

Contents

- Strong Community Response to WFVC Food Recovery Microgrant [Read More→]
- Sharing Food System Innovation at ReFED Summit [Read More→]
- \$1.7 Million Invested to Strengthen Sacramento's Food Recovery Network [Read More→]
- Regional Partnerships in Action During the Garden Grove Emergency [Read More→]

Strong Community Response to Waste Free Ventura County Food Recovery Microgrant



Beginning in May 2026, Abound Food Care assisted in the development and administration of the first grant program on behalf of **Waste-Free Ventura County (WFVC)**. With \$81,500 in available funding, the grant was designed to help local food recovery organizations purchase essential equipment and resources needed to strengthen operations,

increase food recovery capacity, and support food recovery efforts across multiple jurisdictions.

The program received 18 applications, and the Abound Food Care and WFVC are currently meeting with applicants to optimize funding requests and maximize the number of organizations supported, while ensuring investments align with the program's intended outcomes and impact goals.

\$1.7 Million Invested to Strengthen Sacramento's Food Recovery Network

Throughout 2025, Abound Food Care assisted in administering the Equipment and Expansion Grants on behalf of the Edible Food Recovery Working Group in Sacramento County, publicly branded as the **Capital Food Access Alliance (CFAA)**. Building on the success of the 2024 CFAA Microgrant Program, both grant opportunities were strategically developed to strengthen regional edible food recovery capacity.

The Equipment Grant Program awarded \$199,323 to 12 food recovery organizations for critical infrastructure, including refrigeration, transportation, and storage. The Expansion Grant Program awarded more than \$1.5 million to 12 projects involving 19 food recovery organizations and establishments, supporting transportation logistics, Tier 2 recovery, repurposing kitchens, collaborative initiatives, and other innovative food recovery models.

The impact of these investments is already being realized across the region. One Equipment Grant recipient, **Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services**, used grant funding to purchase a swing trailer, significantly expanding its ability to recover and transport excess edible food from retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers, and farms. Since putting the trailer into service, the organization has recovered more than 2.3 million pounds of food for distribution throughout Sacramento County via its network of 112 partner agencies, while also expanding that network with two new partner organizations during the grant period.

Together, these investments are strengthening the region's food recovery network, increasing organizational capacity, and helping more nutritious food reach communities while reducing food waste.

Sharing Food System Innovation at ReFED Summit

In May, Abound Food Care attended the tenth annual ReFED Food Waste Solutions Summit in Charlotte, NC, joining system leaders from across the country to discuss food recovery, food waste reduction, and emerging industry trends. During the conference, CEO Mike Learakos participated in ReFED's Fail Fest session, sharing lessons from our Coordinated Logistics pilot that explored how underutilized refrigerated vehicles and route optimization could improve food donation transportation. While the pilot encountered operational challenges, it generated valuable insights that continue to inform our Logistics Coordination work. Throughout the summit, panelists discussed fundamental changes in our food system, including

rising food costs and supply chain disruptions, as key drivers for building circular food economies and stronger regional food systems. Our team also noted a growing focus on household food waste prevention among national organizations, research institutions, and funders. Our biggest takeaway, however, was that Abound Food Care is well positioned to be a leader in the food waste space. Attendees showed strong interest in Abound Food Care's expertise in food recovery, cold storage infrastructure, and regional programs, reinforcing the growing need for scalable solutions that align public, private, and nonprofit partners to strengthen regional food systems and expand access to nutritious food.

Regional Partnerships in Action During the Garden Grove Emergency

The recent Garden Grove chemical tank emergency serves as a reminder of how critical coordinated regional systems are when communities face unexpected disruptions. While investigations and discussions regarding accountability will continue, the incident highlighted the challenges that arise when thousands of residents, businesses, schools, and public agencies must respond to a rapidly evolving situation.

When the **Orange County Food Bank (Community Action Partnership of Orange County)** was forced to evacuate its facility due to the chemical leak, Abound Food Care immediately made its network of Solar-Powered Refrigeration Units (SPRUs), strategically deployed

throughout Orange County, available to help preserve recovered food and maintain critical cold storage capacity. We also worked alongside the Orange County Food Bank as it temporarily operated with support from **Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County**, offering additional assistance to help ensure food continued reaching the community with minimal disruption.

Events like the one in Garden Grove reinforce the importance of investing in resilient infrastructure, regional collaboration, and scalable solutions that enable communities to adapt quickly during times of crisis while continuing to serve those who rely on critical food assistance.