2026 EDITION · FIELD GUIDE

The Forward Deployed Engineer Field Guide

Get Aanya’s full 90-day playbook — the complete, story-driven path from “stuck engineer” to a signed Forward Deployed Engineer offer at a top AI company.

Salary guide | **Career roadmap** | **AI governance roles** | **Hiring trends**

Inside: a 5-chapter story, a 13-module roadmap, Palantir-style interview prep, a salary-negotiation script citing 2026 Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic & Databricks bands, plus a resume + LinkedIn rebuild checklist.

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

CFDE · CERTIFICATION TRACK

START HERE

What’s inside this guide

Five complete assets, built to be used in order. Read the story for motivation, then work the roadmap, interview prep, salary tools and rebuild checklist as a 90-day system.

- **The 5-chapter Aanya M. story** — the full narrative of one engineer’s 90-day pivot into an FDE role.
- **13-module CFDE roadmap** — every module mapped to a week-by-week study plan.
- **Palantir FDE interview prep** — the loop explained, plus sample questions with model approaches.
- **2026 salary bands** — Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic and Databricks ranges, with a negotiation script.
- **Resume + LinkedIn rebuild checklist** — reposition your profile for forward-deployed hiring.

HOW TO READ IT

Pages flow as a single 90-day arc. You’ll see the GSDC Certified Forward Deployed Engineer (CFDE) track referenced throughout — it is the structured version of everything Aanya did the hard way.

HIRING TRENDS

Why “Forward Deployed Engineer” is the role of 2026

Palantir pioneered the role in the early 2010s — internally called “Deltas” — for engineers who could make a platform actually work inside a customer’s fragmented, legacy, regulated environment. A decade later, every AI lab selling to the enterprise needs the same thing.

800%+
Growth in FDE job postings, 2024→2025

95%
Enterprise GenAI pilots with no measurable impact (MIT NANDA, 2025)

$238K
Reported average total comp for a Palantir FDE

The gap that creates the role is simple: the models are not the problem — the **deployment** is. Notebooks validate; production breaks on legacy data warehouses, security reviews, and stakeholders who don’t trust the output. FDEs own that last mile.

> **THE PROOF POINT**
> Palantir’s embedded model is the clearest evidence the approach scales — strong commercial growth built on engineers who ship working systems inside the customer, not slide decks about them.

Figures are aggregated from public 2026 reporting (Levels.fyi, Glassdoor, company postings, industry guides) and are illustrative, not guaranteed.

HIRING TRENDS

Who’s hiring — and where

The role now spans AI labs, data-infrastructure players, fintechs and the Big Four. Titles vary — Forward Deployed Engineer, Applied AI Engineer, Deployment Strategist — but the job is the same.

Company / type	What they call it	Signal
Palantir	Forward Deployed (S/W) Engineer	Original & largest pure-play FDE shop
OpenAI	Forward Deployed / Applied	“The deployment company” push; F500 + federal
Anthropic	Applied AI Engineer	Scaling enterprise embeds aggressively
Databricks	Forward Deployed / Field Eng.	Active hiring across enterprise verticals
Salesforce	FDE “pods”	Publicly committed to ~1,000 FDEs
Big Four / SIs	FDE practice	EY launched a UK&I FDE practice in 2026

LOCATION SHIFT

New York has overtaken San Francisco as the primary FDE hub; many lab roles run 50–70% remote with heavy travel.

WHY IT’S DURABLE

Demand grows with the volume and complexity of AI rollouts — and supply hasn’t caught up. Qualified FDEs are scarce.

[OFFER] 50% OFF

YOUR NATURAL NEXT STEP

You've seen the opportunity. Now get the credential.

The trends are real — but recruiters screen for proof. The GSDC Certified Forward Deployed Engineer (CFDE) turns "I'm interested in FDE work" into a verifiable credential that maps to exactly the skills this guide describes.

Explore the CFDE Certification

https://www.gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/what-is-forward-deployed-engineer

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

THE STORY · MEET AANYA

Aanya M., before the pivot

Aanya is a composite of dozens of engineers who've made this exact jump. Her 90 days are the spine of this guide — every chapter ends with the concrete move you can copy.

The starting line

DAY 0

Four years as a mid-level data engineer at a mid-size SaaS company. Solid Python, decent SQL, a couple of shipped pipelines. Comfortable — and quietly stuck. Promotions felt capped; the work felt invisible.

The trigger

THE LINKEDIN RABBIT HOLE

A former teammate posts about joining an AI lab as a "Forward Deployed Engineer." The comp screenshot is eye-watering. Aanya assumes it's out of reach — until she reads the job description and realises 70% of it is work she already does, just framed for the customer instead of the backlog.

THE REFRAME THAT STARTED IT

"I wasn't missing skills. I was missing a **system** — and the proof that I could run it in front of a customer."

CHAPTER 1 OF 5

The Plateau

Aanya is good at her job and bored by it. Her tickets are well-scoped, her code reviews are clean, and nothing she builds ever meets a real user. The distance between her work and any business outcome is exactly the distance between her current salary and the one she keeps seeing online.

She tries the obvious moves first: a few generic SWE applications, a half-finished system-design course, a resume tweak. Nothing lands, because nothing about her profile says **“I can own a customer outcome.”** It all says “I can close tickets.”

> **THE DIAGNOSIS**
> The plateau wasn’t ability. It was **positioning** — Aanya was competing in the most crowded lane (generic SWE) instead of the fastest-growing, least-saturated one (forward-deployed roles).

What you copy from Chapter 1: stop optimising the lane you’re in. Write down the last three things you shipped and, for each, the business outcome it drove. If you can’t, that gap — not your coding — is what’s capping you.

- Audit your last 3 projects → outcome, not output.
- Identify the one lane with growth and low supply: forward-deployed AI.
- Accept that this is a positioning problem with a known fix.

CHAPTER 2 OF 5

The Discovery

Aanya goes deep on what FDEs actually do. The pattern is consistent across Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic and Databricks: embed with a customer, understand a messy real-world problem, decompose it, and ship a working system — then feed what you learn back into the product.

She builds a “T-shaped” map of herself. The vertical bar (deep engineering) is fine. The horizontal bar — customer communication, ambiguity, deployment, evals, stakeholder management — is thin. That thin bar is the entire job.

What carried over

Python, SQL, data wrangling, debugging, shipping under constraints.

What she had to build

Decomposition, eval design, cost-aware system design, customer-facing storytelling.

The decision: rather than guess at the gap for 6–12 months, Aanya commits to a structured 90-day program that covers the horizontal bar in order — the GSDC CFDE track — so she can spend her energy practising, not figuring out what to practise.

WHAT YOU COPY FROM CHAPTER 2

Draw your own T. Be honest about the horizontal bar. Then pick a path that fills it in a fixed timeframe instead of an open-ended one.

CHAPTER 3 OF 5

The 90-Day Sprint

Aanya treats the next 90 days like a deployment project with herself as the customer. Three 30-day phases, each with a shippable outcome. No vague “keep learning” — every phase ends in proof.

1–30 DAYS

Foundations & reframing

FDE mental model, decomposition reps, rebuild resume + LinkedIn around outcomes. Outcome: a profile that reads “forward-deployed.”

31–60 DAYS

Deployment & evals

Build one end-to-end mini-deployment with an eval harness and cost-per-query reasoning. Outcome: a portfolio project you can defend.

61–90 DAYS

Interviews & offer

Drill the loop, run mock case studies, apply in volume, negotiate using salary bands. Outcome: interviews → offer.

By Day 20 the plateau already feels different — not because Aanya is suddenly a better coder, but because she finally has a **system** and visible momentum.

> **WHAT YOU COPY FROM CHAPTER 3**
> Commit to three 30-day phases, each ending in something you can show a recruiter. Momentum beats motivation.

[OFFER] LIMITED TIME

LIMITED ENROLLMENT WINDOW

Aanya didn’t improvise her 90 days. She followed a track.

The exact 3-phase system in Chapter 3 is what the CFDE program formalises — foundations, deployment & evals, then interview and offer. Enrollment for the current intake is open for a limited time.

Claim Your CFDE Seat

https://www.gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/what-is-forward-deployed-engineer

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

CHAPTER 4 OF 5

The Interviews

Aanya’s first loop is at a Palantir-style shop. Five stages. She bombs the first mock — she jumps straight to a solution in the case study and the interviewer goes quiet. That silence teaches her the whole game.

The hidden filter isn’t “can you solve it.” It’s **how you decompose it**: do you ask clarifying questions, break the problem into solvable chunks, propose a simple MVP, then iterate — thinking out loud the whole way?

> **THE TURNING POINT**
> In her next mock she opens with: “Before I design anything — what does success look like for this customer, and what’s the riskiest assumption?” The tone of the room changes instantly.

She also learns each lab has a flavour: OpenAI compresses a seven-touch loop into weeks and punishes system designs that ignore eval gates and cost-per-query; Anthropic’s Applied AI Engineer loop leans hard on reliability, safety and reasoning under ambiguity.

What you copy from Chapter 4: never open with a solution. Open with clarifying questions and a decomposition. It is the single highest-leverage interview habit for this role.

CHAPTER 5 OF 5

The Offer

Day 81. Aanya has two live processes and one verbal offer. The base is strong; the equity is where the real money sits. The old Aanya would have said yes on the spot. The new one has the salary bands open in a tab.

She runs the negotiation script (you'll get it later in this guide): anchor on the public band, cite comparable roles at Palantir / OpenAI / Anthropic / Databricks, and ask for a specific number with a reason attached. The recruiter doesn't flinch — they expected it. The revised offer lands materially higher.

90	2	1
Days from "stuck" to signed	Live offers to negotiate against	System she'll reuse for every future role

What you copy from Chapter 5: a verbal offer is the *start* of the conversation. Never accept on the call. Anchor on data, justify your number, and let silence do the work.

THE STORY · DEBRIEF

What Aanya would tell you

- **It’s positioning, then proof.** Most “I can’t break in” problems are really “my profile doesn’t say FDE.”
- **The horizontal bar is the job.** Customer, ambiguity, deployment, evals — that’s where the comp premium lives.
- **Decomposition beats brilliance.** How you break a problem down matters more than the eventual answer.
- **Ship one defensible project.** One end-to-end deployment with an eval harness outperforms ten tutorials.
- **Negotiate from data, not nerve.** The bands exist publicly — use them.
- **A fixed system beats open-ended grinding.** 90 structured days > 12 improvised months.

> **THE ONE-LINE VERSION**
> “I didn’t out-code anyone. I out-**structured** them — and I had proof I could run the playbook in front of a customer.”

THE PLAYBOOK

The 90-day playbook at a glance

Phase	Focus	Weekly cadence	End-of-phase proof
Days 1–30	Foundations & positioning	~8–10 hrs	FDE-ready resume + LinkedIn
Days 31–60	Deployment & eval craft	~10–12 hrs	One defensible portfolio deployment
Days 61–90	Interview loop & offer	~10–12 hrs	Live interviews → negotiated offer

Each phase below maps to specific modules of the 13-module CFDE roadmap (next section) and a 12-week study plan. The point is sequencing: do the right thing in the right order so nothing competes for attention.

IF YOU HAVE LESS TIME
Stretch to 16 weeks at ~6 hrs/week. The order matters more than the speed.

IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME
Compress to ~8 weeks — but never skip the Day 31–60 deployment. It's your interview centrepiece.

[OFFER] 50% OFF

BEST VALUE THIS INTAKE

Get the structured version of this entire playbook.

Everything from these pages — the 3-phase plan, the 13 modules, the eval-driven project and the interview drills — lives inside the CFDE program in sequence. For this intake it’s available at half off.

Enroll at 50% Off

https://www.gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/what-is-forward-deployed-engineer

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

CFDE ROADMAP

The 13-module roadmap

Thirteen modules, grouped into five blocks, mapped to the 90-day arc. Each module is built around a “can you do it in front of a customer?” bar — not just “do you know it.”

Block	Modules	Maps to
A — Foundations	1–3	Days 1–20
B — Deployment & integration	4–6	Days 21–40
C — Applied AI & evals	7–9	Days 41–60
D — Customer, security & governance	10–11	Days 55–70
E — Reliability & capstone	12–13	Days 71–90

DESIGN PRINCIPLE

The roadmap front-loads the **horizontal bar** (the skills most engineers lack) and treats coding as the baseline you already have. That’s why it works for people pivoting from data, ML or backend roles.

BLOCK A · FOUNDATIONS

Modules 1–3

1 **The FDE operating model**
What forward-deployed work is, how the customer feedback loop shapes the product, and the T-shaped profile you're building toward.

2 **Problem decomposition & discovery**
Turning a vague customer ask into clarifying questions, assumptions, and a scoped MVP. The single most-tested interview skill.

3 **Engineering baseline for FDEs**
Python, data plumbing, APIs and just-enough infra — framed as "ship under messy real-world constraints," not leetcode.

BLOCK A OUTCOME
You can take a one-line customer problem and produce a structured discovery — questions, assumptions, risks, and a first MVP — in under ten minutes.

BLOCK B · DEPLOYMENT & INTEGRATION

Modules 4–6

4 **Integrating with messy enterprise data**
Connecting to legacy warehouses, on-prem systems and half-documented APIs — the real reason pilots stall.

5 **Shipping a production deployment**
From prototype to a running system: environments, configuration, observability, and a rollback you can explain.

6 **Working inside constraints**
Security reviews, access controls, change windows and stakeholder sign-off — navigating the organisation, not just the code.

BLOCK B OUTCOME
You can describe, end-to-end, how a model goes from a notebook to a system running inside a regulated customer — and where it usually breaks.

BLOCK C · APPLIED AI & EVALS

Modules 7–9

7 **Applied LLM & agent patterns**
Prompting, retrieval, tool use and agentic workflows — chosen for reliability and cost, not novelty.

8 **Eval design (the filter stage)**
Building evaluation harnesses that prove a deployment actually works. ~70% of candidates are filtered on exactly this.

9 **Cost-per-query & performance reasoning**
Designing systems that are economically viable at scale — latency, token cost, and where to put the eval gates.

BLOCK C OUTCOME

You can design an AI system **and** the evals that gate it, and reason out loud about cost per query — the exact thing labs probe in system-design rounds.

[OFFER] 48 HOURS ONLY

TIME-SENSITIVE

Eval design filters 70% of candidates. Don’t self-filter.

Block C is where most engineers wash out — and where the CFDE program spends the most time, with guided eval and cost-reasoning projects. This intake’s pricing closes within 48 hours.

Lock In Before It Closes

https://www.gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/what-is-forward-deployed-engineer

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

BLOCK D · CUSTOMER, SECURITY & GOVERNANCE

Modules 10–11

10 **Customer & stakeholder management**
Running a room of skeptical stakeholders, managing expectations, and telling the story of a deployment so non-engineers trust it.

11 **AI security, safety & governance**
Data handling, access, model risk, and the governance guardrails enterprises require — increasingly its own career lane (next section).

BLOCK D OUTCOME
You can lead a stakeholder conversation, surface the governance questions before the customer does, and frame risk in language a CTO and a compliance lead both accept.

This block is what separates a forward-deployed engineer from a strong coder who happens to sit near a customer. The premium in this role is paid for ownership of the **relationship** and the **risk**, not just the build.

BLOCK E · RELIABILITY & CAPSTONE

Modules 12–13

12 **Production reliability & iteration**
Monitoring, incident response, and feeding deployment learnings back into the product — the loop that makes FDEs valuable to the company, not just the customer.

13 **Capstone: an end-to-end deployment**
One defensible project: a real-world problem, a working system, an eval harness, a cost story and a stakeholder narrative — your interview centrepiece.

BLOCK E OUTCOME
You walk away with the single asset that changes interviews: a project you can be grilled on for 45 minutes and keep getting stronger.

The capstone is deliberately the same shape as a real FDE engagement — so when an interviewer says “walk me through a complex project you owned,” you’re describing something that looks exactly like their day job.

CFDE ROADMAP

The 12-week study plan

Week	Modules	This week you ship…
1	1	Your T-map + outcome audit of past work
2	2	3 decomposition write-ups from real prompts
3	3	Resume + LinkedIn rebuilt around outcomes
4	4	A messy-data integration spike
5	5	A prototype promoted to a running deployment
6	6	A security/governance checklist for your build
7	7	An agent/RAG pattern chosen for reliability
8	8	An eval harness with pass/fail gates
9	9	A cost-per-query model for your system
10	10–11	A stakeholder deck + governance Q&A
11	12–13	Capstone assembled and rehearsed
12	—	Mock loops, applications out, negotiation prep

Cadence is a guide, not a cage — the sequence is what matters most.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The T-shaped FDE checklist

Score yourself honestly, 1–5, on each. Anything below a 3 on the horizontal bar is where your 90 days should go.

Vertical bar (depth)

- ✓ Python & data manipulation
- ✓ APIs & integration
- ✓ Debugging under real constraints
- ✓ Shipping to production

Horizontal bar (the premium)

- ✓ Problem decomposition
- ✓ Eval design
- ✓ Cost / performance reasoning
- ✓ Customer & stakeholder management
- ✓ Security, safety & governance
- ✓ Deployment storytelling

READ YOUR SCORE LIKE THIS

Strong vertical + weak horizontal = you’re a great hire who interviews badly for FDE roles. That’s the most fixable position there is — and exactly who this guide is for.

[OFFER] 50% OFF

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

One offer at FDE bands changes the math entirely.

With reported total comp ranging from roughly $171K to $415K+ at Palantir and $350K–$550K at OpenAI and Anthropic, the cost of the CFDE is a rounding error against a single FDE offer. Certify the horizontal bar that gets you there.

Invest in the CFDE

https://www.gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/what-is-forward-deployed-engineer

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

INTERVIEW PREP

How the FDE loop actually works

Across companies the loop rhymes: a behavioural / fit screen, one or more technical deep dives, and the famous decomposition case study. The differences are in emphasis.

Company	Shape	What it really tests
Palantir	~5 stages	Decomposition & pushback on underspecified problems
OpenAI	~7 touches, 3–4 wks	System design with eval gates & cost-per-query
Anthropic	Applied AI loop	Reliability, safety, reasoning under ambiguity
Databricks	Field/FDE loop	Data-platform depth + customer scenarios

THE SHARED FILTER

All of them share one stage that filters most candidates: a structured evaluation of how you think about **eval design**. Master that and you're past the wall the majority hit.

INTERVIEW PREP · DEEP DIVE

The Palantir-style loop, stage by stage

1 · Recruiter / fit

COMMUNICATION & OWNERSHIP

Can you tell a crisp story about something you owned end-to-end? Signal: outcomes, not activity.

2 · Technical deep dive

DEPTH & JUDGEMENT

A real project, interrogated. They're testing whether you actually made the decisions or just sat nearby.

3 · Coding

PRACTICAL, NOT PUZZLE

Closer to "wrangle this data / build this small thing" than abstract algorithms.

4 · Decomposition case study

THE HIDDEN FILTER

They evaluate **how you break the problem down** — clarifying questions, chunks, an MVP, iteration — not whether you reach a tidy answer.

5 · Values / leadership

WILL YOU THRIVE EMBEDDED?

Ownership, ambiguity tolerance, and how you handle a customer who disagrees with you.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS · 1 OF 4

Behavioural & ownership

FIT **“Walk me through a complex project you owned.”**

Use STAR+ : Situation, Task, Action, Result — **plus** the decision you personally made and the trade-off you accepted. Centre the customer/business outcome, not the tech.

FIT **“Tell me about a time a stakeholder disagreed with your approach.”**

Show you can hold a position with data *and* change it gracefully. The trait they want is ‘strong opinions, loosely held.’

FIT **“Describe a deployment that went wrong.”**

Pick a real failure. Land on what you changed in your **process** afterward — ownership, not blame.

FIT **“Why forward-deployed, and why now?”**

Tie it to wanting your work to touch a real customer outcome. Reference the deployment gap — models work, deployments fail — in your own words.

SCORING TIP

For every story, end on a measurable result and the lesson. “It shipped” is weak; “it cut their manual review time and I changed how I scope discovery” is strong.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS · 2 OF 4

Technical deep dive & coding

TECH **“Design an analytics pipeline for enterprise IoT data.”**

Clarify volume, latency and downstream use first. Then sketch ingest → storage → processing → serving, and name the failure modes before they ask.

TECH **“This API is half-documented and flaky. Integrate with it.”**

Talk about retries, idempotency, schema validation and graceful degradation. They want to see how you behave when reality is messy.

CODE **“Parse this ugly file and reconcile it against that source.”**

Narrate assumptions, handle the edge cases out loud, keep it readable. Practical correctness beats clever one-liners.

TECH **“Where would this design break at 100x scale?”**

Volunteer the bottleneck yourself — throughput, cost, or a single point of failure — and propose the next iteration.

> **HABIT TO DRILL**
> Think out loud, always. In FDE loops a silent correct answer scores worse than a narrated, slightly imperfect one.

[OFFER] SEATS FILLING

COHORT SCARCITY

Reading sample questions isn’t the same as drilling them.

The CFDE track includes guided mock loops and decomposition practice on exactly these question types, with feedback. Seats in the mentored cohort are limited and filling for this intake.

Reserve a Cohort Seat

https://www.gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/what-is-forward-deployed-engineer

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

SAMPLE QUESTIONS · 3 OF 4

Solution design & the case study

DESIGN **“Design an AI assistant for a Fortune 500 support team.”**

Lead with success metrics and constraints. Then bake in **eval gates** and a **cost-per-query** story — the two things labs specifically check.

CASE **The open-ended decomposition prompt**

Do NOT jump to a solution. Ask clarifying questions → break into chunks → propose a simple MVP → iterate. Push back on anything underspecified.

> **A MODEL OPENING LINE**
> “Before I design anything: what does success look like for this customer, who’s the user, what’s the riskiest assumption, and what’s the cost ceiling?”

The four moves, every time:

- **Clarify** — turn ambiguity into explicit assumptions.
- **Decompose** — break the problem into solvable pieces.
- **MVP** — propose the simplest thing that delivers value.
- **Iterate** — add evals, cost-awareness and scale once the core is agreed.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS · 4 OF 4

Values, safety & ambiguity

VALUES **“How do you reason about reliability and safety in a deployment?”**

Anthropic’s loop leans here. Show you design for failure: guardrails, evals, monitoring, and a clear escalation path when the system is unsure.

AMBIG **“The customer can’t tell you what ‘good’ looks like. What now?”**

Demonstrate structured reasoning under ambiguity: propose a definition of success, validate it, and make the trade-offs explicit.

VALUES **“When would you tell a customer ‘no’?”**

Show judgement: you protect the outcome and the risk posture even when it’s uncomfortable. Ownership includes saying no well.

AMBIG **“Your eval and the customer’s intuition disagree. Decide.”**

Walk through how you’d reconcile data with stakeholder trust — usually: investigate the gap, not override it blindly.

THE THROUGHLINE

Every “values” question is really “can we trust you embedded inside a customer with limited supervision?” Answer that.

COMPENSATION

2026 FDE salary bands

Total compensation (base + equity + bonus), USD. Ranges aggregate public sources and vary widely by level, location and equity timing. Treat them as anchors for negotiation, not promises.

Company	Entry–Mid (TC)	Senior (TC)	Top / Staff+
Palantir (FDSE)	$171K–$240K	$240K–$415K	$630K+
OpenAI (FDE/Applied)	$220K–$300K	$350K–$550K	$550K+
Anthropic (Applied AI Eng.)	$230K–$320K	$350K–$550K	$550K+
Databricks *(est.)*	$190K–$260K	$260K–$400K	$400K+
Google Cloud (base + equity)	$127K–$183K base	+ equity	—

~$238K
Reported avg Palantir FDE total comp

$350–550K
Typical mid–senior at OpenAI / Anthropic

NYC
Now the leading FDE hub, ahead of SF

Sources: Levels.fyi, Glassdoor and public 2026 reporting/industry guides. Databricks figures are estimates benchmarked to peers. Illustrative only — not an offer or guarantee.

COMPENSATION

The salary-negotiation script

Use after a verbal offer. Anchor on the public band, cite comparables, ask for a specific number with a reason, then stop talking.

STEP 1 · APPRECIATE & PAUSE

"Thank you — I'm genuinely excited about this team. I'd like to take a day and come back with a number that works for both of us."

STEP 2 · ANCHOR ON DATA

"Looking at public 2026 bands, comparable forward-deployed roles at **Palantir, OpenAI, Anthropic and Databricks** *land meaningfully above the initial figure for my level."*

STEP 3 · ASK WITH A REASON

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

STEP 4 · HOLD THE SILENCE

"…" **(Let them respond first.)**

- Negotiate **total comp**, not just base — equity is where FDE upside lives.
- Never give the first number if you can avoid it; if pushed, give a researched range.
- One reason per ask. Stacking justifications weakens them.

[OFFER] BONUS BUNDLE

EVERYTHING INCLUDED

The credential, the cohort, the capstone — one enrollment.

CFDE bundles the 13-module roadmap, mentored mock interviews, the eval-driven capstone and the verifiable certificate recruiters recognise. This guide is the map; the program is the whole expedition.

See What's Included

https://www.gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/what-is-forward-deployed-engineer

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

ADJACENT CAREERS

AI governance roles — the FDE’s sister track

As enterprises scale AI, the governance layer is becoming its own high-value career — and FDEs are uniquely positioned to move into it, because they’ve seen where deployments actually go wrong.

AI Governance / Responsible AI Lead

Owns model risk, policy, and the guardrails enterprises require before they’ll deploy. Bridges legal, compliance and engineering.

Eval & Assurance Engineer

Builds the evaluation and monitoring systems that prove deployments are safe and reliable — the exact skill from Module 8, taken to a specialism.

Deployment Risk / Security Engineer

Focuses on data handling, access and the security posture of embedded AI systems inside regulated customers.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The same horizontal-bar skills — evals, governance, stakeholder trust — open **two** doors at once. You don’t have to choose on day one; you have to be credible in the conversation.

REBUILD · 1 OF 2

Resume rebuild checklist for FDE roles

- ✓ **Lead with outcomes.** Every bullet = action → measurable business result, not a list of tools.
- ✓ **Surface customer-facing work.** Any time you dealt with stakeholders, clients or cross-functional partners, name it.
- ✓ **Show deployment, not just building.** “Shipped to production for X users” > “built a model.”
- ✓ **Put the capstone up top.** Your end-to-end deployment with evals is the headline project.
- ✓ **Speak their language.** Mirror real FDE postings: deployment, integration, evals, ownership, ambiguity.
- ✓ **Quantify scale & constraint.** Data volumes, latency, legacy systems navigated, sign-offs secured.
- ✓ **Cut leetcode trivia.** Replace with judgement and impact — that’s what this role screens for.
- ✓ **One page if <8 yrs.** Dense, scannable, outcome-first.

THE TEST

A recruiter reading for 7 seconds should think “this person owns customer outcomes,” not “this person writes code.”

REBUILD · 2 OF 2

LinkedIn rebuild checklist for FDE roles

- ✓ **Headline = positioning.** e.g. “Engineer focused on deploying production AI inside enterprise customers.”
- ✓ **About section tells the arc.** The deployment gap, what you own, and the proof (your capstone).
- ✓ **Feature the capstone.** Pin it with a short write-up: problem → system → evals → outcome.
- ✓ **Skills that match the loop.** Decomposition, eval design, integration, stakeholder management.
- ✓ **Add the CFDE credential.** A verifiable certification signals you’ve trained the horizontal bar.
- ✓ **Post your reps.** A few decomposition or eval write-ups make you discoverable and credible.
- ✓ **Open to work — targeted.** Set the role to Forward Deployed / Applied AI Engineer, right locations.
- ✓ **Engage where they are.** Comment substantively on FDE and applied-AI threads; recruiters watch them.

WHY THIS WORKS

FDE hiring is relationship- and signal-driven. A profile that *shows* the work beats one that merely lists jobs.

WRAP-UP

Your next 7 days

- **Day 1–2:** Draw your T-map and audit your last 3 projects for outcomes.
- **Day 3–4:** Rebuild your resume + LinkedIn headline around forward-deployed work.
- **Day 5–6:** Write three decomposition reps from real prompts.
- **Day 7:** Scope your capstone deployment — the one 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 version of this entire playbook — roadmap, mentored practice, capstone and a verifiable credential.

[OFFER] 48-HOUR FLASH

FINAL CALL · THIS INTAKE

You have the playbook. Aanya had the program. Your move.

Turn these 90 days from a PDF into a guided, mentored, certified path — with the capstone and credential that get you into the loop. Enrollment for this intake closes within 48 hours.

Start the CFDE Now

https://www.gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/what-is-forward-deployed-engineer

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