As part of the Responsible Minerals Initiative’s (RMI) proactive and evolving process to continually improve its programs, RMI issues a feedback survey at the conclusion of every audit under the responsible Minerals Assurance Process (RMAP, formerly Conflict Free Smelter Program or CFSP). The survey serves as one data point for gauging smelter or refiner (SOR) auditee satisfaction of the RMAP, identifying key strengths and areas of improvement for the program, and further understanding expectations for program delivery and growth. Other data points RMI also evaluates include: the RMI grievance mechanism, smelter or refiner appeals process, direct contact with the program, feedback from industry associations and other stakeholders, as well as shadow audit reports.

The feedback survey originally opened on March 29, 2015 and closed on May 31, 2018, in advance of the launch of the revised RMAP standards on June 1, 2018. An updated survey questionnaire was opened in June 2018, reflecting changes to the RMAP which will be highlighted in the future survey reports.

The RMI is releasing this summary report of the feedback received under the previous CFSP protocols. Over a three year period, a total of 129 responses from auditees representing about one-third of the number of audits conducted during the survey period have been collected. While auditees are encouraged to complete the survey at the close of their audit, the survey is optional and can be submitted anonymously.

The feedback from the respondents was largely positive, and demonstrated satisfaction with both the RMAP program and independent third-party auditors approved by RMAP to conduct audits. Auditees provided constructive input on areas of the program they would like to see strengthened or added to the program over time.

The RMI focused on assessing key indicators of auditees’ experiences with the program in general and the audit process specifically. This report provides a summary of responses covering issues from reasons for company participation in RMAP, to experiences during and after the audit, the benefits gained from participation, and challenges with meeting program requirements.

The survey contained a total of 31 questions, and this report includes data highlighting the following areas: satisfaction of the RMAP, identifying key strengths and areas of improvement for the program, and further understanding expectations for program delivery and growth. While a variety of reasons for participation in the RMAP were indicated, the majority of respondents cited corporate policy and values and direct customer requests, as well as End-user, OEMs requests, which reflects a strong desire from both auditees and their customers for responsible mineral procurement (Figure 1).
Ninety-four percent of survey respondents indicated that they understood “Well” or “Very Well” assessment requirements before the audit team arrived on site. However, a common request was the need for greater understanding of the required audit documents during the pre-audit phase. In addition, RMI received numerous requests for audit documents in additional local languages, specifically Chinese and Japanese. Taking this into account, the RMI has translated audit documents, including assessment workbooks, assessment standards, agreements, checklists, procedures, guidance, templates and other tools into several key languages, available here and here.

Regarding the audit process, nearly all survey respondents provided positive feedback on their auditors. This included consistent acknowledgement of auditors’ knowledge of traceability and sourcing issues, the audit process, as well as their preparedness, responsiveness to questions and concerns, and communication of audit findings (Figures 2, 3).

Timely assessment and report execution, as well as completion of corrective actions, are critical for the program where auditee conformance status may have an impact on global supply chains. Respondents generally agreed that the auditors clearly outlined the findings and post-audit process (Figure 4). There were a few cited concerns about the audit process, which included difficulties in obtaining requested data and understanding standards for multiple metals.
The vast majority of respondents received their draft audit report within 10 business days (Figure 5) and understood the necessary corrective actions they needed to implement to address areas of non-conformance (Figure 6). In a few cases, auditees cited delayed reports and wanted additional clarification on audit findings.

Respondents generally reported positive outcomes from RMAP participation. Nearly all respondents reported improvements to their internal due diligence processes (Figure 7). A common suggestion for the corrective actions phase was to receive additional implementation details and guidance. There were also requests for further training on the revised RMAP standards.

A majority of respondents indicated that their internal management systems, document control, and customer/supplier relations improved as a result of participating in RMAP (Figure 8). One respondent stated that while their internal due diligence progress has improved as a result of their result, they would have liked additional feedback and guidance in this area.
Ninety-seven out of 98 respondents that answered the question on continued participation indicated that they would continue participating in RMAP (Figure 9).

While the RMAP received significant positive feedback from survey respondents, respondents also provided constructive feedback where auditor quality, auditee preparedness, program management, and communication could have been improved.

Suggestions for improvement included: better local language access to certain documents, for auditors to better understand smelter and refiner operations for each specific metal, for smelter and refiners to have improved tools and templates to implement the protocols. RMI integrated this constructive feedback into training materials for both auditors and auditees, developed guidance for auditors/auditees on areas of difficulty or that needed clarification, worked with consultants to provide one-on-one technical assistance, and added translations of the audit documents, where appropriate.

Lastly, the survey contained open questions for additional requests or considerations for RMI. Most commonly requested items include:

- Additional training on audit requirements and policies
- Guidance on audit documentation, such as Mass Balance and Origin Determination
- Sample supply chain policy language
- Guidance on supplier communication
- Information on conflict minerals national regulation and international standards
- Practical approaches to implementing due diligence
- Upstream mechanism process clarifications

Given this feedback, the RMI will continue to provide regular online and in-person trainings1 to auditors and auditees with the release of its revised RMAP standards, as well as updated guidance documents and individual technical assistance.

RMI will continue to seek input from program participants and stakeholders as the revised RMAP standards are implemented.

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