

State planning works: the Olympics prove it

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The Rio Olymoucs have finished. Team GB came second. At a cost reported to have exceeded £270 million the country's athletes won 67 medals; a record.

But stunning though these personal achievements were they did not, as is widely recognised, happen by chance. The money bought the back and facilities that clearly made a massive difference.

It's convenient to many that the money came from the National Loittery, but the fact is that this was government directed: the Lottery was given no choice about the use of the funds in question. They were told they were for funding Olympic sport. In other words this was state directed spending.

And it worked.

The government chose to invest in an activity.

It set up a system to pick winners.

And it delivered them.

So let's stop the pretence that this is not possible. It seems to be stunningly successful. I take nothing away from the athletes but the difference between Atlanta in 1996 and Rio 2016 is not the commitment of our athletes; it is the funding and backup they've been given.

The lesson should be noted and replicated whenever appropriate.