



SB 1383 Edible Food Recovery Programs for Local Education Agencies

This document outlines food recovery programs local education agencies may implement to improve waste management, reduce excess food waste, and support compliance with Senate Bill 1383. Under this mandate, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must recycle organic waste, provide containers for organic waste and recyclables, provide education on waste prevention methods to students and staff, and must arrange to recover the maximum amount of edible food that would otherwise be disposed of and donate all edible surplus food to a local Food Recovery Organization (FRO) or Food Recovery Service (FRS). Programs that reduce food waste and increase edible food donation help school districts meet these requirements.

For more information, please refer to [Appendix D: Legal and Compliance Guidelines](#).

Programs Overview

The following programs help ensure excess edible food is redirected for on-campus use or donation rather than disposed of. Schools may implement one or a combination of these programs based on existing food service policies and procedures. Each program is adaptable to a school's capacity and includes compliance requirements such as maintaining donation records, establishing agreements, and clearly defining staff responsibilities. Implementation guidance is intentionally broad to allow schools to tailor programs to their specific needs and capabilities.

If you'd like to learn more about any of the programs presented below, please contact Waste-Free Ventura County at WasteFreeVC@venturacounty.gov

1. **After-School Share Tables** – Donate uneaten, unopened, school food items from an established Share Table to an after-school program for redistribution to students.
2. **On-site Food Pantry** – Operate a district-approved pantry model on campus to redistribute collected or donated edible food items to students, families, and staff.
3. **Food Repurposing** – Schools with access to a commercial kitchen may repurpose excess and end-of-life produce into safe, nutritious meal components to be served in school meals or donated to nonprofit partners.

4. **Donations to External Nonprofit Organizations** – Formalized through a written agreement, schools' partner with a registered 501(c)(3) food recovery organization to donate surplus edible food.

1. After-School Share Tables

1.1 Definition of Share Table

A food Share Table is a designated place located in the school cafeteria such as a container, cart, or bin where students can drop off unwanted, unopened food and beverage options provided by the school through the in-school meal service. These items can be made available for other students to take at no cost during mealtimes or in after-school programs. Provided that all safety guidelines are followed and properly documented, food and beverage items may be reused as a reimbursable meal or served a la carte. This approach provides the most immediate method for recovering excess edible food while also offering students an opportunity to actively participate and gain awareness of waste reduction initiatives on campus.

1.2 Share Table in Afterschool Program

While Share Tables are typically available during regular meal periods, schools may also extend this practice to an after-school program and would be considered a donation to the other program. In these cases, surplus food collected from the Share Table during the school day may be safely donated to the after-school program and distributed after-school hours. This practice ensures compliance with SB 1383 while allowing food to remain within the school district.

1.3 Recovering food from School Share Tables

To meet food safety standards and maintain proper temperature control prior to redistribution, kitchen staff must ensure that all items remain within the appropriate food Safe Temperature Zone during and after meal service. Acceptable items include packaged shelf-stable foods, whole fruit, and cold or hot packaged foods. Items that have been outside of the Safe Temperature Zone for more than two hours must be discarded. (Please refer to [Appendix A: Food Safety Guidelines](#)).

All recovered food must be placed in a clearly labeled container marked "Share Table" and stored in a designated refrigerated or temperature-controlled location until it is donated to the after-school program. The designated storage area may be a cafeteria refrigerator accessible to after-school program staff or a separate refrigerator specifically designated for after-school use. Staff and share table supervisors must record the quantity and type of food donated. Proper documentation should include sufficient detail to support accountability and any potential reimbursement meal

programs (Please refer to [Appendix C: Reporting and Recordkeeping](#)).

Although permitted by the USDA, the use of share tables and the recycling of food and beverages are only acceptable when they comply with local and state health and safety codes. For further guidance and information, contact your local environmental health department.

1.4 After School Share Table Set Up

One staff member from the after-school program is responsible for accessing the designated Share Table bin from storage and placing it at the designated location. The share table should be supervised during set up, use, and cleanup which includes inspecting any remaining items as required. The afterschool Share Table should reflect the same setup used during the school's regular meal period, while adhering to the below requirements. (Note: Each Share Table may vary and should be tailored to meet the specific needs of the cafeteria).

1. Placement: the Share Table should be located at the end of a serving line to increase supervision of the share table by supervisor or staff and reduce possible food contamination.
2. Containers: different types of containers such as wire baskets, clear plastic tubs or other transparent containers can be used to collect Share Table items. All bins and containers must be placed on their own table, elevated off the floor and clearly labeled.
 - a. Clear bins allow for students to easily see what food options are available.
3. Organizing the food based on type, temperature, perishable and non-perishable will help supervisors ensure food remains fresh and with-in the temperature safety zone (Please refer to [Appendix A: Food Safety Guidelines](#)).
4. Separate containers help ensure food is being properly maintained and following specific temperature controls (Please refer to [Appendix A: Food Safety Guidelines](#)).
 - a. Cold items can use small refrigerator, ice bath, or ice pack.
5. Signage: Make sure the food share table, basket, crate, or bin is clearly labeled "Food Share." Placing posters and displays at the beginning of the food line would help inform students what food is acceptable and not acceptable.

1.5 Monitoring the Food Share Table

After-school staff, with the support of custodians and cafeteria monitors, such as volunteers and students, will need to supervise the food Share Table. If possible, check

on the station periodically throughout the meal period to ensure proper temperature controls (Please refer to [Appendix A: Food Safety Guidelines](#)). Some students may use the food Share Table to fill up on items such as graham crackers rather than eating a balanced meal. Staff supervision can help minimize this behavior and promote proper use of the Share Table.

To ensure that food remains fresh and with-in Safe Temperature Zone the after-school Share Table may be open for a maximum of two hours or for a period that does not exceed food safety requirements. The time and duration of the after-school Share Table should be discussed with the school administration to maximize access for students based on the weekly school schedule and the after-school program. At least one trained and responsible overseer must be assigned during the afterschool program to set up, supervise, collect, and properly store remaining food. The designated overseer may vary, and multiple individuals may serve in this role, provided they have been trained on required procedures and best practices.

1.6 Clean-up and Handling Leftovers

At the conclusion of the after-school program, all remaining food must be inspected. If the after-school program has access to a designated area for refrigeration or dry storage, any items that have been deemed acceptable and continue to meet food safety standards may be stored by the afterschool program for future use. If the afterschool program does not have a designated refrigerator and leftover food is stored in the school cafeteria, all items must be clearly labeled to identify the food as designated for the afterschool program. Food donated to the after-school program and served during after-school hours may not be reused during the in-school meal service the following days.

1.7 Instructing Students

Be thoughtful when introducing students to the food Share Table, it is important to highlight the purpose and rules. Explaining they are only encouraged to donate food they do not wish to eat and that they are expected to eat the food items they choose. It is important that students understand that only food served by the cafeteria is allowed to be donated to the Share Table, no outside food is allowed. Hosting a presentation, educational seminar and putting posters throughout the cafeteria would be beneficial to increase thoughtful participation.

2. On-site Food Pantry

2.1 On-site Food Pantry Overview

An on-site food pantry provides an opportunity to donate excess edible food while keeping items within the school district and supports compliance with SB 1383. Food that is not taken during meal service or after-school programs may be safely transferred to the on-site food pantry. This model is particularly beneficial for schools that cannot donate food outside the district but still want to reduce food waste and provide resources for students and families.

Operating a food pantry on school grounds provides multiple benefits, as schools are often trusted community hubs. Teachers, staff, and administrators have established relationships with students and families, allowing the school to offer additional food resources following the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act guidelines (Please refer to [Appendix D: Legal and Compliance Guidelines](#)).

Schools are not legally or structurally equipped to operate a food pantry independently; therefore, it is essential to partner with a local charitable feeding organization. A nonprofit can provide the legal, logistical, and operational support required to run the pantry safely and effectively.

2.2 Need for Strategic Partnership

A successful on-site food pantry requires a formal partnership with a local nonprofit organization that is registered as a 501(c)(3) in good standing. The partnership is typically formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which clearly defines the roles, scope of collaboration, food safety and handling procedures, reporting and communication protocols and liability coverage for both parties (Please refer to [Appendix C: Reporting and Recordkeeping](#)).

The nonprofit partner is generally responsible for:

1. Managing pantry operations, including staffing, stocking, and distribution. Teachers or school staff may serve as volunteers under proper supervision or training.
2. Ensure safe food storage, handling, and distribution per USDA and local health guidelines.
3. Source supplemental food from food banks, donations, or other sources.
4. Track inventory and provide reports to the district as needed.
5. Provide liability insurance and ensure all volunteers and staff are trained in food

safety and operational procedures.

2.3 Food Pantry Models

Schools may choose from several food pantry models based on their facility, student population, and available resources:

1. **Backpack Program:** Pre-packaged boxes, bags, or containers of food are distributed for students to take home.
2. **On-Site School Food Pantry:** Students and families visit a designated location on campus, which is private and accessible. Layouts can mimic a market-style pantry to promote dignity and choice.
3. **Drive-Thru Pantry:** Families receive pre-packaged food from a vehicle, minimizing contact and maximizing convenience.
4. **Mobile Food Pantry:** If the nonprofit operates a fully licensed food truck equipped with proper heating, sanitation, and storage capabilities, it can recover excess prepared meals from school cafeterias and safely reheat and distribute them as hot meals in neighborhoods with a high concentration of students and families in need. This program expands access to nutritious meals beyond the classroom and directly supports underserved communities. The school may promote meal distribution events to families in target neighborhoods and coordinate pre-determined routes that focus on areas facing transportation challenges or limited access to healthy food.

2.4 Operational Procedures

Schools should coordinate with the nonprofit partner to establish a schedule for pantry operation. The pantry may be open on specific days or times depending on staff and volunteer capacity. Food pantry programs can be integrated with existing school activities to maximize distribution efficiency.

Participant identification may be handled discreetly through referrals from staff, counselors, or nurses, or through participation in a reduced-price meal program. The pantry may also be open to all students and families, regardless of income, depending on the school's objectives.

2.5 School Food donation Process

The school should follow the following steps to donate the excess edible food from school meal service to the on-site pantry:

1. Cafeteria staff safely store, and package surplus edible food each day following proper food safety guidelines and labeling requirements.
2. Food is transferred to the on-site food pantry operated by the non-profit partner or to the nonprofit directly per an agreed-upon schedule.
3. All transferred food must be logged and documented (Please refer to [Appendix C: Reporting and Recordkeeping](#)).

Note: Schools that donate food may only give to a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and not to individuals directly per the California Department of Education.

3. Food Repurposing

3.1 Food Repurposing Overview

Schools or districts with access to a commercial kitchen and distribution center can repurpose excess or end-of-life produce into safe, nutritious meal components. These items may be reused during in school meal service or donated to after school programs and local nonprofit organizations. If donated, the school should follow the procedures specified in *Section 3 Food Donations to External Nonprofit organization*.

Food repurposing provides a practical and educational approach to reducing organic waste while lowering costs by making full use of existing ingredients. It also enhances menu diversity with flavorful, student-friendly meal options and can serve as a valuable vocational training opportunity for students interested in culinary arts. When distributed through community organizations, these meals can make a meaningful contribution to community health and food access.

Due to the nature of food handling, preparation, and redistribution, implementing such a program requires strict adherence to food safety protocols, equipment maintenance, and staff training. While this document provides a general overview of the process, it is not intended to serve as a comprehensive operational guide. For detailed procedures, best practices, or support in establishing a repurposing kitchen program, please contact Abound Food Care directly at: <https://www.aboundfoodcare.org/contact/>

3.2 Implementation Guidelines

Schools should at least follow the general implementation guidelines below:

1. Only repurpose produce that has been properly handled and stored, with no signs of spoilage. All reheating, cooling, and storage must comply with USDA and local health department regulations.
2. Train cafeteria teams to identify produce suitable for repurposing and provide instruction on safe preservation and cooking techniques.
3. Schedule time during slower service periods to prepare items such as stocks, jams, sauces, or dehydrated products.
4. Clearly label all repurposed food items with the product name and date of preparation to ensure traceability and proper rotation.
5. Develop menu cycles that incorporate repurposed items to streamline preparation, ensure consistency, and enhance meal variety.

3.3 Examples of Practical Applications for Repurposing Produce

Produce	Condition	Repurpose	Final Use
Tangerines	Overripe	Cooked glaze or marmalade	Breakfast topping
Tomatoes	Softening	Roasted puree	Pasta sauce base
Spinach	Wilting	Blended soup	Lunch entrée
Carrots	Limp	Stock base	Soup broth
Zucchini	Bruised	Dehydrated and powdered	Soup seasoning

4. Donations to External Nonprofit Organization

4.1 Food Donation Overview

To reduce food waste and comply with SB 1383, school districts and district approved schools can partner with an external 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to donate excess edible food through an established food donation program. Schools are not permitted to donate directly to individuals per the California Department of Education (CDE), unless through an established Share Table program, please see section 2.1 *Definition of Share Table* for more information. Partnerships must be formalized through a written agreement, and schools must maintain documentation outlining partnership terms and agreed up items for donation.

4.2 Finding a Nonprofit Food Recovery Partner

To ensure compliance, schools should take the following actions when selecting a nonprofit partner:

1. Find a suitable nonprofit Food Recovery Organization (FRO) or Food Recovery Service (FRS) that aligns with the district's food donation practices, availability, and logistical needs.
2. Establish a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the local education agency and the receiving FRO or FRS to ensure compliance with SB 1383 and maximize food recovery efforts. An agreement template is available for download on the [CalRecycle](#) website.
 - a. Agreements should include:
 - i. Frequency of donations
 - ii. Types of food that are accepted for donation
 - iii. Storage and handling requirements
 - iv. Minimum donation amount required for pickup
 - v. Pickup or delivery procedures
 - vi. Recordkeeping expectations (Please refer to [Appendix C: Reporting and Recordkeeping](#)).

4.3 Operational Procedures

The following steps outline the operational procedures schools must follow to prepare for food donation:

1. Identify the types of food available for donation (Please refer to [Appendix B: List of Acceptable Food Items](#)).
2. Determine the frequency of donations (weekly, biweekly, etc., or as needed).
3. Review the school calendar to anticipate donation fluctuations (e.g., prior to winter, spring, or summer breaks).
4. Establish one or more designated locations for donation pickups.
5. Specify whether donations will be consolidated at a central kitchen or collected from individual school sites.
6. Establish clear timeframes for pickups in coordination with the nonprofit organization.

4.4 Scheduling Donations

The following procedures must be followed when scheduling and preparing food donations:

1. Scheduling Donations: When a school has available food for donation, they should coordinate with their designated FRO/FRS to schedule a pickup or delivery. The following details should be provided at the time of scheduling:
 - a. Type of food
 - b. Quantity by weight (e.g., 10 lbs. produce, 5 lbs. frozen pork, 20 lbs. non-perishables)
 - c. Time and date of pick up or delivery.
 - d. Specific care instructions for donation handoff, such as:
 - i. Contact information of the designated staff overseeing the donation
 - ii. Entry and exit procedures including parking (e.g., backdoor access)
 - e. Preparing Donations for Safe Handling: Food donations should be properly stored, labeled, and prepared before agreed upon pickup or delivery time (Please refer to [Appendix A: Food Safety Guidelines](#)).
2. Food Donation Drop-Off & Check-In
 - a. Donations should be placed in a designated area that is clean, accessible, under security/control of the donor and known to the FRO/FRS.
 - b. Perishable food cannot be left in the designated area at room temperature for more than 30 minutes. Otherwise, it should be returned to refrigeration or freezing.
 - c. The FRO/FRS should inspect the food upon receipt to ensure it meets food safety standards.

Appendix A: Food Safety Guidelines

Staff Training and Preparation

All employees involved in food donation should receive training on:

1. Safe food handling and storage practices per the most recent version of the [California Retail Food Code \("Cal - Code"\)](#).
2. Proper procedures for preparing and donating food
3. Identifying food that is safe for donation
4. Preventing food waste and ensuring donations comply with SB 1383
5. Food labeling

For additional guidance on proper food handling and preparation requirements, schools should consult their local food bank or partnered food recovery organizations.

Proper Food Holding Temperatures

1. All food should be handled according to Cal - Code safe food handling guidelines.
2. The California Retail Food Code, Section 113996, requires that all Potentially Hazardous Foods—such as milk, meals containing meats or cooked vegetables, or certain cut fruits such as melons—must be maintained under proper food holding temperatures to prevent the potential for rapid bacterial growth. Once food items leave their hot or cold environment, they are considered outside the Safe Temperature Zone (STZ). Food donated is allowed to be outside of the STZ no more than two hours. Any food left out after two hours needs to be recycled or composted.
3. Keeping cold items in the STZ can be challenging, especially on hot days. Consider methods to keep cold items chilled, e.g. by using refrigerators, chest freezers, ice tubs or ice sheets. You may want to consider taking the temperature of cold items with a thermometer in between lunch services and discard any items close to 60°F.

Food Types	Safe Temperature Zone (STZ)	Allowable time outside the STZ	Ways to control temperature
Refrigerated and Frozen Foods (e.g. Milk, yogurt)	41°F or below	Up to 2 hours below or at 60°F	Frozen food should remain frozen solid until pickup
Hot Food (e.g. Lunch entrees)	135°F or higher	Up to 2 hours below 135°F	Temperature records should be documented at the time of pickup. Hot food should be rapidly cooled by the school before donation.
Room-temp. food (e.g. Apple, crackers)	N/A	N/A	No temperature concerns. Ready to serve again after cleaning.

Food Donation Labeling

Proper labeling of donated food is essential to ensure food safety. All prepared food items must include clear and accurate labeling that adheres to the following requirements:

1. Common name of the product
2. Donor Information:
 - a. Donor name
 - b. Location

c. Production date

3. Allergen Warning: Labels should indicate the presence of common allergens, including milk, eggs, fish (e.g., bass, flounder, cod), crustacean shellfish (e.g., crab, lobster, shrimp), tree nuts (e.g., almonds, walnuts, pecans), peanuts, wheat, soybeans, and sesame. At a minimum, a general "May contain" disclaimer should be included. For example, "This food may contain milk, eggs, fish (e.g., bass, flounder, cod), crustacean shellfish (e.g., crab, lobster, shrimp), tree nuts (e.g., almonds, walnuts, pecans), peanuts, wheat, soybeans and sesame."
4. Frozen Items: Labels should specify the freeze date.

Appendix B: List of Acceptable and Unacceptable Food Items

Acceptable Foods for Donation

To ensure food safety compliance and meet the exemption qualifications to be protected under the California Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, only wholesome, safe-to-eat food items shall be donated. Acceptable items include:

1. Fresh produce
2. Proteins (cooked or raw meat, poultry, fish)
3. Dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt)
4. Baked goods
5. Eggs and egg whites
6. Shelf-stable, non-perishable foods
7. Fully prepared, properly stored entrées and meals

Unacceptable Foods for Donation

The following foods should not be donated due to food safety concerns:

1. Food that has been held within the food safety temperature "Danger Zone" (42°F - 134°F) for more than 2 hours.
2. Self-serve food items, such as salad bars, hot food bars, or buffet-style foods open and exposed to the public OR exposed to elevated ambient air temperatures within the food safety temperature "Danger Zone" (42°F - 134°F) for more than two hours.
3. Returned or recalled food products or the ingredients used to produce the food.
4. Foods that are partially consumed, or leftovers from student's plates.
5. Any pre-packed or canned food products exposed to fire, sewage, hazardous chemicals, or flooding.
6. Any food products managed by time control only (i.e., not temperature control) must not exceed the 4-hour maximum limit as designated by Time as a Public Health Control (TPHC). * Note temperature control is preferred and items should be maintained using the Safe Temperature Zone guide in [Appendix A: Food Safety](#).

Guidelines.

7. Food with signs of spoilage, including mold, odors, decay, or visible contamination.
8. Damaged packaged goods, including:
 - a. Torn or broken packaging
 - b. Dented, bulging, or leaking cans
 - c. Evidence of pests or vermin infestation

Appendix C: Reporting and Recordkeeping

According to CalRecycle school districts are required to maintain detailed records to ensure compliance with SB 1383 including:

1. A list of food recovery organization or service that collects or receives the local education agency's edible food, including:
 - a. Contact information for the organization or service.
 - b. Types of food collected or delivered to the food recovery organization or service.
 - c. Frequency of food collected or delivered.
 - d. Quantity of food collected or delivered to a food recovery organization or service for recovery (measured in pounds recovered per month).
2. A copy of signed agreements or contracts between the local education agency and food recovery organization or food recovery service.

An additional benefit of recordkeeping is that it enables schools to identify recurring sources of food waste, allowing for adjustments to menu planning and production practices to minimize surplus food.

* All records must be made available to local jurisdictions (e.g., city or county waste management authorities) upon request for inspection or audit purposes.

Appendix D: Legal and Compliance Guidelines

1. **California Senate Bill (SB) 1383:** Local education agencies, which include K-12 public schools, school districts and County Offices of Education play a vital role in fighting climate change and protecting the environment for future generations. SB 1383 requires schools to prevent disposal of all edible food, contracting with a Food Recovery Organization to collect recoverable items that might otherwise be thrown away. Schools are required to maintain commercial recycling and organic recycling programs, including properly labeled recycling containers to collect bottles, cans, paper, cardboard, food waste, and other recyclable materials. For more information refer to CalRecycle website [here](#).
2. **Guidance on Donation of Leftover Food in Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs):** The statute clarifies that any food prepared for CNPs that is edible but not consumed must be donated to eligible local food banks or charitable organizations if possible. The amendment defines the terms “eligible local food banks” or “charitable organizations” to mean any food bank or charitable organization that is tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (Title 26, United States Code, Section 5019(c)(3). It also extends protections against civil and criminal liability for persons or organizations when making food donations to the extent provided under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act found in the Child Nutrition Act, Section 22. More information can be found in the California Department of Education website [here](#).
3. **Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act:** This act ensures that the entities donating and accepting food, as long as it meets all food safety regulations, are protected from liability when the donation is made in good faith. If all food items are “apparently fit” for consumption and there are no signs of gross negligence, the law provides liability protection. More information can be found [here](#).
4. **Privacy Compliance (FERPA):** If student or family information is collected to identify those in need, compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and any other relevant privacy laws is required. More information can be found [here](#).

Abound Food Care has developed this document on behalf of our regional program partner Waste-Free Ventura County. Thank you to all contributors who provided guidance and insight on the implementation of these programs.

About Us

As an insider with decades of expertise, we have the unique skills to solve complex food system problems. We analyze the regional food system and identify each stakeholder's challenges to customize a model for them leveraging our scalable solutions. Our solutions include but are not limited to: food recovery compliance, group purchasing, food donation coordination, grant management, solar powered refrigeration units, and tailored food system solutions. Since our inception, Abound Food Care has empowered hundreds of stakeholders to achieve better food access and less food waste to create healthier communities.



For more information please visit <https://www.aboundfoodcare.org/contact/> or contact us at: info@aboundfoodcare.org