DATA FROM 501 OPEN ROLES AT 81 COMPANIES

State of Forward Deployed Engineering 2027

Who is hiring forward deployed engineers, what they pay, where the jobs are and what the role asks for. A snapshot of open postings on 20 November 2026.

01 Who is hiring

02 Where

03 Pay

04 Skills

05 What it means

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SUMMARY

The engineer who sits with the customer.

On 20 November 2026 we counted 501 open forward deployed engineering roles at 81 companies, from public job boards. Most roles ask for customer work and travel, US pay ranges centre above $200,000, and three employers post four in ten roles.

01 **501 open roles at 81 companies.**
Databricks, Palantir, OpenAI account for 42.9% of them.

02 **Median pay of $216k in the US.**
The midpoint of published base salary ranges (261 US postings). The middle half runs from $168k to $240k.

03 **75.8% mention customer-facing work.**
71.3% mention Python and 38.7% mention LLMs or generative AI.

04 **59.5% mention travel.**
Where a share is stated, 50% and 20% are the most common. Only 18.2% of roles that state a work arrangement are remote.

05 **The title is spreading beyond AI companies.**
A separate Google Jobs sample found 628 listings from 396 employers, including consultancies and large enterprises.

501
open forward deployed engineering roles

$216k
median US base salary, range midpoint

75.8%
mention customer-facing work

59.5%
mention travel

THE ROLE

What is a forward deployed engineer?

A forward deployed engineer (FDE) is a software engineer who works directly with a customer to build and deploy software on the vendor's platform for that customer's problem. Palantir made the title well known. AI companies adopted it as their customers needed help putting models to work.

How the role differs

	PRODUCT ENGINEER	FORWARD DEPLOYED ENGINEER
Builds	The core product	Customer-specific solutions on the product
Works with	Internal teams	Customer teams, often on site
Measured on	The product roadmap	The customer's result

How we counted

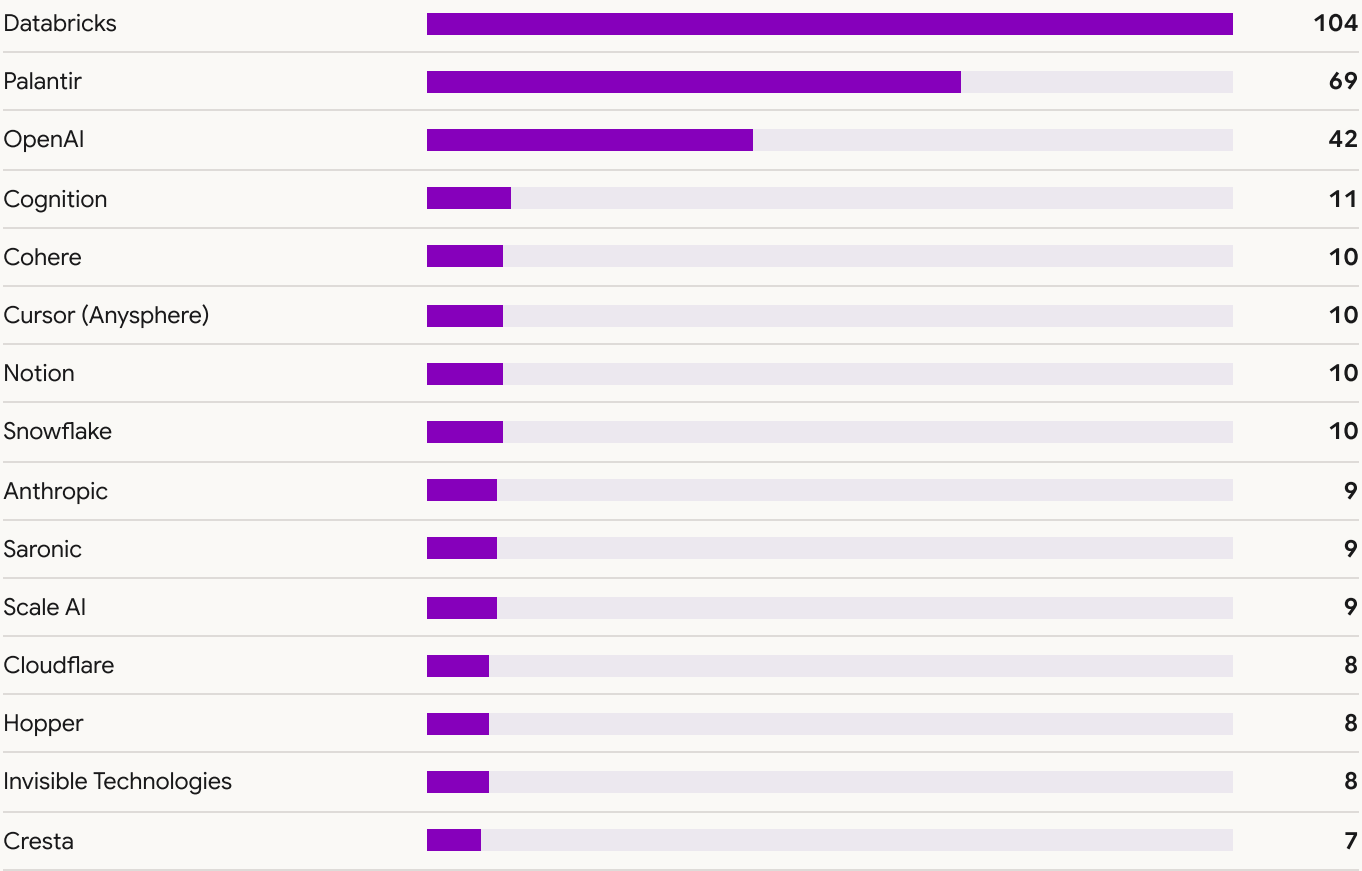
We checked the public job boards of 214 companies on Greenhouse, Lever and Ashby, and found boards for 177. A role counts when its title says "forward deployed" with an engineering word, or uses "FDE". 127 related roles, such as deployment strategists, are reported separately.

Large companies that use other hiring systems, such as Workday, are not in the count. See the method page.

WHO IS HIRING

Three employers, four in ten roles.

Databricks, Palantir, OpenAI account for 42.9% of open roles. 78 other companies share the rest.



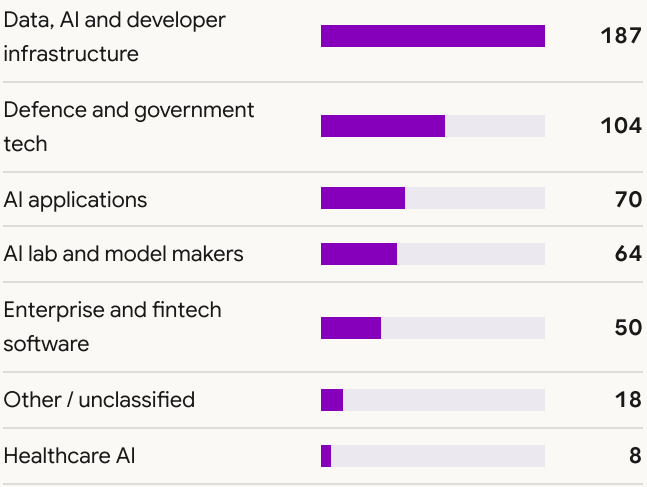
Open forward deployed engineering roles by company, top 15 of 81. Some companies post one role per city. Snapshot 20 November 2026.

WHERE THE JOBS ARE

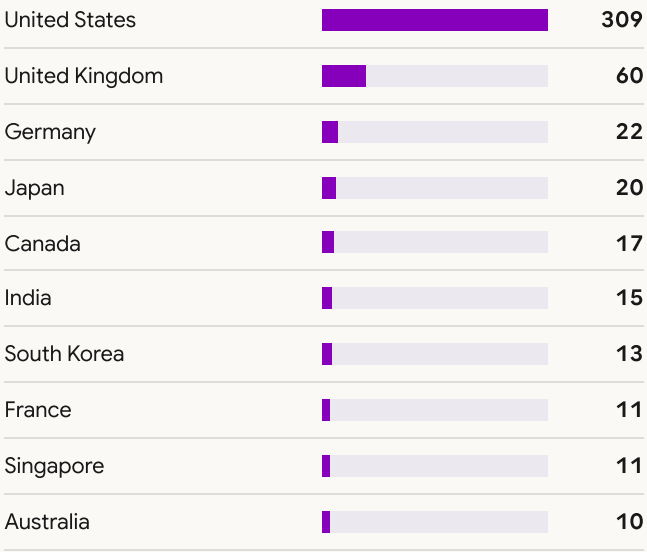
Data platforms lead. Defence is second.

Data and AI infrastructure companies post the most roles, followed by defence and government technology. 62% of roles include a US location.

By sector



By country



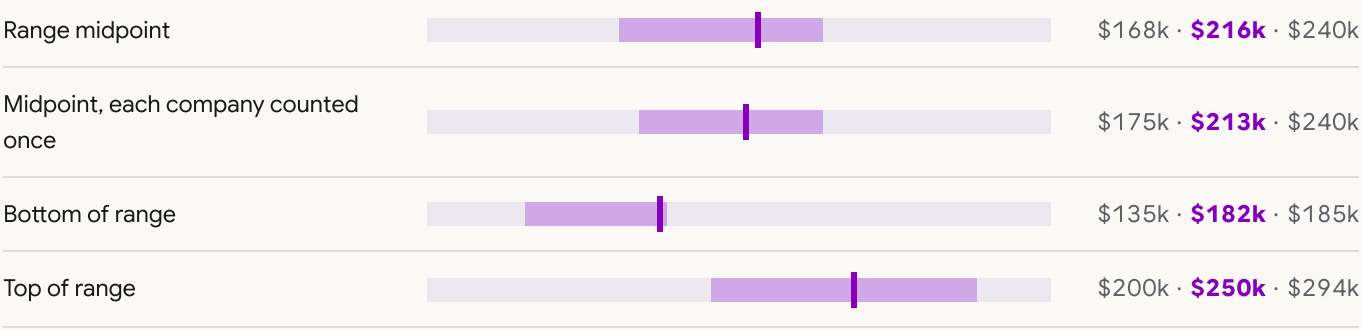
A role listing several countries counts in each.

PAY

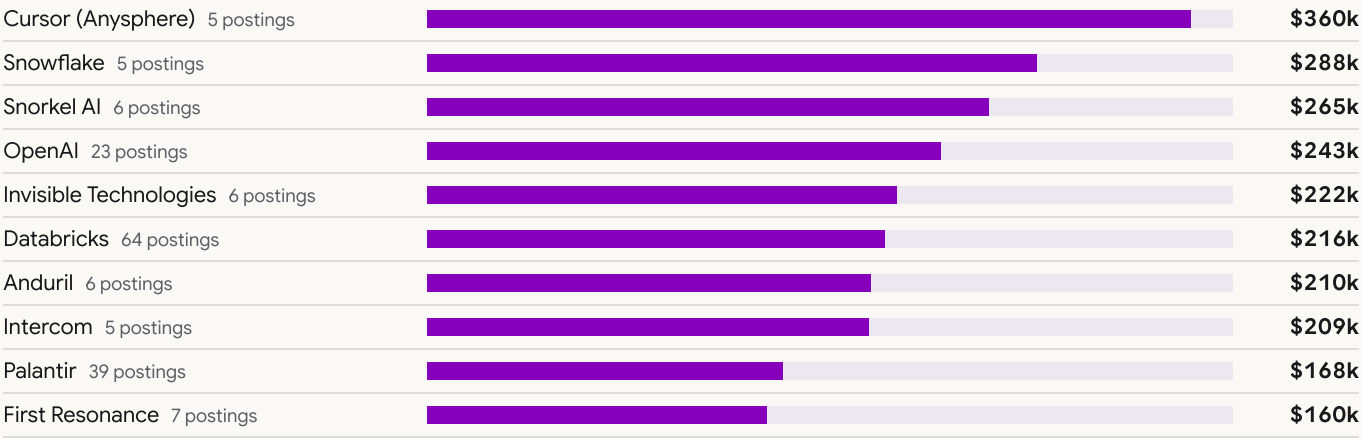
What the role pays in the US.

Based on 261 US postings that publish a base salary range. Equity and bonus are not included.

US base salary: 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile



Median range midpoint by company

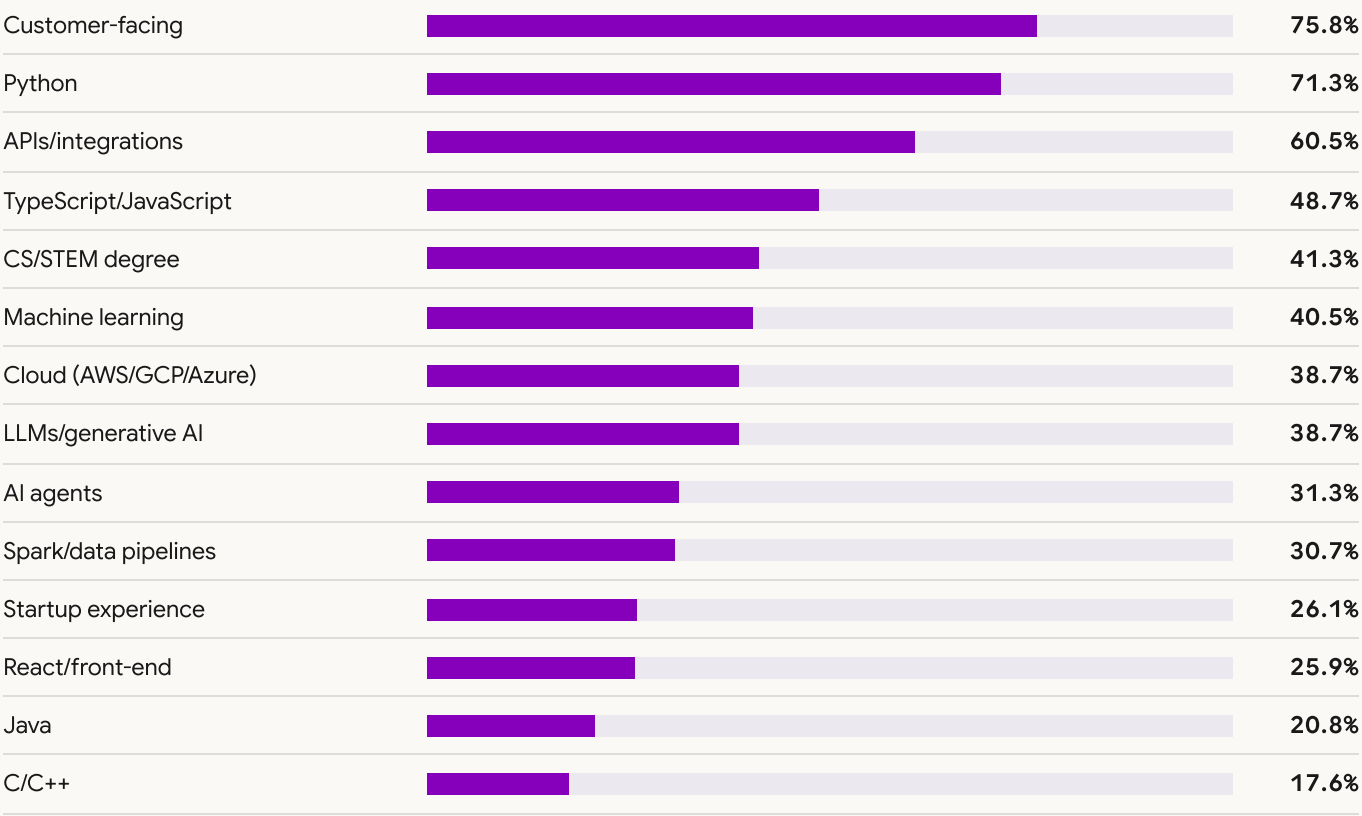


Companies with at least five US postings that publish a range.

SKILLS

Customer work first, then Python.

Share of the 501 postings that mention each skill or requirement at least once.



Keyword matching over full job descriptions, including company boilerplate, so shares are approximate.

THE JOB

Travel, clearance and experience.

59.5%

mention travel. Where a share is stated, the median is 28% of working time.

218 POSTINGS STATE A SHARE

18.2%

of roles that state a work arrangement are remote. 152 are hybrid and 108 on site.

318 POSTINGS STATE ONE

15.2%

mention a security clearance, most of them in defence and government technology.

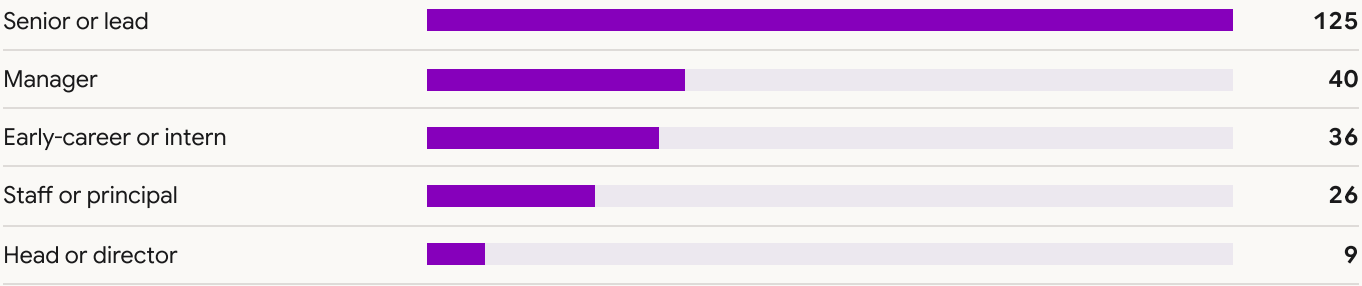
76 POSTINGS

5 years

is the median minimum experience asked for, where a minimum is stated.

247 POSTINGS STATE ONE

Seniority, where the title states it



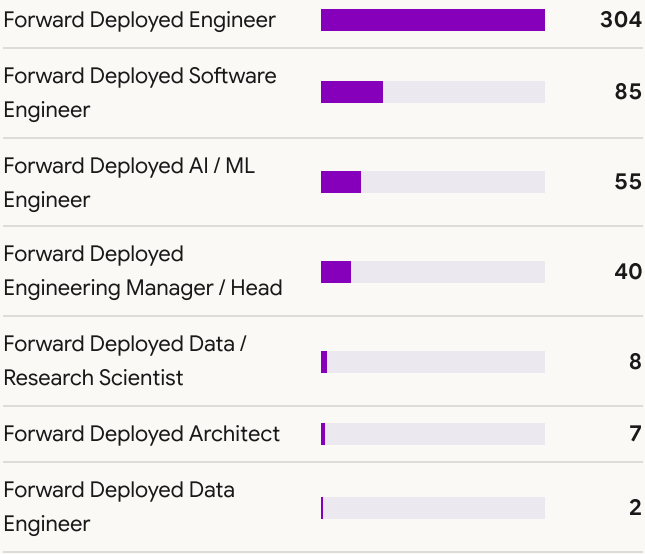
265 titles do not state a level.

TITLES

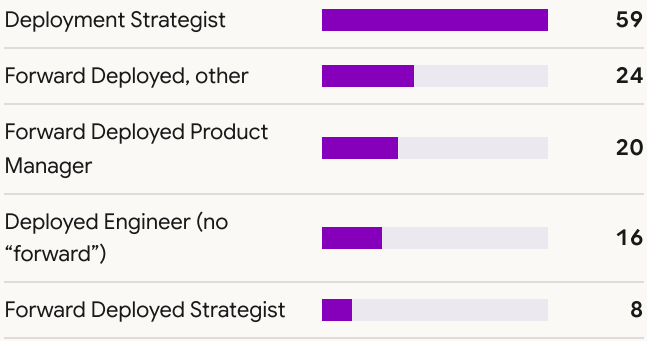
One role, many names.

Most roles use the plain title. Around them sit business-side and product roles on the same teams, and similar work under other names.

Titles counted



Related roles, not counted



Palantir uses Deployment Strategist for the business side of its deployment teams. We also saw 93 “deployment engineer” style titles, such as Agent Deployment Engineer, outside our title rules.

BEYOND AI COMPANIES

The title is spreading.

Our main count covers companies with public job boards, which leans towards venture-backed AI firms. A separate Google Jobs sample shows a wider market.

628

listings with a forward deployed engineering title in a Google Jobs sample from 6 countries.

GOOGLE JOBS VIA DATAFORSEO

396

distinct employers posted them, including staffing agencies.

GOOGLE JOBS VIA DATAFORSEO

7.8%

of those employers were in our main job-board count.

OVERLAP WITH THE MAIN COUNT

Google, Accenture, GSK

were among the employers with the most listings, alongside Databricks and Palantir.

GOOGLE JOBS VIA DATAFORSEO

> The sample is capped at about 100 results per search and is not added to the main count. It suggests the main count understates the market, especially consultancies and large enterprises adopting the title.

WHAT IT MEANS

What it means for buyers.

Vendors are hiring engineers to sit with customers because AI software rarely works out of the box. If you buy from a vendor that offers forward deployed engineers, the questions below help you get value from them.

ASK	WHY IT MATTERS
Who owns the code and configuration the engineers build?	You should be able to keep running it if the engagement ends.
Is the work built on the vendor's product or around it?	Work on the product is maintained with it. Custom work beside it is yours to maintain.
How is the engagement priced: per engineer, per phase or per outcome?	Per-engineer pricing rewards time spent, not results.
What will your team be able to do without the vendor after the project?	Ask for the handover in writing.
How many customers does each engineer support?	It shows how much attention your project will get.

> Our guide to forward deployed engineering explains the model and how to compare vendors: whiteboxx.ai/resources/forward-deployed-engineering

ABOUT WHITEBOXX

Evidence OS, extended for your workflows.

Whiteboxx builds Evidence OS, an enterprise AI platform, and extends it for each customer with forward deployed engineers. You pay a platform subscription and a scoped project fee, and the code and configuration built for you stay usable after the project.

START WITH THE ARCHITECTURE SPRINT

30 days · USD 15,000, fixed

We review your AI tools and pilots, choose one workflow with you and deliver a build plan with costs. You can use the plan with us, with your own team or with another partner.

Book a scope call: **whiteboxx.ai/contact** · info@whiteboxx.ai

Method and limitations

Snapshot of open postings on 20 November 2026, from the public Greenhouse, Lever and Ashby job APIs. Every figure comes from the published data file.

Title rules

Counted: titles containing “forward deployed” (or “forward deployment”) with an engineering word, or the token “FDE”, including managers of FDE teams. Related titles such as Deployment Strategist and Forward Deployed Product Manager are reported separately. Solutions, sales and implementation engineers are not counted.

Limitations

- Coverage: 214 companies checked, chosen by us as known or likely FDE employers; 177 had a public board we could find. Companies on other hiring systems, including most large incumbents, are missing, so totals undercount the market.
- Shares describe this set of companies, not the whole market, and lean towards the three largest employers.
- One posting can stand for several openings, and some companies post one role per city.
- Skills, travel, clearance and countries are parsed from text and are approximate.
- Salary appears mainly where US pay-transparency laws require it. Equity and bonus are excluded.
- Posting dates are as reported by each job system and can reflect re-posting; some long-running roles carry old dates.

Data

The list of counted postings (company, title, location, work arrangement, published salary range and link) is available as a CSV download at whiteboxx.ai/resources/state-of-forward-deployed-engineering-2027.

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