Overview
The COBRE Center for Zoonotic and Emerging Infectious Diseases is soliciting proposals for Pilot Grants. The purpose of this Pilot Grants Program is to provide funding for peer-reviewed and meritorious pilot projects to accelerate biomedical research in the area of zoonotic and emerging infectious diseases at Montana State University. Pilot Grants must address an important problem in basic and/or translational research relevant to zoonotic and/or emerging infectious diseases, and there must be a clear explanation of how the Pilot Grant is consistent with the goals of the COBRE Center.

The Pilot Grants program is focused on research projects relevant to zoonotic and emerging infectious diseases, with specific emphasis on disease pathogenesis, innate and adaptive immune mechanisms in infectious disease, and development of novel immunotherapeutics for infectious disease. In addition, research on select agents or BSL-3 pathogens is encouraged. Of course, the structure of the program includes flexibility to address new and emerging areas of relevance to the Center, as well as address opportunities for developing larger collaborative programs. Projects are available to both junior- and senior-level investigators. It is anticipated that competitive projects could either be: 1) a new research direction for the PI, 2) a key extension of current research that will make the PI more competitive for federal biomedical research support, or 3) an essential component in the development of an interdisciplinary, cross-programmatic, or collaborative program-type initiative.

Eligibility
Any investigator who holds a regular faculty appointment at Montana State University would be eligible to serve as PI of a Pilot Grant proposal. This includes both tenure track and research track faculty. Investigators may only submit one proposal in a given round of solicitation. Postdoctoral fellows may not serve as Pilot Grant PIs. Applicants who do not currently have the expertise needed to achieve the goals should consider partnering with an investigator with that expertise, as experience and expertise are considered during the proposal review process.

Application Format
Proposals will follow an NIH R21 format. This will be helpful in future development of these projects towards regular NIH applications and could provide an area of training for newer investigators who have limited experience applying for NIH funding. The proposals must include the following items:

1. NIH form Page 1 (PHS 398 form)
2. NIH form page 2, including 250 word Abstract
3. Proposed itemized budget with budget justification
4. NIH-style biographical sketch for Principal Investigator and Co-investigators
5. Current and pending support (if not indicated on the biosketches)
6. One page for specific aims
7. Maximum of 5 page research plan (11 point Arial font size and minimum of ½” margins)
8. References
9. Statement(s) addressing animal welfare, human welfare, and any other regulatory issues, if applicable

The research plan must succinctly include: objectives, anticipated results, any relevant preliminary data or conceptually supportive data from the literature, and a brief experimental plan. Additionally, the research plan must clearly describe how the proposed project takes advantage of the COBRE and/or INBRE core facilities. The research plan should also describe how results obtained from the proposed research will increase investigator competitiveness for a new, externally-funded, biomedical research grant. Projects should have a high likelihood of
leading to independent funding. Ideally, an explanation of how the proposed pilot research forms the necessary link to new external funding should be provided. A timeline for both the proposed research and the submission of a national grant application should also be included.

Support of $25,000-$50,000 may be requested. Funds can be budgeted for expenses normally supported by NIH; however, Pilot Grant funds cannot be used for the following: salary support or budget relief for faculty, staff, or students supported by ongoing funded projects, purchase of major pieces of equipment or equipment service contracts, or overhead costs. Work performed by anyone at another institution will also not be an allowable expense. A second year of funding is possible, but renewal requests will be reviewed competitively with all other requests, and a large part of the review will focus on progress to date and whether the project PI has been submitting and presenting abstracts, submitting and publishing manuscripts, and submitting grant applications. Pilot Grants will not be funded for longer than two years.

Submission Deadline
Pilot Grant applications must be submitted using the MSU Electronic Proposal Clearance Form. The sponsor will be NIH and the ePcf should be submitted to your home department. Add Immunology and Infectious Diseases as an Additional Department for approval. Jennifer Hodges, the COBRE Program Coordinator, should be added as a Department Contact on the main project page of the ePcf. The full proposal must be submitted to the Program Coordinator, jennifer.hodges3@montana.edu, on or before June 30, 2014. Please feel free to contact Dr. Mark Quinn, COBRE PI (mquinn@montana.edu) if you have questions about the submission process.

Proposal Review
Proposals will be reviewed by up to three experts in relevant disciplines. Reviewers will score the proposals on the NIH 1-9 scale and also include written strengths and weaknesses for significance, innovation, approach, and investigator. Additionally, reviewers will be asked to comment on 1) responsiveness of the proposed research to the goals and objectives of the COBRE Center, 2) clarity of the plan in outlining the steps whereby this research will result in the submission of a competitive NIH grant application, 3) potential for collaborative science leading to program project-type applications, 4) use of COBRE Scientific Core facilities, and 5) status of IRB and/or IACUC approvals, if applicable. IRB and/or IACUC approval must be obtained prior to the award of any funding. Reviewers’ scores and comments will be considered by the COBRE Executive Committee (comprised of Core Directors and PI), which will then prioritize successful applications and forward them to the COBRE External Advisory Committee (EAC) for who will make the final prioritization of proposals. The final list of successful applicants and the information required for each project (narrative, budget, human subjects approval) will be forwarded to the National Institutes of Health-National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIH-NIGMS) for final approval, after which applicants will be informed of the funding decision regarding their projects. Awards are contingent upon the availability of NIH funding. Funding for successful Pilot Grant applications must be expended by during the grant year. No carryover will be allowed. Successful first year applicants will need to apply for second year funding to continue their projects; renewal proposals will be solicited from toward the end of the first grant year and will be awarded through a competitive process.

Funded applicants are required to acknowledge COBRE funding (NIH P30 GM110732) on all abstracts (if applicable) and manuscripts. A mentor will be assigned to each project, and it is the responsibility of the PI to engage the mentor in their project development and progress. In addition, the PIs are expected to participate in and present their progress to the COBRE group in our fall EAC meeting.