



ICT, FET Open

LIFT ICT-FP7-255951

Using Local Inference in Massively Distributed Systems

Collaborative Project

D 7.1

Quality Assurance Plan

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Abstract:

This deliverable reports on diverse issues related to the administrative and scientific coordination of the LIFT project. More specifically, it describes in detail the procedures that have been set to create the conditions for successful work and results according to the contract, manage all the financial and administrative issues of the project, organize the project reviews, assure the quality of all activities carried out in the context of the project, comply with EC standards and procedures for project management and tracking, support an effective communication and collaboration among the project's partners and committees, assure the overall project's quality. It complements the technical annex and the Consortium Agreement.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

The main objectives of the LIFT quality assurance plan is to

- provide a clear framework for the organization and coordination of all LIFT activities;
- define the appropriate procedures for deliverable production, and
- assure that the overall quality of the project is of high standards.

It is recognized that each LIFT partner has its own internal procedures. The extent of this document is confined to the procedures necessary to facilitate the flow of information and quality control throughout the project, by applying a reasonable level of commonness, in term of content and processes.

1.2 Abbreviations

Terms which regularly appear in this document will be introduced in full name the first time, and then be referred to by their abbreviation, as follows:

- CA – Consortium Agreement
- DE – Deliverable Evaluator
- DM – Deliverable Manager
- DD – Deliverable Deadline
- EC – European Commission
- ECGA - LIFT Grant Agreement
- FC – Financial Coordinator
- GA – General Assembly
- PCO – Project Coordinator (Scientific Coordinator)
- PMB – Project Management Board
- SAB – Scientific Advisory Board
- TL – Task Leader
- WP – Workpackage
- WPL – Work Package Leader

2 Quality Assurance Plan

The LIFT Quality Assurance Plan will aid the maintenance of the desired level of quality in the project work. It is established and agreed by the management board, and will be updated and refined throughout the lifetime of the project. The Quality Assurance Plan covers issues related to reporting, review and production of deliverables, progress meetings, and documentation standards.

2.1 Contractual and Financial Management

The LIFT project scope, terms and conditions are specified in the Grant Agreement no. 255951 (including its Annexes I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII) with the European Commission, within the FP7 Specific Programme “Cooperation”, entered into force on 26 August 2010. Any communication or request regarding the Grant Agreement can only be administered through the coordinating party (CTI) and according to Article 8 of the ECGA. The process for any changes will be governed by the European Commission, Information Society, following the Grant Agreement.

The LIFT Consortium Agreement, based upon Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 and the European Commission Grant Agreement, has followed the template of the DESCA simplified FP7 Model Consortium Agreement

(www.DESCA-FP7.eu). The Consortium Agreement specifies, with respect to the LIFT project, the relationship among the project partners, in particular concerning the organization of the work between them, the management of the project and the decision making mechanisms, as well as the rights and obligations of the Parties concerning inter alia liability, access rights and dispute resolution.

LIFT financial management shall follow the provisions which are detailed in Section 7 of the LIFT Consortium Agreement and will be carried out in compliance with the ECGA and especially the terms and conditions laid out in its Annexes II, VI, and VII.

Each project partner has appointed one person to act as the financial manager in their organization for the LIFT project. The FC may provide support to project partners' financial managers, such as complementary financial guidelines, document and templates, so that the consortium adopts a consistent and professional approach for financial management and financial report production.

The Community financial contribution to the Project shall be distributed by the Coordinator (CTI) according to:

- the Consortium Budget as included in the ECGA,
- the approval of reports by the European Commission, and
- the provisions of payment in the ECGA and in Article 7.3 of the CA.

Each partner organisation shall be funded only for its tasks carried out in accordance with the Grant Agreement.

2.2 IPR policy

The IPR policy of the LIFT project is established with the objective of ensuring an efficient cooperation for carrying out the project and finding the right balance between protection of knowledge and dissemination to the benefit of the partners and for the interest of the European Commission.

The rules applied for the management of intellectual property within the frame of LIFT and for the future exploitation of project's results are fully compatible with the Grant Agreement and are specified in the LIFT Consortium Agreement.

The IPR policy of the LIFT project will be monitored by the Project Management Board.

2.3 Project Planning

The detailed planning for LIFT activities and related use of resources was produced and agreed during the proposal and contract preparation. Timing of WPs and associated tasks is depicted in a Gantt chart in ECGA (Annex I – DoW).

Nevertheless, during the project implementation, each WPL, supported by the PCO and the PMB, is responsible for ensuring that an effective and realistic work planning is in place at the beginning of their WP. WPLs and TLs are responsible for maintaining a detailed plan for the work to be carried out by each partner involved in the project tasks.

The workplan is constantly monitored and evaluated. Timing of project monitoring points is described in the following section. Detailed short-term action lists are discussed and agreed by the PMB and the GA in regular project meetings.

Finally, each partner shall plan and manage their own resources in accordance to the provisions of the ECGA and in order to make their contribution to the project as cost effective as possible. The PCO will overview periodically, via interim reports, the actual use of resources and check the cost effectiveness.

2.4 Progress Monitoring

Project reports will be the main instrument serving the practical measurement of project progress on a regular basis. The PCO, on the behalf of the consortium, collects, compiles and submits consolidated technical and financial details in the form of 'Periodic Reports', as foreseen by FP7 and the ECGA.

2.5 LIFT reporting requirements

Three (3) reporting periods are foreseen for the LIFT project (ECGA, Article 4, page 3):

- P1: from month 1 to month 12;
- P2: from month 13 to month 24;
- P3 (Final): from month 25 to month 36.

Reporting requirements during the course of the project consist in:

- a. **All deliverables** identified in Annex I of the ECGA ("Description of Work").
WHEN: according to the timetable in the Deliverables List (see Table 1.3b).
- b. **Three (3) periodic reports.**
WHEN: within 60 days after the end of each respective period (M12, M24, M36).
- c. **A final report.**
WHEN: within 60 days after the end of the project.
- d. **A report on distribution of the EU financial contribution** between beneficiaries (GA Article II.4.3).
WHEN: After having received the final payment from the EC, at the latest 30 days after receipt of the final payment.
- e. **References of all scientific publications** relating to foreground. A full list of publications relating to foreground is also part of the final report.
WHEN: Continuously (during and after the project), at the latest 2 months after the publication.

All other official LIFT reports (both scientific and financial parts) will be submitted electronically via the Commission's Participant Portal (<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal>). Financial reporting (filling in Form C) is available under the Portal (NEF), but the forms have to be also sent with original signatures. The reporting and evaluation process applicable for LIFT, as specified by EC for FP7, is presented in Figure 2.1.

The LIFT consortium is aware that it should study and regularly consult the ECGA – Annex II and the related EC Guidance notes on project reporting (such as those available at: ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/project_reporting_en.pdf).

2.5.1 Deliverables

Production and evaluation of deliverables is described in Section 2.6.

2.5.2 Periodic Reports

These will be produced annually, according to the contractual requirements and the provisions of the ECGA and its Annex II. The template will be the official template provided by the EC (ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/periodic_report_en.doc). The LIFT Periodic Reports will include:

- An overview, including a publishable summary, of the progress towards the objectives of the project. This will include the differences between the work expected to be carried out in accordance with Annex I and the work that was actually carried out.

- Deliverables and milestones.
- Project Management.
- Explanation of the use of the resources.
- Dissemination and use plan.
- A summary financial report, consolidating the claimed Community contribution of all beneficiaries in an aggregate form, based on the information provided in Form C (Annex VI) by each partner.
- Certificates, if needed.

The procedure followed for the production of the periodic reports will be the following:

- Each partner fills in the periodic report template and emails it to PCO and APM.
- In parallel, each partner fills in the financial part of the report, i.e. Form C, online, using their access keys to the respective NEF session.
- PCO evaluates the submitted data with the collaboration and support of FC, PMB.
- PCO compiles the consolidated periodic report document and sends it for validation to the PMB. This version is archived by the PCO in the web repository.
- PCO uploads the PMB-approved periodic report in the NEF space and waits for validation by the Commission.
- PCO notifies the partners on Commission's feedback and evaluation result, prompts for specific correction actions if and where needed, and ensures proper response to meet EC requests.
- After Commission's approval, all partners send promptly to the PCO their Forms C with original signatures.
- PCO sends to the Commission the signed Forms C.
- PCO notifies the partners on Commission's feedback and evaluation result prompts for specific correction actions if and where needed, and ensures proper response to meet EC requests.
- After Commission's approval, FC attends the payment procedure according to the provisions of the ECGA and the Consortium Agreement.

2.5.3 Final Report

The LIFT Final Report will be submitted to EC within 60 days after the end of the project. It will be produced by a procedure equivalent to the above described for the Periodic report. The template will be the official template provided by the EC (ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/final_report_en.doc). The Final Report and shall consist in:

- A final publishable summary report covering results, conclusions and socio economic impact of the project.
- A plan for the use and dissemination of foreground (results).
- A report covering wider societal implications of the project, in the form of a questionnaire.

2.5.4 Report on distribution of EU funding

The coordinator shall submit, within 30 days after receipt of the final payment, a report on the distribution of the EU financial contribution between beneficiaries. The Commission has 105 days to evaluate it and execute the corresponding payment.

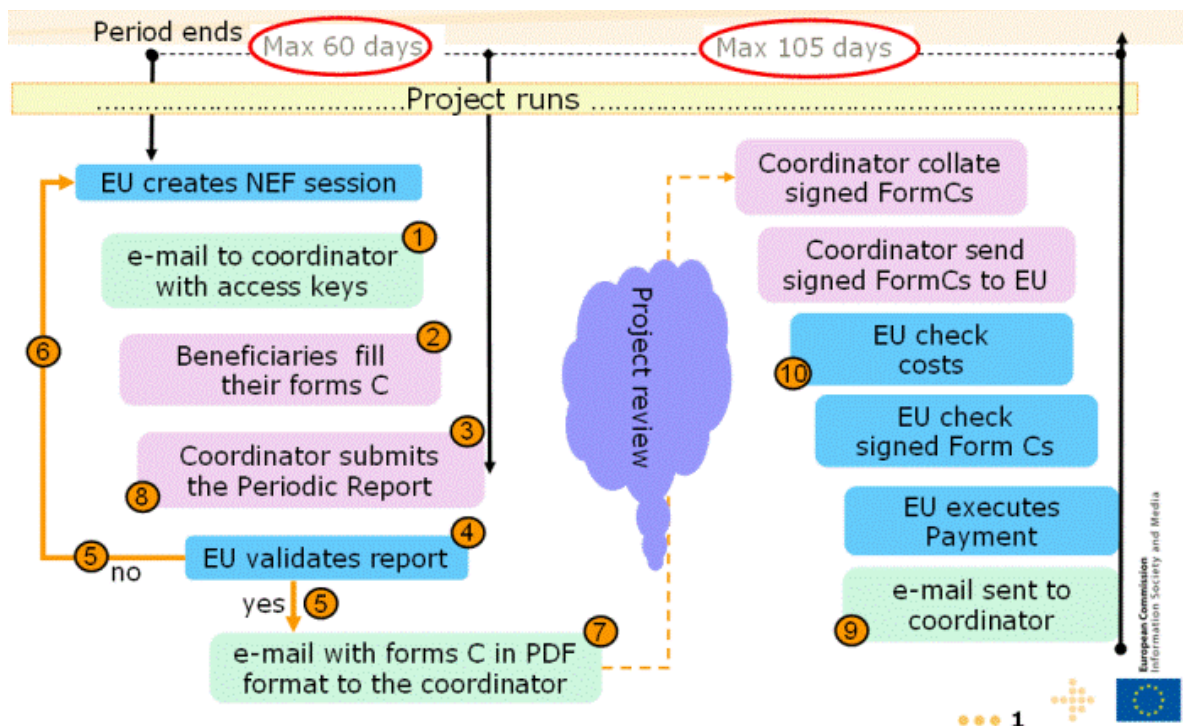


Figure 2.1: Overview of the reporting process in FP7 that will be followed in LIFT
(Source: European Commission, Information Society and Media)

2.6 Project Deliverables

Each WPL, for each deliverable that s/he is in charge of, will assign a Deliverable Manager (DM), who will be the person responsible for the production of the deliverable and its timely delivery for evaluation and approval by the PMB according to the deliverable production cycle detailed below. The DM, together with the WPL, are responsible for ensuring that the deliverable meets the quality assurance requirements.

Moreover, internal deliverable evaluators (peer reviewer) will be assigned for each deliverable for performing the internal assessment. It is agreed among the LIFT consortium that:

- A draft version of each deliverable will be sent to the internal reviewers one month before the deliverable's deadline.
- Each deliverable must be approved by the PCO before its submission to the Commission.
- The deliverable version approved by the PCO will be submitted to the Commission by the PCO.

All deliverables will be timely submitted to EC according to the timeplan specified in the ECGA – Part B (DoW).

2.6.1 Deliverable production cycle

The production cycle for all LIFT deliverables is specified in the following paragraphs.

One (1) month before the official deadline (DD), the Deliverable Manager uploads the version of the deliverable to be evaluated by the internal evaluators at the file repository and sends a notification email.

To: the internal evaluators (peer reviewers)
Cc: WPL, PCO

Subject: Dx.x for internal evaluation.

15 calendar days before the DD, the DM, after having accommodated the feedback provided by the internal reviewers, uploads the peer-evaluated version of the deliverable at the file repository and sends a notification email to the PCO.

To: PCO

Cc: deliverables' internal evaluators, WPL, PCO, PMB

Subject: Dx.x for PCO approval.

5 calendar days before the DD, the DM, after having accommodated the feedback provided by the PCO and/or PMB, uploads the PCO-approved version at the repository and sends a notification email.

To: PCO

Cc:

Subject: Dx.x for submission to EC.

At the latest on the DD, the PCO, submits the deliverable to the EC according to the Project Officer's guidelines and sends a notification email.

To: All project members

Cc:

Subject: Dx.x has been submitted to EC.

Depending on the EC external review results, the above steps are repeated accordingly until the Deliverable is accepted by the Commission.

When the deliverable is accepted by EC, the PCO uploads it at the file repository and sends a notification email

To: All project members

Cc:

Subject: Dx.x has been accepted by EC.

2.7 Evaluation of project reports and deliverables

Technical audits and reviews by EC are inter-related with the evaluation of the project reports and deliverables and may cover scientific, technological and other aspects related to the proper execution of the project and ECGA. EC may initiate a technical audit or review at any time during the implementation of the project and up to five years after the end of the project, in order to assess the work carried out under the project over a certain period.

2.7.1 Review organization

EC may be assisted in technical audits and reviews by external scientific or technological experts. Audits and reviews may be carried out remotely at an expert's site or involve sessions with project representatives either at the Commission premises or at the premises of project partners. The Commission or the external scientific or technological expert may have access to the locations and premises where the work is being carried out, and to any document concerning the work.

On a consortium basis, participation to these reviews for LIFT is restricted to, and mandatory for a) the PCO supported by the FC as needed, and b) all management board members. Other people (e.g. SAB members) may be requested by the PCO to attend an EC review.

2.7.2 Preparation of reviews

Technical audits and reviews shall be initiated on the date of receipt by the beneficiary(ies) of the relevant letter sent by the Commission.

Prior to a technical audit or review, all partners shall make available to PCO and, as requested or needed, directly to the Commission, all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or the external scientific or technological experts.

PCO will coordinate all preparatory activities in point of a review, supported by the PMB. Such activities will include the scheduling and production of presentations and a review rehearsal meeting that is intended to be held with the consortium participants one day before the review.

2.7.3 Review results

A report on the outcome of the audits and reviews shall be sent by the Commission to the beneficiary concerned, who may make observations within one month after receiving it.

On the basis of the experts' formal recommendations, the Commission will inform the PCO of its decision:

1. to accept or reject the deliverables;
2. to allow the project to continue without modification of Annex I or with minor modifications;
3. to consider that the project can only continue with major modifications;
4. to initiate the termination of the grant agreement or of the participation of any beneficiary according to Article II. 38;
5. to issue a recovery order regarding all or part of the payments made by the Commission and to apply any applicable sanction.

2.7.4 Following up the review results

According to the EC's decision, the consortium shall take immediate appropriate action, animated by the PCO and ensured by the PMB. In case of rejection of deliverables and/or request for modifications, a PMB meeting will be held (face-to-face or web) within one week of receiving the Commission's decision. PMB decisions on corrective actions will be communicated to the Project Officer; the beneficiaries concerned and the project's workplan will be adapted accordingly.

2.8 Meetings

Meetings of a LIFT Consortium Body are convened by its chairperson. PCO shall convene ordinary face-to-face meetings of the PMB at least every 6 months, online meetings every 2 months and extraordinary meetings at any time upon written request of any PMB Member. The foreseen regular LIFT project meetings include:

- One General Assembly meeting per year (face-to-face)
- At least six PMB meetings (face-to-face or over the web)
- Three review meetings (plus pre-preview/rehearsal meetings)
- Technical WP meetings (defined in p.88 of ECGA-Annex I)

A schedule of meetings will be maintained on the LIFT website.

2.8.1 Agenda

The chairperson gives written notice to all members 14 days earlier for ordinary and 7 days earlier for extraordinary meetings. He/she also sends out the agenda within 14 days for ordinary and 7 days for extraordinary meetings.

During a meeting of a Consortium Body, the members present or represented can unanimously agree to add a new item to the original agenda.

The meeting agendas are archived in the LIFT web repository.

2.8.2 Minutes

Written minutes shall be the formal record of all decisions taken.

The chairperson produces and sends draft minutes within 10 days.

These minutes are considered accepted if no member objected (in writing) within 15 days from sending.

The chairperson sends the accepted minutes to all members of the Steering Committee, and to PCO, who, if requested, shall provide authenticated duplicates to partners.

The minutes of the meetings are archived in the LIFT web repository.

2.9 Project Documentation Standards

2.9.1 Document content and formatting

The content and general organization of each project document is at the discretion of the project member leading the document's production. Thus, the content of a project deliverable or report is at the responsibility of the DM and the WPL in the framework of which the document is produced.

In order to guarantee a certain degree of homogeneity, the LIFT Deliverable Template (see <http://wiki.LIFT-project.eu/display/DIC/Final+Deliverables>) and the Quarterly Report Template (see Annex 2 of this deliverable) have to be respected.

Common formal rules for writing LIFT documents are:

- Language: English.
- General Font Police: Arial (or similar), font size 11.
- Page set up: A4 paper size, single spacing between lines.
- Margins: left and right justified margins as in this document.

2.9.2 Revisions

Revisions occur when updating a part of a document, which has been distributed to a project team or consortium body (e.g. via uploading to the file repository, via emailing, etc). During document revisions, modifications have to be clearly indicated, i.e. by using a different color or by using an available modification mode (e.g. a "track changes" tool). For the LIFT Deliverables, the document history is recorded, and always appears in the beginning of the document according to the LIFT Deliverable Template.

2.9.3 Naming conventions for project files

Regarding project deliverables:

- file name begins with the Deliverable Number (e.g. D1.1),
- followed by short description,
- followed by version indication (e.g. D1.1v01, D1.1v02, D1.1v03,...),
- followed by the following abbreviated identification of deliverable status, or, if in working progress, by another useful brief user description (e.g. commentsBy).

Abbreviated identification showing the status of LIFT deliverables (the last part of the file name): Plan, Draft, Working, Final, Submitted

-

Examples:

D1.1-ManagementQuality-v01

D1.1-ManagementQuality-v02-draft

D1.1-ManagementQuality-v07-FINAL

2.10 Risk Management

The LIFT risk management process includes identification, mitigation and action plans to reduce and/or eliminate any risk that may arise. More specifically, it will comprise the following steps:

- identification of the risk (together with the relevant competences for its evaluation);
- its evaluation (as far as its probability and impact are concerned);
- actions to avoid, manage and reduce it;
- continuous monitoring and revision of the related risk management plan during the project's duration, and
- provision of success/failure feedback for learning purposes (learning by experiences).

As a general risk mitigation strategy in LIFT, all WP leaders will examine carefully that the scientific and technical work is conducted according to the WP specification in the ECGA-Annex I. Regular reviewing will be also conducted via consortium meetings and working groups. Any unanticipated risks will be promptly reported to PCO and PMB; mitigating actions will be taken accordingly. This risk management methodology will be implemented in an iterative mode, suited to technically challenging projects like LIFT.

Specifically:

- Issues raised will be first reported to and logged by the WP leader, who will assess the implication of the issue and associated risks, and seek to identify a resolution.
- Any mediated solutions, alternatives, assumptions or associated risks identified will be also logged along with risk mitigation plans.
- Unresolved issues or conflicts impacting the project plan will be escalated to the appropriate WP leader, PCO, PMB (whenever appropriate) and then, if required, to the project's General Assembly.

2.11 Conflict Resolution

The consortium will follow a collaborative approach for managing all conflicts that may occur; decisions will be made by seeking consensus.

In the event of a conflict, the related issue will be raised before a PMB meeting (either at the next agreed meeting or at a specially organized one). The problem shall be defined in a written form (by email, in minutes of meeting, etc). All supporting evidence will be thoroughly considered to determine whether the situation is a real problem causing immediate impact or is a potential problem which may or may not occur or may have indirect and/or limited impact. Realistic courses of action which could resolve, avoid or limit the problematic situation, will be jointly sought, under the direction of the PCO and the PMB. The resolving alternatives will be assessed in terms of the required time and effort, assessed chances for success, and any possible side effects on the project. PCO will attempt to reach agreement on a solution by general consensus. Failing to do so, the voting infrastructure of the PMB will be used to resolve the problem, based on a majority vote (as defined in the CA). In the event of a deadlock, the PCO will have an additional casting vote.

The corrective actions to be taken and the project members responsible for their implementation shall be recorded (i.e. as PMB decisions); their implementation will be closely monitored to assure the effective and timely issue resolution.

3 Information flow

3.1 LIFT web portal

The project web portal can be found under <http://www.lift-eu.org>.

3.2 LIFT Repositories

3.2.1 LIFT Wiki

All information and documents relevant to the project will be exchanged and archived on a secure web space maintained at <https://www.lift-eu.org/foswiki>. The repository includes currently the following topics:

- contact information about all project members
- administrative documents
- dates and presentations of meetings
- document design & promotion materials
- technical information
- literature

Access to the wiki is granted to all LIFT members. FHG is responsible for maintaining the information up to date.

3.2.2 LIFT SVN

In addition to the wiki, the SVN repository supports the collaboration of the partners by a versioning system. The SVN is primarily intended for the production of joint papers, deliverables and as software repository. The SVN is maintained at a secure web space at <https://svn-ext.iais.fraunhofer.de/repos/kd.lift>.

Access to the repository is granted to all LIFT members. The WPLs are responsible for maintaining structured archives for all technical and scientific work related to their WP.

3.3 Meetings

Project regular and ad-hoc meetings will be held to ensure successful collaboration and knowledge sharing.

3.4 Project Mailing Lists

The following mailing lists have been created:

- general project list: lift@iais.fraunhofer.de
- management board list: lift-mb@iais.fraunhofer.de

Additional mailing lists can be generated if deemed necessary upon a partner's suggestion emailed to FHG. Technical support for these lists can be provided by an email request to Daniela Börner.

3.5 Project Presentation Templates

Dedicated presentation templates will be used for uniform internal and/or external presentations of the project. These templates are made available via the wiki.