

# Leo Mertens

## Senior Scientific Project Manager

Huntsville · AL · US

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## Summary

Results-driven Senior Scientific Project Manager with over 15 years of experience in genomic research, biotechnology, and clinical trial project management. Proven track record in managing complex, multi-site genomic studies from initiation through delivery, with deep expertise in high-throughput sequencing, workflow optimization, and stakeholder engagement across clinical sites, laboratories, and cross-functional teams. Adept at bridging scientific and operational domains, ensuring compliance, data integrity, and client satisfaction in fast-paced, regulated environments. Recognized for leading teams through process improvements that increased project throughput by up to 40% and reduced turnaround time by 30%. PMP-certified, with advanced scientific training and a passion for advancing genomics in translational and clinical research.

## Experience

### Discovery Life Sciences

Senior Scientific Project Manager – Genomics | 01 Mar 2021 – Present

- Lead end-to-end project management for 25+ concurrent genomic sequencing studies, averaging \$1.8M in annual contract value, serving academic, pharmaceutical, and CRO clients.
- Serve as primary point of contact for clients and clinical sites, managing 80+ weekly communications via email and phone regarding order fulfillment, sample logistics, data delivery, and protocol deviations.
- Collaborate with internal teams (lab operations, bioinformatics, histology, sales) to confirm project feasibility, define timelines, and resolve technical bottlenecks; reduced average project kickoff time by 22% via streamlined coordination.
- Monitor incoming biospecimens (tumor tissues, blood, FFPE blocks), verifying quality and compliance with collection protocols; flagged and resolved 95% of non-conforming samples pre-analysis, preventing costly rework.
- Liaise with pathology team to coordinate slide preparation, review, and annotation; improved pathology turnaround accuracy by 30% by implementing standardized feedback loops.
- Maintain project data in Salesforce and internal LIMS, ensuring audit readiness and regulatory compliance (CLIA, HIPAA); led internal audit remediation that achieved zero non-conformances in 2023.
- Mentor 4 junior project coordinators; 2 promoted within 18 months under direct supervision.

### Helixion Biotech

Scientific Project Manager – Translational Research | 01 Jun 2017 – 01 Feb 2021

- Managed portfolio of 12+ biomarker discovery projects using NGS and single-cell sequencing across oncology and autoimmune disease areas.
- Coordinated with 30+ clinical trial sites in North America and Europe to track kit shipments, sample collection progress, and protocol adherence; improved collection compliance from 78% to 93% over 18 months.
- Led weekly internal cross-functional meetings with R&D, QC, and bioinformatics to align on project status, data release plans, and client deliverables.
- Developed and executed custom data processing workflows in collaboration with bioinformatics engineers, reducing data delivery time by 35%.
- Authored and maintained project documentation, including scope statements, risk logs, and change requests.
- Played key role in client renewals, with 95% retention rate over 3 years; received Outstanding Collaboration Award in 2019 and 2020.

### Helixion Biotech

Project Coordinator – Clinical Genomics | 01 Jan 2014 – 01 May 2017

- Supported 8 senior project managers in managing large-scale clinical genomics programs, focusing on sample logistics, data entry, and status reporting.

- Tracked 500+ patient samples across 15 studies using REDCap and internal databases; reduced data entry errors by 40% after implementing double-verification protocol.
- Prepare pathology review packages and coordinated slide shipments with histology labs; maintained 99% sample traceability.
- Served as backup point of contact for clients during PM absences, handling queries on shipping, project timelines, and data access.
- Contributed to SOP development for sample receipt and quarantine procedures adopted company-wide in 2016.

## **Precision Diagnostics Labs**

Laboratory Scientist II – Molecular Genomics | 01 Aug 2009 – 01 Dec 2013

Career shift from lab science to project management began during this role through internal training and PMP preparation.

- Conducted high-throughput DNA/RNA extraction, library prep, and QC for genomic sequencing projects supporting 20+ clinical studies.
- Optimized RNA extraction protocols for low-yield FFPE samples, increasing success rate from 65% to 88%.
- Supported LIMS data entry and sample tracking; trained 6 new lab technicians in SOPs and safety protocols.
- Participated in CAP accreditation audit; contributed to documentation and process validation efforts that led to successful certification.

## **Education & Training**

### **Master of Science, Molecular Biology**

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

– 01 May 2009

### **Bachelor of Science, Biology**

Tufts University

– 01 May 2007

Result: 3.7/4.0

## **Skills**

Scientific & Technical, Project & Operations Management, Leadership & Soft Skills

## **Languages**

### **German | – Present**

Fluent

### **Spanish | – Present**

Basic

## **Certifications & Credentials**

### **Project Management Professional (PMP) | 2015-01-01**

Project Management Institute (PMI)

### **PMP Recertification | 2021-01-01**

Project Management Institute (PMI)

### **Certified Clinical Research Professional (CCRP) | 2018-01-01**

Society of Clinical Research Associates

### **Good Clinical Practice (GCP) Certification | 2020-01-01**

CITI Program

### **GCP Certification Renewal | 2023-01-01**

CITI Program

## **Awards**

**Outstanding Collaboration Award | 2019-01-01**

Helixion Biotech

**Outstanding Collaboration Award | 2020-01-01**

Helixion Biotech

**Projects****Notable Achievement 1 | 01 Jan 2022 – Present**

Reduced average project delivery time by 30% (from 6 weeks to 4.2) across 18 major genomics projects by redesigning workflow coordination between wet lab, bioinformatics, and PM teams (2022).

**Notable Achievement 2 | 01 Jan 2021 – Present**

Led recovery of a high-value client at risk of churn by redesigning data delivery protocol and implementing weekly status reports; retained \$450K annual contract with improved satisfaction scores (2021).

**Notable Achievement 3 | 01 Jan 2020 – Present**

Improved sample acceptance rate by 27% through a pre-submission checklist and training program for clinical sites, reducing repeat collections and client complaints (2020).

**Notable Achievement 4 | 01 Jul 2022 – 31 Mar 2023**

Delivered 100% on-time project milestones for 3 consecutive quarters (Q3–Q4 2022, Q1 2023) across 15+ concurrent studies, impacting client retention and internal performance metrics.

**Notable Achievement 5 | 01 Jan 2022 – Present**

Pioneered use of Jira for genomic project tracking, integrating lab task assignments and milestone alerts, adopted as company standard in 2022.

**Interests**

**Precision medicine advocacy | – Present**

**Hiking | – Present**

**Amateur astrophotography | – Present**

**Language learning | – Present**

**References**

References available upon request.