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Enabling the Discovery of Gravitational Radiation

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The discovery of gravitational radiation was announced with the publication of the results of a physics experiment involving over a thousand participants. This was preceded by a century of theoretical work, involving a similarly large group of physicists, mathematicians, and computer scientists. This huge effort was enabled by a substantial commitment of resources, both public and private, to develop the different strands of this complex research enterprise, and to build a community of scientists to carry it out. In the excitement following the discovery, the role of key enablers of this success has not always been adequately recognized in popular accounts. In this talk, I will try to call attention to a few of the key ingredients that proved crucial to enabling the successful discovery of gravitational waves, and the opening of a new field of science.