

What Patent Work Actually Costs

23%

Rise in average IP billing rate,
2023 to 2025

\$14,470

US maintenance fees over a
patent's life

\$9k–\$17k

Typical utility application drafting

5–30%

Currency markup reported on
foreign annuities

The average IP billing rate rose 23 percent in two survey cycles, an increase of \$103 on every hour billed. An outside firm prices hundreds of matters a year and watches that move happen, while an in house team sees only its own invoices. The numbers below come from government filings, published firm fee guides, and the USPTO schedule, all current as of August 2026.

Billing rates rose 23 percent in two survey cycles

The USPTO's own filings put both figures on the record. AIPLA's Report of the Economic Survey found the average IP billing rate was \$447 per hour in its 2023 edition and \$550 in its 2025 edition, the same numbers the USPTO cites in the Federal Register when it sets its own fees.

A budget carrying forward a rate assumption from the last cycle is therefore roughly a quarter light against what firms now charge.

Office action responses: \$1,500 to \$5,000

The published guides largely agree here, with firm fee guides published in 2025 and 2026 from Bitlaw, Blueiron IP, and UpCounsel bracketing typical responses at \$1,500 to \$5,000 and most work landing between \$2,300 and \$4,500 per response.

Complexity of the rejection and the fee arrangement decide where a matter lands on that scale, leaving firms that do equally careful work quoting from opposite ends of the same range.

Application drafting runs \$7,500 to \$17,000

Bitlaw's fee guide puts most utility applications at \$9,000 to \$17,000 to draft, with simpler filings closer to \$7,500. The technology field of the invention is the main reason that number moves within the range.

The field averages run from \$9,500 for mechanical work to \$10,923 for electrical and computer to \$11,400 for biotech and chemistry, averages that sit thousands of dollars apart in the same market.

What we see at 100 to 300 patents

In the deals ArcPrime sees at this portfolio size, office action responses commonly land near \$2,500 and new applications near \$11,000. Those are observations from live matters rather than survey statistics, though both sit inside the published ranges above.

Why the ranges are so wide

Part of the spread comes from the fee arrangement, where a flat fee fixes the number before the work starts while hourly billing at the survey average moves with the hours the matter takes.

Who does the first pass moves the number as well: a patent agent's draft reviewed by a partner carries a different cost than one the partner writes start to finish. A response arriving with claim charts and a continuation recommendation is a different purchase than the response alone.

Annuity pricing is quoted, not published

Every major service quotes rather than lists, with a quote combining the official patent office fee, the provider's service fee, and a currency conversion charge on foreign fees.

Invoices diverge on the currency line, where PatentRenewal.com, which discusses its pricing openly, describes industry currency markups of 5 to 30 percent as common. A markup that size separates two companies paying the same official fee in the same country by hundreds of dollars per patent.

The official fees underneath are fixed and public

A US utility patent owes maintenance fees three times in its life, in windows at 3.5, 7.5, and 11.5 years after issue. At large entity rates the three payments total \$14,470 before any surcharge.

Because the due dates fall on each patent's own anniversary, payments arrive steadily through the year rather than as one annual bill. A budget built on the official schedule can be checked line by line against the USPTO fee table.

The published ranges, with sources

Work type	Published range (2025 to 2026 sources)	Source
Utility application drafting	\$9,000 to \$17,000 for most applications; around \$7,500 at minimal complexity	Bitlaw The Patent Drawings Company
Drafting by technology area (averages)	Mechanical \$9,500; electrical and computer \$10,923; biotech and chemistry \$11,400	BlueIron IP
Office action response	\$1,500 to \$5,000 per response; most between \$2,300 and \$4,500	Bitlaw BlueIron IP UpCounsel
Average IP billing rate	\$447 per hour (2023 AIPLA report) to \$550 per hour (2025 AIPLA report), a 23 percent rise	Federal Register, Nov. 19, 2025 Federal Register, July 17, 2026
US maintenance fees (large entity)	\$2,150 at 3.5 years; \$4,040 at 7.5 years; \$8,280 at 11.5 years; \$540 surcharge inside the grace period	USPTO fee schedule
Annuity services	No published absolute service fees; invoices combine the official fee, a service fee, and currency handling, with markups of 5 to 30 percent on currency reported as common	PatentRenewal.com

Sources

Average IP billing rate, 2023 edition: [Federal Register, Nov. 19, 2025 \(AIPLA 2023 Report, pg. F-41\)](#)

Average IP billing rate, 2025 edition: [Federal Register, Jul. 17, 2026 \(AIPLA 2025 Report, pg. F-35\)](#)

US maintenance fees and surcharges: [USPTO fee schedule, effective January 19, 2025, last revised August 14, 2026](#)

Annuity invoice structure and currency markups: [PatentRenewal.com, Patent renewal costs explained](#)

Compiled by ArcPrime. Figures verified August 2026.