

How to Apply to the Inventor's Assistance Service

Updated 6/23/13

In this module, we will discuss the Inventor's Assistance Service application process.

In This Module:

- ▶ Why you may want to apply.
- ▶ How to complete an application.
- ▶ How and where to submit the application.



Idea vs. Invention vs. Patent

- ▶ Idea: a thought or suggestion as to a possible course of action; a concept
- ▶ Invention: a creative, useful idea that can be made or used for a practical purpose
- ▶ To obtain a patent, an invention must:
 - Be unique,
 - Be describable,
 - Serve a practical service,
 - Solve a problem,
 - Be nonobvious.



Having an idea is just the first step toward an invention. In order to qualify as an invention, the idea must solve a problem, be able to be described and drawn, and serve a practical purpose. To be patentable, it must also be new and not obvious.

For example, let's say someone has a dog who lives outside, but when the temperature drops in the winter, its water freezes. The problem: the dog cannot drink frozen water. The dog's owner brainstorms and comes up with an idea: a heated drinking bowl. For the idea to become an invention, the owner must plan specific details, like the material the bowl is made of, what type of heating mechanism to use, where to integrate the heater into the bowl, whether the device will be safe to use, and many other details. The invention (heated bowl) must be functional.

Even though you may have an invention, this does not mean that the invention can be patented.

Why Apply?

- ▶ Preliminary Report
 - Similar Patents
 - Similar Products
 - Market Analysis
- ▶ Potential Engineering and Prototype Assistance



Once you have taken the steps to develop your idea into an invention, the Inventor's Assistance Service can assist you with further research. The Inventor's Assistance Service is funded by the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology. We provide assistance to Oklahoma inventors. Each inventor who submits a complete application will receive a preliminary report including an analysis of similar products, similar patents and the target market. This report can help the inventor determine if they should continue with their invention or move on to their next idea. If it is deemed that the invention is unique or revolutionary, the IAS may be able to also assist with engineering and prototyping as well as refer the inventor to potential manufacturers.

How to Complete your Application Page 1:

- ▶ Contact Information
- ▶ Invention Title
- ▶ Signed Agreement



When completing the application for the Inventor's Assistance Service, complete all applicable contact information. This ensures that the IAS employee who evaluates your invention is able to contact you with updates about the process or questions about your invention. Also, be sure to include a for title your invention. In some cases, this is very valuable when completing a search for similar ideas that are currently being marketed. Be sure to sign the agreement on the bottom of the first page. This agreement gives the Inventor's Assistance Service permission to disclose the materials with the appropriate employee who will be researching your invention. All IAS employees sign confidentiality agreements, and per the terms of said agreement no information pertaining or related to your invention is discussed with or disclosed to outside parties.

How to Complete your Application Page 2:

- ▶ Need
- ▶ Approach
- ▶ Benefits/Costs
- ▶ Intellectual Property Protection
- ▶ Time and Financial Commitment
- ▶ Assistance Needed



The second page of the IAS application is your chance to share all the information pertaining to your invention and invention process. When completing this section of the application, more is better. Give us as much information as possible. Even if you think a detail may be trivial, include it on the application. You know your invention better than anyone else. The more information you share with us, the better able we are to evaluate your invention.

The first three blanks on this page of the application ask you to complete what is known as an NABC analysis. In order for us to understand your invention we need detailed information regarding your need, approach, benefits/costs, and competition. These components of the application will be discussed further in the following slides.

The fourth blank, Intellectual Property Protection, asks you to describe the degree to which you have sought to protect your invention and claim ownership of the invention. Here is where you disclose if you have applied for a patent or if you have discussed your idea with anyone. Tell us how secure you have kept your invention.

The fifth blank, Time and Financial Commitment, asks you to describe the amount of time you have to devote to your invention and the capacity you have to make financial commitments to develop your invention. Describe any financial investments you have already made to develop your product or service. Bringing an invention to market can be a lengthy and expensive process. On average the cost of obtaining a patent ranges from \$10,000 to \$20,000. These costs include attorney fees, patent fees and patent maintenance fees. Obtaining a patent does not guarantee your invention will make you money. Various sources say that very few (some say less than 1%) inventions actually make it to the marketplace. This is where IAS can benefit you the most by providing you with information about products and patents currently on the market. This allows you to decide whether it is worth your time and money to continue with the patent and commercialization process. For more information about the patent process view the video module "Intro to the Patent Process."

Finally, the last blank, Assistance Needed, asks you to tell us how we can help you. We service inventor's in all stages of the invention process. With each application we receive we complete a preliminary product and patent analysis. We also provide information about the market sector in which your invention is included. If it is determined that your invention is novel and will face few competitors in the marketplace, IAS may also be able to help provide engineering and prototyping assistance.

Also, sending drawings, photos or prototypes to accompany your application can assist as we navigate through the research process.

Need:

- ▶ The problem your invention addresses
- ▶ Why this problem is important
- ▶ How your product creates value for the customer



When describing your 'Need,' you should address the need that your product or service will meet and/or describe the problem that it will solve. Every invention should make the consumer's life better in order for the product to sell. Here you should tell us who you expect to purchase this product and why they want to purchase it. Your invention should solve a problem that exists and has no other solution on the market. Your invention may also better address a problem than the solution that is currently on the market.

Approach:

- ▶ How your invention addresses the problem
- ▶ How it is different from other products
- ▶ Specifications of the invention



Approach is one of the most important components of the application. This is where you address how your product solves the problem and provides benefits to potential customers. State how your approach is different from alternative approaches to solving the problem. In order for an invention to be marketable it must be unique in how it looks, works and solves a problem. This is your chance to tell us all the specifics of your invention – from dimensions to uses. In this section include all the information you have regarding your invention. Tell us everything about it. The more details you include, the better able we are to assist you. Be sure to include drawings, pictures of prototypes, and/or other items that help describe your approach. Also include things such as dimensions, materials used, and general design attributes in this section.

Benefit/Costs

- ▶ How your invention benefits target customers
- ▶ How much someone would be willing to pay



The third section, Benefits/Costs, asks what are the benefits of your approach compared to the benefits of alternative approaches? What are the likely costs of your approach compared to the costs of alternative approaches? This is your chance to tell us why someone would spend money on your invention. Tell us how your idea will make life easier or better for your target market group, and tell us your estimate of the costs associated with your invention. Keep in mind, at this stage you will not have a set cost for your product because manufacturing, packaging and marketing costs vary depending on the materials used to make your invention and the scale at which the invention is produced. However, you could have a target price range for your invention. Be realistic with your cost, ask yourself 'how much money would I spend to purchase this product,' and 'how much money would my neighbor, friends or people in the community spend on this product?'

Confidentiality Agreement

- ▶ Must accompany all applications
- ▶ Between you, IAS and OSU
- ▶ Your invention will not be disclosed
- ▶ Protects you and your invention



The confidentiality agreement is an important part of every application. We cannot begin evaluating your invention until we have received a signed confidentiality agreement. This agreement protects you and your invention from disclosure of any kind. Once we receive the signed CDA, the OSU Associate Vice President for Technology Development, the IAS Director and those working with your invention also sign the agreement. This agreement is then kept on record in the IAS Office.

The Application...

- ▶ Online
 - ias.okstate.edu/apply
- ▶ Email
 - invent@okstate.edu
- ▶ Mail
 - 111 Engineering North, Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078



The Application can be completed three different ways. You can find the application by clicking on the Apply tab at ias.okstate.edu. From there you will have the option to complete the online application, to download the application, complete it and email your completed application to invent@okstate.edu, or you may print the application, complete it and mail it to 111 Engineering North, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078.

Please note that all applications must be accompanied by a signed confidentiality agreement and a non-refundable \$100 application fee. Please mail both a signed CDA and the application fee to 111 Engineering North, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078.

Application Fee

- ▶ \$100
- ▶ Non-refundable
- ▶ Covers cost of research and report



Each application must be accompanied by a non-refundable \$100 application fee. IAS is able to keep costs at a minimum because of funding provided by the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology. Your application fee covers the cost of researching your invention and providing you with a final report on our findings.

Complete Applications Include:

- ▶ A complete application
- ▶ Signed Confidentiality Agreement
- ▶ \$100 non-refundable application fee



When submitting your invention be sure to enclose a complete application with thorough information, descriptions and drawings or pictures; a signed confidentiality agreement; and a \$100 non-refundable application fee.

For More Information...

- ▶ Visit ias.okstate.edu
- ▶ Call (405) 744-8727
- ▶ Fax: (405)744-2189
- ▶ Email: invent@okstate.edu
- ▶ Mail: 111 Engineering North
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078

