

**Achieving Meaningful, Ongoing Alignment at Local, National and Global Scales
about the Benefits and Costs of Mineral Extraction Projects
that Allows Confident Investment**

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Foresight about “sustainability” of mineral extraction commonly includes macro projections about costs and benefits-- geologic endowment of minerals (supply) relative to population growth, rate of urbanization, evolving technological needs for critical materials (demand), as well as economic, environmental and cultural impacts of mining. However, the truth is that there is absolutely no governance structure at any scale allowing for the technocratic management of this range of issues to a universally accepted “optimal solution”. Rather, dialog, debate and conflict in the pursuit of agreement on the merits of bringing a project to the world occurs on a case-by-case basis. What is more, individual outcomes of the dialog may well themselves not be stable or “sustainable” over time.

From the start, when a geologist sees the possibility of a new economic deposit or an investor believes technical trends will result in specific new material needs, the tension between the potential value to all stakeholders of developing and possibly mining a deposit on the one hand and the diverse interests that may not acknowledge or accept that value begins. If the back-and-forth becomes a “pro vs con” or “us vs them” conversation, progress to alignment can be delayed years, decades, or indefinitely.

For resource companies, “sustainability” must describe a set of specific leadership instincts, management processes, measurement tools and relationship practices that, when practiced with integrity, creates room for dialogue-- a “safe space” in global conversation within which confident investment, reliable implementation and wealth creation for all stakeholders can occur over time.

We believe it is the responsibility of the group that sees the possibility of a valuable project to enroll not only its investors in the profitability of the project, but also local, national and global stakeholders in the dimensions of value that could be important to each, while honoring their perspectives. In order to accomplish this, the key instincts must be for transparency, integrity, and creativity in maximising the shared perception of the total value of the project relative to impacts. As well, as resource companies are the ones who generate the possibility of value, they also must accept their role in the process for establishing how that value is allocated among employees, governments, communities and investors. Pragmatism is key—rather than insisting on the “best” possible project, it may be better to start with a project for which rapid alignment can be achieved and evolve over time.

Creating and maintaining coalitions at the local, national and global scales that support specific new and ongoing projects requires attention, “face time” and relationship building skills extending from the top of the resource corporation to local managers, technicians and workers. All levels of the company must hold aligned values and context inside a well-designed community engagement plan for diverse communications to make sense and deliver dependable agreements.

In the absence of companies fulfilling these responsibilities, the social, regulatory, legal and financial “license to operate” itself is not sustainable over time. When legal or regulatory agreements break down, jobs are lost, community prosperity is destroyed, investors lose money and supply of critical materials for the world is reduced.