Uniform Task-Based Management System: IP Patent Prosecution Codes Ratified April 2023

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Executive Summary

A LEDES Operating Subcommittee was established to address various issues with current e-Billing practices relating to the delivery of IP legal services. The goal of the Subcommittee was to investigate the existing model for initiating, tracking, and invoicing IP matters and to recommend potential improvements in data definition and communication that would increase the business value of legal matter billing information.

The Subcommittee has produced a new framework—containing the phases of patent prosecution—that was used to create a new set of billing codes. The new code set will improve consistency of coding by making it easier for timekeepers to accurately identify codes by aligning them with the appropriate phases of prosecution. This consistency will enable more valid and useful opportunities for sophisticated analysis of billing data.

The Subcommittee decided to focus on patent prosecution as an area of principal need for review, based on the intricate nature of patent work and the need to streamline the information flow to improve transparency and visibility into patent application drafting and filing. Additionally, there is robust valuable data available from government docketing systems that is useful in monitoring application status and activity.

After numerous months of development and iterating, the Subcommittee has produced a new set of patent prosecution phase and deliverable categories that are significantly more relevant to the actual workstreams in a patent application matter than are the present set of codes. Additionally, a mapping of PAIR codes to each of these phases is provided to identify how this data can be leveraged to better track and monitor the status of a patent application filing, for example validating invoice activity.

About the Subcommittee

Membership

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Members:

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Recommendations

The sub-committee met for several months and recommended the following:

- 1. Simplify and reposition the Patent UTBMS code-set for practical application
- 2. Vendors start comparing PTO data to invoice data to validate whether certain tasks have been completed
- 3. Use full available character limit for expanded phase and task codes.

The subcommittee was open to other suggestions and recommendations as it investigated potential improvements to recommend to the LEDES Operating Committee.

Primary Solution Objectives

While developing a new set of task codes, the Subcommittee had several goals in mind, including:

- Position fee earners to pick right task when recording time
- Present timekeepers with smallest possible list of tasks to choose from (based on IP type, area of law, stage of prosecution, etc.)
- Streamline the billing cycle and improve invoice accuracy
- Position parties to validate the reported task activity by comparing timecards with PTO data
- Position parties (IP owners and outside counsel) to construct more accurate and easier to manage matter budgets

• Prepare for Al/machine learning opportunities

New Code Set

Phases representing Output and Deliverables

The redesigned Patent Prosecution task codes were developed with the intent of representing work output and deliverables as it pertains to a particular patent application. Flaws in the existing set of codes —that this set intends to correct—include:

- Assessment phase codes lifted from the UTBMS litigation set and not relevant to Patent Prosecution
- Unnecessary categories for the various application types, which are more appropriately a
 project-level designation and not task, and that do not render useful data in the context of a
 single patent application as it says nothing about the timekeeper's work on the application.

Limited to Patent Prosecution

While there are UTBMS codes for various types of IP (e.g., Patents and Trademarks) and non-IP work (e.g., Litigation, etc.), the Subcommittee reviewed the UTBMS codes for Patent Prosecution work only. As a result, IP activities such as **General Advice** and **Portfolio Assessment** will be handled in future iterations of the code set.

Table 1: Non-Patent-Prosecution Tasks

General Advice	General patent-related legal guidance and advice	
Portfolio Assessment	Activities relating to review of an overall portfolio	

The following types of legal engagements, related to Intellectual Property but different than Patent Prosecution, are also good candidates for new codes sets:

- 1. Trademark Prosecution
- 2. IP Licensing & Agreements
- 3. IP Infringement

Phases of Patent Prosecution

We designed the following Patent Prosecution code set so IP owners and outside counsel will be better positioned to track the work by phase/stage. At a minimum, we want patent prosecutors and legal support teams to associate each task (i.e., time entry) to one—and only one—of the "Level 2" categories listed below. Coding to Level 3 could be optional depending on an organization's data collection needs.

We identified the *phases* of Patent Prosecution as follows:

- 1. (Pre-Application) Invention Review & Filing Strategy
- 2. Initial Application and Supplements

- 3. Application Amendment (Corrections or Restrictions)
- 4. Examination
- 5. (Express) Abandonment
- 6. Appeal
- 7. Post-Allowance
- 8. Post-Issuance Maintenance and Re-Issue
- 9. Post-Abandonment

These phases are also listed in the second column below titled Code Level 2: Phase / Stage.

Table 2: Basing New Task Codes on the Phases of Patent Prosecution

Code Level 1: Legal Practice	Code Level 2: Phase / Stage	Code Level 3: Task	Deliverable / Work Product Examples
MILESTONE: Receive	e Invention		
Patent Prosecution	(Pre- Application)	Become Familiar with Invention/Idea	Invention disclosure analysis
	Invention Review & Filing	Formalize Invention/Idea	Invention disclosures analysis
	Strategy	Develop Filing Strategy	Preliminary search reportsOpinion letters
MILESTONE: Decide	to File		
Patent Prosecution	Initial Application and Supplements	Prepare/Submit Initial Application	 Applications Application Data Sheets Inventor oaths or declarations (with initial filing) [PCT] Requests for international Application (RO/101)
		Prepare/Submit Supplemental Documents	 [PCT] Requests for supplementary search (IB/375) Inventor Oaths or Declarations Powers Of Attorney Preliminary amendment Petition for micro/small entity status (PTO/SB/15A and 15B) Tip: for IDS see "Examination"
		Request Special Examination	Petition to make specialTrack 1 Request

MILESTONE: File a	Complete Application	(Including All Formal Paper	rs)
Patent Prosecution	Application Amendments (Corrections or Restrictions)	Correct Application	 Requests to correct inventorship Responses to notice of missing parts Responses to formalities notice Requests to change the applicant Corrected application data sheets Certificates of Correction [PCT] Responses to Invitation to correct defects in the demand (PCT/IPEA/404) [PCT] Substitute Drawings [PCT] Substitute Sheets - IA [PCT] Substitute Sheets of Request (Form PCT/RO/101)
		Restrict Application	Response to restriction requirements
	ve First Office Action		
Patent Prosecution	Examination	[PCT] Patentability Analysis	 Demand For International Preliminary Examination Response to ISA written opinion (PCT/ISA/237)
		Respond to Office Action	 Responses to Non-Final Office Actions Response to Final Office Actions
		Interview Examiner	Examiner Interviews
		File Information Disclosure Statement	Information Disclosure Statements (IDS)
		Request Continued Examination	Requests for Continued Examination (RCEs)
	(Express) Abandonment	Abandon Application	Express Abandonment of the Application (PTO/AIA/24)
Milestone: Appeal			
Patent Prosecution	Appeal	File Appeal ¹	Notices of AppealAppellate BriefsResponseReply
Milestone: Receive	Notice of Allowance		
Patent Prosecution	Post-Allowance	Conduct Post- allowance review	Issue fee checklist
		Pay Issue Fee	Pay issue fee
		Withdraw from Issue	Petition to withdraw from issuance

¹ Intended to cover patent office venues; work in other court jurisdictions should utilize litigation codes.

Milestone: Receive Issue Notification				
Patent Prosecution	Post-Issuance Maintenance, Re-Exam and	Pay Maintenance Fees	 Maintenance Fee Address Change Forms (PTO/SB/47) Maintenance Fee Payments 	
	Re-Issue	Request Patent Term Adjustment	Requests for Reconsideration of PTA	
		Re-Issue	• Re-Issue	
		Re-Examine	Re-Examination	
Milestone: Expiration / Abandonment				
Patent Prosecution	Post- Abandonment	Petition to Revive	•	
Milestone: Revival				

New Code Numbering System

In the original draft, the Subcommittee identified phase and task *descriptions* to-date but did not include corresponding code numbers. We asked for comment on ideas for numbering the code set in a way that addresses modern technology capabilities and business needs.

The primary goal of this proposal is to better codify the work components that constitute a patent application. The category numbering system took into consideration: the importance of differentiating and distinguishing from the existing code set to ensure clean historical data; providing a foundation to allow for future growth or evolution of the categories if needed; ensuring that time entry systems can support a new numbering system; and designing a code system that offers much greater flexibility and detail than the existing model.

To accomplish these goals, the following format was established:

Category: XX Phase: YYY Task: ZZZ

As seen below, the numbers stack in order to create unique identifiers:

Patent Prosecution	110000			
(Pre-Application) Invention Review & Filing Strategy	110100			
Become Familiar with Invention/Idea	110101			
Formalize Invention/Idea	110102			
Develop Filing Strategy	110103			
Initial Application and Supplements	110200			
Prepare/Submit Initial Application	110201			
Prepare/Submit Supplemental Documents	110202			
Request Special Examination				
Application Amendments (Corrections or Restrictions)				

	ı				
Correct Application	110301				
Restrict Application					
Examination	110400				
[PCT] Patentability Analysis	110401				
Respond to Office Action	110402				
Interview Examiner	110403				
File Information Disclosure Statement	110404				
Request Continued Examination	110405				
(Express) Abandonment	110500				
Abandon Application	110501				
Appeal	110600				
File Appeal	110601				
Post-Allowance					
Conduct Post-allowance review					
Pay Issue Fee					
Withdraw from Issue	110703				
Post-Issuance Maintenance, Re-Exam and Re-Issue	110800				
Pay Maintenance Fees	110801				
Request Patent Term Adjustment	110802				
Re-Issue					
Re-Examine					
Post-Abandonment					
Petition to Revive					

Ideally, time entry systems emphasize the category names rather than the numbers. The numbers should strictly act as back-end identifying information.

To support this framework, we want to note that all LEDES ebilling formats support a at least a 10 character task code.

This system would be extended to include other future intellectual property code sets as follows:

Patent Prosecution 110000-119999
IP General Advice 120000-129999
Portfolio Assessment 130000-139999
Trademark/Copyright 140000-149999

Transitioning to the New Codes

The following table maps the 2009 UTBMS Patent Codes to the new Patent Prosecution Codes.

2009 LOC IP UTBMS Codes

New Patent Prosecution Code Categories

PA120 Analysis/Strategy PA210 State-of-the-Art Investigation PA220 Patentability Investigation PA299 Other Patent Investigation and Analysis	(Pre-Application) Invention Review & Filing Strategy 110100
PA310 Provisional Application Preparation – Domestic PA330 Design Application Preparation - Domestic PA520 Non-Provisional Application Preparation – International PA530 Design Application Preparation - International	Initial Application Drafting & Submission 110200
PA420 Preliminary Amendment – Domestic PA620 Preliminary Amendment - International	Application Amendments (Corrections or Restrictions) 110300
PA410 Information Disclosure Statement – Domestic PA430 Official Communication - Domestic PA610 Information Disclosure Statement – International PA630 Official Communication - International	Examination 110400
PA450 Post-Issuance Remedial Action – Domestic PA650 Post-Issuance Remedial Action - International	Post-Issuance Maintenance, Re-Exam and Re-Issue 110800

As noted above, the new code set is based on the phases of Patent Prosecution and not the attributes of a patent application. Therefore, the following attributes of a patent application should be captured *separately from* timecards and timekeeper narratives:

- 1. Application Type
- 2. Jurisdiction
- 3. Subject matter of filing
- 4. Provisional/Nonprovisional/Child

Validating the New Codes

Validation Schema

One of the benefits of the new code set is the ability to validate each code by looking at document activity at the Patent and Trademark Offices. The following section provides an example of how the validation works.

USPTO PAIR Validation

One of the main purposes of our code changes is to align them more closely with the USPTO's PAIR activity descriptors. This will help vendors provide services that were not possible with previous LEDES code sets. For applicants, the vendors can provide a service that flags invoice line items that were billed but do not appear to have been performed. For law firms, vendors can provide a service that identifies activity that either was or should have been performed but was not invoiced.

For example, if an invoice contains a line item for preparation and filing a PCT application, the vendor can check PAIR to ensure that an RO/101 was filed and flag the line item if not. Similarly, if a response to an office action was due in a given month, but the response does not appear in the invoice for that month, the vendor can flag the item for the law firm to determine why it was not invoiced.

Since there are over 1,000 PAIR activity descriptors, it was not possible to map our code set directly to the PAIR activity. Instead, we generalized the PAIR activity into categories and created a code for each category. In this document, we list our suggestions of what PAIR activity can be used to validate each invoice line item, however, vendors may choose to add or remove PAIR activity to our suggested list for each category. Because there isn't a direct mapping between PAIR activity and LEDES codes, it will be impossible to validate line items with complete certainty. However, a vendor can flag certain line items as "suspect" if one of the suggested correlated activities does not appear in PAIR.

To conserve the size of the code set, we rely on the vendors' ability to identify certain characteristics of each case to generate summary reports. For example, we do not have separate codes for the type of case such as PCT, re-exam, trademark or design application. We rely on the vendors being able to pull that information from the applicant's IP management system to be able to summarize, for example, all the line items for responses to office actions for design applications, utility applications and re-exams separately.

Table 4: Using USPTO Documents to Validate Task Codes

Code Level 1: Legal Practice	Code Level 2: Phase / Stage	Code Level 3: Task	Deliverable / Work Product Examples	PAIR Transaction Verification			
MILESTONE: Recei	MILESTONE: Receive Invention						
Patent Prosecution		Become Familiar with Invention/Idea	Invention disclosure analysis	(Not applicable)			
	& Filing Strategy	Formalize Invention/Idea	Invention disclosures analysis	(Not applicable)			
		Develop Filing Strategy	Preliminary search reportsOpinion letters	(Not applicable)			
MILESTONE: Decid	e to File						
Patent Prosecution	Initial Application and Supplements	Prepare/Submit Initial Application	 Applications Application Data Sheets Inventor oaths or declarations (with initial filing) [PCT] Requests for international Application (RO/101) 	Initial Exam Team RO/101 - Request form for new IA - Conventional			
		Prepare/Submit Supplemental Documents	 [PCT] Requests for supplementary search (IB/375) Inventor Oaths or Declarations Powers Of Attorney Preliminary amendment Petition for micro/small entity status (PTO/SB/15A and 15B) Tip: for IDS see "Examination" 	 Affidavit(s) (Rule 131 or 132) or Exhibit(s) Received Applicant Has Filed a Verified Statement of Micro Entity Status in Compliance with 37 CFR 1.29 Applicant has Filed a Verified Statement of Micro to Small Entity Status Change in Power of Attorney (May Include Associate POA) Documents submitted with 371 Applications Drawing Preliminary Amendment Power of Attorney Preliminary Amendment Preliminary Amendments Small Entity Statement (37 CFR 1.27) Translation of Specification into English 			
		Request Special Examination	Petition to make specialTrack 1 Request	 COVID-19 Prioritized Examination Request Green Tech Petition under 37 CFR 1.102 Petition to make special based on Age/Health Track 1 Request 			

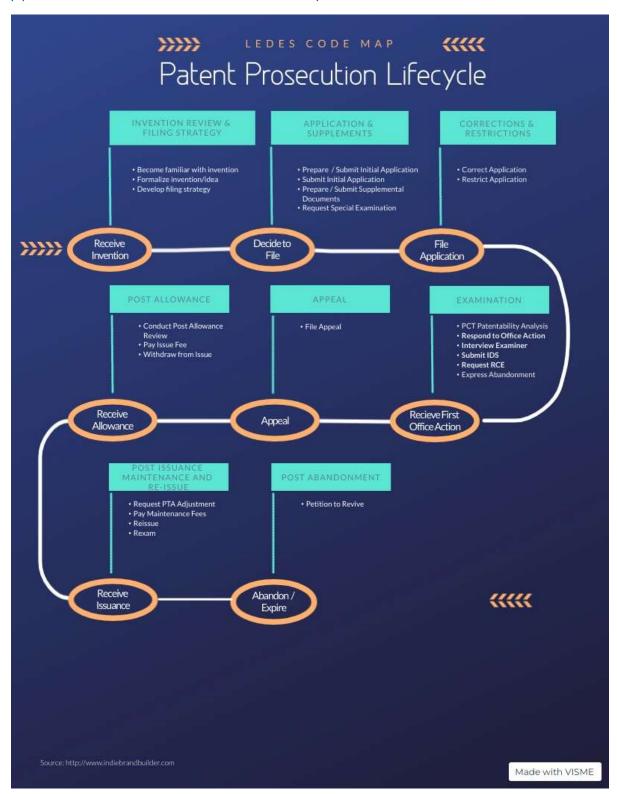
Patent	Application	Correct Application	Requests to correct inventorship	35 USC 115, Oath of the Applic
Prosecution	Amendments (Corrections or Restrictions)	Correct Application	 Requests to correct inventorship Responses to notice of missing parts Responses to formalities notice Requests to change the applicant Corrected application data sheets Certificates of Correction [PCT] Responses to Invitation to correct defects in the demand (PCT/IPEA/404) [PCT] Substitute Drawings [PCT] Substitute Sheets - IA [PCT] Substitute Sheets of Request (Form PCT/RO/101) 	 A statement by one or more inventors satisfying the requirement under Applicant Response to Pre-Exam Formalities Notice Applicant has submitted a new specification to correct Corrected Papers problems CHII - Response to form PCT/IPEA/404 Corrected Paper Drawings-only black and white line drawings Drawings-other than black and white line drawings Oath or Declaration Filed (Including Supplemental) Payment of additional filing fee/Preexam Response - Re: Informal Power of Attorney (PTOL-308) Substitute Sheets - IA Substitute Specification Filed
		Restrict Application	Response to restriction requirements	Response to Election / Restriction Filed
MILESTONE: Red	ceive First Office Actio	n		
Patent Prosecution	Examination	[PCT] Patentability Analysis	 Demand For International Preliminary Examination Response to ISA written opinion (PCT/ISA/237) 	 CHII - Form PCT/IPEA/401 – Demand CHII-Resp to the written opinion ISA/237 / IPEA/408 CHII - Amendments to descriptions/drawings - PCT Art. 34 Request for recording of a change/PCT Rule 92bis Response to Form PCT/ISA/206 Unity of Invention Request for Reconsideration – IA Request for rectification – IA Evidence for restore of priority claim Priority Claim Adjustment under PCT Rule 26bis CHII - Misc. communication from Applicant – IACHII - Request for Reconsideration – IA CHII - Response to form PCT/IPEA/405

				Misc. incoming letter from Applicant – IA
		Respond to Office Action	 Responses to Non-Final Office Actions Response to Final Office Actions 	 Response after Non-Final Action Response after Final Action Response after Ex Parte Quayle Action Amendment After Final or under 37CFR 1.312, initialed by the examiner.
		Interview Examiner	Examiner Interviews	 Interview Summary - Applicant Initiated – Personal Applicant Initiated Interview Summary (PTOL- 413) Interview Summary - Applicant Initiated – Conference
		File Information Disclosure Statement	Information Disclosure Statements (IDS)	Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed
		Request Continued Examination	Requests for Continued Examination (RCEs)	• Request for Continued Examination (RCE)
	(Express) Abandonment	Abandon Application	Express Abandonment of the Application (PTO/AIA/24)	•
Milestone: Appea	al			
Patent Prosecution	Appeal	File Appeal ²	 Notices of Appeal Appellate Briefs Response Reply 	 Notice of Appeal Filed Appeal Brief Filed Reply Brief Filed Petition for review and processing by the PCT legal office CHII - Petition for review by the PCT legal office
Milestone: Receiv	ve Notice of Allowand	e		
Patent Prosecution	Post-Allowance	Conduct Post- allowance review	Issue fee checklist	•
		Pay Issue Fee	Pay issue fee	Issue Fee Payment (PTO-85B)Issue Fee Payment Verified
		Withdraw from Issue	Petition to withdraw from issuance	•
Milestone: Receiv	ve Issue Notification			
	Post-Issuance Maintenance,	Pay Maintenance Fees	Maintenance Fee Address Change Forms (PTO/SB/47)	 Payment of Maintenance Fee, 4th Year, Micro Entity

² Intended to cover patent office venues; work in other court jurisdictions should utilize litigation codes.

Patent Prosecution	Re-Exam and Re- Issue		Maintenance Fee Payments	 Payment of Maintenance Fee, 4th Yr, Small Entity Payment of Maintenance Fee, 4th Year, Large Entity Payment of Maintenance Fee, 8th Year, Micro Entity Payment of Maintenance Fee, 8th Yr., Small Entity Payment of Maintenance Fee, 8th Yr., Large Entity Payment of Maintenance Fee, 12th Year, Micro Entity Payment of Maintenance Fee, 12th Yr., Small Entity Payment of Maintenance Fee, 12th Year, LargeEntity Payment of Maintenance Fee, 12th Year, LargeEntity Payment of Maintenance Fee under 1.28(c)
		Request Patent Term Adjustment	Requests for Reconsideration of PTA	•
		Re-Issue	• Re-Issue	•
		Re-Examine	Re-Examination	•
Milestone: Expirat	ion / Abandonment			
Patent Prosecution	Post- Abandonment	Petition to Revive	•	 Petition to Revive Application – Granted Petition to Revive Application For Continuity Purposes- Granted PREV - 1.81 PETITION TO REVIVE APPLICATION - GRANTED
Milestone: Revival				

Appendix A: Patent Prosecution Lifecycle



Appendix B: Patent Attributes

Appendix – Standard List of Patent Types

Lists to be modified on an on-going basis

Patent Type
Utility
Design
Plant

Application Type
Provisional
Divisional
Continuation
Continuation-In-Part
Re-Issue
Designated EP
Designated PCT

Appendix C: Committee Charter

The Subcommittee's Charter states:

The purpose of the subcommittee is to establish recommendations to streamline and improve how Intellectual Property costs are managed and how Intellectual Property invoices are created, reviewed, processed, and reported on.

Intellectual Property invoices are different than many other types of legal invoices in the sense that they are typically high in volume and low in dollar amount. Those who review Intellectual Property invoices often note that is time-intensive and costly to review them. In addition, legal matters as typically identified in billing systems don't reflect IP legal projects and workstreams, making it difficult to segregate work activity correctly.

Of interest to IP invoice reviewers and a focus of this Subcommittee is the tracking of individual tasks assigned to vendors (e.g., drafting an office action response). Invoice review for tasks is difficult because sometimes companies are billed twice for the same task and invoice reviewers must spend significant amounts of time to check whether this is the case. The Subcommittee will investigate whether updating the LEDES formats with a place for a unique task id generated by an ELM or IP system may be used to validate that a task has only been billed once.