

Food Donation & Recovery in Alameda County

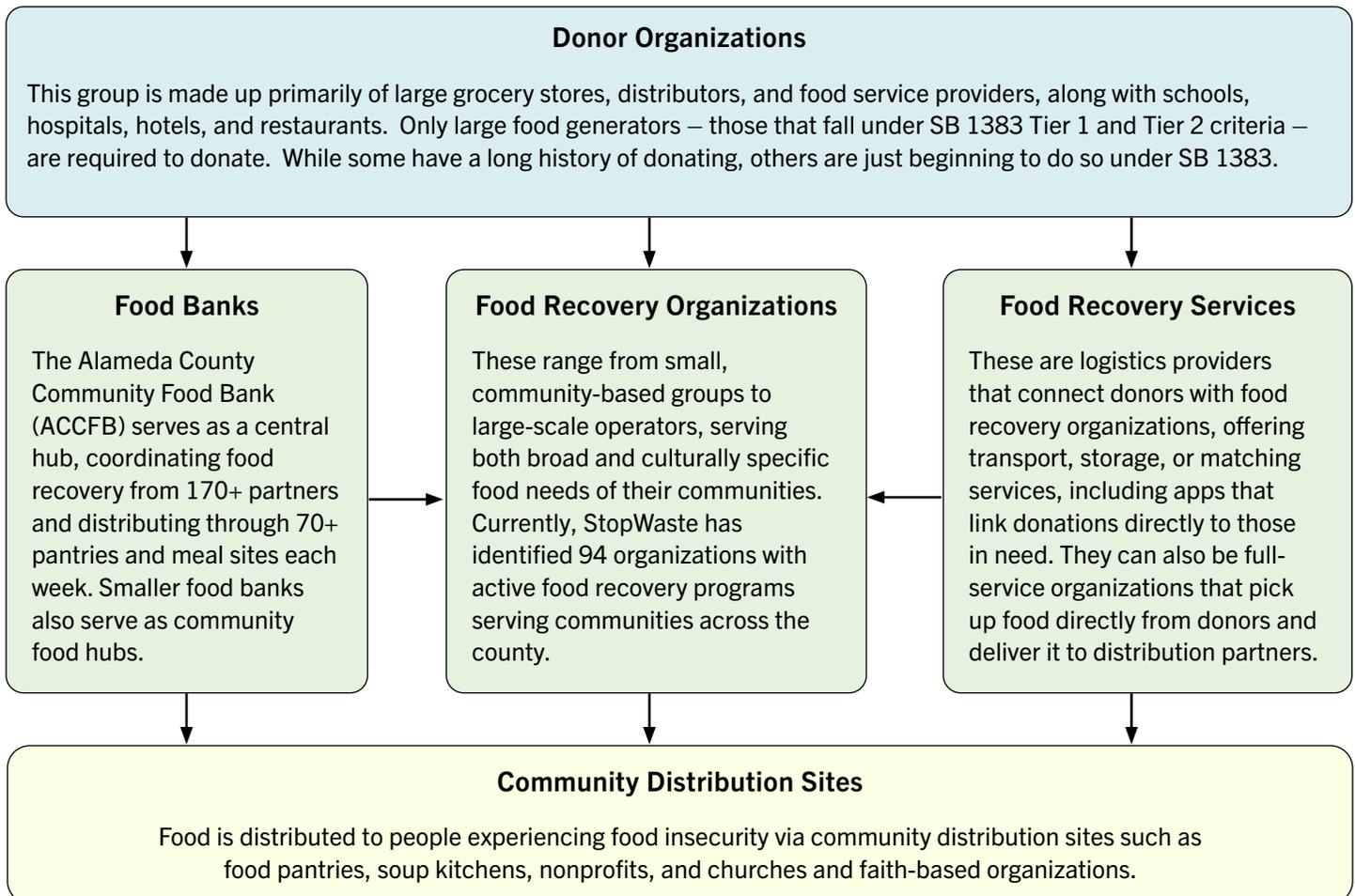
Every year, more than 300 million pounds of food and scraps are thrown away – some of which is edible food that could instead nourish community members and help meet California’s climate goals. State law SB 1383 requires some large food-generating businesses to donate surplus food rather than send it to landfills. This is critical because:

- **1 in 4 people in Alameda County experiences food insecurity, and the demand for food assistance has grown significantly since the pandemic.**
- **Food waste is one of the largest sources of methane in landfills, a powerful climate pollutant.**
- **Wasting food also wastes the water, energy, and labor used to produce it.**

Across Alameda County, significant amounts of surplus edible food from grocery stores, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and other large food generators is recovered through a network of food banks, food pantries, food recovery organizations, and logistics providers.

In 2024, local partners together recovered **14 million pounds** of edible food, the equivalent of nearly **12 million meals**.

Key Partners in the Food Donation & Recovery System



StopWaste's Role in Food Recovery

StopWaste helps build and sustain this system by:

- **Coordinating countywide edible food recovery education, outreach as well as SB 1383 compliance monitoring, reporting, and capacity planning.**
- **Investing over \$2.3 million in grants to nonprofits since 2016 for cold storage, equipment, staffing, and operational costs.**
- **Convening the Alameda County Food Recovery Network, made up of more than 40 organizations to help foster collaboration, efficiency, and shared learning.**



Staff and volunteers sort donated food at the San Lorenzo Family Help Center.

Challenges Facing the System

Despite major progress, food recovery efforts face persistent pressures that threaten the sustainability of ongoing efforts:

- **Funding gaps:** SB 1383 is an unfunded mandate. Organizations face rising costs to meet increased demand for storage, staff, and transportation, while looming cuts to federal food assistance (SNAP/CalFresh) are projected to increase demand and reliance on these organizations, most of which do not have steady revenues and rely on fundraising efforts.
- **Capacity strain:** Nearly 90 percent of local food recovery organizations operate with fewer than five paid staff, relying heavily on volunteers.
- **Infrastructure needs:** Investments for additional cold storage and transportation equipment remain top requests from food recovery groups looking to increase their capacity to handle perishable foods.
- **Donation “dumping”:** Some organizations report an increase in spoiled or inedible food donations, leaving them burdened with the downstream impacts of having to separate and properly discard inedible food and packaging.
- **Rising demand:** ACCFB projects distributing 60 million pounds of food in 2025, an 11 percent increase over last year, with need surpassing pandemic-era levels.

Looking Ahead

Sustaining and expanding edible food recovery requires stable funding, supportive policy, and continued collaboration among food banks, food recovery organizations, service providers, and local government.

StopWaste will continue to work with partners to advocate for local and state policies that support sustainable operations for food recovery, including working with regional and statewide coalitions, philanthropic foundations, and local government to push for policy changes and sustainable funding models. We aim to identify opportunities for in-kind support, such as access to shared kitchens for food preparation and storage, secure vehicle parking, and other social services that our member agencies may be able to offer. And throughout, we will continue our commitment to strengthening food donation and recovery systems by increasing coordination and resource-sharing between the network of food recovery partners.



Hope 4 the Heart is an all-volunteer nonprofit organization that feeds 16,000+ individuals every month, helping to route donated and rescued food to affordable housing apartment complexes, trailer parks, senior housing sites, and more.

For more information about Alameda County's food donation and recovery system and how you can support these organizations, visit www.StopWaste.org/food-recovery-network.