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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Influence of Collaborative Procurement on Innovation and Competitive Advantage: Perspectives of Agriculture Stakeholders in Guyana

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## ABSTRACT

This research project investigated the perceptions of Agriculture stakeholders on the influence of Collaborative Procurement on Innovation and Competitive Advantage. The advancement of technology leads to rapid innovation, and increased competitiveness. This has resulted in agricultural organizations facing greater competition from local, regional and international markets. The agricultural sector in Guyana is plagued with ineffective procurement practices that resulted from fragmented sourcing strategies, inconsistent supplier partnerships, and lack of available low-cost procurement approaches. This study aims to provide practical tools based on best practices that Guyanese agriculture enterprises can use to improve their collaborative procurement practices in a more efficient manner, resulting in more strategic supplier relationships and more long-term sustainability. This study employed a Qualitative Approach with a Case Study Design. A Digital Structured Interview Schedule was the research tool that was utilized to gain insights from Agriculture stakeholders from eight different agriculture organizations. The participants included procurement officers and suppliers. Findings revealed that some organizations were already engaged in collaborative procurement; some organizations were at the initial stage of the implementation of collaborative procurement while two organizations were not in a state of readiness and had not considered collaborative procurement. Collaborative procurement influences innovation and competitive advantages by aligning technological advancements through networking, adaptation to change, increased organizational recognition and profit generation. The enabling factors to collaborative procurement and its influence on innovation and competitive advantage are; collaborating with organizations that are actively engaged in collaborative procurement, leveraging the purchasing power of organizations, provision of high-quality goods and services and human capacity building. It is recommended that there should be more training and collaboration with agricultural organizations that are actively involved in collaborative procurement and the opportunity for collaborative procurement should be open to all agricultural organizations.

## KEYWORDS

Collaborative Procurement, Competitive Advantage, Innovation

## ARTICLE INFORMATION

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## 1. Introduction

Globally, as of 2024, the agriculture sector was projected to employ approximately 26.7% of the workforce and contribute to 4.3% of global GDP. However, the sector still had surging challenges from climate change, supply chain disruptions, and rising input costs, which threatened food security and economic stability (FAO, 2017; World Bank, 2023). The Food and Agriculture Organization therefore projected that food production must increase by 60% by 2050 to meet global demand, necessitating

more efficient and resilient procurement systems. Collaborative procurement—where organizations pool resources and coordinate purchasing—has emerged as a strategic response to such pressures, enabling enhanced supplier engagement, cost savings, and improved service delivery (OECD, 2017).

Regionally, Guyana's agriculture sector continues to stabilize its non-oil economy and contributes significantly to national development. In 2024, the country recorded a 13.1% increase in non-oil GDP, which was facilitated mainly by growth in rice production (amongst other crops) and aquaculture (Bank of Guyana, 2024). The Ministry of Agriculture reported that 42.3% of Guyana's landmass was suitable for agriculture, and recent investments have focused on infrastructure, research, and market access to boost productivity and resilience (Ministry of Agriculture, 2024). Institutions such as the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) and the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) are central to these efforts, coordinating procurement activities and engaging suppliers to support rice and diversified crop production (Ministry of Agriculture, 2025; Parkinson-Chowbay, 2024). In collaborative procurement management, supplier relationships are recognized as strategic assets that transform the traditional buyer-supplier dynamic into long-term partnerships built on trust, transparency, and shared objectives (OECD, 2017). This approach is particularly relevant in agriculture, where supply chains encounter vulnerability to seasonal cycles, climate variation, and logistical constraints (FAO, 2017). By fostering supplier engagement through coordinated procurement, organizations can enhance responsiveness, reduce duplication, and integrate innovation (World Bank, 2023).

To add, in Guyana, two prominent agricultural organizations that engage in collaborative procurement are the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) and the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI). GRDB exemplifies collaborative procurement through its structured engagement with suppliers. The organization regularly issues tenders for fertilizers, seed development, and infrastructure projects, signaling a commitment to transparency and supplier inclusiveness (GRDB, 2025). As substantiated by the Guyana Standard (2025), its procurement activities are not solely designed to secure inputs but also to engage suppliers in sector-wide development. GRDB's consultative approach includes regular meetings with rice farmers and millers to align procurement with field realities. The Ministry of Agriculture reinforces GRDB's strategic role, emphasizing its mandate to promote rice production through research and development (Ministry of Agriculture, 2024). NAREI complements GRDB's efforts by focusing on crop diversification and sustainable practices. Its procurement activities are rooted in adaptive research and technical collaboration, particularly in cassava and other non-rice crops (NAREI, 2023). The Ministry of Agriculture also corroborated NAREI's role in supporting national food security through research-driven procurement and supplier partnerships (Ministry of Agriculture, 2025).

Furthermore, Parkinson-Chowbay (2024) reported that NAREI's CEO has prioritized collaborative efforts with suppliers and farmers, where procurement is a tool for innovation and resilience. These developments underscore the growing importance of collaborative procurement as a strategic tool for agricultural advancement in Guyana. As GRDB and NAREI continue to engage suppliers through structured tenders, adaptive research, and stakeholder consultations, the potential for deeper institutional collaboration becomes increasingly evident. By aligning procurement practices and fostering joint supplier relationships, these organizations can reduce redundancy, enhance efficiency, and support national food security goals. Hence, collaborative procurement is not merely a mechanism for acquiring goods and services—it is a pathway toward integrated development, innovation, and resilience in Guyana's agricultural sector. The procurement of resources to facilitate the effective functioning of any organization whether at the global, regional, and local levels is extremely critical.

In many instances, sole procurement of resources may not be effective, and the aspect of collaborative procurement must be implemented. In an ever more interdependent and competitive global society, procurement can drive business success significantly, particularly for parts of the economy that are heavily reliant on supply chain management such as, agriculture (Handfield et al., 2021). Agriculture companies in Guyana are faced with many problems including high operating costs, disconnected supply lines and insufficient use of competitive procurement methods (Ali, 2020). In the search for innovative, value-creating cost-effective solutions to problems, collaborative procurement has emerged as a strategic tool to share resources and develop strategic alliances to optimize operational performance (Gadde & Hakansson, 2018).

Notwithstanding the universal acceptance of collaborative procurement, there is limited literature outlining the use of this strategy in the agricultural sector in Guyana, warranting an exploration of its potential to drive innovative strategies and competitive advantage. Guyana's agricultural industry is plagued with inefficiencies in procurement which creates higher operating costs; increases supply chain, delays, and reduced scalability of products (Johnson & Brown, 2019). Agricultural companies were frequently the domain of single operators cutting deals with suppliers without the advantages of economies of scale and joint procurement contracts that might have resulted in better pricing and service (Carroll, 2022). Collaborative

procurement eases this difficulty through allowing a collective of organizations to merge resources, improve supplier relations, and foster common principles as well as practices (Schotanus et al., 2017).

## 2. Literature Review

### Awareness and Readiness for Collaborative Procurement

The buyer supplier relationship is a fundamental part of what is commonly referred to as collaborative procurement, where strategic partnerships between buyers and suppliers are formed to co-create value, to enhance the capability for innovation, and to improve performance (Singh et al., 2018). Today, efficient purchasing has given way to these collaborative models, with more focus on value and shared goals within a relationship of trust, rather than on cutting costs. There are varying degrees of understanding and preparedness to pursue some of those collaborative efforts across sectors and regions. For example, Johnson and Primel (2020) discovered that 65% of purchasing officers in mid-sized agricultural enterprises in Kenya did not know of collaborative buying systems. Meanwhile, in South Korea, Lee et al (2021) observed a higher level of awareness and adoption of collaboration approaches by around 40% after two years of supplier development programs.

Further, organizational preparedness, which includes cultural alignment and leadership support, heavily influences the effectiveness of the partnership. Decentralized purchasing organizations are prone to such models (Tan & Tan, 2019). But in limited resource settings such as Ghana's agricultural sector, awareness does not always lead to preparedness to implement owing to lack of infrastructure and knowledge (Reichborn-Kjennerud, 2021; Kwame & Agyemang, 2022). These findings signal urgency for evaluating not just knowledge of cooperative purchasing, but also organizational readiness, from skills and systems to leadership commitment. It must be noted that many organizations are not in a state of readiness to accommodate the process of collaborative procurement. These organizations do not foresee the importance of acquiring knowledge and skills in innovation while at the same time creating competitive advantage. Collaborative procurement has its place in facilitating competition among businesses (Garcia-Cediel et al., 2023). Guyana's Agriculture sector is heavily invested in collaborative efforts to secure markets, however there is still a need for the sector to embark on technological advancements to a greater extent especially involving the use of technologically driven equipment (Guyana Country Commercial Guide, 2023).

### The Role of Collaborative Procurement in Driving Innovation and Competitive Advantage

Innovation today is increasingly recognized as a networked activity. Chesbrough (2024) focuses on "open innovation" where companies engage in innovation by making use of knowledge that is external to the firm, often from suppliers. This renders relationships with suppliers' important channels for co-innovation and knowledge transmission. Collaborative purchasing then becomes an enabler not only for sourcing goods and services, but also for stimulating innovation, by deep involvement with selected suppliers (Zhang et al., 2023). This is consistent with the Resource-Based View (RBV) which suggests that unique supplier capabilities, when both valuable and scarce, inimitable, and non-substitutable, can form the basis of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). In a similar vein, the Relational View Dyer and Singh (1998) posit that inter-organization relationships themselves can create rent through relational assets, shared knowledge, and governance mechanisms. These theories are backed by empirical analyses. Wagner and Hoegl (2006) demonstrated that early supplier involvement (ESI) provides benefits in innovation outcomes. Trust, shared objectives, and information sharing were found to be the predictors of enhanced performance from collaboration based on an investigation of 210 manufacturing companies (Cao & Zhang, 2012). But very few studies actually go on to establish a direct relationship between collaborative purchasing and sustainable competitive advantage, especially in non-manufacturing industries. Little is known about how this unfolds in SMEs or agriculture, where the regulatory context and capacity are quite different from large companies. Figure 1 highlights the Resource Based View Model for competitive advantage among businesses.

**Figure 1**

*Resource-Based View Theoretical Framework*



Figure 1 extracted from: *Strategic Management Insight* by: (Jurevicius, 2023)

In the RBV Model, the premise is on the effective use of resources that already exist within the organization. These resources can be categorized into tangible and intangible, with the former been those resources that are physical in nature such as agricultural machinery which any agricultural organization can purchase, hence there is not a great advantage to the company as these very models of machinery can be purchased by other companies. Intangible resources are those resources that are more abstract meaning that they are not physical in nature but carry the weight of being beneficial to organizations. Some of these resources are the reputation of the company, the name or brand of that company as well as company's intellectual property.

Further, these intangible resources are considered to be the components that contribute to the competitive advantage of any organization. Organizations will utilize these resources to gain a competitive edge over their rivals in the process of collaborative procurement. The RBV Framework associates resources as heterogenous and immobile. In this sense the view is that heterogeneity exists among organizations in terms of skill set and is unique and specific to the dynamics of the organization. While the immobility of resources rests on the premise that resources will remain within the organization for a period which allows other competitive organizations to replicate and produce at lower costs. Thus, creating the atmosphere of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

Therefore, the addition of the VRIO attributes in the RBV model is particularly important. These attributes are desirable characteristics that resources should possess so as to render these resources capable of creating a competitive advantage. This means that the resources must be valuable, rare, and imitable must be costly while the resources should be organized to create a competitive advantage. The process of identifying these resources is extremely critical and the effective utilization of these resources is equally important. These resources should be valued and protected as they will be responsible for the organization's competitive advantage status. The VRIO attributes of tangible, intangible, heterogenous and immobile resources must undergo continuous review to remain viable to sustain the company's competitive advantage (Triantis, 2024).

### **Strategies for Effective Implementation of Collaborative Procurement**

Several approaches to effective collaboration are revealed in academic literature. Among these categories are governance mechanisms, partner choice, methods of performance measurement, and mutual capability development (Petersen et al., 2008). Trust-based and knowledge-sharing mechanisms need to be promoted within the procurement stage in order to encourage continued collaboration. Still, tensions remain between cooperation and budget consciousness. Skeptics argue that trust and systems are expensive to build and cannot be directly or reliably transferred to collaboratively involved customers Morgan and Hunt (2010); questions would be raised about whether the gains in costs are properly realized are critical in this context. But long-term gains in supplier commitment, innovation capabilities and risk-sharing usually make these entry costs worth it (Gerber & Misko, 2019). Discussions also center on trust versus control when managing supplier relationships. If formal contracts (control-based governance) can help to mitigate ambiguity and risk, high trust environments foster creativity and co-creation. Hybrid models attempting to accommodate a good balance between both are now being advocated with increasing frequency (Dekker, 2004).

Another strategic challenge is the ownership of innovation. Some studies suggest that co-innovation leads to better integration in relation to strategic objectives (Hartmann et al., 2012). This is especially so, particularly in complex contexts like agriculture where buyers and suppliers share contextual knowledge (Brown, 2007). Then, questions on the scalability and reproducibility of joint procurement initiatives persist. A practice that is effective in one firm or territory cannot simply be adopted in another due to its cultural, sectoral, or regulatory differences (Nelson & Kataka, 2018). Hence, the strategies need to be adaptive and context

dependent. Therefore, the success of collaborative buying depends more on the awareness and readiness of an organization as these factors determine how open to change and innovation an organization is and how competitive it can be. In the face of complex supplier dynamics, the trust and adaptability in how companies approach procurement are crucial to creating lasting value that will help drive sustainable development.

### 3. Methodology

#### Research Approach

The study utilized a Qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was utilized to gain insights from organizations on their roles in collaborative procurement. The qualitative approach in research served as a mechanism to gain rich data that is not necessarily numerical in nature but rather these data are garnered from the lived experiences of participants as they function within organizations (Oranga & Matere, 2023). Qualitative data tends to answer the why questions and offer deeper insights into the exploration of the issue being investigated. The qualitative approach is most relevant to this study as the aspect of collaborative procurement is specific and contextualized in relation to the organizations (Bell et al., 2022). It was used to find actual practices, lessons learned, and insights that are not yet well-documented in the literature from stakeholders in the agriculture and other business sectors. The study aimed to provide explanations as to the extent to which collaborative procurement influences innovations and competitive advantage, given that it examines current collaborative procurement practices, yet this study also possesses elements of an analytical study as it interprets relationships and builds themes linking collaboration to innovation and competitive advantage.

#### Research Design

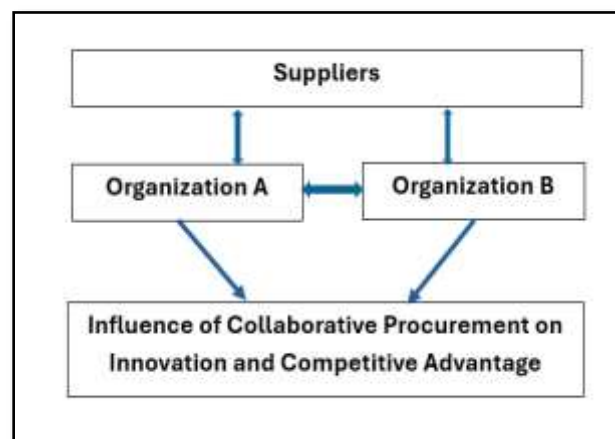
This study utilized a case study design through the responses obtained from a Digital Structured Interview Schedule Instrument in order to explore and understand the multifarious interactions between collaborative procurement, innovation, and competitive advantage from the viewpoint of practitioners and stakeholders. The research questions are exploratory in character and aimed to facilitate exploration of topics to develop further hypotheses or theories, and this emphasizes understanding processes, perceptions and which strategic decisions are made within a given context, all of which are difficult concepts to quantify meaningfully.

#### Conceptual Framework

This research entailed the participation of procurement managers and suppliers from organizations that are mostly involved in agriculture. These personnel provided data that served to answer the research questions and offered insights into these organizations views on "The Influence of Collaborative Procurement on Innovation and Competitive Advantage."

**Figure 2**

*Conceptual Framework of Research*



*Created by Umadevi Narain 2025*

Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework of the study. It can be seen that the suppliers are tasked with providing goods and services to the agricultural organizations. In the process of the provision of goods and services the concepts of collaboration and procurement would come into effect and be practiced. The agricultural organizations that engage in collaborative procurement or have established the need for collaborative procurement in order to have competitive advantage in a technologically driven society will collaborate. The influence of collaborative procurement on innovation and competitive advantage was critically analyzed based on the data obtained from the agricultural organizations.

### 3.1 Ethical Considerations

The ethical principles of confidentiality, informed consent and protection of participants guided the conduct of this qualitative case study design research. The study's purpose and procedures were explained to all participants. The participants who consented to answer the Digital Structured Interview Schedule were sent the instrument via email. Data was obtained through informed consent and anonymized to maintain participant confidentiality following ethical standards in research. This design can provide theoretical and practical contributions of significance as it can not only provide granular insights on what collaborative procurement looks like but also demonstrates why collaborative procurement is contributing to innovation and competitive advantage.

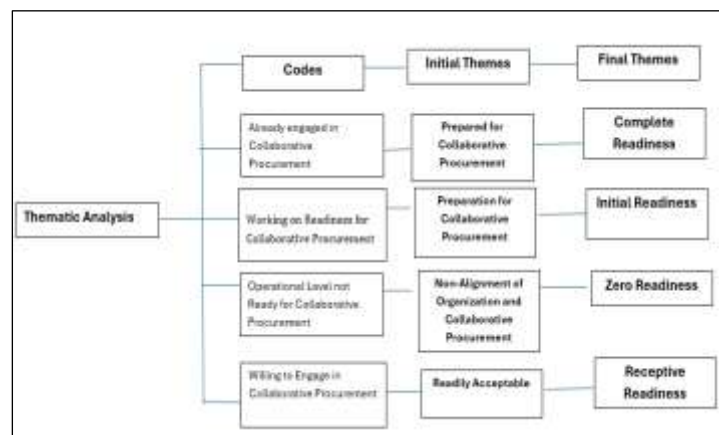
## 4. Results and Discussion

### Results of Data Analysis for Research Question 1

To answer the first research question which asks *"What is the level of readiness and awareness to engage in collaborative procurement in the agriculture/other business sectors?"* The participants responses were initially coded, these codes were categorized, and initial themes were generated, this was followed by the formulation of final themes all of which are reflected in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Readiness of Organizations to Engage in Collaborative Procurement*



*Created by Umadevi Narain 2025*

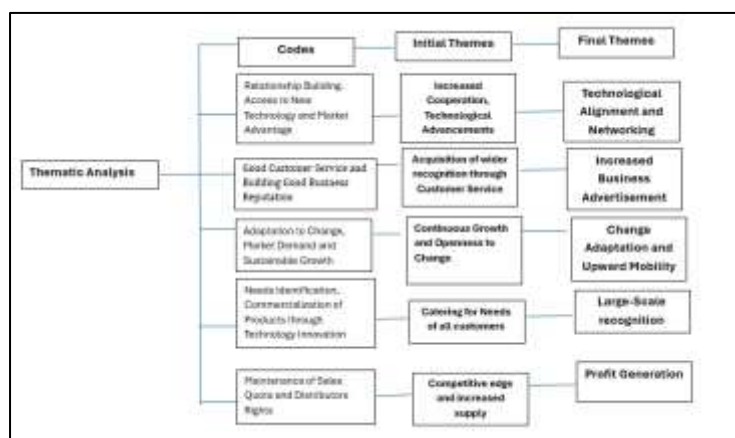
Figure 3 shows that some organizations are already in collaborative procurement and are in a state of complete readiness to continue to be involved in collaborative procurement. The suppliers indicated that they are at the stage where they are putting systems in place to start collaborative procurement. These suppliers are in the initial state of readiness for collaborative procurement. One supplier indicated that due to the small-scale business enterprise, the company is not in a state of readiness to embrace collaborative procurement. In two instances suppliers, while not engaged in active collaborative procurement have expressed their willingness to become engaged in collaborative procurement.

### Results of Data Analysis for Research Question 2

To answer the second research question which asks, *"How does collaboration in procurement influences innovation and competitive advantage?"* The participants responses were initially coded, these codes were categorized, and initial themes were generated, this was followed by the formulation of final themes, all of which are reflected in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**

*Collaborative Procurement Influence on Innovation and Competitive Advantage*



*Created by Umadevi Narain 2025*

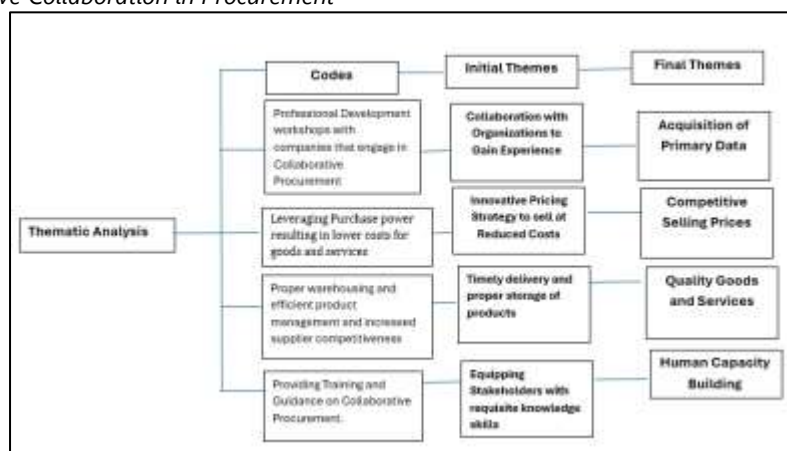
Figure 4 shows that agricultural organizations are in agreement that collaborative procurement greatly influences innovation and competitive advantage by networking with other organizations through the utilization of updated and compatible technologies. It also makes it easier for organizations to save time and money and with a reduced cost for products, leading to organizations having a competitive advantage. Due to the elaborate networking, many organizations will be exposed to the market needs leading to large scale recognition. The organizations will now have a competitive edge because they are open to changes based on market demand. The influence of collaborative procurement on innovation is far reaching leading to competitive advantage and ultimately increased profitability.

### Results of Data Analysis for Research Question 3

To answer the third research question which asks, "What strategies should be implemented to enable effective collaboration in procurement?" The participants' responses were initially coded, these codes were categorized, and initial themes were generated, this was followed by the formulation of final themes, all of which are reflected in Figure 4.

**Figure 5**

*Strategies to Enable Effective Collaboration in Procurement*



*Created by Umadevi Narain 2025*

Figure 5 shows the different strategies that procurement officers and suppliers in the agriculture sector perceive as enabling the effectiveness of collaborative procurement. Organizations indicated that the evidential analysis of organizations that are involved in collaborative procurement needs to be shared on a firsthand basis so that potential organizations to be involved in collaborative procurement can be convinced of the advantages. Collaborative procurement can be effective by paying attention to the process of pricing. A competitive price can lead to more products being sold and profit generation. Organizations that are engaged in collaborative procurement and who have intentions of becoming engaged in collaborative procurement must ensure

that the quality of the products is of a high standard when they reach the customers. This would involve adhering to all marketing services. There should be continuous training of procurement officers and other stakeholders who are involved in collaborative procurement. This would ensure that collaborative procurement is done according to international standards of best practices.

### **General Findings**

The participants responded to the Digital Structured Interview Schedule through lived experiences and anticipation of the possible implementation of collaborative procurement which greatly influences innovation and competitive advantage leading to organizations upward mobility and increased profits.

#### **1. Collaborative Procurement Readiness**

A greater percentage of the sample expressed their involvement in collaborative procurement and willingness to become engaged in collaborative procurement. One organization is at the initial stage of collaborative procurement. On the other hand, two organizations expressed no desire to become involved in collaborative procurement as these organizations have a fixed arrangement with their suppliers while the type of operation in one instance does not see collaborative procurement as a major activity that would benefit that organization.

#### **2. Influence of Collaborative Procurement on Innovation and Competitive Advantage**

The responses of participants on the influence of collaborative procurement on innovation and competitive advantage were positive. Organizations were engaged in collaborative procurement, organizations who expressed willingness to be engaged in collaborative procurement and even those organizations that were reluctant to become engaged in collaborative procurement all holistically saw the process as having several benefits. Some benefits of collaborative procurement on innovation and competitive advantage mentioned were; bulk purchases leading to reduced purchasing costs, the timely sourcing of products that are of high quality with adherence to international standards and best practices, the ability to network with other stakeholders where technological advancements in machinery, equipment, precision agricultural practices will be garnered while at the same time these organizations are able to maintain a competitive edge.

#### **3. Collaborative Procurement Enablement Strategies**

There were several recommended strategies that organizations provided in relation to the enablement of collaborative procurement. The inclusion of a legal framework to oversee the collaborative procurement procedures to ensure that there is transparency, openness and integrity in the procurement process. The provision of equitable opportunities by the Government to ensure that there is equal access to market opportunities and not just for the benefit of selected organizations. The provision of financial incentives and leveraging of purchasing power were also seen as enabling factors for collaborative procurement. The view was expressed that since collaborative procurement is a mechanism by which innovation and competitive advantage is influenced, this would force organizations to become more competitive and improve their standing when it comes to the marketing process.

#### **4. The Future of Collaborative Procurement in Guyana**

In terms of the future of collaborative procurement in the context of Guyana, the organizations expressed a high degree of positivity. Guyana as a fast-rising economy has the potential to be engaged in collaborative procurement with organizations regionally and globally. This engagement will provide Guyana to be in tune with the many innovative techniques, advanced equipment and devices and become on par with international standards. Collaborative procurement is promising and will see greater investments and other initiatives making Guyana earning a competitive advantage.

### **5. Conclusion**

The influence of collaborative procurement on innovation and competitive advantage from the perspectives of the participants is positive leading to several benefits to local agricultural organizations with the ripple effect of improvement in Guyana's economy. It can be concluded from the findings of the study that :-

1. There are three degrees of readiness of agricultural organizations to engage in collaborative procurement. These degrees of readiness are complete readiness, initial readiness, receptive readiness and zero readiness. The degree of readiness of organizations for collaborative procurement is dependent on factors such as adequate training, of stakeholders in the collaborative procurement process (Reichborn-Kjennerud, 2021).



2. Collaborative procurement influences innovation and competitive advantages by the alignment of technological advancements through networking, adaptation to change, increased organizational recognition and profit generation (Zhang et al., 2023).
3. The enabling factors to collaborative procurement in its influence on innovation and competitive advantage based on the results of the study are, collaborating with organizations that are actively engaged in collaborative procurement, leveraging purchasing power of organizations, provision of high-quality goods and services and human capacity building (Gerber & Misko, 2019).

### Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the key findings derived from the qualitative analysis of the responses obtained from agriculture stakeholders in Guyana. The Government of Guyana has a major role to play in the process of collaborative procurement for it to be effective and for innovation and competitive advantage to be manifested.

1. Agriculture organizations will embrace collaborative procurement if there are more awareness and readiness within organizations. This can only be done through collective bargaining with private and state governed agriculture organizations. There should be more training and collaboration with agricultural organizations that are actively involved in collaborative procurement. These training sessions can be initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture through the Public Service Ministry, Guyana.
2. Small farmers would be able to benefit from collaborative procurement by networking with large-scale agriculture organizations. This would enable small scale farmers to have a ready cash flow system by tapping into the benefit of reduced purchasing cost for initial production. The Ministry of Agriculture, through the numerous extension services, should include small farmers in the bargaining process so as to provide opportunities for the increase in supply through the acquisition of machinery for precision agricultural techniques. This would allow for competitive advantage and innovation through collaborative procurement.
3. The opportunity for collaborative procurement should be open to all agriculture organizations and there should be equity in the procurement process. While at the same time individual organizations can remain competitive by the utilization of the skills and resources that already exist within these organizations, as depicted in the Resource-Based View (RBV) Model (Triantis, 2024).

**Study Limitations:** The findings of the study cannot be generalized since the sample size was small and focused on agricultural organizations and their suppliers. The perspectives of these agriculture stakeholders may not be reflective of other organizations in the country.

**Suggestions for Future Research:** Researchers may use larger sample sizes and expand the survey to include not only agricultural organizations.

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