

Protocol Division Roles in Facilitating Regional Head Activities: A Public Management Study at a Regional Secretariat

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: April 15, 2026; Received in revised form: May 17, 2026; Accepted: May 30, 2026;

Available online: June 01, 2026;

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the role of the Protocol and Leadership Communication Division in facilitating the official activities of a regional head within a city regional secretariat. Although protocol work is often perceived as ceremonial, the findings show that it operates as a strategic public management function involving coordination, agenda governance, event arrangement, and field assistance for the regional head. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were obtained from interviews, observation, and documentation and were analyzed through the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The study found that the protocol division contributed substantially to the smoothness of regional-head activities through structured cross-agency coordination, rapid formal and informal communication, systematic agenda management, technical event preparation, and direct leadership assistance in the field. However, implementation was constrained by delayed information from organizing agencies, sudden schedule changes, incomplete technical data, limited protocol personnel when activities occurred simultaneously, and different perceptions among agencies regarding protocol standards. The article argues that the protocol function should be understood not only as ceremonial support but also as an integrative administrative mechanism that connects leadership mobility, organizational coordination, public symbolism, and service quality. The recommended improvement strategy includes strengthening integrated digital agenda management, standardizing cross-agency operating procedures, improving early notification discipline, building protocol contingency capacity, and institutionalizing documentation-based coordination. The article contributes to public administration by demonstrating how protocol management supports administrative effectiveness, leadership legitimacy, and the operational quality of local government activities.

Keywords: coordination, leadership communication, local government, protocol division, public management, regional head activities.

INTRODUCTION

Local government administration is not only reflected in the formulation of policies, budgets, and development programs. It is also reflected in the daily operational ability of public organizations to coordinate leadership activities, present government authority in orderly ways, and ensure that official events are implemented according to administrative, symbolic, and service standards. In this context, protocol work occupies an important but often underestimated position. It regulates the order of official events, supports the mobility of the regional head, coordinates stakeholders, and protects the institutional dignity of local government. Protocol therefore has a managerial meaning: it connects planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling within the practical rhythm of governmental activities.

The regional head is a central actor in local governance. The mayor, regent, or governor represents executive authority, provides strategic direction to local bureaucracy, and becomes the face of government in public activities. The activities of a regional head include coordination meetings, official visits, inaugurations, public consultations, ceremonial events, field inspections, development launches, and community engagement agendas. These activities are not merely routine; they are spaces where government presence, policy messages, and public legitimacy are performed. If such activities are poorly arranged, the effects may include delays, protocol disorder, communication confusion, weak public impression, and reduced administrative effectiveness.

In Indonesian local government, the protocol function is generally organized within the regional secretariat through the Protocol and Leadership Communication Division. The division is responsible for preparing, arranging, and assisting official activities involving the regional head and deputy regional head. Its tasks cover coordination with regional apparatus organizations, preparation of the agenda, arrangement of ceremonial procedures, preparation of event information, leadership assistance, and communication with internal and external actors. National protocol regulation emphasizes that protocol functions are related to official respect, order, and the proper arrangement of state and government events. In practice, however, protocol work is also deeply connected with organizational coordination and public management. See figure 1.

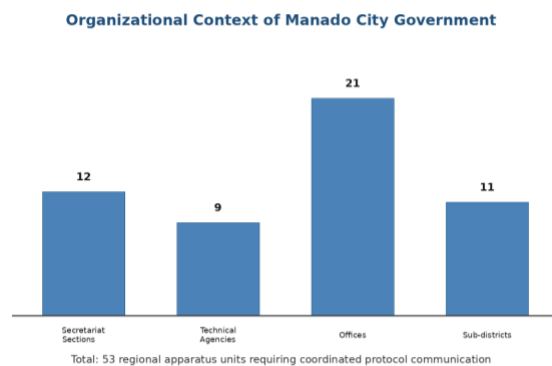


Figure 1. Organizational context of the local government coordination environment

The study underlying this article was motivated by a gap between the ideal function of protocol as regulated and the practical difficulties found in the field. The local government setting studied has many regional apparatus units, and the large number of agencies creates intensive coordination needs. The official data in the thesis show that the city government has fifty-three regional apparatus units consisting of twelve regional secretariat sections, nine technical agencies,

twenty-one offices, and eleven sub-districts. This organizational complexity means that any activity involving the regional head may require communication across several units, confirmation of responsibilities, adjustment of schedules, preparation of venues, and technical alignment between the organizing agency and the protocol division.

Initial observation indicated that the protocol division often faced delayed information, sudden schedule changes, and activities organized without adequate early coordination. Some activities required immediate adjustment because official agendas emerged suddenly, while other activities suffered from incomplete technical information from organizing agencies. These conditions show that the challenge is not simply a technical problem of ceremony. It is a public management problem involving coordination discipline, standard operating procedure compliance, organizational commitment, information flow, and the capacity to integrate formal and informal communication channels.

The issue is relevant to public administration because modern public organizations are expected to be responsive, accountable, adaptive, and coordinated. Denhardt, Denhardt, and Blanc (2019) emphasize that public administration is not only bureaucratic procedure but also a mechanism for creating public value through responsive governance. Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2021) add that public value is created through collaborative processes across actors. In a regional secretariat, the protocol division plays such a collaborative role by integrating activities across agencies and by ensuring that the regional head's presence is institutionally meaningful and operationally effective.

The article aims to analyze the role of the protocol division in facilitating regional-head activities and to identify the main inhibiting factors in that role. It also develops an applied public management interpretation of the findings, arguing that protocol management should be strengthened through digital agenda integration, cross-agency standardization, and adaptive communication systems. The article follows a structure commonly used in IJITE/Graceiella-style manuscripts: introduction, literature review, method, findings, discussion, conclusion, and references.

The research questions guiding the article are: first, how does the Protocol and Leadership Communication Division facilitate the activities of the regional head? Second, what factors inhibit the implementation of its role? These questions are important because protocol work sits at the intersection of public administration, leadership support, organizational communication, event governance, and symbolic legitimacy. A deeper understanding of this function can help local governments improve the quality of official activities and strengthen the effectiveness of regional secretariat coordination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Administration and Public Management

Public administration is the organized process through which governmental institutions implement public purposes. Classical definitions emphasize cooperation, hierarchy, and administrative execution, while contemporary definitions highlight collaboration, public value, accountability, and responsiveness. Denhardt, Denhardt, and Blanc (2019) view public administration as a field concerned with public service, democratic responsibility, and the implementation of public goals through institutions. Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2021) connect public administration with public value creation, stressing that public organizations must coordinate actors and resources to produce outcomes that matter to society.

Public management is a more operational branch of public administration. It concerns how public organizations plan, organize, direct, coordinate, and control resources. Stoner's management view, as used in many Indonesian public administration texts, sees management as a process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling organizational resources to achieve objectives. Pangkey and Rantung (2023) describe management as a collaborative process of planning, implementation, and supervision to achieve organizational goals. In the context of protocol management, public management is visible in how the protocol division plans the leader's agenda, organizes cross-agency coordination, directs event preparation, and controls the implementation of official activities.

Modern public management also requires adaptability. Government organizations face dynamic schedules, diverse stakeholders, limited resources, and sudden public events. Osborne (2021) explains that public service logic requires public institutions to respond to citizens and to create value through service networks. Andrews et al. (2020) also demonstrate that management quality affects public sector performance. Therefore, protocol work should not be treated as a narrow ceremonial routine; it is a public management function that influences organizational responsiveness and the perceived quality of government performance.

Protocol Functions in Government Activities

Protocol refers to the rules, procedures, and practices used to arrange official events, ceremonial order, respect for public office, and the participation of officials in government activities. In Indonesia, protocol functions are regulated in Law Number 9 of 2010 concerning Protocol. The law positions protocol as an instrument for organizing state and official events through appropriate arrangements of precedence, ceremonies, and respect. In local government, protocol is not only a legal requirement but also a way of maintaining institutional dignity and administrative order.

The practical scope of protocol work includes preparation of schedules, venue arrangements, guest placement, order of ceremony, technical readiness, coordination with event organizers, and leadership assistance. Nasution (2016) notes that protocol tasks include inauguration, official visits, ceremonial events, and the role of master of ceremony in formal government events. Wahab (2014) also emphasizes that protocol work requires order, accuracy, communication skill, and sensitivity to official hierarchy. These tasks require coordination because protocol officers must connect the needs of the regional head, the organizing agency, security units, public relations, technical teams, and the invited audience.

Protocol has a symbolic dimension. Official events communicate government authority and public respect. Markum (2012) explains that government events should prioritize national and public interests in terms of time, place, ceremony arrangement, invited participants, and material presentation. In this sense, protocol is a public representation mechanism. When official activities are orderly, punctual, and well-coordinated, the public sees government as professional and credible. Conversely, disorder or delay may undermine public trust and weaken the symbolic legitimacy of local government.

Coordination and Organizational Communication

Coordination is central to any organization that involves multiple actors. Fayol's management theory places coordination among the essential functions of management because organizational goals cannot be achieved when units work separately. In government, coordination is more complex because agencies have different mandates, schedules, and administrative cultures. Protocol coordination requires the integration of information about time, place, participants, security needs, event flow, leadership speech needs, and technical support.

Communication is the medium through which coordination occurs. Robbins and Judge (2022) explain that organizational communication problems often arise from unclear messages, delayed information, filtering, and differences in perception. These problems are particularly relevant in protocol work because even small delays in agenda information may affect the readiness of transportation, security, ceremony order, and leadership presence. Barnard's theory of organization also emphasizes that communication is necessary for cooperation; without accepted and clear communication, organizational action becomes fragmented.

Contemporary studies of public organizations distinguish formal and informal networks. Whetsell, Kroll, and DeHart-Davis (2020) show that both formal and informal networks influence the functioning of public organizations. Formal networks provide legitimacy, documentation, and accountability, while informal networks provide speed and flexibility. The thesis findings reflect this duality: formal meetings, dispositions, and official correspondence provide structure, while WhatsApp groups and direct calls accelerate operational coordination. The challenge is to integrate both channels without losing documentation and administrative certainty.

Agenda Management and Time Governance

Agenda management is a specific form of organizational time management. It involves prioritizing activities, arranging schedules, avoiding overlap, and ensuring that leadership time is used effectively. Claessens and van Eerde (2020) define time management as behaviors aimed at achieving effective use of time while performing goal-directed activities. In public leadership, agenda management has additional complexity because the regional head's schedule is influenced by administrative priorities, political commitments, community needs, emergency situations, and ceremonial duties.

Protocol agenda management requires a balance between structure and flexibility. A schedule must be planned systematically, but it must also allow adjustment when urgent public issues arise. This condition produces a tension between planned bureaucracy and adaptive governance. If agenda changes are not communicated quickly, the protocol division cannot prepare event transitions, inform affected agencies, or ensure the presence of supporting personnel. Therefore, agenda management is not only a calendar task but a governance function that coordinates leadership priorities across organizational units.

The digital transformation of agenda management is increasingly important. Wahyuni, Rahman, and Fitriani (2023) argue that digital communication improves coordination in local government when supported by clear procedures and shared information systems. A digital agenda system can reduce dependence on situational communication, provide real-time updates, record changes, and create a shared reference for all involved agencies. For protocol divisions, such systems are essential to prevent information asymmetry and to improve accountability.

Role Theory and Protocol Officers as Organizational Actors

Role theory explains how individuals or organizational units behave according to expectations attached to their position. In public organizations, a role is not simply a job description; it includes expectations from leaders, colleagues, other agencies, and the public. The Protocol and Leadership Communication Division is expected to be an agenda manager, event coordinator, communication bridge, leadership assistant, and guardian of official order. These multiple expectations create complex role demands.

Role conflict and role ambiguity may occur when agencies have different understandings of protocol procedures or when information is incomplete. For example, an organizing agency may assume that protocol only needs to arrive on the day of the event, while the protocol division

requires early technical information to prepare the agenda, venue, ceremony order, and leadership flow. Differences in perception can produce operational obstacles. Therefore, role clarity must be strengthened through standard operating procedures, socialization of protocol standards, and shared coordination mechanisms.

From a public management perspective, role performance depends on resources, communication, leadership support, and organizational culture. A protocol division with limited personnel can still perform effectively if coordination is early and information is complete. However, when several activities occur simultaneously and information arrives late, the same personnel limitation becomes a serious constraint. This shows that protocol performance is produced by the interaction between internal capacity and external cooperation from regional apparatus organizations.

METHOD

Research Type and Design

This article is based on a qualitative descriptive study. A qualitative approach was selected because the research problem concerns process, meaning, interaction, and organizational practice rather than numerical measurement. The study sought to understand how protocol officers and related actors interpret the role of the Protocol and Leadership Communication Division in facilitating regional-head activities. Qualitative description is appropriate for explaining public administration practices that involve coordination, communication, and organizational context.

The research site was the regional secretariat of a city government, specifically the Protocol and Leadership Communication Division. The study focused on the role of the division in facilitating activities of the regional head. The research indicators were coordination and communication, agenda management, arrangement of event implementation, leadership assistance, and inhibiting factors. These indicators were derived from the problem formulation and from the actual functions of protocol work in the regional secretariat.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Interview informants included strategic, technical, and operational actors involved in protocol and leadership communication. They included the head of the protocol and leadership communication division, the head of protocol subdivision, protocol staff, and related government actors. Observation was used to understand the practical setting of protocol work, while documentation was used to support information about organizational structure, duties, functions, and official procedures.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation involved selecting and organizing relevant statements from interviews and documents. Data display involved arranging findings into thematic matrices and narrative categories. Conclusion drawing involved interpreting the meaning of the findings and verifying them through consistency across informants and documents.

Credibility was strengthened by triangulating interview, observation, and documentation data. The study did not attempt to generalize statistically to all local governments. Instead, it offers an analytical generalization about how protocol divisions function as coordination mechanisms in local government administration. The findings can be useful for other regional secretariats with similar coordination challenges. See figure 2, and table 1.

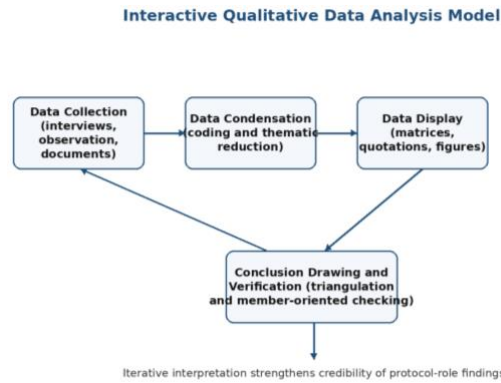


Figure 2. Converted interactive qualitative data analysis model

Table 1. Research focus and data sources

Research focus	Operational meaning	Key data sources
Coordination and communication	Information exchange and cross-agency alignment between protocol division and organizing agencies	Interviews with protocol leadership and staff; observation of coordination practices
Agenda management	Planning, sequencing, controlling, and adjusting the regional head's schedule	Agenda documents, interview narratives, field observation
Event arrangement	Technical preparation of venues, ceremony order, protocol order, and operational readiness	Event documents, staff interviews, observation
Leadership assistance	Direct support to ensure the regional head can attend, move through, and complete activities smoothly	Interviews with protocol staff and related agencies
Inhibiting factors	Conditions that reduce the effectiveness of protocol coordination and agenda facilitation	Cross-informant interviews and documentation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Organizational Setting and Coordination Complexity

The organizational setting explains why protocol coordination is complex. The city government has fifty-three regional apparatus units, including regional secretariat sections, technical agencies, offices, and sub-districts. Each unit can become an organizer or stakeholder of activities involving the regional head. Consequently, the protocol division must work as an integrator across a large and diverse bureaucracy. It must receive information, check event readiness, align expectations, and prepare the regional head's involvement without disrupting other agenda priorities.

One important implication of this organizational structure is that protocol effectiveness depends on the discipline of other agencies. When an agency submits activity information early and completely, the protocol division can prepare venue flow, official order, schedule allocation, and leadership assistance. When information is late or incomplete, the protocol division must work reactively. This produces risks such as overlapping schedules, unclear ceremony sequences, inadequate technical preparation, or delegation of the regional head's attendance to another official.

The organizational setting also shows that the protocol division is not merely a support unit. It performs a linking function. It connects policy actors, event organizers, leadership schedules, technical personnel, and public-facing activities. The more complex the regional apparatus structure, the more strategic this linking function becomes. See table 2.

Table 2. Organizational context of regional apparatus coordination

Regional apparatus category	Number	Coordination implication for protocol work
Regional secretariat sections	12	Frequent internal government coordination, leadership agenda preparation, and administrative support
Technical agencies	9	Need for coordination on specialized programs, innovation, planning, and policy events
Offices	21	High volume of sectoral activities requiring mayoral presence or representation
Sub-districts	11	Community-based activities and field visits requiring local coordination
Total	53	Large coordination network requiring integrated communication and agenda governance

Coordination and Communication

The findings show that coordination and communication are the first and most decisive role of the protocol division. Coordination is conducted in stages: initial communication with the organizing agency, confirmation of time and location, clarification of ceremony needs, and division of tasks among the involved units. Formal coordination is carried out through meetings, briefings, dispositions, and official communication. Informal coordination is conducted through direct calls and WhatsApp groups, especially when agenda changes require rapid response.

Informants described coordination as both planned and adaptive. Planned coordination is needed to ensure that every activity involving the regional head has a clear agenda, event order, supporting personnel, and technical readiness. Adaptive coordination is needed because local government activities often change due to urgent invitations, priority meetings, emergencies, or community events. The protocol division therefore operates in a fast-moving information environment.

The use of WhatsApp and direct communication was found to be useful for speed. It allows protocol officers to obtain quick confirmation, distribute sudden changes, and solve problems in the field. However, the same informal channel also creates risks. Messages may not be documented systematically, different versions of information may circulate, and some actors may assume that informal confirmation is enough without official administrative follow-up. Thus, the finding reveals a dual reality: informal communication supports responsiveness, but formal documentation is still necessary for accountability.

Coordination with regional apparatus organizations was generally effective when the organizing agency understood protocol procedures and provided complete information. The most effective coordination pattern involved early notification, joint technical meeting, shared understanding of event flow, and active communication before and during the event. Conversely, coordination became weak when agencies submitted information too close to the event or failed to specify technical needs such as master of ceremony, seating arrangement, leadership speech requirements, escort path, or security support.

Agenda Management

The second role is agenda management. The protocol division helps organize the regional head's schedule so that official activities can be implemented in a structured and efficient manner. Agenda management includes receiving activity requests, checking priority, confirming attendance, sequencing activities, preparing alternative arrangements, and communicating schedule decisions to relevant agencies. This role is important because the regional head's agenda is dense and often changes.

The findings show that agenda management has been implemented systematically but must remain flexible. The protocol division prepares schedules based on available information and leadership priorities. However, changes may occur suddenly because government leadership requires rapid response to urgent public issues. This means that protocol officers must continually monitor agenda developments and adjust technical preparations.

The main difficulty in agenda management is the gap between planned schedules and real-time administrative dynamics. Activities may be added, postponed, delegated, or moved to different times and places. When these changes are communicated late, they can disrupt other activities and create confusion among organizing agencies. Therefore, agenda management requires a shared system that enables all relevant parties to receive the same updated information.

Another important finding is that agenda management is not simply arranging time. It also determines how leadership authority is represented. When the regional head can attend on time and participate in a well-prepared event, the government's message is strengthened. When a schedule is chaotic or attendance must be delegated without adequate preparation, the symbolic and administrative quality of the event may decrease. Thus, agenda management is directly connected to leadership effectiveness.

Event Arrangement

The third role is the arrangement of event implementation. This includes technical preparation of venues, ceremony order, official seating, sequence of events, guest reception, leadership movement, and readiness of supporting facilities. The findings indicate that the protocol division plays a controlling role in ensuring that official activities follow proper procedure and can run smoothly.

Event arrangement requires detailed information from organizing agencies. The protocol division needs to know the type of event, venue layout, list of invited officials, order of ceremony, whether the regional head will deliver remarks, and whether there are special honors or symbolic actions. Incomplete technical information can force protocol officers to make rapid adjustments in the field. Such adjustments may succeed when officers are experienced, but repeated reliance on field improvisation can reduce institutional quality.

The findings also show that protocol officers are expected to understand both formal rules and practical field conditions. They must ensure compliance with protocol standards while adapting to venue limitations, audience dynamics, weather, transportation, security, and sudden leadership direction. This confirms that protocol work is a combination of administrative knowledge, field judgment, communication skill, and situational leadership.

Technical event arrangement is closely linked with public image. A well-arranged event presents the government as orderly, respectful, and professional. An event with unclear seating, poor sound system, confused agenda flow, or uncoordinated movement may create negative perceptions. Therefore, the protocol division contributes to the quality of public service indirectly by improving the operational quality of official events.

Leadership Assistance

The fourth role is leadership assistance. Protocol officers accompany and support the regional head during official activities to ensure that movement, sequence, participation, and communication are smooth. Assistance includes confirming arrival and departure arrangements, guiding the regional head through the event flow, coordinating with master of ceremony and security, preparing information about the activity, and helping the leader respond to changes in the field.

The findings show that leadership assistance requires readiness, alertness, and discretion. Protocol staff must understand the leader's schedule, the event context, and the expected flow of activity. They must also communicate quickly with other officers if changes occur. Leadership assistance is therefore not passive escorting; it is active field coordination.

Leadership assistance becomes especially important when several activities occur close together or simultaneously. Limited protocol personnel can become a constraint because staff must divide responsibilities across events. When the number of officers is insufficient, the division must prioritize activities and rely on coordination with other agencies. This finding indicates the need for contingency planning and personnel backup mechanisms.

Leadership assistance also supports the dignity of public office. The regional head must be able to attend activities in an orderly and informed manner. Protocol officers help prevent confusion, delays, or inappropriate arrangements that could affect the leader's public role. In this sense, leadership assistance is part of administrative professionalism and institutional representation.

Inhibiting Factors

The study identified several inhibiting factors. The first is delayed information from organizing agencies. Late information reduces preparation time and forces protocol officers to work reactively. The second is sudden schedule change. Government activities are dynamic, but when changes are not integrated into a shared agenda system, they create confusion and overlap. The third is incomplete technical information, including unclear venue layout, sequence of events, seating needs, speech requirements, and support personnel.

The fourth inhibiting factor is limited protocol personnel, especially when multiple leadership activities occur simultaneously. This constraint affects the ability of the division to provide full assistance at every event. The fifth is different perceptions among agencies regarding protocol standards. Some agencies may understand protocol as merely ceremonial, while protocol officers understand it as a broader system of agenda control, official order, and administrative coordination. This difference can weaken compliance with coordination procedures.

The sixth factor is the imbalance between formal and informal communication. Informal channels accelerate coordination, but they may not provide adequate documentation. Formal channels provide accountability, but they may be too slow for sudden agenda changes. The challenge is not to choose one channel over the other, but to integrate both into a documented digital coordination system.

The findings suggest that the protocol division has performed its role relatively effectively, but its effectiveness depends on the cooperation of the wider organization. Protocol work cannot be optimized by protocol officers alone. It requires shared discipline from all regional apparatus organizations, leadership support, and a coordination culture that respects early communication and complete data submission. See table 3.

Table 3. Summary of findings by role dimension

Role dimension	Empirical practice	Main strength	Main problem
Coordination and communication	Formal meetings, briefings, dispositions, direct calls, and WhatsApp coordination	Fast information exchange and cross-agency alignment	Late or incomplete information and inconsistent documentation
Agenda management	Systematic scheduling with flexible adjustment to leadership priorities	Ability to adapt to dynamic government activities	Sudden changes and overlapping agendas
Event arrangement	Venue preparation, ceremony flow, seating, technical readiness, and protocol order	Supports orderly and legitimate official events	Incomplete technical data from organizers
Leadership assistance	Direct escort, field coordination, troubleshooting, and real-time confirmation	Improves smoothness of regional-head activities	Limited personnel when simultaneous events occur
Inhibiting factors	Delayed information, different perceptions, limited staff, and weak integrated system	Problems are recognized and can be managed	Requires institutional digital and procedural strengthening

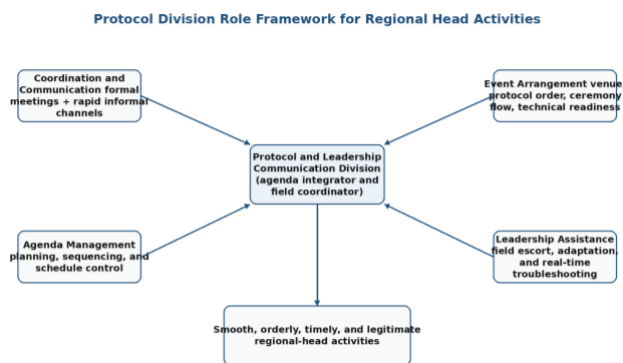


Figure 3. Protocol role framework

Protocol as a Strategic Public Management Function

The findings challenge the narrow perception that protocol work is only ceremonial. The protocol division in this study performed a strategic public management function because it integrated leadership agenda, organizational communication, event readiness, and public representation. This interpretation is consistent with public management theory, which emphasizes planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling as mechanisms for achieving organizational goals. In local government, the goal is not only administrative completion but also the creation of public trust, institutional order, and effective leadership presence.

The protocol division's work can be understood as the management of leadership activity systems. It receives agenda information, filters priorities, coordinates units, prepares events, assists the leader, and responds to sudden changes. These activities involve resource management, information management, and stakeholder coordination. Therefore, protocol work should be included in broader discussions of local government capacity and not relegated to ceremonial administration.

The public value perspective helps explain why this matters. Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2021) argue that public value is created through coordinated actions among public actors. A well-

managed regional-head activity can communicate responsiveness, respect, government readiness, and institutional credibility. A poorly managed activity can communicate disorder. Thus, protocol management contributes to public value by making government activities meaningful and credible.

Formal-Informal Communication Balance

One of the most important discussion points is the balance between formal and informal communication. The findings indicate that formal communication provides administrative legitimacy, while informal communication provides speed. This is consistent with organizational network studies showing that formal and informal networks perform complementary roles in public organizations (Whetsell, Kroll, & DeHart-Davis, 2020).

In protocol work, relying solely on formal communication may reduce responsiveness because leadership agendas change quickly. Conversely, relying solely on informal communication may weaken documentation, accountability, and shared certainty. The practical solution is an integrated communication system in which informal updates are captured into formal digital records. For example, a WhatsApp update about schedule change should be followed by entry into a shared agenda application or digital log. This would preserve speed while improving accountability.

Robbins and Judge (2022) argue that communication barriers occur when information is delayed, unclear, or interpreted differently. The findings confirm this theory. Delayed information from agencies, sudden agenda revisions, and different perceptions created operational obstacles. Therefore, protocol improvement must focus not only on faster communication but also on clearer communication standards: who must report, what information must be submitted, when it must be submitted, and how revisions must be documented.

Agenda Management as Time Governance

Agenda management emerged as a central role because the regional head's time is a scarce public resource. Every official activity competes for leadership attention. The protocol division helps allocate this resource by arranging schedules, confirming priorities, and coordinating attendance. When agenda management is weak, leadership time may be wasted, activities may overlap, and public service signals may be disrupted.

The findings show that the existing system is systematic but still heavily dependent on manual and situational coordination. This suggests the need for time governance. Time governance means institutional rules and tools that make agenda planning transparent, shared, and adjustable. A digital agenda dashboard could help agencies see confirmed schedules, submit activity requests, attach technical documents, receive confirmation, and record revisions. Such a system would reduce reliance on individual memory and fragmented messages.

Agenda management also involves contingency planning. Because local government activities often change, protocol officers need alternative scenarios: who represents the regional head if attendance is impossible, which event is prioritized, what technical elements must be ready for each scenario, and how agencies are notified. Contingency planning would shift the system from reactive adjustment to planned adaptability.

Event Arrangement and Public Symbolism

The event arrangement role demonstrates the symbolic dimension of public administration. A government event is not only a meeting or ceremony. It communicates the seriousness of government, the respect given to public office, and the professionalism of bureaucracy. Protocol

order, seating arrangement, ceremony sequence, and leadership movement all shape how the public interprets the event.

Markum (2012) emphasizes that government events must prioritize public and state interests in their arrangement. The findings show that the protocol division works to protect this principle by ensuring that activities are prepared, orderly, and respectful. However, incomplete technical information from organizing agencies can weaken this function. Event organizers must therefore recognize that technical data are not minor details; they are essential inputs for public representation.

This point is relevant to the New Public Service perspective. Denhardt, Denhardt, and Blanc (2019) argue that public service should prioritize citizens and democratic values. Official events are one space where citizens encounter government. If an event is well arranged, the public experiences government as attentive and organized. If it is poorly arranged, the public may perceive bureaucracy as unprepared. Thus, protocol arrangement indirectly affects service perception.

Leadership Assistance and Administrative Professionalism

Leadership assistance is a form of administrative professionalism. Protocol officers help the regional head navigate public activities so that leadership presence is effective. This includes ensuring that the leader receives the right information, enters the correct sequence, meets the appropriate officials, and responds to field conditions. The findings indicate that this role requires alertness, communication skill, and situational judgment.

The limited number of protocol personnel becomes a serious concern when activities occur simultaneously. The issue is not simply staffing quantity but also role distribution and backup capacity. A protocol division needs a layered personnel system: core protocol officers for high-priority events, trained liaison officers in each regional apparatus organization, and a shared coordination standard. This would distribute protocol awareness across the organization and reduce dependence on a small core team.

Leadership assistance also connects to risk management. Risks include the leader arriving without full information, ceremony flow being unclear, security movement being uncoordinated, or speeches not being prepared. Protocol officers reduce these risks through preparation and real-time control. Therefore, the protocol function can be viewed as an operational risk mitigation mechanism for leadership activities. See figure 4.

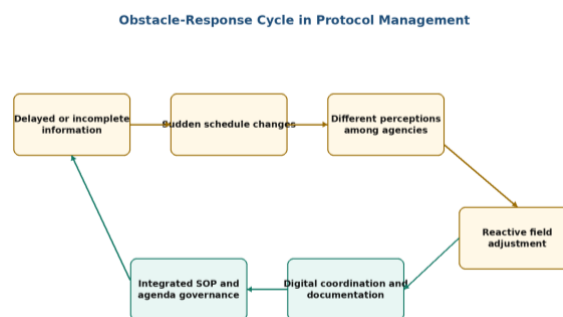


Figure 4. Obstacle-response cycle

Integrated Improvement Strategy

Based on the findings, the main improvement strategy is to integrate communication, agenda management, event arrangement, and leadership assistance into a single protocol governance system. The system should combine formal accountability with informal speed. This can be done

through a digital agenda platform, standardized activity submission forms, integrated WhatsApp-to-log procedures, and routine cross-agency protocol briefings.

The first improvement is early notification discipline. Every regional apparatus organization that organizes an activity involving the regional head should submit a complete protocol information package within a specified time. The package should include the purpose of the event, venue, time, invited officials, event flow, speech needs, ceremonial elements, technical facilities, security needs, and contact person. This would reduce incomplete information and improve preparation.

The second improvement is integrated digital agenda governance. A shared digital agenda system should record activity requests, confirmations, changes, delegation decisions, and supporting documents. Access can be given to authorized units. The system would create a single source of truth for schedule information and reduce the risk of multiple versions circulating through informal channels.

The third improvement is protocol literacy for regional apparatus organizations. Many obstacles arise because agencies have different perceptions about protocol standards. Regular socialization and short protocol training can help agencies understand why early coordination, complete data, and adherence to procedure are necessary. Protocol literacy should not be limited to protocol officers; it should be distributed across all units that organize leadership activities.

The fourth improvement is contingency capacity. The protocol division should develop templates for sudden changes, simultaneous activities, delegation scenarios, and emergency agenda shifts. Each scenario should specify who decides, who informs agencies, what documents are prepared, and which field officers are assigned. This makes adaptability more systematic.

The fifth improvement is personnel strengthening. When activities occur simultaneously, limited staff reduce coverage. The local government can establish protocol liaison officers in major regional apparatus organizations. These liaison officers would not replace the protocol division but would support early coordination, technical preparation, and information transmission. This network would strengthen the division's ability to manage complex agendas. See table 4.

Table 4. Obstacles, interpretations, and improvement strategy

Problem identified	Management interpretation	Recommended intervention	Expected improvement
Delayed information	Weak early notification discipline	Mandatory digital activity submission form and deadline	More time for preparation and fewer reactive adjustments
Sudden schedule change	Dynamic leadership time governance	Real-time digital agenda dashboard and contingency protocol	Faster and more consistent schedule updates
Incomplete technical data	Weak event readiness control	Standardized technical checklist for all agencies	Improved venue, ceremony, and leadership flow preparation
Different perceptions among agencies	Low shared protocol literacy	Cross-agency protocol orientation and SOP socialization	Greater compliance with protocol procedures
Limited protocol personnel	Capacity constraint under simultaneous events	Protocol liaison network and backup personnel plan	Better coverage of multiple activities

Informal communication without documentation	Speed-accountability imbalance	WhatsApp-to-digital-log procedure and formal confirmation	Responsive yet accountable coordination
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Proposed Protocol Governance Model

The proposed model consists of four integrated components: communication governance, agenda governance, event governance, and assistance governance. Communication governance regulates how information moves between the protocol division and regional apparatus organizations. It includes early notification, complete technical data, confirmation procedures, and documentation of changes. Agenda governance regulates how the regional head’s time is planned, prioritized, revised, and communicated. Event governance regulates technical readiness, ceremony order, venue layout, and compliance with protocol standards. Assistance governance regulates field escort, real-time troubleshooting, and leadership movement.

These components must be supported by three enabling systems. The first is digital integration. Digital integration ensures that agendas, documents, technical checklists, and revisions are stored in one shared system. The second is cross-agency commitment. Protocol cannot work if organizing agencies treat coordination as optional. The third is continuous evaluation. After major activities, the protocol division and organizing agencies should evaluate what worked, what failed, and what must be improved.

The model is practical because it does not require changing the legal mandate of the protocol division. It strengthens existing functions through clearer procedures, better information systems, and shared organizational discipline. It also aligns with public management principles of efficiency, accountability, responsiveness, and adaptability. See table 5.

Table 5. Proposed protocol governance model

Model component	Core process	Management tool	Performance indicator
Communication governance	Early notification, message clarity, confirmation, and documentation	Digital correspondence log, WhatsApp integration, contact matrix	Information received complete and on time
Agenda governance	Planning, prioritization, revision, delegation, and update distribution	Shared digital agenda dashboard	Reduced schedule overlap and faster update circulation
Event governance	Venue readiness, ceremony order, seating, technical facilities, and protocol compliance	Technical checklist and event readiness form	Events run orderly and according to protocol
Assistance governance	Leadership escort, field coordination, real-time adaptation, and post-event reporting	Assignment sheet and field report template	Smooth leadership movement and fewer field disruptions
Continuous evaluation	Review of events and lessons learned	Post-activity evaluation note	Repeated obstacles decrease over time

Extended Implications for Local Government Practice

Beyond the immediate findings, the study has wider implications for how local governments organize leadership activities in complex bureaucratic environments. The first implication concerns institutional discipline. Protocol effectiveness is not achieved only by improving the skill of protocol

officers. It requires all regional apparatus organizations to recognize that leadership agenda information is a shared administrative asset. When agencies delay information, prepare activities without prior coordination, or provide incomplete technical data, the problem affects not only the protocol division but also the public image and operational reliability of the whole government. Therefore, leadership activities should be governed through a whole-of-government coordination standard.

The second implication concerns the relationship between protocol and digital governance. Many local governments already use informal digital communication, especially WhatsApp groups, because such platforms are fast and familiar. However, informality alone is not sufficient for accountable governance. A more mature approach is to transform informal digital speed into formal digital traceability. This means that every schedule change, delegation decision, activity request, and technical update should be recorded in a digital system that can be reviewed. In this way, digital communication becomes more than a conversational tool; it becomes a governance infrastructure for planning, documentation, and evaluation.

The third implication concerns human resource development. Protocol officers need competencies that go beyond knowledge of ceremonial order. They need skills in organizational communication, crisis response, digital agenda management, public etiquette, stakeholder negotiation, writing of event notes, and real-time decision support. Training programs for protocol staff should therefore combine protocol law, public relations, event management, leadership assistance, and information technology. In addition, regional apparatus organizations should appoint internal liaison officers who understand basic protocol requirements. This would distribute protocol competence across the bureaucracy and prevent the protocol division from becoming the only unit responsible for coordination quality.

The fourth implication concerns standard operating procedures. Existing procedures often describe formal steps, but they may not be detailed enough for dynamic situations. A useful SOP should include normal procedures and exception procedures. Normal procedures regulate standard event submission, confirmation, preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Exception procedures regulate sudden agenda changes, simultaneous events, emergency leadership attendance, leadership delegation, field constraints, and cancellation. Each procedure should specify decision authority, communication channels, required documents, and time limits. Such detail would reduce ambiguity and prevent differences in perception among agencies.

The fifth implication concerns evaluation culture. Protocol activities are often evaluated informally after events, but systematic evaluation is necessary for institutional learning. After major events, the protocol division should prepare a short post-event review covering what went well, what problems occurred, which agencies responded quickly, what information was missing, and what corrective action is needed. These reviews can become a database of recurring issues. Over time, the database can support evidence-based improvement of protocol governance.

The sixth implication concerns public trust. The public may not directly observe the internal coordination behind an official activity, but it experiences the result. A well-organized event communicates that government is prepared and respectful. A disorganized event communicates the opposite. Therefore, protocol quality is connected to trust in local government. In this sense, investment in protocol management is not merely internal administrative improvement; it is part of improving the quality of government representation before citizens.

The seventh implication concerns leadership decision support. The regional head needs reliable information before attending activities. Protocol officers can provide short briefs containing event background, key participants, expected messages, potential sensitivities, and time allocation. Such briefs would help the leader communicate consistently and respond appropriately. This

function shows that protocol is also part of leadership knowledge management. It helps convert scattered information from agencies into usable information for executive action.

Finally, the study suggests that future research should examine protocol management comparatively across different local governments. Comparative studies could explore how protocol divisions differ in structure, digital tools, staffing, SOP enforcement, and coordination with public relations units. Future studies could also examine how citizens perceive the quality of official government events and whether protocol order influences public trust. These directions would strengthen protocol studies as a legitimate subfield within public administration and public management.

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that the Protocol and Leadership Communication Division plays a strategic role in facilitating regional-head activities. Its role is expressed through four major functions: coordination and communication, agenda management, event arrangement, and leadership assistance. These functions allow official activities to be implemented in an orderly, timely, and institutionally appropriate manner. The division also acts as an integrator among regional apparatus organizations, leadership schedules, technical event needs, and public-facing government activities. The findings show that the role has been implemented relatively effectively. Coordination is conducted through formal and informal channels, agenda management is systematic yet flexible, event arrangement supports official order, and leadership assistance helps the regional head participate smoothly in government activities. However, several obstacles remain: delayed information, sudden schedule changes, incomplete technical data, limited personnel, and different perceptions among agencies. These problems indicate that the protocol function cannot be optimized only through the internal efforts of protocol officers; it requires organizational discipline from the entire regional secretariat and regional apparatus network.

The article recommends strengthening integrated digital agenda management, standardized cross-agency procedures, protocol literacy, contingency planning, and a protocol liaison network. These improvements will help combine responsiveness with accountability. The broader theoretical contribution is that protocol work should be recognized as a public management function rather than a merely ceremonial task. By managing leadership activities effectively, the protocol division supports administrative efficiency, organizational coordination, public legitimacy, and the quality of local government service representation.

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