

About the CMA site test — a plain-language summary

version	date	change
1.0	2026-10-11	first version, for non-technical readers who may test their own computer or connection
1.1	2026-10-14	says it is a work in progress; results paragraph brought up to date; closing status note removed

We built a small test kit that tells us whether a computer and its internet connection could serve as a Community Media Archive station, one that collects local-government meeting videos and sends them to the Internet Archive. We built it because we once set a machine up fully before learning that its location couldn't download video. Now we test first, before anyone ships, installs or wires anything.

You download a folder and start it. A quick check takes about ten minutes; the full test runs for a day so it can see how the connection behaves over time. It checks what the computer is, how fast the connection uploads, and whether YouTube will actually let this address download a real video, using the same software our stations use. Everything it needs stays inside that one folder. It doesn't change your computer's settings, and deleting the folder removes all of it. It doesn't collect your computer's name, your user name, your Wi-Fi network name, serial numbers or hardware addresses. When it finishes, it makes one small file for you to send us.

So far we have run it on Linux, Mac and Windows computers at four different internet addresses. A connection YouTube is blocking was correctly reported "not suitable now"; good connections were reported "looks suitable." Twice it got an answer wrong because of a mistake in the kit itself, and both mistakes are fixed. We also taught it not to fail a location over one brief hiccup: a refused request is retried once, and the retry is noted in the results.

This is still a work in progress. So far it has been run only on our own computers. On a Mac, it has been started with a double-click and has run the full

one-day test from start to finish. Some parts are not finished yet: starting it with a double-click on Windows, and on a Mac when the folder has just been downloaded (the Mac checks downloaded programs first), and a packaged download that anyone can fetch. Until then, we send the kit to people directly.

The result is always a recommendation; a person on our team makes the decision. “Not suitable now” means “not today,” not “never”: these blocks come and go, and we schedule a retest.