

Lauren James

A proud Hoosier, Lauren James is the Executive Director of the Mitch Daniels Leadership Foundation (MDLF), a nonprofit advancing its mission to “Enable Leaders. Drive Change.” by developing a statewide network of change agents working to make Indiana the best place to build a future.

Lauren’s career includes experience with the Indianapolis Colts, ExactTarget and Salesforce in marketing and community engagement, followed by TechPoint, where she led strategic initiatives and stakeholder engagement. An advocate, mentor and facilitator, Lauren is a 2026 Presidential Leadership Scholar and serves additionally on the boards of United Way of Central Indiana and the Orr Fellowship. Her impact has been recognized by the Indianapolis Business Journal as both a Woman of Influence and Forty Under 40 honoree. She is also a recipient of the Elevate Award’s Board Member of the Year, a Make-A-Wish Women Inspiring Strength and Hope honoree and a Junior Achievement Best & Brightest finalist.

Her core values of championing others, doing the right thing and embracing a growth mindset have been shaped by her experiences as an inaugural MDLF Fellow, a participant in the Stanley K. Lacy Executive Leadership Series and as an Aspen Institute Executive Seminar member.

Lauren graduated summa cum laude with a degree in Urban Planning & Development from Ball State University, holds a certificate in Nonprofit Executive Leadership from the Lilly School of Philanthropy and was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Poland, where she served as a cultural ambassador and lecturer at the University of Wrocław.

Together, she and her husband, Dr. Luke James, enjoy road trips with their goldendoodle, Champ, supporting local restaurants, spending time on the lake and playing mediocre golf. She also finds joy in family and friends, staying active, watercolor painting and a spirited game of euchre.