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OLYMPIC ECONOMIC SPIN-OFF

The future of the structures from the Olympic Games, hosted in London, England, remains full of doubt. The supposed economic benefits of the games may never emerge. But one service-sector industry is already getting its reward from putting on a successful Olympics: sports-management consultancy.

Organizing the Olympics involves years of planning and tremendous cost. There is a new host, new organizers, at least some new competitions, and complex and unique security, infrastructure and logistics requirements. Yet all organizing committees must consider similar questions.

In recognition of this continuity, the International Olympic Committee has set up a 'knowledge management' program to pass lessons on to the next host. Members of the London Organizing Committee are already in Rio de Janeiro to do just that.

Alongside official feedback channels, however, a private industry of sports consultants has emerged. They travel from one host city to the next offering experience in various domains. At London's games, Australians in particular held key positions. This was because the Sydney games were particularly efficient and fun – and also because London's organizers felt closer to the Australians from a cultural point of view.

Britain has already started selling its Olympic expertise. One British consultancy, for example, worked on the successful bid for the winter Olympics in Russia. An infrastructure firm that planned the Olympic Park in east London won a contract in 2011 to help Rio build its equivalent.

Sports-event management is not confined to the Olympics. Private consultants, many of them British, have long worked on other globe-trotting events like football and rugby world cups, on contracts lasting from six months to years.

Their client list is growing because the geographical spread of sports events is expanding. Brazil is a keen recipient: it is staging the football World Cup in 2014 as well as the first Latin American Olympics two years later. The Middle East is also a strong growth market. Qatar is hosting the 2022 football World Cup and bids for almost every major sporting event. The first Formula One Grand Prix will be staged in the region as well.

Though sport is the focus of such ventures, experience in security or transport requirements, press operations, accommodation and catering, cleaning and waste management are valuable

for different settings too. The British Government promised more business from hosting the Olympics: for a few specialized firms it is definitely true.