Congratulations on the approval of your Bass Connections project! Here are some key considerations and resources to help you get organized and make a strong start.

**Clarify and Articulate Project Goals and Expectations**
Feedback from faculty and students who have previously participated in Bass Connections suggests that it’s important to set clear and achievable goals and expectations for everyone involved in the project before the project begins – and even before you start recruiting students since this will ensure that everyone enters into the project with aligned expectations. Some suggestions include:

- Review the project description that the Bass Connections team prepares for you to be posted on the website and ensure that it clearly articulates the goal of the project and your expectations for students (this description will be sent to you for review in early January). This will help students make informed decisions.
- Host a kick-off meeting with all of the faculty/staff involved in the project to clarify goals, roles and time commitment.
- Consider interviewing students prior to accepting them to the team to discuss the nature of the work and expectations. And/or, consider hosting a kick-off/introductory meeting in the spring right after student selection. You can use this time to: introduce team members to one another, describe the nature of the project, set expectations and provide students with any applicable background resources. This can mitigate any subsequent student “melt.”
- Use a planning document such as a team charter to help your team plan and ensure that everyone on the team has aligned expectations. We’ve provided a template in the Team Resource Center.
- At the beginning of the team’s work, provide students with a document outlining the goals for the work and expectations for student participation and contributions, including how students will be graded. (This is required for all teams offering academic credit)

**Build a Strong Team**
While every team is unique, evidence suggests that the most effective Bass Connections teams include undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, and community partners/clients with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Some questions to consider when forming your team include:

- What is the right size for your team? How much work needs to be done and how do you envision this work being structured? Most Bass Connections teams have between six and twelve students.
- What disciplines/skills/experiences would benefit the team?
- What mix of undergraduates, professional/graduate students would be ideal?
- If you haven’t already identified a client or community partner, is there an opportunity to integrate an external partner? See tips on engaging external partners.
- Do you need a project manager and who would be best to play that role? Feedback suggests that having a project manager helps improve team functioning, reduces the workload of the faculty team
leaders and provides a valuable developmental opportunity for professional/graduate students or post-docs. See more information about how to effectively structure the project manager role.

- Once you select students, consider how to get them up to speed quickly. This might include assigning readings before the project starts or planning a few initial trainings. Remember, there are many resources at Duke to help providing grounding in research methods so this does not have to rest entirely on your shoulders.

**Tips for recruiting participants**

Bass Connections will distribute information about opportunities to join your team to students and will set up a centralized process and infrastructure for collecting student applications. Most teams receive strong student interest but we also recommend that you consider conducting targeted outreach through your own channels, including:

- Advertise the project to students in your current and previous classes, current and former advisees, and other students you know.
- Circulate a description of your project through your department’s email listserv.
- Participate in the Bass Connections Fair in late January. This is a great opportunity to discuss your project directly with the most interested students.
- Ask other faculty for student recommendations and/or to publicize the project to their students.
- Target graduate students by contacting relevant Directors of Graduate Studies (DGSs) and asking them to share information about your project with their students and/or ask for student recommendations.
- Advertise the project through listservs and student groups in the master’s programs and professional schools.

**Minimize Administrative Challenges**

There are several steps that you can take up front to minimize the administrative demands of leading a team including:

- **Pick a time for your team to meet weekly and publicize this time during registration** so that students who sign up can schedule the rest of their courses around this time. This is a recommendation that has been heavily emphasized by prior team leaders who have found scheduling to be the single greatest challenge for their team.
- Talk to the theme administering your project and then your school/department financial administrator to discuss how funds will be managed and administered.
- Identify and plan for IRB approvals early.
- Determine whether students will receive stipends or course credit and how crediting and grading will work before the project begins. In general, students receive stipends for any work performed over the summer, and course credit for participation during the academic year (the exception being advanced PhD students who do not need course credit). See hourly student rates.
- Identify a project manager who can help keep the team on task.
- Use resources available through Duke to help the team communicate.
Structure Your Team Effectively
Student feedback has demonstrated that the opportunity to engage in team-based inquiry is one of the most valuable and rewarding aspects of Bass Connections. That said, poorly structured teams are also the most common source of frustration for faculty and students alike. Before your team begins its work, we encourage you to visit our Team Resource Center which contains materials and guidance that may be useful to you:

- Executive Summary: How Our Research Teams Fail and Succeed
- Project Team Charter Template
- Team Building Suggestions
- Setting Team Norms
- Research and Technology Support Resources
- Engaging External Organizations and Communities
- Using a Project Manager to Improve Your Team