

P. Rogers, 2010: Implications of complicated and complex characteristics for key tasks in evaluation, in Schwartz, R., ed. Evaluating the Complex, Transactions Publisher

Table 1 Distinguishing between simple, complicated and complex

	Simple	Complicated	Complex
What interventions look like	Discrete, standardized intervention	Interventions which are have multiple components, or which only work in conjunction with other interventions or favourable	Non standardized and changing, adaptive, and emergent in response to changing needs, opportunities and understandings of what is working
Who implements them	Single organization	Multiple identifiable organizations in predictable ways	Multiple organizations with emergent and unpredictable roles
How interventions work	Pretty much the same everywhere	Differently in different situations (different people or different implementation environments) which can be clearly identified	Generalisations rapidly decay, results are sensitive to initial conditions as well as to context

Table 2 Implications of essentially simple interventions

	Aspect	Issues for evaluation
Measuring and describing	Single organization	Likely agreement on what is important to measure or describe and what are credible measures or types of evidence
Causal analysis	Intervention is both necessary and sufficient to produce results	With/without comparisons show impact of intervention
Reporting and using findings	Single message – ‘What works’	Knowledge transfer to other settings, compliance and fidelity of implementation

Table 3 Implications of interventions with complicated aspects

	Aspect	Issues for evaluation
Measuring and describing	Different partners in the intervention with different information needs and accountabilities and values about what is important	Potentially divergent views on what is valued and should be measured, what constitutes credible evidence, and how it should be weighted to produce an overall judgement of merit
Causal analysis	Intervention is not sufficient - multiple sequential interventions, or simultaneous causal strands required to produce the impacts	Need information about quality of subsequent or simultaneous interventions and disaggregated analysis
	Intervention is not sufficient – only works in favourable circumstances	Need information about context (implementation environment and participant characteristics) and disaggregated analysis
	Intervention not the only way to achieve results	Need to identify other ways in which results achieved and compare costs and benefits
Reporting and using findings	Complicated message – ‘What works for whom in what circumstances’	Knowledge translation to other settings, including application only in similar contexts and appropriate adaptation

Table 4 Implications of interventions with complex aspects

	Aspect	Issues for evaluation
Measuring and describing	Different and emerging partners in the intervention with different and emerging information needs and accountabilities and values about what is important	Potentially divergent and changing views on what is valued and should be measured, what constitutes credible evidence, and how it should be weighted to produce an overall judgement of merit
		Emerging variables that need to be included
Causal analysis	Sensitivity to initial conditions – a small difference can produce a disproportionate difference. Recursive causality – vicious or virtuous circles	Need to understand where the ‘tipping point’ is Need to identify vicious or virtuous circles
Reporting and using findings	Findings are about “What’s working?”	Need to support ability to continue to learn and adapt