

THE FIRST 100 DAYS AFTER A SAUDI EXPLORATION LICENCE

A practical workforce and site readiness plan for
exploration companies entering Saudi Arabia

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The staffing and HR solutions specialists · People For Tomorrow

THE SCALE

Saudi exploration is getting bigger. And faster.

Saudi Arabia is opening more ground, publishing more geological data and using incentives to push exploration forward. That creates opportunity. It also creates a simple execution problem. More licences mean more exploration programmes competing for many of the same technical people.



1,075

Active exploration licences

Recorded in Saudi Arabia by early 2026.



309

Identified 2026 licence records

Captured in TASC analysis of Ta’adeen exploration data as at 19 August 2026.



58

Unique 2026 awardees

The 309 identified records collapse to 58 unique companies.



25%

Exploration cost support

Up to 25% cash support on eligible drilling, laboratory testing and geoscientific studies under EEP Wave 3.



15%

Salary cost support

Up to 15% salary cost support for eligible technical experts residing in Saudi Arabia under EEP Wave 3.



139

Ma’aden licence records

Ma’aden alone accounts for 139 identified 2026 records in the TASC prospecting database.

TASC ANALYSIS

A licence count is not a company count. But every active programme can create its own demand for geologists, drilling teams, HSE and field support



The licence is permission. The work programme is the promise.

An exploration licence gives a company the right to explore. But it sits alongside a defined programme of work, technical capability, financial commitments and environmental and social responsibilities. The Ministry does not simply award ground and walk away. Current licensing requirements link exploration rights to the company’s ability to execute.

The work programme

What exploration activity will be carried out, where, when and at what level of expenditure?

Technical capability

Does the company have access to people with the experience required to deliver the programme?

Financial capacity

Can the company fund what it has committed to do?

Environmental and social management

How will field activity be managed responsibly and how will local impact be addressed?

Performance

The Ministry can monitor progress against the agreed programme

Current Round 10 rules also require successful bidders to provide a financial guarantee equal to 15% of projected expenditure during the first two years of the work programme.

THE QUESTION TO ASK

For every activity committed in the work programme: Who needs to be there to deliver it? If the answer is not clear, the programme is not operationally ready.



THE FIRST PEOPLE

Who actually needs to be there first?

An exploration company does not need its final ocalizeion chart on day one. It needs the people who unlock the next activity. The best way to plan the first team is by dependency, not seniority.

TIER 1 People who unlock the programme

Exploration Manager

Owns the technical programme, people, priorities and contractor coordination.

Senior Exploration Geologist

Turns geological information into field targets and supervises technical work.

Field HSE Lead

Sets field controls before crews, vehicles and contractors begin operating.

Field Operations Coordinator

Connects people, travel, accommodation, vehicles, equipment and day to day site activity.

TIER 2 People who create the data



Project and Field Geologists



Geophysicists



Core Logging Geologists



GIS and Geodata Specialists



Drilling Supervisors



Sampling and Quality Control Teams

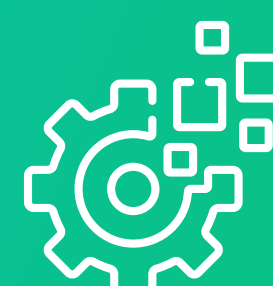
TIER 3 People who keep the field operating



Government Relations



Procurement



Document Control



Field Administration



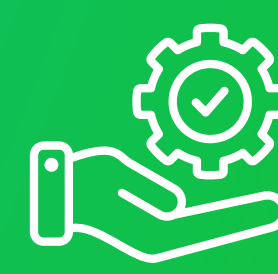
HR and Payroll



Logistics



Finance



Drivers and Site Support

THE RULE

Do not ask, “How many people do we need?” first. Ask: “Which activity cannot begin until this person is in place?” That gives you the real hiring order.

Local where you can. International where you need depth.

The wrong debate is whether the exploration team should be Saudi or international. The practical answer is usually both.

Saudi Arabia needs experienced international mining specialists while building more local mining capability at the same time. Those two goals can work together.

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL DEPTH	SAUDI CAPABILITY FROM THE START
✓ Exploration leadership ✓ Senior exploration geologists ✓ Specialist structural geologists ✓ Geophysicists ✓ Drilling leadership ✓ Commodity specialists ✓ Technical quality control ✓ Specialist data interpretation	✓ Saudi geologists where suitable experience is available ✓ Field HSE ✓ Field coordination ✓ Government Relations ✓ Procurement and logistics ✓ Finance ✓ HR and administration ✓ Document control ✓ Site support

THE BETTER MODEL

International specialist brings deep technical experience → Saudi professional works beside them → responsibility transfers over time as capability grows.

That is stronger than building an expatriate localisation first and trying to localise it later. It also fits the direction of Saudi exploration incentives. Wave 3 of the Exploration Enablement Program includes workforce-related support alongside exploration expenditure incentives, subject to programme requirements.

The test for every international role

- ✓ Why does this person need to come from outside Saudi Arabia?
- ✓ How long is that experience needed?
- ✓ Who can learn beside them?
- ✓ What should be locally owned later?



Do not hire “a geologist”. Hire the geology your programme needs.

Exploration teams often lose time before recruitment even begins because the brief is too broad. “Need an exploration geologist” is not a useful search brief. The right person depends on the commodity, geology, exploration method and stage of the programme.

Commodity experience Has the person explored for the mineral system you are targeting? Copper experience is not automatically interchangeable with every gold, lithium or industrial minerals programme.	Exploration stage Do you need someone strong in greenfield targeting and mapping, or somebody better suited to resource definition and later stage drilling?
Field experience Can the person work effectively in remote field conditions, manage crews and make decisions without a large support structure?	Technical tools What GIS, geological modelling, geophysical or data systems does your programme use?
Drilling exposure Can the person plan holes, supervise field drilling, log core and manage sampling quality?	Reporting Can they produce the technical records, data and reporting required by your company, investors and Saudi licence obligations?

Source by experience, not passport

International sourcing should follow the technical problem. Australia and Canada can provide deep exploration and project leadership talent. South Africa can provide strong field, geology and mining experience. Chile and Peru become especially relevant when the requirement is copper. Other markets can support engineering, field operations, site support and technical documentation.

A bad hire here is expensive

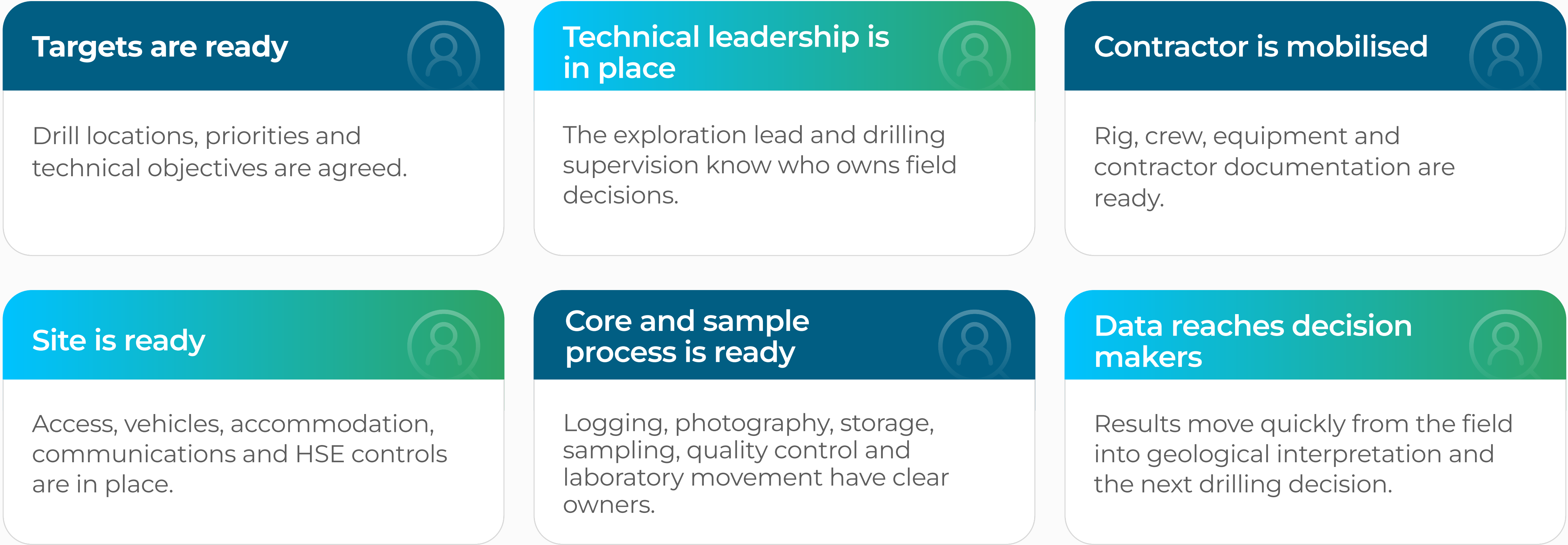
- ✔ Poor targeting
- ✔ Slow decisions
- ✔ Inconsistent field data
- ✔ Rework
- ✔ Poor contractor control
- ✔ Lost drilling time
- ✔ A delayed investment decision



DRILLING

A rig on site does not mean you are ready to drill.

A drilling contractor solves one part of the programme. It does not remove the licence holder’s need for technical control, field coordination, HSE, sample management and decisions. Before drilling begins, the operator side needs clear ownership.



The people around the rig

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| ✓ Drilling Supervisor | ✓ Sampling Team | ✓ Logistics Support |
| ✓ Drilling or Project Geologist | ✓ Field HSE | ✓ Data and GIS Support |
| ✓ Core Logging Geologist | ✓ Field Coordinator | ✓ Contractor Coordinator |

THE RISK

A licence holder can have a drilling contractor ready while still being weeks away from drilling readiness. The rig is only one piece of the system around it.



People cannot work safely on a site that is not ready for people.

Field exploration creates a different operating environment from a Riyadh office. Teams may be travelling long distances, working in heat, operating vehicles, handling equipment, staying in remote locations and working beside drilling contractors.

HSE and logistics need to be designed before mobilisation, not after the first crew arrives.

PEOPLE

- Employment documents confirmed
- Medical requirements checked
- Travel plan confirmed
- Emergency contacts recorded
- Field induction prepared
- Responsibilities clearly assigned



VEHICLES AND MOVEMENT

- Suitable vehicles available
- Approved drivers identified
- Journey planning in place
- Fuel and maintenance support arranged
- Remote travel controls agreed



FIELD OPERATIONS

- Equipment available
- Core handling process ready
- Sample storage identified
- Laboratory transport route agreed
- Data capture process ready
- Daily field reporting agreed



SITE

- Access confirmed
- Camp or accommodation confirmed
- Drinking water and welfare planned
- Communications available
- Emergency response process established
- Medical support access understood



HSE

- Risk assessment completed
- PPE ready
- Heat exposure controls understood
- Contractor HSE aligned
- Incident reporting route clear
- Emergency response tested



DO NOT CONFUSE DOCUMENT READINESS WITH SITE READINESS

A person can have every employment document completed and still arrive at a site that cannot safely use them. Both tracks have to finish together.

How someone is hired can decide how quickly they arrive.

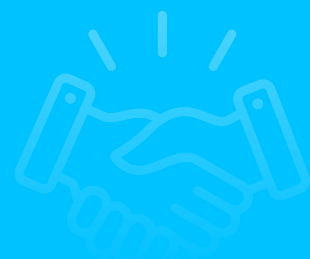
Not every person on an exploration programme needs the same employment structure. The right model depends on how long the role is needed, how much operational control the company requires, whether the individual is Saudi or international and the permitted employment route.

Direct employment



Best suited to the permanent core of the Saudi exploration business.

Project contractors



Useful when expertise is tied to a defined exploration campaign or technical requirement.

Third party employment



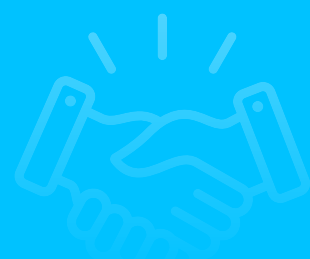
Where legally appropriate, third party employment can support eligible time bound specialists when companies need additional employment capacity or a different hiring route. It does not remove the licence holder's operational responsibilities.

Managed mobilisation



Useful when several people need to move into Saudi Arabia across different countries, roles and start dates. Recruitment is only one part. Documentation, employment, travel, arrival and deployment have to move together.

Saudi hiring



Important for building local capability and supporting the Saudi workforce plan from the beginning. The strongest model is usually a combination.

Decide five things for every role

- ✓ Who employs them?
- ✓ Who sponsors or processes their employment where relevant?
- ✓ Who pays them?
- ✓ Who manages them?
- ✓ What happens when the assignment ends?

IF THOSE ANSWERS ARE UNCLEAR, DEPLOYMENT DATES WILL BE UNCLEAR TOO.

This section is a workforce planning framework, not legal advice. Exact employment requirements should be confirmed for each individual and role before deployment.



Your geologists do not mobilise themselves.

Technical hiring gets most of the attention. The first field problems often come from somewhere else.

Government Relations Keeps employment, government processes and local administrative requirements moving. Without it: technical staff can be selected but unable to move through the required process smoothly.	HR and Payroll Owns contracts, employee records, onboarding and monthly people administration. Without it: field managers end up solving employee problems instead of exploration problems.	Procurement Gets the field what it needs when it needs it. Without it: small missing items become lost field days.
Logistics Coordinates travel, vehicles, accommodation, equipment and movement between office, camp and field. Without it: people are hired but not deployable.	Document Control Keeps employment, contractor and project records organised. Without it: teams start chasing documents when they should be working.	Finance Controls payments, allowances, contractor invoices and field costs. Without it: the field begins carrying administrative problems that should have been solved elsewhere.

THE SIMPLE TEST

If every geologist had to stop working tomorrow and deal with visas, vehicles, accommodation, supplier invoices and payroll, who would keep the exploration programme moving? That is why support roles belong in the workforce plan from the beginning.



THE PLAN

The first 100 days

The first 100 days should not be one long recruitment exercise. They should move the project from licence to controlled field execution.

DAYS 1 TO 15

Translate the licence into people

OUTPUT

A 100 day workforce and mobilisation map

- Review the approved work programme
- Map every planned activity to the roles required
- Identify critical path roles
- Separate permanent, project and support requirements
- Identify Saudi and international talent needs
- Confirm likely employment routes
- Review planned field locations and logistics
- Identify the first mobilisation risks

DAYS 16 TO 30

Secure the core team

OUTPUT

A named core team and confirmed hiring route for every critical role

- Appoint or secure exploration leadership
- Begin senior geological recruitment
- Secure drilling supervision
- Appoint field HSE ownership
- Confirm field operations coordination
- Start Saudi support recruitment
- Confirm employment and documentation routes
- Begin contractor readiness checks

DAYS 31 TO 60

Make the field ready

OUTPUT

A field team that can operate, not simply an employee list

- Mobilise priority technical people
- Complete onboarding and field inductions
- Confirm vehicles, accommodation and travel
- Align drilling contractor and operator teams
- Prepare core and sample processes
- Set field reporting lines
- Confirm payroll and people support
- Build reserve candidates for critical roles

DAYS 61 TO 100

Ramp without losing control

OUTPUT

A stable exploration workforce with a forward plan

- Scale field geologists and sampling teams
- Track drilling and workforce demand together
- Build rotation and leave coverage
- Review Saudi capability development
- Replace weak or unavailable hires quickly
- Track recruitment against future drilling needs
- Maintain a critical role backup list
- Plan workforce requirements for the next 180 days

BY DAY 100, LEADERSHIP SHOULD KNOW

Who is in Saudi | Who is still being mobilised | Which roles remain exposed | Who the backup candidates are | Where Saudi capability is growing | Whether the workforce can support the next phase of the work programme



One resignation should not move your drilling programme.

Exploration teams are usually lean. That makes every specialist more important. If one senior geologist, drilling supervisor or HSE lead leaves unexpectedly, there may not be another person sitting beside them who can simply take over. Backup planning has to start before there is a vacancy.

CRITICAL ROLE	WHAT CAN GO WRONG	BACKUP ROUTE
Exploration Manager	Notice period, relocation issue or unexpected resignation	Prequalified external option and clear interim technical ownership
Senior Exploration Geologist	Scarce technical fit	Reserve shortlist matched to the same commodity and exploration stage
Drilling Supervisor	Rotation gap, contractor change or programme acceleration	Second approved supervisor with known availability
Field HSE	Leave, illness or field expansion	Relief coverage already identified
Field Geologists	Attrition or faster drilling ramp	Prequalified reserve pool that can be added as activity increases
GIS and Data	Too much knowledge sitting with one person	Shared data process and a second person capable of maintaining the system

What “backup talent” actually means

It does not mean keeping people on salary with nothing to do. It means knowing:

- ✔ Who the alternative is
- ✔ Whether they are interested
- ✔ How quickly they could start
- ✔ What documentation they would need
- ✔ What they would cost
- ✔ Who covers the role until they arrive

THE RULE

Every critical role needs a primary person, a backup route and an interim plan. That is workforce resilience.

Day 1 should not be the day you start hiring.

Saudi Arabia can give an exploration company access to ground, geological information and a growing support framework for exploration.

The company still has to turn that opportunity into a working field programme. That means getting the right technical people into the right place, with the right employment route, field support and backup plan.

The companies that do this early protect their exploration timeline. The companies that wait until drilling dates are fixed usually discover the workforce problem too late.

FREE SAUDI EXPLORATION WORKFORCE READINESS REVIEW

Have a Saudi exploration licence or programme moving toward field activity? TASC can help you map the first 100 days before hiring becomes the constraint.

[REQUEST A SAUDI EXPLORATION WORKFORCE READINESS REVIEW ↗](#)

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