**Superior Hiking Trail Association**

**LCCMR-ENRFT Submission (2020 funding)**

**April 2020**

**Organization Description**

The mission of the Superior Hiking Trail Association is to build, maintain, renew and promote the Superior Hiking Trail – linking people with nature by footpath along Lake Superior’s North Shore.

The founder of the Superior Hiking Trail toiled quietly and steadily to build a hiking trail paralleling the North Shore. The original ambition was to build a hiking trail from Grand Marais to Two Harbors, but by the late 1990s the Association expanded its ambition and committed to stretch the trail border to border – from the Canadian border to the Minnesota-Wisconsin state line.

In July of 2017, the final link of this 310-mile long natural footpath – a bridge over the Red River near the southern terminus of the SHT, near Jay Cooke State Park – was completed. In addition to the main SHT, there are nearly 40 miles of loops and spurs (main trail offshoots) and 94 campsites operated by the SHTA.

Numbers of trail users are hard to verify, but we estimate nearly 100,000 people use the SHT annually, from all over the state and country: trail runners competing in nationally renowned trail races near Lutsen, Twin Citians enjoying the watery glory of the Split Rock River, grandmothers walking their grandchildren and dogs in Duluth. At the heart of the SHT are the hundreds of volunteers putting in tens of thousands of hours scratching out tread, whipping weeds, building bridges and board walks, and generally keeping the trail in shape.

Because the Trail is over 30 years old; built before modern trail-building standards; located in places that were more convenient than ecologically appropriate; and heavily used, it was clear the existing trail management system was not equal to the task and needed a reboot. In 2018, the Association initiated a Trail Renewal Program to better plan trail renewal and prioritize projects. The program includes better planning, improved volunteer training and engagement, and a full time position at SHTA devoted to trail operations.

**Trail Operations Director**

Trail operations director Tamer Ibrahim will be the primary project manager for this effort. He is a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Forest Service as a wilderness ranger, building trails and portages throughout the Superior National Forest. He has considerable experience in working with volunteers, working with contractors, handling large tools and equipment, and developing and executing trail-building projects, all of which will serve him well at SHTA. He developed and leads our Volunteer Crew Leader program (a small cadre of highly skilled and experienced volunteers) and oversees all trail construction initiatives and the logistical support they require.