



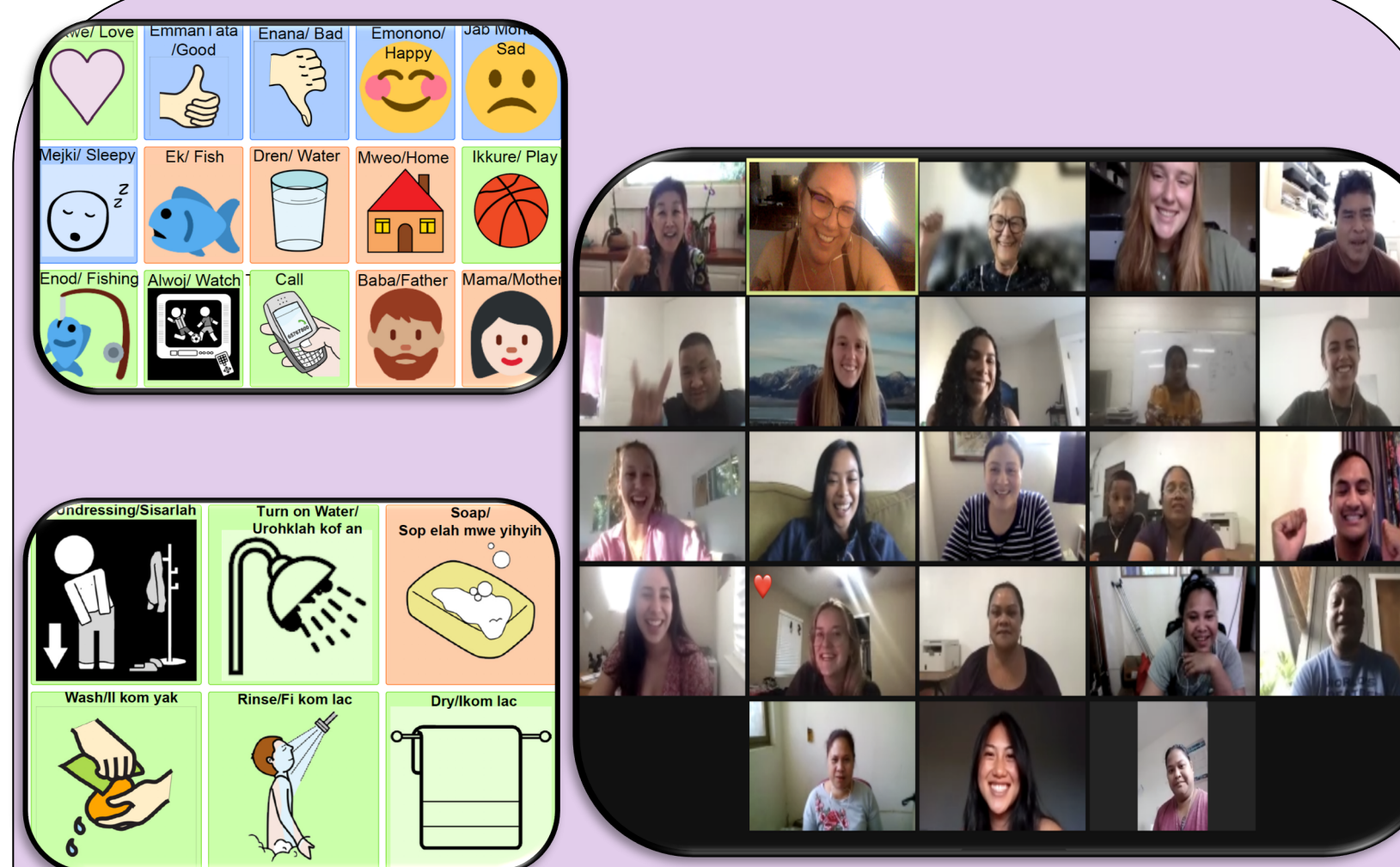
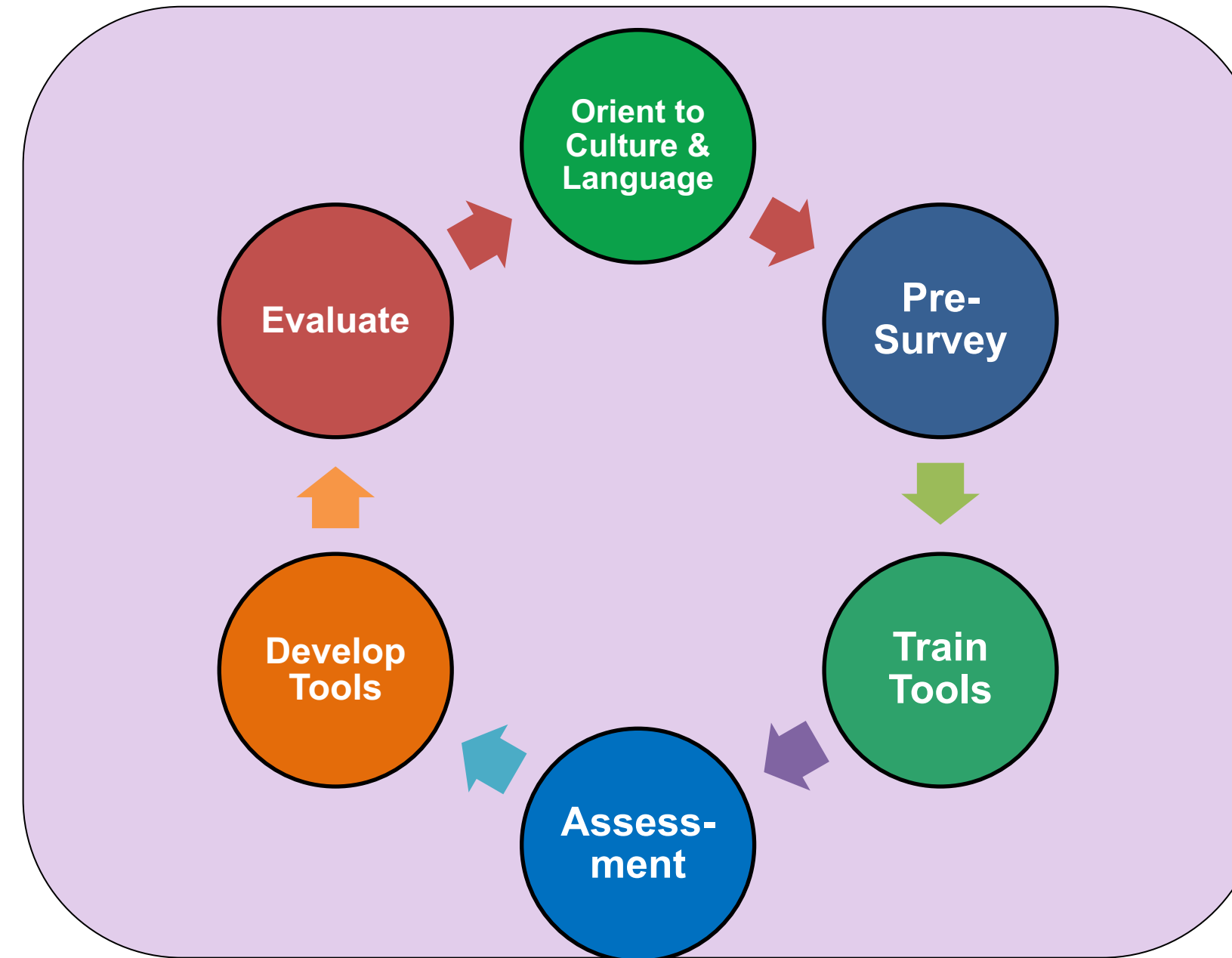
Background

Project Building Bridges, Grant # H325K150405, 2015-2021, prepared 58 Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) to provide culturally and linguistically responsive AAC services through a sequence of courses and fieldwork.

- AAC Service-Learning, a two-week summer internship, immersed Scholars in diverse cultures.
- Scholars participated with AAC Mentors to expand AAC resources with Teams in host countries (Belize, the Marshall Islands, Bali and Malaysia.)
- Similar to findings by Onosu (2021), cultural immersion and service-learning resulted in transformative learning, demonstrated in Scholars' reflections and resulting competence.
- **Scholars transferred learning to collaborate with families and students with diverse backgrounds in subsequent internships.**

When the pandemic halted travel in spring 2020, the Project 'pivoted' to virtual outreach in partnership with the **Nika Project**, a non-profit organization of volunteer AAC specialists. Beginning in summer 2020 and continuing into summer 2021, Scholars participated in a series of online sessions to assist teachers, students and families to develop AAC in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), India, and Peru. Two projects were co-led by Nika and Project Building Bridges faculty: 1) Teams in Peru and India with Cohort 5 Scholars; and 2) Teachers in the FSM and RMI with Cohort 6 Scholars, in collaboration the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Process



Outcomes

Scholars' Competence:

- Reflections demonstrated transformative learning in perspectives and competence ([see handout](#)).

International Teams' Access to AAC:

- Teachers reported significant increases in confidence to implement AAC in pre- and post-survey results.

Sustainable International AAC Internships:

- Virtual learning platforms enabled global collaboration.
- Open-Source apps provided cultural relevance and language translation ([see handout](#)).
- Institutionalized in AAC Graduate Certificate and university course structure.

Further Inquiry:

- Compare virtual and in-person experiences.
- Evaluate long-term impacts of cultural immersion on Scholars' perspectives and competence.

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