Mining & Minerals

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Public-private collaboration in mining: Global models and lessons learned

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Public-private collaboration in mining: Global models and lessons learned

The 2026 Mining Indaba, to be held in Cape Town in February 2026, convenes at a moment when the global mining industry is being redefined by issues of governance, collaboration and sustainable development. Stakeholders face intensifying ESG expectations, rapid technological change and mounting pressure to demonstrate tangible local benefits. Investors scrutinise not only mineral reserves, but also the credibility of institutions, the clarity of rules and the predictability of government engagement.

The countries that have succeeded in mining have done so not through resource advantage alone, but through systematic public-private collaboration and reliable partnerships between state and the industry. These partnerships reduce risk, incentivise investment, build social legitimacy and create sustainable value.

These principles form the central theme of the 2026 Indaba, which focuses on industry collaboration. In this article we examine international models of collaboration in the mining industry, illustrating how governments and industry have strengthened mining ecosystems, deepened local benefits and navigated environmental and social expectations in various global jurisdictions.

Botswana: Long-term joint ventures and disciplined governance

African nations attending the 2026 Indaba have an inspiring example from their own continent of how a collaborative approach can elevate the mining sector. Botswana stands out globally as a benchmark for how a successful long-term partnership can transform the economy.

The cornerstone of Botswana's model is Debswana, a longstanding joint venture between the Government and De Beers. This partnership exemplifies strong alignment between state and industry, built on shared ownership, co-governance and profit-sharing arrangements. The Government upholds rigorous governance, maintaining regulatory independence while managing its commercial stake through a structured board and robust professional oversight.

Over time, Debswana has expanded its remit from extraction into sorting, sales and beneficiation, nurturing local industries in diamond cutting, polishing and associated services. The enduring

strength of this partnership stems from a foundation of transparent contractual agreements, mutual respect and a commitment to governance.

Even though the diamond industry is currently facing challenges, this does not detract from the fact that this partnership has been a long term success story for one of *"Africa's own"*.

Australia: Pre-competitive geoscience and enabling institutions

Australia has long recognised that exploration does not fail because minerals are absent; it fails because uncertainty is too high. Public investment in pre-competitive geoscience (through Geoscience Australia and state surveys) provides high-quality geological maps, geophysical datasets and mineral system analyses at no cost to explorers. Between 2015 and 2020, regions targeted by publicly available datasets saw a 20 to 30% increase in new exploration licences, and a marked expansion of greenfield investments in under-explored states such as Queensland and Western Australia.

Australia's permitting system is similarly structured and predictable. Statutory timelines, clear sequencing of environmental and heritage assessments, and transparent land access frameworks reduce uncertainty. Government-facilitated negotiation with traditional owners ensures that agreements follow standardised policies rather than ad hoc practice.

Infrastructure co-ordination further supports investment. Strategic rail and port corridors are planned jointly with industry under regulated access frameworks that enable third-party participation while protecting existing investment. Workforce development is aligned with operational needs through partnerships with vocational institutions, ensuring skills in mining engineering, automation and environmental management meet industry demand.

Canada: Fiscal innovation and indigenous partnerships

Canada demonstrates how fiscal incentives, federal-provincial co-ordination and indigenous engagement can work together to stimulate mining. The flow-through share regime allows exploration companies to transfer tax benefits to investors, reducing risk in early-stage projects. This mechanism underpins Canada's junior exploration sector, which accounted for more than 60% of new mineral discoveries between 2010 and 2020.

Geological surveys at federal and provincial levels provide extensive pre-competitive data, while transparent staking and tenure regimes reduce discretion and strengthen investor confidence. Regulatory co-ordination, particularly in environmental assessment, reduces duplication and accelerates permitting.

Indigenous communities are integrated through impact-and-benefit agreements. Governments support negotiation and capacity-building, while companies commit to employment, procurement, and revenue sharing. This framework builds social licence, reduces project-specific friction and embeds local economic participation in project economics.

Chile: Stability, public development agencies and industry modernisation

Chile's long-term copper leadership rests on stable institutions, clear concessions, predictable fiscal regimes and co-investment in ecosystem modernisation. Codelco, the state-owned copper company, operates alongside private firms under transparent regulation and oversight.

Chile has invested in digitalised permitting, modernised tailings governance, and water and energy transition projects, including desalination and renewable energy integration. Public agencies co-invest in supplier development and technology adoption, upgrading the capabilities of the local mining ecosystem. The result is high-value local content, downstream beneficiation and a global reputation for responsible mining.

Nordic model (Finland and Sweden): Innovation clusters and sustainability leadership

Finland and Sweden demonstrate how innovation ecosystems can address technological and environmental challenges in mining. The Geological Survey of Finland GTK and public research agencies co-fund research and development with universities and companies on ore processing, battery materials and circular-economy solutions. Pilot projects reduce technological risk for private adopters, accelerating adoption of clean technologies.

Sweden combines state-owned mining firms with a sophisticated mining equipment, technology and services (METS) cluster. Public agencies co-fund research platforms with industry to drive advances in automation, electrification and low-carbon production. Environmental standards remain rigorous, but a problem-solving culture encourages iterative innovation across government, industry and academia.

Peru: Social licence compacts and public investment linkages

Peru's copper growth was unlocked through competitive concessions, macroeconomic stability and a deliberate effort to channel mining revenues into local public investment. The Canon Minero fiscal mechanism allocates shares of mining taxes and royalties to regional and municipal governments.

While implementation has been uneven, the collaborative model has relied on tripartite frameworks in which companies, local authorities and communities agree on project-specific development plans for water, roads and social services.

Government support units help sub-national entities plan and execute investment. Where applied effectively, these arrangements convert mining-led fiscal flows into visible local benefits, de-risk projects and sustain operating stability.

Kazakhstan: Legal transplantation and investor partnership platforms

Kazakhstan overhauled its mining legal regime to attract foreign capital and expertise, drawing on international best practice and the Australian licensing model. Reforms clarified subsoil use rights, introduced transparent cadastral systems and simplified exploration permits.

To bolster investor confidence, the Government established a dedicated international centre with its own common-law based court and regulatory framework, signalling a partnership approach to the rule of law. Regulators engaged industry in drafting implementing regulations and digitalising licensing processes, while national geological agencies expanded data availability. This collaborative legal modernisation aligned domestic institutions with investor expectations and reduced entry barriers for both juniors and majors.

Indonesia: Downstreaming through negotiated pathways

Indonesia's model combines resource nationalism with structured state-industry negotiation to advance domestic processing. By setting progressive requirements for in-country beneficiation and offering incentives and timelines for compliance, the Government has induced private investment in smelters and associated infrastructure.

This policy has been operationalised through memoranda and project-specific agreements that sequence export permissions against construction milestones, with state entities facilitating land, power and permitting. While not without controversy, the model demonstrates how the state can articulate industrial policy objectives and work with private partners to deliver shared assets and capacity that reshape the value chain.

What typically goes wrong and how successful jurisdiction address it

Public-private collaboration in mining tends to fail for a small number of recurring, structural reasons. The jurisdictions that perform best are not those that avoid these risks altogether, but those that design around them explicitly.

First, collaboration breaks down when the state plays too many roles at once (regulator, commercial participant and political decision-maker) without clear separation. Where this occurs, permitting becomes discretionary, confidence erodes and investment slows. Successful jurisdictions address this by legally and operationally separating regulatory authority from state shareholding, placing equity interests in ring-fenced holding entities with professional boards and no regulatory influence.

Second, long-term capital is deterred when fiscal and regulatory frameworks change abruptly in response to elections, commodity cycles or budget pressure. The strongest models protect stability by fixing core rules (tenure, licensing, royalty structures) while allowing limited, scheduled adjustment of parameters through transparent review processes.

Third, social licence fails where mining revenues reach the state but not the community. This is rarely a funding problem and almost always an execution problem. Jurisdictions that perform better tie revenue transfers to defined local projects, co-designed with municipalities and communities, and provide technical support to ensure funds are actually spent on visible infrastructure and services.

Fourth, industrial policy fails when governments mandate outcomes (beneficiation, localisation, technology shifts) without regard to project economics or capital constraints. Effective collaboration sequences these objectives to project maturity and market conditions, using negotiated milestones rather than blanket prohibitions, and pairing obligations with enabling infrastructure, energy supply and permitting certainty.

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Fifth, collaboration collapses when engagement depends on individual relationships rather than institutions. Ad hoc task teams and informal forums disappear with leadership changes. Durable jurisdictions formalise engagement through standing platforms with defined mandates, disclosure rules and technical continuity, so dialogue survives political turnover.

Finally, community participation breaks down when it is treated as a box-ticking exercise rather than part of project design. Where participation is disconnected from jobs, procurement, revenue or ownership, expectations rise but outcomes do not. Stronger models embed communities directly into project economics, aligning participation with operational performance and long-term viability.

Global lessons learned

International experience, both within and outside of Africa, suggests partnerships are most effective when roles are clear and mutually reinforcing. Governments' comparative advantage lies in providing information, setting and enforcing predictable rules, convening stakeholders and investing in shared public goods that private actors will not provide at scale. The private sector's strengths are capital allocation, operational excellence and innovation. Aligning incentives, through stable fiscal terms, access to data and fair returns to communities and the state, turns this division of labour into a collaborative engine.

Of course the sequencing matters. Early emphasis on geology, cadastre transparency and permitting clarity attracts exploration and signals seriousness. As projects mature, collaboration shifts to infrastructure solutions, social compacts and technology deployment. Periodic policy reviews undertaken with industry and civil society help maintain competitiveness and legitimacy without undermining stability. Where the state holds equity or operates state-owned enterprises, ring-fenced governance and a clear separation between regulator and commercial actor preserve trust in decision-making.

Ultimately, countries that scale mining successfully without eroding social or environmental standards treat collaboration not as episodic negotiation, but as a system. They institutionalise dialogue, measure outcomes, and refine programmes to close gaps.

Whether through joint ventures, innovation alliances or community benefit frameworks, the common thread is disciplined partnership: public institutions that are predictable and capable, private partners that are accountable and have a long-term outlook, and communities whose participation is embedded into the value proposition from the outset.

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