

Chapter 4

Support for SMEs and Venture Companies

1 Support Schemes for SMEs and Venture Companies

This chapter presents JPO support schemes for SMEs and venture companies for the purpose of further encouraging the favorable movement of the intellectual creation cycle.

(1) Seminars for Specific Targets

For managers and technological development staff of SMEs and venture companies, the JPO holds seminars for SMEs and venture companies at the METI Regional Bureaus and the Okinawa General Bureau. Detailed explanation is provided regarding strategic means to obtain intellectual property rights and use patent information.

(2) Lectures and Training

With the aim of encouraging SMEs and venture companies to understand and use industrial property systems, the JPO provides lectures and training in all regions by dispatching lecturers for patent promotion courses and events implemented by local authorities.

(3) Consultation Services

For SMEs and venture companies, the JPO provides individual consultation services on specific cases concerning intellectual property rights (consultations on patent and renewal of trademark, patent lectures and guidance) in more than 170 locations nationwide.

(4) Prior Art Search

For SMEs and venture companies, the JPO provides prior art search services in 47 locations nationwide. Prior art search is required in the patent system and the new utility model system introduced in January 1994.

(5) Accelerated Examination and Accelerated Appeal Examination for Patents and Utility Models

With the objective of increasing the competitiveness of Japanese industry through encouraging early use of the results of basic research, supporting applicants who carry out excellent R&D projects and providing early support for global economic activities, the JPO implements accelerated examination and accelerated appeal examination for applications filed by SMEs and venture companies, which are expected to play an important role in the strengthening of the international competitiveness of Japanese industry, upon submission of the description of the circumstances requiring accelerated (appeal) examination, in the same manner as working-related applications and overseas-related applications.

(6) Circuit Examination (appeal examination) for Patents

In order to support applicants including local SMEs that have less opportunity to meet examiners or trial examiners, the JPO has been implementing since FY 1996 the circuit examination system and the circuit appeal examination system in which examiners or trial examiners visit outlying areas to interview SMEs.

(7) Reduction and Exemption of Fees (annual fees or fees for request for examination)

Since January 2000, under the Patent Law the JPO has implemented measures to grant the reduction of annual fees for the first three years of the patent term and fees to request examination as well as grant extension of payment of such fees for SMEs and venture companies with limited financial means.

Since April 2000, under the Law for Strengthening of Industrial and Technological Competitiveness, the JPO has also implemented measures to reduce annual fees for the first three years of the patent term and fees to request examination, for researchers of R&D-type SMEs and venture companies, national or private universities, technical colleges and institutions for joint use among universities as well as founders of public or private universities and technical colleges.