

2012 OLYMPICS & PARALYMPIC GAMES: RIO TINTO & HISTORIC FUTURES AIM FOR THE MEDALS

Sector: Mining


Region: UK – US – Australia

Organisation: **Rio Tinto** is a leading international mining group with its HQ in the UK; combining Rio Tinto plc – a London and NYSE listed company, and Rio Tinto Limited, listed on the Australian Securities Exchange. The company's activities span the world (Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, North America and South America).

Rio Tinto's business is finding, mining, and processing mineral resources. Major products are aluminium, copper, diamonds, energy (coal and uranium), gold, industrial minerals (borax, titanium dioxide, salt) and iron ore. In 2002, Rio Tinto provided the metal for the Winter Olympic Games medals held in Salt Lake City, Utah and it is also a Partner of the 2012 Australian Olympic Team.

Project summary: Rio Tinto will exclusively provide the metal needed to produce the 4,700 gold, silver and bronze medals at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. As a part of its commitment to sustainable development (both as an organisation and an Olympic and Paralympic partner), Rio Tinto established a partnership with an independent organisation, Historic Futures, to be able to trace the journey of the metal used in the medals from the mine to the Royal Mint and finally to the Games and the winning athletes.

Context of the initiative: The mining sector is confronted with a number of environmental and social issues including biodiversity, climate change and human rights. As such, mining companies are increasingly expected to develop, and operate by, high standards in relation to their social and environmental performance. In parallel, as part of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games' (LOCOG) commitment to sustainable development and social responsibility, the Committee has outlined sustainability requirements with regard to sourcing metals for medals, diplomas and flowers, to ensure that



there is a sustainable and responsible approach to environmental and social issues across supply chains at all levels.


LOCOG's requirement for traceability echoes a core component of Rio Tinto as an organisation. Over the past decade, the company has adopted a proactive approach towards traceability and considers it as one of its main strengths in the mining market. For example, the organisation has established traceability initiatives for its diamonds and other precious metals. Furthermore, as part of Rio Tinto's vision to be "the global mining leader," Rio Tinto places high priority on "maintaining or achieving sector leadership, including operational excellence, sustainable development, exploration and innovation."¹ Thus, to assure reactivity and quality as a supplier for the London Games, Rio Tinto wanted to launch an initiative to demonstrate to its stakeholders the organisation's expertise and commitment to the traceability of the medals' entire metal supply chain. The company's objective is to enable the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to certify that sustainable development concerns are being addressed at every stage, with the process of producing the medals compliant with industry's leading standards and overall to contribute to enabling the most sustainable Games possible.

Overview of the initiative: Rio Tinto worked with an independent third party called **Historic Futures**,² using that organisation's traceability platform, 'String', to trace the journey of the medals' metal. String is a secure, online platform for business networks to manage and share product and process information, from raw material through to finished product. This traceability enabled Rio Tinto to successfully communicate to its stakeholders and to proactively respond to any social or environmental issues which may occur throughout the production of the medals.

Issues and challenges: This initiative is a shared corporate social responsibility initiative between Rio Tinto, its supply chain and Historic Futures, which fits into both Rio Tinto's and LOCOG's sustainability commitments, policies and strategies. The overall delivery of the LOCOG's sustainable commitment is intrinsically linked to their partners' work, initiatives and commitments and as such Rio Tinto's approach needed to be aligned with LOCOG expectations.

¹ http://www.riotinto.com/aboutus/19602_strategy.asp

² **Historic Futures Limited** (HF) are recognised experts in supply-chain traceability with world leading technologies and consulting expertise.



Furthermore, Rio Tinto was tasked with the challenge of engaging its often dispersed supply chain into the process, as the initiative is grounded upon enabling stakeholders and supply chain partners to be able to be involved from the beginning and to be able to share data to guarantee the quality of the analysis. To help facilitate this cross-supply chain programme, training has been delivered to enable supply partners to work with the String system (including a remote peer-support mechanism to assist with specific data recording challenges). One of the key successes emerging from this collaborative approach is that it has enabled the people involved to understand the objectives and to efficiently use the String traceability platform.

Why did Article 13 select this initiative? Metal supply-chain traceability requires environmental stewardship and signing a partnership with an expert to deal with this issue seems to be a key of success. An external audit brings various point of view and objectivity, collaboration and participation within the supply chain enables technical employees to become integrated into the process.

In terms of management, training and involving teams from various departments directly in CSR initiatives is a good practice as it brings quality and increases employees' knowledge on sustainability issues.

Rio Tinto's expertise on responsible mining and traceability has been built through years. The company was one of the founding members of **The International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM)** in 2001 which was formed as a result of the Global Mining Initiative (GMI) where Rio Tinto played a leading role.

Additionally, to be more involved in the community of the Oyu Tolgoi in Mongolia, Rio Tinto will be the Gold Partner sponsor of the Mongolian National Team competing at the London Games. Rio Tinto also invests in numerous programmes that assist regional and local communities and young Mongolians in the areas of education and training, local procurement practices and sustainable development.



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