



Funding for SMEs in the UK

The UK Intellectual Property Office (UK IPO) is currently offering qualifying small and medium-sized businesses grants towards the cost of various IP services.

The IP Audits Plus scheme enables SMEs to have a heavily subsidized IP audit carried out by an IP professional, while the IP Access funding scheme is intended to help businesses recover from COVID-related challenges and to encourage them to invest in their IP.

IP Advance

The IP Advance scheme enables SMEs to claim money towards various IP-related services. There are two tiers of support, and business can apply for either or both:

Tier 1 – IP Audit provides part-funding of £2,250 (including VAT) towards the funding of an IP audit, with the company required to contribute £750 towards the overall cost. IP audits are conducted by a qualified IP professional (such as a trade mark attorney or patent attorney) and are designed to help companies and individuals find out what IP they own and how it could be protected or commercialised.

Tier 2 – IP Access provides businesses with up to 50% of the cost of further professional advice or services related to commercialising their IP – such as the preparation of trade mark, patent or design applications – up to a maximum of £2,250 (including VAT). This funding is designed for progressing or implementing recommendations from an IP audit. However, companies can still apply for IP Access funding even if they've not applied for IP Audit funding.

What is an IP audit?

Auditing a company's intellectual property involves carrying out a detailed analysis of the company's existing IP assets and providing advice on how best to manage their IP and maximise the IP's value. An IP audit can play an essential role in helping an innovative business to develop and commercialise its technology. The results of such an audit can also help potential investors to understand a business's approach to IP.

An IP audit carried out by one of our experienced attorneys at HLK can provide a business with a detailed understanding of its existing IP assets, including patents, trade marks, designs and copyright, along with advice on:

- ownership of their IP rights
- ownership of their IP rights
- how best to harvest their IP
- the likely patentability of an invention
- whether their IP is being exploited appropriately to gain a commercial advantage
- how to go about assessing their freedom to operate in the market, and related potential risks regarding third party rights
- effective IP management
- developing and maintaining an effective IP strategy
- how to handle confidential information using non-disclosure agreements
- how to present the results of an IP audit to potential investors

How to apply for funding under the IP Audits Plus Scheme?

To be eligible for either grant, a business must meet the UK government’s definition of a micro- entity, or small or medium enterprise, including having fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover of less than €50 million:

Turnover or balance sheet total	Headcount	Business size
Turnover less than €50 million, or balance sheet total less than €43 million	Fewer than 250	Medium sized
Turnover less than €10 million, or balance sheet total less than €10 million	Fewer than 50	Small
Turnover less than €2 million, or balance sheet total less than €2 million	Fewer than 10	Micro

The scheme is completely delivered by the UK IPO’s regional partners. To apply, in the first instance, an applicant should contact the relevant regional partner for their business.

England – [Innovate UK Business Growth](#)

Scotland – [Scottish Enterprise](#), [South of Scotland Enterprise](#), and [Highlands and Islands Enterprise](#)

Northern Ireland – [Invest Northern Ireland](#)

Wales – [Welsh Government](#)

If the UK IPO accepts the application, the business can then instruct an IP firm, such as HLK, to conduct an audit or to provide help in developing or implementing an IP strategy.

We recommend applying for funding as early as possible to ensure there is sufficient time to undertake any IP services made possible through the funding.

How HLK can help

At HLK, we are experienced in carrying out IP audits for a wide range of companies. HLK can help businesses access the UK IPO grant and can conduct IP audits and offer further IP assistance under the IP Advance scheme.

If you would like further information about applying for funding under the IP Advance scheme, or if you would like to engage HLK to carry out an IP audit for your business, please get in touch. We’d be happy to put you in touch with the relevant team at one of the regional partners.

This is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice. Should you require advice on this or any other topic then please contact hlk@hlk-ip.com or your usual HLK advisor.