume + LinkedIn rebuild template** — fill-in structure for FDE roles.
- ◆ **Salary-negotiation script** — anchor on band and level, then close.

**SAME CREDENTIAL, FOUR PATHS**

All four personas converge on the same GSDC Certified Forward Deployed Engineer (CFDE) credential — the difference is the order and emphasis of the 90 days, tuned to the gap you're closing.

## PICK YOUR ROUTE

# Which persona are you?

Choose by your **biggest gap**, not your job title. Most engineers are one strong bar and one thin bar away from FDE-ready.

Persona	You today	Gap to close	Targets
<b>Builder</b>	Backend / full-stack SWE	Customer + applied AI	Palantir, Databricks
<b>Bridger</b>	Solutions / consulting / TPM	Deep engineering + evals	Salesforce, Google
<b>AI-Lab</b>	ML eng / researcher	Production + customer	OpenAI, Anthropic
<b>Data</b>	Data eng / analyst / DS	Applied AI + customer	Databricks, Snowflake

**NOT SURE?**

Score yourself on the T-shaped profile: a strong vertical bar (deep engineering or ML) with a thin horizontal bar (customer, evals, deployment) → **Builder / AI-Lab / Data**. A strong horizontal bar with a thin vertical → **Bridger**.

## THE FRAMEWORK

# The shared 90-day arc & LBD

Every persona runs the same three-phase arc — only the tasks differ.

**Days 1-30**

FOUNDATIONS  
Close your gap; reframe your profile

**Days 31-60**

BUILD & DEPLOY  
One defensible deployment + evals

**Days 61-90**

INTERVIEW & OFFER  
Drill loops; apply; negotiate

**WHAT IS AN LBD CHECKPOINT?**

**Learn-By-Doing.** Every week ends in a concrete artifact — a memo, a demo, a deployed service, an eval harness. Artifacts are what move interviews and what you can't fake. If a week has no artifact, it isn't done.

**The capstone** is the through-line: by Day 90 every persona has one end-to-end deployment, with evals and a cost story, that they can be grilled on for 45 minutes. It is the single most important asset in the plan.

**[OFFER] 50% OFF**

YOUR NATURAL NEXT STEP

## Four paths, one credential. Make yours count.

Whichever persona you are, the destination is the same: a verifiable CFDE credential plus a defensible capstone. The GSDC Certified Forward Deployed Engineer track is the structured version of this entire roadmap.

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

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

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

## PERSONA 1 OF 4 · 90-DAY PLAN

# The Builder

L4-L5 · ~\$245K-\$660K TC

Strong engineer — light on customer & applied-AI.

## Who you are

Backend / full-stack software engineer, ~2-5 years. Solid coding and shipping; thin on decomposition, eval design and customer-facing work.

## Target companies

Palantir (FDSE)

Databricks

Rippling

Adobe

## The 90-day arc

### Days 1-30

REFRAME & FOUNDATIONS  
Profile rebuilt around outcomes;  
decomposition reps

### Days 31-60

BUILD & DEPLOY  
One end-to-end deployment with evals

### Days 61-90

INTERVIEW & OFFER  
Loops drilled; applications out; offer  
negotiated

## YOUR THEME

Add the horizontal bar — decomposition, evals, and customer ownership on top of your engineering.

## BUILDER · PHASE 1-2

# Builder: weeks 1-6

Each week pairs a focus with a **Learn-By-Doing (LBD) checkpoint** — a concrete artifact you produce to prove the skill.

Week	Focus	Task	LBD checkpoint
1	<b>FDE operating model</b>	Map your T-profile; audit 3 past projects for outcomes	T-map + outcome-audit doc
2	<b>Decomposition</b>	Write 3 decomposition memos from real prompts	3 decomposition memos
3	<b>Positioning</b>	Rebuild resume + LinkedIn around customer outcomes	FDE-ready profile
4	<b>Applied AI</b>	Build a small RAG prototype	Working RAG demo
5	<b>Integration</b>	Integrate a flaky / legacy-style API	Integration spike + notes
6	<b>Deploy</b>	Promote the prototype to a running service	Deployed service + README

**LBD RULE**

If you can't point to the week's artifact, you haven't finished the week. Shipping > reading.

## BUILDER · PHASE 2-3

# Builder: weeks 7-12

Week	Focus	Task	LBD checkpoint
7	<b>Eval design</b>	Add a pass/fail eval harness	Eval harness with gates
8	<b>Cost-per-query</b>	Model latency + cost; add caching	Cost-per-query memo
9	<b>Capstone</b>	Package the deployment end-to-end	Capstone v1
10	<b>Stakeholder</b>	Build a stakeholder deck + Q&A	5-slide stakeholder deck
11	<b>Interview</b>	Drill decomposition + system design	3 recorded mock loops
12	<b>Apply</b>	Send tailored applications; prep negotiation	10 tailored applications

## CAPSTONE BRIEF

## Enterprise document-automation deployment

Automate document review for a (mock) finance team: integrate a legacy-style data source, ship a working system, add an eval harness with precision/recall gates, and a cost-per-document model.

- Running deployment + README
- Eval harness with pass/fail gates
- Cost-per-document model
- 5-slide stakeholder narrative

## BUILDER · INTERVIEW PREP

# Builder: interview schedule

Weeks 9–12 drill plan, tailored to your target companies.

Week	Focus	Drills
Wk 9	Decomposition	Palantir case-study reps: clarify → chunk → MVP → iterate
Wk 10	System design	Eval gates + cost reasoning (Databricks / Adobe)
Wk 11	Coding + deep dive	Practical data wrangling; defend your capstone
Wk 12	Values + mocks	Ownership / ambiguity stories; full mock loops

## THE ROUND THAT DECIDES IT

Your edge is engineering. The round you must shore up is the **decomposition case study** — never lead with a solution.

**Cadence:** 2–3 mock loops in weeks 11–12, recorded and reviewed. Treat the capstone as the project you'll be grilled on — rehearse defending it for 30 minutes.

**[OFFER] LIMITED TIME**

LIMITED ENROLLMENT WINDOW

## The Builder plan works best with a guided cohort.

Decomposition, evals and customer storytelling are hard to self-grade. CFDE's mentored cohort gives you feedback on exactly those — the gaps the Builder must close. The current intake is open for a limited time.

**Claim Your CFDE Seat**

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

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## PERSONA 2 OF 4 · 90-DAY PLAN

# The Bridger

L4-L5 · ~\$200K-\$450K TC

Strong customer & communication — light on deep engineering.

## Who you are

Solutions engineer / consultant / TPM with technical exposure. Excellent with stakeholders; needs hands-on deployment and eval depth.

## Target companies

Salesforce (Associate / pods)

Google Cloud

Snowflake

Adobe

## The 90-day arc

### Days 1-30

ENGINEERING FOUNDATIONS  
Hands-on coding + deployment basics

### Days 31-60

BUILD & EVAL  
Own a deployment + an eval harness

### Days 61-90

INTERVIEW & OFFER  
Loops drilled; leverage your communication edge

## YOUR THEME

Add the vertical bar — hands-on deployment and eval craft beneath your customer strength.

## BRIDGER · PHASE 1-2

# Bridger: weeks 1-6

Each week pairs a focus with a **Learn-By-Doing (LBD) checkpoint** — a concrete artifact you produce to prove the skill.

Week	Focus	Task	LBD checkpoint
1	<b>Engineering baseline</b>	Refresh Python/SQL; ship a small script with tests	Working script + tests
2	<b>APIs &amp; integration</b>	Build a real API integration	Integration demo
3	<b>Positioning</b>	Rebuild resume + LinkedIn for FDE	FDE-ready profile
4	<b>Applied AI</b>	Build a RAG prototype	RAG demo
5	<b>Deploy</b>	Promote the prototype to a running service	Deployed service
6	<b>Decomposition</b>	Write 3 decomposition memos	3 decomposition memos

**LBD RULE**

If you can't point to the week's artifact, you haven't finished the week. Shipping > reading.

## BRIDGER · PHASE 2-3

# Bridger: weeks 7-12

Week	Focus	Task	LBD checkpoint
7	<b>Eval design</b>	Build an eval harness	Eval harness with gates
8	<b>Cost / perf</b>	Model cost-per-query	Cost memo
9	<b>Capstone</b>	Assemble the capstone	Capstone v1
10	<b>Stakeholder</b>	Lean into your edge: polished deck + live demo	Stakeholder deck + demo
11	<b>Interview</b>	Mock loops: delivery story + system design	3 mock loops
12	<b>Apply</b>	Tailored apps (Salesforce Associate first)	10 applications

## CAPSTONE BRIEF

## Customer-facing AI assistant deployment

Deploy an AI assistant for a support / ops team end-to-end: integrate a knowledge base, add evals for answer quality, design human-in-the-loop escalation, and present it to a (mock) stakeholder group.

- Running assistant + KB integration
- Answer-quality eval set + gates
- Escalation / HITL design
- Stakeholder deck + live demo

## BRIDGER · INTERVIEW PREP

# Bridger: interview schedule

Weeks 9–12 drill plan, tailored to your target companies.

Week	Focus	Drills
Wk 9	Delivery story	Lead with ownership + stakeholder wins
Wk 10	System design	Add eval gates + HITL — the round you must shore up
Wk 11	Coding	Practical integration coding; defend your capstone
Wk 12	Values + mocks	Full loops; target the Salesforce Associate track

## THE ROUND THAT DECIDES IT

Your edge is the customer. The round you must shore up is **technical system design** — bake in eval gates and escalation.

**Cadence:** 2–3 mock loops in weeks 11–12, recorded and reviewed. Treat the capstone as the project you'll be grilled on — rehearse defending it for 30 minutes.

**[OFFER] 50% OFF**

BEST VALUE THIS INTAKE

## **Bridger's gap is technical depth. Build it fast.**

The CFDE roadmap front-loads the hands-on deployment and eval work the Bridger needs — with a capstone that proves it. For this intake it's half off.

**Enroll at 50% Off**

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

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## PERSONA 3 OF 4 · 90-DAY PLAN

# The AI-Lab

L4-L5 · ~\$350K-\$550K+ TC

Strong ML — light on production & customer.

**Who you are**

ML engineer / applied scientist / researcher. Deep modelling; needs production reliability, eval gates, cost reasoning and customer-facing skill.

**Target companies**

OpenAI

Anthropic

Cohere

Sierra / Harvey

**The 90-day arc****Days 1-30**

PRODUCTION FOUNDATIONS

Ship a reliable service; reframe your profile

**Days 31-60**

EVAL + COST CRAFT

Eval gates + cost-per-query mastery

**Days 61-90**

INTERVIEW &amp; OFFER

Lab loops drilled; safety &amp; ambiguity

**YOUR THEME**

Productionize and go customer-facing — reliability, evals and stakeholders on top of your ML depth.

## AI-LAB · PHASE 1-2

# AI-Lab: weeks 1-6

Each week pairs a focus with a **Learn-By-Doing (LBD) checkpoint** — a concrete artifact you produce to prove the skill.

Week	Focus	Task	LBD checkpoint
1	<b>FDE model</b>	T-map; reframe research as deployment outcomes	Outcome-framed profile
2	<b>Production</b>	Wrap a model in a reliable service (API, logging)	Deployed service + monitoring
3	<b>Positioning</b>	Resume + LinkedIn for Applied AI Engineer	FDE-ready profile
4	<b>RAG / agents</b>	Build an agentic / RAG pipeline with real tradeoffs	Agent pipeline demo
5	<b>Integration</b>	Connect to a messy enterprise-style source	Integration spike
6	<b>Decomposition</b>	Decomposition + clarifying-question reps	3 decomposition memos

**LBD RULE**

If you can't point to the week's artifact, you haven't finished the week. Shipping > reading.

## AI-LAB · PHASE 2-3

# AI-Lab: weeks 7-12

Week	Focus	Task	LBD checkpoint
7	<b>Eval gates</b>	Build offline + online evals; block regressions	Eval harness + gates
8	<b>Cost-per-query</b>	Latency / cost model; route to smaller models	Cost + routing memo
9	<b>Capstone</b>	Assemble the capstone	Capstone v1
10	<b>Safety / reliability</b>	Add guardrails, escalation, audit log	Reliability design doc
11	<b>Interview</b>	Mock system design (OpenAI) + safety reasoning (Anthropic)	3 mock loops
12	<b>Apply</b>	Tailored apps; run lab + scaleup loops in parallel	10 applications

## CAPSTONE BRIEF

## Production agent with eval gates

Deploy an enterprise agent (support or research assistant): RAG + tool use, an eval harness gating deploys on accuracy / safety, a cost-per-query model with model routing, and a failure-design story (guardrails, escalation, audit).

- Running agent + tools
- Offline + online eval gates
- Cost-per-query + routing model
- Failure / safety design doc

## AI-LAB · INTERVIEW PREP

# AI-Lab: interview schedule

Weeks 9–12 drill plan, tailored to your target companies.

Week	Focus	Drills
Wk 9	System design	Eval gates + cost-per-query (OpenAI make-or-break)
Wk 10	Safety / ambiguity	Reliability reasoning; design-for-failure (Anthropic)
Wk 11	Customer story	The bar to build: stakeholder + deployment narrative
Wk 12	Values + mocks	Full lab loops; negotiate level / grant

## THE ROUND THAT DECIDES IT

Your edge is ML. The bar you must build is **customer-facing deployment** — show you can run a room, not just a model.

**Cadence:** 2–3 mock loops in weeks 11–12, recorded and reviewed. Treat the capstone as the project you'll be grilled on — rehearse defending it for 30 minutes.

**[OFFER] 48 HOURS ONLY**

TIME-SENSITIVE

## AI-Lab loops move fast. Be production-ready first.

Frontier-lab loops reward eval-gate and reliability reasoning — exactly what CFDE drills. Don't learn it mid-process. This intake's pricing closes within 48 hours.

**Lock In Before It Closes**

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## PERSONA 4 OF 4 · 90-DAY PLAN

# The Data

L4-L5 · ~\$250K-\$500K TC

Strong data depth — light on applied AI & customer.

## Who you are

Data engineer / analyst / scientist. Strong SQL, Spark and pipelines; needs applied LLM / RAG, deployment and customer-facing skill.

## Target companies

Databricks

Snowflake

Scale AI

Glean

## The 90-day arc

### Days 1-30

FOUNDATIONS  
Applied-AI basics; reframe your profile

### Days 31-60

BUILD & EVAL  
Deployment + evals on a data stack

### Days 61-90

INTERVIEW & OFFER  
Data-platform loops + customer scenarios

## YOUR THEME

Layer AI on your data depth — RAG, deployment and customer ownership on a strong platform base.

## DATA · PHASE 1-2

# Data: weeks 1-6

Each week pairs a focus with a **Learn-By-Doing (LBD) checkpoint** — a concrete artifact you produce to prove the skill.

Week	Focus	Task	LBD checkpoint
1	<b>FDE model</b>	T-map; frame data work as deployment outcomes	Outcome-framed profile
2	<b>Applied AI</b>	RAG over a dataset (chunking, embeddings, vector store)	RAG demo + tradeoff notes
3	<b>Positioning</b>	Resume + LinkedIn for FDE	FDE-ready profile
4	<b>Deploy</b>	Promote a prototype to a running service	Deployed service
5	<b>Integration</b>	Lakehouse / warehouse + GenAI workload	Integration spike
6	<b>Decomposition</b>	Decomposition reps on ambiguous data problems	3 decomposition memos

**LBD RULE**

If you can't point to the week's artifact, you haven't finished the week. Shipping > reading.

## DATA · PHASE 2-3

# Data: weeks 7-12

Week	Focus	Task	LBD checkpoint
7	<b>Eval design</b>	Eval harness (precision/recall + data-quality gates)	Eval harness with gates
8	<b>Cost / perf</b>	Cost-per-query + p95 latency model	Cost + latency memo
9	<b>Capstone</b>	Assemble the capstone	Capstone v1
10	<b>Customer</b>	Stakeholder deck + adoption story	Stakeholder deck
11	<b>Interview</b>	Data-platform deep dive + customer scenarios	3 mock loops
12	<b>Apply</b>	Tailored apps; prep the Scale AI take-home	10 applications

## CAPSTONE BRIEF

## Lakehouse + GenAI analytics deployment

Build a customer-facing analytics / AI workload on a data platform: ingest messy data, layer RAG / analytics, add data-quality + answer evals and a cost / latency model — then narrate it for a stakeholder.

- Running data + GenAI workload
- Data-quality + answer eval gates
- Cost-per-query + p95 latency model
- Stakeholder deck

## DATA · INTERVIEW PREP

# Data: interview schedule

Weeks 9–12 drill plan, tailored to your target companies.

Week	Focus	Drills
Wk 9	Data-platform deep dive	SQL / Spark depth; lakehouse design
Wk 10	System design	GenAI overlay + eval gates + cost
Wk 11	Customer scenarios	The bar to build: stakeholder + deployment story
Wk 12	Values + mocks	Full loops; Scale AI first-principles + take-home

## THE ROUND THAT DECIDES IT

Your edge is data. The bar you must build is the **applied-AI + customer** layer on top of your platform depth.

**Cadence:** 2–3 mock loops in weeks 11–12, recorded and reviewed. Treat the capstone as the project you'll be grilled on — rehearse defending it for 30 minutes.

**[OFFER] 50% OFF**

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

## Data depth + applied AI = the highest-leverage pivot.

Layering deployment and evals onto strong data skills opens \$250K-\$500K roles. CFDE certifies the layer — a rounding error against a single Databricks or Snowflake offer.

**Invest in the CFDE**

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

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## PER-COMPANY INTERVIEW PREP

# Palantir: interview prep schedule

**THE ROUND THAT DECIDES IT**

The **decomposition case study**. They grade how you break a problem down — clarify, chunk, MVP, iterate — not whether you reach a tidy answer.

Week	Focus	Drills
Wk 9	Decomposition	Daily case reps: open with clarifying questions, never a solution
Wk 10	Technical deep dive	Rehearse a real project you owned end-to-end
Wk 11	Coding	Practical data-wrangling problems, narrated out loud
Wk 12	Values + mocks	Ownership / ambiguity stories; 2-3 full mock loops

**MOST COMMON PITFALL**

Jumping straight to a solution. The interviewer goes quiet — that silence is the test. Always decompose first.

## PER-COMPANY INTERVIEW PREP

# OpenAI: interview prep schedule

**THE ROUND THAT DECIDES IT**

**System design with eval gates and cost-per-query.** The ~7-touch loop is compressed into 3-4 weeks; the design round is the make-or-break.

Week	Focus	Drills
Wk 9	System design	Design with eval gates baked in from the start
Wk 10	Cost reasoning	Add cost-per-query, caching and model routing to every design
Wk 11	RAG / agents	Real tradeoffs: chunking, vector store, p95 latency
Wk 12	Values + mocks	Full loops; equity is now RSUs — prep the offer math

**MOST COMMON PITFALL**

Designing the happy path with no evals or cost story. Volunteer where it breaks at 100x before they ask.

## PER-COMPANY INTERVIEW PREP

# Anthropic: interview prep schedule

**THE ROUND THAT DECIDES IT**

**Reliability and safety reasoning under ambiguity.** The Applied AI Engineer loop uniquely tests how you reason when 'good' isn't defined.

Week	Focus	Drills
Wk 9	Reliability	Design-for-failure: guardrails, monitoring, escalation
Wk 10	Safety / evals	Eval sets for safety and correctness; block regressions
Wk 11	Ambiguity	Practice defining success when the customer can't
Wk 12	Values + mocks	Full loops; firm on cash — negotiate level / grant

**MOST COMMON PITFALL**

Treating safety as an afterthought. Lead with how you make a deployment trustworthy and reason under uncertainty.

## PER-COMPANY INTERVIEW PREP

# Databricks: interview prep schedule

**THE ROUND THAT DECIDES IT**

**Data-platform depth + lakehouse / GenAI design.** The GenAI overlay sits on top of strong SQL / Spark fundamentals.

Week	Focus	Drills
Wk 9	Data depth	SQL window functions, Spark, denormalised-schema joins
Wk 10	Lakehouse design	Architect a lakehouse + GenAI workload end-to-end
Wk 11	Customer scenarios	Walk a customer deployment with integration tradeoffs
Wk 12	Values + mocks	Full loops; defend your data-stack capstone

**MOST COMMON PITFALL**

Leading with the GenAI layer and skipping data fundamentals. Anchor on platform depth first.

**[OFFER] SEATS FILLING**

COHORT SCARCITY

## Per-company prep is sharper with mentors who've done the loop.

CFDE's mentored cohort runs company-tuned mock loops for Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic and Databricks, with feedback. Seats are limited and filling for this intake.

**Reserve a Cohort Seat**

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

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## MASTER TRACKER

# The 12-week LBD checkpoint tracker

Tick each artifact as you ship it. Twelve checkpoints = one FDE-ready candidate, whichever persona you ran.

- ✓ **Wk 1:** T-map + outcome audit (or outcome-framed profile)
- ✓ **Wk 2:** 3 decomposition memos — or your first applied-AI / integration artifact
- ✓ **Wk 3:** FDE-ready resume + LinkedIn headline
- ✓ **Wk 4:** Working RAG / agent prototype
- ✓ **Wk 5:** Integration spike against a messy source
- ✓ **Wk 6:** Deployed service + README
- ✓ **Wk 7:** Eval harness with pass/fail gates
- ✓ **Wk 8:** Cost-per-query (and latency) model
- ✓ **Wk 9:** Capstone v1 assembled
- ✓ **Wk 10:** Stakeholder deck (and reliability / HITL design)
- ✓ **Wk 11:** 3 recorded mock loops
- ✓ **Wk 12:** 10 tailored applications out

**IF YOU SLIP**

Protect Wk 6 (deploy), Wk 7 (evals) and Wk 9 (capstone) above all — they are your interview centrepiece. Cut polish, never the artifact.

## REBUILD · RESUME

# Resume rebuild template

**HEADLINE**

**[Role]** focused on deploying production AI inside enterprise customers — **[domain]**.

**BULLET FORMULA (EVERY BULLET)**

**[Action]** → **[system/skill]** → **[measurable business outcome]**. *Not a list of tools.*

Example: “Shipped a document-extraction deployment to a finance team, cutting manual review ~40% and surfacing the legacy-API risk early.”

**FLAGSHIP PROJECT BLOCK (TOP OF RESUME)**

**[Capstone name]** — problem → system → evals → cost → outcome, in five lines.

**THE 7-SECOND TEST**

A recruiter skimming should think “owns customer outcomes,” not “writes code.” Cut leetcode trivia; keep impact. One page if <8 years.

## REBUILD · LINKEDIN

# LinkedIn rebuild template

**HEADLINE**

Engineer deploying production AI inside enterprise customers · **[Builder/Bridger/AI-Lab/Data]** → FDE · CFDE

**ABOUT (THE ARC)**

1) The deployment gap (models work, deployments fail). 2) What you own. 3) Proof — your capstone, one line. 4) What you're targeting.

**FEATURED + SKILLS**

Pin the capstone write-up. Skills: decomposition, eval design, integration, stakeholder management. Add the **CFDE** credential.

**BE DISCOVERABLE**

Set "Open to work" to Forward Deployed / Applied AI Engineer with NYC/SF weighting, and post a couple of decomposition or eval write-ups — recruiters watch those threads.

## NEGOTIATION

# Salary-negotiation script

Use after a verbal offer. Anchor on level and band; never accept on the call.

**1 · APPRECIATE & PAUSE**

*"Thank you — I'm excited about this team. Let me come back tomorrow with a number that works for both of us."*

**2 · ANCHOR ON LEVEL + BAND**

*"Based on the scope we discussed, I see this as **L[X]**; public 2026 bands for that level run **[\$[Y]-\$[Z]] TC**."*

**3 · ASK WITH ONE REASON**

*"Given my deployment and eval experience, I'm targeting **[\$[Z]] TC**. Can we close the gap on base, or weight it through equity?"*

**4 · HOLD THE SILENCE**

*"..." (Let them respond first.)*

- ◆ **Negotiate total comp**, not just base — equity is where FDE upside lives.
- ◆ **Know the house style:** Palantir negotiates; Anthropic is firm (push level/grant); OpenAI sits between.

Illustrative; not financial advice. Bands per Levels.fyi (May 2026) / Glassdoor (2026).

**[OFFER] BONUS BUNDLE**

EVERYTHING INCLUDED

## The plans, the templates, the scripts — plus the credential.

This roadmap is the map. CFDE is the guided journey: the persona-tuned curriculum, mentored mock loops, an eval-driven capstone and the verifiable certificate that gets you shortlisted.

[See What's Included](#)

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

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

## AT A GLANCE

## Cross-persona comparison

Persona	Gap to close	Top targets	Comp target
<b>Builder</b>	Customer + applied AI	Palantir, Databricks	~\$245K-\$660K
<b>Bridger</b>	Engineering + evals	Salesforce, Google	~\$200K-\$450K
<b>AI-Lab</b>	Production + customer	OpenAI, Anthropic	~\$350K-\$550K+
<b>Data</b>	Applied AI + customer	Databricks, Snowflake	~\$250K-\$500K

**SAME DESTINATION**

All four close a single gap, ship one capstone, and earn the same CFDE credential. The plan just changes the order you do it in.

**Hybrid?** If you're between two personas, run the one matching your **thinner** bar — closing the bigger gap moves the needle most.

Comp targets anchored to Levels.fyi (May 2026), Glassdoor (2026); illustrative, not guarantees.

## BEYOND 90 DAYS

# Career roadmap & AI governance

The 90 days land the first offer. The next moves compound it.

Horizon	Move	Why
<b>Year 1</b>	Own a deployment, then a customer (L4→L5)	Equity becomes the majority of TC at L5
<b>Year 2-3</b>	Re-level by switching at the right moment	A switch often re-levels faster than internal promotion
<b>Adjacent</b>	Move toward AI governance / evals	Same skills; a second high-paid lane

**AI governance roles (indicative TC)**

Responsible AI / Governance Lead (\$250K-\$500K) · Eval & Assurance Engineer (\$300K-\$600K) · Deployment Risk / Security Engineer (\$250K-\$500K).

**WHY FDES WIN HERE**

Eval design, governance and stakeholder trust — the exact skills this roadmap builds — open both the FDE and the governance door.

## METHODOLOGY

# Sources & how CFDE maps in

- ◆ **Comp anchors:** Levels.fyi (May 2026) — Palantir FDSE median ~\$215K; OpenAI SWE median ~\$555K; Databricks L3-L7 ~\$246K-\$1.74M — plus Glassdoor (2026) and Blind.
- ◆ **Interview notes:** synthesised from public 2026 interview guides and reported candidate experiences.
- ◆ **Timelines & comp targets:** illustrative for prepared candidates; they vary by team, level, location and equity.

## HOW THE CFDE TRACK MAPS TO THESE PLANS

The Certified Forward Deployed Engineer curriculum mirrors the 90-day arc — foundations, deployment & evals, then interview and offer — with mentored practice and a capstone. Each persona front-loads different modules; the credential is the same.

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

# Start this week

- ◆ **Day 1:** Pick your persona by your thinnest bar.
- ◆ **Day 2-3:** Do Week 1 — T-map / outcome audit and rebuild your headline.
- ◆ **Day 4-5:** Start Week 2's artifact (decomposition memos or first applied-AI build).
- ◆ **Day 6-7:** Scope your capstone — the project everything else hangs on.

**ABOUT GSDC**

The Global Skill Development Council (GSDC) is a professional certification body. The Certified Forward Deployed Engineer (CFDE) program is the structured, mentored version of this roadmap — curriculum, capstone and a verifiable credential, for all four personas.

Disclaimer: Educational resource. Compensation figures are aggregated public estimates cited from Levels.fyi (May 2026), Glassdoor (2026) and Blind; they vary by level, location and equity and are not guarantees of any pay or outcome, nor financial advice. Company names are referenced for market context only and do not imply endorsement or affiliation.

**[OFFER] 48-HOUR FLASH**

FINAL CALL · THIS INTAKE

## You have the plan. Now get the guided version that lands it.

Turn your 90-day persona plan into a mentored, certified path — persona-tuned curriculum, mock loops, an eval-driven capstone and the credential that gets you shortlisted. Enrollment for this intake closes within 48 hours.

**Start the CFDE Now**

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

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