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<https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2021/05/06/makee-company-lands-diverse-companies-contracts.html>

## MaKee aims to boost government contracts for entrepreneurs of color

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Government contracts can provide a big boost for a young company, but minority-owned businesses in Minnesota have historically had a hard time landing them. A St. Paul consulting firm hopes to change that.

MaKee Co., which launched in 2017, provides strategic assistance to people of color-run firms to help them land contracts, said R. Lynn Pingol, CEO. All the while, MaKee works with government agencies to tailor their procurement strategies to be more inclusive, and to assist in mentorship programs for diverse firms.

For Minnesota in fiscal year 2020, just 2% of contracting dollars awarded went to people of color-owned businesses, according to Department of Administration data. That's despite ethnic minorities making up more than 20% of the state's population as of 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Just 0.2% of contracts went to Black-owned firms. MaKee aims to change that.



NANCY KUEHN | MSPBJ  
Lynn Pingol

"[MaKee] champions small, minority, women and disadvantaged businesses to win contracts because we understand the procurement processes," Pingol said.

To that end, MaKee provides its clients technical assistance, help crafting capability statements and marketing services, among other things. In 2019, the firm managed to help land 72% of its clients earn at least one government contract, Pingol said. The firm has helped 90 firms land \$35 million in contracting dollars over the past three years. Its clients have included Trott-Binns Construction in St. Paul; J Benson Construction in Hopkins, and Genius Innovation Group in Minneapolis.

"MaKee recognized my talents, skills and ability to execute," Michael Lopez, Genius Innovation Group president and founder, told the Business Journal. "This has helped propel my business and further expose me as an individual."

As for its work directly with the government, the city of Brooklyn Center contracted Pingol's consulting firm to develop its new procurement policies to eliminate barriers faced by disadvantaged businesses, she said. MaKee is also in its second year of providing workshops, technical assistance and business coaching for disadvantaged businesses for the city of St. Paul.

**Iain Carlos**

Reporter

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