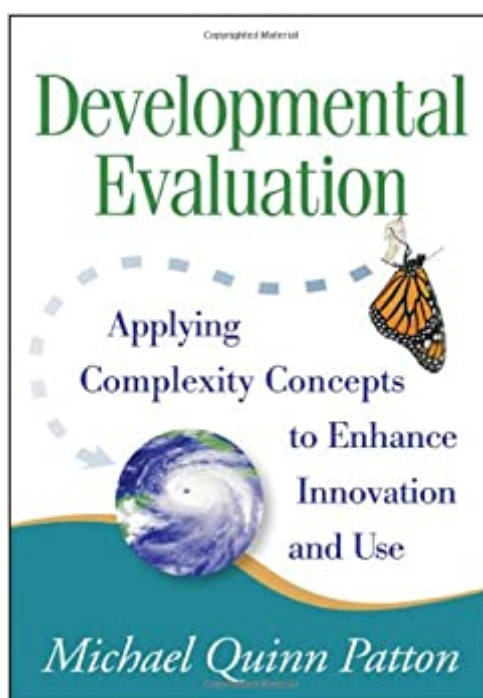


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# Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts To Enhance Innovation And Use



## Synopsis

Developmental evaluation (DE) offers a powerful approach to monitoring and supporting social innovations by working in partnership with program decision makers. In this book, eminent authority Michael Quinn Patton shows how to conduct evaluations within a DE framework. Patton draws on insights about complex dynamic systems, uncertainty, nonlinearity, and emergence. He illustrates how DE can be used for a range of purposes: ongoing program development, adapting effective principles of practice to local contexts, generating innovations and taking them to scale, and facilitating rapid response in crisis situations. Students and practicing evaluators will appreciate the book's extensive case examples and stories, cartoons, clear writing style, "closer look" sidebars, and summary tables. Provided is essential guidance for making evaluations useful, practical, and credible in support of social change. See also *Developmental Evaluation Exemplars*, edited by Michael Quinn Patton, Kate McKegg, and Nan Wehipeihana, which presents 12 in-depth case studies.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Proust wrote that 'the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.' In this book, Patton brings new eyes to evaluation landscapes. He illustrates the distinct contribution that developmental evaluation can make in addressing the dynamic complexity that often challenges evaluation efforts. Evaluators will see themselves among the stories Patton shares. The concepts and ideas are accessible and the case examples provide a diverse array of

teachable vignettes, making the book ideal for classroom use. This is a most enjoyable read that offers lots of new learning, even for an evaluation veteran!"--Ann M. Doucette, PhD, Director, The Evaluators' Institute, The George Washington University

"There is a real hunger for this book among social innovators, funders, policymakers, and educators. The book is sure to become dog-eared as it is read, used, and reread to help evaluators conduct their work in a manner consistent with the complexity of the challenges they are addressing."--Brenda Zimmerman, PhD, Director, Health Industry Management Program, Schulich School of Business, York University, Canada

"In true Michael Quinn Patton style, this book successfully extends both the theory and practice of evaluation in significant and timely ways. Solutions to the world's most pressing social problems are neither predictable nor known; developmental evaluation is just what the field needs to evaluate the complex realities of today's organizations and communities. This book is a 'must read' for anyone committed to understanding how, where, when, and for whom social innovations are achieving their goals."--Hallie Preskill, PhD, Executive Director, Strategic Learning and Evaluation Center, FSG Social Impact Advisors, Seattle, Washington

"Patton pulls back the curtain to reveal that there is no great Oz of evaluation. This book reminds us that when we are working in complex systems we are better off acknowledging how little we know from the outset--and then acting on continual feedback--rather than pretending we already have all the knowledge needed to succeed. Patton challenges evaluators to relentlessly adapt, react, change, and innovate to work toward the best outcomes."--John B. Bare, PhD, Vice President, The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Atlanta, Georgia

"Draws together sophisticated concepts and models from an extraordinary array of disciplines, such as ecology, business, sociology, and international development. It includes the work of thought leaders and practitioners from around the globe and is explicit about the need for more collaboration and input to continuously inform and develop this evaluation framework. Seasoned readers of Patton's earlier works will instantly recognize the classic Patton style, complete with rich narrative stories, wry wit, and clever cartoonstrappings purposefully used to not only engage the reader, but also bring about clearer understanding and meaning....This book is a must-read for any evaluator, as it will change the way you see the world around you and how you view and conduct your practice." (Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation 2013-05-28)

"Patton is the originator of developmental evaluation, and his decades of experience in the broader context of utilization-focused evaluation...radiate throughout the text, providing a rich source for evaluators at all levels of expertise the reader is in good hands....A rich text, brimming with Patton's years of experience and the wisdom of his esteemed colleagues....Patton writes with emotion and effectively meshes storytelling with fundamentals to deepen the reader's

understanding of developmental evaluation. For newcomers to the field, experienced evaluators, and social innovators alike, this book can serve to instill excitement about program evaluation and a broadened sense of its usefulness for creating social change." (Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology 2013-05-01)

Michael Quinn Patton is an independent organizational development and program evaluation consultant. A former President of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), he teaches regularly in AEA's professional development workshops, The Evaluators' Institute, and The World Bank's International Program in Development Evaluation Training. Dr. Patton is a recipient of the Myrdal Award for Outstanding Contributions to Useful and Practical Evaluation Practice from the Evaluation Research Society and the Lazarsfeld Award for Lifelong Contributions to Evaluation Theory from the AEA.

I've always liked the observation by George Box that "All models are wrong, some are useful." It fits here in helping describe Patton's thoughtful and passionate treatment of developmental evaluation, which is essentially a learn-as-you-go approach to program evaluation. It's definitely useful, which is high praise.

**PROS:** What I appreciate most about Patton's developmental approach is that it applies nicely to navigating messy, real-world situations where folks are building new programs in changing environments and really don't know what's likely to work and what isn't. The developmental approach embraces the idea that we do the best we can in these situations, recognizing that we can collect and use feedback along the way to figure out what works, what doesn't and to change accordingly. The approach also acknowledges that it's often unrealistic to "freeze" a program to evaluate it. Overall, Patton's wealth of experience comes through in a text that is filled with rich analysis and sprinkled liberally with useful examples and meaningful insights of when and where the approach can be used. In addition, there are good summaries after each chapter and readers in a hurry may want to skim these first to find the parts most relevant to them.

**CONS:** Though well written, this is not a breezy read. The text is focused on practical matters but the writing style will strike some as "academic." Patton also takes a number of tangents to highlight issues he believes are relevant. While I generally appreciated these side trips and reasons for them, it's worth noting that those looking for a how-to book shouldn't expect a step-by-step flow to the discussion. Finally, I agree with a previous reviewer who noted that Patton takes a great deal of time providing rationales for some points in the book which seemed almost obvious. My sense here is that he does this b/c he's writing for several audiences at once. One of these likely consists of traditional evaluators who

may see developmental evaluation as some kind of abomination. Where the text appears to go overboard in defending the devel approach, it's probably just a bit of armor plating to ensure that critics see and understand the rigor underpinning the approach and under what circumstances it's sensible to use. To wrap up, there are several good and free primers on developmental evaluation out there (for example, Preskill & Beer), but if you're looking to go in depth on the topic, Patton's book is well worth the time.

This is an excellent introduction to Developmental Evaluation by the person who coined the term. This book should be in every evaluator's library.

great book thank you

Patton's approach to evaluation is relentlessly pragmatic. It breaks free from formulaic constraints and offers models calculated to account for complexity. He weaves concrete experience throughout the text to illustrate and fortify his points. A wonderful read.

good book, bought for an office environment to better understand how we can work best

Good book. Patton has a very engaging writing style. He uses a lot of stories and analogies to get his points across. If you need to know a little more about Developmental Evaluation, this is a good one to read.

Still reviewing.

I use it all the time. Great reference for key evaluation concepts and working with complexity.

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