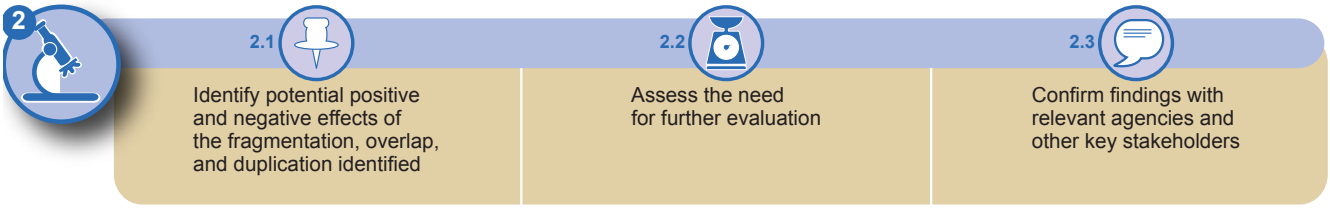
Step 2: Identify the Potential Effects of Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication

This step summarizes for analysts how to identify the potential positive and negative effects of any fragmentation, overlap, or duplication found in Step 1 of this guide (that is, the effects analysts might expect to result from the conditions identified). Identifying the potential positive and negative effects of fragmentation, overlap, or duplication will help analysts and evaluators determine whether or not actions to improve efficiency or reduce or better manage the fragmentation, overlap, or duplication are warranted.



2.1 Identify potential positive and negative effects of the fragmentation, overlap, or duplication, identified in step 1.

Analysts should develop a comprehensive list of the potential positive and negative effects associated with the fragmentation, overlap, or duplication identified in Step 1 of this guide. Fragmentation, overlap, and duplication can affect (1) program implementation, (2) outcomes and impact, and (3) cost-effectiveness. To identify potential positive and negative effects, analysts can consult existing sources of information and conduct original research for evidence of these effects. Table 3 identifies questions to consider when assessing the potential positive and negative effects of the identified fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, and provides examples of such effects using GAO's 2010 work on federal food and nutrition assistance programs.[15] Tool 2 in appendix III provides a table that analysts can use to collect and assess information on the potential positive and negative effects of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication.

[15]For more information, see appendix V and GAO, *Domestic Food Assistance: Complex System Benefits Millions, but Additional Efforts Could Address Potential Inefficiency and Overlap among Smaller Programs*, GAO-10-346 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 15, 2010). GAO's 2010 report focused on 18 food and nutrition assistance programs including the five largest—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; National School Lunch Program; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; Child and Adult Care Food Program; and School Breakfast Program.

Table 3: Questions and Examples to Help Identify Potential Effects of Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication

Assessment area	Questions	Examples of potential positive effects	Examples of potential negative effects
Implementation	Is there evidence of the following: • Programs and agencies work together to provide logical and coordinated benefits, services, or products? • Related programs and agencies have strategic agreements in place to help achieve outcomes? • Roles and responsibilities of related programs and agencies are clear? • The collective programs cover all who might be eligible for benefits, services, or products? • The fragmentation, overlap, or duplication was planned or intentional—such as to fill a gap, complement an existing program, or try a new method—and is still necessary or justified? • Any unplanned or unintentional fragmentation, overlap, or duplication has positive effects?	In its 2010 report, GAO found that the availability of multiple food and nutrition assistance programs provided at different locations within a community can increase the likelihood that eligible individuals seeking benefits from one program will be referred to other appropriate programs. GAO found that since no one program was intended to meet a household's full nutritional needs, the variety of food assistance programs offered eligible individuals and households different types of assistance and could help households fill the gaps and address their specific, individual needs.	GAO found that the federal response to food insecurity and the decentralized network of programs developed to address it emerged piecemeal over many decades to meet a variety of goals. GAO also found that program overlap can create the potential for unnecessary duplication of efforts for administering agencies, local providers, and individuals seeking assistance. Such duplication can waste administrative resources and confuse those seeking services.
Outcomes and impact	Is there evidence of the following: • The collective provision of benefits, services, or products helps agencies meet the individual and shared goals and objectives of their programs? • Agencies are able to measure the "whole" effort, if multiple agencies and programs are working together to meet shared goals and objectives? • Related programs and outcomes are complementary (i.e., not working at cross-purposes or conflicting)? • Those who are eligible for benefits, services, or products are receiving them? • Beneficiaries or customers are receiving benefits, services, or products in a coordinated manner (i.e., not receiving similar or duplicative benefits, services, etc., from multiple programs)?	GAO found that research suggested that participation in 7 food and nutrition assistance programs it reviewed (out of a total of 18) was associated with positive health and nutrition outcomes consistent with the programs' goals.	GAO found that little was known about the effectiveness of 11 of 18 food and nutrition assistance programs. GAO also found that while the federal government's food assistance structure allowed households to receive assistance from more than one program at a time, Department of Agriculture data indicated that a small portion of food-insecure households received assistance from multiple food assistance programs.
Cost-effectiveness	Is there evidence of the following: • The collective provision of benefits, services, or products is economical and efficient? • There is no reduction in benefits resulting from the current structure of providing benefits, services, or products?	None identified.	GAO found that the federal food assistance structure showed signs of program overlap, which could have resulted in an inefficient use of program funds. GAO found that most food assistance programs had specific and often complex administrative procedures that federal, state, and local organizations followed to help manage each program's resources and provide assistance. Government agencies and local organizations dedicated staff time and resources to separately manage the programs even when a number of the programs were providing comparable benefits to similar groups.

Source: GAO-10-346. | GAO-15-49SP

2.2 Assess the need for further evaluation.

Analysts should review their lists of potential positive and negative effects of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication to determine whether further evaluation is warranted.

- If analysts identify potential negative effects or are unsure whether the potential effects are positive or negative, they should move on to Step 3 of this guide to further evaluate and compare the performance of the identified programs. Understanding program effectiveness (both in terms of performance and cost), as well as how programs are related or coordinated can help analysts identify corrective actions to reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, and duplication (outlined in Step 4 of this guide).
- Conversely, if analysts identify all or mostly potential positive effects, they may judge that no additional analysis or corrective action is necessary to reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, or duplication. In these cases, analysts may choose to move on to Step 4 of this guide for options to improve efficiency.

2.3 Confirm findings with relevant agencies and other key stakeholders.

After identifying the potential positive and negative effects of fragmentation, overlap, or duplication identified in Step 1, analysts should confirm their findings with relevant agencies and other key stakeholders. For example, analysts may wish to interview agency officials to confirm positive or negative effects of fragmentation, overlap, or duplication identified through surveys of beneficiaries.

Step 3 of this guide provides information on how to use the results of existing or new evaluations to validate the effects identified in Step 2 and assess and compare programs to determine their relative performance and cost-effectiveness.