Symbal – Gulf AI Labs Lead List (HITL Data)

Prepared 21 Nov 2026 · Signal window: last 6–12 months · Grades: A 80+ Hot, B 60–79 Warm, C 40–59 Nurture, D under 40 Deprioritize

Leads

Company	Score	Grade	Key signal (date)	Target persona	Confidence	HQ	Domain	Type	Size	ICP fit	Incumbent / risk	Next action
TII (Falcon)	89	A – Hot	Launched Falcon-Emirati (Emirati dialect) + Arabic speech & OCR models (7 Oct 2026); Falcon-H1 Arabic (Jan 2026)	Dr. Hakim Hacid, Chief Researcher, AI & Digital Science Research Center (in role 2026). Exec sponsor: Dr. Najwa Aaraj, CEO	High	Abu Dhabi, UAE	tii.ae	Government applied-research lab (ATRC)	9 research centers; headcount not verified	Strong: builds Arabic + dialect LLMs, speech, vision	No public data vendor found	Pitch Gulf-dialect preference data + speech eval for next Falcon-Arabic cycle
MBZUAI – Institute of Foundation Models	87	A – Hot	Jais 3 + Jais Speech with Inception42 (16 Oct 2026); K2 Horizon, 6 open models up to 375B (3 Sep 2026)	Prof. Eric Xing, President & IFM founder (in role Sep 2026). Technical: Hector Liu, K2-V2 corresponding author (title not verified)	High	Abu Dhabi, UAE (also Paris, Silicon Valley)	mbzuai.ac.ae	University frontier-model lab	Not verified	Strong: reasoning, agentic, Arabic post-training	Fully-open data policy: vendor data must be licensable for release	Offer open-licensable expert reasoning/agentic traces for K2 and Jais
HUMAIN	86	A – Hot	humain-m3 428B Arabic MoE unveiled at LEAP (2 Sep 2026); weights to be released after safety training	Dr. Yaser Al-Onaizan, Deputy CEO & President, Data & AI Models (Oct 2025; title varies by source). CEO: Tareq Amin	High (signal) / Medium (persona)	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	humain.ai (not verified)	PIF-owned national AI company	120+ AI specialists (Aug 2025)	Strong: largest Arabic model program in GCC	In-house team of 600 domain experts + 250 evaluators; Scale AI has Riyadh office	Pitch Arabic safety/red-team data to speed the humain-m3 open-weights release
QCRI / HBKU (Fanar)	82	A – Hot	Fanar 3.0 slated for Dec 2026 (stated 9 Dec 2025); Fanar 2.0 technical report (17 Mar 2026)	Dr. Ahmed Elmagarmid, Executive Director (Dec 2025). Technical: Dr. Mohamed Eltabakh, Principal Scientist	High	Doha, Qatar	qcri.org	University research institute (Qatar Foundation)	100+ engineers & researchers (Dec 2025)	Strong: Arabic multimodal, safety (FanarGuard), Islamic content	Sovereignty: built with no external AI providers. Scale AI holds a Qatar gov deal (Feb 2025)	Act now: offer launch eval/red-team for Fanar 3.0, then Fanar 3.x post-training
Inception42 (G42)	82	A – Hot	Jais 3 fleet + Jais Speech (16 Oct 2026); Jais 2 (9 Dec 2025)	Ashish Koshy, CEO (Dec 2025)	Medium-High	Abu Dhabi, UAE	Not verified (parent g42.ai)	Applied AI arm of G42	Not verified	Strong: Jais Arabic LLM + speech	Scale AI strategic partner since Mar 2025	Lead with a narrow dialect/speech pilot Scale doesn't cover
Misraj AI	69	B – Warm	Launched Kawn Arabic LLM ecosystem (15 dialects) + Baseer OCR at AWS re:Invent (4 Dec 2025) – weak, ~11 months	Safwan AlModhayan, CEO (Dec 2025)	Medium	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	misraj.ai	Arabic-first AI startup / venture studio	Not verified	Good: builds own models; budget unknown	Budget risk; no vendor found	Founder-led outreach: dialect SFT/preference data pilot
Oman MTCIT – Mu'een	62	B – Warm	National AI program plans to further develop Mu'een (25 Jul 2026); model launched ~Sep 2025	Program owner not found. Sponsor: Minister Said bin Hamoud al Maawali	Medium	Muscat, Oman	Not verified	Government ministry program	Not applicable	Moderate: Omani-dialect model; built with private partner	Government tender process; delivery partner not named	Identify the private-sector model partner; watch for tenders
Aramco – METABRAIN	60	B – Warm	Showcased METABRAIN industrial LLM at CERAWeek (Mar 2026); says technology delivered $5B value (17 Sep 2026)	Not verified. Find the current METABRAIN owner in Aramco Digital / Technology & Innovation	Low-Medium	Dhahran, Saudi Arabia	aramco.com	Energy major, in-house industrial LLM	Enterprise	Partial: expert domain data (petroleum, engineering)	Mostly internal proprietary data; long procurement	Nurture: expert-annotated engineering eval sets
Wittify.ai	51	C – Nurture	$1.5M pre-seed for Arabic ASR/TTS across 25 dialects (Jul 2025) – stale	Not found	Low	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	wittify.ai (not verified)	Arabic speech AI startup	Early stage	Moderate: dialect speech data need	Small budget	Monitor for next funding round
AI71	50	C – Nurture	No model-building signal found in last 12 months	Mahir Nayfeh, CPO (Dec 2024 – stale, verify)	Low	Abu Dhabi, UAE	ai71.ai (not verified)	Commercial arm of TII's Falcon	Not verified	Weak: deploys rather than trains	Unknown	Approach via TII relationship

Scoring

Company	ICP fit (30)	Signals & timing (30)	DM access (15)	Budget / health (15)	Competitive opening (10)	Total (100)	Rationale
TII (Falcon)	29	27	11	15	7	89	Builds Arabic + dialect models (Falcon-Emirati, Oct 2026); state-funded; named AI research chief; no public data vendor found.
MBZUAI – Institute of Foundation Models	28	28	10	15	6	87	Three major releases in 2026 (K2 Think V2, K2 Horizon, Jais 3). Fully-open data policy means vendor data must be releasable.
HUMAIN	30	27	9	15	5	86	Largest Gulf buyer; humain-m3 awaiting safety training before weights release. Large in-house evaluator team and Scale AI in Riyadh reduce the opening.
QCRI / HBKU (Fanar)	28	26	10	13	5	82	Fanar 3.0 slated for Dec 2026. Strict sovereignty (no external AI providers); Scale AI holds a Qatar government deal.
Inception42 (G42)	28	27	9	15	3	82	Co-builds Jais 3 / Jais Speech (Oct 2026). Partnered with Scale AI since Mar 2025, so this is a displacement play.
Misraj AI	26	15	12	8	8	69	Arabic-first model builder (Kawn, 15 dialects); CEO reachable; last major launch Dec 2025 (weak signal); smaller budget.
Oman MTCIT – Mu'een	22	16	6	10	8	62	National model built with private-sector partner; Jul 2026 plan to further develop it. Government procurement, owner not named.
Aramco – METABRAIN	20	14	5	15	6	60	Industrial LLM needs expert domain data (Symbal's 150+ domains). Mostly internal data; AI owner not verified.
Wittify.ai	20	6	12	5	8	51	Arabic ASR/TTS across 25 dialects needs speech data; funding is stale (Jul 2025) and small.
AI71	18	8	6	12	6	50	Commercial arm of Falcon; no 2026 model-building signal found; contact data stale.

Sources & Gaps

Company	Claim	Source	Tier	Date	Note / contradiction
TII	Falcon-Emirati + Arabic speech & OCR models launched	WAM	1 (state agency)	2026-10-07	
TII	Falcon-H1 Arabic + Falcon H1R 7B released	TII	1	2026-01-05	
TII	Hakim Hacid still Chief Researcher, AI & Digital Science	ITU AI for Good	3	2026	Confirms 2024 appointment still current
MBZUAI IFM	K2 Horizon: 6 fully open models, 0.9B–375B	MBZUAI	1	2026-09-03	Also covered by The National (Tier 2)
MBZUAI IFM / Inception42	Jais 3 fleet + Jais Speech	HPCwire	3	2026-10-16	Single trade source; confirm on mbzuai.ac.ae
MBZUAI IFM	K2 Think V2 post-trained only on Institute-curated data	WAM	1	2026-01-28	Curated in-house data = possible in-house data team
HUMAIN	humain-m3 428B MoE; weights after safety training	Middle East AI News	3	2026-09-02	AI-Monitor (Tier 2) corroborates MiniMax-based model
HUMAIN	ALLaM refined by 600+ domain experts and 250 evaluators	Saudi Gazette	2	2025-08-25	Stale (>12 mo); indicates in-house HITL capacity
HUMAIN	Yaser Al-Onaizan, Deputy CEO & President of Data & AI Models	Arab News	2	2025-10-20	Conflict: Constellation profile says 'President of AI Products'. Verify current title
QCRI	Fanar 3.0 slated for December 2026	Middle East AI News	3	2025-12-09	Also The Peninsula (Tier 3) quoting Elmagarmid; release not yet confirmed
QCRI	Fanar 2.0 built with no dependency on external AI providers	arXiv 2603.16397	1 (primary paper)	2026-03-17	Sovereignty constraint on outside data vendors
Inception42	Scale AI strategic partnership	Middle East AI News	3	2025-03	Incumbent competitor; status in 2026 unknown
Misraj AI	Kawn Arabic LLM ecosystem, 15 dialects	GlobeNewswire	1 (press release)	2025-12-04	Weak signal (~11 months)
Oman MTCIT	Plan to further develop the Mu'een model	Times of Oman	3	2026-07-25	Built with private-sector partner (Times of Oman, May 2026)
Aramco	Technology delivered $5B value; internal LLM in use	Semafor	2	2026-09-17	
Competitor	Scale AI regional team of 130+ across UAE, Qatar, KSA (Dubai office added)	Middle East AI News	3	2026	Main incumbent across Gulf accounts
Competitor / partner	Arabic.AI (Tarjama) got HUMAIN strategic investment	Wamda	3	2026-09	Arabic language-data player now inside HUMAIN's orbit
GAP	No business emails or phone numbers collected	Not found			Use official contact forms, LinkedIn, or warm intros. Do not guess addresses
GAP	Data vendors for TII, QCRI, MBZUAI not public	Not found			Ask in discovery; absence may mean in-house teams
GAP	Budgets / procurement routes unknown for all accounts	Not found			Government entities likely need tenders or a registered supplier (TII/ATRC has supplier registration)
COMPLIANCE	UAE PDPL, KSA PDPL, Qatar PDPPL				Use business contacts only, give an opt-out in every message, and keep any training data in-country if required