A large-scale mining operation in a dark, cavernous underground setting. A yellow excavator is visible on the left, and several workers in orange safety gear and hard hats are working in the foreground. The background shows a massive rock wall with vertical cables or pipes.

Saudi Mining Workforce Playbook 2026

Saudi Arabia has the minerals, the capital and the policy push. The harder question is whether mining companies can find, hire, mobilise and manage the people needed to turn opportunity into operation.

THE SCALE

The Opportunity Is Not The Question

Saudi Arabia is no longer treating mining as a side sector. It is building mining into a major pillar of economic growth, industrial development and global mineral supply.

The Kingdom has upgraded its estimate of untapped mineral resources to around \$2.5 trillion, including phosphate, gold, rare earths, copper, zinc and other minerals linked to industrial growth and energy transition. It is targeting a mining GDP contribution of around SAR 240 billion (\$64 billion) by 2030, alongside 200,000 direct and indirect jobs. The scale is already visible.



\$2.5T

Estimated untapped mineral resources



3,017

Active mining licences by end of March 2026



1,075

Active exploration licences



\$64B

Targeted mining GDP contribution by 2030



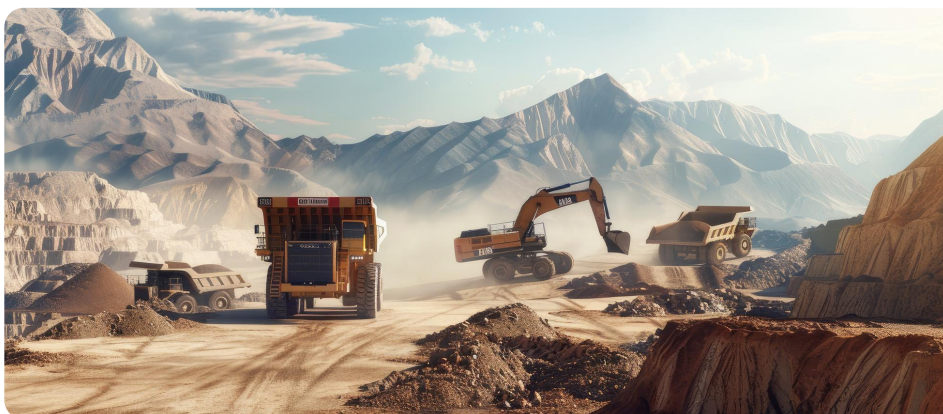
200K

Direct & indirect jobs targeted by 2030



595%

Growth in minesite exploration budget, 22-25



160 projects

Saudi mining sites drilled in 2024, up from 58 in 2023

The opportunity is real. The mistake is assuming opportunity automatically becomes execution.

THE DRIVERS

Why Saudi Mining Is Moving Faster Now

This is not only a commodity cycle. Saudi mining is being driven by policy, capital, land access, industrial planning and global partnerships at the same time.

01

A Clearer Investment Framework

Saudi Arabia has modernised its mining investment environment and moved more licensing through digital channels such as Ta'adeen, covering reconnaissance, exploration, mining, small mining, building materials and surplus raw materials.

02

More land is being opened

In 2025 the Kingdom awarded exploration licences across major mineralised belts, including Jabal Sayid in Madinah and Al Hajar in Aseer. Reuters reported awarded areas of 4,788 km², with planned spending of about SAR 366 million over three years.

03

Global companies are already moving

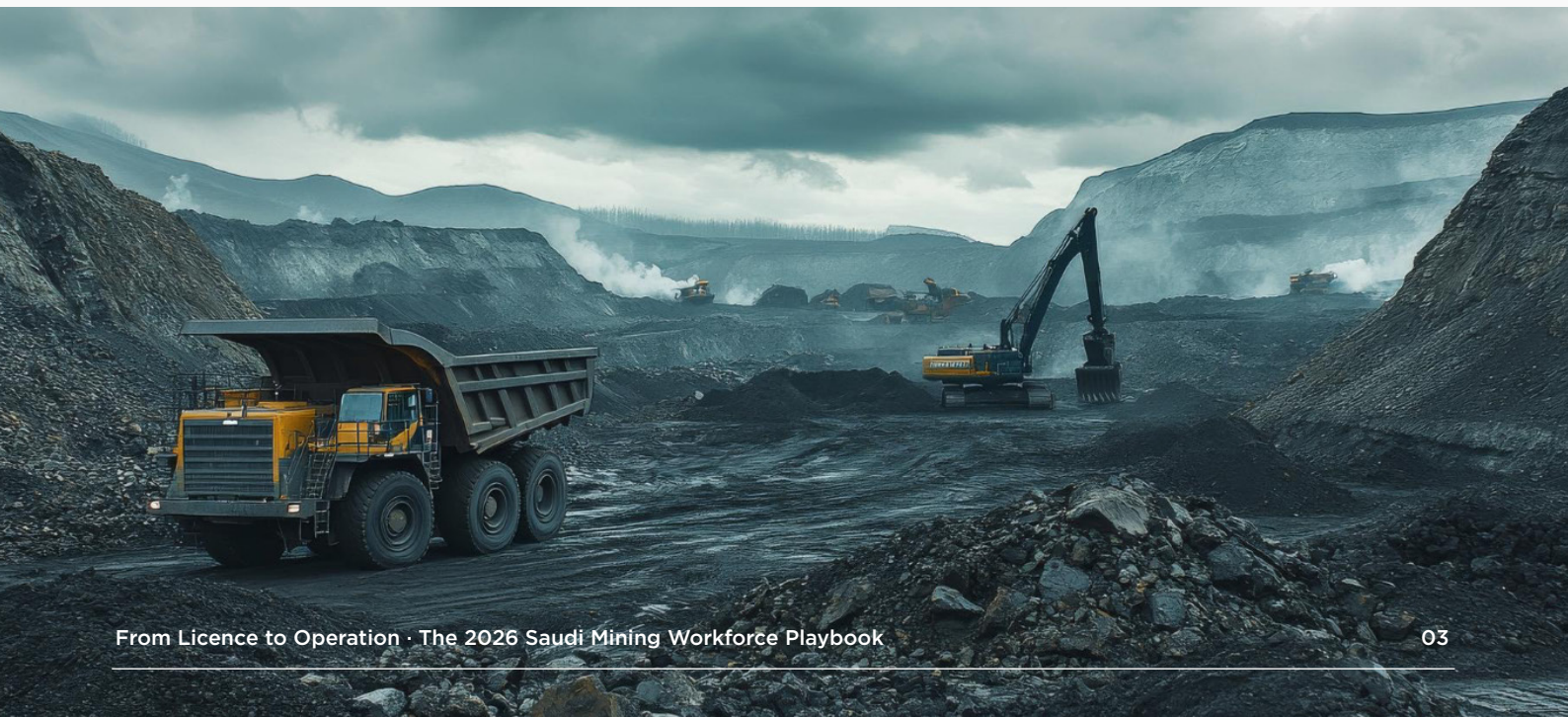
Vedanta, Zijin, Barrick, Alcoa, Mosaic, Hancock Prospecting, Ivanhoe Electric and other international names are connected to Saudi mining through licences, partnerships, joint ventures or operating assets.

04

The Future Minerals Forum is a deal platform

A government-led platform connecting governments, investors and mining leaders. FMF 2026 ran in Riyadh from 13-15 January 2026, with exhibitors across exploration, services, equipment, technology, project delivery and investment.

The door is open. But getting through the door is not the same as being ready to operate.



THE REAL QUESTION

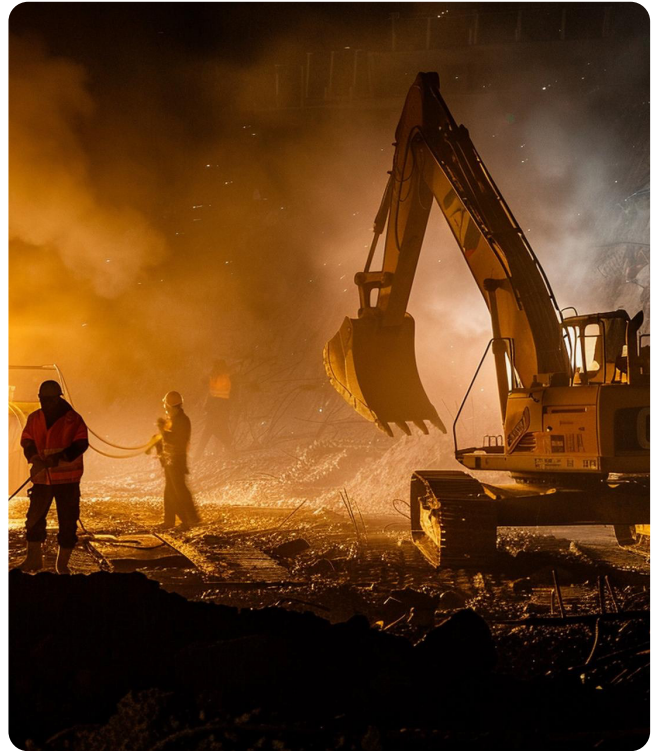
The Hard Part Starts After The Licence

Winning a licence, signing a partnership or attending FMF does not make a company operationally ready.

- ✓ **A licence** does not give you a mine manager.
- ✓ **A partnership** does not give you geologists on site.
- ✓ **A project award** does not give you visa capacity.
- ✓ **A Saudi entity** does not automatically solve Saudization.
- ✓ **A Global HR team** does not always understand local hiring rules.

The real question is not only can we win the opportunity?

It is: can we staff it, mobilise it, and stay compliant while timelines are moving?



The Four Questions Every Entrant Needs To Answer Early

01 Which roles must be in Saudi first?

03 What is the right employment route before and after entity setup?

02 Which roles can be hired locally, and which must be sourced internationally?

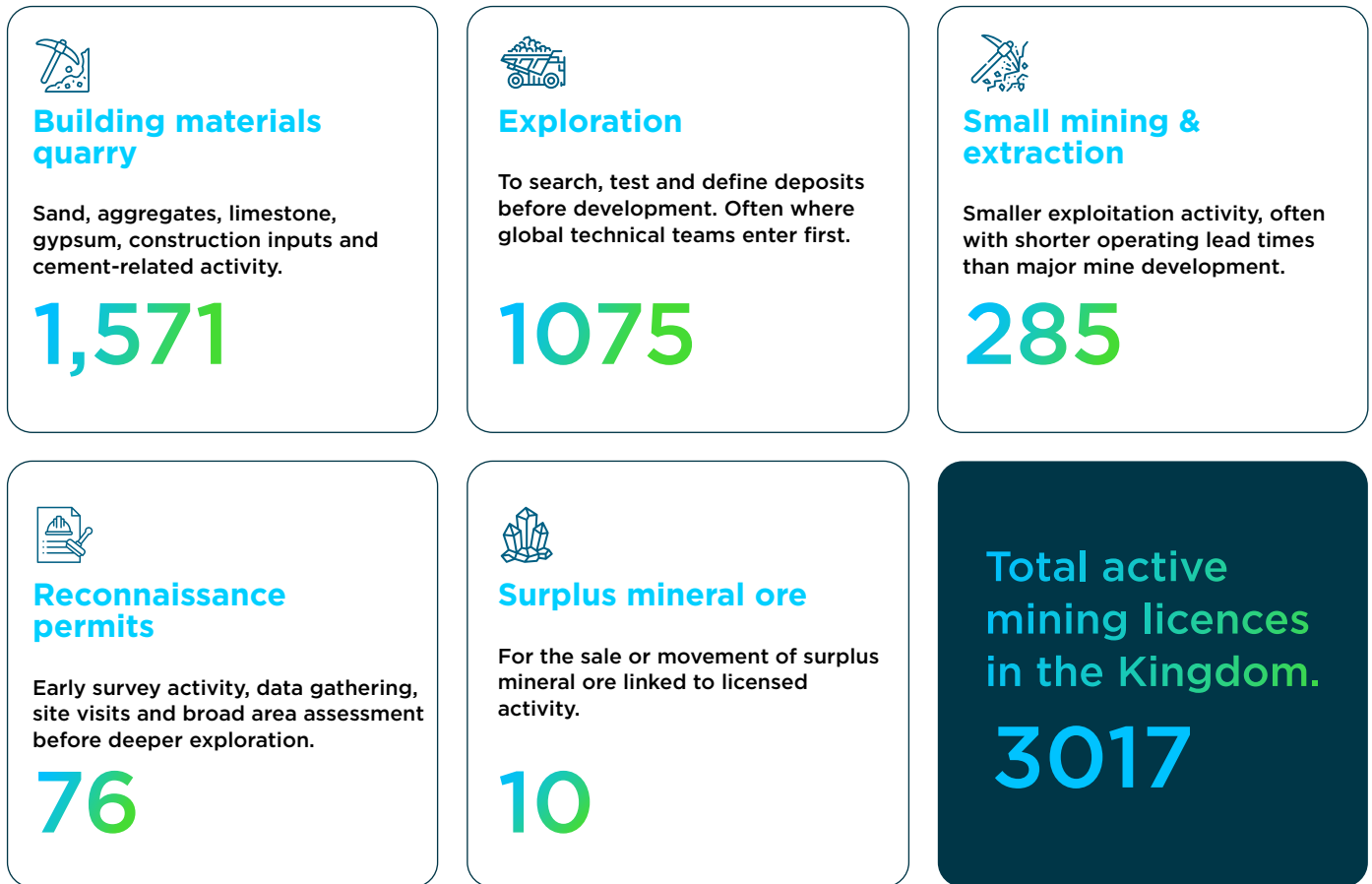
04 How will Saudization, Nitaqat, visas, contracts, payroll and site mobilisation affect the timeline?

The companies that plan workforce last will lose time first.

THE LICENCE LANDSCAPE

The Saudi mining licence landscape

Saudi Arabia had 3,017 active mining licences by the end of March 2026. Exploration licences matter most to entrants: they are the leading signal of future project work, site activity and hiring demand.

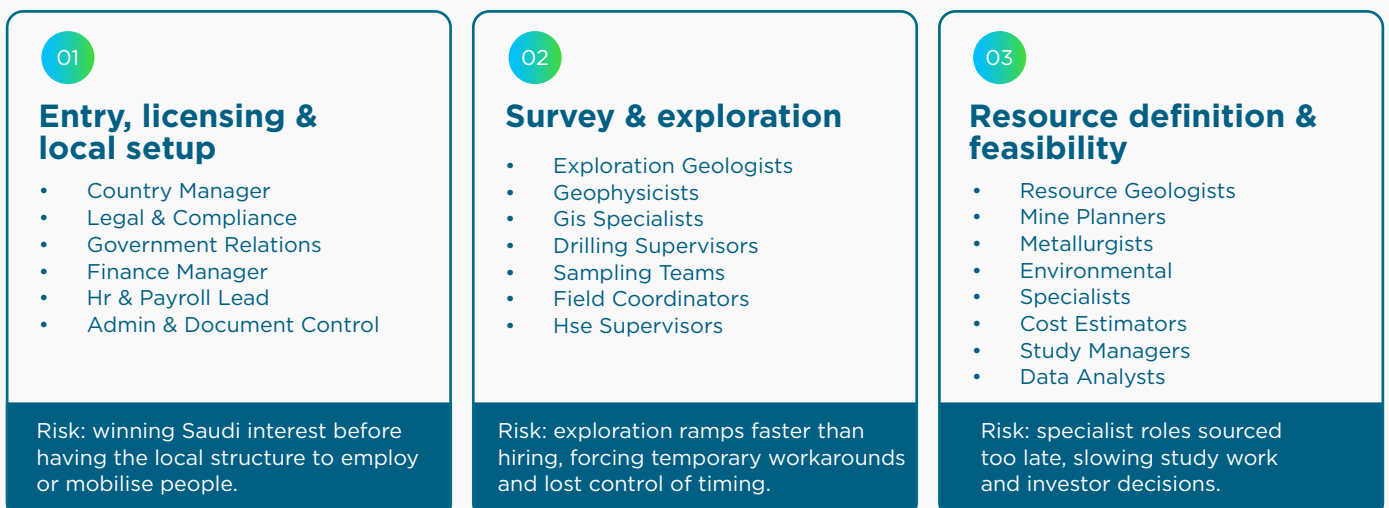


The licence tells you what you are allowed to do. It does not tell you whether you have the people to do it.

THE STAFFING CURVE

Six stages, and the people each stage needs

A mining project is staffed stage by stage. Each stage creates different hiring pressure, visa needs and Saudization decisions.



04

Mine development

- Project Directors
- Mining Engineers
- Construction Managers
- Civil, Electrical & Mechanical Engineers
- Hse & Quality Managers
- Planning & Controls

Risk: project teams hired after commitments are made, not before.

05

Processing & operations

- Mine & Plant Managers
- Process Engineers
- Maintenance Managers
- Mobile Equipment Supervisors
- Control Room & Shift Teams
- Reliability Engineers

Risk: underestimating how hard it is to hire experienced technical people in a still-maturing market.

06

Commercial, support & scale

- Procurement & Logistics
- Finance
- Controllers
- Contracts Managers
- Training Leads
- Saudization Managers
- Camp & Site Support

Risk: focusing on technical roles and forgetting the support roles that keep people paid, housed and compliant.

Mining projects fail slowly when the workforce plan is treated as admin. In Saudi Arabia, it is a core project risk.

THE LICENCE LANDSCAPE

The Saudi mining workforce problem

Saudi Arabia needs international specialists to build the sector quickly. At the same time, Saudization requires rising Saudi participation. These two realities do not cancel out. They must be planned together.

01

Specialist mining talent is scarce

Deep mining experience takes years to create. Senior geologists, mine managers, processing specialists and technical project leaders cannot be built overnight.

02

Mining competes with oil, gas, construction and mega-projects

The same engineers, HSE leaders, project managers and site specialists are wanted by other sectors already mature in Saudi Arabia.

03

Saudization cannot be left until later

Nitaqat is not a one-time box to tick. It affects hiring plans, company classification and the balance between Saudi and expatriate employees.

04

Visa and contract planning affects speed

Even when candidates are available, mobilisation depends on the right employment route, documentation, role classification and local process.

05

Remote site work adds another layer

Site rotations, camp arrangements, safety requirements, travel, replacements and retention must all be planned early.

The winning workforce model will not be fully local or fully international. It will be blended, planned and built by project phase.

Saudization & Nitaqat: what entrants need to know

Saudization is the policy direction. Nitaqat is one of the main systems used to classify private-sector companies by Saudi national employment.



Human Resources and
Social Development

340,000

In February 2026, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development announced a new phase of the Nitaqat Mutawar Program, running for three years and aiming to localise more than 340,000 additional private-sector jobs. International hiring does not stop. It must sit inside a wider Saudi workforce plan.

Four planning questions

- ✓ Which roles should be Saudi from day one?
- ✓ Which roles need expatriate specialists because local experience is limited?
- ✓ Which roles can be paired with Saudi trainees or future successors?
- ✓ Which employment model keeps the company compliant while the project grows?

What not to do

- ✓ Assume Saudization can be fixed after the first hiring wave
- ✓ Assume the visa quota will match the hiring plan automatically
- ✓ Assume a global HR team can handle Saudi mobilisation alone
- ✓ Assume every role can be filled locally at project speed

Better Approach For Every International Role, Ask

1. Is this role truly needed from outside Saudi Arabia, and for how long?
2. Can a Saudi employee be developed beside this person?
3. What is the employment and visa route, and what happens when the person rotates, resigns or reaches contract end?

In Saudi mining, compliance is not separate from hiring. It shapes the hiring plan.

Where mining talent will come from

The mistake is choosing countries first. The better approach is to map countries to roles.



Australia

- Mine Managers
- Mining Engineers
- Open-Pit Specialists
- Metallurgists
- Hse Leaders
- Project & Site Managers

Mature mining systems, large-scale operations experience, a workforce used to remote sites and rotation.



South Africa

- Underground managers
- Rock engineers
- Plant managers
- Surveyors
- Safety leads
- Maintenance
- Leaders

Deep gold, platinum, underground and processing experience, with many already open to Gulf moves.



Canada

- Senior Executives
- Exploration Leaders
- Mine Planners
- Corporate Development
- Esg Specialists

A strong source of senior leadership, public company experience and project governance.



Chile & Peru

- Copper specialists
- Processing engineers
- Metallurgists
- Maintenance leaders
- Concentrator specialists

Saudi Arabia's copper ambition needs people who have worked in mature copper markets.



India

- Engineers
- Project Controls
- Finance
- Procurement
- Back-Office
- Technical
- Documentation

Supports engineering, project support, finance and operational scale when the model is clear.



Philippines & E. Europe

- Site Support
- Survey Maintenance
- Technical Operations
- Safety Support
- Admin & Coordination

Practical, site-based and support roles where speed and reliability matter.

Do not build a country-based hiring plan. Build a role-based sourcing map.

AVOID THESE

Seven mistakes entrants make

The costliest delays are rarely caused by a lack of interest. They are caused by late workforce planning.

01

Treating Saudi Arabia like another export market

For many miners it becomes an operating market: local hiring, payroll, contracts, visas, Saudization and site mobilisation.

02

Waiting until after the project award to hire

By award time the talent plan should already exist. Senior specialists are rarely available on short notice, especially with relocation.

03

Assuming the licence is the hard part

The licence gives access. It does not create a field team, a plant team, a safety team or a compliant employment structure.

04

Building a fully expatriate plan first

Expatriate specialists may be needed, but a Saudi project cannot be planned as though Saudization does not exist. Blended is safer.

05

Treating Saudi Arabia like another export market

Candidate interest does not equal deployment. Visa planning, role classification, contracts and local process decide who arrives on time.

06

Underestimating support roles

Companies plan for geologists and engineers but forget HR, payroll, procurement, logistics, camp support, document control and compliance.

07

Using global hiring timelines for a Saudi project

Global recruitment often moves slower than Saudi project expectations. You need ready talent pools before demand peaks.

THE PLAN

The 90-day Saudi mining workforce plan

The first 90 days should not be spent reacting. They should be spent removing hiring, visa and compliance risk before the project accelerates.

FIRST 30 DAYS

Map The Risk

OUTPUT

A role-risk map for the first 12 months.

- ✓ Map the project timeline by phase
- ✓ Split into Saudi, expat, contractor, advisory
- ✓ Check which roles are hardest to source locally
- ✓ Review likely visa and employment routes
- ✓ List all roles needed in the first 12
- ✓ Identify roles needed before site work
- ✓ Review Saudization exposure
- ✓ Decide direct, contractor, EOR or entity-linked

DAYS 31-60

Build the hiring route

OUTPUT

A role-risk map for the first 12 months.

- ✓ Build target profiles for priority
- ✓ Create compensation assumptions
- ✓ Prepare the Saudi hiring plan for local roles
- ✓ Decide payroll, contract and onboarding route
- ✓ Select source countries by role type
- ✓ Start senior talent outreach
- ✓ Check documentation for expat
- ✓ Build a replacement plan for critical roles

DAYS 61-90

Prepare deployment

OUTPUT

A deployment plan with named candidates, timelines and compliance checks.

- ✓ Shortlist and interview priority candidates roles
- ✓ Prepare onboarding and contract documents
- ✓ Plan arrival, travel, accommodation, rotation
- ✓ Prepare reporting for leadership
- ✓ Confirm employment route for each role
- ✓ Align visa and mobilisation timelines
- ✓ Set compliance tracking for Saudization candidates
- ✓ Build a backup list for critical roles



THE OPTIONS

Choosing the right employment model

There is no single model for every project. The right one depends on stage, entity status, role type, duration and compliance needs.

01

Direct hiring

Best when you have a Saudi entity and permanent roles for your own payroll.

Useful for: country leaders, Saudi national roles, long-term operational, finance and HR roles. Can be slow during setup or when demand shifts.

02

Employer of Record

Best when you need to employ people before local setup is ready, or to test the market.

Useful for: early-stage entry teams, project specialists, short-term technical roles, expats needing local employment. Not a substitute for long-term planning.

03

Contractor Hiring

Best when work is project-based, time-bound and tied to a defined technical need.

Useful for: drilling supervisors, field geologists, HSE specialists, project controls, commissioning. Too many contractors creates continuity and accountability gaps.

04

Managed Mobilisation

Best when you need to move many people across several roles, countries and timelines.

Useful for: new project launch, site ramp-up, plant setup, exploration campaigns, operations transition. Without a role map, it gets expensive and chaotic.

05

Local Saudi hiring

Best when the role can be filled locally, supports Saudization, or needs local/government knowledge.

Useful for: HR, admin, government relations, finance, procurement, logistics, training. Hiring without training or progression creates retention problems.

The strongest Saudi mining workforce model is usually blended. Direct hires, Saudi nationals, expat specialists, contractors and EOR support can all have a place.

Saudi mining workforce readiness checklist

Use this before committing to timelines, bids or project start dates.

STRATEGY & TIMING

- Do we know which roles are needed in the first 30,60, 90 and 180 days?
- Do we know which are critical-path roles?
- Have we mapped hiring timelines against project milestones?
- Have we identified roles that cannot be filled locally at speed?

SAUDI & EXPAT BALANCE

- Have we split roles into Saudi, expat, contractor and advisory?
- Do we know which Saudi roles are needed from day one?
- Do we have a plan to develop Saudis alongside expat specialists?
- Does the plan support Saudization expectations?

VISA & EMPLOYMENT ROUTE

- Do we know how each expat role will be employed?
- Have we checked visa and documentation requirements early?
- Can we employ now, or need EOR support first?
- Are contracts, payroll and onboarding responsibilities clear?

SOURCING & COMPENSATION

- Have we selected target source countries by role?
- Do we know the expected salary range for each priority role?
- Do we have a shortlist before demand peaks?
- Have we planned retention and replacement for critical roles?

SITE READINESS

- Have we planned arrival, rotation, travel, accommodation and safety onboarding?
- Do we know who manages employee issues once people are deployed?
- Have we planned backup coverage for resignations or visa delays?
- Is leadership receiving regular workforce-risk reporting?

A plan is ready only when every critical role has a hiring route, an employment route, a timeline and a backup plan.

The Licence Is The Easy Part.

Saudi Arabia has the minerals, the capital and the policy. What it does not yet have at full scale is the mining workforce needed to support every exploration campaign, development project, processing plant and operating site now entering the market. The companies that win the next phase will plan early, source globally, hire locally where possible, mobilise fast and stay compliant while they scale.

FREE SAUDI MINING WORKFORCE READINESS REVIEW

Planning an operation, exploration campaign, project team or site ramp-up?

- ✓ Which roles are likely to delay your Saudi plan
- ✓ Which roles to hire locally vs source internationally
- ✓ Where Saudization and Nitaqat affect your model
- ✓ What visa and mobilisation issues to plan early
- ✓ Direct hire, contractor, EOR or managed mobilisation
- ✓ How fast you can realistically deploy the first team

[Request a free workforce review](#)

hello@tascoutsourcing.com