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<https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2021/12/01/local-podcast-on-diversity-and-procurement-gaining.html>

## **iHeartRadio picks up locally produced podcast series about diversity and procurement**

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Lynn Pingol has been working with minority owned businesses to help them land public-sector contracts for over five years. With her latest endeavor, a podcast titled The Procurement Games, she now has a platform to reach more business people.

As CEO of St. Paul-based consulting firm MaKee Co., she has assisted over 200 minority owned firms, out of which 127 were awarded contracts for a total of \$42 million.

Her podcast works to shed light on the uphill battles minority-owned contractors in Minnesota have to fight in order to be considered for government contracts. It features business owners of color and military-veteran entrepreneurs. The professionals represent various fields of work, such as construction, banking, sustainability and media, among others.



NANCY KUEHN | MSPBJ

R. Lynn Pingol of MaKee Co. has launched a podcast titled The Procurement Games that has been picked up by iHeartMedia.

Pingol has found quite the audience for her podcast. Within a week of the first episode airing, over 70 business owners reached out to be featured, and within 10 days it was picked up by iHeartRadio, which is run by San Antonio-based iHeartMedia Inc. She has now booked interviews for the podcast through next October.

The accolades are particularly impressive considering the minimal promotion. Pingol emailed people in her network about starting the podcast and her team now uses LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to promote it further. As of this week, the podcast's three episodes have been downloaded over 18,000 times.

The podcast can be found on iHeartRadio, Amazon Music, Google Podcast, Spotify, iTunes and other podcast platforms.

Despite her years of experience helping businesses owned by people of color land public-sector contracts, she was still surprised by just how many company leaders had similar stories to share.

Pingol says the issue isn't necessarily ill intentions, but lack of intention that's leading to the failures of government agencies to meet their own requirements for awarding minority-owned contract work.

"I write policies that are intentional for ethnic-, race- and gender-conscious contracting. Government agencies don't write it that way. Their intent is there, but it's not executed that way," she says.

One example of unrealized intent is the difficulty the Minnesota Department of Transportation has faced while trying to contract minority-owned businesses. According to data from MnDOT, the agency is technically regressing when it comes to contracting dollars being budgeted for minority owned businesses, with such firms receiving only 8.1% of its budget — a dip from 10.5% in 2019. MnDOT has said this shortfall could be due to capital intensive contracts that may be difficult for smaller firms to complete as well as geographical concerns, with minority-owned businesses having trouble with contracts in rural Minnesota.

In Pingol's perspective, it's the procurement process that's leading to these disparities.

When government bodies like MnDOT move forward with a construction project, they will contract what is known as a prime contractor, Pingol said. The prime contractor will then hire subcontractors to complete various tasks. The business owners of color that Pingol works with are usually subcontractors that are trying to get their firm work on the project.

"The other disconnect happens when the people who are told to go get this project out ... don't understand who's available in the market for small businesses who can truly perform the work. They rely on a directory that is not necessarily accurate," she said.

Ultimately, Pingol hopes to use her podcast not only as a resource for both minority-owned small businesses and the contractors who may look to hire them, but also as a resource for the entire country.

Given her recent appointment to the Leadership Council for the National Small Business Association in Washington, D.C., that may just be possible.

"Every year, we have an opportunity to present to Congress and I'm looking forward to presenting procurement barriers to Congress, because I actually have data. Imagine if I did 100 of these podcasts. I would have 100 true-to-life testimonies of the barriers that small businesses face," she said.

Pingol was featured as one of the Minneapolis/ St. Paul Business Journal's Women in Business in 2021.

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