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TECHNICAL REPORT

Setting the Agenda for an Evidence-based Olympics

Evidence-based Olympics Team

Prepared for RAND Corporate

The report was performed as part of the RAND Corporation's continuing program of self-initiated research. The research was conducted by RAND Europe.

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Summary

Big projects bring big challenges, and organising and running the Olympics is just about as big as it gets. This report shows policymakers, organisers and implementers a way to create the right foundations for the decisions that will determine the success or failure of London's Olympic Games.

London 2012 needs an evidence base for accountability

Evidence based policy making is now the norm. We know we have to examine the past in order to plan for the future, and that only by pointing to tangible evidence for what works can we justify the use of public funds. The 2012 Olympics, more than any other major publicly funded project, will be under the glare of the media spotlight until long after the 2012 Games are over. We have to get it right. Action must be taken now if we are to keep control of the Olympics agenda in the eyes of the public, Government, and the International Olympics Committee.

Policy makers, organisers and implementers of the Olympic Games must have a sound basis for their decisions that enables them to make the best possible use of resources, anticipate potential problems, deal with actual problems, and deliver a Games and a legacy that will testify to their efforts. Only by using the detailed and considered analysis of a comprehensive evidence base will those involved be able to demonstrate that their decisions are robust.

Chapter 1 of this document identifies the requirements for and trend towards evidence based policy making in the UK, and links this to the planning, delivery and legacy of London 2012. It sets out the context in which policy making for the London Games must take place.

There is an evidence base on mega-events that can provide accountability

Each Olympic Games is unique, and what worked in Sydney will not necessarily work in London. Evidence analysed correctly shows us what works, and equally important, what doesn't. In Chapter 2 of this paper, RAND Europe looks at many of the key questions to ask as we build the Olympics evidence base for a number of the issues that organisers must explore, including health, volunteering, employment, governance and accountability, economic development, tourism, transport, regeneration, land use, environment, civic engagement, multiculturalism and security. We show how meta-analysis of previous Olympic Games and other mega-events should be applied, not only to ensure that all the information from past events on this scale is analysed and taken into account, but also to examine the evidence for best practice and how it can be applied to London 2012.

This meta-analysis identifies issues and evidence that are pertinent to the planning, delivery and legacy of London 2012 by examining previous studies of Olympics and mega-events. By identifying the questions that can and should be addressed by those with a stake in the London Olympics, we start to build the evidence based agenda for the Games.

Primary research can add to the evidence base for London 2012

It is not just important to build on previous studies however; having a valid research programme to investigate the specific contextual problems associated with London 2012 (defined by geography, culture and timing) will allow us to answer questions that cannot be addressed by understanding previous events. This programme of primary research can sensibly build upon the secondary research of any meta-analysis. To illustrate using the evidence base in more depth to take things forward, we look at two critical areas that will have resounding impacts up to and after the Games, transport and security.

Creating a transport system that functions effectively and efficiently during and after the Games is in everyone's interests. By investigating options surrounding transport choices made by travellers, RAND Europe can apply its modelling methods to facilitate this outcome. Furthermore, the same modelling techniques can be applied to the legacy for land use in the regeneration of East London.

The 2012 Olympic Games promise to pose a massive security challenge. Clearly identifying what the security environment will be in five years time is remarkably difficult. However, there are tools available that can deepen understanding of the interactions of different aspects of Olympic security. We show how a future scenarios model developed by RAND Europe for a government department can be applied to the Olympics to help reduce the security threat.

More evidence will be needed for London 2012 to be the best Games yet

This paper offers the starting point for developing an evidence base for the London 2012 Olympics. It should not be the end of the evidence base however. There is a need for a full understanding of the details of evidence from both secondary and primary research, and this paper identifies where this evidence base could provide real learning opportunities for the organisers of, and interested parties in, London 2012. Within the meta-analysis section (Chapter 2) we identify questions that can be addressed through a more in-depth meta-analysis, either of multiple streams of policy or in specific research areas such as tourism or healthcare. Whilst in Chapters 3 and 4 we outline potential studies that will provide a greater evidence base in two specific policy areas.

Figure 1 illustrates the set out of the report, and outlines the areas in which we have identified where evidence can inform the planning, delivery and legacy of London 2012. The figure shows the three time windows in which evidence can help in Olympic policy making (planning; delivery and legacy). At each of these stages, there are a large number of themes in which an evidence base could help policy. These themes are covered in the meta-analysis (Chapter 2 of this document) and lead onto a number of questions that can be answered in order to provide an evidence based agenda for the Olympics in London. Two of the themes have been highlighted in the figure – Transport and Security.



Figure 1. Overview of the evidence base required for the Olympics

