

June 15 is Last Day to Submit Applications for Peer Review Pilot

USPTO Transitions to Evaluation Phase of Pilot Program to Test Impact of Public Input on Improving Patent Quality

The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) will move to the evaluation phase of the Peer Review Pilot program this month. Under the original program plan, the pilot was scheduled to end in June 2008, but USPTO extended the deadline last year by 12 months. Under the program, the public reviews volunteered published patent applications and submits technical references and comments on the best prior art to consider during the examination. Volunteered applications meeting the pilot's criteria will continue to be accepted until June 15, 2009.

Qualifying volunteered published applications will be accessible at <http://www.peertopatent.org> until at least October. The public may also continue submitting peer reviewed prior art for the more than 120 published applications awaiting a first action on the merits. Once all of the pilot's volunteered applications are examined, USPTO will publish a comprehensive report outlining the details, results and next steps.

The pilot was initially restricted to patent applications in the computer-related arts (those classified in Technology Center 2100). In June 2008, the scope of the program was expanded to include the automated business data processing technologies, or business methods, class 705. Additionally, technical experts in the computer and business methods-related arts, who had registered with the Peer to Patent website, reviewed and submitted information for up to 400 published patent applications, up from 250 as originally announced, and 25 separate applications are allowed from any one person or organization, up from 15 in the original announcement.

The pilot has been conducted in cooperation with the Peer-to-Patent Project, organized by the New York Law School's Institute for Information Law and Policy. It is currently showcased on the White House website as an example of how federal agencies are using transparency, participation and collaboration to achieve their missions as part of the Obama Administration's open government initiative.

For further information on the program, see <http://www.uspto.gov/web/patents/peerpriorartpilot/>.